

STORIES FROM THE PERSIAN



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Stories from the Persian

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ABDÛLLA OF KHORASSAN

AHMED THE COBBLER

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CHARLES W. SEVER

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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THESE tales are taken from Malcolm's Sketches of Persia, one of the most agreeable books in the English language, though it seems scarcely to be known to the present generation of Americans. They were recited to Malcolm, while he was on a mission to Persia, at the beginning of this century, by story-tellers of the highest reputation, who enjoyed, and I think every reader will allow deserved, royal favor. I have long wished to see them reprinted, for the pleasure which they are sure to give; and I am persuaded that many will feel obliged to the publisher for bringing to their notice what will be practically a charming novelty.

F. J. CHILD.

CAMBRIDGE,

Nov. 1, 1887.



S T O R Y  
OF  
ABDÛLLA OF KHORASSAN.

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IN a sequestered vale of the fruitful province of Khorassan there lived a peasant called AbdÛlla. He had married a person in his own rank of life, who, though very plain in her appearance, had received from her fond father the fine name of Zeebâ, or the beautiful; to which act of parental folly the good woman owed the few seeds of vanity that mixed in her homely character. It was this feeling that led her to name her two children YÛsuph and Fatima, — conceiving, no doubt, that the fortunate name of the son of Yâcoob, the vizier of Far'oun and fascinator of Zûleikhâ,

would aid the boy in his progress through life; while there could be no doubt of her little girl receiving equal advantages from being named after the daughter of the Prophet and the wife of the renowned Ali.

With all these family pretensions from high names, no man's means could be more humble or views more limited than those of AbdÛlla; but he was content and happy. He was strong and healthy, and labored for the reis, or squire, who owned the land on which his cottage stood; he had done so from youth, and had never left, nor ever desired to leave, his native valley. The wages of his labor were paid in grain and cloth, sufficient for the food and clothing of his family and himself; with money he was unacquainted except by name.

It happened, however, one day, that the reis was so well pleased with AbdÛlla's exertions that he made him a present of ten piastres. AbdÛlla could hardly express his thanks, he was so sur-

prised and overjoyed at this sudden influx of wealth. The moment he could get away from his daily labor he ran home to his wife. "There, my Zeebâ," said he, "there are riches for you!" and he spread the money before her. The astonishment and delight of the good woman was little less than that of her husband, and the children were called to share in the joy of their parents. "Well," said AbdÛlla, still looking at the money, "the next thing to consider is, what is to be done with this vast sum. The reis has given me to-morrow as a holiday; and I do think, my dear wife, if you approve, I will go to the famous city of Meshed: I never saw it, but it is not above six or seven fersekh's distant. I will pay my devotions at the shrine of the holy Imâm Mehdee, upon whom be God's blessing, and like a good Mahometan deposit there two piastres, — one-fifth of my wealth, — and then I will go to the great bazaar, of which I have heard so much, and purchase with the remainder

everything you, my dear wife and children, can wish ; tell me what you would like best."

" I will be moderate," said Zeebâ ; " I want nothing but a piece of handsome silk for a dress ; I think it would be becoming ;" and as she said so, all the associations to which her father had given birth when he gave her a name, shot across her mind. " Bring me," said the sturdy little Yûsuf, " a nice horse and a sword." " And me," said his sister, in a softer tone, " an Indian handkerchief and a pair of golden slippers." " Every one of these articles shall be here tomorrow evening," said AbdÛlla, as he kissed his happy family ; and early next morning, taking a stout staff in his hand, he commenced his journey towards Meshed.

When AbdÛlla approached the holy city, his attention was first attracted by the cluster of splendid domes and minarets which encircled the tomb of the holy Imâm Mehdee, whose roofs glittered with

gold. He gazed with wonder at a sight which appeared to him more like those which the faithful are promised in heaven than anything he ever expected to see on this earth. Passing through the streets which led to such magnificent buildings, he could look at nothing but them. When arrived at the gate of the sacred shrine, he stopped for a moment in silent awe, and asked a venerable priest, who was reading the Koran, if he might proceed, explaining at the same time his object. "Enter, my brother," said the old man. "Bestow your alms, and you shall be rewarded; for one of the most pious of the caliphs has said, 'Prayer takes a man half way to paradise; fasting brings him to its portals; but these are only opened to him who is charitable.'"

Having deposited, like a good and pious Mussulman, the fifth<sup>1</sup> of his treas-

<sup>1</sup> The Mahometan law only requires a small deduction on account of charity from what is necessary for subsistence; but of all superfluous wealth (and such

ure on the shrine of the holy Imâm, AbdÛlla went to the great bazaar; on entering which his senses were quite confounded by the novel sight of the pedestrian crowd hurrying to and fro, the richly-caparisoned horses, the splendid trains of the nobles, and the loaded camels and mules, which filled the space between rich shops, where every ware of Europe, India, China, Tartary, and Persia was displayed. He gazed with open mouth at everything he saw, and felt for the first time what an ignorant and insignificant being he had hitherto been. Though pushed from side to side by those on foot, and often nearly run over by those on horseback, it was some time before he became aware of the dangers to which his wonder exposed him. These accidents, however, soon put him out of humor with the bustle he had at first so much admired, and determined him to finish his business and return to his quiet home.

AbdÛlla deemed his ten piastres), true believers were expected to give one-fifth to the poor.

