

THE BOOK OF THE THOUSAND NIGHTS AND A NIGHT

**A Plain and Literal Translation
of the Arabian Nights Entertainments
by Richard F. Burton**

**VOLUME TWELVE
(Supplemental Volume Two)**



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The Book Of The Thousand Nights And A Night
A Plain and Literal Translation
of the Arabian Nights Entertainments
by Richard F. Burton
First published 1885–1888
Volume Twelve
Supplemental Nights
To The Book Of The Thousand Nights And A Night
Volume Two

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To Henry Irving, Esq.

My Dear Irving,

To a consummate artist like yourself I need hardly suggest that *The Nights* still offers many a virgin mine to the Playwright; and I inscribe this volume to you, not only in admiration of your genius but in the hope that you will find means of exploiting the hidden wealth which awaits only your “Open Sesame!”

Every yours sincerely,

Richard F. Burton.

London, August 1, 1886.

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The Appendix *Variants and Analogues of Some of the Tales in Vols. XI and XII* by W. A. Clouston has been omitted from the present edition.

About the Author and *About this Edition* see Volume 1

SUPPLEMENTAL NIGHTS

TO THE BOOK OF THE THOUSAND NIGHTS AND A NIGHT

VOLUME TWO

Al-Malik al-Zahir Rukn al-Din Bibars al-Bundukdari and the Sixteen Captains of Police

There was once in the climes of Egypt and the city of Cairo, under the Turks, a king of the valiant kings and the exceeding mighty Soldans, hight Al-Malik al-Záhir Rukn al-Din Bibars al-Bundukdári,¹ who was used to storm the Islamite sconces and the strongholds of “The Shore”² and the Nazarene citadels. His Chief of Police in the capital of his kingdom was just to the folk, all of them; and Al-Malik al-Zahir delighted in stories of the common sort and of that which men purposed in thought; and he loved to see this with his own eyes and to hear their sayings with his own ears. Now it fortunèd that he heard one night from a certain of his nocturnal reciters³ that among women are those who are doughtier than the doughtiest men and prower of prowess, and that among them are some who will engage in

¹ Bibars whose name is still famous and mostly pronounced “Baybars,” the fourth of the Baharite Mamelukes whom I would call the “Soldans.” Originally a slave of Al-Sálih, seventh of the Ayyubites, he rose to power by the normal process, murdering his predecessor, in A.D. 1260; and he pushed his conquests from Syria to Armenia.

² There are sundry Sáhils or shore-lands: here it means the lowlands of Palestine once the abode of the noble Philistines.

³ Arab. “Sammár” (from Samar = conversatio nocturna), = the story-teller who in camp or house whiles away the evening hours.

fight singular with the sword and others who beguile the quickest-witted of Walis and baffle them and bring down on them all manner of miseries; wherefore said the Soldan, "I would lief hear this of their legerdemain from one of those who have had to do with it, so I may hearken unto him and cause him discourse." And one of the storytellers said, "O king, send for the Chief of Police of this thy city."

Now 'Alam al-Din⁴ Sanjar was at that time Wali and he was a man of experience, in affairs well versed; so the king sent for him and when he came before him, he discovered to him that which was in his mind. Quoth Sanjar, "I will do my endeavour for that which our lord seeketh." Then he arose and returning to his house, summoned the Captains of the watch and the Lieutenants of the ward and said to them, "Know that I purpose to marry my son and make him a bridal banquet, and I desire that ye assemble, all of you, in one place. I also will be present, I and my company, and do ye relate that which you have heard of rare occurrences and that which hath betided you of experiences." And the Captains and Runners and Agents of Police answered him, "'Tis well: Bismillah — in the name of Allah! We will make thee see all this with thine own eyes and hear it with thine own ears." Then the Chief of Police arose and going up to Al-Malik al-Zahir, informed him that the assembly would meet on such a day at his house; and the Soldan said, "'Tis well," and gave him somewhat of coin for his spending-money.

When the appointed day came the Chief of Police set apart for his officers and constables a saloon, which had latticed casements ranged in order and giving upon the flower-garden, and Al-Malik al-Zahir came to him, and he seated himself and the Soldan, in the alcove.

⁴ "Flag of the Faith:" Sanjar in old Persian = a Prince, a King.

Then the tables were spread for them with food and they ate: and when the bowl went round amongst them and their souls were gladdened by meat and drink, they mutually related that which was with them and revealed their secrets from concealment. The first to discourse was a man, a Captain of the Watch, hight Mu'ín al-Din⁵ whose heart was wholly occupied with the love of fair women; and he said, “Harkye, all ye people of high degree, I will acquaint you with an extraordinary affair which fortunèd me aforetime.” Then he began to tell

The First Constable's History.

Know ye that when I entered the service of this Emir,⁶ I had a great repute and every low fellow and lewd feared me most of all mankind, and when I rode through the city, each and every of the folk would point at me with their fingers and sign at me with their eyes. It happened one day, as I sat in the palace of the Prefecture, back-propped against a wall, considering in myself, suddenly there fell somewhat in my lap, and behold, it was a purse sealed and tied. So I hent it in hand and lo! it had in it an hundred dirhams, but I found not who threw it and I said, “Lauded be the Lord, the King of the Kingdoms!” Another day, as I sat in the same way, somewhat fell on me and startled me, and lookye, 'twas a purse like the first: I took it and hiding the matter, made as though I slept, albeit sleep was not with me.

One day as I thus shammed sleep, I suddenly sensed in my lap a hand, and in it a purse of the finest; so I seized the hand and behold, 'twas that of a fair woman. Quoth I to her, “O my lady, who art thou?”

⁵ “Aider of the Faith.”

⁶ i.e. the Chief of Police, as the sequel shows.

and quoth she, "Rise and come away from here, that I may make myself known to thee." Presently I rose up and following her, walked on, without tarrying, till we stopped at the door of a high-built house, whereupon I asked her, "O my lady, who art thou? Indeed, thou hast done me kindness, and what is the reason of this?" She answered, "By Allah, O Captain Mu'in, I am a woman on whom love and longing are sore for desire of the daughter of the Kazi Amín al-Hukm.⁷ Now there was between me and her what was and fondness for her fell upon my heart and I agreed upon an assignation with her, according to possibility and convenience; but her father Amin al-Hukm took her and went away, and my heart cleaveth to her and yearning and distraction waxed sore upon me for her sake."

I said to her, marvelling the while at her words, "What wouldst thou have me do?" and said she, "O Captain Mu'in, I would have thee lend me a helping hand." Quoth I, "Where am I and where is the daughter of the Kazi Amin al-Hukm?"⁸ and quoth she "Be assured that I would not have thee intrude upon the Kazi's daughter, but I would fain work for the winning of my wishes. This is my will and my want which may not be wroughten save by thine aid." Then she added, "I mean this night to go with heart enheartened and hire me bracelets and armlets and anklets of price; then will I hie me and sit in the street wherein is the house of Amin al-Hukm; and when 'tis the season of the round and folk are asleep, do thou pass, thou and those who are with thee of the men, and thou wilt see me sitting and on me fine raiment and ornaments and wilt smell on me the odour of Ottars; whereupon do thou question me of my case and I will say, 'I hail from

⁷ "Faithful of Command;" it may be a title as well as a P.N.

⁸ i.e. "What have I to do with, etc.?" or "How great is the difference between me and her."

the Citadel and am of the daughters of the deputies and I came down into the town for a purpose; but night overtook me all unawares and the Zuwaylah Gate was shut against me and all the other portals and I knew not whither I should wend this night. Presently I saw this street and noting the goodly fashion of its ordinance and its cleanliness, I sheltered me therein against break of day.' When I speak these words to thee with complete self-possession, the Chief of the watch will have no ill suspicion of me, but will say, 'There's no help but that we leave her with one who will take care of her till morning.' Thereto do thou rejoin, 'Twere best that she night with Amin al-Hukm and lie with his wives and children until dawn of day.' Then straightway knock at the Kazi's door, and thus shall I have secured admission into his house, without inconvenience, and won my wish; and — the Peace!"

I said to her, "By Allah, this is an easy matter." So, when the night was blackest, we rose to make our round, followed by men with girded swords, and went about the ways and compassed the city, till we came to the street where was the woman, and it was the middle of the night. Here we smelt mighty rich scents and heard the clink of rings: so I said to my comrades, "Methinks I espy a spectre;" and the Captain of the watch cried, "See what it is." Accordingly, I undertook the work and entering the thoroughfare presently came out again and said, "I have found a fair woman and she telleth me that she is from the Citadel and that dark night surprised her and she saw this street and noting its cleanness and goodly fashion of ordinance, knew that it belonged to a great man and that needs must there be in it a guardian to keep watch over it, so she sheltered her therein." Quoth the Captain of the watch to me, "Take her and carry her to thy house;" but quoth I, "I seek refuge with Allah! My house is no strong box and on this woman are trinkets and fine clothing. By Allah, we will not deposit the lady save

with Amin al-Hukm, in whose street she hath been since the first starkening of the darkness; therefore do thou leave her with him till the break of day.” He rejoined, “Do whatso thou willest.” So I rapped at the Kazi’s gate and out came a black slave of his slaves, to whom said I, “O my lord, take this woman and let her be with you till day shall dawn, for that the lieutenant of the Emir Alam al-Din hath found her with trinkets and fine apparel on her, sitting at the door of your house, and we feared lest her responsibility be upon you;⁹ wherefore I suggested ’twere meetest she night with you.” So the chattel opened and took her in with him.

Now when the morning morrowed, the first who presented himself before the Emir was the Kazi Amin al-Hukm, leaning on two of his negro slaves; and he was crying out and calling for aid and saying, “O Emir, crafty and perfidious, yesternight thou depositedst with me a woman and broughtest her into my house and home, and she arose in the dark and took from me the monies of the little orphans my wards,¹⁰ six great bags, each containing a thousand dinars, and made off; but as for me, I will say no syllable to thee except in the Soldan’s presence.”¹¹ When the Wali heard these words, he was troubled and rose and sat down in his agitation; then he took the Judge and placing him by his side, soothed him and exhorted him to patience, till he had made an end of talk, when he turned to the officers and questioned them of that. They fixed the affair on me and said, “We know nothing of this matter but from Captain Mu’in al-Din.” So the Kazi turned to me and

⁹ Because, if she came to grief, the people of the street, and especially those of the adjoining houses would get into trouble.

¹⁰ As Kazi of the quarter he was ex-officio guardian of the orphans and their property, and liable to severe punishment in case of fraud or neglect.

¹¹ i.e. “I am going at once to complain of thee before the king unless thou give me due satisfaction by restoring the money and finding the thief.”

said, “Thou wast of accord to practice upon me with this woman, for she said she came from the Citadel.”

As for me, I stood, with my head bowed ground-wards, forgetting both Sunnah and Farz,¹² and remained sunk in thought, saying, “How came I to be the dupe of that randy wench?” Then cried the Emir to me, “What aileth thee that thou answerest not?” Thereupon I replied, “O my lord, ’tis a custom among the folk that he who hath a payment to make at a certain date is allowed three days’ grace: do thou have patience with me so long, and if, at the end of that time, the culprit be not found, I will be responsible for that which is lost.” When the folk heard my speech they all approved it as reasonable and the Wali turned to the Kazi and sware to him that he would do his utmost to recover the stolen monies adding, “And they shall be restored to thee.” Then he went away, whilst I mounted without stay or delay and began to-ing and fro-ing about the world without purpose, and indeed I was become the underling of a woman without honesty or honour; and I went my rounds in this way all that my day and that my night, but happened not upon tidings of her; and thus I did on the morrow. On the third day I said to myself, “Thou art mad or silly;” for I was wandering in quest of a woman who knew me and I knew her not, she being veiled when I met her. Then I went round about the third day till the hour of mid-afternoon prayer, and sore waxed my cark and my care for I kenned that there remained to me of my life but the morrow, when the Chief of Police would send for me.

However, as sundown-time came, I passed through one of the main streets, and saw a woman at a window; her door was ajar and she was clapping her hands and casting sidelong glances at me, as who should

¹² The Practice (of the Prophet) and the Holy Law (Koranic).

say, "Come up by the door." So I went up, without fear or suspicion, and when I entered, she rose and clasped me to her breast. I marvelled at the matter and quoth she to me, "I am she whom thou depositedst with Amin al-Hukm." Quoth I to her, "O my sister, I have been going round and round in request of thee, for indeed thou hast done a deed which will be chronicled and hast cast me into red death on thine account." She asked me, "Dost thou speak thus to me and thou a captain of men?" and I answered, "How should I not be troubled, seeing that I be in concern for an affair I turn over and over in mind, more by token that I continue my day long going about searching for thee and in the night I watch its stars and planets?"¹³ Cried she, "Naught shall betide save weal, and thou shalt get the better of him."¹⁴ So saying, she rose and going to a chest, drew out therefrom six bags full of gold and said to me, "This is what I took from Amin al-Hukm's house. So an thou wilt, restore it; else the whole is lawfully¹⁵ thine; and if thou desire other than this, thou shalt obtain it; for I have monies in plenty and I had no design herein save to marry thee." Then she arose and opening other chests, brought out therefrom wealth galore and I said to her, "O my sister, I have no wish for all this, nor do I want aught except to be quit of that wherein I am." Quoth she, "I came not forth of the Kazi's house without preparing for thine acquittance."

Then said she to me, "When the morrow shall morn and Amin al-Hukm shall come to thee bear with him till he have made an end of his speech, and when he is silent, return him no reply; and if the Wali ask, 'What aileth thee that thou answerest me not?' do thou rejoin, 'O lord

¹³ i.e. for lack of sleep.

¹⁴ i.e. of the Kazi.

¹⁵ Arab. "Mubáh," in the theologic sense, an action which is not sinful (harám) or quasisinful (makrúh); vulgarly "permitted, allowed."

and master know that the two words are not alike, but there is no helper for the conquered one¹⁶ save Allah Almighty.' The Kazi will cry, 'What is the meaning of thy saying, The two words are not alike?' And do thou retort, 'I deposited with thee a damsel from the palace of the Sultan, and most likely some enemy of hers in thy household hath transgressed against her or she hath been secretly murdered. Verily, there were on her raiment and ornaments worth a thousand ducats, and hadst thou put to the question those who are with thee of slaves and slave-girls, needs must thou have litten on some traces of the crime.'

When he heareth this from thee, his trouble will redouble and he will be amated and will make oath that thou hast no help for it but to go with him to his house: however, do thou say, 'That will I not do, for I am the party aggrieved, more especially because I am under suspicion with thee.' If he redouble in calling on Allah's aid and conjure thee by the oath of divorce saying, 'Thou must assuredly come,' do thou reply, 'By Allah, I will not go, unless the Chief also go with me.' Then, as soon as thou comest to the house, begin by searching the terrace-roofs; then rummage the closets and cabinets; and if thou find naught, humble thyself before the Kazi and be abject and feign thyself subjected, and after stand at the door and look as if thou soughtest a place wherein to make water, because there is a dark corner there. Then come forward, with heart harder than syenite-stone, and lay hold upon a jar of the jars and raise it from its place. Thou wilt find there under it a mantilla-skirt; bring it out publicly and call the Wali in a loud voice, before those who are present. Then open it and thou wilt find it full of blood, exceeding for freshness, and therein a woman's

¹⁶ i.e. we both make different statements equally credible, but without proof, and the case will go against me, because thou art the greater man.

walking-boots and a pair of petticoat-trousers and somewhat of linen.” When I heard from her these words, I rose to go out and she said to me, “Take these hundred sequins, so they may succour thee; and such is my guest-gift to thee.”

Accordingly I took them and leaving her door ajar returned to my lodging. Next morning, up came the Judge, with his face like the ox-eye, and asked, “In the name of Allah, where is my debtor and where is my property?” Then he wept and cried out and said to the Wali, “Where is that ill-omened fellow, who aboundeth in robbery and villainy?” Thereupon the Chief turned to me and said, “Why dost thou not answer the Kazi?” and I replied, “O Emir, the two heads¹⁷ are not equal, and I, I have no helper; but, an the right be on my side ’twill appear.” At this the Judge grew hotter of temper and cried out, “Woe to thee, O ill-omened wight! How wilt thou make manifest that the right is on thy side?” I replied “O our lord the Kazi, I deposited with thee and in thy charge a woman whom we found at thy door, and on her raiment and ornaments of price. Now she is gone, even as yesterday is gone; and after this thou turnest upon us and suest me for six thousand gold pieces. By Allah, this is none other than a mighty great wrong, and assuredly some foe of hers in thy household hath transgressed against her!” With this the Judge’s wrath redoubled and he swore by the most solemn of oaths that I should go with him and search his house. I replied, “By Allah I will not go, unless the Wali go with us; for, an he be present, he and the officers, thou wilt not dare to work thy wicked will upon me.” So the Kazi rose and swore an oath, saying, “By the truth of Him who created mankind, we will not go but with the Emir!”

¹⁷ i.e. parties.

Accordingly we repaired to the Judge's house, accompanied by the Chief, and going up, searched it through, but found naught; whereat fear fell upon me and the Wali turned to me and said, "Fie upon thee, O ill-omened fellow! thou hast put us to shame before the men." All this, and I wept and went round about right and left, with the tears running down my face, till we were about to go forth and drew near the door of the house. I looked at the place which the woman had mentioned and asked, "What is yonder dark place I see?" Then said I to the men, "Pull up¹⁸ this jar with me." They did my bidding and I saw somewhat appearing under the jar and said, "Rummage and look at what is under it." So they searched, and behold, they came upon a woman's mantilla and petticoat-trousers full of blood, which when I espied, I fell down in a fainting-fit. Now when the Wali saw this, he said, "By Allah, the Captain is excused!" Then my comrades came round about me and sprinkled water on my face till I recovered, when I arose and accosting the Kazi (who was covered with confusion), said to him, "Thou seest that suspicion is fallen on thee, and indeed this affair is no light matter, because this woman's family will assuredly not sit down quietly under her loss." Therewith the Kazi's heart quaked and fluttered for that he knew the suspicion had reverted upon him, wherefore his colour yellowed and his limbs smote together; and he paid of his own money, after the measure of that he had lost, so we would quench that fire for him.¹⁹ Then we departed from him in peace, whilst I said within myself, "Indeed, the woman falsed me not."

After that I tarried till three days had passed, when I went to the Hammam and changing my clothes, betook myself to her home, but found the door shut and covered with dust. So I asked the neighbours

¹⁸ It was probably stuck in the ground like an amphora.

¹⁹ i.e. hush up the matter.

of her and they answered, “This house hath been empty of habitants these many days; but three days ago there came a woman with an ass, and at supper-time last night she took her gear and went away.” Hereat I turned back, bewildered in my wit, and for many a day after I inquired of the dwellers in that street concerning her, but could happen on no tidings of her. And indeed I wondered at the eloquence of her tongue and the readiness of her talk; and this is the most admirable of all I have seen and of whatso hath betided me.

When Al-Malik al-Zahir heard the tale of Mu’in al-Din, he marvelled thereat. Then rose another constable and said, “O lord, hear what befel me in bygone days.”

The Second Constable’s History

I was once an overseer in the household of the Emir Jamál al-Din al-Atwash al-Mujhidi, who was made governor of the two provinces, Sharkíyah and Gharbíyah,²⁰ and I was dear to his heart and he hid from me naught of whatso he desired to do; and he was eke master of his reason.²¹ It came to pass one day of the days that it was reported to him how the daughter of Such-an-one had a mint of monies and raiment and ornaments and at that present she loved a Jewish man, whom every day she invited to be private with her, and they passed the light hours eating and drinking in company and he lay the night with her. The Wali feigned not to believe a word of this story, but he summoned the watchmen of the quarter one night and questioned them of this tittle-tattle. Quoth one of them, “As for me, O my lord,

²⁰ In Egypt.

²¹ i.e. a man ready of wit and immediate of action, as opposed to his name Al-Atwash — one notable for levity of mind.

I saw none save a Jew²² enter the street in question one night; but I have not made certain to whom he went in;" and quoth the Chief, "Keep thine eye on him from this time forward and note what place he entereth." So the watchman went out and kept his eye on the Judaeon.

One day as the Prefect sat in his house, the watchman came in to him and said, "O my lord, in very sooth the Jew goeth to the house of Such-an-one." Whereupon Al-Atwash sprang to his feet and went forth alone, taking with him none save myself. As he went along, he said to me, "Indeed, this girl is a fat piece of meat."²³ And we gave not over going till we came to the door of the house and stood there until a handmaid came out, as if to buy them something wanted. We waited till she opened the door, whereupon, without question or answer, we forced our way into the house and rushed in upon the girl, whom we found seated with the Jew in a saloon with four daïses, and cooking-pots and candles therein. When her eyes fell on the Wali, she knew him and rising to her feet, said, "Well come and welcome and fair cheer! By Allah, great honour hath betided me by my lord's visit and indeed thou dignifiest my dwelling." Hereat she carried him up to the dais and seating him on the couch, brought him meat and wine and gave him to drink; after which she put off all that was upon her of raiment and ornaments and tying them up in a kerchief, said to him, "O my lord, this is thy portion, all of it." Then she turned to the Jew and said to him, "Rise, thou also, and do even as I:" so he arose in haste and went out very hardly crediting his deliverance.²⁴

²² The negative is emphatic, "I certainly saw a Jew," etc.

²³ As we should say, "There are good pickings to be had out of this job."

²⁴ The Jew rose seemingly to fetch his valuables and ran away, thus leaving the Wali no proof that he had been there in Moslem law which demands ocular testimony, rejects circumstantial evidence and ignores such partial witnesses as the policeman who accompanied his Chief.

When the girl was assured of his escape, she put out her hand to her clothes and jewels and taking them, said to the Chief, “O Emir, is the requital of kindness other than kindness? Thou hast deigned to visit me and eat of my bread and salt; so now arise and depart from us without ill-doing; or I will give a single outcry and all who are in the street will come forth.” So the Emir went out from her, without having gotten a single dirham; and on this wise she delivered the Jew by the seemliness of her stratagem.

The company admired this tale, and as for the Wali and Al-Malik al-Zahir, they said, “Ever devised any the like of this device?” and they marvelled with the uttermost of marvel. Then arose a third constable and said, “Hear what betided me, for it is yet stranger and rarer.”

The Third Constable’s History

I was one day abroad on business with certain of my comrades; and, as we walked along behold, we fell in with a company of women, as they were moons, and among them one, the tallest of them and the handsomest. When I saw her and she saw me, she lagged behind her companions and waited for me till I came up to her and bespake her. Quoth she, “O my lord (Allah favour thee!) I saw thee prolong thy looking on me and I fancied that thou knewest me. An it be thus, let me learn more of thee.” Quoth I, “By Allah, I know thee not, save that the Most High Lord hath cast the love of thee into my heart and the goodness of thy qualities hath confounded me; and that wherewith the Almighty hath gifted thee of those eyes that shoot with shafts hath captivated me.” And she rejoined, “By Allah, indeed I feel the like of that which thou feelest; ay, and even more; so that meseemeth I have known thee from childhood.” Then said I, “A man cannot well effect all

whereof he hath need in the market-places.” She asked me, “Hast thou a house?” and I answered, “No, by Allah, nor is this city my dwelling-place.” Rejoined she, “By Allah, nor have I a place; but I will contrive for thee.” Then she went on before me and I followed her till she came to a lodging-house and said to the Housekeeper, “Hast thou an empty room?” The other replied, “Yes:” and my mistress said, “Give us the key.” So we took the key and going up to see the room, entered to inspect it; after which she went out to the Housekeeper and giving her a dirham, said to her, “Take the *douceur* of the key for the chamber pleaseth us, and here is another dirham for thy trouble. Go, fetch us a gugglet of water, so we may refresh ourselves and rest till siesta-time pass and the heat decline, when the man will depart and bring our bag and baggage.” Therewith the Housekeeper rejoiced and brought us a mat, two gugglets of water on a tray, a fan and a leather rug.

We abode thus till the setting-in of mid-afternoon, when she said, “Needs must I make the Ghushl-ablution ere I fare.”²⁵ Said I, “Get water wherewith we may both wash,” and drew forth from my pocket a score or so of dirhams, thinking to give them to her; but she cried, “Refuge with Allah!” and brought out of her pocket a handful of silver, saying, “But for destiny and that the Almighty hath caused the love of thee fall into my heart, there had not happened that which hath happened.” Quoth I, “Accept this in requital of that which thou hast spent;” and quoth she, “O my lord, by and by, whenas mating is prolonged between us, thou wilt see if the like of me looketh unto money and means or no.” Then the lady took a jar of water and going into the lavatory, made the Ghushl-ablution and presently coming forth, prayed the mid-afternoon prayer and craved pardon of Allah Almighty for

²⁵ Showing that car. cop. had taken place.

the sin into which she had fallen. Now I had asked her name and she answered, "Rayhánah," and described to me her dwelling-place. When I saw her make the ablution, I said within myself, "This woman doth on this wise, and shall I not do the like of her doing?" Then quoth I to her, "Peradventure thou wilt seek us another jar of water?" Accordingly she went out to the Housekeeper and said to her, "O my sister, take this Nuf and fetch us for it water wherewith we may wash the flags."²⁶ So the Housekeeper brought two jars of water and I took one of them and giving her my clothes, entered the lavatory and bathed.

When I had made an end of bathing, I cried out, saying, "Harkye, my lady Rayhanah!" However none answered me. So I went out and found her not; but I did find that she had taken my clothes and all that was in them of silver, to wit, four hundred dirhams. She had also carried off my turband and my kerchief and I lacked the wherewithal to veil my shame; so I suffered somewhat than which death is less grievous and abode looking about the place, hoping that haply I might espy a rag wherewith to hide my nakedness. Then I sat a little and presently going up to the door, smote upon it; whereat up came the Housekeeper and I said to her, "O my sister, what hath Allah done with the woman who was here?" She replied, "The lady came down just now and said, 'I'm going to cover the boys with the clothes,' adding, 'and I have left him sleeping; an he awake, tell him not to stir till the clothes come to him.'" Then cried I, "O my sister, secrets are safe with the fair-dealing and the freeborn. By Allah, this woman is not my wife, nor ever in my life have I seen her before this day!" And I recounted to her the whole affair and begged of her to cover me,

²⁶ Arab. "Balát," in Cairo the flat slabs of limestone and sandstone brought from the Turah quarries, which supplied stone for the Jízah Pyramids.

informing her that my private parts were clean unconcealed. She laughed and cried out to the women of the lodging-house, saying, “Ho, Fátimah! Ho, Khadíjah! Ho, Harífah! Ho, Sanínah!” Whereupon all those who were in the place of women and neighbours flocked to me and fell a-mocking me and saying, “O pimp, what hadst thou to do with gallantry?”

Then one of them came and looked in my face and laughed, and another said, “By Allah, thou mightest have known that she lied, from the time she said she liked thee and was in love with thee! What is there in thee to love?” A third said, “This is an old man without wisdom;” and all vied one with other in exercising their wits upon me, I suffering mighty sore chagrin. However, one of the women took compassion on me after a while, and brought me a rag of thin stuff and cast it on me. With this I covered my shame, and no more, and abode awhile thus: then said I in myself, “The husbands of these women will presently gather together upon me and I shall be disgraced.” So I went out by another door of the lodging-house, and young and old crowded about me, running after me and crying, “A madman! A madman!” till I came to my house and knocked at the door; whereupon out came my wife and seeing me naked, tall, bare of head, cried out and ran in again, saying, “This is a maniac, a Satan!” But, when my family and spouse knew me, they rejoiced and said to me, “What aileth thee?” I told them that thieves had taken my clothes and stripped me and had been like to slay me; and when I assured them that the rogues would have slaughtered me, they praised Allah Almighty and gave me joy of my safety. So consider the craft this woman practised upon me, and I pretending to cleverness and wiliness.

Those present marvelled at this story and at the doings of women; then came forward a fourth constable and said, “Now that which hath

betided me of strange adventures is yet stranger than this, and 'twas after the following fashion."

The Fourth Constable's History

We were sleeping one night on the terrace-roof, when a woman made her way through the darkness into the house and, gathering into a bundle all that was therein, took it up that she might go away with it. Now she was big with child and nigh upon her time of delivery; so, when she packed up the bundle and prepared to shoulder it and make off with it, she hastened the coming of the labour-pangs and bare a child in the dark. Then she sought for the fire-sticks and when they burned, kindled the lamp and went round about the house with the little one, and it was weeping. The wail awoke us, as we lay on the roof, and we marvelled. So we rose to see what was to do, and looking down through the opening of the saloon,²⁷ saw a woman, who had lit the lamp, and heard the little one crying. As we were peering, she heard our words and raising her head to us, said, "Are ye not ashamed to deal thus with us and bare our shame? Wist ye not that the day belongeth to you and the night to us? Begone from us! By Allah, were it not that ye have been my neighbours these many years, I would assuredly bring down the house upon you!" We doubted not but that she was of the Jinn and drew back our heads; but, when we rose on the morrow, we found that she had taken all that was with us and made off with it; wherefore we knew that she was a thief and had practised on us a device, such as was never before practised; and we repented, whenas repentance availed us naught.

²⁷ Arab. "Daur al-Ká'ah" = the round opening made in the ceiling for light and ventilation.

The company, hearing this tale, marvelled thereat with the utmost marvelling. Then the fifth constable, who was the lieutenant of the bench,²⁸ came forward and said, "This is no wonder and there befel me a story which is rarer and stranger than this."

The Fifth Constable's History

As I sat one day at the door of the Prefecture, behold, a woman suddenly entered and said as though consulting me. "O my lord, I am the wife of Such-an-one the Leach, and with him is a company of the notables of the city, drinking fermented drinks in such a place." When I heard this, I misliked to make a scandal; so I bluffed her off and sent her away unsatisfied. Then I rose and walked alone to the place in question and sat without till the door opened, when I rushed in and entering, found the company even as the woman aforesaid had set out, and she herself with them. I saluted them and they returned my salam and rising, treated me with honour and seated me and served me with meat. Then I informed them how one had denounced them to me, but I had driven him away and had come to them by myself; so they thanked me and praising me for my kindness, brought out to me from among them two thousand dirhams and I took them and went away.

Now two months after this adventure, there came to me one of the Kazi's officers, with a paper, wherein was the judge's writ, summoning me to him. So I accompanied the officer and went in to the Kazi, whereupon the plaintiff, he who had taken out the summons, sued me for two thousand dirhams, declaring I had borrowed them of him as the agent or guardian of the woman. I denied the debt, but he

²⁸ i.e. he whose turn it is to sit on the bench outside the police office in readiness for emergencies.

produced against me a bond for that sum, attested by four of those who were in company on the occasion; and they were present and bore witness to the loan. I reminded them of my kindness and paid the amount, swearing that I would never again follow a woman's counsel. Is not this marvellous?

The company admired the goodness of his tale and it pleased Al-Malik al-Zahir; and the Wali said, "By Allah, this is a strange story!" Then came forward the sixth constable and said to those present, "Hear my adventure and that which befel me, to wit, that which befel Such-an-one the Assessor, for 'tis rarer than this and finer."

The Sixth Constable's History

A certain Assessor one day of the days was taken with a woman and much people assembled before his house and the Lieutenant of police and his posse came to him and rapped at the door. The Assessor peered from house-top and seeing the folk, said, "What do ye want?" Replied they, "Speak with the Lieutenant of police Such-an-one." So he came down and as he opened the door they cried to him, "Bring forth the woman who is with thee."

"Are ye not ashamed? How shall I bring forth my wife?"

"Is she thy wife by book or without marriage-lines?"

"She is my wife according to the Book of Allah and the Institutes of His Apostle."

"Where is the contract?"

"Her lines are in her mother's house."

"Arise thou and come down and show us the writ."

"Go from her way, so she may come forth."

Now, as soon as he got wind of the matter, he had written the bond

and fashioned it after the fashion of his wife, to suit with the case, and he had written therein the names of certain of his friends to serve as witnesses and forged the signatures of the drawer and the wife's next friend and made it a contract of marriage with his wife and a legal deed. Accordingly, when the woman was about to go out from him, he gave her the contract he had forged, and the Emir sent with her a servant of his, to carry her home to her father. So the servant went with her and when she was inside she said to him, "I will not return to the citation of the Emir: but let the Assessors present themselves and take my contract." Hereupon the servant carried this message to the Lieutenant of police, who was standing at the Assessor's door, and he said, "This is permissible." Then said the Assessor to the servant, "Fare, O eunuch, and fetch us Such-an-one the Notary;" for that he was his friend and 'twas he whose name he had forged as the drawer-up of the contract.

So the Lieutenant sent after him and fetched him to the Assessor, who, when he saw him, said to him, "Get thee to Such-an-one, her with whom thou marriedst me, and cry out upon her, and when she cometh to thee, demand of her the contract and take it from her and bring it to us." And he signed to him, as much as to say, "Bear me out in the lie and screen me, for that she is a strange woman and I am in fear of the Lieutenant who standeth at the door; and we beseech Allah Almighty to screen us and you from the woes of this world. Amen." So the Notary went up to the Lieutenant, who was among the witnesses, and said, "'Tis well. Is she not Such-an-one whose marriage-contract we drew up in such a place?" Then he betook himself to the woman's house and cried out upon her; whereat she brought him the forged contract and he took it and returned with it to the Lieutenant of police. When the officer had taken cognizance of the document and

professed himself satisfied, the Assessor said to the Notary, "Go to our lord and master, the Kazi of the Kazis, and acquaint him with that which befalleth his Assessors." The Notary rose to go, but the Lieutenant feared for himself and was urgent in beseeching the Assessor and in kissing his hands till he forgave him; whereupon the Lieutenant went away in the utmost concern and affright. On such wise the Assessor ordered the case and carried out the forgery and feigned marriage with the woman; and thus escaped calumny and calamity by the seemliness of his stratagem.

The folk marvelled at this with the uttermost marvel and the seventh constable said, "There befel me in Alexandria the God-guarded a wondrous thing, and 'twas this."

The Seventh Constable's History

There came one day an old woman to the stuff-bazar, with a casket of mighty fine workmanship, containing trinkets, and she was accompanied by a young baggage big with child. The crone sat down at the shop of a draper and giving him to know that the girl was pregnant by the Prefect of Police of the city, took of him, on credit, stuffs to the value of a thousand dinars and deposited with him the casket as security. She opened the casket and showed him that which was therein and he found it full of trinkets of price; so he trusted her with the goods and she farewelled him and carrying the stuffs to the girl who was with her, went her way. Then the old woman was absent from him a great while, and when her absence was prolonged, the draper despaired of her; so he went up to the Prefect's house and asked anent the woman of his household who had taken his stuffs on credit; but could obtain no tidings of her nor happen on any trace of her. Then he brought out

the casket of jewellery and showed it to experts, who told him that the trinkets were gilt and that their worth was but an hundred dirhams. When he heard this, he was sore concerned thereat and presenting himself before the Deputy of the Sultan made his complaint to him; whereupon the official knew that a sleight had been served upon him and that the sons of Adam had cozened him and conquered him and cribbed his stuffs.

Now the magistrate in question was a man of experience and judgment, well versed in affairs; so he said to the draper, "Remove somewhat from thy shop, including the casket, and to-morrow morning break the lock and cry out and come to me and complain that they have plundered all thy shop. Also mind thou call upon Allah for aid and wail aloud and acquaint the people, so that a world of folk may flock to thee and sight the breach of the lock and that which is missing from thy shop: and on this wise display it to every one who presenteth himself that the news may be noised abroad, and tell them that thy chief concern is for a casket of great value, deposited with thee by a great man of the town and that thou standest in fear of him. But be thou not afraid and still say ever and anon in thy saying, 'My casket was the casket of Such-an-one, and I fear him and dare not bespeak him; but you, O company and all ye who are present, I call you to witness of this for me.' And if there be with thee more than this saying, say it; and the old woman will assuredly come to thee." The draper answered with "To hear is to obey" and going forth from the Deputy's presence, betook himself to his shop and brought out thence the casket and a somewhat making a great display, which he removed to his house.

At break of day he arose and going to his shop, broke the lock and shouted and shrieked and called on Allah for aid, till each and every of the folk assembled about him and all who were in the city were

present, whereupon he cried out to them, saying even as the Prefect had bidden him; and this was bruited abroad. Then he made for the Prefecture and presenting himself before the Chief of Police, cried out and complained and made a show of distraction. After three days, the old woman came to him and bringing him the thousand dinars, the price of the stuffs, demanded the casket.²⁹ When he saw her, he seized her and carried her to the Prefect of the city; and when she came before the Kazi, he said to her, “Woe to thee O Sataness; did not thy first deed suffice thee, but thou must come a second time?” She replied, “I am of those who seek their salvation in the cities, and we foregather every month: and, yesterday we foregathered.” He asked her, “Canst thou cause me to catch them?” and she answered, “Yes; but, an thou wait till to-morrow, they will have dispersed; so I will deliver them to thee to-night.” The Emir said to her, “Go;” and said she, “Send with me one who shall go with me to them and obey me in whatso I shall say to him, and all that I bid him he shall not gainsay and therein conform to my way.”

Accordingly, he gave her a company of men and she took them and bringing them to a certain door, said to them, “Stand ye here, at this door, and whoso cometh out to you seize him; and I will come out to you last of all.” “Hearing and obeying,” answered they and stood at the door, whilst the crone went in. They waited a whole hour, even as the Sultan’s deputy had bidden them, but none came out to them and their standing waxed longsome, and when they were weary of waiting, they went up to the door and smote upon it a heavy blow and a violent, so that they came nigh to break the wooden bolt. Then one of them entered and was absent a long while, but found naught; so he

²⁹ Her object was to sue him for the loss of the pledge and to demand fabulous damages.

returned to his comrades and said to them, "This is the door of a dark passage, leading to such a thoroughfare; and indeed she laughed at you and left you and went away." When they heard his words, they returned to the Emir and acquainted him with the case, whereby he knew that the old woman was a cunning craft-mistress and that she had mocked at them and cozened them and put a cheat on them, to save herself. Witness, then, the wiles of this woman and that which she contrived of guile, for all her lack of foresight in presenting herself a second time to the draper and not suspecting that his conduct was but a sleight; yet, when she found herself hard upon calamity, she straightway devised a device for her deliverance.

When the company heard the seventh constable's story, they were moved to mirth galore, than which naught could be more; and Al-Malik al-Zahir Bībars rejoiced in that which he heard and said, "Verily, there betide things in this world wherefrom kings are shut out, by reason of their exalted degree!" Then came forward another person from amongst the company and said, "There hath reached me through one of my friends a similar story bearing on the malice of women and their wiles, and it is more wondrous and marvellous, more diverting and more delectable than all that hath been told to you." Quoth the company there present, "Tell us thy tale and expound it unto us, so we may see that which it hath of extraordinary." And he began to relate

The Eighth Constable's History.

Ye must know that a company, amongst whom was a friend of mine, once invited me to an entertainment; so I went with him, and when we came into his house and sat down on his couch, he said to me, "This is a blessed day and a day of gladness, and who is he that liveth to see

the like of this day? I desire that thou practice with us and disapprove not our proceedings, for that thou hast been accustomed to fall in with those who offer this.”³⁰ I consented thereto and their talk happened upon the like of this subject.³¹ Presently, my friend, who had invited me, arose from among them and said to them: — Listen to me and I will acquaint you with an adventure which happened to me.

There was a certain person who used to visit me in my shop, and I knew him not nor he knew me, nor ever in his life had he seen me; but he was wont, whenever he wanted a dirham or two, by way of loan, to come to me and ask me, without acquaintance or introduction between me and him, and I would give him what he required. I told none of him, and matters abode thus between us a long while till he began a-borrowing at a time ten or twenty dirhams, more or less. One day, as I stood in my shop, behold, a woman suddenly came up to me and stopped before me; and she was a presence as she were the full moon rising from among the constellations, and the place was a-light by her light. When I saw her, I fixed my eyes on her and stared in her face; and she fell to bespeaking me with soft voice. When I heard her words and the sweetness of her speech, I lusted after her; and as soon as she saw that I longed for her, she did her errand and promising me an assignation, went away, leaving my thoughts occupied with her and fire a-flame in my heart.

Accordingly I abode, perplexed and pondering my affair, the fire still burning in my heart, till the third day, when she came again and I could hardly credit her coming. When I saw her, I talked with her and cajoled her and courted her and craved her favour with speech and

³⁰ Apparently meaning the forbidden pleasures of wine and wassail, loose talk and tales of women’s wiles, a favourite subject with the lewder sort of Moslem.

³¹ i.e. women’s tricks.

invited her to my house; but, hearing all this, she only answered, "I will not go up into any one's house." Quoth I, "I will go with thee" and quoth she, "Arise and come with me." So I rose and putting into my sleeve a kerchief, wherein was a fair sum of silver and a considerable, followed the woman, who forwent me and ceased not walking till she brought me to a lane and to a door, which she bade me unlock. I refused and she opened it and led me into the vestibule. As soon as I had entered, she bolted the entrance door from within and said to me, "Sit here till I go in to the slave-girls and cause them enter a place whence they shall not see me." "'Tis well," answered I and sat down: whereupon she entered and was absent from me an eye-twinkling, after which she returned to me, without a veil, and straightway said, "Arise and enter in the name of Allah." So I arose and went in after her and we gave not over going till we reached a saloon.

When I examined the place, I found it neither handsome nor pleasant, but desolate and dreadful without symmetry or cleanliness; indeed, it was loathsome to look upon and there was in it a foul smell. After this inspection I seated myself amiddlemost the saloon, misdoubting; and lo and behold! as I sat, there came down on me from the dais a body of seven naked men, without other clothing than leather belts about their waists. One of them walked up to me and took my turband, whilst another seized my kerchief that was in my sleeve, with my money, and a third stripped me of my clothes; after which a forth came and bound my hands behind my back with his belt. Then they all took me up, pinioned as I was, and casting me down, fell a-haling me towards a sink-hole that was there and were about to cut my throat, when suddenly there came a violent knocking at the door. As they heard the raps, they were afraid and their minds were diverted from me by affright; so the woman went out and presently returning, said to

them, "Fear not; no harm shall betide you this day. 'Tis only your comrade who hath brought you your dinner." With this the new-comer entered, bringing with him a roasted lamb; and when he came in to them, he asked, "What is to do with you, that ye have tucked up sleeves and bag-trousers?" Replied they, "This is a head of game we've caught."

As he heard these words, he came up to me and peering in my face, cried out and said, "By Allah, this is my brother, the son of my mother and father! Allah! Allah!" Then he loosed me from my pinion-bonds and bussed my head, and behold it was my friend who used to borrow silver of me. When I kissed his head, he kissed mine and said, "O my brother, be not affrighted;" and he called for my clothes and coin and restored all to me nor was aught missing. Also, he brought me a porcelain bowl full of sherbet of sugar, with lemons therein, and gave me to drink; and the company came and seated me at a table. So I ate with them and he said to me, "O my lord and my brother, now have bread and salt passed between us and thou hast discovered our secret and our case; but secrets with the noble are safe." I replied, "As I am a lawfully-begotten child and a well-born, I will not name aught of this nor denounce you!" They assured themselves of me by an oath; then they brought me out and I went my way, very hardly crediting but that I was of the dead.

I lay ill in my house a whole month; after which I went to the Ham-mam and coming out, opened my shop and sat selling and buying as was my wont, but saw no more of that man or that woman till, one day, there stopped before my shop a young Turkoman, as he were the full moon; and he was a sheep-merchant and had with him a leathern bag, wherein was money, the price of sheep he had sold. He was followed by the woman, and when he stopped over against my shop, she stood

by his side and cajoled him, and indeed he inclined to her with great inclination. As for me, I was dying of solicitude for him and began casting furtive glances at him and winked at him, till he chanced to look round and saw me signing to him; whereupon the woman gazed at me and made a signal with her hand and went away. The Turkoman followed her and I deemed him dead without a doubt; wherefore I feared with exceeding fear and shut my shop. Then I journeyed for a year's space and returning, opened my shop; whereupon, behold, the woman as she walked by came up to me and said, "This is none other than a great absence." I replied, "I have been on a journey;" and she asked, "Why didst thou wink at the Turkoman?" I answered, "Allah forfend! I did not wink at him." Quoth she, "Beware lest thou thwart me;" and went away.

Awhile after this a familiar of mine invited me to his house and when I came to him, we ate and drank and chatted. Then he asked me, "O my friend, hath there befallen thee aught of sore trouble in the length of thy life?" Answered I, "Tell me first, hath there befallen thee aught?" He rejoined: — Know that one day I espied a fair woman; so I followed her and sued her to come home with me. Quoth she, "I will not enter any one's house but my own; so come thou to my home, an thou wilt, and be it on such a day." Accordingly, on the appointed day, her messenger came to me, proposing to carry me to her; and when he announced his purpose I arose and went with him, till we arrived at a goodly house and a great door. He opened the door and I entered, whereupon he bolted it behind me and would have gone in; but I feared with exceeding fear and foregoing him to the second door, whereby he would have had me enter, bolted it and cried out at him, saying, "By Allah, an thou open not to me, I will slay thee; for I am none of those whom thou canst readily cozen!"

“What deemest thou of cozening?”

“Verily, I am startled by the loneliness of the house and the lack of any keeper at its door; for I see none appear.”

“O my lord, this is a private door.”

“Private or public, open to me.”

So he opened to me and I went out and had gone but a little way from the door when I met a woman, who said to me, “A long life was fore-ordained to thee; else hadst thou never come forth of yonder house.” I asked, “How so?” and she answered, “Enquire of thy friend Such-an-one,” (naming thee), “and he will acquaint thee with strange things.” So, Allah upon thee, O my friend, tell me what befel thee of wondrous and marvellous, for I have told thee what befel me.

“O my brother, I am bound by a solemn oath.”

“O my friend, false thine oath and tell me.”

“Indeed, I dread the issue of this.” But he urged me till I told him all, whereat he marvelled. Then I went away from him and abode a long while, without further news.

One day, I met another of my friends who said to me, “A neighbour of mine hath invited me to hear singers” but I said, “I will not foregather with any one.” However, he prevailed upon me; so we repaired to the place and found there a person, who came to meet us and said, “Bismillah!”³² Then he pulled out a key and opened the door, whereupon we entered and he locked the door after us. Quoth I, “We are the first of the folk; but where be the singers’ voices?” He replied, “They’re within the house: this is but a private door; so be not amazed at the absence of the folk.” My friend said to me, “Behold, we are two, and what can they dare to do with us?” Then he brought us into the

³² i.e. Enter in the name of Allah.

house, and when we entered the saloon, we found it desolate exceedingly and dreadful of aspect. Quoth my friend, "We are fallen into a trap; but there is no Majesty and there is no Might save in Allah, the Glorious, the Great!" And quoth I, "May God never requite thee for me with good!"³³ Then we sat down on the edge of the dais and suddenly I espied a closet beside me; so I peered into it and my friend asked me, "What seest thou?" I answered, "I see there wealth in store and corpses of murdered men galore. Look." So he looked and cried, "By Allah, we are down among the dead!" and we fell a-weeping, I and he.

As we were thus, behold, four men came in upon us, by the door at which we had entered, and they were naked, wearing only leather belts about their waists, and made for my friend. He ran at them and dealing one of them a blow with his sword-pommel, knocked him down, whereupon the other three rushed upon him. I seized the opportunity to escape while they were occupied with him, and espying a door by my side, slipped into it and found myself in an underground room, without issue, even a window. So I made sure of death, and said, "There is no Majesty and there is no Might save in Allah, the Glorious, the Great!" Then I looked at the top of the vault and saw in it a range of glazed and coloured lunettes; so I clambered up for dear life, till I reached the lunettes, and I out of my wits for fear. I made shift to remove the glass and scrambling out through the setting, found behind them a wall which I bestrode. Thence I saw folk walking in the street; so I cast myself down on the ground and Allah Almighty preserved me, and when I reached the face of earth, unhurt, the folk flocked round me and I acquainted them with my adventure.

³³ i.e. Damn your soul for leading me into this danger!

