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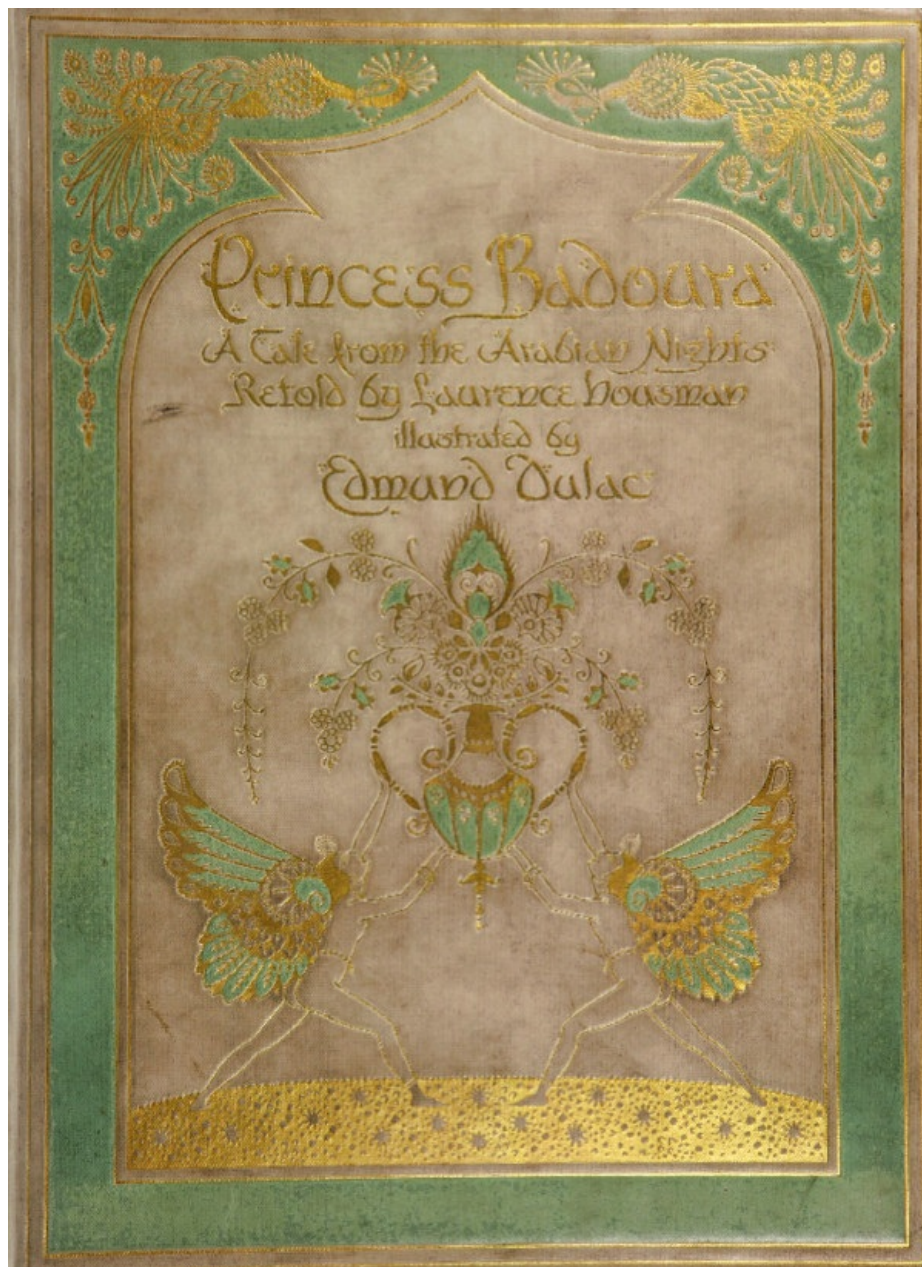
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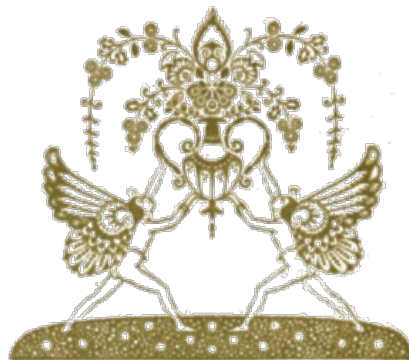
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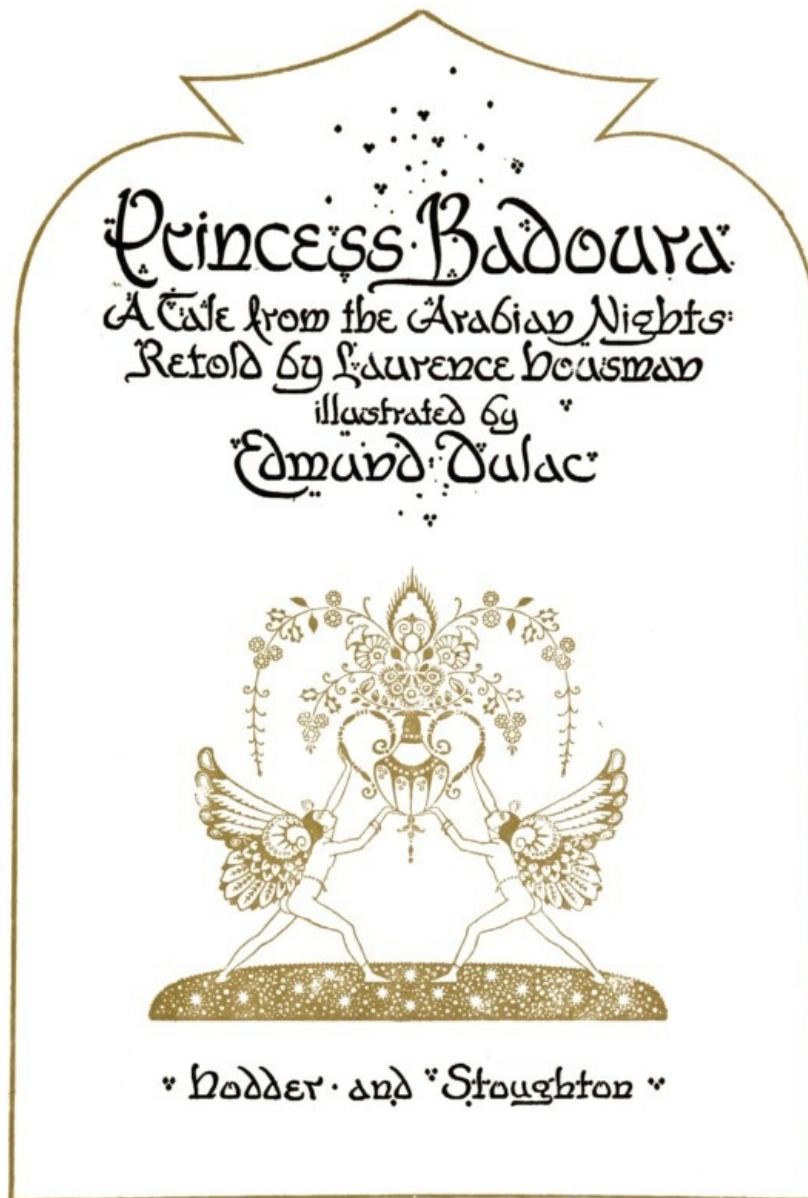
*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK PRINCESS BADOURA: A TALE FROM THE ARABIAN NIGHTS ***



Princess Badoura
A Tale from the Arabian Nights
Retold by Laurence Bousman
illustrated by
Emond Dulac



Princess Badoura



Princess Badoura

A tale from the Arabian Nights

Retold by Laurence Housman

**illustrated by
Edmund Dulac**

Hodder and Stoughton

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The Sultan Shahriar stands out to fame as the greatest monogamist in all history. Having been deceived by his first wife, he caused her to be put to death, and then proceeded to avenge himself upon a thousand others. Faithful to his monogamic instincts, he married a fresh wife every day, and on the morning of the next became a widower. Having thus achieved faith to a thousand dead maidens—all equally beloved in turn—he may, in his heart of hearts, have found that change, so doggedly insisted on, did but mean boredom, and so may readily have welcomed any excuse to relax a performance to which he had bound himself by many religious oaths.

But, if he had a heart, the old Eastern chronicler has neglected to tell us what was in it; and at the point where his sacrificial bridals have become monotonous, the interest of the story shifts from bridegroom to bride, and Scheherazade, daughter of the Grand Vizier, witty, courageous, resourceful, and most prolix of all delightful tale-tellers, adventurously enters the royal menage, and becomes his only surviving wife.

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For Scheherazade, intent on saving the lives of others, brings her bridesmaid with her, a younger sister named Dinarzade; and when the morning light comes to tell her that death is near, Dinarzade—prompted thereto beforehand—stirs in her attendant place at the foot of the couch, and asks for the sake of old times that one last tale may be told.

Shahriar, at the bride's humble request, grants permission, and from that moment is in the toils of the plot which has made his name so secondary in importance to hers. Scheherazade, 'to do a great right, does a little wrong': by her entrancing powers of narrative, always interrupted when the interest of each story is at its height, she breeds in her tyrant lord infirmity of will, and destroys the only principle of conduct wherewith he set out to teach woman her place. For the thousand and one nights which have given their name to the world's most famous collection of stories, he lives blissfully forsworn, postponing the execution of his wife to another day; and at the end, repenting him of his vows, does what we still make our kings do in England when justice has gone astray, and bestows his 'free pardon' upon innocence.

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The story which is here retold, with many of its life-saving prolixities omitted, has the distinction of being, according to some versions, the last of all: it witnesses the accomplishment of the task which Scheherazade set out to perform. With the story of Badoura, the woman of beauty and brain, who, personating her husband, ruled a Kingdom, and without jealousy provided him at the end of his wanderings with a second wife—in this story Scheherazade, her great act of statesmanship concluded, adumbrates what woman set free to use her own resources can do. And in this reflection of her own great adventurous self the series concludes. Through a thousand dim dawns, with the issue still in doubt, she has led the forlorn hope for all the other women whose lives she would save; and when her tyrant relents, and in his promise to spare her life spares theirs as well, she kneels and gratefully kisses his feet.

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The History of Badoura, Princess of China, and of Camaralzaman, The Island Prince

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The story of Aboulhassan, the Prince of Persia, had come to an end and the light of morning was full. Then said Dinarzade, 'Another story, O sister, another story!' Scheherazade made answer, 'If my Lord will suffer me to live for another day, there is yet one more tale that I could tell. The history of Prince Camaralzaman and of his bride Badoura is far more entrancing than that which I have just given; but it is too long to be told now.'

Then she was silent; and Shahriar could not bring himself to order her death till he had heard that story also. So once more he let his oath stay unfulfilled and deferred sentence; and the next night, wakened in the small hours towards dawn, Scheherazade, opening a mouth of loveliness and filling it with wise and sweet words, took up the thread of her tale and began:

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O King, live for ever! About twenty days' sail from the coast of Persia there lies in the open sea an island which is called Khaledan, a country wealthy and prosperous and containing many large and well-inhabited towns. Its ruler in ancient times was a king named Shahzaman. As a reward for his many virtues, he had gathered about him a large and well-proportioned household, four wives, the daughters of kings, and sixty concubines; but, in spite of so generous a provision for that which only Heaven can bestow, he had no son; and as time went on, and he grew old, his bones wasted, and his heart became filled with affliction; and he said to his Vizier, 'Now in a little while I shall die; then will my name perish, and my Kingdom pass to others, for I have not a son to come after me. Tell me, is there anything I can do to avert so great a calamity?'