Entering a shop where there was a number of silks such as he had seen worn by the family of the reis, he inquired for their finest pieces. The shopman looked at him, and observing from his dress that he was from the country, concluded he was one of those rich farmers who, notwithstanding the wealth they have acquired, maintain the plain habits of the peasantry, to whom they have a pride in belonging. He consequently thought he had a good customer; that is, a man who added to riches but little knowledge of the article he desired to purchase. With this impression he tossed and tumbled over every piece of silk in his shop. AbdÛlla was so bewildered by their beauty and variety, that it was long before he could decide; at last he fixed upon one, which was purple, with a rich embroidered border. "I will take this," he said, wrapping it up and putting it under his arm; "what is the price?"

"I shall only ask you, who are a new customer," said the man, "two hundred

piastres ; I should ask any one else three or four hundred for so exquisite a specimen of manufacture, but I wish to tempt you back again, when you leave your beautiful lands in the country to honor our busy town with your presence." AbdÛlla stared, replaced the silk, and repeated in amazement, "Two — hundred — piastres ! you must be mistaken ; do you mean such piastres as these ?" taking one out of the eight he had left in his pocket, and holding it up to the gaze of the astonished shopkeeper. "Certainly I do," said the latter ; "and it is very cheap at that price." "Poor Zeebâ !" said AbdÛlla, with a sigh, at the thoughts of her disappointment. "Poor who ?" said the silk-mercier. "My wife," said AbdÛlla. "What have I to do with your wife ?" said the man, whose tone altered as his chance of sale diminished. "Why," said AbdÛlla, "I will tell you all : I have worked hard for the reis of our village ever since I was a boy ; I never saw money till yesterday, when he gave me

ten piastres. I came to Meshed, where I had never been before. I have given, like a good Mussulman, a fifth of my wealth to the Imâm Mehdee, the holy descendant of our blessed Prophet, and with the eight remaining piastres I intend to buy a piece of embroidered silk for my good wife, a horse and sword for my little boy, and an Indian handkerchief and a pair of golden slippers for my darling daughter; and here you ask me two hundred piastres for one piece of silk! How am I to pay you, and with what money am I to buy the other articles, — tell me that!” said AbdÛlla, in a reproachful tone. “Get out of my shop!” said the enraged vender of silks; “here have I been wasting my valuable time, and rumpling my choicest goods, for a fool and a madman! Go along to your Zeebâ and your booby children; buy stale cakes and black sugar for them, and do not trouble me any more.” So saying, he thrust his new and valued customer out of the door.

AbdÛlla muttered to himself as he went away, "No doubt this is a rascal, but there may be honest men in Meshed ; I will try amongst the horse-dealers ; and having inquired where these were to be found, he hastened to get a handsome pony for Yûsuph. No sooner had he arrived at the horse market, and made his wishes known, than twenty were exhibited. As he was admiring one that pranced along delightfully, a friend, whom he had never seen before, whispered him to beware ; that the animal, though he went very well when heated, was dead lame when cool. He had nearly made up his mind to purchase another, when the same man significantly pointed to the hand of the owner, which was one finger short, and then champing with his mouth and looking at the admired horse, gave AbdÛlla to understand that his beloved boy might incur some hazard from such a purchase. The very thought alarmed him ; and he turned to his kind friend, and asked if he could not

recommend a suitable animal. The man said his brother had one, which, if he could be prevailed upon to part with, would just answer, but he doubted whether he would sell him; yet as his son, who used to ride this horse, was gone to school, he thought he might. AbdÛlla was all gratitude, and begged him to exert his influence. This was promised and done; and in a few minutes a smart little gray horse, with head and tail in the air, cantered up. The delighted peasant conceived YÛsuf on his back, and in a hurry to realize his vision, demanded the price. "Any other person but yourself," said the man, "should not have him for one piastre less than two hundred; but as I trust to make a friend as well as a bargain, I have persuaded my brother to take only one hundred and fifty." The astonished AbdÛlla stepped back. "Why, you horse-dealers," said he, "whom I thought were such good men, are as bad as the silk-mercers!" He then recapitulated to his friend the

rise of his present fortune, and all that had occurred since he entered Meshed. The man had hardly patience to hear him to a close. "And have I," said he, "been throwing away my friendship, and hazarding a quarrel with my brethren, by an over-zealous honesty to please a fool of a bumpkin? Get along to your Zeebâ, and your Yûsuf, and your Fati-ma, and buy for your young hopeful the sixteenth share of a jackass! The smallest portion of that animal is more suited to your means and your mind than a hair of the tail of the fine horses you have presumed to look at."

So saying, he went away in a rage, leaving AbdÛlla in perfect dismay. He thought, however, he might still succeed in obtaining some of the lesser articles; he, however, met with nothing but disappointment: the lowest-priced sword was thirty piastres, the golden slippers were twenty, and a small Indian handkerchief was twelve, being four piastres more than all he possessed.

Disgusted with the whole scene, the good man turned his steps towards home. As he was passing through the suburbs he met a holy mendicant exclaiming, "Charity, charity! He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord; and he that lendeth to the Lord shall be repaid a hundred-fold." "What is that you say?" said AbdÛlla. The beggar repeated his exclamation. "You are the only person I can deal with," said the good but simple peasant; "there are eight piastres, — all I possess; take them, and use them in the name of the Almighty, but take care that I am hereafter paid a hundred-fold, for without it I shall never be able to gratify my dear wife and children." And in the simplicity of his heart he repeated to the mendicant all which had occurred, that he might exactly understand the situation in which he was placed.

The holy man, scarcely able to suppress a smile as he carefully folded up the eight piastres, bade AbdÛlla to be of good heart

and rely upon a sure return. He then left him, exclaiming as before, "Charity, charity! He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord; and he that lendeth to the Lord shall be repaid a hundred-fold."

