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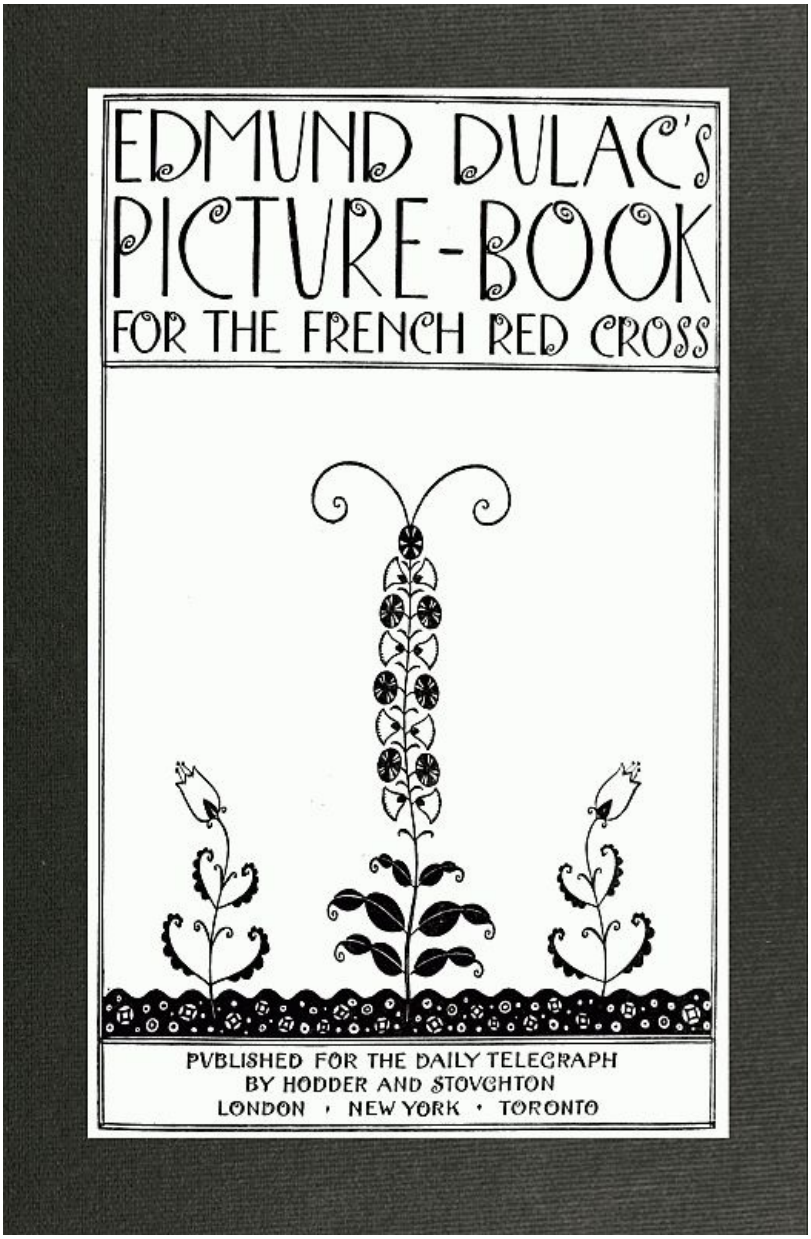

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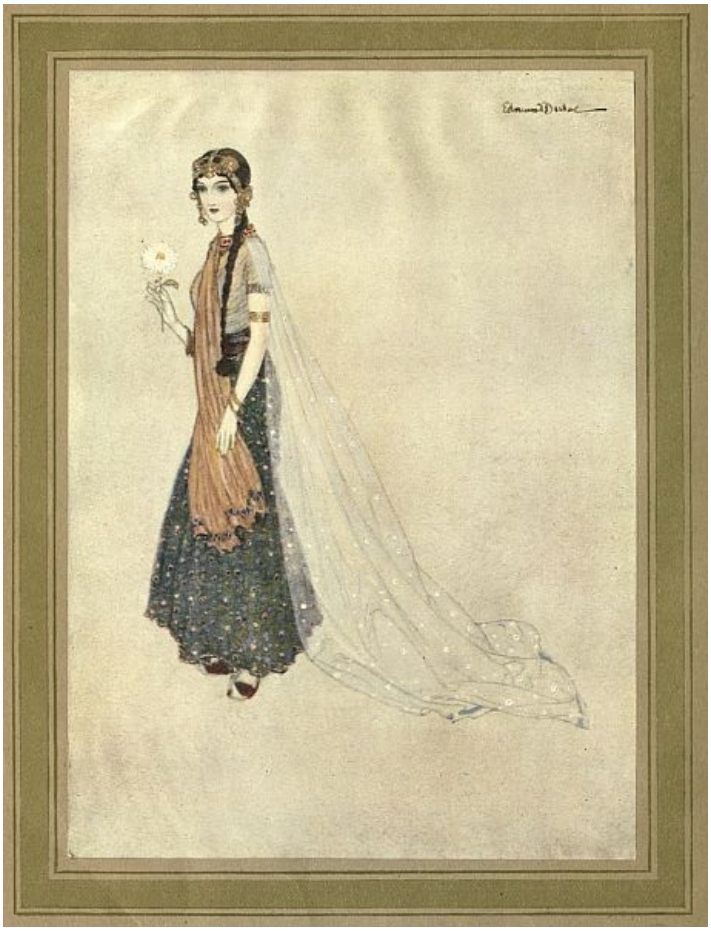

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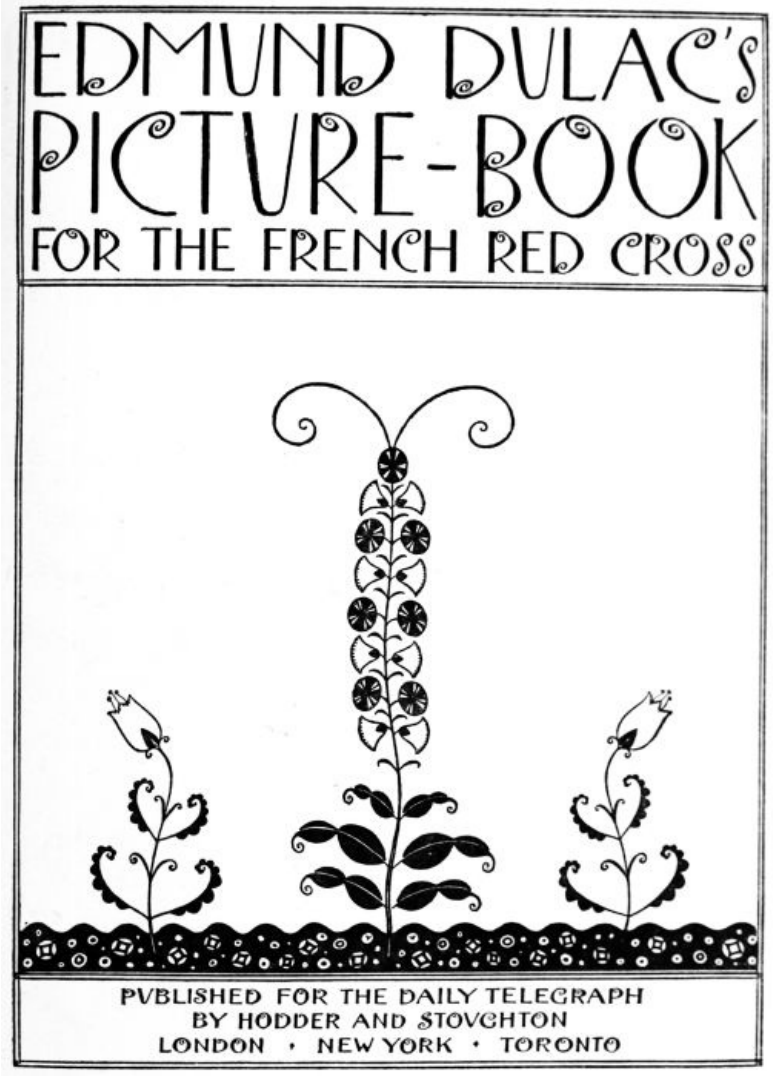

EDMUND DULAC'S

PICTURE-BOOK
FOR THE FRENCH RED CROSS

PUBLISHED FOR THE DAILY TELEGRAPH
BY HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LONDON · NEW YORK · TORONTO

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ILLUSTRATIONS

EDMUND DULAC'S PICTURE BOOK

PUBLISHED ON BEHALF OF THE

CROIX ROUGE FRANÇAISE

COMITÉ DE LONDRES
9 KNIGHTSBRIDGE, LONDON, S.W.

Président d'honneur
S. E. MONSIEUR PAUL CAMBON

Présidente
VICOMTESSE DE LA PANOUSE

Under the Patronage of
H.M. QUEEN ALEXANDRA

The work of the FRENCH RED CROSS is done almost entirely by the willing sacrifice of patriotic people who give little or much out of their means. The Comité is pleased to give the fullest possible particulars of its methods and needs. It is sufficient here to say that every one who gives even a shilling gives a wounded French soldier more than a shilling's worth of ease or pleasure.

The actual work is enormous. The number of men doctored, nursed, housed, fed, kept from the worries of illness, is great, increasing, and will increase.

You must remember that everything to do with sick and wounded has to be kept up to a daily standard. It is you who give who provide the drugs, medicines, bandages, ambulances, coal, comfort for those who fight, get wounded, or die to keep you safe. Remember that besides fighting for France, they are fighting for the civilised world, and that you owe your security and

civilisation to them as much as to your own men and the men of other Allied Countries.

There is not one penny that goes out of your pockets in this cause that does not bind France and Britain closer together. From the millionaire we need his thousands; from the poor man his store of pence. We do not beg, we insist, that these brave wounded men shall lack for nothing. We do not ask of you, we demand of you, the help that must be given.

There is nothing too small and nothing too large but we need it.

Day after day we send out great bales of goods to these our devoted soldiers, and we must go on.

Imagine yourself ill, wounded, sick, in an hospital, with the smash and shriek of the guns still dinning in your ears, and imagine the man or woman who would hold back their purse from helping you.

Times are not easy, we know, but being wounded is less easy, and being left alone because nothing is forthcoming is terrible. You have calls upon you everywhere, you say; well, these men have answered their call, and in the length and breadth of France they wait your reply.

What is it to be?

Will you please send anything you can afford to
EDMUND DULAC, c/o "The Daily Telegraph," London, E.C.

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[1]

THE WONDERFUL BIRD, LIKE A FIRE OF MANY COLOURS COME DOWN FROM HEAVEN, ALIGHTED BEFORE THE PRINCESS, DROPPING AT HER FEET THE PORTRAIT

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THE STORY OF THE BIRD FENG

A FAIRY TALE FROM CHINA

In the Book of the Ten Thousand Wonders there are three hundred and thirty-three stories about the bird called *Feng*, and this is one of them.

Ta-Khai, Prince of Tartary, dreamt one night that he saw in a place where he had never been before an enchantingly beautiful young maiden who could only be a princess. He fell desperately in love with her, but before he could either move or speak, she had vanished. When he awoke he called for his ink and brushes, and, in the most accomplished willow-leaf style, he drew her image on a piece of precious silk, and in one corner he wrote these lines:

The flowers of the pæony
  Will they ever bloom?
A day without her
  Is like a hundred years.

He then summoned his ministers, and, showing them the portrait, asked if any one could tell him the name of the beautiful maiden; but they all shook their heads and stroked their beards. They knew not who she was.

So displeased was the prince that he sent them away in disgrace to the most remote provinces of his kingdom. All the courtiers, the generals, the officers, and every man and woman, high and low, who lived in the palace came in turn to look at the picture. But they all had to confess their ignorance. Ta-Khai then called upon the magicians of the kingdom to find out by their art the [2]
name of the princess of his dreams, but their answers were so widely different that the prince, suspecting their ability, condemned them all to have their noses cut off. The portrait was shown in the outer court of the palace from sunrise till sunset, and exalted travellers came in every day, gazed upon the beautiful face, and came out again. None could tell who she was.

Meanwhile the days were weighing heavily upon the shoulders of Ta-Khai, and his sufferings cannot be described; he ate no more, he drank no more, and ended by forgetting which was day and which was night, what was in and what was out, what was left and what was right. He spent his time roaming over the mountains and through the woods crying aloud to the gods to end his life and his sorrow.

It was thus, one day, that he came to the edge of a precipice. The valley below was strewn with rocks, and the thought came to his mind that he had been led to this place to put a term to his misery. He was about to throw himself into the depths below when suddenly the bird *Feng* flew across the valley and appeared before him, saying:

'Why is Ta-Khai, the mighty Prince of Tartary, standing in this place of desolation with a shadow on his brow?'

Ta-Khai replied: 'The pine tree finds its nourishment where it stands, the tiger can run after the deer in the forests, the eagle can fly over the mountains and the plains, but how can I find the one for whom my heart is thirsting?'

And he told the bird his story.

The *Feng*, which in reality was a *Feng-Hwang*, that is, a female *Feng*, rejoined:

'Without the help of Supreme Heaven it is not easy to acquire wisdom, but it is a sign of the benevolence of the spiritual beings that I should have come between you and destruction. I can make myself large enough to carry the largest town upon my back, or small enough to pass through the smallest keyhole, and I know all the princesses in all the palaces of the earth. I have [3]
taught them the six intonations of my voice, and I am their friend. Therefore show me the picture, O Ta-Khai, and I will tell you the name of her whom you saw in your dream.'

They went to the palace, and, when the portrait was shown, the bird became as large as an elephant, and exclaimed, 'Sit on my back, O Ta-Khai, and I will carry you to the place of your dream. There you will find her of the transparent face with the drooping eyelids under the crown of dark hair such as you have depicted, for these are the features of Sai-Jen, the daughter of the King of China, and alone can be likened to the full moon rising under a black cloud.'

At nightfall they were flying over the palace of the king just above a magnificent garden. And in the garden sat Sai-Jen, singing and playing upon the lute. The *Feng-Hwang* deposited the prince outside the wall near a place where bamboos were growing and showed him how to cut twelve bamboos between the knots to make the flute which is called Pai-Siao and has a sound sweeter than the evening breeze on the forest stream.

And as he blew gently across the pipes, they echoed the sound of the princess's voice so harmoniously that she cried:

'I hear the distant notes of the song that comes from my own lips, and I can see nothing but the flowers and the trees; it is the melody the heart alone can sing that has suffered sorrow on sorrow, and to which alone the heart can listen that is full of longing.'

At that moment the wonderful bird, like a fire of many colours come down from heaven, alighted before the princess, dropping at her feet the portrait. She opened her eyes in utter astonishment at the sight of her own image. And when she had read the lines inscribed in the corner, she asked, trembling:

'Tell me, O *Feng-Hwang*, who is he, so near, but whom I cannot see, that knows the sound of my voice and has never heard me, and can remember my face and has never seen me?'

Then the bird spoke and told her the story of Ta-Khai's dream, adding: [4]

'I come from him with this message; I brought him here on my wings. For many days he has longed for this hour, let him now behold the image of his dream and heal the wound in his heart.'

Swift and overpowering is the rush of the waves on the pebbles of the shore, and like a little pebble felt Sai-Jen when Ta-Khai stood before her....

The *Feng-Hwang* illuminated the garden sumptuously, and a breath of love was stirring the flowers under the stars.

It was in the palace of the King of China that were celebrated in the most ancient and magnificent style the nuptials of Sai-Jen and Ta-Khai, Prince of Tartary.

And this is one of the three hundred and thirty-three stories about the bird *Feng* as it is told in the Book of the Ten Thousand Wonders.

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[5]

YOUNG ROUSSELLE

A FRENCH SONG OF THE OLDEN TIME

YOUNG Rousselle has three houses got,
Never a roof to all the lot,—
For swallows' nests they will serve quite well—
What do you think of Young Rousselle?
Ah! ah! ah! truth to tell,
A jolly good chap is Young Rousselle.

Young Rousselle, he has three top-coats;
Two are of cloth as yellow as oats;
The third, which is made of paper brown,
He wears if it freezes or rain comes down.
Ah! ah! ah! truth to tell,
A jolly good chap is Young Rousselle.

Young Rousselle, he has three old hats;
Two are as round as butter-pats;
The third has two little horns, 'tis said,
Because it has taken the shape of his head.
Ah! ah! ah! truth to tell,
A jolly good chap is Young Rousselle.

Young Rousselle, he has three fine eyes;
Each is quite of a different size;
One looks east and one looks west,
The third, his eye-glass, is much the best.
Ah! ah! ah! truth to tell,
A jolly good chap is Young Rousselle. [6]

Young Rousselle, he has three black shoes
Two on his feet he likes to use;
The third has neither sole nor side:
That will do when he weds his bride.
Ah! ah! ah! truth to tell,
A jolly good chap is Young Rousselle.

Young Rousselle three hairs can find:
Two in front and one behind;
And, when he goes to see his girl,
He puts all three of them in curl.
Ah! ah! ah! truth to tell,
A jolly good chap is Young Rousselle.

Young Rousselle, three boys he has got:
Two are nothing but trick and plot;
The third can cheat and swindle well,—
He greatly resembles Young Rousselle.
Ah! ah! ah! truth to tell,
A jolly good chap is Young Rousselle.

Young Rousselle, he has three good tykes;
One hunts rabbits just as he likes,
One chivies hares,—and, as for the third,

He bolts whenever his name is heard.
Ah! ah! ah! truth to tell,
A jolly good chap is Young Rousselle.

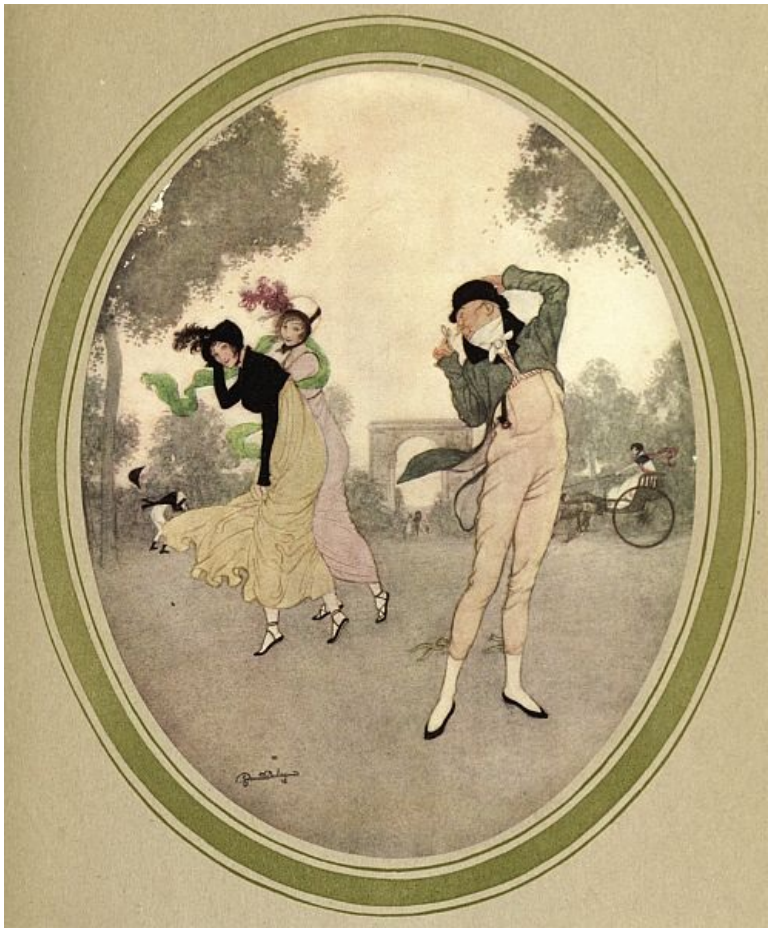
Young Rousselle, he has three big cats,
Who never attempt to catch the rats;
The third is blind, and without a light
He goes to the granary every night.
Ah! ah! ah! truth to tell,
A jolly good chap is Young Rousselle. [7]

Young Rousselle, he has daughters three,
Married as well as you'd wish to see;
Two, one could scarcely beauties call,
And the third, she has just no brains at all.
Ah! ah! ah! truth to tell,
A jolly good chap is Young Rousselle.

Young Rousselle, he has farthings three,—
To pay his creditors these must be;
And, when he has shown these riches vast,
He puts them back in his purse at last.
Ah! ah! ah! truth to tell,
A jolly good chap is Young Rousselle.

Young Rousselle, he will run his rig
A long while yet ere he hops the twig,
For, so they say, he must learn to spell
To write his own epitaph,—Young Rousselle!
Ah! ah! ah! truth to tell,
A jolly good chap is Young Rousselle.

[8]



WHAT DO YOU THINK OF YOUNG ROUSSELLE?

p. 5

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[9]

LAYLA AND MAJNVN

A PERSIAN LOVE STORY

Laylá, Pearl of the Night!

She was beautiful as the moon on the horizon, graceful as the cypress that sways in the night wind and glistens in the sheen of a myriad stars. Her hair was bright with depths of darkness; her eyes were dark with excess of light; her glance was shadowed by excess of light. Her smile and the parting of her lips were like the coming of the rosy dawn, and, when love came to her—as he did with a load of sorrow hidden in his sack—she was as a rose plucked from Paradise to be crushed against her lover's breast; a rose to wither, droop, and die as Ormazd snatched it from the hand of Ahriman.

Out of the night came *Laylá*, clothed with all its wondrous beauties: into the night she returned, and, while the wind told the tale of her love to the cypress above her grave, the stars, with an added lustre, looked down as if to say, '*Laylá* is not lost: she was born of us; she hath returned to us. Look up! look up! there is brightness in the night where *Laylá* sits; there is splendour in the sphere where *Laylá* sits.

As the moon looks down on all rivers, though they reflect but one moon,—so the beauty of *Laylá*, which smote all hearts to love. Her father was a great chief, and even the wealthiest princes of other lands visited him, attracted by the fame of *Laylá's* loveliness. But none could win her heart. Wealth and royal splendour could not claim it, yet it was given to the young Qays, son of the mighty chief of Yemen. Freely was it given to Qays, son of the chief of Yemen.

Now *Laylá's* father was not friendly to the chief of Yemen. Indeed, the only path that led from [10]
the one to the other was a well-worn warpath; for long, long ago their ancestors had quarrelled, and, though there were rare occasions when the two peoples met at great festivals and waived their differences for a time, it may truly be said that there was always hate in their eyes when they saluted. Always? Not always: there was one exception. It was at one of these festivals that Qays first saw *Laylá*. Their eyes met, and, though no word was spoken, love thrilled along a single glance.

From that moment Qays was a changed youth. He avoided the delights of the chase; his tongue was silent at feast and in council; he sat apart with a strange light in his eyes; no youth of his tribe could entice him to sport, no maiden could comfort him. His heart was in another house, and that was not the house of his fathers.

And *Laylá*—she sat silent among her maidens with eyes downcast. Once, when a damsel, divining rightly, took her lute and sang a song of the fountain in the forest, where lovers met beneath the silver moon, she raised her head at the close of the song and bade the girl sing it again—and again. And, after this, in the evenings when the sun was setting, she would wander unattended in the gardens about her father's palace, roaming night by night in ever widening circles, until, on a night when the moon was brightest, she came to the confines of the gardens where they adjoined the deep forest beyond;—but ever and ever the moonlight beyond. And here, as she gazed adown the spaces between the tree trunks, she saw, in an open space where the moonbeams fell, a sparkling fountain, and knew it for that which had been immortalised in the sweet song sung by her damsel with the lute. There, from time immemorial, lovers had met and plighted their vows. A thrill shot through her at the thought that she had wandered hither in search of it. Her cheeks grew hot, and, with a wildly beating heart, she turned and ran back to her father's palace. Ran back, ashamed.

Now, in a high chamber of the palace,—it was as wondrous as that of a Sultan,—where *Laylá* [11]
was wont to recline at the window looking out above the tree-tops, there were two beautiful white doves; these had long been her companions, perching on her shoulder and pecking gently at her cheek with 'Coo, coo, coo';—preeking and preening on her shoulder with 'Coo, coo, coo.' They would come at her call and feed from her hand; and, when she threw one from the window, retaining the other against her breast, the liberated one seemed to understand that it might fly to yonder tree; and there it would sit cooing for its mate until *Laylá*, having held her fluttering bird close for a time, would set it free. 'Ah!' she would sigh to herself, as the bird flew swiftly to its mate, 'when love hath wings it flies to the loved one, but alas! I have no wings.' And yet it was by the wings of a dove that her lover sent her a passionate message, which threw her into joy and fear, and finally led her footsteps to the place of lovers' meeting.

Qays, in the lonely musings which had beset him of late, recalled the story—well known among the people—of *Laylá's* two white doves. As he recalled it he raised himself upon his elbow on his couch and said to himself, 'If I went to her father, saying, "Give me thy daughter to wife!" how should I be met? If I sent a messenger, how would *he* be met? But the doves—if all tales be true, they fly in at her window and nestle to her bosom.'

With his thought suddenly intent upon the doves, he called his servant Zeyd, who came quickly, for he loved his master.

'Thou knowest, Zeyd,' said Qays, 'that in the palace of the chief of Basráh there are two white doves, one of which flies forth at its mistress's bidding, and cooes and cooes and cooes until its mate is permitted to fly to it.'

'I know it well, my master. They are tame birds, and they come to their mistress's hand.'

'Would they come, thinkest thou, to *thy* hand?'

Zeyd, who was in his master's confidence, and knew what troubled him, answered the question

with another.

'Dost thou desire these doves, O my master? My father was a woodman and I was brought up [12]
in the forests. Many a wilder bird than a dove have I snared in the trees. I even know the secret art of taking a bird with my hand.'

'Then bring me one of these doves, but be careful not to injure it—not even one feather of its plumage.'

Zeyd was as clever as his word. On the third evening thereafter he brought one of *Laylá's* white doves to Qays and placed it in his hand. Then Qays stroked the bird and calmed its fears, and, bidding Zeyd hold it, he carefully wrapt and tied round its leg a small soft parchment on which were written the following verses:—

Thy heart is as a pure white dove,
And it hath come to me;
And it hath brought me all thy love,
Flying from yonder tree.

Thou shalt not have thy heart again,
For it shall stay with me;
Yet thou shalt hear my own heart's pain
Sobbing in yonder tree.

There is a fount where lovers meet:
To-night I wait for thee.
Fly to me, love, as flies the dove
To dove in yonder tree.

Now *Laylá*, who had sent her dove into the warm night, sat listening at her window to hear it coo to its mate held close in her bosom. But it cooed not from its accustomed bough on yonder tree. Holding the fluttering mate to her she leaned forth from the window, straining her ears to catch the well-known note, but, hearing nothing, she said to herself, 'What can have happened? Whither has it flown? Never was such a thing before. Perchance the bird is sleeping on the bough.'

Then, as the moon rose higher and higher above the tree-tops, shedding a glistening radiance [13]
over everything, she waited and waited, but there came no doling of the dove, no coo from yonder tree. At last, unable to account for it, she took the bird from her bosom and stroked it and spoke to it; then she threw it gently in the air as if to send it in search of its lost mate to bring it back.

The bird flew straight to the tree, and, perching there, cooed again and again, but there was no answering coo of its mate. Finally *Laylá* saw it rise from the tree and circle round the palace. Many times she saw it flash by and heard the beating of its wings, until at last it flew in at the window; and, when she took it and pressed it to her, she felt that it was trembling. For sure, it was distressed and trembling.

'Alas! poor bird!' she said, stroking it gently. 'It is hard to lose one's lover, but it is harder still never to have found him.'

But lo, as she was comforting the bird, the other dove suddenly fluttered in and perched upon her shoulder. She gave a cry of delight, and, taking it, held them both together in her arms. In fondling them her fingers felt something rough on the leg of the one that had just returned. Quickly she untied the fastenings, and, with beating heart, unfolded the parchment and read the writing thereon. It was the message from her lover. She knew not what to do. Should she go to the fountain where lovers meet beneath the moon? In her doubt she snatched first one dove and then the other, kissing each in turn. Then, setting them down, she rose and swiftly clothed herself in a long cloak, and stole quietly down the stairs and out of the palace by a side door. Love found the way to the path through the forest that led to the fountain where lovers meet. Like a shadow flitting across the bars of moonlight that fell among the trees she sped on, and at last arrived at the edge of the open space where the fountain played, its silvery, high-flung column sparkling like jewelled silver ere it fell in tinkling spray upon the shining moss.

Laylá paused irresolute in the shadows, telling herself that if her heart was beating so hard it was because she had been running. Where was he who had stolen her dove and returned it with a [14]
message?

Wherever he was he had quick eyes, for he had discovered her in the shadows, and now came past the fountain, hastening towards her.

She darted into the light of the moon.

'Who art thou?'

Their eyes met. The moonlight fell on their faces. No other word was spoken, for they recognised each other in one glance.

'*Laylá!* thou hast come to me. I love thee.'

'And I thee!'

And none but the old moon, who has looked down on many such things before, saw their sudden embrace; and none but the spirit of the fountain, who had recorded the words of lovers ever since the first gush of the waters, heard what they said to one another.

And so *Laylá* and Qays met many times by the fountain and plighted their vows there in the depths of the forest. And once, as they lingered over their farewells, Qays said to *Laylá*, 'And oh! my beloved, if the desert were my home, and thou and I were free, even in the wilderness, eating the herbs that grow in the waste, or a loaf of thine own baking from the wild corn; drinking the water of the brook, and reposing beneath the bough,—then would I let the world go by, and, with no hate of thy people, live with thee and love thee for ever.'

'And I thee, beloved.'

'Then let us leave all, and fly to the wilderness—'

'Now?'

'No, not now. Thou must prepare. To-morrow, beloved, I will await thee here at this hour with two fleet steeds; and then, as they spurn the dust from their feet, so will we spurn the world—you and I.'

