

THE LOVE ADVENTURES OF AL-MANSUR



EDITED

BY

ARCHIBALD CLAVERING GUNTER

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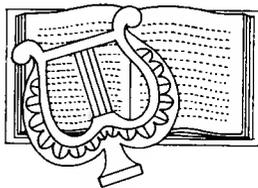
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THE LOVE ADVENTURES
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PARIS.
A PRINCESS OF PARIS.
THE KING'S STOCKBROKER.
THE FIRST OF THE ENGLISH.
THE LADIES' JUGGERNAUT.

EDITED BY A. C. GUNTER.
HOW I ESCAPED.

THE
LOVE ADVENTURES
OF AL-MANSUR

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL PERSIAN BY
OMAR-EL-AZIZ

EDITED BY
ARCHIBALD CLAVERING GUNTER
AUTHOR OF "MR. BARNES OF NEW YORK"

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PREFACE.

In presenting this little volume I have endeavored to retain in its English form sufficient of Arabic phraseology and dialogue to keep its Eastern atmosphere, but have attempted to exclude from it that superabundance of Oriental metaphor and mythology which would destroy its directness and perhaps its charm for modern readers. It may be remarked also that the origin of Harun Al-Raschid differs in this story from many other chronicles of that illustrious potentate.

THE EDITOR.

THE LOVE ADVENTURES OF AL-MANSUR.

In the name of Allah, who loves all true believers.

CHAPTER I.

THE DESOLATION OF THE SERAGLIO.

Baghdad was waking from its dreams and rising from its slumbers to another day.

Tempted by the soft rays of the sun that was slowly coming into view from Farther-India and tinging the yellow and turbid waters of the Tigris, its inhabitants, summoned by their holy imáms, were making their ablutions and flocking to its hundred mosques whose minarets were being gilded by the sun, to make their morning prayers and salutations to the one true God of which Mohammed is the Prophet.

But wondrous to relate as even the tales of the professional story-tellers and the songs of the lying-poets, there was but one prayer went up in Baghdad that morning from old men, from young men, from women, from children, from the great Emirs and Princes, to the lowly water-carriers

who bore each day their goat skins filled with the water of the Tigris, and that petition was:

“Allah, il Allah, may it please thy omnipotence to make our youthful Sovereign know the love of woman !”

This prayer had been sent up from every mosque and praying place in the great capital of the East for two years. For the unhappy disposition of the youthful Caliph had saddened the songs of the singing girls, the tongues of the story tellers, and had even made plaintive the gibes of the donkey boys, and they—may Sheytan curse their mothers—every one knows are as merry at the misfortunes of others as the imps of Eblis!

What had first been made a public prayer by the proclamation of the Ulamà had now become the public prayer by the hearts of the people; they sympathized with their young monarch in his affliction.

Though in the very height of youthful manhood, with the strength and heart of a warrior, the mind of a Suleyman, and the beauty of one favored by the good spirits of the air, Abu Jaffar Abdallah, known as the great Al-Mansur, throughout the world from the regions of far Kathay to where the Moorish banners floated on the Caliphates of Cordova and Seville, would not look upon the beauties of woman with the eyes of love.

Already four years upon the throne, this Caliph though possessed of ardent temperament and wise with wisdom, could find no attraction in the charms of that sex which has been sent upon earth for the solace and delight of man, and is in the Seventh Heaven set apart for the joy of true

believers after death has taken them to the Paradise of Mohammed.

The youthful monarch had been petitioned by the Assembly of the Ulamà, and entreated by his Grand Vizier and great officers of State to marry, even if he could not love; but Al-Mansur with a profundity seldom known in youth had replied that until he loved he would wed no woman, because his nuptials to an uncared for bride would bring no heir worthy to take upon him the mantle of the great Abul-Abbas, the founder of the Abbaside, whose dynasty was worthy to exist until the end of man.

This lofty resolution of the young Caliph, though applauded when uttered—as the words of all Caliphs are—had set his councillors wondering what would become of the crown of Baghdad were the hand of God to be laid upon their monarch. They remembered the last cruel and bloody contest for the succession to the throne. Some of the wise men shook their heads and plucked impatiently their white beards that had come to them with wisdom, and one or two more profound than the rest and more deeply initiated in the mysteries that surround the seven worlds, hinted that an evil spell had been put upon the Commander of the Faithful, obtained by some magician who wished to ruin the country, from some evil genii who resided in the mountains of Káf, which bound the circumambient ocean and form the circular barrier around the abiding place of man.

When these hints came to the venerable

Houssan-El-Remo a sly and malicious twinkle flashed in his deep eyes, the brightness of which age could not dim; as he still presided over the Council of the Ulamà. For the illustrious Houssan had been the acknowledged master of statecraft philosophy and politics of the last generation. As Grand Vizier he had been the power that guided the policy of the preceding reign, but now not being admitted to equal prominence in the councils of his young master, he had, through the agency of Zoreb, the magician, put this very spell upon the youthful Caliph of Baghdad.

This maliciousness, caused by that lust for power that dominates nearly all old office seekers and politicians, had been increased by the peculiar circumstances that had brought his young sovereign to the throne.

Upon the death of Abul-Abbas, the illustrious founder of the Abbaside dynasty, some four years preceding the day now dawning on Baghdad, the succession to his throne had been in dispute; he having left two sons, Selim Mustapha and Abu-Jaafar Abdallah, rival claimants to the sovereignty of the Eastern world, and the mantle of the Prophet.

The first of these, Selim Mustapha, brought up by the ladies of the seraglio within the precincts of the zenana, had grown into the vices of that world of women by whom he was surrounded. His mind, weak and vacillating, like the sex that educated him yet bowed down with slavish adulation before him, was also crafty and cruel. Though foolishly conceited, he was extremely pliable to

advice and influence, thus he was naturally the one whom the Grand Vizier of his father had selected to reign over Baghdad, because he could dominate him. For the other prince, Abu-Jaafar Abdallah, had been educated in all military exercises and in the sports of the chase, and had received wisdom from the instructions of the noted Huccazah, a profound philosopher full of potent wisdom and extraordinary experience in the arts and literature of the East.

Between one whom he could dominate and cajole by means of flattery and one whose upright spirit and manlike determination was easily apparent even in his early youth, Houssan El-Remo did not hesitate to choose. Upon the death of the father, though the Vizier appeared not in the matter, he, by his arts, caused Selim to be proclaimed Caliph at Damascus. The troops, bribed to his purpose, responded with loud acclamations, and acknowledged Selim Commander of the Faithful and Vicar of the Prophet.

This was the more easily accomplished as Abu-Jaafar Abdallah was at that time engaged at the farther confines of the empire in putting down an uprising in the province of Korassan. Upon this news being brought to the young prince he took counsel with himself, for he had been taught by Huccazah to give his confidence only to his own mind. After a night spent in prayer to Allah, the next morning he called his officers together and proclaimed himself the reigning Caliph under the name of Al-Mansur.

“Were my brother worthy to reign, would he

live to the glory of the Prophet and the despair of the enemies of Islam, I would willingly bow the knee to him and become the humblest of his slaves," said Abu-Jaafar to those gathered about him. "But knowing in my mind that Selim's education has given him all the vices of woman without any of her virtues, in the name of Allah and the Prophet I take into my own hands the destiny of the nation. Those who are with me follow me!"

With excited cries his officers to a man saluted him as Caliph. Then supported by his little army and filled with the ardor of youth, and perhaps its rashness, Abu-Jaafar, obtaining some successes against the light troops sent out to meet him by his brother, who was secretly under the counsels of the wise and crafty Houssan, by rapid marches made straight for Bassorah, confident in his mind that if he could obtain possession of that important seaport he could make this his base of supplies for his advance on Damascus.

But Abu-Jaafar had advanced too rapidly. Though he captured Bassorah, he soon found himself shut up within its walls and a large army under Selim besieging him, while the war-gallies won over by his brother's money blockaded Bassorah from the mouth of the Tigris in the Persian Gulf.

Unable to obtain provisions, either by land or by sea, starvation soon came upon his army, and to save them, stipulating that their lives and those of his principal officers should be spared, Abu-Jaafar Abdallah surrendered himself to receive a brother's mercy.

But what mercy was this?

Selim Mustapha, careless of the ties of blood, and actuated by the craft and cruelty of his harem education, condemned the unfortunate youth who had aspired to the throne of his father to the awful execution "of the throne."

This punishment especially selected for all aspirants to royalty who fail in gaining it is a tantalizing exhibition of the pomp of empire that shall never come to them, a constant gazing upon power that shall never be theirs, a continual looking upon the joys, opulence and potency of a sovereign while suffering the punishment of the malefactor; for this penalty has been invented with wondrous and exquisite cruelty.

It is this! Beneath the very golden throne on which the Caliph sits dispensing life and death and joy and despair, surrounded by all the pageantry of his court, is constructed a little cell with barred windows, through which the captive can look upon that which he wished to be, yet never can be. Each morning the chief executioner opens the grated doors and puts in provisions for the day, on which the prisoner lives while he sighs, as he sees the glory that can never be his. For six months this is continued. On the first day of the next half year, despite his prayers and entreaties, the captive is walled up by masonry entirely from the sun and air, and though his groans as he dies may reach the royal ears to give the occupant of the throne pleasure, that masonry is never removed.

Condemned to this horrible punishment, bound

hand and foot and secured night and day by a hundred of the royal body guard, the unfortunate Abu-Jaafar Abdallah was being slowly brought from Bassorah toward Damascus, where, under the golden throne of his brother, he was to suffer his cruel fate.

In contrast to Abu's misery and torment, surrounded by his emirs and viziers, and attended by the most beautiful women of his seraglio, Selim Mustapha, in the triumph of his conquest, came journeying by easy stages along the banks of the Tigris.

On the twelfth day, and distant eighteen days more from Damascus, the route leaves the banks of the river to make straight across the fertile plains of Persia to the capital.

Here the royal tent was just being spread for the evening. The carpets were being unfolded. The ladies of his harem were preparing their harps and lutes to sing unto the young Caliph, and his dancing girls were donning their transparent garments for the Sarabande. His bakers and his cooks were preparing for him a banquet of royal magnificence. Sherbets cooled by snows brought from the distant Caucasus were being made ready for him.

In youthful conceit, power and triumph Selim Mustapha sprang from his horse and carelessly threw himself under a banyan tree until his pavilion was ready for him. Prevented by the etiquette of the court, his officers and councillors did not approach him. The setting sun as the Caliph reclined beneath the banyan tree dazzled

his eyes and the young sovereign taking from out his belt a handkerchief of red Ispahan silk of softest texture threw it over his face to shade it from the sun and so shut out the light of the world forever.

Allah who is merciful and just, pitying the sorrows and despair of Abu-Jaafar Abdallah, determined to give him both the throne and life, so that he should become a caliph worthy to spread the banner of Islam against the enemies of the faith, and to rule over those who believe there is but one God, and Mohammed is his Prophet.

From little things great things arise. A swift flying falcon-kite pursuing a nightingale lighted upon the branches of the banyan tree. This bird looked down upon the sovereign resting beneath him, and seeing over Selim Mustapha's face the red silk handkerchief of Ispahan, mistook it for carrion and his prey. With a swift whirl of wings the kite flew down and plunged both sharp beak and cruel talons into the red handkerchief to bear it to his eyrie in the tree, but dragged only from their sockets both Selim Mustapha's eyes and, flying upward, left him blind, sightless and helplessly groping over the ground uttering cries of despair. Though he ruled over the land, he had no eyes to see its beauty.

Then, beholding the helplessness of their sovereign, a sudden change came in the minds of his officers, and they said: "Here is a poor sightless creature!" and Allah placing wisdom in their hearts, they cried: "Shall we have to rule over us this blind thing whose weakness we laugh at

and despise?" So with sudden acclamation they proclaimed Abu-Jaafar Abdallah, Caliph of the East and Selim Mustapha, sightless and despairing, was dethroned.

Then there was a curious scene such as never has been seen before. The youthful Abu-Jaafar still with the dust of the cruel journey upon him, with the marks of his cruel bonds yet livid upon his limbs, but with the gleam of hope and success upon his noble face, and with the bearing of the ruler of the world standing, with all that multitude kissing the ground and saluting him as Caliph and successor to Mohammed.

Before him, groveling on the earth and begging for mercy, was the blind man who but ten minutes before had been lord of life and death within all Persia, Arabia, Egypt, even unto far Kathay and the Isles of Camphor. And in the banyan tree, shrieking with delight and eating up the two eyes that had given light to Selim Mustapha, was the cruel kite sent by God to change the destiny of this earth.

"I am lost; I know my fate is death, but for the love of Allah I pray thee spare me the torture, for we were once brothers," implored the trembling wretch.

"Neither the torture nor death," cried the generous young sovereign. "God has punished you, for you have sinned. I have forgotten in thy misery to what you had condemned me. I remember only that you are my brother and are blind."

With these words Abu lifted Selim from the
c

ground and commanded his physicians to give him their greatest skill and most careful attention. Then when his brother had recovered from his wounds Abu-Jaafar Abdallah dismissed him with a pension of a hundred thousand deenárs, or pieces of gold, to live after the manner of his rank in Egypt, to which country Selim Mustapha very shortly departed.

Though he forgave his brother, Abu-Jaafar, who was now proclaimed over all the East Caliph, did not trust Houssan-El-Remo. He spared him punishment on account of his great services to the State during his father's reign, but gave him neither office nor advancement. Another Grand Vizier, Merzed, took the keys and seals of office from the snarling Houssan, who though ex-officio chief of the Ulamà had no further voice in the councils of the Caliph.

Then on the very spot upon which the kite-falcon had saved him from cruel death and made him Lord of the Earth, in gratitude to God, Abu-Jaafar Abdallah, who reigned under the name of Al-Mansur, caused to be erected the great city of Baghdad and made it his capital and gave it dominion over the other cities of the East. And such is the magic power of the master of the world, and such is the great richness of the treasures of his kingdom, that in three years Baghdad became from a grazing place of camels the most beautiful city of the country, whose hundred mosques flashed from their golden domes the sun's rays to the four quarters of the heavens.

The banks of the river Tigris, which flows

through the city, were lined with the palaces of his emirs and princes, and the gardens of their seraglios.

That morning, its streets crowded with caravans of merchants and traders from Ispahan, Damascus, Egypt and even Spain, Baghdad looked very grand and powerful, though the hearts of its people were sad, for the seraglio of its master was empty of mates to their lord and was only peopled by slaves who should be attendant to the favorites of this Caliph, who had no favorites to minister unto him. The exquisite gardens running down in gentle slope to the banks of the Tigris, those set apart for the exclusive use of the wives of the Commander of the Faithful, though guarded from the observation of travelers and boatmen in the river by high walls of solid stone and patrolled by black eunuchs armed with drawn scimitars who kept watch as sternly as if they were filled with the most beautiful women on earth, were empty of the charmers of mankind. No soft voices floated through their groves of rose bushes and alma and orange trees, no fair hands plucked their precious flowers, though among them was the carnalate, whose sacred blossoms make the perfume of heaven. The nightingales in their branches sang only to themselves, the seraglio of the Caliph was bare of female loveliness as a tanned goatskin is of fleas.

Looking upon this desolation of the harem, Zamo, chief of the royal eunuchs, remarked moodily to Merzed, the Grand Vizier, after they had made their morning salutations: "What is the

use of being a eunuch when I have no favorites of our Lord to guard from the eyes of man?"

"Truly," said Merzed, "as our master never weds, your duties, Zamo, are so light that you grow even fatter and more smiling than ever."

At which Zamo gave a grunt of rage, for Zamo was an Ethiopian of waddling fatness and squeaky voice, yet he had a face that had grown stern in the correction of women. "It is strange," remarked the eunuch, "that our Lord of Life does not grow moody himself without any one to love."

"By Allah," replied the vizier, "Al-Mansur has much to love."

"Your words delight my ears," answered Zamo. "Where is she? Where is this paragon, that she may be conducted to the seraglio to be properly guarded from the eyes of all save our Master?"

"Then you'll have a great duty before you, Zamo," laughed Merzed, "for our Caliph loves his army, his country and the law of God. Put them into thy seraglio, Chief of Eunuchs, and guard them if you can."

Though the words of the Grand Vizier were light his countenance was solemn. He knew the importance to the country of an heir to the Caliphate. But even while speaking a page showed in to him through the great entrance of the palace and past the officers in attendance a swift runner covered with the dust of journey.

This courier prostrating himself before the Vizier, in answer to his questions, announced: "I come in advance of Hammad the cousin of the Caliph, he who has been away for one year

searching the world over for the most superb women to bring them before our master to see if beauty will not produce love. Announce to the Lord of Life that Hammad after a journey over all the earth, even as far as Spain, and receiving from various Emirs of the provinces the maids of Circassia, Georgia, Egypt and Arabia, and from his cousin who upholds the banner of Islam in the Western world, the Caliph of Cordova, the beauties of Andalusia and Granada to tempt the appetite of the Vicar of the Prophet, is already at the gates of the city, having traveled by quick camels from Bassorah, and craves permission to exhibit before the Commander of the Faithful the loveliness he has brought to give him joy."

At this announcement Zamo uttered a hideous chuckle and smacking his fat hands together cried: "Now for business!" while the Vizier with eager steps hastened to make known the intelligence to the young Caliph.

This news, though it has already been rumored about the town, proclaimed from the mosques and chattered about in the khans and trading booths, produced very little effect upon the young sovereign to whose ears it was intended to bring delight.

"By the beard of the Prophet," said Al-Mansur carelessly, "more women to tease me? True I know my cousin Hammad has done this for love of me and duty to the country. Yet I cannot see these beings that are necessary, I suppose, to the dwelling of man upon the earth,

but who tend to distract mankind from nobler emotions."

"But Lord of Life," answered the Vizier earnestly, "you know its importance. Can you not, before the noonday meal, inspect these moon-eyed beauties that have been brought from the four corners of the earth to tickle thy senses as well as welcome thy cousin Hammad?"

"Before the mid-day meal," said the sovereign, "I review the cavalry of the guard and the squadrons of Arabia. At the mid-day meal I will be pleased to give salutation to my cousin Hammad; but remember not a woman within sight of me, upon thy head, Merzed."

"My Lord of Lords," muttered the Vizier, prostrating himself, "why this stern resolution?"

"Why? Because they might tend to distract me from painting my battle picture upon which I am now engaged, or composing my poem on the joys of celibacy, to which I intend to devote the latter hours of the day. In addition I have a deputation to receive on weighty matters from the Caliph of Seville, who implores my aid in planting the sacred standard over Sardinia and Sicily."

"But, Master of Life," stammered the Vizier, and dared say no more, though he opened the casement of the audience closet of the Caliph, to permit the murmur coming up from the streets which seem to speak for him; there being exclamations from the people and cries of joy as if Baghdad was no longer sad, now it had hopes its sovereign would love and wed.

The Vizier's face suggested this to Al-Mansur, though his lips did not utter it, for Merzed—made wary in the intrigues of the palace—loved his head and did not dare to risk it by opening his mouth. The young Caliph looked out and after a moment laughed lightly as he said: "The people are anxious that my seraglio shall be filled."

"Not that, Commander of the Faithful," answered the Vizier. "Only that a successor shall be born unto the Caliphate. They know an absence of heirs in the direct line means the menace of war."

"Is there not time?" answered Al-Mansur. "In his twenty-third year a man does not think of death." Then he muttered: "But even I have very closely approached to the other state!" Next said impatiently: "Send orders to the Commander of the Horse that I will not review the cavalry this morning. Quick! a deputation to the city gates to meet my cousin and give him greeting. Take Hammad word I will receive him as soon as he has removed the dust of travel from his person, and that he may bring with him any present for me he likes."

"Does that mean——?" murmured the Vizier, kissing the carpet.

"Yes, it means the beauties from the four corners of the earth. By Allah, the last they sent me were a sorry lot," laughed the Caliph.

CHAPTER II.

THE INSPECTION OF THE VIRGINS.

Then word of the Caliph's welcome and a present of magnificent horses from the royal stables being brought to Hammad at the gates of the city, he entered Baghdad preceded by a body of the royal guards. Behind him, surrounded by the eunuchs of the seraglio, both black and white, headed by Zamo, were the beauties of the four quarters of the world, in litters, whose closed canopies carefully veiled them from the eye of man.

This procession was received with universal acclamation and cries of joy by the population of the city that crowded the route to the palace of Hammad.

Though the cheers were great for the dashing cousin of the Caliph as he rode surrounded by some of the great officers of State, still the acclamations were louder and the plaudits greater as the populace saw the silken litters draped from prying eyes and surrounded by the stern eunuchs with their drawn scimitars, for in some one of these silent palanquins they hoped there was a future bride of their sovereign and mother of an heir to the Caliphate of Baghdad.

Fifty litters, two abreast, bore the beauties of the world; and though no man dared look on them under pain of death, the imagination of the populace gave them all the glories of the houris of

paradise. As they passed, the imáms blessed them and prayed to Allah for their welfare, that they might find favor in the eyes of the Master of Life, and that the one selected might be fertile as the olive tree and the date palm.

The sun was at its height in the heavens when Hammad set forth from his own palace to present himself and his charges to his cousin and sovereign. He had only made sufficient delay at his own house to make his ablutions and to prepare the virgins under his care. These were already under the hands of Zamo and attendants, their charms being enhanced by every art the female slaves of the harem, accustomed to such offices, could give them.

The reception of the young traveler by his sovereign was in the presence of the great officers of the State, the members of the Ulamà, the princes and emirs; the Caliph embracing his cousin warmly and not even permitting him to throw himself before his feet.

Public salutations having been made, Al-Mansur immediately granted private audience to Hammad and the two conversed as friends, not as sovereign and subject; for the young men had been brought up together and Al-Mansur knew that he had no more faithful and devoted follower than his cousin, who had traveled over the world to bring unto him, if possible, a bride that would rouse the slumbering passion in his soul.

“You have journeyed far,” said the Caliph.

“To the utmost ends of the earth,” answered his cousin. “Even to the circumambient ocean

that surrounds the seven worlds; for I have looked over its waters from the high rocks called by unbelievers the Pillars of Hercules."

"And all to give me pleasure," murmured Al-Mansur.

"And love," suggested Hammad; though as he said this a curious look of anxiety came upon the young man's face.

But at this moment Zamo, receiving signal to enter, prostrated himself before the Caliph and announced: "Master of life, the beauties of the world await the coming of their lord. Never has thy slave seen such transcendent peacocks before."

"Even you, Zamo, admire them?" laughed Al-Mansur.

At this the eunuch smacked his thick lips and uttered guttural sounds expressive of admiration beyond the power of words. As he heard this, the look of concern left the face of the young traveler, his eye grew brighter and he joined the Caliph in his laugh.

"Hammad, you have seen all these houris before; come with me and tell me that I am insensate and have not the feelings of my sex if I do not love some of them," said the monarch, lightly, thus giving his cousin the greatest proof of intimacy possible from a sovereign to a subject, or, for the matter of that, from one man to another.

Then the Caliph and his cousin entered the royal seraglio, in the principal chamber of which (a room with dome of azure and lighted by the sun shining through sheets of Phœnician crystals)

were gathered together the fifty beauties selected from the flower of the earth.

It was a sight that would have made the heart of any man, untrammelled by enchantment, bound to bursting, for, glittering with priceless gems, arrayed in the various garments best suited to display their loveliness, some stately in the rich silks of India and others graceful as the willow tree, draped in the light gauzes of the fairy looms of Cashmere, all of them awaiting the pleasure of their lord, stood the maidens that were selected to give him the joys of love and the pleasures of paternity.

But the Caliph, after a quick glance over them, remarked in a careless tone that made Hammad bite his lips: "These are better than the last lot sent me for inspection!"

"Will not my Lord gaze at them privately?—their beauties are such that they even inspire me," said Zamo, making obeisance.

"Then let us get through with it quickly," muttered Al-Mansur, "so I can have at least an hour or two to paint my battle picture before the evening meal."

So the examination began. Beautiful Georgians and Circassians, with eyebrows dark as ebony and finely curved like the new moon; eyes black as sloe-leaves, and forms stately as the angels of the air, with hair that glistened in the sun from very blackness and fell to their waists—yea, sometimes to their heels; soft-eyed maidens from India, with the light, graceful figures of that country; dark-eyed Spanish girls, who had once been Christians

but who were now converted to the faith of Islam,—with eyes that laughed and sparkled, and skins white as the snow upon the mountains, and cheeks tinged with the red of the sunset, and figures that seemed as if of the willow-tree—lifted their veils to let their eyes shine upon the Master of the World. But not one of them could hold them there when they saw the monarch of the universe and lord of their life gazing upon them. Each drooped her glance bashfully before his and turned her head away, because it is not in the nature of woman to look upon the man who has full dominion over her with aught save the eyes of the slave.

On this, the monarch turned from each with his heart beating not one pulse faster and no care for any of them in his soul. For the spell given to Houssan-El-Remo by the magician Zoreb was of this curious nature: the charm would prevent love entering the heart of Al-Mansur *for any woman who could not look him in the eye*. Houssan had asked for even a more potent spell, but the magician Zoreb, thwarted by the angels, had been unable to obtain from the genii of passion any greater power than this for his charm. And Houssan, in his occult mind, had pondered over the problem and said: “No woman will be able to look upon the Master of the World, whose breath is to her life or death, by whose words she can become the first Sultana in the East or the slave in the kitchen, and not droop before his gaze. The spell is potent enough!”

Therefore, though he had the charms of the world spread out before him on this day in Baghdad, love entered not the heart of the Caliph Al-Mansur, for no woman that he gazed upon that afternoon was able to meet his glance, but all shrank before it.

As the veil of each maiden was removed, and she was examined and gazed upon with indifference by the monarch, each time a little more impatiently, the look of concern on his cousin Hammad's face deepened until the last beauty was observed—a creature of wondrous loveliness, brought even from the borders of Frankish Spain—a girl who would have made a heart of stone throb wildly by her charm of manner as well as that of voice and form. Then she having no more effect on his sovereign's heart than the others, Hammad muttered discontentedly: “And this is all that comes from my year of travel, my fortune of gold-pieces and diamonds that I have expended to find the beauties of the earth for you, my lord and cousin?”

“Do not think, my cousin,” replied the Caliph, “that I do not know that you have done all that man could do for another, and for my people and my dominion. But I fear I have a heart within me flinty as if it were the agate stone. Truly to the mind these women are beautiful, but on my soul they have no effect. There is no glance that makes me long for another, there is no voice causes me to wish to hear it more.”

“Then,” cried Hammad impetuously, “I must reveal to you—” but the young man's lips seemed

to grow cold and freeze together and he spoke no other word.

“What?” asked Al-Mansur hastily.

“My—my wondrous adventures by land and sea to obtain these beauties,” stammered the young traveler.

“Pish!” said the Caliph, “I thought perhaps you had something of interest to relate to me—some tale of the chase or of war; but that will rest until the evening meal, when you will sup with me. Now, glory to the Prophet, I can get once more to work at my picture of the rout of the unbelievers before the forces of Islam.”

With these words the sovereign dismissed Hammad, giving him five of the virgins who found the greatest favor in his eyes to be his own, and issuing orders to Zamo to send the others as presents to his principal emirs, princes and officers of state; at which the eunuch gave a terrible snarl and retired growling at the beauties that were not accepted, and driving the last of the lovely captives ahead of him with no very gentle hands, as he muttered to himself: “What is the use of a eunuch when there is no man in the house—I am defiled, accursed—my occupation is gone forever!”

CHAPTER III.

“I WILL NOT BE PRESENTED AS A SLAVE!”

As he came out from this interview and passed through the great rooms and entrance hall of the palace, the countenance of Hammad told its tale to the officers of the court and the princes in waiting. They knew their master had disdained again the most exquisite maidens on earth, even those brought from far-off climes. The rumor of this spreading quickly through the capital, as Hammad returned through the streets of the city to his own house he saw that gloom had once more come over everyone in Baghdad.

The whispers in the bazars were low, the priests threw dust and ashes upon their heads at the entrances of the mosques, and the people said: “This land is accursed—its monarch will never wed!”; others muttering, even impiously: “The beauties of the world will not attract our lord. By the beard of the Prophet, we will have to invade the Seventh Heaven and snatch the houris of paradise to make the Commander of the Faithful find the joys of love!”

As these words came to Hammad’s ears his face grew more disturbed and gloomy. He acted as a man does when some strange yet important secret weighs down his soul. Finally, as he arrived at his own house, he saw a litter guarded by four horsemen drawn up at the pri-

vate entrance of his palace, and a female, who, though veiled from head to foot and draped from the gaze of man, was of apparently wondrous beauty of figure, being conducted into the apartments set apart for the women of his household. Then suddenly a mighty resolution came into the young man's face, and muttering to himself: "Though it cost me my head, though it deprive her of life, for the glory of God and the safety of this, my country, I will do it!"

With this, hastily turning his horse as if to prevent a change of mind, he rode at full gallop back to the palace of the Master of the World. Being admitted to the atelier of the Caliph, where the young monarch was at work upon his war picture, the young man prostrated himself and kissed the ground.

On this, the potentate gazed at his cousin with rather impatient eyes, and said: "How now, Hammad; this is not the hour of supper to which I invited you. What has brought you so quickly to me?"

"I come to tell you, my lord," replied the young man still prostrate before his sovereign, "that I have defiled myself with lies, that I have not shown you all the beauties that I have brought back with me to Baghdad. There is one more, and she has so much greater loveliness than any who have been exhibited to thine eyes, that the graces and charms of all those you have inspected to-day are as naught compared with the glories of this other one."

"Very well, bring her in," said the Caliph im-

patiently, and would have clapped his hands together and called Zamo, but his cousin stopped him with these words: " Pardon, my master, she is not here. My head deserves to fall ! "

" By Allah, " said Al-Mansur, looking at his prostrate cousin, " from your description of her you have fallen victim to the charms that should have been mine. But I am sure I should not have cared for this paragon of female loveliness any more than for the rest of them. "

" O lord of life, I dared not love her, " muttered the young man, " for she was set apart for you. "

" Then why do you not present her ? " questioned the monarch, rather astonished at the words he had heard.

" Because it would be her death, and she is too beautiful to die, " cried Hammad.

" Ah-h ! By the beard of the Prophet she is a proud and haughty one, " laughed the Caliph. " To be rejected by me would have caused her to die from mortified vanity and pride ? "

" No, Lord of Lords. "

" Then why ? "

" Because she swore to me by Mohammed and the angels, and by Allah himself, that were she presented to you, even though you are the Master of the World, as a slave, she would not live beyond the setting of the sun. She would suffer no such humiliation. And she is a maiden of her word. "

" A maiden of her word ! " sneered Al Mansur. " By the beard of the Prophet, she is a rare curiosity ! Such a woman has never been heard of in Persia or Arabia before. Her name ? "

“I know not her name!” murmured Hammad. “But I entreat my lord that he will not have her brought to him, because I am sure it would be the death of the most beautiful woman who has ever trod the earth. Will my master permit his slave and cousin to tell him how he obtained her and knows so well her wondrous resolution?”

“Yes; but be brief about it, for we are giving too much time to this discussion of a woman.”

“Then, my lord,” replied Hammad, “my words shall be short. On my return journey, sailing down the Red Sea in an exceedingly fleet war galley furnished by the Emir of Cairo, we overtook a merchant ship, boarded and conquered by a pirate. Engaged in slaughtering their victims and plundering the captured vessel, the robbers of the sea did not notice us until we had laid ourselves alongside of them and boarded and captured them in turn.