Now as Destiny decreed, the Chief of Police was passing through the market-street; so the people told him what was to do and he made for the door and bade raise it off its hinges. We entered with a rush and found the thieves, as they had thrown my friend down and cut his throat; for they occupied not themselves with me, but said, "Whither shall yonder fellow wend? Verily, he is in our grasp." So the Wali hent them with the hand and questioned them of their case, and they confessed against the woman and against their associates in Cairo. Then he took them and went forth, after he had locked up the house and sealed it; and I accompanied him till he came without the first house. He found the door bolted from within; so he bade raise it and we entered and found another door. This also he caused pull up, enjoining his men to silence till the doors should be lifted, and we entered and found the band occupied with new game, whom the woman had just brought in and whose throat they were about to cut.

The Chief released the man and gave him back whatso the thieves had taken from him; and he laid hands on the woman and the rest and took forth of the house a mint of money, with which they found the purse of the Turkoman sheep-merchant. They at once nailed up the thieves against the house-wall, whilst, as for the woman, they wrapped her in one of her mantillas and nailing her to a board, set her upon a camel and went round about the town with her. Thus Allah razed their dwelling-places and did away from me that which I feared from them. All this befel, whilst I looked on, and I saw not my friend who had saved me from them the first time, whereat I wondered to the uttermost of wonderment. However, some days afterward, he came up to me, and indeed he had renounced the world and donned a Fakir's dress; and he saluted me and went away.

Then he again began to pay me frequent visits and I entered into

conversation with him and questioned him of the band and how he came to escape, he alone of them all. He replied, "I left them from the day on which Allah the Most High delivered thee from them, for that they would not obey my say; so I swear I would no longer consort with them." Quoth I, "By Allah, I marvel at thee, for that assuredly thou wast the cause of my preservation!" Quoth he, "The world is full of this sort; and we beseech the Almighty to send us safety, for that these wretches practice upon men with every kind of malpractice." Then I said to him, "Tell me the rarest adventure of all that befel thee in this villainy thou wast wont to work." And he answered, "O my brother, I was not present when they did such deeds, for that my part with them was to concern myself with selling and buying and feeding them; but it hath reached me that the rarest thing which befel them was on this wise."

The Thief's Tale

The woman who acted decoy for them and trapped their game and used to inveigle damsels from marriage-banquets, once caught them a woman from a bride-feast, under pretence that she had a wedding in her own house, and fixed for her a day when she should come to her. As soon as the appointed time arrived, the woman presented herself and the other carried her into the house by a door, declaring that it was a private wicket. When she entered the saloon, she saw men and braves and knew that she had fallen into a snare; so she looked at them and said, "Harkye, my fine fellows! I am a woman and in my slaughter there is no glory, nor have ye against me any feud of blood-wite wherefor ye should pursue me; and that which is upon me of raiment and ornaments ye are free to take as lawful loot." Quoth they, "We fear thy

denunciation;” but quoth she, “I will abide with you, neither coming in nor going out.” So they said, “We grant thee thy life.” Then the Captain looked on her and she pleased him; so he took her for himself, and she abode with him a whole year doing her very best in their service, till they became familiar with her and felt assured of her faith. One night of the nights she plied them with drink and they drank till they became drunken; whereupon she arose and took her clothes and five hundred dinars from the Captain; after which she fetched a razor and shaved off all their beards. Then she took soot from the cooking-pots and blackening their faces³⁴ opened the doors and fared forth; and when the thieves recovered from their drink, they abode confounded and knew that the woman had practiced upon them.

All present marvelled at this his story and the ninth constable came forward and said, “I will tell you a right pleasant tale I heard at a wedding.”

The Ninth Constable’s History

A certain singing-girl was fair of favour and bruited of repute, and it happened one day that she fared forth to a garden a-pleasuring. As she sat in the summer-house, behold, a man lopped of the hand stopped to beg of her, and suddenly entered in at the door. Then he touched her with his stump, saying, “An alms, for the love of Allah!”³⁵ but she answered, “Allah open!” and insulted him. Many days after this, there

³⁴ This was in popular parlance “adding insult to injury:” the blackening their faces was a promise of Hell-fire.

³⁵ Arab. “Shayyan li ’lláh!” lit. = (Give me some) Thing for (the love of) Allah. The answer in Egypt. is “Allah ya’tík” = Allah will give it thee (not I), or, “Yaftah Allah” = Allah open (to thee the door of subsistence).

came to her a messenger and gave her the hire of her going forth.³⁶ So she took with her a handmaid and an accompanyst;³⁷ and when she came to the place appointed, the messenger brought her into a long passage, at the end whereof was a saloon.

So (quoth she) we entered therein and found nobody, but we saw the room made ready for an entertainment with candles, dried fruits and wine, and in another place we saw food and in a third beds. Thereupon we sat down and I looked at him who had opened the door to us, and behold he was lopped of the hand. I misliked this, and when I sat a little longer, there entered a man, who filled the candelabra in the saloon and lit the waxen candles; and behold, he also was hand-lopped. Then flocked the folk and there entered none except he were lopped of the hand, and indeed the house was full of these companions.³⁸ When the session was complete, the host came in and the company rose to him and seated him in the place of honour. Now he was none other than the man who had fetched me, and he was clad in sumptuous clothes, but his hands were in his sleeves, so that I knew not how it was with them. They brought him food and he ate, he and the company; after which they washed hands and the host began casting at me furtive glances. Then they drank till they were drunken, and when they had taken leave of their wits, the host turned to me and said, "Thou dealtest not in friendly fashion with him who sought an alms of thee, and thou saidst to him, 'How loathsome art thou!'"

I considered him and behold, he was the lophand who had accosted me in my pleasance. So I asked, "O my lord, what is this thou sayest?" and he answered, "Wait; thou shalt remember it." So saying,

³⁶ i.e. engaged her for a revel and paid her in advance.

³⁷ Arab. "Rasílah" = a (she) partner, to accompany her on the lute.

³⁸ Suggesting that they are all thieves who had undergone legal mutilation.

he shook his head and stroked his beard, whilst I sat down for fear. Then he put out his hand to my mantilla and walking-boots and laying them by his side, cried to me, "Sing, O accursed!" Accordingly, I sang till I was tired out, what while they occupied themselves with their case and drank themselves drunk and the heat of their drink redoubled. Presently, the doorkeeper came to me and said, "O my lady, fear not; but when thou hast a mind to go, let me know." Quoth I, "Thinkest thou to delude me?" and quoth he, "Nay, by Allah! But I have ruth on thee for that our Captain and Chief purposeth thee no good and methinketh he will kill thee this night." Said I to him, "An thou be minded to do me a favour, now is its time;" and said he, "When our Chief riseth to his need and goeth to the Chapel of Ease, I will precede him with the light and leave the door open; and do thou wend whithersoever thou wiliest." Then I sang and the Captain cried, "'Tis good." Replied I, "Nay, but thou'rt loathsome." He looked at me and rejoined, "By Allah, thou shalt never more scent the odour of the world!" But his comrades said to him, "Do it not," and gentled him, till he added, "An it must be so, and there be no help for it, she shall tarry here a whole year and not fare forth." My answer was, "I am content to submit to whatso pleaseth thee: if I have failed in respect to thee, thou art of the clement." He shook his head and drank, then arose and went out to do his need, whilst his comrades were occupied with what they were about of merry-making and drunkenness and sport. So I winked to my friends and we all slipped out into the corridor.

We found the door open and fled forth, unveiled³⁹ and unknowing whither we went; nor did we halt till we had fared afar from the house and happened on a Cook cooking, of whom I asked, "Hast thou a

³⁹ Arab. "Muhattakât;" usually "with torn veils" (fem. plur.) here "without veils," metaphor. meaning in disgrace, in dishonour.

mind to quicken the dead?” He said, “Come up;” so we went up into the shop, and he whispered, “Lie down.” Accordingly, we lay down and he covered us with the Halfah grass, wherewith he was used to kindle the fire under the food. Hardly had we settled ourselves in the place when we heard a noise of kicking at the door and people running right and left and questioning the Cook and asking, “Hath any one passed by thee?” Answered he, “None hath passed by me.” But they ceased not to go round about the shop till the day broke, when they turned back, disappointed. Then the Cook removed the reeds and said to us, “Rise, for ye are delivered from death.” So we arose, and we were uncovered, sans veil or mantilla; but the Cook carried us up into his house and we sent to our homes and fetched us veils; and we repented to Allah Almighty and renounced singing, for indeed this was a mighty narrow escape after stress.⁴⁰

Those present marvelled at this, and the tenth constable came forward and said, “As for me, there befel me that which was yet rarer than all ye have yet heard.” Quoth Al-Malik al-Zahir, “What was that?” And quoth he, “Deign give ear to me.”

The Tenth Constable’s History

A robbery of stuffs had been committed in the city and as it was a great matter I was cited,⁴¹ I and my fellows: they pressed hard upon us: but we obtained of them some days’ grace and dispersed in search of the stolen goods. As for me, I sallied forth with five men and went round

⁴⁰ I have repeatedly noticed that singing and all music are, in religious parlance, “Makruh,” blameable though not actually damnable; and that the first step after “getting religion” is to forswear them.

⁴¹ i.e. to find the thief or make good the loss.

about the city that day; and on the morrow we fared forth into the suburbs. When we found ourselves a parasang or two parasangs away from the city, we waxed athirst; and presently we came to a garden. There I went in alone and going up to the waterwheel, entered it and drank and made the Wuzu-ablution and prayed. Presently, up came the keeper of the garden and said to me, "Woe to thee! Who brought thee to this waterwheel?" and he smote me and squeezed my ribs till I was like to die. Then he bound me with one of his bulls and made me work the waterwheel, flogging me as I walked round with a cattle-whip he had with him, till my heart was a-fire; after which he loosed me and I went out, knowing not the way.

Now when I came forth, I fainted: so I sat down till my trouble subsided; then I made for my comrades and said to them, "I have found money and malefactor, and I affrighted him not neither troubled him, lest he should flee; but now, come, let us go to him, so we may contrive to lay hold upon him." Then I took them and we repaired to the keeper of the garden, who had tortured me with tunding, with the intent to make him taste the like of that which he had done with me and lie against him and cause him eat many a stick. So we rushed to the waterwheel and seized the keeper. Now there was with him a youth and, as we were pinioning the gardener, he said, "By Allah, I was not with him and indeed 'tis six months since I entered this city, nor did I set eyes on the stuffs until they were brought hither." Quoth we, "Show us the stuffs;" upon which he carried us to a place wherein was a pit, beside the waterwheel, and digging there, brought out the stolen goods with not a thread or a stitch of them missing. So we took them and carried the keeper to the Prefecture of Police where we stripped him and beat him with palm-rods till he confessed to thefts manifold. Now I did this by way of mockery against my comrades, and it succeeded.

The company marvelled at this story with the utmost marvelling, and the eleventh constable rose and said, "I know a story yet stranger than this: but it happened not to myself."

The Eleventh Constable's History

There was once in times of yore a Chief Officer of Police and there passed by him one day of the days a Jew, hending in hand a basket wherein were five thousand dinars; whereupon quoth that officer to one of his slaves, "Art able to take that money from yonder Jew's basket?" "Yes," quoth he, nor did he tarry beyond the next day ere he came to his lord, bringing the basket.

So (said the officer) I bade him, "Go, bury it in such a place;" whereupon he went and buried it and returned and told me. Hardly had he reported this when there arose a clamour like that of Doomsday and up came the Jew, with one of the King's officers, declaring that the gold pieces belonged to the Sultan and that he looked to none but us for it. We demanded of him three days' delay, according to custom and I said to him who had taken the money, "Go and set in the Jew's house somewhat that shall occupy him with himself." Accordingly he went and played a mighty fine trick, which was, he laid in a basket a dead woman's hand, painted with henna and having a gold seal-ring on one of the fingers, and buried that basket under a slab in the Jew's home. Then we came and searched and found the basket, whereupon without a moment of delay we clapped the Jew in irons for the murder of a woman. As soon as it was the appointed time, there entered to us the man of the Sultan's guards, who had accompanied the Jew, when he came to complain of the loss of the money, and said, "The Sultan

sayeth to you, Nail up⁴² the Jew and bring the money, for there is no way by which five thousand gold pieces can be lost.” Wherefore we knew that our device did not suffice.

So I went forth and finding a young man, a Hauráni,⁴³ passing along the road, laid hands on him forthright and stripped him, and whipped him with palm-rods. Then I threw him in jail, ironed, and carrying him to the Prefecture, beat him again, saying to them, “This be the robber who stole the coin.” And we strove to make him confess; but he would not. Accordingly, we beat him a third and a fourth time, till we were weary and exhausted and he became unable to return a reply; but, when we had made an end of beating and tormenting him, he said, “I will fetch the money this very moment.” Presently we went with him till he came to the place where my slave had buried the gold and he dug there and brought it out; whereat I marvelled with the utmost marvel and we carried it to the Prefect’s house. When the Wali saw the money and made sure of it with his own eyes, he rejoiced with joy exceeding and bestowed on me a robe of honour. Then he restored the coin straightway to the Sultan and we left the youth in durance vile; whilst I said to my slave who had taken the money, “Say me, did yonder young man see thee, what time thou buriedst the money?” and he replied, “No, by Allah the Great!”

So I went in to the young man, the prisoner, and plied him with wine till he recovered, when I said to him, “Tell me how thou stolest the money?” Answered he, “By Allah, I stole it not, nor did I ever set eyes on it till I brought it forth of the earth!” Quoth I, “How so?” and quoth he, “Know that the cause of my falling into your hands was my parent’s imprecation against me; because I entreated her evilly yester-

⁴² i.e. to crucify him by nailing him to an upright board.

⁴³ i.e. a native of the Hauran, Job’s country east of Damascus.

night and beat her and she said to me, ‘By Allah, O my son, the Lord shall assuredly gar the oppressor prevail over thee!’ Now she is a pious woman. So I went out forthright and thou sawest me on my way and didst that which thou didst; and when beating was prolonged on me, my senses failed me and I heard a voice saying to me, ‘Fetch it.’ So I said to you what I said and the Speaker guided me till I came to the place and there befel what befel of the bringing out of the money.” I admired this with the utmost admiration and knew that he was of the sons of the pious. So I bestirred myself for his release and cured him and besought him of acquittance and absolution of responsibility.

All those who were present marvelled at this story with the utmost marvel, and the twelfth constable came forward and said, “I will tell you a pleasant trait that I heard from a certain person, concerning an adventure which befel him with one of the thieves.”

The Twelfth Constable’s History

(Quoth he) I was passing one day in the market, when I found that a robber had broken into the shop of a shroff, a changer of monies, and thence taken a casket, wherewith he had made off to the burial-ground. Accordingly I followed him thither and came up to him, as he opened the casket and fell a-looking into it; whereupon I accosted him, saying, “Peace be on you!” And he was startled at me; so I left him and went away from him. Some months after this, I met him again under arrest, in the midst of the guards and “men of violence,”⁴⁴ and he said to them, “Seize this man.” So they laid hands on me and carried me to the Chief of Police, who said, “What hast thou to do with this wight?”

⁴⁴ Arab. “Al-Zalamah;” the policeman.

The robber turned to me and looking a long while in my face, asked, “Who took this man?” and the officer answered, “Thou badest us take him; so we took him.” And he cried, “I ask refuge of Allah! I know not this man, nor knoweth he me; and I said not that to you but of a person other than this.” So they released me, and a while after the thief met me in the street and saluted me with the salam, saying, “O my lord, fright for fright! Hadst thou taken aught from me, thou hadst a part in the calamity.”⁴⁵ I replied to him, “Allah be the judge between thee and me!”⁴⁶ And this is what I have to recount.

Then came forward the thirteenth constable and said, “I will tell you a tale which a man of my friends told me.”

The Thirteenth Constable’s History

(Quoth he) I went out one night of the nights to the house of a friend and when it was the middle of the night, I sallied forth alone to hie me home. When I came into the road, I espied a sort of thieves and they espied me, whereupon my spittle dried up; but I feigned myself drunken and staggered from side to side, crying out and saying, “I am drunken.” And I went up to the walls right and left and made as if I saw not the thieves, who followed me afoot till I reached my home and knocked at the door, when they went away. Some few days after this, as I stood at the door of my house, behold, there came up to me a young man, with a chain about his neck and with him a trooper, and he said to me, “O my lord, an alms for the love of Allah!” I replied, “Allah open!” and he looked at me a long while and cried, “That which thou shouldst give me would not come to the worth of thy turband or thy

⁴⁵ i.e. in my punishment.

⁴⁶ i.e. on Doomsday thou shalt get thy deserts.

waistcloth or what not else of thy habit, to say nothing of the gold and the silver which were about thy person.” I asked, “And how so?” and he answered, “On such a night, when thou fellest into peril and the thieves would have stripped thee, I was with them and said to them, ‘Yonder man is my lord and my master who reared me.’ So was I and only I the cause of thy deliverance and thus I saved thee from them.” When I heard this, I said to him, “Stop;” and entering my house, brought him that which Allah Almighty made easy to me. So he went his way; and this is all I have to say.

Then came forward the fourteenth constable and said, “Know that the tale I have to tell is rarer and pleasanter than this; and ’tis as follows.”

The Fourteenth Constable’s History

I had a draper’s shop before I entered this corporation,⁴⁷ and there used to come to me a person whom I know not, save by his face, and I would give him whatso he sought and have patience with him, till he could pay me. One night, I foregathered with certain of my friends and we sat down to liquor: so we drank and were merry and played at Táb;⁴⁸ and we made one of us Wazir and another Sultan and a third Torchbearer or Headsman. Presently, there came in upon us a spunger, without bidding, and we went on playing, whilst he played with us. Then quoth the Sultan to the Wazir, “Bring the Parasite who cometh in to the folk, without leave or license, that we may enquire into his case;

⁴⁷ Arab. Hirfah = a trade, a guild, a corporation: here the officers of police.

⁴⁸ Here it would mean a rude form of tables or backgammon, in which the players who throw certain numbers are dubbed Sultan and Wazir, and demean themselves accordingly.

after which I will cut off his head;” so the headsmen arose and dragged the spunger before the Sultan who bade cut off his head.

Now there was with them a sword, that would not cut clotted curd; so the headsmen smote him therewith and his head flew from his body. When we saw this, the wine fled from our brains and we became in the foulest of plights. Then my friends lifted up the corpse and went out with it, that they might hide it, whilst I took the head and made for the river. Now I was drunken and my clothes were drenched with the blood; and as I passed along the road, I met a robber. When he saw me, he knew me and cried to me, “Such-an-one!” “Well?” said I, and he rejoined, “What is that thou hast with thee?” So I acquainted him with the case and he took the head from me. Then we fared on till we came to the river, where he washed the head and considering it straitly, exclaimed, “By Allah, verily this be my brother, the son of my sire, and he used to spunge upon the folk;” after which he threw that head into the river. As for me, I was like a dead man for dread; but he said to me, “Fear not, neither do thou grieve, for I acquit thee of my brother’s blood.” Presently, he took my clothes and washed them and dried them and put them on me; after which he said to me, “Get thee gone to thy house.” So I returned to my house and he accompanied me, till I came thither, when he said to me, “Allah never desolate thee! I am thy friend Such-an-one, who used to take of thee goods on credit, and I owe thee a kindness; but henceforward thou wilt never see me more.” Then he went his ways.

The company marvelled at the manliness of this man and his clemency and courtesy, and the Sultan said, “Tell us another of thy stories, O Shahrazad.”⁴⁹ She replied: — ’Tis well! They set forth

⁴⁹ The Story-teller, probably to relieve the monotony of the Constables’ histories, here returns to the original cadre. We must not forget that in the Bresl. Edit. the

A Merry Jest of a Clever Thief.

A thief of the thieves of the Arabs went one night to a certain man's house, to steal from a heap of wheat there, and the people of the house surprised him. Now on the heap was a great copper tasse, and the thief buried himself in the corn and covered his head with the tasse, so that the folk found him not and went their ways; but as they were going, behold, there came a mighty great fart forth of the corn. So they went up to the tasse and raising it, discovered the thief and laid hands on him. Quoth he, "I have saved you the trouble of seeking me: for I purposed, in breaking wind, to direct you to my hiding place; wherefore do you be easy with me and have ruth on me, so may Allah have ruth on you!" Accordingly they let him go and harmed him not.

And for another story of the same kind (she continued), hearken to

The Tale of the Old Sharper.

There was once an old man renowned for clever roguery, and he went, he and his mates, to one of the markets and stole thence a quantity of stuffs: then they separated and returned each to his quarter. Awhile after this, the old man assembled a company of his fellows and, as they sat at drink, one of them pulled out a costly piece of cloth and said, "Is there any one of you will dare sell this in its own market whence it was stolen, that we may confess his superior subtlety?" Quoth the old man, "I will;" and they said, "Go, and Allah Almighty open to thee the door!" So early on the morrow, he took the stuff and carrying it to the market whence it had been stolen, sat down at the very shop out of

Nights are running on, and that the charming queen is relating the adventure of Al-Malik al-Zahir.

which it had been purloined and gave it to the broker, who hented it in hand and cried it for sale. Its owner knew it and bidding for it, bought it and sent after the Chief of Police, who seized the Sharper and seeing him an old man of grave presence and handsomely clad said to him, "Whence hadst thou this piece of stuff?" Quoth he, "I had it from this market and from yonder shop where I was sitting." Quoth the Wali, "Did its owner sell it to thee?" and quoth the robber, "Not so; I stole it, this and other than it." Then said the Chief, "How camest thou to bring it for sale to the place whence thou stolest it?"

"I will not tell my tale save to the Sultan, for that I have a profitable counsel wherewith I would fief bespeak him."

"Name it!"

"Art thou the Sultan?"

"No!"

"I'll not tell it save to himself."

Accordingly the Wali carried him up to the Sultan and he said, "I have a counsel for thee, O my lord." Asked the Sultan, "What is thy counsel?" And the thief said, "I repent and will deliver into thy hand all who are evildoers, and whomsoever I bring not, I will stand in his stead." Cried the Sultan, "Give him a robe of honour and accept his profession of penitence." So he went down from the presence and returning to his comrades, related to them that which had passed, when they confessed his subtlety and gave him that which they had promised him. Then he took the rest of the booty and went up therewith to the Sultan, who, seeing him, recognised him and he was magnified in the royal eyes and the king commanded that naught should be taken from him. After this, when he went down, the Sultan's attention was diverted from him, little by little, till the case was forgotten, and so he saved the booty for himself.

Those present marvelled at this and the fifteenth constable came forward and said, "Know that among those who make a trade of trickery are those whom Allah Almighty taketh on their own testimony against themselves." It was asked him, "How so?" and he began to relate

The Fifteenth Constable's History.

It is told of a thieving person, one of the braves, that he used to rob and cut the way by himself upon caravans, and whenever the Chief of Police and the Governors sought him, he would flee from them and fortify himself in the mountains. Now it came to pass that a certain man journeyed along the road wherein was that robber, and this man was single-handed and knew not the sore perils besetting his way. So the highwayman came out upon him and said to him, "Bring out that which is with thee, for I mean to kill thee and no mistake." Quoth the traveller, "Kill me not, but annex these saddle-bags and divide that which is in them and take to thee the fourth part." And the thief answered, "I will not take aught but the whole." Rejoined the traveller, "Take half, and let me go;" but the robber replied, "I will have naught but the whole, and eke I will kill thee." So the wayfarer said, "Take it." Accordingly the highwayman took the saddle-bags and offered to slay the traveller, who said, "What is this? Thou hast against me no blood-feud that should make my slaughter incumbent." Quoth the other, "Needs must I kill thee;" whereupon the traveller dismounted from his horse and grovelled before him, beseeching the thief and bespeaking him fair. The man hearkened not to his prayers, but cast him to the ground; whereupon the traveller raised his eyes and seeing a francolin flying over him, said, in his agony, "O Francolin, bear testimony that

this man slayeth me unjustly and wickedly; for indeed I have given him all that was with me and entreated him to let me go, for my children's sake; yet would he not consent. But be thou witness against him, for Allah is not unmindful of deeds which the oppressors do." The highwayman paid no heed to what he heard, but smote him and cut off his head.

After this, the rulers compounded with the highwayman for his submission, and when he came before them, they enriched him and he became in such favour with the lieutenant of the Sultan that he used to eat and drink with him and there befel between them familiar converse which lasted a long while till in fine there chanced a curious chance. The lieutenant of the Sultan one day of the days made a banquet, and therein was a roasted francolin, which when the robber saw, he laughed a loud laugh. The lieutenant was angered against him and said to him, "What is the meaning of thy laughter? Seest thou any fault or dost thou mock at us, of thy lack of good manners?" Answered the highwayman, "Not so, by Allah, O my lord; but I saw yonder francolin, which brought to my mind an extraordinary thing; and 'twas on this wise. In the days of my youth, I used to cut the way, and one day I waylaid a man, who had with him a pair of saddle-bags and money therein. So I said to him, 'Leave these saddle-bags, for I mean to slay thee.' Quoth he, 'Take the fourth part of that which is in them and leave me the rest;' and quoth I, 'Needs must I take the whole and kill thee without mistake.' Then said he, 'Take the saddle-bags and let me wend my way;' but I answered, 'There is no help but that I slay thee.' As we were in this contention, behold, he saw a francolin and turning to it, said, 'Bear testimony against him, O Francolin, that he slayeth me unjustly and letteth me not go to my children, for all he hath taken my money.' However, I had no pity on him neither hearkened to that

which he said, but smote him and slew him and concerned not myself with the evidence of the francolin.”

His story troubled the lieutenant of the Sultan and he was enraged against him with sore rage; so he drew his sword and smiting him, cut off his head while he sat at table; whereupon a voice recited these couplets: —

*An wouldst not be injured, injure not; * But do good and from Allah
win goodly lot,
For what happeth by Allah is doomed to be * Yet thine acts are the root
I would love thee wot.*

Now this voice was the francolin which bore witness against him.

The company present marvelled at this tale and all cried, “Woe to the oppressor!” Then came forward the sixteenth constable and said, “And I for another will tell you a marvellous story which is on this wise.”

The Sixteenth Constable’s History

I went forth one day of the days, intending to travel, and suddenly fell upon a man whose wont it was to cut the way. When he came up with me he offered to slay me and I said to him, “I have naught with me whereby thou mayst profit.” Quoth he, “My profit shall be the taking of thy life.” I asked, “What is the cause of this? Hath there been enmity between us aforetime?” and he answered, “Nay; but needs must I slay thee.” Thereupon I ran away from him to the river side; but he caught me up and casting me to the ground, sat down on my breast. So I sought help of the Shaykh of the Pilgrims and cried to him, “Protect me from this oppressor!” And indeed he had drawn a knife

to cut my throat when, lo and behold! there came a mighty great crocodile forth of the river and snatching him up from off my breast plunged into the water, with him still hending knife in hand, even within the jaws of the beast: whilst I abode extolling Almighty Allah, and rendering thanks for my preservation to him who had delivered me from the hand of that wrong-doer.⁵⁰

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⁵⁰ Here the Stories of the Sixteen Constables abruptly end, after the fashion of the Bresl. Edit. They are summarily dismissed even without the normal “Bakhshísh.”

Tale of Harun al-Rashid and Abdullah bin Nafi'

Know thou, O King of the Age, that there was in days of yore and in ages and times long gone before, in the city of Baghdad the Abode of Peace, a Caliph Harun al-Rashid hight, and he had cup-companions and tale-tellers to entertain him by night. Among his equerries was a man named Abdullah bin Náfi', who stood high in favour with him and dear to him, so that he did not forget him a single hour. Now it came to pass, by the decree of Destiny, that it became manifest to Abdullah how he was grown of small account with the Caliph, who paid no heed unto him nor, if he absented himself, did he ask after him, as had been his habit. This was grievous to Abdullah and he said within himself, "Verily, the soul of the Commander of the Faithful and his Wazir are changed towards me and nevermore shall I see in him that cordiality and affection wherewith he was wont to treat me." And this was chagrin-full to him and concern grew upon him, so that he recited these couplets: —

*Whoso's contemned in his home and land * Should, to better his case,
in self-exile hie;
So fly the house where contempt awaits, * Nor on fires of grief for the
parting fry;
Crude Ambergris is but offal where * 'Tis born; but abroad on our
necks shall stye;
And Kohl at home is a kind of stone, * Cast on face of earth and on
roads to lie;
But when borne abroad it wins highest worth * And thrones between
eyelid and ball of eye.*

(Quoth the sayer), Then he could brook this matter no longer; so he went forth from the dominions of the Prince of True Believers, under pretence of visiting certain of his kith and kin, and took with him nor servant nor comrade, neither acquainted any with his intent, but betook himself to the road and fared deep into the wold and the sandwastes, unknowing whither he went. After awhile, he unexpectedly fell in with travellers who were making the land of Hind and journeyed with them. When he came thither, he lighted down in a city of that country and housed him in one of the lodging-houses; and there he abode a while of days, relishing not food neither solacing himself with sleep; nor was this for lack of dirhams or dinars, but for that his mind was occupied with musing upon the shifts of Destiny and bemoaning himself for that the revolving sphere had turned against him in enmity, and the days had decreed unto him the disfavour of our lord the Imam.⁵¹

After such fashion he abode a space of days, and presently he homed him in the land and took to himself friends and got him many familiars, with whom he addressed himself to diversion and good cheer. He used also to go a-pleasuring with his companions and their hearts were solaced by his company and he entertained them every evening with stories and displays of his manifold accomplishments and diverted them with delectable verses and told them abundance of stories and histories. Presently, the report of him reached King Jamhúr, lord of Kashgar of Hind, who sent in quest of him, and great was his desire to see him. So Abdullah repaired to his court and going in to him, kissed ground before him; and Jamhur welcomed him and treated him with kindness and bade lodge him in the guest-house, where he

⁵¹ i.e. The Caliph.

abode three days, at the end of which the king sent to him a chamberlain of his chamberlains and bade bring him to the presence. When he came before him, he greeted him, and the truchman accosted him, saying, "Verily, King Jamhur hath heard of thy report, that thou art a pleasant cup-companion and an eloquent teller of night tales, and he would have thee company with him o' nights and entertain him with that which thou knowest of histories and pleasant stories and verses." And he made answer, "To hear is to obey!"

(Quoth Abdullah bin Nafi',) So I became his boon-companion and entertained him by night with tales and talk; and this pleased him with the utmost pleasure and he took me into favour and bestowed on me robes of honour and set apart for me a lodging; indeed he was bountiful exceedingly to me and could not brook to be parted from me a single hour. So I sojourned with him a while of time and every night I caroused and conversed with him till the most part of the dark hours was past; and when drowsiness overcame him, he would rise and betake himself to his sleeping-place, saying to me, "Forsake not my service and forego not my presence." And I made answer with "Hearing and obeying."

Now the king had a son, a nice child, called the Emir Mohammed, who was winsome of youth and sweet of speech: he had read books and had perused histories and he loved above all things in the world the telling and hearing of verses and tales and anecdotes. He was dear to his father King Jamhur, for that he owned no other son than he on life, and indeed he had reared him in the lap of love and he was gifted with exceeding beauty and loveliness, brilliancy and perfect grace: he had also learnt to play upon the lute and upon all manner instruments and he was used to converse and company with friends and brethren. Now it was his wont when the king arose seeking his sleeping-chamber,

to sit in his place and require me to entertain him with tales and verses and pleasant anecdotes; and on this wise I abode with them both a great while in all joyance and delight, and the Prince still loved me with mighty great love and treated me with the utmost tenderness. It fortunately one day that the king's son came to me, after his sire had withdrawn, and cried, "O Ibn Nafi'!"

"At thy service, O my lord;"

"I would have thee tell me a wondrous story and a marvellous matter, which thou hast never related either to me or to my father Jamhur."

"O my lord, what story is this that thou desirest of me and what kind shall it be of the kinds?"

"It mattereth little, so it be a goodly story, whether it befel of olden tide or in these times."

"O my lord, I know by rote many stories of various kinds; so which of the kinds preferrest thou, and wilt thou have a story of mankind or of Jinn-kind?"

"'Tis well! An thou have espied aught with thine eyes and heard it with thine ears, tell it me." Then he bethought himself and said to me, "I conjure thee by my life, tell me a tale of the tales of the Jinn and that which thou hast heard of them and seen of them!" I replied, "O my son, indeed thou conjurest me by a mighty conjuration; so lend an ear to the goodliest of stories, ay, and the strangest of them and the pleasantest and rarest."

Quoth the Prince, "Say on, for I am attentive to thy speech;" and quoth I: — Hear then, O my son,

The Tale of the Damsel Tohfat al-Kulub and the Caliph Harun al-Rashid.

The Viceregent of the Lord of the three Worlds, Harun al-Rashid, had a boon-companion of the number of his boon-companions, by name Ishak bin Ibrahim al-Nadim al-Mausili,⁵² who was the most accomplished of the folk of his time in smiting upon the lute; and of the Commander of the Faithful's love for him, he set apart for him a palace of the choicest of his palaces, wherein he was wont to instruct hand-maidens in the arts of singing and of lute playing. If any slave-girl became, by his instruction, clever in the craft, he carried her before the Caliph, who bade her perform upon the lute; and if she pleased him, he would order her to the Harim; else would he restore her to Ishak's palace.

One day, the Commander of the Faithful's breast was straitened; so he sent after his Wazir Ja'afar the Barmecide and Ishak the cup-companion and Masrur the eunuch, the Sword of his vengeance; and when they came, he changed his habit and disguised himself, whilst Ja'afar and Ishak and Masrur and al-Fazl⁵³ and Yúnus⁵⁴ (who were also present) did the like. Then he went out, he and they, by the postern, to the Tigris and taking boat fared on till they came to near Al Táf,⁵⁵ when they landed and walked till they came to the gate of the high street. Here there met them an old man, handsome in his hoariness and of a venerable bearing and a dignified, agreeable of aspect and apparel. He kissed the earth before Ishak al-Mausili (for that he knew only him of the company, the Caliph being disguised, and deemed the others

⁵² i.e. Isaac of Mosul, the greatest of Arab musicians.

⁵³ The elder brother of Ja'afar, by no means so genial or fitted for a royal frolic.

⁵⁴ Ibn Habíb, a friend of Isaac, and a learned grammarian who lectured at Basrah.

⁵⁵ A suburb of Baghdad.

certain of his friends), and said to him, "O my lord, there is presently with me a handmaid, a lutanist, never saw eyes the like of her nor the like of her grace, and indeed I was on my way to pay my respects to thee and give thee to know of her, but Allah, of His favour, hath spared me the trouble. So now I desire to show her to thee, and if she take thy fancy, well and good; otherwise I will sell her." Quoth Ishak, "Go before me to thy quarters, till I come to thee and see her."

The old man kissed his hand and went away; whereupon quoth Al-Rashid to him, "O Ishak, who is yonder man and what is his want?" The other replied, "O my lord, this is a man Sa'id the Slave-dealer hight, and 'tis he that buyeth us maidens and Mamelukes. He declareth that with him is a fair slave, a lutanist, whom he hath withheld from sale, for that he could not fairly sell her till he had passed her before me in review." Quoth the Caliph, "Let us go to him so we may see her, by way of solace, and sight what is in the slave-dealer's quarters of slave-girls;" and quoth Ishak, "Command belongeth to Allah and to the Commander of the Faithful." Then he forewent them and they followed in his track till they came to the slave-dealer's quarters and found a building tall of wall and large of lodgment, with sleeping-cells and chambers therein, after the number of the slave-girls, and folk sitting upon the wooden benches. So Ishak entered, he and his company and seating themselves in the place of honour, amused themselves by looking at the handmaids and Mamelukes and watching how they were bought and sold, till the vending came to an end, when some of the folk went away and some remained seated.

Then cried the slave-dealer, "Let none sit with us except whoso purchaseth by the thousand dinars and upwards." Accordingly those present withdrew and there remained none but Al-Rashid and his suite; whereupon the slave-dealer called the damsel, after he had

caused set her a chair of Fawwák, lined with Grecian brocade, and she was like the sun shining high in the shimmering sky. When she entered, she saluted and sitting down, took the lute and smote upon it, after she had touched its strings and tuned it, so that all present were amazed. Then she sang thereto these couplets: —

*Breeze o' Morn, an thou breathe o'er the loved one's land, * Deliver my
greeting to all the dear band!*

*And declare to them still I am pledged to their love * And my longing
excels all that lover unmanned:*

*O ye who have blighted my heart, ears and eyes, * My passion and
ecstasy grow out of hand;*

*And torn is my sprite every night with desire, * And nothing of sleep
can my eyelids command.*

Ishak exclaimed, “Brave, O damsel! By Allah, this is a fair hour!” Whereupon she sprang up and kissed his hand, saying, “O my lord, in very sooth the hands stand still before thy presence and the tongues at thy sight, and the eloquent when confronting thee wax dumb; but thou art the looser of the veil.”⁵⁶ Then she clung to him and cried, “Stand;” so he stood and said to her, “Who art thou and what is thy need?” She raised a corner of the veil, and behold she was a damsel as she were the full moon rising or the levee glancing, with two side-locks of hair which fell down to her anklets. She kissed his hand and said to him, “O my lord, know that I have been in these quarters some five months, during which I have withheld myself from sale till thou

⁵⁶ “A passage has apparently dropped out here. The Khalif seems to have gone away without buying, leaving Ishak behind, whereupon the latter was accosted by another slave-girl, who came out of a cell in the corridor.” So says Mr. Payne. vol. ii. 207. The “raiser of the veil” means a fitting purchaser.

shouldst be present and see me; and yonder slave-dealer also made thy coming a pretext for not vending me, and forbade me for all I sought of him night and day that he should cause thee come hither and vouchsafe me thy company and gar me and thee forgather.” Quoth Ishak, “Tell me what thou wouldst have;” and quoth she, “I beseech thee, by Allah Almighty, that thou buy me, so I may be with thee by way of service.” He asked, “Is that thy desire?” and she answered, “Yes.”

So Ishak returned to the slave-dealer and said to him, “Ho thou, Shaykh Sa’id!” Said the old man, “At thy service, O my lord,” and Ishak continued, “In the corridor is a chamber and therein wones a damsel pale and wan. What is her price in dirhams and how much dost thou ask for her?” Quoth the slave-dealer, “She whom thou mentionest, O my lord, is called Tohfát al-Humaká?”⁵⁷ Ishak asked, “What is the meaning of Al-Humaka?” and the old man answered, “Her price hath been weighed and paid an hundred times and she still saith, ‘Show me him who would buy me;’ and when I show her to him she saith, ‘This one I mislike; he hath in him such and such a default.’ And in every one who would fain buy her she noteth some defect or other, so that none careth now to purchase her and none seeketh her, for fear lest she find some fault in him.” Quoth Ishak, “She seeketh at this present to sell herself; so go thou to her and inquire of her and see her price and send her to the palace.” Quoth Sa’id, “O my lord, her price is an hundred dinars, though, were she free of this paleness that is upon her face, she would be worth a thousand gold pieces; but wanton folly and wanness have diminished her value; and behold I will go to her and consult her of this.”

⁵⁷ i.e. “Choice gift of the Fools,” a skit upon the girl’s name “Tohfát al-Kulúb” = Choice gift of the Hearts.

So he betook himself to her and enquired of her, "Wilt thou be sold to Ishak bin Ibrahim al-Mausili?" She replied, "Yes," and he said, "Leave folly, for to whom doth it happen to be in the house of Ishak the cup-companion?" Thereupon Ishak went forth the slave-dealer's quarters and overtook Al-Rashid who had preceded him; and they ceased not walking till they came to their landing-place, where they embarked in the boat and fared on to Thaghr al-Khánakah. As for the slave-dealer, he sent the damsel to the house of Ishak al-Nadim, whose slave-girls took her and carried her to the Hammam. Then each damsel gave her somewhat of her gear and they decked her with earrings and bracelets, so that she redoubled in beauty and became as she were the moon on the night of its full. When Ishak returned home from the Caliph's palace, Tohfah rose to him and kissed his hand; and he saw that which the handmaids had done with her and thanked them for so doing and said to them, "Let her home in the house of instruction and bring her instruments of music, and if she be apt at song teach her; and may Allah Almighty vouchsafe her health and weal!" So there passed over her three months, while she homed with him in the house of instruction, and they brought her the instruments of music. Furthermore, as time went on she was vouchsafed health and soundness and her beauty waxed many times brighter than before and her pallor was changed to white and red, so that she became a seduction to all who saw her.

One day, Ishak bade summon all who were with him of slave-girls from the house of instruction and carried them up to Al-Rashid's palace, leaving none in his house save Tohfah and a cookmaid; for that he thought not of Tohfah, nor did she come to his memory, and none of the damsels reminded him of her. When she saw that the house was empty of the slave-girls, she took the lute (now she was singular in her

time for smiting upon the lute, nor had she her like in the world, no, not Ishak himself, nor any other) and sang thereto these couplets: —

*When soul desireth one that is its mate * It never winneth dear desire
of Fate:*

*My life for him whose tortures tare my frame, * And dealt me pine
he can alone abate!*

*He saith (that only he to heal mine ill, * Whose sight is medicine to
my doleful state),*

*“O scoffer-wight, how long wilt mock my woe * As though did Allah
nothing else create?”*

Now Ishak had returned to his house on an occasion that called for him; and when he entered the vestibule, he heard a sound of singing, the like whereof he had never heard in the world, for that it was soft as the breeze and more strengthening than oil of almonds. So the pleasure of it gat hold of him and delight so seized him, that he fell down fainting in the vestibule. Tohfah heard the noise of footfalls and laying the lute from her hand, went out to see what was the matter. She found her lord Ishak lying aswoon in the entrance; so she took him up and strained him to her bosom, saying, “I conjure thee in Allah’s name, O my lord, tell me, hath aught of ill befallen thee?” When he heard her voice, he recovered from his fainting and asked her, “Who art thou?” She answered, “I am thy slave-girl, Tohfah;” and he said to her, “Art thou indeed Tohfah?” “Yes,” replied she; and he, “By Allah, I had indeed forgotten thee and remembered thee not till this moment!” Then he looked at her and said, “Verily, thy case is altered to other case and thy wanness is changed to rosiness and thou hast redoubled in beauty and loveliness. But was it thou who was singing just now?” She was troubled and affrighted and answered,

“Even I, O my lord;” whereupon Ishak seized upon her hand and carrying her into the house, said to her, “Take the lute and sing; for never saw I nor heard thy like in smiting upon the lute; no, not even myself!”

Quoth she, “O my lord, thou mockest me. Who am I that thou shouldst say all this to me? Indeed, this is but of thy kindness.” Quoth he, “Nay, by Allah, I said but the truth to thee and I am not of those on whom pretence imposeth. For these three months nature hath not moved thee to take the lute and sing thereto, and this is naught save a rare thing and a strange. But all this cometh of strength in the art and thy self-restraint.” Then he bade her sing; and she said, “Hearkening and obedience.” So she took the lute and tightening its strings to the sticking point, smote thereon a number of airs, so that she confounded Ishak’s wit and for delight he was like to fly. Then she returned to the first mode and sang thereto these couplets: —

*By your ruined stead aye I stand and stay, * Nor shall change or
dwelling depart us tway!*

*No distance of homestead shall gar me forget * Your love, O friends,
but yearn alway:*

*Ne’er flies your phantom the babes of these eyne * You are moons in
Nighthead’s murkest array:*

*And with growing passion mine unrest grows * And each morn I find
union dissolved in woes.*

When she had made an end of her song and laid down the lute, Ishak looked fixedly on her, then took her hand and offered to kiss it; but she snatched it from him and said to him, “Allah, O my lord, do not that!” Cried he, “Be silent. By Allah, I had said that there was not in the world the like of me; but now I have found my dinár in the art but

a dánik, for thou art more excellent of skill than I, beyond comparison or approximation or calculation! This very day will I carry thee up to the Commander of the Faithful, Harun al-Rashid, and when his glance lighteth on thee, thou wilt become a Princess of womankind. So Allah, Allah upon thee, O my lady, whenas thou becomest of the household of the Prince of True Believers, do not thou forget me!” She replied, “Allah, O my lord, thou art the root of my fortunes and in thee is my heart fortified.” Thereat he took her hand and made a covenant with her of this and she swore to him that she would not forget him. Then said he to her, “By Allah, thou art the desire of the Commander of the Faithful! Now take the lute and sing a song which thou shalt sing to the Caliph, when thou goest in to him.” So she took the lute and tuning it, improvised these couplets: —

*His lover hath ruth on his woeful mood * And o’erwept him as still
by his couch he⁵⁸ stood:
And garred him drink of his lip-dews and wine * Ere he died and
this food was his latest good.*

Ishak stared at her and seizing her hand, said to her, “Know that I am bound by an oath that, when the singing of a damsel pleaseth me, she shall not end her song but before the Prince of True Believers. But now tell me, how came it that thou tarriedst with the slave-dealer five months and wast not sold to any one, and thou of this skill, especially when the price set on thee was no great matter?” Hereat she laughed and answered, “O my lord, my story is a wondrous and my case a marvellous. Know that I belonged aforetime to a Maghribi merchant, who bought me when I was three years old, and there were in his house

⁵⁸ Again “he” for “she”.

many slave-girls and eunuchs; but I was the dearest to him of them all. So he kept me with him and used not to address me otherwise than, 'O daughterling,' and indeed to this moment I am a clean maid. Now there was with him a damsel, a lutanist, and she reared me and taught me the art, even as thou seest. Then was my master removed to the mercy of Allah Almighty and his sons divided his monies. I fell to the lot of one of them; but 'twas only a little while ere he had wasted all his wealth and there was left him naught of coin. So I gave up the lute, fearing lest I should fall into the hand of a man who knew not my worth, for well I wot that needs must my master sell me; and indeed but a few days passed ere he carried me forth to the quarters of the slave-merchant who buyeth damsels and displayeth them to the Commander of the Faithful. Now I desired to learn the art and mystery; so I refused to be sold to other than thou, until Allah (extolled and exalted be He!) vouchsafed me my desire of thy presence; whereupon I came out to thee, as soon as I heard of thy coming, and besought thee to buy me. Thou heartenedst my heart and broughtest me; and since I entered thy house, O my lord, I have not taken up the lute till now; but to-day, when I was left private by the slave-girls, I took it; and my purpose in this was that I might see if my hand were changed or not. As I was singing, I heard a footfall in the vestibule; so springing up, I laid the lute from my hand and going forth to see what was to do, found thee, O my lord, after this fashion."

Quoth Ishak, "Indeed, this was of thy fair fortune. By Allah, I know not that which thou knowest in this art!" Then he arose and opening a chest, brought out therefrom striped clothes, netted with jewels and great pearls and other costly gems and said to her, "In the name of Allah, don these, O my lady Tohfah." So she arose and donned that dress and veiled herself and went up with Ishak to the palace of the

Caliphate, where he made her stand without, whilst he himself went in to the Prince of True Believers (with whom was Ja'afar the Barmaki) and kissing the ground before him, said to him, "O Commander of the Faithful, I have brought thee a damsel, never saw eyes of seer her like for excellence in singing and touching the lute; and her name is Tohfah." Al-Rashid asked, "And where be this Tohfah⁵⁹ who hath not her like in the world?" Answered Ishak, "Yonder she standeth, O Commander of the Faithful;" and he acquainted the Caliph with her case from first to last. Then said Al-Rashid, "'Tis a marvel to hear thee praise a slave-girl after this fashion. Admit her that we may look upon her, for verily the morning may not be hidden."

Accordingly, Ishak bade admit her; so she entered, and when her eyes fell upon the Prince of True Believers, she kissed ground before him and said, "The Peace be upon thee, O Commander of the faithful Fold and Asylum of all who the true Creed hold and Quickener of justice in the Worlds threefold! Allah make thy feet tread on safest wise and give thee joy of what He gave thee in generous guise and make thy harbourage Paradise and Hell-fire that of thine enemies!" Quoth Al-Rashid, "And on thee be the Peace, O damsel! Sit." So she sat down and he bade her sing; whereupon she took the lute and tightening its strings, played thereon in many modes, so that the Prince of True Believers and Ja'afar were confounded in sprite and like to fly for delight. Then she returned to the first mode and improvised these couplets: —

*O mine eyes! I swear by him I adore, * Whom pilgrims seek thronging
Arafât;*

⁵⁹ i.e. a choice gift. The Caliph speaks half ironically, "Where's this wonderful present etc?"