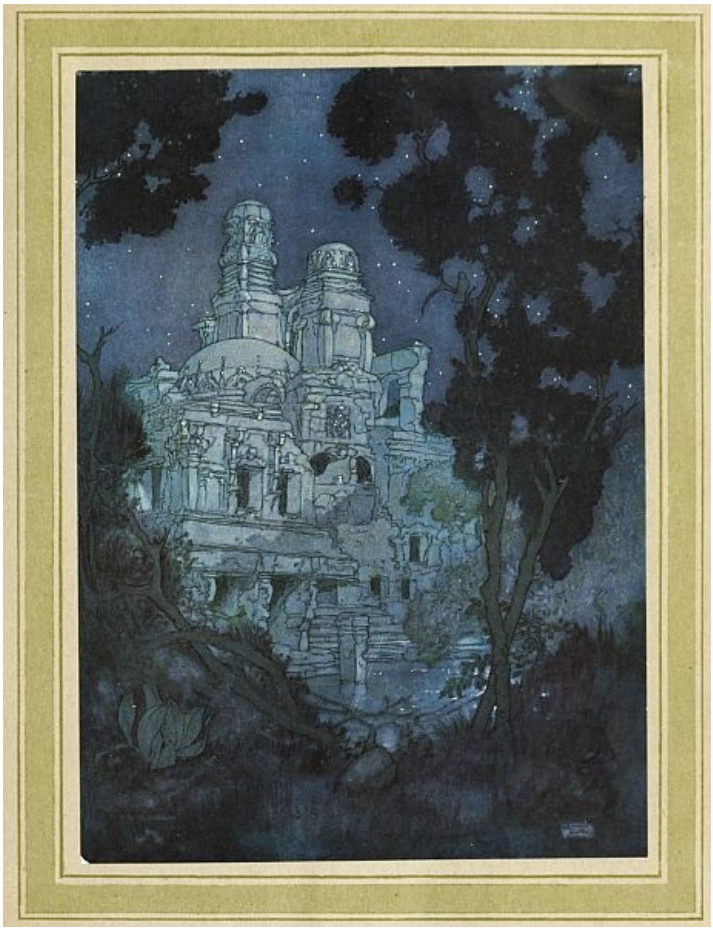
That night *Laylá* dreamed that she was in the wilderness with her lover, sitting beneath the bough, drinking from the waters of the brook, eating a loaf of her own making from the wild corn, and, in her lover's presence, happy to lose the luxury of palaces.

But alas! the dream was never to be realised. Some one at the palace—some one with more [15]
than two ears, and with eyes both back and front—some one, moreover, in the pay of Ibn Salám, a handsome young chief who greatly desired *Laylá* in marriage, breathed a word into the ear of *Laylá's* father. The following day the palace was deserted. The old chief, with *Laylá* and the whole of his retinue, had departed to his estate in the mountains, where it was hoped that the keen, pure air would be better for *Laylá's* health;—at least so her father said, though none could understand why, seeing that she had never looked better in her life.

Qays, knowing nothing of this sudden departure for several days, waited at the fountain at the appointed hour. At last one day, being already sad at heart, he learned—for Ibn Salám had not been idle in the matter—that *Laylá* had gone to the mountains of her own accord with her father's household, and that Ibn Salám, the favoured one, had gone with her also. Believing this to be true—for lovers are prone to credit what they fear—Qays ran forth from his abode like a man distraught. In the agony of his despair he thought of nothing but to search for, and find, *Laylá.* Setting his face towards the distant mountains, he plunged into the desert, calling *'Laylá! Laylá!'* Every rock of the wilderness, every tree and thorny waste soon knew her name, for it echoed thereamong all that day and the following night, until at dawn he sank exhausted on a barren stretch of sand.

And here it was that his servant Zeyd and a party of his master's friends found him as the sun was rising. He was distracted. Worn out with fatigue and hunger and thirst, he wandered in his mind as he had wandered in the desert. They took him back to his father's abode and sought to restore him, but, when at last he was well, he still called continually for his lost love *Laylá*, so that they thought his reason was unhinged, and spoke of him as '*Majnún*'—that is to say, 'mad with love'; and by this name he was called ever afterward.

His father came and pleaded with him to put away his infatuation for the daughter of a chief no friend of his; but, finding him reasonable in all things save his mad love, the chief said within [16]
himself: 'If he can be healed of this one thing he will be whole.' Then, being willing further to cement enmity or establish a bond with the chief of Basráh, he decided to set the matter to the test. Collecting a splendid retinue, he journeyed to the mountains on a mission to the chief, his enemy, leaving *Majnún* in the care of the faithful Zeyd.



IN A HIGH CHAMBER OF THE PALACE—IT WAS AS WONDROUS AS THAT OF A SULTAN

p. 12

When, after many days' journey, he at last arrived at the estate of *Laylá's* father, he stood before that chief and haughtily demanded the hand of his daughter in marriage with his son, setting forth the clear meaning of consent on the one hand and refusal on the other. His proposal was rejected as haughtily as it had been made. 'News travels far,' said the chief of Basráh. 'Thy son is mad: cure him of his madness first, and then seek my consent.'

Cyd, the chief of Yemen, was a proud man and fierce. He could not brook this answer. He had proposed a bond of friendship, and it had been turned into a barbed shaft of war. He withdrew from Basráh's presence with the cloud of battle lowering on his brows. He returned to his own place to come again in war, vowing vengeance on Basráh.

But Yemen's chief delayed his plans, for, on his return, he discovered that his son, accompanied by the faithful Zeyd, had set out on the yearly pilgrimage to Mecca, there to kneel before the holy shrine and drink of the sacred well in the Kaába.

'Surely,' said he, 'that sacred well of water which sprang from the parched desert to save Hagar and her son will restore my own son to his health of mind. I will follow him and pray with him at the holy shrine; I will drink also at the sacred well, and so, perchance, he will be restored to me.'

But it so chanced that, when the chief, followed by a splendid retinue, was but two days on his journey towards Mecca, he was met by a lordly chief of the desert named Noufal, who, with a small band of warriors, rode in advance of a cloud of dust to greet him in friendly fashion.

'I know thee,' said Noufal, reining in his magnificent horse so suddenly that the sand and [17]
gravel scattered wide; 'thou art the chief of Yemen and the father of *Majnún*, whom I have met in the desert. Greetings to thee! I have succoured thy son, whom I found in sore straits and nigh unto death. I have heard his story, and I will aid him and thee against the chief of Basráh, if it be thy will, O chief of Yemen.'

'Greetings to thee, O Noufal! I know thy name; thou art a wanderer of the desert, but I have heard many brave tales of thy prowess and thy generosity. Thou hast my son in thy keeping? But how comes it that he failed of his pilgrimage to Mecca, whither I was following to join him at the holy shrine?'

'Alas! he fell by the wayside in sight of my warriors; and, when they came to him, his only cry was, "*Laylá! Laylá!*" They brought him to me, and from his broken story and this oft-repeated cry of "*Laylá*" I knew him for *Majnún*, thy son; for the tale of beauty and love, O chief of Yemen, travels far in the silent desert.'

'What wouldst thou, then, Noufal?'

'I would that thou and I, for the sake of thy son, go up against the chief of Basráh and demand

his daughter. If he consent not, and we conquer, I will extend thine interests and protect them through the desert and beyond. If he consent, thou and I and he will be for ever at peace, and will combine our territories on just terms of thine own choosing.'

'Thou hast spoken well, O Noufal, and I trust thee. Go thou up against the chief of Basráh and demand *Laylá* in my name. I will follow thy path, and, if thou returnest to meet me with *Laylá* in thy protection, all is well; but, if not, then we will proceed against Basráh together, and thy terms shall be my terms. For the rest, thou hast swift messengers, as have I.'

At the word Noufal wheeled his horse and gave commands to some of his warriors, and presently six fleet-footed chargers were speeding towards the horizon in six different directions to call the warriors of the desert to converge on a point at the foot of the mountains. Meanwhile similar messengers were hastening back to Yemen with orders from their chief. Noufal and his [18]
band of warriors set out for the rendezvous, but the chief of Yemen waited for the return of his messengers.

Meanwhile *Laylá*, on her father's estate among the mountains, lived in the depths of misery. The young chief Ibn Salám, well favoured of her father, was continually pleading for her hand in marriage, but *Laylá's* protestations and tears so moved her father that he was fain to say to the handsome and wealthy suitor, 'She is not yet of age; wait a little while and all will be well.' For Basráh looked with a calculating eye on this young chief, who had splendid possessions and many thousands of warriors. As for *Laylá*, she immured herself from the light of day, communing only with the stars by night, and saying within her heart, 'I will die a maiden rather than marry any but *Majnún*, who is now, alas! distracted, even as I.'

IF THE DESERT WERE MY HOME—THEN WOULD I LET THE WORLD GO BY

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Now *Laylá*, well knowing that her doves were nesting in 'yonder tree,' had left them to the care of the attendants at the palace. They had always been a solace to her, especially since one had been Love's messenger, and she missed that solace now. A young tiger, obedient only to an Ethiopian slave, could not speak to her of love as the doves had done! But one day a slave-girl brought her a bird of paradise, saying, 'My boy lover caught this in the forests of the hills and bade me offer it to thee for thy kindness to me.'

Laylá treasured the bird in her solitude, and soon discovered that it could imitate the sounds of her voice. On this she straightway taught it one word, and one word only. Then she would sit for hours, with the bird perched on the back of her hand, listening to its soft intonation of that one word: '*Majnún*.' Again and again and again the bird would speak softly in her ear that sweetest name in all the world: '*Majnún, Majnún, Majnún*,' and her heart would leave her bosom and range through the desolation of the desert, seeking always *Majnún*.

The affair of her heart stood in such case when, one day at dawn, Noufal, with a large band of [19]
warriors, smote with his sword upon the gates and demanded to see the chief of Basráh.

It was a short and pointed exchange of few words between Noufal and Basráh as the broadening band of sunlight crept slowly down the background of mountains; and, when it smote upon the gates as the sun burst up, the talk was finished and Noufal and his band were galloping towards the desert to meet the oncoming hosts of Yemen. The chief of Basráh gazed upon the cloud of dust that rose between him and the sun, and in it read the signs of sudden war.

Now Basráh's mountain estate adjoined the territory of Ibn Salám, and, as soon as the latter learned that the chief had flouted Noufal in favour of his own suit, and that the thunder-cloud of battle was arising against the wind, he offered the aid of a thousand of his warriors—an offer which was eagerly accepted. But the thousand he offered were not a third part of the warriors at his call.

The way of war was paved. Before noon a host of Ibn Salám's warriors came riding in. *Laylá*, from her window, noted their brave array. Then, looking far out on to the desert, she saw the dust-cloud rising from the hoofs of an advancing host. 'Alas!' she cried, 'the heart that beats in my bosom is the cause of this. I love my father; I love *Majnún:* Destiny must choose between them.'

Destiny hath strange reversals. The shock and clash of battle dinned on her ears till near nightfall, when, with a heart divided between hope and fear, she saw clearly that Ibn's hosts could not hold their ground. The onslaughts of her father's foe were forcing them back. They scattered, and rallied, and scattered again. Those that were left retreated within the gates. The gates were battered down, and all was lost—or won. A herald advanced, offering terms of surrender. *Laylá* leaned from her window, listening. No word could she hear until her father, still defiant in the face of defeat, spoke in ringing tones.

'And, if I deliver not up my daughter, you will take her. Yea, but you will not take her alive. I have but to raise my hand and she will be slain. I have lost all, but my servants will still obey me: [20] if I give the word, her dead body is yours for the asking.'

At this the chief of Yemen bade him hold his hand from committing this terrible deed.

'O chief of Basráh,' he said, 'I give thee one day to think about this matter. There are two sides to it: the one is that thou deliver up thy daughter to be given to my son to wife, so that there may be a bond of friendship between us; the other is that thou keep thy daughter and surrender thy sovereignty, retaining thy territories only in vassalage to me.'

With that the chief of Yemen and his ally, Noufal, withdrew, leaving Basráh to decide before dawn the following day.

Now, among Ibn Salám's messengers that he had sent out was one whose orders were to ride back, as if from Yemen, bringing word that he had discovered *Majnún*, who, having fled from his attendants in the night, was lying dead in the desert. This was not truth, but Ibn had reason to believe that it soon would be, for he had sent out others to find him and kill him. It was to his purpose that the false news should arrive quickly, for, on that, and the offer of a further host of warriors at his command, he hoped to gain *Laylá's* promise and strengthen her father's hand in the matter.

The victors had scarcely withdrawn when the messenger rode in, shouting the news to victors and vanquished alike. The chief of Yemen heard it and wept for his son. Noufal heard it and said, '*Laylá* is nothing to us now; at dawn we shall dictate our own terms.' Ibn Salám and *Laylá's* father heard the news without grief, and Ibn said, 'Now there can be no obstacle to thy daughter's consent, for she is a woman, and must know that the living is more desirable than the dead. I have already helped thee, O Chief, and we have failed. But thy daughter has only to speak the word and a further host of my warriors—more than treble the number that fought to-day—will come out of the desert at my call. Half will come to aid our defence, and half will attack the hosts of Yemen from the desert. Thus your foes will be scattered like chaff in the wind. Go to thy [21] daughter and show her now how a word from her will save thee from destruction and make thee great.'

The chief of Basráh went to his daughter, and, when Ibn heard sounds of a woman wailing, he knew that the false news of *Majnún's* death was believed. Long time the chief pleaded with *Laylá*, urging the uselessness of weeping for *Majnún* when, by accepting Ibn in marriage, she could save Basráh and make it a great kingdom. Then he spoke of her duty to him, her father, in this terrible plight, from which her word alone could save him; and *Laylá* saw, through her tears, that for her father's sake the sacrifice must be made; and through duty, not love, she mournfully pledged herself to Ibn Salám.

As soon as Ibn knew this he called some of his warriors and questioned them on the matter of his hosts in reserve.

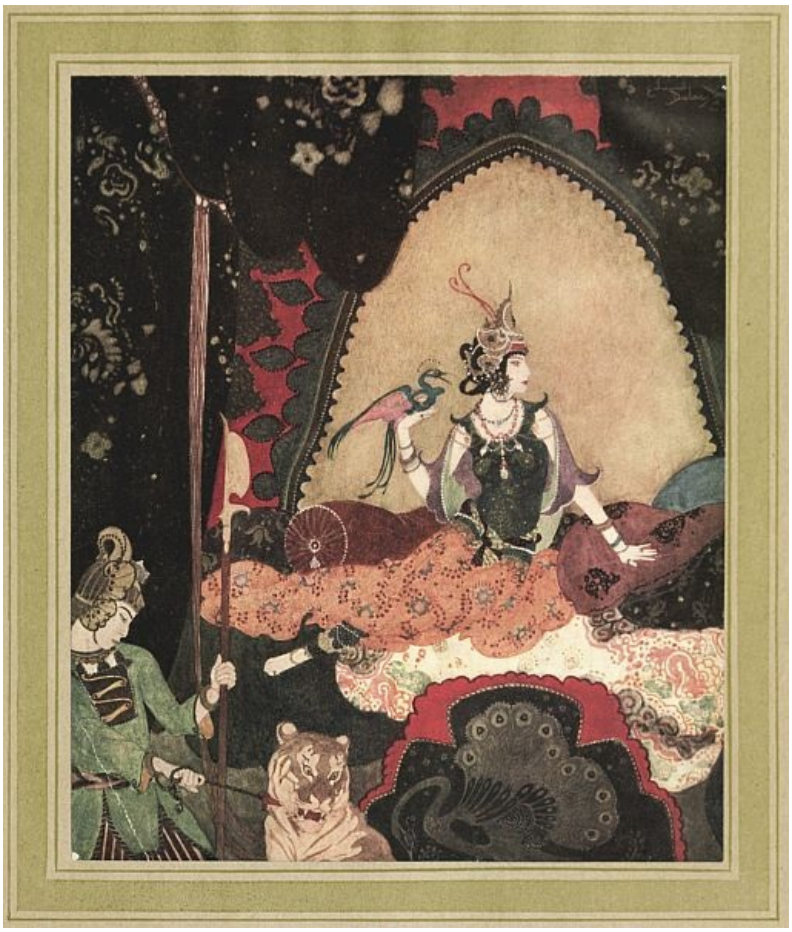
'Four thousand,' he said, when he had heard their replies. 'The foe is but three thousand, and we are little more than one thousand.'

Then he gave orders to some chosen messengers and bade them steal forth secretly and deliver them to his generals. Half the four thousand was to arrive by night under cover of the mountains and be ready for battle at sunrise. The other half was to make a circuit of the desert and fall upon the foe from behind when the battle was at its hottest. On this sudden stroke he relied for complete victory.

And he was not wrong. When dawn broke over the desert, and the mountain peaks were flushed with sunrise fire, the dark shadows at the base were two thousand strong. There they waited hidden from the foe, while, as the sun rose, a herald came to the gates. In the name of Yemen, he dictated the terms of surrender without any condition in regard to *Laylá*.

The chief of Basráh laughed him to scorn. 'Go tell the chief of Yemen and his robber friend of the desert,' he said, 'that if they desire my domains they must take them by force of arms. Tell them that Basráh never surrenders: he prefers to live free, or to die fighting.'

[22]



SHE WOULD SIT FOR HOURS, WITH THE BIRD PERCHED ON THE BACK OF HER HAND, LISTENING TO ITS SOFT INTONATION OF THAT ONE WORD "MAJNÚN"

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The herald took back this proud answer of defiance. On hearing it Yemen wondered and questioned, but Noufal, who was a man of the desert, sudden in temper and quick to act, counselled an immediate attack.

The battle was joined. At the first shock came Ibn's two thousand warriors from their concealment, and the invaders fell back in astonishment. Yet they rallied again, and fiercely raged the fight between the opposing hosts, now equally matched in numbers. *Laylá* looked from her window in horror. She noted how the battle swayed this way, then that. And now it seemed that the foe was steadily gaining the mastery. But what was that in the distance of the desert? What was that, thrust forward from the desert? A great cloud of dust, quickly approaching. It drew near, its cause quickly outstripping it. A mighty host of warriors now shook the earth with the thunder of their horses' feet. They drew nearer. Now like a whirlwind they hurled themselves upon the invaders and bore them down like trodden wheat—sweeping the flying remainder of them like chaff to the four winds.

Yemen was slain. Noufal, flying from numbers on swifter steeds than his, laughed back at his pursuers, then slew himself, dying, as he had lived, at full gallop.

Basráh was victorious. That night *Laylá* was given by her father to Ibn Salám. That night, too, the chief of Basráh, having been previously wounded in the battle, died. Ibn ruled now over three vast territories welded into one. And, where he was king, *Laylá* was queen.

Years passed by, and Ibn and *Laylá* reigned in peace. The palace of her fathers was their abode, and the bird of paradise and the two white doves were often her companions, recalling to her heart a lost, but never-to-be-forgotten, love. The faithful Zeyd, who had wandered long in the desert searching in vain for his master, was now her servant.

[23]

One day news came secretly to Zeyd that *Majnún*, long mourned as dead, had returned disguised as a merchant from distant parts, and would be waiting for him at a certain spot on the outskirts of the desert at sunset. Zeyd said nothing of this to his mistress, but, unknown to her, he caught one of the doves and took it away with him to the meeting-place, for he reasoned that

what had happened once would happen again with like result. Full of joy was the meeting between *Majnún* and Zeyd on the edge of the desert as the sun went down.

Now *Laylá*, when she repaired to her high chamber that evening, was astonished to find one of her doves missing. She sent the other forth to the great tree, thinking the two might return together, but presently it returned alone. Then, wondering greatly, she sat by the window, musing on the past: how, three years ago, the dove had returned after an absence, bearing a love-message from *Majnún*, and how she had met him again and again at the lovers' fountain in the forest. Alas! all was changed: *Majnún* was dead, and she was the wife of another. Her eyes filled with tears, and, bowing her head on her arms upon the window-sill, she wept silently.

For a long time she remained like this. Then, suddenly, she was aroused from her weeping by a sound. It was the 'coo, coo, coo' of the missing dove, and it came from the great tree. Immediately the other dove fanned her hair as it sped past her to its mate. It made her long for wings that she too might fly away and away to her lover.

Presently the two birds fluttered in at the window and came to her. What strange thing was this? There, wrapped round the leg of one was a small strip of soft parchment as on that night long ago. With trembling fingers she unfastened and read what was written thereon. It was from *Majnún!* He was alive and well! As before, the writing begged her to come that very night to the lovers' fountain at moonrise.

In her sudden joy at learning that her lover was alive and near at hand, *Laylá* forgot all, and, as the gibbous moon was already brightening the horizon, she arose and cloaked herself and stole [24] down the stairway of the palace. She reached the side door unobserved. She passed out and closed it behind her. Her heart flew before her to *Majnún*, but suddenly, as she hastened, it rebounded swiftly and almost stopped beating. Her footsteps faltered and she clutched at a bough of a tree for support. Her husband! Her duty! Once she had given all for duty's sake: should she take it back now, and in this way? What would it mean? With *Majnún's* arms around her she would forget all—husband, duty, her people: all, all would be forgotten, and the step once taken could not be retraced. Alas! this was not the act of a wife! It was not the act of a queen! She groaned as she grasped the bough, and her body swayed with her spirit's woe as she then and there rejected her purpose and accepted her sorrow.

Slowly *Laylá* strengthened herself; then, like one in a dream, she turned and retraced her steps to the palace, no sigh, no sob escaping her. All that night she refused sleep or comfort, dry-eyed; and it was only when the dawn came that tears came too, to save her reason on its throne.

Majnún waited long by the lovers' fountain, and, at last, learning from Zeyd that his mistress had ventured forth and had returned, he went away, treasuring to his heart a love that could not give one glance without giving all; for, from Zeyd's story he knew this to be so. As *Laylá* had gone back to the palace, silent and strong, so *Majnún* set his face towards distant cities, praying ever that the years might bring surcease of woe, if not the rapture of the love of *Laylá*.

Two years passed by, and Fate stepped in. Ibn Salám fell stricken with a fever and died. The news spread far, and one day *Majnún*, in a distant city, looked up and heard that *Laylá*, the queen of Yemen and Basráh, was free. Swift, then, were the steeds that bore him to Yemen. But, remembering how she had twice sacrificed herself for duty, he forbore to approach her until the expiration of the prescribed term of widowhood—four moons and half a moon. This period he spent, alone and unknown, in an abode from which he could see the lights of *Laylá's* palace. His [25] longing ate into his heart, and it was harder to bear than his former distraction, by which he had earned his name of *Majnún* ('mad with love'). But as, in the first instance, his reason had borne the strain, so now it bore the stress of all this weary waiting at the gates of Paradise.

Zeyd bore tidings of *Laylá* to *Majnún*, but from *Majnún* to *Laylá* no message passed until, on a day when the prescribed term had passed, Zeyd took word to her that *Majnún* would come to her at the palace at noon, or, according to her choice, wait for her at the lovers' fountain at two hours after sunset.

Zeyd brought back the delayed message: 'Noon has passed, but noon will come again—after this eventide.' Which was not unlike the answer *Majnún* had expected.

The saddest part of the history of these ill-destined lovers is yet to be told. Two hours after sunset *Majnún* kept the tryst. Two hours after sunset *Laylá*, her eyes smouldering with a pent-up fire, cloaked herself as of old and went out by the side door of the palace. There was no moon, but the stars shed a soft light upon the gardens. She passed among the trees; her heart beat fast and her breath came quick. The whole of her life seemed wrapped up in her two feet, which ran a hot race with each other. She reached the edge of the forest and paused, clasping her hands over her bosom. She must regain her breath to show *Majnún* how little she had hastened. Then, before she had regained it, she ran on, losing it the more. There was the fountain—the fountain where lovers had always met—she saw it sparkling in the starlight through the trees. Now she stood on the edge of the open space, the folds of her cloak parted, her masses of raven hair fallen loose, her breast heaving.

A figure darted from the fountain's side. She faltered forward, swaying. A moaning cry escaped her as *Majnún* caught her in a wild embrace.

Who knows if it was but a moment or a thousand years? Love has no dial. But that time-moment two hours after sunset was their swift undoing. At the touch of her lips upon his,

Majnún's reason was wrenched away. At the touch of his lips upon hers, she swooned in his arms. [26]
He let her fall, and ran, shrieking, out of the forest and into the desert; shrieking her name, far into the desert.

'*Laylá! Laylá! Laylá!*'—his maniac cries echoed on and on until, in the hopeless waste of wilderness, he fell exhausted. But Zeyd, who had followed his voice, at last found him. Many a day and night he tended his master, but to no purpose. Joy had done what grief had failed to do: *he was mad!*

Laylá awoke from her swoon, and, hearing her own name repeated again and again,—that wild cry coming from farther and farther in the desert,—divined the truth and returned, slowly and wringing her hands, to the palace.

From time to time Zeyd sent news of *Majnún* and his undying love, which even his madness had failed to touch.

Day by day, and week by week, *Laylá's* eyes grew brighter and her cheeks paler. Slowly she pined away, and then she died of a broken heart. Her last words were a message to *Majnún*—a message of love that could not die, though it must quit the beautiful, unhappy house of clay in which it had suffered so much.

'And tell him,' she said, 'that my body shall be buried by the side of the fountain where he first clasped me in his arms. And tell him, too, these very words: '*Majnún*, lift thine eyes! See, yonder are the Fields of Light, and a fountain springing in the sunshine—yonder—a fountain of eternal waters, where lovers meet, never to part again;—*thou shalt find me there!*' And with that she died, and her spirit sped on her parting thought to that place of lovers' meeting;—the immortal font of lovers' meeting.

* * * * *

Dawn was breaking on the desert when two figures came running. Each held the other by the hand, and on the face of one was that look which told how he had been driven mad by love. *Majnún*, outstripping Zeyd, left him to follow, and plunged into the forest. Soon he came to the open space in which the fountain played. Well he knew the spot where he had first clasped *Laylá* [27]
in his arms. There was now a newly made grave. Exhausted, not with running, but with love, madness, and grief, he flung himself upon it.

'*Laylá! Laylá!*' he moaned, with a heart-bursting pang. 'I will come soon—ah, soon! Hold thy shroud of night about thee! Hide thy beauty in the Fields of Light—*until I find thee there!*'

And, as the sun rose, Zeyd came and stood by the grave, gazing down upon his master through tears of grief;—gazing down upon the dead through bitter tears of grief.

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[28]
[29]

THE NIGHTINGALE

AFTER A FAIRY TALE BY HANS ANDERSEN

THERE was no more beautiful thing in the world than the palace of the emperor of China. It was built of the very finest porcelain, delicate and fragile as an egg-shell. The people, high and low, who dwelt in that palace moved with the utmost grace and care lest they should break anything, and in this they had more admiration for the extreme beauty of the place than fear of being trampled upon by the emperor for any damage caused by clumsiness. The palace garden was so big that not even the head gardener could tell you where it ended. It contained the most wonderful flowers; every here and there among the glorious blooms was one more rare than its neighbours; and, as if to attract your attention to its splendour, each had attached to it a little silver bell which tinkled melodiously in the hands of every passing zephyr. Miles and miles and miles of beautiful trees and flowers, with smooth lawns and sparkling fountains; and always, if you wished, you could turn off into a delightful wood which skirted the garden and led down a gentle slope to the sea, where, on the brink, the trees were so high and spreading, and the blue water beneath so suddenly deep and still, that great ships could shelter there in the shade. And in this wonderful wood lived a *Nightingale* which sang so deliciously that all who heard it stood rooted to the spot. Never had such music been heard before in any wood in the world. Even the poor fisherman, busy with his nets in the bay, would pause in his work to listen. 'Heavens, how beautiful that song is!' he would say; and, night after night, when the bird sang he would forget his toil to murmur, 'How beautiful! how beautiful!'

From every land travellers came to see the emperor's palace and walk in the wonderful [30]
garden, but those who heard the *Nightingale* sing said, 'There is nothing here so entrancing as that song.' And these went away carrying the music in their hearts and the tale of it on their lips to tell in their own lands. Thus the wonder of the *Nightingale* was known afar, and learned men wrote books about it, describing at length the beauty of the emperor's palace and garden only as

a fit setting for the crowning wonder of all—the bird whose entrancing song lifted all this earthly splendour to heaven. Many were the poems written and sung about the far-off *Nightingale* which filled and thrilled the woods with music by the deep-blue sea. The books and the poems went through the whole world, and of course many of them reached the emperor.

Sitting in his golden chair reading, he nodded his head with a smile of pleasure at the splendid descriptions of palace and garden and all they contained; but, when he read that all this splendour was of minor account compared to the glorious singing of a *Nightingale* in the woods by the sea, he sat up straight and said, 'A *Nightingale?* What is this? A wonder in my own home, my own garden—a wonder that travels afar and yet I have never heard of it till now! What strange things we read about in books, to be sure. But I'll soon settle the matter.'

With this he summoned his gentleman-in-waiting—a very important personage; so important, indeed, that when one of less importance dared to address him on even a matter more important than either of them, he would simply answer, 'Ph!'—which, as you know, means nothing at all.

'They say,' said the emperor, 'ahem! they say there is a wonderful bird here called a *Nightingale*, compared with whose delicious song my palace and garden are of small account. Why have I not been informed of this marvel?'

The gentleman-in-waiting protested that he knew nothing whatever of such a thing as a *Nightingale*—at least, he was certain it had never been presented at court.