“Upon the deck of the trading vessel was an old man of distinguished appearance, wringing his hands and gazing over the stern at the figure of a young girl that was being dashed about by the waves. Unveiled by the washing of the waters she seemed to me of marvelous beauty; I plunged into the sea and rescued her. A moment after, upon the deck, I inspected her, and joy came into my soul; for I said: ‘I have journeyed over the world and collected the beauties of the earth for my master; but here, as I am returning to him, I find come into my hand one gleaned from the sea, whose charm is to that of all the others as the sun is to the moon!’

So I ordered her to be set apart with the other virgins I was bringing to my lord, and became full of glee and drunk with happiness as an Arab boatman is with boozah.

“When she had entirely recovered—she being almost insensible when rescued from the water—I sent for her, and, bowing before her, told her of the honor that was about to come to her in being presented to the Master of the Universe. But to my astonishment, though her voice was sweet as the lutes of heaven, she said in a determined tone: ‘As a slave I will be offered, not even to the Vicar of the Prophet! I sprang into the raging sea to escape from the polluting touch of pirates, so will I escape by death from the hands of any one who would take me to his embrace save he is my husband, and to be my husband he must be the man I love. Present me to the Caliph, under the hands of his eunuchs and subjected to the inspection and treatment of a slave, and I die by my own hand. On my head be it. I am a woman of my word!’ Her face told me that she spoke the truth, and I knew she had the resolution to keep her vow as she had had the fortitude to attempt her life before.”

At this Al-Mansur burst out laughing, and jeered: “Who is this woman of her word’s father?”

“That also I cannot determine” remarked Hammad, sadly. “The wretched old man, who was dressed as a merchant, I think has been afflicted by Heaven and has lost his head, for he calls himself the King of Georgia.”

“And the maiden will not disclose her name?”

“She has refused utterly. She says she is in too lowly a situation to tell how high she has been. Though graceful, charming and of a sweet yet resolute temper, on this subject she will not move her lips, that are red as the cherries of the mountains. Force cannot open them, though love may.”

“By Allah!” cried the Caliph. “And you say the maid is beautiful?”

“More than any one on earth.”

“And if she is brought to me as a slave she will kill herself?”

“As sure as Mohammed is the Prophet of Allah.”

“Then, by the soul of my father she shall not die! But I will see her. I will be the humble one; if necessary I will be the slave. She is in Baghdad?”

“The litter bearing her has now arrived. I dared not bring her with the others; then I would have been compelled to present her to my lord.”

“She is at your house?”

“Yes, O, my master!”

“Hearken!” said Al-Mansur, “this evening at sunset I will see her. I will sup with you and talk with her, not as the Caliph of Baghdad, but as your other cousin, Zoab, the young captain of the Royal Guards. It will be an adventure like the poets sing. She will not shrink from me and droop before me; perchance *she* will command *me*. I feel my heart throbbing at the thought of her haughtiness and my humility

—'tis a new sensation! Hammad, perhaps the very means you have taken to prevent my beholding her will make the passion of man spring up within me. On thy head be it! see that she does not know I am aught but thy cousin, the captain of the guard." And tears of joy stood in the monarch's eyes, for a new feeling was coming into his soul and the blood was warming his cold heart.

"As I hope to see the Heaven of Heavens!" muttered Hammad, bowing to the earth, a great happiness coming over his face, for at last he had hope that his sovereign would love well enough to take to himself a bride.

Had he suspected what was happening, old Houssan-El-Remo would have trembled, fearing that his spell would no longer be potent and of avail; because a woman is not as apt to droop and shrink and turn away from a dashing young officer of the Royal Guard as she is from the Lord of the World, whose breath may blast her in an instant

But, unknowing this, the old ex-vizier, having heard the news that the Caliph had looked with no more emotion upon the new beauties offered to him than upon those he had already rejected, was chuckling and rubbing his wrinkled hands and jeering, though very much under his breath: "God is good! Zoreb's charm is still potent! The genii of passion yet blast the heart of this young stripling, who would not take into his councils the statesman his father honored and trusted—the only one in all his realm who can remove

from him the spell that will in time wreck his happiness and the safety of his people!"

For Houssan-El-Remo hoped to be called again into the royal councils when Al-Mansur should at last despair. Then by secretly removing the enchantment from off the Caliph, and permitting him to love and wed, the wily old vizier expected to bring great honor and power and renown to himself, and to be again called the second man in the kingdom, nay, more, the pillar of the throne itself, without whose support the Empire of the Arabs would be as dry grass in the fire.

CHAPTER IV

THE MAIDEN WHO LOOKED THE CALIPH IN THE FACE.

THE evening prayers had just been offered up to God when Abu-Jaafar, called by his subjects the Caliph Al-Mansur, disguised in the uniform of an officer of his own guard and attended at a respectful distance by two black mutes, left his palace by a private exit and made his way through the streets of Baghdad, which were already growing dark, to the house of his cousin Hammad.

Admitted into the courtyard of the spacious mansion by the doorkeeper and his slaves awaiting him there, his cousin having left orders to that effect, the young captain of the guard was shown into Hammad's private apartments, in

which lamps were burning and preparations being made for the evening meal.

Slaves, white and black, were running about with silver basins that they were arranging upon a low table that stood upon an embroidered cloth of Ispahan spread upon the floor. Perfumed oil was burning in the lamps, and the odors that came up from the great pie or pasty that stood on the center of the table were such as made the Caliph's lips water with anticipation. For it had been compounded by a very skillful confectioner brought by Hammad from far-off Cordova, and the juices of its baked lambs, seasoned with the oil of sesame, pistachio nuts, cinnamon, coriander seed, mastic and nutmeg, were of such pungency that it caused the eyes to water as well as the mouth. Every delicacy of the East surrounded it, for Hammad lived with the luxury of a free and open-handed prince, and upon this evening, when his monarch did him the greatest of honors, he had ordered his attendants to prepare a feast worthy of the Prophet himself.

As the Caliph entered, Hammad sprang from the deewan to give him welcome and make obeisance before him; but his sovereign's eye giving him warning, and remembering his instructions, he simply said: "Welcome to my house, O Zoab! Thou hast been promoted to be a captain since I journeyed to the West. In your honor is this meal, which I pray you to eat in the name of Allah!" Then Hammad sat down again, motioning his guest to his right hand.

"Yes," answered Al-Mansur, "my master, the

Lord of Lords, has been kind enough to look with favor upon his servant and give him command of a hundred men of his body guard, which Al-Mansur would not do unless I were a great warrior!" Here, assuming the complacency of a youthful captain of the guard, and his host calling on the name of God having tasted of the soup, their meal commenced.

All the time the eyes of Al-Mansur roamed around the apartment like a ferret searching for rats, and at his first opportunity of private word with his cousin, he whispered: "Where is she—this girl who is a woman of her word?"

"That she is not here proves it to you," remarked Hammad seriously. "She has refused to sup with me. She says she is fatigued with the journey."

"By the beard of the Prophet, am I not to see her?" muttered the Caliph savagely, as he took a kebab that had been placed appetizingly before him.

"I have a plan to bring her to me," laughed his cousin. "Though I was loath to practice it still it gives me joy, for it will bring her to thy eyes in all her beauty. Eat, my master, within the hour you shall see her face."

But they had not to wait that length of time. Almost as he spoke the head eunuch of Hammad's harem entered, and making obeisance said: "Oh cousin of the Caliph, the lady brought in your litter this afternoon demands audience with you."

"Demands audience!" said Hammad. "A captive demand audience?"

“Those were her words.”

“Then let the slaves retire so she may be brought to me,” commanded the master of the house; and turning he gave a slight wink at the Caliph and rubbed his hands together, for Hammad was a young man who enjoyed a little roguery at times. Besides, joy had come unto him, for he saw Al-Mansur had already forgotten his kebab, and signaling for the ewer to be brought to him, had washed his hands and wiped them with his napkin, apparently discarding the pleasures of the table.

A moment after, attended by the eunuch, the lady entered. Though both face and figure were heavily veiled still there was a grace in her movements that proved her limbs were as the gazelle's in beauty and lightness.

“Do you know you are assuming an unusual tone to me, nameless one,” said Hammad severely, “in demanding an audience?”

“That is the manner in which I have been accustomed to speak,” replied the veiled one with a voice which, though haughty, was soft as the lutes of Paradise—a voice that made the Caliph's heart beat faster.

“Why this demand?” asked his cousin.

“Because,” answered the lady, “this has been done to me.” And with one movement of her graceful arms she threw off veils from face and figure and stood robed as a Sultana, appareled for the winning of her lord; her eyes flashing with indignant fire. “*This!* I have been arrayed for the inspection of the Caliph. Did I not tell you

were this indignity offered to me; were I presented to him as a slave, I would die by my own hand? Do you wish my death?"

But just here there was a gasp of admiration from Al-Mansur, whom the lady, enveloped in her veils, had not noticed. She uttered an affrighted cry and covered her face with her hands and murmured: "There is another person—I had supposed you alone!"

Then she would have veiled herself to the despair of the Caliph, but Hammad, speaking lightly, said: "This is my cousin, Zoab, Captain of the Guard, my protégé, my dependent, my nearest relative save the Master of Life, whom you would disdain. He has dominion over my house under my hand. Your words can be spoken before him. He will look on you as I would look upon you. You have been accustomed to gaze haughtily on me; look haughtily on him."

Here Hammad laughed as the lady lifted up her head, and in graceful gesture turned her glance, unbendingly, even commandingly, upon the Lord of Lords, who sat there as a Captain of the Guard, and killed the enchantment upon him with a single glance; *for her eyes did not droop before his; she did not tremble and turn away, as had the beauties that had been presented to him at the royal palace.* With that glance the evil spell of Zoreb the magician and the Genii of Passion floated into the mists of darkness, and the Angel of Love entered the heart of the Commander of the Faithful.

He looked upon eyes that as they gazed into

his were blue as those of a peri washed by the soft, limpid waves of the Arabian Gulf; and her loveliness was the more wondrous to Al-Mansur because it was not as the beauty of the dark-eyed ones, which is of the night, but as the beauty of the day, which is of the sun. According to Arab ideas, naught but the dark-eyed houris had been presented to him, and this one's hair was as fair as the sunlight, and this one's eyes were azure and shone like diamonds; and this one's form, graceful as the willow tree, did not droop, but stood erect, and her garments were such that they added to the fascination of her figure; as she was arrayed in robes of whitest gauze, with glittering gems on her bare arms and neck, and her bosoms were like unto pomegranates, and her brilliancy was like unto the angels.

"Thy complaint is——?" faltered Hammad, for he saw with one glance that she on whom he now looked would perchance rule his destiny.

"My complaint," answered the lady, "is that the five slaves inspected, but disdained by, the Caliph this day, and brought back to your harem—presented to thee as a man throws away cast-off garments that he does not want—in the rage of their hearts said to me: 'It is now thy turn to be disdained. These are the garments with which as a slave you will be inspected by the Lord of Lords, and by him jecred at and turned away.' And they robed me in this dress of gauze despite my protest, declaring this very night I was to be conveyed to the royal palace to see if I would

not tempt the palate of this epicure, who searches the earth over for new beauties."

"Was that all?"

"Was not that enough? Besides, they said"—here the fair one's glance was maliciously mocking—"that the Caliph, though he is reported by his sycophants a god-like youth, is really both as old and as ugly as a dancing dervish."

At which the young guardsman smacked his hands together in rage, though Al-Mansur was too much of a philosopher to care for the gibes of women very greatly, or whether he was beautiful or not. As a matter of truth the Caliph was glad at this moment that he was known to the fair scoffer only as a Captain of the Guard, for he had seen her eyes turn towards his when she said the Caliph was reported to be old and ugly, and her glance had said: "This other cousin is young and handsome!"

"Well, what is your wish, fair unknown one?" answered Hammad, who was very anxious to let his monarch understand he had treated his captive with all due respect. "Have I not always granted your wishes, even to the great one, that you should not be presented to the Caliph?"

"Yes, but men's words are not always to be believed," answered the lady, "and I feared that, as the others were rejected, I would at the last moment, despite your promise, be offered. Swear to me once more by the true God and his Prophet that I shall never be presented to any man as slave."

On this Hammad rising made affirmation by all

things held as holy to the followers of Mohammed, that her request should be his law.

“Then, having granted my prayer,” returned the fair one, her eyes alight with happiness, and the stern resolution on her mouth changing to a smile beautiful as the full moon, “as I am already arrayed for festival, as the odors of thy banquet are pleasing to me, and as”—here she turned her eyes upon the Caliph—“you have pleasant company, I will sit down and sup with thee. What I refused to thy command I give out of my own heart graciously.”

As she spoke she seated herself at the banquet with the two young men. But though the slaves attempted to wait on the unknown lady the young Captain of the Guard, forgetting he was Caliph, yea, disregarding even the customs of the Arab race, assisted in placing sweetmeats upon her plate and giving her the daintiest morsels of the repast. At intervals as opportunity presented itself he spoke to her and she answered him, not as slave to master but as one of exceedingly exalted rank would address those somewhat beneath her in station yet high enough to be worthy of her condescension. All this she did with a discretion greatly beyond what is usual in women, of whom the Prophet has said: “They have not wisdom, they have only cunning!”

Twice when the young Caliph's eyes spoke more strongly than his tongue, did she rebuke him. On one occasion saying laughingly, when Al-Mansur, forgetting his assumed station, spoke commandingly to her; “One would

think that you were with your soldiers, whose law is your word. Though you are the cousin of the Caliph, you are not a king." At another time when his hand would have pressed hers, for though Al-Mansur, following the precepts of his creed, had quaffed no wine, he was as drunk with love as the birds of Paradise who eat nutmegs, she rebuked him with: "You warriors are not fit to enter the harems of others, even as guests. Go ye, O Captain, to thy own seraglio, where thy favorite slaves await thee."

Notwithstanding her badinage, they got along very well, one with the other, as Hammad had wisely withdrawn from the conversation, and the Caliph respected the unknown one for the wondrous qualities of mind she showed to him. For she displayed a knowledge of things that are generally untaught to females, speaking of astronomy and the stars like a wise man, and discussing the precepts of law and poetry in a manner like unto no woman he had ever heard before. After a time their conversation growing more confidential, Al-Mansur ventured to ask again her name, and she replied: "You may call me Zelda."

At this the Caliph jeered his cousin, saying: "My tongue is more persuasive than thine!"

Then, anxious to play his part, Hammad requested his fair captive to tell him her birth and station.

But she replied: "Not without my father's permission. I am enjoined by him to silence."

To this Hammad answered: "Unfortunately thy father is——"

“Not dead!” she faltered; then cried in affright: “Tell me what you have done with him.”

“He still lives, but is afflicted by God,” answered Hammad solemnly. “Thy father has been accursed by evil spirits and is now a man without a mind. He raves.”

“Raves? How?”

“He declares he is the King of Georgia.”

“Ah, blessed be God,” cried the lady, “he is not bereft of his intellect. He has simply spoken the words of truth. He is the rightful King of Georgia.”

“Impossible! The king of that mighty country, and you, his daughter, the Princess of Georgia, found by me in a merchant vessel upon the Red Sea?” said Hammad.

But she replied simply: “Fate is stronger than aught else in this world.”

“Tell me thy history, fair Zelda,” murmured the Caliph. “I will believe, though my cousin even doubts you.” Here he gave Hammad an awful glance, and forgetting his part of Captain of the Guard, said in a commanding voice: “Believe what she says, I charge thee, O my cousin!” Then addressing the beautiful creature, whose eyes had begun to distil tears of pearls at her father’s fate, he murmured again: “Tell *me*!”

But she, rising up, faltered: “Not until I have seen my father. If he permits me, to-morrow evening I will relate to you my story. Until then I pray you to dismiss me, permitting me only intercourse with my father.” And she rose and withdrew from them, leaving them both astounded.

Turning to his cousin, the Caliph muttered: "In God's truth, this is a curious revelation from one who is brighter than the sun in heaven and softer than the moon at night."

"You love her?" murmured Hammad.

"As woman was never loved before, and as man never loved," cried the monarch. "My heart, so long dead to her sex, glows with mighty life to make my love stronger than that of any man." Then he smote his hands together and muttered: "I pray Allah that she may not disdain me!" looking anxiously at his cousin, not as one who could compel but as one who would beg love. Next he said sternly: "Not a word of my rank to her. If she loves me as the Captain of the Guard, I shall make her happy as the Caliph of Baghdad. Obey her in all things, do her father honor, and to-morrow evening I will return to thee."

So he took his way from the house of Hammad, accompanied by his slaves, to pass a night made sleepless by the desires of passion.

This agitation left its traces upon the handsome face of Al-Mansur. The next morning in the council chamber Merzed whispered to Zamo: "Our master has still the spell upon him. He wishes to love but cannot. He despairs of ever feeling the passion of man."

And Houssan-El-Remo, making his obeisance before the sovereign, thought within his soul: "Despair is coming upon him, he will soon turn to me for counsel. Then I will remove the spell from Al-Mansur, and be again called the savior of the country." For he, like all others in Bagh-

dad; thought the Caliph's moodiness and absent demeanor was caused by lack of love, not by too much of it.

CHAPTER V

THE STORY OF THE PRINCESS OF GEORGIA, AND BAZOOK, KING OF THE TARTARS.

AFTER evening prayer, the Caliph, who had passed an uneasy day thoughtless of the cares of government—not even touching his battle painting—repaired hastily, again accompanied by the two mutes, to the home of his cousin. Being ushered in to supper he found seated thereat the wondrous being whom he had seen in imagination all the livelong day; also Hammad, and an old man whose presence had once been commanding but who now seemed bowed by as many sorrows as had come to Eiyooob.* “Behold my father, O Captain of the Guard,” said Zelda, whose eyes were bright.

Whereupon Al-Mansur greeted him, giving him the salutation that is given to kings.

Soon after, the meal being over, Zelda's father remarked, “My daughter can tell her story to thee, Zoab, and to thee, Hammad, who saved her life, and who has given her kindness when all men, and even the genii, were against us.”

The attendants having withdrawn, the princess, who this night looked even more lovely than she

*The Arab name for Job,

did the evening before, if it were possible, to the hungry eyes of the Caliph, began her story in this wise:

“The kingdom of Georgia lies north of the mountains of Kaf, named for their fancied resemblance to those greater ones that surround the Seven Worlds. In the largest and most beautiful valley in these mountains is the capital of my father’s kingdom, Tiflis, where I was born, and as a child received the tenderest nursing. As I grew up I was carefully educated in the true belief, in the doctrines of the poets and in the wisdom of the stars, by the celebrated Boabdil, called from his wondrous knowledge of philosophy and even more occult sciences, The Wise Man of the Mountains.

“In these pursuits my childhood was a pleasant one, so happy that one day when my laugh was lightest, Boabdil said: ‘Thou hast been born under a lucky star. To-night, the proper conjunctions taking place in the heavens, I will work out thy horoscope and fate.’ The next morning, when he came to give me my instruction, he remarked: ‘Praise to Allah, I have read the stars last night and they tell me that you, my favorite pupil, Zelda, are born to attain the most illustrious station given by God to woman.’

“‘How can I have more exalted rank than I now have, as daughter of the King of Georgia?’ I answered haughtily.

“‘There are higher than even thy father,’ whispered the aged Boabdil. ‘You forget there is but one God and Mohammed is his Prophet, and

the Caliph of Baghdad is his vicar upon earth. The stars tell me you will wed——'

" 'Not him,' I cried, 'not that old, and they tell me ugly, Abbas!' For at that time thy uncle, Hammad, still lived, and the present Caliph did not reign. 'Besides,' I went on sneeringly, 'what do I care for the stars, I make my own destiny!' and with careless hand I tossed the paper of my horoscope into a fire of burning charcoal upon a nearby chafing dish.

" As I did this old Boabdil looked on affrighted, and at that moment I trembled also, for there was a deafening crash about us, and a great column of smoke suddenly ascended from the chafing dish to the vaulted roof of the palace. In the smoke floated a mighty genius confronting us, who said in an awful voice: 'You who dare to blaspheme the power of the Genii of Fate shall be punished for your scoffing. The stars have said that you shall have the most exalted post in life, but the Genii of Fate decree that before that, you, Zelda, princess though you are, shall be abased and punished for your impious words!'

" And with another crash like unto a scattered thunderbolt in the upper mountains the awful thing departed, as I fell swooning to the floor.

" But as time went on, I, seeing no more of the genius, forgot about his prediction; and there was no more light-hearted princess in the world. When I arrived at the age when maidens are given in marriage, the beauty of my person had found fame in the surrounding kingdoms, for " — here the lady blushed and murmured: " I have

been told by flatterers that I am lovely." Then catching the Caliph's glance, hers now for the first time drooped before his, for his eyes endorsed the story of the flatterers.

"Therefore my hand was demanded in marriage, not only by many neighboring kings, but even by one or two of the youths of highest nobility in Georgia and the Caucasus, those whom we call princes, but still are not royal; those who, like you, young man," here she gazed reprov-ingly at the Caliph, "have royal blood in their veins, but still do not wear the crowns of this earth, yet perchance aspire. Embassy after embassy came to me, but I looked upon the princes sent to me with haughty eyes. Love came not unto my soul; and my father would not compel my consent to a marriage my heart did not approve.

"Inspired by my rejection of all of royal blood, two nobles, my father's subjects"—here the fair one's eyes blazed haughtily—"aspired to my hand; Ascah, Prince of Trebizond, and Hassan, Emir of the Caspian. Both of these I indignantly rejected, though one"—here Zelda paused and continued sadly, "one was worthy of my love!"

On hearing this the Caliph under his breath in jealous rage consigned the tomb of the favored young prince's father to infamy and defilement. But Zelda, not hearing his muttered comment, went on with her story.

"Ascah resented my rejection of his suit by attempting to carry me off by force; but his con-

spiracy being discovered, fled from my father's vengeance and took refuge with Bazook, the powerful king of the Tartars, and so brought destruction upon my father, his realm and myself."

At this the aged man sitting beside her uttered a plaintive sigh, as she looked tenderly and compassionately upon him, though she ceased not her tale.

"For my beauty has until now been not my blessing but my curse," continued the princess sadly. "Ascah, who was apparently in love with me, sung so strongly and so continually the praises of my person to Bazook, that that monarch sent a delegation demanding my hand, not for the unfortunate Ascah, whom he had caused to be strangled, but for himself; for Bazook, though a great warrior, is a man of untrammelled passions and infinite cruelty in pursuit of them.

This embassy arriving at our court my father came to me and asked me if to save my country from a fearful war I would become the bride of the barbarian. But my tears flowing like rivulets, he was unable to press this horrible fate upon me, and returned answer denying the Tartar king's demand, though it was accompanied by a threat of invasion and war should I not be brought back to him by the embassy he had sent, commanding my person, not as the child of a brother monarch, but as the daughter of a vassal or a slave.

"Immediately all Georgia flew to arms, for we knew well that the coming of the King of the Tartars would be with fire and sword. Among those

most zealous in my defense was Hassan, Emir of the Caspian, who at once proceeded to his province to gather together his forces to aid the Georgian army.

Probably foreseeing the refusal of his demand, the Tartar king was already upon the borders of our land with a numerous host; and before preparation could be made to meet him, had crossed the frontiers with that dash that makes the Tartars so famous, yet so feared in war.

The rapid advance of Bazook's army compelled us to withdraw from Tiflis until our forces could be gathered together. But the tenth day after leaving our capital saw my father in command of a numerous army—Hassan having joined him with ten thousand Caspian horsemen, which, though not so numerous, being equally expert as riders, could be matched against the light Tartar squadrons.

“Never shall I forget the pride and hope of that day, as I looked from the strong castle of Ardahan upon the glorious army gathered together to defend me from the Tartar king. In the center the sturdy mountaineers of Georgia were massed as infantry in solid phalanx. On one wing was the cavalry of Circassia, commanded by Scanzel, our ally; upon the other pranced the squadrons of Caspian horse under Hassan, who, in military array, looked proudly though beseechingly at me as he rode forth to head his squadrons. Perchance he hoped by valor to win a love that had disdained him.

And I, gazing upon the waving banners of that

host, thought : 'What can equal the power of my father, the King of Georgia!' and grew prouder and haughtier than ever, for I little knew the hideous chances of a stricken field, that I was this day to see in all its glory, in all its cruel carnage.

"Leaving me in company with Boabdil, and surrounded by my maidens in the stronghold under charge of a veteran warrior, my father went forth to head his army.

Scarce had he done so when the vanguard of the Tartar host came in sight, causing great columns of dust to float up from the burning earth, parched by the hot sun of summer. These were light squadrons of Turkoman horse, the wanderers of the desert, but the true subjects of the King of the Tartars. Having driven in our outposts, these, circling to one side or the other, unmasked the infantry, barbarians of the Crimea, who marched one hundred thousand strong under the immediate command of Bazook himself. This I knew, as Boabdil pointed out to me his awful banner floating over the lesser ones, and amid the gleam of a hundred thousand spears that glistened in the sun.

"Then the attack began! The foremost divisions of the Tartar infantry, headed by Bazook's bravest pashas, attacked our lesser army that held a position strongly entrenched. Each time the Tartar wave came on, each time I cried in exultation as I saw it recoil from our Georgian infantry, every man of whom had sworn by Allah to give his life to save his princess from the unbelieving king.

Here carried away by success, and moved by the

rashness of his younger generals, my father, believing his triumph had come, left his entrenchments and driving his foes before him, marched proudly through the plain, and would have won but for the Turkoman cavalry of the Khanates of Khiva and Bokhara. These, like swarms of accursed spirits, darted hither and thither on their fleet horses, surrounding the infantry of Georgia and cutting them off slowly man by man. Seeing this I screamed to Boabdil: 'Why do not our horsemen move?' And he, wiser than I, answered: 'In good time. Behold, my daughter!'

"Following his hand I looked, and saw Hassan and Scamzel uniting the squadrons of Circassian and Caspian horse for a mighty charge, their leaders dashing to the front and twenty thousand scimitars flashing in the air! I can hear the thunder of their hoofs as they rang out upon the plain, and their cries of 'Allah, Allah! Victory or Paradise!' And in that shout I felt was triumph.

"But even as they charged an awful cloud of intense darkness seemed to descend from on high upon them, and in it were thousands of the weird forms of the Genii of the Air; and Boabdil looking from my side muttered: 'Heaven wars against us! Thy impious words, O my daughter, have now brought thy fate upon thee!' Then flashes of lightning from the hands of these myriad genii seemed to strike right and left with crushing force the columns of our charging horsemen and destroyed them, disordering their array and making them a broken rabble before they

even reached the Tartar host. From this dread sight I would have hid my eyes but a voice spoke in my ear. Turning, I beheld the cruel genius who had before made me accursed, and he laughed in my face and jeered: 'Now, daughter of a king, you shall know the abasement of a slave before thy fate comes to thee to make thee blest!' With a clap of thunder he disappeared, and all I saw upon that battle field were the wounded being butchered, and the few survivors of the host who this day had fought and died for me pursued by the squadrons of the Turkoman cavalry.

"Within an hour the castle was surrounded, its walls were scaled, its garrison put to the sword, and I was led forth and stood face to face with the destroyer of my nation, Bazook, King of the Tartars, who claimed me for his prey. My maidens wept around me; there were only dead men to defend me from his impious clasp. I lifted up my eyes to heaven and prayed as I shall never pray again to Allah to save me from the barbarian.

"He stood only surrounded by the slaves of his harem to which I was condemned; his principal officers having been commanded to withdraw their troops that no eye in all the Tartar host should look on the beauties destined for their lord. The nearest Turkoman cavalry were distant from us two full bow shots.

Suddenly my prayer was answered; fifty Caspian horsemen, survivors of the combat, led by Hassan swept upon us with the speed of birds, from a neighboring thicket in which they had been ambushed, and my prayer was answered

like a ray of light. In a breath, I was drawn up on the saddle in front of my preserver and borne away, while his followers cutting down those who opposed our flight followed their master, and within one mark of the sun-dial I was in my father's arms.

“ But the Tartar pursuit was swift as the storm itself. Some twenty squadrons of the fleetest Turkoman horsemen pursued us into a defile of the mountains through which we hoped to take our flight to Persia. Headed by Bazook, who having seen me would not now lose my beauties, they followed us, hour by hour until the sun sank, hour by hour as the moon rose, until the morning dawning found us with exhausted horses.

Even as we paused in the narrow defile to make a last stand, a wandering merchant met us with two fresh steeds of incomparable beauty and power; and Boabdil looking on these said: ‘ Fate has sent them to you, my daughter, to save you for the exalted station. Mount, Zeld, and you, also, King of Georgia, and continue your flight.’ As he said this the wise Boabdil suddenly disappeared from our eyes.

“ To this my father answered: ‘ With the last of my followers I fall also,’ and would have put himself in the ranks that Hassan had arranged to stay the coming of the Tartar horsemen, whose hoofs already rang on the rocks behind us, telling of their approach.

But Hassan cried to him: ‘ I die here, not you, my king, who shall return and reign once more

over the land. I stay because I love her who disdains me. I perish that she may wed the man for whom her heart shall beat. My sword and my blood to save her from defilement by the Tartar!' Before I could stay him or could even speak entreating him to forget my haughtiness to him, he had ridden at the head of his devoted band against the Tartars that were coming like the wind; and I saw him struck down by the hand of Bazook himself, fall dying to the ground.

"Then some strange power was upon my steed; as, despite myself, it bore me far from the combat into a happier land where war was not; but I carried with me the recollection of the day when a hundred thousand men died for me, and one to whom I had been disdainful gave his life that I might live free."

The eyes of the princess were full of tears; then she gave a slight start; an expression on the face of the Caliph told her there was another who would die for her, not that she might live free, but that she might live his own.

After a few minutes, recovering from the agitation the thoughts of her past had brought to her, Zelda continued: "The rest of the story is short. My father and I joined a caravan that was going toward Arabia, and in order to avoid comments upon our appearance disguised ourselves as a merchant and his daughter. Arriving at the great sea we took passage there in a trading ship intending to journey as far as Mecca, hoping by a pilgrimage to the shrine of the Prophet to appease the wrath of the genii; but on this voyage we were

captured by robbers of the sea, and the rest is known to you, Hammad, and I presume to your cousin."

"You—you loved this Hassan, who died for you?" muttered the Caliph disconsolately.

"No, Captain Zoab," answered the lady. "Sacrifice does not always bring love. I respect his memory, I weep for it. The only man whom I will bless will be the man who will bring to me the hideous head of Bazook, King of the Tartars, and will tell me that Georgia is once more free to follow the religion of the Prophet. For the tyrant has overrun my land, word has been brought to me of this. Our adherents have been enslaved or put to the sword, our chiefs, princes and emirs have been compelled to bow the knee to him. Georgia is no longer Georgia, though there is still but one God, and Mohammed is his Prophet."

CHAPTER VI.

HUCCAZAH AND THE EFREETS.

THE recital of the princess having agitated her she withdrew to the apartments of the women, and the Caliph, under his guise of Captain of the Guard, began questioning her father as to the disposition, discipline and bearing of the Tartar hosts, in so shrewd a manner that after the King of Georgia had left them his cousin suddenly said to Al-Mansur: "What was the meaning of your

questioning? Do you think that you will be able to obtain from the discipline of the Tartars anything to add to the military establishment of your Caliphate?"

For Al-Mansur, who was a great, though youthful warrior, had established a military conscription through his empire, that made each man a soldier, and permitted him to draw together a host mightier than that of all other monarchs.

But the Caliph said: "No, I only wish to know the forces I may have to contend with. For in confidence to you, my cousin, I have an itching palm to present within the next few days to this being who, somehow, has captured my very soul, the hideous head of Bazook, King of the Tartars."

"Within a few *days*? You mean years! It is twelve weeks travel to the Tartary confines; it will be the work of campaigns, not of battles, to conquer the great warrior of the barbarians. How will you transport your legions there without months of preparation to provision their march? How will you do this thing, powerful as you are, Master of the World? By the aid of the genii and the angels?" questioned Hammad.