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His Vizier answered, 'When human means fail, it is then that we must rely on Heaven, for often these evils are sent to remind us of our dependence on Him who alone holds power. Fast, therefore, and pray, and perform ablutions, and when that is done make a great banquet, and call to it the poor and needy; it may be that among them will be found one pure and righteous soul whose blessing will thus descend on thee, for the fulfilment of thy desire.'

The King did as his Vizier advised: he made a great feast, and called to it all whose poverty might give virtue to their petition: and bidding them pray that he might have a son, caused meat to be set before them; so they did eat and were filled.

This holy act had the desired effect; one of the King's four Queens immediately conceived, and in course of time presented him with a son as fair as a full moon on a cloudless night. When the midwives and nurses carried him to his father, the King, seeing his beauty and transported with joy at the event, named him Camaralzaman, that is to say Moon of the Age; and he sent out orders, on pain of death to any who disobeyed, that for seven days the drums were to beat and every house in the city to be decorated in sign of thanksgiving. Never were such rejoicings heard.

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The Prince was reared and educated with all care and magnificence until he attained the age of fifteen. For the polish of his manners and the enlightenment of his brain the wisest and most accomplished men in the Kingdom were chosen; and since from the first he displayed a modest and docile disposition, combined with a fine understanding, he became, as he approached the years of manhood, the most virtuous and eligible heir to a throne that monarch or people could find it in their hearts to desire.

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He was of surpassing comeliness and grace, perfect in form and stature; and his father loved him so tenderly that he could scarcely bear to be away from him either by night or day. This devotion to his son was, indeed, so excessive, that the King himself was perturbed by it, for always accompanying it was a terror lest the Prince might die.

One day he said to his Grand Vizier, 'How came it that my happiness in the possession of such a son gives me anxiety rather than rest? When I was childless I was miserable, and now that the desire of my heart has been satisfied, I am full of dread lest he also should die childless and my hope of posterity fail? Calamities and accidents come when we least expect them, and so it seems to me now that the Prince being vigorous and strong is in greater danger of death than I who am near the grave. For him a thousand perils are waiting, while I have nothing to fear but old age. If, therefore, I may not see my son married in my own lifetime I shall die in a state more miserable than that which I endured before he was born.'

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His Vizier said, 'The Prince is still full young, but nothing forbids that he should marry if, by the will of Allah, we can find one worthy of him.'

'As for that,' said the King, 'Heaven cannot have willed to send into the world a form of beauty and of virtue so pre-eminent without also providing a fitting match for it. Doubt not, if the Prince himself is willing, that some maiden not too far beneath him will be found capable of sustaining the honour.'

So Shahzaman sent for his son, and Camaralzaman came and stood before him, and when he saw the King seated in state upon his throne, though not having his lords round him, the Prince bade reverence take the place of love, and with his head bowed down toward the ground waited in submission for the royal word to be spoken.

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Thus he stood before his father humbly as a stranger; for never before had the King so received him, and he wondered why he had been summoned, and in his heart there was a fear.

The King perceiving his reserve said to him, 'My son, can you now guess for what reason I have sent for you?' But the Prince answered, 'My lord, I would not so presume; for it is not in the power of one so young as I am to fathom the thoughts of the hearts of Kings. Only when I hear the true reason from your Majesty's lips will my brain become enlightened.'

So he spoke, with all the decorum, and deference, and virtue, and prudent modesty which had been instilled in him by the preceptors of his youth; and Shahzaman, his father, loved him for it, and said in his heart, 'Never was King blessed with such a son as I.'

Then he said to the Prince, 'What thou lackest in years of man's estate thou hast already gained in wisdom and understanding; therefore as a man I speak to thee. Know, then, it is my wish that thou shouldst marry, so that before my days are ended I may rejoice in the assurance of my posterity.'

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When Camaralzaman heard these words he no longer hung his head, but stood up straight; and as he made answer to the King his face flushed and his eyes grew bright; and said he, 'O my father, is it into bondage you would deliver me ere I become a man? Lo, here am I, the son of Kings, and all my life till now have I been free, and my soul has been free within me, because I have not gone in the way of women nor inclined my heart toward them; but if I marry, then by their cunning and guile will my soul and my freedom be taken from me. Far rather would I drink the cup of death.'

When King Shahzaman heard that, the light of day darkened before him, for never until now had his son gone against his wish or disobeyed his word. But, because he loved the youth very tenderly, he forgave him and thought not at this time to punish him; for he said to himself, 'At present he is full young, and excess of virtue hath caused his manhood to slumber.' So he forbore, and waited till another year should have passed, and withdrew not from his son the light and favour of his countenance.

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So Camaralzaman continued in undisturbed life to receive the instructions of his preceptors, and every day he increased in beauty and comeliness of form, in modesty of mind, and in grace of manner and in elegance of deportment. Added to which, he became accomplished in verse, and eloquence, and rhetoric and the divine sciences, so that the flower of his form and the honey of his understanding made together a thing of inconceivable loveliness and attraction. Even as a magical willow-branch bearing peach-blossom and fruit at one season, so was he.

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Now when another year was completed, his father having once more consulted with the Grand Vizier, sent for him again, and said, 'This time, O my son, listen to my word, and obey; for now have thy years touched manhood, and unless thou beget children thy virtue and wisdom are wasted. Therefore if thou wilt marry her whom I shall now choose for thee, I will also make thee ruler over all my dominions; so with mine eyes shall I see my kingdom and my posterity established, and rejoice in thee before I die.'

But the Prince had listened so well to the preceptors set over him to guard his virtue, and had pondered so deeply the books which wise men had written in their old age, when delight had fled from them and when all that they had done in the past seemed only to be vanity, that his mind, even though his heart softened to his father's request, remained as aforesaid. Therefore, abasing himself in fear and reverence at the King's feet, he said, 'O my father, not so can I find happiness, or strength, or wisdom wherewith to rule others, seeing that if I marry I cease to be ruler of myself. In all things outward it is Allah's will that I should obey you; but in this which comes from within and concerns myself alone, I can obey the voice of no man, however wise he may be. Yet, by all the seers and poets and soothsayers is the same thing told, that woman is a calamity, and that from her spring all the weaknesses and afflictions of men.' And so saying with sweetness and modulation of tone, and grace of gesture, Camaralzaman began to recite to his father all the words of the poets; and there was not a poet who had written poetry in his old age whose verses did not bear out the contention.

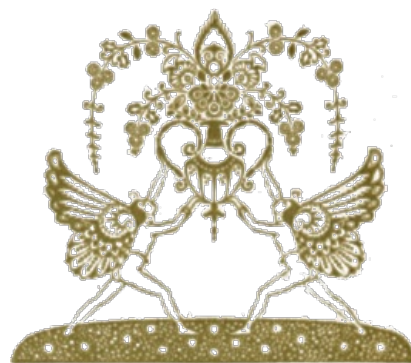
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So when the King had heard the verses of the poets and the words of the ancients arrayed against him, he returned no answer; for he said to himself: 'I doubt not but that before another year shall have run that voice within will have spoken differently to my son than it speaks now, and the words of the sages will have far less weight with him than the glance of some woman's eye.' Once more, therefore, letting his tenderness extinguish his resentment, he forgave the Prince's disobedience and received him back into his favour.

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But to his Grand Vizier Shahzaman said, 'Now twice, O Vizier, have I come to thee for advice, and what profit has it been? When I consulted thee first as to marrying my son thy word was for it; yet no sooner did I mention it to him than his mind rebelled. This time also, it was on thy advice that I sought to bribe him by the offer of power; but when I offered him the Crown, so little did he care that he seemed almost not to have heard me. What better advice, then, wilt thou give me now so that my patience may be rewarded and my heart obtain its desire?'

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Dahnash and Meymooneh.

'At she rose up through clouds there passed one she knew by his tail to be Dahnash.' (p. 27)



The Vizier answered, 'O King, thy son hath presumed on thy forbearance, knowing well thy tenderness, and when thou hast spoken with him it hath been privately and as a father. But when a year hence the time comes to speak with him again on this matter, then speak not to him privately any more, but before all the people, with the emirs and the viziers and the troops standing by. Then he will no longer dare to oppose thee, since to do so before all those witnesses would be an offence treasonable and worthy of death.'

So the King accepted the advice of his Vizier, and when another year had gone by he summoned the Prince to his presence on a day of festival, when all about him were the dignitaries and chamberlains of his court, the viziers of the provinces, and the emirs of neighbouring states who paid tribute to Shahzaman as their Sultan. Thus he sat in all his power and splendour, and Camaralzaman came in and drew near, and stood before him, being then in his eighteenth year, with the early bloom of manhood beginning to show upon his cheek. Allah, who loves to give beauty to virtue, had clothed him in comeliness and crowned his features with joy; his eyes were like pools of deep water and their glances flashed like a fountain in the sun; and from head to foot whether he moved or stood he was perfect in dignity and grace.

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As he approached, thrice he bent and kissed the ground in sign of obedience and reverence, and thereafter stood upright, with hands folded behind his back, waiting to hear the King's pleasure.

Shahzaman spoke. 'Once more, O my son, I have sent for thee to declare my will. Twice ere this have I been tender and patient, not forcing an inclination that was not ripe. But now thou art come to man's estate, and the season of waiting is ended. Therefore my command is that thou marry a daughter of kings, whom presently I shall choose for thee; so shall I have joy in thee before I die, seeing the establishment of my posterity.'

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When Camaralzaman heard these words he shut fast his lips and stood speechless for a while. But as his eye fell on all those lords assembled as witnesses as to what he should say, wrath kindled in his blood and the fire of youth mounted to his brain and he spoke swiftly and

unadvisedly.

'Surely,' he said, 'thou art a man of great age and little sense thus to talk, having already been answered! Twice before hast thou asked me, and twice have I refused. Thinkest thou with all these cooks to make a better broth of me, having thyself failed? I swear now that rather than marry I will drink the cup of perdition and die: for no man shall possess himself of my body to give it to another while my will is contrary!' And so saying Camaralzaman unclasped his hands from behind his back, and rolling up his sleeves stood before his father all quivering with anger.

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Greatly was Shahzaman, the King, disturbed at receiving so public an affront from the son whom he loved so tenderly. For a moment he sat speechless, seeing in the eyes of those around him the reflection of his humiliation and shame; then his energy returned to him, and rising from his throne he uttered so terrible a cry of wrath that at once Camaralzaman became conscious of the enormity of his offence, and his hasty anger departed leaving only contrition and fear.

Then, at the King's command, the memlooks came and seized him, and having first bound his hands, dragged him before the throne.

The extremity of Shahzaman's wrath now broke into words, and while the Prince stood speechless before him, his head bowed down and with drops of anguish upon his brow, he loaded him with a volume of abuse which did not spare even the Queen's unblemished reputation. 'Woe to thee,' he cried, 'baseborn child of iniquity and deceit! Is it thus that a King is to be answered in the presence of his people? Is it thus that a son nurtured in the tenderest affection casts insult on the head of his father. Had such language been uttered by one of the common people, it had been less disgraceful and more pardonable than coming from thee.'

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Then he commanded the memlooks to take him away and imprison him in the deepest dungeon of the castle, which had long stood neglected and empty.

Servants of the Prince hearing of that order went in haste and prepared the chamber for his reception; they swept the walls of its cobwebs, and wiped the damp from the floors; they placed in it a bedstead, and on it laid a mattress and a leather covering and cushions; they also provided a large lantern and a candle, for even in the daytime the place was dark. To this dungeon came Camaralzaman escorted by his guard, and when all had been made secure and a eunuch set outside to keep watch, there they left him.

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Camaralzaman threw himself upon the couch weeping, for bitterly now did he repent of his injurious conduct to his father; yet even in his affliction he ceased not to inveigh against marriage. 'Malediction upon women!' he cried, 'alas, why were they invented to give sting to the affections and divide father and son! Had Allah refrained from creating women, certainly I should not have been here!'