*An thou call my name on the grave of me, * I'll reply to thy call tho'
my bones go rot:*

*I crave none for friend of my heart save thee; * So believe me, for true
are the well-begot.*

Al-Rashid considered her comeliness and the goodliness of her singing and her eloquence and what other qualities she comprised and rejoiced with joy exceeding; and for the stress of that which overcame him of delight, he descended from the couch and sitting down with her upon the floor, said to her, "Thou hast done well, O Tohfah. By Allah, thou art indeed a choice gift!" Then he turned to Ishak and said to him, "Thou dealtest not justly, O Ishak, in the description of this damsel, nor didst thou fairly set forth all that she comprised of charms and art; for that, by Allah, she is inconceivably more skilful than thou; and I know of this craft that which none knowest save I!" Exclaimed the Wazir Ja'afar, "By Allah, thou sayst sooth, O my lord, O Commander of the Faithful. Indeed, she hath done away my wit, hath this damsel." Quoth Ishak, "By Allah, O Prince of True Believers, I had said that there was not on the face of the earth one who knew the art of the lute like myself; but when I heard her, my skill became nothing worth in mine eyes." Then said the Caliph to her, "Repeat thy playing, O Tohfah." So she repeated it and he cried to her, "Well done!" Moreover, he said to Ishak, "Thou hast indeed brought me a marvellous thing, one which is worth in mine eyes the empire of the world." Then he turned to Masrur the eunuch and said to him, "Carry Tohfah to the chamber of honour."

Accordingly, she went away with the Castrato and the Caliph looked at her raiment and ornaments and seeing her clad in clothing of choice, asked Ishak, "O Ishak, whence hath she these robes?"

Answered he, "O my lord, these are somewhat of thy bounties and thy largesse, and they are a gift to her from me. By Allah, O Commander of the Faithful, the world, all of it, were little in comparison with her!" Then the Caliph turned to the Wazir Ja'afar and said to him, "Give Ishak fifty thousand dirhams and a robe of honour of the choicest apparel." "Hearing and obeying," replied Ja'afar and gifted him with that which the Caliph ordered him. As for Al-Rashid, he was private with Tohfah that night and found her a pure virgin and rejoiced in her; and she took high rank in his heart, so that he could not suffer her absence a single hour and committed to her the keys of the affairs of the realm, for that which he saw in her of good breeding and fine wit and leal will. He also gave her fifty slave-girls and two hundred thousand dinars and a quantity of raiment and ornaments, gems and jewels worth the kingdom of Egypt; and of the excess of his love for her, he would not entrust her to any of the handmaids or eunuchs; but, whenever he went out from her, he locked the door upon her and took the key with him, against he should return to her, forbidding the damsels to go in to her, of his fear lest they should slay her or poison her or practice on her with the knife; and in this way he abode awhile.

One day, as she sang before the Commander of the Faithful, he was delighted with exceeding delight, so that he offered to kiss her hand;⁶⁰ but she drew it away from him and smote upon her lute and broke it and wept. Al-Rashid wiped away her tears and said, "O desire of the heart, what is it maketh thee weep? May Allah not cause an eye of thine to shed tears!" Said she, "O my lord, what am I that thou shouldst kiss my hand? Wilt thou have Allah punish me for this and my term come to an end and my felicity pass away? For this is what

⁶⁰ Throughout the East this is the action of a servant or a slave, practised by freemen only when in danger of life or extreme need and therefore humiliating.

none ever attained unto.” He rejoined, “Well said, O Tohfah. Know that thy rank in my esteem is high and for that which delighted me of what I saw in thee, I offered to do this, but I will not return unto the like thereof; so be of good cheer, with eyes cool and clear, for I have no desire to other than thyself and will not die but in the love of thee, and thou to me art queen this day, to the exclusion of all humankind.” Therewith she fell to kissing his feet; and this her fashion pleased him, so that his love for her redoubled and he became unable to brook severance from her a single hour.

Now Al-Rashid one day went forth to the chase and left Tohfah in her pavilion. As she sat perusing a book, with a candle-branch of gold before her, wherein was a perfumed candle, behold, a musk-apple fell down before her from the top of the saloon.⁶¹ So she looked up and beheld the Lady Zubaydah bint al-Kasim, who saluted her with a salam and acquainted her with herself, whereupon Tohfah sprang to her feet and said, “O my lady, were I not of the number of the new, I had daily sought thy service; so do not thou bereave me of those noble steps.”⁶² The Lady Zubaydah called down blessings upon her and replied, “I knew this of thee; and, by the life of the Commander of the Faithful, but that it is not of my wont to go forth of my place, I had come out to do my service to thee.” Then quoth she to her, “Know, O Tohfah, that the Commander of the Faithful hath deserted all his concubines and favourites on thine account, even myself hath he abandoned on this wise, and I am not content to be as one of the mistresses; yet hath he made me of them and forsaken me, and I have sought thee, so thou mayst beseech him to come to me, though it be

⁶¹ It had been thrown down from the Mamrak or small dome built over such pavilions for the purpose of light by day and ventilation by night.

⁶² i.e. thine auspicious visits.

but once a month, in order that I may not be the like of the handmaids and concubines nor take rank with the slave-girls; and this is my need of thee.” Answered Tohfah, “Hearkening and obedience! By Allah, O my lady, I would that he might be with thee a whole month and with me but one night, so thy heart might be heartened, for that I am one of thy handmaids and thou in every case art my lady.” The Princess Zubaydah thanked her for this and taking leave of her, returned to her palace.

When the Caliph came back from the chase and course, he betook himself to Tohfah’s pavilion and bringing out the key, opened the lock and went in to her. She rose to receive him and kissed his hand, and he gathered her to his breast and seated her on his knee. Then food was brought to them and they ate and washed their hands; after which she took the lute and sang, till Al-Rashid was moved to sleep. When aware of this, she ceased singing and told him her adventure with the Lady Zubaydah, saying, “O Prince of True Believers, I would have thee favour me with a favour and hearten my heart and accept my intercession and reject not my supplication, but fare thee forthright to the Lady Zubaydah.” Now this talk befel after he had stripped himself naked and she also had doffed her dress; and he said, “Thou shouldst have named this ere we stripped ourselves naked, I and thou!” But she answered, saying, “O Commander of the Faithful, I did this not except in accordance with the saying of the poet in these couplets: —

*Of all intercessions can none succeed, * Save whatso Tohfah bint*

Marjān sue’d:

*No intercessor who comes enveiled; * She sues the best who sues
mother-nude.”*

When Al-Rashid heard this, her speech pleased him and he strained

her to his bosom. Then he went forth from her and locked the door upon her, as before; whereupon she took the book and sat perusing it awhile. Presently, she set it aside and taking the lute, tightened its strings; and smote thereon, after a wondrous fashion, such as would have moved inanimate things to dance, and fell to singing marvellous melodies and chanting these couplets: —

*Cease for change to wail, * The world blames who rail;
Bear patient its shafts * That for aye prevail.
How often a joy * Grief-garbed thou shalt hail:
How oft gladding bliss * Shall appear amid bale!*

Then she turned and saw within the chamber an old man, handsome in his hoariness and stately of semblance, who was dancing in goodly and winning wise, a dance whose like none might dance. So she sought refuge with Allah Almighty from Satan the Stoned and said, “I will not give over what I am about, for whatso the Lord willeth, He fulfilleth.” Accordingly, she went on singing till the Shaykh came up to her and kissed ground before her, saying, “Well done, O Highmost of the East and the West! May the world be not bereaved of thee! By Allah, indeed thou art perfect of manners and morals, O Tohfāt al-Sudūr!⁶³ Dost thou know me?” Cried she, “Nay, by Allah, but methinks thou art of the Jann.” Quoth he, “Thou sayst sooth; I am Abū al-Tawāif⁶⁴ Iblis, and I come to thee every night, and with me thy sister Kamariyah, for that she loveth thee and sweareth not but by thy life; and her pastime is not pleasant to her, except she come to thee and see thee whilst thou seest her not. As for me, I approach thee upon an affair, whereby thou

⁶³ i.e. Choice Gift of the Breasts, that is of hearts.

⁶⁴ Pron. “Abuttawāif,” the Father of the (Jinn-)tribes. It is one of the Moslem Satan’s manifold names, alluding to the number of his servants and worshippers.

shalt gain and rise to high rank with the kings of the Jann and rule them, even as thou rulest mankind; and to that end I would have thee come with me and be present at the festival of my daughter's wedding and the circumcision of my son; for that the Jann are agreed upon the manifestation of thy command." And she answered, "Bismillah; in the name of the Lord."

So she gave him the lute and he forewent her, till he came to the Chapel of Ease,⁶⁵ and behold, therein was a door and a stairway. When Tohfah saw this, her reason fled; but Iblis cheered her with chat. Then he descended the steps and she followed him to the bottom of the stair, where she found a passage and they fared on therein, till they came to a horse standing, ready saddled and bridled and accoutred. Quoth Iblis, "Bismillah, O my lady Tohfah;" and he held the stirrup for her. So she mounted and the horse heaved like a wave under her and putting forth wings soared upwards with her, while the Shaykh flew by her side; whereat she was affrighted and clung to the pommel of the saddle; nor was it but an hour ere they came to a fair green meadow, fresh-flowered as if the soil thereof were a fine robe, purpled with all manner bright hues. Amiddlemost that mead was a palace towering high in air, with crenelles of red gold, set with pearls and gems, and a two-leaved door; and about the gateway were much people of the chiefs of the Jann, clad in costliest clothing. When they saw the Shaykh, they all cried out, saying, "The Lady Tohfah is come!" And as soon as she reached the palace-gate they pressed forward in a body, and dismounting her from the horse's back, carried her into the palace and fell to kissing her hands.

When she entered, she beheld a palace whereof seers ne'er saw the

⁶⁵ Arab. "Al-Mustaráh," a favourite haunting place of the Jinn, like the Hammám and other offices for human impurity.

like; for therein were four halls, one facing other, and its walls were of gold and its ceilings of silver. It was high-built of base, wide of space, and those who descried it would be posed to describe it. At the upper end of the hall stood a throne of red gold set with pearls and jewels, up to which led five steps of silver, and on its right and on its left were many chairs of gold and silver. Quoth Tohfah, "The Shaykh led me to the estrade and seated me on a chair of gold beside the throne, and over the dais was a curtain let down, gold and silver wrought and broidered with pearls and jewels." And she was amazed at that which she beheld in that place and magnified her Lord (extolled and exalted be He!) and hallowed Him. Then the kings of the Jann came up to that throne and seated themselves thereon; and they were in the semblance of Adam's sons, excepting two of them, who appeared in the form and aspect of the Jann, each with one eye slit endlong and jutting horns and projecting tusks. After this there came up a young lady, fair of favour and seemly of stature, the light of whose face outshone that of the waxen flambeaux; and about her were other three women, than whom none fairer abode on face of earth. They saluted Tohfah with the salam and she rose to them and kissed ground before them whereupon they embraced her after returning her greeting and sat down on the chairs aforesaid.

Now the four women who thus accosted Tohfah were the Princess Kamariyah, daughter of King Al-Shísbán, and her sisters; and Kamariyah loved Tohfah with exceeding love. So, when she came up to her, she fell to kissing and embracing her, and Shaykh Iblis cried, "Fair befall the accolade! Take me between you." At this Tohfah laughed and Kamariyah said, "O my sister, I love thee, and doubtless hearts have their witnesses, for, since I saw thee, I have loved thee." Replied Tohfah, "By Allah, hearts have sea-like deeps, and thou, by Allah, art

dear to me and I am thy handmaid.” Kamariyah thanked her for this and kissing her once more said, “These be the wives of the kings of the Jann: greet them with the salam! This is Queen Jamrah,⁶⁶ that is Queen Wakhímah and this other is Queen Sharárah, and they come not but for thee.” So Tohfah rose to her feet and bussed their hands, and the three queens kissed her and welcomed her and honoured her with the utmost honour. Then they brought trays and tables and amongst the rest a platter of red gold, inlaid with pearls and gems; its raised rims were of or and emerald, and thereon were graven these couplets: —

*To bear provaunt assigned, * By hands noble designed,
For the gen’rous I’m made * Not for niggardly hind!
So eat safe all I hold * And praise God of mankind.*

After reading the verses they ate and Tohfah looked at the two kings who had not changed shape and said to Kamariyah, “O my lady, what be this feral and that other like unto him? By Allah, mine eye may not suffer the sight of them.” Kamariyah laughed and answered, “O my sister, that is my sire Al-Shisban and the other is hight Maymun the Sworder; and of the arrogance of their souls and their insolence, they consented not to change their created shapes. Indeed, all whom thou seest here are nature-fashioned like them; but on thine account they have changed favour, for fear lest thou be disquieted and for the comforting of thy mind, so thou mightest become familiar with them and be at thine ease.” Quoth Tohfah, “O my lady, verily I cannot look at them. How frightful is this Maymun, with his monocular face! Mine eye cannot brook the sight of him, and indeed I am in affright of him.”

⁶⁶ i.e. A live coal, afterwards called Zalzalah, an earthquake; “Wakhímah” = an unhealthy land, and “Sharárah” = a spark.

Kamariyah laughed at her speech, and Tohfah continued, “By Allah, O my lady, I cannot fill my eye with the twain!” Then cried her father Al-Shisban to her, “What be this laughing?” So she bespoke him in a tongue none understood but they two and acquainted him with that which Tohfah had said; whereat he laughed a prodigious loud laugh, as it were the roaring thunder.

Presently they ate and the tables were removed and they washed their hands; after which Iblis the Accursed came up to Tohfah and said to her, “O my lady, thou gladdenest the place and enlightenest and embellishest it with thy presence; but now fain would these kings hear somewhat of thy singing, for Night hath dispread her pinions for departure and there abideth of it but a little.” Quoth she, “Hearing and obeying.” So she took the lute and touching its strings with rare touch, played thereon after wondrous wise, so that it seemed to those who were present as if the palace surged like a wave with them for the music. Then she began singing and chanting these couplets: —

*Folk of my faith and oath, Peace with you be! * Quoth ye not I shall
meet you you meet me?*

*I'll chide you softerwise than breeze o' morn, * Sweeter than spring
of coolest clarity.*

*I' faith mine eyelids are with tears chafed sore: * My vitals plain to
you some cure to see.*

*My friends! Our union to disunion changed * Was aye my fear for
'twas my certainty.*

*I'll plain to Allah of all ills I bore; * For pine and yearning misery
still I dree.*

The kings of the Jann were moved to delight by that sweet singing and seemly speech and thanked Tohfah therefore; and Queen Kamariyah

rose to her and threw her arms round her neck and kissed her between the eyes, saying, “By Allah, ’tis good, O my sister and coolth of mine eyes and core of my heart!” Then said she, “I conjure thee by Allah, give us more of this lovely singing;” and Tohfah answered with “To hear is to obey.” So she took the lute and playing thereon in a mode different from the former fashion, sang these couplets: —

*I, oft as ever grows the pine of me, * Console my soul with hope thy
sight to see.*

*Haply shall Allah join our parted lives, * E’en as my fortunes far
from thee cast He!*

*Then oh! who thrallest me by force of love — * Seizèd by fond
affection’s mastery*

*All hardships easy wax when thou art nigh; * And all the far draws
near when near thou be.*

*Ah! be the Ruthful light to lover fond, * Love-lorn, frame wasted,
ready Death to dree!*

*Were hope of seeing thee cut off, my loved; * After thine absence
sleep mine eyes would flee!*

*I mourn no worldly joyance, my delight * Is but to sight thee while
thou seest my sight.*

At this the accursed Iblis was hugely pleased and thrust his finger up his fundament, whilst Maymun danced and said, “O Tohfah al-Sudur, soften the sound; for, as pleasure entereth into my heart, it arresteth my breath and blood.” So she took the lute and altering the tune, played a third air; then she returned to the first and sang these couplets: —

*The waves of your love o’er my life have rolled; * I sink while I see you
all aid withhold:*

*You have drowned my vitals in deeps of your love, * Nor can heart and
sprite for your loss be consoled:*

*Deem not I forget my troth after you: * How forget what Allah decreed
of old?*

*Love clings to the lover who nights in grief, * And 'plains of unrest
and of woes ensouled.*

The kings and all those who were present rejoiced in this with joy exceeding and the accursed Iblis came up to Tohfah and kissing her hand, said to her, “Verily there abideth but little of the night; so tarry with us till the morrow, when we will apply ourselves to the wedding and the circumcision.” Then all the Jann went away, whereupon Tohfah rose to her feet and Iblis said, “Go ye up with Tohfah to the garden for the rest of the night.” So Kamariyah took her and went with her into the garden, which contained all manner birds, nightingale and mocking-bird and ringdove and curlew and other than these of all the kinds. Therein were all manner of fruits: its channels were of gold and silver and the water thereof, as it broke forth of its conduits, was like the bellies of fleeing serpents, and indeed it was as it were the Garden of Eden.

When Tohfah beheld this, she called to mind her lord and wept sore and said, “I beseech Allah the Most High to vouchsafe me speedy deliverance and return to my palace and to my high estate and queendom and glory, and reunion with my lord and master Al-Rashid.” Then she walked about that garden and saw in its midst a dome of white marble, raised on columns of black teak whereto hung curtains purpled with pearls and gems. Amiddlemost this pavilion was a fountain, inlaid with all kinds of jacinths, and thereon a golden statue of a man and beside it a little door. She opened the door and found

herself in a long corridor: so she followed it and entered a Hammam-bath walled with all kinds of costly marbles and floored with a mosaic of pearls and jewels. Therein were four cisterns of alabaster, one facing other, and the ceiling of the bath was of glass coloured with all varieties of colours, such as confounded the understanding of those who have insight and amazed the wit of every wight.

Tohfah entered the bath, after she had doffed her dress, and behold the Hammam-basin was overlaid with gold set with pearls and red balasses and green emeralds and other jewels: so she extolled Allah Almighty and hallowed Him for the magnificence of that which she saw of the appointments of that bath. Then she made her Wuzu-ablution in that basin and pronouncing the Prohibition, prayed the dawn-prayer and what else had escaped her of orisons; after which she went out and walked in that garden among jessamine and lavender and roses and chamomile and gillyflowers and thyme and violets and basil royal, till she came to the door of the pavilion aforesaid. There she sat down, pondering that which would betide Al-Rashid after her, when he should come to her apartment and find her not; and she plunged into the sea of her solicitude, till slumber overtook her and soon she slept.

Presently she felt a breath upon her face; whereupon she awoke and found Queen Kamariyah kissing her, and with her her three sisters, Queen Jamrah, Queen Wakhímah and Queen Sharárah. So she arose and kissed their hands and rejoiced in them with the utmost joy and they ceased not, she and they, to talk and converse, what while she related to them her history, from the time of her purchase by the Maghrabi to that of her coming to the quarters of the slave-dealer, where she besought Ishak al-Nadim to buy her, and how she won union with Al-Rashid, till the moment when Iblis came to her and

brought her to them. They gave not over talking till the sun declined and yellowed and the hour of its setting drew near and the day departed, whereupon Tohfah was urgent in supplication to Allah Almighty, on the occasion of the sundown prayer, that he would reunite her with her lord Al-Rashid. After this, she abode with the four queens, till they arose and entered the palace, where she found the waxen tapers lit and ranged in candlesticks of gold and silver, and censuring vessels of silver and gold filled with lign-aloes and ambergris, and there were the kings of the Jann sitting. So she saluted them with the salam, kissing the earth before them and doing them service; and they rejoiced in her and in her sight.

Then she ascended the estrade and sat down upon her chair, whilst King Al-Shisban and King Al-Muzfir⁶⁷ and Queen Lúlúah and other kings of the Jann sat on chairs, and they brought choice tables, spread with all manner meats befitting royalties. They ate their fill; after which the tables were removed and they washed their hands and wiped them with napkins. Then they brought the wine-service and set on sasses and cups and flagons and beakers of gold and silver and bowls of crystal and gold, and they poured out the wines and they filled the flagons. Then Iblis took the bowl and signed to Tohfah to sing: and she said, "To hear is to obey!" So she hent the lute in hand and tuning it, sang these couplets: —

*Drink wine, O ye lovers, I rede you alway, * And praise his worth who
loves night and day;*

*'Mid the myrtle, narcissus and lavender, * And the scented herbs that
bedeck the tray.*

⁶⁷ Al-Muzfir = the Twister; Lúlúah = The Pearl, or Wild Heifer.

So Iblis the Damned drank and said, "Brave, O desire of hearts! But thou owest me still another aria." Then he filled the cup and signed to her to sing. Quoth she, "Hearkening and obedience," and chanted these couplets: —

*Ye wot, I am whelmed in despair and despight, * Ye dight me blight
that delights your sight:*

*Your wone is between my unrest and my eyes; * Nor tears to melt you,
nor sighs have might.*

*How oft shall I sue you for justice, and you * With a pining death
my dear love requite?*

*But your harshness is duty, your farness near; * Your hate is Union,
your wrath is delight:*

*Take your fill of reproach as you will: you claim * All my heart, and
I reckon not of safety or blame.*

All present were delighted and the sitting-chamber was moved like a wave with mirth, and Iblis said, "Brave, O Tohfah al-Sudur!" Then they left not liquor-bibbing and rejoicing and making merry and tambourining and piping till the night waned and the dawn waxed near; and indeed exceeding delight entered into them. The most of them in mirth was the Shaykh Iblis, and for the stress of that which befel him of joyance, he doffed all that was on him of coloured clothes and cast them over Tohfah, and among the rest a robe brodered with jewels and jacinths, worth ten thousand dinars. Then he kissed the earth and danced and he thrust his finger up his fundament and hending his beard in hand, said to her, "Sing about this beard and endeavour after mirth and pleasance, and no blame shall betide thee for this." So she improvised and sang these couplets: —

*Barbe of the olden, the one-eyed goat! * What words shall thy foulness
o' deed denote?*

*Be not of our praises so pompous-proud: * Thy worth for a dock-tail
dog's I wot.*

*By Allah, to-morrow shall see me drub * Thy nape with a cow-hide
and dust thy coat!*

All those present laughed at her mockery of Iblis and wondered at the wittiness of her visnomy⁶⁸ and her readiness in versifying, whilst the Shaykh himself rejoiced and said to her, “O Tohfah al-Sudur, verily, the night be gone; so arise and rest thyself ere the day; and to-morrow there shall be naught save weal.” Then all the kings of the Jinn departed, together with those who were present of guards; and Tohfah abode alone, pondering the case of Al-Rashid and bethinking her of how it went with him after her going, and of what had betided him for her loss, till the dawn lightened, when she arose and walked about the palace.

Suddenly she saw a handsome door; so she opened it and found herself in a flower-garden finer than the first — ne’er saw eyes of seer a fairer than it. When she beheld this garth, she was moved to delight and she called to mind her lord Al-Rashid and wept with sore weeping and cried, “I crave of the bounty of Allah Almighty that my return to him and to my palace and to my home may be nearhand!” Then she walked about the parterres till she came to a pavilion, high builded of base and wide of space, never espied mortal nor heard of a grander than it. So she entered and found herself in a long corridor, which led to a Hammam goodlier than that aforetime described, and its cisterns were full of rose water mingled with musk. Quoth Tohfah, “Extolled

⁶⁸ Arab. “Farásah” = lit. knowing a horse.

be Allah! Indeed, this⁶⁹ is none other than a mighty great king.” Then she pulled off her clothes and washed her body and made her Ghushl ablution of the whole person and prayed that which was due from her of prayer from the evening of the previous day.

When the sun rose upon the gate of the garden and she saw the wonders thereof, with that which was therein of all manner blooms and streams, and heard the voices of its birds, she marvelled at what she beheld of the rareness of its ordinance and the beauty of its disposition and sat musing over the case of Al-Rashid and pondering what was come of him after her. Her tears coursed down her cheeks and the Zephyr blew on her; so she slept and knew no more till she suddenly felt a breath on her side-face, whereat she awoke in affright and found Queen Kamariyah kissing her, and she was accompanied by her sisters, who said, “Rise, for the sun hath set.” So Tohfah arose and making the Wuzu-ablution, prayed her due of prayers and accompanied the four queens to the palace, where she saw the wax candles lighted and the kings sitting. She saluted them with the salam and seated herself upon her couch; and behold, King Al-Shisban had shifted his semblance, for all the pride of his soul. Then came up Iblis (whom Allah damn!) and Tohfah rose to him and kissed his hands. He also kissed her hand and blessed her and asked, “How deemest thou? Is not this place pleasant, for all its desertedness and desolation?” Answered she, “None may be desolate in this place;” and he cried, “Know that this is a site whose soil no mortal dare tread;” but she rejoined, “I have dared and trodden it, and this is one of thy many favours.” Then they brought tables and dishes and viands and fruits and sweetmeats and other matters, whose description passeth powers

⁶⁹ i.e. the owner of this palace.

of mortal man, and they ate their sufficiency; after which the tables were removed and the dessert-trays and platters set on, and they ranged the bottles and flagons and vessels and phials, together with all manner fruits and sweet-scented flowers. The first to raise the bowl was Iblis the Accursed, who said, “O Tohfah al-Sudur, sing over my cup.” So she took the lute and touching it, carolled these couplets: —

*Wake ye, Ho sleepers all! and take your joy * Of Time, and boons he
deignèd to bestow;*

*Then hail the Wine-bride, drain the wine-ptisane * Which, poured
from flagon, flows with flaming glow:*

*O Cup-boy, serve the wine, bring round the red * Whose draught gives
all we hope for here below:*

*What's worldly pleasure save my lady's face, * Draughts of pure wine
and song of musico?*

So Iblis drained his bowl and, when he had made an end of his draught, waved his hand to Tohfah; then, throwing off that which was upon him of clothes, delivered them to her. The suit would have brought ten thousand dinars and with it was a tray full of jewels worth a mint of money. Presently he filled again and gave the cup to his son Al-Shisban, who took it from his hand and kissing it, stood up and sat down again. Now there was before him a tray of roses; so he said to her, “O Tohfah, sing thou somewhat upon these roses.” She replied, “Hearkening and obedience,” and chanted these two couplets: —

*It proves my price o'er all the flowers that I * Seek you each year, yet
stay but little stound:*

*And high my vaunt I'm dyèd by my lord * Whom Allah made the best
e'er trod on ground.*

So Al-Shisban drank off the cup in his turn and said, “Brave, O desire of hearts!” and he bestowed on her that was upon him, to wit, a dress of cloth-of-pearl, fringed with great unions and rubies and purfled with precious gems, and a tray wherein were fifty thousand dinars. Then Maymun the Sworder took the cup and began gazing intently upon Tohfah. Now there was in his hand a pomegranate-flower and he said to her, “Sing thou somewhat, O queen of mankind and Jinn-kind upon this pomegranate-flower; for indeed thou hast dominion over all hearts.” Quoth she, “To hear is to obey;” and she improvised and sang these couplets: —

*Breathes sweet the zephyr on fair partèrre; * Robing lute in the
flamings that fell from air:
And moaned from the boughs with its cooing rhyme * Voice of ring-
doves plaining their love and care:
The branch dresses in suit of fine sendal green * And in wine-hues
borrowed from bloom Gulnare.*

Maymun the Sworder drained his bowl and said to her, “Brave, O perfection of qualities!” Then he signed to her and was absent awhile, after which he returned and with him a tray of jewels worth an hundred thousand ducats, which he gave to Tohfah. Thereupon Kamariyah arose and bade her slave-girl open the closet behind the Songstress, wherein she laid all that wealth; and committed the key to her, saying, “Whatso of riches cometh to thee, lay thou in this closet that is by thy side, and after the festivities, it shall be borne to thy palace on the heads of the Jinn.” Tohfah kissed her hand and another king, by name Munír,⁷⁰ took the bowl and filling it, said to her, “O

⁷⁰ i.e. “The brilliant,” the enlightened.

ferly Fair, sing to me over my bowl somewhat upon the jasmine.” She replied with, “Hearkening and obedience,” and improvised these couplets: —

*’Twere as though the Jasmine (when self she enrobes * On her boughs)
doth display to my wondering eyne;
In sky of green beryl, which Beauty enclothes, * Star-groups like studs
of the silvern mine.*

Munir drank off his cup and ordered her eight hundred thousand dinars, whereat Kamariyah rejoiced and rising to her feet, kissed Tohfah on her face and said to her, “Be the world never bereaved of thee, O thou who lordest it over the hearts of Jinn-kind and mankind!” Then she returned to her place and the Shaykh Iblis arose and danced, till all present were confounded; after which the Songstress said, “Verily, thou embellishest my festivities, O thou who commandest men and Jinn and rejoicest their hearts with thy loveliness and the beauty of thy faithfulness to thy lord. All that thy hands possess shall be borne to thee in thy palace and placed at thy service; but now the dawn is nearhand; so do thou rise and rest thee according to thy custom.” Tohfah turned and found with her none of the Jinn; so she laid her head on the floor and slept till she had gotten her repose; after which she arose and betaking herself to the lakelet, made the Wuzu-ablution and prayed. Then she sat beside the water awhile and meditated the matter of her lord Al-Rashid and that which had betided him after her loss and wept with sore weeping.

Presently, she heard a blowing behind her; so she turned and behold, a Head without a body and with eyes slit endlong: it was of the bigness of an elephant’s skull and bigger and had a mouth as it were an oven and projecting canines as they were grapnels, and hair which

trailed upon the ground. So Tohfah cried, “I take refuge with Allah from Satan the Stoned!” and recited the Two Preventives;⁷¹ what while the Head drew near her and said, “Peace be with thee, O Princess of Jinn and men and union-pearl of her age and her time! Allah continue thee on life, for all the lapsing of the days, and reunite thee with thy lord the Imam!” She replied, “And upon thee be Peace; O thou whose like I have not seen among the Jann!” Quoth the Head, “We are a folk who may not change their favours and we are hight Ghuls: mortals summon us to their presence, but we cannot present ourselves before them without leave. As for me, I have gotten leave of the Shaykh Abu al-Tawaif to appear before thee and I desire of thy favour that thou sing me a song, so I may go to thy palace and question its Haunters⁷² concerning the plight of thy lord after thee and return to thee; and know, O Tohfah al-Sudur, that between thee and thy lord be a distance of fifty years’ journey for the *bonâ fide* traveller.”

She rejoined, “Indeed, thou grieveest me anent him between whom and me is fifty years’ journey;” but the Head cried to her, “Be of good cheer and of eyes cool and clear, for the sovrans of the Jann will restore thee to him in less than the twinkling of an eye.” Quoth she, “I will sing thee an hundred songs, so thou wilt bring me news of my lord and that which betided him after me.” And quoth the Head, “Do thou favour me and sing me a song, so I may go to thy lord and fetch thee tidings of him, for that I desire, before I go, to hear thy

⁷¹ The two short Koranic chapters, The Daybreak (cxiii.) and The Men (cxiv. and last) evidently so called from the words which occur in both (versets i., “I take refuge with”). These “Ma’úzatáni,” as they are called, are recited as talismans or preventives against evil, and are worn as amulets inscribed on parchment.

⁷² Arab. “’Ummár” i.e. the Jinn, the “spiritual creatures” which walk this earth, and other non-humans who occupy it.

voice, so haply my thirst may be quenched.” So she took the lute and tuning it, sang these couplets: —

*They have marched, yet no empty stead left they: * They are gone, nor heart grieves me that fled be they:*

*My heart forebode the bereaval of friends; * Allah ne’er bereave steads wherefrom sped be they!*

*Though they hid the stations where led were they, * I’ll follow till stars fall in disarray!*

*Ye slumber, but wake shall ne’er fly these lids; * ’Tis I bear what ye never bore — well-away!*

*It had irked them not to farewell who fares * With the parting-fires that my heart waylay.*

*My friends,⁷³ your meeting to me is much * But more is the parting befel us tway:*

*You’re my heart’s delight, or you present be * Or absent, with you is my soul for aye!*

Thereupon the Head wept exceeding sore and cried, “O my lady, indeed thou hast solaced my heart, and I have naught but my life; so take it.” She replied, “Nay, an I but knew that thou wouldst bring me news of my lord Al-Rashid, ’twere fainer to me than the reign of the world;” and the Head answered her, “It shall be done as thou desirest.” Then it disappeared and returning to her at the last of the night, said, “O my lady, know that I have been to thy palace and have questioned one of its Haunters of the case of the Commander of the Faithful and that which befel him after thee; and he said: — When the Prince of True Believers came to Tohfah’s apartment and found

⁷³ Arab. “Ahbábu-ná” plur. for singular = my beloved.

her not and saw no sign of her, he buffeted his face and head and rent his raiment.

Now there was in thy chamber the Castrato, the chief of thy household, and the Caliph cried out at him, saying, "Bring me Ja'afar the Barmaki and his father and brother at this very moment!" The Eunuch went out, bewildered in his wit for fear of the King, and when he stood in the presence of Ja'afar, he said to him, "Come to the Commander of the Faithful, thou and thy father and thy brother." So they arose in haste and betaking themselves to the presence, said, "O Prince of True Believers what may be the matter?" Quoth he, "There is a matter which passeth description. Know that I locked the door and taking the key with me, betook myself to my uncle's daughter, with whom I lay the night; but, when I arose in the morning and came and opened the door, I found no sign of Tohfah." Quoth Ja'afar, "O Commander of the Faithful have patience, for that the damsel hath been snatched away, and needs must she return, seeing that she took the lute with her, and 'tis her own lute. The Jinns have assuredly carried her off, and we trust in Allah Almighty that she will return." Cried the Caliph, "This is a thing which may nowise be!" And he abode in her apartment, nor eating nor drinking, while the Barmecides besought him to fare forth to the folk; and he weepeth and tarrieth on such fashion till she shall return. This, then, is that which hath betided him after thee.

When Tohfah heard his words, they were grievous to her and she wept with sore weeping; whereupon quoth the Head to her, "The relief of Allah the Most High is nearhand; but now let me hear somewhat of thy speech." So she took the lute and sang three songs, weeping the while. The Head exclaimed, "By Allah, thou hast been bountiful to me, the Lord be with thee!" Then it disappeared and the season of sundown came: so she rose and betook herself to her place

in the hall; whereupon behold, the candles sprang up from under the earth and kindled themselves. Then the kings of the Jann appeared and saluted her and kissed her hands and she greeted them with the salam. Presently appeared Kamariyah and her three sisters and saluted Tohfah and sat down; whereupon the tables were brought and they ate; and when the tables were removed there came the wine-tray and the drinking-service. So Tohfah took the lute and one of the three queens filled the cup and signed to the Songstress. Now she had in her hand a violet, so Tohfah improvised these couplets: —

*I'm clad in a leaf-cloak of green; * In an honour-robe ultramarine:
I'm a wee thing of loveliest mien * But all flowers as my vassals are seen:
An Rose tittle her "Morn-pride," I ween * Nor before me nor after
she's Queen.*

The queen drank off her cup and bestowed on Tohfah a dress of cloth-of-pearl, fringed with red rubies, worth twenty thousand ducats, and a tray whereon were ten thousand sequins. All this while Maymun's eye was upon her and presently he said to her, "Harkye, Tohfah! Sing to me." But Queen Zalzalah cried out at him, and said "Desist, O Maymun. Thou sufferest not Tohfah to pay heed to us." Quoth he, "I will have her sing to me:" and many words passed between them and Queen Zalzalah cried aloud at him. Then she shook and became like unto the Jinns and taking in her hand a mace of stone, said to him, "Fie upon thee! What art thou that thou shouldst bespeak us thus? By Allah, but for the respect due to kings and my fear of troubling the session and the festival and the mind of the Shaykh Iblis, I would assuredly beat the folly out of thy head!" When Maymun heard these her words, he rose, with the fire shooting from his eyes, and said, "O daughter of Imlák, what art thou that thou shouldst outrage me with

the like of this talk?" Replied she, "Woe to thee, O dog of the Jinn, knowest thou not thy place?"

So saying, she ran at him, and offered to strike him with the mace, but the Shaykh Iblis arose and casting his turband on the ground cried, "Out on thee, O Maymun! Thou dost always with us on this wise. Wheresoever thou art present, thou troublest our pleasure! Canst thou not hold thy peace until thou go forth of the festival and this bride-feast be accomplished? When the circumcision is at an end and ye all return to your dwellings, then do as thou willest. Fie upon thee, O Maymun! Wottest thou not that Imlak is of the chiefs of the Jinn? But for my good name, thou shouldst have seen what would have betided thee of humiliation and chastisement; yet on account of the festival none may speak. Indeed thou exceedest; dost thou not ken that her sister Wakhimah is doughtier than any of the Jann? Learn to know thyself: hast thou no regard for thy life?" So Maymun was silent and Iblis turned to Tohfah and said to her, "Sing to the kings of the Jinns this day and to-night until the morrow, when the boy will be circumcised and each shall return to his own place."

Accordingly she took the lute and Kamariyah said to her (now she had a citron in hand), "O my sister, sing to me somewhat on this citron." Tohfah replied, "To hear is to obey," and improvising, sang these couplets: —

*I'm a dome of fine gold and right cunningly dight; * And my sweetness
of youth gladdeth every sight:*

*My wine is ever the drink of kings * And I'm fittest gift to the friendliest
sprite.*

At this Queen Kamariyah rejoiced with joy exceeding and drained her cup, crying, "Brava! O thou choice Gift of hearts!" Furthermore, she

took off a sleeved robe of blue brocade, fringed with red rubies, and a necklace of white jewels worth an hundred thousand ducats, and gave them to Tohfah. Then she passed the cup to her sister Zalzalah, who hent in her hand herb basil, and she said to Tohfah, "Sing to me somewhat on this basil." She replied, "Hearing and obeying," and improvised and sang these couplets: —

*I'm the Queen of herbs in the séance of wine * And in Heaven Na'im
are my name and sign:
And the best are promised, in garth of Khuld, * Repose, sweet scents
and the peace divine:
What prizes then with my price shall vie? * What rank even mine,
in all mortals' eyne?*

Thereat Queen Zalzalah rejoiced with joy exceeding and bidding her treasuress bring a basket, wherein were fifty pairs of bracelets and the same number of earrings, all of gold, crusted with jewels of price, whose like nor mankind nor Jinn-kind possessed, and an hundred robes of vari-coloured brocades and an hundred thousand ducats, gave the whole to Tohfah. Then she passed the cup to her sister Shararah, who had in her hand a stalk of narcissus; so she took it from her and turning to the Songstress, said to her, "O Tohfah, sing to me somewhat on this." She replied, "Hearkening and obedience," and improvised these couplets: —

*With the smaragd wand doth my form compare; * 'Mid the finest
flowers my worth's rarest rare:
My eyes are likened to Beauty's eyne, * And my gaze is still on the
bright partèrre.*

When she had made an end of her song, Shararah was moved to

delight exceeding, and drinking off her cup, said to her, “Brava, O thou choice Gift of hearts!” Then she ordered her an hundred dresses of brocade and an hundred thousand ducats and passed the cup to Queen Wakhimah. Now she had in her hand somewhat of Nu’uman’s bloom, the anemone; so she took the cup from her sister and turning to the Songstress, said to her, “O Tohfah, sing to me on this.” Quoth she, “I hear and I obey,” and improvised these couplets: —

*I’m a dye was dyed by the Ruthful’s might; * And all confess me
the goodliest sight:*

*I began in the dust and the clay, but now * On the cheeks of fair
women I rank by right.*

Therewith Wakhimah rejoiced with joy exceeding and drinking off the cup, ordered her twenty dresses of Roumí brocade and a tray, wherein were thirty thousand ducats. Then she gave the cup to Queen Shu’a’ah,⁷⁴ Regent of the Fourth Sea, who took it and said, “O my lady Tohfah, sing to me on the gillyflower.” She replied, “Hearing and obeying,” and improvised these couplets: —

*The time of my presence ne’er draws to a close, * Amid all whose
joyance with mirth o’erflows;*

*When topers gather to sit at wine * Or in nightly shade or when
morning shows,*

*I filch from the flagon to fill the bowls * And the crystal cup where
the wine-beam glows.*

Queen Shu’a’ah rejoiced with joy exceeding and emptying her cup, gave Tohfah an hundred thousand ducats. Then up sprang Iblis

⁷⁴ i.e. Queen Sunbeam.

(whom Allah curse!) and cried, "Verily, the dawn lighteneth;" whereupon the folk arose and disappeared, all of them, and there abode not one of them save the Songstress, who went forth to the garden and entering the Hamman made her Wuzu-ablutions and prayed whatso lacked her of prayers. Then she sat down and when the sun rose, behold, there came up to her near an hundred thousand green birds, which filled the branches of the trees with their multitudes and they warbled in various voices, whilst Tohfah marvelled at their fashion. Suddenly, appeared eunuchs, bearing a throne of gold, studded with pearls and gems and jacinths, both white and red, and having four steps of gold, together with many carpets of sendal and brocade and Coptic cloth of silk sprigged with gold; and all these they spread in the centre of the garden and setting up the throne thereon, perfumed the place with virgin musk, Nadd and ambergris. After that, there came a queen; never saw eyes a fairer than she nor than her qualities; she was robed in rich raiment, broidered with pearls and gems, and on her head was a crown set with various kinds of unions and jewels. About her were five hundred slave-girls, high-bosomed maids, as they were moons, screening her, right and left, and she among them like the moon on the night of its full, for that she was the most worthy of them in majesty and dignity.

She ceased not walking till she came to Tohfah, whom she found gazing on her in amazement; and when the Songstress saw her turn to her, she rose to her, standing on her feet, and saluted her and kissed ground between her hands. The queen rejoiced in her and putting out her hand to her, drew her to herself and seated her by her side on the couch; whereupon the Songstress kissed her hands and the queen said to her, "Know, O Tohfah, that all which thou treadest of these carpets belongeth not to any of the Jinn, who may never tread them without

thy leave, for that I am the queen of them all and the Shaykh Abu al-Tawaif Iblis sought my permission to hold festival and prayed me urgently to be present at the circumcision of his son. So I despatched to him, in my stead, a slave-girl of my slave-girls, namely, Shu'ā'ah Queen of the Fourth Sea, who is vice-reine of my reign. When she was present at the wedding and saw thee and heard thy singing, she sent to me, informing me of thee and setting forth to me thy grace and amiability and the beauty of thy breeding and thy courtesy. So I am come to thee, for that which I have heard of thy charms, and hereby I do thee a mighty great favour in the eyes of all the Jann.”⁷⁵ Thereupon Tohfah arose and kissed the earth and the queen thanked her for this and bade her sit. So she sat down and the queen called for foods when they brought a table of gold, inlaid with pearls and jacinth; and jewels and bearing kinds manifold of birds and viands of various hues, and the queen said, “O Tohfah, in the name of Allah! Let us eat bread and salt together, I and thou.”

Accordingly the Songstress came forward and ate of those meats and found therein somewhat the like whereof she had never eaten; no, nor aught more delicious than it, while the slave-girls stood around the table, as the white compasseth the black of the eye, and she sat conversing and laughing with the queen. Then said the lady, “O my sister, a slave-girl told me of thee that thou saidst, ‘How loathly is what yonder Jinni Maymun eateth!’” Tohfah replied, “By Allah, O my lady, I have not any eye that can look at him, and indeed I am fearful of him.” When the queen heard this, she laughed till she fell backwards and said “O my sister, by the might of the graving upon the seal-ring of Solomon, prophet of Allah, I am queen over all the Jann, and none

⁷⁵ Or “And in this there shall be to thee great honour over all the Jinn.”

dare so much as cast on thee a glance of the eye;" whereat Tohfah kissed her hand. Then the tables were removed and the twain sat talking. Presently up came the kings of the Jinn from every side and kissed ground before the queen and stood in her service; and she thanked them for this, but moved not for one of them. Then appeared the Shaykh Abu al-Tawaif Iblis (Allah curse him!) and kissed the earth before her, saying, "O my lady, may I not be bereft of these steps!"⁷⁶ She replied, "O Shaykh Abu al-Tawaif, it behoveth thee to thank the bounty of the Lady Tohfah, who was the cause of my coming." Rejoined he, "Thou sayest sooth," and kissed ground.

Then the queen fared on towards the palace and there arose and alighted upon the trees an hundred thousand birds of manifold hues. The Songstress asked, "How many are these birds?" and Queen Wakhimah answered her, "Know, O my sister, that this queen is hight Queen al-Shahbá"⁷⁷ and that she is queen over all the Jann from East to West. These birds thou seest are of her host, and unless they appeared in this shape, earth would not be wide enough for them. Indeed, they came forth with her and are present with her presence at this circumcision. She will give thee after the measure of that which hath been given to thee from the first of the festival to the last thereof; and indeed she honoureth us all with her presence." Then the queen entered the palace and sat down on the couch of the circumcision⁷⁸ at the upper end of the hall, whereupon Tohfah took the lute and pressing it to her breast, touched its strings suchwise that the wits of all present were

⁷⁶ i.e. "May thy visits never fail me!"

⁷⁷ i.e. Ash-coloured, verging upon white.

⁷⁸ The Arab boy who, unlike the Jew, is circumcised long after infancy and often in his teens, thus making the ceremony conform after a fashion with our "Confirmation," is displayed before being operated upon, to family and friends; and the seat is a couch covered with the richest tapestry. So far it resembles the bride-throne.

bewildered and Shaykh Iblis cried to her, “O my lady Tohfah, I conjure thee, by the life of this noble queen, sing for me and praise thyself, and cross me not.” Quoth she, “To hear is to obey; still, but for thine adjuration, I had not done this. Say me, doth any praise himself? What manner thing is this?” Then she improvised these couplets: —

*In all fêtes I’m Choice Gift to the minstrel-race;
Folk attest my worth, rank and my pride of place,
While Fame, merit and praises with honour engrace.*

Her verses pleased the kings of the Jann and they cried, “By Allah, thou sayst sooth!” Then she rose to her feet, hending lute in hand, and played and sang, whilst the Jinns and the Shaykh Abu al-Tawaif danced. Presently the Father of the Tribes came up to her bussing her bosom, and gave her a Bráhmāni carbuncle he had taken from the hidden hoard of Yáfis bin Núh⁷⁹ (on whom be the Peace), and which was worth the reign of the world; its light was as the sheen of the sun and he said to her, “Take this and be equitable therewith to the people of the world.” She kissed his hand and rejoiced in the jewel and said, “By Allah, this befitteth none save the Commander of the Faithful.”

Now Queen Al-Shahba laughed with delight at the dancing of Iblís and she said to him, “By Allah, this is a goodly pavane!” He thanked her for this and said to the Songstress, “O Tohfah, there is not on earth’s face a skilfuller than Ishak al-Nadim; but thou art more skilful than he. Indeed, I have been present with him many a time and have shown him positions on the lute, and there has betided me with him that which betided. Indeed, the story of my dealings with him is a long one but this is no time to repeat it; for now I would show thee a shift

⁷⁹ Japhet, son of Noah.

on the lute, whereby thou shalt be exalted over all folk.” Quoth she, “Do what seemeth good to thee.” So he took the lute and played thereon a wondrous playing, with rare divisions and marvellous modulations, and showed her a passage she knew not; and this was goodlier to her than all that she had gotten. Then she took the lute from him and playing thereon, sang and presently returned to the passage which he had shown her; and he said, “By Allah, thou singest better than I!”