"Only incidentally," replied Al-Mansur, who was in a deep study. "I go to consult Huccazah, my old instructor, who has a thing or two in magic up his sleeve, I think, for occasions like the present."

At this Hammad laughed. "O Lord of Lords, Huccazah will be, indeed, a master of enchantment if he can put into thy hand the head of Bazook, King of the Tartars!"

Unheeding these words, the Caliph departed from his cousin and returned to his palace, attended as usual by the two mutes.

The next morning, after another sleepless night of longing desire, he repaired immediately after the prayers of the morning to that portion of his palace where the sage Huccazah dwelt, with his books of science and instruments of astronomy, surrounded by every luxury that his student and monarch could place about him.

On entering the apartment of the wise man, Al-Mansur greeted him not as sovereign to subject, but as pupil to master. Immediately the sage, whose face had the burden of years upon it, but whose figure had a supernatural youthfulness in its movements, placed piercing eyes upon the Caliph.

“I thought you would be coming to me very shortly,” he said, “Abu-Jaafar”—for he always called Al-Mansur by the name of his youth. “You find the burdens of love greater even than the absence of passion.”

“You know my secret?” asked the Caliph astonished.

“Only that you love. For two days you have not labored upon your poem; for two days you have not reviewed your troops; for two days you have given no orders in your council. Naught but that passion which disorganizes mankind could have caused such a change in the habits of one who like you is devoted to military exercise, to poetry and the government of your kingdom. You have come to ask my aid to win a woman’s

heart; for I know she is not in thy seraglio. Zamo, thy chief eunuch, has the same sad face that betokens he has lack of occupation in guarding beauties set apart for thee. I could probably, by aid of the occult sciences, discover thy secret, O my son, but I prefer to have the revelation from thy own lips."

"You are right, I love as no man ever loved before!" cried Al-Mansur.

"Others have said that," replied the sage, "and have forgotten. All men think that when they first love; few, after they have loved many times—as most men do."

"By Allah! no man adores like me. No man is willing to make the sacrifice I will. It is on account of this that I came to you to ask your advice and wisdom."

"Very well," answered Huccazah, "tell me thy story; but do not dwell too much upon the maiden's beauties being as those of the sun at midday and the moon in her fullness. I have read too many poems."

Whereupon the Caliph related his tale as well as that of the Georgian princess, stating that he desired to present to her, to gain her affection, the head of Bazook, King of the Tartars.

"And for this woman's pleasing you, my pupil would shed the blood of hundreds of thousands of your subjects by waging war against this powerful sovereign, and bring misery on myriads who look to you for happiness upon earth!" dissented the wise man.

"Not if it can be avoided," answered Al-Man-

sur, "though it would be to the glory of Islam and the duty I owe to the faith to again plant the banner of the Prophet over the kingdom of Georgia and permit believers to worship once more in the true faith, a privilege that has been denied them by this barbarous king. But I would take all the risk upon myself rather than bring misery upon my subjects. It is with this view that I wish your aid. Can you place me in such a position that I may personally defeat and kill, if God gives vigor to my arm, Bazook, King of the Tartars, though he is surrounded by the legions of the North?"

"You would take upon yourself a desperate adventure," remarked Huccazah, meditatively. Then after a pause of profound thought he said: "I will, by means of the occult sciences, enter into communication with those of the efreets* whose power I can command, and obtain such information from the world of spirits that I can give you a definite answer within three days."

"Three days! How can I postpone my desire to do her service that immense time?" cried the Caliph, impatiently

"Pish!" answered the sage. "You lingered four years as Caliph without the love of woman and seemed to thrive in body and mind. Will three days be your death, O lovesick soul? Besides, to succeed it is necessary not only to pro-

*The efreets are a species of *genii*, the fourth in the order. *Janns* being the lowest and least powerful—*Jinns* the second in rank, *Sheytans* the third, *Efreets* the fourth, and *Madrids* the highest and most potent.

ceed with caution, but to be right in taking the first step. Come to me in three days."

Compelled to be satisfied with this answer the Caliph left the wise man, who, even as he spoke adieu, had begun to arrange his instruments for his researches.

Passing to his council chamber Al-Mansur tried to forget in the duties of the sovereign the agitation of his spirit.

But it was impossible. Houssan-El-Remo, making again his obeisance, for he was always an attendant at court, though little recognized, meditated: "The Caliph's despair is even greater than yesterday. My triumph will surely come. When he asks my aid the spell shall be taken off him and he shall love."

That evening again repairing to the house of his cousin, Al-Mansur once more feasted his eyes upon the beauty of the Princess of Georgia; but the lady, noting his preoccupied manner, laughed at him and said: "O Captain of the Guard, what has come to thy spirit? You were a brighter youth two days ago."

Al-Mansur answered quietly: "It is the thought of thy wrongs that makes me sad." And his eyes and manner spoke so strongly to her that the Princess commenced to turn her mind upon her own feelings toward this young man, so looking on him with veiled glances she discovered that he was pleasing unto her. Then, after the manner of women which is deceptive, this knowledge coming to her made her disdainful to the young Captain of the Guard

and she sneered when she spoke to him. But each time she did so her heart throbbed within her reproaching her. Still such is the perversity of her sex instead of this making her tender toward the young man, with each scoff she appeared more haughty

Therefore Al-Mansur left her more sad and moody than before ; and the next morning in the council chamber his orders were severe against all criminals, and he issued an edict increasing punishment for various offenses.

On hearing this Houssan-El-Remo chuckled to himself : " If he does not love soon, this Caliph will shortly become a tyrant and will be deposed by his enraged subjects. Verily, my hour of triumph is approaching ! If Al-Mansur does not apply to me another will soon reign in his stead."

But in the evening the Caliph, unable to keep himself aloof from the eyes that tortured him, and the beauty that caused him to despair, again visited his cousin ; and, now behold ! such are the caprices of that sex which but few men understand, that instead of being haughty to him, the Princess Zelda was soft and tender, and gave Al-Mansur glances that fired his soul. So he went home from her as near the Seventh Heaven as man can get before he leaves this earth.

The next morning, with smiling countenance, Al-Mansur sat in his council, revoked his cruel edicts, pardoned many criminals, and ordered great sums of money distributed to the poor, which caused his subjects to bless

him, and made Houssan-El-Remo go to his house and meditate glumly upon the wondrous change that had taken place in the Caliph.

And after a time this crafty old man, though it was a ten days' journey, called his servants and bade them bring his easiest-gaited mule, and together with many of his slaves took the road to the Syrian Desert, upon the borders of which lived the magician, Zoreb, who had placed the spell in his behalf upon the Caliph.

With the coming night Al-Mansur was again astonished in the house of Hammad his cousin, by seeing the beautiful Zelda neither gay, sparkling nor tender, as she had been the evening before, but very sad, with a sadness that piqued his curiosity. Therefore obtaining private conversation with her—for his cousin Hammad only watched the Caliph's glances to give him opportunity with the fair being in his charge—Al-Mansur said to her: "Why, O Princess, does thy heart change with emotions that are fickle as the winds that blow sometimes from the North and are cold, sometimes from the South and are hot, and sometimes from the East and bring showers? Three days ago you were chilling as the blasts of winter; last night you were warm as the breeze tempered by the sun's rays; to-day you are tearful as the air is when it brings the showers of the East!"

And she said to him: "Why should I answer thee, O Captain of the Guard? What right have you to inquire as to the moods of one of royal blood?"

To this he replied: "Because, though I am only Captain of the Guard, I love thee!"

Whereupon Zelda first gave him a glance haughty as the rebellious genii give to Allah who rules over and dominates them, then fell to weeping as a peri who has done some naughty act like these captivating and careless women spirits are wont to perform, and said:

"Though thou art cruel to ask it, thee I will tell. With the thought of my wrongs upon me I rashly swore to Allah I would give love to no man who could not bring me the head of Bazook, the King of the Tartars. Now, O Zoab, Captain of the Guard, I know I have made a false oath, for I shall love but one man, and he cannot tender to me the head of the barbarian. If I had but loved the Caliph of Baghdad he might have had the power to give to me my wish. But as I have loved thee, O Zoab, a poor captain in the guard, who cannot gain for me that which I have taken oath to have; come near me no more or I shall break my oath and adore thee and be accursed! For those who make vows to Allah must observe them."

Then a mighty wave of joy, such as had never come to him before, flying all over Al-Mansur, he replied: "Thou, O my princess, love me now, despite thy oath. Thy words have said it and thy manner hath told me more!"

Then, unheeding her protestations, despite her denials with the lips, which women are wont to give, he embraced her, clinging to her beautiful knees and swearing that she loved him.

But when he would have kissed her on the lips she sprang from him and cried: "No, then we should be both accursed, because of my rash oath to Allah!"

"That oath to Allah I bless, for it shall give you unto me!" he answered. Then he covered with kisses the fair lips that would have questioned him.

And though she implored him to tell her what he meant he left her.

The next morning, it being the third day, he came with eager heart to the apartments of Huccazah, and greeting that sage begged of him to tell him what had been the result of his enchantments.

Thereupon the sage said to him: "To explain the various occult processes I have called to my aid would take too long. Neither would it bring fortune upon thee. But this is the result of my inspection of the heavens, my consultation with the efreets and the genii and the angels that I have called to me from the land they inhabit in the mountains of Kaf that surround the seven worlds and the circumambient ocean. To attack Bazook with the forces of earth would mean a bloody war of years duration, and the death of myriads of thy subjects. The only way the head of the Tartar king shall become thine is by a personal adventure in which thy own life must be risked. If you think the love of any woman is worthy such a chance, ask me and I will continue my revelation."

To this the Caliph immediately replied: "Proceed, O Huccazah!"

“Then behold,” said the sage, “I have obtained for thy use the following things. Look out into the courtyard.”

And the Caliph gazing out said: “I only see a mule browsing upon the herbage of my finest flowers.”

“That is not a mule, but only the semblance of one,” answered Huccazah. “A madrid inhabits it and makes it an enchanted mule, a beast as fleet as the winds of heaven, who can cover the distance between here and Tiflis or Astrakhan, the capital of the Tartars, which is distant one hundred and twenty suns’ journeys by ordinary means, in one day and a night. For this mule is insensible to fatigue, if each day you give him one of these,” and he produced a small gold case containing six pellets made apparently of meat but highly spiced. “Thus I have provided the means for your meeting the Tartar face to face.”

Next exhibiting a cage, he continued: “Behold, here are seven pigeons of the famous breed of Bassorah, that will fly in one day the journey of fifty. To communicate with me tie thy letter under the tail of one of these, it will bear to me thy words. Each day I charge thee to let me know what has happened to thee, for I may discover signs of evil unto you that thou wouldst not notice in the rashness of youth. That you mayst get within sword’s sweep of the tyrant I have given thee this letter to a wise man of Georgia, Boabdil, called the ‘Wizard of the Mountains,’ with whom I have been in com-

munication by means of an efreet that is known to us both."

"Ah," cried the Caliph, "Boabdil, the instructor of my beloved princess. He, indeed, will be of aid to me!"

"His home is on the street of the skin dealers in Tiflis," returned the sage. "When you have shown to him this talisman, the most potent yet dangerous of all I give to you, yet the best fitted to give you entrance to the presence of the tyrant, Boabdil will know you have been sent by me."

With these words the old man produced a small amulet of onyx inscribed in curious cabalistic characters.

"What is its power?" asked Al-Mansur.

"This charm I hand you," replied Huccazah, impressively, "is one that by its deft use may bring you into contact with the Tartar king, but one that may expose you to great dangers before and after your attempt upon him. So long as you bear it in your bosom, so long will you obtain and retain the love of any woman whose affection you desire. While you wear it she will become thy assistant in any plan to which you may cajole her. But beware how jealousy enters into the heart of one won by this amulet."

"Give it to me," cried Al-Mansur, eagerly; and he placed it in his bosom. "I will test it on the beautiful Zelda before I carry it with me to Tiflis. It may increase her passion for Zoab, Captain of the Guard." And the Caliph laughed merrily, but Huccazah grew solemn and said:

“Beware, O my son, of the love of woman turned to hate. Would that my age allowed me to go with thee and guard thy youth with my experience.”

But Al-Mansur replied: “I have employment for you here. The lady of my love may, I pray Allah, droop in my absence. I will bring thee to her. I remember in my earliest childhood how you entranced me with curious stories. Huccazah, you shall do the like to Zeida, and in thy entertaining tales keep her from remembering that I am not by her side.”

“A handsome young man would better console her for your absence,” chuckled Huccazah. But the Caliph looked so awful at this jest that the old man hastened to assure him that he was at his bidding.

Soon all arrangements for his journey were made, Al-Mansur deputing Hammad to act as regent during his absence, and causing it to be rumored through the streets of Baghdad, that not having found any woman to his liking in those that had been brought to him, he would soon depart to visit the various courts of the East in order to obtain a bride to his fancy.

Then the next day the Caliph brought Huccazah to visit the Princess of Georgia.

“I am ordered by my master to attend him in his journey throughout the East in search of a bride, and have presented to thee this old man of great wisdom of whom you have heard me speak, Huccazah, who will charm thee during my absence with his stories and make the hours

seem light to thee," said Zoab, Captain of the Guard, to the beautiful maiden.

"In truth, O Zoab!" replied Zelda, concealing some tears that were ready to flow, for the young man looked more handsome to her now that he was leaving her side. "It is better that you depart from me. Were you to stay I might forget my oath to Allah."

Whereupon Al-Mansur, embracing her as he bid her farewell, the amulet had such an effect on the princess that had not Huccazah seized it from the young man's breast she could have never left his arms again.

But the charm being removed from him, after a time the Caliph succeeded in leaving the princess, who was as one bereft, at one instant begging him to depart from her on account of her oath to Allah, and the next crying to him that she knew his journey with the Caliph was but a pretense so that he, Zoab, might attempt to gain for her the head of the Tartar. That he would lose his life for her sake and to satisfy her rash vow.

At last, however, Al-Mansur left her in a swoon and, counseled by Huccazah, departed that very night with a small retinue, ten purses of gold in his saddle-bags and mounted upon the enchanted mule in search of his adventure.

CHAPTER VII

THE STORY OF THE SULTANA, THE FLEA AND
THE USURPER.

ON the evening after the Caliph's departure Huccazah visited the house of Hammad. Admitted to the presence of the lovely lady of Al-Mansur's desire, he found her surrounded by regal luxury, orders having been given to throw about the Princess of Georgia a state and pomp worthy of one destined to be the Caliph's bride, a homage Zelda had accepted as a tribute to her own rank now she had revealed her royal birth, taking it as a matter natural to one born in her exalted station.

Seated on an ottoman of silk, adorned by priceless jewels, surrounded by lovely slaves all seeking to do her slightest wish, in a beautiful marquee which permitted easy access to the soft breezes of the evening, the Georgian princess received the man of wisdom.

The scene was lovely as one of enchantment, for the silken pavilion was surrounded by the delightful gardens of Hammad's palace, which were filled with shrubs of the rarest beauty, flowers of the most exquisite perfume, and fruits sweet to the taste as those of Meru; the soft murmurs of scented fountains and rivulets running down the slight slope to the waters of the

Tigris filled the air, through which fireflies and butterflies floated like autumn leaves.

Here, under softest lights of perfumed lamps illuminating her delicate beauty, and robed in the gauzes of Kashmire, Zelda should surely have been happy. But Huccazah found her silent and listless, the music of her attendant women and the contortions of the dancing girls being as naught to her. Two slaves, of a beauty second only to their mistress, agitated the languid air about her with fans stolen from peacock tails; two more knelt beside her, offering her sherbets cooled by snows that came from the distant mountains.

Noting the languid manner of the Georgian Princess as she received his obeisance, the sage remarked: "I had presumed, O fair one, that a restoration to some of the privileges of your rank would have made your eyes bright and laughing, whereas I see that tears are near to them. Is it the absence of the impetuous young Zoab, the Captain of the Guard?"

"Pish!" answered the Princess lightly "Zoab told me you were a wise man, but you have not wisdom enough to know that women never confess they are afflicted by the absence of man." Then she said, attempting a lightness that was not real: "I suppose Zoab went with his master, the Caliph, who has, rumor tells me, departed on his foolish expedition in pursuit of a beauty whom he will love; as if these—" she waved her hand to her four attendants—"were not beautiful enough to charm any man!"

To this Huccazah answered with a chuckle: "Aha, these are some of the rejected ones!"

"Yes, this is the frankish lady that Al-Mansur thought was cross-eyed," laughed Zelda. "And here is a Circassian whose dark hair found not favor; and these two, who hand me sherbets, are Spanish maids, whose limbs were not white and lithe enough to please the ruler of the East."

"Oho! By the beard of Iblis! these are the ones who said that you should be presented to the Caliph as a slave? I remember, Zoab told me," laughed Huccazah. "Behold a woman's vengeance, my princess; those that scoffed at thee are now thy slaves!"

But she replied: "Not so, old man. They are my slaves that I may save them from punishment. Hammad, the cousin of the Caliph, learning that they had declared his word to me was to be broken, and that his tongue had spoken untruths, would have had them chastised; but I being given dominion over the harem, claimed them as my own, and so saved them. Now they are grateful to me and love me."

At this, the four attendant maidens prostrated themselves before Zelda, and kissed the hem of her garment in proof of their attachment to her, while Huccazah looking on, grinned in his soul, for he knew they hated her as the peris do the angels; even kindness does not cause women to love those that triumph over them.

But he spoke not his thoughts, and continued: "Fair lady, according to my promise to Zoab, Captain of the Guard, I have come to take the

place of thy dancing girls and singing women, who apparently do not amuse thee. I hope to help thee to pass an hour of forgetfulness this evening by a few tales which have as yet never been heard by the ears of man or woman. As they are of a private nature pray make a signal to your slaves that we may be alone."

The princess having sent away her attendants, Huccazah began as follows:

"The first adventure of my life, O Princess of Georgia, I must preface by stating that I am possessed of what is called a 'Changing Spirit.' This most wondrous boon was given to me by the Genii of the Air upon my birth, in response to the prayers of my father, for I am the son of the Efreet Shikák by a Sultana of the Indies, whom each night he bore away from the harem of the Sultan; and in response to her outcries of shame and rage, promised that their son, if one were born to them, should be blessed by the 'Changing Spirit.'"

"The Changing Spirit?" interrupted Zelda. "I have studied all the wisdom of the stars from Boabdil and know not what that is."

"It is," replied the sage, "that wondrous power of the soul blessed by its possession that permits that spirit as the body it inhabits is dying, to transfer itself to the nearest animate creature and so retain existence in this physical world. Had I not possessed it I would have been dead in my youth, but by a deft use of this marvelous gift I have already lived six hundred years and still am young."

Here the sage chuckled to himself and stroked his snowy beard, though his eyes were as bright and piercing as a boy's.

"Thy spirit changes, from one body to another? You are an accursed follower of Buddha!" cried the princess, shudderingly, turning her eyes away. "Out of my sight, in the name of Allah, out of my sight!"

But instead of being angry at this curse from the pious maiden, Huccazah laughed and said: "No, I am a true follower of Mohammed and a believer in his faith, though I was born five hundred years before him, a blessing that has been granted to none save to me on this earth. I, who have the power of transferring myself from one *living* body to another, am conceited enough not to believe in the creed of Buddha—that all men have even greater powers than mine, and that their spirits are transferred not merely from one living body to another but from one inanimate thing to another. I could not, though the pangs of death were upon me, transform myself into this couch that I now squat upon, as the followers of Buddha's faith believe. But were I dying, O Princess of Georgia, at this very moment, and no one nearer to me than you, I should have no hesitation in giving one jump from my present ugly and aged domicile into the lovely and sprightly body that surrounds your sweet soul, fair princess!"

"Then I pray you," answered Zelda, "to keep in good health when near me, for I am sure my sprightly mind is better suited to my youthful

graces than thy ancient but occult spirit, O seer, who has promised to tell me a tale, and is now reveling only in a bragging philosophy."

"Were sudden accident to happen to me by deadly snake or by fire catching my clothes from yonder lamps, you would find that my spirit would become in my dying moment, even an inhabitant of thy beauteous form, O Zelda! Self preservation is the first law of the world," chuckled the sage and there was something in his eye that proclaimed he spoke the truth.

"In that case," cried the princess clapping her hands, "I will summon an attendant. If a snake stings you or you are consumed, please direct thy spirit's flight into her body, not into mine."

And her slaves appearing, she summoned a Spanish maiden to her and said: "Issa, recline before me and fan me while I listen to the words of this wise man."

At this Huccazah smiled, and after it each night as he told his stories he smiled still more, as he saw always a maiden summoned to the lady's feet to protect her from his Changing Spirit.

The princess seeming more at her ease, and the slave girls being all dismissed save the one lying at Zelda's feet, Huccazah chuckled and continued:

"As I told you, at my birth, though the son of the Efreet Shikák, the Sultan of India thought me to be his offspring, I being born in his harem. Therefore I was acknowledged heir to the realm of the Indies. But even in my youth the savage temper of the efreet, inherited from my father, commenced to show itself in me. Though I became

a great warrior, I was a merciless one. The inhabitants of the towns I captured I put to the sword; and when, on the death of the Sultan, I ascended the throne, it was as one feared of men and accursed by God with cruelty

“Soon after my accession to the title of Sultan of the Indies under the name of Zamah, I was called to my dying mother’s side. As I watched her pass away, a voice spoke to us and said: ‘Drive all thy attendants out of the chamber so I can speak to thee alone.’ Then I doing the bidding of the voice, it spoke again and said: ‘O woman! hast thou not told our son the power that is given unto him?’

“My mother faltered: ‘I have not, for I did not wish to confess my shame unto my child—a shame brought upon me, not by my own indiscretions, but by thy cruelty, persecution and lust, O Efreect Shikák!’

“Then, behold, a mighty spirit in man’s guise stood beside us, and he said: ‘Foolish woman, wouldst thou have thy son die as thou art dying? Since thou dost not reveal to him the power he has of the Changing Spirit, I will do it for thee!’

“And he told me of the wondrous gift that had been given to me by the Genii of the Air, and placing his hand upon my head, cried: ‘Thou art a worthy offspring of a cruel efreect. Go on, slay! None can slay thee, if thou canst find another living thing to cast thy spirit into.’

“So, with a clap of thunder, he disappeared, and behold, my mother was dead.

“And I believed him, and it made me even more

cruel in war than before, and yet more victorious. I feared nothing, knowing that while one man remained alive upon the battlefield, though my body was cleft in twain, if I had one spark of life, I could propel myself into the living being near to me, and so survive them all. Soon I would have conquered the world and ruled the whole of it, had not an unlucky accident compelled me, on the spur of the moment, to transfer myself into the body of a flea.

“I had returned in triumph from the conquest of Kashmire, bringing with me many beautiful women as captives. Some of these I had transferred to my own seraglio, which I ruled with barbarous cruelty, even my favorites trembling at the glance of my eye, for its glance was often death.

“Among the captives brought with me from Kashmire, was the daughter of the king of that country, Zeleckha, a beautiful woman of an unbending spirit and uncompromising haughtiness, something like thine, fair princess, who if the Caliph had taken my advice would have been transferred to his harem some days ago.”

“I don't understand thy gibbering, old man,” said Zelda haughtily. “But you can tell your Caliph that were he to dare to treat me with aught save the respect he would treat a princess equal to him in rank, I would poniard myself or him or both of us.”

“That's what the fair daughter of the King of Kashmire caused to be done to me,” replied Hucçazah with a hideous grin. “But to return to my
G

story. Zeleekha, more crafty than thee, appeared to yield to me the duties of the slave, and I reveled in her beauty. But one day I saw something in her exquisite eyes that caused me to think she did not love me as I compelled all women whom I honored with my favor. I half determined that evening to have her sewn within the sack and tossed into the waters of the Indus. Still her loveliness of face and the graces of her white limbs were so great that I hesitated, and the man who hesitates makes a mistake. Her eyes appeared to me brighter than ever before, the charm of her beauty was more refreshing than the breezes of the great snowy mountains that lie above India. But I suspected she loved some other, and I longed to have not only the woman but the man also within my grasp.

“Among those brought by me as captives from her country was the Pasha Obed, and his cousin Dirbas (the lion). These warriors had fought me more bravely than any of their race, and for their valor I had permitted them to live. I had even given Obed a high place in my realm and command of a division of my army; still had I been wise I would have known that he loathed, he detested, he hated me, who had cut off so many of his race from the sight of the sun.

“That evening, as I was about to give Zeleekha the farewell marks of my favor, she whispering: ‘I love thee so truly, O Sultan, I shall bind thee forever,’ twined her arms around me, holding me as tightly as she could.

“As she uttered these words I saw over my heart

the hand of a man holding a poniard raised to strike, and before I could release myself the blow fell.

“But as the dagger pierced me, with the last instincts of despair, calling to myself the power of the ‘*Changing Spirit*,’ I threw myself into the only living object my eyes rested upon—a flea that was feasting upon the white arm of my favorite who had betrayed me.

“With one agile bound I launched myself into the body of this insect of prey, and found myself still living and looking upon both my enemies.

“Behold! I saw the man who had assassinated me; it was the Pasha Obed, who cried as he gloated over the carcass from which I had so deftly escaped: ‘This is the tyrant who robbed my kindred of life, and who has caused thee to be his slave, my Zeleekha.’ With this he took from the finger of the carcass that had once been mine my signet ring, and, placing it upon his hand, said: ‘Now, having put him to death, I will reign in his place and you shall be my favorite sultana.’

“This he did, for the two had made their plans so carefully that even this night Obed was proclaimed Sultan and Zeleekha was installed as the queen of his harem.

“The next day this Obed, who had slain me, with slaves bowing before him and wearing my signet ring, my jeweled scimitar and even my garments of state, came in triumph to visit Zeleekha, the beautiful being who had once been mine; and I, an ignoble insect that had been chased about that very morning by slaves with slapping towels,

gazed from the security of my hiding place in one of the tassels of a divan upon the glory of the woman who had betrayed me, and the usurper who had assassinated me. And they, in the joy of their love, took no notice of me or the rage that was within me. But in the sanctity of the royal apartments I had the supreme pleasure of a grand but ignoble vengeance. I inflicted painful bites upon them both which made them writhe and scream and pursue me with unavailing slaps, for my agile bounds enabled me to escape, and I took refuge in the seclusion of the fringe of a neighboring curtain. Then when they had ceased their search for me, and the lamps were again turned down, I came forth and repeated my revenge upon them, and caused them misery where they should have had joy, even biting their lips as they kissed one another.

“Thus it passed that each night I repeated my exploits and devoured them, not only as a matter of revenge but as a matter of sustenance, as now my instincts were changing gradually, from those of a man that I had been, to the insect that I was; for such is the curious effect of the changing soul that the spirit gradually assimilates itself to the body it inhabits. The mind of a brave warrior transferred into the brain of a timid deer becomes gradually cowardly; a spirit passing from the body of a nervous woman into that of a ferocious lion loses its terrors and is soon as savage as a lion should be.

“This effect was coming over my soul. I was gradually gaining the ignoble instincts

of the flea I inhabited. My appetite was overcoming my revenge. I was getting to that state when I would as willingly feast off the body of a lapdog as from that of the beautiful sultana. Perceiving that I would soon be content to remain an insect of prey, I determined to make a desperate effort to overcome this ignoble condition and to transfer myself to the body of a human being once more. That is easy when you are a flea! Everyone likes to kill you.

“‘I will induce the sultana to slay me,’ thought I, ‘when he, Obed, is present. As I look into his face her fair hand shall with one agile pat cause my death. Then I will spring into his body and be once more sultan and lord over the woman who has betrayed me!’

“To do this successfully I knew I must be looking straight into the face of Obed, for the spirit cannot falter in its flight from one body to another and circle about to choose its habitat. It must go direct.

“It was four days before I could put my plan in what I considered certain operation, for I lived the life of a Bedouin of the desert, every one’s hand was against me. The moment I was seen I was pursued, and had it not been for the wondrous agility of my race and the cunning manner that I had of concealing myself even in the warp of the rugs, I would have passed away, though probably I would have succeeded in launching my spirit into the body of the slave who killed me and so remained alive.

“But I wanted to inhabit Obed’s body. I wished

to have the power of the Sultan of the Indies again. During these four days Zeleekha, as Obed's queen, lived in the greatest power. She had a haughty temper like thine own, princess, though not thy kind heart, as, alas! I discovered afterwards. She had also the same appreciation of beauty and gathered about her the loveliest women of the capital, one of them a most exquisite and fascinating widow named Zandora, of great wealth, the daughter of a prince, the widow of a rajah.

This lady against her will Zeleekha, as Sultana of the Indies, undertook to wed to Obed's cousin Dirbas, and Zandora, hearing what was to be her fate, and being secretly in love with a young Indian emir, came to petition the Sultan that she might not be given in marriage against her consent. But Obed turned a deaf ear to her protestations and said the matter of her marriage was an affair of Zeleekha's; that Zandora being a lady of the court her hand was at the disposal of the Sultana.

“On this affair Zandora came repeatedly to the women's apartments of the palace to ask an audience with Zeleekha; but the Sultana always denied herself to her, saying: ‘I want not this woman's tears, but her hand in marriage to the lord I have chosen for her as a matter of state policy.’ For Obed and the Sultana were trying to create a homogeneous party in their support that would make them certain of the quiet possession of the throne by marrying the lords of their country to the native princesses and the daughters of the emirs of the Indies.

“For two days the lady Zandora had applied for audience and each day had been refused. This I knew from the gossip of the maidens in waiting and the slaves that I heard talking about me. And I laughed to myself and said: ‘Wait until I have transformed myself to Obed’s body; then, perchance, poor Zandora, you may wed the man you love, the young Emir Kasgah, who had been one of my most faithful warriors.’

“So the time being propitious on the morning of the fourth day, even while Obed was speaking to the Sultana, I sprang upon the fair Zeleekha and again began my attack upon her white skin. I bit her alabaster arms and shoulders till she writhed in impotent anger. Then, I growing careless and by design so languid in my motions, she cried in triumph: ‘O Obed, at last I shall catch this little villain!’

“‘With my aid, fair Zeleekha,’ laughed the Sultan, and assisted her in pursuing me, I trying to place myself in such a position that when killed my spirit could spring into the body of the usurper.

“Just at this moment as the Sultana’s hand was raised to give me the fatal smack, even as it descended upon me, there was a rush into the apartment and a veiled figure threw herself at Zeleekha’s feet and sobbed: ‘Give me mercy!’

Behold, I looked into the face of Zandora! While I gazed the Sultana’s hand descended on me, and for one moment I thought I was sped, but even as the hand shut out the light of the sun from me, my spirit sprang and I found myself in the body

of the beautiful Zandora, suppliant at the feet of the Sultana Zeleekha, and at her mercy, for no agile bounds could now conceal me in the neighboring hiding places of the divan or the curtain fringe.

Instead of being in Obed, Sultan of the Indies and Lord of Zeleekha, I was Zandora, slave of the Sultana's will; and though rich and beautiful, still much more helpless than the insect I had left, for I could not escape if anger came to Zeleekha.

"I gazed about me astounded. A red spot of blood upon the Sultana's arm was all that was left of my former self. I stood there a shrinking woman, not knowing what words to utter.

"'Praise to Allah, that beast that has driven me to despair for the last four nights has now gone to Sheytan!' cried my beautiful destroyer, with a slight laugh.

"But Obed interrupted her, saying to me who stood abashed before him: 'Zandora, how dared you enter unannounced the private apartments of the Sultana?'

"Fortunately I knew enough of the matter to say falteringly: 'My despair drove me to madness—I flew past the eunuchs on guard before they could seize me. I have come to plead with thee that I may be permitted to marry the man I love!'