Thus in his misfortune did Camaralzaman find truths to comfort him. Meanwhile the King, his father, was suffering an equal affliction, and lacking the philosophy of youth he sought to find comfort in laying the blame for all that had happened upon the Grand Vizier. 'See, O Vizier!' he cried, 'what comes of taking counsel with thee! Thou alone hast been the cause of my son's undoing; for had I spoken to him privately on this matter as aforesaid, he would not have answered me otherwise than as a son should and in such manner as would have made forgiveness possible. Now, therefore, since we are brought to this pass by the foolishness of thy wisdom, it is for thee to devise means by which we may find a remedy.'

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The Vizier replied: 'O King, let the Prince stay where he is for another fifteen days, so shall he have time to cool himself. I doubt not that thereafter his mind toward marriage will be all that your heart can desire. Better to him then will seem the bride's chamber than the stone walls of his prison.'

Shahzaman took the Vizier's advice and slept on it, or rather slept not at all, for the loss of his son so troubled him that he lay awake all night tossing restlessly from side to side and longing for the light of day.

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Far better did Camaralzaman fare; for when night came the eunuch brought lantern and candle, and having prepared a table set food before him. The Prince ate little and thought much, sorrow for his ill-conduct having severed his appetite in half, and when he had finished he called for water and washed his hands from all taint of food; then he performed the ablution preparatory to prayer, and recited with his accustomed regularity the prayers of sunset and nightfall. After that he sat upon the couch reciting extracts from the Koran: he recited the chapters from 'The Cow' and 'The Family of Emran' and 'The Two Preventives'; and having done all these things he commended his soul to Allah and laid himself down upon the couch, whereon was a mattress of figured satin showing its pattern on both sides and stuffed abundantly with ostrich plumes. And when sleep drew near he took off his outer raiment and clothed himself in a fine shirt of waxed linen, and wrapped about his head a kerchief of blue muslin so that he seemed like the moon on its fourteenth night. Then with the lantern at his feet and the candle at his head, he covered himself with the sheet and fell into the sleep of the just from which he awakened not till after the third hour, knowing nought of the hidden event which then awaited him, or what Allah, who knoweth all secrets, had decreed should befall.

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The King of China and Badoura.

'The King came in haste, and found that which till now he had only pretended, concerning his daughter, apparently come true.' ([p. 51](#))



Now in the floor of this dungeon was an old well malodorous and foul through long disuse; and in this well dwelt a female Genie or Efreet, named Meymooneh, a monster of bad ancestry and of tremendous power to set evil above good. Toward midnight, when the hour for her nightly wanderings had come, Meymooneh rose up like a bubble from the bottom of the well and lifting her head over the brim saw a light which had not been there formerly and under it a couch whereon lay some one asleep.

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Full of wonder, she drew up her feet to earth, and advancing, cautiously turned back the coverlet from the sleeper's face. Thereafter she stood for a whole hour lost in wonder and astonishment at the beauty which she found there: perfect in all its lines and colour and texture was the loveliness of the sleeping youth, and there arose from his body an odour like fragrant musk. Meymooneh snuffed at it, and her heart became enlarged, lifting her thoughts toward Heaven. 'Blessed be

Allah!' she cried, 'surely He must be good to have created this thing.' And as she continued to gaze, her mind acquired a benevolence which had long since been strange to it. 'By Allah,' she said, 'in no way will I injure him; rather will I watch over and protect him from any that may seek to do him harm.' And so saying she stooped over the youth and kissed him between the eyes.

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Then elated of heart she spread her wings and smiting the earth with her heel sprang upward and floated away into space, till the heavens about her were clear. As she rose up through clouds she heard above her head a flapping of wings, and there passed one she knew by his tail to be Dahnash, an Efreet greatly inferior in power to herself. After him she went like a hawk, pounced and caught him by the scruff.

Dahnash, perceiving into whose clutches he had fallen, quivered through all his members, and imploring pardon for his existence cried, 'I conjure thee by the Most High Name and the sign on the Seal of Solomon that this time and for the present thou shouldst release me. So will I go upon my errand and return presently.'

Then said Meymooneh, 'By the high oath which thou hast sworn, what errand art thou after?'

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Dahnash answered, 'I have seen once with mine eyes that which should make the wicked virtuous, and the foul-minded clean; therefore I am in haste to make known the story of it to others less virtuous than thou art; so that they too may see it and find reward.'

'Though I am more virtuous than thou art,' replied Meymooneh, 'yet shalt thou tell me thy story, else I will pluck off every scale from thy body and every feather from thy wings and throw thee to the bottomless pit. And if what thou tellest be not true then also shalt thou fare as I have said.'

Then said Dahnash, 'O Meymooneh, if my word be not true, invent for me what tortures thou wilt and I will accept them. I am come to-night from the farthest isles of China, which are the dominions of King Gaiour, who is lord also of the Seas and of the Seven Palaces. There have I seen the Princess, his daughter, for whom also these palaces were built; surely there is none like her in all the world! Her hair is as dark as the night of separation and exile, and her face is like the dawn when lovers meet to embrace; her nose hath both point and edge, and her cheeks are like petals of anemone filled with wine. When she speaks, wisdom flows from her tongue; and when she moves, her feet faint with delight under the burden of the loveliness laid on them. The King's love for her is so great that there is no limit to what he will bestow on her if only it may add to her happiness; therefore in her honour hath he built the seven palaces: the first is of crystal, the second of marble, the third of steel, the fourth of onyx, the fifth silver, the sixth is of inlaid gold, and the seventh of all manner of jewels. Also these palaces are most sumptuously furnished, and around them lie gardens embellished with everything that can soothe the senses and delight the eye. Yet all this is but as a shade when the beauty of the Princess shines in the midst of it. Because the fame of her incomparable loveliness has gone far and wide, many kings and powerful princes come to demand her hand in marriage. But so tender is the King's love for her, that in all these years without her free consent he has married her to none. Many a time has he sought to persuade her, but it is all in vain. 'For where,' says the Princess, 'shall I have honour and freedom such as I enjoy now? Here I sit at thy side in council and am a ruler over men; but if I marry then will my husband rule me.' And now there has come to the court of King Gaiour, another monarch, so dreaded and so powerful that his suit cannot be refused. Nevertheless the Princess, whose name is Badoura, will not consent; and having threatened to kill herself rather than submit, the King now treats her as insane in order to excuse himself, and hath shut her up in one of her palaces with ten old women to look after her. There she has been confined for a whole year, but the imprisonment has done nothing either to change her will or diminish the enchantment of her beauty. So to-night when I saw her lying asleep every evil thought and passion died within me, for so holy is her beauty that I respected her even as I respect myself. Come, Meymooneh, and you shall see what is indeed a miracle and a wonder!'

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So far had Dahnash proceeded, when Meymooneh impatiently interrupted him. First, she cuffed him over the head, and then spitting in his face cried with laughter, 'O fool, what eyes have you to behold beauty, or what tongue to tell of it? This Princess that you speak of is, I doubt not, a poor insignificant creature not worth looking at. What would you say, then, if I shewed you my own beloved? Little talk would there be then of this fine Princess of yours; you would have but to look at him once and you would go crazy with jealousy.'

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Dahnash replied humbly, 'O Mistress of language and of facts, far be it from me to deny beauty that you yourself have verified; but neither can I deny that which I, in turn, have beheld and think to be incomparable. All I can ask, therefore, is that you should accompany me to the bedchamber of this adorable Princess, where she now lies sleeping, and judge for yourself.'

'Not so,' answered Meymooneh, 'wherefore should I travel to the far ends of China merely to prove thy folly and thy falsehood? Here close at hand is the tower wherein my beloved lies prisoner; come, then, and see for yourself the face of him whose loveliness even in sleep puts all other beauty to scorn.'

So they descended, and passing through the roof and floors of the tower came to the dungeon below, where Camaralzaman lay sleeping. There by the bedside Meymooneh put forth her hand and drew back the sheet; and Dahnash gazed with awe and remained silent, for doubt swayed him. Nevertheless after a while he said, 'O Meymooneh, though my word may seem hard to believe, yet do I still say that she whom I saw is fairer than this youth; and needs must it be so, since the fairest woman is by her sex made fairer than the fairest man. But for that, these two whom we contend over might be twin flowers from the same stem, so like are they.'

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When Meymooneh heard that she struck him a hard blow over the head with her wing, crying,

'Go, accursed one, fly back to China, lift up thy beloved and bring her quickly to this place; so when we see them side by side shall it be manifest which one is the more beautiful. Then if I am right thou shalt pay forfeit to me, and if thou art right I will pay.'

Then with inconceivable swiftness Dahnash departed; and within an hour returned bearing the Princess in his arms. She was clad in a gown of finest silk with two borders of gold, and when the Efreet laid her upon the bed beside Camaralzaman, the two proved to be so alike that they might have been twin brother and sister. Nevertheless Meymooneh and Dahnash continued to say each to each, 'My beloved is more beautiful than thine.' Nor was agreement possible between them.

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Therefore after much strife, wherein Dahnash, though physically worsted, stuck to his opinion, they determined to refer the matter to an arbitrator, and by his sentence to abide.

Then Meymooneh struck the ground with her foot and cried 'Kashkash!' Instantly the earth opened and there arose from it an Efreet hideous to look upon; he was blind of an eye, and lame of a leg, and upon his back he carried a hump bigger than the rest of his body; and when he saw Meymooneh he prostrated himself before her, saying, 'O Mistress and daughter of Kings, what dost thou require of me?'

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Meymooneh told him of the contention that had arisen between them, and showing him the Prince and Princess lying side by side called on him to say which was the more beautiful of the two.

But Kashkash, having considered them for a while with great attention, replied, 'When mortals are endowed with such beauty as these, then only themselves can decide. Let us, then, awake them each in turn, and the one that draws from the other the most violent protestations of love and admiration shall be esteemed the more beautiful.'

This proposal was approved both by Meymooneh and Dahnash.

Thereupon Meymooneh transformed herself into a flea, and leaping upon Camaralzaman's neck bit him in a soft place. The youth put up his hand and rubbed to allay the smarting; then moving sideways he touched something that stirred, and starting up saw by his side a maiden of most marvellous beauty.

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No sooner had he beheld her than all his reasons against marriage were confounded and put to flight; and he said within his heart, 'What God desireth will come to pass, and what He desireth not will not happen.' Then taking the Princess by the hand, he endeavoured gently to rouse her, and ceasing not to invoke her with words and kisses of tenderness, he would infallibly have awakened her had not Dahnash bound her by a spell.

Then, seeing how fast she slept, 'What!' cried the Prince, 'must the love of Camaralzaman admit an impediment such as this? Awake, O beloved!' Carried away by his words he was tempted for a moment to assail her rudely, but then the nobility of his nature reasserted itself and respect for her beauty and innocence constrained him. Then he bethought himself, and said, 'Doubtless this is the honourable maiden to whom the King, my father, intended to marry me. Oh why, instead of argument, did he not show me her face? So would none of this trouble have come about!'

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Then perceiving upon the Princess's finger a ring, he drew it off and exchanged it for his own, saying, 'Since I may not yet possess myself of the owner I will take this.' And having so done, he turned his back to her and slept.

Then Meymooneh, jealous of the testimony which Camaralzaman had given to the Princess's beauty, transformed herself again into a flea, and entering beneath the clothes of Badoura, the beloved of Dahnash, bit her sharply; whereupon she opened her eyes and sat up; and there at her side beheld a youth snoring in his sleep, with eyelashes shading roseate cheeks and a mouth like the seal of Solomon. No sooner had she seen him than her heart was filled with contending emotions. 'Oh me!' she cried, 'what disgrace is this that has come upon me to be lying in the same bed with a stranger? But, by Allah, he is so beautiful that I have much ado not to love him to distraction. Nay, if this be the Prince who came demanding my hand in marriage of my father, I would have been willing to marry him ten times over had I but known beforehand.'