As for Tohfah, it became manifest to her that her former practice was all of it wrong and that what she had learnt from the Shaykh Abu al-Tawaif Iblis was the root and foundation of all perfection in the art and its modes. So she rejoiced in that which she had won of skill in touching the lute far more than in all that had fallen to her lot of wealth and honour-robcs and kissed the Master’s hand. Then said Queen Al-Shahba, “By Allah, O Shaykh, my sister Tohfah is indeed singular among the folk of her time, and I hear that she singeth upon all sweet-smelling blooms.” Iblis replied, “Yes, O my lady, and I am in extremest wonderment thereat. But there remaineth somewhat of sweet-scented flowers, which she hath not besung, such as myrtle and tuberosc and jessamine and the moss-rose and the like.” Then the Shaykh signed to her to sing somewhat upon the rest of the flowers, that Queen Al-Shahba might hear, and she said, “Hearing and obeying.” So she took the lute and played thereon in many modes, then returned to the first and sang these couplets: —

*I’m one of the lover-retinue * Whom long pine and patience have
doomed rue:*

*And sufferance of parting from kin and friends * Hath clothed me,
O folk, in this yellow hue:*

*Then, after the joyance had passed away, * Heart-break, abasement
and cark I knew,
Through the long, long day when the lift is light, * Nor, when night
is murk, my pangs cease pursue:
So, 'twixt fairest hope and unfailing fear, * My bitter tears ever flow
anew.*

Thereat Queen Al-Shahba rejoiced with joy exceeding and cried, “Brava, O queen of delight! No one is able to describe thee. Sing to us on the Apple.” Quoth Tohfah, “Hearkening and obedience.” Then she recited these couplets: —

*I surpass all forms in my coquetry * For mine inner worth and mine
outer blee;
Tend me noble hands in the sight of all * And slake with pure waters
the thirst of me;
My robe is of sendal, and eke my veil * Is of sunlight the Ruthful hath
bidden be:
When my fair companions are marched afar, * In sorrow fro' home
they are forced to flee:
But noble hands deign hearten my heart * With beds where I sit in my
high degree;⁸⁰
And where, like full moon at its rise, my light * 'mid the garden-fruits
thou shalt ever see.*

Queen Al-Shahba rejoiced in this with exceeding joy and cried “Brava! By Allah, there is none excelleth thee.” Tohfah kissed the ground, then returned to her place and versified on the Tuberose, saying: —

⁸⁰ The bed (farsh), is I presume, the straw-spread(?) store-room where the apples are preserved.

*I'm a marvel-bloom to be worn on head! * Though a stranger among
you fro' home I fled:*

*Make use of wine in my company * And flout at Time who in languish
sped.*

*E'en so doth camphor my hue attest, * O my lords, as I stand in my
present stead.*

*So gar me your gladness when dawneth day, * And to highmost seat
in your homes be I led:*

*And quaff your cups in all jollity, * And cheer and ease shall ne'er
cease to be.*

At this Queen Al-Shahba rejoiced with exceeding joy and cried, "Brava, O queen of delight! By Allah, I know not how I shall do to give thee thy due! May the Most High grant us the grace of thy long continuance!" Then she strained her to her breast and bussed her on the cheek; whereupon quoth Iblis (on whom be a curse!), "This is a mighty great honour!" Quoth the queen, "Know that this lady Tohfah is my sister and that her biddance is my biddance and her forbiddance my forbiddance. So all of you hearken to her word and render her worshipful obedience." Therewith the kings rose in a body and kissed ground before Tohfah, who rejoiced in this. Moreover, Queen Al-Shahba doffed dress and habited her in a suit adorned with pearls, jewels and jacinths, worth an hundred thousand ducats, and wrote for her on a slip of paper a patent appointing her to be her deputy. So the Songstress rose and kissed ground before the Queen, who said to her, "Of thy favour, sing to us somewhat concerning the rest of the sweet-scented flowers and herbs, so I may hear thy chant and solace myself with witnessing thy skill." She replied, "To hear is to obey, O lady mine," and, taking the lute, improvised these couplets: —

*My hue excelleth all hues in light, * And I would all eyes should enjoy
my sight:*

*My site is the site of fillets and pearls * Where the fairest brows are
with jasmine dight:*

*My light's uprist (and what light it shows!) * Is a silvern zone on
the waist of Night.*

Then she changed the measure and improvised these couplets: —

*I'm the gem of herbs, and in seasons twain * My tryst I keep with
my lovers-train:*

*I stint not union for length of time * Nor visits, though some be of
severance fain;*

*The true one am I and my troth I keep, * And, easy of plucking,
no hand disdain.*

Then, changing measure and the mode, she played so that she bewildered the wits of those who were present, and Queen Al-Shahba, moved to mirth and merriment, cried, “Brava, O queen of delight!” Presently she returned to the first mode and improved these couplets on Nenuphar: —

*I fear me lest freke espy me, * In air when I fain deny me;*

*So I root me beneath the wave, * And my stalks to bow down apply me.*

Hereat Queen Al-Shahba rejoiced with exceeding joy, and cried, “Brava, O Tohfah! Let me hear more of thy chant.” Accordingly, she smote the lute and changing the mode, recited on the Moss-rose these couplets: —

*Look on Nasrín those branchy shoots surround; * With greenest
leafery 'tis deckt and crowned:*

*Its graceful bending stem draws every gaze * While beauteous bearing
makes their love abound.*

Then she changed measure and mode and sang these couplets on the Water-lily: —

*O thou who askest Súsán⁸¹ of her scent, * Hear thou my words and
beauty of my lay.*

*“Emir am I whom all mankind desire” * (Quoth she) “or present
or when ta’en away.”*

When Tohfah had made an end of her song, Queen Al-Shahba rose and said, “I never heard from any the like of this;” and she drew the Songstress to her and fell to kissing her. Then she took leave of her and flew away; and on like wise all the birds took flight with her, so that they walled the horizon; whilst the rest of the kings tarried behind. Now as soon as it was the fourth night, there came the boy who was to be circumcised, adorned with jewels such as never saw eye nor heard ear of, and amongst the rest a crown of gold crusted with pearls and gems, the worth whereof was an hundred thousand sequins. He sat down upon the couch and Tohfah sang to him, till the surgeon came and they snipped his foreskin in the presence of all the kings, who showered on him a mighty great store of jewels and jacinths and gold. Queen Kamariyah bade her Eunuchs gather up all this and lay it in Tohfah’s closet and it was as much in value as all that had fallen to her, from the first of the festivities to the last thereof. Moreover, the Shaykh Iblis (whom Allah curse!) bestowed upon the Songstress the crown worn by the boy and gave the circumcisee another, whereat Tohfah’s reason took flight.

⁸¹ The lily in Heb.

Then the Jinn departed, in order of rank, whilst Iblis farewelled them, band after band. Seeing the Shaykh thus occupied with taking leave of the kings, Maymun seized his opportunity, the place being empty, and taking up Tohfah on his shoulders, soared aloft with her to the confines of the lift, and flew away with her. Presently, Iblis came to look for the Songstress and see what she purposed, but found her not and sighted the slave-girls slapping their faces: so he said to them, "Fie on you! What may be the matter?" They replied, "O our lord, Maymun hath snatched up Tohfah and flown away with her." When Iblis heard this, he gave a cry whereto earth trembled and said, "What is to be done?" Then he buffeted his face and head, exclaiming, "Woe to you! This be none other than exceeding insolence. Shall he carry off Tohfah from my very palace and attaint mine honour? Doubtless, this Maymun hath lost his wits." Then he cried out a second time, so that the earth quaked, and rose on his wings high in air. The news came to the rest of the kings; so they flew after him and overtaking him, found him full of anxiety and affright, with fire issuing from his nostrils, and said to him, "O Shaykh al-Tawaif,⁸² what is to do?" He replied, "Know ye that Maymun hath carried off Tohfah from my palace and attained mine honour." When they heard this, they cried, "There is no Majesty and there is no Might save in Allah the Glorious, the Great. By God he hath ventured upon a grave matter and verily he destroyeth self and folk!" Then Shaykh Iblis ceased not flying till he fell in with the tribes of the Jann, and they gathered together a world of people, none may tell the tale of them save the Lord of All-might.

⁸² It may be a misprint for Abú al-Tawaif, but it can also mean "O Shaykh of the Tribes (of Jinns)!"

So they came to the Fortress of Copper and the Citadel of Lead,⁸³ and the people of the sconces saw the tribes of the Jann issuing from every deep mountain-pass and said, "What be the news?" Then Iblis went in to King Al-Shisban and acquainted him with that which had befallen; whereupon quoth he, "Verily, Allah hath destroyed Maymun and his many! He pretendeth to possess Tohfah, and she is become queen of the Jann! But have patience till we devise that which befitteth in the matter of Tohfah." Iblis asked, "And what befitteth it to do?" And Al-Shisban answered, "We will fall upon him and kill him and his host with cut of brand." Then quoth Shaykh Iblis, "'Twere better to acquaint Queen Kamariyah and Queen Zal-zalah and Queen Shararah and Queen Wakhimah; and when they are assembled, Allah shall ordain whatso He deemeth good in the matter of her release." Quoth Al-Shisban, "Right is thy rede" and thy despatched to Queen Kamariyah an Ifrit hight Salhab who came to her palace and found her sleeping, so he roused her and she said, "What is to do, O Salhab?" Cried he, "O my lady, come to the succour of thy sister the Songstress, for Maymun hath carried her off and attained thine honour and that of Shaykh Iblis." Quoth she, "What sayst thou?" and she sat up straight and cried out with a great cry. And indeed she feared for Tohfah and said, "By Allah, in very sooth she used to say that he gazed at her and prolonged the gaze; but ill is that whereto his soul hath prompted him." Then she rose in haste and mounting a Sataness of her Satans, said to her, "Fly."

So she flew off with her and alighted in the palace of her sister Shararah, whereupon she sent for her sisters Zalzalah and Wakhimah and acquainted them with the tidings, saying, "Know that Maymun

⁸³ The capital of King Al-Shisban.

hath snatched up Tohfah and flown off with her swiftness than the blinding leven.” Then they all flew off in haste and lighting down in the place where were their father Al-Shisban and their grandfather the Shaykh Abu al-Tawaif, found the folk on the sorriest of situations. When their grandfather Iblis saw them, he rose to them and wept, and they all wept for the Songstress. Then said Iblis to them, “Yonder hound hath attained mine honour and taken Tohfah, and I think not other wise but that she is like to die of distress for herself and her lord Al-Rashid and saying, ‘The whole that they said and did was false.’” Quoth Kamariyah, “O grandfather mine, nothing is left for it but stratagem and device for her deliverance, for that she is dearer to me than everything; and know that yonder accursed when he waxeth ware of your coming upon him, will ken that he hath no power to cope with you, he who is the least and meanest of the Jann; but we dread that he, when assured of defeat, will slay Tohfah; wherefore nothing will serve but that we contrive a sleight for saving her; else will she perish.” He asked, “And what hast thou in mind of device?” and she answered, “Let us take him with fair means, and if he obey, all will be well; else will we practice stratagem against him; and expect not her deliverance from other than myself.” Quoth Iblis, “The affair is thine; contrive what thou wilt, for that Tohfah is thy sister and thy solicitude for her is more effectual than that of any other.”

So Kamariyah cried out to an Ifrit of the Ifrits and a calamity of the calamities, by name Al-Asad al-Tayyár, the Flying Lion, and said to him, “Hie with my message to the Crescent Mountain, the wone of Maymun the Sworder, and enter and say to him, ‘My lady saluteth thee with the salam and asketh thee, How canst thou be assured for thyself of safety, after what thou hast done, O Maymun? Couldst thou find none to maltreat in thy drunken humour save Tohfah, she too being a

queen? But thou art excused, because thou didst not this deed, but 'twas thy drink, and the Shaykh Abu al-Tawaif pardoneth thee, because thou wast drunken. Indeed, thou hast attained his honour; but now restore her to her palace, for that she hath done well and favoured us and rendered us service, and thou wottest that she is this day our queen. Belike she may bespeak Queen Al-Shahba, whereupon the matter will become grievous and that wherein there is no good shall betide thee; and thou wilt get no title of gain. Verily, I give thee good counsel, and so the Peace!'”

Al-Asad answered “Hearing and obeying,” and flew till he came to the Crescent Mountain, when he sought audience of Maymun, who bade admit him. So he entered and kissing ground before him, gave him Queen Kamariyah’s message, which when he heard, he cried to the Ifrit, “Return whence thou comest and say to thy mistress, ‘Be silent and thou wilt show thy good sense.’ Else will I come and seize upon her and make her serve Tohfah; and if the kings of the Jinn assemble together against me and I be overcome by them, I will not leave her to scent the wind of this world and she shall be neither mine nor theirs, for that she is presently my sprite⁸⁴ from between my ribs; and how shall any part with his sprite?” When the Ifrit heard Maymun’s words, he said to him, “By Allah, O Maymun, art thou a changeling in thy wits, that thou speakest these words of my lady, and thou one of her page-boys?” Whereupon Maymun cried out and said to him, “Woe to thee, O dog of the Jinns! Wilt thou bespeak the like of me with these words?”

Then he bade those who were about him bastinado Al-Asad, but he took flight and soaring high in air, betook himself to his mistress and

⁸⁴ Arab. “Rúhf” lit. my breath, the outward sign of life.

told her the tidings: when she said, “Thou hast done well, O good knight!” Then she turned to her sire and said to him, “Hear that which I shall say to thee.” Quoth he, “Say on;” and quoth she, “I rede thee take thy troops and go to him, for when he heareth this, he will in turn levy his many and come forth to thee; whereupon do thou offer him battle and prolong the fight with him and make a show to him of weakness and giving way. Meantime, I will devise me a device for getting at Tohfah and delivering her, what while he is busied with you in battle; and when my messenger cometh to thee and informeth thee that I have gotten possession of Tohfah and that she is with me, return thou upon Maymun forthwith and overthrow him and his hosts, and take him prisoner. But, an my device succeed not with him and we fail to deliver Tohfah, he will assuredly practice to slay her, without recourse, and regret for her will remain in our hearts.” Quoth Iblis, “This is the right rede” and bade call a march among the troops, whereupon an hundred thousand knights, doughty wights of war, joined themselves to him and set out for the country of Maymun.

As for Queen Kamariyah, she flew off to the palace of her sister Wakhimah, and told her what deed Maymun had done and how he declared that, whenas he saw defeat nearhand, he would slay Tohfah; adding, “And indeed, he is resolved upon this; otherwise had he not dared to work such sleight. So do thou contrive the affair as thou see fit, for in rede thou hast no superior.” Then they sent for Queen Zalalah and Queen Shararah and sat down to take counsel, one with other, concerning what they had best do in the matter. Presently said Wakhimah, “’Twere advisable we fit out a ship in this our island home and embark therein, disguised as Adam’s sons, and fare on till we come to anchor under a little island that lieth over against Maymun’s palace. There will we sit drinking and smiting the lute and singing; for Tohfah

will assuredly be seated there overlooking the sea, and needs must she see us and come down to us, whereupon we will take her by force and she will be under our hands, so that none shall be able to molest her any more. Or, an Maymun be gone forth to do battle with the Jinns, we will storm his stronghold and take Tohfah and raze his palace and slay all therein. When he hears of this, his heart will be broken and we will send to let our father know, whereat he will return upon him with his troops and he will be destroyed and we shall have rest of him.” They answered her, saying, “This is a good counsel.” Then they bade fit out a ship from behind the mountain, and it was fitted out in less than the twinkling of an eye; so they launched it on the sea and embarking therein, together with four thousand Ifrits, set out, intending for Maymun’s palace. They also bade other five thousand Ifrits betake themselves to the island under the Crescent Mountain and there lie in wait for them ambushed well.

Thus fared it with the kings of the Jann; but as regards Shaykh Abu al-Tawaif Iblis and his son Al-Shisban the twain set out, as we have said, with their troops, who were of the doughtiest of the Jinn and the prowtest of them in wing-flying and horse-manship, and fared on till they drew near the Crescent Mountain. When the news of their approach reached Maymun, he cried out with a mighty great cry to the troops, who were twenty thousand riders, and bade them make ready for departure. Then he went in to Tohfah and kissing her, said, “Know that thou art this day my life of the world, and indeed the Jinns are gathered together to wage war on me for thy sake. An I win the day from them and am preserved alive, I will set all the kings of the Jann under thy feet and thou shalt become queen of the world.” But she shook her head and shed tears; and he said, “Weep not, for I swear by the virtue of the mighty inscription borne on the seal-ring of Solomon,

thou shalt never again see the land of men; no, never! Say me, can any one part with his life? Give ear, then, to my words; else will I slay thee.” So she was silent. And forthright he sent for his daughter, whose name was Jamrah,⁸⁵ and when she came, he said to her, “Harkye, Jamrah! Know that I am going to fight the clans of Al-Shisban and Queen Kamariyah and the Kings of the Jann. An I be vouchsafed the victory over them, to Allah be the laud and thou shalt have of me largesse; but, an thou see or hear that I am worsted and any come to thee with ill news of me, hasten to kill Tohfah, so she may fall neither to me nor to them.” Then he farewelled her and mounted, saying, “When this cometh about, pass over to the Crescent Mountain and take up thine abode there, and await what shall befall me and what I shall say to thee.” And Jamrah answered “Hearkening and obedience.”

Now when the Songstress heard these words, she fell to weeping and wailing and said, “By Allah, naught irketh me but severance from my lord Al-Rashid; however, when I am dead, let the world be ruined after me!” And she was certified in herself that she was assuredly lost. Then Maymun set forth with his army and departed in quest of the hosts of the Jinn, leaving none in the palace save his daughter Jamrah and Tohfah and an Ifrit which was dear to him. They fared on till they met with the army of Al-Shisban; and when the two hosts came face to face, they fell each upon other and fought a fight, a passing sore than which naught could be more. After a while, Al-Shisban’s troops began to give way, and when Maymun saw them do thus, he despised them and made sure of victory over them.

On this wise it befel them; but as regards Queen Kamariyah and her company they sailed on without ceasing, till they came under the

⁸⁵ i.e. A bit of burning charcoal.

palace wherein was Tohfah, to wit, that of Maymun the Sworder; and by the decree of the Lord of destiny, the Songstress herself was at that very time sitting on the belvedere of the palace, pondering the affair of Harun al-Rashid and her own and that which had befallen her and weeping for that she was doomed to death. She saw the vessel and what was therein of those we have named, and they in mortal guise, and said, "Alas, my sorrow for this ship and for the men that be therein!" As for Kamariyah and her many, when they drew near the palace, they strained their eyes and seeing the Songstress sitting, cried, "Yonder sitteth Tohfah. May Allah not bereave us of her!" Then they moored their craft and, making for the island which lay over against the palace, spread carpets and sat eating and drinking; whereupon quoth Tohfah, "Well come and welcome to yonder faces! These be my kinswomen and I conjure thee by Allah, O Jamrah, that thou let me down to them, so I may sit with them awhile and enjoy kindly converse with them and return." Quoth Jamrah, "I may on no wise do that;" and Tohfah wept. Then the folk brought out wine and drank, while Kamariyah took the lute and sang these couplets: —

*By Allah, had I never hoped to greet you * Your guide had failed
on camel to seat you!*

*Far bore you parting from friend would greet you * Till meseems
mine eyes for your wone entreat you.*

When Tohfah heard this, she cried out so great a cry, that the folk heard her and Kamariyah said, "Relief is nearhand." Then the Songstress looked out to them and called to them, saying, "O daughters of mine uncle, I am a lonely maid, an exile from kin and country: so for the love of Allah Almighty, repeat that song!" Accordingly Kamariyah repeated it and Tohfah swooned away. When she came to herself,

she said to Jamrah, "By the rights of the Apostle of Allah (whom may He save and assain!) unless thou suffer me go down to them and look on them and sit with them for a full hour, I will hurl myself headlong from this palace, for that I am weary of my life and know that I am slain to all certainty; wherefore will I kill myself, ere you pass sentence upon me." And she was instant with her in asking.

When Jamrah heard her words, she knew that, an she let her not down, she would assuredly destroy herself. So she said to her, "O Tohfah, between thee and them are a thousand cubits, but I will bring the women up to thee." The Songstress replied, "Nay, there is no help but that I go down to them and solace me in the island and look upon the sea anear; then will we return, I and thou; for that, an thou bring them up to us, they will be affrighted and there will betide them neither joy nor gladness. As for me, I wish but to be with them, that they may cheer me with their company neither give over their merrymaking, so peradventure I may broaden my breast with them, and indeed I swear that needs must I go down to them; else I will cast myself upon them." And she cajoled Jamrah and kissed her hands, till she said, "Arise and I will set thee down beside them." Then she took Tohfah under her armpit and flying up swiffler than the blinding leven, set her down with Kamariyah and her company; whereupon she went up to them and accosted them, saying, "Fear ye not: no harm shall befall you; for I am a mortal, like unto you, and I would fain look on you and talk with you and hear your singing." So they welcomed her and kept their places whilst Jamrah sat down beside them and fell a-snuffing their odours and saying, "I smell the scent of the Jinn! Would I wot whence it cometh!"

Then said Wakhimah to her sister Kamariyah, "Yonder foul slut smelleth us and presently she will take to flight; so what be this

inaction concerning her?” Thereupon Kamariyah put out an arm long as a camel’s neck, and dealt Jamrah a buffet on the head, that made it fly from her body and cast it into the sea. Then cried she, “Allah is All-great!” And they uncovered their faces, whereupon Tohfah knew them and said to them, “Protection!” Queen Kamariyah embraced her, as also did Queen Zalzalah and Queen Wakhimah and Queen Shararah, and the first-named said to her, “Receive the good tidings of assured safety, for there abideth no harm for thee; but this is no time for talk.” Then they cried out, whereupon up came the Ifrits ambushed in that island, hending swords and maces in hand, and taking up Tohfah, flew her to the palace and made themselves masters of it, whilst the Ifrit aforesaid, who was dear to Maymun and whose name was Dukhán,⁸⁶ fled like an arrow and stinted not flying till he came to Maymun and found him fighting a sore fight with the Jinn. When his lord saw him, he cried out at him, saying, “Fie upon thee! Whom hast thou left in the palace?” Dukhan answered, saying, “And who abideth in the palace? Thy beloved Tohfah they have captured and Jamrah is slain and they have taken the palace, all of it.” At these ill tidings Maymun buffeted his face and head and said, “Oh! Out on it for a calamity!” Then he cried aloud.

Now Kamariyah had sent to her sire and reported to him the news, whereat the raven of the wold⁸⁷ croaked for the foe. So, when Maymun saw that which had betided him (and indeed the Jinn smote upon him and the wings of eternal severance overspread his host), he planted the heel of his lance in the earth and turning its head to his heart, urged his charger thereat and pressed upon it with his breast, till the point came forth gleaming from his back. Meanwhile the messenger had

⁸⁶ Lit. “Smoke.”

⁸⁷ Arab. “Ghuráb al-bayn,” of the wold or of parting.

made the friendly host with the news of Tohfah's deliverance, whereat the Shaykh Abu al-Tawaif rejoiced and bestowed on the bringer of lief tidings a sumptuous robe of honour and made him commander over a company of the Jann. Then they charged home upon Maymun's host and wiped them out to the last man; and when they came to Maymun, they found that he had slain himself and was even as we have said.

Presently Kamariyah and her sister Wakhimah came up to their grandfather and told him what they had done; whereupon he came to Tohfah and saluted her with the salam and congratulated her on deliverance. Then he made over Maymun's palace to Salhab; and, taking all the rebel's wealth gave it to the Songstress, while the troops encamped upon the Crescent Mountain. Furthermore, the Shaykh Abu al-Tawaif said to Tohfah, "Blame me not," and she kissed his hands, when behold, there appeared to them the tribes of the Jinn, as they were clouds, and Queen Al-Shahba flying in their van, drawn sword in grip. As she came in sight of the folk, they kissed ground between her hands and she said to them, "Tell me what hath betided Queen Tohfah from yonder dog Maymun and why did ye not send to me and report to me?" Quoth they, "And who was this dog that we should send to thee on his account? Indeed he was the least and lowest of the Jinn." Then they told her what Kamariyah and her sisters had done and how they had practiced upon Maymun and delivered the Songstress from his hand, fearing lest he should slay her when he found himself defeated; and she said, "By Allah, the accursed was wont to lengthen his looking upon her!" And Tohfah fell to kissing Al-Shahba's hand, whilst the queen strained her to her bosom and kissed her, saying, "Trouble is past; so rejoice in assurance of deliverance."

Then they rose and went up to the palace whereupon the trays of food were brought and they ate and drank; after which quoth Queen

Al-Shahba, "O Tohfah, sing to us, by way of sweetmeat for thine escape, and favour us with that which shall solace our minds, for that indeed my thoughts have been occupied with thee." And quoth Tohfah, "Hearkening and obedience, O my lady." So she improvised and sang these couplets: —

*Breeze of East an thou breathe o'er the dear ones' land * Speed, I pray
thee, my special salute and salam:
And say them I'm pledged to love them and * In pine that passeth
all pine I am.*

Thereat Queen Al-Shahba rejoiced and with her all who were present; and they admired her speech and fell to kissing her; and when she had made an end of her song, Queen Kamariyah said to her, "O my sister, ere thou go to thy palace, I would fain bring thee to look upon Al-'Anká,⁸⁸ daughter of Bahram Júr, whom Al-'Anka, daughter of the wind, carried off, and her beauty; for that there is not her fellow on earth's face." And Queen Al-Shahba said, "O Kamariyah, I also think it were well an I beheld her." Quoth Kamirayah, "I saw her three years ago; but my sister Wakhimah seeth her at all times, for she is near to her people, and she saith that there is not in the world fairer than she. Indeed, this Queen Al-Anka is become a byword for beauty and comeliness." And Wakhimah said, "By the mighty inscription on the seal-ring of Solomon, there is not her like for loveliness here below." Then said Queen Al-Shahba, "An it needs must be and the affair is as ye say, I will take Tohfah and go with her to Al-Anka, so she may look upon her!" So they all arose and repaired to Al-Anka, who abode in the Mountain Kaf.

⁸⁸ Lit. "The long-necked (bird)."

When she saw them, she drew near to them and saluted them, saying, "O my ladies, may I not be bereaved of you!" Quoth Wakhimah to her, "Who is like unto thee, O Anka? Behold, Queen Al-Shahba is come to thee." So Al-Anka kissed the Queen's feet and lodged them in her palace; whereupon Tohfah came up to her and fell to kissing her and saying, "Never saw I seemlier than this semblance." Then she set before them somewhat of food and they ate and washed their hands; after which the Songstress took the lute and smote it well; and Al-Anka also played, and they fell to improvising verses in turns, whilst Tohfah embraced Al-Anka every moment. Al-Shahba cried, "O my sister, each kiss is worth a thousand dinars;" and Tohfah replied, "And a thousand dinars were little therefor;" whereat Al-Anka laughed and after nighting in her pavilion on the morrow they took leave of her and went away to Maymun's palace.

Here Queen Al-Shahba farewelled them and taking her troops, returned to her capital, whilst the kings also went away to their abodes and the Shaykh Abu al-Tawaif applied himself to diverting Tohfah till nightfall, when he mounted her on the back of one of the Ifrits and bade other thirty gather together all that she had gotten of treasure and raiment, jewels and robes of honour. Then they flew off, whilst Iblis went with her, and in less than the twinkling of an eye he set her down in her sleeping room, where he and those who were with him bade adieu to her and went away. When Tohfah found herself in her own chamber and on her couch, her reason fled for joy and it seemed to her as if she had never stirred thence: then she took the lute and tuned it and touched it in wondrous fashion and improvised verses and sang.

The Eunuch heard the smiting of the lute within the chamber and cried, "By Allah, that is the touch of my lady Tohfah!" So he arose and went, as he were a madman, falling down and rising up, till he came to

the Castrato on guard at the gate of the Commander of the Faithful and found him sitting. When his fellow neutral saw him, and he like a madman, slipping down and stumbling up, he asked him, "What aileth thee and what bringeth thee hither at this hour?" The other answered, "Wilt thou not make haste and awaken the Prince of True Believers?" And he fell to crying out at him; whereupon the Caliph awoke and heard them bandying words together and Tohfah's slave crying to the other, "Woe to thee! Awaken the Commander of the Faithful in haste." So quoth he, "O Sawab, what hast thou to say?" and quoth the Chief Eunuch, "O our lord, the Eunuch of Tohfah's lodging hath lost his wits and crieth, 'Awaken the Commander of the Faithful in haste!'" Then said Al-Rashid to one of his slave-girls, "See what may be the matter."

Accordingly she hastened to admit the Castrato, who entered at her order; and when he saw the Commander of the Faithful, he salamed not neither kissed ground, but cried in his hurry, "Quick: up with thee! My lady Tohfah sitteth in her chamber, singing a goodly ditty. Come to her in haste and see all that I say to thee! Hasten! She sitteth awaiting thee." The Caliph was amazed at his speech and asked him, "What sayst thou?" He answered, "Didst thou not hear the first of the speech? Tohfah sitteth in the sleeping-chamber, singing and lute-playing. Come thy quickest! Hasten!" Accordingly Al-Rashid sprang up and donned his dress; but he believed not the Eunuch's words and said to him, "Fie upon thee! What is this thou sayst? Hast thou not seen this in a dream?" Quoth the Eunuch, "By Allah, I wot not what thou sayest, and I was not asleep;" and quoth Al-Rashid, "An thy speech be soothfast, it shall be for thy good luck, for I will free thee and give thee a thousand gold pieces; but, an it be untrue and thou have seen this in dream-land, I will crucify thee." The Eunuch said within

himself, "O Protector, let me not have seen this in vision!" then he left the Caliph and running to the chamber-door, heard the sound of singing and lute-playing; whereupon he returned to Al-Rashid and said to him, "Go and hearken and see who is asleep."

When the Prince of True Believers drew near the door of the sleeping-chamber, he heard the sound of the lute and Tohfah's voice singing; whereat he could not restrain his reason and was like to faint for excess of delight. Then he pulled out the key but his hand refused to draw the bolt: however, after a while, he took heart and applying himself, opened the door and entered, saying, "Methinks this is none other than a vision or an imbroglio of dreams." When Tohfah saw him, she rose and coming to meet him, pressed him to her breast; and he cried out a cry wherein his sprite was like to depart and fell down in a fit. She again strained him to her bosom and sprinkled on him rose-water mingled with musk, and washed his face, till he came to himself, as he were a drunken man, and shed tears for the stress of his joy in Tohfah's return to him, after he had despaired of her returning. Then she took the lute and smote thereon, after the fashion she had learnt from Shaykh Iblis, so that Al-Rashid's wit was bewildered for excess of joy and his understanding was confounded for exultation; after which she improvised and sang these couplets: —

*That I left thee my heart to believe is unliefe; * For the life that's in it
ne'er leaveth; brief,
An thou say "I went," saith my heart "What a fib!" * And I bide 'twixt
believing and unbelief.*

When she had made an end of her verses, Al-Rashid said to her, "O Tohfah, thine absence was wondrous, yet is thy presence still more marvellous." She replied, "By Allah, O my lord, thou sayst sooth;"

then, taking his hand, she said to him, "O Commander of the Faithful, see what I have brought with me." So he looked and spied treasures such as neither words could describe nor registers could document, pearls and jewels and jacinths and precious stones and unions and gorgeous robes of honour, adorned with margarites and jewels and purpled with red gold. There he beheld what he never had beheld all his life long, not even in idea; and she showed him that which Queen Al-Shahba had bestowed on her of those carpets, which she had brought with her, and that throne, the like whereof neither Kisrā possessed nor Caesar, and those tables inlaid with pearls and jewels and those vessels which amazed all who looked on them, and that crown which was on the head of the circumcised boy, and those robes of honour, which Queen Al-Shahba and Shaykh Abu al-Tawaif had doffed and donned upon her, and the trays wherein were those treasures; brief, she showed him wealth whose like he had never in his life espied and which the tongue availeth not to describe and whereat all who looked thereon were bewildered.

Al-Rashid was like to lose his wits for amazement at this spectacle and was confounded at that he sighted and witnessed. Then said he to Tohfah, "Come, tell me thy tale from beginning to end, and let me know all that hath betided thee, as if I had been present." She answered, "Hearkening and obedience," and acquainting him with all that had betided her first and last, from the time when she first saw the Shaykh Abu al-Tawaif, how he took her and descended with her through the side of the Chapel of Ease; and she told him of the horse she had ridden, till she came to the meadow aforesaid and described it to him, together with the palace and that was therein of furniture, and related to him how the Jinn rejoiced in her, and whatso she had seen of their kings, masculine and feminine, and of Queen Kamariyah and her

sisters and Queen Shu'a'ah, Regent of the Fourth Sea, and Queen Al-Shahba, Queen of Queens, and King Al-Shisban, and that which each one of them had bestowed upon her. Moreover, she recited to him the story of Maymun the Sworder and described to him his fulsome favour, which he had not deigned to change, and related to him that which befel her from the kings of the Jinn, male and female, and the coming of the Queen of Queens, Al-Shahba, and how she had loved her and appointed her her vice-reine and how she was thus become ruler over all the kings of the Jann; and she showed him the writ of investiture which Queen Al-Shahba had written her and told him what had betided her with the Ghulish Head, when it appeared to her in the garden, and how she had despatched it to her palace, beseeching it to bring her news of the Commander of the Faithful and of what had betided him after her.

Then she described to him the flower-gardens, wherein she had taken her pleasure, and the Hammam-baths inlaid with pearls and jewels and told him that which had befallen Maymun the Sworder, when he bore her off, and how he had slain himself; in fine, she related to him everything she had seen of wonders and marvels and that which she had beheld of all kinds and colours among the Jinn. Then she told him the story of Al-Anka, daughter of Bahram Jur, with Al-Anka, daughter of the wind, and described to him her dwelling-place and her island, whereupon quoth Al-Rashid, "O Tohfah al-Sadr,⁸⁹ tell me of Al-Anka, daughter of Bahram Jur; is she of the Jinn-kind or of mankind or of the bird-kind? For this long time have I desired to find one who should tell me of her." Tohfah replied, "'Tis well, O Commander of the Faithful. I asked the queen of this and she acquainted

⁸⁹ Choice Gift of the breast (or heart).

me with her case and told me who built her the palace.” Quoth Al-Rashid, “Allah upon thee, tell it me;” and quoth Tohfah, “I will well,” and proceeded to tell him. And he was amazed at that which he heard from her and what she reported to him and at that which she had brought back of jewels and jacinths of various hues and precious stones of many sorts, such as amazed the beholder and confounded thought and mind.

As for this, Tohfah was the means of the enrichment of the Barmecides and the Abbasides, and they had endurance in their delight. Then the Caliph went forth and bade decorate the city: so they decorated it and the drums of glad tidings were beaten; and they made banquets to the people for whom the tables were spread seven days. And Tohfah and the Commander of the Faithful ceased not to enjoy the most delightful of life and the most prosperous till there came to them the Destroyer of delights and the Severer of societies; and this is all that hath come down to us of their story.

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Women's Wiles

On the following night Dunyazad said to her sister Shahrazad, "O sister mine, an thou incline not unto sleep, prithee tell us a tale which shall beguile our watching through the dark hours." She replied: — With love and gladness.

It hath reached me, O magnificent King, that whilome there was in the city of Baghdad, a comely youth and a well bred, fair of favour, tall of stature, and slender of shape. His name was Alá al-Dín and he was of the chiefs of the sons of the merchants and had a shop wherein he sold and bought. One day, as he sat in his shop, there passed by him a merry girl who raised her head and casting a glance at the young merchant, saw written in a flowing hand on the forehead of his shop door these words, "THERE BE NO CRAFT SAVE MEN'S CRAFT, FORASMUCH AS IT OVERCOMETH WOMEN'S CRAFT." When she beheld this, she was wroth and took counsel with herself, saying, "As my head liveth, there is no help but I show him a marvel trick of the wiles of women and put to naught this his inscription!" Thereupon she hied her home; and on the morrow she made her ready and donning the finest of dress, adorned herself with the costliest of ornaments and the highest of price and stained her hands with henna. Then she let down her tresses upon her shoulders and went forth, walking with coquettish gait and amorous grace, followed by her slave-girl carrying a parcel, till she came to the young merchant's shop and sitting down under pretext of seeking stuffs, saluted him with the salam and demanded of him somewhat of cloths.

So he brought out to her various kinds and she took them and turned them over, talking with him the while. Then said she to him,

“Look at the shapeliness of my shape and my semblance! Seest thou in me aught of default?” He replied, “No, O my lady;” and she continued, “Is it lawful in any one that he should slander me and say that I am humpbacked?” Then she discovered to him a part of her bosom, and when he saw her breasts his reason took flight from his head and his heart craved to her and he cried, “Cover it up, so may Allah veil thee!” Quoth she, “Is it fair of any one to decry my charms?” and quoth he, “How shall any decry thy charms, and thou the sun of loveliness?” Then said she, “Hath any the right to say of me that I am lophanded?” and tucking up her sleeves, she showed him forearms as they were crystal; after which she unveiled to him a face, as it were a full moon breaking forth on its fourteenth night, and said to him, “Is it lawful for any to decry me and declare that my face is pitted with smallpox or that I am one-eyed or crop-eared?” and said he, “O my lady, what is it moveth thee to discover unto me that lovely face and those fair limbs, wont to be so jealously veiled and guarded? Tell me the truth of the matter, may I be thy ransom!” And he began to improvise: —

*White Fair now drawn from sheath of parted hair, * Then in
the blackest tresses hid from sight,
Flasheth like day irradiating Earth * While round her glooms
the murk of nightliest night.⁹⁰*

— And Shahrazad perceived the dawn of day and ceased to say her permitted say. Whereupon cried Dunyazad her sister, “O sister mine, how delectable is this tale and how desirable!” She replied, saying,

⁹⁰ She is compared with a flashing blade (her face) now drawn from its sheath (her hair) then hidden by it.

“And where is this compared with that which I will recount to thee next night, Inshallah?”

The Hundred and Ninety-seventh Night

Now when came the night, quoth Duniyazad to her sister Shahrazad, “O sister mine, an thou incline not unto sleep, prithee finish thy tale which shall beguile our watching through the dark hours.” She replied: — With love and gladness!

It hath reached me, O auspicious King, that the girl said to the young merchant, “Know, O my lord, that I am a maid oppressed of my sire, who speaketh at me and saith to me, ‘Thou art loathly of looks and semblance and it besitteth not that thou wear rich raiment; for thou and the slave-girls are like in rank, there is no distinguishing thee from them.’ Now he is a richard, having a mighty great store of money and saith not thus save because he is a pinchpenny, and grudgeth the spending of a farthing; wherefore he is loath to marry me, lest he be put to somewhat of expense in my marriage, albeit Almighty Allah hath been bounteous to him and he is a man puissant in his time and lacking naught of worldly weal.” The youth asked, “Who is thy father and what is his condition?” and she answered, “He is the Chief Kazi of the well-known Supreme Court, under whose hands are all the Kazis who administer justice in this city.”

The merchant believed her and she farewelled him and fared away, leaving in his heart a thousand regrets, for that the love of her had prevailed over him and he knew not how he should win to her; wherefore he woned enamoured, love-distracted, unknowing if he were alive or dead. As soon as she was gone, he shut up shop and walked straightway to the Court, where he went in to the Chief Kazi and saluted him.

The magistrate returned his salam and treated him with distinction and seated him by his side. Then said Ala al-Din to him, "I come to thee seeking thine alliance and desiring the hand of thy noble daughter." Quoth the Kazi, "O my lord merchant, welcome to thee and fair welcome; but indeed my daughter befitteth not the like of thee, neither beseemeth she the goodliness of thy youth and the pleasantness of thy composition and the sweetness of thy speech;" but Ala al-Din replied, "This talk becometh thee not, neither is it seemly in thee; if I be content with her, how should this vex thee?" So the Kazi was satisfied and they came to an accord and concluded the marriage contract at a dower precedent of five purses ready money and a dower contingent of fifteen purses, so it might be hard for him to put her away, her father having given him fair warning, but he would not be warned.

Then they wrote out the contract document and the merchant said, "I desire to go in to her this night." Accordingly they carried her to him in procession that very evening, and he prayed the night prayer and entered the private chamber prepared for him; but, when he lifted the head gear from the bride's head and the veil from her face and looked, he saw a foul face and a favour right fulsome; indeed he beheld somewhat whereof may Allah never show thee the like! loathly, dispensing from description, inasmuch as there were reckoned in her all legal defects.⁹¹ So he repented, when repentance availed him naught, and knew that the girl had cheated him. —

And Shahrazad perceived the dawn of day and ceased to say her permitted say. Whereupon cried Dunyazad, her sister, "O sister mine, how delectable is thy story and how sweet!" She replied, saying, "And

⁹¹ All the blemishes which justify returning a slave to the slave-dealer.

where is this compared with that which I will recount to thee next night an I be spared and suffered to live by the King, whom Almighty Allah preserve?”

The Hundred and Ninety-eight Night

Now whenas came the night, quoth Dunyazad to her sister Shahrazad, “O sister mine, an thou incline not unto sleep, prithee finish thy story which shall beguile our watching through the dark hours, for indeed ’tis a fine tale and a wondrous.” She replied: — With love and gladness!

It hath reached me, O generous King, that the unhappy merchant carnally knew the loathly bride, sore against the grain, and abode that night troubled in mind, as he were in the prison of Al-Daylam.⁹² Hardly had the day dawned when he arose from her side and betaking himself to one of the Hammams, dozed there awhile, after which he made the Ghushl-ablution of ceremonial impurity and donned his every day dress. Then he went out to the coffee house and drank a cup of coffee; after which he returned to his shop and opening the door, sat down, with concern and chagrin manifest on his countenance.

After an hour or so, his friends and intimates among the merchants and people of the market began to come up to him, by ones and twos; to give him joy, and said to him, laughing, “A blessing! a blessing! Where be the sweetmeats? Where be the coffee?”⁹³ ’Twould seem thou hast forgotten us; and nothing made thee oblivious save that the charms of the bride have disordered thy wit and taken thy reason, Allah help thee! We give thee joy, we give thee joy.” And they mocked

⁹² The “Daylamite prison” was one of many in Baghdad.

⁹³ On the morning after a happy night the bridegroom still offers coffee and Halwā to friends.

at him whilst he kept silence before them, being like to rend his raiment and shed tears for rage. Then they went away from him, and when it was the hour of noon, up came his mistress, the crafty girl, trailing her skirts and swaying to and fro in her gait, as she were a branch of Ban in a garden of bloom. She was yet more richly dressed and adorned and more striking and cutting in her symmetry and grace than on the previous day, so that she made the passers stop and stand in espalier to gaze upon her.

When she came to Ala al-Din's shop, she sat down thereon and said to him, "Blessed be the day to thee, O my lord Ala al-Din! Allah prosper thee and be good to thee and perfect thy gladness and make it a wedding of weal and welfare!" He knitted his brows and frowned in answer to her; then asked her, "Wherein have I failed of thy due, or what have I done to harm thee, that thou shouldst requite me after this fashion?" She answered, "Thou hast been no wise in default; but 'tis yonder inscription written on the door of thy shop that irketh me and vexeth my heart. An thou have the courage to change it and write up the contrary thereof, I will deliver thee from thine evil plight." And he answered, "Thy requirement is right easy: on my head and eyes!" So saying, he brought out a sequin and summoning one of his Mamelukes said to him, "Get thee to Such-an-one the Scribe and bid him write us an epigraph, adorned with gold and lapis lazuli, in these words, 'THERE BE NO CRAFT SAVE WOMEN'S CRAFT, FOR INDEED THEIR CRAFT IS A MIGHTY CRAFT AND OVERCOMETH AND HUMBLETH THE FALSES OF MEN.'" And she said to the white slave, "Fare thee forthright."

So he repaired to the Scribe, who wrote him the scroll, and he brought it to his master, who set it on the door and asked the damsel, "Is thy heart satisfied?" She answered, "Yes! Arise forthwith and get thee to the place before the citadel, where do thou foregather with all

the mountebanks and ape-dancers and bear-leaders and drummers and pipers and bid them come to thee to-morrow early, with their kettle-drums and flageolets, whilst thou art drinking coffee with thy father in law the Kazi, and congratulate thee and wish thee joy, saying, 'A blessing, O son of our uncle! Indeed, thou art the vein⁹⁴ of our eye! We rejoice for thee, and if thou be ashamed of us, verily we pride ourselves upon thee; so, although thou banish us from thee, know that we will not forsake thee, albeit thou forsake us.' And do thou fall to throwing dinars and dirhams amongst them; whereupon the Kazi will question thee, and do thou answer him, saying, 'My father was an ape-dancer and this is our original condition; but our Lord opened on us the gate of fortune and we have gotten us a name amongst the merchants and with their provost.' Upon this he will say to thee, 'Then thou art an ape-leader of the tribe of the mountebanks?' and do thou rejoin, 'I may in nowise deny my origin, for the sake of thy daughter and in her honour.' The Kazi will say, 'It may not be that thou shalt be given the daughter of a Shaykh who sitteth upon the carpet of the Law and whose descent is traceable by genealogy to the loins of the Apostle of Allah, nor is it meet that his daughter be in the power of a man who is an ape-dancer, a minstrel.' Then do thou reply, 'Nay, O Efendi, she is my lawful wife, and every hair of her is worth a thousand lives, and I will not put her away though I be given the kingship of the world.' At last be thou persuaded to speak the word of divorce and so shall the marriage be voided and ye be saved each from other."

Quoth Ala al-Din, "Right is thy rede," and locking up his shop, betook himself to the place —

And Shahrazad perceived the dawn of day and ceased saying her

⁹⁴ Arab. "Irk": our phrase is "the apple of the eye."

permitted say. Whereupon cried Dunyazad, her sister, "O sister mine, how goodly is thy story and how sweet!" She replied, saying, "And where is this compared with that which I will recount to thee next night, Inshallah!"

The Hundred and Ninety-ninth Night

And whenas came the night, quoth Dunyazad to her sister, "O sister mine, an thou incline not unto sleep, pray finish thy tale which shall beguile our watching through the dark hours." She replied: — With love and gladness!

It hath reached me, O generous King, that the young merchant betook himself to the place before the citadel, where he foregathered with the dancens, the drummers and pipers and instructed them how they should do, promising them a mighty fine reward. They received his word with "Hearing and obeying;" and he betook himself on the morrow, after the morning prayer, to the presence of the Judge, who received him with humble courtesy and seated him by his side. Then he addressed him and began questioning him of matters of selling and buying and of the price current of the various commodities which were carried to Baghdad from all quarters, whilst his son-in-law replied to all whereof he was questioned. As they were thus conversing, behold, up came the dancens and drummers with their drums and pipers with their pipes, whilst one of their number preceded them, with a long pennon-like banner in his hand, and played all manner antics with voice and limbs.

When they came to the Court house, the Kazi cried, "I seek refuge with Allah from yonder Satans!" and the young merchant laughed but said naught. Then they entered and saluting his worship the Kazi,

kissed Ala al-Din's hands and said, "A blessing on thee, O son of our uncle! Indeed, thou coolest our eyes in whatso thou doest, and we beseech Allah for the enduring greatness of our lord the Kazi, who hath honoured us by admitting thee to his connection and hath allotted to us a portion in his high rank and degree." When the Judge heard this talk, it bewildered his wit and he was dazed and his face flushed with rage, and quoth he to his son-in-law, "What words are these?" Quoth the merchant, "Knowest thou not, O my lord, that I am of this tribe? Indeed this man is the son of my maternal uncle and that other the son of my paternal uncle, and if I be reckoned of the merchants, 'tis but by courtesy!" When the Kazi heard these words his colour changed —

And Shahrazad perceived the dawn of day, whereupon cried Dunyazad her sister, "O sister mine, how delectable is thy story and how desirable!" She replied, saying, "And where is its first compared with its last? But I will forthwith relate it to you and I be spared and suffered to live by the King, whom may Allah the Most High keep!" Quoth the King within himself, "By the Almighty, I will not slay her until I hear the end of her tale!"

The Two Hundredth Night

Now whenas came the night, quoth Dunyazad to her sister, "O sister mine, and thou incline not unto sleep, prithee finish thy tale which shall beguile our watching through the dark hours." She replied: — With love and gladness!

It hath reached me, O auspicious king, that the Kazi's colour changed and he was troubled and waxed wroth with exceeding wrath and was like to burst for stress of rage. Then said he to the young

merchant, "Allah forbend that this should last! How shall it be permitted that the daughter of the Kazi of the Moslems cohabit with a man of the dancers and vile of origin? By Allah, unless thou repudiate her forthright, I will bid beat thee and cast thee into prison and there confine thee till thou die. Had I foreknown that thou wast of them, I had not suffered thee near me, but had spat in thy face, for that thou art more ill-omened than a dog or a hog."⁹⁵ Then he kicked him down from his place and commanded him to divorce; but he said, "Be ruthless to me, O Efendi, for that Allah is ruthless, and hasten not: I will not divorce my wife, though thou give me the kingdom of Al-Irak."