When Abdûlla came within sight of his cottage, they all ran to meet him. The breathless Yûsuf was the first who reached his father: "Where is my horse and my sword?" "And my Indian handkerchief and golden slippers?" said little Fatima, who had now come up. "And my silk vest?" said Zeebâ, who was close behind her daughter. "But wealth has changed your disposition, my dear Abdûlla!" said the good woman. "You have become grave, and, no doubt," she added with a smile, "so dignified, that you could not be burdened, but have hired a servant to bring home the horse and to carry the presents for your family. Well, children, be patient; we shall see everything in a few minutes." Abdûlla shook his head, but would not speak a

word till he entered his dwelling. He then seated himself on his coarse mat, and repeated all his adventures, every part of which was heard with temper till his last act, — that of giving his piastres to the mendicant. Zeebâ, who had a little more knowledge of the world than her husband, and whose mind was ruffled by disappointment, loudly reproached him with his stupidity and folly in thus throwing away the money he had obtained by the liberality of the reis, to whom she immediately went and gave information of all that had occurred. The enraged squire sent for AbdÛlla. “You blockhead,” said he, “what have you been about? I, who am a man of substance, never give more than a copper coin to these vagabond rascals who go about asking charity; and here you have given one of them eight piastres, — enough to spoil the whole generation: but he promised you a hundred-fold, and you shall have it to prevent future folly. Here,” said he to the servants near him,

“seize the fellow, and give him a hundred stripes!” The order was obeyed as soon as given, and poor AbdÛlla went home on the night of the day following that which had dawned upon his wealth, sore from a beating, without a coin in his pocket, out of temper with silk-merciers, horse-dealers, cutlers, slipper-makers, mendicants, squires, wives, himself, and all the world.

Early next morning AbdÛlla was awakened by a message that the reis wanted him. Before he went he had forgiven his wife, who was much grieved at the punishment which her indiscretion had brought upon her husband. He also kissed his children, and bid them be of good heart, for he might yet, through God’s favor, make amends for the disappointment he had caused them. When he came to the reis, the latter said, “I have found a job for you, AbdÛlla, that will bring you to your senses: here, in this dry soil, I mean to dig for water, and you must toil day after day till it is

found." So saying, he went away, leaving AbdÛlla to his own sad reflections and hard labor. He made little progress the first two days; but on the third, when about six cubits below the surface, he came upon a brass vessel; on looking into which he found it full of round white stones, which were beautiful from their smoothness and fine lustre. He tried to break one with his teeth, but could not. "Well," said he, "this is no doubt some of the rice belonging to the squire, which has been turned into stones. I am glad of it; he is a cruel master; I will, however, take them home — they are very pretty; and now I recollect I saw some very like them at Meshed for sale. But what can this be?" said AbdÛlla to himself, disengaging another pot from the earth. "Oho! these are darker, they must have been wheat; but they are very beautiful; and here!" cried he, "these shining pieces of glass are finer and brighter than all the rest; but I will try if they are glass;" and he

put one of them between two stones, but could not break it.

Pleased with this discovery, and believing he had got something valuable, but ignorant what it was, he dug out all he could find, and putting them into a bag, carefully concealed it even from his wife. His plan was, to obtain a day's leave from his master and go again to Meshed, where he had hopes of selling the pretty stones of various colors for as much money as would purchase the silk vest, the horse, the sword, the slippers, and the handkerchief. His mind dwelt with satisfaction on the pleasing surprise it would be to those he loved, to see him return home, mounted on the horse, and loaded with the other articles. But while the pious AbdÛlla indulged in this dream, he always resolved that the Imâm Mehdee should receive a fifth of whatever wealth he obtained.

After some weeks' hard labor at the well, water was found. The reis was in good humor, and the boon of a holiday

was granted. AbdÛlla departed before daylight, that no one might see the bag which he carried ; when close to Meshed, he concealed it near the root of a tree, having first taken out two handfuls of the pretty stones, to try what kind of a market he could make of them. He went to a shop where he had seen some like them. He asked the man, pointing to those in the shop, if he would buy any such articles. "Certainly," said the jeweller, for such he was ; "have you one to sell ?" "One !" said AbdÛlla, "I have plenty." "Plenty !" repeated the man. "Yes ; a bagful." "Common pebbles, I suppose ; can you show me any ?" "Look here !" said AbdÛlla, taking out a handful, which so surprised the jeweller that it was some time before he could speak. "Will you remain here, honest man," said he, "for a moment," trembling as he spoke, "and I will return instantly." So saying, he left the shop, but reappeared in a few minutes with the chief magistrate and some of his at-

tendants. "There is the man," said he; "I am innocent of all dealings with him. He has found the long-lost treasure of Khoosroo;<sup>1</sup> his pockets are filled with diamonds, rubies, and pearls, in price and lustre far beyond any existing; and he says he has a bagful." The magistrate ordered AbdÛlla to be searched, and the jewels which had been described were found. He was then desired to show where he had deposited the bag, which he did; all were carefully sealed, and carried with AbdÛlla to the governor, by whom he was strictly examined. He told his whole history from first to last: the receiving of ten piastres; his charity at the shrine of the Imâm; his intended purchases; the conduct of the mercer, the horse-dealer, the cutler, the slipper-maker; the promises of the mendicant; the disappointment and anger of his wife; the cruelty of the reis; the digging of the well; the discovery of the pretty

<sup>1</sup> Cyrus. There is a common belief in Persia that an immense treasure was buried by this monarch.

stones ; the plan formed for disposing of them, with the reserve for further charity : all this was narrated with a clearness and simplicity that stamped its truth, which was confirmed by the testimony of his wife and children, who were brought to Meshed. But notwithstanding this, Abdûlla, his family, and the treasures he had found were a few days afterwards despatched for Isfahan, under a guard of five hundred horsemen. Express couriers were sent before to advise the ministers of the great Abbas of the discovery which had been made, and of all that had been done.