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So saying she seized Camaralzaman by the arm and shook him so violently that, saving for the enchantment, he must surely have awakened.

Thereat she lost patience. 'Self-satisfied youth,' she cried, 'is this the way to behave to a Princess upon the night of her bridal? What? has so much beauty made thee proud?' Then as love began to devour her heart, 'O my lord,' she cried, 'light of mine eyes, and moon of my existence, arise, awake out of sleep!' And forthwith seizing his hand she began kissing it. While she was doing so she saw her ring upon his little finger, and uttered a cry of astonishment; while even greater became her amaze when she found upon her own hand a strange ring. This, she thought, must surely mean that she had become wedded to him in her sleep, so putting away all false modesty and fear she lay down again by his side, and fell fast asleep.

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Then Meymooneh and Dahnash, seeing how evenly between the pair the balance of love and admiration was divided, composed their difference; and Dahnash, taking the sleeping Princess upon his shoulder, carried her back to China.

When Camaralzaman awoke the next morning to find no maiden at his side, he supposed that the King, his father, had caused her to be carried away secretly, in order that thereby his desire for her might be increased. So he called to the slave who guarded him and said, 'Tell me of the lady who slept with me last night: how came she, and who brought her?'

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The slave replied, 'O Prince, there was no lady; how could any lady get in while I slept all night across the doorway, and had the key?'

This answer so infuriated the Prince that he fetched the slave a buffet which knocked him over; then tying him to the well rope he let him down into the well, though it was the middle of winter; and this he continued to do, now up, now down, saying as he did so, 'When thou hast told me the truth I will let thee go.'

After a while the unfortunate slave, at the last gasp for wretchedness, cried, 'O Prince, restore to me my life and I will tell thee all.'

So Camaralzaman drew him up and laid him to drain upon the floor.

Then the eunuch, with shiverings and chattering of teeth, said, 'Alas, Master, in my present plight I have not tongue nor wits to tell thee the whole story. Suffer me to go hence and get dry, then will I return.' So Camaralzaman let him go.

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Camaralzaman as an Astrologer.

'At last the King heard him, and said to the Vizier, "Go down and bring the Astrologer in."' (p. 67)



Off ran the eunuch, and without stopping came even as he was into the presence of Shahzaman, the King. Shahzaman was complaining to the Grand Vizier of the misery he had endured and the restless night he had passed, when the slave entered all a-drench with wetness and forthwith uttered his tidings. 'O King,' he cried, 'insanity hath seized on thy son, and thus hath he done to me! He saith there hath been a lady in his bed, when there hath been no lady; and because I cannot tell him how she came or how she went, or where now he can find her, see from what a drowning I have escaped!'

When the King heard these words his sorrow for his son and his wrath against the Vizier knew no bounds. 'Go, accursed,' he cried, 'this is thy doing. Go to the Prince and discover the true cause of his malady; then come again and tell me.'

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So the Vizier hastened, treading upon his skirts as he went forth in fear of the King's anger, and coming to the tower found the Prince not mad at all, but seated upon the couch reciting verses from the Koran with the utmost composure.

'O Prince,' cried the Vizier, 'the mere sight of thee relieves me of affliction; but so have I the more reason to complain of that vile slave who attends on thee, and hath said shameful things concerning thee to thy father, the King.'

'I also,' answered the Prince, 'have great reason to complain of him; but let that be for a while, and tell me now what has become of the lady who slept with me last night? For I know my father must have sent her to me for a just purpose, and to cure me of my folly: which indeed she hath done. So let that sweet remedy return to me and you shall find me sane.'

'Of a truth, Prince,' replied the Vizier, 'the King, thy father, sent no lady to thee, and all that thou sayest now is mystery. Bethink thee, shut in here a prisoner, how canst thou have seen any lady with thine eyes except in a dream?'

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'O ill-omened old man,' cried the Prince, 'thou wilt be saying next that I saw her only with my ears!' And approaching the Vizier he seized him by the beard, which was long, and twisting it this way and that, cried, 'Tell me the truth, or I will treat thee as I did the slave!'

Then the Vizier, to save himself from further ill-treatment, replied even as the slave had done, and said, 'O Prince, I am not free to reveal the secrets of my master, but I will take to him any

message wherewith you may be pleased to entrust me.'

'Go, then,' answered the Prince, 'and tell my father that I repent of my former words and will marry the lady he sent to me last night, but no other, though he should put me to a thousand deaths!'

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So the Vizier, as soon as Camaralzaman had let go of his beard, returned in haste to the King and said to him, 'O my lord, what the slave says is true; the Prince hath been seized with insanity of the most violent kind; yea, he heareth with his eyes, and seeth with his ears, and declareth a lady hath slept with him, whom he will marry and no other.'

Then Shahzaman went himself to see the Prince and to learn the truth of this matter, for he doubted the Vizier's word. And when he came to the prison, his son received him with so much respect, and contrition and devotion, that he turned upon the Vizier with eyes of anger and reproach, crying, 'O wretch, why hast thou afflicted me with lies?' But the Vizier only shook his head sorrowfully, waiting for the truth to reveal itself.

Then said the King, 'O my son, what day of the week is it?' Camaralzaman answered, 'To-day is Saturday, to-morrow is Sunday, the next day is Monday, then comes Tuesday, then Wednesday, then Thursday and then Friday.'

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'Praise be to Allah!' cried the King, 'my son is not mad, for he knows the days of the week.' Then he said to Camaralzaman, 'Tell me, my son, who is this lady who, you say, slept with you last night; for truly I know nothing about her.'

'O my lord,' replied the Prince, 'I pray that you cease to mock me, for though I have deserved it through my folly, yet now am I ready and eager to marry this lady whom you have chosen for me, since her beauty delights me, and her manners, even in her sleep, fascinate me.'

On hearing these words the King was as much astonished as the Vizier had been; but the countenance of his son was so full of ingenuousness and truth that he was not as incredulous as the others had been before him. 'I swear to you, my son,' said he, 'that I know nothing of this matter. What my Vizier has told you, he invented to appease your anger. But now tell me everything, just as it happened, for whether it be true or no, this event has given me cause for rejoicing.'

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Then the Prince sat down by his father's side and told him everything, and when he had finished he showed him the ring for proof that his tale was true; and the King was so convinced by his son's manner and by all the incidents of the story, that he had not a word to say against it.

Therefore was his heart uplifted, and he said to Camaralzaman, 'Though all these things be mysteries in the hands of Allah, so deep that we may not fathom them, yet now hast thou convinced me that thou art not as was said of thee. Keep, therefore, that precious mind to which Heaven hath given light, and possess thyself in patience till the mystery hath resolved itself.'

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But Camaralzaman replied, 'Alas, O my father, to what term of imprisonment dost thou now condemn me? for if thou canst not find for me this maiden who hath ravished my heart, surely I shall die of anguish. So great is my love and my distraction that I cannot wait for her even an hour.'

Upon this the King smote his palms together, and cried, 'Now are we in the hands of Allah, where no mortal power can avail!' Then he took his son gently by the hand and led him back to the palace: and there the Prince threw himself down upon a bed of sickness, too weak to rise or look up: and Shahzaman seated himself at his side, mourning and weeping for his grief, and leaving him neither by day or night.

But after a while his Vizier came to him and said, 'O King of the Age, how long shall thy people seek for thee, and not find thee? Thy troops murmur that they have none to lead them to the field, and in the city corruption grows rife because the seat of judgment stays empty. This sickness into which the Prince has fallen comes only from grief; and as his grief increases thine, so does thine give nourishment to his. Therefore I entreat your Majesty to provide some better relief for the complaint both of the Prince and of the people. Here in the city his spirits languish and his strength returns not; but take him to the palace which is upon the shore looking toward the islands; there shall his soul, on the days when thou art absent, find peace and refreshment. And do thou, O King, on two days in each week return to the affairs of state, which need thy presence, to give audiences and to hold councils, else out of these two evils which are upon us there may grow a greater.'

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Camaralzaman Cures Badoura.

'She ran forth, and threw herself into the arms of Camaralzaman.' ([p. 71](#))



So Shahzaman did as his Vizier advised him, and caused the Prince to be carried, all wasted as he was with grief, to a pavilion which was upon the shore, and there on the days when affairs of state caused the King to be absent Camaralzaman lay and looked out over the sea.

While these things were happening in the land of Khaledan, Dahnash had conveyed the Princess of China safely back to her own bed. There the next morning she awoke, unstained by travel and with her raiment undisturbed; nor was she conscious that she had been anywhere but where she now was. No sooner, therefore, did she perceive on looking to left and right that the youth who had lain in her bosom was no longer near her than her heart became agitated and her reason confounded, and she uttered a loud cry.

All her women came running; and her nurse, who was the chief, inquired what misfortune had befallen her. The Princess, who continued to search among the bedclothes, said, 'Vexatious and contrary old woman, what have you done with the beautiful youth who slept last night in my bosom, or how comes it that I have mislaid him?'

At these words the nurse was shocked in her morals and confounded in her understanding, and she answered, 'O mistress, what mean these disgraceful words! Surely thy bosom is guiltless of any such deed, and no youth, whether beautiful or otherwise, has been near thee.'

Badoura answered, 'He had black eyes and a lovely face, and a mouth like the seal of Solomon, and his eyebrows were joined where I kissed them; and he was here sleeping at my side from nightfall to nigh upon daybreak.'

'Princess,' answered her nurse, 'thou hast had an unpermissible dream and art talking non-sense. No such young man hath been near thee, nor would I have permitted it.'

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Then the Princess lifting her hand in anger saw upon it the ring which Camaralzaman had given her in exchange for her own, and cried to her nurse, 'Woe to thee, O deceitful! Have I also dreamed this ring which is not mine and lost that which belonged to me?' And so saying she started to belabour her nurse so unmercifully, that she would assuredly have killed her had not all the other women and the eunuchs lifted up their voices in lamentation; whereupon the Princess, who greatly disliked loud noises, desisted.

So the nurse, escaping from her vengeance, fled and acquainted the King with all that had happened and with the story which the Princess had told her.

The King came in haste and found that which till now he had only pretended concerning his daughter apparently come true. For excess of reason had fled to her brain, and rushing this way and that she was searching for her beloved in every cupboard, and under every article of furniture, crying, 'Where is the beautiful youth who slept in my bosom last night? He belongs to me; he is mine. If I do not find him I shall die.'

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When her father saw and heard this he inquired no further, but ordered the slaves and eunuchs to seize her, and bind her with chains lest she should do herself or others an injury.

So they put a chain about her neck and fastened her to a window of the palace looking toward the sea, that so by the will of Allah her thoughts might have rest and her reason be restored. And the King, loving her tenderly and greatly distressed at the condition she had fallen into, caused a proclamation to be issued to all sages, astrologers, and men skilled in such matters saying, 'Whosoever shall cure my daughter of her present malady, to him will I give her hand in marriage together with the half of my kingdom; and whoso fails to cure her, having offered, his head will I strike off and set it above the gates of my palace as a warning to others.' This he continued to do till forty of the wisest physicians and astrologers had lost their heads. Then the supply foiled; and the Princess, whom the offer of any husband other than the one she sighed for threw into paroxysms of wrath, was as far from a cure at the end as at the beginning. Thus she remained for the space of three years, sitting at a window with a chain about her neck and looking out over the sea.

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Now the nurse of the Princess Badoura had a son named Marzavan, who was a great traveller. He was foster-brother to the Princess; when they were children she had been to him as his own sister; and the two loved each other tenderly. So on the day when he returned from his travels he went to the palace to get tidings of the Princess, and there over the gates were ranged the heads of the forty wise men. This surprised him greatly, and when on inquiring into the matter he learned the cause, he heard also of the unhappy state into which the Princess had fallen. The news troubled him far more deeply than the death of forty wise men who had been found foolish, but, unwilling to trust to the judgment of others in such a case, being himself also well skilled in medicine, he besought his mother to obtain for him an interview with the Princess.