The judge was perplexed and knew that compulsion was not permitted of Holy Law; so he bespake the young merchant fair and said to him, "Veil me,⁹⁶ so may Allah veil thee. An thou divorce her not, this dishonour shall cleave to me till the end of time." Then his fury gat the better of his wit and he cried, "An thou divorce her not of thine own will, I will forthright bid strike off thy head and slay myself; Hell-flame but not shame." The merchant bethought himself awhile, then divorced her with a manifest divorce and a public and on this wise he won free from that unwelcome worry. Then he returned to his shop and presently sought in marriage of her father her who had done with him what she did and who was the daughter of the Shaykh of the guild of the blacksmiths. So he took her to wife and they abode each with other and lived the pleasantest of lives and the most delightsome, till the day of death: and praise be to Allah the Lord of the Three Worlds.

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⁹⁵ i.e. than a Jew or a Christian.

⁹⁶ i.e. protect my honour.

Nur al-Din Ali of Damascus and the Damsel Sitt al-Milah

There was once, in days of yore and in ages and times long gone before, a merchant of the merchants of Damascus, by name Abu al-Hasan, who had money and means, slave-blacks and slave-girls, lands and gardens, houses and Hammams in that city; but he was not blessed with boon of child and indeed his age waxed great. So he addressed himself to supplicate Allah Almighty in private and in public and in his bows and his prostrations and at the season of prayer-call, beseeching Him to vouchsafe him, before his decease, a son who should inherit his wealth and possessions. The Lord answered his prayer; his wife conceived and the days of her pregnancy were accomplished and her months and her nights; and the travail-pangs came upon her and she gave birth to a boy, as he were a slice of Luna. He had not his match for beauty and he put to shame the sun and the resplendent moon; for he had a beaming face and black eyes of Bábílí witchery and aquiline nose and carnelian lips; in fine, he was perfect of attributes, the loveliest of folk of his time, sans dubitation or gainsaying.

His father joyed in him with exceeding joy and his heart was solaced and he was at last happy: he made banquets to the folk and he clad the poor and the widows. Presently he named the boy Sídí Nur al-Din Ali and reared him in fondness and delight among the hand-maids and thralls. When he had passed his seventh year, his father put him to school, where he learned the sublime Koran and the arts of writing and reckoning; and when he reached his tenth year, he was taught horsemanship and archery and to occupy himself with arts and sciences of all kinds, part and parts. He grew up pleasant and polite, winsome and lovesome; a ravishment to all who saw him, and he

inclined to companying with brethren and comrades and mixing with merchants and travelled men. From these he heard tell of that which they had witnessed of the wonders of the cities in their wayfare and heard them say, "Whoso journeyeth not enjoyeth naught; especially of the city of Baghdad."

So he was concerned with exceeding concern for his lack of travel and disclosed this to his sire, who said to him, "O my son, why do I see thee chagrined?" Quoth he, "I would fain travel;" and quoth Abu al-Hasan, "O my son, none travelleth save those whose need is urgent and those who are compelled thereto by want. As for thee, O my son, thou enjoyest ample means; so do thou content thyself with that which Allah hath given thee and be bounteous to others, even as He hath been bountiful to thee; and afflict not thyself with the toil and tribulation of travel, for indeed it is said that travel is a piece of Hell-torment." But the youth said, "Needs must I journey to Baghdad, the House of Peace." When his father saw the strength of his resolve to travel he fell in with his wishes and fitted him out with five thousand dinars in cash and the like in merchandise and sent with him two serving-men. So the youth fared forth, on the blessing of Allah Almighty; and his parent went out with him, to take leave of him, and returned to Damascus.

As for Nur al-Din Ali, he ceased not travelling days and nights till he entered Baghdad city, and laying up his loads in the Wakálah,⁹⁷ made for the Hammam-bath, where he did away that which was upon him of the soil of the road and doffing his travelling clothes, donned a costly suit of Yamaní stuff, worth an hundred dinars. Then he loaded his sleeve with a thousand miskals of gold and sallied forth a-walking

⁹⁷ The Egyptian term for a khan, called in Persia caravanserai (karwán-serái).

and swaying gracefully as he paced along. His gait confounded all those who gazed upon him, as he shamed the branches with his shape and belittled the rose with the redness of his cheeks and his black eyes of Babili witchcraft: thou wouldst deem that whoso looked on him would surely be preserved from bane and bale; for he was even as saith of him one of his describers in these couplets: —

*Thy haters and enviers say for jeer * A true say that profits what ears
will hear;
“No boast is his whom the gear adorns; * The boast be his who adorns
the gear!”*

So Sidi Nur al-Din went walking in the highways of the city and viewing its edifices and its bazars and thoroughfares and gazing on its folk. Presently, Abú Nowás met him. (Now he was of those of whom it is said, “They love fair lads,” and indeed there is said what is said concerning him.) When he saw Nur al-Din Ali, he stared at him in amazement and exclaimed, “Say, I take refuge with the Lord of the Daybreak!” Then he accosted the youth and saluting him, asked him, “Why do I see my lord lone and lorn? Meseemeth thou art a stranger and knowest not this country; so, with leave of my lord, I will put myself at his service and acquaint him with the streets, for that I know this city.” Nur al-Din answered, “This will be of thy favour, O nuncle.” Abu Nowas rejoiced at this and fared on with him, showing him the streets and bazars, till they came to the house of a slave-dealer, where he stopped and said to the youth, “From what city art thou?”

“From Damascus,” replied Nur al-Din; and Abu Nowas said, “By Allah, thou art from a blessed city, even as saith of it the poet in these couplets: —

*Now is Damascus a garth adorned * For her seekers, the Houris and
Paradise-boys."*

Sidi Nur al-Din thanked him and the twain entered the mansion of the slave-merchant. When the people of the house saw Abu Nowas, they rose to do him reverence, for that which they knew of his rank with the Commander of the Faithful; and the slave-dealer himself came up to them with two chairs whereon they seated themselves. Then the slave-merchant went inside and returning with a slave-girl, as she were a branch of Ban or a rattan-cane, clad in a vest of damask silk and tired with a black and white headdress whose ends fell down over her face, seated her on a chair of ebony; after which he cried to those who were present, "I will discover to you a favour as it were a full moon breaking forth from under a cloud-bank." They replied, "Do so;" whereupon he unveiled the damsel's face and behold, she was like the shining sun, with shapely shape and dawn-bright cheeks and thready waist and heavy hips; brief, she was endowed with an elegance, whose description is unfound, and was even as saith of her the poet: —

*A fair one, to idolaters if she herself should show,
They'd leave their idols and her face for only Lord would know;
And if into the briny sea one day she chanced to spit,
Assuredly the salt sea's floods straight fresh and sweet would grow.*

The dealer stood at the handmaid's head and one of the merchants said, "I bid a thousand dinars for her." Quoth another, "I bid one thousand one hundred dinars;" and a third, "I bid twelve hundred." Then said a fourth merchant, "Be she mine for fourteen hundred ducats." And the biddings standing still at that sum, her owner said, "I will not sell her save with her consent: an if she desire to be sold,

I will sell her to whom she willeth." The slave-dealer asked him, "What is her name?" Answered the other, "Her name is Sitt al-Miláh;"⁹⁸ whereupon the dealer said to her, "With thy leave, I will sell thee to yonder merchant for this price of fourteen hundred dinars." Quoth she, "Come hither to me." So the man-vendor came up to her and when he drew near, gave him a kick with her foot and cast him to the ground, saying, "I will not have that oldster." The slave-dealer arose, shaking the dust from his dress and head, and cried, "Who biddeth more of us? Who is desirous?" Said one of the merchants, "I," and the dealer said to her, "O Sitt al-Milah, shall I sell thee to this merchant?" She replied, "Come hither to me;" but he rejoined, "Nay; speak and I will hear thee from my place, for I will not trust myself to thee nor hold myself safe when near thee." So she cried, "Indeed I will not have him."

Then the slave-dealer looked at her and seeing her fix eyes on the young Damascene, for that in very deed he had fascinated her with his beauty and loveliness, went up to him and said to him, "O my lord, art thou a looker-on or a buyer? Tell me." Quoth Nur al-Din, "I am both looker-on and buyer. Wilt thou sell me yonder slave-girl for sixteen hundred ducats?" And he pulled out the purse of gold. Hereupon the dealer returned, dancing and clapping his hands and saying, "So be it, so be it, or not at all!" Then he came to the damsel and said to her, "O Sitt al-Milah, shall I sell thee to yonder young Damascene for sixteen hundred dinars?" But she answered, "No," of bashfulness before her master and the bystanders; whereupon the people of the bazar and the slave-merchant departed, and Abu Nowas and Ali Nur al-Din arose and went each his own way, whilst the damsel returned to her

⁹⁸ Lady or princess of the Fair (ones).

owner's house, full of love for the young Damascene. When the night darkened on her, she called him to mind and her heart hung to him and sleep visited her not; and on this wise she abode days and nights, till she sickened and abstained from food.

So her lord went in to her and asked her, "O Sitt al-Milah, how findest thou thyself?" Answered she, "O my lord, dead without chance of deliverance and I beseech thee to bring me my shroud, so I may look upon it ere I die." Therewith he went out from her, sore concerned for her, and betaking himself to the bazar, found a friend of his, a draper, who had been present on the day when the damsel was cried for sale. Quoth his friend to him, "Why do I see thee troubled?" and quoth he, "Sitt al-Milah is at the point of death and for three days she hath neither eaten nor drunken. I questioned her to-day of her case and she said, 'O my lord, buy me a shroud so I may look upon it ere I die.'" The draper replied, "Methinks naught aileth her but that she is in love with the young Damascene, and I counsel thee to mention his name to her and declare to her that he hath foregathered with thee on her account and is desirous of coming to thy quarters, so he may hear somewhat of her singing. An she say, 'I reckon not of him, for there is that to do with me which distracteth me from the Damascene and from other than he,' know that she saith sooth concerning her sickness; but, an she say thee other than this, acquaint me therewith."

So the man returned to his lodging and going in to his slave-girl said to her, "O Sitt al-Milah, I went out for thy need and there met me the young man of Damascus, and he saluted me with the salam and saluteth thee; he seeketh to win thy favour and prayed me to admit him as a guest in our dwelling, so thou mayst let him hear somewhat of thy singing." When she heard speak of the young Damascene, she gave a sob, that her soul was like to leave her body, and answered,

“He knoweth my plight and how these three days past I have not eaten nor drunken, and I beseech thee, O my lord, by Allah of All-Might, to do thy duty by the stranger and bring him to my lodging and make excuse to him for me.” When her master heard this, his reason fled for joy, and he went to his familiar the draper and said to him, “Thou wast right in the matter of the damsel, for that she is in love with the young Damascene; so how shall I manage?” Said the other, “Go to the bazar and when thou seest him, salute him, and say to him, ‘Thy departure the other day, without winning thy wish, was grievous to me; so, an thou be still minded to buy the maid, I will abate thee of that which thou badest for her an hundred sequins by way of gaining thy favour; seeing thou be a stranger in our land.’ If he say to thee, ‘I have no desire for her,’ and hold off from thee, be assured that he will not buy; in which case, let me know, so I may devise thee another device; and if he say to thee other than this, conceal not from me aught.”

So the girl’s owner betook himself to the bazar, where he found the youth seated at the upper end of the place where the merchants mostly do meet, selling and buying and taking and giving, as he were the moon on the night of its full, and saluted him. The young man returned his salam and he said to him, “O my lord, be not offended at the damsel’s speech the other day, for her price shall be lowered to the intent that I may secure thy favour. An thou desire her for naught, I will send her to thee or an thou wouldst have me abate to thee her price, I will well, for I desire nothing save what shall content thee; seeing thou art a stranger in our land and it behoveth us to treat thee hospitably and have consideration for thee.” The youth replied, “By Allah, I will not take her from thee but at an advance on that which I bade thee for her afore; so wilt thou now sell her to me for one thousand and seven hundred dinars?” And the other rejoined, “O my lord, I sell her

to thee, may Allah bless thee in her!" Thereupon the young man went to his quarters and fetching a purse, sent for the girl's owner and weighed out to him the price aforesaid, whilst the draper was between the twain. Then said he, "Bring her forth;" but the other replied, "She cannot come forth at this present; but be thou my guest the rest of this day and night, and on the morrow thou shalt take thy slave-girl and go in the ward of Allah."

The youth agreed with him on this and he carried him to his house, where, after a little, he bade meat and wine be brought, and they ate and drank. Then said Nur al-Din to the girl's owner, "I would have thee bring me the damsel, because I bought her not but for the like of this time." So he arose and going in to the girl, said to her, "O Sitt al-Milah, the young man hath paid down thy price and we have bidden him hither; so he hath come to our quarters and we have entertained him, and he would fain have thee be present with him." Therewith the damsel rose deftly and doffing her dress, bathed and donned sumptuous apparel and perfumed herself and went out to him, as she were a branch of Ban or a cane of rattan, followed by a black slave-girl, bearing the lute. When she came to the young man, she saluted him and sat down by his side. Then she took the lute from the slave-girl and screwing up its pegs, smote thereon in four-and-twenty modes, after which she returned to the first and sang these couplets: —

*My joy in this world is to see and sit near thee. * Thy love's my religion; thy Union my pleasure.*

*Attest it these tears when in memory I speer thee, * And unchecked down my cheeks pours the flood without measure.*

*By Allah, no rival in love hast to fear thee; * I'm thy slave as I swear, and this troth is my treasure.*

*Be not this our last meeting: by Allah I swear thee * Thy severance
to me were most bitter displeasure!*

The young man was moved to delight and cried, “By Allah, thou sayest well, O Sitt al-Milah! Let me hear more.” Then he largessed her with fifty gold pieces and they drank and the cups made circuit among them; and her seller said to her, “O Sitt al-Milah, this is the season of farewelling; so let us hear somewhat thereon.” Accordingly she struck the lute and touching upon that which was in her heart, improvised these couplets: —

*I thole longing, remembrance and sad repine, * Nor my heart can
brook woes in so lengthened line.*

*O my lords think not I forget your love; * My case is sure case and cure
shows no sign.*

*If creature could swim in the flood of his tears, * I were first to swim
in these floods of brine:*

*O Cup-boy withhold cup and bowl from a wretch * Who ne’er ceaseth
to drink of her tears for wine!*

*Had I known that parting would do me die, * I had shirked to part,
but — ’twas Fate’s design.*

Now whilst they were thus enjoying whatso is most delicious of ease and delight, and indeed the wine was to them sweet and the talk a treat, behold, there came a knocking at the door. So the house-master went out, that he might see what might be the matter, and found ten head of the Caliph’s eunuchs at the entrance. When he saw this, he was startled and said, “What is to do?”

“The Commander of the Faithful saluteth thee and requireth of

thee the slave-girl whom thou hast exposed for sale and whose name is Sitt al-Milah.”

“By Allah, I have sold her.”

“Swear by the head of the Commander of the Faithful that she is not in thy quarters.”

The slaver made oath that he had sold her and that she was no longer at his disposal: yet they paid no heed to his word and forcing their way into the house, found the damsel and the young Damascene in the sitting-chamber. So they laid hands upon her, and the youth said, “This is my slave-girl, whom I have bought with my money;” but they hearkened not to his speech and taking her, carried her off to the Prince of True Believers. Therewith Nur al-Din’s pleasure was troubled: he arose and donned his dress, and his host said, “Whither away this night, O my lord?” Said he, “I purpose going to my quarters, and tomorrow I will betake myself to the palace of the Commander of the Faithful and demand my slave-girl.” The other replied, “Sleep till the morning, and fare not forth at the like of this hour.” But he rejoined, “Needs must I go;” and the host said to him, “Go in Allah his safeguard.”

So the youth went forth and, drunkenness having got the mastery of his wits, he threw himself down on a bench before one of the shops. Now the watchmen were at that hour making their rounds and they smelt the sweet scent of essences and wine that reeked from him; so they made for it and suddenly beheld the youth lying on the bench, without sign of recovering. They poured water upon him, and he awoke, whereupon they carried him off to the office of the Chief of Police and he questioned him of his case. He replied “O my lord, I am an alien in this town and have been with one of my friends: I came forth from his house and drunkenness overcame me.” The Wali bade

carry him to his lodging; but one of those in attendance upon him, Al-Murádi hight, said to him, "What wilt thou do? This man is robed in rich raiment and on his finger is a golden ring, whose bezel is a ruby of great price; so we will carry him away and slay him and take that which is upon him of clothes and bring to thee all we get; for that thou wilt not often see profit the like thereof, especially as this fellow is a foreigner and there is none to ask after him." Quoth the Chief, "This wight is a thief and that which he saith is leasing." Nur al-Din said, "Allah forfend that I should be a thief!" but the Wali answered, "Thou liest."

So they stripped him of his clothes and taking the seal-ring from his finger, beat him with a grievous beating, what while he cried out for succour, but none succoured him, and besought protection, but none protected him. Then said he to them, "O folk, ye are quit⁹⁹ of that which ye have taken from me; but now restore me to my lodging." They replied, "Leave this knavery, O rascal! thine intent is to sue us for thy clothes on the morrow." The youth cried, "By the truth of the One, the Eternal One, I will not sue any for them!" but they said, "We find no way to this." And the Prefect bade them bear him to the Tigris and there slay him and cast him into the stream. So they dragged him away, while he wept and said the words which shall nowise shame the sayer: "There is no Majesty and there is no Might save in Allah, the Glorious, the Great!" When they came to the Tigris, one of them drew the sword upon him and Al-Muradi said to the sworder, "Smite off his head;" but one of them, hight Ahmad, cried, "O folk, deal softly with this poor wretch and slay him not unjustly and wickedly, for I stand in fear of Allah Almighty, lest He burn me with

⁹⁹ i.e. You are welcome to it and so it becomes lawful (halál) to you.

his fire.” Quoth Al-Muradi, “A truce to this talk!” and quoth the Ahmad aforesaid, “An ye do with him aught, I will acquaint the Commander of the Faithful.” They asked, “How, then, shall we do with him?” and he answered, “Let us deposit him in prison and I will be answerable to you for his provision; so shall we be quit of his blood, for indeed he is a wronged man.” Accordingly they agreed to this and taking him up cast him into the Prison of Blood,¹⁰⁰ and then went their ways.

So far as regards them; but returning to the damsel, they carried her to the Commander of the Faithful and she pleased him; so he assigned her a chamber of the chambers of choice. She tarried in the palace, neither eating nor drinking, and weeping sans surcease night and day, till, one night, the Caliph sent for her to his sitting-hall and said to her, “O Sitt al-Milah, be of good cheer and keep thine eyes cool of tear, for I will make thy rank higher than any of the concubines and thou shalt see that which shall rejoice thee.” She kissed ground and wept; whereupon the Prince of True Believers called for her lute and bade her sing: so in accordance with that which was in her heart, she sang these improvised couplets: —

*By the sheen of thy soul and the sheen of thy smile, * Say, moan'st thou
for doubt or is't ring-dove's moan?*

*How many have died who by love were slain! * Fails my patience but
blaming my blamers wone.*

Now when she had made an end of her song, she threw the lute from her hand and wept till she fainted away, whereupon the Caliph bade carry her to her chamber. But he was fascinated by her and loved her

¹⁰⁰ Arab. “Sijn al-Dam,” where men convicted or even accused of bloodshed were confined.

with exceeding love; so, after a while, he again commanded to bring her in to the presence, and when she came, he ordered her to sing. Accordingly, she took the lute and chanted to it that which was in her heart and improvised these couplets: —

*Have I patience and strength to support this despair? * Ah, how
couldst thou purpose afar to fare?*

*Thou art swayed by the spy to my cark and care: * No marvel an
branchlet sway here and there!*¹⁰¹

*With unbearable load thou wouldst load me, still * Thou loadest
with love which I theewards bear.*

Then she cast the lute from her hand and fainted away; so she was carried to her sleeping-chamber and indeed passion grew upon her. After a long while the Prince of True Believers sent for her a third time and commanded her to sing. So she took the lute and chanted these couplets: —

*O of piebald wild ye dunes sandy and drear, * Shall the teenful lover
'scape teen and tear?*

*Shall ye see me joined with a lover, who * Still flies or shall meet we
in joyful cheer?*

*O hail to the fawn with the Houri eye, * Like sun or moon on horizon
clear!*

*He saith to lovers, "What look ye on?" * And to stony hearts, "Say,
what love ye dear?"*

*I pray to Him who departed us * With severance-doom, "Be our union
near!"*

¹⁰¹ The branchlet, as usual, is the youth's slender form.

When she had made an end of her verse, the Commander of the Faithful said to her, "O damsel, thou art in love." She replied, "Yes;" and he asked, "With whom?" Answered she, "With my lord and sovran of my tenderness, for whom my love is as the love of the earth for rain, or as the desire of the female for the male; and indeed the love of him is mingled with my flesh and my blood and hath entered into the channels of my bones. O Prince of True Believers, whenever I call him to mind my vitals are consumed, for that I have not yet won my wish of him, and but that I fear to die, without seeing him, I had assuredly slain myself." Thereupon quoth he, "Art thou in my presence and durst bespeak me with the like of these words? Forsure I will gar thee forget thy lord." Then he bade take her away; so she was carried to her pavilion and he sent her a concubine, with a casket wherein were three thousand ducats and a collar of gold set with seed-pearls and great unions, and jewels, worth other three thousand, saying to her, "The slave-girl and that which is with her are a gift from me to thee." When she heard this, she cried, "Allah forfend that I be consoled for the love of my lord and my master, though with an earth-full of gold!" And she improvised and recited these couplets: —

*By his life I swear, by his life I pray; * For him fire I'd enter unful
dismay!*

*"Console thee (cry they) with another fere * Thou lovest!" and I,
"By 's life, nay, NAY!"*

*He's moon whom beauty and grace array; * From whose cheeks and
brow shineth light of day.*

Then the Commander of the Faithful summoned her to his presence a fourth time and said, "O Sitt al-Milah, sing." So she recited and sang these couplets: —

*The lover's heart by his beloved is oft disheartenèd * And by the hand
of sickness eke his sprite dispirited,
One asked, "What is the taste of love?" and I to him replied, * "Love is
a sweet at first but oft in fine unsweetenèd."
I am the thrall of Love who keeps the troth of love to them * But oft
they proved themselves 'Urkúb¹⁰² in pact with me they made.
What in their camp remains? They bound their loads and fared away; *
To other feres the veiled Fairs in curtained litters sped;
At every station the beloved showed all of Joseph's charms: * The lover
wone with Jacob's woe in every shift of stead.*

When she had made an end of her song, she threw the lute from her hand and wept herself a-swoon. So they sprinkled on her musk-mingled rose-water and willow-flower water; and when she came to her senses, Al-Rashid said to her, "O Sitt al-Milah, this is not just dealing in thee. We love thee and thou lovest another." She replied, "O Commander of the Faithful, there is no help for it." Thereupon he was wroth with her and cried, "By the virtue of Hamzah¹⁰³ and 'Akīl¹⁰⁴ and Mohammed, Prince of the Apostles, an thou name in my presence one other than I, I will assuredly order strike off thy head!" Then he bade return her to her chamber, whilst she wept and recited these couplets: —

*"Oh brave!" I'd cry an I my death could view; * My death were better
than these griefs to rue,
Did sabre hew me limb by limb; this were * Naught to affright a lover
leal-true.*

¹⁰² Immortalised in the A.P. as "more promise-breaking than 'Urkúb."

¹⁰³ Uncle of Mohammed.

¹⁰⁴ First cousin of Mohammed.

Then the Caliph went in to the Lady Zubaydah, complexion-altered with anger, and she noted this in him and said to him, "How cometh it that I see the Commander of the Faithful changed of colour?" He replied, "O daughter of my uncle, I have a beautiful slave-girl, who reciteth verses by rote and telleth various tales, and she hath taken my whole heart; but she loveth other than myself and declareth that she affecteth her former lord; so I have sworn a great oath that, if she come again to my sitting-hall and sing for other than for me, I will assuredly shorten her highest part by a span." Quoth Zubaydah, "Let the Commander of the Faithful favour me by presenting her, so I may look on her and hear her singing." Accordingly he bade fetch her and she came, upon which the Lady Zubaydah withdrew behind the curtain, where the damsel saw her not, and Al-Rashid said to her, "Sing to us." So she took the lute and tuning it, recited these couplets: —

*O my lord! since the day when I lost your sight, * My life was ungladdened, my heart full of teen;
The memory of you kills me every night; * And by all the worlds is my trace unseen;
All for love of a Fawn who hath snared my sprite * By his love and his brow as the morning sheen.
Like a left hand parted from brother right * I became by parting thro' Fortune's spleen.
On the brow of him Beauty deigned indite * "Blest be Allah, whom best of Creators I ween!"
And Him I pray, who could disunite * To re-unite us. Then cry "Ameen!"*

When Al-Rashid heard the end of this, he waxed exceeding wroth and said, "May Allah not reunite you twain in gladness!" Then he sum-

moned the headsman, and when he presented himself, he said to him, "Strike off the head of this accursed slavegirl." So Masrur took her by the hand and led her away; but, when she came to the door, she turned and said to the Caliph, "O Commander of the Faithful, I conjure thee, by thy fathers and forefathers, behead me not until thou give ear to that I shall say!" Then she improvised and recited these couplets: —

*Emir of Justice, be to lieges kind * For Justice ever guides thy generous mind;*

*And, oh, who blamest love to him inclining! * Are lovers blamed for lâches undesigned?*

*By Him who gave thee rule, deign spare my life * For rule on earth He hath to thee assigned.*

Then Masrur carried her to the other end of the sitting-hall and bound her eyes and making her sit, stood awaiting a second order: whereupon quoth the Lady Zubaydah, "O Prince of True Believers, with thy permission, wilt thou not vouchsafe this damsel a portion of thy clemency? An thou slay her, 'twere injustice." Quoth he, "What is to be done with her?" and quoth she, "Forbear to slay her and send for her lord. If he be as she describeth him in beauty and loveliness, she is excused, and if he be not on this wise then kill her, and this shall be thy plea against her." Al-Rashid replied, "No harm in this rede;" and caused return the damsel to her chamber, saying to her, "The Lady Zubaydah saith thus and thus." She rejoined, "God requite her for me with good! Indeed, thou dealest equitably, O Commander of the Faithful, in this judgment." And he retorted, "Go now to thy place, and tomorrow we will bid them bring thy lord." So she kissed ground and recited these couplets: —

*I indeed will well for whom love I will: * Let chider chide and let
blamer blame:*

*All lives must die at fixt tide and term * But I must die ere my
life-term came:*

*Then Oh whose love hath afflicted me * Well I will but thy presence
in haste I claim.*

Then she arose and returned to her chamber. Now on the morrow, the Commander of the Faithful sat in his hall of audience and his Wazir Ja'afar bin Yahya the Barmecide came in to him; whereupon he called to him, saying, "I would have thee bring me a youth who is lately come to Baghdad, hight Sidi Nur al-Din Ali the Damascene." Quoth Ja'afar, "Hearing and obeying," and going forth in quest of the youth, sent to the bazars and Wakalahs and Khans for three successive days, but discovered no trace of him, neither happened upon the place of him. So on the fourth day he presented himself before the Caliph and said to him, "O our lord, I have sought him these three days, but have not found him." Said Al-Rashid, "Make ready letters to Damascus. Per-adventure he hath returned to his own land." Accordingly Ja'afar wrote a letter and despatched it by a dromedary-courier to the Damascus-city; and they sought him there and found him not.

Meanwhile, news was brought that Khorasan had been conquered;¹⁰⁵ whereupon Al-Rashid rejoiced and bade decorate Baghdad and release all in the gaol, giving each of them a ducat and a dress. So Ja'afar applied himself to the adornment of the city and bade his brother Al-Fazl ride to the prison and robe and set free the prisoners. Al-Fazl did as his brother commanded and released all save the young

¹⁰⁵ Khorasan which included our Afghanistan was in a chronic state of rebellion during the latter part of Al-Rashid's reign.

Damascene, who abode still in the Prison of Blood, saying, "There is no Majesty, and there is no Might save in Allah, the Glorious, the Great! Verily, we are God's and to Him are we returning." Then quoth Al-Fazl to the gaoler, "Is there any left in the prison?" Quoth he, "No," and Al-Fazl was about to depart, when Nur al-Din called out to him from within the prison, saying, "O our lord, tarry awhile, for there remaineth none in the prison other than I and indeed I am wronged. This is a day of pardon and there is no disputing concerning it." Al-Fazl bade release him; so they set him free and he gave him a dress and a ducat. Thereupon the young man went out, bewildered and unknowing whither he should wend, for that he had sojourned in the gaol a year or so and indeed his condition was changed and his favour fouled, and he abode walking and turning round, lest Al-Muradi come upon him and cast him into another calamity.

When Al-Muradi learnt his release, he betook himself to the Wali and said, "O our lord, we are not assured of our lives from that youth, because he hath been freed from prison and we fear lest he complain of us." Quoth the Chief, "How shall we do?" and quoth Al-Muradi, "I will cast him into a calamity for thee." Then he ceased not to follow the Damascene from place to place till he came up with him in a narrow stead and cul-de-sac; whereupon he accosted him and casting a cord about his neck, cried out, "A thief!" The folk flocked to him from all sides and fell to beating and abusing Nur al-Din, whilst he cried out for aidance but none aided him, and Al-Muradi kept saying to him, "But yesterday the Commander of the Faithful released thee and to-day thou robbest!" So the hearts of the mob were hardened against him and again Al-Muradi carried him to the Chief of Police, who bade hew off his hand.

Accordingly, the hangman took him and bringing out the knife,

proceeded to cut off his hand, while Al-Muradi said to him, "Cut and sever the bone and fry not in oil the stump for him, so he may lose all his blood and we be at rest from him." But Ahmad, he who had before been the cause of his deliverance, sprang up to him and cried, "O folk, fear Allah in your action with this youth, for that I know his affair, first and last, and he is clear of offence and guiltless: he is of the lords of houses,¹⁰⁶ and unless ye desist from him, I will go up to the Commander of the Faithful and acquaint him with the case from beginning to end and that the youth is innocent of sin or crime." Quoth Al-Muradi, "Indeed, we are not assured from his mischief;" and quoth Ahmad, "Set him free and commit him to me and I will warrant you against his doings, for ye shall never see him again after this." So they delivered Nur al-Din to him and he took him from their hands and said to him, "O youth, have ruth on thyself, for indeed thou hast fallen into the hands of these folk twice and if they prevail over thee a third time, they will make an end of thee; and I in doing thus with thee, aim at reward for thee and recompense in Heaven and answer of prayer."

So Nur al-Din fell to kissing his hand and blessing him said, "Know that I am a stranger in this your city and the completion of kindness is better than its commencement; wherefore I pray thee of thy favour that thou make perfect to me thy good offices and generosity and bring me to the city-gate. So will thy beneficence be accomplished unto me and may God Almighty requite thee for me with good!" Ahmad replied, "No harm shall betide thee: go; I will bear thee company till thou come to thy place of safety." And he left him not till he brought him to the city-gate and said to him, "O youth, go in Allah's guard and return not to the city, for, an they fall in with thee again, they will make an end

¹⁰⁶ i.e. folk of good family.

of thee." Nur al-Din kissed his hand and going forth the city, gave not over walking, till he came to a mosque that stood in one of the suburbs of Baghdad and entered therein with the night.

Now he had with him naught wherewith he might cover himself; so he wrapped himself up in one of the mats of the mosque and thus abode till dawn, when the Muezzins came and finding him seated in such case, said to him, "O youth, what is this plight?" Said he, "I cast myself on your protection, imploring this defence from a company of folk who seek to slay me unjustly and wrongously, without cause." And one of the Muezzins said, "I will protect thee; so be of good cheer and keep thine eyes cool of tear." Then he brought him old clothes and covered him therewith; he also set before him somewhat of victual and seeing upon him signs of fine breeding, said to him, "O my son, I grow old and desiring help from thee, I will do away thy necessity." Nur al-Din replied, "To hear is to obey;" and abode with the old man, who rested and took his ease, while the youth did his service in the mosque, celebrating the praises of Allah and calling the Faithful to prayer and lighting the lamps and filling the spout-pots¹⁰⁷ and sweeping and cleaning out the place of worship.

On this-wise it befel the young Damascene; but as regards Sitt al-Milah, the Lady Zubaydah, the wife of the Commander of the Faithful, made a banquet in her palace and assembled her slave-girls. And the damsel came, weeping-eyed and heavy-hearted, and those present blamed her for this, whereupon she recited these couplets: —

*Yè blame the mourner who weeps his woe; * Needs must the mourner
sing, weeping sore;*

¹⁰⁷ Arab. "Al-Abárik" plur. of lbrik, an ewer containing water for the Wuzu-ablution.

*An I see not some happy day I'll weep * Brine-tears till followed by
gouts of gore.*

When she had made an end of her verses, the Lady Zubaydah bade each damsel sing a song, till the turn came round to Sitt al-Milah, whereupon she took the lute and tuning it, carolled thereto four-and-twenty carols in four-and-twenty modes; then she returned to the first and sang these couplets: —

*The World hath shot me with all her shafts * Departing friends
parting-grief t' aby:
So in heart the burn of all hearts I bear * And in eyes the tear-drops
of every eye.*

When she had made an end of her song, she wept till she garred the bystanders weep and the Lady Zubaydah condoled with her and said to her, “Allah upon thee, O Sitt al-Milah, sing us somewhat, so we may hearken to thee.” The damsel replied, “Hearing and obeying,” and sang these couplets: —

*People of passion, assemble ye! * This day be the day of our agony:
The Raven o' severance croaks at our doors; * Our raven which nigh
to us aye see we.
The friends we love have appointed us * The grievousest parting-dole
to dree.
Rise, by your lives, and let all at once * Fare to seek our friends where
their sight we see.*

Then she threw the lute from her hand and shed tears till she drew tears from the Lady Zubaydah who said to her, “O Sitt al-Milah, he whom thou lovest methinks is not in this world, for the Commander of

the Faithful hath sought him in every place, but hath not found him.” Whereupon the damsel arose and kissing the Princess’s hands, said to her, “O my lady, an thou wouldst have him found, I have this night a request to make whereby thou mayst win my need with the Caliph.” Quoth the Lady, “And what is it?” and quoth Sitt al-Milah, “’Tis that thou get me leave to fare forth by myself and go round about in quest of him three days, for the adage saith, ‘Whoso keeneth for herself is not like whoso is hired to keen!’ An if I find him, I will bring him before the Commander of the Faithful, so he may do with us what he will, and if I find him not, I shall be cut off from hope of him and the heat of that which is with me will be cooled.” Quoth the Lady Zubaydah, “I will not get thee leave from him but for a whole month; so be of good cheer and eyes cool and clear.” Whereat Sitt al-Milah rejoiced and rising, kissed ground before her once more and went away to her own place, and right glad was she.

As for Zubaydah, she went in to the Caliph and talked with him awhile; then she fell to kissing him between the eyes and on his hands and asked him for that which she had promised to Sitt al-Milah, saying, “O Commander of the Faithful, I doubt me her lord is not found in this world; but, an she go about seeking him and find him not, her hopes will be cut off and her mind will be set at rest and she will sport and laugh; and indeed while she nourisheth hope, she will never take the right direction.” And she ceased not cajoling him till he gave Sitt al-Milah leave to fare forth and make search for her lord a month’s space and ordered a riding-mule and an eunuch to attend her and bade the privy purse give her all she needed, were it a thousand dirhams a day or even more. So the Lady Zubaydah arose and returning to her palace bade summon Sitt al-Milah and, as soon as she came, acquainted her with that which had passed; whereupon she kissed her

hand and thanked her and called down blessings on her. Then she took leave of the Princess and veiling her face with a mask,¹⁰⁸ disguised herself; after which she mounted the she-mule and sallying forth, went round about seeking her lord in the highways of Baghdad three days' space, but happed on no tidings of him; and on the fourth day, she rode forth without the city.

Now it was the noon-hour and fierce was the heat, and she was aweary and thirst came upon her. Presently, she reached the mosque of the Shaykh who had lodged the young Damascene, and dismounting at the door, said to the old Muezzin, "O Shaykh, hast thou a draught of cold water? Verily, I am overcome with heat and thirst." Said he, "'Tis with me in my house." So he carried her up into his lodging and spreading her a carpet, seated her; after which he brought her cold water and she drank and said to her eunuch, "Go thy ways with the mule and to-morrow come back to me here." Accordingly he went away and she slept and rested herself. When she awoke, she asked the old man, "O Shaykh, hast thou aught of food?" and he answered, "O my lady, I have bread and olives." Quoth she, "That be food which befitteth only the like of thee. As for me, I will have naught save roast lamb and soups and reddened fowls right fat and ducks farcis with all manner stuffing of pistachio-nuts and sugar." Quoth the Muezzin, "O my lady, I have never heard of this chapter in the Koran, nor was it revealed to our lord Mohammed, whom Allah save and assain!" She laughed and said, "O Shaykh, the matter is even as thou sayest; but bring me pen-case and paper."

So he brought her what she sought and she wrote a note and gave it to him, together with a seal-ring from her finger, saying, "Go into the

¹⁰⁸ Arab. "Burka'," the face veil of Egypt, Syria, and Arabia with two holes for the eyes, and the end hanging to the waist.

city and enquire for Such-an-one the Shroff and give him this my note." Accordingly the oldster betook himself to the city, as she bade him, and asked for the money-changer, to whom they directed him. So he gave him ring and writ, seeing which, he kissed the letter and breaking it open, read it and apprehended its contents. Then he repaired to the bazar and buying all that she bade him, laid it in a porter's crate and made him go with the Shaykh. The old man took the Hammál and went with him to the mosque, where he relieved him of his burden and carried the rich viands in to Sitt al-Milah. She seated him by her side and they ate, he and she, of those dainty cates, till they were satisfied, when the Shaykh rose and removed the food from before her. She passed that night in his lodging and when she got up in the morning, she said to him, "O elder, may I not lack thy kind offices for the breakfast! Go to the Shroff and fetch me from him the like of yesterday's food."

So he arose and betaking himself to the money-changer, acquainted him with that which she had bidden him. The Shroff brought him all she required and set it on the heads of Hammals; and the Shaykh took them and returned with them to the damsel, when she sat down with him and they ate their sufficiency, after which he removed the rest of the meats. Then she took the fruits and the flowers and setting them over against herself, wrought them into rings and knots and writs, whilst the Shaykh looked on at a thing whose like he had never in his life seen and rejoiced in the sight. Presently said she to him "O elder, I would fain drink." So he arose and brought her a gugglet of water; but she cried to him, "Who said to thee, Fetch that?" Quoth he, "Saidst thou not to me, I would fain drink?" and quoth she, "I want not this; nay, I want wine, the solace of the soul, so haply, O Shaykh, I may refresh myself therewith."

Exclaimed the old man, "Allah forbend that strong drink be drunk in my house, and I a stranger in the land and a Muezzin and an Imam, who leadeth the True Believers in prayer, and a servant of the House of the Lord of the three Worlds!"

"Why wilt thou forbid me to drink thereof in thy house?"

"Because 'tis unlawful."

"O elder, Allah hath forbidden only the eating of blood and carrion¹⁰⁹ and hog's flesh: tell me, are grapes and honey lawful or unlawful?"

"They are lawful."

"This is the juice of grapes and the water of honey."

"Leave this thy talk, for thou shalt never drink wine in my house."

"O Shaykh, people eat and drink and enjoy themselves and we are of the number of the folk and Allah is indulgent and merciful."

"This is a thing that may not be."

"Hast thou not heard what the poet saith?" And she recited these couplets: —

*Cease thou to hear, O Sim'án-son,¹¹⁰ aught save the say of me; **

How bitter 'twas to quit the monks and fly the monast'ry!

*When, on the Fête of Palms there stood, amid the hallowed fane, **

A pretty Fawn whose lovely pride garred me sore wrong to dree.

*May Allah bless the night we spent when he to us was third, **

While Moslem, Jew, and Nazarene all sported fain and free.

*Quoth he, from out whose locks appeared the gleaming of the morn, **

"Sweet is the wine and sweet the flowers that joy us comrades three.

¹⁰⁹ i.e. animals that died without being ceremonially killed.

¹¹⁰ i.e. son of Simeon = a Christian.

*The garden of the garths of Khuld where roll and rail amain, *
Rivulets 'neath the myrtle shade and Bán's fair branchery;
And birds make carol on the boughs and sing in blithest lay, *
Yea, this indeed is life, but, ah! how soon it fades away."*

She then asked him, "O Shaykh, an Moslems and Jews and Nazarenes drink wine, who are we that we should reject it?" Answered he, "By Allah, O my lady, spare thy pains, for this be a thing whereto I will not hearken." When she knew that he would not consent to her desire, she said to him, "O Shaykh, I am of the slave-girls of the Commander of the Faithful and the food waxeth heavy on me and if I drink not, I shall die of indigestion, nor wilt thou be assured against the issue of my case."¹¹¹ As for me, I acquit myself of blame towards thee, for that I have bidden thee beware of the wrath of the Commander of the Faithful, after making myself known to thee." When the Shaykh heard her words and that wherewith she threatened him, he sprang up and went out, perplexed and unknowing what he should do, and there met him a Jewish man, which was his neighbour, and said to him, "How cometh it that I see thee, O Shaykh, strait of breast? Eke, I hear in thy house a noise of talk, such as I am unwont to hear with thee."

Quoth the Muezzin, "'Tis of a damsel who declareth that she is of the slave-girls of the Commander of the Faithful, Harun al-Rashid; and she hath eaten meat and now would drink wine in my house, but I forbade her. However she asserteth that unless she drink thereof, she will die, and indeed I am bewildered concerning my case." Answered the Jew, "Know, O my neighbour, that the slavel-girls of the Commander of the Faithful are used to drink wine, and when they eat and drink not, they die; and I fear lest happen some mishap to her,

¹¹¹ Wine, carrion and pork being lawful to the Moslem if used to save life.

when thou wouldst not be safe from the Caliph's fury." The Shaykh asked, "What is to be done?" and the Jew answered, "I have old wine that will suit her." Quoth the Shaykh, "By the right of neighbourship, deliver me from this descent of calamity and let me have that which is with thee!" Quoth the Jew, "Bismillah, in the name of Allah," and passing to his quarters, brought out a glass flask of wine, wherewith the Shaykh returned to Sitt al-Milah. This pleased her and she cried to him, "Whence hadst thou this?" He replied, "I got it from the Jew, my neighbour: I set forth to him my case with thee and he gave me this."

Thereupon Sitt al-Milah filled a cup and emptied it; after which she drank a second and a third. Then she crowned the cup a fourth time and handed it to the Shaykh, but he would not accept it from her. However, she conjured him, by her own head and that of the Prince of True Believers, that he take the cup from her, till he received it from her hand and kissed it and would have set it down; but she swore him by her life to smell it. Accordingly he smelt it and she said to him, "How deemest thou?" Said he, "I find its smell is sweet;" and she conjured him by the Caliph's life to taste thereof. So he put it to his mouth and she rose to him and made him drink; whereupon quoth he, "O Princess of the Fair,¹¹² this is none other than good." Quoth she, "So deem I: hath not our Lord promised us wine in Paradise?" He answered, "Yes! The Most High saith, 'And rivers of wine, delicious to the drinkers.'¹¹³ And we will drink it in this world and in the next world." She laughed and emptying the cup, gave him to drink, and he said, "O Princess of the Fair, indeed thou art excusable in thy love

¹¹² Here and below, a translation of her name.

¹¹³ "A picture of Paradise which is promised to the God-fearing! Therein are rivers of water which taint not; and rivers of milk whose taste changeth not; and rivers of wine, etc." — Koran xlvii. 16.

for this.” Then he bent in hand from her another and another, till he became drunken and his talk waxed great and his prattle.

The folk of the quarter heard him and assembled under the window; and when the Shaykh was ware of them, he opened the window and said to them, “Are ye not ashamed, O pimps? Every one in his own house doth whatso he willeth and none hindereth him; but we drink one single day and ye assemble and come, panders that ye are! To-day, wine, and to-morrow business; and from hour to hour cometh relief.” So they laughed together and dispersed. Then the girl drank till she was drunken, when she called to mind her lord and wept, and the Shaykh said to her, “What maketh thee weep, O my lady?” Said she, “O elder, I am a lover and a separated.” He cried, “O my lady, what is this love?” Cried she, “And thou, hast thou never been in love?” He replied, “By Allah, O my lady, never in all my life heard I of this thing, nor have I ever known it! Is it of the sons of Adam or of the Jinn?” She laughed and said, “Verily, thou art even as those of whom the poet speaketh, in these couplets: —

*How oft shall they admonish and ye shun this nourishment; *
When e'en the shepherd's bidding is obeyèd by his flocks?
I see you like in shape and form to creatures whom we term *
Mankind, but in your acts and deeds you are a sort of ox.”*

The Shaykh laughed at her speech and her verses pleased him. Then cried she to him, “I desire of thee a lute.” So he arose and brought her a bit of fuel.¹¹⁴ Quoth she, “What is that?” and quoth he, “Didst thou not say: Bring me fuel?” Said she, “I do not want this,” and said he, “What then is it that is hight fuel, other than this?” She laughed and

¹¹⁴ In Arab. “Ud” means primarily wood; then a lute. The Muezzin, like the school-master, is popularly supposed to be a fool.

replied, "The lute is an instrument of music, whereunto I sing." Asked he, "Where is this thing found and of whom shall I get it for thee?" and answered she, "Of him who gave thee the wine." So he arose and betaking himself to his neighbour the Jew, said to him, "Thou favouredst us before with the wine; so now complete thy favours and look me out a thing hight lute, which be an instrument for singing; for she seeketh this of me and I know it not." Replied the Jew, "Hearkening and obedience," and going into his house, brought him a lute. The old man carried it to Sitt al-Milah, whilst the Jew took his drink and sat by a window adjoining the Shaykh's house, so he might hear the singing. The damsel rejoiced, when the old man returned to her with the lute, and taking it from him, tuned its strings and sang these couplets: —

*Remains not, after you are gone, or trace of you or sign, * But hope
to see this parting end and break its lengthy line:*
*You went and by your wending made the whole world desolate; * And
none may stand this day in stead to fill the yearning eyne.*
*Indeed, you've burdened weakling me, by strength and force of you *
With load no hill hath power t'upheave nor yet the plain low li'en:*
*And I, whenever fain I scent the breeze your land o'erbreathes, * Lose
all my wits as though they were bemused with heady wine.*
*O folk no light affair is Love for lover woe to dree * Nor easy 'tis to
satisfy its sorrow and repine.*
*I've wandered East and West to hap upon your trace, and when *
Spring-camps I find the dwellers cry, "They've marched, those
friends o' thine!"*
*Never accustomed me to part these intimates I love; * Nay, when I left
them all were wont new meetings to design.*

Now when she had ended her song, she wept with sore weeping, till presently sleep overcame her and she slept. On the morrow, she said to the Shaykh, "Get thee to the Shroff and fetch me the ordinary;" so he repaired to the money-changer and delivered him the message, whereupon he made ready meat and drink, according to his custom, with which the old man returned to the damsel and they ate their sufficiency. When she had eaten, she sought of him wine and he went to the Jew and fetched it. Then the twain sat down and drank; and when she waxed drunken, she took the lute and smiting it, fell a-singing and chanted these couplets: —

*How long ask I the heart, the heart drowned, and eke * Refrain my
complaint while I my tear-floods speak?*

*They forbid e'en the phantom to visit me, * (O marvel!) her phantom
my couch to seek.*

And when she had made an end of her song, she wept with sore weeping. All this time, the young Damascene was listening, and now he likened her voice to the voice of his slave-girl and then he put away from him this thought, and the damsel had no knowledge whatever of his presence. Then she broke out again into song and chanted these couplets: —

*Quoth they, "Forget him! What is he?" To them I cried, * "Allah forget
me when forget I mine adored!"*

*Now in this world shall I forget the love o' you? * Heaven grant the
thrall may ne'er forget to love his lord!*

*I pray that Allah pardon all except thy love * Which, when I meet Him
may my bestest plea afford.*

After ending this song she drank three cups and filling the old man other three, improvised these couplets: —

*His love he hid which tell-tale tears betrayed; * For burn of coal that
'neath his ribs was laid:
Giv'n that he seek his joy in spring and flowers * Some day, his spring's
the face of dear-loved maid.
O ye who blame me for who baulks my love! * What sweeter thing than
boon to man denayed?
A sun, yet scorcheth he my very heart! * A moon, but riseth he from
breasts a-shade!*

When she had made an end of her song, she threw the lute from her hand and wept, whilst the Shaykh wept for her weeping. Then she fell down in a fainting fit and presently recovering, crowned the cup and drinking it off, gave the elder to drink, after which she took the lute and breaking out into song, chanted these couplets: —

*Thy parting is bestest of woes to my heart, * And changed my case till
all sleep it eschewed:
The world to my being is desolate; * Then Oh grief! and O lingering
solitude!
Maybe The Ruthful incline thee to me * And join us despite what our
foes have sued!*

Then she wept till her voice rose high and her wailing was discovered to those without; after which she again began to drink and plying the Shaykh with wine, sang these couplets: —

*An they hid thy person from eyen-sight, * They hid not thy name fro'
my mindful sprite:*

*Or meet me; thy ransom for meeting I'll be¹¹⁵ * Or fly me; and ransom
I'll be for thy flight!*

*Mine outer speaks for mine inner case, * And mine inner speaks for
mine outer plight.*

When she had made an end of her verses, she threw the lute from her hand and wept and wailed. Then she slept awhile and presently awaking, said, "O Shaykh, say me, hast thou what we may eat?" He replied, "O my lady, I have the rest of the food;" but she cried, "I will not eat of the orts I have left. Go down to the bazar and fetch us what we may eat." He rejoined, "Excuse me, O my lady, I cannot rise to my feet, because I am bemused with wine; but with me is the servant of the mosque, who is a sharp youth and an intelligent. I will call him, so he may buy thee whatso thou wantest." Asked she, "Whence hast thou this servant?" and he answered, "He is of the people of Damascus." When she heard him say "of the people of Damascus," she sobbed such a sob that she swooned away; and when she came to herself, she said, "Woe is me for the people of Damascus and for those who are therein! Call him, O Shaykh, that he may do our need." Accordingly, the old man put his head forth of the window and called the youth, who came to him from the mosque and sought leave to enter.