During these proceedings at Meshed, extraordinary events occurred at Isfahan. Shah Abbas the Great saw one night in a dream the holy Imâm Mehdee clothed in green robes. The saint, after looking steadfastly at the monarch, exclaimed, " Abbas, protect and favor my friend ! " The king was much troubled at this dream, and desired his astrologers and wise men to expound it ; but they could

not. On the two following nights the same vision appeared and the same words were pronounced. The monarch lost all temper, and threatened the chief astrologer and others with death unless they relieved the anxiety of his mind before the evening of the same day. While preparations were making for their execution, the couriers from the governor of Meshed arrived, and the vizier, after perusing the letters, hastened to the king. "Let the mind of the refuge of the world be at repose," he said, "for the dream of our monarch is explained. The peasant AbdÛlla of Kho-rassan, who, though ignorant and poor, is pious and charitable, and who has become the chosen instrument of Providence for discovering the treasures of Khoosroo, is the revealed friend of the holy Imâm Mehdee, who has commanded that this good and humble man be honored by the protection and favor of the king of kings."

Shah Abbas listened to the particulars

which were written from Meshed with delight; his mind was quite relieved, and he ordered all his nobles and his army to accompany him a day's march from Isfahan to meet the friend of the holy Imâm. When the approach of the party was announced, the king walked from his tent a short distance to meet them. First came one hundred horsemen; next Abdûlla, with his arms bound, sitting on a camel; after him, on another, his wife Zeebâ, and followed by their children, Yûsuph and Fatima, riding together on a third. Behind the prisoners was the treasure. A hundred horsemen guarded each flank, and two hundred covered the rear. Shah Abbas made the camels which carried Abdûlla and his family kneel close to him, and aided, with his royal hands, to untie the cords by which the good man was bound, while others released his wife and children. A suit of the king's own robes was directed to be put upon Abdûlla, and the monarch led him to a seat close to his throne: but

before he would consent to be seated, he thus addressed his majesty : —

“ O King of the Universe, I am a poor man, but I was contented with my lot, and happy in my family, till I first knew wealth. From that day my life has been a series of misfortunes : folly and ambition have made me entertain wishes out of my sphere, and I have brought disappointment and misfortune on those I loved best ; but now that my death is near, and it pleases your majesty to amuse yourself with a mock honor to your slave, he is satisfied, if your royal clemency will only spare the lives of that kind woman and these dear children. Let them be restored to the peace and innocence of their native valley, and deal with me according to your royal pleasure.”

On uttering these words, AbdÛlla, overcome by his feelings, burst into tears. Abbas was himself greatly moved. “ Good and pious man,” he said, “ I intend to honor, not to slay thee. Thy humble

and sincere prayers, and thy charitable offerings at the shrine of the holy Meh-dee, have been approved and accepted. He has commanded me to protect and favor thee. Thou shalt stay a few days at my capital, to recover from thy fatigues, and return as governor of that province from which thou hast come a prisoner. A wise minister, versed in the forms of office, shall attend thee; but in thy piety and honesty of character I shall find the best qualities for him who is destined to rule over others. Thy good wife Zeebâ has already received the silk vest she so anxiously expected; and it shall be my charge," continued the gracious monarch, with a smile, "to see Yûsuf provided with a horse and sword, and that little Fatima shall have her handkerchief and golden slippers."

The manner as well as the expressions of the king dispelled all AbdÛlla's fears and filled his heart with boundless gratitude. He was soon after nominated governor of Khorassan, and became fa-

mous over the country for his humanity and justice. He repaired, beautified, and richly endowed the shrine of the holy Imâm, to whose guardian care he ever ascribed his advancement. Yûsufh became a favorite of Abbas, and was distinguished by his skill in horsemanship, and by his gallantry. Fatima was married to one of the principal nobles, and the good Zeebâ had the satisfaction through life of being sole mistress in her family, and having no rival in the affection of her husband, who continued to cherish, in his exalted situation, those ties and feelings which had formed his happiness in humble life.

S T O R Y  
OF  
AHMED THE COBBLER.

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IN the great city of Isfahan lived Ahmed the cobbler, an honest and industrious man, whose wish was to pass through life quietly; and he might have done so, had he not married a handsome wife, who, although she had condescended to accept of him as a husband, was far from being contented with his humble sphere of life.

Sittâra — such was the name of Ahmed's wife — was ever forming foolish schemes of riches and grandeur; and though Ahmed never encouraged them, he was too fond a husband to quarrel with what gave her pleasure: an incredulous smile or a shake of the head was his only answer to her often-told day-dreams; and

she continued to persuade herself that she was certainly destined to great fortune.

It happened one evening, while in this temper of mind, that she went to the Hemmâm, where she saw a lady retiring dressed in a magnificent robe, covered with jewels, and surrounded by slaves. This was the very condition Sittâra had always longed for, and she eagerly inquired the name of the happy person who had so many attendants and such fine jewels. She learned it was the wife of the chief astrologer to the king. With this information she returned home. Her husband met her at the door, but was received with a frown; nor could all his caresses obtain a smile or a word. For several hours she continued silent, and in apparent misery; at length she said, —

“Cease your caresses, unless you are ready to give me a proof that you do really and sincerely love me.”