"To this Zeleekha answered haughtily: 'The man you love must be the man I will you to love, Zandora. You would wed the Emir Kasgah, but I decree that thou shall be the bride of my husband's cousin the brave Pasha Dirbas. The

orders are already given for thy nuptials. This very night thou shalt take thy place in the seraglio of Dirbas.'

"As a flea I had learned enough about Dirbas to know that he would not be a pleasant husband. Imperious and cruel to his dependents and slaves, he was a man who I knew would think no more of a wife than of a bauble purchased in the bazar; and a fine horse would appear to him much more worthy of his tenderness.

"Horried at my approaching fate I sobbed: 'Not to Dirbas, Sultana; give me mercy—not to savage Dirbas! How did you feel when, four days ago, you called Zamah thy Sultan and thy lord, but loved Obed?' and threw myself at Zeleekha's feet.

"At the mention of Zamah, the name under which the world had bowed to me when I was Sultan, Zeleekha's eyes filled with tears as she gazed at Obed, for she adored him.

"Then she cried: 'Do not remind me of that awful time, audacious one! Were it not that thou art to be a bride to-night the bastinado should avenge thy insolent words! Remember, Zandora, thou art my subject, I, thy queen!'

"I was about to again supplicate her, but she stamped her foot and cried out: 'Not another word or I punish! The affair is settled! Go back to your house, thankful that thy insolence is permitted to escape so lightly. There, prepare yourself to go through your nuptials and do honor to the husband I have selected for thee. And now, my Obed,' she turned her eyes, dewy with love

upon the Sultan, 'come with me to enjoy the fête of the dancing girls I have prepared for thee.' Then, turning to me, she whispered sternly: 'Go, lest I repent my clemency!'

"And I, happy to escape from her, left her apartments, and hurrying in disorder to the door of the palace found my own attendants awaiting me with a litter to convey me to my own house.

In the courtyard of my residence a female slave, assisting me to alight, slipped a missive into my hands, and I read it, in inconceivable astonishment, for it was:

"Zandora, fear not, all is ready as we have arranged it. Give the sacred document to the black slave that I have pointed out to you when he makes obeisance three times. All depends on this. Then meet me at the appointed place. To-night the tyrants fall. Trust, thy loving
KASGAH."

"This note put me in a fearful dilemma. I was apparently interested in some conspiracy against the Sultan, yet knew not what it was. I was to meet Kasgah at an appointed place, of which I had no knowledge. Who was this dark slave mentioned in the letter, and what document was I to give to him? Where was I to find it? Did I make a false step our lives would doubtless be sacrificed to the rage of Zeleekha and the Sultan Obed."

"O what a horrible dilemma," interjected the beautiful Zelda, with earnest eyes.

"Yes," replied Huccazah, smiling. "And this being an interesting point in my narrative I will here discontinue it for this evening, to again resume it to-morrow, O Princess."

"O, go on! Tell me more about her!"

But Huccazah replied, smilingly: "No, it will give thee something to put thy fair mind upon during the day, Lady Zelda. It will take thy thoughts from Zoab, Captain of the Guard, and perchance you will be anxious for my coming to-morrow evening!"

And despite the princess's protestations and entreaties Huccazah, who had the instinct of the story teller and knew when to leave off, departed, leaving the Princess of Georgia wondering what would happen to the bewildered Zandora, who loving one man was condemned to be the bride of another, and who was one of the conspirators against the power of a sultan, yet did not know a single detail of the plot, upon the success of which her very life depended.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STORY OF THE BEAUTIFUL ZANDORA, THE INNOCENT CONSPIRATOR.

On arriving at his apartments in the palace of the departed, Al-Mansur, Huccazah found one of the flying pigeons he had given to his master had already returned to him, bringing a missive from the absent Caliph, which read as follows:—

WORTHY HUCCAŽAH:—I have left the escort that departed with me from Baghdad encamped at a day's journey from my capital to wait there until I return to them. I have already traveled two hundred leagues upon the enchanted mule. The high slopes of the Caucasus loom before me. To-morrow the winged hoofs of the Madrid will bear me across them to the land of

Bazook, King of the Tartars, whose head I have sworn to bring back to the lovely Zelda. I pray to Allah that she thinks of me as I think of her, that her eyes are heavy with longing as mine are. Once more I impress upon you to keep her from sorrow by thy delightful stories, Huccazah! May the time pass quickly and pleasantly to her, and if I return alive thou shalt find thy reward in the favor of thy sovereign,

AL-MANSUR.

The next evening, with the Caliph's command in his mind, the sage again repaired to the palace of Hammad. At the door he was met by a slave who said to him: "Quick! the Princess of Georgia awaits you. Three times has she sent to ask for thy coming!"

Following the attendant, Huccazah found himself once more in the beautiful pavilion in the gardens, where the nightingales were just singing their last evening songs. The perfumed air was floating languidly from the fans of the attendants as they ministered to the pleasure of the exquisite Zelda. That princess regarded him with eager eyes as he made his obeisance, and clapping her hands cried to her slaves: "Leave me, all of you!" then suddenly paused, and looking as if affrighted, added: "One of you, Issa, remain at my feet and fan me!"

At this Huccazah stifled a smile; he knew the princess wished to have an attendant ready to receive his flying spirit if by accident it should take departure from his body.

"Now continue," said the lady, "O Huccazah! for I have thought often to-day of thy unfortunate predicament while inhabiting the body of the perplexed Zandora!"

"And truly it was one," answered the sage,

resuming his story. "There was I, who had once been a sultan and once a flea, and was now a beautiful woman, trembling with terror, agitated by excitement, the center of a conspiracy of which I knew only what had come to me in the note of Kasgah, whom I was supposed to love but did not love, though I must admit that I feared with my whole soul the savage Dirbas whom Zeleekha had so haughtily decreed that I should wed.

These were not my only embarrassments. Though fortunately such is the power of the Changing Spirit that I had all the habits, manners, thoughts, yea, even the passions of a woman, yet I was unacquainted with the numerous details that surrounded me. I knew not the various apartments of my own home. I could not call by name my slaves and servants that clustered about me.

Calling to my aid a wisdom that has, even in my most unfortunate moments, accompanied me in my various extraordinary positions in this world, I let circumstances develop themselves, for a few moments trying to obtain the information from my surroundings which I dared not ask directly.

One of my attendants, a bright faced Afghan girl, from the confident manner in which she addressed me, and the liberties she presumed to take, to all appearance was my favorite slave. Under her hands the veils that had shielded my face from the lookers on in the streets were taken from me. As this was going on I opened my ears and behold! the maid was spoken to by the other slaves as Nuzheh, which signified delight; prob-

ably from her bright and sunny disposition, for her tongue was babbling to me after the pert manner of a pampered attendant.

“‘You have heard, O my mistress,’ she ran on, ‘what audacious words Dirbas has sent to thee!’

“‘No, Nuzheh,’ I answered, ‘tell me what is his message?’

“‘Only this, Lady Zandora,’ said the attendant, ‘that he, Dirbas, will send his chief eunuch to take charge of thee and thy household after the midday meal.’

“‘And you replied?’ I asked.

“‘Nothing, O Lady Zandora ; I dared not, I only hoped that thy visit to the Sultana would give thee freedom to choose the man you love!’

“‘You have not, then, seen Kasgah?’ I inquired, hoping to draw from her some knowledge of the conspiracy of which I was a member.

“‘No, I have received from him only the note I handed to you even as you left your litter,’ answered the girl.

“Apparentiy Zandora had not even taken her favorite slave into her confidence in regard to the plot against the Sultan. As I thought of this I admired the intellect of the former Zandora, reflecting that she was one of the few women in this world who was able to keep a thing to herself. But that did not aid me. In fact, it would have been better for the second Zandora if the first Zandora had babbled a little to her hand maid ; then I might have discovered the secret of the conspiracy.

“Affecting carelessness, I said: ‘Nuzheh, where is that document I left here?’

“To this the girl replied, opening her eyes: ‘What document?’

“Then I answered, affecting sternness: ‘You remember it—you must—the one you saw me with but yesterday. Quick! tell me where I placed it, or where you placed it, or what has been done with it!’

“This I said so severely that Nuzheh, affrighted, prostrated herself at my feet, and answered: ‘O, my mistress, I know not what you mean! I have seen no document nor scroll in your possession. Neither hast thou given me any!’

“Her manner told me she spoke the truth. The former Zandora’s secretive nature was destroying me.

“I thought agitatedly, for I had but little time to act: if Dirbas sends his eunuch I dare not resist him. I shall then be confined to the women’s apartments of my house and unable to communicate with Kasgah.

“‘Quick!’ I cried, ‘Nuzheh, fly with these words to Kasgah. Tell him to come to me at once—that it is vital for the happiness of us both!’

“‘Where shall I find him, O Lady Zandora?’ said the girl.

“‘At his house, I presume,’ I answered; for in truth I had no other direction to give her. ‘If not there inquire and follow him, no matter where he is and bring him to me.’

“‘I will do it,’ said the devoted slave. With

this Nuzheh flew away on her errand, leaving me perturbed and agitated, for having no love for Kasgah in my heart, I had a decided disinclination to share the fate of his conspiracy.

“A swift death I would not have dreaded so greatly, for then my soul might have fled into the body of some one else; but imprisonment or torture I feared as much as if I had not been blessed with the Changing Spirit. Then again, that curious attribute of my wondrous gift had begun to come in force. Occupying now the body of a beautiful, young and fascinating lady, gradually were coming to me the nervous feelings peculiar to the body I inhabited. I was growing apprehensive and timid and desired the assistance and support of man, like other women.

“As my emotions became like unto those of a female, I looked at myself. An oval mirror of crystal reflected my person, and gazing upon it, I gave a cry of delight, for I had become sufficiently imbued with the vanity of my sex to be elated with my own beauty. My eyes were dark, soft, and melting like those the poets praise; my form like unto the figures of the maidens who cling round the Prophet in Paradise; my skin was fair as the snow upon the mountains that are ever covered with whiteness.

“Looking on this I said: ‘No wonder Kasgah loves me; perchance Dirbas loves me also.’

“I trembled when I thought that this very night I might know.

“Appeal to the Sultana for delay I knew was useless. I was too well aware I had made a lucky

escape from her presence this same morning. As a flea I could evade Zeleekha, as Zandora I was helpless in her hands whenever the dominating Sultana stretched them forth to seize me. Alas! How often are men and women more powerless than the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air. The bird fears not the earthquake, the speed of the horse protects him from the tempest—man falls before both.

“But I had little time for philosophy. I must discover the document, which meant so much to me, according to Kasgah’s note, the one that I was to hand to the slave—the dark slave, when he made obeisance to me three times.

“The contents of this would probably be the clue to the plot against Obed and the Sultana.

“I called my women to me and questioned them. Knowing not their names, I said: ‘If any one here has seen a scroll or document tell me what has become of it!’

“‘I know not, my mistress,’ replied the first of these. ‘I have seen nothing like that in your possession; for the last two days, thou hast not permitted us to be near thee.’ Similar answers were given to me by all the rest.

“Then I was convinced that the former Zandora had taken such precautions that none of the slaves knew aught of the scroll that I was so anxious to obtain; furthermore, that not one of them guessed of my meetings with Kasgah save Nuzheh, my favorite maid, who was now away in search of the young emir.

“I bade them withdraw from me, and the maid,

ens being departed, sought eagerly under every divan, even beneath the jars that stood outside in the balconies cooling the water for drinking; also in every roll of silk and every rug, without avail.

“I summoned my women to me once more and bid them bring the dresses I had worn, and they placed before me robes of the greatest beauty, but I thought naught of them, only to see if in their folds I could find the scroll of which I was in search; but still without avail.

“‘What room did I sleep in last night, dost thou remember, slaves?’ I said haughtily.

“They answered in astonishment: ‘Dost thou not remember, O my mistress! The night was sultry, you had your couch upon the roof.’

“‘Of a certainty I know I slept upon the roof,’ I cried, feigning anger. ‘But I did not array myself for slumber there. Precede me to that apartment, quick.’

“Then they ran before me to a little chamber looking to the East. Here, I said to them, ‘My mind is on other things, leave me!’

“This room I searched with anxious care, every divan, every drapery. Beneath each rug or Ispahan I looked, but still no document.

“The sun was rising in the heavens, the time of the midday meal was growing nigh, when with light step Nuzheh came breathless into the chamber. ‘Hast thou found Kasgah?’ cried I.

“‘Alas, no! I was at his palace but they said he had departed, going to the public baths. There I followed him, but he had gone from the hammám, and the attendants knew not where, Several

emirs and princes were in his company. That was all they could tell me. I could not find him!’

“Even while she spoke the midday meal was placed before me. Though it was composed of dainties fit to tempt the appetites of fasting devotees, I could not eat. Anxiety had destroyed the wish for food. As I dallied with confections and sweet syrups, and pretended to enjoy a pancake covered with honey of the orange groves of Kauzeroon, I felt my fate was upon me.

“It was!

“Even as they took from me the ewer in which I was bathing my hands after playing with the sweetmeats before me, Nuzheh came running to me and making obeisance, said: ‘Bobec, the chief eunuch of Dirbas, is here. He bears with him the order of the Sultan, giving into his charge, thee, thy house, thy slaves and everything that is thine. He has directions to have thee decked and prepared for the nuptials that will take place after the prayers of the evening!’

“Then I felt that I was lost. What could I do to fulfill the instructions in Kasgah’s letter when I was no longer mistress of myself? I trembled; my eyes became big with anxiety and terror.

“Seeing my despair Nuzheh whispered: ‘While thou still can command thy actions, fly again to the Sultana and beg for time.’

“But I answered: ‘It is useless, Zeleekha has refused me; I am no longer mistress of myself, nor of thee, also Nuzheh, for now, under the Sultana’s decree, Bobec will have charge of all of us!’

“‘Then I fear for all of us,’ said Nuzheh, ‘for Bobec is a dark Ethiopian of stern demcanor. He demands to see thee at once.’

“And I not knowing what to do, replied: ‘Let him be brought in to me!’

“With this Bobec entered, three other eunuchs behind him and a number of Dirbas’ women slaves.

“Behold! he was black as night, and he stood before me and made obeisance that seemed a mockery, saying: ‘I salute thee, bride of Dirbas!’

“I answered him not.

“Then again he made obeisance to me saying: ‘I salute thee, bride of my master!’

“To this I again said nothing.

“Once more he made obeisance to me for the third time, uttering: ‘I salute thee, bride of the Lion!’

“To this I replied nothing, being filled with despair. Whereupon the black’s face seemed to grow hollow and pale and his limbs smote themselves together as the gums that held his yellow teeth became blue.

“In a flash it flew through me that this was the dark slave that would make obeisance to me three times: the one to whom I was to give the vital paper of the conspiracy. This paper I did not have; I could only look at him astounded, but despairingly.

“At this rage seemed to possess him and he whispered: ‘Traitoress! thou hast destroyed us all, but I will make thy lot a hard one!’ Then clapping his hands he directed that my own personal

attendants should be removed from me and replaced by the women he had brought with him. Nuzheh was sent with my other slaves to the palace of Dirbas. Behold, I was under the hand of this cunuch, who seemed to have now a personal spite against me. He cried to the female slaves: 'Quick, see that thy mistress is bathed and perfumed and arrayed in bridal robes for my master's pleasure!' Next jeered me with: 'Handle this fair lily gently, for to-morrow she may come under the hand of some one who will be unkind to her!'

"Even as he said this, though the Ethiopian glared at me with ill-concealed hatred, his eyes gazed about the apartment with an anxious look as if seeking for something they could not find. Then, as the women were about to lead me away, he came to me, and taking me aside whispered in my ear: 'Quick, tell me where is that fatal document! Give it to me and I will still be true to thee and Kasgah, the emir you love!'

"I answered him trembling and agitated: 'Alas! I know not where it is!'

"On this, he uttered a low cry, his knees smote themselves together again; he moaned: 'Liar of liars! thou hast betrayed us. May thy mother's tomb be defiled!' and lifted his hand as if he would smite me, but durst not, knowing I was to be the bride of his lord. Restraining himself he made a sign and the women came to me and led me away; but even as I left the apartment I looked behind me, and behold! Bobec, the Ethiopian, was searching through the rugs and among the divans

and jars, as I had done before, seeking the self-same scroll.

“Surrounded by the slaves of Dirbas, I soon saw they held me in no high esteem. The manner in which the chief eunuch had addressed me had probably made them think that my reign in Dirbas’ seraglio would be a short one.

“So they cared not to conceal the jealousy that actuates all slaves toward a new arrival in the harem. Even their whispers were so loud that I could hear them.

“‘By the soul of Iblis!’ said one, ‘this lady will not long be Dirbas’ favorite. The last maiden amused him but a week, and she was a Chinese, with eyes like in shape unto water-melon seeds, and a skin colored as saffron juice, but much more lovely than this one.’

“‘Besides, they say this Zandora is a widow, who has been accustomed to command,’ laughed another ‘How she will droop her haughty eyes when she feels Bobec’s stern hands upon her, and is chastised at Dirbas’ nod if she is restive under his rule.’ To this I listened, despair in my eyes but rage in my heart.

“While they spoke the women did not neglect their duties. My garments were taken from me. I was bathed and perfumed; my hair and eye-lashes were blackened with kohl; my eyes were sprayed with a tincture of that marvelous plant which causes them to grow large, lustrous and melting. I was arrayed in the soft gauzes of India, whose whiteness became gleaming pink as my limbs moved under them; strings of pearls were

thrown around my dazzling neck; jewels blazed upon my lustrous bosom; in my hair were the golden campac flowers; my feet were placed in slippers broidered with pearls; a scarf of woven silver was wound about my waist. I stood prepared for the bridal fête.

“Even as this happened to me a woman slave, summoned by clapping of the hands, suddenly left the bath. A moment after she returned, and quickly seized upon and bore away the garments I had worn during the morning. To this I gave but indifferent thought, until I was led by the women back into the apartment where Bobec stood waiting to receive me.

“As I entered I gave a start of surprise. He was tossing away from him the garments I had worn; his hand was placed upon his bosom as if holding something that was precious as his life; his air was no longer trembling and uncertain but confident and commanding. He walked to me and made obeisance, whispering in my ear: ‘Though thou art a traitress I no longer fear thee!’ Next said sternly to me: ‘Bow thy head, Lady Zandora, for the bridal veil!’

“Then I murmured to him: ‘For the love of Allah, tell me if thou hast the document that I could not find?’

“But he only answered with a harsh laugh, and commanded: ‘Bow thy head for the veil that shall not be lifted from off thee until it is by thy husband, Dirbas, my master and thy lord!’

“Though I would have spoken, he suddenly clapped his hands, and two women slaves placed

themselves beside me with the long bridal veil that was to envelop me and be my prison until lifted by the man who was to have dominion over me. Their hands were upon my head and over me descended the bridal veil, shutting me out from the world until I should stand face to face with Dirbas, and my beauties be surrendered to his hand.

“Then through the gauzes words came to me, and I heard the nuptial procession commanded. I was taken from my house and placed upon a steed that my hands told me was decked with flowers.

“With canopy of silk above me, we proceeded through the streets of the city, from my house to the palace of Dirbas; women walked before me, and musicians playing hautboys, drums and other instruments. There were buffoons, jugglers and wrestlers, to delight with their antics the crowd that looked upon the festival march; and confectioners making up rare dainties to distribute to the lookers-on; also carts bearing the makers of sweet drinks and coffee to give to those who wished them.

“Thus, surrounded by the eunuchs and slaves of my bridegroom, veiled from the eye of man, upon the decked horse, the silken canopy floating over me I came, a conspirator fearful of discovery, a bride trembling because she loved not the man unto whom she was to be given.

“Soon the *ziraleet*, the joy chorus of the women, told me we had reached the house of Dirbas. A moment after, I was lifted from the saddle and

borne by the hands of eunuchs up the stairs and into an apartment—I could not tell what it was, the veil only permitting a faint light to come to me, that indicated the nuptial lamps were burning.

“Then I heard a voice, apparently that of a Cadi, asking: ‘Do thou, O Zandora, take Dirbas to be thy husband?’

“I dared not answer no, but tremblingly bowed my head.

“Again I heard the magistrate, saying: ‘Do thou, O Dirbas, take this woman to be thy wife, and do thou give her a dowry of over ten dirhems?’

“On this, a voice like the roar of a lion sounded in my ears, crying: ‘By Allah, I do!’ and I felt gold coins showered upon me for my dower, and I was his and I knew it! I trembled.

“Then ’mid the sound of music and of song I heard the cry: ‘The banquet is in the outer hall!’ The noise of moving feet told me the guests were going to the wedding feast.

“Next I heard the voice of the accursed Bobec saying: ‘My lord, what is thy pleasure?’ And I heard the lion roar again: ‘Take this woman to the seraglio, where I will visit her and unveil her.’

“I was led away, rage burning within me. I had had the nuptials of a woman of rank, yet I had been treated with little more consideration than if it had been the wedding of a slave.

“Bobec seemed in great haste with me. He hurried me along, assisted by some of the women. The doors closing after me informed me that I was in the seraglio. Here the eunuch whispered

close in my ear: 'Now, faithless woman, behold the revenge of Bobec, whose head thou would'st have caused to jump from his shoulders!'

"I would have torn off my veils to ask him what he meant, to even run after him to beg him to tell me the meaning of it all, but one of the women about me, placing her hand upon me, cried: 'O bride, do not remove thy veil, that is for thy bridegroom's hands to do!'

"A moment after another and a kinder voice whispered to me: 'Be not cast down, Lady Zandora! A hint in thy ear! Play the disdainful mistress, and Dirbas, the lion, will become even as the lamb who is led by the string!'

"Then the other woman cried suddenly: 'I hear our lord's approach!'

"Departing footfalls came to my ears. I was left alone, awaiting the husband that I dreaded. The light of lamps faintly penetrating the gauzes that enveloped me told me the apartment was brilliantly illuminated. I heard his step!

"The noise of heavy draperies let down told me we were apart from all the world, this man who was to have my loveliness in his hands, and I who was to be his plaything.

"Then all at once my heart seemed to beat no more within me.

"The veils were suddenly unwound from about me, I stood abashed, my face uncovered to his gaze, my limbs gleaming under the gauzes of Kashmire for his admiration; the blaze of myriad lamps blinding my eyes just now released from darkness.

“Dazzled, I placed my hands upon them to shield them from the glare. As I did so, two burning kisses fell upon my lips, and with a low cry I raised my eyes to gaze upon my master.

“It was not Dirbas’ face they looked upon, it was Kasgah’s; his lips parched by despair, his voice soft with the agony of a breaking heart.”

“Kasgah? How did he obtain admission into the harem of Dirbas?” asked the Princess of Georgia, excitedly.

“That,” replied Huccazah, “will be explained to-morrow evening. It will be a riddle for thy sprightly young mind to meditate upon until I see thee again!”

Then, despite Zelda’s entreaties and questions, the wily old story teller took his leave and repaired to the palace of the Caliph.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BEAUTIFUL ZANDORA, THE UNWILLING BRIDE.

ON arriving at his apartments, Huccazah found no pigeon bearing a message from his master. It gave him little anxiety, however, the Caliph was a young man and therefore careless. Besides, the bird even if sent might have perished in attempting its flight over the snowy mountains that separate Tiflis from Persia.

After the prayers of the evening on the following day, the sage again repaired to the palace

of Hammad, where he found the beautiful Zelda, surrounded by her maidens, eagerly awaiting him.

The attendants having retired, all save the Spanish girl that the princess retained in case Huccazah's spirit should take flight, and who as usual reclined at the feet of her mistress, fanning her slowly or rapidly, as the fair Zelda's signs indicated her wishes, the wise man continued his story as follows:

“The same astonishment, O my princess, that filled your mind at Kasgah's appearance, also filled mine. I cried to him: ‘Kasgah! How did you enter the harem of Dirbas?’

“He whispered to me: ‘Speak low, I have taken my life in my hand to gain entrance. In the little garden by the river I, in company with my friends, the powerful pashas of Delhi, Agra and the Scindh, with their adherents and followers, awaited thy coming. But you came not. Then word was brought to me that you were being made the bride of Dirbas, and frenzy came upon me. I left my friends and hurried to this palace where the music of the nuptial song came to me to give me despair. But still I lingered, hoping to see Bobec, whose services I had bought with a mighty bribe—the slave who was to make obeisance to thee three times and receive the scroll which contains the proof that the governor of this town is doomed to die by Obed—the document that will give us control of the citadel and the troops about the palace—the one you obtained by thy bright intellect, my Zandora.’

“Here Kasgah patted my cheek and kissed me, while I gazed at him astounded. There was no time to ask questions—only to act, but I could not restrain an exclamation of affright as I saw the clothes that Kasgah wore. They were the same as those of Bobec.

“Noting my look, he whispered hurriedly: ‘Yes, at last I met the eunuch outside the gates, and said to him: ‘The scroll thou hast received from the lady Zandora!’ Whereupon Bobec replied: ‘She gave it not to me!’ Then I knew we were betrayed, because thou wouldst surely have given it to him. So I slew the traitor, and disguising myself in his garments and muffling up my face came in, the slaves permitting me to pass because they thought I was Bobec, the eunuch of Dirbas. Thus I have entered the seraglio of mine enemy, to find thee his bride! to demand if thou hast given, as I charged thee, the vital scroll to Bobec. I could not find it in his garments. If he had the paper he has doubtless betrayed us, and the fatal document is even now in the hands of Obed or Zeleekha.’

“‘He had the scroll,’ I replied, knowing this to be the truth.

“‘Then there is but one thing that may save us. That document would have made the governor of the citadal and fortifications our ally, and we could have declared open war against Obed. Without it, there is but one chance. I go now to head my most trusty friends and bravest warriors. We will enter by force this very night the palace of Obed and kill him in the midst of his

guards. Its very audacity will be its success. To do this Dirbas, his most faithful warrior, must be kept from Obed's side. That must be your business, my beloved! Keep him at arm's length—but keep him *here*! Play the bride—but the unwilling one; attract him, charm him, but be not his. By midnight I am dead or I am the ruler of this land and thou shalt be my Sultana as Dirbas' head rolls at my feet. Thou hast a woman's wit—use it for our lives and for our love! See that thou comest to me unstained by Dirbas, or I will slay thee, though I adore thee.'

"Then with hurried, burning kisses Kasgah was gone, leaving me astounded and dismayed.

"Ah! how I jeered my woman's wit. I had obtained the proofs that would have made the governor of the city our tool, yet knew not what they were. I laughed hysterically, sneering at myself as I remembered I had searched my house and every garment that had decked me for a week seeking for the vital scroll, and had not thought of looking in the dress that draped me. Now by the document the dead Bobec had probably betrayed us.

"Then it flew through me I must keep Dirbas *here* by my side, away from Obed. This I would do, not for love of Kasgah but for my own safety. His success at least meant that, if I came to him unsullied.

"Then suddenly I remembered that one of the attendant women had whispered: 'Treat Dirbas with disdain and the lion will become the lamb!'

"Desperately I clapped my hands together.

The slaves came in timidly, fearing to see their master. From their appearance I gathered he was a loud roaring, domestic tyrant; their words proved it to me.

“Looking at me affrighted, one of the ladies gasped: ‘O, unhappy one! thou hast removed thy bridal veil. Thou has disobeyed thy master. Thy fate will be terrible!’

“‘Yours might be,’ I sneered, ‘for you are but a slave. Remember I am a wife, bringing great dowry to Dirbas, and not an odalisque. Obey me! bring wine, flowers, confections, all the delicacies of the earth, to me here. To-night I have a wedding supper with my lord! Quick, hearken to my words, I am a princess and accustomed to command!’

“Some of them would have hesitated, but I said imperiously: ‘Do my bidding on the instant! or I summon the eunuchs to chastise you with rods.

“At this they fled from me, for I was in a desperate state; agitation was making me as cruel as Dirbas himself. My commands were obeyed with rapidity. In a few moments they had spread carpets embroidered with gold and on them had placed fruits, flowers, confections and delicacies of every kind, sherbets and sweet wines. I waved the slaves from me and said: ‘No word to my lord. This is a surprise to him.’

“So the women going out from me, I was alone once more; but feminine artifice coming into me, I wound the bridal veils all around me as they had been before, thinking when Dirbas removed them

my charms would have the greater hold upon him, coming as a surprise unto his eyes.

“I had not long to wait. A heavy step was at the portals of my apartment; it paused—the bridegroom was removing his sandals at my door.

“A minute passed; then my veils were torn from me by impatient hands. I heard a snort of astounded joy as I into the light of myriad lamps stepped forth in all the glory of my beauty and looked on Dirbas.

“He gazed at me and cried: ‘By Allah! Zeleekha told me thou wast lovely, but Zeleekha must have envied thee thy charms and told but half the truth!’ Then like lightning I received two sounding kisses, one on either cheek.

“Of a verity I must have been fascinating that evening; for the peculiar nervous agitation that had been upon me all this day had made me light and tripping as a sprite; my eyes blazed with a supernatural fire; my bosom gleamed like ivory; my limbs seemed filled with some ethereal fluid that made them light as the spirits of the air, as they glistened under the gauzes of my robe. The jewels that sparkled upon my snowy arms, neck and shoulders were not so bright as the eyes that glanced from over them. That evening I was an ecstatic being.

“But Dirbas’ guttural tones called me again to earth. ‘By the Seven Genii of the enchanted caves,’ he said, ‘Zandora, thou must have an appetite if this is the supper thou hast ordered!’

“‘It is for both of us, my lord,’ murmured I, drooping my orbs beneath his gaze; ‘I knew I was

to have a lion to eat it with me!’ As I uttered the last, I dared to smile at him.

“‘Soho!’ he remarked, ‘not only beautiful but witty.’ Then he added sternly: ‘I like not a woman with too ready a tongue, remember that, Zandora!’

“‘Pish!’ I cried, ‘you forget you are talking to a widow.’

“At this he could not help laughing, but a moment after turning admiring eyes on me, said: ‘A widow this morning. Have you forgotten your marriage vows *already*?’ chuckling at his own joke.

“Then I, taking advantage of his good humor, replied: ‘This is our wedding supper that I have made ready for thee, my lord. Partake thou of it with me!’

“‘That is not the custom of my nouse,’ he said commandingly. ‘I eat first and my wives minister to me. When I have partaken it is their turn.’

“‘That is not the custom of my house,’ laughed I. ‘I eat first, I—’ but I paused here, Dirbas’ look was so awful.

“‘Now, by the gates of the city of brass,’ he roared, ‘this is too much! Bow thy head quickly, O woman, and minister unto me. Otherwise—’

“He lifted up his hands to clap them, and I, rearing what might come to me, his demeanor being very stern and his voice growing very deep and solemn, bowed my head, and he seated himself, chuckling in hoarse voice: ‘This is better. Now, if I leave any morsel here of all these delicacies

thou wilt have thy chance at it. Fortunately for thee I have eaten quite heartily at the wedding supper outside.'

"In truth it would have been fortunate for me, that is, if I had been hungry, though I had no appetite; for while he spoke he gathered in the dainties before him in a manner like unto a giant that had fasted. And at the moment Dirbas did look that to me, for his frame was grotesquely huge and his appetite like unto his stature.

"As he sat there, I waiting on him, every limb in a tremble, he seemed to me as if he were a ghou! eating and that I was to be his last dainty. But I reflected that every moment that he occupied in the pleasures of the table was so much time he was kept away from the side of the Sultan Obed.

"Actuated by this, I humbly offered Dirbas the dainties of the feast and plied him with the sweet wine of Kishma, which he drank as if it were water; each time he turned his eyes upon me I felt as if he were an evil genius and I an unhappy captive. I trembled, and my agitation gave new beauties to me, and as I waited on him he gave me many kisses.