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This was a difficult matter, for the door of the chamber was strictly guarded, and no one had access to it except the nurse herself. So urgent, however, was her son's entreaty, that at last she consented and set about finding the means. To this end she said to the eunuch who was on guard at the door, 'You know well my devotion to the Princess, and my desire to do anything that may alleviate her affliction, therefore I am come to ask you for a favour. I have a daughter whom my mistress from her earliest childhood, when I nursed them together, has ever regarded with the tenderest affection. She has lately married, and the Princess, hearing of this event, has expressed a wish to see her. Allow this to be; and do not doubt that Heaven will reward you for your goodness.'

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The eunuch readily consented in spite of the strictness of his orders. 'Let her come at night,' he said, 'or bring her yourself, after the King has retired: then the door shall be open and no one need know of it.'

Accordingly, the next night, the nurse disguised Marzavan in woman's attire, and taking his hand in hers led him to the palace. The eunuch let them pass without suspicion; but as soon as they were in the Princess's presence, and the door shut behind them, the nurse said, 'O mistress, I have brought gladness to you to-night; for this is no woman but my son Marzavan, who, having returned from his travels, wished greatly to see you.' No sooner did the Princess hear the name of Marzavan than she sprang joyfully forward, the full length of her chain, and being held back by it, she stretched her hands toward him, crying, 'O brother, come to me!' When Marzavan beheld her in that unhappy plight, then for weeping he could not look at her, but turned away his head and covered his eyes. Then said Badoura, 'Dost thou also think that I am mad like the rest of them? Nay, hear my story and be undeceived, for it is true.'

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Then she told Marzavan everything; and he, perceiving that she was in love, doubted no longer, for he knew that such passion and such a desire for beauty could arise neither out of madness

nor of a dream. So when she besought his aid, he pondered deeply what he might do, and then said, 'O sister, have patience yet a little while, and I will go search through the world for thy missing friend. Be assured that if he lives I will find him.' Then they embraced as brother and sister in full affection; and Marzavan departed.

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The next day he set out once more upon his travels, and continued to journey from city to city, and island to island for the space of some months. At first, wherever he went, he heard men speaking of the beauty of the Princess Badoura and of the strange malady that afflicted her; but presently, as he changed from country to country, her name ceased to be upon men's lips, and he heard instead of one by name Camaralzaman, a prince of the Islands of Khaledan, who for three years had suffered from a grievous affliction of body and a desolation of spirit to which there seemed no remedy.

Marzavan did not delay when he heard that story; but inquiring for the nearest route he took ship and sailed from the city of Torf, where these tidings had first reached him, to the islands of Khaledan, a whole month's voyage; and all the way he was glad so that his heart sang. But on the day when the ship approached the dominions of Shahzaman, there arose a great storm which broke the mast and carried away the sail and capsized the vessel.

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Marzavan, thrown overboard with the rest, was caught by a strong current and carried shorewards; and as fate would have it, since the destiny of all are in the hands of the Most High, the current bore him toward that part of the coast where stood the palace of the King; and there at that time, in the pavilion looking toward the sea, sat Shahzaman attended by his Vizier; and the head of Camaralzaman lay upon his lap; and a eunuch was whisking the flies from him.

The Vizier, looking out from the terrace, saw in the water below him the shipwrecked Marzavan, tossed this way and that and unable to land; so his heart was moved with pity and he came running to the King and crying, 'Permit me, O my lord, to open the gates of the court and put forth my hand to save yonder man who is now drowning. For since a just action is never without reward, it may be he shall bring us good.'

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Shahzaman replied, 'Thou art the cause of all our trouble, and I doubt not that coming by thy hand this drowning man will bring us more. Yet I cannot forbid thee to save his life: only be sure that he comes not near us to spy upon my son in his affliction and report it to others. If he do, his head and thine shall be forfeit.'

So the Vizier ran, and opening the gates of the court leaned down, and caught Marzavan by the hair and drew him up to dry land. And Marzavan came forth from the sea all lost to consciousness, his stomach filled with water and his eyes protruding. The Vizier waited till his spirit had returned to him; then he took from him his clothes and clad him in others and put on his head the turban of an attendant and said to him, 'Now, as I have saved thy life, do my bidding and save mine also. Cast down thine eyes, speak not, look not into any chamber as we go, but follow closely where I lead lest worse befall thee.'

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Then said Marzavan, 'What is this peril that I am not to see?'

The Vizier answered, 'It is the King's son, who is sorely afflicted for the loss of a fair damsel that came to him but once and is gone again, none knows where. That is the story, and on pain of death all who hear it must believe it.' And the Vizier sighed heavily, for at this time life was hard to him and belief difficult.

When the half-drowned Marzavan heard that, his heart went up like a singing bird, and he skipt at the Vizier's heels like a squirrel. And when they came by the chamber where Camaralzaman was lying, with the King seated beside him, then Marzavan turned swiftly and went in and stood before him; and no sooner had he seen the Prince than, with an exclamation of joy, he cried: 'Extolled be the perfection of him who hath given beauty its pair! Lo, the eyes are hers, the complexion is hers, the lips and the cheeks are hers!'

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At these words the knees of the Vizier went from under him, and he prayed succour of death: but on the heart of Camaralzaman there descended a coolness and a refreshment, and turning his tongue in his mouth, he signalled with his hand to Shahzaman to make the young man sit down.

The King seeing the look of joy upon his son's face easily forgave the intrusion which had earned death; and having placed Marzavan in the seat at the Prince's side, he bade him recount his history and whence and why he came.

So Marzavan told of the country from which he had come and of its King and people, and of all the events of his journey, but of the real cause which had brought him he said nothing. And the Prince listened and waited, for he saw that something was concealed: and all the while, since hope had returned to him, his countenance grew bright and his strength of body increased. So presently he made a sign for his father to raise him to a sitting posture; and the King, full of joy, lifted him, and placed cushions behind him and under him. Thus after three years of lying down did Camaralzaman sit up. So after a while Shahzaman, seeing how by the conversation of Marzavan the Prince was restored to health, went away and left them; and the Vizier departed also.

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Then, seeing that they were alone, Marzavan spoke low in the ear of Camaralzaman saying, 'O Prince, thy sorrow is at an end; for she whom thou lovest is the Princess Badoura, daughter of the King of China and my own foster-sister: and I am come through the world seeking thee because of my devotion to her, who, for love of thee, now lieth in chains. All that hath happened unto thee with thy father hath happened to her also with her father, yea, and worse things also.' So he went on and told him all.

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Now when Camaralzaman had heard the story of the Princess, and of her sufferings and constancy, and of all the useless cures for her malady that had been tried, his heart was divided in its joy by an overflowing of sorrow, even as a rich country is divided and broken by a stream when it floods its banks; and he said to Marzavan, 'Alas! how may I bring her the true cure, seeing that we dwell in such different parts of the world, and my father will not suffer me to be out of his sight even for one day?'

Marzavan answered, 'For thy health's sake he will allow thee that one, and it shall suffice. For tomorrow thou shalt say to him, "Let me go out into the hills for a day and a night, that I may hunt and recover my strength," and surely he shall not deny it to thee. And when thou hast found that for which thou art in search, I know that thou wilt return to him. But we will take with us two spare horses and saddlebags, with money sufficient for our journey, and when we have started upon our way I will provide, so that we may not be pursued and overtaken.'

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At these words the Prince rejoiced greatly, and it all came about even as Marzavan had planned. For on the morrow the King, rejoicing that his son's health was so quickly restored, granted him the permission he sought, saying only, 'Be not absent, my son, longer than one night, for while thou art away from me I have no joy left.' Camaralzaman answered, 'The night of sorrow will end, then shall I return.' So he took leave of his father and departed.



Camaralzaman Finds the Talisman.

'The Prince sow the girdle, and knotted within its folds, a large stone.' (p. [75](#))



For the whole of that day until the evening Camaralzaman and Marzavan went in the direction they had chosen, setting their laces for the open country and the seaport lying beyond. And when it was night they ate and drank, fed their beasts, and rested for a while; then they remounted and journeyed on. At daybreak they came to a spacious tract of forest; there Marzavan took one of the led horses and killed it, stripping the flesh from its bones; next he took the garments which Camaralzaman had worn on the previous day, and after tearing them this way and that daubed them with blood.

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Camaralzaman inquired why he did this: and Marzavan answered, 'When we return not great search will be made for thee, and I doubt not, if it went far enough, we should be overtaken. But when the searchers come upon this they will suppose that a wild beast has fallen upon thee and devoured thee; and that I, fearing the King's wrath, have fled away. Doubtless the news will bring great sorrow to thy father's heart; but when thou returnest with thine errand safely accomplished, he shall be recompensed with joy.'

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The Prince sorrowfully commended the plan which Marzavan had devised for the safety of their enterprise; and so they continued upon their way unmolested, and after much travelling by land and water, and many adventures not to be told of here, they arrived at the capital of the dominions of King Gaiour, where the Princess Badoura lay in captivity.

Marzavan did not take Camaralzaman to his own house, but to a public khan, where for three days they remained recovering from the fatigues of their journey. Then, having clothed the Prince in the garb of a merchant-doctor with all the signs and instruments of his calling, he conducted him to the gates of the palace; standing before which Camaralzaman began, on the instructions of Marzavan, to cry in a loud voice, 'Look at me, for I am learned! Marvel at me, for I am wise! I am the healer, the calculator, the astrologer; I know the cause of all maladies and their cure. If any one, be he king or peasant, is in affliction, let him come to me!'

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The people were greatly astonished to hear once more an astrologer so bold of tongue; and pitying him for his youth and wondering at the beauty of his form, they pointed to the heads which were over the palace gates, saying, 'While there is time save thyself; for if the King hear thee thy head will be joined to those.'

Nevertheless Camaralzaman continued to cry with a loud voice; till at last the King heard him, and said to his Vizier, 'Go down, and bring this astrologer in.'

So the Vizier went out and fetched him, and Camaralzaman came and bowed himself before the King. And when the King looked at him, his heart also was moved with pity toward the stranger, as the heart of the people had been, because of his youth and the beauty of his form. And he said to him, 'My son, comply not with my conditions; for I have bound myself with an oath, and whoso goes in to visit my daughter but cannot cure her, his head must I strike off; and of a truth you have but to look over my palace gate to see that her malady is obstinate. Nevertheless if you can cure her she is yours, and the half of my kingdom is yours also.'

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Camaralzaman said, 'To those conditions, O King, I am agreed!' Then the King, sighing heavily, sent for the eunuch and bade him conduct the astrologer to the apartment of the Princess.

The eunuch led the way; but when they were come to the corridor wherein Badoura's chamber was situated, so great was the joy of the Prince that he hastened and went before; and the eunuch called after him, 'Tarry, good sir, and be not so hasty before the event, for I alone have the key that shall bring thee to thy death! Never was any other astrologer in such haste to depart from life as thou.'

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'Friend,' answered Camaralzaman, 'they had not such science as I have to make them glad: for they could not tell what the end would be, but I know it already, nay, even without entering that door of which thou hast the key I can cure the Princess of her malady.'

The eunuch, astonished to be met with so much confidence, ceased from his taunts, and admitted the Prince to the ante-chamber. 'If thou canst do that,' he said, 'thou art indeed the wonder of the world. Truly were I only permitted to see such a marvel accomplished, I should account myself rich.'

Thereupon Camaralzaman seated himself against the curtain which divided the outer from the inner chamber and wrote the following prescription:

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'He whom estrangement hath afflicted is cured when the vow of the beloved is accomplished; and the heart of exile findeth restoration in union with that which was lost. Love alone can heal those whom love hath persecuted.'