“What proof of love,” exclaimed poor Ahmed, “can you desire, which I will not give?”

“Give over cobbling ; it is a vile, low trade, and never yields more than ten or twelve dinars a day. Turn astrologer ; your fortune will be made, and I shall have all I wish, and be happy.”

“Astrologer !” cried Ahmed, — “astrologer ! Have you forgotten who I am, — a cobbler without any learning, — that you want me to engage in a profession which requires so much skill and knowledge ?”

“I neither think nor care about your qualifications,” said the enraged wife ; “all I know is, that if you do not turn astrologer immediately, I will be divorced from you to-morrow.”

The cobbler remonstrated, but in vain. The figure of the astrologer’s wife, with her jewels and her slaves, had taken complete possession of Sittâra’s imagination. All night it haunted her ; she dreamt of nothing else, and on awaking declared she would leave the house if her husband did not comply with her wishes. What could poor Ahmed do ?

He was no astrologer ; but he was dotingly fond of his wife, and he could not bear the idea of losing her. He promised to obey ; and having sold his little stock, bought an astrolabe, an astronomical almanac, and a table of the twelve signs of the zodiac. Furnished with these, he went to the market-place, crying : “ I am an astrologer ! I know the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the twelve signs of the zodiac ; I can calculate nativities ; I can foretell everything that is to happen ! ”

No man was better known than Ahmed the cobbler. A crowd soon gathered round him. “ What, friend Ahmed,” said one, “ have you worked till your head is turned ? ” “ Are you tired of looking down at your last,” cried another, “ that you are now looking up at the planets ? ” These and a thousand other jokes assailed the ears of the poor cobbler, who, notwithstanding, continued to exclaim that he was an astrologer, having resolved on doing what he could to please his beautiful wife.

It so happened that the king's jeweller was passing by. He was in great distress, having lost the richest ruby belonging to the crown. Every search had been made to recover this inestimable jewel, but to no purpose; and as the jeweller knew he could no longer conceal its loss from the king, he looked forward to death as inevitable. In this hopeless state, while wandering about the town, he reached the crowd around Ahmed, and asked what was the matter. "Don't you know Ahmed the cobbler?" said one of the by-standers, laughing. "He has been inspired, and is become an astrologer."

A drowning man will catch at a broken reed; the jeweller no sooner heard the sound of the word astrologer, than he went up to Ahmed, told him what had happened, and said, "If you understand your art, you must be able to discover the king's ruby. Do so, and I will give you two hundred pieces of gold. But if you do not succeed within six hours, I will use all my influence at

court to have you put to death as an impostor.”

Poor Ahmed was thunderstruck. He stood long without being able to move or speak, reflecting on his misfortunes, and grieving, above all, that his wife, whom he so loved, had, by her envy and selfishness, brought him to such a fearful alternative. Full of these sad thoughts, he exclaimed aloud, “Oh, woman, woman! thou art more baneful to the happiness of man than the poisonous dragon of the desert!”

The lost ruby had been secreted by the jeweller's wife, who, disquieted by those alarms which ever attend guilt, sent one of her female slaves to watch her husband. This slave, on seeing her master speak to the astrologer, drew near; and when she heard Ahmed, after some moments of apparent abstraction, compare a woman to a poisonous dragon, she was satisfied that he must know everything. She ran to her mistress, and, breathless with fear, cried, “You are discovered, my

dear mistress, — you are discovered by a vile astrologer. Before six hours are past, the whole story will be known, and you will become infamous, if you are even so fortunate as to escape with life, unless you can find some way of prevailing on him to be merciful.” She then related what she had seen and heard; and Ahmed’s exclamation carried as complete conviction to the mind of the terrified mistress as it had done to that of her slave.

The jeweller’s wife, hastily throwing on her veil, went in search of the dreaded astrologer. When she found him, she threw herself at his feet, crying, “Spare my honor and my life, and I will confess everything!”

“What can you have to confess to me?” exclaimed Ahmed, in amazement.

“Oh, nothing, — nothing with which you are not already acquainted. You know too well that I stole the ruby from the king’s crown. I did so to punish my husband, who uses me most cruelly; and

I thought by this means to obtain riches for myself, and to have him put to death. But you, most wonderful man, from whom nothing is hidden, have discovered and defeated my wicked plan. I beg only for mercy, and will do whatever you command me."

An angel from heaven could not have brought more consolation to Ahmed than did the jeweller's wife. He assumed all the dignified solemnity that became his new character, and said, "Woman! I know all thou hast done, and it is fortunate for thee that thou hast come to confess thy sin, and beg for mercy before it was too late. Return to thy house; put the ruby under the pillow of the couch on which thy husband sleeps; let it be laid on the side farthest from the door; and be satisfied thy guilt shall never be even suspected."

The jeweller's wife returned home and did as she was desired. In an hour Ahmed followed her, and told the jeweller he had made his calculations, and found

by the aspect of the sun and moon, and by the configuration of the stars, that the ruby was at that moment lying under the pillow of his couch, on the side farthest from the door. The jeweller thought Ahmed must be crazy; but as a ray of hope is like a ray from heaven to the wretched, he ran to his couch, and there, to his joy and wonder, found the ruby in the very place described. He came back to Ahmed, embraced him, called him his dearest friend and the preserver of his life, gave him the two hundred pieces of gold, declaring that he was the first astrologer of the age.