'These books cannot all be wrong,' said the emperor; 'especially as they all agree in their accounts of it. It appears that the whole world knows what I am possessed of, and yet I have never known it myself till now. I command you to bring this rare bird here this evening to sing to me.' [31]

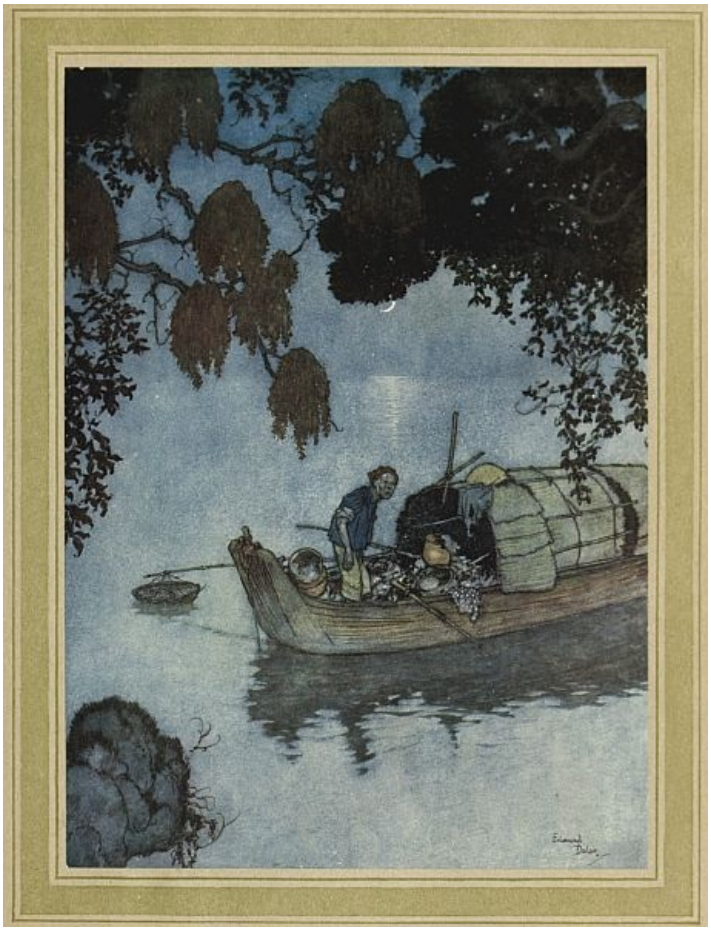
The gentleman-in-waiting went off, well knowing what would happen if he failed to produce the bird in the time appointed. But how was it to be found? He ran up and down stairs and through all the corridors asking rapid questions of every one he could find, but not one knew anything about the *Nightingale*. 'Ha!' thought he, 'this thing is a myth, invented by writers to make their books more interesting.' And he ran back and told the emperor so.

'Nonsense!' cried the emperor. 'This book here was sent me by his powerful majesty the emperor of Japan, so it must be true—every word of it. I will give this bird my most gracious protection, but, as for those who fail to find it and bring it here to-night—well, if it is not forthcoming, I will have the whole court trampled upon after supper!'

'Tsing-pe!' said the gentleman-in-waiting, and hurried off. Up and down all the stairs, in and out all the corridors he ran again, and this time half the court ran with him, for the thought of being trampled upon got into their heels and there was no time to be wasted. Still, no one in court knew anything about the *Nightingale* with which all the outside world was so familiar. But at last they came to a poor little maid in the scullery. She knew all about it. 'Oh yes; the delightful *Nightingale!*' she cried. 'Of course I know it. Every evening I hear it sing in the wood by the seashore on my way home. Ah me! its music brings tears into my eyes and makes me feel as if my mother is kissing me.'

'Listen, little kitchen-maid!' said the gentleman-in-waiting, 'if you will lead us to the *Nightingale* I will give you permission to see the emperor dining to-night.'

She clapped her hands with glee at this, and very soon they were all following her on the way to the wood. As they ran a cow began to bellow loudly, and they stopped. 'That's it!' cried a young courtier. 'What a magnificent voice for so small a creature!' [32]



EVEN THE POOR FISHERMAN WOULD PAUSE IN HIS WORK TO LISTEN

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'Nay, nay; that's a cow. We have not reached the place yet.' And the little maid hurried them on.

Presently the frogs of a neighbouring marsh raised a chorus of 'Koax! koax!'

'How beautiful!' cried the palace chaplain; 'more beautiful than the sound of church bells. This bird——'

'Nay, nay; those are frogs; but we are coming to the *Nightingale* soon.' And the little maid ran on. Then, suddenly, they all paused, breathless, beneath the trees, for the *Nightingale* had begun to sing.

'There it is! there it is!' cried the little kitchen-maid, pointing to the little gray bird among the branches. 'Listen!'

'Ph!' said the gentleman-in-waiting; 'what a common little object! I suppose meeting so many grand people from other lands has driven all its colours away. But it can——'

'*Nightingale!*' called the little kitchen-maid; 'our most gracious emperor wants you to sing to him to-night!'

'With all the pleasure in the world,' replied the bird, trilling out the most delightful notes.

'Extraordinary!' said the gentleman-in-waiting, who had perceived that the *Nightingale* was thinking, very naturally, that he *was* the emperor; and all the courtiers took up the word; for if *he* said 'Extraordinary!' instead of 'Ph!' surely the whole world had a perfect right to go into hysterics over such singing.

'My dear little *Nightingale*,' he said at last, 'I have the honour to command your attendance at court to-night to sing before the emperor.'

'I think it sounds best among the trees,' replied the *Nightingale*, 'but I will do my best to please the emperor.' And it fluttered down and perched on the little kitchen-maid's shoulder. Then away they went to the palace.

That evening the splendid abode of the emperor was a sight to see. The china walls and floors [33]
shone with the radiance of a thousand golden lamps; the corridors were decked with the rarest flowers from the garden, each with its little silver bell attached, so that when the breeze swept their subtle perfumes along the ways of the palace they rang a peal of joy.

In the great reception-room sat the emperor, and near by his side was a golden rod on which was perched the *Nightingale*. Every one was there, and all were dressed in their very best, for it was a time of rejoicing; the wonderful bird had been found, and the whole court had escaped being trampled upon. Even the little kitchen-maid, who had now been raised to the position of

cook, was allowed to stand behind the door, where she could feast her wide eyes on the mighty emperor.

There was silence. Then the little gray bird began to sing. The emperor nodded approvingly; then, as a burst of glorious song came in liquid notes from the *Nightingale* and welled out into the palace, the emperor's eyes slowly filled with tears, which soon rolled down over his cheeks. Seeing this the bird sang more divinely still, so that all hearts were touched. The emperor wrung his hands with delight; he was so charmed that he said he would decorate the *Nightingale:* it should have his gold slipper to wear round its neck. But this the *Nightingale* declined gracefully, with thanks.

'I have seen tears in the eyes of the emperor,' it said, 'and that is sufficient reward.' Then it burst again into its sweet, melodious song.

The *Nightingale* soon became the one absorbing fashion. The ladies, when any one spoke to them, took water in their mouths, raised their heads and gurgled, thinking to imitate its song. The lackeys and chamber-maids, who are always the most difficult people to please, freely admitted they had nothing whatever against the bird; while the people of the town could think of nothing else but this new wonder of the palace. So great was their feeling on the matter that when two met in the street one would say, 'Night,' to which the other replied, 'Gale'; then they [34] would sigh and pass on, perfectly understanding each other. Eleven different cheesemongers' children, who had the good luck to be born during this time, were named after the bird, but not one of these cheese-mites ever developed the semblance of a voice.

As for the *Nightingale* itself, it had indeed made a great sensation, and was accorded every honour. Living at court, it was assigned a special cage, with full liberty to walk out twice a day and once in the night. On these outings it was attended by twelve footmen, each holding a separate ribbon attached to its leg. You can imagine how the poor bird sang for joy when it got back to its cage again.

One day the emperor was sitting in his golden chair when a large parcel was brought to him bearing on the outside the word '*Nightingale*.' Thinking it was another book on the subject he put it aside, but, when he came to open it later, he was astonished to find that it was no book, but an exquisite little work of art—an artificial *Nightingale*, just like the real one, but in place of gray feathers there were wonderful diamonds, and rubies, and sapphires. Round its neck was a ribbon on which was written, 'The emperor of Japan's *Nightingale* is a poor bird compared with the emperor of China's.'

On examination it was found that this splendid toy was meant to go. So it was wound up, and immediately it sang that extremely lovely thing which the real *Nightingale* had first sung to the emperor.

'How delightful!' cried everybody, and immediately the emperor summoned the messenger who had delivered the parcel, and there and then created him Imperial Nightingale-Carrier in Chief.

'Now,' said the emperor, as the I.N.-C.C. withdrew, 'the two birds must sing together. What a duet we shall have!'

But the duet was not a great success, for the real *Nightingale* sang with its soul in its throat, while the other merely sang with the machinery it was stuffed with. They did not get on at all well together. But the music master explained all this quite easily, saying that their voices, [35] though of equal merit, were of widely different quality, and each could be heard to best advantage alone. As to time and tune and dramatic attack, he said, there was nothing to choose between them.

So the toy bird had to sing alone, and everybody said the music master was right; there was nothing to choose between the two, unless it was that the toy bird's coat was a blaze of dazzling jewels, while that of the other was a gray drab—common in the extreme. The toy bird sang just as well, and, besides, it was much prettier to look at.

When the new *Nightingale* had sung the same tune thirty-three times and the courtiers wanted still to hear the tune again, the emperor said, 'No; the real bird must have its turn now.' But the real bird was nowhere to be found: it had flown out at the open window, back to its own woods by the side of the deep-blue sea.

'What does this mean?' cried the emperor.

The gentleman-in-waiting stepped forward.

'It means, your Majesty,' he said, 'it means, I'm afraid, that it was an ungrateful bird, but still clever enough to give place to its betters.'

And then, when all were agreed that they had got the better bird, the toy *Nightingale* sang the same tune again, for the thirty-fourth time, because, though they had heard it so often, they did not know it thoroughly even yet: it was so very difficult.

The music master was loud in his praises of the bird. He extolled it inside as well as out, saying that it was not only beautiful and valuable, but that its works were perfect. The real bird sang what it liked, but here one could choose a given tune and hear it sung. The whole thing was far

more perfect than the real. The court agreed with him, and the emperor was prevailed upon to let the people hear the toy bird sing on the following Sunday.

When Sunday came the whole town assembled before the palace, and, when they heard the bird sing, they were as excited as if they had drunk themselves merry on tea, which is a way they have in China. All except the poor fisherman, who had so often paused from his toil to listen to [36] the real *Nightingale*. 'It is a very good imitation,' said he; 'but it lacks something, I can't say what.' And the little kitchen-maid, who was now a real cook, said nothing, but stole away in sadness to the wood, where she knew that she would hear the real music that she loved.

Following the opinion of the people the emperor banished the real *Nightingale* from the kingdom, and placed the toy bird on a silken cushion close to his bed, with the gifts of gold and jewels it had received arranged around it. And he promoted it to the rank of 'Chief Imperial Singer of the Bed-Chamber,' class one, on the left side; that is to say, nearest the heart, for even an emperor's heart is on the left side. And he gave the music master royal permission to write a work of five-and-twenty volumes about the bird, which no one has ever read to this day, because it is so tremendously difficult; but you would not find any one in China who would not claim to have mastered it thoroughly, since they one and all object to be thought stupid and to have their bodies trampled upon.

For a whole year the artificial bird ground out its mechanical tunes. They were even set to music by the skilled men of the time, and the people sang them in their homes. On great public festivals, when the bird sang before delighted multitudes, they would raise their voices and join in the chorus. It was a great success. But one night, when the bird was singing its best by the emperor's bedside, something inside the toy went 'whizz.' Then, with a grating catch and a snap, the main crank broke: 'whirr' went all the wheels, and the music stopped.

The emperor immediately summoned the Chief Winder of the Imperial Singer of the Bed-Chamber, and he, with the assistance of the skilled workmen of his department, managed, in less than seven days and nights of talk and toil, to put the works right again; but, he said, the inside of the bird was not what it used to be, and, unless it was used very sparingly, say once a year, he hesitated to say what might happen in the end.

This was a terrible blow to China! The bird could only sing once a year, but, on that great [37] annual occasion, it was listened to with long-pent-up enthusiasm; and, at the end of the concert, the music master made a speech, in which he used none but the most difficult words, to prove that the bird was still as good as ever, in fact even better, and that his saying so made it so.

Five years passed away, during which time the bird sang five times; and then a great grief fell upon the nation. The emperor lay dying. The physicians came and went, shaking their heads: they gave no hope. The gentleman-in-waiting, when questioned by the people as to the state of their emperor, merely answered 'Ph!' So bad was the outlook that already a new emperor had been chosen, and the whole court hurried to congratulate him.

The old emperor lay pale and still in his gorgeous bed, but he was not dead. While the courtiers were jostling each other in their efforts to catch the eye of the emperor-elect; while the lackeys were running hither and thither exchanging the news, and the chamber-maids giving a grand coffee-party, the old emperor's spark of life flickered and flickered. Through a high open window the moon shone in upon the bed with its velvet hangings and heavy golden tassels; upon the pale face of the emperor; upon the jewelled bird by his side. Now he gasped for breath: there was something heavy on his chest. With a great effort he opened his eyes, and there, sitting upon him, he saw Death, wearing his own golden crown, with his own golden sword in one hand, and in the other his own imperial banner. Death grinned as he settled himself more heavily. Then, as the emperor still struggled for breath, he saw, peering at him round the folds of the bed-hangings, the faces of all the deeds he had ever committed. Some were hideous as they hissed, 'Do you remember?' Others were sweet and loving as they murmured, 'Do you remember?' And then, while they told him in one breath all that he had ever done, good and bad, Death sat heavier and heavier upon him, nodding his head at all they had to say.

The perspiration streamed down the emperor's face. At last he shrieked aloud, 'This is [38] unbearable! Sound the drums! Give me music to drown their voices!' Then he said to the bird by his side, 'You precious little bird—golden bird with your coat of jewels—sing, sing! I have given you everything; I have even hung my golden slipper round your neck,—now sing, I command you, sing!'

But there was no response. The bird stood there, a dumb thing: you see, it could not sing because there was nobody there to wind it up. Then, as Death fastened his empty sockets upon him, a terrible silence fell. Deeper and deeper it grew, and the emperor could hear nothing but the beating of Death's heart—his own would soon be silent.

Suddenly through the open window came a lovely burst of song. Radiant, sparkling as a shower of pearls, the living notes of rarest melody fell within the silent chamber. It was the *Nightingale*, perched on a branch outside—the *Nightingale* as God had made it, singing the song that God had taught it. It had heard the emperor's call, and had come to bring him comfort.

Slowly, slowly, as it sang divinely, the faces that peered round the velvet folds grew wan. Pale Death himself started, and turned still paler with wonder and amazement. 'How beautiful!' he said; 'sing on, little bird, thrilling with life!'

'Lay down the imperial banner,' answered the *Nightingale;* 'lay down the golden sword; lay down the emperor's crown.'

'Agreed!' And the mighty snatcher, Death, laid down these treasures for the price of a song. The *Nightingale* went on singing. And it sang as it flitted from bough to bough, until it reached the quiet churchyard where the grass grows green upon the graves, where the roses bloom living on the breast of death, and the cypress points to the immortal skies. There on the cypress' topmost twig it perched and sang a song so rich and rare, so far-reaching, that it touched the heart of Death sitting on the chest of the emperor,—for, after all, Death has a tender heart. Filled with a longing for his own garden, melted by the *Nightingale's* song, he vanished in a cold, grey mist,—out at the window.

Soon came the *Nightingale* fluttering with delight above the emperor's bed. Then it perched by [39]
the side of the toy bird, and the emperor looked, and knew at last the difference between the natural and the artificial. He knew, too, that he ought to have known it before.

'You heavenly little bird!' he said. 'Welcome back to my heart! I banished you from my kingdom, but you heard my call and returned to charm away those evil visions, and even Death himself. Thanks! A world of thanks! How can I ever repay you?' Tears shone in the emperor's eyes.

'I am already repaid,' said the *Nightingale*. 'When first I sang to you I saw tears in your eyes, and now I see them again. Those are the jewels that I wear in my heart, not upon my coat. But sleep now; you must get well. Sleep—I will sing you to sleep!'

So the little bird sang, and the emperor fell into a healing sleep. In the morning, when the sun shone in at the window, he awoke refreshed and well. Where were his attendants? None was there: they were all busy running after the emperor-elect. But the *Nightingale* was there, perched on the window-sill, singing divinely.

'Little *Nightingale*,' said the emperor tenderly, 'you must come and stay with me always. You shall sing only when you like; and, as to this toy bird here, I will smash it in a thousand bits.'

'Oh! you mustn't do that,' replied the real bird, 'it did its best, and, after all, it is a pretty thing. Keep it always by you. I can't come to live in the palace, but let me come whenever I like and sit in the tree outside your window and sing to you in the evening. I will sing you songs to make you happy, to cheer and comfort you. And sometimes I will sing of those who suffer, to make you sad, and then you will long to help them. I will sing of many things unknown to you in your great wide kingdom, for the little gray bird flies far and wide, from the roof-tree of the humblest peasant to the bed of the mighty emperor. Yes, I will come very often—but—but will you promise me one thing?'

'I will promise you anything, little bird.' The emperor had risen from his bed; he now stood by [40]
the window in his imperial robes, and the jewels in the golden crown upon his head flashed and sparkled in the moonlight. Taking his heavy sword he pressed the golden hilt against his heart as he repeated, 'anything—anything!'

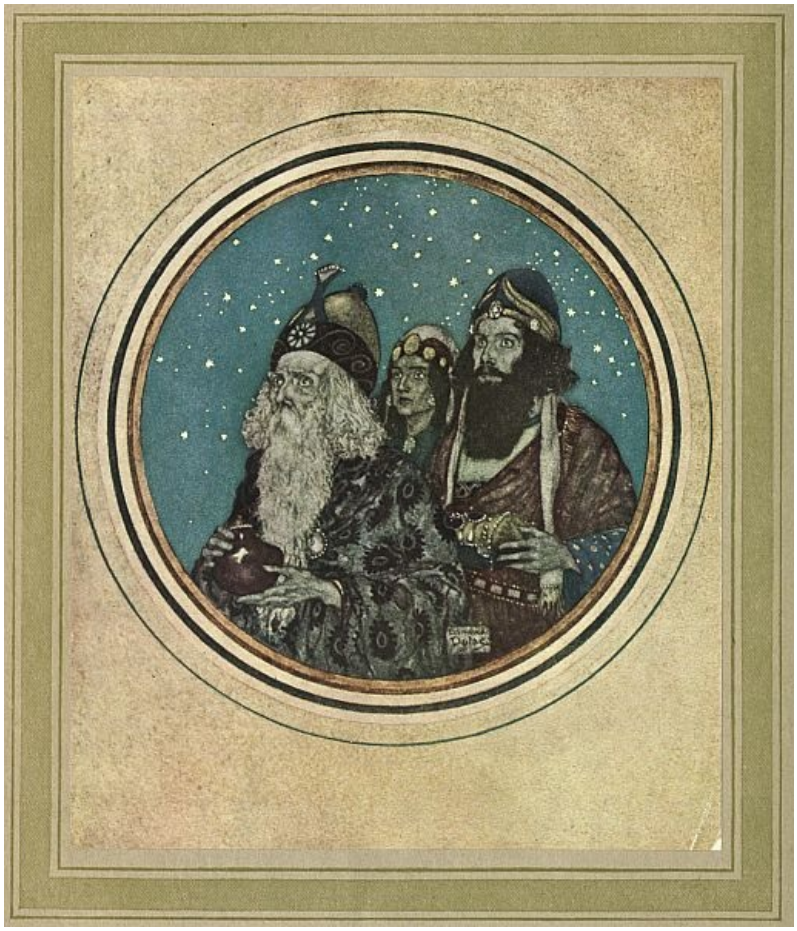
'It is just one little thing,' said the *Nightingale*. 'Never let any one know that you have a little gray bird who tells you everything. It is far better.'

With that the *Nightingale* skipped to a branch of the tree, trilled a long trill, and then, in the grey light of dawn, flew off to her nest.

When the courtiers and attendants came in to view the body of their late master, he was still standing by the window in his imperial robes. They gasped in horror at missing their grief.

'Good morning!' said the emperor.

[41]



O STAR OF WONDER, STAR OF NIGHT

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THREE KINGS OF ORIENT

A CAROL

GASPAR, MELCHIOR, BALTHAZAR:

We three Kings of Orient are,
Bearing gifts we traverse afar
Field and fountain,
Moor and mountain,
Following yonder star.
O Star of Wonder, Star of Night,
Star with Royal Beauty bright,
Westward leading,
Still proceeding,
Guide us to Thy perfect Light.

GASPAR.

Born a King on Bethlehem plain,
Gold I bring to crown Him again,
King for ever,
Ceasing never
Over us all to reign.
O Star of Wonder, Star of Night,
Star with Royal Beauty bright,
Westward leading,
Still proceeding,
Guide us to Thy perfect Light.

MELCHIOR:

Frankincense to offer have I—
Incense owns a Deity nigh.

All men, raising
Prayer and praising,
Worship Him, God on High.
O Star of Wonder, Star of Night,
Star with Royal Beauty bright,
Westward leading,
Still proceeding,
Guide us to Thy perfect Light.

BALTHAZAR:

Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume
Breathes a life of gathering gloom;—
Sorrowing, sighing,
Bleeding, dying,
Sealed in the stone cold tomb.
O Star of Wonder, Star of Night,
Star with Royal Beauty bright,
Westward leading,
Still proceeding,
Guide us to Thy perfect Light.

GASPAR, MELCHIOR, BALTHAZAR:

Glorious now behold Him arise,
King and God and Sacrifice;
Heav'n sings Hallelujah,
Hallelujah the earth replies.
O Star of Wonder, Star of Night,
Star with Royal Beauty bright,
Westward leading,
Still proceeding,
Guide us to Thy perfect Light.

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[43]

SINDBAD THE SAILOR
A TALE FROM THE THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS

O KING of the Age, as thou biddest me re-tell the strangest adventure of *Sindbad the Sailor* in all his marvellous voyages, I will name it without hesitation: it is that of *Sindbad's* fifth voyage, wherein he was in fearful peril from that great bird, the rukh, and afterwards was ridden almost to the point of death by the Old Man of the Sea.

But first let me call to thy recollection how *Sindbad the Sailor* came to tell his story to Sindbad the Landsman, for herein lies much meaning, O King.

In the time of the Caliph Harun-er-Rashid, in the palmy days of Baghdad, there lived and slaved a poor, discontented porter, whose moments of rest and leisure were most pleasantly occupied in grumbling at his hard lot. Others lived in luxury and splendour while he bore heavy burdens for a pittance. There was no justice in the world, said he, when some were born in the lap of wealth, and others toiled a lifetime for the price of a decent burial.

This discontented porter would run apace with his burden to gain time for a rest upon the doorstep of some mansion of the rich, where, a master in contrasts, he would draw comparisons between his own lot and that of the rich man dwelling within. Loudly would he call on Destiny to mark the disparity, the incongruity, the injustice of the thing; and not until he had drunk deep at the fountain of discontent would he take up his burden and trudge on, greatly refreshed.

One day, in pursuance of this strange mode of recreation, he chanced to select the doorstep of a wealthy merchant named *Sindbad the Sailor*, and there, through the open window, he heard as it were the chink of endless gold. The song, the music, the dance, the laughter of the guests—all [44] seemed to shine with the light of jewels and the lustre of golden bars. Immediately he began to revel in his favourite woe. He wrung his hands and cried aloud: 'Allah! Can such things be? Look on me, toiling all day for a piece of barley bread; and then look on him who knows no toil, yet eateth peacocks' tongues from golden dishes, and drinketh the wine of Paradise from a jewelled cup. What hath he done to obtain from thee a lot so agreeable? And what have I done to deserve a life so wretched?'

As one who flings back a difficult question, and then bangs the door behind him, so the porter

rose and shouldered his burden to continue his way, when a servant came running from within, saying that his master had sharp ears and had invited the porter into his presence for a fuller hearing of his woes.

As soon as the porter came before the wealthy owner of the house, seated among his guests and surrounded by the utmost luxury and magnificence, he was greeted with the question: 'What is thy name?' 'My name is Sindbad,' replied the porter, greatly abashed. At this the host clapped his hands and laughed loudly. 'Knowest thou that my name is also *Sindbad?*' he cried. 'But I am *Sindbad the Sailor*, and I have a mind to call thee Sindbad the Landsman, for, as thou lovest a contrast, so do I.'

'True,' said the porter, 'I have never been upon the sea.'

'Then, Sindbad the Landsman,' was the quick rejoinder, 'thou hast no right to complain of thy hard lot. Come, be seated, and, when thou hast refreshed thyself with food and wine, I will relate to thee what at present I have told no man—the tale of my perils and hardships on the seas and in other lands—in order to show you that the great wealth I possess was not acquired without excessive toil and terrible danger. I have made seven voyages: the first thou shalt hear presently—nay, if thou wilt accept my hospitality for seven days, I will tell thee the history of one each day.'

Thus it was, O King, that *Sindbad the Sailor*, surrounded by a multitude of listeners, came to [45]
tell the story of his voyages to Sindbad the Landsman. Now on the fifth day he spoke as follows:

Having sworn that my fourth voyage should be my last, I dwelt in the bosom of my family for many months in the utmost joy and happiness. But soon my heart grew restless in my bosom, and I longed again for the perils of the sea, and the adventures found only in other lands. Moreover, I had become inspired of a new ambition to possess a ship of my own in which to sail afar, and even to greater profit than on my former voyages.

I arose, therefore, and gathered together in Baghdad many bales of rich merchandise, and departed for the city of El-Basrah, where, in the river's mouth, I soon selected a splendid vessel. I purchased this and secured a master and a crew, over whom I set my own trusty servants. Then, together with a goodly company of merchants as passengers, their bales and mine being placed in the hold, I set sail.

Fair weather favoured us as we passed from island to island, bartering everywhere for gain, as merchants do, until at length we came to an island which seemed never to have known the fretful heel of man. Here we landed, and, almost immediately, on sweeping our gaze over the interior, we espied a strange thing, on which all our attention and wonder soon became centred.

There in the distance shone beneath the sun a great white dome. Loud was the talk among us as to the meaning of this. Some said the island could not be uninhabited since a mosque was built upon it; others contended that, as the island was uninhabited, the structure could not be a mosque. A third party, cooling their minds in the shade of the trees, preferred idly that it was probably some huge white rock smoothed and rounded by wind and weather; yet even these, when the discussion became heated, were constrained by curiosity to follow as we bent our steps inland to discover what this strange object really was.

As we drew nearer and nearer the wind-and-weather merchants lost in countenance what they gained in speed, for the mystery deepened: it was very clear that no mere wind and weather [46]
could have fashioned such a perfect, glistening dome. Nearer still, and then we all ran our utmost, and arrived breathless at the base of the marvellous structure. Gigantic and perfect in form, this must be some wonderful dome built to the glory of Allah, and fashioned in such a way that, with its lower half imbedded in earth and its upper half rising in the air, it typified at once the division and the union of heaven and earth. A learned merchant of our company—one who had travelled greatly in the further realms of Ind—raised his voice and assured us that the object represented the mysterious Hiranyagarbha—the Egg of All Things; whereupon another, to test this theory in derision, struck violently with his hatchet upon the shell of this supposed egg. 'If this be the egg of Hiranya—something,' he shouted, 'let us get to the yolk!'

Following his words, and his blow, the strangest thing happened. The great dome seemed to shake itself as if something within it had awakened to life. We stood in awe and waited. Then, as a chicken comes forth out of its shell, there came forth, with a terrific rending of the dome, a mighty fledgling having the aspect of that monstrous bird, the rukh, which, when grown, darkens the sky with its wings.

'It is indeed the young of the rukh,' I cried, for well I knew the bird. 'Beware!'

At first we were terrified beyond measure, but soon some among us, seeing the helplessness of the creature, set upon it with their hatchets, and, though I pleaded with them to forbear, it was quickly slain and dismembered.

'Woe!' I cried. 'Ye have slain the offspring of the rukh, and, as the time of hatching was near, the parents will come, and there will be trouble.'

But they heeded my words so little that they roasted and ate the choicest parts of the young rukh, and left the remains as a sign of contempt. I, who live to tell the tale, O Landsman, did not eat. In vain I entreated them to conceal all traces of their foul crime, even as they had concealed the choicest portions in their capacious stomachs. In vain I told them what I had learnt by costly [47]

peril at the hands of the giant rukh, foretelling the dire vengeance of those fierce monsters of the sky. Indeed, from the experiences of a former voyage, as you know, I had every reason to fear them. But the merchants, smacking their lips at the memory of their repast, laughed in my face. 'We have dined,' said they, 'and your fearsome rukhs cannot touch us.' To this I returned no word, but a stern face; for I knew the power of the rukh.

We returned towards the ship, but we had no sooner reached the seashore when we saw the master making signs of wild alarm. Shouting loudly to us to make all haste he pointed towards the horizon. He had sailed those seas before, and he knew, as did I, the sign of a terrible danger. There in the distance were two black clouds, growing rapidly larger.

'A storm!' cried some among us.

'Nay, nay,' I answered. 'I would it were, even a twofold storm. Storms come not so. Yonder come the rukh and his mate to attend the hatching of their young. Aboard! aboard! We may yet escape.'

As soon as I had given this warning there were hurry and scurry among the merchants. The flesh of the young rukh seemed to have turned within them, and it now cried out for vengeance. With all haste we made our way on board the ship.

'What have ye done?' cried the master in alarm.

They were silent.

'They have roasted and eaten the young of the rukh,' I said. The master wrung his hands and his face blanched. Then he sprang to action.

'All sail! all sail!' he cried out. 'Woe be on us if we escape not quickly. They know not yet, but when they learn they will rest not until——'

Instantly the crew leapt to the ropes, while the merchants stood around in terror, regarding the two black clouds as they drew rapidly towards us, side by side. Now they loomed nearer as [48] monstrous birds, and presently they passed overhead, darkening the sky as they craned their gigantic necks and looked down upon us with suspicion.