Underneath this prescription he added the following words:

'From the distracted, the passionate, the perplexed, the famished with longing, the captive of transport and ardent desire, Camaralzaman, son of Shahzaman, King of Khaledan, to the peerless one of her age, the pre-eminent among Hooris, the Princess Badoura, daughter of Gaiour, King of the Isles of China and lord of the seven Palaces. Behold the slave of the ring who, sleepless and inflamed by love, now awaits the call of his Beloved.'

Then, having enclosed the ring which at their first meeting he had exchanged for his own, he sealed the missive, and putting it into the hands of the eunuch bade him carry it to his mistress.

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No sooner had the Princess Badoura received the missive and the ring than she knew at once from whom it came. Whereupon joy overthrew her reason, and leaping up in a transport of exultation she pressed her feet against the wall, and breaking the chains which bound her ran forth and threw herself into the arms of Camaralzaman.

Speechless with joy she kissed him without ceasing; even as a pigeon when it feeds its young, so upon the lips of Camaralzaman fell the kisses of the Princess Badoura. Then came the nurse, crying aloud for gladness to behold the joy of her mistress and the healing of her malady accomplished; and presently after her came the King. For to him had run the eunuch in swift haste bringing tidings of the event—how that without entering her chamber the astrologer had cured her. 'What?' cried the King, 'can such news be true?' 'O my lord,' answered the eunuch, 'let thine own eyes look upon her and be blest; for she hath broken her chains of iron, and coming forth to the astrologer she falleth upon him and kisseth him, and never will she let him go.'

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So Gaiour the King came and found it even as the eunuch had said. Full of joy to behold so sweet a sight, he embraced first the Princess and then the Prince, thanking him with tears of gratitude for the debt which he owed him. And when he inquired further and learned of Camaralzaman his name, and his true rank, and of the country from which he came, with all the strange story of his love and the grief of his separation, then his satisfaction and delight knew no bounds. And so on that very day the nuptials were celebrated, and word of rejoicing went forth through the whole of the King's dominions.



Prince Camaralzaman and the Birds.

'In the leaves overhead he saw one furiously attacking another with beak and claw.' ([p. 90](#))



The hearts of Prince Camaralzaman and his bride were now so full of happiness that for many months they wist not the passing of time, and waking or sleeping it seemed to them as one day. But while their joy thus decked itself in the colours of immortality, the Prince one night had a dream, wherein he beheld his father, Shahzaman, lying as at the point of death. And in his dream it seemed that he heard him say, 'O my son, whom in thy grief I so tenderly cherished, wherefore hast thou acted thus, leaving me in my old age to die alone?'

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So sharp was the sting of that dream upon his conscience that, sighing, the Prince woke; and his wife hearing him made inquiry as to his grief. 'Alas!' answered Camaralzaman, 'in my happiness with thee I had forgotten my father.' And thereupon he recounted his dream. So the next day the Princess Badoura went to her father, and having told him all, besought leave for Camaralzaman to return for a while to his own land so that he might comfort his father in his old age.

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The King readily granted his daughter's request. Then said Badoura, 'If my husband goes I must go too.' 'Why so?' inquired her father. 'Because,' said she, 'if you separate us there is no power in the world that shall keep me alive.'

Now the King had learned during the years of his daughter's captivity, that anything which she said she meant. Therefore with much grief and reluctance at being so compelled, he granted her request; and having accorded them permission to be absent for a whole year, he made preparation for their departure. In order that they might appear at the court of Shahzaman in the splendour that became their rank, he presented them with many changes of costly apparel, and having provided a large train of horses, dromedaries, and attendants, he bade them an affectionate farewell, and with many tears watched them depart. [Pg 75]

For a whole month Camaralzaman and his bride travelled in comfort and luxury by the route that they had chosen, and greatly was the Prince's heart rejoiced by the thought of seeing his father once more and presenting to his eyes the lovely and innocent cause of all their past affliction. Therefore, early and late they journeyed on, only stopping to rest at night and during the heat of each day.

And so it chanced that one day, about noon, they came to a spacious meadow shaded by trees, and there at the Prince's command the tents were pitched; and the Princess went into her pavilion and lay down to sleep.

Now when she lay down, the heat being very great, she took off her outer robe and her girdle. And the Prince, coming in later, saw the girdle lying, and knotted within its folds a large stone, red as blood, inscribed with strange characters which, in the darkness of the tent, he could not read. Being curious, therefore, to see what words were upon this talisman which the Princess carried so secretly in her apparel, he unfastened the knot, and taking the knot went forth from the tent to examine it. [Pg 76]

Scarcely had he done so when, with a strange cry, a bird swooped down from the tree above his head, caught up the stone in its beak, and flew away with it. Camaralzaman, fearing to lose what, for all he knew, might be a precious talisman, ran after the bird, throwing up his arms, shouting and endeavouring in all possible ways to make it let go the stone. But the bird flew on from tree to tree, and from valley to valley, never so fast that Camaralzaman could not keep pace with it, but never coming within his reach, or letting go of the talisman. So the flight went on and so the chase continued, till several hours had passed and it began to grow dark. Then the bird, uttering once more its strange cry, went up to the topmost branch of a high tree and settled itself to roost. [Pg 77]

The pursuit had now led Camaralzaman so far and in so many directions, that he no longer knew which way to turn. So, commending himself to Allah, he lay down at the foot of the tree and slept.

In the morning, with a loud rustling of feathers, the bird awakened him, and still carrying the stone in its beak, sprang out of the tree and continued its flight. And as Camaralzaman rose and followed, it presently became apparent that at whatever rate he went, the bird went too; so when he ran the bird flew fast, and when he could run no more it waited for him, flying from point to point and never disappearing from view.

'By Allah!' cried Camaralzaman, 'this is wonderful! This chase will lead me either to great fortune or to death.' So without giving up he went on; and thus he followed the bird for ten days, living upon roots and drinking of the streams that he crossed; and every night he slept at the foot of some tree while the bird perched in its topmost branches. [Pg 78]

Thus on the tenth day he was brought to the outskirts of a large city. Then, like a flash, the bird flew over it and disappeared; and Camaralzaman following, footsore and weary, came to the city gates and passed through. Here for some time he wandered, solitary and without hope, not knowing what to do nor of whom to seek aid; and coming presently to the other side of the city, he found there a harbour with much shipping and merchandise, and people plying their trade and talking in many languages. And as he walked along the shore, still uncertain what course to pursue, he came upon an old man working in a garden of flowers; and when he halted the old man looked up. [Pg 79]

The gardener, seeing a stranger at his gate, came forward, and saluting him in the name of Allah, bade him come in. 'I see by your dress,' said he, 'that you are a Mussulman, as I also am; and great is your good fortune to have escaped until now the wrath of the inhabitants, for they are unbelievers and idolaters, and fierce is their hatred for those who are of the true faith. Therefore come quickly into my house, and disguise yourself; else is your life not safe.'

Camaralzaman was thankful to have found a friend in such a moment of need; and after his host had supplied him with food and drink and made him rest for a while, then without concealment he confided to him the whole of his story. Greater than ever had now become his longing to reach the island of Khaledan, for there not only did he hope to find his father still alive, but to be reunited with his wife, the Princess Badoura. Inquiring therefore of the old gardener, he learned that there were two routes; the longer being for the greater part of the way by land—a year's journey, and the shorter by sea. 'But if,' said the gardener, 'you would go by sea, then you must wait for the merchant ship which sails every year to the Island of Ebony, for through that country lies your way. Had you but come a few days earlier, you would have been in time; but now the ship has left the harbour and will not return for another year. If you decide upon this course, then while you wait my house is open to you, and if you are willing to share my work and be my assistant, you shall also have a fair share of the profits.' [Pg 80]

Camaralzaman gladly accepted the proposition, for better by far is work, however hard or

humble it may be, than the idleness of unavailing regret. So for a whole year he lived with the old gardener as if he had been his son, wearing a blue smock down to his knees, working with a hoe, tending plants, tilling the soil, and carrying its produce for sale to the market. And every day he looked out over the sea for the merchant vessel which was to arrive and bear him back to his own country and to the arms of his beloved.

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Now turn we to the Princess Badoura, whom we left lying asleep in her tent. When she awoke she inquired after her husband, the Prince, but he was not to be found; some had seen him go into the tent, but no one had seen him come out. Then, as she put on her dress, she noticed that the knot in her girdle had been untied and that the stone was missing. 'Alas, O Beloved, what hast thou done?' she cried. 'Ignorant of its virtues thou hast taken from me the talisman which unites us; now surely if thou hast lost it we shall be separated for ever.' And as time went on her distress and her certainty of misfortune became greater; for she knew that had not the Prince already lost the talisman its infallible virtues would by now have brought him back to her. Knowing therefore that if the talisman were indeed lost, he also was lost to her, and that when found, he would return to her again, she made no useless delay in proceeding to her destination. Yet was there now great peril if the absence of the Prince were discovered, lest she and her women and all the wealth which her father had bestowed on her might fall a prey to the men who formed their escort. For this reason she concealed the matter from all but her women, and having dressed herself in some of her husband's clothes, and put into her litter a girl-slave wearing the royal veil, she went forth from her tent and gave orders for the camp to be struck and their journey resumed. So, for many days she continued to travel by land and sea, till she came before a city set on a height with a great harbour lying below; and when she inquired its name of the inhabitants they said to her, 'This is the city of Ebony, wherein dwells King Amanos, and he has a beautiful daughter whose name is Hayatelnefoos.'

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Presently word went to the palace that a stranger prince of very noble appearance, accompanied by a large retinue, had arrived in the harbour and was seeking admission to the city. Whereupon the King sent in haste certain high dignitaries of his court to give welcome and to conduct the supposed Prince into his presence. And no sooner had he beheld the noble appearance of his guest and the graciousness of her bearing than he gave orders for a great banquet to be prepared, appointed that she should be lodged in the palace, and extended to her for three days an entertainment of the most royal magnificence.

During the whole of these festivities the Princess bore herself exactly as Camaralzaman would have done, doing honour to that rank and name which for her own protection she had assumed. Therefore the heart of King Amanos was drawn greatly towards her, and when she began to speak of departure, he said, 'Wherefore, O Prince, shouldst thou seek to leave a country where happiness and power can be thine? For behold, I am an old man and childless, save for one daughter, whose beauty and perfection resemble thine. But, for me, the cares of state have become too heavy a burden, and I sigh to be released from them. Remain with us, therefore, and I will give to thee even now the hand of my daughter and the sceptre and rule of my kingdom.'

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At this proposal, so generously expressed, the face of Badoura became covered with bashfulness, for strange indeed to a woman was this offer of a kingdom and a bride. Yet at her father's court she had long since become learned in the affairs of state, and to rule a kingdom had ever been her desire; moreover, since by the loss of the talisman she and her husband seemed destined to eternal separation, there was no cause that she could see why her life should not thus be dedicated; there was also some peril in a refusal, which the King would be certain to take as an affront both to himself and his daughter. So after pondering the matter for a while she lifted her head and spoke to the King as follows:

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'O King, if I delayed for one moment my acceptance of so splendid an offer, it was only a knowledge of unworthiness which held me back. Yet to delay longer might seem to throw a doubt on the discretion of your royal mind. Beset by these two dangers I place myself entirely in your Majesty's hands; and if I may have your promise of the guidance and counsel which I shall constantly need, then I will unreservedly accept your Majesty's proposal. To hear is to obey.'

The marriage being thus agreed on, the nuptial ceremony was fixed for the following day. The pretended Prince, putting a bold face upon the matter, informed the officers of her escort of the coming event, saying also that the Princess Badoura had given it her approval. As for her women, their silence was already assured since, as partners to the deception, their very lives depended on it.