"Then he said; 'I have supped enough.'

"Here I cried hurriedly: 'My lord, you have not partaken of these sweet pancakes. Let me offer them to you covered with sliced oranges and honey.'

"'Well, for thy sake,' he said, 'since thou offer them, O Zandora; it will prove how greatly I love thee!' And in a flash the oranges and honey and

pancakes had disappeared. 'Now give me the ewer of water and a napkin that I may lave my hands.'

"But I begged him again: 'My lord, thou hast forgotten the candied pomegranates.'

"To this he answered: 'So I have.' And in a moment there were no pomegranates.

"'After the pomegranates thou must not forget the watermelon,' I said despairingly, as he cracked the last pomegranate seeds between his strong teeth.

"'Ah, watermelon is my joy!' he cried; for he loved that glorious fruit that all believers, harkening to the words of Mohammed, cherish so highly. Though Dirbas had never heard of Mohammed, still he believed in the watermelon.

"But at last there was nothing more for him to eat—nor for me neither for that matter—and he rose up and said: 'O Zandora, my bride, thou canst feast to-morrow!'

"To this I replied—anxiety coming upon me: 'Let me eat a little now, my lord! Permit me to summon the slaves, that I may partake of the dainties I have watched you enjoy.'

"And I would have clapped my hands, but Dirbas chuckled: 'You fascinating but artful little glutton! You would eat and fill thy stomach to bursting, whilst I, thy husband, only think of love!' As he patted me on the cheek with his great hand.

"At this moment there sounded outside the voice of a slave crying, though in trembling tones: 'O Dirbas, a messenger has come to thee from the Sultan Obed!'

“‘To hear is to obey,’ answered my bridegroom. He turned and was about to leave the apartment.

“He must be detained! I stepped before him and said, my eyes drooping and my voice soft: ‘Wilt thou desert me, this night I am thy bride, my lord and husband?’

“Whereupon he cried out: ‘Let the messenger from the Sultan Obed wait!’ then whispered to me: ‘This evening is for love and thee, my Zandora!’

“But I laughed at him: ‘Now for a game of romps. Thou shalt catch me to win a single kiss!’ With light feet I fled from him, gathering my robes about me and dancing all around the room, the golden bells upon my zone making merry music—and he pursued me.

“I skipped about, fleeing from Dirbas’ lumbering footsteps, springing over rugs and divans, first this way, then that, even jumping with agile steps over the remnants of the nuptial feast, he chasing, careless of all save me, crunching under his elephantine feet the dishes he had feasted from and the wine cups that had given him pleasure; until at last I stood in a corner with no way of escape open to me. ‘By Allah!’ laughed Dirbas, out of breath, ‘thou art as slippery as an eel, my Zandora, but as beautiful as a peacock.’

“Then, as he reached out his hand to seize me, of a sudden there was a voice outside the door, which cried: ‘A second messenger from the Sultan Obed has come to thee, O Dirbas!’

“And he cried back; ‘Let the second messenger from the Sultan wait.’

‘As Dirbas raised his head to utter these words aloud, I slipped under his arm with a merry laugh and sped upon my way.

“But he pursued me no further. His manner changed. He cried out: ‘Stand still, Zandora, I command you! Verily you are making a buffoon of thy husband. Now come to me, I have sued to thee enough. Obey me, or when I place my hand upon thee it will not be that of a lover suing for thy favor but of a husband who will chasten thy vagaries and correct thy archness in a way that will change thy merriment to tears!’

“Looking over my shoulder the laugh left my face. I saw Dirbas would permit no more lightness or mockery from me. His brow was a thundercloud, his eyes flashed lightning. I trembled; and every quiver of my limbs made me more fascinating; for, of a truth, agitation and nervous excitement give supernatural brightness to a woman’s eyes, and magic grace to her movements, gestures and poses.

“My very beauty was betraying me; I knew it, but I could not help looking more lovely as each step brought Dirbas nearer to me. One of my white arms was already within his grasp; my eyes were falling before his. His voice was whispering in my ear: ‘Turn thy lips to mine, Zandora, I now command thy kisses!’—when of a sudden a voice cried out again: ‘A third messenger from the Sultan, Obed, to thee, O Dirbas, demands audience.’

“And he cried back, grinding his teeth with rage: ‘Let the third messenger knock his head

against the second messenger, and the second messenger smack his skull against the first messenger, and let them all wait, for they are imps of Iblis and annoy me!’

“With this, of a sudden, the door was burst open, the draperies torn away, and a body of the royal guards entered, before them one of the officers of the palace, who said: ‘This firman, from the Sultan Obed, O Dirbas, cannot wait. Thy master and my master, though it grieves his heart, is compelled to seize, as traitor to the State, this woman Zandora, whom to-day thou hast taken to wife. Though it grieves thy cousin Obed to bring unhappiness to thy house, still, in his wisdom, he has done this thing. Behold! the royal warrant.’

“He presented a paper, bearing the Sultan’s signet, to Dirbas, who, in reading, bowed his head and said: ‘To hear is to obey.’ Then the messenger whispering to him quickly, my husband answered: ‘Tell the Sultan I will be with him at once. If Zandora is a traitoress, if she has conspired, lovely as she is, there is no mercy in my heart for her or any other enemy of my sovereign.’

“As he said this I was quickly seized. A moment after I was in a litter, surrounded by the royal guards and borne to the palace of Obed. Attended by two black mutes, I was ushered not into the tribunal of justice, but into the private apartments of Zeleekha.

“‘I have had thee brought to me, O Zandora,’ said the Sultana, ‘that I might investigate thy crime, for it seems one particularly against me for having thwarted thy affair of love.’

“Our eyes met. Into my mind flew this thought: I had held my own with a man, could I do as much with a woman?”

“One thing gave me a ray of hope, apparently Kasgah’s design to break into the royal palace with his adherents was as yet unsuspected.

“The Sultana was reclining languidly upon a divan, four black mutes and the executioner of the harem stood awaiting her orders; three ladies of the court were giving her sweetmeats to eat. She gazed at me languidly; there was something in her face I had never seen before. When I was Zamah, the Sultan of the Indies, she had looked upon me with trembling glances; while she pursued my agile bounds as a flea rage and anger had been in her eyes. Now as she looked upon me, Zandora, helpless in her power, a cold sneer of latent cruelty rippled over Zeleekha’s features. She eyed me as the cat does her prey. Then it flashed through me that Dirbas’ words were true, she was jealous of my beauty, and I trembled, for I knew the spite of women.

“‘I have sent for thee, Zandora,’ said the Sultana, even as her white teeth bit a honey-covered orange, ‘to charge thee with conspiring against my life and that of Obed, thy Sultan; to tell thee that thy only hope of escaping a death, the mere mention of which will make thee shudder, is a quick confession of those connected with thee in thy crime. The eunuch Bobec, being devoted to our cause, discovered in the garments thou threw off when arrayed for bridal, this document!’

“She held up a scroll before me and I knew that I was undone.

“‘Confess,’ said the Sultana slowly, almost caressingly; ‘confess, O Zandora, from whom did you receive this, and thy death will be a mild one.’

“But how could I tell what I did not know? Not that I loved Kasgah—in fact I hated him for placing me in this awful situation.

“‘How can I tell about a document I have not seen?’ I faltered, with eyes full of tears, and all the time fear was making my beauty greater and so angering Zeleekha the more.

“‘Thy tongue is usually quick to speak, let me see if I can aid its wagging,’ laughed the Sultana. Then she made a sudden sign.

“Two of her ladies came to me; two mutes approached bearing the *falakah*, with its rope of silk to secure my ankles.

“Looking on the long, lithe, cruel canes they carried in their hands I knew what was before me, and cried out: ‘My Sultana, mercy! Of a truth I know not what thou hast asked me!’

“For now I saw I was to suffer, *not to die*.

“‘I am giving thee mercy, O Zandora!’ said she. ‘More than thou wouldst have given to me. Mine was to be death. Thou art suffering only as a reluctant witness, not as a culprit. Such is my great mercy to thee. I am inflicting upon thee no greater chastisement than I am wont to give to my ladies when they are rebellious or careless of my words. Prostrate thyself!’

“It was useless to resist. In a moment I found myself stretched on the carpet, held down by the

hands of two ladies near me. In another moment my jeweled slippers were torn from my feet, which were imprisoned in the silken cord of the *falakah*, and turned upward for their punishment.

“‘Speak!’ cried the Sultana.

“I could only hold up my hands for mercy.

“‘Then thy doom be upon thy own head!’

And she gave the signal.

“In an instant the canes whistled through the air and fell upon my shrinking feet. Again and again they descended upon the bruised flesh giving me anguish unutterable. And so it continued, Zeleekha laughing and chatting to her ladies. At last my shrieks died away; insensibility had given me respite from the Sultana.

“I recovered to find myself still in her presence and she, I verily believe, devising some new torture to make my tongue disclose secrets of which I knew so little.

“At this moment Obed himself strode in, with Dirbas just behind him. He asked hurriedly of his Sultana: ‘What does Zandora say?’

“‘Not a word! She has a stubborn tongue that even the bastinado will not quicken into life. There is no doubt of her guilt, let us have her executed, but quietly, lest the people say we are slaying all their native rajahs and princesses.’

“Obed, turning to Dirbas, asked: ‘What does the husband say? I know, faithful Dirbas, thy answer will be as severe a doom as if I had uttered it myself!’

“On this, Dirbas looking on me, who was his bride, said sternly: ‘Since she will not speak, let

her have a silent death—yea, a gentle one! The sack!’

“‘Quick!’ cried Zeleekha, ‘a sack of leather in which to drown this conspirator!’

“As this was being brought in my knees smote together; I felt that this time I was indeed to be divorced forever from the life of this world. Of what use would be my Changing Spirit when I died sewn up in a sack beneath the deep waters of the river? There would be no other living body near me into which I could cast my soul as it left the body of Zandora.

“It meant despair!

“My one hope now was to make them kill me *where I stood*; so that something living would be nigh to me into which my spirit might fly as Zandora’s body died.

“So I lifted up my voice and I, delicate woman as I was, trembling with the pain of torture, cried unto them and reviled them in words that made them shudder; for I cursed the tombs of their ancestors and the tombs of their children; I called down defilement upon them and their kindred to the fiftieth generation.

“But this only made Zeleekha cry: ‘Into the sack with her before her words defile us more!’

“The slaves were lifting my swollen feet to place them in the bag of skin. Then I saw that deeds, not words, must bring sudden death upon me.

“I sprang from the mutes’ hands, and screaming: ‘Sultana, a little of the torture for you!’ flew at her with my long nails, that had been carefully

pared to make me beautiful as a bride, and scored her cheeks with living stripes of blood; I slapped her face—then the instinct of the flea apparently again possessing me, I seized and bit her soft arms till she shrieked: ‘The executioner, quick! Bowstring her that I may see her die!’

“To this I joyously made no resistance.

“The garments were torn from my shoulders, the hands of the slaves held me, the fatal noose was slipped over my white neck, as I bowed my head looking straight into the face of Obed.

“The Sultana clapped her fair hands.

“Suddenly a flash of lightning seemed to blind me; my eyes were starting from my head!

“Then all grew dark as with one quick, agile bound I found myself inhabiting the body of Obed, Sultan of the Indies, and gazing at the corpse of a beautiful woman lying at my feet, she who had been Zandora!

“But even as I looked there was a cry of despair from the entrance of the apartment, and Kasgah, the young emir, followed by several Indian princes and warriors, bounded into the room.

“With a scream Zeleekha fled through the side door as Kasgah, looking upon the corpse of Zandora, moaned: ‘My love, slain for my sake!’

“I was about to attempt to explain to him, but with a bound he sprang upon me, cried: ‘Die, tyrant!’ and stabbed me to the heart.

“But with a quick jump I was in Kasgah, and still lived!

“Then Dirbas smote Kasgah and he died, but with

agile flight I sprang into the body of another Indian emir, as a fearful *melée* took place in that apartment between the Indian princes who loved Kasgah and the adherents and pashas of the dead Obed, and blood flowed like water.

“By Allah how I had to work to keep alive in all that massacre!

“My spirit was no sooner in the body of one man than he was killed and I flew into the body of another warrior, and as he died, into that of still another; Indian soldier or adherent of Obed, I cared not whose carcass I was in as long as I remained alive.

“As one hero expired I sprang into the person of another, and behold! at last found myself inhabiting the body of Dirbas, who was the only living man in all that vast apartment.

“It had been exhausting labor; no such rapid change of abode had ever come to me before. But self-preservation is the first law of nature, and I found my spirit still an inhabitant of this earth, though it possessed the body of Dirbas, the lion, he who had been wedded unto me this very night, when I was Zandora the widow”

“Dirbas! You were now Dirbas,” laughed the Georgian princess. “Did you avenge yourself as Dirbas on the beautiful Zeleekah?”

“That,” answered Huccazah “will be explained when I tell you the adventures of the little dog to-morrow evening.”

With this he departed, leaving the lady Zelda murmuring: “The little dog. What can a little dog have to do with Dirbas?”

CHAPTER X.

THE DOG AND THE MOUNTEBANK.

AT his own apartments in the palace Huccazah sought anxiously for a pigeon bearing message from Al-Mansur, but found none. The next morning, however, one of the birds of passage dragged its way into his apartment, with one wing severely injured.

Examining it with hasty hands, the sage to his consternation discovered that the letter had been removed from it, perhaps by human hands, as the packet had not been plucked from the silk which had tied it to the tail of the bird, but the cord itself had been unfastened.

This gave greater concern to Huccazah than if no pigeon had been thrown to the winds of heaven by the hands of the great sovereign, who was risking his life as any ordinary hero to win the favor of the woman he loved.

“Oh the reckless boy!” moaned the sage to himself. “Why did he not take my advice? If he had he would have made an easy end to his love affair. Why did he not have the Lady Zelda removed to his harem and command her love, as he would that of any other woman? I’ll warrant that the fair jade would have returned the adoration of the Monarch of the World, who is young

and handsome and devoted to her. Now perchance Al-Mansur's head adorns the battlements of the Tartar king."

Then by means of one of his enchantments he summoned a genius to him and commanded: "Bring me a mule inhabited by a Madrid, that I may journey to Astrakhan in pursuit of Al-Mansur, the Caliph."

And the genius departing, after a few minutes returned with these words: "There was but one Madrid mule at your command, and that was given thee seven days ago."

"Then carry a message from me, O genius, to Boabdil, the Wise Man of the Mountains, at Tiflis, in the Street of the Skin Dealers. Ask him if a youth bearing a letter from me has been to him, and if he still lives and is well."

From this errand in the course of two hours the genius returned and said to Huccazah: "I have seen Boabdil and these are his words to thee: 'Al-Mansur, bearing thy message, came to him three days ago, received his advice and departed upon his Madrid mule for Astrakhan.' Then I sped to Astrakhan. Behold! I have seen the youth. He is doing finely. Already the favorite wife of Bazook, the King of the Tartars, loves him to despair." With this the genius departed, chuckling, in a cloud.

Whereupon Huccazah muttered to himself: "By the garments of Sheytan, if I told this tale to the Princess of Georgia it might interest her even more than the adventures of my Changing Spirit! I fear the charm I gave Al-Mansur will bring him

more trouble than joy—before the end of the adventure.”

That evening he again made his way through the streets of Baghdad to the palace of Hammad, where, in the beautiful gardens made pleasant by the languid breezes of the Tigris, the lovely Zelda awaited him.

As usual the princess received him, motioning the rest of her slaves away, but retaining at her feet the Spanish maiden Issa, for the Lady Zelda wished to be safe in case accident came to the sage, and his spirit had to bound into the body of some one else.

A moment after she said, impatiently: “Begin, O Huccazah. What had the little dog to do with Dirbas?”

“That I am coming to in a moment,” answered the story teller. “There I stood, Dirbas, and about me the corpses of nearly all the bravest warriors of Kashmire and the Indies. As I looked upon them it suddenly occurred to me that I—being in command of a large body of troops, and nearly all the principal warriors of the realm being dead, as well as the usurper Obed—might cause myself, Dirbas, to be proclaimed Sultan.

“To this end I took immediate steps, forestalling Zeleekha, who would have moved in this matter for her own sovereignty had I not been too quick for her.

“My own troops swore allegiance to me, also the guards of the palace.

“That very night by flaming torches I was proclaimed Sultan of the Indies, and sent messengers

conveying my commands to the governors of distant provinces. All of them bowed down to me, save one, the Pasha of the Sindh, and Zeleekha, who was ambitious for herself.

“But imprisoning the Sultana in the harem, I took command of my army and in the course of a month returned in triumph to my capital bearing the rebellious Pasha in chains. For if Dirbas had been a gallant warrior in former days, Dirbas inhabited by my spirit that feared not death, was ten times as valiant.

“Arriving in my capital, it occurred to me that as Zeleekha had got into the habit of having sultans assassinated, it might be well to look closely into what she had done during my absence. Though she had been confined to the seraglio strictly, still she might have made some movement against me.

“On investigating this matter I was staggered by what I discovered. The lady had undermined my government. By means of women that had gone out from her she had given great promises to the governor of the city and to most of the principal nobles. My throne was on a political quicksand. But I knew my danger in time; the head of the governor of the citadel rolled on the floor as he made obeisance to me. Then I sent for Zeleekha. She was brought to me, still disdainful, and more beautiful, if possible, than ever. But her haughtiness left her when she saw the head of the governor of the town, her agent and co-conspirator.

“‘Zeleekha,’ I said, ‘by thy machinations thou

hast caused the death of the former Sultan, Zamah, a noble man whom I once loved as myself.'

"At this she opened her eyes in astonishment and cried: 'By Allah! thou hated him, O Dirbas; for I have heard thee say so again and again. Thou supported Obed when he slew him.'

"This I answered not, for she would not have believed my explanations. Therefore I continued sternly: 'By thy tyranny over Zandora, a lovely woman who was to me as the apple of my eye, thou caused her death!'

"'By my head,' she answered, 'thou, Dirbas, did condemn thy bride. It was thou suggested the sack for her!'

"'That may be, O Sultana,' I replied; 'I have not time to explain unto thee the change in my heart. But as I hate conspirators and loathe tyrants, and the flowing of blood is sickening unto me, in punishment for thy crimes I have ordered a sack of buffalo hide that awaits thee in the next apartment. It is the one that was to have held the lovely Zandora.'

"So, despite her cries and protestations for mercy, she was led away from me and within the hour was sewn up in the sack and tossed into the waters of the Indus.

"Thus by wise acts of quick justice I spread terror through the conspirators against my throne and reigned in great pomp, magnificence and power, if not loved, at least feared and respected. My harem contained the most beautiful women of the East; my dancing girls were famous from Persia to Kathay for the grace of their movements;

my musicians were the most skillful in producing sweet sounds in the known world. Having conquered by war and ruling by fear, I attempted, as many other sovereigns have done, to make people forget my severity by encouraging poetry and the arts. In this way I reigned for a number of years, and would have existed many more as Dirbas, Sultan of the Indies, had it not been that a mighty pestilence came upon the land.

“Men sank and died before this plague in such numbers that any one afflicted with it was regarded as accursed by God, and all fled from him, fearing to receive death by contact with him.

“Despair reigned in my capital, and I, taking my court with me, journeyed by rapid marches, with a great procession of elephants carrying my favorites in litters, also horses and baggage mules, towards the great mountains that bound India on the north, that their cool breath might keep away the pestilence from me and my court. But it was fully ten days’ journey over the burning plains and through the hot jungles before we would reach those snowy mountains that seemed so near my hand could almost touch them.

“On the fifth day, after we had encamped for the night, I was reclining in my great pavilion of floating silk, the music of my musicians sounding to me, the lithe limbs of my dancing girls flashing about to give me pleasure, the voices of my courtiers attempting merry jests—for I had ordained that all should assume happiness and forget that death was nigh.

“Here, with my favorite ladies fanning me and

surrounded by the officers of my court, a curious, penetrating chill came upon me; my hands trembled, my face grew pale, but not so pale as those that looked upon me.

“The cry came up that I was stricken with the plague!

“Then the terror of death destroyed their terror of me. The troops forming the escort rode away. My servants and lackeys fled. The ladies of my harem, my attendants and sycophants mounted the elephants and taking with them all the animals laden with spoils flew from me even as I called to them to come to me. Not one slave remained with me. What had been a beautiful camp full of military display and regal luxury was habited by me alone, dying from the pest, no hand to give me cooling drinks, no one to minister to my last moments!

“Then a greater agony came upon me. Of a sudden I thought, with no living thing near to me when I die, it is the last of me upon this earth.

“I called aloud in my despair. There was no reply save the rustling of the leaves in the faint breeze and the cry of the distant tigers. The hand of death was upon me. I tried to struggle to my feet that I might wander forth to encounter something animate into which my changing spirit might spring to save itself for better things. But I had not strength to move! I fell back upon the couch—my spirit was speeding to another world.

“Then even as my death rattle sounded through the empty pavilion, I felt something touch me. It was the tongue of a little lap dog, one I had been

went to fondle, licking my hand—the only living thing that had not deserted me.

“As the pretty creature’s face peered into mine I gave my last sigh, and behold! I, who had been Dirbas, the Sultan, was now Ajeeb, the lap dog.

“I looked around me. No human being was in sight. My former slaves, followers, pashas, and favorites were too far distant for me to hope to overtake them. Then I contemplated my situation, striving to gaze at it, not from the standpoint of the Sultan, Dirbas, but from the point of view of Ajeeb, the lap dog, and found it in some respects more favorable as seen through the poodle’s eyes.

“I no longer feared the pestilence. This plague that surrounded me destroyed only man. Four legs are much better than two when you are compelled to travel on foot. Besides, my appetite was less dainty. At a pinch I could eat things that would have turned the Sultan Dirbas’ stomach, for though I had been a dog only three minutes, according to the wondrous power of the Changing Spirit, the instincts, faculties and accomplishments of the canine race were rapidly coming to me.

“But there were also dangers; I might make a mouthful for a tiger; a small snake might sting me, a larger one might crush me in his folds. The lap dog, Ajeeb, would be safer and happier under the protection of a master. For such is the curious nature of the canine that he prefers the company of man rather than the society of other dogs, if choice is permitted him.

“So I departed on my journey in search of a master, taking my steps towards the West, for the pestilence was coming from the East, and all men were journeying from it.

“After many days on the borders of a country called Gedrosia, I encountered a caravan of fugitives from the pest. Subsisting upon the trifles of meat and provisions they threw away, I journeyed with them through the mountain passes that separate India from Persia. The cold of the elevation and the snow made the fugitives of the caravan bless God, crying: ‘Of a surety these icy winds will take the plague away and prevent it from following us!’

“So they were very happy until they descended into the fertile lowlands of the country in which they intended to take refuge.

“But the inhabitants thereof having heard stories of the plague, and fearing their visitors from India would bring the pestilence with them, as a sanitary measure fell upon the people of the caravan and slew them, all but one man—one that I saved. He was a young fellow named Aboo-al-Agog, and had been kind to me in a careless way as we had journeyed over the mountains, giving me scraps from his meals and sometimes patting me on the head.

“When his companions had said: ‘Why dost thou take notice of that wandering cur?’ he had replied: ‘Because I know him and recognize him. This is no cur, this is Ajeeb, the pet lapdog of the great Sultan, and he has more tricks in his curly head than you have brains in yours. I

have seen him perform for the amusement of the officers of the palace.'

"Then he would attempt to make me execute my tricks which I did not know, though after a time I remembered some of them, those that I had seen the dog perform when I was Dirbas. Finally by coaxings, caressings and cuffings—mostly cuffings—I became thoroughly educated in the arts that Ajeeb number one had been an adept in before I entered his carcass.

"As Aboo was the only being that paid much attention to me, I attached myself to him and he became my master, and I saved his life. After the caravan had encamped on the evening of the slaughter Al-Agog had wandered to a neighboring stream to bathe, for the heat of the day had been intense. While he was in the cool waters of the river the attack was made. I saw all of his companions—men, women and children—put to the sword, and I said to myself, if Aboo returns he is no better than dead. Whereupon, springing to the body of a dying man I rubbed myself all over in his blood, then ran to the stream where my master was.

"Here, by my actions, barks, yelps and whimpering, I gave him such warning that he did not return to the camp, but hid himself in the thick undergrowth till the marauders having gone he came cautiously out, and beholding all that had taken place he wept, and said: 'By the Seven Sons of Misfortune, if I appear in the garments I now wear the people will know that I came from India and will slay me, as they have done my friends and fellow journeyers.'

“Whereupon, seeing a dead native of the country—for some had been killed in the attack upon our camp—Aboo, quick of intellect, threw off his own garments and replaced them by those of the dead man, laughing: ‘Behold, now I am a Persian, and am safe!’

“Then he took me in his arms, saying: ‘O, Ajeeb, dog that thou art, thou hast saved my life and thou shalt be my dog always, and I will be thy master!’ And he caressed me and I licked his face.

“Together we took our journey through Persia, traveling by the caravan route through the great desert, and joining a large company that was returning from Kelat, my master making himself a pleasant companion to those that journeyed with him, and gaining from them enough sustenance by exhibiting my tricks to them, also some of his own that he had invented—for he was crafty as a Fakir.

‘At last, getting into the more central and richer portions of the country, my master said: ‘Verily, I will be a mountebank, and thou, Ajeeb, shall be my assistant.’ The first performance that we gave in a little village brought us ten pieces of silver. With these Aboo bought jugglers’ clothes for himself and a string of bells to hang around my neck. So we journeyed on, picking up dirhems by the wayside, and once doing a merchant out of some pieces of gold that I stole from under his head while he slept, an accomplishment to which I was educated by my master, for Aboo had not only the quick intelligence of the Indian, but had also a

drop of the blood of Armenia within him, that gave him the assurance and subtlety of Sheytan himself.

“Until finally we came in sight of the rich, populous city of Jai, now known as Ispahan, surrounded by its gardens of olive, date and orange trees, and looking upon this Aboo patted me on the head and said; ‘Here is the place for us to dwell, O Ajeeb! Here the bones shall have meat upon them for thee, and the inhabitants will have purses of gold to be obtained by my subtletics.

“Whereupon we entered the city, and behold in one of the principal streets thereof, the one leading from the great square down to the river Zindehrud, there was a great concourse of people.

“Joining it we heard proclamation being made in the name of the Walec, or head of police, that reward of fifty pieces of silver would be given unto any one delivering to the officers of the law a thief who had stolen one hundred pieces of gold from the shop of Abdel-Abnadar, a dealer in perfumes.

“The bazar of the unfortunate merchant did not need to be pointed out to us, for Abdel-Abnadar was in front of it tearing his hair, throwing dust on his head, screaming he was a ruined man, and calling down imprecations upon the robber; and his words were like unto these: ‘May the villain’s tomb be defiled who stole my hundred pieces of bright yellow Caspian gold; money honestly earned by selling ambergris and accumulated by vending musk, whose sweet perfumes you can all enjoy—the savings of a lifetime. May the villain’s

father's and mother's tombs be defiled! May dogs tear his bones after he dies!'

"He continued in this wise, rending his hair, while we stood in the crowd that was jeering him. And the odor all about his shop was of musk—strong, penetrating musk.

"After a few minutes' profound thought, my master approached the lamenting merchant, and mocked him in these words: 'Verily, thou hast lost no hundred pieces of gold! Otherwise you would be too sad to sing the song you are now singing.'

"Whereupon Abdel-Abnadzar burst forth at him: 'Liar, and son of a liar! Would I offer a reward of fifty pieces of silver for nothing? Did I not have the hundred beautiful pieces of gold tied up securely in a goatskin bag, which I placed in this drawer surrounded by my precious musk so that the smell of the accursed goat would not come too strongly to my nostrils? Now, dost thou not believe? Verily, even here are some of the hairs of the goat still in the drawer!'

"And he held up some long billy-goat hairs to my master's eyes.

"'Verily, I believe,' answered Aboo, and he purchased from the scent merchant ten dirhems' worth of musk with subtle perfume, and took it away with him; I following his footsteps wondered at his behavior, as Al-Agog never perfumed himself—yea, seldom even washed.

"Then we wandered about the streets of the city, my master encouraging me to perform my tricks. So I walked on my hind legs and threw

my somersaults until the people laughed, and Aboo by this means became acquainted with them, asking them carelessly what kind of a Walee they had in this town.

“To this they answered: ‘He is a new Walee and is anxious to make a record. He is a righteous Walee and very severe upon all brought before him. If he catches the thief upon whom proclamation has been made, the soles of the rascal’s feet will not wish to touch the ground for months.’

“Then my master mused once more, and soon after led me to the shop of a skin merchant, where he purchased a goatskin bag. Taking this with him to a retired spot, he threw upon it the musk; and the odor of the goat, mixed with the musk, was of a most peculiar flavor to my nostrils.

“Next Aboo smelt of it and whined, then pushed it to my nose and whined again; and I, understanding him, whined also, for now I knew that when this mixture of musk and goat came to my nostrils, I was always to whine. Then he said: ‘Follow!’ And threw it ahead of him. So I ran and brought the goat-musk bag back to him. Soon by this means I understood that I was to follow this perfume whenever I smelt it, and to give my master notice, by whining.

“Having accomplished his purpose, for which he had bought the goatskin and the musk, Aboo carelessly threw away the bag into the street.

“Then we wandered all about the city, I running into court-yards and snuffing the clothes of passers-by; but no odor of goat and musk came

unto me. So we walked about all that day until about the time of the evening meal, at the entrance of a large khan, where merchants and dealers congregated, exhibited their goods and ate their food, suddenly goat and musk came floating to my nostrils. I uttered a low whinny and pursued the perfume into the place, my master stepping close behind me.

“Here the room being full of men who were eating, Aboo and I sat down with them—that is, he sat down and ate, while I ran about the company, pretending to seek for food but really snuffing for the odor of goat and musk.

“Some kindly threw me scraps of meat, others unkindly gave me kicks.

“Noting this my master said: ‘Do not kick that dog.’

“One of the merchants answered him: ‘Why not? He is a cur, and unclean.’

“But Aboo replied: ‘He is not a cur, neither is he unclean; if you kick him you shall surely suffer; for he is an enchanted dog.’

“At this one of the merchants jeered: ‘Yes, he is enchanted enough to steal our suppers!’ And they all laughed at his words.

“All the time I ran about them snuffing for the accursed scent of goat and musk, but found none—until the proprietor of the khan entered, bearing in his hands a sikbaj made of meat, vinegar and rice-flour, for the appetites of his guests. Then notwithstanding the vinegar was strong and its odor pungent, I discovered, as the man entered, the flavor of musk and goat. Whereupon I

whinnied and sniffed round the proprietor of the khan.

“The merchants said: ‘The dog is hungry and the food delights him!’ But Al-Agog knew differently, and he whispered in my ear: ‘Seek it!’ With this I flew at the master of the khan and, guided by my nose, seized upon a goat-skin purse that hung from his belt, but was concealed by his garments

“Then there was an outcry: ‘Kill the thieving dog!’ But Aboo said: ‘He is an honest dog, and if thou say a word against him I will smite thee on the face!’ Which he did with his staff to one of the merchants. And in a minute there was a great commotion, the proprietor crying out: ‘Hold thy hands, thou art ruining me! The Walee will bring me up before him for keeping a disorderly house!’

“But my master still smote right and left and the others smote at him, and verily I believe would have beaten him to death had not certain of the Walee’s officers entered with staves in their hands. These surrounded all who were in the room, compelling them to follow to the offices of justice, where, in the absence of the Cadi, the Walee administered the law as it seemed best to him to do.

“The keeper of the khan immediately made charges to the Walee against my master, saying: ‘This man without cause or reason lifted up his staff and would have beaten the whole of us had not thy officers interfered.’