These praises conveyed no joy to the poor cobbler, who returned home more thankful to God for his preservation than elated by his good fortune. The moment he entered the door, his wife ran up to him and exclaimed, "Well, my dear astrologer, what success?"

"There!" said Ahmed very gravely, "there are two hundred pieces of gold: I hope you will be satisfied now, and not

ask me again to hazard my life, as I have done this morning." He then related all that had passed. But the recital made a very different impression on the lady from what these occurrences had made on Ahmed. Sittâra saw nothing but the gold, which would enable her to vie with the chief astrologer's wife at the Hem-mâm. "Courage!" she said, "courage, my dearest husband! This is only your first labor in your new and noble profession. Go on, and prosper; and we shall become rich and happy."

In vain Ahmed remonstrated, and represented the danger; she burst into tears, and accused him of not loving her, ending with her usual threat of insisting upon a divorce.

Ahmed's heart melted, and he agreed to make another trial. Accordingly, next morning he sallied forth with his astrolabe, his twelve signs of the zodiac, and his almanac, exclaiming as before, "I am an astrologer! I know the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the

twelve signs of the zodiac; I can calculate nativities; I can foretell everything that is to happen!" A crowd again gathered round him, but it was now with wonder, and not ridicule; for the story of the ruby had gone abroad, and the voice of fame had converted the poor cobbler Ahmed into the ablest and most learned astrologer that was ever seen at Isfahan.

While everybody was gazing at him, a lady passed by veiled. She was the wife of one of the richest merchants in the city, and had just been at the Hem-mâm, where she had lost a valuable necklace and ear-rings. She was now returning home in great alarm, lest her husband should suspect her of having given her jewels to a lover. Seeing the crowd around Ahmed, she asked the reason of their assembling, and was informed of the whole story of the famous astrologer: how he had been a cobbler, was inspired with supernatural knowledge, and could, with the help of his astrolabe, his twelve

signs of the zodiac, and his almanac, discover all that ever had, or ever would happen in the world. The story of the jeweller and the king's ruby was then told her, accompanied by a thousand wonderful circumstances which had never occurred. The lady, quite satisfied of his skill, went up to Ahmed and mentioned her loss; saying, "A man of your knowledge and penetration will easily discover my jewels: find them, and I will give you fifty pieces of gold."

The poor cobbler was quite confounded, and looked down, thinking only how to escape without a public exposure of his ignorance. The lady, in pressing through the crowd, had torn the lower part of her veil. Ahmed's downcast eyes noticed this; and wishing to inform her of it in a delicate manner, before it was observed by others, he whispered to her, "Lady, look down at the rent." The lady's head was full of her loss, and she was at that moment endeavoring to recollect how it could have occurred. Ahmed's speech

brought it at once to her mind, and she exclaimed in delighted surprise, "Stay here a few moments, thou great astrologer. I will return immediately with the reward thou so well deservest." Saying this, she left him, and soon returned, carrying in one hand the necklace and ear-rings, and in the other, a purse with the fifty pieces of gold. "There is gold for thee," she said, "thou wonderful man, to whom all the secrets of nature are revealed! I had quite forgotten where I laid the jewels, and without thee should never have found them. But when thou desiredst me to look at the rent below, I instantly recollected the rent near the bottom of the wall in the bath-room, where, before undressing, I had hid them. I can now go home in peace and comfort; and it is all owing to thee, thou wisest of men!"

After these words she walked away, and Ahmed returned to his home, thankful to Providence for his preservation, and fully resolved never again to tempt

it. His handsome wife, however, could not yet rival the chief astrologer's lady in her appearance at the Hemmâm, so she renewed her entreaties and threats to make her fond husband continue his career as an astrologer.

About this time it happened that the king's treasury was robbed of forty chests of gold and jewels, forming the greater part of the wealth of the kingdom. The high treasurer and other officers of state used all diligence to find the thieves, but in vain. The king sent for his astrologer, and declared that if the robbers were not detected by a stated time, he, as well as the principal ministers, should be put to death. Only one day of the short period given them remained. All their search had proved fruitless, and the chief astrologer, who had made his calculations and exhausted his art to no purpose, had quite resigned himself to his fate, when one of his friends advised him to send for the wonderful cobbler, who had become so famous for his extraor-

dinary discoveries. Two slaves were immediately despatched for Ahmed, whom they commanded to go with them to their master. "You see the effects of your ambition," said the poor cobbler to his wife; "I am going to my death. The king's astrologer has heard of my presumption, and is determined to have me executed as an impostor."

On entering the palace of the chief astrologer, he was surprised to see that dignified person come forward to receive him and lead him to the seat of honor, and not less so to hear himself thus addressed: "The ways of heaven, most learned and excellent Ahmed, are unsearchable. The high are often cast down and the low are lifted up. The whole world depends upon fate and fortune. It is my turn now to be depressed by fate; it is thine to be exalted by fortune."

His speech was here interrupted by a messenger from the king, who, having heard of the cobbler's fame, desired his attendance. Poor Ahmed now concluded

that it was all over with him, and followed the king's messenger, praying to God that he would deliver him from this peril. When he came into the king's presence, he bent his body to the ground, and wished his majesty long life and prosperity. "Tell me, Ahmed," said the king, "who has stolen my treasure."

"It was not one man," answered Ahmed, after some consideration; "there were forty thieves concerned in the robbery."

"Very well," said the king; "but who were they; and what have they done with my gold and jewels?"

"These questions," said Ahmed, "I cannot now answer; but I hope to satisfy your majesty, if you will grant me forty days to make my calculations."