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So on the morrow King Amanos gathered together his emirs, viziers, and captains, and having presented to them the Princess Badoura as his destined son-in-law and heir, he placed her upon the throne and gave orders for the nuptial ceremony to commence. And when the day of rejoicings was ended, the Princess Badoura was conducted to the bridal chamber.

But no sooner did Badoura find herself by the side of the beautiful Princess Hayatelnefoos than the thought of her beloved Camaralzaman overwhelmed her with grief, and committing herself to prayer and recitation, she continued at her devotions till the bride lay fast asleep. And thus she did the next night and on the night following.

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Finding herself thus neglected by the husband of whom she had received such glowing reports, the Princess Hayatelnefoos was filled with a depression of spirit which immediately became visible in her looks; and when her father, King Amanos, discerning his daughter's grief, inquired what was amiss, she informed him that her husband, whom she already loved most tenderly, had

conceived for her an aversion so intense that to avoid all intimacy of conversation he committed himself to prayer, and thus continued till weariness and sleep overcame her.

At this news the countenance of King Amanos was darkened, and he said to his daughter, 'If the Prince does not treat thee with the respect due from a husband to a wife, he shall be divested of his royal dignity and banished from my kingdom.'

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This threat so afflicted the heart of Hayatelnfoos, to whom the thought of separation from her husband was already unbearable, that on their next meeting she confided to Badoura her grief, informing her also of the King's words and of the danger that threatened her.

Then said Badoura, 'O amiable and charming Princess, though thou canst not be my wife thou canst be my friend. Hear first my story, and then, if thou art unable to pardon me thou canst at least have the satisfaction of depriving me of life.' And forthwith she proceeded to give the full story of her adventures.

When she had finished, Hayatelnfoos replied, 'O Princess, I should indeed be unworthy of your confidence, if such a tale of misfortune had failed to win not only my pity, but my devotion. Henceforth we two are of one mind, and will have between us but one heart and one desire for the preservation of thy life and honour and the restoration of thy husband.'

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Badoura Watching the Ship.

'It so happened as the ship came into the harbour, Badoura was looking out towards the sea.' ([p. 96](#))



Thereupon the two Princesses embraced with the tenderest affection, and from that day on, concealing from all others the true facts, they lived together in the greatest amity and concord; while the Princess Badoura continued in her husband's name to rule over the city of Ebony, giving law and justice to all.

Prince Camaralzaman, meanwhile, was living with the old gardener, tilling the soil, and carrying each day fruit and vegetables to the market. The time was now near for the merchant vessel which he was awaiting to return; but having lost the talisman of which he had come in quest, he had little hope of a successful issue to the adventure. So one day, when the inhabitants of the city were making holiday and all the markets were closed, the Prince, released from labour, sat in deep dejection of spirit under the trees of the garden away from the sound of festival, when suddenly he heard a strange cry of birds and in the leaves overhead he saw one furiously attacking another with beak and claw. So desperate was the fight, that before many minutes were over one of the birds fell dead at his feet, and the conqueror, uttering a loud cry of triumph, flew swiftly away.

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But hardly had it disappeared, when two other birds of larger size came flying into the garden, and making straight for the murdered body they bowed their heads over it, crying lamentably and seeking with the warmth of their breasts to restore it to life. Presently, when all their efforts proved vain, they scooped a grave with their claws, and having laid therein the slaughtered bird, they covered it with earth and immediately soared upward and disappeared.

Camaralzaman sat weeping; for the mourning of these birds reminded him in some way of the grief and separation he himself had endured, and as little could he hope for the return of his lost happiness as they for the revival of their dead comrade. As he was thus thinking, once again came the strange cry he had heard before, and looking up he saw the two birds flying back carrying the murderer in their claws. No sooner had they alighted above the grave than falling upon their captive they tore out his heart and entrails, and having drained out his blood as an offering to the slain, they left the body lying, and flew away.

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All this while Camaralzaman had looked on in wonder; and surely it seemed to him that if, in the

lower order of creation such miracles of devotion and service were wrought, humanity had no cause for despair. And even as he so thought, he saw in the torn body of the bird something that shone brightly, and coming nearer he recognised it as the talisman which he had taken from his wife's girdle.

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Instantly all life became changed to him; seizing the stone he wiped it of blood and pressed it a thousand times to his lips. 'Now at last,' he cried, 'I believe and know that my beloved is to be restored to me!'

So sure was he his good fortune had now returned to him that, unable to remain idle and inactive, he seized a hoe, and started to break up the ground at the foot of the tree under which he had been standing. At the third stroke the earth gave back a hollow and metallic sound. Quickly removing the soil he discovered a trapdoor, which, when it was opened, disclosed an aperture and a narrow flight of steps. Descending these he found himself in a deep cellar lined with jars, twenty in all, filled with red gold.

Contentment now took hold of his spirit, and having returned to the garden he replaced the trap and continued at his work until in the evening the old gardener returned from the festivities.

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On seeing him the old man said, 'Rejoice, my son, I bring you good tidings. The ship which you have so long waited for is now in the harbour, and in three days will be ready once more to set sail.'

This news so delighted Camaralzaman that taking the old man's hand he kissed it saying, 'I too have tidings for you of a happy kind.' And leading the gardener to the tree he lifted the trap, and disclosed to his astonished eyes the gold that lay stored below.

'Well,' said the gardener, 'I am glad that my poor plot of ground should have yielded thee such rich fruit. Take it, my son, and Heaven prosper thee by its aid till thou come once more to thine own land and the heart of thy beloved.'

'Not so,' replied Camaralzaman, 'I will take nothing if I may not share it equally with thee.'

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So it was agreed. Then said the gardener, 'My son, hast thou thought how to convey safely so much gold on a voyage where thou wilt be alone in the hands of strangers? Surely if they find thee possessed of such wealth they will kill thee for the sake of it. Hearken, therefore, to what I shall advise. From this country we send olives into all parts of the world, and many ships go laden with them. Fill for thyself, therefore, fifty jars from the olive-trees which are in this garden, and at the bottom of each jar lay a portion of the gold: so shall it be safe, and no man will know of it.'

So the Prince did as the gardener advised; and fearing lest, while on the voyage, he himself might be robbed, he put the talisman along with the gold in one of the olive jars, marking it with a number so that he might know it again. Then he made a bargain with the owner of the vessel, and on the third day the seamen came and carried away the jars and stowed them on board. And the captain said to Camaralzaman, who had accompanied them, 'Do not be long in returning, for the wind is fair and I only wait for you to set sail.'

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So Camaralzaman hastened back to say farewell to the old gardener and to thank him for all that he had done; but when he arrived at the house he found the old man so stricken with grief at his departure that he was already at the point of death. Camaralzaman therefore sat down by his bed and tended him, holding him by the hand and speaking many comfortable words; and toward evening, having made his profession of faith, as all good Mussulmans do, the old man let fall his head and expired.

Camaralzaman closed his eyes, wrapped his body for burial, and having dug a grave in the garden, interred it. Then he went down in haste to the shore and found that the vessel had gone.

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Once again, therefore, despair returned to him, for now a second time the talisman was lost, and he had no hope of recovering it. Also he must needs wait another year before the ship could return and take him upon his way. So going to the landlord of the garden he became a tenant in the place of his dead friend, and hiding what remained of the gold in fifty other olive jars, he set to work once more as a gardener until the time should once more come round for him to embark.

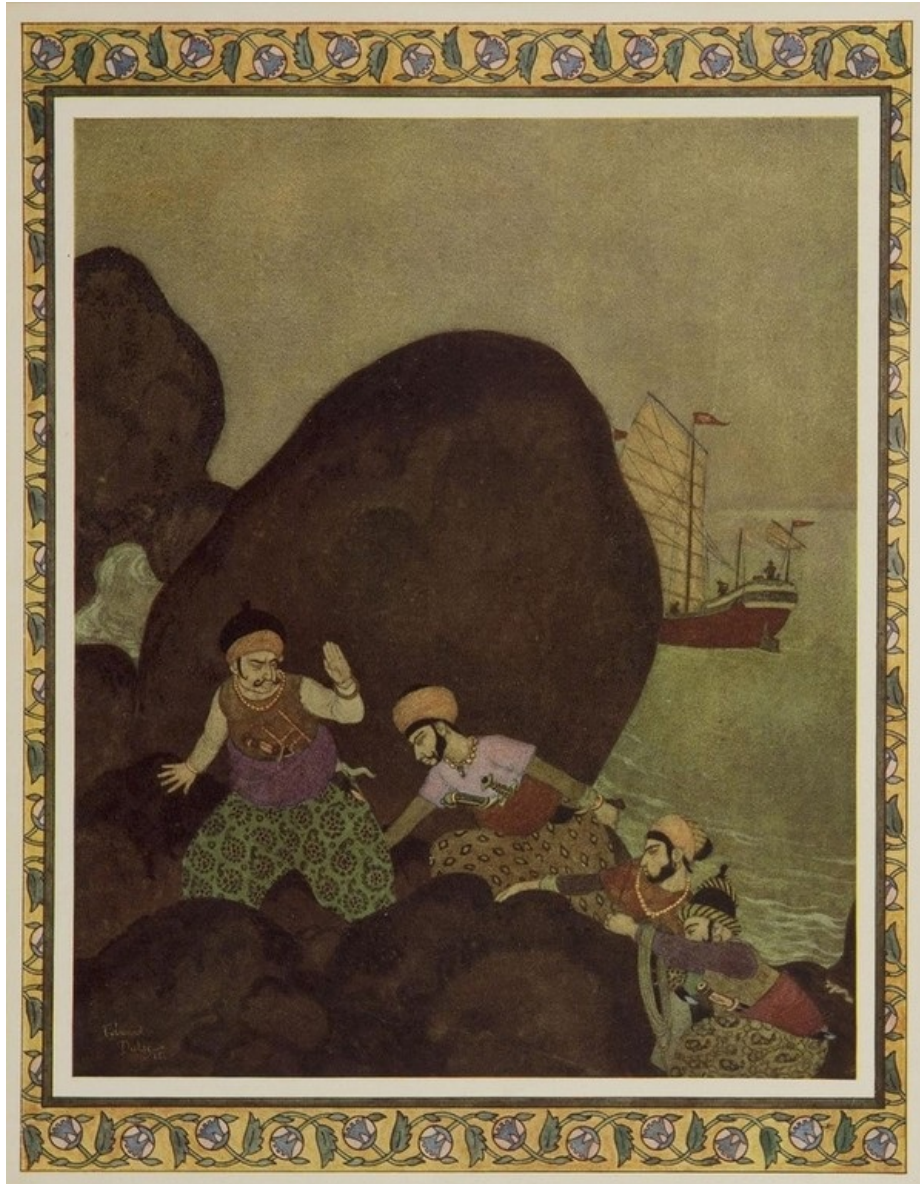
Meantime, under a favourable wind, the ship arrived at the island of Ebony; and it so happened that as it came into the harbour the Princess Badoura was looking out of one of the palace windows toward the sea. No sooner did her eyes rest upon the sails of that ship than her heart became uplifted with joy. 'Surely,' she said to herself, 'either my beloved is there on board or it brings news of him.'

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Capture of Camaralzaman.

'The captain of the ship goes to capture Camaralzaman at the command of Badoura.' ([p. 99](#))



So going down to the shore, accompanied by her emirs and attendants, she caused the master of the vessel to be summoned before her and inquired of him what merchandise he had brought. 'O King,' replied the captain, 'I have spices, drugs, aromatic scents, and sweet ointments; I have also rich fabrics and metal-work; and in addition to all these things I have olives such as are not to be found in any other country, and these, since I came by them fortunately, I can let you have cheap.' On hearing this a desire for the olives took hold of the Princess, and she said, 'What quantity have you brought?' 'Fifty jars,' answered the master; 'that is all I have.' 'Well,' said the Princess, 'I will take fifty.' And she paid him for them the price that he asked—a thousand pieces of silver.