The Muezzin bade him come in, and when he appeared before the damsel, he knew her and she knew him; whereupon he turned back in bewilderment and would have fled at hap-hazard; but she sprang up to him and held him fast, and they embraced and wept together, till they fell to the floor in a fainting fit. When the Shaykh saw them in this condition, he feared for himself and fared forth in fright, seeing not the way for drunkenness. His neighbour the Jew met him and asked

¹¹⁵ i.e. I will lay down my life to save thee from sorrow.

him, "How is it that I behold thee astounded?" Answered the old man, "How should I not be astounded, seeing that the damsel who is with me is fallen in love with the mosque servant and they have embraced and slipped down in a swoon? Indeed, I fear lest the Caliph come to know of this and be wroth with me; so tell me thou what is thy device for that wherewith I am afflicted in the matter of this damsel." Quoth the Jew, "For the present, take this casting-bottle of rose-water and go forthright and sprinkle them therewith: an they be aswoon for this their union and embrace, they will recover, and if otherwise, then take to flight."

The Shaykh snatched the casting-bottle from the Jew and going up to the twain, sprinkled their faces, whereupon they came to themselves and fell to relating each to other that which they had suffered, since both had been parted, for the pangs of severance. Nur al-Din also acquainted Sitt al-Milah with that which he had endured from the folk who would have killed him and utterly annihilated him; and she said to him, "O my lord, let us for the nonce leave this talk and praise Allah for reunion of loves, and all this shall cease from us." Then she gave him the cup and he said, "By Allah, I will on no wise drink it, whilst I am in this case!" So she drank it off before him and taking the lute, swept the strings and sang these couplets: —

*O absent fro' me and yet present in place, * Thou art far from mine
eyes and yet ever nigh!*

*Thy farness bequeathed me all sorrow and care * And my troublous
life can no joy espy:*

*Lone, forlorn, weeping-eyelidded, miserablest, * I abide for thy sake
as though banisht I:*

*Then (ah grief o' me!) far thou hast fared from sight * Yet canst no
more depart me than apple of eye!*

When she had made an end of her verse, she wept and the young man of Damascus, Nur al-Din, wept also. Then she took the lute and improvised these couplets: —

*Well Allah wots I never namèd you * But tears o'erbrimming eyes
in floods outburst;
And passion raged and pine would do me die, * Yet my heart rested
wi' the thought it nurst;
O eye-light mine, O wish and O my hope! * Your face can never
quench mine eyes' hot thirst.*

When Nur al-Din heard these his slave-girl's verses, he fell a-weeping, while she strained him to her bosom and wiped away his tears with her sleeve and questioned him and comforted his mind. Then she took the lute and sweeping its strings, played thereon with such performing as would move the staidest to delight and sang these couplets: —

*Indeed, what day brings not your sight to me, * That day I rem'mber
not as dight to me!
And, when I vainly long on you to look, * My life is lost, Oh life and
light o' me!*

After this fashion they fared till the morning, tasting not the nourishment of sleep; and when the day lightened, behold the eunuch came with the she-mule and said to Sitt al-Milah, "The Commander of the Faithful calleth for thee." So she arose and taking by the hand her lord, committed him to the Shaykh, saying, "This is the deposit of Allah,

then thy deposit,¹¹⁶ till this eunuch cometh to thee; and indeed, O elder, my due to thee is the white hand of favour such as filleth the interval betwixt heaven and earth.” Then she mounted the mule and repairing to the palace of the Commander of the Faithful, went in to him and kissed ground before him. Quoth he to her, as who should make mock of her, “I doubt not but thou hast found thy lord;” and quoth she, “By thy felicity and the length of thy continuance on life, I have indeed found him!”

Now Al-Rashid was leaning back; but, when he heard this, he sat upright and said to her “By my life, true?” She replied, “Ay, by thy life!” He said, “Bring him into my presence, so I may see him;” but she said, “O my lord, there have happened to him many hardships and his charms are changed and his favour faded; and indeed the Prince of True Believers vouchsafed me a month; wherefore I will tend him the rest of the month and then bring him to do his service to the Commander of the Faithful.” Quoth Al-Rashid, “Sooth thou sayest: the condition certainly was for a month; but tell me what hath betided him.” Quoth she, “O my lord (Allah prolong thy continuance and make Paradise thy place of returning and thine asylum and the fire the abiding-place of thy foes!), when he presenteth himself to serve thee, he will assuredly expound to thee his case and will name to thee his wrongdoers; and indeed this is an arrear that is due to the Prince of True Believers, by whom may Allah fortify the Faith and vouchsafe him the victory over rebel and froward wretch!” Thereupon he ordered her a fine house and bade furnish it with carpets and vessels of choice and commanded them to give all she needed.

This was done during the rest of the day, and when the night came,

¹¹⁶ i.e. “I commit him to thy charge under God.”

she sent the eunuch with a suit of clothes and the mule, to fetch Nur al-Din from the Muezzin's lodging. So the young man donned the dress and mounting, rode to the house, where he abode in comfort and luxury a full-told month, while she solaced him with four things, the eating of fowls and the drinking of wine and the sleeping upon brocade and the entering the bath after horizontal refreshment. Furthermore, she brought him six suits of linen stuffs and took to changing his clothes day by day; nor was the appointed time of delay accomplished ere his beauty and loveliness returned to him; nay, his favour waxed tenfold fairer and he became a seduction to all who looked upon him.

One day of the days Al-Rashid bade bring him to the presence; so his slave-girl changed his clothes and robing him in sumptuous raiment, mounted him on the she-mule. Then he rode to the palace and presenting himself before the Caliph, saluted him with the goodliest of salutations and bespake him with Truchman's speech eloquent and deep-thoughted. When Al-Rashid saw him, he marvelled at the seemliness of his semblance and his loquence and eloquence and asking of him, was told that he was Sitt al-Milah's lord; whereupon quoth he, "Indeed, she is excusable in her love for him, and if we had put her to death wrongfully, as we were minded to do, her blood would have been upon our heads." Then he accosted the young man and entering into discourse with him, found him well-bred, intelligent, clever, quick-witted, generous, pleasant, elegant, excellent. So he loved him with exceeding love and questioned him of his native city and of his sire and of the cause of his journey to Baghdad.

Nur al-Din acquainted him with that which he would know in the goodliest words and concisest phrases; and the Caliph asked him, "And where hast thou been absent all this while? Verily, we sent after

thee to Damascus and Mosul and all other cities, but happened on no tidings of thee.” Answered the young man, “O my lord, there betided thy slave in thy capital that which never yet betided any.” Then he acquainted him with his case, first and last, and told him that which had befallen him of evil from Al-Muradi and the Chief of Police. Now when Al-Rashid heard this, he was chagrined with sore chagrin and waxed wroth with exceeding wrath and cried, “Shall this thing happen in a city wherein I am?” And the Háshimí vein started out between his eyes. Then he bade fetch Ja’afar, and when he came between his hands, he acquainted him with the adventure and said to him, “Shall this thing come to pass in my city and I have no news of it?” Thereupon he bade Ja’afar fetch all whom the young Damascene had named, and when they came, he bade smite their necks: he also summoned him whom they called Ahmad and who had been the means of the young man’s deliverance a first time and a second, and thanked him and showed him favour and bestowed on him a costly robe of honour and made him Chief of Police in his city.¹¹⁷

Then he sent for the Shaykh, the Muezzin, and when the messenger came to him and told him that the Commander of the Faithfull summoned him, he feared the denunciation of the damsel and walked with him to the palace, farting for fear as he went, whilst all who passed him by laughed at him. When he came into the presence of the Commander of the Faithful, he fell a-trembling and his tongue was tied, so that he could not speak. The Caliph smiled at him and said, “O Shaykh, thou hast done no offence; so why fearest thou?” Answered the old man (and indeed he was in the sorest of that which may be of fear), “O my lord, by the virtue of thy pure forefathers, indeed

¹¹⁷ After putting to death the unjust Prefect.

I have done naught, and do thou enquire of my manners and morals.” The Caliph laughed at him and ordering him a thousand dinars, bestowed on him a costly robe of honour and made him headman of the Muezzins in his mosque. Then he called Sitt al-Milah and said to her, “The house wherein thou lodgest with all it containeth is a largesse to thy lord: so do thou take him and depart with him in the safeguard of Allah Almighty; but absent not yourselves from our presence.”

Accordingly she went forth with the young Damascene and when she came to the house, she found that the Prince of True Believers had sent them gifts galore and good things in store. As for Nur al-Din, he sent for his father and mother and appointed for himself agents in the city of Damascus, to receive the rent of the houses and gardens and Wakalahs and Hammams; and they occupied themselves with collecting that which accrued to him and sending it to him every year. Meanwhile, his father and mother came to him, with that which they had of monies and merchandise of price and, foregathering with their son, found that he was become of the chief officers and familiars of the Commander of the Faithful and of the number of his sitting-companions and nightly entertainers, wherefore they rejoiced in reunion with him and he also rejoiced in them.

The Caliph assigned them solde and allowances; and as for Nur al-Din, his father brought him those riches and his wealth waxed and his estate was stablished, till he became the richest of the folk of his time in Baghdad and left not the presence of the Commander of the Faithful or by night or by day. He was vouchsafed issue by Sitt al-Milah, and he ceased not to live the goodliest of lives, he and she and his father and his mother, a while of time, till Abu al-Hasan sickened of a sore sickness and departed to the mercy of Allah Almighty.

Presently, his mother also died and he carried them forth and shrouded them and buried and made them expiations and funeral ceremonies. In due course his children grew up and became like moons, and he reared them in splendour and affection, while his wealth waxed and his case never waned. He ceased not to pay frequent visits to the Commander of the Faithful, he and his children and his slave-girl Sitt al-Milah, and they abode in all solace of life and prosperity till there came to them the Destroyer of delights and the Sunderer of societies; and laud to the Abiding, the Eternal! This is all that hath come down to us of their story.

Tale of King Ins bin Kays and his Daughter with the Son of King Al-'Abbas

There was once, in days of yore and in ages and times long gone before, in the city of Baghdad, the House of Peace, a king mighty of estate, lord of understanding and beneficence and generosity and munificence, and he was strong of sultanate and endowed with might and majesty and magnificence. His name was Ins bin Kays bin Rabī' al-Shaybání,¹¹⁸ and when he took horse, there rode about him riders from the farthest parts of the two Iraks.¹¹⁹ Almighty Allah decreed that he should take to wife a woman hight 'Aḫfah, daughter of Asad al-Sundúsi, who was endowed with beauty and loveliness and brightness and perfect grace and symmetry of shape and stature; her face

¹¹⁸ "Of the Shaybán tribe." I have noticed how loosely the title Malik (King) is applied in Arabic and in mediaeval Europe. But it is ultra-Shakespearean to place a Badawi King in Baghdad, the capital founded by the Abbasides and ruled by those Caliphs till their downfall.

¹¹⁹ i.e. Irák Arabí (Chaldaeae) and 'Ajami (Western Persia).

was like the crescent moon and she had eyes as they were gazelle's eyes and an aquiline nose like Luna's cymb. She had learned cavalierice and the use of arms and had mastered the sciences of the Arabs; eke she had gotten by heart all the dragomanish tongues and indeed she was a ravishment to mankind. She abode with Ins bin Kays twelve years, during which time he was not blessed with children by her; so his breast was straitened by reason of the failure of lineage, and he besought his Lord to vouchsafe him a son.

Accordingly the queen conceived, by permission of Allah Almighty; and when the days of her pregnancy were accomplished, she gave birth to a maid-child, than whom never saw eyes fairer, for that her face was as it were a pearl pure-bright or a lamp raying light or a candle gilt with gold or a full moon breaking cloudy fold, extolled be He who her from vile water dight and made her to the beholders a delight! When her father saw her in this fashion of loveliness, his reason fled for joy, and when she grew up, he taught her writing and *belles-lettres* and philosophy and all manner of tongues. So she excelled the folk of her time and surpassed her peers; and the sons of the kings heard of her and all of them longed to look upon her.

The first who sought her to wife was King Nabhán¹²⁰ of Mosul, who came to her with a great company, bringing an hundred she-camels, laden with musk and lign-aloes and ambergris and five score loaded with camphor and jewels and other hundred laden with silver monies and yet other hundred loaded with raiment of silken stuffs, sendal and brocade, besides an hundred slave-girls and a century of choice steeds of swift and generous breeds, completely housed and accoutred, as they were brides; and all this he had laid before her

¹²⁰ As fabulous a personage as "King Kays."

father, demanding her of him in wedlock. Now King Ins bin Kays had bound himself by an oath that he would not marry his daughter save to him whom she should choose; so, when King Nabhan sought her in marriage, her father went in to her and consulted her concerning his affair. She consented not and he repeated to Nabhan that which she said, whereupon he departed from him. After this came King Bahrá́m, lord of the White Island, with treasures richer than the first; but she accepted not of him and he returned disappointed; nor did the kings cease coming to her sire, on her account, one after other, from the farthest of the lands and the climes, each glorying in bringing more than those who forewent him; but she heeded not any one of them.

Presently, Al-'Abbás, son of King Al-'Azíz, lord of the land of Al-Yaman and Zabídún and Meccah (which Allah increase in honour and brightness and beauty!) heard of her; and he was of the great ones of Meccah and Al-Hijáz,¹²¹ and was a youth without hair on his side-face. So he presented himself one day in his sire's assembly, whereupon the folk made way for him and the king seated him on a chair of red gold, crusted with pearls and gems. The Prince sat, with his head bowed groundwards, and spake not to any: whereby his father knew that his breast was straitened and bade the cup-companions and men of wit relate marvellous histories, such as beseem the sessions of kings; nor was there one of them but spoke forth the goodliest of that which was with him; but Al-'Abbas still abode with his head bowed down.

Then the king bade his sitting-companions withdraw, and when the chamber was private, he looked at his son and said to him, "By Allah, thou cheerest me with thy coming in to me and chagrimest me for that thou payest no heed to any of the familiars nor of the cup-companions.

¹²¹ The Moslem's Holy Land whose capital is Meccah.

What is the cause of this?" Answered the Prince, "O my papa, I have heard tell that in the land of Al-Irak is a woman of the daughters of the kings, and her father is called King Ins bin Kays, lord of Baghdad; she is famed for beauty and loveliness and brightness and perfect grace, and indeed many of the kings have sought her in marriage; but her soul consented not unto any one of them. Wherefore my thought prompteth me to travel herwards, for that my heart cleaveth to her, and I beseech thee suffer me to go to her." His sire replied, "O my son, thou knowest that I have none other than thyself of children and thou art the coolth of mine eyes and the fruit of my vitals; nay, I cannot brook to be parted from thee a single hour and I purpose to seat thee on the throne of the kingship and espouse thee to one of the daughters of the kings, who shall be fairer than she."

Al-Abbas gave ear to his father's word and dared not gainsay him; wherefore he abode with him awhile, whilst the love-fire raged in his vitals. Then the king took rede with himself to build his son a Hammam and adorn it with various paintings, so he might display it to him and divert him with the sight thereof, to the intent that his body might be solaced thereby and that the accident of travel might cease from him and he be turned from his purpose of removal from his parents. Presently he addressed himself to the building of the bath and assembling architects and artisans from all his cities and citadels and islands, assigned them a foundation-site and marked out its boundaries. Then the workmen occupied themselves with the building of the Hammam and the ordinance and adornment of its cabinets and roofs. They used paints and precious minerals of all kinds, according to the contrast of their colours, red and green and blue and yellow and what not else of all manner tincts; and each artisan wrought at his craft and each painter

at his art, whilst the rest of the folk busied themselves with transporting thither varicoloured stones.

One day, as the Master-painter wrought at his work, there came in to him a poor man, who looked long upon him and observed his mystery; whereupon quoth the artist to him, "Knowest thou aught of painting?" Quoth the stranger, "Yes;" so he gave him tools and paints and said to him, "Limn for us a rare semblance." Accordingly the pauper stranger entered one of the bath-chambers and drew on its walls a double border, which he adorned on both sides, after a fashion than which eyes never saw a fairer. Moreover, amiddlemost the chamber he limned a picture to which there lacked but the breath, and it was the portraiture of Máriyah, daughter to the king of Baghdad. Then, when he had finished the portrait, he went his way and told none of what he had done, nor knew any wight the chambers and doors of the bath and the adornment and ordinance thereof.

Presently the chief artisan came to the palace and sought audience of the king who bade admit him. So he entered and kissing the earth, saluted him with a salam beseeming Sultans and said, "O king of the time and lord of the age and the tide, may prosperity endure to thee and acceptance and eke thy degree over all the kings both morning and evening exalted be! The work of the bath is accomplished, by the king's fair fortune and the purity of his purpose, and indeed, we have done all that behoved us and there remaineth but that which behoveth the king." Al-Aziz ordered him a costly robe of honour and expended monies galore, giving unto each who had wroughten after the measure of his work. Then he assembled in the Hammam all the Lords of his realm, Emirs and Wazirs and Chamberlains and Nabobs, and the chief officers of his kingdom and household, and sending for his son Al-Abbas, said to him, "O my son, I have builded thee a bath, wherein

thou mayst take thy pleasure; so enter that thou mayst see it and divert thyself by gazing upon it and viewing the beauty of its ordinance and decoration.” “With love and gladness,” replied the Prince and entered the bath, he and the king and the folk about them, so they might divert themselves with viewing that which the workmen’s hands had worked.

Al-Abbas went in and passed from place to place and chamber to chamber, till he came to the room aforesaid and espied the portrait of Mariyah, whereupon he fell down in a fainting-fit and the workmen went to his father and said to him, “Thy son Al-Abbas hath swooned away.” So the king came and finding his son cast down, seated himself at his head and bathed his face with rose-water. After awhile he revived and the king said to him, “I seek refuge with Allah for thee, O my son! What accident hath befallen thee?” The Prince replied, “O my father, I did but look on yonder picture and it bequeathed me a thousand qualms and there befel me that which thou beholdest.” Therewith the king bade fetch the Master-painter, and when he stood before him, he said to him, “Tell me of yonder portrait and what girl is this of the daughters of the kings; else I will take thy head.” Said the painter, “By Allah, O king, I limned it not, neither know I who she is; but there came to me a poor man and looked hard at me. So I asked him, ‘Knowest thou the art of painting?’ and he answered, ‘Yes.’ Whereupon I gave him the gear and said to him, ‘Limn for us a rare semblance.’ Accordingly he painted yonder portrait and went away and I wot him not neither have I ever set eyes on him save that day.”

Hearing this, the king ordered all his officers to go round about in the thoroughfares and colleges and to bring before him all strangers they found there. So they went forth and brought him much people, amongst whom was the pauper who had painted the portrait. When

they came into the presence, the Sultan bade the crier make public proclamation that whoso wrought the portrait should discover himself and have whatso he wished. Thereupon the poor man came forward and kissing the ground before the king, said to him, "O king of the age, I am he who limned yonder likeness." Quoth Al-Aziz, "And knowest thou who she is?" and quoth the other, "Yes, this is the portrait of Mariyah, daughter of the king of Baghdad." The king ordered him a robe of honour and a slave-girl and he went his way. Then said Al-Abbas, "O my papa, give me leave to seek her, so I may look upon her: else shall I farewell the world, withouten fail."

The king his father wept and answered, "O my son, I builded thee a Hammam, that it might turn thee from leaving me, and behold, it hath been the cause of thy going forth; but the behest of Allah is a determinate decree." Then he wept again and Al-Abbas said to him, "Fear not for me, for thou knowest my prowess and puissance in returning answers in the assemblies of the land and my good breeding and accomplishments together with my skill in rhetoric; and indeed for him whose father thou art and whom thou hast reared and bred and in whom thou hast united praiseworthy qualities, the repute whereof hath traversed the East and the West, thou needest not fear aught, more especially as I purpose but to seek pleasuring and return to thee, an it be the will of Allah Almighty." Quoth the king, "Whom wilt thou take with thee of attendants and what of monies?" Replied Al-Abbas, "O my papa, I have no need of horses or camels or weapons, for I purpose not warfare, and I will have none go forth with me save my page 'Amir and no more."

Now as he and his father were thus engaged in talk, in came his mother and caught hold of him; and he said to her, "Allah upon thee, let me gang my gait and strive not to divert me from what purpose

I have purposed, for needs must I go.” She replied, “O my son, if it must be so and there be no help for it, swear to me that thou wilt not be absent from me more than a year.” And he sware to her. Then he entered his father’s treasuries and took therefrom what he would of jewels and jacinths and everything weighty of worth and light of load: he also bade his servant Amir saddle him two steeds and the like for himself, and whenas the night beset his back, he rose from his couch and mounting his horse, set out for Baghdad, he and Amir, whilst the page knew not whither he intended. He gave not over going and the journey was joyous to him, till they came to a goodly land, abounding in birds and wild beasts, whereupon Al-Abbas started a gazelle and shot it with a shaft. Then he dismounted and cutting its throat, said to his servant, “Alight thou and skin it and carry it to the water.” Amir answered him with “Hearkening and obedience” and going down to the water, built a fire and broiled the gazelle’s flesh. Then they ate their fill and drank of the water, after which they mounted again and fared on with diligent faring, and Amir still unknowing whither Al-Abbas was minded to wend. So he said to him, “O my lord, I conjure thee by Allah of All-might, wilt thou not tell me whither thou intendest?” Al-Abbas looked at him and in reply improvised these couplets: —

*In my vitals are fires of desire and repine; * And naught I reply when
they flare on high:*

*Baghdad-wards I hie me on life-and-death work, * Loving one who
distorts my right judgment awry:*

*A swift camel under me shortcuts the wold * And deem it a cloud all
who nearhand espy:*

*O ’Ámir make haste after model of her * Who would heal mine ill
and Love’s cup drain dry:*

*For the leven of love burns the vitals of me; * So with me seek my tribe
and stint all reply.*

When Amir heard his lord's verses, he knew that he was a slave of love and that she whom he loved abode in Baghdad. Then they fared on night and day, traversing plain and stony way, till they sighted Baghdad and lighted down in its environs and there lay their night. When they arose in the morning, they removed to the bank of the Tigris where they encamped and sojourned a second day and a third.

As they abode thus on the fourth day, behold, a company of folk giving their beasts the rein and crying aloud and saying, "Quick! Quick! Haste to our rescue, Ho thou the King!" Therewith the King's chamberlains and officers accosted them and said, "What is behind you and what hath betided you?" Quoth they, "Bring us before the King." So they carried them to Ins bin Kays; and when they saw him, they said to him, "O king, unless thou succour us, we are dead men; for that we are a folk of the Banú Shaybán,¹²² who have taken up our abode in the parts of Bassorah, and Hodhayfah the wild Arab hath come down on us with his steeds and his men and hath slain our horse-men and carried off our women and children; nor was one saved of the tribe but he who fled; wherefore we crave help first by Allah Almighty, then by thy life." When the king heard their speech, he bade the crier proclaim in the highways of the city that the troops should busk them to march and that the horsemen should mount and the footmen fare forth; nor was it but the twinkling of the eye ere the kettle-drums beat and the trumpets blared; and scarce was the forenoon of the day passed when the city was blocked with horse and foot. Presently, the king reviewed them and behold, they were four-and-twenty

¹²² The king's own tribe.

thousand in number, cavalry and infantry. He bade them go forth to the enemy and gave the command of them to Sa'ad ibn al-Wákidí, a doughty cavalier and a dauntless champion; so the horsemen set out and fared on along the Tigris-bank.

Al-Abbas, son of King Al-Aziz, looked at them and saw the flags flaunting and the standards stirring and heard the kettle-drums beating; so he bade his page saddle him a blood-steed and look to the surcingles and bring him his harness of war, for indeed horsemanship was rooted in his heart. Quoth Amir, "And indeed I saw Al-Abbas, his eyes waxed red and the hair of his hands on end." So he mounted his charger, whilst Amir also bestrode a destrier, and they went forth with the commando and fared on two days. On the third day, after the hour of the midafternoon prayer, they came in sight of the foe and the two armies met and the two ranks joined in fight. The strife raged amain and sore was the strain, whilst the dust rose in clouds and hung in vaulted shrouds, so that all eyes were blinded; and they ceased not from the battle till the night overtook them, when the two hosts drew off from the mellay and passed the night, perplexed concerning themselves.

When Allah caused the morning to morrow, the two hosts were aligned in line and their thousands fixed their eyne and the troops stood looking one at other. Then sallied forth Al-Háris ibn Sa'ad between the two lines and played with his lance and cried out and improvised these couplets: —

*You are in every way this day our prey; * And ever we prayèd your
sight to see:*

*The Ruthful drave you Hodhayfah-wards * To the Brave, the Lion
who sways the free:*

*Say, amid you's a man who would heal his ills, * With whose lust
of battle shrewd blows agree?*

*Then by Allah meet me who come to you * And whoso is wronged
shall the wronger be.*

Thereupon there sallied forth to him Zuhayr bin Habíb, and they wheeled about and wiled a while, then they exchanged strokes. Al-Haris forewent his foe in smiting and stretched him weltering in his gore; whereupon Hodhayfah cried out to him, "Gifted of Allah art thou, O Haris! Call out another of them." So he cried aloud, "I say, who be a champion?" But they of Baghdad held back from him; and when it appeared to Al-Haris that consternation was amongst them, he charged down upon them and overrolled the first of them upon the last of them and slew of them twelve men. Then the evening caught him and the Baghdadis began addressing themselves to flight.

No sooner had the morning morrowed than they found themselves reduced to a fourth part of their number and there was not one of them had dismounted from his horse. Wherefore they made sure of destruction and Hodhayfah rushed out between the two lines (now he was reckoned good for a thousand knights) and cried out, "Harkye, my masters of Baghdad! Let none come forth to me but your Emir, so I may talk with him and he with me; and he shall meet me in combat singular and I will meet him, and may he who is clear of offence come off safe." Then he repeated his words and said, "How is it I see your Emir refuse me a reply?" But Sa'ad, the Emir of the army of Baghdad, answered him not, and indeed his teeth chattered in his mouth, when he heard him summon him to the duello.

Now when Al-Abbas heard Hodhayfah's challenge and saw Sa'ad in this case, he came up to the Emir and asked him, "Wilt thou suffer

me to answer him and I will be thy substitute in replying him and in monomachy with him and will make my life thy sacrifice?" Sa'ad looked at him and seeing knighthood shining from between his eyes, said to him, "O youth, by the virtue of Mustafâ the Chosen Prophet (whom Allah save and assain), tell me who thou art and whence thou comest to bring us victory." Quoth the Prince, "This is no place for questioning;" and quoth Sa'ad to him, "O Knight, up and at Hodhayfah! Yet, if his Satan prove too strong for thee, afflict not thyself on thy youth." Al-Abbas cried, "Allah is He of whom help is to be sought;" and, taking his arms, fortified his purpose and went down into the field, as he were a fort of the forts or a mountain's contrefort. Thereupon Hodhayfah cried out to him, saying, "Haste thee not, O youth! Who art thou of the folk?" He replied, "I am Sa'ad ibn al-Wakidi, commander of the host of King Ins, and but for thy pride in challenging me, I had not come forth to thee; for thou art no peer for me to front nor as mine equal dost thou count nor canst thou bear my brunt. Wherefore get thee ready for the last march seeing that there abideth but a little of thy life."

When Hodhayfah heard this speech, he threw himself backwards, as if in mockery of him, whereat Al-Abbas was wroth and called out to him, saying, "O Hodhayfah, guard thyself against me." Then he rushed upon him, as he were a swooper of the Jinn,¹²³ and Hodhayfah met him and they wheeled about a long while. Presently, Al-Abbas cried out at Hodhayfah a cry which astounded him and struck him a stroke, saying, "Take this from the hand of a brave who feareth not the like of thee." Hodhayfah met the sabre-sway with his shield, thinking to ward it off from him; but the blade shore the target in sunder and

¹²³ i.e. as he were a flying Jinni, swooping down and pouncing falcon-like upon a mortal from the upper air.

descending upon his shoulder, came forth gleaming from the tendons of his throat and severed his arm at the armpit; whereupon he fell down, wallowing in his blood, and Al-Abbas turned upon his host; nor had the sun departed the dome of the welkin ere Hodhayfah's army was in full flight before Al-Abbas and the saddles were empty of men. Quoth Sa'ad, "By the virtue of Mustafa the Chosen Prophet, whom Allah save and assain, I saw Al-Abbas with the blood upon his saddle-pads, in clots like camels' livers, smiting with the sword right and left, till he scattered them abroad in every gorge and wold; and when he hied him back to the camp, the men of Baghdad were fearful of him." But as soon as they saw this victory which had betided them over their foes, they turned back and gathering together the weapons and treasures and horses of those they had slain, returned to Baghdad, victorious, and all by the knightly valour of Al-Abbas.

As for Sa'ad, he foregathered with his lord, and they fared on in company till they came to the place where Al-Abbas had taken horse, whereupon the Prince dismounted from his charger and Sa'ad said to him, "O youth, wherefore alightest thou in other than thy place? Indeed, thy rights be incumbent upon us and upon our Sultan; so go thou with us to the dwellings, that we may ransom thee with our souls." Replied Al-Abbas, "O Emir Sa'ad, from this place I took horse with thee and herein is my lodging. So, Allah upon thee, mention not me to the king, but make as if thou hadst never seen me because I am a stranger in the land." So saying he turned away from him and Sa'ad fared on to his palace, where he found all the courtiers in attendance on the king and recounting to him that which had betided them with Al-Abbas. Quoth the king, "Where is he?" and quoth they, "He is with the Emir Sa'ad."

So, when the Emir entered, the king looked, but found none with

him; and Sa'ad, seeing at a glance that he longed to look upon the youth, cried out to him, saying, "Allah prolong the king's days! Indeed, he refuseth to present himself before thee, without order or leave." Asked the king, "O Sa'ad, whence cometh this man?" and the Emir answered, "O my lord, I know not; but he is a youth fair of favour, amiable of aspect, accomplished in address, ready of repartee, and valour shineth from between his eyes." Quoth the king, "O Sa'ad, fetch him to me, for indeed thou describest to me at full length a mighty matter." And he answered, saying, "By Allah, O my lord, hadst thou but seen our case with Hodhayfah, when he challenged me to the field of fight and the stead of cut-and-thrust and I held back from doing battle with him! Then, as I thought to go forth to him, behold, a knight gave loose to his bridle-rein and called out to me, saying, 'O Sa'ad, wilt thou suffer me to be thy substitute in waging war with him and I will ransom thee with myself?' and quoth I, 'By Allah, O youth, whence comest thou?' and quoth he, 'This be no time for thy questions, while Hodhayfah standeth awaiting thee.'" Thereupon he repeated to the king all that had passed between himself and Al-Abbas from first to last; whereat cried Ins bin Kays, "Bring him to me in haste, so we may learn his tidings and question him of his case." "'Tis well," replied Sa'ad, and going forth of the king's presence, repaired to his own house, where he doffed his war-harness and took rest for himself.

On this wise fared it with the Emir Sa'ad, but as regards Al-Abbas, when he dismounted from his destrier, he doffed his war-gear and repose himself awhile; after which he brought out a body-dress of Venetian silk and a gown of green damask and donning them, bound about his head a turband of Damietta stuff and zoned his waist with a kerchief. Then he went out a-walking in the highways of Baghdad and fared on till he came to the bazar of the traders. There he found a

merchant, with chess before him; so the Prince stood watching him, and presently the other looked up at him and asked him, "O youth, what wilt thou bet upon the game?" He answered, "Be it thine to decide." Said the merchant, "Then be it an hundred dinars," and Al-Abbas consented to him; whereupon quoth he, "Produce the money, O youth, so the game may be fairly stablished." Accordingly Al-Abbas brought out a satin purse, wherein were a thousand dinars, and laid down an hundred dinars therefrom on the edge of the carpet, whilst the merchant produced the like, and indeed his reason fled for joy when he saw the gold in possession of Al-Abbas.

The folk flocked about them, to divert themselves with watching the play, and they called the bystanders to witness the wager and after the stakes were duly staked, the twain fell a-playing. Al-Abbas forebore the merchant, so he might lead him on, and dallied with him a full hour; and the merchant won and took of him the hundred dinars. Then said the Prince, "Wilt thou play another partie?" and the other said, "O youth, I will not play again, save for a thousand dinars." Quoth the youth, "Whatsoever thou stakest, I will match thy stake with its like." So the merchant brought out a thousand dinars and the Prince covered them with other thousand. Then the game began, but Al-Abbas was not long with him ere he beat him in the house of the elephant¹²⁴ nor did he cease to do thus till he had beaten him four times and won of him four thousand dinars. This was all the merchant had of money; so he said, "O youth, I will play thee another game for the shop." Now the value of the shop was four thousand dinars; so they played and Al-Abbas beat him and won his shop, with whatso was therein; upon which the other arose, shaking his clothes,¹²⁵ and said to

¹²⁴ i.e. the castle's square.

¹²⁵ In sign of quitting possession.

him, "Up, O youth, and take thy shop." Accordingly Al-Abbas arose and repairing to the shop, took possession thereof, after which he returned to the place where he had left his servant Amir, and found there the Emir Sa'ad, who was come to bid him to the presence of the king.

The Prince consented to this and accompanied him till they came before King Ins bin Kays, whereupon he kissed the ground and saluted him and exaggerated¹²⁶ the salutation. So the king asked him, "Whence comest thou, O youth, and whither goest thou?" and he answered, "I come from Al-Yaman." Then said the king, "Hast thou a need we may fulfil to thee; for indeed thou hast strong claims to our favour after that which thou didst in the matter of Hodhayfah and his folk." And he commanded to cast over him a mantle of Egyptian satin, worth an hundred dinars. He also bade his treasurer give him a thousand dinars and said to him, "O youth, take this in part of that which thou deservest of us; and if thou prolong thy sojourn with us, we will give thee slaves and servants." Al-Abbas kissed ground and said, "O king, Allah grant thee abiding weal, I deserve not all this." Then he put his hand to his pouch and pulling out two caskets of gold, in each of which were rubies whose value none could estimate, gave them to the king, saying, "O king, Allah cause thy welfare to endure, I conjure thee by that which the Almighty hath vouchsafed thee, heal my heart by accepting these two caskets, even as I have accepted thy present." So the king accepted the two caskets and Al-Abbas took his leave and went away to the bazar.

Now when the merchants saw him, they accosted him and said, "O youth, wilt thou not open thy shop?" As they were addressing him,

¹²⁶ i.e., he was as eloquent and courtly as he could be.

up came a woman, having with her a boy bare of head, and stood looking at Al-Abbas, till he turned to her, when she said to him, "O youth, I conjure thee by Allah, look at this boy and have ruth on him, for that his father hath forgotten his skull-cap in the shop he lost to thee; so, an thou see fit to give it him, thy reward be with Allah! For indeed the child maketh our hearts ache with his excessive weeping, and the Lord be witness for us that, had they left us aught wherewith to buy him a cap in its stead, we had not sought it of thee." Replied Al-Abbas, "O adornment of womankind, indeed, thou bespeakest me with thy fair speech and supplicatest me with thy goodly words! But bring me thy husband." So she went and fetched the merchant, whilst a crowd collected to see what Al-Abbas would do. When the man came, he returned him the gold he had won of him, art and part, and delivered him the keys of the shop, saying, "Requite us with thy pious prayers." Therewith the woman came up to him and kissed his feet, and in like fashion did the merchant her husband: and all who were present blessed him, and there was no talk but of Al-Abbas.

Thus fared it with him; but as for the merchant, he bought him a head of sheep and slaughtering it, roasted it and dressed birds and other meats of various kinds and colours and purchased dessert and sweetmeats and fresh fruits; then he repaired to Al-Abbas and conjured him to accept of his hospitality and visit his home and eat of his provaunt. The Prince consented to his wishes and went with him till they came to his house, when the merchant bade him enter: so Al-Abbas went in and saw a goodly house, wherein was a handsome saloon, with a vaulted ceiling. When he entered the saloon, he found that the merchant had made ready food and dessert and perfumes, such as may not be described; and indeed he had adorned the table with sweet-scented flowers and sprinkled musk and rose-water upon

the food; and he had smeared the saloon walls with ambergris and had burned aloes-wood therein and Nadd. Presently, Al-Abbas looked out of the window of the saloon and saw by its side a house of goodly ordinance, tall of base and wide of space, with rooms manifold and two upper stories crowning the whole; but therein was no sign of inhabitants.

So he said to the merchant, "Verily, thou exaggeratest in doing us honour; but, by Allah, I will not eat of thy meat until thou tell me what hath caused the voidance of yonder house." Said he, "O my lord, that was Al-Ghitrif's house and he passed away to the mercy of the Almighty and left no heir save myself; whereupon the mansion became mine, and by Allah, an thou have a mind to sojourn in Baghdad, take up thine abode in this house, whereby thou mayst be in my neighbourhood; for that verily my heart inclineth unto thee with affection and I would have thee never absent from mine eyes, so I may still have my fill of thee and hearken to thy speech." Al-Abbas thanked him and said to him, "By Allah, thou art indeed friendly in thy converse and thou exaggeratest in thy discourse, and needs must I sojourn in Baghdad. As for the house, if it please thee to lodge me, I will abide therein; so accept of me its price." Therewith he put hand to his pouch and bringing out from it three hundred dinars, gave them to the merchant, who said in himself, "Unless I take his dirhams, he will not darken my doors." So he pocketed the monies and sold him the mansion, taking witnesses against himself of the sale.

Then he arose and set food before Al-Abbas and they sat down to his good things; after which he brought him dessert and sweetmeats whereof they ate their sufficiency, and when the tables were removed they washed their hands with musked rose-water and willow-water. Then the merchant brought Al-Abbas a napkin scented with the smoke

of aloes-wood, on which he wiped his right hand, and said to him, "O my lord, the house is become thy house; so bid thy page transport thither the horses and arms and stuffs." The Prince did this and the merchant rejoiced in his neighbourhood and left him not night nor day, so that Al-Abbas said to him, "By the Lord, we distract thee from thy livelihood." He replied, "Allah upon thee, O my lord, name not to me aught of this, or thou wilt break my heart, for the best of traffic art thou and the best of livelihood." So there befel straight friendship between them and all ceremony was laid aside.

Meanwhile the king said to his Wazir, "How shall we do in the matter of yonder youth, the Yamáni, on whom we thought to confer gifts, but he hath gifted us with tenfold our largesse and more, and we know not an he be a sojourner with us or not?" Then he went into the Harim and gave the rubies to his wife Afifah, who asked him, "What is the worth of these with thee and with other of the kings?" Quoth he, "They are not to be found save with the greatest of sovrans nor can any price them with monies." Quoth she, "Whence gottest thou them?" So he recounted to her the story of Al-Abbas from beginning to end, and she said, "By Allah, the claims of honour are imperative on us and the King hath fallen short of his devoir; for that we have not seen him bid the youth to his assembly, nor hath he seated him on his left hand." When the king heard his wife's words, it was as if he had been asleep and awoke; so he went forth the Harim and bade kill poultry and dress meats of every kind and colour. Moreover, he assembled all his courtiers and let bring sweetmeats and dessert and all that beseemeth the tables of kings. Then he adorned his palace and despatched after Al-Abbas a man of the chief officers of his household, who found him coming forth of the Hammam, clad in a jerkin of fine goats' hair and over it a Baghdádi scarf; his waist was girt with a

Rustaki kerchief and on his head he wore a light turband of Damietta stuff. The messenger wished him joy of the bath and exaggerated in doing him honour: then he said to him, "The king biddeth thee in weal." "To hear is to obey," quoth Al-Abbas and accompanied the officer to the king's palace.

Now Afifah and her daughter Mariyah were behind the curtain, both looking at him; and when he came before the sovran he saluted him and greeted him with the greeting of kings, whilst all present gazed at him and at his beauty and loveliness and perfect grace. The king seated him at the head of the table; and when Afifah saw him and considered him straitly, she said, "By the virtue of Mohammed, prince of the Apostles, this youth is of the sons of the kings and cometh not to these parts save for some noble purpose!" Then she looked at Mariyah and saw that her favour was changed, and indeed her eye-balls were as dead in her face and she turned not her gaze from Al-Abbas a twinkling of the eyes, for that the love of him had sunk deep into her heart. When the queen saw what had befallen her daughter, she feared for her from reproach concerning Al-Abbas; so she shut the casement-wicket that the Princess might not look upon him any more.

Now there was a pavilion set apart for Mariyah, and therein were boudoirs and bowers, balconies and lattices, and she had with her a nurse, who served her as is the fashion with the daughters of the Kings. When the banquet was ended and the folk had dispersed, the King said to Al-Abbas, "I would fain have thee abide with me and I will buy thee a mansion, so haply we may requite thee for thy high services; and indeed imperative upon us is thy due and magnified in our eyes is thy work; and soothly we have fallen short of thy deserts in the matter of distance." When the youth heard the king's speech,

he rose and sat down¹²⁷ and kissing ground, returned thanks for his bounty and said, "I am the King's thrall, wheresoever I may be, and under his eye." Then he told him the tale of the merchant and the manner of the buying of the house, and the king said, "In very truth I would fain have had thee in my neighbourhood and by side of me."

Presently Al-Abbas took leave of the king and went away to his own house. Now it chanced that he passed under the palace of Mariyah, the king's daughter, and she was sitting at a casement. He happened to look round and his eyes met those of the Princess, whereupon his wit departed and he was ready to swoon away, whilst his colour changed, and he said, "Verily, we are Allah's and unto Him are we returning!" But he feared for himself lest severance betide him; so he concealed his secret and discovered not his case to any of the creatures of Allah Almighty. When he reached his quarters, his page Amir said to him, "I seek refuge for thee with Allah, O my lord, from change of colour! Hath there betided thee a pain from the Lord of All-might or aught of vexation? In good sooth, sickness hath an end and patience doeth away trouble." But the Prince returned him no answer. Then he brought out ink-case¹²⁸ and paper and wrote these couplets: —

*I cry (and mine's a frame that pines alway), * A mind which fires of
passion e'er waylay;
And eyeballs never tasting sweets of sleep; * Yet Fortune spare its cause
I ever pray!
While from world-perfidy and parting I * Like Bishram with Hind,¹²⁹
that well-loved may; —*

¹²⁷ In sign of agitation.

¹²⁸ I would remind the reader that the "Dawát" (ink-case) contains the reed-pens.

¹²⁹ Two well-known lovers.

*Yea, grown a bye-word 'mid the folk but aye * Spend life unwinning
wish or night or day.*

*"Ah say, wots she my love when her I spied * At the high lattice
shedding sunlike ray?"*

*Her glances, keener than the brand when bared * Cleave soul of man
nor ever 'scapes her prey:*

*I looked on her in lattice pierced aloft * When bare her cheat of veil
that slipped away;*

*And shot me thence a shaft my liver pierced * When thrall to care and
dire despair I lay*

*Knowst thou, O Fawn o' the palace, how for thee * I fared from farness
o'er the lands astray?*

*Then read my writ, dear friends, and show some ruth * To wight who
wones black-faced, distraught, sans stay!*

And when he ended inditing, he folded up the letter. Now the merchant's wife aforesaid, who was the nurse of the king's daughter, was watching him from a window, unknown of him, and when she saw him writing and reciting, she knew that some rare tale attached to him; so she went in to him and said, "Peace be with thee, O afflicted wight, who acquaintest not leach with thy plight! Verily, thou exposest thy life to grievous blight. I conjure thee by the virtue of Him who hath afflicted thee and with the constraint of love-liking hath stricken thee, that thou acquaint me with thine affair and disclose to me the truth of thy secret; for that indeed I have heard from thee verses which trouble the mind and melt the body." Accordingly he acquainted her with his case and enjoined her to secrecy, whereof she consented, saying, "What shall be the recompense of whoso goeth with thy letter and bringeth thee its reply?" He bowed his head for shame before her and

was silent; and she said to him, "Raise thy head and give me thy writ:" so he gave her the letter and she hent it and carrying it to the Princess, said to her, "Take this epistle and give me its answer."

Now the dearest of all things to Mariyah was the recitation of poesy and verses and linked rhymes and the twanging of lute-strings, and she was versed in all tongues; wherefore she took the writ and opening it, read that which was therein and understood its purport. Then she threw it to the ground and cried, "O nurse, I have no answer to make to this letter." Quoth the nurse, "Indeed, this is weakness in thee and a reproach to thee, for that the people of the world have heard of thee and commend thee for keenness of wit and understanding; so do thou return him an answer, such as shall trick his heart and tire his soul." Quoth she, "O nurse, who may be the man who presumeth upon me with this correspondence? Haply 'tis the stranger youth who gave my father the rubies." The woman said, "It is himself," and Mariyah said, "I will answer his letter in such fashion that thou shalt not bring me other than it." Cried the nurse, "So be it." Thereupon the Princess called for ink-case and paper and wrote these couplets: —

*Thou art bold in the copy thou sentest! May be * 'Twill increase the
dole foreign wight must dree!*

*Thou hast spied me with glance that bequeaths thee woe * Ah! far is
thy hope, a mere foreigner's plea!*

*Who art thou, poor freke, that wouldst win my love * Wi' thy verse?
What seeks thine insanity?*

*An thou hope for my favours and greed therefor; * Where find thee
a leach for such foolish gree?*

*Then rhyme-linking leave and fool-like be not * Hanged to Cross
at the doorway of ignomy!*

*Deem not that to thee I incline, O youth! * 'Mid the Sons of the Path¹³⁰
is no place for me.*

*Thou art homeless waif in the wide wide world; * So return thee home
where they keen for thee:*

*Leave verse-spouting, O thou who a-wold dost wone, * Or minstrel
shall name thee in lay and glee:*

*How many a friend who would meet his love * Is baulked when the
goal is right clear to see!*

*So begone and ne'er grieve for what canst not win * Albe time be near,
yet thy grasp 'twill flee.*

*Now such is my say and the tale I'd tell; * So master my meaning and
— fare thee well!*

When Mariyah had made an end of her verses, she folded the letter and delivered it to the nurse, who hent it and went with it to Al-Abbas. When she gave it to him, he took it and breaking it open, read it and comprehended its contents; and when he reached the end of it, he swooned away. After awhile, he came to himself and cried, "Praise be to Allah who hath caused her return a reply to my writ! Canst thou carry her another missive, and with Allah Almighty be thy requital?" Said she, "And what shall letters profit thee, seeing that such is her reply;" but he said, "Peradventure, she may yet be softened." Then he took ink-case and paper and wrote these couplets: —

*Reached me the writ and what therein didst write, * Whence grew my
pain and bane and blight:*

*I read the marvel-lines made wax my love * And wore my body out till
slightest slight.*

¹³⁰ Travellers, Nomads, Wild Arabs.