With the utmost speed the ship was put upon her way, the while we watched the rukhs hover and settle inland. We were already speeding fast for the open sea when we saw them rise and circle in the air, heard their hoarse complaint and clamour for vengeance, and noted their swift swoop towards the rocky heights of the interior. We gave a sigh of relief. We thought we had escaped, so well did the breeze serve us; but we had forgotten, or did not yet know, the power of wings.

Soon there arose from the far heights of the island two gigantic shapes. As they moved towards us they grew bigger and bigger, and now we heard the oarage of their wings, ever louder and louder on our ears. They were coming, the rukhs, to wreak vengeance; and, now we saw it with fear, in the talons of each was a granite crag torn from the bedrock of the island. Their purpose was as plain as it was terrible.

We cowered as they drew overhead. They circled round the ship, each clutching its mighty rock and giving forth cries of rage and fury. Now they hovered above us, and one let go his missile of destruction. Our steersman, bent on taking the vessel this way and then that, evaded the falling crag, which fell a caster's throw astern. The ship danced high on the mountain waves raised by the falling mass, and then fell as deep into the watery valleys between them. We thought our time had come, but it was not yet, though it was soon to be. No sooner had we come to rest on a level tide than the other rukh hovered above us and dropped its crag. It struck the ship in the middle and split it to pieces.

In that moment all was a swirl of confusion. The crash of the rock, the cries of the giant birds, the wash of the waves on my ears—these were the last things I knew. It seems to me that I gripped some wreckage, and, lying thereupon in a swoon, was borne onwards by the tide to the [49] shores of an island; for, when I awoke to life, I found myself on a sandy slope, with my head on the high-water mark and my feet against the stranded wreckage that had supported me.

As if from death's door I crawled up and away, gaining strength as I went, until I reached a point from which I could view the nature of the island. Allah! What a paradise it was! Streams of fresh, pure water wimpled down between banks where grew the lordliest trees laden with the rarest fruits. The sight gave me fresh strength. I rose and wandered from stream to stream, drinking the cool water and plucking and eating the delicious fruit. But, O Sindbad the Landsman, though I knew it not, there was a vile snake in this paradise, as I was soon to discover to my cost.

Coming at length to a stream of some width, I sat down upon a mossy bank with my back against a tree to watch the rippling current purling by. Lulled by this and the songs of the birds, I became drowsy and turned to find a soft bed on the moss, when I caught sight of an object which arrested my attention. There, sitting against the tree next to mine, was an aged man of comely and benevolent aspect.

I regarded him intently. What a kindly old man he looked, with his flowing silver locks and his ample white beard! The more did I consider him one of nature's innocent children from the fact

that his body was clothed from the waist downwards with the green leaves of trees—a raiment neatly threaded together on the fibres of some plant. As I scrutinised his appearance intently for some moments I felt that here was one of the simplest and kindliest disposition, who knew not the meaning of wrong. I arose and advanced towards him, but, when I spoke, he shook his head sadly and sighed. Alas! Was he deprived of the power of speech? To make certain, I saluted him, saying, 'Allah be with thee!' But he merely bowed his head, making no other reply. All my questions brought never a word: he was, indeed, dumb. But he could make intelligent signs, and I perceived by these that it was his greatest wish to be carried across the stream. Seeing that he [50] was old and infirm as well as dumb, I readily consented. My heart was sorry for him, and I stooped down and told him to climb upon my shoulders. This he did with alacrity, and so I carried him over the stream.

KNOWEST THOU MY NAME IS ALSO SINDBAD?

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But, when I stooped for him to dismount on the further bank, he showed no manner of inclination to do so. On the contrary, he gripped me with both hands round my throat, and beat me violently in the ribs with his heels. What with the throttling, and the hard blows with his heels, I swooned away; but, notwithstanding, when I regained my senses I found the old fellow still clinging like a leech to my neck. And now he belaboured me so unmercifully that I was forced to rise against my will.

Once on my feet I determined to shake him off, but he rode me well, and even my efforts to crush him against the trunks of trees were of no avail. I ran hither and thither wildly, employing every trick against him, but all in vain: he kept his seat, and with hand and heel punished me severely. In less than an hour I was broken to the will of this truculent fellow, and he guided me hither and thither among the fruit-trees, pulling me up when he would gather fruit and eat, and urging me on again when he so desired.

In this fashion he stuck to me all that day, and such was his behaviour that I forswore my first opinion of him. He was by no means the gentle being I had thought him. Though he clung so close we were not friends, nor likely to become such. I was his bond-slave, and he ceased not to remind me of it by his utterly vile behaviour. When I dallied he thrashed me unmercifully with his feet; when I thought to brush him off against the overhanging branch of a tree he would duck his head and throttle me with his long bony hands. At night, when I slept exhausted, I woke to find him digging his heels into me in his sleep; indeed, once it seemed that I had thwarted him in a dream, for he thrashed me up and treated me abominably. I thought my end had come.

Thus for many days and nights was I beridden by this abandoned fellow, forced hither and [51] thither at his will, with never a word from him, though he had many from me. So great was my agony that I turned upon myself, crying, 'By the living Allah! never again will I do a kindness to any; never again will I show mercy!'

Long I pondered by what subtle trick I might unseat him. I thought of many things, but dared not try one of them, lest it should fail and I be punished unmercifully. But at last Allah took pity

on me and threw a strange opportunity in my way.

It chanced that, one day, while I was being goaded about the island, we came upon a place where pumpkins grew. They were ripe and luscious, and, while the old fellow was eating greedily, I bethought me of a fashion of our own country. I gathered some of the largest, and, having scooped them out, I filled them with the juice squeezed from grapes which I found growing in abundance near by. Then I sealed them up and set them in the sun. In this way I obtained in a few days a good quantity of pure wine.

The old man did not notice my curious behaviour—he was always engaged in eating pumpkins—until one day I drank so deep of my new-made wine that I became exalted, and danced and rollicked about with him among the trees. With fist and heel he sought to sober me, requiring to know the reason of my merriment. At length I took him to the spot where I had laid my pumpkins in the sun, and then, laughing and dancing again, signed to him that they contained pure wine.

The idea was new to him, but, when he understood that I had drunk with such pleasant results, he insisted on drinking also. So I unsealed one of the pumpkins and handed it to him, whereupon he drank and smacked his lips. Then he drank again and again and again, with evident satisfaction, until the wine taking effect, and the pumpkin being empty, he broke it over my head and bade me hand him another. This also he emptied and broke in the same manner. Being by this time in a state of vile intoxication, he thrashed me thrice round the open space, and then in among the trees, behaving in the wildest manner possible, rocking and rolling from side to side [52] with laughter.

Now I had not drunk so much of the wine that I could not see my chance. I adopted the utmost docility, and, never letting him suspect my purpose, contrived to regain the place where I had laid the pumpkins in the sun. As I had expected, he demanded another, and I gave it him. This time he drank half the wine and emptied the remainder over my face,—so vile was this creature of sin. Then I perceived with joy that he was losing control of his limbs. He swayed from side to side, and his head lolled. Slowly I unwound his legs from my neck, and then, with a vicious twist, I flung him on the ground.

As I looked upon him lying there, my joy turned for the moment to uncontrollable fury. I thought of what I had endured at the hands of this aged villain. Should I allow him to live he would surely serve some other poor shipwrecked traveller in the same abominable fashion. The island would be well rid of such an inhuman monster. Without another thought I slew him then and there. May his accurséd spirit be ridden for ever by a worse than himself!

I went forth upon the island like one walking on air. Never was mortal man rid of so heavy a burden as I had just flung from me. Even the very atmosphere of the place seemed light and joyous with relief. The streams rippled more merrily, the birds sang more sweetly, the dreamy trees sighed with content as if at a great and long-desired riddance. They all seemed to feel that this terrible old man no longer oppressed them: his legs were no longer round their necks, his masterful feet and hands no longer gripped them in a vice. Rid—all was rid of an intolerable burden. Having found a shady spot, I sank down on the bank of a stream and wiped my brow, thanking Allah devoutly for this sweet deliverance.

For long days thereafter I sat by the seashore scanning the ocean for the speck of a sail. But none came in sight, and I was abandoning myself to the thought that Allah had rescued me from one peril only to consign me into the hands of another—that of death by desolation—when one [53] morning I descried a large ship standing in towards the shore. She cast her anchor, and many passengers landed on the island. With a great shout of joy I ran down to greet them. Many voices answered mine, and all plied me with questions respecting my condition. Presently, perceiving that my case was extraordinary, they ceased questioning while I told them my story. They listened with amazement. Then some one said:

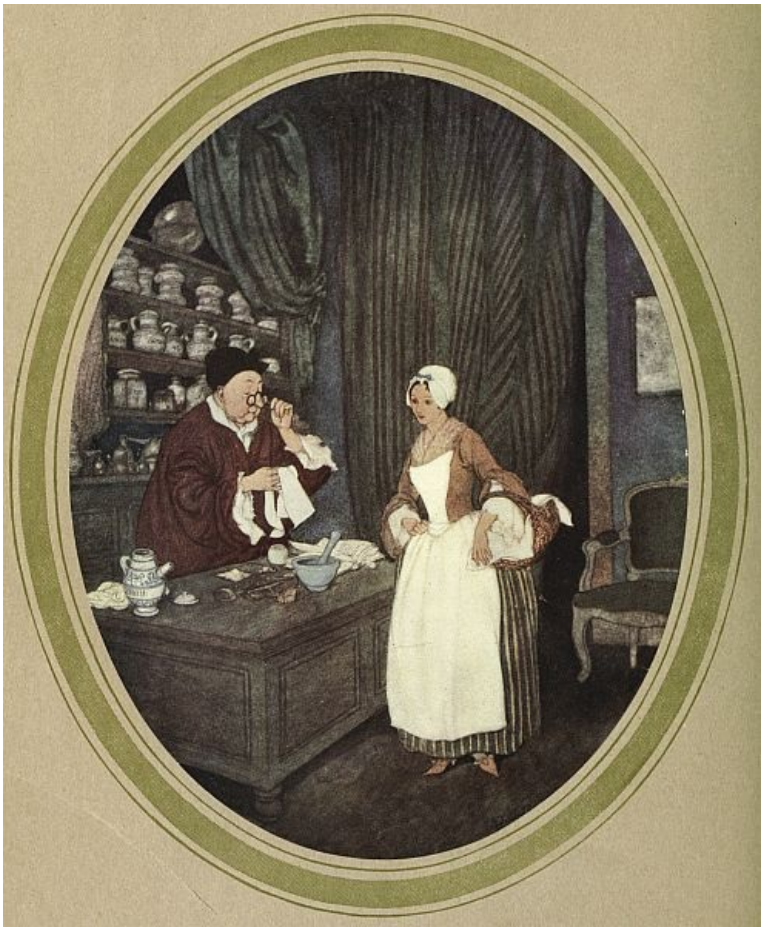
'In my travels in these seas I have heard many tales of such an old man of whom thou speakest, dwelling alone upon an island, and lying in wait for shipwrecked sailors. I know not how these tales were spread abroad, for it is said that of those he has ridden none has survived. Thou art the only survivor. His name is called the Old Man of the Sea. But now he is no more: Allah be praised for that! and thou hast escaped: Allah be praised for that also!' And all extolled the greatness of Allah.

I returned with them to the ship, and they clothed me in rich apparel and set food and wine before me; and, when I had refreshed myself, we made merry as the ship set sail.

We were bound for El-Basrah, and my thoughts flew further,—to Baghdad, the Abode of Peace.

Great as had been the sufferings I endured, I soon forgot the perils which had threatened me by sea and in unknown lands. Lapped in luxury in the bosom of my family, I lived in Baghdad, the Abode of Peace, in the utmost joy and happiness.

And now, O Sindbad the Landsman, thou shalt dwell here with me for ever in content, and be my well-beloved boon companion. Thou hast suffered much on land, but thou hast never been in far-off lands and seas where I, as you shall further hear, have suffered enough for the two of us. Wherefore, remain thou beneath my roof, for I have conceived an affection for thee; and together we shall live in happiness, praising Allah (whose name be exalted!) the Omnipotent Creator of Land and Sea and all the wealth which cometh therefrom.



I NEVER AT ALL
SAW SEWING SO SMALL

p. 55

THE LITTLE SEAMSTRESS

A FRENCH SONG OF THE OLDEN TIME

A DEAR little seamstress in Paris I knew;
The tiniest possible stitches she drew.
I never at all
Saw sewing so small!

She made the Notary neckties new;
The Apothecary, he had some too.
I never at all
Saw sewing so small!

The Apothecary, he had some too,—
Seamstress, what do I owe to you?
I never at all
Saw sewing so small!

Seamstress, what do I owe to you?
Just six nothings, no more is due.
I never at all
Saw sewing so small!

Just six nothings, no more is due.
Give me a kiss, then,—or give me two!
I never at all
Saw sewing so small!

THE REAL PRINCESS

AFTER A FAIRY TALE BY HANS ANDERSEN

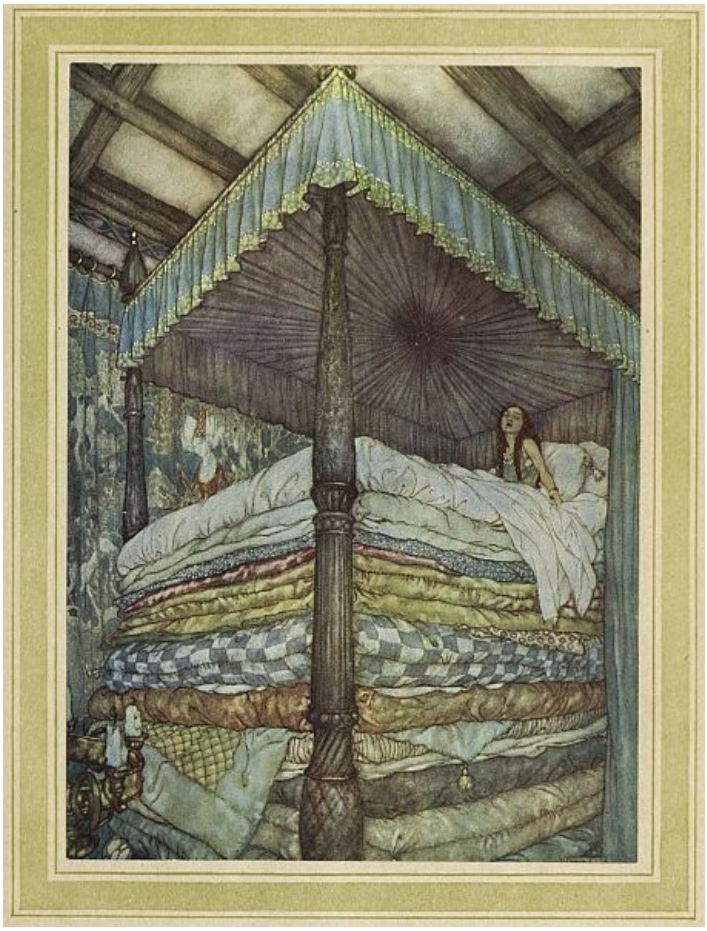
ONCE upon a time there was a prince, and, as he knew very well that he was a *real* prince and could never forget it for a single moment, he very naturally wanted to marry a *real* princess. He sought one after another, and, after talking about the weather and the health of the emperor, he found in each case that there was something about them he didn't like—something artificial and unprincess-like. When he spoke gently they smiled; when he spoke roughly to hurt them, they still smiled—the same smile. They were not a success. None of them was what he wanted. His princess must be so sensitive that she would wither at a reproachful glance; so delicately dainty that a spot of dust would make her scream, and the draught of a fly's wings cause her a severe cold. He would have the real thing, or nothing.

When this exacting prince had duly considered all the princesses in his own country, and found them wanting, he set out to travel all over the world, forever saying to himself, 'I am a real prince: there *must* be a real princess somewhere.'

He found plenty of princesses on his travels, but when he spoke to them about the weather he soon found that they were not what he called *real* princesses. They were the daughters of kings and queens, yes, but——

Sad and weary he returned home with an empty heart. He had not found what he set out to seek, yet he was firmly convinced that the world did contain such a thing as a real princess. He wanted her so badly, and that was how he knew that she must be there—somewhere.

[58]



NOT A WINK THE WHOLE NIGHT LONG

p. 59

And he was right.

One evening as he was sitting in his father's palace, studying books of far-off lands where princesses might be found, there came a fearful thunderstorm. The lightning grasped at the earth, spreading its roots down the walls of heaven; the thunder split and roared and rattled as if the ceiling was coming down; and, when the cloud-man unsealed his can and tipped it up, swish came the rain in torrents. Indeed, it was a fearful night.

When the storm had risen to the height of its fury a messenger came running to the king crying, 'Your Majesty gave orders that all gates be locked and barred, and opened to none; but some one without knocks and knocks and knocks, and will not go away.'

'I will go myself,' said the king, 'and see who it is that craves admittance in this fearful storm.'

So the king went down and opened the palace gates. What was his astonishment to see

standing there a lovely maiden all forlorn, her long hair drenched with the rain, her beautiful clothes saturated and clinging to her form, while the water, trickling from them, ran out at her heels. She was in a terrible plight, but she was beautiful, and she said she was a princess—a real princess. Her mind was distracted: she could not remember how or whence she came, but, being a princess, and seeing the palace gates, she had run through the storm and knocked hard.

'A real princess,' said the king, looking her up and down 'Hm! I believe you, though the queen mightn't. Come in!'

The old queen received the visitor coldly and with a critical eye. 'We shall soon see if she is what she says she is,' thought she, but she said nothing. Then she went into the spare bedroom, and took off all the bed-clothes, and laid a pea on the bedstead. On top of this she piled mattress after mattress to the number of twenty, and then twenty feather beds on top of that. 'Now,' she said to herself, 'here she shall sleep, and we shall soon see in the morning whether she is a real princess or not.'

So they put the princess to bed on the top of the twenty feather beds and as many mattresses, and said good-night. [59]

In the morning they asked her how she had slept.

'Not at all,' replied she wearily; 'not a wink the whole night long. Heaven knows what there was in the bed. Whichever way I turned I still seemed to be lying upon some hard thing, and, I assure you, this morning my whole body's black and blue. It's terrible!'

Then the old queen told what she had done, and they all saw plainly that this was indeed a real princess when she could feel the pea through twenty feather beds and twenty mattresses. None but a real princess could possibly have such a delicate skin.

So the prince married her, quite satisfied that he had now found his real princess.

Now this is a true story, and if you don't believe it you have only to go and look at the pea itself, which is still carefully preserved in the museum—unless some one has stolen it.

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[60]
[61]

MY LISETTE

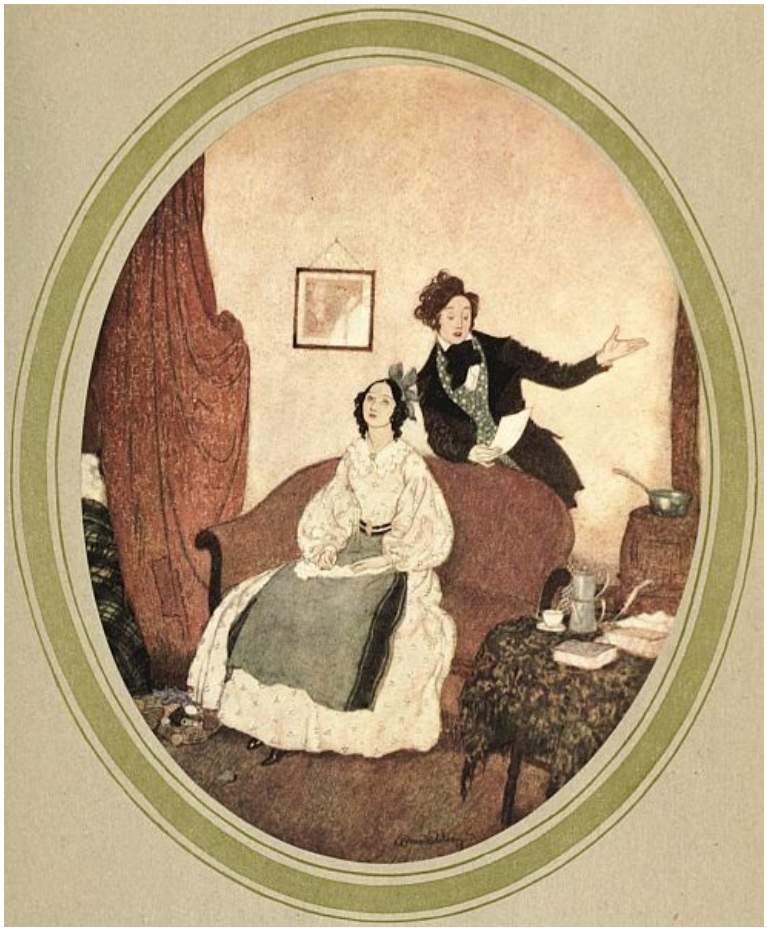
AN OLD FRENCH SONG

Of all the pretty maidens
There ne'er was lassie yet
That looked so sweet and sprightly,
That moved so gay and lightly,
As my darling, my Lisette,—
Little pet!—
'Tis Lisette whom I adore,
And with reason, more and more!

Her face it is her fortune,—
But who will smiling let
Me kiss it at my pleasure,
Nor ever stint the measure?—
'Tis my darling, my Lisette,—
Little pet!—
'Tis Lisette whom I adore,
And with reason, more and more!

Along the pavement tripping,
Through sunshine and through wet,
To all, as she advances,
Who casts her winning glances?—
'Tis my darling, my Lisette,—
Little pet!—
'Tis Lisette whom I adore,
And with reason, more and more!

[62]



'TIS LISETTE WHOM I ADORE
AND WITH REASON MORE AND MORE

p. 61

To blind, and poor, and crippled,
Who gives, without regret,
Her bread, and does not sorrow
That she must starve to-morrow?—
'Tis my darling, my Lisette,—
Little pet!—
'Tis Lisette whom I adore,
And with reason, more and more!

Who oftentimes deceives me,
Though truly no coquette,—
And then, for me, who hoaxes,
Cajoles, and dupes, and coaxes?—
'Tis my darling, my Lisette,—
Little pet!—
'Tis Lisette whom I adore,
And with reason, more and more!

Who, by her tender teaching,
Has aided me to get
The impudence and passion
Of which my songs I fashion?—
'Tis my darling, my Lisette,—
Little pet!—
'Tis Lisette whom I adore,
And with reason, more and more!

On week-days and on Sundays,
Who, in my hovel set,
Can turn its corners gloomy
To a palace rich and roomy?—

'Tis my darling, my Lisette,— [63]
Little pet!—
'Tis Lisette whom I adore,
And with reason, more and more!

When Prudence o'er our playtime
Would hold a distant threat,—
'Twixt now and what comes after,

Who throws her merry laughter?—
'Tis my darling, my Lisette,—
Little pet!—
'Tis Lisette whom I adore,
And with reason, more and more!

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[64]
[65]

CINDERELLA

A FAIRY TALE FROM THE FRENCH

ONCE upon a time there lived a gentleman who married twice. He had one fair daughter by his first wife. Ella was sweet and gentle, taking after her dear dead mother, who had been the most lovable of women. His second wife, a widow with two hard-featured daughters, was very proud and overbearing; and, if her two daughters had only never been born, or, being born, had died, she would then have possessed the vilest temper in all the world. As it was, the three were all equally gifted in that respect.

From the very day of the wedding the step-mother and her daughters took a violent dislike to the young girl, for they could see how beautiful she was, both outwardly and inwardly; and green envy soon turns to hate. They dared not show it openly, for fear of the father's anger; but he, poor man, finding he had taken too heavy a burden upon his shoulders, fell ill and died,—simply worried into his grave. Then his young daughter reaped the full measure of jealousy and spite and malice which her step-mother and sisters could now openly bestow upon her. She was put to do the drudgery of the household at no wages at all, and what was saved in this way was spent on the finery so sorely needed to make the two hard-featured ones at all passable. The poor girl scrubbed the floors, polished the brights, swept the rooms and stairs, cleaned the windows, turned the mangle, and made the beds; and in the evening, when all the work was done, she would sit by the kitchen fire darning the stockings for recreation. When bedtime came she would gaze awhile into the fire, answer the door to her step-sisters coming home from the theatre in all their finery; and then, with their stinging words still in her ears, she would creep up to bed in the [66]
garret, there, on a wretched straw mattress, to sleep fast for very weariness and dream of princes and palaces till at morning light she had to begin her dreary round again.

And it was indeed a dreary round. No sooner had she begun to sift the cinders when the bell would ring, and ring again. One of the sisters wanted her,—sometimes both wanted her at once. It was merely a matter of a pin to be fixed, or a ribbon to be tied, but when she came to do it she met with a shower of abuse. 'Look at your hands, you dirty little kitchen slut! How dare you answer the bell with such hands? And your face!—go and look in the glass, Ella: no, go straight to the kitchen pump,—you filthy little slut!'

The 'glass' was corrected to the 'kitchen pump' because they knew very well that if she stood before the glass she would see the reflection of a very beautiful girl—a reflection which they themselves spent hours looking for but could never find.

Yet the child endured it all patiently, and, when her work was done, which happened sometimes, she would sit in the chimney corner among the cinders, dreaming of things which no one knows. And it was from this habit of musing among the cinders that she got her name of Cinder-slut, which was afterwards softened, for some unknown reason, to *Cinderella*.

Now the day of a great festival drew near. It was the occasion of the king's son's coming of age, and it was spread abroad that he would select his bride from among the most beautiful attending the state ball. As soon as the elder sisters got breath of this they preeked and preened and powdered and anointed, and even ran to the door themselves at every knock, for they expected invitations; and they were not disappointed, for you will easily see that at a ball even beauty must have its plain background to set it off. Very proud they were of their gold-lettered invitation cards bearing the royal seal, and, when they rang for *Cinderella*, they held them in their hands to emphasise their orders. This must be ironed, just so; this must be pressed and set aside in tissue paper; this must be tucked and frilled and goffered in just such a fashion, and so [67]
on with crimping and pleating and tabbing and piping and boxing, until poor *Cinderella* began to wonder why the lot of some was so easy and the lot of others so hard. Nevertheless, she worked and worked and worked; and always in her drudgery came day-dreams of what *she* would wear if she were invited to the ball. She had it all planned out to the smallest frill,—but how absurd! She must toil at her sisters' bidding and, on the great night when they were there in their finery, she must sit among the cinders dreaming—in a faery world of her own—of the prince who came to claim her as his bride. Fool! what a wild fancy! What an unattainable dream!—and there was the bell ringing again: her sisters wanted something, and woe betide her if she dallied.

At last the night of the ball arrived. Early towards the evening there was no peace in the household. When the elder sister had fully decided, in spite of her complexion, to wear her velvet cramoisie trimmed *à l'anglaise*, and the younger had thought out her gold-flowered robe in conjunction with a jewelled stomacher, to say nothing of an old silk underskirt, which, after all, would be hidden; when they had squabbled over the different jewels they possessed, each

complimenting the other on the set she desired least herself; when the milliner and the hairdresser had called and gone away exhausted; when the beauty specialist had reached the limit of his art and departed sighing heavily; then and not till then was *Cinderella* called up and allowed the great privilege of admiring the result.

Now *Cinderella* had, by nature, what one might call 'absolute taste.' She knew instinctively how one should look at a state ball, and she gave them her simple, but perfect, advice, with a deft touch to this and that, which made all the difference. She got no thanks, of course; but one of the sisters did unbend a little.

'*Cinderella*,' said she, 'wouldn't you like to be going to the ball?'

'Heigho!' sighed *Cinderella*. 'Such delights are not for me. I dream of them, but that is all.'

'Quite enough, too,' said the other sister. 'Fancy the Cinder-slut at a ball! How the whole Court would laugh!' [68]

Cinderella made no reply, though the words hurt her. Pin after pin she took from her mouth and fixed it dexterously, where you or I might have done some accidental damage with it, and drawn blood. But not so *Cinderella*. She had no venom in her nature. When she had arrayed them perfectly she expected no thanks, but just listened to their fault-finding with a hidden smile. It was only when they had left the house, and she was going downstairs to the kitchen, that one word escaped her: 'Cats!' And if she had not said that she would not have been a girl at all, but only an angel. Then she sat down in her favourite place in the chimney corner to look into the fire and imagine things quite different from what they were.

The house was very still—so still that you could have heard a pin fall in the top room. The step-mother was on a visit to a maiden aunt, who was not only dying, but very rich, so the best thing to do was to show the dying aunt her invitation card to the ball and play another card—the ace of self-sacrifice. Yes, the house was *very* still. *Cinderella*, watching the pictures in the glowing embers, could almost hear what the prince of her dreams was saying.

All of a sudden a storm of feeling seemed to burst in her bosom. She—*Cinderella*—was sitting there alone in the chimney corner dreaming dreams of princes and palaces: what a contrast between what *was* and what *was not*, nor ever could be! It was too much for the child; she broke down, and, taking her head in her hands, she sobbed as if her heart would break.

While she was still crying bitterly, a gust of cold air swept through the kitchen. She looked up, thinking that the door had blown open. But no, it was shut. Then she gradually became aware of a blue mist gathering and revolving upon itself on the other side of the fireplace. It grew bluer still, and began to shine from within. It spun itself to a standstill, and there, all radiant, stood the queerest little lady you could ever imagine. Her dress was like that of the fairy mother of a prince, with billowy lace flounces and a delicate waist. There was not an inch of it that did not sparkle with a jewel. And as this little lady stood, fingering her wand and looking lovingly and laughingly at *Cinderella*, the girl knew not what to do. She could only smile back to those kindly eyes, while, half-dazed, she fell to counting the powdered ringlets of her hair, which was so very beautiful that surely it must have been grown in Fairyland! Then, when she looked again at the wand and saw a bright blue flame issue shimmering from the tip of it, she was certain that the door of Fairyland had opened and some one had stepped out. [69]

'Good evening, my dear,' said the visitant, in the voice and manner of one who could do things. 'Dry your tears and tell me all about it.'