Now presently, when the olives had been conveyed to the palace, there came upon the Princess a strange desire to taste that which she had just purchased, so she gave orders for one of the jars

to be opened and the contents to be poured into a dish; and as the attendant poured, first came olives and then a heap of red gold.

Then said Badoura to the Princess Hayatelnfoos, who alone was with her, 'That is gold!' So she examined further and in every jar found gold in equal quantity. Presently as she emptied one of the jars, along with the gold came the talisman which Camaralzaman had concealed there; and no sooner did the Princess Badoura see it than she knew it again; and she showed it to Hayatelnfoos, saying, 'Lo, this is the stone whose loss hath caused our separation; now, finding it again, I know that my beloved will be restored to me.'

Then she sent in haste and caused the master of the vessel to be brought before her, and she said to him, 'Whence had you these olives? Tell me the truth, or you shall die!' [Pg 99]

Thereupon the master being smitten in his conscience dropped to earth and lay there, crying, 'Alas, I had them of a poor man who brought them himself to the vessel but did not return at the appointed time; therefore I sailed without him. Be assured, O King, that all the money I got for them shall be honestly paid to him.'

Then said Badoura, 'As to that I care not. But go back straightway to that country from which you came and find the man and bring him to me, for he is a malefactor against the laws of this kingdom, for he hath stolen from me a precious thing dearer than life itself; therefore is his life forfeit. And if you fail to bring him, then all the merchandise which you have now brought I will hold, and no ship or merchandise of yours shall ever enter this port again. But if you bring him safely, I will reward you abundantly.' [Pg 100]

The master therefore, being so compelled, left his merchandise in bond and returned with all haste to the port from which he had set out, and there coming with his men to the house of Camaralzaman, he knocked; and no sooner had the Prince opened than, seizing him, they carried him off, and bestowed him on board the vessel as a prisoner.

Camaralzaman said to them, 'Masters, why are you treating me thus?' They answered, 'Thou art an offender and malefactor against the King of the Ebony Isles, son to the King Amanos, and hast stolen his wealth; yea, a precious thing hast thou stolen from him, and now he requires it of thee!'

'Well,' said Camaralzaman, 'this is the first that I have heard of it.'

So they bore him away, and after they had sailed for some while they came again to the city of Ebony, and word was sent to the palace that the master of the vessel had returned bringing the King his prisoner. [Pg 101]

Then Badoura gave orders, and Camaralzaman, still in his workman's dress, his body wasted with grief, and his face and hands soiled with the defilements of his long voyage, came and stood before her. As soon as she saw him her heart leapt with joy, but she feared to reveal herself, for how would it appear to her emirs and chamberlains were she before all eyes to throw herself into the arms of a common gardener. Therefore, retaining her disguise, she spoke to him as a King should do to a peasant, and in a man's voice. And Camaralzaman, fearful of the unknown charge which was to be brought against him, stood before her with bowed head and did not look up.

The Princess asked him but a few questions, of the country from which he had come, of the time that he had lived there, and what calling he had followed. Then she said to him, 'Be assured that if thou art innocent of that which is charged against thee, thine honour and integrity shall be made known to all. Even now if thou wilt confess to having taken a thing which is not thine and wilt restore it to me, I am willing to pardon thee, seeing that it was done without thought of evil.' But Camaralzaman hearing these words knew not what they meant, for his thoughts were all astray and he did not dream that it was of himself and of the talisman that she spoke. [Pg 102]

Then Badoura ordered an officer of her household to take charge of the prisoner and treat him with all care; and having recompensed the master of the vessel and set free his merchandise, she went in to Hayatelnfoos, and told her of all that had come about. And she said to her, 'O bosom-friend and comforter of my heart, be sure that what brings happiness to me shall bring it to thee also; for no fortune shall Heaven send me, nor any bliss, however great, that I am not ready to share equally with thee.' Then speaking of Camaralzaman she said, 'So great a distance divides in men's eyes what seems his present lot from ours, that it were peril to be sudden in this matter lest the truth of our story should not be believed. Therefore we must wait till of his own natural nobleness he shall have raised himself in the eyes of all.' And to this plan Queen Hayatelnfoos agreed. [Pg 103]

So the next day Badoura gave orders to conduct Camaralzaman to the bath; then she caused him to be clad in an emir's robes and brought forth where all might see; and lo! as a willow branch after rain or the planet of love shining at dusk, so seemed he then to the eyes of all.

Then again she caused him to be brought before her in the Hall of Judgment and pronounced him clear of all that had been charged against him. 'For that which was precious to me,' she said, 'has been restored; and other hands held it from me, not thine. Therefore as thou hast been proved true I will appoint thee to high honour.' Then addressing the emirs and councillors who were gathered about her she said, 'My lords, this Camaralzaman whom to-day I admit to my Councils is not unworthy of the high post which I confer on him; for not only have I tested him as ye have seen on an accusation whereof he is innocent, but he is a man of approved valour, of grace, and learning, being also a descendant of kings.' [Pg 104]

Great was Camaralzaman's astonishment at finding his name and lineage known to the King of the Ebony Isles; but not daring to question how his good fortune had come about he prostrated

himself before the throne, saying, 'O King, only by thy favour have I been raised to this honour, and by that alone can I either deserve or maintain it.' So the Council ended, and Camaralzaman was conducted to a large and sumptuous abode with slaves and attendants to wait upon him, and everything that his heart could desire save only his beloved Princess.

[Pg 105]

After a few days Badoura, wishing to find occasion for Camaralzaman's more frequent presence, appointed him to the office of Grand Treasurer, and thereafter scarcely a day passed that she did not bestow on him fresh honours; while Camaralzaman, for his part, wondering why such high favours were shown him, served the King diligently, and was greatly respected not only by all the emirs and officials of the Court, but by the common people, who swore by his life, and would have asked no better than for such an one as he to be their ruler.

So time went on, and ever did the wonder of Camaralzaman increase why he alone had been chosen for such great honours. And because this thing seemed to him without reason, he came at last to fear it. Furthermore, for loss of his beloved, restlessness and the desire for travel filled his heart, and in no one place could he find happiness. So one day coming to the King—that is to say to Badoura—he spoke as follows: 'O King of the Age, so great is the favour that thou hast shown me, that I know well it cannot last. Suffer me therefore to depart before I have outstayed my welcome; so shall my gratitude be undiminished and the nature of thy regard for me unchanged.' When Badoura heard these words she smiled on him and said: 'If indeed it is thy will to depart, then must thou take and cast away once more—yea, lose utterly—this stone whose virtue brought thee back to me, and by which, while it is in my possession, our lives are bound.' So saying she reached out and put the talisman in his hand.

[Pg 106]

When Camaralzaman beheld the stone once more his wonder was beyond words. 'O King,' he cried, 'whence came this to thee? For herein lies the cause of all my afflictions and separation from one whom I loved as my own soul.'

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'Surely,' answered Badoura, 'none can part from that talisman without estrangement and separation. And since now I have parted from it to thee, our separation must infallibly begin from this hour. Therefore the King of the Ebony Isles thou shalt see no more.'

So saying she passed out of the chamber, and Camaralzaman stood and wondered, not knowing what to think.

Then Badoura went in haste to a closet, and there she put on the dress and the girdle which she had worn on the day of separation; and taking from her head the man's turban, she spread her hair and put on a head-dress of fine gold delicately wrought. So she returned to him, and when Camaralzaman saw her he uttered a cry and ran into her arms and held her with kisses as if he could never let her go. And when at last he spoke of things other than his joy—'How,' he inquired, 'has the King accomplished this miracle? Surely when he spoke I understood nothing of what he said.'

[Pg 108]

Badoura smiled as she answered: 'When the King put the talisman into thy hand, then did his kingship cease, and he returned once more to his true form. O my lord, look upon thy king, who is now become thy slave. Surely hadst thou loved me a little more thou wouldst have known me.'

Then she told Camaralzaman of all that had happened to her from first to last; and on the morrow she went to King Amanos, and to him also made her story plain. Nor would she allow that any deception had been used, 'For truly,' she said, 'I and my beloved are one; and I did but come before and prepare for him the place which he was destined to fill. Therefore when I married thy daughter, it was Camaralzaman who married her; and when I accepted of thee the crown, it was Camaralzaman who accepted it. Give me leave, therefore, O King, who hast been to me as a father, to show my beloved to the Queen whom I have won for him, and to the people over whom, in his name, I have ruled.'

[Pg 109]

Greatly was King Amanos astonished to hear a woman utter such words; and the wonder of Camaralzaman was scarcely less. Yet, as she had brought fortune and happiness to both alike, they consented to do her will; and so it was agreed.

Therefore from that day on did Camaralzaman take up the power and authority which Badoura had attained for him, rejoicing also in the domestic felicity of two wives, the one as beautiful as the other, each without jealousy, and having no wish or thought out of which estrangement could arise. Doubtless it was the perfect happiness in which he thus dwelt which caused Camaralzaman to forget altogether the object for which his journey had been begun. No second dream of his father, the King Shahzaman, ever came to remind him of his neglected purpose, while to the dominions of King Gaiour of China he had no wish to return.

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[Pg 111]

Epilogue

'This, O King, is the story of Prince Camaralzaman and of the Princess Badoura from the time of their falling in love until the day when all their wanderings of separation were ended. A year later the two Queens each presented him with a son almost upon the same day. And the birth of these Princes was celebrated with every kind of festivity and rejoicing.'

As Scheherazade concluded her story the light of dawn grew full. For a thousand and one nights she had given entertainment to her lord, saving at the same time the lives of her fellow-women. During this period she had borne the King three children, all with so strong a resemblance to their father that even he could find no cause in them for casting suspicion upon his wife's virtue.

So the tale being ended Scheherazade rose, and having kissed the ground at the King's feet, said, 'O King of the Age, perfect and incomparable, lo in dust and ashes I thy slave come to present to thee a petition.' And the King said, 'Ask, and it shall be granted thee.'

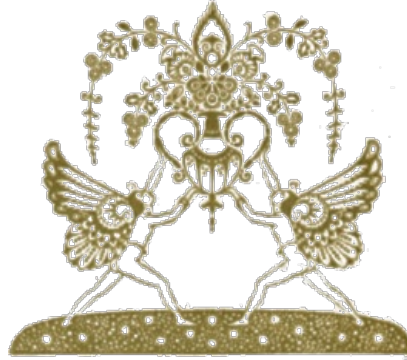
[Pg 112]

Then Scheherazade called to her attendants and said, 'Bring in the children!' So they brought the children quickly; one of them walked, one crawled, and one lay at the breast.

So she set them before the King, and said, 'These children are thine and mine. In pain I bore them, having little hope of any joy that they might bring me; for under sentence of death I brought them into the world, and though thrice I have been a mother thou hast not yet pardoned me. Say, therefore, O King, when is my death to be; or, if it is not to be, then let my suspense be ended.'

At these words the King wept; and embracing his children tenderly, cried: 'O Scheherazade, by Allah I swear to thee that before the coming of these children thou wast pardoned already. Nor shall the death of such an one as thou be laid to my charge when Kings come before God to be judged.'

[Pg 113]



The Final Marriage Procession.



Then Scheherazade fell down and kissed his feet and his hands, crying, 'God give thee a long life, and power and strength, and dominion and majesty to the world's end.'

Joy of that news spread through the palace, and thence to the city and all the people; and the night of rejoicing that followed was a night not to be reckoned among lives, for its colour was as the rainbow in its promise over young fields of corn, and its light whiter than the face of day.

THE END

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK PRINCESS BADOURA: A TALE FROM THE ARABIAN NIGHTS ***

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