*Would Heaven ye wot the whole I bear for love * Of you, with vitals
 clean for you undight!*
*And all I do t' outdrive you from my thought * 'Vails naught and
 'gainst th' obsession loses might:*
*Couldst for thy lover feel 'twould ease his soul; * E'en thy dear
 Phantom would his sprite delight!*
*Then on my weakness lay not coyness-load * Nor in such breach of
 troth be traitor-wight:*
*And, weet ye well, for this your land I fared * Hoping to 'joy the
 union-boon forthright:*
*How many a stony wold for this I spanned; * How oft I waked when
 men kept watch o'night!*
*To fare fro' another land for sight of you * Love bade, while length
 of way forbade my sprite:*
*So by His name who molt my frame, have ruth, * And quench the
 flames thy love in me did light:*
*Thou fillest, arrayed with glory's robes and rays, * Heaven's stars
 with joy and Luna with despight.*
*Then who dare chide or blame me for my love * Of one that can all
 Beauty's boons unite?*

When Al-Abbas had made an end of his verses, he folded the letter and delivering it to the nurse, charged her keep the secret. So she took it and carrying it to Mariyah, gave it to her. The Princess broke it open and read it and apprehended its purport; then cried she, "By Allah, O nurse, my heart is chagrined with exceeding chagrin, never knew I a sorer, because of this correspondence and of these verses." And the nurse made answer to her, "O my lady, thou art in thy dwelling and thy palace and thy heart is void of care; so return to him a reply and

reck not.” Accordingly, the Princess called for ink-case and paper and wrote these couplets: —

*Ho thou who wouldst vaunt thee of cark and care; * How many love-
molten, tryst-craving be there?
An hast wandered the wold in the murks of night * Bound afar and
anear on the tracks to fare,
And to eyne hast forbidden the sweets of sleep, * Borne by Devils and
Marids to dangerous lair;
And beggest my boons, O in tribe-land homed * And to urge thy wish
and desire wouldst dare;
Now, woo Patience fair, an thou bear in mind * What The Ruthful
promised to patient prayer!¹³¹
How many a king for my sake hath vied, * Craving love and in
marriage with me to pair.
Al-Nabhán sent, when a-wooing me, * Camels baled with musk and
Nadd scenting air.
They brought camphor in boxes and like thereof * Of pearls and
rubies that countless were;
Brought pregnant lasses and negro-lads, * Blood steeds and arms
and gear rich and rare;
Brought us raiment of silk and of sendal sheen, * And came courting
us but no bride he bare:
Nor could win his wish, for I ’bode content * To part with far parting
and love forswear;
So for me greed not, O thou stranger wight * Lest thou come to ruin
and dire despair!*

¹³¹ “O ye who believe! seek help through patience and prayer: verily, Allah is with the patient.” Koran ii. 148.

When she had made an end of her verses, she folded the letter and delivered it to the nurse, who took it and carried it to Al-Abbas. He broke it open and read it and comprehended its contents; then took ink-case and paper and wrote these improvised couplets: —

*Thou hast told me the tale of the Kings, and of them * Each was
rending lion, a furious foe:
And thou stolest the wits of me, all of them * And shotst me with shaft
of thy magic bow:
Thou hast boasted of slaves and of steeds and wealth; * And of
beauteous lasses ne'er man did know;
How presents in mighty store didst spurn, * And disdainedst lovers
both high and low:
Then I followed their tracks in desire for thee, * With naught save
my scymitar keen of blow;
Nor slaves nor camels that run have I; * Nor slave-girls the litters
enveil, ah, no!
But grant me union and soon shalt sight * My trenchant blade with
the foeman's woe;
Shalt see the horsemen engird Baghdad * Like clouds that wall the
whole world below,
Obeying behests which to them I deal * And hearing the words to
the foes I throw.
An of negro chattels ten thousand head * Wouldst have, or Kings who
be proud and prow,
Or chargers led for thee day by day * And virgin girls high of bosom,
lo!
Al-Yaman land my command doth bear * And my biting blade to
my foes I show.*

*I have left this all for the sake of thee, * Left Aziz and my kinsmen for
ever-mo'e;
And made Al-Irak making way to thee * Under nightly murks over
rocks arow;
When the couriers brought me account of thee * Thy beauty,
perfection, and sunny glow,
Then I sent thee verses whose very sound * Burns the heart of shame
with a fiery throe;
Yet the world with falsehood hath falsèd me, * Though Fortune was
never so false as thou,
Who dubbest me stranger and homeless one * A witless fool and
a slave-girl's son!*

Then he folded the letter and committed it to the nurse and gave her five hundred dinars, saying, "Accept this from me, for by Allah thou hast indeed wearied thyself between us." She replied, "By Allah, O my lord, my aim is to bring about forgathering between you, though I lose that which my right hand possesseth." And he said, "May the Lord of All-might requite thee with good!" Then she carried the letter to Mariyah and said to her, "Take this letter; haply it may be the end of the correspondence." So she took it and breaking it open, read it, and when she had made an end of it, she turned to the nurse and said to her, "This one foisteth lies upon me and asserteth unto me that he hath cities and horsemen and footmen at his command and submitting to his allegiance; and he wisheth of me that which he shall not win; for thou knowest, O nurse, that kings' sons have sought me in marriage, with presents and rarities; but I have paid no heed unto aught of this; how, then, shall I accept of this fellow, who is the ignoramus of his time and possesseth naught save two caskets of rubies, which he gave

to my sire, and indeed he hath taken up his abode in the house of Al-Ghitrif and abideth without silver or gold? Wherefore, Allah upon thee, O nurse, return to him and cut off his hope of me.”

Accordingly the nurse rejoined Al-Abbas, without letter or answer; and when she came in to him, he looked at her and saw that she was troubled, and he noted the marks of anger on her face; so he said to her, “What is this plight?” Quoth she, “I cannot set forth to thee that which Mariyah said; for indeed she charged me return to thee without writ or reply.” Quoth he, “O nurse of kings, I would have thee carry her this letter and return not to her without it.” Then he took ink-case and paper and wrote these couplets: —

*My secret now to men is known though hidden well and true * By me:
enough is that I have of love and love of you:
I left familiars, friends, and kin to weep the loss of me * With floods of
tears which like the tide aye flowed and flowed anew:
Then, left my home myself I bore to Baghdad-town one day, * When
parting drave me there his pride and cruelty to rue:
I have indeed drained all the bowl whose draught repression was *
Handed by friend who bitter gourd therein for drinking threw.
And, oft as strove I to enjoin the ways of troth and faith, * So often on
refusal's path he left my soul to sue.
Indeed my body molten is with care I'm doomèd dree; * And yet I hoped
relenting and to win some grace, my due.
But wrong and rigour waxed on me and changed to worse my case; *
And love hath left me weeping-eyed for woes that aye pursue.
How long must I keep watch for you throughout the nightly gloom? *
How many a path of pining pace and garb of grief endue?*

*And you, what while you joy your sleep, your restful pleasant sleep, *
 Reck naught of sorrow and of shame that to your friend accrue:
 For wakefulness I watched the stars before the peep o' day, * Praying
 that union with my dear in bliss my soul imbrue;
 Indeed the throes of long desire laid waste my frame and I * Rise every
 morn in weaker plight with hopes e'er fewer few:
 "Be not" (I say) "so hard of heart!" for did you only deign * In phantom
 guise to visit me 'twere joy enough to view.
 But when ye saw my writ ye grudged to me the smallest boon * And cast
 adown the flag of faith though well my troth ye knew;
 Nor aught of answer you vouchsafe, albe you wot full well * The words
 therein address the heart and pierce the spirit through.
 You deemed yourself all too secure for changes of the days * And of the
 far and near alike you ever careless grew.
 Hadst thou (dear maid) been doomed like me to woes, forsure hadst felt *
 The lowe of love and Lazá-hell which paring doth enmew;
 Yet soon shalt suffer torments such as those from thee I bear * And storm
 of palpitation-pangs in vitals thine shall brew:
 Yea, thou shalt taste the bitter smack of charges false and foul, * And
 public make the privacy best hid from meddling crew;
 And he thou lovest shall approve him hard of heart and soul * And
 heedless of the shifts of Time thy very life undo.
 Then hear the fond Salam I send and wish thee every day * While
 swayeth spray and sparkleth star all good thy life ensue!*

When Al-Abbas had made an end of his verses, he folded the scroll and gave it to the nurse, who took it and carried it to Mariyah. When she came into the Princess's presence, she saluted her; but Mariyah returned not her salutation and she said, "O my lady, how hard is thy

heart that thou grudgest to return the salam! Accept this letter, because 'tis the last that shall come to thee from him." Quoth Mariyah, "Take my warning and never again enter my palace, or 'twill be the cause of thy destruction; for I am certified that thou purposest my disgrace. So get thee gone from me." And she bade beat the nurse who went forth fleeing from her presence, changed of colour and 'wildered of wits, and gave not over going till she came to the house of Al-Abbas. When the Prince saw her in this plight, he became like a sleeper awakened and cried to her, "What hath befallen thee? Acquaint me with thy case." She replied, "Allah upon thee, nevermore send me to Mariyah, and do thou protect me, so the Lord protect thee from the fires of Gehenna!"

Then she related to him that which had betided her with Mariyah which when Al-Abbas heard, there took him the pride and high spirit of the generous and this was grievous to him. The love of Mariyah fled forth of his heart and he said to the nurse, "How much hadst thou of Mariyah every month?" Quoth she, "Ten dinars" and quoth he, "Be not concerned." Then he put hand to pouch and bringing out two hundred ducats, gave them to her and said, "Take this wage for a whole year and turn not again to serve anyone of the folk. When the twelve-month shall have passed away, I will give thee a two years' wage, for that thou hast wearied thyself with us and on account of the cutting off the tie which bound thee to Mariyah." Also he gifted her with a complete suit of clothes and raising his head to her, said, "When thou toldest me that which Mariyah had done with thee, Allah uprooted the love of her from out my heart, and never again will she occur to my thought; so extolled be He who turneth hearts and eyes! 'Twas she who was the cause of my coming out from Al-Yaman, and now the time is past for which I engaged with my folk and I fear lest my father

levy his forces and ride forth in quest of me, for that he hath no child other than myself nor can he brook to be parted from me; and in like way 'tis with my mother.”

When the nurse heard his words, she asked him, “O my lord, and which of the kings is thy sire?” He answered, saying, “My father is Al-Aziz, lord of Al-Yaman, and Nubia and the Islands¹³² of the Banu Kahtán, and the Two Sanctuaries¹³³ (Allah of All-might have them in His keeping!), and whenever he taketh horse, there ride with him an hundred and twenty and four thousand horsemen, each and every smiters with the sword, besides attendants and servants and followers, all of whom give ear to my word and obey my bidding.” Asked the nurse, “Why, then, O my lord, didst thou conceal the secret of thy rank and lineage and passedst thyself off for a foreigner and a wayfarer? Alas for our disgrace before thee by reason of our shortcoming in rendering thee thy due! What shall be our excuse with thee, and thou of the sons of the kings?” But he rejoined, “By Allah, thou hast not fallen short! Indeed, 'tis incumbent on me to requite thee, what while I live, though from thee I be far distant.” Then he called his man Amir and said to him, “Saddle the steeds.”

When the nurse heard his words and indeed she saw that Amir brought him the horses and they were resolved upon departure, the tears ran down upon her cheeks and she said to him, “By Allah, thy separation is saddening to me, O coolth of the eye!” Then quoth she, “Where is the goal of thine intent, so we may know thy news and solace ourselves with thy report?” Quoth he, “I go hence to visit 'Akíl, the son of my paternal uncle, for that he hath his sojourn in the camp of Kundah bin Hishám, and these twenty years have I not seen him

¹³² “For Jazírah” = insula, island, used in the sense of “peninsula.”

¹³³ Meccah and Al-Medinah.

nor hath he seen me; so I purpose to repair to him and discover his news and return. Then will I go hence to Al-Yaman, Inshallah!" So saying, he took leave of the nurse and her husband and set out, intending for 'Akil, the son of his father's brother.

Now there was between Baghdad and 'Akil's abiding-place forty days' journey; so Al-Abbas settled himself on the back of his steed and his servant Amir mounted also and they fared forth on their way. Presently, Al-Abbas turned right and left and recited these couplets: —

*I'm the singular knight and my peers I slay! * I lay low the foe and
his whole array:*

*I fare me to visit my friend Al-Akil, * And in safety and Allah-lauds
shorten the way;*

*And roll up the width of the wold while still * Hears Amir my word or
in earnest or play.*

*I spring with the spring of a lynx or a pard * Upon whoso dareth our
course to stay;*

*O'erthrow him in ruin and abject shame, * Make him drain the
death-cup in fatal fray.*

*My lance is long with its steely blade; * A brand keen-grided, thin-
edged I sway:*

*With a stroke an it fell on a towering hill * Of the hardest stone, this
would cleave in tway:*

*I lead no troops, nor seek aid save God's, * The creating Lord (to whom
laud alway!)*

*On Whom I rely in adventures all * And Who pardoneth lâches of
freeman and thrall.*

Then they fell a-faring night and day, and as they went, behold, they sighted a camp of the camps of the Arabs. So Al-Abbas enquired

thereof and was told that it was the camp of the Banu Zohrah. Now there were around them herds and flocks, such as filled the earth, and they were enemies to Al-Akil, the cousin of Al-Abbas, upon whom they made daily raids and took his cattle, wherefore he used to pay them tribute every year because he lacked power to cope with them. When Al-Abbas came to the skirts of the camp, he dismounted from his destrier and his servant Amir also dismounted; and they set down the prowaunt and ate their sufficiency and rested an hour of the day. Then said the Prince to his page, "Fetch water from the well and give the horses to drink and draw up a supply for us in thy bag, by way of provision for the road."

So Amir took the water-skin and made for the well; but, when he came there, behold, two young men slaves were leading gazelles, and when they saw him, they said to him, "Whither wendest thou, O youth, and of which of the Arabs art thou?" Quoth he, "Harkye, lads, fill me my water-skin, for that I am a stranger astray and a farer of the way, and I have a comrade who awaiteth me." Quoth the thralls, "Thou art no wayfarer, but a spy from Al-Akil's camp." Then they took him and carried him to their king Zuhayr bin Shabib; and when he came before him, he said to him, "Of which of the Arabs art thou?" Quoth Amir, "I am a wayfarer." So Zuhayr said, "Whence comest thou and whither wendest thou?" and Amir replied, "I am on my way to Al-Akil." When he named Al-Akil, those who were present were excited; but Zuhayr signed to them with his eyes and asked him, "What is thine errand with Al-Akil?" and he answered, "We would fain see him, my friend and I."

As soon as Zuhayr heard his words, he bade smite his neck; but his Wazir said to him, "Slay him not, till his friend be present." So he commanded the two slaves to fetch his friend; whereupon they repaired

to Al-Abbas and called to him, saying, "O youth, answer the summons of King Zuhayr." He enquired, "What would the king with me?" and they replied, "We know not." Quoth he, "Who gave the king news of me?" and quoth they, "We went to draw water, and found a man by the well. So we questioned him of his case, but he would not acquaint us therewith, wherefore we carried him willy-nilly to King Zuhayr, who asked him of his adventure and he told him that he was going to Al-Akîl. Now Al-Akîl is the king's enemy and he intendeth to betake himself to his camp and make prize of his offspring, and cut off his traces." Said Al-Abbas, "And what hath Al-Akîl done with King Zuhayr?" They replied. "He engaged for himself that he would bring the King every year a thousand dinars and a thousand she-camels, besides a thousand head of thoroughbred steeds and two hundred black slaves and fifty handmaids; but it hath reached the king that Al-Akîl purposeth to give naught of this; wherefore he is minded to go to him. So hasten thou with us, ere the King be wroth with thee and with us." Then said Al-Abbas to them, "O youths, sit by my weapons and my stallion till I return." But they said, "By Allah, thou prolongest discourse with that which beseemeth not of words! Make haste, or we will go with thy head, for indeed the King purposeth to slay thee and to slay thy comrade and take that which is with you."

When the Prince heard this, his skin bristled with rage and he cried out at them with a cry which made them tremble. Then he sprang upon his horse and settling himself in the saddle, galloped till he came to the King's assembly, when he shouted at the top of his voice, saying, "To horse, O horsemen!" and couched his spear at the pavilion wherein was Zuhayr. Now there were about the King a thousand smiters with the sword; but Al-Abbas charged home upon them and dispersed them from around him; and there abode none in the tent save Zuhayr and

his Wazir. Then Al-Abbas came up to the door of the tent wherein were four-and-twenty golden doves; so he took them, after he had tumbled them down with the end of his lance. Then he called out saying, "Ho, Zuhayr! Doth it not suffice thee that thou hast abated Al-Akil's repute, but thou art minded to abate that of those who sojourn round about him? Knowest thou not that he is of the lieutenants of Kundah bin Hisham of the Banu Shayban, a man renowned for prowess? Indeed, greed of his gain hath entered into thee and envy of him hath gotten the mastery of thee. Doth it not suffice thee that thou hast orphaned his children and slain his men? By the virtue of Mustafa, the Chosen Prophet, I will make thee drain the cup of death!" So saying, he bared his brand and smiting Zuhayr on his shoulder-blade caused the steel issue gleaming from his throat tendons; then he smote the Wazir and clove his crown asunder.

As he was thus, behold, Amir called out to him and said, "O my lord, come help me, or I be a dead man!" So Al-Abbas went up to him guided by his voice, and found him cast down on his back and chained with four chains to four pickets of iron. He loosed his bonds and said to him, "Go in front of me, O Amir." So he fared on before him a little, and presently they looked, and, behold, horsemen were making to Zuhayr's succour, and they numbered twelve thousand riders led by Sahl bin Ka'ab bestriding a coal-black steed. He charged upon Amir, who fled from him, then upon Al-Abbas, who said, "O Amir, hold fast to my horse and guard my back." The page did as he bade him, whereupon Al-Abbas cried out at the folk and falling upon them, overthrew their braves and slew of them some two thousand riders, whilst not one of them knew what was to do nor with whom he fought.

Then said one of them to other, "Verily, the King is slain; so with whom do we wage war? Indeed ye flee from him; but 'twere better ye

enter under his banners, or not one of you will be saved.” Thereupon all dismounted and doffing that which was upon them of war-gear, came before Al-Abbas and proffered him allegiance and sued for his protection. So he withheld his brand from them and bade them gather together the spoils. Then he took the riches and the slaves and the camels, and they all became his lieges and his retainers, to the number (according to that which is reported) of fifty thousand horses. Furthermore, the folk heard of him and flocked to him from all sides; whereupon he divided the loot amongst them and gave largesse and dwelt thus three days, and there came gifts to him. After this he bade march for Al-Akil’s abiding place; so they fared on six days and on the seventh they sighted the camp.

Al-Abbas bade his man Amir precede him and give Al-Akil the good news of his cousin’s coming; so he rode on to the camp and, going in to Al-Akil, acquainted him with the glad tidings of Zuhayr’s slaughter and the conquest of his clan. Al-Akil rejoiced in the coming of Al-Abbas and the slaughter of his enemy and all in his camp rejoiced also and cast robes of honour upon Amir; while Al-Akil bade go forth to meet Al-Abbas, and commanded that none, great or small, freeman or slave, should tarry behind. So they did his bidding and going forth all, met Al-Abbas at three parasangs distance from the camp; and when they met him, they dismounted from their horses and Al-Akil and he embraced and clapped palm to palm. Then rejoicing in the coming of Al-Abbas and the killing of their foeman, they returned to the camp, where tents were pitched for the new-comers and skin-rugs spread and game slain and beasts slaughtered and royal guest-meals spread; and after this fashion they abode twenty days in the enjoyment of all delight of life.

On this wise fared it with Al-Abbas and his cousin Al-Akil; but as

regards King Al-Aziz, when his son left him, he was desolated for him with exceeding desolation, both he and his mother; and when tidings of him tarried long and the tryst-time passed without his returning, the king caused public proclamation to be made, commanding all his troops to get ready to mount and ride forth in quest of his son Al-Abbas, at the end of three days, after which no cause of hindrance or excuse would be admitted to any. So on the fourth day, the king bade muster the troops who numbered four-and-twenty thousand horse, besides servants and followers. Accordingly, they reared the standards and the kettle-drums beat the general and the king set out with his power intending for Baghdad; nor did he cease to press forward with all diligence, till he came within half a day's journey of the city, when he bade his army encamp on the Green Meadow. There they pitched the tents, till the lowland was straitened with them, and set up for the king a pavilion of green brocade, purfled with pearls and precious stones.

When Al-Aziz had sat awhile, he summoned the Mamelukes of his son Al-Abbas, and they were five-and-twenty in number besides ten slave-girls, as they were moons, five of whom the king had brought with him and other five he had left with the prince's mother. When the Mamelukes came before him, he cast over each and every of them a mantle of green brocade and bade them mount similar horses of one and the same fashion and enter Baghdad and ask after their lord Al-Abbas. So they rode into the city and passed through the market-streets and there remained in Baghdad nor old man nor boy but came forth to gaze on them and divert himself with the sight of their beauty and loveliness and the seemliness of their semblance and the goodliness of their garments and horses, for all were even as moons. They gave not over going till they came to the palace, where they halted, and

the king looked at them and seeing their beauty and the brilliancy of their apparel and the brightness of their faces, said, "Would Heaven I knew of which of the tribes these are!" And he bade the Eunuch bring him news of them.

The castrato went out to them and questioned them of their case, whereto they replied, "Return to thy lord and enquire of him concerning Prince Al-Abbas, an he have come unto him, for that he left his sire King Al-Aziz a full-told year ago, and indeed longing for him troubleth the King and he hath levied a division of his army and his guards and is come forth in quest of his son, so haply he may light upon tidings of him." Quoth the Eunuch, "Is there amongst you a brother of his or a son?" and quoth they, "Nay, by Allah, but we are all his Mamelukes and the purchased of his money, and his sire Al-Aziz hath sent us to make enquiry of him. Do thou go to thy lord and question him of the Prince and return to us with that which he shall answer thee." Asked the Eunuch, "And where is King Al-Aziz?" and they answered, "He is encamped in the Green Meadow." The Eunuch returned and told the king, who said, "Indeed we have been unduly negligent with regard to Al-Abbas. What shall be our excuse with the King? By Allah, my soul suggested to me that the youth was of the sons of the kings!"

His wife, the Lady Afifah, saw him lamenting for his neglect of Al-Abbas, and said to him, "O King, what is it thou regrettest with this mighty regret?" Quoth he, "Thou knowest the stranger youth, who gifted us with the rubies?" Quoth she, "Assuredly;" and he, "Yonder youths, who have halted in the palace court, are his Mamelukes, and his father, King Al-Aziz, lord of Al-Yaman, hath pitched his camp on the Green Meadow; for he is come with his army to seek him, and the number of his troops is four-and-twenty thousand horsemen." Then

he went out from her, and when she heard his words, she wept sore for him and had compassion on his case and sent after him, counselling him to summon the Mamelukes and lodge them in the palace and entertain them. The king hearkened to her rede and despatching the Eunuch for the Mamelukes, assigned unto them a lodging and said to them, "Have patience, till the King give you tidings of your lord Al-Abbas." When they heard his words, their eyes ran over with a rush of tears, of their mighty longing for the sight of their lord. Then the King bade the Queen enter the private chamber opening upon the throne-room and let down the curtain before the door, so she might see and not be seen. She did this and he summoned them to his presence; and, when they stood before him, they kissed ground to do him honour, and showed forth their courtly breeding and magnified his dignity. He ordered them to sit, but they refused, till he conjured them by their lord Al-Abbas: accordingly they sat down and he bade set before them food of various kinds and fruits and sweetmeats.

Now within the Lady Afifah's palace was a souterrain communicating with the pavilion of the Princess Mariyah: so the Queen sent after her and she came to her, whereupon she made her stand behind the curtain and gave her to know that Al-Abbas was son to the King of Al-Yaman and that these were his Mamelukes: she also told her that the Prince's father had levied his troops and was come with his army in quest of him and that he had pitched his camp on the Green Meadow and had despatched these Mamelukes to make enquiry of their lord. Then Mariyah abode looking upon them and upon their beauty and loveliness and the goodliness of their raiment, till they had eaten their fill of food and the tables were removed; whereupon the King recounted to them the story of Al-Abbas and they took leave of him and went their ways.

So fortun'd it with the Mamelukes; but as for the Princess Mariyah, when she returned to her palace, she bethought herself concerning the affair of Al-Abbas repenting her of what she had done; and the love of him took root in her heart. And, when the night darkened upon her, she dismissed all her women and bringing out the letters, to wit, those which Al-Abbas had written her, fell to reading them and weeping. She left not weeping her night long, and when she arose in the morning, she called a damsel of her slave-girls, Shafikah by name, and said to her, "O damsel, I purpose to discover to thee mine affair and I charge thee keep my secret, which is that thou betake thyself to the house of the nurse, who used to serve me, and fetch her to me, for that I have grave need of her." Accordingly, Shafikah went out and repairing to the nurse's house, entered and found her clad in clothing other and richer than what she had whilome been wont to wear.

So she saluted her and asked her, "Whence hadst thou this dress, than which there is no goodlier?" Answered the nurse, "O Shafikah, thou deemest that I have seen no good save of thy mistress; but, by Allah, had I endeavoured for her destruction, I had acted righteously, seeing that she did with me what she did and bade the Eunuch beat me, without offence by me offered: so tell her that he, on whose behalf I bestirred myself with her, hath made me independent of her and her humours, for he hath habited me in this habit and given me two hundred and fifty dinars and promised me the like every year and charged me to serve none of the folk." Quoth Shafikah, "My mistress hath a need for thee; so come thou with me and I will engage to restore thee to thy dwelling in safety and satisfaction." But quoth the nurse, "Indeed her palace is become unlawful and forbidden to me¹³⁴ and

¹³⁴ The palace, even without especial and personal reasons, not being the place for a religious and scrupulous woman.

never again will I enter therein, for that Allah (extolled and exalted be He!) of His favour and bounty hath rendered me independent of her.” Presently Shafikah returned to her mistress and acquainted her with the nurse’s words and that wherein she was of prosperity; whereupon Mariyah confessed her unmannerly dealing with her and repented when repentance profited her not; and she abode in that her case days and nights, whilst the fire of longing flamed in her heart.

On this wise happened it to her; but as regards Al-Abbas, he tarried with his cousin Al-Akil twenty days, after which he made ready for the journey to Baghdad and bidding bring the booty he had taken from King Zuhayr, divided it between himself and his cousin. Then he sent out a-marching Baghdad-wards and when he came within two days’ journey of the city, he summoned his servant Amir and said to him, “Mount thy charger and forego me with the caravan and the cattle.” So Amir took horse and fared on till he came to Baghdad, and the season of his entering was the first of the day; nor was there in the city little child or old greybeard but came forth to divert himself with gazing on those flocks and herds and upon the beauty of those slave-girls; and their wits were wildered at what they saw. Soon afterwards the news reached the king that the young man Al-Abbas, who had gone forth from him, was come back with booty and rarities and black slaves and a conquering host and had taken up his sojourn without the city, whilst his servant Amir was presently come to Baghdad, so he might get ready for his lord dwelling-places wherein he should take up his abode.

When the King heard these tidings of Amir, he sent for him and caused bring him before him; and when he entered his presence, he kissed the ground and saluted with the salam and showed his fine breeding and greeted him with the goodliest of greetings. The King bade him raise his head and, this done, questioned him of his lord

Al-Abbas; whereupon he acquainted him with his adventures and told him that which had betided him with King Zuhayr and of the army that was become at his command and of the spoil he had secured. He also gave him to know that Al-Abbas was to arrive on the morrow, and with him more than fifty thousand cavaliers, obedient to his orders. When the king heard his words, he bade decorate Baghdad and commanded the citizens to equip themselves with the richest of their apparel, in honour of the coming of Al-Abbas. Furthermore, he sent to give King Al-Aziz the glad tidings of his son's return and informed him of all which he had heard from the Prince's servant. When the news reached King Al-Aziz, he joyed with exceeding joy in the approach of his son and straightway took horse, he and all his host, while the trumpets blared and the musicians played, so that the earth quaked and Baghdad also trembled, and it was a notable day. When Mariyah beheld all this, she repented in all possible penitence of that which she had done against Al-Abbas and the fires of desire raged in her vitals.

Meanwhile, the troops¹³⁵ sallied forth of Baghdad and went out to meet those of Al-Abbas, who had halted in a garth called the Green Island. When he espied the approaching host, he strained his sight and, seeing horsemen coming and troops and footmen he knew not, said to those about him, "Among yonder troops are flags and banners of various kinds; but, as for the great green standard that ye see, 'tis the standard of my sire, the which is reserved to him and never displayed save over his head, and thus I know that he himself is come out in quest of me." And he was certified of this, he and his troops. So he fared on towards them and when he drew near them, he knew them and they knew him; whereupon they lighted down from their horses

¹³⁵ "i.e. those of El Aziz, who had apparently entered the city or passed through it on their way to the camp of El Abbas." This is Mr. Payne's suggestion.

and saluting him, gave him joy of his safety and the folk flocked to him. When he came to his father, they embraced and each greeted other a long time, whilst neither of them could utter a word, for the greatness of that which betided them of joy in reunion.

Then Al-Abbas bade the folk take horse; so they mounted and his Mamelukes surrounded him and they entered Baghdad on the most splendid wise and in the highest honour and glory. Now the wife of the shopkeeper, that is, the nurse, came out, with the rest of those who flocked forth, to divert herself with gazing upon the show, and when she saw Al-Abbas and beheld his beauty and the beauty of his host and that which he had brought back with him of herds and slave-girls, Mamelukes and negroes, she improvised and recited these couplets: —

*Al-Abbás from the side of Akíl is come; * Caravans and steeds he hath
plunderèd:*

*Yea; horses he brought of pure blood, whose necks * Ring with collars
like anklets wher'er they are led.*

*With domèd hoofs they pour torrent-like, * As they prance through
dust on the level stead:*

*And bestriding their saddles come men of war, * Whose fingers play
on the kettle-drum's head:*

*And couched are their lances that bear the points * Keen grided, which
fill every soul with dread:*

*Who wi' them would fence draweth down his death * For one deadly
lunge soon shall do him dead:*

*Charge, comrades, charge ye and give me joy, * Saying, "Welcome to
thee, O our dear comràde!"*

*And who joys at his meeting shall 'joy delight * Of large gifts when he
from his steed shall 'light.*

When the troops entered Baghdad, each of them alighted in his tent, whilst Al-Abbas encamped apart on a place near the Tigris and issued orders to slaughter for the soldiers, each day, that which should suffice them of oxen and sheep and to bake them bread and spread the tables: so the folk ceased not to come to him and eat of his banquet. Furthermore, all the country-people flocked to him with presents and rarities and he requited them many times the like of their gifts, so that the lands were filled with his renown and the fame of him was bruited abroad among the habitants of wold and town. Then, as soon as he rode to the house he had bought, the shopkeeper and his wife came to him and gave him joy of his safety; whereupon he ordered them three head of swift steeds and thoroughbred and ten dromedaries and an hundred head of sheep and clad them both in costly robes of honour. Presently he chose out ten slave-girls and ten negro slaves and fifty mares and the like number of she-camels and three hundred of sheep, together with twenty ounces of musk and as many of camphor, and sent all this to the King of Baghdad.

When the present came to Ins bin Kays, his wit fled for joy and he was perplexed wherewith to requite him. Al-Abbas also gave gifts and largesse and bestowed robes of honour upon noble and simple, each after the measure of his degree, save only Mariyah; for to her indeed he sent nothing. This was grievous to the Princess and it irked her sore that he should not remember her; so she called her slave-girl Shafikah and said to her, "Hie thee to Al-Abbas and salute him and say to him, 'What hindereth thee from sending my lady Mariyah her part of thy booty?'" So Shafikah betook herself to him and when she came to his door, the chamberlains refused her admission, until they should have got for her leave and permission. When she entered, Al-Abbas knew her and knew that she had somewhat of speech with him; so he dis-

missed his Mamelukes and asked her, "What is thine errand, O hand-maid of good?" Answered she, "O my lord, I am a slave-girl of the Princess Mariyah, who kisseth thy hands and offereth her salutation to thee. Indeed, she rejoiceth in thy safety and blameth thee for that thou breakest her heart, alone of all the folk, because thy largesse embraceth great and small, yet hast thou not remembered her with anything of thy plunder, as if thou hadst hardened thy heart against her."

Quoth he, "Extolled be He who turneth hearts! By Allah, my vitals were consumed with the love of her; and, of my longing after her I came forth to her from my mother-land and left my people and my home and my wealth, and it was with her that began the hard-heartedness and the cruelty. Natheless, for all this, I bear her no malice and there is no help but that I send her somewhat whereby she may remember me; for that I sojourn in her country but a few days, after which I set out for the land of Al-Yaman." Then he called for a chest and thence bringing out a necklace of Greek workmanship, worth a thousand dinars, wrapped it in a mantle of Greek silk, set with pearls and gems and purfled with red gold, and joined thereto a couple of caskets containing musk and ambergris. He also put off upon the girl a mantle of Greek silk, striped with gold, wherein were divers figures and portraitures depicted, never saw eyes its like. Therewithal the girl's wit fled for joy and she went forth from his presence and returned to her mistress. When she came in to her, she acquainted her with that which she had seen of Al-Abbas and that which was with him of servants and attendants and set out to her the loftiness of his station and gave her that which was with her.

Mariyah opened the mantle, and when she saw that necklace (and indeed the place was illumined with the lustre thereof), she looked at her slave-girl and said to her, "By Allah, O Shafikah, one look at him

were dearer to me than all that my hand possesseth! Oh, would Heaven I knew what I shall do, when Baghdad is empty of him and I hear of him no news!” Then she wept and calling for ink-case and paper and pen of brass, wrote these couplets: —

*Longsome my sorrows are; my liver's fired with ecstasy; * And
severance-shaft hath shot me through whence sorest pangs I dree:
And howso could my soul forget the love I bear to you? * You-wards
my will perforce returns nor passion sets me free:
I 'prison all desires I feel for fear of spies thereon * Yet tears that streak
my cheek betray for every eye to see.
No place of rest or joy I find to bring me life-delight; * No wine tastes
well, nor viands please however savoury:
Ah me! to whom shall I complain of case and seek its cure * Save unto
thee whose Phantom deigns to show me sight of thee?
Then name me not or chide for aught I did in passion-stress, * With
vitals gone and frame consumed by yearning-malady!
Secret I keep the fire of love which aye for severance burns; * Sworn
slave to Love who robs my rest and wakes me cruelly:
And ceaseth not my thought to gaze upon your ghost by night, * Which
falsing comes and he I love still, still unloveth me.
Would Heaven ye wist the blight that I for you are doomed to bear *
For love of you, which tortures me with parting agony!
Then read between the lines I wrote, and mark and learn their sense *
For such my tale, and Destiny made me an outcast be:
Learn eke the circumstance of Love and lover's woe nor deign *
Divulge its mysteries to men nor grudge its secrecy.*

Then she folded the scroll and giving it to her slave-girl, bade her bear it to Al-Abbas and bring back his reply. So Shafikah took the letter and

carried it to the Prince, after the doorkeeper had sought leave of him to admit her. When she came in to him, she found with him five damsels, as they were moons, clad in rich raiment and ornaments; and when he saw her, he said to her, "What is thy need, O hand-maid of good?" Presently she put out her hand to him with the writ, after she had kissed it, and he bade one of his slave-girls receive it from her.¹³⁶ Then he took it from the girl and breaking the seal, read it and comprehended its contents; whereupon he cried, "Verily, we be Allah's and unto Him we shall return!" and calling for ink-case and paper, wrote these improvised couplets: —

*I wonder seeing how thy love to me * Inclined, while I in heart from
love declined:*

*Eke wast thou wont to say in verseful writ, * "Son of the Road"¹³⁷ no
road to me shall find!*

*How oft kings flocked to me with mighty men * And bales on back of
Bukhti¹³⁸ beast they bind:*

*And noble steeds of purest blood and all * They bore of choicest boons
to me consigned;*

*Yet won no favour!" Then came I to woo * And the long tale o' love
I had designed,*

*I fain set forth in writ of mine, with words * Like strings of pearls
in goodly line aligned: —*

*Set forth my sev'rance, griefs, tyrannic wrongs, * And ill device
ill-suiting lover-kind.*

¹³⁶ Not wishing to touch the hand of a strange woman.

¹³⁷ i.e. a mere passer-by, a stranger; alluding to her taunt.

¹³⁸ The Bactrian or double-humped dromedary.

*How oft love-claimant, craving secrecy, * How oft have lovers 'plained
as sore they pined,
How many a brimming bitter cup I've quaffed, * And wept my woes
when speech was vain as wind!
And thou: — "Be patient, 'tis thy bestest course * And choicest
medicine for mortal mind!"
Then unto patience worthy praise cleave thou; * Easy of issue and
be lief resigned:
Nor hope thou aught of me lest ill alloy * Or aught of dross affect my
blood refined:
Such is my speech. Read, mark, and learn my say! * To what thou
deemest ne'er I'll tread the way.*

Then he folded the scroll and sealing it, entrusted it to the damsel, who took it and bore it to her mistress. When the Princess read the letter and mastered its meaning, she said, "Meseemeth he recalleth bygones to me." Then she called for pens, ink, and paper, and wrote these couplets: —

*Love thou didst show me till I learnt its woe * Then to the growth of
grief didst severance show:
I banisht joys of slumber after you * And e'en my pillow garred my
wake to grow.
How long in parting shall I pine with pain * While severance-spies¹³⁹
through night watch every throe?
I've left my kingly couch and self withdrew * Therefrom, and taught
mine eyelids sleep t'unknow:*

¹³⁹ i.e. Stars and planets.

*'Twas thou didst teach me what I ne'er can bear: * Then didst thou
waste my frame with parting-blow.*

*By oath I swear thee, blame and chide me not: * Be kind to mourner
Love hath stricken low!*

*For parting-rigours drive him nearer still * To narrow home, ere clad
in shroud for clo':*

*Have ruth on me, since Love laid waste my frame, * 'Mid thralls
enrolled me and lit fires that flame.*

Mariyah rolled up the letter and gave it to Shafikah, bidding her bear it to Al-Abbas. Accordingly she took it and going with it to his door, proceeded to enter; but the chamberlains and serving-men forbade her, till they had obtained her leave from the Prince. When she went into him, she found him sitting in the midst of the five damsels before mentioned, whom his father had brought for him; so she gave him the letter and he tare it open and read it. Then he bade one of the damsels, whose name was Khafifah and who came from the land of China, tune her lute and sing anent separation. Thereupon she came forward and tuning her lute, played thereon in four-and-twenty modes: after which she returned to the first and sang these couplets: —

*Our friends, when leaving us on parting-day, * Drave us in wolds
of severance-grief to stray:*

*When bound the camels' litters bearing them, * And cries of drivers
urged them on the way,*

*Outrusht my tears, despair gat hold of me * And sleep betrayed mine
eyes to wake a prey.*

*The day they went I wept, but showed no ruth * The severance-spy
and flared the flames away:*

*Alas for lowe o' Love that fires me still! * Alack for pine that melts
 my heart away!*
*To whom shall I complain of care, when thou * Art gone, nor fain
 a-pillow head I lay?*
*And day by day Love's ardours grow on me, * And far's the tent that
 holds my fondest may:*
*O Breeze o' Heaven, bear for me a charge * (Nor traitor-like my troth
 in love betray!),*
*Whene'er thou breathest o'er the loved one's land * Greet him with
 choice salam fro' me, I pray:*
*Dust him with musk and powdered ambergris * While time endures!*
Such is my wish for aye.

When the damsel had made an end of her song, Al-Abbas swooned away and they sprinkled on him musked rose-water, till he recovered from his fainting-fit, when he called another damsel (now there was on her of linen and raiment and ornaments that which undoeth description, and she was a model of beauty and brightness and loveliness and symmetry and perfect grace, such as shamed the crescent moon, and she was a Turkish girl from the land of the Roum and her name was Háfizah) and said to her, "O Hafizah, close thine eyes and tune thy lute and sing to us upon the days of severance." She answered him, "To hear is to obey" and taking the lute, tightened its strings and cried out from her head,¹⁴⁰ in a plaintive voice, and sang these couplets: —

*My friends! tears flow in painful mockery, * And sick my heart from
 parting agony:*

¹⁴⁰ i.e. Sang in tenor tones which are always in falsetto.

*My frame is wasted and my vitals wrung * And love-fires grow and
 eyes set tear-floods free:
 And when the fire burns high beneath my ribs * With tears I quench it
 as sad day I see.
 Love left me wasted, baffled, pain-begone, * Sore frightened, butt to
 spying enemy:
 When I recal sweet union wi' their loves * I chase dear sleep from
 the sick frame o' me.
 Long as our parting lasts the rival joys * And spies with fearful
 prudence gain their gree.
 I fear me for my sickly, langourous frame * Lest dread of parting slay
 me incontinently.*

When Hafizah had ended her song, Al-Abbas cried to her, "Brava! Verily, thou quickenest hearts from griefs." Then he called another maiden of the daughters of Daylam by name Marjánah, and said to her, "O Marjanah, sing to me upon the days of parting." She said, "Hearing and obeying," and recited these couplets: —

*"Cleave to fair Patience! Patience 'gendereth weal:" * Such is the rede
 to us all sages deal:
 How oft I plained the lowe of grief and love * Mid passions cast my
 soul in sore unheal.
 How oft I waked and drained the bitter cup * And watched the stars,
 nor sleep mine eyes would seal!
 Enough it were an deal you grace to me * In writ a-morn and garred
 no hope to feel.
 But Thoughts which probed its depths would sear my heart * And
 start from eye-brows streams that ever steal:*

*Nor cease I suffering baleful doom and nights * Wakeful, and heart
by sorrows rent piece-meal:*

*But Allah purged my soul from love of you * When all knew secrets
cared I not reveal.*

*I march to-morrow from your country and * Haply you'll speed me
nor fear aught unweal;*

*And, when in person you be far from us, * Would heaven we knew who
shall your news reveal.*

*Who kens if home will e'er us two contain * In dearest life with union
naught can stain!*

When Marjanah had made an end of her song, the Prince said to her, “Brava, O damsel! Indeed, thou sayest a thing which had occurred to my mind and my tongue was near to speaking it.” Then he signed to the fourth damsel, who was a Cairene, by name Sitt al-Husn, and bade her tune her lute and sing to him upon the same theme. So the Lady of Beauty tuned her lute and sang these couplets: —

*Patience is blest for weal comes after woe * And all things stated time
and ordinance show;*

*Haps the Sultan, hight Fortune, prove unjust * Shifting the times,
and man excuse shall know:*

*Bitter ensueth sweet in law of change * And after crookedness things
straightest grow.*

*Then guard thine honour, nor to any save * The noble knowledge
of the hid bestow:*

*These be vicissitudes the Lord commands * Poor men endure, the
sinner and the low.*

When Al-Abbas heard her make an end of her verses, they pleased him

and he said to her, “Brava, O Sitt al-Husn! Indeed, thou hast done away with anxiety from my heart and hast banished the things which had occurred to my thought.” Then he sighed and signing to the fifth damsel, who was from the land of the Persians and whose name was Marzíyah (now she was the fairest of them all and the sweetest of speech and she was like unto a lustrous star, a model of beauty and loveliness and perfection and brightness and justness of shape and symmetric grace and had a face like the new moon and eyes as they were gazelle’s eyes) and said to her, “O Marziyah, come forward and tune thy lute and sing to us on the same theme, for indeed we are resolved upon faring to the land of Al-Yaman.” Now this maiden had met many of the monarchs and had foregathered with the great; so she tuned her lute and sang these couplets: —

*Friend of my heart why leave thou lone and desolate these eyne? * Fair
union of our lots ne’er failed this sitting-stead of mine!*

*And ah! who dwellest singly in the heart and sprite of me, * (Be I thy
ransom!) desolate for loss of friend I pine!*

*By Allah! O thou richest form in charms and loveliness, * Give alms
to lover who can show of patience ne’er a sign!*

*Alms of what past between us tway (which ne’er will I divulge) *
Of privacy between us tway that man shall ne’er divine:*

*Grant me approval of my lord whereby t’ o’erwhelm the foe * And let
my straitness pass away and doubtful thoughts malign:*

*Approof of thee (an gained the meed) for me high rank shall gain *
And show me robed in richest weed to eyes of envy fain.*

When she had ended her song, all who were in the assembly wept for the daintiness of her delivery and the sweetness of her speech and Al-Abbas said to her, “Brava, O Marzíyah! Indeed, thou bewilderest

the wits with the beauty of thy verse and the polish of thy speech.” All this while Shafikah abode gazing about her, and when she beheld the slave-girls of Al-Abbas and considered the charms of their clothing and the subtlety of their senses and the delicacy of their delivery her reason flew from her head. Then she sought leave of Al-Abbas and returning to her mistress Mariyah, sans letter or reply, acquainted her with what she had espied of the damsels and described to her the condition wherein he was of honour and delight, majesty, veneration and loftiness of rank. Lastly, she enlarged upon what she had seen of the slave-girls and their case and that which they had said and how they had incited Al-Abbas anent returning to his own country by the recitation of songs to the sound of the strings.

When the Princess heard this her slave-girl’s report, she wept and wailed and was like to leave the world. Then she took to her pillow and said, “O Shafikah, I will inform thee of a something which is not hidden from Allah the Most High, and ’tis that thou watch over me till the Almighty decree the accomplishment of His destiny, and when my days are ended, take thou the necklace and the mantle with which Al-Abbas gifted me and return them to him. I deem not he will survive me, and if the Lord of All-might determine against him and his days come to an end, do thou give one charge to shroud us and entomb us both in one tomb.” Then her case changed and her colour waxed wan; and when Shafikah saw her mistress in this plight, she repaired to her mother and told her that the lady Mariyah refused meat and drink. Asked the Queen, “Since when hath this befallen her?” and Shafikah answered, “Since yesterday’s date;” whereat the mother was confounded and betaking herself to her daughter, that she might inquire into her case, lo and behold! found her as one dying. So she sat down at her head and Mariyah opened her eyes and seeing her mother sitting

by her, sat up for shame before her. The Queen questioned her of her case and she said, "I entered the Hammam and it stupefied me and prostrated me and left in my head an exceeding pain; but I trust in Allah Almighty that it will cease."

When her mother went out from her, Mariyah took to chiding the damsel for that which she had done and said to her, "Verily, death were dearer to me than this; so discover thou not my affair to any and I charge thee return not to the like of this fashion." Then she fainted and lay swooning for a whole hour, and when she came to herself, she saw Shafikah weeping over her; whereupon she pluckt the necklace from her neck and the mantle from her body and said to the damsel, "Lay them in a damask napkin and bear them to Al-Abbas and acquaint him with that wherein I am for the stress of severance and the strain of forbiddance." So Shafikah took them and carried them to Al-Abbas, whom she found in readiness to depart, being about to take horse for Al-Yaman. She went in to him and gave him the napkin and that which was therein, and when he opened it and saw what it contained, namely, the mantle and the necklace, his chagrin was excessive and his eyes turned in his head and his rage shot out of them

When Shafikah saw that which betided him, she came forward and said to him, "O bountiful lord, verily my mistress returneth not the mantle and the necklace for despite; but she is about to quit the world and thou hast the best right to them." Asked he, "And what is the cause of this?" and Shafikah answered, "Thou knowest. By Allah, never among the Arabs nor the Ajams nor among the sons of the kings saw I a harder of heart than thou! Can it be a slight matter to thee that thou troublest Mariyah's life and causest her to mourn for herself and quit the world for the sake of thy youth? Thou wast the cause of her acquaintance with thee and now she departeth this life on thine account,

she whose like Allah Almighty hath not created among the daughters of the kings.” When Al-Abbas heard from the damsel these words, his heart burned for Mariyah and her case was not light to him, so he said to Shafikah, “Canst thou bring me in company with her; so haply I may discover her concern and allay whatso aileth her?” Said she, “Yes, I can do that, and thine will be the bounty and the favour.”