Cinderella was gazing up at her with wonder in her beautiful eyes, though they still brimmed with misery.

'Oh!' she said, choking down her sobs, 'I want—I want to go——,' and then she broke down again and could say no more.

'Ah! you got that want from me, I'll warrant; for I have come on purpose to supply it. You want to go to the ball, my dear; that's what you want, though you didn't know it before. And you shall. Come, come, dry your eyes, and we'll see about it. I'm your fairy godmother, you know; and your dear mother, whom I knew very well, has sent me to you. That's better, you've got your mother's smile. Ah! how beautiful she was, to be sure, and you—you're her living image. Now to work! Have you any pumpkins in the garden?'

'What an odd question!' thought *Cinderella*. 'Why pumpkins? But still, why not?' Then she hastened to assure her fairy godmother that there were plenty of them, big and ripe.

Together they went out into the dark garden, and *Cinderella* led the way to the pumpkin bed.

'There,' said her godmother, pointing with her wand at the finest and largest, 'pick it and bring it along.'

Cinderella, wondering greatly, obeyed, and her godmother led her to the front doorstep, where, bidding the child sit beside her, she took from the bosom of her dress a silver fruit-knife, and with this she scooped out the fruit of the pumpkin, leaving only the rind. This she set down in the street before them, and then touched it with her wand, when, lo and behold! the pumpkin was immediately transformed into a magnificent coach, all wrought with pure gold. [70]

Cinderella was so amazed that she could not speak. She caught a quick breath of delight, and

waited.

'That's that!' said her godmother; 'now for the horses. Let me see: I suppose you haven't a mouse trap anywhere in the house.'

'Yes, yes, I have,' cried *Cinderella;* 'I set one early this evening, and I always catch such a lot—sometimes a whole family at once.'

'Then go find it, child; we shall want at least six.'

So *Cinderella* ran in and found the mouse trap she had set; and, sure enough, there was a whole family of six—father and mother, a maiden aunt, and three naughty children who had led them into the trap. In high glee *Cinderella* ran back to her godmother and showed her.

'Yes, yes; that is quite good, but we're going a bit too fast. Here are six horses—though they don't look it at present—but we must first have a coachman to manage them. Now I don't suppose, by any chance, you've got a——'

'A rat?' cried *Cinderella*, her eyes sparkling with excitement. 'Well, now, I *did* set a rat trap in the scullery—not a guillotine, you know, but just a thing to catch them alive: I always think they much prefer to be caught alive and then drowned.'

'Run, then, and see, child. We can do nothing without a coachman,—nothing at all.'

So *Cinderella* ran and fetched the rat trap. In it were three large rats, and the two inspected them closely.

'I think that's the best one,' said *Cinderella;* 'look at his enormous whiskers! He'd make a lovely coachman.'

'You're right, child; I was just thinking that myself: he's got a good eye for horse-flesh too.' [71]

With this the fairy godmother touched him with the tip of her wand, and instantly he stood before them—a fat coachman with tremendous whiskers, saluting and waiting for orders.

'Now,' said the fairy godmother to *Cinderella*, 'open the door of the mouse trap and let one out at a time.'

Cinderella did so, and, as each mouse came out, the godmother tapped it with her wand, and it was immediately changed into a magnificent horse, richly harnessed and equipped. The coachman took charge of them and harnessed them to the coach as a six-in-hand.

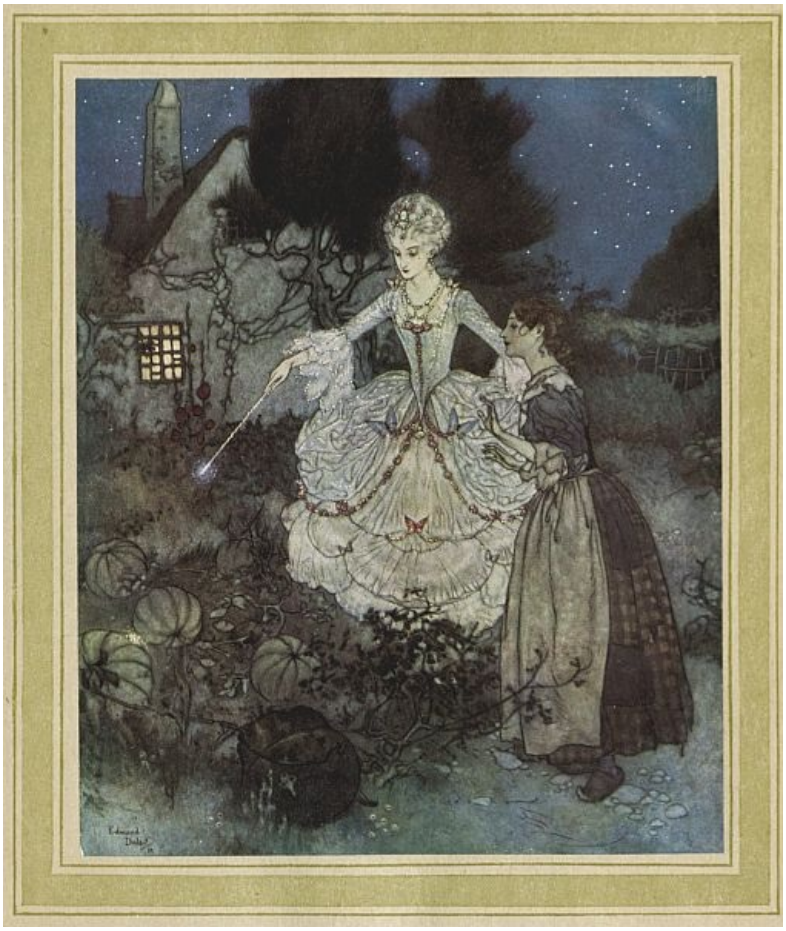
'That's that!' said the fairy. 'Now for the footmen. Run, child, down to the farther end of the garden. There, in the corner, behind the old broken water-pot, something tells me you will find six lizards in a nest. Bring them here to me.'

Cinderella ran off, and soon returned with the identical six lizards. A tap of the wand on each and there stood six imposing footmen, such as are only seen in kings' palaces. Their liveries were dazzling with purple and gold. To the manner born they took their places on the coach and waited.

'But—but,' cried *Cinderella*, who saw by now that she was bound for the ball, 'how can I go like this? They would all jeer at me.'

Her godmother laughed and chided her on having so little faith. 'Tut, tut,' she said, and tapped her on the shoulder with her wand.

What a transformation! The girl, lovely indeed in herself, that stood a moment ago in rags, now stood there a splendid woman—for there is always a moment when a child becomes a woman—and a woman clothed in cloth of gold and silver, all bespangled with jewels. The tiring-maids of Fairyland had done her hair up to show its beauty, and in it was fastened a diamond clasp that challenged the sparkling stars. An osprey, too, quivered and danced to the beating of her heart. 'But,' said *Cinderella*, when she had recovered from her amazement, 'I see that I have lovely silk [72] stockings, yet, O my godmother, where are my shoes?'



THERE, SAID HER GODMOTHER, POINTING WITH HER WAND . . . PICK IT AND BRING IT ALONG

p. 69

'Ah! that is just the point.' And her godmother drew from the folds of her dress a pair of glass slippers. 'Glass is glass, I know, my dear; and it is not one in a hundred thousand that could wear such things; but perfect fit is everything, and, as for these, I doubt if there is any in the world but yourself who could fit them exactly.'

Cinderella took the slippers and poked her toes into them very carefully, for, as her godmother had said, glass is glass, and you have to be measured very carefully for it. But what was her delight to find that they were, indeed, an absolute fit. Either her feet had been made for the slippers or the slippers had been made for her feet, it did not matter: it was the same thing, and not a little surprising.

Now *Cinderella* stood up, a perfect picture, and kissed her godmother and thanked her. The carriage was waiting, the horses were restive, the coachman sat on the box, and the footmen were in their places.

'Now, there's just one thing which is rather important,' said the fairy godmother, as *Cinderella* entered the coach, 'and you must not forget it. I can do this, that, and the other, but at midnight there's an end to it all. You must leave the ball before the clock strikes twelve, for, if you don't, you'll be in a pretty pickle. Your coach will turn into a pumpkin again, your coachman into a rat, your horses into mice, and your footmen into lizards; and there you will be in the ballroom in nothing but your dirty rags for all to laugh at. Now, remember; it all ends at the stroke of twelve.'

'Never fear,' said *Cinderella*. 'I shall not forget. Good-bye!'

'Good-bye, child!'

Then the coachman cracked his whip and the prancing horses sprang forward. *Cinderella* was off to the ball.

'That's that!' said the fairy godmother, as she looked after the coach for a moment. Then the blue flame at the tip of her wand went out, and so did she—flick! [73]

It was a glorious night. The same moon that had looked down on *Cinderella's* pumpkins now shone upon the king's palace and the royal gardens. Within, the ball was at its height. The movement of the dance was a fascinating spectacle. In the great hall the light of a thousand candles was reflected from the polished floor; from the recesses came the soft plash of cool fountains and the fragrance of the rarest flowers; while, to the sweet strains of the violins, many pairs of feet glided as if on air. Without, among the trees, where hanging lanterns shed a dim light and the music throbbed faintly on the warm night air, couples strayed and lingered, speaking in voices sweet and low, while from cloud to cloud wandered the moon, withdrawing to hide a maiden's blushes, shining forth again to light her smiles.

Suddenly a note of something unusual seemed to run through the whole scene. The chamberlain was seen to speed hither and thither on some quest that left his dignity to see after itself. Breathless he sought the *Prince*, and at last he found him.

'Your Serene Highness,' he gasped, 'a princess of high degree has just arrived in state and desires admission. She will not give her name, but—if you will permit me to be skilled in these matters—she is a lady that cannot be denied. Beautiful as a goddess and proud as a queen; why, the very jewels in her hair are worth a thousand square miles of territory. Believe me, your Serene Highness, she is a princess of exalted dignity.'

The *Prince* followed the chamberlain to the gate, where they found the fair unknown waiting in her coach. The *Prince*, silent for want of words—she was so very beautiful—handed her down and escorted her through the palace gardens, where, as they passed, the guests started and sighed at sight of one so rare. So they reached the ballroom, and immediately the dance ceased. Even the music fainted away as this vision of beauty came upon the scene. All was at a silent standstill as [74] the *Prince* led the unknown down the hall, and nothing could be heard but whispers of 'Ah! how beautiful she is!' and 'Never, never have I seen such loveliness!' Even the old king was altogether fascinated. 'My dear!' he said to the queen in a whisper, 'what an adorable woman! Ah! she and those very words remind me of you yourself.' From which the queen, by a rapid retrospect, inferred that the stranger was indeed a very beautiful woman, and did not hesitate to admit it.

The *Prince* presented the stranger with few words—for beauty speaks for itself—and then led her out to dance. *Tara tara tara ra ra ra!*—the fiddles struck up a sprightly measure, and all the couples footed it with glee; but one after another they wilted away to watch the graceful pair, so exquisitely did they dance. And then, as if by common consent, the music fell to a dreamy waltz; the *Prince* and the fair unknown passed into the rhythm, and all were spellbound as this perfect couple danced before them. Even the hard-featured step-sisters were lost in admiration, for little they guessed who the beautiful stranger really was.

The night wore on, and *Cinderella* danced with the stateliest of the land, and again and again with the *Prince*. And when supper was over, and the *Prince* had claimed her for yet another dance, she almost fainted in his arms when she happened to glance at the clock and saw that it was just two minutes to twelve. Alas! her godmother's warning! She had fallen madly in love with the *Prince*, as he with her, and she had forgotten everything beside. But now it was a case of quick action or she would soon be in rags and coachless; how they would all laugh at her then!

With a wrench she tore herself away, and, concealing her haste till she got clear of the ballroom, sped like a deer through the ways of the palace till she reached the marble steps leading down to the gate, when she heard with dismay the ominous sound of a great clock striking twelve.

Down she went three steps at a time, a flying figure of haste in the moonlight. One of her glass slippers came off, but she had to leave it. There—there was the coach waiting for her. She rushed [75] towards it, when, lo and behold, as the last stroke of twelve died away, there was no coach at all; nothing but a hollow pumpkin by the kerb, and six mice and a heavily whiskered rat nibbling at it, to say nothing of six lizards wriggling away. And that was not all. She looked at herself in horror. She was in rags!

With the one thought to hide herself, she ran as fast as her legs would carry her in the direction of her home. She had scarcely covered half the distance when it came on to rain hard, and, before she reached her doorstep, she was drenched to the skin. Then, when she had crept to her chimney corner in the kitchen, she made a strange discovery. As you know, the coach and all that appertained to it had disappeared; her splendid attire had gone; but—how was this?—one real glass slipper still remained. The other, she remembered, she had dropped on the steps of the palace.

'Well, child?' said a clear voice from the other side of the fireplace; and *Cinderella*, looking up, saw her godmother standing there gazing down at her with a quizzical smile.

'The slippers!' she went on. 'Oh no; however forgetful you might have been, they could never have vanished like the other things. Don't you remember, I brought them with me? They were *real*. But where is the other one?'

'In my haste to get away I dropped it on the palace steps.' And *Cinderella* began to cry.

'There, there; never mind. Perhaps somebody with a capital S has picked it up. You were certainly very careless, but you are not unlucky—at least, not if I can help it.' And when *Cinderella* looked up through her tears her godmother had gone.

'Somebody with a capital S,' mused *Cinderella*, as she gazed into the dying fire. 'I wonder!' But just then the bell rang announcing the return of her step-sisters. Oh! they were full of it! A most beautiful princess had been to the ball, they said, and they had actually spoken with her. She was most gentle and condescending. Their faces shone with reflected glory. And she had left suddenly [76] at midnight, and the *Prince* was beside himself; and there was nothing to show for it all but a glass slipper which he had picked up on the steps of the palace. What a night! And so they rambled on, little thinking that *Cinderella* had the other glass slipper hidden in her bosom along with other state secrets.

The next day events followed one another with great rapidity. First, came a royal proclamation.

Whereas a lady had cast a slipper at the ball it must be returned to the rightful owner, and so forth. Secondly, came news that the slipper had been tried on the princesses, duchesses, marchionesses, countesses, and viscountesses, and finally on the baronesses of the Court, but all in vain. It fitted none of them. Thirdly, it gradually became known that any lady with a foot that betokened good breeding was invited to call at the palace and try on the slipper. This went on for weeks, and finally the prime minister, who carried the glass slipper on a velvet cushion, went out himself to search for the fitting foot, for the *Prince* was leading him a dog's life, and threatening all kinds of things unless that foot and all that was joined to it were found.

At last, going from house to house, he came to *Cinderella's* sisters, who, of course, tried all they could to squeeze a foot into the slipper, but without success. *Cinderella* looked on and laughed to herself to see how hard they tried, and, when they had given it up, she said gaily, 'Let me try and see if I can get it on.'

Her sisters laughed loudly at the idea of a little kitchen slut trying her luck, and began to mock and abuse her; but the chamberlain, seeing what a beautiful girl she was, maintained that his orders were to try it upon every one.

So *Cinderella* held out her little foot, and the chamberlain put the slipper on quite easily. It fitted like wax. This was an astonishing thing, but it was more astonishing still when *Cinderella* produced the other slipper and put it on the other foot. Then, to show that wonders could never cease, the door flew open, and in came the fairy godmother. One touch of her wand on *Cinderella's* clothes, and there she stood again dressed as on the night of the ball, only this time [77]
there were not only jewels in her hair but orange blossoms as well.

There was a breathless silence for a while. Then, when *Cinderella's* step-sisters realised that she was the same beautiful unknown that they had seen at the ball, they prostrated themselves before her, begging her to forgive all. *Cinderella* took them by the hand and raised them up and kissed them. And it melted their hard natures to hear her say that she would love them always.

When the fairy godmother had witnessed all this she said to herself, 'That's that!' and vanished. But she never lost sight of *Cinderella*. She guided and guarded her in all her ways, and, when the *Prince* claimed his willing bride, their way of happiness was strewn with roses.

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THE CHILLY LOVER

A SONG FROM THE FRENCH

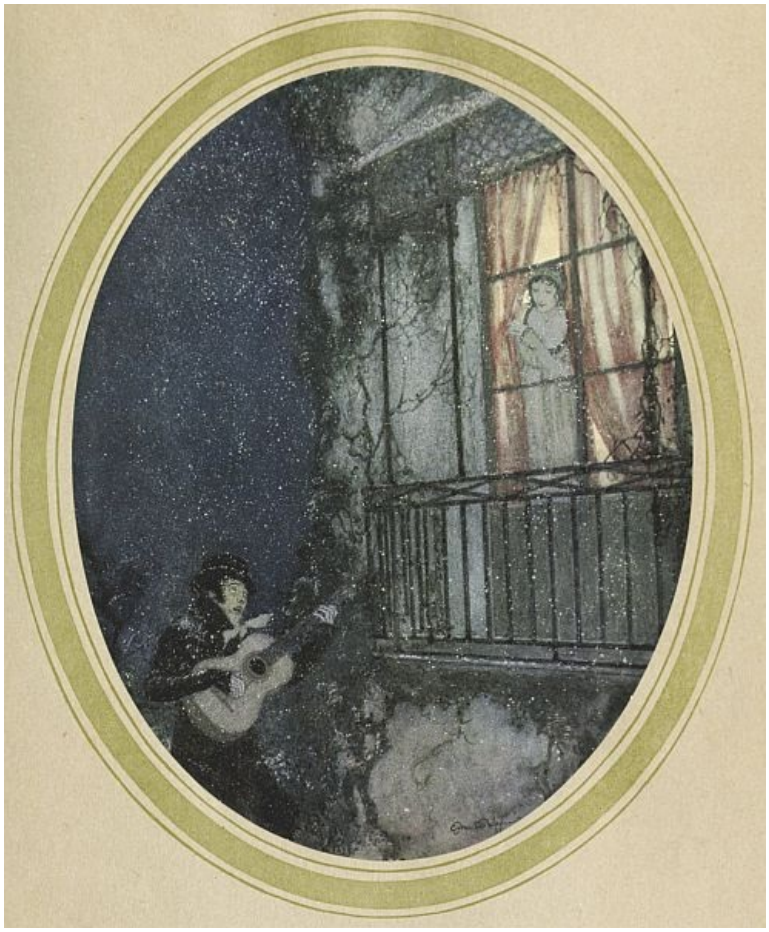
BEHOLD me here, my dear to meet!
Alas, I must have come too soon!
The wind that blows beneath the moon
In winter is not over-sweet.
Ah! never think my love is backward turning,
It still increases by a thousand-fold;
O Ursula, for thee
My heart is burning,—
But I'm so cold!

I would I had thy hand to kiss,
That pledge of faith so white and small,
Instead of these great flakes that fall
And chill me to the bone like this!
Upon my back they tumble helter-skelter,
And yet, beyond whatever could be told,
O Ursula, for thee
I simply swelter,—
But I'm so cold!

While thus my deathless love I trill,
My soft guitar for thee I play;
Alas, the north wind fierce and grey
Plays upon me a measure shrill! [80]
On me his miserable music making,
Seizing each finger in his icy hold.—
O Ursula, for thee
My heart is baking,—
But I'm so cold!

Within thy room with friendly glow
I see the hearthfire shining clear;
The crackling faggots I can hear,—
And I am numb from top to toe!
Oh, must I freeze while thou art toasting?

Shall not my suffering be consoled?
Sweet Ursula, for thee
I am just roasting,—
But I'm so cold!



**O URSULA, FOR THEE
MY HEART IS BURNING,—
BUT I'M SO COLD!**

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[81]

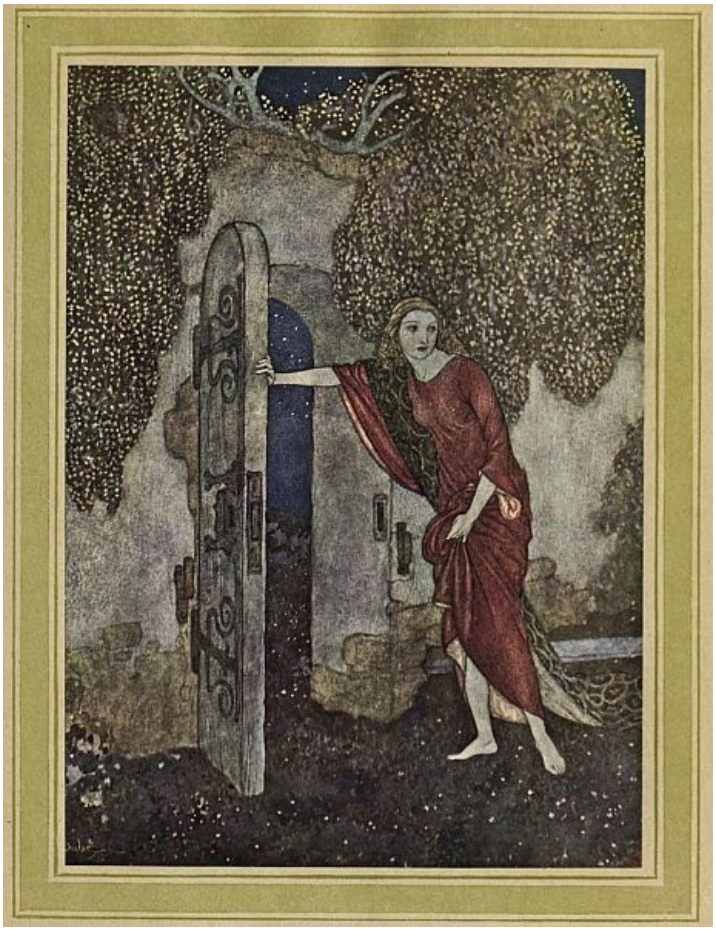
THE STORY OF AUCASSIN AND NICOLETTE

AN OLD WORLD IDYLL

Count Garin de Biaucaire, being attacked and besieged by his mortal enemy, Count Bougars de Valence, was hard beset and in evil plight. He therefore besought his only son, *Aucassin*, a stalwart and handsome young man of excellent virtue, to take arms against the foe. *Aucassin* refused to enter to battle unless he were given to wife his true love *Nicolette;* but his father answered that *Nicolette* was a slave-girl and a stranger, bought long ago from the Saracens, and no fit mate for his son. *Aucassin* declared that *Nicolette* was fit to occupy any queen's throne, and he would not be dissuaded from his love. So the Count Garin de Biaucaire spoke privily with his vassal, the captain of the city, that he should send away *Nicolette* forthwith, 'for, if I could do my will upon her,' said the Count, 'I would burn her in a fire.' The captain of the city, *Nicolette's* foster-father, who had bought her, had her baptized, and brought her up, was distressed at this; but, having knowledge that *Aucassin* was enamoured of the maiden, he shut her up in a richly painted chamber in his palace, which looked through one small window into the garden. There *Nicolette* was kept in durance, with one old woman to attend her; and she saw the roses, and heard the birds in the garden, and resolved that she would escape to her own true love.

Nicolette being thus shut away, it was rumoured through all the land how she was lost; and some said that Count Garin de Biaucaire had slain her. Thereupon *Aucassin*, in great sorrow and anger, went and demanded her of the captain. But he got no satisfaction from the captain, who advised him, even as his father had done, to take a maiden of high degree to wife, and think no [82] more of *Nicolette*. So *Aucassin* went home to his chamber and lamented for his love. And at this hour the castle was suddenly assaulted by the army of Count Bougars de Valence. Count Garin de Biaucaire, again seeking that *Aucassin* should take arms to the defence of his heritage, came in

and found him making moan for *Nicolette*. Hot words passed between them; but presently *Aucassin* covenanted with his father that, if he overcame the foe, he should be allowed to see *Nicolette*, if only for a moment.



BUT NICOLETTE ONE NIGHT ESCAPED

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So he rode forth into the fray. But so full was his mind of his love, that he dreamed instead of doing, and was taken prisoner and about to be slain. Then he aroused himself and struck down all around, and rode back home with Count Bougars de Valence as his captive. And when he claimed his father's promise, the Count Garin de Biaucaire not only forbade him any sight of *Nicolette*, but flung him into a dungeon till he should forgo the love of her.

So *Aucassin* lay bewailing in his dungeon; but *Nicolette* one night escaped, letting herself down by the window, wrapped in a silken cloak, and crept along through the streets of Biaucaire until she came to the tower where her lover was. And they had speech of each other; and she cut off her golden curls and cast them to *Aucassin* through a crevice. But when she told him that she must leave that land, he was greatly angered and forbade her. Then the sentinel on the tower, who was aware of *Nicolette*, took pity on her, warning her that the town-guard were even now seeking her with swords to slay her.

Nicolette sank into the shadow till the guard passed by; then she made her farewell to *Aucassin*, and with hardship let herself down the castle wall into the fosse, being assured that she would be burned by Count Garin if she still abode in Biaucaire. And she hid herself in the outskirts of the forest until next day at noon. There came some shepherd lads then, and ate bread on the fringe of the forest. By these *Nicolette* sent a secret message to *Aucassin*, which none but he might understand, and she built herself a little lodge of oak-leaf boughs and lily flowers—and [83] hither, after much quest, came *Aucassin*, searching vainly for his love. Then the lovers had much joy of this meeting; and they rode away together on one horse until they reached the seashore and took ship. But a storm arose and drove their vessel upon the coast of the country of Torelore. In this land men did battle with eggs, baked apples, and fresh cheeses; and *Aucassin* with his sword put the foes of the king to flight.

When *Aucassin* and *Nicolette* had dwelt here for three years in great delight, a company of Saracens stormed the castle of Torelore, and carried them off separately captive; and the ship which held *Aucassin* was drifted by a tempest back home to Biaucaire, where his father and mother were dead. So now he was lord of that land; but he cared for nothing in the world but to regain his love *Nicolette*. As for her, she was also at home; for the ship which carried her pertained to the king of Carthage, her father, from whom she had been stolen as a little child. And when her father and brothers knew her, they made much of her, and would have wedded her to a Paynim king. But *Nicolette* obtained a viol, and learned to play it; then she dyed herself all brown with a certain herb, and attired herself as a harper-boy. She persuaded a shipmaster to carry her to the land of Provence, and there she came to the castle of Biaucaire, and sang to her viol what had befallen *Nicolette*. *Aucassin* was overjoyed to know that *Nicolette* was living, and he bade the harper-boy to go fetch *Nicolette* from Carthage that he might wed her. *Nicolette*

then went to her foster-mother, the captain's wife, and rested there eight days, till she was washed and anointed and richly clothed, and fairer than ever. And she sent that lady to bring *Aucassin* her love, who was weeping in the palace for lack of her. So were these true lovers reunited and wedded, and for all their sorrows they had a double happiness, their whole lives long.

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BLUE BEARD

AN OLD TALE FROM THE FRENCH

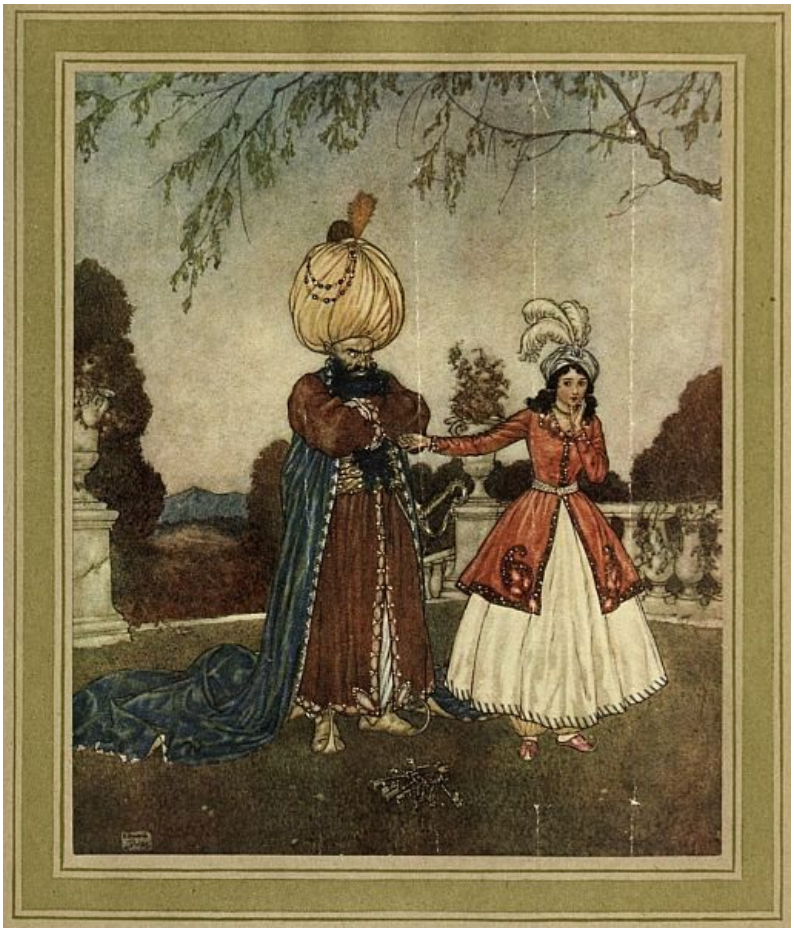
THINK of it! A man rich as a prince, of fine upstanding presence and commanding manner; a man of great moment in Baghdad!

Think of it again! A man cursed by nature with a beard that was quite blue, from the roots of the hairs to their very tips!

To be sure, he had three alternatives in the matter. First, he might shave it off, thus avoiding earthly ugliness while renouncing all hope of a place in Paradise; secondly, he might marry a scold, and so become prematurely grey; and last, he might keep his blue beard and remain the ugliest man in all the world. There was no other alternative, for the beard was so deadly blue that no dye could touch it.