"I grant you forty days," said the king; "but when they are past, if my treasure is not found, your life shall pay the forfeit."

Ahmed returned to his house well pleased, for he resolved to take advan-

tage of the time allowed him to fly from a city where his fame was likely to be his ruin. "Well, Ahmed," said his wife, as he entered, "what news at court?"

"No news at all," said he, "except that I am to be put to death at the end of forty days, unless I find forty chests of gold and jewels, which have been stolen from the royal treasury."

"But you will discover the thieves."

"How? By what means am I to find them?"

"By the same art which discovered the ruby and the lady's necklace."

"The same art!" replied Ahmed. "Foolish woman! thou knowest that I have no art, and that I have only pretended to it for the sake of pleasing thee. But I have had sufficient skill to gain forty days, during which time we may easily escape to some other city, and, with the money I now possess, and the aid of my former occupation, we may still obtain an honest livelihood."

"An honest livelihood!" repeated his

lady, with scorn. "Will thy cobbling, thou mean, spiritless wretch, ever enable me to go to the Hemmâm like the wife of the chief astrologer? Hear me, Ahmed! Think only of discovering the king's treasure. Thou hast just as good a chance of doing so as thou hadst of finding the ruby, and the necklace and ear-rings. At all events, I am determined thou shalt not escape; and shouldst thou attempt to run away, I will inform the king's officers, and have thee taken up and put to death, even before the forty days are expired. Thou knowest me too well, Ahmed, to doubt my keeping my word. So take courage, and endeavor to make thy fortune, and to place me in that rank of life to which my beauty entitles me."

The poor cobbler was dismayed at this speech; but knowing there was no hope of changing his wife's resolution, he resigned himself to his fate. "Well," said he, "your will shall be obeyed. All I desire is to pass the few remaining days of my life as comfortably as I can. You

know I am no scholar, and have little skill in reckoning; so there are forty dates; give me one of them every night after I have said my prayers, that I may put them in a jar, and, by counting them, may always see how many of the few days I have to live are gone."

The lady, pleased at carrying her point, took the dates, and promised to be punctual in doing what her husband desired.

Meanwhile the thieves who had stolen the king's treasure, having been kept from leaving the city by fear of detection and pursuit, had received accurate information of every measure taken to discover them. One of them was among the crowd before the palace on the day the king sent for Ahmed; and hearing that the cobbler had immediately declared their exact number, he ran in a fright to his comrades, and exclaimed, "We are all found out! Ahmed, the new astrologer, has told the king that there are forty of us."

“There needed no astrologer to tell that,” said the captain of the gang. “This Ahmed, with all his simple good-nature, is a shrewd fellow. Forty chests having been stolen, he naturally guessed that there must be forty thieves; and he has made a good hit, that is all: still, it is prudent to watch him, for he certainly has made some strange discoveries. One of us must go to-night, after dark, to the terrace of this cobbler’s house, and listen to his conversation with his handsome wife; for he is said to be very fond of her, and will, no doubt, tell her what success he has had in his endeavors to detect us.”

Everybody approved of this scheme, and soon after nightfall one of the thieves repaired to the terrace. He arrived there just as the cobbler had finished his evening prayers, and his wife was giving him the first date. “Ah,” said Ahmed, as he took it, “there is one of the forty.”

The thief, hearing these words, hastened, in consternation, to the gang, and

told them that the moment he took his post he had been perceived by the supernatural knowledge of Ahmed, who immediately told his wife that one of them was there. The spy's tale was not believed by his hardened companions; something was imputed to his fears; he might have been mistaken; in short, it was determined to send two men the next night at the same hour. They reached the house just as Ahmed, having finished his prayers, had received the second date, and heard him exclaim, "My dear wife, to-night there are two of them!"

The astonished thieves fled, and told their still incredulous comrades what they had heard. Three men were consequently sent the third night, four the fourth, and so on. Being afraid of venturing during the day, they always came as evening closed in, and just as Ahmed was receiving his date: hence they all in turn heard him say that which convinced them he was aware of their presence. On the last night they all went, and Ahmed

exclaimed aloud, "The number is complete! To-night the whole forty are here!"

All doubts were now removed. It was impossible that Ahmed should have discovered them by any natural means. How could he ascertain their exact number, and night after night, without ever once being mistaken? He must have learnt it by his skill in astrology. Even the captain now yielded, in spite of his incredulity, and declared his opinion that it was hopeless to elude a man thus gifted; he therefore advised that they should make a friend of the cobbler, by confessing everything to him, and bribing him to secrecy by a share of the booty.

His advice was approved of, and an hour before dawn they knocked at Ahmed's door. The poor man jumped out of bed, and, supposing the soldiers were come to lead him to execution, cried out, "Have patience! I know what you are come for. It is a very unjust and wicked deed."

“Most wonderful man!” said the captain, as the door was opened, “we are fully convinced that thou knowest why we are come, nor do we mean to justify the action of which thou speakest. Here are two thousand pieces of gold, which we will give thee, provided thou wilt swear to say nothing more about the matter.”

“Say nothing about it!” said Ahmed. “Do you think it possible I can suffer such gross wrong and injustice without complaining, and making it known to all the world?”

“Have mercy upon us!” exclaimed the thieves, falling on their knees; “only spare our lives, and we will restore the royal treasure.”