So he arose and followed her, and she preceded him, till they came to the palace. Then she opened and locked behind them four-and-twenty doors and made them fast with padlocks; and when he came to Mariyah, he found her as she were the downing sun, strown upon a Tāif rug of perfumed leather,¹⁴¹ surrounded by cushions stuffed with ostrich down, and not a limb of her quivered. When her maid saw her in this state, she offered to cry out; but Al-Abbas said to her, “Do it not, but have patience till we discover her affair; and if Allah (be He extolled and exalted!) have decreed her death, wait till thou have opened the doors to me and I have gone forth. Then do what seemeth good to thee.” So saying, he went up to the Princess and laying his hand upon her bosom, found her heart fluttering like a doveling and the life yet hanging to her breast. So he placed his hand on her cheek, whereat she opened her eyes and beckoning to her maid, said to her by signs, “Who is this that treadeth my carpet and transgresseth against me?” “O my lady,” cried Shafikah, “this is Prince Al-Abbas, for whose sake thou forsakest the world.”

When Mariyah heard speak of Al-Abbas, she raised her hand from under the coverlet and laying it upon his neck, inhaled awhile his scent. Then she sat up and her complexion returned to her and they abode talking till a third part of the night was past. Presently, the Princess

¹⁴¹ i.e. leather from Al-Tāif.

turned to her handmaid and bade her fetch them somewhat of food, sweetmeats, and fruits, fresh and dry. So Shafikah brought what she desired and they ate and drank and abode on this wise without lewdness, till night went and light came. Then said Al-Abbas, "Indeed, the morn breaketh. Shall I hie to my sire and bid him go to thy father and seek thee of him in wedlock for me, in accordance with the book of Allah Almighty and the practice of His Apostle (whom may He save and assain!) so we may not enter into transgression?" And Mariyah answered, saying, "By Allah, 'tis well counselled of thee!" So he went away to his lodging and naught befel between them; and when the day lightened, she recited these couplets: —

*O friends, morn-breeze with Morn draws on amain: * A Voice
bespeaks us, gladding us with 'plain.
Up to the convent where our friend we'll sight * And wine more subtile
than the dust we'll drain;
Whereon our friend spent all the coin he owned * And made the
nursling in his cloak contain;
And, when we oped the jar, light opalline * Struck down the singers
in its search waylain.
From all sides flocking came the convent-monks * Crying at top o'
voices, "Welcome fain!"
And we carousing sat, and cups went round, * Till rose the Venus-star
o'er Eastern plain.
No shame in drinking wine, which means good cheer * And love and
promise of prophetic strain!¹⁴²
Ho thou, the Morn, our union sundering, * These joyous hours to fine
thou dost constrain.*

¹⁴² i.e. the delights of Paradise promised by the Prophet.

*Show grace to us until our pleasures end, * And latest drop of joy
fro' friends we gain:
You have affection candid and sincere * And Love and joy are best
of Faiths for men.*

Such was the case with Mariyah; but as regards Al-Abbas, he betook himself to his father's camp, which was pitched on the Green Meadow, by the Tigris-side, and none might thread his way between the tents, for the dense network of the tent-ropes. When the Prince reached the first of the pavilions, the guards and servants came out to meet him from all sides and walked in his service till he drew near the sitting-place of his sire, who knew of his approach. So he issued forth his marquee and coming to meet his son, kissed him and made much of him. Then they returned together to the royal pavilion and when they had seated themselves therein and the guards had taken up their station in attendance on them, the King said to Al-Abbas, "O my son, get ready thine affair, so we may go to our own land, for that the lieges in our absence are become as they were sheep lacking shepherd." Al-Abbas looked at his father and wept till he fainted, and when he recovered from his fit, he improvised and recited these couplets: —

*I embraced him,¹⁴³ and straight I waxt drunk wi' the smell * Of a fresh
young branch wont in wealth to dwell.
Yea, drunken, but not by the wine; nay, 'twas * By draughts from his
lips that like wine-cups well:
For Beauty wrote on his cheek's fair page * "Oh, his charms! take refuge
fro' danger fell!"*

¹⁴³ Again, "he" for "she," making the lover's address more courtly and delicate.

*Mine eyes, be easy, since him ye saw; * Nor mote nor bleariness with
you shall mell:*

*In him Beauty showeth fro' first to fine * And bindeth on hearts bonds
unfrangible:*

*An thou kohl thyself with his cheek of light * Thou'll find but jasper
and or in stelle:¹⁴⁴*

*The chiders came to reproach me when * For him longing and pining
my heart befel:*

*But I fear not, I end not, I turn me not * From his life, let tell-tale
his tale e'en tell:*

*By Allah, forgetting ne'er crossed my thought * While by life-tie bound,
or when ends my spell:*

*An I live I will live in his love, an I die * Of love and longing, I'll cry,
“’Tis well!”*

Now when Al-Abbas had ended his verses, his father said to him, “I seek refuge for thee with Allah, O my son! Hast thou any want thou art powerless to win, so I may endeavour for thee therein and lavish my treasures in its quest.” Cried Al-Abbas, “O my papa, I have, indeed, an urgent need, on whose account I came forth of my motherland and left my people and my home and affronted perils and horrors and became an exile, and I trust in Allah that it may be accomplished by thy magnanimous endeavour.” Quoth the King, “And what is thy want?” and quoth Al-Abbas, “I would have thee go and ask for me to wife Mariyah, daughter of the King of Baghdad, for that my heart is distracted with love of her.” Then he recounted to his father his adventure from first to last.

¹⁴⁴ i.e. an thou prank or adorn thyself: I have translated literally, but the couplet strongly suggests “nonsense verses.”

When the King heard this from his son, he rose to his feet and calling for his charger of parade, took horse with four-and-twenty Emirs of the chief officers of his empire. Then he betook himself to the palace of the King of Baghdad who, when he saw him coming, bade his chamberlains open the doors to them and going down himself to meet them, received him with all honour and hospitality and carried him and his into the palace; then causing make ready for them carpets and cushions, sat down upon his golden throne and seated the guest by his side upon a chair of gold, framed in juniper-wood set with pearls and jewels. Presently he bade bring sweetmeats and confections and scents and commanded to slaughter four-and-twenty head of sheep and the like of oxen and make ready geese and chickens and pigeons stuffed and boiled, and spread the tables; nor was it long before the meats were served up in vessels of gold and silver.

So they ate their sufficiency and when they had eaten their fill, the tables were removed and the wine-service set on and the cups and flagons ranged in ranks, whilst the Mamelukes and the fair slave-girls sat down, with zones of gold about their waists, studded with all manner pearls, diamonds, emeralds, rubies and other jewels. Moreover, the king bade fetch the musicians; so there presented themselves before him twenty damsels with lutes and psalteries and viols, and smote upon instruments of music playing and performing on such wise that they moved the assembly to delight. Then said Al-Aziz to the King of Baghdad, "I would fain speak a word to thee; but do thou not exclude from us those who are present. An thou consent unto my wish thine is ours and on thee shall be whatso is on us;¹⁴⁵ and we will be to thee a mighty forearm against all unfriends and foes." Quoth Ins bin Kays,

¹⁴⁵ i.e. That which is ours shall be thine, and that which is incumbent on thee shall be incumbent on us = we will assume thy debts and responsibilities.

“Say what thou wilt, O King, for indeed thou excellest in speech and in whatso thou sayest dost hit the mark.”

So Al-Aziz said to him, “I desire that thou marry thy daughter Mariyah to my son Al-Abbas, for thou knowest what he hath of beauty and loveliness, brightness and perfect grace and his frequentation of the valiant and his constancy in the stead of cut-and-thrust.” Said Ins bin Kays, “By Allah, O King, of my love for Mariyah, I have appointed her mistress of her own hand; accordingly, whomsoever she chooseth of the folk, to him will I wed her.” Then he arose to his feet and going in to his daughter, found her mother with her; so he set out to them the case and Mariyah said, “O my papa, my wish followeth thy word and my will ensueth thy will; so whatsoever thou chooseth, I am obedient to thee and under thy dominion.” Therewith the King knew that Mariyah inclined to Al-Abbas; he therefore returned forthright to King Al-Aziz and said to him, “May Allah amend the King! Verily, the wish is won and there is no opposition to that thou commandest.” Quoth Al-Aziz, “By Allah’s leave are wishes won. How deemest thou, O King, of fetching Al-Abbas and documenting the marriage-contract between Mariyah and him?” and quoth Ins bin Kays, “Thine be the rede.”

So Al-Aziz sent after his son and acquainted him with that which had passed; whereupon Al-Abbas called for four-and-twenty mules and ten horses and as many camels and loaded the mules with fathom-long pieces of silk and rugs of leather and boxes of camphor and musk and the camels and horses with chests of gold and silver. Eke, he took the richest of the stuffs and wrapping them in wrappers of gold, purpled silk, laid them on the heads of porters, and they fared on with the treasures till they reached the King of Baghdad’s palace, whereupon all who were present dismounted in honour of Al-Abbas and escorting

him in a body to the presence of Ins bin Kays, displayed to the King all that they had with them of things of price. The King bade carry all this into the store rooms of the Harim and sent for the Kazis and the witnesses, who wrote out the contract and married Mariyah to Al-Abbas, whereupon the Prince commanded slaughter one thousand head of sheep and five hundred buffaloes. So they spread the bride-feast and bade thereto all the tribes of the Arabs, men of tents and men of towns, and the banquet continued for the space of ten days.

Then Al-Abbas went into Mariyah in a commendable and auspicious hour and lay with her and found her a pearl unthriden and a goodly filly no rider had ridden; wherefore he rejoiced and was glad and made merry, and care and sorrow ceased from him and his life was pleasant and trouble departed and he ceased not abiding with her in most joyful case and in the most easeful of life, till seven days were past, when King Al-Aziz resolved to set out and return to his realm and bade his son seek leave of his father-in-law to depart with his wife to his own country. So Al-Abbas spoke of this to King Ins, who granted him the permission he sought; whereupon he chose out a red camel,¹⁴⁶ taller and more valuable than the rest of the camels, and loading it with apparel and ornaments, mounted Mariyah in a litter thereon. Then they spread the ensigns and the standards, whilst kettle-drums beat and the trumpets blared, and set out upon the homewards way.

The King of Baghdad rode forth with them and companied them three days' journey on their route, after which he farewelled them and returned with his troops to Baghdad. As for King Al-Aziz and his son, they fared on night and day and gave not over going till there remained

¹⁴⁶ The red (Ahmar) dromedary like the white-red (Sabah) were most valued because they are supposed best to bear the heats of noon; and thus "red camels" is proverbially used for wealth.

but three days' journey between them and Al-Yaman, when they despatched three men of the couriers to the Prince's mother to report that they were bringing with them Mariyah, the King's daughter of Baghdad, and returning safe and laden with spoil. When the Queen-mother heard this, her wit took wings for joy and she adorned the slave-girls of Al-Abbas after the finest fashion. Now he had ten hand-maids, as they were moons, whereof his father had carried five with him to Baghdad, as hath erst been set forth, and the remaining five abode with his mother. When the dromedary-posts¹⁴⁷ came, they were certified of the approach of Al-Abbas, and when the sun easted and their flags were seen flaunting, the Prince's mother came out to meet her son; nor on that day was there great or small, boy or grey-beard, but went forth to greet the king.

Then the kettle-drums of glad tidings beat and they entered in the utmost of pomp and the extreme of magnificence; so that the tribes and the townspeople heard of them and brought them the richest of gifts and the rarest of presents and the Prince's mother rejoiced with joy exceeding. They butchered beasts and spread mighty bride-feasts for the people and kindled fires, that it might be visible afar to townsman and tribesman that this was the house of hospitality and the stead of the wedding-festival, to the intent that, if any passed them by, it should be of his own sin against himself. So the folk came to them from all districts and quarters and in this way they abode days and months. Presently the Prince's mother bade fetch the five slave-girls to that assembly; whereupon they came and the ten damsels met. The queen seated five of them on her son's right hand and the other five on his left and the folk gathered about them. Then she bade the five who

¹⁴⁷ i.e. Couriers on dromedaries, the only animals used for sending messages over long distances.

had remained with her speak forth somewhat of poesy, so they might entertain therewith the seance and that Al-Abbas might rejoice thereat.

Now she had clad them in the costliest of clothes and adorned them with trinkets and ornaments and moulded work of gold and silver and collars of gold, wrought with pearls and gems. So they paced forward, with harps and lutes and zithers and recorders and other instruments of music before them, and one of them, a damsel who came from the land of China and whose name was Bá'úthah, advanced and screwed up the strings of her lute. Then she cried out from the top of her head and recited these couplets: —

*Indeed your land returned, when you returned, * To whilom light
which overgrew its gloom:
Green grew the land that was afore dust-brown. * And fruits that
failed again showed riping bloom:
And clouds rained treasures after rain had lacked, * And plenty
poured from earth's re-opening womb.
Then ceased the woes, my lords, that garred us weep, * With tears like
dragons' blood, our severance-doom,
Whose length, by Allah, made me yearn and pine, * Would Heaven,
O lady mine, I were thy groom!*

When she had ended her song, all who were present were delighted and Al-Abbas rejoiced in this. Then he bade the second damsel sing somewhat on the same theme. So she came forward and tightening the strings of her harp, which was of balass ruby,¹⁴⁸ raised her voice in a plaintive air and improvised these couplets: —

¹⁴⁸ i.e. of rare wood, set with rubies.

*Brought the Courier glad news of our absentees, * To please us through
 those who had wrought us unease:*
*Cried I, "My life ransom thee, messenger man, * Thou hast kept thy
 faith and thy boons are these."*
*An the nightlets of union in you we joyed * When fared you naught
 would our grief appease;*
*You sware that folk would to folk be true, * And you kept your oaths
 as good faith decrees.*
*To you made I oath true lover am I * Heaven guard me when sworn
 from all perjuries:*
*I fared to meet you and loud I cried, * "Aha, fair welcome when come
 you please!"*
*And I joyed to meet you and when you came, * Deckt all the dwelling
 with tapestries,*
*And death in your absence to us was dight, * But your presence
 bringeth us life and light.*

When she had made an end of her verse, Al-Abbas bade the third damsel (who came from Samarkand of Ajam-land and whose name was Rummánah) sing, and she answered, "To hear is to obey." Then she took the zither and crying out from the midst of her head, recited and sang these couplets:¹⁴⁹ —

*My watering mouth declares thy myrtle-cheek my food to be * And cull
 my lips thy side-face rose, who lily art to me!*

¹⁴⁹ Mr. Payne and I have long puzzled over these enigmatical and possibly corrupt lines: he wrote to me in 1884, "This is the first piece that has beaten me." In the couplet "Rayhání" may mean "my basil-plant" or "my food" (the latter Koranic), "my compassion," etc.; and Súsání is equally ancipitous "My lilies" or "my sleep."

*And twixt the dune and down there shows the fairest flower that blooms
 * Whose fruitage is granado's fruit with all granado's blee.¹⁵⁰
 Forget my lids of eyne their sleep for magic eyes of him; * Naught since
 he fared but drowsy charms and languorous air I see.
 He shot me down with shaft of glance from bow of eyebrow sped: *
 What Chamberlain¹⁵¹ betwixt his eyes garred all my pleasure flee?
 Haply shall heart of me seduce his heart by weakness' force * E'en as
 his own seductive grace garred me love-ailment dree.
 For an by him forgotten be our pact and covenant * I have a King who
 never will forget my memory.
 His sides bemock the bending charms of waving Tamarisk, * And in
 his beauty-pride he walks as drunk with coquetry:
 His feet and legs be feather-light whene'er he deigns to run * And say,
 did any ride the wind except 'twere Solomon?*

Therewith Al-Abbas smiled and her verses pleased him. Then he bade the fourth damsel come forward and sing (now she was from the Sundown-land¹⁵² and her name was Balakhshá); so she came forward and taking the lute and the zither, tuned the strings and smote them in many modes; then she returned to the first and improvising, sang these couplets: —

*When to the séance all for pleasure hied * Thy lamping eyes illumined
 its every side;*

¹⁵⁰ The “Niká” or sand hill is the swell of the throat: the Ghaur or lowland is the fall of the waist: the flower is the breast.

¹⁵¹ Arab. “Hájib,” eyebrow or chamberlain. The pun is classical used by a host of poets including Al-Harírí.

¹⁵² Arab. “Bilád al-Maghrib (al-Aksa,” in full) = the Farthest Land of the setting Sun, shortly called Al-Maghrib and the people “Maghribi.”

*While playing round us o'er the wine-full bowl * Those necklace-
pearls old wine with pleasure plied,*¹⁵³

*Till wits the wisest drunken by her grace * Betrayed for joyance secrets
sages hide;*

*And, seen the cup, we bade it circle round * While sun and moon
spread radiance side and wide.*

*We raised for lover veil of love perforce * And came glad tidings which
new joys applied:*

*Loud sang the camel-guide; won was our wish * Nor was the secret
by the spy espied:*

*And, when my days were blest by union-bliss * And to all-parting
Time was aid denied,*

*Each 'bode with other, clear of meddling spy * Nor feared we hate of foe
or neighbour-pride.*

*The sky was bright, friends came and severance fared * And Love-in-
union rained boons multiplied:*

*Saying, "Fulfil fair union, all are gone * Rivals and fears lest
shaming foe deride:"*

*Friends now conjoinèd are: wrong passed away * And meeting-cup
goes round and joys abide:*

*On you be Allah's Peace with every boon * Till end the dooming years
and time and tide.*

When Balakhsha had ended her verse, all present were moved to delight and Al-Abbas said to her, "Brava, O damsel!" Then he bade the fifth damsel come forward and sing (now she was from the land of Syria and her name was Rayhánah; she was passing of voice and when she appeared in an assembly, all eyes were fixed upon her), so she came

¹⁵³ The necklace-pearls are the cup-bearer's teeth.

forward and taking the viol (for she was used to play upon all instruments) recited and sang these couplets: —

*Your me-wards coming I hail to sight; * Your look is a joy driving woe
from sprite:*

*With you love is blest, pure and white of soul; * Life's sweet and my
planet grows green and bright:*

*By Allah, you-wards my pine ne'er ceased * And your like is rare and
right worthy hight.*

*Ask my eyes an e'er since the day ye went * They tasted sleep, looked on
lover-wight:*

*My heart by the parting-day was broke * And my wasted body betrays
my plight:*

*Could my blamers see in what grief am I, * They had wept in wonder
my loss, my blight!*

*They had joined me in shedding torrential tears * And like me a-morn
had shown thin and slight:*

*How long for your love shall your lover bear * This weight o'er much
for the hill's strong height?*

*By Allah what then for your sake was doomed * To my heart, a heart
by its woes turned white!*

*An showed I the fires that aye flare in me, * They had 'flamed Eastern
world and earth's Western site.*

*But after this is my love fulfilled * With joy and gladness and mere
delight;*

*And the Lord who scattered hath brought us back * For who doeth good
shall of good ne'er lack.*

When King Al-Aziz heard the damsel's song, both words and verses pleased him and he said to Al-Abbas, "O my son, verily long versifying

hath tired these damsels, and indeed they make us yearn after the houses and the homesteads with the beauty of their songs. These five have adorned our meeting with the charm of their melodies and have done well in that which they have said before those who are present; so we counsel thee to free them for the love of Allah Almighty.” Quoth Al-Abbas, “There is no command but thy command;” and he enfranchised the ten damsels in the assembly; whereupon they kissed the hands of the King and his son and prostrated themselves in thanksgiving to the Lord of All-might. Then they put off that which was upon them of ornaments and laying aside the lutes and other instruments of music, kept to their houses like modest women and veiled, and fared not forth.

As for King Al-Aziz, he lived after this seven years and was removed to the mercy of Almighty Allah; when his son Al-Abbas bore him forth to burial as beseemeth kings and let make for him perlections and professional recitations of the Koran. He kept up the mourning for his father during four successive weeks, and when a full-told month had elapsed he sat down on the throne of the kingship and judged and did justice and distributed silver and gold. He also loosed all who were in the jails and abolished grievances and customs dues and righted the oppressed of the oppressor; so the lieges prayed for him and loved him and invoked on him endurance of glory and continuance of kingship and length of life and eternity of prosperity and happiness. The troops submitted to him, and the hosts from all parts of the kingdom, and there came to him presents from each and every land: the kings obeyed him and many were his warriors and his grandees, and his subjects lived with him the most easeful of lives and the most delightsome.

Meanwhile, he ceased not, he and his beloved, Queen Mariyah, in the most enjoyable of life and the pleasantest, and he was vouchsafed

by her children; and indeed there befel friendship and affection between them and the longer their companionship was prolonged, the more their love waxed, so that they became unable to endure each from other a single hour, save the time of his going forth to the Divan, when he would return to her in the liveliest that might be of longing. And after this fashion they abode in all solace of life and satisfaction till there came to them the Destroyer of delights and the Severer of societies. So extolled be the Eternal whose sway endureth for ever and aye, who never unheedeth neither dieth nor sleepeth! This is all that hath come down to us of their tale, and so the Peace!

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Shahrazad and Shahryar

King Sjafruar marveled at this history¹⁵⁴ and said, “By Allah, verily, injustice slayeth its folk!”¹⁵⁵ And he was edified by that, wherewith Shahrazad bespoke him and sought help of Allah the Most High. Then said he to her, “Tell me another of thy tales, O Shahrazad; supply me with a pleasant story and this shall be the completion of the story-telling.” Shahrazad replied: — With love and gladness! I will tell thee a tale the like of which has never been heard before.

It hath reached me, O auspicious King, that a man once declared to his mates: — I will set forth to you a means of security against annoy. A friend of mine once related to me and said: — We attained to security against annoy, and the origin of it was other than this; that is, it was the following¹⁵⁶

Tale of the Two Kings and the Wazir’s Daughters.

I overtravelled whileome lands and climes and towns and visited the cities of high renown and traversed the ways of dangers and hardships. Towards the last of my life, I entered a city of the cities of China, wherein was a king of the Chosroës and the Tobbas and the Caesars.

¹⁵⁴ i.e. the old Sindibae-Námeh (see vol. vi.), or “The Malice of Women.”

¹⁵⁵ i.e. Those who commit it.

¹⁵⁶ The connection between this pompous introduction and the story which follows is not apparent. The “Tale of the Two Kings and the Wazir’s Daughters” is that of Shahrazad told in the third person, in fact a rechauffé of the Introduction. But as some three years have passed since the marriage, and the dénouement of the plot is at hand, the Princess is made, with some art I think, to lay the whole affair before her husband in her own words, the better to bring him to a “sense of his duty.”

Now that city had been peopled with its inhabitants by means of justice and equity; but its then king was a tyrant dire who despoiled lives and souls at his desire; in fine, there was no warming oneself at his fire, for that indeed he oppressed the believing band and wasted the land.

Now he had a younger brother, who was king in Sarmarkand of the Persians, and the two kings sojourned a while of time, each in his own city and stead, till they yearned unto each other and the elder king despatched his Wazir to fetch his younger brother. When the Minister came to the King of Samarkand and acquainted him with his errand, he submitted himself to the bidding of his brother and answered, "To hear is to obey." Then he equipped himself and made ready for wayfare and brought forth his tents and pavilions. A while after midnight, he went in to his wife, that he might farewell her, and found her with a strange man, lying by her in one bed. So he slew them both and dragging them out by the feet, cast them away and set forth on his march. When he came to his brother's court, the elder king rejoiced in him with joy exceeding and lodged him in the pavilion of hospitality beside his own palace.

Now this pavilion overlooked a flower-garden belonging to the elder brother and there the younger abode with him some days. Then he called to mind that which his wife had done with him and remembered her slaughter and bethought him how he was a king, yet was not exempt from the shifts of Time; and affected him with exceeding affect, so that it drave him to abstain from meat and drink, or, if he ate anything, it profited him naught. When his brother saw him on such wise, he deemed that this had betided him by reason of severance from his folk and family, and said to him, "Come, let us fare forth a-coursing and a-hunting." But he refused to go with him; so the

elder brother went to the chase, while the younger abode in the pavilion aforesaid.

Now, as he was diverting himself by looking out upon the flower-garden from the latticed window of the palace, behold, he saw his brother's wife and with her ten black slaves and ten slave-girls. Each slave laid hold of a damsel and another slave came forth and did the like with the queen; and when they had their wills one of other they all returned whence they came. Hereat there betided the King of Samarkand exceeding surprise and solace and he was made whole of his malady, little by little. After a few days, his brother returned, and finding him cured of his complaint, said to him, "Tell me, O my brother, what was the cause of thy sickness and thy pallor, and what is the reason of the return of health to thee and of rosiness to thy face after this?" So he acquainted him with the whole case and this was grievous to him; but they hid their affair and agreed to leave the kingship and fare forth a-pilgrimage and adventuring at hap-hazard, for they deemed that there had befallen none the like of what had befallen them.

Accordingly, they went forth and as they journeyed, they saw by the way a woman imprisoned in seven chests, whereon were five padlocks, and sunken deep in the midst of the salt sea, under the guardianship of an Ifrit; yet for all this that woman issued out of the ocean and opened those padlocks and coming forth of those chests, did what she would with the two brothers, after she had practised upon the Ifrit. When the two kings saw that woman's fashion and how she circumvented the Ifrit, who had lodged her in the abyss of the main, they turned back to their kingdoms and the younger betook himself to Samarkand, whilst the elder returned to China and contrived for himself a custom in the slaughter of damsels, which was, his Wazir

used to bring him every night a girl, with whom he lay that night, and when he arose in the morning, he gave her to the Minister and bade him do her die. After this fashion he abode a long time, and the commons cried out by reason of that grievous affair into which they were fallen and feared the wrath of Allah Almighty, dreading lest He destroy them by means of this. Still the king persisted in that practice and in his blameworthy intent of the killing of damsels and the despoilment of maidens concealed by veils,¹⁵⁷ wherefore the girls sought succor of the Lord of All-might, and complained to Him of the tyranny of the king and of his oppression.

Now the king's Wazir had two daughters, sisters german, the elder of whom had read the books and made herself mistress of the sciences and studied the writings of the sages and the stories of the cup-companions,¹⁵⁸ and she was a maiden of abundant lore and knowledge galore and wit than which naught can be more. She heard that which the folk suffered from that king in his misuage of their children; whereupon ruth for them gat hold of her and jealousy and she besought Allah Almighty that He would bring the king to renounce that his new accursed custom, and the Lord answered her prayer. Then she consulted her younger sister and said to her, "I mean to devise a device for freeing the children of folk; to wit, I will go up to the king and offer myself to marry him, and when I come to his presence, I will send to fetch thee. When thou comest in to me and the king had his carnal will of me, do thou say to me, 'O my sister, let me hear a story of thy goodly stories, wherewith we may beguile the waking hours of

¹⁵⁷ Arab. "Mukhaddarát," maidens concealed behind curtains and veiled in the Harem.

¹⁵⁸ i.e. the professional Ráwis or tale-reciters who learned stories by heart from books like "The Arabian Nights."

our night, till the dawn, when we take leave of each other; and let the king hear it likewise!” The other replied, “’Tis well; forsure this contrivance will deter the king from this innovation he practiseth and thou shalt be requited with favour exceeding and recompense abounding in the world to come, for that indeed thou perilest thy life and wilt either perish or win to thy wish.”

So she did this and Fortune favoured her and the Divine direction was vouchsafed to her and she discovered her design to her sire, the Wazir, who thereupon forbade her, fearing her slaughter. However, she repeated her words to him a second time and a third, but he consented not. Then he cited to her a parable, which should deter her, and she cited to him a parable of import contrary to his, and the debate was prolonged between them and the adducing of instances, till her father saw that he was powerless to turn her from her purpose and she said to him, “There is no help but that I marry the King, so haply I may be a sacrifice for the children of the Moslems: either I shall turn him from this his heresy or I shall die.”

When the Minister despaired of dissuading her, he went up to the king and acquainted him with the case, saying, “I have a maiden daughter and she desireth to give herself in free gift to the King.” Quoth the King, “How can thy soul consent to this, seeing that thou knowest I abide but a single night with a girl and when I arise on the morrow, I do her dead, and ’tis thou who slayest her, and again and again thou hast done this?” Quoth the Wazir, “Know, O king, that I have set forth all this to her, yet consented she not to aught, but needs must she have thy company and she chooseth to come to thee and present herself before thee, albeit I have cited to her the sayings of the sages; but she hath answered me with more than that which I said to her and contrariwise.” Then quoth the king, “Suffer her visit me this

night and to-morrow morning come thou and take her and kill her; and by Allah, an thou slay her not, I will slay thee and her also!"

The Minister obeyed the king's bidding and going out from the presence returned home. When it was night, he took his elder daughter and carried her up to the king; and when she came before him she wept; whereupon he asked her, "What causeth thee to weep? Indeed, 'twas thou who willedst this." She answered, "I weep not but of longing after my little sister; for that, since we grew up, I and she, I have never been parted from her till this day; so, an it please the King to send for her, that I may look on her, and listen to her speech and take my fill of her till the morning, this were a boon and an act of kindness of the King." So he bade fetch the damsel and she came. Then there befel that which befel of his union with the elder sister, and when he went up to his couch, that he might sleep, the younger sister said to her elder, "Allah upon thee, O my sister, an thou be not asleep, tell us a tale of thy goodly tales, wherewith me may beguile the watches of our night, ere day dawn and parting." Said she, "With love and gladness;" and fell to relating to her, whilst the king listened.

Her story was goodly and delectable, and whilst she was in the middle of telling it, the dawn brake. Now the king's heart clave to the hearing of the rest of the story; so he respited her till the morrow; and, when it was the next night, she told him a tale concerning the marvels of the land and the wonders of Allah's creatures which was yet stranger and rarer than the first. In the midst of the recital, appeared the day and she was silent from the permitted say. So he let her live till the following night, that he might hear the end of the history and after that slay her. On this wise it fortun'd with her; but as regards the people of the city, they rejoiced and were glad and blessed the Wazir's daughters, marvelling for that three days had passed and that the king

had not put his bride to death and exulting in that he had returned to the ways of righteousness and would never again burthen himself with blood-guilt against any of the maidens of the city.

Then, on the fourth night, she related to him a still more extraordinary adventure, and on the fifth night she told him anecdotes of Kings and Wazirs and Notables. Brief, she ceased not to entertain him many days and nights, while the king said to himself, “Whenas I shall have heard the end of the tale, I will do her die,” and the people redoubled their marvel and admiration. Also, the folk of the circuits and cities heard of this thing, to wit, that the king had turned from his custom and from that which he had imposed upon himself and had renounced his heresy, wherefor they rejoiced and the lieges returned to the capital and took up their abode therein, after they had departed thence; and they were constant in prayer to Allah Almighty that He would stablish the king in his present stead.

“And this,” said Shahrazad, “is the end of that which my friend related to me.” Quoth Shahryar, “O Shahrazad, finish for us the tale thy friend told thee, inasmuch as it resembleth the story of a King whom I knew; but fain would I hear that which betided the people of this city and what they said of the affair of the King, so I may return from the case wherein I was.” She replied: — With love and gladness! Know, O auspicious king and lord of right rede and praiseworthy meed and prowrest of deed, that, when the folk heard how the king had put away from him his malpractice and returned from his unrighteous wont, they rejoiced in this with joy exceeding and offered up prayers for him. Then they talked one with other of the cause of the slaughter of the maidens, and the wise said, “Women are not all alike, nor are the fingers of the hand alike.”

Now when King Shahryar heard this story he came to himself and

awakening from his drunkenness,¹⁵⁹ said, “By Allah, this story is my story and this case is my case, for that indeed I was in reprobation and danger of judgment till thou turnedst me back from this into the right way, extolled be the Causer of causes and the Liberator of necks!” presently adding, “Indeed, O Shahrazad, thou hast awakened me to many things and hast aroused me from mine ignorance of the right.” Then said she to him: — O chief of the kings, the wise say, “The kingship is a building, whereof the troops are the base, and when the foundation is strong, the building endureth;” wherefore it behoveth the king to strengthen the foundation, for that they say, “Whenas the base is weak, the building falleth.” In like fashion it befitteth the king to care for his troops and do justice among his lieges, even as the owner of the garden careth for his trees and cutteth away the weeds that have no profit in them; and so it befitteth the king to look into the affairs of his Ryots and fend off oppression from them.

As for thee, O king, it behoveth thee that thy Wazir be virtuous and experienced in the requirements of the people and the peasantry; and indeed Allah the Most High hath named his name¹⁶⁰ in the history of Musa (on whom be the Peace!) when he saith, “And make me a Wazir of my people, Aaron.” Now could a Wazir have been dispensed withal, Moses son of Imrán had been worthier than any to do without a Minister. As for the Wazir, the Sultan discovereth unto him his affairs, private and public; and know, O king, that the likeness of thee with the people is that of the leach with the sick man; and the essential condition of the Minister is that he be soothfast in his sayings, reliable in all his relations, rich in ruth for the folk and in tenderness of

¹⁵⁹ i.e. his indifference to the principles of right and wrong, which is a manner of moral intoxication.

¹⁶⁰ i.e. hath mentioned the office of Wazir (in Koran xx. 30).

transacting with them. Verily, it is said, O king, that good troops be like the druggist; if his perfumes reach thee not, thou still smellst the fragrance of them; and bad entourage be like the blacksmith; if his sparks burn thee not, thou smellst his evil smell. So it befitteth thee to take to thyself a virtuous Wazir, a veracious counsellor, even as thou takest unto thee a wife displayed before thy face, because thou needest the man's righteousness for thine own right directing, seeing that, if thou do righteously, the commons will do right, and if thou do wrongly, they will also do wrong.

When the King heard this, drowsiness overcame him and he slept and presently awaking, called for the candles; so they were lighted and he sat down on his couch and seating Shahrazad by him, smiled in her face. She kissed the ground before him and said: — O king of the age and lord of the time and the years, extolled be the Forgiving, the Bountiful, who hath sent me to thee, of His grace and good favour, so I have incited thee to longing after Paradise; for verily this which thou wast wont do was never done of any of the kings before thee. Then laud be to the Lord who hath directed thee into the right way, and who from the paths of frowardness hath diverted thee! As for women, Allah Almighty maketh mention of them also when He saith in His Holy Book, "Truly, the men who resign themselves to Allah and the women who resign themselves, and the true-believing men and the true-believing women and the devout men and the devout women and truthful men and truthful women, and long-suffering men and long-suffering women, and the humble men and the humble women, and charitable men and charitable women, and the men who fast and the women who fast, and men who guard their privities and women who guard their privities, and men who are constantly mindful of Allah and

women who are constantly mindful, for them Allah hath prepared forgiveness and a rich reward.”

As for that which hath befallen thee, verily, it hath befallen many kings before thee and their women have falsed them, for all they were more majestical of puissance than thou, and mightier of kingship and had troops more manifold. If I would, I could relate to thee, O king, concerning the wiles of women, that whereof I should not make an end all my life long; and indeed, in all these my nights that I have passed before thee, I have told thee many tales of the wheedling of women and of their craft; but soothly the things abound on me; so, an thou please, O king, I will relate to thee somewhat of that which befel olden kings of perfidy from their women and of the calamities which overtook them by reason of these deceivers.

Asked the king, “How so? Tell on;” and she answered: — Hearkening and obedience. It hath been told me, O king, that a man once related to a company the following tale of

The Concubine and the Caliph.

One day of the days, as I stood at the door of my house, and the heat was excessive, behold, I saw a fair woman approaching, and with her a slave-girl carrying a parcel. They gave not over going till they came up to me, when the woman stopped and asked me, “Hast thou a draught of water?” Answered I, “Yes, enter the vestibule, O my lady, so thou mayest drink.” Accordingly she came in and I went up into the house and fetched two gugglets of earthenware, smoked with musk and full of cold water. She took one of them and discovered her face, the better to drink; whereupon I saw that she was as the rising moon or the resplendent sun and said to her, “O my lady, wilt thou not come up

into the house, so thou mayst rest thyself till the air cool and afterwards fare thee to thine own place?" Quoth she, "Is there none with thee?" and quoth I, "Indeed I am a bachelor and have none belonging to me, nor is there a wight in the site;" whereupon she said, "An thou be a stranger, thou art he in quest of whom I was going about."

So she went up into the house and doffed her walking-dress and I found her as she were the full moon. I brought her what I had by me of food and drink and said to her, "O my lady, excuse me: this is all that is ready;" and said she, "This is right good[and indeed 'tis what I sought." Then she ate and gave the slave-girl that which was left; after which I brought her a casting-bottle of musked rose-water, and she washed her hands and abode with me till the season of mid-afternoon prayer, when she brought out of the parcel she had with her a shirt and trousers and an upper garment and a gold-worked kerchief and gave them to me; saying, "Know that I am one of the concubines of the Caliph, and we be forty concubines, each of whom hath a cicisbeo who cometh to her as often as she would have him; and none is without a lover save myself, wherefore I came forth this day to get me a gallant and now I have found thee. Thou must know that the Caliph lieth each night with one of us, whilst the other nine-and-thirty concubines take their ease with the nine-and-thirty masculines, and I would have thee company on such a day, when do thou come up to the palace of the Caliph and sit awaiting me in such a place, till a little eunuch come out to thee and say to thee a certain watch-word which is, 'Art thou Sandal?' Answer 'Yes,' and wend thee with him."

Then she took leave of me and I of her, after I had strained her to my bosom and thrown my arms round her neck and we had exchanged kisses awhile. So she fared forth and I abode patiently expecting the appointed day, till it came, when I arose and went out, intending for

the trysting place; but a friend of mine met me by the way and made me go home with him. I accompanied him and when I came up into his sitting-chamber he locked the door on me and walked out to fetch what we might eat and drink. He was absent until midday, then till the hour of mid-afternoon prayer, whereat I was chagrined with sore concern. Then he was missing until sundown, and I was like to die of vexation and impatience; and indeed he returned not and I passed my night on wake, nigh upon death, for the door was locked on me, and my soul was like to depart my body on account of the assignation. At daybreak, my friend returned and opening the door, came in, bringing with him meat-pudding and fritters and bees' honey, and said to me, "By Allah, thou must needs excuse me, for that I was with a company and they locked the door on me and have let me go but this very moment."

I returned him no reply; however, he set before me that which was with him and I ate a single mouthful and went out running at speed so haply I might overtake the rendezvous which had escaped me. When I came to the palace, I saw over against it eight-and-thirty gibbets set up, whereon were eight-and-thirty men crucified, and under them eight-and-thirty concubines as they were moons. So I asked the cause of the crucifixion of the men and concerning the women in question, and it was said unto me, "The men thou seest crucified the Caliph found with yonder damsels, who be his bed-fellows." When I heard this, I prostrated myself in thanksgiving to Allah and said, "The Almighty require thee with all good, O my friend!" for had he not invited me and locked me up in his house that night, I had been crucified with these men, wherefore Alhamdolillah — laud to the Lord!

On this wise (continued Shahrazad), none is safe from the calamities of the world and the vicissitudes of Time, and in proof of this,

I will relate unto thee yet another story still rarer and stranger than this. Know, O king, that one said to me: — A friend of mine, a merchant, told me the following tale of

The Concubine of Al-Maamun.

As I sat one day in my shop, there came up to me a fair woman, as she were the moon at its rising, and with her a handmaid. Now I was a handsome man in my time; so that lady sat down on my shop and buying stuffs of me, paid the price and went her ways. I asked the girl anent her and she answered, “I know not her name.” Quoth I, “Where is her abode?” Quoth she, “In heaven;” and I, “She is presently on the earth; so when doth she ascend to heaven and where is the ladder by which she goeth up?” The girl retorted, “She hath her lodging in a palace between two rivers,¹⁶¹ that is, in the palace of Al-Maamún al-Hákim bi-Amri ’llah.”¹⁶² Then said I, “I am a dead man, without a doubt;” but she replied, “Have patience, for needs must she return to thee and buy other stuffs of thee.” I asked, “And how cometh it that the Commander of the Faithful trusteth her to go out?” and she answered, “He loveth her with exceeding love and is wrapped up in her and crosseth her not.” Then the slave-girl went away, running after her mistress; whereupon I left the shop and followed them, so I might see her abiding-place. I kept them in view all the way, till she disappeared from mine eyes, when I returned to my place, with heart a-fire.

Some days after, she came to me again and bought stuffs of me: I refused to take the price and she cried, “We have no need of thy

¹⁶¹ i.e. In Rauzah-Island.

¹⁶² There is no historical person who answers to these names, “The Secure, the Ruler by Commandment of Allah.”

goods." Quoth I, "O my lady, accept them from me as a gift;" but quoth she, "Wait till I try thee and make proof of thee." Then she brought out of her pocket a purse and gave me therefrom a thousand dinars, saying, "Trade with this till I return to thee." So I took the purse and she went away and returned not till six months had passed. Meanwhile, I traded with the money and sold and bought and made other thousand dinars profit on it. At last she came to me again and I said to her, "Here is thy money and I have gained with it other thousand ducats;" and she, "Let it lie by thee and take these other thousand dinars. As soon as I have departed from thee, go thou to Al-Rauzah, the Garden-holm, and build there a goodly pavilion, and when the edifice is accomplished, give me to know thereof."

As soon as she was gone, I betook myself to Al-Rauzah and fell to building the pavilion, and when it was finished, I furnished it with the finest of furniture and sent to tell her that I had made an end to the edifice; whereupon she sent back to me, saying, "Let him meet me to-morrow about day-break at the Zuwaylah gate and bring with him a strong ass." I did as she bade and, betaking myself to the Zuwaylah gate, at the appointed time, found there a young man on horseback, awaiting her, even as I awaited her. As we stood, behold, up she came, and with her a slave-girl. When she saw that young man, she asked him, "Art thou here?" and he answered, "Yes, O my lady." Quoth she, "To-day I am invited by this man: wilt thou wend with us?" and quoth he, "Yes." Then said she, "Thou hast brought me hither against my will and parforce. Wilt thou go with us in any case?" He cried, "Yes, yes," and we fared on, all three, until we came to Al-Rauzah and entered the pavilion.

The dame diverted herself awhile with viewing its ordinance and furniture, after which she doffed her walking-dress and sat down with

the young man in the goodliest and chiefest place. Then I fared forth and brought them what they should eat at the first of the day; presently I again went out and fetched them what they should eat at the end of the day and brought for the twain wine and dessert and fruits and flowers. After this fashion I abode in their service, standing on my feet, and she said not unto me, “Sit,” nor “Take, eat” nor “Take, drink,” while she and the young man sat toying and laughing, and he fell to kissing her and pinching her and hopping over the ground and laughing. They remained thus awhile and presently she said, “Hitherto we have not become drunken; let me pour out.” So she took the cup, and crowning it, gave him to drink and plied him with wine, till he lost his wits, when she took him up and carried him into a closet. Then she came out, with the head of that youth in her hand, while I stood silent, fixing not mine eyes on her eyes neither questioning her of the case; and she asked me, “Take it and throw it in the river.”

I accepted her commandment and she arose and stripping herself of her clothes, took a knife and cut the dead man’s body in pieces, which she laid in three baskets, and said to me, “Throw them into the river.” I did her bidding and when I returned, she said to me, “Sit, so I may relate to thee yonder fellow’s case, lest thou be affrighted at what accident hath befallen him. Thou must know that I am the Caliph’s favourite concubine, nor is there any higher in honour with him than I; and I am allowed six nights in each month, wherein I go down into the city and tarry with my whilome mistress who reared me; and when I go down thus, I dispose of myself as I will.

Now this young man was the son of certain neighbors of my mistress, when I was a virgin girl. One day, my mistress was sitting with the chief officers of the palace and I was alone in the house, and as the night came on, I went up to the terrace-roof in order to sleep there,

but ere I was ware, this youth came up from the street and falling upon me knelt on my breast. He was armed with a dagger and I could not get free of him till he had taken my maidenhead by force; and this sufficed him not, but he must needs disgrace me with all the folk for, as often as I came down from the palace, he would stand in wait for me by the way and fluttered me against my will and follow me wheresoever I went. This, then, is my story, and as for thee, thou pleasest me and thy patience pleaseth me and thy good faith and loyal service, and there abideth with me none dearer than thou.” Then I lay with her that night and there befel what befel between us till the morning, when she gave me abundant wealth and took to meeting me at the pavilion six days in every month.

After this wise we passed a whole year, at the end of which she cut herself off from me a month’s space, wherefore fire raged in my heart on her account. When it was the next month, behold, a little eunuch presented himself to me and said, “I am a messenger to thee from Such-an-one, who giveth thee to know that the Commander of the Faithful hath ordered her to be drowned, her and those who are with her, six-and-twenty slave-girls, on such a day at Dayr al-Tin,¹⁶³ for that they have confessed of lewdness, one against other and she sayeth to thee, ‘Look how thou mayest do with me and how thou mayest contrive to deliver me, even an thou gather together all my money and spend it upon me, for that this be the time of manhood.’” Quoth I, “I know not this woman; belike it is other than I to whom this message is sent; so beware, O Eunuch, lest thou cast me into a cleft.” Quoth he, “Behold, I have told thee that I had to say,” and went away, leaving me in sore concern on her account.

¹⁶³ “The convent of Clay,” a Coptic monastery near Cairo.

Now when the appointed day came, I arose and changing my clothes and favour, donned sailor's apparel; then I took with me a purse full of gold and buying a right good breakfast, accosted a boatman at Dayr al-Tin and sat down and ate with him; after which I asked him, "Wilt thou hire me thy boat?" Answered he, "The Commander of the Faithful hath commanded me to be here;" and he told me the tale of the concubines and how the Caliph purposed to drown them that day. When I heard this from him, I brought out to him ten gold pieces and discovered to him my case, whereupon he said to me, "O my brother, get thee empty gourds, and when thy mistress cometh, give me to know of her and I will contrive the trick." So I kissed his hand and thanked him and, as I was walking about, waiting, up came the guards and eunuchs escorting the women, who were weeping and shrieking and farewelling one another. The Castratos cried out to us, whereupon we came with the boat, and they said to the sailor, "Who be this?" Said he, "This is my mate whom I have brought to help me, so one of us may keep the boat whilst another doth your service." Then they brought out to us the women, one by one, saying, "Throw them in by the Island;" and we replied, "'Tis well."

Now each of them was shackled and they had made fast about her neck a jar of sand. We did as the neutrals bade us and ceased not to take the women, one after other, and cast them in, till they gave us my mistress and I winked to my mate. So we took her and carried her out and cast her into mid-stream, where I threw to her the empty gourds and said to her, "Wait for me at the mouth of the Canal." Now there remained one woman after her: so we took her and drowned her and the eunuchs went away, whilst we dropped down the river till we came to where I saw my mistress awaiting me. We haled her into the canoe and returned to our pavilion on Al-Rauzah. Then I rewarded the sailor

and he took his boat and went away; whereupon quoth she to me, "Thou art indeed the friend ever faithful found for the shifts of Fortune." And I sojourned with her some days; but the shock wrought upon her so that she sickened and fell to wasting away and redoubled in weakness till she died. I mourned for her and buried her; after which I removed all that was in the pavilion and abandoned the building.

Now she had brought to that pavilion a little coffer of copper and laid it in a place whereof I knew not; so, when the Inspector of Inheritances came, he rummaged the house and found the coffer. Presently he opened it and seeing it full of jewels and seal-rings, took it, and me with it, and ceased not to put me to the question with beating and torment till I confessed the whole affair. Thereupon they carried me to the Caliph and I told him all that had passed between me and her; and he said to me, "O man, depart this city, for I release thee on account of thy courage and because of thy constancy in keeping thy secret and thy daring in exposing thyself to death." So I arose forthwith and fared from his city; and this is what befel me.