He had staked his chances on the second point: he *had* married, and more than once; but, although his wives had disappeared mysteriously, his blue beard still remained, as blue as ever. How it was that he had ever found any woman blind enough to marry him it is difficult to imagine, for he was so frightfully ugly that most women at sight of him ran away screaming, and hid in the cellar. But it is only fair to say that *Blue Beard* had such a way with him that, given two hours' start, he could snap his fingers at any rival.

Now it so happened that in his neighbourhood there lived a lady of quality, who had two sons and two daughters; and, in his walks abroad, *Blue Beard* often met the two girls, and soon fell into the lowest depths of love. Both were adorable, and he really could not decide which one he preferred. Always in exquisite doubt on the point, he finally approached the mother and asked her for the hand of one of her daughters, leaving the choice to her. And she, like a wise woman, [86]
said nothing, but simply introduced *Blue Beard* to *Anne* and *Fatima*, and left the rest to nature and their own fancies.



SEVEN AND ONE ARE *EIGHT*, MADAM!

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But neither *Anne* nor *Fatima* fell in love with their admirer at first sight. His beard was so blue that they could not endure it, and, between them, they led him a dance. Neither was inclined to marry a man with a beard like that, and, what made matters worse, they soon learned that he had already been married several times, and that his wives had disappeared mysteriously. This was rather disconcerting, and each was angling for a brother-in-law rather than a husband.

But, as already stated, *Blue Beard* had a way with him. He did not expect to be accepted at first asking. Indeed, when he proposed, first to one and then to the other, they both said, 'Oh! you must see father about it.' Now *Blue Beard* knew very well that their father, having led a very wicked life, was dead and gone; and, as he pondered over it, stroking his beard the while, he began to realise what they meant when they said, 'You must see father about it.'

But *Blue Beard* did not despair, he merely altered his plan. He invited the whole family, with some of their chosen friends, to one of his country houses, where he gave them the time of their lives. Hunting, hawking, shooting with the bow, or fishing for goldfish in the ponds, they enjoyed themselves to the full, especially in the evenings, when they were rowed upon the lake to the sound of beautiful music, and made moonlight excursions to some of *Blue Beard's* ruined castles, of which he possessed quite a number. Whatever the nature of the day's pleasure-party, the night hours were taken up with banqueting, dancing, or some other form of revelry, until such a late hour that *Blue Beard* said to himself, 'Only wait till I marry one of them, then we shall see who is master.' For the present he was content to take their pranks in good part. When he found himself trying in vain to get into an apple-pie bed he merely laughed; when he found his pillow stuffed with prickly cactus, or the sleeves and legs of his garments stitched up so that he could not put them on, he swore merrily and fell more deeply in love than ever. One day they cut down the stem of an aloe that was about to flower—a thing which happened only once in every hundred [87] years. The head gardener, who had been listening every day for the loud report with which the aloe blossoms burst their sheath, was heart-broken when he saw what had been done; but *Blue Beard* consoled him by raising his wages, saying that in a hundred years' time, when every one was bald, the plant might blossom again,—what did it matter? In fact, things went so smoothly, and everything in the garden was so very lovely, that the younger daughter, *Fatima*, being the more poetical and impressionable of the two, began quietly to think what a splendid beard their host's would be if it were not so blue. From this—for you know that love is colour-blind—she began to see the beard in a different light. Like a dutiful and affectionate daughter she spoke to her mother upon the point.

'Mother,' she said, 'it may be only my fancy, but I really think his beard *has* changed a little in colour during the last few days. Perhaps it's the country air, I don't know; but it doesn't seem to me *quite* so blue, after all.'

'My darling child,' replied the mother, 'it is strange that you should have mentioned that. I had also noticed it, but, thinking my sight was failing me, I feared that old age was creeping on, and so held my tongue on the matter.'

'That settles it, dear mother. Sooner than believe that you are growing old and your sight is failing I prefer to believe that what we have both noticed is an actual fact. But mind you, though there is a slight change, it is still horribly blue, mother.'

'Yes, dear; but blue's a very nice colour. It's lucky to some people. The eyes of the Goddess of Love were blue; the sky above is blue; the bird of paradise is blue; the deep sea is blue. Press your thumbs on your eyes and what do you see? Blue—the deepest blue imaginable: it is the light of the mind and soul burning in your head, dear; and that is why poets and singers are so fond of blue.'

'Then you think——'

'Think? I *know*, child. Besides, a man with a blue beard is different from all other men; and [88] besides, again, in the dark all beards are black.'

'But even in the light, dear mother, you think it is changing—just a little?'

'Yes, my darling, I do. And the reason I know full well. He has fallen in love, dear; and I think I know with whom. And love can work wonders. Just as grief can turn black hair grey, so can love turn a blue beard——'

'Not grey, mother. Say a greyish blue.'

'I was going to say a bluish grey. But there;—if this worthy gentleman suffers from an affliction,—which, mind you, I am far from allowing,—what could be sweeter in a woman than to pity him? And pity, my darling, sometimes leads to love.'

Fatima then sought her sister *Anne*, and told her what was on her mind. 'Oh, well,' said *Anne* when she had heard all about the wonderful change, 'your having discovered it now saves me the trouble of finding it out later on. Not only do I thank you, *Fatima*, I congratulate you.'

Greatly relieved by her mother's and her sister's attitude, *Fatima* decked herself out in her best, and waited for *Blue Beard* to come and find her, which she felt sure he would do. And she was right. That very evening *Blue Beard* led her aside from the others into the garden, where the moon was shining and the nightingales singing. And there he spoke soft words to her, and wooed and won her for his wife. As soon as they returned to town the wedding was celebrated, and there were great rejoicings over the happy event.

Now, shortly after the honeymoon was over, *Blue Beard* was called away into the country on matters of urgent importance, which would occupy his attention for at least six weeks. And when *Fatima*, on hearing this, pouted and began to cry, he sought to console her by suggesting that she should amuse herself among her friends during his absence.

'See now, my dear,' he said, 'these keys will unlock all the doors for you so that you shall want [89] for nothing. These two are the keys of the store-chambers, and these others open the strong-rooms where the gold and silver plate is kept. These here are the keys to my money chests, and these smaller ones fit the locks of my jewel coffers. But this little one here'—he separated a curious little key from the others and showed it her—'is the key of the little room with the iron door at the end of the great corridor. Do what you will with all the rest, but, I warn you, open not that door. Now, I have trusted you with everything: if you disobey me in this one little matter you will incur my gravest displeasure.'

'That will I never do,' said *Fatima* as she took the keys from his hand. And she meant it at the time. *Blue Beard* kissed her, embracing her fondly. Then he entered his coach and was driven away.

Fatima, in her grand home, eagerly welcomed the chance of holding high revelry and playing hostess to her friends. They all came running at her invitation, and were immediately shown over the great house. Rooms, cupboards, wardrobes, closets, cabinets and presses were opened by the aid of keys on the bunch, and they went into ecstasies over the wonderful treasures the house contained. There were magnificent pictures, tapestries, costly silk hangings, gold and silver ornaments, the loveliest soft carpets, and, best of all, gold-framed looking-glasses reaching from floor to ceiling. These last, which cast one's reflection taller and fairer than the original inlooker, were the subject of long and careful admiration. All spoke with rapture of the splendid luxury of the place, and congratulated *Fatima* on her great good fortune.

'For my part,' said one, 'if my husband could give me such a magnificent house as this, I would not trouble about the colour of his beard.'

'You're right,' said another. 'Why, for half this grandeur I would marry a man even if his beard were all the colours of the rainbow, especially if he went away and left me the keys of the whole house.'

'The *whole* house,' thought *Fatima;* 'nay, this little key here he has forbidden me to use. I [90] wonder why!'

But he had been so stern about it—and his beard got very blue when he was angry—that *Fatima* put her curiosity away, and continued to entertain her guests. Still, the temptation to slip away and open that forbidden door returned again and again; but always she said to herself, 'Nay; I have the run of the whole house beside: is it a great matter that I am forbidden one pokey little room at the end of a dark corridor?' Then, having triumphed for the twentieth time, she fell at last the more easily;—at least she fell to this extent, that she slipped away from her guests and ran along the corridor, just to go and take a peep at the door.

There was nothing unusual about the door. It was of plain, solid iron, and the key-hole was very small. She wondered if the little key would fit it. She tried, and found that it went in quite easily; yet, remembering her promise, she would not turn it, but pulled it out again and tore herself away. But, after all, she could not see what possible harm there could be in opening a small room like that and just having one look inside. Besides, if her husband had been really serious he would have kept the key himself and not given it to her with the others. To be sure, he was a kind, indulgent husband, and would not be so very angry; and then, again, he need never know that she *had* opened the door.

With thoughts like these passing quickly in her mind she hesitated, paused, and finally turned again to the door. Her disobedient hands trembled as she selected the key a second time, detached it from the bunch, and inserted it in the lock. In another moment she had turned it and pushed the heavy door open.

At first, as the shutters were closed, she could see nothing; but gradually her eyes became accustomed to the dim light and she saw that the floor was of porphyry,—at all events, it was red. Then, as she shaded her eyes from the light creeping through the chinks of the shutters, and peered more closely, she discovered to her horror that what she had taken for porphyry was nothing of the kind—*it was blood!*—Here it had clotted in dark crimson pools, and there it had *[91]* run in little streams along the irregular stone floor. Quickly she traced those streams to their source by the opposite wall, where, as she raised her eyes, she discerned seven dark forms hanging feet downwards from seven spikes driven through their necks into the masonry.

Her first impulse was to flee from the spot;—then there came a dreadful thought, and she stayed. Whose bodies were those hanging in the forbidden cupboard? She took a step forward and inspected them more closely. Yes, they were women, and they had been young and beautiful. O horror of horrors! Could it be true? Were those the bodies of *Blue Beard's* wives, who had disappeared, one after another, so mysteriously? There they hung, spiked through the neck, their feet dangling above pools of their life's blood,—mute evidence of foul murder.

As *Fatima* stood gazing at the scene before her, her eyes dilated with fear, and, her breath coming in gasps, the little key fell from her fingers and clinked upon the floor. The sound recalled her to her senses, and she picked the key up hastily. Then she turned and rushed out; and, having

locked the door,—no easy feat with such trembling hands,—she ran upstairs, her face as pale as death. She thought to escape and regain her composure in her own room, but, when she arrived there, she found it full of her guests, who were so busy admiring its luxurious appointments that her pallor went unnoticed. One by one, however, perceiving that she was tired, they melted away, promising to come again on the morrow,—unless her husband was expected to return. It was evident they feared him; so did she, now.

At last they were all gone, and, as soon as she was left alone, she bethought her of the key and drew it from her pocket. What was her horror to observe the dull red stain of blood upon it, which she had not noticed when she picked it up from the blood-smeared floor of the dreadful chamber. Quickly she seized the nearest rag, thinking to wipe off the stain; but, rub as she might, it would not come off. As she scoured and polished without result, terror slowly grew on her face. 'Alas!' [92] she cried, 'there is Blue Magic in this. Now I know my husband has consorted with fiends: his beard for one thing, this bewitched key for another. If I am not mistaken, nothing will remove the stain of foul murder from this key.'

Nevertheless, she bethought herself of many things: of sand, and pumice, and strong acid, and she tried them all upon the key; but though she wore the metal away by hard rubbing, the bloodstain still remained, for, being a magic key, it had absorbed the blood of *Blue Beard's* victims, and was saturated through and through with it.

She was just beginning to realise that the task was hopeless when she heard the rumble of wheels, but she still went on polishing the key, for, whatever coach was approaching, she assured herself it could not be her husband's—thank Heaven, *he* was not due to return yet for six weeks, and by that time she might contrive to have a new key made, exactly like the old one. But presently, when the coach drew up at the gate, and the horns sounded in her husband's style and manner, she started up with a cry of dismay, and her knees trembled with sudden fright.

Her first care was to hide the key in her bosom; then she ran out, but, for very fear, could get no farther than the head of the main stairway, where she stood clutching the stair-rail, and quaking in every limb. There, in the hall below, stood *Blue Beard* giving some final orders to the coachman. With a quick movement he turned, and, looking up, perceived her standing irresolute.

'Yes, it is I, my darling,' he called up gaily as he advanced to the foot of the stairs. 'Some letters reached me on the road, showing me that my long journey was unnecessary. So, you see, I have returned to your arms.'

By this time *Fatima* was tottering down the stairs, bent on giving him a fitting welcome; for, though she feared him more than aught else, she must try not to show it. 'Seven of them!' she kept saying to herself, as she gripped the balustrade, 'and seven and one are *eight!* And I have a [93] throat as well as they, as sure as iron spikes have points.'

There was only a dim light in the hall, so that *Blue Beard* could not see her trembling condition; and if, when she greeted him, he felt that her body was quaking, he was fond enough to put it down to joy at his unexpected return. And *Fatima*, taking cover in this, behaved in an excited manner, like one so delighted to see her husband back again that she did not know what she was doing. She ran hither and thither, ordering this and that to be done, and then countermanding the orders, doing this or that herself, and then immediately undoing it again,—behaving, in short, like one demented with excitement, until *Blue Beard* smiled and stroked his beard, and thought she was a wonderful little bundle of delight.

And so, through such artfulness long sustained, it transpired that the question of the keys did not arise all that night, nor, indeed, until late the following day, when, as ominous as a thunder-clap, came a summons from *Blue Beard* that *Fatima* should attend him immediately on the terrace. With a wildly beating heart she hastened to answer the summons.

'I want my keys,' he said in the usual manner of a man. 'Where are they?'

'The keys?—Oh yes; the keys. I—I will go and fetch them immediately.'

Fatima ran off, and you can imagine her thoughts and feelings as she went. *Blue Beard* remained—he was always a grim figure—standing as she had left him,—just waiting: his thoughts and feelings were in his beard.

Presently *Fatima* returned, purposely out of breath in order to hide whatever confusion she might feel, and handed the bunch of keys to her husband. He took them without a word, looked at them carefully, and then slowly turned his eyes upon her.

'The key of the room at the end of the corridor,' he said grimly, 'it is not here: where is it?'

'The key of the—— Oh; you mean the key of the——'

'I mean the key of the——; yes, that's what I mean. Where is it?' [94]

'Oh! I remember now. You said I was not to use it; so, to make sure, I took it off the bunch and put it away in a drawer of my dressing-table. I will run and fetch it.'

'Do,' said *Blue Beard*, and, while she ran off, he stood there looking for all the world like a blue thunder-cloud before the lightning comes.

Once out of sight *Fatima* paused to collect her wits. Then, having made up her mind, she ran

twice up and down stairs, and finally rejoined her husband, panting heavily.

'It is not there,' she cried in dismay. 'I put it in my jewel case,—of that I'm sure,—but now it's gone. Who can have taken it?'

'Go look again,' replied *Blue Beard*, dangerously calm.

She ran away again, and again came running back. 'No,' she said, 'it is not there. Who can have——?'

'Silence, madam!' broke in *Blue Beard*. 'That was no ordinary key; and something tells me it is in your bosom now.' And, with this, he gathered her shrinking form in his rough arm, and with a rougher hand searched for, and found—the key!

'So!' he said. 'You lied to me. And—what is this? How came this blood upon the key?'

Fatima was very pale, and trembling like an aspen leaf. 'I do not know,' she replied. 'Perhaps ——'

'Perhaps nothing!' roared *Blue Beard* in a terrible voice. 'Madam! your face tells me you are guilty. You have presumed to disobey me; to enter that room at the end of the corridor. Yes, madam; and, since you would sooner indulge your fancy for that room than obey my commands, you shall go there and stay as long as you like. Seven and one are *eight*, madam!'

'Mercy! Mercy!' cried *Fatima*, flinging herself at *Blue Beard's* feet. 'Do what you will with me, but do not put me in that room.'

She looked up sobbing, imploring his forgiveness; and, if a woman's beauty in despair could [95]
have melted a heart of stone, the sight of her would have melted his. But it will not astonish you to know that his heart was as flinty as his beard was blue, and *Fatima* realised this as she looked again at his terrible face.

'I have said it, madam,' he replied to her pleadings. 'None can disobey me and live. Prepare, then, for death.'

'Then,' said she, her imploring eyes brimming with tears, 'you will give me a little time to prepare? If I must die, I must say my prayers.'

'Ten minutes will suffice for that. Not a second more.'

Fatima hurried away towards her own room, but on the way she met her sister *Anne*, who was looking for her.

'Oh! dear *Anne*,' sobbed *Fatima*, as she embraced her sister; 'ask me no questions; there is no time. My husband has returned, and, because I disobeyed him, he has threatened to kill me. Oh! where are my brothers? If they were only here!'

'They are on the way hither,' said *Anne* quickly. 'They were delayed, but promised to follow me very soon.'

'Then run, dear sister, if you love me; run to the top of the tower, and, if you can see them coming, make a sign to them to hasten; for in ten minutes I must die.'

Quickly *Anne* ran up and up until she reached the roof of the tower; and *Fatima*, standing at the foot, called up to her:

'Sister *Anne!* Dear sister *Anne!* Do you see any one coming?'

And *Anne* answered her:

'*I see naught but dust a-blowing, naught but the green grass growing.*'

Presently *Fatima* called up again:

'Sister *Anne*, can you see no one coming?'

'*Nay, I see naught but dust a-blowing, naught but the green grass growing.*'

Fatima, in despair, continued to call again and again, but always the same answer came down
from the roof of the tower. And so the ten minutes ran out, and *Fatima* wrung her hands and [96]
groaned.

Meanwhile *Blue Beard*, having sharpened his sword, was trying its edge on the greensward of the terrace below. Fully satisfied with it, he strode into the house, and, standing at the foot of the stairs, shouted, 'Madam, your time is up. Come down at once!'

'One moment,—just one moment,' she replied, then called softly to her sister: '*Anne, sister Anne, do you see any one coming?*'

'*Nay, naught but dust a-blowing, naught but the green grass growing.*'

'Madam,' roared *Blue Beard*, 'if you do not come down quickly, I will come up and drag you down.'

'I am coming,' she replied; and again she called softly to *Anne:* '*Sister Anne, do you see any*

one coming?'

'Sister, I see a great cloud of dust.'

'Raised by galloping horses?'

'Alas! Nay, it is but a flock of sheep.'

'*Will* you come down?' bellowed *Blue Beard*, 'or by——'

'I am coming in another moment.' Then to *Anne:* 'Sister *Anne*, can you see anybody coming?'

'Yonder I see—God be praised—I see two knights in armour, riding fast.... Yes, they are my brothers.... I am waving my kerchief to them.... They see me.... They spur and hasten.... Sister, they will soon be here.'

Then *Blue Beard* stamped his foot and roared out so terribly that he made the whole house tremble. At this his poor wife, wholly fascinated by terror, crept down to her doom. Her face was stained with tears, her long hair was dishevelled; she flung herself at his feet and besought him to take pity on her.

'Pity!' he thundered; 'I have no pity. You must die!' He seized her by the hair and twisted her head back to expose her beautiful throat; then, flourishing his sword, he went on: 'This is my last word on the abominable crime of curiosity as practised by women. By that detestable vice [97] misfortune and grief came into the world, and we owe our present state of evil to the first woman, whose daughters greatly resemble her in that peculiar gift of prying into matters forbidden....' And so he continued to harangue his poor wife, grasping her hair with one hand while he flourished his great sword with the other.

When at length he paused for want of words to describe the horrible crime he was about to meet with punishment, *Fatima* wailed, 'O sir! wilt thou punish me before I have recommended myself to Heaven? One moment, I implore thee, while I turn my soul to God.'

'Nay, thy prayers are said.' And he raised his sword to strike. But the sword remained in air, as *Blue Beard*, startled by a loud battering at the gate, turned his head. Then, as the gate was burst in, and two knights came running with drawn swords, he loosed his hold upon *Fatima*, who sank in a huddled heap like one already dead. Turning quickly, *Blue Beard* fled, but the two brothers were hot upon his heels; and, after a rapid chase through the house and garden, they came up with him just as he reached the steps of the main porch. There they ran their swords through and through his body, and left him dead in a pool of blood.

When *Fatima* opened her eyes and saw her two brothers and her sister *Anne* bending over her, she thanked Heaven for her deliverance. With a sword all dripping red one brother pointed towards the porch, and *Fatima* gave a deep sigh of relief. She knew, and was satisfied to know, she was a widow.

Now, as *Blue Beard* had no children by any of his wives, his sole surviving wife became mistress of all that had been his. All his vast estates and treasures came into her possession, and she was young and beautiful into the bargain. The first thing she did was to purchase commissions for her two brothers in the army; next, she bestowed a splendid estate and a large sum of money upon her sister *Anne* as a wedding present on the occasion of her marrying the young man of her choice. Then *Fatima* fell in love with, and married, a worthy gentleman who [98] adored her, and these two lived out their lives in one continuous hour of happiness.

His beard was black, and, when at length it grew grey, and then silvery white, she only loved him all the more. Even in the first year of her marriage she had quite forgotten the dark cloud cast upon her early life by that terrible man, *Blue Beard;* and ever afterwards she never had the slightest cause or reason to remember him.

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CERBERUS. THE BLACK DOG OF HADES

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CERBERUS

CERBERUS, the triple-headed, snake-haired, black dog guarding the gates of Hades, was a mythological monster of fierce and terrible aspect. When the shades of the departed from the upper world were ferried across the River Styx by old Charon the boatman, *Cerberus* lay quiet and let them pass unchallenged. He knew them: they were shades brought in regular order, by Charon, and, as such, they were allowed to enter Hades. But, if they wished to retrace their steps, and gain the upper world again—this was a labour, this was a task not so easily accomplished, for *Cerberus* would bar their way; his mane would rise and his jaws would gape, and there was no passing this terrible gatekeeper.

Yet, in the stories of antiquity, there are at least three instances of mortals, or gods in the form of mortals, passing the grim tiler on entering Hades, and repassing him on coming out again. These three were Persephone, Orpheus, and Æneas.

Persephone was the daughter of Ceres (Demeter), and was carried off by Pluto, the ruler of Hades. It was into Hades he carried her and made her his queen. *Cerberus* knew his master, so, although Pluto bore in his arms a woman in mortal form, they passed in unchallenged by the janitor. But, when Persephone's mother, Ceres, having searched with lighted torches through all the world for her daughter, came at last to the gates of Hades, she evaded *Cerberus* in some way that is not clearly recorded. And, when she found her daughter, and discovered that Zeus and Pluto had conspired over her abduction, she was angry and said that she would deprive the earth of cereals (a word derived from her name *Ceres*, the goddess of corn) until a satisfactory agreement was arrived at. Zeus and Pluto again conspired, and it was arranged that Persephone [100] should spend four months of the year in Hades and the other eight with the gods. This meant that she had to pass and repass *Cerberus* constantly.

The second case is that of Orpheus. His wife Eurydice died of a serpent's bite, and her shade was ferried across the Styx by Charon and passed into Hades without challenge from *Cerberus*. But Orpheus bewailed her loss, saying, as in Glück's wonderful opera, 'Eurydice':

'She is gone, and gone for ever';

and finally resolved to journey to Hades and bring his wife back. With the lute to which he had sung the praises of the gods, and so passed the Sirens in safety,—whereas Ulysses had to order his sailors to bind him to the mast,—he charmed the fierce dog into a deep slumber, and so entered Hades.

He found Eurydice, and Pluto agreed to let her go, provided that Orpheus did not look back before he passed *Cerberus*. But, when he came to the monster, Eurydice following, he looked back to reassure her, when lo, she vanished again to her place among the shades. Orpheus, in despair, sang again to his lute:

'She is gone, and gone for ever!'

and so, having charmed *Cerberus* to sleep, passed to the middle world where, like Bacchus, he

was torn to pieces by his fellow-mortals.

The third case is that of Æneas, the Trojan prince, who made the journey to Hades to find his lost love, Dido, and to consult his father, Anchises. He repaired to a sibyl dwelling among the mountains, and she conducted him to the gates of the lower regions.

There, over a crag that marked his den, rose the monstrous three-headed dog, his crested snakes bristling, his eyes shooting fire, his jaws greedy for prey. But the sibyl had provided herself with a cake steeped in honey and tinctured with an opiate drug derived from India and now called *Cerbera*. This she flung to the monster, who greedily devoured it and immediately [101] sank into a deep sleep, leaving the way to Hades unguarded. And, ever since, the phrase 'a sop to *Cerberus*' has been used to signify a sweet morsel flung to pave the way to some concession.

This dog of Hades was not immortal. It remained for Hercules—the type of the perfect man—to vanquish him in the last of his twelve labours. And by this act Hercules was said to have abolished the tyranny of evil in the realm of Pluto, which extended from the utmost star of the galaxy to the lowest depth of Hades.

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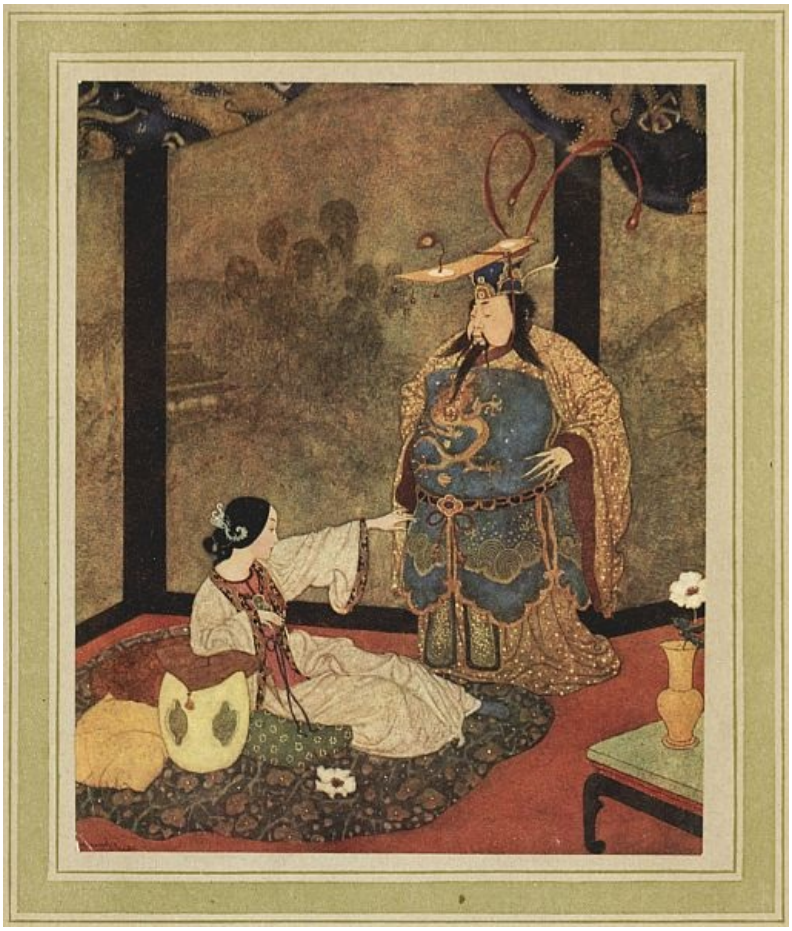
[102]

THE LADY BADOURA

A TALE FROM THE THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS

The Lady Badoura, Princess of China, the daughter of King Gaiour, Lord of all the Seas and of the Seven Palaces! O King! There was none like her in all the world! Her hair was as dark as the night of separation and exile; her face was like the dawn when lovers meet to embrace; her cheeks were like petals of the anemone filled with wine. When she spoke music was born again on earth; when she moved her feet seemed to faint with delight under the burden of grace and loveliness laid upon them. The seven palaces of the king, with gardens like the inmost courts of Paradise, were splendid and wonderful beyond the poet's art to describe, but, without the dazzling beauty of *Badoura's* presence, they were as a houri's eyes without their lovelight—an empty and lifeless shade. And this all who beheld her in that sphere were destined to discover.



NAY, NAY; I WILL NOT MARRY HIM

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For, O King of the Age, it was as it were but yesterday that the *Lady Badoura* reclined in a palace of gold, jewel-encrusted; her couch was of ivory, gold-inwrought; and on the air, fragrant

with a thousand perfumes, floated the silvery voice of the slave-girl, singing of love. But to-day, O King, the *Lady Badoura* was a prisoner in a lonely tower, attended by ten old women long deaf to songs of love. And the cause of this I will relate to you.

For several years the king, through his tender regard for her slightest wish, had left her to bestow her heart and hand of her own free accord upon some worthy suitor; but she had clung tenaciously to her freedom, rejecting all suitors—even the most powerful princes in the land. The king was sorely troubled at this, for *Badoura* was his first and only child, and it was his greatest [103] wish that she should marry, and raise up children for the continuance of his line. But greater trouble was yet in store. Came one day a monarch mightier than all others who had sought her hand in marriage. So powerful and dreaded was this potentate that the king dared not refuse him. He came with a splendid cortège bearing costly gifts such as are seldom found in the treasuries of kings, and he demanded of Gaiour his one and peerless daughter.

As soon as the ceremony of welcome was over, and the king had heard his guest's petition, he sought the *Lady Badoura* and made the matter known to her. But she, knowing what was toward, rose not to greet him, as was her wont, but remained reclining, answering every stronger and stronger persuasion of her parent with shakes of her head and 'Nay, nay; I will not marry him.' At length, finding her will obdurate, the king gave way to anger, and, finally taking refuge in the opinion that she had gone from her mind, lapsed into grief, wringing his hands and crying, 'Alas! alas! that thou, my only child, shouldst be in this plight. I see now by thy look and manner that thy mind is affected.' With this he ordered his eunuchs and slaves to take her and place her, carefully guarded, where she could do no injury either to herself or others.

'Since none can rouse her heart to love,' said he, 'she must needs be insane.' And, had the first part of his words been true, thou wouldst know, O King, that the second would be true also. But she was not in this case; and now, having shown how and why she, who but yesterday was sitting free in a golden palace, was to-day imprisoned in a lonely tower, I will relate the causes of that love for an unknown one, which now afflicted her.