“Upon this the Walee spoke and said: ‘By

his clothes this man is evidently a traveling mountebank. Beat him on the soles of his feet!’

“At which my master lifted up his voice and cried: ‘O most righteous Walee! this is a disguise to discover this man’s wrong-doing. I am an officer of the law from Damaseus in search of criminals, and am well beloved by the Cadi there—so much so that the Sultan will hear if thou treat me ill! I had a reason for beating these men. Thou hast offered a reward, O most wise and reverend Walee, for the thief who stole one hundred pieces of gold from the perfume dealer, Abdel-Abnadar. That thief is in thy presence!’

“And the Walee answered: ‘I will believe thou art an officer of the law if thou prove thy words, otherwise thy feet shall be beaten until there are no soles to them!’

“Then my master said: ‘Let the perfume merchant, who has been robbed, be sent for.’

“This was done. Very shortly Abdel-Abnadar stood in the presence of the Walee.

“‘Most grave and reverend Walee, let me question this merchant and prove my cause,’ said Aboo. Permission being given him he asked: ‘Thou art a perfume merchant, Abdel-Abnadar?’

“‘Of a surety I am; but where are my hundred pieces of gold?’ cried Abdel.

“‘Those hundred pieces will come afterwards; at present answer my questions,’ replied my master. ‘What perfumes do you sell?’

“‘Ambergris, rosewater and musk.’

“‘But chiefly musk,’ said Aboo, ‘to such an extent that thy whole bazar is perfumed with it?’

“‘Verily, thy words are true!’

“‘Then,’ continued my master, ‘thy money was contained in a goat-skin purse. That purse would be perfumed with musk.’

“‘Of a surety it would be, seeing that I had it concealed in my musk drawer,’ ejaculated the merchant.

“‘Verily,’ cried the Walee, ‘thou speakest words of wisdom, young man!’

“‘Then,’ said Aboo, ‘search that robber,’—pointing to the keeper of the khan,—‘and upon him will be found the goatskin purse perfumed with musk.’

“Immediately the officers did so, and the goat-skin purse was handed to the Walee, who sniffed it and cried: ‘By my father! It smells strong of musk. But in the purse are no pieces of gold.’

“‘The treasure,’ said my master, ‘was immediately secreted by the thief. A little of the bastinado will teach him to tell us where it is lodged.’

“‘Quick!’ said the Walee, ‘the kurbaj to this man’s feet until he tells the truth.’

“‘I will tell the truth,’ shouted the affrighted innkeeper. ‘I have stolen no gold. People who have known me for thirty years know me to be honest. This accursed goat-skin purse I picked up in the street to-day.’ And he mentioned the very place where my master had thrown it away.

“Aboo gave a start at this revelation, still he knew that it was now either his head or that of the unfortunate keeper of the khan. So he cried out: ‘That is a likely story! Would there be apt to be more than one goatskin purse smelling of

musk in all this town? Fine ladies use musk, but do not, I believe, carry goatskin purses about with them. The gold will follow the bastinado.'

“‘It nearly always follows the bastinado in my court,’ chuckled the Walee. At this, all save the innkeeper were convulsed with merriment. Every one laughs at a Walee’s jokes. With this the witty official clapped his hands and the officers threw the unfortunate khan-keeper upon the floor, and under the bastinado he screamed for mercy, but the Walee said: ‘The handkerchief of clemency I will not drop until thou has disclosed to me where are the hundred pieces of gold.’

“Then knowing he would be beaten to death unless he found treasure for the Walee, the unfortunate landlord sobbed: ‘Truly I have a hundred pieces of gold secreted in the mattress on which I sleep at my khan.’

“Whereupon the Walee sent the officers and they returned with the money. But on counting them there were a hundred and ten pieces of gold, and the wretched khan-keeper cried out: ‘They are the savings of my lifetime!’

“‘The *ten* pieces may have been,’ answered my master. ‘But the hundred came in the goatskin purse flavored with musk.’

“Whereupon the Walee said to Aboo: ‘Thou hast done well, young officer of the law; thou hast found the criminal quickly. Here are the extra ten pieces of gold for thy services. The hundred are for the expenses of the court.’

“Then he ordered the landlord to have his right hand cut off, which was promptly done, and

he was thrown into the street shrieking like a maniac. The keeper of the perfume shop screaming out for his hundred pieces of gold, he too was immediately bastinadoed and sent about his business, while the Walee said to the others who had been arrested with the khan-keeper: 'It is fortunate for thee that the night is well advanced; otherwise you should all taste the kurbaj for being in the society of a criminal. Beware how you keep bad company!'

"Whereupon all save my master ran away, happy to escape from this severe, yet discrete, dispenser of justice.

"'Thy learning in the law, young man,' said the Walee, who was very happy at obtaining the hundred pieces of gold, 'is great! There are other criminals in Ispahan besides the one you have apprehended.'

"'I will come to your court to-morrow, and will do any business that may please you,' answered Aboo, very happy at the result of this adventure.

"So that evening my master took lodgings in the city and purchased the wherewithal for a feast and had a pleasant night of it; and the next morning, giving me many bones and many caresses, said: 'Whereas I only gained silver as a mountebank, I gain gold as an officer of justice. Therefore an officer of justice will I be. Praise God and the wise Walee!'

"Then, arraying himself in garments more suited for his new occupation and followed by me he took his way to the court of justice where the Walee sat, looking over the order and happiness

of the city. To him Aboo said, prostrating himself: 'Are there any more criminals that I may discover, O master of justice. O most astute support of the Sultan?'

"To this the Walee replied: 'Yea, verily I have one or two investigations to give unto thee, O bright young man, whose nose scents criminals like unto the nostrils of a dog.'

"Here my master looked at me and I gazed at him and wagged my tail modestly.

"'To hear is to obey thee,' answered Al-Agog, making obeisance.

"'Then hearken unto these facts that I give thee,' whispered the Walee in a low voice, leading my master aside. 'Our Cadi here who is now on a visit to Damascus has left in my hands his beautiful daughter——'

"But here he paused suddenly, snapping his jaws together as if he had been rash, and continued: 'That will wait for another time. At present we will speak of police routine business, in which I can see thou art an adept.'

"Ah! we are now coming to the lady of the story!" interrupted the Princess of Georgia with a slight laugh and interested eyes.

"Then we have arrived at a good stopping place in my tale," said Huccazah, "and as the night is far advanced, I will take my leave."

With this the sage returned to his own apartments in the palace, leaving the beautiful Zelda to meditate upon what might happen to the Cadi's daughter in the hands of such an upright chief of police as the Walee of Ispahan.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DAUGHTER OF THE CADI AND THE DOG

CHUCKLING to himself at Zelda's curiosity Huccazah was admitted by the slaves of the Caliph to his apartment, in the royal palace, there to find dismay awaiting him. In his room was one of the pigeons, and it bore upon its tail a little packet which the sage opened and found to contain to his consternation the love amulet he had given to the Caliph, and the scroll wrapped about it read :

“HUCCAZAH : I send back thy amulet. It has been to me a curse rather than a blessing. Should you not hear from me or see me within three days, show this, I charge thee, to Hammad. Let this be his warrant to proclaim war, throw out the two great banners of the Shadow and the Night, and take the field with all the forces of the Caliphate against Bazook, King of the Tartars, for it may be the only hope I have of liberty and life.

AL-MANSUR.”

That night the sage pondered upon these words of evil portent from his sovereign, and several times muttered to himself: “The rash boy! If he had but taken my words of wisdom and put that baggage Zelda in his harem, she would have loved him when she discovered he was the Caliph and devoted to her.”

Then there being no Madrid mule at his command he summoned by his arts the genius who was favorable to him, and commanded him, saying :

“Take thy way to Astrakhan, the capital of the Tartars, and there put thy eyes again, O genius! upon the young man thou looked upon before, Al-Mansur, and do anything in thy power, I charge thee, to aid him, whether he calls upon thee or not. Only if he be dead, return at once to me.”

To this the genius replied: “I like thy errand, O Huccazah! The young man was enjoying himself the last time I saw him; I see sport ahead of me!” And he flapped his great wings with thunderous claps and departed.

Then Huccazah watched all the day, but the genius returned not to him, and he said: “My Caliph is not dead!”

Though when evening came he was in by no means a good temper with the beautiful Zelda, who greeted him from amongst her maidens; for the old man reckoned to himself: “It is thy beauty that has given all this anxiety to me and danger to my sovereign.”

But Zelda’s loveliness was so enchanting and her eyes so dreamy and her voice so soft as she asked eagerly if he had heard news of Zoab, the captain of the guard, that Huccazah’s heart was melted to her and he replied: “I have no message from Zoab,” not wishing to frighten the exquisite creature that was before him. “Has Zoab driven from thy mind the daughter of the Cadi and the lap dog Ajeeb?”

And she answered telling him a lady’s lie: “Zoab was but a passing thought; my mind has been turned to thy story of this evening. Sit down and tell it unto me.”

Whereupon all the maidens having been dismissed save Issa, the Spanish one who was to receive Huccazah's spirit in case accident happened to him, the story teller began :

“ Upon the Walee saying these words about the Cadi's daughter to my master I noted Aboo's eyes flashing with a subtle intelligence. But he asked no questions and received the instructions of his superior with evident attention.

“ ‘There are many in this town,’ said the Walee, ‘who, unmindful of the laws of the land, have houses in which, by means of dice and other games visitors to these places are despoiled of their money and property. Many of the keepers of these houses are rich. It would be proper to bring them to justice could we but discover them. But, alas, they are a crafty and cunning trade, carrying on their abominations secretly, and those who come into their clutches do not like to reveal themselves to me, in dread of punishment and for fear of the shame that would be put upon them by other men who would say, behold, these fools have been parted from their money. Dost thou think, O Aboo-al-Agog, thou canst discover some of these defiers of the law?’

“ ‘Verily I will become a rich young man in appearance and suffer myself to be led astray for the sake of justice,’ laughed my master.

“ But the Walee jeered him : ‘I had supposed I was bringing new brains to my assistance when I spoke to thee. That trick has been played upon the keepers of gambling houses here until they have become as wary of apparently rich young

men as foxes are of leopards. Hast thou no other plan?’

“Whereupon my master, looking at me, said: ‘O most grave and reverend Walee, from whose lips wisdom drivels from very overflow, if you will give into my hand some of these dice you have confiscated from gamesters thou hast already had under thy rod, I will try to bring unto thee some more of their accursed tribe.’

“At this the Walee handed to my master four or five of these little carved figures of ivory that bear various numbers upon them, asking him: ‘How will these enable thee to discover the men who use them?’

“My master returned: ‘Have no fear, I will bring them before thee within a few days.’

“‘See that you do!’ said the officer of justice, sternly; and looking in his eye my master saw that it would be well for him to have a few rich criminals for the Walee to place his hand upon.

“Therefore he departed and returned to his own house, where he showed these little figures to me until I knew them by sight. Then hiding them in different parts of the room he taught me to find them and bring them in my mouth to him. Next he cried unto me: ‘Seek!’ and turned me out of his rooms.

“Understanding him, I departed on my errand, wandering through the streets of the city, going into houses where I was not wanted, and sometimes barely escaping from them with my life.

“This I did all that day and returned to my

master late at night. But when he spoke to me and said: 'O Ajeeb, hast thou brought what I sent thee to find?' I wagged my tail deprecatingly and uttered a low whine. Whereupon Al-Agog sighed heavily and ate his meal with but little appetite.

"The next day he sent me forth again at sunset, saying: 'It is useless to seek these things in the daytime when they are mostly used at night.'

"Again I went out, but though I trotted past the doorkeepers of many houses into their courtyards and investigated many private rooms, assuming an easy, playful manner, I found nothing save a brickbat that found me, and I returned limping with one leg bruised and nearly broken to my master.

"He sighed on seeing me and the next morning he sighed more, for a message came to him from the Walee, saying: 'Where are the gamesters thou hast promised me? Have a care of yourself, young investigator, if thou art not diligent!'

"On hearing this, Aboo-Al-Agog the next night sent me out once more; and now chancing to encounter two youths of goodly appearance and rich garments, partly inflamed with wine, happy and singing, I followed them. These coming to the door of a house the gatekeeper let me enter with them, thinking I was their dog; though I noted he stopped several men who came after us, and would not let them pass.

"I continued on my way up a dark staircase, still following the two young men, who after

various knocks were admitted into a gayly lighted apartment, I with them, no one noticing me nor caring for me. In this apartment laughter mingled with curses, and the shaking of various of the little implements of which I was in search.

“While they were tossing them down, and counting the spots on them and the numbers of them, yea, even when one man gave a shout of triumph and cried: ‘I win ten thousand dirhems on this throw!’ I sprang between them, seized one of the dice in my teeth and fled from the apartment, followed by the curses of the unlucky gamester, whose good throw I had spoiled, for he had no proof of the number. This man pursued me with imprecations, but I darted into the street and lost him in the distance.

“All the time I held on to the die in my mouth, and coming with this to my master, he gave a shout of triumph, crying: ‘Bless thee, O Ajeeb, thou hast saved thy master from the rage of the Walee!’

“Whereupon he obtained officers of the law, and following me, I led them back to the house from which I had purloined the die. Surrounding and entering it they took many of its occupants, even with the implements of play in their hands, and brought them with the proprietor of the place before the Walee, who smiled upon my master and said: ‘Thou art a worthy officer of the law!’

“Whereupon under the sticks of justice the gamblers gave up all the money they had with them, the house was despoiled of its rich furnish-

ings and confiscated to the state, and all men cried: 'The wondrous Walee discovers all iniquity! He is as wise as he is powerful!'

"Of the fines and confiscations my master received his share, though a small one, for the expenses of the court were very great, the Walee said. But still the remunerations received by Aboo-Al-Agog were such as to quicken his wits, and aided by me he discovered several more houses of play, until there were no more gamblers in Ispahan.

"But these being exhausted the Walee frowned on my master, saying to him: 'Have you no more criminals to bring unto me?'

"To this question Aboo-Al-Agog shook his head sadly, whereupon the virtuous Walee remarked: 'I must have criminals. I am a new Walee, and it is necessary for me to keep my name exalted. Rack your brains, young man, and discover for me some rich evil doer so that I may warm the soles of his feet and make his purse bleed drops of gold.'

"At this my master went away and thought very hard; then suddenly joy came to him. He returned to his superior and said: 'Truly our eyes have been blind as bats!'

"'This may have been the case with you, young man,' answered the Walee, 'but as for me I see all things.'

"'As an officer of police, yes; as a judge, no. Justice is always blind.'

"'So it is,' muttered the great man. 'Tell me what thy eyes have missed.'

“‘Under thy predecessor, O most learned and wise Walee,’ answered Aboo-Al-Agog, ‘there were permitted, by payment of a bribe to him, to exist houses where slave girls took the heads of travelers into their laps, ministered unto them and comforted them after their long journeys through the desert.’

“‘And you tell this to me?’ cried the Walee tearing his hair, ‘to me, a virtuous man who has nine wives and has never cast his eyes beyond the confines of his own harem? Bring these abominable creatures and those who own them before me. They shall see that bribes have no weight with me.’

“Whereupon my master took the officers of justice and gathered before the Walee a great company of slave girls and those who owned them, and the Walee fell upon them despite their protestations that they had never been persecuted before, that a slight bribe had always mollified the former Walees.

“But he cried to them: ‘I am not as other Walees!’ And their masters and mistresses were beaten and imprisoned and the slave girls were sold in the slave market and their price was confiscated for the expenses of the court.

“Then all about the city said: ‘This is truly a just judge, and he has without doubt an upright officer of discovery’ And such was the virtue of this Walee that all of light morals were driven out, and travelers came but little to Ispahan, where they could no longer receive all the comforts of a home.

“At last such was the Walee’s severity that all criminals fled from Ispahan, and the revenues of his court became less and less; also the income of my master. But Aboo was not a man to lose a lucrative occupation for want of the means to carry it on. He said to himself: ‘If there are no more criminals in Ispahan, verily I will make some. They can be manufactured even as I manufactured one out of the keeper of the khan.’

“Then he went to his superior and prostrated himself before that officer, saying: ‘Are there no more thieves in Ispahan?’

“And the Walee sighed: ‘No, verily to my own undoing I have stamped out all evil doers of that class.’

“Then my master asked: ‘Are there no murderers? Are there no perjurers?’

“‘I am afraid not,’ muttered the officer of justice.

“Then Aboo said; ‘Are there not laws, *old* laws, in Ispahan, *forgotten* laws? Is there not an edict against drunkenness?’

“Therefore the Walee commanded his clerks and scribes to get out the statute scrolls; and after days of research they found a law long ago forgotten—one made by a Sultan dead two hundred years. And it read in this wise:

“‘All are forbidden to drink of wine more in one day than they can earn by one hour’s labor. Those whose appetites make them forget this edict shall come under our eye and be properly dealt with by our officers.’

“Then my master said: ‘There are now many criminals in Ispahan if this law is enforced.’

“ ‘Yea,’ chuckled the Walee, ‘under this statute I can convict half the town. Go out, find them and bring them in.’

“Whereupon Aboo departed, I trotting at his heels. And he stationed himself at the various wine shops and noticed who brought the largest vessels to be filled with red wine, and if any man bought a whole skin of it he followed his servants and noted his house. Then that evening, accompanied by the officers of the law, he went about and apprehended many people, some of them the best tradesmen and merchants in Ispahan; but he did not dare to touch the high officials connected with the governor or any of the sheiks or their dependents.

“The next morning in the court the fines and confiscations were enormous and the stick and kurbaj did great work.

“Upon this scene I looked, and as I squatted upon my haunches, I, Ajeeb, thought it was well I was a dog—I could drink all I liked and no one beat me for it. Verily I was better off than if I was a man.

“This resurrection of the forgotten statute was repeated the next day and the next. Our justice was so stern in Ispahan that the town became like unto a desert of virtue—such was the fear of his severity. As it was the place became as gloomy as the entrance of the Seven Hells, and so strictly virtuous that all men and women who could get out of the way fled from it.

“But this brought a great decrease in the revenues of the governor of the city, and that official

commenced to lift up his voice and cry out that he was undone, that the Walee was destroying the prosperity of Ispahan and all connected with it, even to the governor himself. Therefore he sent a messenger to the Sultan at Damascus, praying him that he send at once the absent Cadi to take the reins of justice in his hands again.

“This news coming to our ears the Walee looked at my master and suggested: ‘My worthy disciple of the law, if my head falls what will become of thine?’

“‘Verily, it will be in the basket with thine, illustrious Walee,’ answered Aboo.

“To this the Walee said: ‘Truly, we understand each other!’ and took Aboo-Al-Agog aside, and I, following at his heels, heard his words and they were to this effect: ‘My one chance with the Cadi is to marry his only daughter, who was left in my harem for safety when that official took his journey to Damascus.’

“‘Ah, you will use a little of the authority of thy office upon the maiden,’ whispered my master. ‘Shall I inveigh her into a violation of the law for thee, O virtuous Walee?’

“‘Impossible!’ answered the Walee. ‘If a hair of her head is harmed the Cadi will reckon with me for each hair.’

“‘Then the lady is favorably disposed to thee?’ muttered Al-Agog.

“‘Of a truth that is the trouble. I have pursued her with words of love, but she looks upon my gray head with disdainful eyes, so much so that I think she would sooner be wedded to a

ghoul than to me. But I have a plan by which she may be mollified, and thou must aid me in it.'

"'To hear thy words is to obey them,' answered Aboo, making obeisance. 'Thy salt is my salt, thy safety is my safety. If thou art injured I am destroyed.'

"'I know that,' returned the Walee, 'otherwise I would not trust thee. Behold, this is my enterprise. You—did you wash yourself sufficiently—would be a handsome young man. This girl may take a liking unto thee if she sees thee, for I have kept her in my harem where her eyes have looked upon no man save myself. I will arrange it in such a way that she shall behold thee, Then if she loves thee thou canst contrive it that I surprise her with thee and so obtain, by my threats of telling her father the Cadi, such influence over her so that she may be induced to marry me to avoid my uttering words to her father that may cause him to curse her, beat her and cast her out of his house.'

"'Wallah!' cried my master, 'I will array myself as if I were a sheik or emir of the court. The damsel shall love me, and it shall be as thou desirest.'

"Accordingly, my master having made himself like unto a man who would be beloved, arraying himself in fine raiment, and placing upon his person some jewels of which, unknown to his superior, he had despoiled various prisoners, came beneath the windows of the Walee's harem. After a time a maiden opened a lattice and looked out, and behold! she was beautiful as the

women of Yezd. She gazed upon my master, and after a time dropped a handkerchief upon his head.

“The next day, at the same time, Aboo appeared in the same place, and the maiden dropped out another handkerchief upon his head, and in it a scroll which read: ‘Follow the woman that snaps her fingers three times in thy face at the right hand corner of the great bazar nearest the river.’

“Whereupon my master took his way to the great bazar and posted himself on the right hand corner nearest the river and waited. After a time an old woman came past him and snapped her fingers and walked on. Again, in a few moments the same old woman passed him walking the other way, and once more her fingers made signal. A third time did she wander past him and snapped her fingers under his nose.

“Then my master followed her, and I followed my master, as she took us up several narrow streets to a wicket, and knocked three times.

“The door was opened by a eunuch whose black face grinned and whose white teeth showed as my master placed a gold piece within his hand; and following the old woman we were introduced into a beautiful chamber occupied by a lady whose eyes were as black as sloe leaves, and whose eyebrows were arched as new moons. Altogether her youth and her beauty were so great that they struck Aboo-al-Agog with such admiration that for a moment even he was dumb—which was wonderful, as he had usually a face as brazen as if it were made by a coppersmith.

“The lovely maiden turned to him, and in a voice that seemed attuned from lute strings, said: ‘I have never beheld any other man but my father and the gray-bearded Walee, and I love thee, O beautiful youth.’

“With this she lifted up two lips as red as the coral of the sea for my master to kiss, which he did, and he murmured: ‘I love thee!’

“The words were scarce out of his mouth when there was a banging at the door; the old woman entered, and said hurriedly: ‘Save thyself, young man, the Walee is coming!’

“At this Aboo darted out, but not before the maiden had whispered to him: ‘To-morrow evening at eight, at the same place the old woman will snap her fingers.’

“So my master was conducted secretly from the house, and coming to the Walee he said to him: ‘All is as thou desirest; the maiden loves me.’

“‘You have seen her?’ asked his superior.

“‘Only for three minutes,’ answered the young man, ‘but in them she told me she adored me.’

“‘That will be sufficient,’ said the Walee, ‘thou shalt never see her again. Only be prepared to give thy evidence before her father, the Cadi, when he arrives.’

“‘Whereupon the Walee rubbed his hands and muttered: ‘I have won her; this pearl shall come unto my old heart to warm it, also to save me from her father’s wrath.’

“But he counted his gains too soon, for my master had also said to himself: ‘I shall win her; she

shall come to me to warm my young heart, and save me from her father, the Cadi's, wrath.'

"Therefore at the appointed time the next evening Aboo stood at the right hand corner of the bazar nearest the river, and the old woman approached him three times and each time she snapped her fingers. Accepting the signal he departed after the hag through the narrow streets to the Walee's harem, I following after. But at the wicket, the negro eunuch being in a hurry slammed the door in my face, and I found myself on the outside of the house with Aboo-Al-Agog upon the inside. Then such was my great affection for my master that I wandered about sniffing at the portals, but no one heeded me.

"After passing the door of the house many times, I heard the noise of some one being beaten and cries of anguish. Whereupon I said to myself, 'It is the Walee smiting my master!' and I set up such fearful yells and shrieks and scratchings at the door that finally it was opened to me and I found the Walee attended by a slave whom he had been beating and whose cries had come to my ears.

"Looking upon me the Walee said: 'This is Ajeeb the dog of Aboo-Al-Agog. Why is he here? Why does he come sniffing round my door?—Hi! stop cur!'

"For my anxiety for my master was so great that I ran hurriedly past him, and finding my way up the stairs rushed about until I came to the harem, in one of the rooms of which I scented the ardent Aboo. So I wagged my tail and uttered a

whinny of joy but all the time the Walee was crying: 'Bismillah! why is this dog in the house? He has never come in before. What is he seeking?'

"But on hearing my whines of delight he suddenly shouted: 'By Allah, his master is in my harem! The villain Aboo-Al-Agog has not hearkened unto my commands and is again uttering words of love to the daughter of the Cadi.'

"So summoning his eunuchs he rushed in, I following them and sniffing about.

"Apparently there was no one in the apartment save the beautiful girl, who said to him: 'Old man, how dost thou dare to intrude upon the sanctity of my private apartments? Thou hast not even called "Permission!" as is the custom, nor given warning voice before you entered.'

"To this the Walee answered: 'I am lord in my own house! Besides, another has entered before me. This dog knows it as well as I.'

"Then of a sudden I ran to a neighboring divan, drawn there by my nose, and finding Aboo beneath I licked his face while he cursed me under his breath. And even as I ran about and whined with joy at finding him alive, my master was dragged from his hiding place.

"Confronting him the Walee spat upon Al-Agog's face and cried: 'Thou villain that I have raised from nothing, dar'st thou to look with eyes upon this lady who is to be my wife?'

"To this the maiden jeered: 'Heed him not, the old man is a liar! I love thee, Aboo, it is thy bride I shall be, not his!'

“Whereupon the Walee went into a fit of jealousy and rage, and under his orders my master was dragged to prison. Where the Walee said to him: ‘To-morrow morning the bastinado, and after that thy head!’

“But Aboo knew the ropes of justice as well as his superior; and a number of the officials of the court being frightened that in his predicament he might disclose their peccadilloes, such as taking bribes from prisoners, connived at his escape.

“By their means my master was set free secretly in the night and fled, making his way along the road to Damascus, where he met the Cadi returning from that city, full of wrath at the Walee from stories that had come to him from the Governor of Ispahan.

“Into the Cadi’s open cars Aboo-Al-Agog told his tale, confirming the rumor of his superior’s unrighteousness and offering to appear as witness against him.

“So they all came back to the city and the Cadi had the Walee thrown into prison. By my master’s evidence the Walee was proved to have converted to himself fines that should have been given unto the state. Therefore the governor’s hand being also upon him, the Walee’s head fell into the basket, his possessions were confiscated to the Sultan, and Aboo, under the favor of the Cadi, became Walee himself, and would have been prosperous—for he had a discreet tongue and knew how to flatter and how to lie—but for the love of women, that brings men often to destruction.

“ Apparently at first even love went to his liking; as the daughter of the Cadi proclaimed to her father her passion for him, and was betrothed to him, and the day was fixed for the nuptials of Aboo and the beautiful Luluah, for such was the name of the exquisite maiden.

“ But in making his visits to the Cadi, it chanced in an evil hour for Aboo-Al-Agog that the Governor of Ispahan, one of the great emirs of the country, saw her, and the wondrous loveliness of the coming bride caught his eye. Hearing she was betrothed to Aboo the Walee, this governor put evil eyes upon my master, and said: ‘ There is no doubt he is a bad Walee,’ and looked about for the proofs of the same, for he wished to have Al-Agog’s head in order that he might marry the beautiful daughter of the Cadi.

“ But my master was so discreet it was difficult to get evidence against him—even by the governor; and Aboo would have been happy and well in this life had not by ill-hap a thief been apprehended who had upon his person a purse of goat-skin flavored with musk.

“ Now this criminal unfortunately was not captured by the officers of justice belonging to Aboo, but by a patrol of cavalry that circulated throughout the surrounding country under the immediate command of the governor of the city. So the robber being brought by the officer of the troops before the governor, he interrogated the prisoner and discovered that he was the man who had really stolen the hundred pieces of gold from the perfume merchant, Abdel-Abnadzar.

“Whereupon the governor sent to my master and said: ‘Thou hast failed in thy duty; thou hast not apprehended the thief of the one hundred pieces of gold from the merchant, Abdel-Abnadzar.’

“‘On the contrary,’ replied Aboo, ‘by my means he was apprehended. The landlord of the khan has already suffered for it; he has lost his hand.’

“Then the governor sent out and had brought before him the keeper of the khan, also the perfume merchant, and they told their tales to him; one as to how he had been robbed of his gold which was confiscated to the state, and the other how he had been unjustly convicted of being a thief and had his hand smitten off.

“And the governor conferred with the Cadi, and said: ‘This man’s head, who has convicted innocent men from false evidence, must fall. Also, thou having been derelict in thy duty in leaving thy post and going to Damascus, whereby this town has suffered greatly, canst only find favor in my eyes by sending to my harem thy beautiful daughter.’

“Whereat the Cadi kissed the hem of his lord’s garment, and to save himself sent his daughter to the seraglio of the Governor of Ispahan, and condemned my master to die the death of terrors.

“While they made preparations for his punishment, Aboo was led into an adjoining room, and I, Ajeeb, the lap dog, sympathizing with him, ran after him and fawned upon him as he lay chained. Then in his despair he lifted up his foot

and kicked me with all his might, and I died.

“But as I died—though I would have chosen any other resting place on earth—my spirit flew into the body of Aboo-Al-Agog, and behold, there I stood manacled, shackled and condemned.

“A minute after the officers of the law came unto me, and they led me out to die the death of terrors.”

Here, as he told the story, Huccazah's face became agitated, and he muttered: “During my existence I have suffered the pangs of death two hundred and fifty-five times, but this one I cannot bear to think of!”

Whereupon the Princess said to him in sad, sympathetic voice, dominated slightly by woman's curiosity: “What kind of a death is the death of terrors?”

At which Huccazah uttered a horrible cry and shuddered: “Boiling oil has such an oozing, insinuating way with it! Your feet turn away from it as they hold you over its bubbling surface, then into it you go, inch by inch, as it enters the very marrow of your bones, filling them with agonies that are to you as the joys of Paradise when the next inch of you is laved with liquid fire. Ah! how I screamed and writhed and struggled! What piteous cries to heaven I sent up as my eyes rolled in bloodshot anguish in that boiling cauldron, as over me stood the Governor of Ispahan enjoying the dying agonies of the man who he knew was adored by the beauty he would that night espouse.”

“And you were sped?” murmured the beautiful Zelda, with tears in her eyes.

“Sped?” cried Huccazah. “No! At my last gasp, with one bound my spirit entered the body of the Governor of Ispahan! There I stood, one of the great emirs of the country, at my hand bowed the Cadi who had given unto me his daughter for a bride, and looked upon the body of a dead man, seething in the cauldron! *Boiling oil was but a reminiscence to me!* I gazed about and would have been happy, save for one thing: I knew that the beautiful Luluah who was even now given into my hand loved this dead thing in the cauldron!”

“Oh, tell me about the Emir of Ispahan and the beautiful Luluah,” said the princess eagerly

But the wise Huccazah returned unto her with a chuckle: “That will be for thy ear to-morrow evening, my princess.”

So he departed once more, making his way to the palace, the monarch of which was absent, yea, perchance dead in distant Tartary. And he might well be anxious as to the fate of the Caliph.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TEA MERCHANT OF ASTRAKHAN.

IT was on the morning of the sixth day previous to this that Al-Mansur had departed privately from Baghdad. Two squadrons of horse under the real Zoab, a captain of the guard, and cousin of Hammad, formed his escort. The party traveled rapidly and by the Caliph's orders encamped early in the afternoon in a grove of date palms by the banks of the Tigris.

Here the royal pavilion was pitched and all preparations made for the night, when the Caliph, calling his captain to him, directed him to permit no one of the party to leave the encampment until his return.

"O Commander of the Faithful, we have only provisions for two weeks," answered the officer.

"Then remain here two weeks. After that time, in case I do not return to thee, march thy troops to Baghdad and report to Hammad, the regent, for he may have need of thee."