Badoura had treasured to her heart a talisman,—a gem of wondrous beauty given to her by Dahnash the Efreet. Now, as you know, the Efreets are a powerful order of spirits, sometimes benign and friendly to mortals, sometimes malign and inimical. Dahnash, and another, of whom I shall presently speak, were of evil origin, but possessed enough of good in their nature to make them long for an immortal soul, and this they sought to obtain by labours of love for mankind. [104] The talisman given to *Badoura* had the peculiar virtue of uniting lovers destined for each other. She had, by this virtue, dreamed of one far away; and all her heart longed for him unutterably, while she still knew that a golden hour of the future would bring him to her side.

Know, O King, that the potency in a talisman is linked with its origin in the world of Efreets. Now in the far country of Khaledan, ruled by King Shazaman, dwelt Meymooneh, a female Efreet of great wisdom. It was she who had endowed this talisman with its virtues and sent it by Dahnash, an Efreet of lower degree, to the *Lady Badoura*. After this she had, by magic spells, led Prince Camaralzaman, the king's only son, to defy his father's command to marry; and, by her subtle arts, his heart and mind were so entranced by dreams of one as lovely as she was far away, that his ever-growing resistance to his father's will was at last met by the sternest anger. So it happened that just as *Badoura* was imprisoned in the tower,—and for the same reason,—so was Camaralzaman cast into the dungeon beneath his father's palace. There in that self-same spot, in the depth of a well in a recess of the dungeon, dwelt Meymooneh the Efreet.

Towards midnight, when the Efreet goes forth, Meymooneh rose like a bubble from the bottom of the well and found the prince, beautiful in sleep, lying on a rough couch against the wall of his prison. Lost in wonder at his perfect loveliness, she gazed down upon him. For a while she stood thrilled with the thrill of the Efreet's love for a mortal, her outspread wings quivering above him; then at the call of her lifelong purpose she slowly folded her wings and drew back with a sigh. 'By Allah!' she murmured, 'I know now that He is good, or He could not have created a mortal so perfectly beautiful. I will fulfil my task and win my soul.' So saying she bent down and pressed a kiss between his eyes. He turned, dreaming that a rose-petal had fallen on his brow, but did not wake.

With glad heart and heel Meymooneh spurned the earth and soared aloft through the [105] dungeon's roof, crying 'Dahnash! Dahnash!' Her summons was answered by a peal of thunder and a whirr of wings, as Dahnash appeared through a murky cloud. Torn from his demon abode he must needs come, for Meymooneh had power over him. By muttered spells she held him in mid-air, his eyes blazing, his tail lashing, and his wings vibrating feather against feather.

'Dahnash! sayest thou that she to whom I sent thee with the talisman is more perfect than any among mortals?'

'O Meymooneh!' replied he, fearing her glance, 'torture me as thou wilt if I have not told thee truly that there is none her equal: the *Lady Badoura* is fair above all beauty among mortals.'

'Thou liest! He for whose sake I wrought the talisman is fairer.'

Word gave word in heated dissension, and Dahnash only escaped Meymooneh's wrath by pleading for a fair comparison of the two seen side by side.

'Go, then!' cried Meymooneh, buffeting him with her wing. 'Off with you to China and bring hither your bird of beauty. We will compare them side by side, as thou sayest; and then we will

further prove the matter by waking first one and then the other to see which accords the other the more fervent protestations of love. Go! Bring her to my abode!'

On this Dahnash sped with incredible swiftness to China, while Meymooneh repaired to the dungeon where the prince was still in slumber.

In a brief space Dahnash reappeared at her side bearing the *Lady Badoura* sleeping in his arms. He laid his lovely burden on the couch beside Camaralzaman, and the two Efreets, dumbfounded by the incomparable beauty of the pair, gazed upon them in speechless wonder.

'It is well we agreed that they themselves should decide,' said Meymooneh at length, 'for [106] where both are perfect the decision is beyond our power.'

Then, transforming herself into a flea, she sprang forthwith upon the neck of the prince and bit him. Camaralzaman awoke, and, raising himself on one elbow, beheld the face and form of *Badoura* by his side. Giving himself up to a sudden ecstasy of love, and crying that all his life had been a dream of which this was the waking fulfilment, he strove to arouse her; but in vain: she was bound by the spell of the Efreets, who, having rendered themselves invisible, were watching intently. At last, his words of love falling exhausted on her unconscious spirit, he placed his arm beneath her raven tresses, and, raising her head, kissed her on the brow with the purest love of youth. Then, by a sudden inspiration, on seeing a ring upon her finger, he exchanged it for his own; and, having done this, sank to sleep in obedience to the Efreets' spell.

Meymooneh, now anxious to show the other aspect of the case, again assumed the form of a flea, and, springing upon *Badoura*, soon found a way to bite her hard in a soft place. *Badoura* sprang up wide awake and immediately beheld Camaralzaman sleeping by her side.

'Oh me!' she cried, 'what shame has come upon me? Yet, by Allah! he is so beautiful that I love him to distraction.' Then, after crying out the utmost words of love to his unheeding spirit, she fell to kissing his hands, whereupon she found to her amazement that her ring was upon his finger and a strange one upon her own. 'I know not,' cried she at last, 'but it seemeth we are married.' And with that she sighed with content, and, nestling to his side, fell under the Efreets' spell of sleep.

At a loss, even now, to decide which was the more beautiful, the Efreets agreed to waive their difference, and Dahnash, at the bidding of Meymooneh, raised *Badoura* in his arms and sped through space to China.

When waking came with morning light the case with *Badoura* was like that with Camaralzaman, save that the former, having quitted her couch, forgot it, whereas the latter was [107] clearly certain he had not quitted his. Each discovered the other's ring bestowed in exchange. Each thrilled at the meaning of this pledge, which proved their meeting to have been no baseless dream. Each swore by Allah that a fiendish trick had been played at dead of night,—not in the wedding of them in their sleep, but in the snatching of them asunder before waking. *Badoura* wailed for her husband; Camaralzaman rose in wrath and demanded his stolen wife. There was trouble in China and in Khaledan that day, and in each kingdom a sorrowful king wept for the madness of his first-born.

For three long years the pair nursed their love in separation and confinement. Camaralzaman was sent in splendid exile to a palace by the sea, but the wide expanse of waters only afforded him the greater space for the longing which consumed him. He could not know that, far across the ocean, the one he longed for was sitting, chained by the neck with a golden chain, there at the window of her palace tower—chained and guarded lest in her supposed madness she should hurl her body in the wake of her soul which rushed to meet him from afar. He could not know that her father, the king, had invited the astrologers and wise men to cure his daughter of her malady, the reward of success being her hand and half his kingdom, the punishment of failure the forfeiture of life; nay, he might even have rejoiced to know that already forty heads, relieved of wisdom, decked the walls of Gaiour's palace. Yet, O King of the Age, through the virtues of the talisman he was led thither to see and know.

One day *Badoura's* old nurse arose from sleep bewildered, and, summoning her son Marzavan, she dispatched him on the track of the footprints of a dream. One in the wide world afar seemed to have come and gone, leaving nothing but a trail of the perfume of Paradise—a trail which Marzavan must follow. He set forth, and over land and sea he travelled on his quest. Now upon some fragrant gale he fancied he heard the voice of the one he sought; now in the sunset glow of the western hills he caught the echo of his horse's hoofs. Many he met who had heard of a prince [108] afar who was mad for the love of one unknown, but none could pilot him to that prince's dwelling-place. At last it was the wing of chance—the certainty of talismans—that brought him to the feet of Camaralzaman. Through perilous adventure, ending in shipwreck, he found him and told him all. How they contrived their sudden flight and passage across land and sea I leave to your own thoughts, O King of the Age, for thou knowest in thy wisdom that, where none can find a way, Love will find a way.

So it transpired one day that the forty heads relieved of wisdom looked down approvingly upon a youthful astrologer beating with his staff upon the palace gates.

'By Allah!' cried the janitor on opening to him. 'Thou art in a mighty hurry to quit this life so soon.'

'Nay, I come to heal the *Lady Badoura* of her malady. Let me in, and that quickly!'

He had his will. Then, step by step, each step an age, he followed up and up to the lonely tower. His hair seemed turning grey before he was admitted; but no sooner had he crossed the threshold than *Badoura*, with a cry of joy, rose and broke her golden chain, and sped to his arms, where she lay in bliss, pouring out her soul in sobs and kisses.

The cure was immediate. The king came in haste and saw in a moment that she was healed beyond the wildest hope of the forty bleached heads.

'Allah be praised!' he cried on seeing her face aglow and her eyes a-dancing with delight. 'There is indeed no god but Allah! For I perceive that He hath restored my daughter's reason.'

'Nay, my father,' returned she, 'Allah hath restored thy daughter's husband: her reason was never lacking.' And when, in proof of her words, she had shown the astonished king her own ring upon the finger of Camaralzaman, and his upon hers, she clung to her husband in an ecstasy of joy, returning his ardent kisses again and again and again.

When the whole story of Camaralzaman's perils and adventures by land and sea was told, the [109] king marvelled greatly at the power of love that had drawn two sundered hearts together in so wonderful a fashion.

'Of a surety,' he said, 'the souls of these two have stood together in the Magic Isle of Love, where the woven moonbeams trap the hearts of lovers in one net. And, by Allah! though those silvery threads may stretch to the brink of the earth and the opposite sides of heaven, they must, at Allah's will, tighten again, drawing heart close to heart. Great is the will of Allah!'

* * * * *

The *Lady Badoura*, with her husband, Prince Camaralzaman, dwelt in the land of China in a state of the utmost delight and happiness for many, many days, beloved of the king and all the people. And *Badoura* treasured the talisman that had brought such great joy: she wore it always, —sewn in her robe against the beating of her heart.

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[110]

THE SLEEPER AWAKENED

A TALE FROM THE THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS

ABU HASAN THE WAG!

O my Lord the King, strange as was the story of Sindbad the Sailor, that of Abu Hasan the Wag is even stranger—indeed, there is no true story so strange in all the world. Abu Hasan—a mere merchant—awoke one morning to find himself caliph of Baghdad; and, as thou bidst me recall a tale of past telling, I will relate exactly how it happened.

Know, then, O King, that Abu Hasan the Wag, living in the reign of Harun-er-Rashid, inherited a large fortune from his father. As his wealth was no longer his father's but his own, he took thought as to how he might save at least some of it. Accordingly, without telling any one, he divided it into two equal parts, setting one part aside in a safe place and keeping the other at his disposal to lavish among his boon companions. 'In this way,' said he, 'I shall at once be risking only half my fortune and learning the way of the world; for I doubt not that when I have spent the one-half on my friends they will in their turn treat me in like fashion.' By which you will perceive, O King, that Abu Hasan, whose exact age I have not stated, was at least young.

A great man then was Abu Hasan. He had gold, and he summoned his boon companions to every delight his heart could devise. Long and loud was the revelry by night. Equally long were the bills by day. But Abu Hasan knew his friends: they were good fellows all, and he felt quite sure that when the half of his fortune was spent and they thought him penniless, they would turn [111] to him and say, 'Thou didst treat us right royally while thou wast rich: now that thou art poor, come and partake, in your turn, of our *largesse*.' By which you will perceive, O King, that he was not growing any older.

A whole year passed in riotous living and extravagant generosity. Then, finding the money exhausted, he called his boon companions and laid his case before them, expecting what he did not receive. Every one of them turned his back and left him with the utmost unconcern. Some called him a fool; others could not imagine what he had done with all his money: all took their leave and went their ways.

A sad man then was Abu Hasan and, like all sad men, he sought his mother.

'O my son,' said she, stroking his hair, 'was it not always so? Thou wast rich: they were thy friends. Thou art poor: where is their friendship? My son, thou hast sold it and paid for it thyself.

Alas! learn from this never to put thy trust in the friends of thy purse.' And, with his head upon her lap, she wept over him bitterly.

A changed man then was Abu Hasan. He arose and went forth, no longer young, and withdrew from its safe keeping the remaining half of his fortune. With a part of this—being still a man of wealth—he purchased a mansion and filled it with all manner of delights till it was fit to charm the heart of the caliph himself; and there he dwelt in luxury, as befitted a man of his station. But, having purchased a fragment of wisdom at the price of half his original fortune, he resolved to make use of it. He would have done with friends and have to do only with strangers, and these, moreover, should remain strangers, for his associationship with any one of them should be for one night only;—at dawn 'Farewell! Henceforth I know you not; for I have been sorely bit by friends; by strangers never.'

In the evenings, when the purple twilight fell upon Baghdad, Abu Hasan would take up a position at the end of the great bridge, and there, sooner or later, he would accost a stranger, pressing upon him a warm invitation to spend the night under his roof, and promising him the [112] best of entertainment. Indeed, being of a gay and merry disposition, he sought even to choose one of a melancholy cast, so that he might exercise his wit upon him and cause his face to shine with mirth. In the morning he would send his guest away with his blessing, having explained to him the nature of his oath and exacted his promise to regard him henceforth as a perfect stranger. 'And so, farewell! May God conduct you in safe and pleasant ways!'

For a long time he behaved in this manner, providing the best of entertainment and adhering closely to his oath. At length there came an evening when he was waiting as usual on the bridge, and it chanced that the caliph of Baghdad himself came by, disguised as a merchant—a favourite amusement of his when he wished to traverse the ways of the city and see how his people fared. Abu Hasan looked at him as he passed, and taking him, by his dress and the stout slave following him, for a merchant from Moussul, and therefore a stranger in the city, he accosted him.

'Sir,' he said, saluting gracefully, 'permit me to compliment you on your happy arrival in Baghdad. Not, indeed, to show you that this is a hospitable city, but rather that I may have the honour of your company at my house, I beg that you will accept my invitation to come and sup with me and rest yourself after the fatigue of your journey.'

The caliph, always in the mood for an adventure, accepted gladly, and together they repaired to Hasan's abode, the slave following after. When they arrived they found supper laid for two, and in the most sumptuous style. Hasan, treating his guest with every courtesy, seated him in the place of honour.

The apartment was most luxurious. On one side trickled streams of water through silver channels half hidden among rare ferns. On another side golden fountains played in cool grottoes, and, over all, a soft light falling from a wonderful lamp overhead wrapped the richness of the place in a dreamy glamour.

Towards the end of the repast a beautiful slave-girl floated in with her lute and sang a song of [113] love, inspired by the soft languor of the night. And the caliph wondered concerning his host: what manner of man was he to entertain so royally?

When supper was over, and everything cleared away, Hasan arose, and, having lighted a number of candles to throw a brighter light on the scene, spread a rich wine-cloth and brought out his rarest wines. He did these things himself, because it was always his whim after supper to play the servant to his guest as if he were a royal personage.

'My master,' he said, filling a golden goblet with wine and raising it to the caliph, 'I make you free of all ceremony. I am thy faithful servitor, and may I never have to grieve thy loss.' With this he drank the wine and then filled another goblet for his guest. 'I warrant you will find it good,' he said, handing it to him on bended knee.

'I am satisfied of that,' replied the caliph; 'I can see you have nothing but the best of everything.' And he drank to Abu Hasan.

Far into the night they sat and talked of many things. The caliph was pleased at his host's waggish whim of playing the rôle of servant to a royal master, and Hasan, for his part, was delighted at his guest's refined manners and his great knowledge on many subjects. 'I am, indeed, a proud man to be honoured by the company of so accomplished and polite a personage,' he said, and, even if he had known that he was entertaining the caliph of Baghdad, he could not have treated his guest in better fashion.

At length, when they had pledged each other in many glasses of wine, and the hours were growing small, the caliph remarked, 'Mine host, thou hast seen for thyself how greatly I have enjoyed this pleasant intercourse; and, as I would not seem ungrateful, pray tell me in what way I may serve thee. I am but a merchant of Moussul, but if there be any request dear to thy heart, I beg thee to mention it, for, though a stranger in this city, I have some friends who sit in high places.'

'Nay, my master,' replied Abu Hasan; 'my entertainment has been more than rewarded by the [114] gracious presence of a charming guest. Any other recompense would spoil my memory of this night and thee.'

'As you will. But let us suppose now—both of us being greatly tickled by this most fragrant

wine—if I had the power to grant the dearest wish of thy heart, what would that wish be?'

Abu Hasan laughed and took up the quaint conceit. 'The dearest wish of my heart?' said he; 'I will tell it thee in a trice. Yonder, at the cast of a stone, stands a mosque, and the imam of that mosque is a hypocrite of an exalted degree. Indeed, among hypocrites he stands at the head of his profession. He lords it over the whole neighbourhood, and especially over me, for, when he hears music and revelry during the hours that every self-respecting imam should be asleep, he ceases not to persecute me on the matter until I have no stomach for anything that is his. Ah! if I were caliph, even for a single day, then would I punish this wicked man in a fitting fashion. A hundred strokes on the soles of his feet—not less! Then a parade through the city—a triumphal procession headed by that sycophant impaled on a camel, with his face to the tail to signify that he is on his way to Paradise in the wrong direction. And, not to pay too poor a tribute to his skilled hypocrisy, I would give him a cortège: four of his sheiks who aid and abet him in his kill-joy persecutions should follow him at an admiring and respectful distance, each impaled upon a camel, and each bound for Paradise with his face pointing the other way. Then, by Allah! the people would follow this great procession, crying, "Behold, such is the reward of fools and interferers!" This would I do if I were caliph for a single day, but——' And Hasan the Wag broke off, laughing. His guest laughed with him, for he was mightily amused. Suddenly his face became as the face of one who hath a purpose; then, to conceal that purpose, he laughed again, louder than before.

'Mine host,' he cried, as soon as he could contain himself, 'verily thou art a wag!' Then he took a bottle and filled a goblet with sparkling wine. 'May thy wish be granted,' he said, and drained [115] the goblet. 'Pray, friend,' he went on, 'while I fill a cup for thee, wilt thou be so good as to ascertain the condition of my slave beneath thy roof. I doubt not that he is comfortably situated, but he is a faithful servant, and well deserveth the solicitude of his master.'

Abu Hasan admired his guest the more for his thought for his slave. He arose quickly and went to see into the matter himself, for by this time his whole household had retired to rest. While he was gone the caliph drew a lozenge of benj—a powerful opiate—from the inner recesses of his dress and dropped it into the goblet, which he quickly filled with wine. When Hasan returned, saying that the slave had been well cared for, the caliph handed him the wine. 'You have filled for me many times,' he said; 'now I have filled for you. Drink, I pray thee, for my sake.'

Abu Hasan took the goblet, and, eager to fulfil the slightest wish of his guest, drank deep. Then, scarcely had he set down the goblet, when his senses reeled. He threw up his arms and was falling prone when the caliph sprang to his aid and gently laid him down upon the soft cushions. The benj had done its work: Abu Hasan was in a deep sleep.

The caliph now summoned his slave, and directed him to take up the unconscious body of his host and carry it to the palace. So they set out, unobserved at that late hour; and, when they reached their destination, the caliph gave orders that Abu Hasan be undressed, clothed in the royal robes, and put to bed upon the royal couch. This was soon done.

Then the caliph summoned his grand vizier.

'Giafer,' said he, 'you see this man upon my state bed: now mark my words. In the morning, when he awakes, see to it that you treat him in every respect as you would myself. Accost him with the same reverence, and observe and do whatever he bids you, for I have put him in my place. Convince him by thy subtlety, Giafer, that he is indeed the caliph of Baghdad, and that his lightest word must be obeyed. His generosity is such that he may wish to empty the coffers of my [116] treasury on the heads of the poor: even so, carry out his commands. And see to it, Giafer, that all, from the emirs to the lowest slaves, pay him the same honour and obedience as they would myself, always exercising the greatest care lest he discover that he is not what he seems. Moreover, as this is a rare diversion after my own heart, be sure to wake me before the drug releases him; and, as thou knowest, the power of the benj lasts little more than three hours, and, after that, natural sleep, from which he can be awakened. But, Giafer, wake me first, for I would see what I would see.'

The vizier failed not to understand. He quickly conducted the caliph to a couch behind some heavy velvet hangings, whence, by parting the folds, he would be able to see all he desired. Then the vizier went to prepare the whole Court for the part they were to play.

In the morning, as the three hours' thrall of the benj drew to a close, the royal apartment was as it had always been at the hour of sunrise. The officers and the ladies of the Court were there, placed according to their rank. The other attendants—the eunuchs and the slave-girls—took their positions as usual, for the caliph was due to arise and prepare for morning prayer.

A slave-girl struck some joyous chords upon her lute, and Abu Hasan awoke with a start. He sat up and looked about him. The royal couch, the resplendent apartment lit by the morning sun, the courtiers bowing before him—surely this was all a dream! With a sigh at the seeming reality of it all he sank back and went to sleep again.

Presently, however, he awoke a second time to the continued music of the lute. Again he sat up and stared in blank astonishment at the richly apparelled attendants of the Court making obeisance to him. Then a lovely slave-girl ran forward and bowed low. 'O Prince of the Faithful,' she said, 'it is the hour of morning prayer. It is thy daily wish that I remind thee of this.'

Abu Hasan remained speechless. He knew not what to make of it. He looked again at the [117]

sumptuous magnificence of the apartment and rubbed his eyes. 'Am I awake?' he cried. 'Is this real? Nay, nay; it cannot be: I dream.'

'O Prince of the Faithful,' said the slave-girl, 'hast thou indeed dreamed that thou wert other than the Lord of all Creatures? It was an evil dream, my lord! and now that thou art awake, I pray thee remember thy usual custom.'

'Alas!' exclaimed Abu Hasan, beating his breast, 'what affair is this? Am I Abu Hasan dreaming I am the caliph, or am I in truth the caliph who heretofore dreamed he was Abu Hasan?'

Meanwhile the caliph himself, peering between the velvet hangings, revelled in the exquisite perplexity of his guest. And when, after Abu Hasan had given the lie to one and another who sought to convince him, and, being fairly beaten, had to admit that he was indeed the caliph of Baghdad, Rashid himself nearly split his sides with merriment. Finally, when Hasan, believing himself the Lord of all Creatures, commanded all present to withdraw and let him sleep on, the caliph rocked and rolled upon his hidden couch as if in a fit.

As for Abu Hasan, he fell asleep again and dreamed he was naught but Abu Hasan, the merchant. But later he awoke to find it was only a dream. Of a verity he was the caliph of Baghdad, for there by his side stood Mesrur, the High Executioner.

'Commander of the Faithful,' said Mesrur, prostrating himself, 'your Majesty will forgive me for reminding you that it is unusual to rise so late. The time of prayers is over and the business of the day waits. The chief officers of state dwell upon your pleasure in the Council Hall.'

Abu Hasan looked at him keenly. 'Am I awake?' he asked. 'Or do I dream that I am awake?' Then, holding out his little finger to Mesrur, he added, 'Bite that!'

Now Mesrur, who knew that the real caliph's eyes were upon him, was anxious to please him, so he advanced, and, taking Hasan's little finger, bit it hard—so hard that the owner of it cried [118] out with pain. 'Ha!' he cried, 'I do not sleep: I feel, I see, I hear, I speak. Enough!'

'Enough, Monarch of the World!' replied Mesrur. 'Wilt thou deign to rise?'

Then Abu Hasan arose, and was dressed by the officers of the bedchamber. Arrayed in magnificent robes of state he followed Mesrur to the Council Hall, where he ascended the throne amid the acclamations of the Court.

Er-Rashid himself found a niche high in the side of the hall, a point from which he could see all that took place within. It pleased him greatly to notice with what a solemn dignity Abu Hasan occupied the throne. He evidently believed firmly and truly that he was indeed the caliph. How gracious and condescending he was as the principal officers of the Court approached, and, having made obeisance, preferred petitions which were granted or refused wisely and without the least embarrassment.

The business of the day was nearly over when Abu Hasan caught sight of the cadi, whose face he knew very well. 'Stop!' he said to the grand vizier, who was making a long speech 'I have an order of great moment to give to the cadi.'

The cadi immediately arose on hearing his name and prostrated himself before the throne. In his excitement at a sudden thought Abu Hasan had risen to his feet. The vizier stepped forward. 'O Prince of the Faithful!' he said, 'forget not that all men are thy humble slaves, and that it is not fitting for the Lord of all Creatures to rise to any.'

But Hasan waved him aside. 'Peace!' he said sternly. 'I have a command of the greatest importance for the cadi, and I cannot deliver it sitting.' Then, turning to the cadi, he continued, 'Proceed immediately to the house of Abu Hasan and give into the hand of his mother a thousand pieces of gold with my blessing. Then repair to the mosque near by and take the imam and his four chief sheiks and bestow upon them a hundred strokes each. After that impale them each [119] upon a camel, with their faces towards the tails of the beasts, and drive them through all the ways of the city, with a crier in advance proclaiming, "Behold the reward of those who meddle in other people's affairs!" When this is done, see to it that they are expelled from their mosque for ever.'

Having said this Abu Hasan sat down upon the throne with a gasp. He had achieved the dearest wish of his heart. Then he declared the Court closed, and, one by one, all present passed before him and made the same obeisance as when they entered.

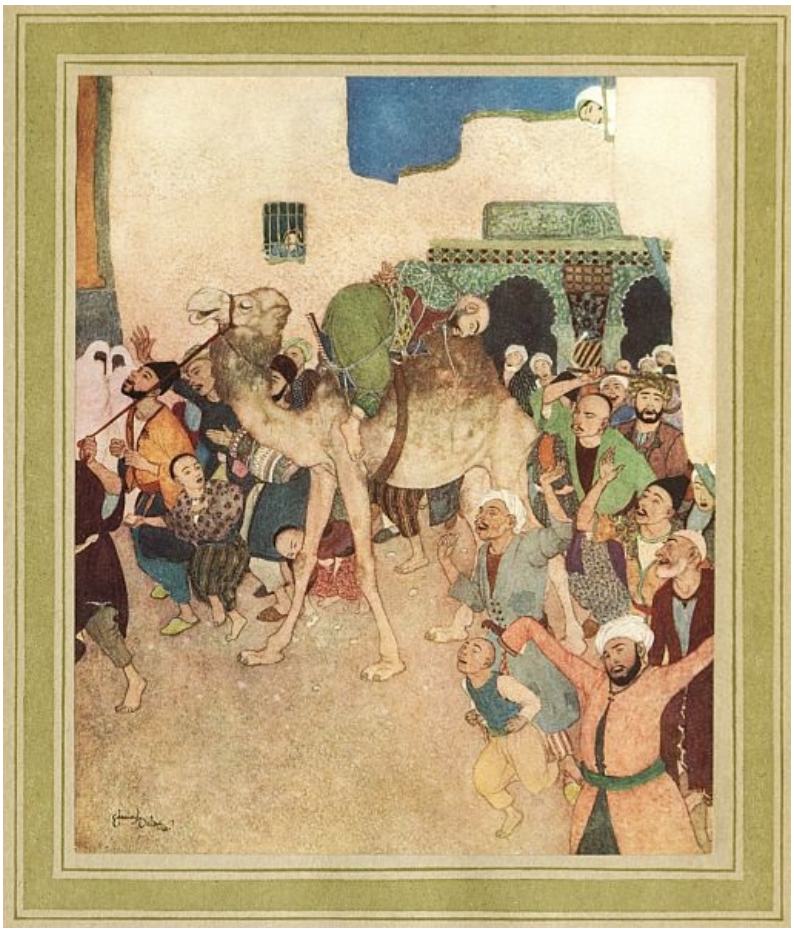
Abu Hasan descended the throne and was conducted into a great hall of stately magnificence, where a sumptuous feast was spread. The plates and dishes were of solid gold, and from the rare viands upon them were spread abroad the odours of spices and ambergris. Ten of the most beautiful ladies of the Court stood about the seat set for him with fans to fan him while he dined.

Now Abu Hasan the Wag had a merry wit. Contending that one fan was quite enough, he bade the remaining nine ladies sit at the table with him and eat; and when for very shyness they did not eat, he helped them to the choicest morsels until they could not refrain. Even the lady with the fan he fed with tit-bits from his own dish. The way he engaged them with his sparkling wit was a delight to the caliph, who was still watching the progress of his joke from a concealed place. 'Verily,' said he, 'thou art a wag, Abu Hasan.'

When Hasan was fully refreshed with food there was still another delight before him. The chief

officer led him into another hall as elegant as the former, and there, when his ladies-in-waiting had bathed his hands in a golden bowl with great ceremony, Abu Hasan seated himself on luxurious cushions and partook of the choicest sweetmeats and fruits, while the Court musicians played a serenade and the Court ladies stood around him fanning him, and responding to his sprightly sallies. Never had he experienced such pleasure; but even greater awaited him.

When dessert was finished he was conducted into yet another hall, where, in the midst of [120] everything the heart of luxury could desire, were set silver flagons filled with sparkling wine, and near them were placed seven golden goblets.



BEHOLD THE REWARD OF THOSE WHO MEDDLE IN OTHER PEOPLE'S AFFAIRS

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Here also, reposing on soft cushions, were six beautiful damsels, each one of whom could vie with the fairest flower or sit in the place of the moon. Easily enticed to a luxurious divan prepared for him, Abu Hasan seated himself, and, clapping his hands, bade the musicians cease. There was silence. Then, turning to the damsel nearest him, Hasan asked her name.

'Cluster of Pearls,' replied she.

'Then, Cluster of Pearls, fill a goblet with wine and I will drink your health, and may you always shine as now.'

The girl, vastly pleased, handed him the wine, and he drank. And, as the music played, and they whirled about him in the dance, he called one after another at intervals, asked her name, and received wine at her hands.

An hour of delight sped by in this fashion, until at last he came to the sixth and last. 'What is your name?' asked he. 'Coralie,' said she. 'Then, Coralie, give me wine as red as your lips, and with a sparkle like that in your eyes.'

Now the caliph had ordered that a lozenge of benj should be placed in one of the goblets, and this reserved till the last. Accordingly, this was the goblet that Coralie filled; and she handed it to Abu Hasan with sweet words, bidding him forget his exalted degree and drink to the eyes and lips of his humblest slave-girl.