With this, it now being dusk, Al-Mansur ordered the madrid mule, which had been led by the side of his charger during the day, to be brought unto him equipped for the journey, placing upon its saddle two bags, each containing five hundred pieces of gold, also a sack filled with dates, bread and dried meat. Then armed with scimitar, dagger and a powerful bow, in the use of

which he was expert, the Caliph mounted the madrid mule.

“O Master of the World, you take no attendant with you,” remarked his officer as he prostrated himself and held his monarch’s stirrup. “Permit at least thy slave to accompany thee with a few trusty men.”

“That is impossible, O faithful Zoab,” answered the Caliph. “It is my wish to depart alone.”

With these words the sovereign privately took his way from the encampment at a moderate trot, but as soon as he was out of sight of his escort he called upon the mule for speed. Thereupon the beast of enchantment, the one inhabited by the Madrid, spurned the ground with his hoofs and distance was as naught. So, late that night the Caliph found himself on the southern slopes of the great snowy range that cuts off Persia from Georgia.

Alighting from the mule in a sequestered valley, Al-Mansur made his meal from some of the provisions he had brought with him, and slept that evening with no canopy above him save the starry heavens, the mule grazing contentedly by the side of his sleeping master

The next morning, rising with the first rays of the sun, Al-Mansur baited his mule with one of the wondrous balls of spiced meat Huccazah had given him. After a drink of water from a babbling brook which came cool and sparkling from the snowy range above it, and a light repast from his bag of provisions, he again mounted and very early in the day took his way over the mountains

in a manner that surprised him; for the beast, inspired by the strength of the condiment administered to him, leaped from crag to crag of this gigantic range with the strength of fifty mountain antelopes, causing the Caliph's head to swim as he found himself flying through space with naught beneath him for a thousand feet save the blue ether that overhangs the world.

Distance was naught, and in the course of two hours the madrid mule, which had such intelligence that he sometimes made his gait no faster than that of an ordinary animal, trotted up the Street of the Skin Dealers in Tiflis. Here, making inquiries the Caliph soon discovered the home of Boabdil the Wise Man of the Mountains.

"You are not unexpected, O noble youth," said the sage, after reading Huccazah's letter that Al-Mansur presented to him. "Huccazah had already notified me by means of a genius that thou wert coming and also thine errand."

Then he asked for word of the Princess Zelda and her father, but all this very cautiously, and in a low voice. "For," he added, "thou art now in the land ruled with the iron hand of the barbarian."

"Yes," whispered Al-Mansur. "I have come to bear back to my love the head of Bazook, the King of the Tartars."

"It is a rash errand that has brought thee," answered the old man. "I had presumed from the communication from Huccazah that the power of the Caliph and all the legions of the Faithful would be employed in this service and he has sent only you."

“I come on my own errand, uncommanded and unsupported,” was the reply.

“Then I fear you will never go back, unless you return immediately,” sighed the sage.

“That I will never do without the head of the Tartar,” said Al-Mansur, with the ardor of love. Then he asked earnestly: “Will you give me your counsel and your aid?”

“With my whole heart,” replied the old man, “for since Bazook conquered this country Georgia has been overrun by his tax gatherers, its religion has been insulted and its mosques defiled. Its people would rise to a man to again place their rightful king upon the throne, but there is hardly one chance in a myriad that you will succeed. Remember Bazook is himself a most valiant warrior. Surrounded as he is by the power of a mighty kingdom, how will you unaided pass his guards, and if you slew him would not thy head fall with his?”

“Notwithstanding, I shall attempt the adventure,” replied the Caliph in a voice made ardent by the thought of his loved one, who had promised to give her heart only to the man who brought back the tyrant’s head.

Then said Boabdil: “Bazook is now in his capital. I can give thee a scroll to Mustapha, the Kurd, a man well disposed toward me, and who is a merchant in Astrakhan. From him you can obtain information of the movements of the king and a local knowledge of the place that will be necessary to you. At his house you can stay without arousing suspicion as to your errand.

You had better," murmured the old man, after considerable thought, "enter Astrakhan as a visitor from some one of the Eastern khanates, which have a large trade with the capital."

"You have no friend among the Tartar king's officers—you know of no Prince of Georgia attendant at Bazook's court, but who really loves his country?" questioned the Caliph. "One whom I can trust to aid me?"

"Those who really love their country," answered Boabdil sadly, "are dead, or chained and slaving in the gold mines." Then he suddenly said: "Stay! There is Meruf, one who floats with the stream, one who blows with the wind. He was governor of the royal palace here under our rightful king, but he is now—having taken service with Bazook—assistant governor of the royal palace at Astrakhan. Though Meruf cannot be trusted, if he thought the Tartar king would fall he would become a true Georgian once more; because without fear of this mighty tyrant the whole land would rise. In addition, four times has my science as a physician saved Meruf's life. I will give you a letter to him. Under what name will you travel to Astrakhan?"

"As Zanza, a wealthy dealer in teas, from the borders of Kathay," replied the Caliph, inspired to this answer by the aroma from a pot of that wondrous herb of the far East that was boiling over some charcoal in a nearby brazier.

"You have drawn your ideas from this blessed beverage that has been my solace many years," said Boabdil. "Fortunately you are speaking to

one who can supply you with the article of your trade; for I had sent to me a generation ago many cases of the very finest brands of tea obtainable within the whole dominions of the Emperor of China. Some of these packed in leaden caskets I will place at thy command as samples of thy wares. Drink with me of this beverage that thou may'st know how to praise it!"

Whereupon, over a cup of wondrous flavor, Boabdil discussed with Zanza, the new-made tea merchant of Astrakhan, some of the minor details of his adventure, telling him how he must deport himself in the Tartar capital.

Then as they conversed together Boabdil, noting the ardent expressions and impulsive demeanor of the Caliph, said to him: "I have here something for thee, most important to a young man. This talisman is of greater value than the one Huccazah gave to thee. That may aid thee in thy enterprise, but will be a constant source of danger to thee; for the love of women is a dangerous thing. This charm will be a continual safeguard."

With these words he handed to Al-Mansur a little silver bell with a girdle attached to it, and continued: "Bind this upon thy waist. Young men always look ahead of them. Whenever you hear its warning sound turn thee quickly and gaze behind thee. It is sometimes more important to know what is following than what is before you. But you are anxious to be upon your way."

Thereupon he brought into the room ten leaden caskets of tea, the flavor of which was beyond

anything Al-Mansur had enjoyed before; their aroma filled the apartment with exquisite but invigorating perfume.

“These,” remarked Boabdil, “are a present worthy the acceptance of a sultan. Bazook and the ladies of his harem will bless thy coming if thou bring'st such an offering to them.”

Then together the two placed the precious packages with much care upon the back of the madrid mule, and the Caliph departed upon his journey, trotting at an ordinary pace through the streets of the city, but after passing beyond the gates and the view of those upon its watch towers, the enchanted creature suddenly increased its speed to that of the wind; and within three hours after leaving Tiflis the Caliph found himself approaching a great city from which floated the banners of the King of Tartary. It was Astrakhan.

Crossing a great river, many miles above the town, which the madrid mule did with rare discretion, leaping from one island to another, so as to make his entry by the eastern gate by the road leading from Buchara, to give his story of being a trader from an eastern khanate the semblance of truth, Al-Mansur entered the place, and after some inquiry made his way to the home of Mustapha, the Kurd.

This man, like most of his race, though of a surly and dogged disposition, was as a prince in hospitality. He was seated in a large and opulent bazar filled with his goods, and the moment he read the letter from Boabdil presenting Zanza,

the tea merchant, to him, and begging him to give him aid and hospitality, he embraced the young man, exclaiming: "Eat with me to-day, O Zanza! Your teas shall be set out before the people, so that you shall obtain great profit from them if they are as fine as you report."

Therefore the two having eaten their noonday meal together, and the Caliph obtaining from the Kurd much information as to Bazook, his court and the city about him, that afternoon he opened his samples, and behold, Mustapha, with rolling of eyes and smacking of lips, cried out: "Verily, such teas have never been seen before in Astrakhan! They shall have the place of honor in my bazar!"

So the Caliph placed his wares on sale, squatting behind them after the manner of a dealer, and praising his goods like any lying tradesman; though at times the words stuck in his mouth, which had been only accustomed to utter commands, and his body got tired of making obeisances that he had only been used to receive. It seemed a degradation to him that he, Al-Mansur, should thus be making himself the veriest huckster. But he thought of Zelda and his own safety, and concluded that as he was going to be a tea merchant he must be one with his whole heart and soul, for he was now surrounded by hundreds of thousands whose swords would spring from their scabbards to give him death did they but guess his errand.

So all this day he sung his song: "O good people of Astrakhan, behold the most lovely teas

ever brought for thy delectation from far Kathay, teas that the Emperor Tin-Pooh and his wives and concubines have declared were more beautiful than those plucked in paradise!"

And Al-Mansur's voice being loud and his shrieking vociferous, various ladies, chiefly those of the higher class and one or two connected with the palace, demanded samples of his herbs. To these he gave small portions from one of the leaden caskets, thinking that by means of its wondrous flavor he would be brought into communication with the chief people of the court, and so at last, to the king, his enemy.

In truth it was so, for the next morning many came to test the fine teas that had been brought to Astrakhan. Among them, attended by two eunuchs, was an old woman of hideous appearance, who said: "Give me thy teas."

He gave some to her, and she took the herbs away, but came back again within the hour and said: "I will take all; I buy for the ladies of the seraglio of Bazook, our King."

To this the Caliph answered: "I will not sell unto thee. These are only samples. But I will give a case to the most beautiful lady in Bazook's harem as an offering, so that it may come to the ears of the king what wondrous teas I sell, and he may be induced to taste them."

"O ho! You wish to gain the good will of Bazook's favorite, so that thou may'st sell thy tea to the King of Tartary," returned the hag.

"Thy words are truth," answered Al-Mansur, "because if the King enjoys my tea all the tea-

drinkers in his dominions will follow him. For I will cause it to be proclaimed from the corners of the streets that Bazook drinks no other tea than that of Zanza, the tea merchant."

"Verily you have an eye for trade," replied the old woman, "and some day will make as cunning a huckster as if thou wert an Armenian. Will you trust me to carry the herb to the beauty of Bazook's harem?"

"No," he answered, "but I will give you this package for thine own"—and he handed the hag a leaden casket containing tea of a most wondrous flavor—"if you will bring the lady to me that I may speak words to gain her favor when I make my offering unto her."

"She may come," chuckled the old woman, "for the lady Leila loves tea as well as I love it, and I love it better than God. I will bear your words to her."

In truth she did bear them; for within two hours a lady veiled from head to foot attended by eight eunuchs and three or four woman slaves came to the khan, the old woman with her, who whispered in Al-Mansur's ears: "Behold! this is the favorite Leila to whom thou shalt present the case of tea. Since Bazook ten moons ago conquered Georgia and for one short minute saw the Princess Zelda unveiled in face and form, he would look upon no other woman until the exquisite Leila was placed before him scarce a month ago."

To this the putative Zanza, his blood boiling in his veins, returned under his voice: "What proof dost thou give me that this lady is the favorite of

Bazook, Lord of Lords, before whose feet I grovel?"

"You may guess," whispered the old woman, "by the lady's voice that she is lovely. Her face is as beautiful as the tones that will come to you."

So after this conversation she led him to the lady and he prostrated himself before her; and a sweet voice came to him, which said; "I have been told of thy wondrous teas, O merchant; that thou wouldst not sell them, though I am willing to buy them with a great price, but that thou declarest that thou will only present them to me, that I in my turn may offer them to the King, my Lord, and so gain favor for thy wares throughout his dominions."

Her voice was so enchanting that the Caliph believed that her face must be as lovely as the moon upon its fourteenth day, and the possessor of these notes must indeed be the favorite of the King.

Therefore he answered: "O lady, all that I have is at your service," and gave unto her slaves a casket of lead containing the finest teas he had brought with him. Then as he looked at her, noting the grace of each movement, it came into his mind: "If this lady but loves me, she can give me access to the man whose head is my desire!"

Then in a flash he remembered the charm Hue-eazah had given him; the one that lay on his bosom—the one that would bring to him the love of anyone he desired. Thereupon he wished that the being he looked upon would adore him and have passion for him and become his slave from love.

And immediately he knew from the quiver of her voice and the trembling of her limbs as she said farewell to him that the lady Leila loved him; for her voice was tender though tremulous, and he could see her eyes lighting up beneath the tissues of her veil.

Then Al-Mansur knew the charm was potent, but scarce how potent it really was.

Almost immediately the fair one bowed her head and departed with the eunuchs and slaves and the old woman bearing the tea from him; but behold, as she left she whispered into the Caliph's ear: "When you see this ring"—and she showed an emerald curiously engraved—"believe the words that come unto thee with it."

To this Al-Mansur bowed his head and made obeisance, humbly whispering: "Thy words are my law, O Lady of the Veils!"

Whereupon some three hours afterward, as it was approaching evening, the old woman made her appearance again, and taking Al-Mansur aside displayed the ring and said to him cautiously: "Thy teas must have a magic charm, O Zanza, for I bear a message unto thee from the lady who came with me that would be her death and thy death also did it but reach to the ears of the King, her master. Bribe me heavily that thy servant may keep her tongue within her lips."

On hearing this speech the putative tea merchant thought it wise to give the hag fifty pieces of gold.

After counting and testing the money, she opened her mouth and spoke to him, trembling

and looking about her for fear she was overheard: "Stand outside thy khan when darkness has fallen upon the earth and watch for me carefully. Have with thee a small rope ladder that will bear thy weight and of the length of ten cubits. When I pass thee do thou follow after at a short distance, and note the door into which I enter. Then station thyself beneath the sixth window on the right of that entrance, listen for a song in the lovely voice you heard to-day, and watch for a silken cord let down from the window. To this cord attach one end of thy ladder. It will be drawn up. Then if thou art the man of love thou pretendest to be, ascend to the joys of paradise. But do all this in such a manner as to cause no one to look with curiosity or suspicion upon your movements. Thy head, my head and her head depend upon it, for I have her commands to lead thee to her."

CHAPTER XIII.

BAZOOK THE BARBARIAN.

THAT evening, girding on a sharp seimitar and agitated in mind, for the Caliph was not accustomed to penetrating into other men's harems, he stood dressed in the finest attire that could be purchased in Astrakhan, in front of the bazar of Mustapha the Kurd. And behold! shortly after the red glows issued from the unceasing burning incense in the temples of these unbelievers—for they worship fire, not God—the old woman passed Al-Mansur and he followed her.

After leading him through dark lanes with many turnings, in the course of time she arrived before a small wicket in a high wall of heavy masonry built with watch towers above it. Pausing here the hag coughed twice, then rapped upon the gate three times. Immediately the door was opened to her, and she passed in.

From this entrance, remembering his instructions, Al-Mansur counted carefully the sixth window to the right and took his stand beneath it; for it was so high above him it would have been death to have fallen from it to the lane below. This window was easily distinguished by a faint light which came through its open casement. From it Al-Mansur heard the sweet voice that had

seemed so beautiful to him in the bazar, singing a few couplets of a Persian love ditty :

“ Which loves me best ? The Emir brave
 Whose eunuchs guard me day and night,
 Or my other lover, the Christian slave
 Whose every kiss means death and fright.
 The Emir has bought me with his gold,
 The slave has won me at risk of life.
 The Emir’s kisses to me seem cold
 When I think with a sigh
 Of the slave who would die
 To kiss me but once,
 To kiss me but once.”

As the last words fell upon his ear, he saw a fair hand in the light of the casement above him. Within it was a silken cord that was being lowered to the street beneath. The Caliph was about to attach his rope ladder to it, when of a sudden the silver bell given him by the sage Boabdil sounded sweetly but sharply in his ear. Remembering his instructions he turned and looked behind him. Just as he did so two black slaves entered the lane, laughing and chatting together.

Whereupon Al-Mansur with a quick step concealed himself behind a turret in the wall, and in the darkness the two passed him, one saying : “ Did you hear the love song the Lady Leila is singing, doubtless to Bazook, her king, as his head is pillowed in her lap.”

“ By Sheytan,” answered the other, “ some day thou mayst have her head in thy bag, O Korfuh, for if I judge rightly—and my harem experience has been great—this lady’s eyes would like to

roam outside the seraglio if she feared not a jealous king !”

By this time they had passed out of hearing, going toward the same wicket and entering the same door by which the old woman had departed. But Al-Mansur as he looked after them now knew that the hag had told him the truth, and that the lady who had accepted his tea offering at the bazaar, and whose white hand was now at the casement above him, was in truth the favorite of his enemy, Bazook.

Hope of success in his adventure took away from him the fear of death that it involved ; the Caliph hurriedly tied the cord to one end of the small rope ladder he had brought with him.

Immediately the silken cord was drawn up again to the window, bearing with it the rope ladder. A moment or two after, this was shaken three times. Then with a muttered prayer to God, Al-Mansur with the agility and strength of youth rapidly mounted and a moment after stood in an apartment which exceeded in magnificence any hall within his great palaces in Baghdad or Damascus.

But he had no time to note the details of this ; all he knew was that gorgeous magnificence, regal luxury and barbaric splendor were all about him, and that two of the whitest and softest arms in the world were around his neck, and a voice sweeter than lute strings or the nightingale at evening was saying to him : “ O Zanza, though thou art but a tea merchant thou art a hero, for thou hast braved death to meet me. For this I honor thee with my

lips that thou mayst kiss at thy desire, for I, despite the bonds of the barbarian, am only slave in soul and heart to thee!"

"And you love me?" whispered the Caliph, not only to test Huccazah's charm, but also because he was dazed with the warmth of his reception.

"Since this morning I have thought of naught but thee."

"Me, a tea merchant?"

"That is what thou callest thyself, but in truth," laughed the beautiful being, "I know you are a prince, perchance the Emperor of China himself! Thy signet ring bears the arms of a kingdom," and she glanced earnestly but archly at the magnificent ring that gleamed upon the finger of Al-Mansur; and he, looking at it with a sudden start, reflected that he had made a careless, yea, a rash mistake, in wearing a token which no tea merchant ever wore before.

"You must be some relative of the Caliph of Baghdad; these are the royal arms of the Abbaside," said the lady, as she inspected the signet ring; then she suddenly whispered: "What strange errand brings thee disguised as a tea merchant to Astrakhan?"

"Thy beauty," muttered Al-Mansur under his voice—for in truth he knew no other answer. He could not tell her it was the love for another woman that had brought him this evening, at the risk of his life, into the palace of Bazook, her master.

All the time there was a strange conflict going on within the Caliph. He loved Zelda

with his soul; but this lady before him was beautiful enough to make the heart of any man beat; and in truth, now that the charm of Zoreb the magician had been broken, Al-Mansur had as warm a heart as any other man. Besides, the doctrines of his religion and the words of the Koran not only did not compel constancy to one, but in truth commanded constancy to many. And for a short hour or two the dashing Caliph felt that he might be constant to both.

Even as he spoke the fair one was rapidly drawing up the rope ladder that dangled from the window and coiling it in the room; though it remained fastened carefully to the stout frame of the lattice ready for instant use it was concealed by a tiger skin she threw over it.

As she did this, Al-Mansur noticed for one instant the room. This was lighted by soft lamps, adorned with precious jade from China, and its roof was supported by columns of marble and malachite from India. The skins of the chase—those of huge bears, wild boars, spotted leopards and striped tigers—made soft couches upon which its fair occupant might toss her white limbs in easy indolence.

This glance took but a second; then the beautiful woman demanded his gaze and received it—to the full.

Her hair was as soft as the sun's rays; her eyes, scarce blue, scarce gray, glittered like the gems of Golconda. Her form, above the medium height of women, was commanding and statuesque, yet graceful like unto the spirits that dwell beneath

the sea. She was robed in some soft fabric such as the girls weave where the silk-worms grow in upper India. This was white, pure and dazzling, save where it was trimmed upon bosom and shoulders with fur as light as swans' down, yet as blue as the sky—that fur taken from the young foxes in winter, which is worth a prince's ransom. From out this garment, shoulders, arms and bosom, yea, even feet and ankles bare and beautiful, glimmered in the soft light; though around her arms were bands of gold set heavily with gems. But over all her face, to make it still more enchanting, was a smile of dreamy love, frightened perhaps, agitated perhaps, but still love—true love.

Then her red lips opened, permitting pearls to be seen, and she spoke to him these words: "I love thee, but thee—because for my love thou hast risked thy life. For thy love have I risked mine also. But in order to love we must live, therefore I have taken every precaution to prevent discovery coming to us, at least before we know how much we love. Bazook, my tyrant lord, in company with his principal emirs and pashas, is enjoying the performance of his buffoons. That means that liquor, strong and potent, will be pouring down their barbaric throats until within their brains will be no thought—save that of drinking more. When Bazook looks kindly on the wine cup, I am forgotten," she murmured, half petulantly, half laughingly—shaking her sunny curls.

"Then the great King of Tartary does not care for tea, as you do, my Leila," said Al-Mansur.

“There you are mistaken,” answered the lady. “He has already drunk all of the package of that wondrous herb you gave to me. Bazook likes his tea, like his liquor—strong!”

“And you love him?” whispered the Caliph.

“I?” Then she burst into jeering laughter. “I—love him? I have never loved, my Zanza, until to-day. Why should I love him? Because I was stolen from my home by the borders of the cold sea far away? Because I was brought here to make Bazook forget that he had seen one that they say is even more beautiful than I—in which I think they lie! Thou wouldst not think her more beautiful, would you, my Zanza, this one his eunuchs talk about, who for one moment stood unveiled before him, and whom now he cannot forget—the Georgian Princess, Zelda by name—thou wouldst not think her more beautiful than I?”

Now this question was embarrassing to the Caliph, who disliked to decry the charms of the woman he loved most in the world to the one he loved second; therefore he was hesitating for an answer.

“Ah, you have seen this paragon!” Leila cried. “By the soul of my mother you hesitate—you know—some way—you know her—answer!” And she blazed with indignation.

Then of a sudden there was a hurried knocking upon the door and the lady flew to the entrance and whispered: “Why dost thou disturb me?”

On this the old woman entered and said: “To save thy life. Bazook, followed by his courtiers,

is already staggering up the stairway leading from his banquet hall."

"Bazook is drunk," cried Leila.

"Thou knowest to whose apartments he will come, drunk or sober," chuckled the old woman. "By the fallen genii thou hast scarce time!" For the sounds of drunken revelry and laughter and the noise of unsteady footsteps came to their ears.

"It is too late for the rope ladder," whispered the lady, with white lips, to Al-Mansur. "Conceal thyself in front of the window, so that should discovery come to thee thou mayst have one chance of flight and life, my Zanza. It is our one chance of safety!"—for the Caliph had half drawn his scimitar. "Brave as thou art thou canst not fight the thousand swords that will fly from their scabbards at his command. Forget thou art a lion, play the fox—into thy hole!"

Then her fair hands half forcing the Caliph to recline upon the floor just in front of the open casement, Leila threw over him lion skins, covering him from view, but leaving one little aperture through which he might breathe and see.

And as he lay there, all of a sudden the lion skin was drawn back from his head and red lips pressed his in one long, lingering kiss as a half-breathed sigh came to his ears: "Perhaps this is the last!"

The next instant the drapery was replaced and Leila stepped with haughty mien to meet Bazook, the Tartar King, who came staggering with unsteady steps into the room, followed by a

drunken crowd of laughing revelers, courtiers and emirs—aye! even his buffoons, some scarce able to keep their feet, but all applauding some happy idea the royal brain, inspired by potent liquor, had conceived.

“The meaning of this intrusion?” said Leila proudly. “This portal”—and she pointed to the door with white outstretched arm—“may be for thee to enter as my lord, but not for those whom thou bring'st with thee.”

And looking from his hiding place the Caliph for the first time saw the face he hated and the head he coveted. The Tartar king, clad in barbaric skins which glittered with gems stolen from many a pillaged town, stood strong before him with massive brow and tawny, unkempt hair, and arms of giant strength and legs of sturdy build; his face, illumined with the eyes of the savage, which would have been alert, quick and sparkling had they not been deadened by the wine within him; the lips thick, repulsive, sensual, but firm to command, as if they knew the words they uttered must be as law. In truth he would have made a glorious picture had not debasing liquor destroyed the traits that make a savage great.

Then though his lips spoke as one muzzled with drink, they spoke commandingly.

“Every room in my palace, O haughty one,” he said, “is mine. Every being in it mine also! Thou art no more than any other of my goods and chattels. If I admire thee and wish others to admire, even to my monkeys, who will say me nay? If we are tired of buffoons why should

we not turn to beauty? Speaking to my officers I praised thy loveliness: I told them of thy wondrous form, and offered them as an apex to our festival that thou shouldst dance before them as I have seen thee dance, thy white limbs flashing in their grace unutterable, to make us think that we are not on earth but live in Paradise."

"I—I'll dance—for thee, and thee alone," murmured Leila; for she saw he was in no mood to be disobeyed.

"Thou wilt dance for those I bring with me, and for those before whom I desire thee to show thy graces," said the King.

"Never!" faltered the lady. "Dost thou think I am one of thy dancing girls? Dost forget that I am thy favorite—though thy slave? Never!"

"That word is not used to me by any one upon this earth. Thou'lt dance for me or else thy head will fall within the minute! Wouldst thou have me lose my wager with Meruf of five hundred gold pieces, that he shall pronounce thee the greatest wonder upon this earth for petulant beauty? Dost thou not know that I have bet with Dafour that he will admit no dancing girl has such enchanting steps and postures? That's right! Look like that and I will surely win. Never was seen such mutinous beauty!" he chuckled with thick lips, and looked upon his officers, who, in half-drunken hiccoughs, echoed their master's laughter; for in truth Leila at this moment was a marvel both of beauty and rebellion.

Then Bazook lifted up his hands and cried: "If I smite these together the executioner will come

and thou wilt be lost. There will be another beauty less upon the world, but I will still be king and lord and no one will defy me with impunity. Beware lest I smite my hands together; thy back is near the rod, thy head is near the sack, my rebellious one! Bow it and save it."

And the lady, casting her eyes half in despair about, saw the pile of skins which concealed the man she loved, agitated. Her adored was about to rise! To save his life rather than her own, she bowed her haughty head and whispered: "Thy word is my law; I obey thee, my master!"

Then summoning her maidens, as they made music with stringed instruments, harps and lutes, she gathered up her robes about her white glistening limbs, and to the sweet strains danced with grace ecstatic, each step a protest, each bound a defiance; and all the time the king and his favorite officers discussed her beauty and applauded the lithe motions of her graceful figure. At last they burst into wild and uncontrollable drunken applause with cries of: "She beats the buffoon! She is more pleasing than the trained monkeys! By Kishra! this moon-eyed one is more beautiful than we will see until we reach the fiery mountain of the other world!"

And as they cried, Leila with one graceful bound sprang before the king, and sinking prostrate at his very feet, according to the custom of his court, kissed the barbarian's sandals and murmured: "I am thy slave!"

“Thou hast done well,” laughed the king. “Meruf, thy five hundred pieces of gold, and thou too, Darfour, the hundred ones you wagered, they are fairly mine. And now, haughty slave!” and he lifted Leila to him.

Then taking her fair face between his great strong hands he gave her red lips one sounding kissing smack, at which his officers cried out: “Aha! our King commands and loves as well!”

So followed by his sycophants and courtiers, Bazook strode out, but at the door turned and said: “When next I come, I come alone and as he who loves thee. Remember that, my proud peacock bird!”

With this he strode from the chamber, all following after him; and Leila springing to the door, closed it and dropping the draperies upon it, stood looking at the portal from which her master had passed out.

To her came the Caliph, his face ablaze. And she whispered, her eyes looking as if she saw the form of the departed barbarian king: “For this, even if he had twenty lives, Bazook dies!”

“By my hand!” muttered her suitor in her ear; and she turned to him and threw her arms around his neck and sobbed: “Yes, because you love me!”

To this Al-Mansur answered naught, for he knew it was because he loved another that he would kill the Tartar king.

But they had no time for further words.

Of a sudden without knocking the old woman entered and said: “Bazook comes back again, this time alone.”

"So soon!" murmured Leila, wringing her hands.

"Yes, did you suppose he could see thy beauty, drunk or sober, and keep away from it?" chuckled the hag.

"I stay here and kill him now," whispered the Caliph.

"No, no," answered the lady. "We are not prepared for flight. Why not live to enjoy the memory of our revenge? To-morrow—quick, the rope ladder, while you have time!"

So heeding her words and reflecting that he had made no preparation to save himself after the tyrant's head was his, Al-Mansur quickly and cautiously departed from the room of the favorite of his enemy, crawling down the rope ladder in the darkness. He had no sooner arrived at the foot of it than it was drawn up again.

So he wandered through the dark streets until at last he found himself safe at the bazar of Mustapha the Kurd. Remembering his promise to Huccazah he wrote a short note and tied it to the tail of a carrier pigeon.

But even as he put the bird outside the casement an agile hand plucked it from his, and departed with the swift-winged dove into the darkness, leaving the Caliph amazed, astounded and frightened.

Whose eye was upon his movements? Then he reflected that in the stolen letter he had written only these words:

"All goes well. Give my love undying, to Zelda."

CHAPTER XIV

THE HEAD OF THE TARTAR.

THOSE words would be no warning to the Tartar king. Those words meant nothing to one unacquainted with his secret. Still, the thought that he was watched made Al-Mansur pass almost as uneasy a night as when, bound and helpless, he was being brought by his half brother Selim to endure the awful punishment of "the throne."

The next morning his appearance showed that he had not rested, and Mustapha the Kurd, who had sharp eyes, laughed at him and said: "Is not your business satisfactory, O Zanza? Verily thou canst sell a thousand cases of such teas as you have brought to Astrahkan. Why art thou sad?"

"I am only sad," replied the putative Zanza, "because I shall not have enough to supply all my customers when my caravan arrives."

"In that case thou must adulterate thy teas with cheaper brands," answered the tradesman. "With my aid thy thousand cases shall become two thousand. Permit me to manage thy business for thee, O upright young man, too upright to do enough for thyself in this world!"

Whereupon the Caliph, anxious to be rid of an occupation that was utterly uncongenial to him, gave over the business into the hands of Mustapha, only stipulating that he (Zanza) was to distribute the teas unto the ladies who called for samples.

“By Allah,” muttered the Kurd, “thou hast a greater eye for beauty I fear than for money I doubt not that the loveliest of thy customers will receive the finest brands. But have thy way I was young once and loved to roam in other men’s harems; now, Bismillah!—two wives make misery and three would be despair.”

But the tea business did not trouble Mustapha long. Even as they were arranging the samples and discussing their various flavors a dashing officer, accompanied by half a dozen soldiers bearing the royal arms, entered the bazar. In one hand he bore a purse of gold, which he threw before the Caliph, saying: “O merchant, this is for thy herbs, all of which I take in the name of Bazook, the king, for his use. He has tasted thy teas and commanded me to take all that thou hast.”

Whereupon, though Mustapha set up exclamations of despair, the attendant soldiers gathered up every leaf that Zanza, the tea merchant, had on exhibition. Then they departed, leaving the Caliph very much relieved. In truth when he saw the soldiers’ terror had entered his bones, for he feared the old woman had betrayed him and that he was to be cast into prison, tortured and his head cut off and set upon the battlements. For Al-Mansur was a monarch and knew how such things were carried on.

“Min Allah! we are ruined,” muttered the Kurd. “We must now wait until thy caravan arrives with the main portion of thy goods.” A minute after he cried out: “This will be our fortune. I will have ten men mounted on white

jackasses riding through every street of the city and proclaiming that the high and mighty Lord of Lords and King of Kings, Bazook, has been so enraptured with the teas that thou hast brought that he has taken them all, giving to thee a thousand pieces of gold for even the small amount of samples thou hast with thee. When thy caravan arrives, O Zanza, thy camels shall be decked with ribbons, bells shall be placed upon their necks and we will have a procession that shall stir every tea drinker in the country to the roots of his tongue. Again we will take the camels out and bring them in with more and inferior teas; once more we will do the same. These teas we will mix together, the fine flavored leaves being on the top of each leaden casket. Thus we will both become rich. But we will keep enough of the good tea so that if Bazook sends for more he will not discover our business policy and smite off our heads for having defrauded him."