Abu Hasan drank, and, in truth, he forgot everything—even the eyes and lips of the slave-girl—for his head fell forward on his breast and the goblet rolled from his hand. The benj had done its work: he was in a profound slumber.

The caliph, who had enjoyed the whole scene immensely, quickly came out of his hiding-place and ordered Abu Hasan to be dressed again in his own clothes and carried back to his own house and put to bed.

Next morning—— [121]

O King, next morning, when Abu Hasan awoke, he sat up and looked about him in the utmost astonishment. What prank was this that he should dream he was awake and in his own home? Faugh! He clapped his hands and called loudly, 'Coralie! Cluster of Pearls! Morning Star! Heart's Delight! Where are you all?'

He called so loudly that his mother came running to him.

'What ails thee, my son?' cried she.

Abu Hasan sat up and looked at her haughtily. 'My good woman,' he said, 'I advise thee to moderate thy tone somewhat if thou wish to have a head left upon thy body. Thy son, indeed! Knowest thou not that I am the Commander of the Faithful. Bow down, woman, or it will go hardly with thee.'

His mother knew not what to say, but it was clear he had lost his reason. Thinking to divert his mind, she told him about the thousand pieces of gold and the punishment of the imam.

'Ha! that is so,' cried he. 'It was by my order these things were done. I tell you I am the caliph of Baghdad, and I will soon teach you how to behave towards the Prince of the Faithful.'

With this he arose in wrath, and, seizing a cane, thrashed his mother severely—whack! whack! whack! until her screams brought the neighbours running in. And as soon as they learnt how matters were they said among themselves, 'He is mad!' So they fell upon him and bound him, and took him off to the mad-house.

A mad man then was Abu Hasan. Every day he received fifty strokes to remind him that he was not the Lord of all Creatures, until at last he was fain to admit that since these things must be done by order of the caliph, it was not within reason that the caliph should punish the Prince of the Faithful, or that the Lord of all Creatures should fall upon himself in so grievous a fashion. At last, one day he confessed his error to his mother, and it gave her as much joy as if she had brought him into the world for the second time. 'I have had an evil dream,' he said, 'a dream so real that verily it must have been the work of wizardry. Ha! I see it now—that accurséd merchant [122] that supped with me. It was he and none other. But the thousand pieces of gold! The imam! Nay, it was no dream, but the most devilish enchantment.'

But as he now confessed that he was not the caliph, his mother easily procured his release and took him home. Under her tender care he soon regained his strength, and at length began to resume his former habits. Again he repaired in the evenings to the end of the bridge and waylaid some stranger whom he invited to sup with him. Some weeks had elapsed when one evening, while he was waiting in his usual place, he saw the merchant from Moussul approaching, attended by his slave. 'By Allah!' said he in great agitation, 'here comes that vile magician!'

The caliph walked straight up to him and cried, 'Ho, brother! Is it thou? I am delighted! Permit me to embrace thee.'

'Not so fast,' returned Abu Hasan coldly. 'I care not for thee nor thy embraces. Be off about thy business, accurséd of God!'

'What hast thou then suffered at my hands?' asked the caliph. 'Is it that I forgot your oath through pleasure at seeing you once more? I am deeply sorry.'

'Nay, nay; it is not that, O master of fiends! Thou didst enchant me and hand me over to fiends, and now thou comest to make sport of my sufferings. Begone! I like thee not.'

'Brother!' replied the caliph with extreme courtesy, 'thou art surely in error. Yet perchance it was my fault, for now I do remember that when I left you that night I neglected to close the door, and methinks the evil one entered to thee after I had gone.' And, by cunning arguments and the most courteous protestations of affection, the caliph succeeded in convincing Hasan that he had no hand in such devilries, and in the end Hasan realised that he had done the stranger so great an injustice that he set aside his oath for once and invited him again to his house.

And as it fell out before, so it befell again. A second time the caliph employed the benj, and a second time Hasan awoke in the morning to find himself upon the royal couch surrounded by the [123] attendants of the Court. His first call was for his mother, but a slave-girl struck a lute near by and answered, 'O Prince of the Faithful! we are here to do thy bidding.'

Abu Hasan looked about him completely dazed. If he was one day Abu Hasan and another day the caliph, who was he when he was at home? The problem was insoluble. He tried to solve it by commanding the chief memluk to bite his ear to see if he was really awake. Then, as the memluk's teeth met through the flesh of the lobe, Abu Hasan shrieked aloud, and the caliph, hidden in a recess near by, fell to his knees with suppressed laughter.

'Verily, I am awake,' cried Abu Hasan, rising in fury, 'but this is the work of the evil one. O Abandoned of God! Back to your infernal abodes! I will have none of you.' And he hurled at them the most holy passages of the Koran ordained for the casting out of devils. At this the caliph, unable to endure it further, came forth, laughing as he had never laughed before. He cried, holding his sides, 'Stop! for Allah's sake, stop! or it will be the death of me!'

Then Abu Hasan stood aghast. He recognised the merchant of Moussul, and also, for the first time, he recognised Harun-er-Rashid, the caliph of Baghdad, the mighty descendant of the House of Abbas. He saw it all now, and humbly made obeisance, praying that the Lord of all Creatures

might live for ever.

'Rise, Abu Hasan the Wag!' said the caliph, 'and the peace of Allah be with thee.'

Abu Hasan the Wag! What a history was his! He rose in favour with the caliph, who ceased not to shower gifts upon him. And a time came when the caliph and the Queen Zobeide conspired together to marry him to one of the loveliest women of the Court. These two thereafter lived in the palace, under the caliph's smile, in perfect happiness, tasting every delight until, in the end, when the last cup of joy was quaffed, the Great Gleaner, who gleans alike in palaces and in the humblest dwellings, came to gather them home.

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[124]

JVSEF AND ASENATH

A LOVE STORY OF EGYPT

THE loves of *Jusef* and *Asenath* which ran not smooth! Deep is the poet's singing thereon, and sweet is the song that is sung.

In the days of old, even on a day when *Jusef*, having interpreted the dream of Egypt's king, set forth through the whole land to gather the plenteous harvest against the seven years of famine to come, a beautiful maiden named *Asenath* sat in the tower of her father's palace surrounded by seven damsels whose beauty was rare, though it paled before that of *Asenath* herself. She had chosen these damsels from the multitudes of Syria and Egypt and Arabia—a choice beset with difficulty, for each one of them was neither older nor younger than *Asenath*, having been born in the selfsame midnight hour, though in places far distant beneath the moon.

'Think not,' she was saying to them, 'that my father Putiphra, priest of Heliopolis and satrap of Pharaoh though he be, can say to me, "This man shalt thou love," or, "That man shall take thee to wife." Nay, the heart of *Asenath* is her own, and it goes not out to any man, be he the greatest in the land or so beautiful that the stars bow down before him. True, my father is a good man and just, yet would not I obey him in such a matter, for, in the first place, my dead mother's words are locked in my bosom. "My daughter," she said, "although thy father is of Egypt, thou art not, as I am not. I, a Hebrew of Syria, descended from Zedekiah, in the region beyond the Euphrates, did spoil the Egyptians of thee, by thy very birth from me. See to it, therefore, that thou take no prince of the land of Pharaoh to thy bosom, but rather one of my own Hebrew blood, which has flowed through Syria to the east, and, having at length sat on the throne of Egypt, will rise from [125] the ends of the earth to vanquish Syria in the west." Do ye comprehend this?'

'O *Asenath*, we bow before thee. Thy beauty would burn the heart of the mightiest in the land.'

'Nay, I shall ever shun such fires. In that respect my mother's words take no hold upon me. For that was in the first place; in the second place, my mother's words counselling me to shun the Egyptian and wed one of her own blood mean naught to me, since I would of my own accord shun all men, both Hebrew and Egyptian.'

The seven damsels looked at one another in silence. At last one, a dark-eyed Syrian, leaned forward and spoke:

'O *Asenath*, hear me! Hast thou never felt a strange voice in thy heart calling for eyes like thine, and lips like wine, and strong arms to gather thee close and crush thee like a flower?'

'Never have I. Hast thou, Ashtar?'

'Never. Yet I have heard it sung in songs, when I doubt not it is the sweet music only that holds one in a close embrace till the heart beats wildly and——'

'Stay thy tongue, Ashtar,' broke in *Asenath* with scorn. 'Thy words strike upon the back of my head, and fall at my heels. I see the light of madness in thine eyes.'

And Ashtar, withered by her glance, hid her face in her hands and drowned that light of madness in a storm of tears.

'Tush, girl!' said *Asenath*, 'surely thou hast gone from thy mind to speak such words.' The others sat mute and still, fearing to sympathise with Ashtar lest they should arouse their mistress's anger still further. And yet each maiden leaned her body and turned her eyes a little—a very little—towards the culprit, for she had spoken bold words which they had never dared to frame.

'Look you,' cried *Asenath*, raising herself and speaking high, 'this day I learn that the first-born of Pharaoh hath desired me as wife. But I will none of him. I told his messenger that the king of Egypt would desire a greater personage than I as his son's wife, and therefore he had best look to the king of Moab, whose daughter is not only beautiful, but a queen. Faugh! I will none of them. I [126] am a maiden, and a maiden I will remain.'

Now, although *Asenath* treasured her mother's memory, and for Hebrew loveliness was as

beautiful as Rachel; although she liked not the Egyptians and their rule, yet, perforce, she knew no other religion than theirs. Her father had brought her up in the worship and fear of the Egyptian gods. Every day she repaired to the highest story of the tower, where, in the central chamber of twelve—a chamber splendidly adorned with rare stones of many colours and workmanship—those gods, who were many, were wrought in silver and gold, even upon the purple ceiling. There, day by day, she worshipped and feared and paid them sacrifice. This done, she would retire into a luxurious chamber which had a great window looking towards the east, and there she would sit and muse and ponder, gazing out beyond the palace courtyard and away to the lonely waters of the Nile, now plying her needle on delicate embroideries which she loved, and now playing sweet music on her lute and singing to the silver moon. Always her damsels were about her; and always the feet of men, for whom she had neither love nor fear, trod far below in the ways of the city, no foot among those thousands ever destined to tread the marble stairway leading to her palace tower.

Rich and rare were the priceless things the twelve chambers contained. Apart from treasure-rooms stocked with precious stones and rare ornaments and linen and silk of striking splendour there were broad balconies and pillared alcoves where the soft breezes rustled in the branches of great palms and the spray of clear fountains sparkled in the sunlight ere it fell to rest on a bed of moss or strayed further to caress the foliage of rare ferns nodding dreamily in deep grot or cool recess. No flower that ever delighted the eyes of king or peasant was absent from *Asenath's* abode, and such a fragrance hung upon the air that one had but to close one's eyes and yield to the sweet influences of Paradise.

On the day when *Asenath* was speaking to her maidens, as has been told already, she was [127] reclining on a golden couch decked with purple, woven with threads of gold, while all about it and upon were set jewels that sparkled like stars in the midnight sky. She was gazing out at the great window towards the east, when suddenly she was startled by a great commotion in the courtyard below. Slaves ran hither and thither at the word of the steward of the palace. All seemed in preparation for some great event.

'It can be naught but this,' said *Asenath*, 'my father hath sent a messenger saying that he is returning from his country estate, having taken tale of the harvest, for the king hath decreed that *Jusef*, the first ruler, shall require a toll of all in this the first year of plenty.'

'*Jusef*, the prime ruler,' said Ashtar, 'he will come here? Then we shall see him. They say he is as beautiful as a god.'

'*They* say, girl? Who say?'

'The songs,' stammered Ashtar, crestfallen, 'the—the songs of love.'

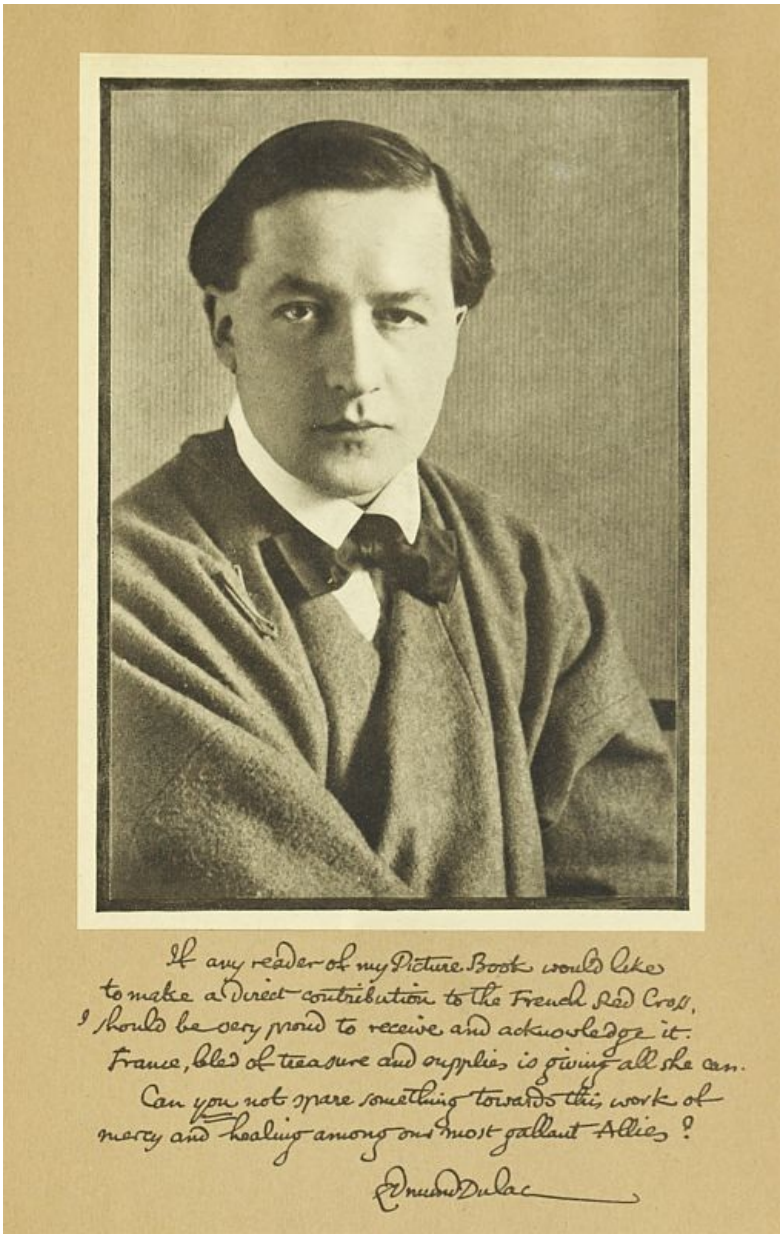
'Silence, wayward one! Thou art bemused by the poets. This *Jusef* is a mere man like other men; was he not the son of a shepherd? Was he not a runaway? Was he not sold as a slave? Was he not cast by his master, and for some good reason, into a dungeon?'

'Yea, O my adored mistress, but was he not liberated by Pharaoh?'

'Yes, because he interpreted Pharaoh's dreams, just as any old Egyptian woman might do. Pouf! Thou art bemused!'

Then Ashtar sat in silence, gazing out at the deep blue sky. Why had this *Jusef's* interpretation of dreams raised him to the king's favour while that of the old Egyptian women had been unheeded? Was it because he was, as the singers sang, as beautiful as a god and possessed the spirit of a god? Ashtar could not tell. Beneath the haughty frown of *Asenath* she sat dumb. Then, with a sigh, she sank upon her cushions, her lips trembling.

'Ashtar is bemused,' whispered the other damsels one to another. 'Could the like happen to [128] us?' And *Asenath*, catching their words, cried, 'Ashtar is a fool! Who but a fool would ever think such thoughts or speak such words?' Then, as a great sound of voices struck upon her ear, she turned again to the window. 'See! See!' she exclaimed, 'a great cavalcade is approaching the gates. There at the head is my father, and—who is that beside him? What are the people crying? —"*Jusef*, the Prince of God!" Ah! How proudly he sits his white charger, and how brave his equipments—how splendid his retinue! say you, Ashtar, that this is the second to Pharaoh?'



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Edmund Dulac

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'Yes, mistress, yes; this is the man *Jusef*, like all other men. They say he is searching for corn, not for the love of woman.'

'Then let him deal with corn,' flashed *Asenath*, rising. 'Leave me, all of you! I would be alone.'

The damsels fled, and *Asenath* turned again to the window. The gates were now opened, and her father and *Jusef*, followed by a great retinue, rode into the courtyard. Ah! What perfect grace of form and feature! *Asenath's* heart almost burst for frantic beating as she looked at him. Then, in spite of herself, she drew nearer the window, and, as she gazed down, *Jusef* chanced to glance up. Their eyes met, and *Asenath*, with a pang at her heart, reeled and fell clutching at the cushions. There she lay sobbing in sudden sorrow. She had spoken bitter words against him, and now the sweet tears of repentance refreshed her anguished soul. Soon she sat up, a picture of misery, but with a glorious light in her eyes.

'Ashtar is no fool,' she murmured, clenching her hands; 'and I do not believe the tales told by the people against him. Oh! Unhappy *Asenath!* What is life to thee now? He comes for toll of corn, and with toll of corn he will depart, and then——'

She swung herself prone upon the cushions and wept again most bitterly.

And *Jusef* entered into the palace of Putiphra, and all fell down and made obeisance before him,—all except *Asenath*, who remained hidden in her tower. When the slave-girls had washed *Jusef's* feet they set food and wine before him, but on a table apart, for it was known in the land [129] that *Jusef* the son of Jakub would not eat with the Egyptians, this being an abomination to him.

'My lord Putiphra,' he said, when he had refreshed himself, 'pray tell me, who is that woman I saw looking from the window of the tower? I desire not her presence here.'

Now Putiphra knew it was his daughter *Asenath* that *Jusef* had seen. He knew, also, that there was no wife nor daughter of any great man of Egypt who at sight of *Jusef's* beauty did not fall in evil case. Nay, further, many were the gifts of gold and silver and precious stones sent him by those who languished and were undone in heart by a single glance at him afar. Wherefore these things were a sore vexation to *Jusef*, who was as pure as he was beautiful. Remembering ever his father's exhortation to avoid the strange woman with a gentle and courteous denial, and to have no other communication with her, he had preserved the sweetness of his soul to God. 'I pray,' he said, seeing his host was slow to answer, 'let the woman go hence, for so thou shalt earn my thanks.'

'My lord,' replied Putiphra, 'the woman thou sawest was none but mine own daughter, a pure virgin, whom no man save myself hath seen unto this day. Indeed, she hath no heart for aught but her present state, my lord. Wert thou to speak with her, thou wouldst regard her from that moment henceforth as thy sister, for in any other respect she hateth every man.'

These words pleased *Jusef* exceedingly.

'Then the case is different,' said he. 'If she be your daughter and a maiden, hating all men save father and brother, let her come to me and she will be to me as a sister, and I will love her henceforth, even as my own sister.'

Then Putiphra went up to the tower and soon returned, leading *Asenath* by the hand. And when she saw *Jusef* her eyes were as the eyes of one that looketh into Paradise.

'Go to thy brother,' said Putiphra, 'and salute him with a kiss, for he is like thee, pure and virgin.'

Asenath advanced to *Jusef*, saying, 'Hail, lord, great and blessed of the Most High!' And *Jusef* [130] replied, 'Hail to thee, maiden! May the Lord God, who giveth all grace and beauty, so continue to bless thee.'

But when *Asenath* timidly advanced still further to fulfil her father's command, and showed a sweet intent to kiss her new-found brother, *Jusef* saw the love-light in her eyes, though she, poor child, knew naught of it but that her heart had left her bosom and flown to his. He rose quickly from his seat, and, raising his right arm, said, 'It is not fitting that a man whose lips extol the living God should kiss a strange woman whose mouth prayeth to blocks of wood and stone, and eateth the bread of strangling, and drinketh the cup of treachery.'

When *Asenath* heard these words her knees trembled. Her heart returned to her own bosom and sank within it. She groaned aloud, and, as she gazed sorrowfully at *Jusef*, her eyes brimmed with tears. Seeing this, *Jusef* felt pity for her, for he was gentle and merciful. Placing his hand upon her head, he spoke: 'God of my fathers, who hast given life and light to all things, do Thou bless this maiden, and count her as one of Thy people chosen from the foundations of the world; and may she come to Thine eternal peace, pure and holy in Thy sight.'

Then the tears withdrew from *Asenath's* eyes as the blessing of *Jusef* shone upon her face. She thanked him joyfully, and, having saluted him, returned to her tower, where she threw herself upon her couch by the window, weak and trembling with joy and grief and fear and remorse.

Alas! how she had spoken of *Jusef!* How she had besmirched his name—called him a runaway, a guilty man who should still be in prison for his sin, a mere interpreter of dreams. Alas! and he had spurned her as a worshipper of idols and then had forgiven and blessed her, the last on earth to deserve it.

For a time she wept with a great and bitter weeping; then she rose with teeth clenched and dry eyes aflame. Rushing to the wall of the chamber she snatched a stone idol from its place and [131] hurled it from the window into the courtyard below. She saw it fall, and heard the crash as it splintered upon the stones. 'His faith was my mothers faith,' she cried, 'and henceforth my mother's faith is mine.'

When *Jusef* had gathered the toll of wheat and was about to depart Putiphra besought him to tarry and abide at his palace the night and continue his journey on the following day. But *Jusef* replied, 'Nay, I have seven days in which I must make a circuit of the whole country, but on the eighth day I will return and take up my abode with you.'

And *Jusef* departed with his retinue through the palace gates; and as he went he looked not up at the window of the palace tower, nor did *Asenath* look down therefrom.

For seven days thereafter the sun rose and set on *Asenath* weeping. She neither ate nor drank, nor could her damsels console her in any way. Sleep fled from her eyes. 'Woe is me,' she would cry, smiting her breast. 'Woe to me that I have spoken evil words concerning him; whither shall I

go to escape from my sorrow? Woe to me, wretched one, who hath defamed with my tongue the most beautiful son of Heaven. Oh that my father could now give me to *Jusef* as a slave-girl or a handmaiden, that I might serve him for ever.'

On the night of the seventh day she arose from her couch, and, passing among her damsels, who were all asleep, stole down the stairway of the tower, through the ways of the palace, and out to the great gateway. Here she found the janitor fast asleep. Without waking him, she ran to the gate and tore down the skin of the screen belonging to it. Then she sought an ash heap in a remote part of the courtyard, and, having filled the skin with ashes, returned with it to the tower. She entered her own chamber and bolted the door; then she spread the skin of ashes on the pavement by the window and fell upon it, weeping violently, and crying in broken words: 'By this do I renounce the gods of Egypt. By this do I change my heart and cleanse my lips, which, as he [132] said, have offered prayers to idols.' And so she repented with groans and tears until the dawn was near, when she looked up towards the east and saw the morning star depending from the side of heaven, like a great lamp burning clear and sheltered from the wind, lighting her soul to the gate of forgiveness. She sat up and raised her hands towards it, when suddenly the sky opened and a wondrous light appeared. When *Asenath* saw it she fell on her face upon the ashes, and lo, a man strode out of heaven and stood above her, calling her by name; but she answered not, so great was her terror. Then he called her again: '*Asenath! Asenath!*' and his voice was like the murmur of the four streams of Paradise.

'O my lord, who art thou?' she answered from the dust.

'I am the prince and commander of the hosts of the Lord. Arise and stand before me, for I would speak with thee.'

When *Asenath* raised her head and looked at the bright visitant she saw before her an angel in the form and features of *Jusef*, clad in a robe of dazzling purple, with a crown of gold encircling his brows, and bearing a royal staff in his hand. Then she was taken with a sudden fear, and fell again upon her face. But the Bright One of God raised her up and comforted her.

'Lift up thy heart, O Virgin *Asenath*,' he said, 'for thy name is written in the Book of Life and shall never be blotted out for ever and for ever. For know that thy repentance hath pleaded with the Most High as a daughter pleads with a loving father, and it is this day decreed that thou shalt be given unto *Jusef* as his bride. Therefore arise and change thy garments. Remove that goat's-hair girdle of sorrow from thy loins, shake the ashes from thine head, and array thyself in fine linen with ornaments fitting for the bride of a king to be. Go now, and on thy return thou wilt find me here, provided thou return alone.'

So *Asenath* went and woke her damsels, and bade them select the finest raiment and the brightest jewels fitting for the bride of the second to Pharaoh. No word did she say of the angel, and they wondered greatly. Ashtar alone, on looking into her mistress's eyes, saw there the light [133] that she almost understood.

'Nay, Ashtar,' said *Asenath*, as the damsel's deft fingers plied their task, 'thou art not bemused. It has come to me, Ashtar; canst thou not see it?'

'Yea, beloved mistress; that can I, right well.' And as their eyes met, Ashtar's filled with tears of joy.

At last *Asenath* stood apparelled and adorned as befitted the bride of the second to Pharaoh. Her braided hair, a plait of which hung over her shoulder, was bound about her brows with a tiara of gold set with sparkling jewels. Gold bracelets were on her arms; a crimson sash encircled her waist; flounces of her skirts shone with a thousand diamonds and rubies; but most wonderful of all was the long, gossamer veil which fell from her shoulders and trailed on the ground: it was like the milky way of heaven, all stars, with diamond suns blazing here and there. Beauty beyond words was *Asenath* as she returned to the angel bearing a white flower of purity in her hand.

He was standing by the window as she entered the chamber alone and barred the door behind her.

'My lord,' she said, humbly kneeling before him, 'if now I have won favour in thine eyes, I pray thee take this flower, for thou knowest the meaning of it. It is spotless white, even as I; with a centre of gold, even as I. I pray thee take it and set it in Paradise that it may never wither.'

The angel smiled and took the flower, which he placed in his girdle. 'It will never wither,' he said. 'It is the flower that endures when all created things have passed away. When thou comest to the tree of life thou shalt find it there. *Perchance thou mayst find it even here.*'

Then *Asenath*, pondering his words in her heart, beseeched him to sit upon the couch whereon man had never sat. And she said, 'I will bring thee a meal. What wouldst thou?'

'A honeycomb,' said he.

'Alas! I have no honeycomb.' And she was sorrowful.

'Go thou into thy cellar,' said the angel, 'and thou wilt find a honeycomb.' [134]

Wondering, she went to the cellar, and found a honeycomb there upon the table. It was as white as snow and had the combined fragrance of all the flowers that bloom on hillside and plain. And she returned to him with the honeycomb, saying, 'My lord, as thou spakest, so it was, and the

fragrance of it is as the breath of thy presence.'

'Blessed art thou,' said the angel, laying his hand tenderly upon her hair; 'thou hast cast away thine idols and hast turned to the living God. Thou hast come to me in penitence, and shalt now eat of this honeycomb which was gathered and made by the bees of God from the red roses of Eden. It is the food of angels, and those who eat it can never die.'

With this he brake a portion from the honeycomb and set it to her lips, saying, 'Eat, and thy youth shall not fail, thy beauty shall not fall away, thy breasts shall not wither, and thou shalt come at last, in eternal youth, before the throne of God.'

Asenath ate the morsel of honeycomb, and immediately her face was radiant with the glory of heaven.

'See,' said the angel, touching the broken honeycomb, 'it is now whole as before.' Then he rose up, and with his finger traced a line upon the honeycomb from east to west, and another from north to south; and the lines stood out as red as the blood shed on the cross erected upon the foundations of the world. And, as *Asenath* looked upon it, there came forth from the comb a multitude of bees with purple wings; and they swarmed around her with incessant life, and, swiftly speeding to and from the gardens of Paradise, deposited in the bosom of her dress a honeycomb as white as snow.

'This,' said the angel, 'shall be a sign to thee of sweetness for ever.' And, as at his command, the bees flew eastward to Eden; then he touched the honeycomb, and it was immediately consumed by flames; but the fragrance of that burning was like the marriage of honey with fire. It rose into the nostrils of *Asenath* and overcame her senses. Relinquishing all hold on earthly [135] life, she threw up her arms and sank back upon the couch, where she lay like a beautiful soul fallen dead at the very gates of Paradise.

On the slanting rays of dawn the angel took his way eastwards. Then up rose the sun of the eighth day since *Jusef's* departure. A cavalcade approached the gates of the palace.

'Ho, within!'

The gates open and there is rushing to and fro. A man, as lordly as the sun, a white flower with a heart of gold in his girdle, rides in, followed by a retinue found only in the wake of kings. It is *Jusef*. Maddened by a dream, he looks up at the window of the palace tower, but the beautiful face that has showed before shows there no more. Love speeds his footsteps. He has right to command. Where—where is she?

Asenath upon her couch wakes from oblivion at a touch. Who is this standing over her? The angel, yea, the angel, for there is her flower still in his girdle. But how?—and why?—it seems not right; his lips pressed close to hers, his arms around her in a wild embrace——

'*Asenath!* my bride!'

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You must remember that everything to do with sick and wounded has to be kept up to a daily standard. It is you who give who provide the drugs, medicines, bandages, ambulances, coal, comfort for those who fight, get wounded, or die to keep you safe. Remember that besides fighting for France, they are fighting for the civilised world, and that you owe your security and civilisation to them as much as to your own men and the men of other Allied Countries.

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Transcriber's Notes:

Punctuation errors repaired. The note on the publishing of this book appeared at the front and back of this book. That repetition was retained. Also, the note from Edmund Dulac is really loacted in the last story as shown.

Page 7, "ROUSELLE" changed to "ROUSSELLE" on the illustration (OF YOUNG ROUSSELLE?)

Page 9, "LAYLA AND MANJUN" changed to "LAYLÁ AND MAJNÚN" in chapter title (LAYLÁ AND MAJNÚN)

Page 22, "MAJNUN" changed to "MAJNÚN" on the illustration (THAT ONE WORD "MAJNÚN")

Page 102, "104" changed to "103" on illustration reference (HIM p. 103)

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