Filled with this ambition, Mustapha ran out to hire the ten white donkeys and loud-voiced men to shriek out the facts throughout the Tartar capital.

While the Kurd was on this errand the old woman came into the bazar, and whispered to the Caliph: "O tea merchant, I will take another sample of thy teas!"

But when she learnt there were no more, she looked with evil eyes upon Al-Mansur, and he was compelled to appease her with some of the gold Bazook had sent to him, of which there was plenty, for the Tartar monarch, like most barbarians, valued little either money or blood.

Then the hag whispered: "I have words for thee that may save thy life. For some reason my mistress, the Lady Leila, is enraged against thee. She is jealous of some woman called Zelda. This morning she cried and wrung her hands and muttered: 'Let him beware how he slights my love.'"

"By Allah! I will make the pretty Leila sing another song when I talk to her," replied the Caliph confidently. Every woman he had as yet met had told him, either by words or manner, that she adored him; therefore he thought he was as fascinating as Zanza, the tea merchant, as he was when known as the Lord of the World, forgetting that rank and power cause women to love as much as beauty.

"I shall probably have another message for you if you dare risk the interview," whispered the old woman. "She will not be able to come here, now the excuse of the tea is taken from her, for behold! men upon donkeys are, as I speak, proclaiming in the streets that you have no more samples left."

Whereupon the hag departed, leaving the Caliph meditating upon her words. As he mused, behold, the little bell at his waist—the one given him by Boabdil—tinkled and tinkled, and tinkled again. He looked about him and perceived no one. The bell continued its warning sound, then suddenly into the mind of Al-Mansur came this thought: "It means for me, since no physical danger is near, to look backward mentally."

He commenced to review the situation with the cold eye of philosophy, pondering over the

happenings of the preceding night. This Leila who loved him, and who hated Bazook, was of a most vivacious, passionate yet jealous temperament. She knew he wore the signet of the Abbaside. She had caused him to be followed by someone the night before; her emissary had stolen the carrier pigeon from his hand bearing his note to Huccazah, in which was the name Zelda—the name Leila had spoken of as that of the only woman who could compare with her in beauty, the name she had hinted that he knew too well. In his missive to Huccazah he had proclaimed his undying love to Zelda—even after he had seen this jealous favorite of Bazook. That note Leila must have read. Would her love be greater than her jealousy? If it were not, what misfortune might not befall him, what fate might not be his?

Upon his meditation Mustapha the Kurd broke in, crying: “The proclamation is out; but even if thy caravans arrive, for three days we shall have no tea to sell. At midday—even as I speak—begins the festival of the God of Fire, in which no business is permitted, and during which no travelers or caravans can enter or pass out the city’s gates.”

Then the Caliph knew that for three days he was at the mercy of a jealous woman. Overcome by his danger, and almost in despair, he plucked the love-amulet from his bosom, and wrapping it in a warning note to Huccazah, tied it to a pigeon’s tail and threw the bird into the air, envying it its power of flight over the city’s walls to freedom, to safety, to Persia and—to Zelda.

Scarce had he done this when the old woman returned with a missive which she secretly gave to him. It read: "If thou wouldst have my kisses again, follow the old woman this evening as before. Thy rope ladder will be let down to thee."

There was but one way—the way of the brave man. He must show Leila that he loved her beyond everything else in the world. That way the Caliph took.

He whispered to the hag: "To-night I am at thy service."

"Mashallah! You are brave enough to take the chances of her jealousy?" whispered the old woman, eyeing him with astonishment.

"Yes, because she loves me," answered the Caliph.

At this the emissary went off chuckling to herself.

Then Al-Mansur made his preparations for the adventure on which he knew his life hung on a thread as uncertain as a woman's passion. He armed himself carefully, not only with scimitar, but in his bosom he concealed a long, sharp dagger of Damascus steel, with edge so keen that a veil dropped upon it fell in two pieces, one on either side of its marvelous blade.

Then he sought some place of concealment to which, in case he was pursued, he might retire and so avoid immediate death. The only one he could discover that would not be immediately searched was a little outhouse where melons were kept preserved throughout the winter by that

rare process best known to Tartary, the one that has made the melons of the Steppes of Central Asia celebrated even in Arabia.

The main house and the principal buildings connected with the establishment of Mustapha the Kurd the Caliph knew would be examined immediately suspicion fell upon him. This place might give him refuge for a short quarter of an hour.

Then with a philosophy worthy of an older man, Al-Mansur threw away care, ate his meal with Mustapha and enjoyed it, and as night fell upon the city took his station outside the bazar.

Soon after the old woman passed him. Following her with due precautions, and keeping an ear open for the tinkle of the little bell that had saved him the night before, the Caliph passed through various lanes and behold, the hag stood before the wicket, made the same signal and entered.

Al-Mansur stopped below the sixth window, from whence the same love song came. Almost immediately the rope ladder was cautiously lowered to the ground.

With a quick glance on either side of him to note that none could observe him, he rapidly ascended in the gloom, and a moment after found himself in the same brilliant apartment and in the same soft arms that had welcomed him the night before.

Leila's kisses now were feverish where before they had been tender. A hectic flush on either cheek showed that her blood was coursing wildly through her veins, her blue eyes blazed like the

opal, not with melting love, but rather passionate fire, as if behind their loveliness was some baneful impulse.

“Thou art welcome,” she said. “I read last night—I do not deign to deny it—a letter in thy hand. Ah, I know you can reproach me, but you hesitated when I asked you if I were the most lovely thing upon this earth—then I knew you remembered some other woman. I thought that she was here in Astrakhan, but by the note stolen from thy pigeon she is far away. She has the name I hate; it is the only one that ever has been spoken in my ear with the suggestion that the lady bearing it has greater loveliness in the eyes of men than I. Tell me who she is, tell me that note was a lie, that you have no undying love for Zelda, then punish me for my treachery as you please, and I am happy ”

“That I can easily do,” said the Caliph, whose desperate situation made him think a lie would be forgiven by Allah. “Zelda is my sister.”

“Thy—thy sister? You mean it?” and the eyes which had been heavy with anguish grew bright with hope and love.

“By Allah, I do!”

“Then punish me, do what you will with me, I love thee!” And sweet kisses fell upon his lips and beautiful white arms came round his neck, and in them Al-Mansur, perchance, forgot for a little time even his Zelda.

Bismillah! Who can tell? Besides, it is not prudent to betray the secrets of the harem.

Soon after, he accepted wine from her hands,

and the two chatted together with words of honey, Leila's witcheries making Al-Mansur forego in the delights of love the prudence his situation should have compelled.

In an unguarded moment he uttered such words that told the lady who he was.

"You are the Caliph of Baghdad; no wonder that I love thee!" she cried with a start, her eyes growing more tender than before.

"Certainly You saw my signet."

"Why shouldst thou journey from thy capital disguised as a low-born tea merchant?" she asked with feverish eagerness.

"To—to slay Bazook," stammered Al-Mansur.

"Why shouldst thou kill Bazook?"

"Because I love thee!"

"No, because you love *another*!" said the girl. "Does not the whole world know that the Commander of the Faithful has no sisters whatsoever? How then can Zelda be your sister? Zelda! she who was unveiled before the Tartar King! Zelda! who has been deprived of her dominions by Bazook! Zelda! you come to avenge *her*!" And she stood before him, the fire of anger in her eyes, the anguish of jealous agony upon her lips.

Then of a sudden she grew wondrous pale and Al-Mansur grew pale also, for striding in between them came Bazook, the Tartar King, alone; with the eyes of a lover, that changed into the eyes of a wild beast as he saw another lover there.

With sudden spring the lady flew to the door, closed it and dropped a heavy bar across it, preventing entrance.

Then standing before them both, she cried: "This is rare happiness for me! The two men who love me *second* in this world and love Zelda the Georgian Princess *first*, stand face to face; the two great powers of all this world—Bazook, the Tartar King; Al-Mansur, Caliph of the Faithful; Draw both, and fight to the death for the woman you love best, while I, your second choice, look on!"

And the two gazed at each other, for astonishment was on them—Bazook, that any man should dare to invade his palace and his harem! Al-Mansur, astounded at the strange meeting, face to face at last! The head he had sworn to have by Allah glaring with savage eyes into his.

As usual with the Tartar warrior, Bazook wore his sword. It flashed in the air. "If thou art he she saidst thou art, it is a meeting I have longed for. I who have spit upon thy religion now spit on thee! Thou, Caliph of Baghdad, who hast curbed my power; thou who art the only one who dares say: 'Keep to thy own and come not upon mine!' And you have come here—for what?"

"To take thy head away with me," answered the Caliph, grimly.

"What!—in my palace, surrounded by armies you—*alone*?" muttered the Tartar King astounded; for in truth the temerity of the act seemed monstrous to the barbarian monarch. Then, he cried, "Thou shalt have thy chance at it. By the Fire of Heaven, thou who art brave enough to leave thy armies behind thee, and come to me

here unattended save by thy sword, shall have thy chance at it, monarch to monarch, man to man!"

Both their swords were drawn and flashed in the light of the chamber, the huge weapon of the Tartar giant and the slight scimitar of the eastern warrior; ponderous strength against agile speed. Blow followed blow; over the apartment they fought, dashing away tapestries, rugs and divans in their mad combat, the giant pursuing, the wary youth avoiding strength too great for him to meet, save by activity and skill.

Twice the Tartar's sword came cleaving down, and had not Al-Mansur sprung from beneath it he were dead. Three times the scimitar flashed through the air, to meet the strong guard of the barbarian's weapon.

While all the time the beautiful woman like one possessed cried out encouragement, and laughed and wrung her hands with a triumph that was despair.

Then the Tartar's sword descended once again, and the light scimitar of Al-Mansur shivered in his grasp. The barbarian laughed in triumph, his sword uplifted for fatal blow

But even as he struck, Al-Mansur with desperate bound sprang into the very arms of his conqueror, drawing his dagger with the spring, and embracing the Tartar giant, aye, even as if he loved him, drove the steel to his heart.

So, with gurgling cry, Bazook sank down upon the floor of his great palace—dead!

But now there was no time for joy, hardly time

for safety; the sound of hurrying footsteps came along the passage; those within the palae were alarmed; the sentries were shouting to each other on the walls.

With one quick gash the barbarian's head became Al-Mansur's, and picking up a leopard skin he wrapped his prize within it, flew to the window, and descending the rope ladder was astounded to see a beautiful fae looking down upon him, a white hand waving to him, and to hear a soft voice whispering to him: "Come back; take me away. Though thou lovest another I love thee too well to lose thee, thou fight so well!"

But lights flashing from the windows and the cries of the guards at the gates told Al-Mansur to remain were death. Even as he glided along the lane steps were in pursuit of him, waving swords and torches were behind him and the cry was: "The King has been murdered! Let not the assassin bear his head away! Death to the slayer of Bazook!"

As he flew along the cries increased; but finally he lost them in the darkness, and gaining the home of the Kurd he dared not enter it, but concealed himself within the outhouse among the melons; he had no time to do more.

Bacons were burning, lights were waving up and down the streets, Turkoman horsemen were galloping through them—the whole city was alarmed.

The gates already closed on account of the religious festival forbade any hope of Al-Mansur's

leaving the city. The Caliph was cooped up in the capital of his enemy, bearing with him the head of its King ; its gates guarded, its walls patrolled, even concealment meant but scant safety.

So there he lay not knowing what to do, as he heard the patrols, the tread of the people on the streets and the movement of the troops. Then a blaze went up to heaven, and he knew they had discovered that Zanza, the tea merchant, had slain the King of Tartary. For the flames came up from the house of Mustapha the Kurd, who had harbored the regicide. The house was being searched, likewise the grounds.

Despair had come upon Al-Mansur, when of a sudden he heard in the stable next to the melon hut a whinnying that sounded familiar to his ears. At this the magic bell bound at his waist began to tinkle, causing him to reflect on what had happened to him before.

Then he said : "Of a surety it is the madrid mule whinnying for corn. I had forgotten to feed this wondrous animal all this day. The madrid mule ! She who jumped in two bounds across the mighty river—with one spring could she not fly over the battlements of Astrakhan bearing me to the steppes and liberty ? Upon the great plains I should be free and safe, for who could overtake this magic beast ? "

He who had been benumbed by fear now blazed with hope. With cautious hands the Caliph opened the door of the melon hut, and passing out into the darkness, though the light of the burning buildings caused great danger of discovery, he

slipped into the stable and unloosed the madrid mule. Not daring to take time to saddle her, he searched in his bosom and gave her one of the balls of condiment he had received from Huccazah. Then leading her out cautiously he mounted her back, and gripping with the strong knees of the expert horseman the sides of the animal, and holding on her mane, he whispered to her, and trotted her along the street, bearing in one hand the leopard skin holding the Tartar's head.

As he passed on he was noted and challenged by soldiers, but he paused not; then they recognized him and a shout went up: "It is the tea merchant—the slayer of the King!"

Bows were bent and arrows drawn to the head, one scathing his arm. He clapped his feet against the madrid mule and shouted to her, and she sprang and soared and floated over the walls of Astrakhan, landing a hundred cubits outside the gates, while arrows were left behind, such was the mule's swift flight; and the astonished guards fell down and cried out: "An enchanter has killed our warrior King!"

But upon the plains even as the sun arose, Al-Mansur was pursued by Tartar cavalry, and he laughed them to scorn and gave his mule another condiment. Then she had the speed of the wind, and disappeared as the horsemen of the steppes looked at her in amazement.

So coming to the great mountains she bounded over them from crag to crag.

Descending into Persia, at the frontier province Al-Mansur ordered the emir in command to move

his troops across the mountains to assist the Georgian rising, now certain to take place.

So at each succeeding division of his empire he directed his troops to assemble for their march to Tiflis.

Thus he traveled all that day; and at night there came trotting through the streets of Baghdad a mule, on its back a traveler stained, worn out and jaded man, bearing in his hand a leopard skin that was red in spots, upon which he looked with triumphant eyes.

And the people gazing at this wayfarer in the dim light said: "He is a traveler who has journeyed far," but did not recognize their Caliph and their lord.

CHAPTER XV

THE BIRTH OF HAROUN AL-RASCHID.

That evening Huccazah with anxious brow awaited news of the Caliph. On the morrow, according to his sovereign's instructions, he must show the scroll to Hammad, and bid him advance the two black banners of the Abbaside, that of "The Shadow" and the one called "The Night," and proclaim war against Tartary and its subservient Khanates of Bokhara, Khiva and Samarcand.

Filled with these weighty thoughts, the sage was concerned to discover that it was past the hour when he was wont to visit the Princess of Georgia and entertain her with the tales of his varied life.

So hastening his footsteps he entered the house of Hammad, and in the great garden running down to the Tigris found the fair Zelda with her maidens awaiting him in the silk pavilion, whose folds rustled in the soft breezes of the night.

The lovely lady was, however, indignant, and said pettishly: "Is this the manner, () Huccazah, thou keepest thy promise to Zoab, captain of the guard? Didst thou not tell me that each night you would charm my ears with one of thy wondrous tales? This evening they have been open for thy words, and as yet none have come to them. Tell me quickly of the Emir of Ispahan and the beautiful daughter of the Cadi!"

Then, the maidens having departed, as usual leaving only Issa lying at her mistress's feet and fanning her softly, the sage began as follows :

“Of a verity I was in a curious position. I was Governor of Ispahan and knew not my chief officers. I was lord of a great harem but could not even call my favorite wife by name; in truth, I did not know which was my favorite wife.”

“That, I presume, you *soon* discovered,” said the fair Zelda archly. “Besides, a bride was awaiting thee.” Here the maiden drooped her eyes modestly upon the carpet, then blushed divinely.

But even as she did so one of her maidens ran in hurriedly uttering cries of excitement.

“Noora,” said the princess sternly, “I am not to be intruded upon unless permission is asked. Beware, if you anger me!” And she might have clapped her hands and given her slave over to chastisement had not suddenly one or two more of the maidens run in crying out: “A mule is eating all the beautiful rose bushes of Damascus that you love so well, O Princess!”

“A mule in the gardens? Impossible! The beast could not scale the wall.”

“This very moment we saw him browsing about and eating up the shrubbery, and ran to tell you,” answered one of the ladies.

But as Zelda arose on hearing these words she suddenly stopped, blushing and trembling, for a manly step was heard and the voice of one she called Zoab, captain of the guard, came to her

ears, saying: "Is this the pavilion of the Princess? I have just alighted from my mule."

With this, covered with the dust of travel, his face haggard by the anxiety of his journey and adventure, Al-Mansur strode in; but over his countenance was a great joy, that of again beholding the being for whom his eyes had longed these many days.

With a start Huccazah noted that the Caliph carried in his left hand a leopard skin stained red in places and containing something round.

"You have returned from the journey with your master, O Zoab!" said the fair Zelda, pretending unconcern. Then affecting lightness she laughed: "Has the Caliph found at last a lady to his taste?"

"Ah, that he has," answered Al-Mansur. "One whose eyes are as beautiful as thine, whose lips are as red as thine and whose figure is as graceful as thine own." Whereupon meeting the eyes of the lovely Zelda they both wished they were alone.

"You have had some adventures, O Zoab," said Huccazah, looking meaningly at the leopard skin the Caliph bore, "since you left the capital with our sovereign."

"Yes, I have come to tell them to thee," answered the Caliph. At this the Princess of Georgia waved her hands to the ladies about her, and all departed from her save Issa, whom she still kept at her feet, not knowing if accident happened to Huccazah whether he would prefer being a captain of the guard or a princess—for in

truth she had a great terror of the old man in case death should come upon him suddenly, knowing his motto was, "Self-preservation is the first law of the universe!"

The wily Huccazah rose also to go and was making his obeisance before them when the Caliph suddenly said: "Remain, O wise preceptor; thou who aided my journey listen to the tale I tell thee. I have here——" he laid his hand upon the skin which he had placed in front of him and on which he looked complacently

Suddenly at this point he was interrupted by a cry from Zelda: "Thou art wounded, O my Zoab, upon thy arm!"

"'Tis but a scratch, my Zelda, a mere nothing to a captain of the guard, as I am! But perchance I had better break this news to thee more gently," answered the young sovereign.

"Then you have something curious to tell me," cried the girl. "Wounded, and in time of peace—news thou must break to me gently—and yet thou seemest filled with joy! Thou went not with thy Caliph, O Zoab; thou went for my sake. And yet it is impossible—Astrakhan and Tiflis are the journey of months, not of days!"

"An enchanted mule bore me to Tiflis," answered the Caliph.

"To Tiflis—to Georgia—you went for——."

"This!" cried Al-Mansur triumphantly, "for love of thee—*this!*"

And he tore from out the leopard skin and held up before the maid the head of a barbarian with thick lips and staring eyeballs and bloody neck.

" 'Tis the head of Bazook, mine enemy, king of the Tartars!" screamed the girl. Then she murmured: "O wondrous captain of the guard, who hast done more than thy master, the Caliph, could. Bless Allah that he will permit me to keep my oath and love thee! This must be told my father, that he may take the proper steps."

"They are already taken," answered Al-Mansur. "As I crossed Persia's frontiers, I issued my orders to the officer in command. Already a division of cavalry is ascending the slopes of the Caucasus to co-operate with thy subjects, fair Zelda, to restore thy father to his throne."

"*Thy* orders!" gasped the lady, looking astonished.

"Yes," stammered Al-Mansur, "I—I had the Caliph's permission to assist the followers of Islam in their uprising for the true religion."

"Quick—tell me, that I may believe that my father will be once more restored to his dominions," whispered the fair being with pleading eyes.

Whereupon the Caliph told his story of the tea merchant of Astrakhan—but not peradventure all of it. In truth, he posed as one irresponsive to the beauty of Leila, the favorite of Bazook, hinting his indifference had caused her rage and her betrayal.

"But you—you visited this—this beauty in the privacy of the harem," murmured Zelda as he closed, tears standing in her bright blue eyes; for perchance the Caliph warming to his work as story teller had enlarged upon the charms of his magnificent temptress, as the recollection of her

loveliness was still strong upon him; though he had been warned by several kicks slyly administered by Huccazah beneath the divan—each kick of which was high treason under the law.

“What matters it,” answered Al-Mansur. “As I have returned to thee thy charm, O Huccazah, the lady loves me no longer.”

“Do not be so sure of that,” chuckled the sage. “It is easier to kindle the fire of love than put it out.”

Which in truth it was; for of a sudden there was heard the noise of gigantic wings, and the jovial-faced genius who had been sent to watch over Al-Mansur by Huccazah came flopping down into the pavilion, bearing in his arms the beautiful Leila.

“This great thing,” cried the fair one, casting astounded glances upon the jovial genius, “seized me, and with shrieks of laughter bore me through the air from Astrakhan and thus saved my life. Had he not taken me from out the palace I had died by the scimitars of the eunuchs of Bazook.” Then she turned drooping eyes upon Al-Mansur and murmured: “My hero, how I love you!”

“She wished to follow thee,” laughed the genius, “thou wert so sad at leaving her, O Caliph! I saw thee look back three times as thou ranst along the narrow lane, though the scimitars of the barbarians were waving over thy head. She is here! Two beauties—take thy choice, or rather, if thou hast the common sense the world gives thee credit for, take them *both!*”

Whereupon the two exquisite women gazed upon each other, grace in their movements, beauty in their limbs and fire in their eyes.

“Thy name is Zelda; thou art the woman to whom he sent undying love!” cried the one.

“And thou art Leila, who betrayed him to the Tartar King,” answered Zelda, her blue eyes blazing into her rival’s that gave out opal lights.

Then there was another duel strangely like that other fought at the palace of the Tartar King, where Al-Mansur and Bazook battled who should have *the woman*. Here Leila and Zelda fought who should have *the man*.

Leila cried with angry voice: “Thou shalt not have my Caliph!”

“Thy *Caliph!*” jeered Zelda. “This is a simple captain of the guard, who played the sovereign to thee to win thy love.” And she looked with scorn upon the abashed Al-Mansur.

“Pish!” answered Huccazah, “the Caliph of all the East, the grandest monarch of the world, Vicar of the Prophet and Commander of the Faithful, for love of thee, O haughty Georgian Princess, and to gain thy true affection, threw away his rank and pretended to be but a captain of the guard. Further, he risked his life, not at the head of his armies as Caliph, but as a wandering emir—to do homage to thy pride and to quit thee of thy impious oath to Allah that thou wouldst love only the man who brought to thee the barbarian’s head. Were he to take my advice Al-Mansur would follow the law of the Prophet,

and to thee, Zelda, he would give a crown and the title of wife, but from thee he would compel to the obedience of one. As for thee, Leila, he would summon his chief eunuch Zamo, and thou shouldst form one of the band of beauties that shouldst minister to the Caliph's pleasure. Has it not been said by the Prophet, 'A man may have four wives, and slaves and favorites innumerable; and a sovereign may have all the wives he desires?' Take my advice, O Caliph, whose head has been turned by love; lift up thy hand and dominate thy own harem, otherwise thou wilt have no more happiness upon this earth than the man who eats the apple of Istakhar, one half of which is sweet, the other bitter."

But Al-Mansur answered: "No!" Then turning unto Zelda he murmured: "You have my love. For you I have risked my life. Without violation of thy oath you can now wed me and become Sultana of the East. And in our first love dream none shall come between us."

Ah! who could resist the Lord of the World when he spake thus!

The Lady Zelda could not. With streaming eyes she cried out: "O generous one! Thou hast won me by thy magnanimity more than by the head of the barbarian. I am thine!"

"But what shall we do with the other?" queried Huccazah, as Leila in panting rage uttered a fearful cry and swooned.

A minute after the sage laughed: "Why not give this beauty to the genius who has brought her from Astrakhan? Let him take her and fly

away with her into the enchanted regions of the outer world!"

"That I cannot do honestly," answered the worthy spirit, "for of a truth thy generosity compels me to tell you that I brought this lady here, O Huccazah, at the instigation of Zoreb, the magician, with whom I also have dealings. Since his charm upon Al-Mansur forbidding him to love any woman who could not look upon him without faltering has been dissolved by Zelda's haughty eyes, Houssan-El-Remo, the former vizier, at whose request the spell was put upon the Prince of all the Faithful, has begged and implored the magician to stay the Caliph's wooing. At his crafty urging I brought this lady here, that jealousy, which abounds in women, might produce an unhappy ending to Al-Mansur love. Had he not adored the Lady Zelda, had he determined to take both, as I suggested, though 'tis a law of the Prophet, the Lady Zelda, perchance, might have despised him. And so unhappiness might have been brought upon all the East, which would have pleased the ex-vizier, who loves not his master over well!"

"By Sheytan!" cried the Caliph, "and it was Zoreb's charm at the instigation of the crafty Houssan-El-Remo that has for years forbidden my heart to beat when all the loveliness of the world was thrown before it. Of course no woman could look upon the Caliph and meet his glance. But by happy chance, as a humble captain of the guard I found one whose eyes looked straight in mine. Bless thy pride, O Zelda, for destroying

the spell that was upon me! Bless thee for making me as other men with hearts to love; and of that love thou shalt have the best."

Then preparations were made for the nuptials of the Commander of the Faithful and the Princess of Georgia. So days of feasting and revelry came upon Baghdad, and no longer the imams threw ashes on their heads, and no longer the people were sad, for they rejoiced when their lord rejoiced.

Then within the week, the nuptial procession like unto which the world had never seen before, left the palace of Hammad, five thousand mountebanks in advance of it, six thousand confectioners and coffee men feeding the people as they crowded the streets and sent up joyous cries to heaven. Next a thousand virgins walking four and four, singing the nuptial songs; and under canopy of silk and mounted upon the madrid mule, that neighed with joy rode Lady Zelda, veiled from head to foot and attended by Zamo and four hundred eunuchs, black and white, who proudly marched about this beauty who was to give joy unto their lord.

After his daughter came the father of the princess escorted by the officers of state, the great vassals of the crown, the kings of Trebizond, Teheran, Kandahar and Baroda, and emirs and pashas innumerable.

Behind these, upon a disreputable donkey, his face toward its tail, his feet tied beneath its belly, with ashes on his head, rode Houssan-El-Remo, ex-vizier, who that day should have his

head chopped off and mounted on the battlements.

Then there were mighty rejoicings as the bride entered the palace of the Caliph, and the gates closed behind her and the wedding feast began. The nuptials were solemnized in the presence of the Council of the Ulama and blessed by one hundred imams.

That night, under the soft lamps of love's temple, when alone together the Caliph unveiled the beauteous Zelda, he said to her: "Behold my nuptial present. This packet brought to Huccazah by supernatural speed is from Boabdil telling me that that Mustapha the Kurd has been enriched and ennobled and thy father is now proclaimed King of Georgia. Thou art to me not only my Sultana, but a princess." And he kissed the hem of her garment.

Then Zelda turned upon him with streaming eyes and answered: "In the few days before my nuptials Huccazah has instructed me in the duties of an Arab wife. My pride has gone from me, thy love hath cast it out. As such, behold my offering unto thee!"

She clapped her hands, and Zamo entering made obeisance and said: "The beautiful slave is without!"

At her orders he led in a lady, veiled from head to foot, and Zelda herself removing the veils, behold! the Caliph saw once more the beauteous Leila!

"It would be a shame upon me," said Zelda,

if love for thee made me forget the law of the Prophet. I am thy Queen and fear no rival!"

"And thou shalt have none!" replied the Caliph. "All other beauties that I may bring into my harem shall be thy slaves as they are my slaves. Remove this lady, O Zamo; watch her, guard her, for it is meet that none shall look upon her loveliness—save I."

At which Zamo retired leading the beautiful slave who had been taught obedience and silence by this stern eunuch and chuckled to himself: "By Allah, my duties are but just begun. The charm of the spiteful Houssan whose head I saw upon the battlements is now destroyed. Where I had none, I shall soon have a hundred of the beauties of the world to guard and watch. Verily, I shall become the most celebrated of my profession."

Then in course of time the King of Georgia departed to his dominions, leaving his daughter happy in the Caliph's love. And in the tenth month from the nuptial day a beautiful baby was born unto the Sultana Zelda, and Baghdad, yea, all of Islam, rejoiced in that a beautiful boy was now successor and heir to Al-Mansur. So the land became a happy land, and fetes and festivals were heard from the date groves of Bassorah to the apple orchards of Khorasan. And the child waxed strong.

But though all rejoiced, sorrow came upon the Caliph. The wise Huccazah chancing one day to eat a date—with a carelessness that sometimes comes upon the circumspect—swallowed the seed

which, stopping in his throat, choked the unfortunate philosopher to death.

But even as he died, called by his cries, the chief nurse bearing in her arms the heir to all the power of the East, ran unto him, and just as he breathed his last the baby looked into his face.

To the fair Zelda the Caliph came perturbed and said: "O woe is me, sorrow has come upon me!" and threw ashes upon his head and tore his hair.

And the Sultana questioning him, he told her of Huccazah's death.

"Thou art sure? How didst thou learn of this?" questioned the sorrowing Zelda.

"By the head nurse, who came running unto me as I entered the harem, bearing our boy in her arms, and told me the story "

"And she saw Huccazah die, and there was nobody near him save the woman and our child?" cried Zelda, agitated.

"Yea," answered the Caliph, "but what matters that? Huccazah is surely dead."

On this, the nurse being brought in she told her story, how as Huccazah died he had taken the heir of Baghdad in his arms and his last breath had been breathed upon the child of Al-Mansur.

Whereupon Zelda's eyes opened, she took the child and fondled it, and the child looked at her more knowing than ever he had been before and cackled and goo-goo'd and winked his eye at her.

Then with a scream the Sultana fell down upon the ground; for as she held him in her arms she felt the baby laughing as if it would split its sides,

and knew Huccazah had not died, and that her little boy had in him the wise man's Changing Spirit.

And at times, as the child grew up of wondrous beauty and of precocious mind, when he was naughty as all children sometimes are, the Sultana held her hand, for she could not bear to smite the wise Huccazah.

What wonder was it that the child was great and that the man was great?—the fifth of the Abbaside, the grandest of them all, like unto him there were none before, like unto him, as the Arabs say to-day, none came after. For the boy the Princess Zelda held in her arms, the one that crowed to her and winked his eye to her and laughed to split his sides to show her he had the undying spirit of Huccazah, was known throughout the realms of the East as the great, the beneficent, the far-seeing, the wise Haroun Al-Raschid, whose name will never die in story

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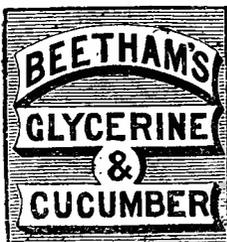
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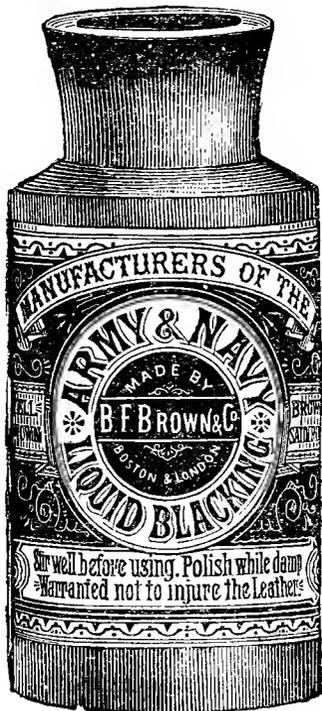
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