The cobbler started, rubbed his eyes to see if he were asleep or awake; and being satisfied that he was awake, and that the men before him were really the thieves, he assumed a solemn tone, and said, “Guilty men! ye are persuaded that ye cannot escape from my penetration,

which reaches unto the sun and moon, and knows the position and aspect of every star in the heavens. Your timely repentance has saved you. But ye must immediately restore all that ye have stolen. Go straightway, and carry the forty chests exactly as ye found them, and bury them a foot deep under the southern wall of the old ruined Hemmâm, beyond the king's palace. If ye do this punctually, your lives are spared; but if ye fail in the slightest degree, destruction will fall upon you and your families."

The thieves promised obedience to his commands, and departed. Ahmed then fell on his knees, and returned thanks to God for this signal mark of his favor. About two hours after the royal guards came, and desired Ahmed to follow them. He said he would attend them as soon as he had taken leave of his wife, to whom he determined not to impart what had occurred until he saw the result. He bade her farewell very affectionately; she supported herself with great forti-

tude on this trying occasion, exhorting her husband to be of good cheer, and said a few words about the goodness of Providence. But the fact was, Sittâra fancied that if God took the worthy cobbler to himself, her beauty might attract some rich lover, who would enable her to go to the Hemmâm with as much splendor as the astrologer's lady, whose image, adorned with jewels and fine clothes, and surrounded by slaves, still haunted her imagination.

The decrees of Heaven are just: a reward suited to their merits awaited Ahmed and his wife. The good man stood with a cheerful countenance before the king, who was impatient for his arrival, and immediately said, "Ahmed, thy looks are promising; hast thou discovered my treasure?"

"Does your majesty require the thieves, or the treasure? The stars will only grant one or the other," said Ahmed, looking at his table of astrological calculations. "Your majesty must make

your choice. I can deliver up either, but not both."

"I should be sorry not to punish the thieves," answered the king; "but if it must be so, I choose the treasure."

"And you give the thieves a full and free pardon?"

"I do, provided I find my treasure untouched."

"Then," said Ahmed, "if your majesty will follow me, the treasure shall be restored to you."

The king and all his nobles followed the cobbler to the ruins of the old Hemmâm. There, casting his eyes toward Heaven, Ahmed muttered some sounds, which were supposed by the spectators to be magical conjurations, but which were in reality the prayers and thanksgivings of a sincere and pious heart to God, for his wonderful deliverance. When his prayer was finished, he pointed to the southern wall, and requested that his majesty would order his attendants to dig there. The work was hardly

begun, when the whole forty chests were found in the same state as when stolen, with the treasurer's seal upon them still unbroken.

The king's joy knew no bounds: he embraced Ahmed, and immediately appointed him his chief astrologer, assigned to him an apartment in the palace, and declared that he should marry<sup>1</sup> his only daughter, as it was his duty to promote the man whom God had so singularly favored, and had made instrumental in restoring the treasures of his kingdom. The young princess, who was more beautiful than the moon, was not dissatisfied with her father's choice; for her mind was stored with religion and virtue, and she had learnt to value beyond all earthly qualities that piety and learning which she believed Ahmed to possess. The royal will was carried into execution as soon as formed. The wheel of fortune had taken

<sup>1</sup> It is very common in the East for the daughters of monarchs to be married to men eminent for piety or learning, however low their origin.

a complete turn. The morning had found Ahmed in a wretched hovel, rising from a sorry bed, in the expectation of losing his life: in the evening he was the lord of a rich palace, and married to the only daughter of a powerful king. But this change did not alter his character. As he had been meek and humble in adversity, he was modest and gentle in prosperity. Conscious of his own ignorance, he continued to ascribe his good fortune solely to the favor of Providence. He became daily more attached to the beautiful and virtuous princess whom he had married; and he could not help contrasting her character with that of his former wife, whom he had ceased to love, and of whose unreasonable and unfeeling vanity he was now fully sensible.

As Ahmed did not return to his house, Sittâra only heard of his elevation from common rumor. She saw with despair that her wishes for his advancement had been more than accomplished, but that all her own desires had been entirely frus-

trated. Her husband was chief astrologer, — the very situation she had set her heart on; he was rich enough to enable his wife to surpass all the ladies of Isfahan, in the number of her slaves, and the finery of her clothes and jewels, whenever she went to the Hemmâm: but he had married a princess; and his former wife, according to custom, was banished from his house, and condemned to live on whatever pittance she might receive from a man whose love and esteem she had forever forfeited. These thoughts distracted her mind: her envy was excited by the accounts she daily heard of Ahmed's happiness, and of the beauty of the princess; and she now became anxious only for his destruction, looking on him as the sole cause of her disappointment.

An opportunity of indulging her revengeful feelings was not long wanting. The king of Seestan had sent an emerald of extraordinary size and brilliancy as a present to the king of Irak. It was carefully enclosed in a box, to which

there were three keys, and one of them was given in charge to each of the three confidential servants employed to convey it. When they reached Isfahan, the box was opened, but the emerald was gone. Nothing could exceed their consternation; each accused the other: as the lock was not broken, it was evident one of them must be the thief. They consulted what was to be done. To conceal what had happened was impossible; the very attempt would have brought death on them all. It was resolved, therefore, to lay the whole matter before the king, and beg that by his great wisdom he would detect the culprit, and that he would show mercy to the other two.

The king heard the story with astonishment, but was unable to find any clew by which he might ascertain the truth. He summoned his vizier and all the wisest men of his court; but they were as much at a loss as their master. The report spread through the city; and Sit-târa thought she had now the means

of working her husband's ruin. She solicited a private audience of his majesty, on the plea of having a communication of importance to make. Her request was granted. On entering the royal presence she threw herself at his feet, exclaiming, "Pardon, O king, my having so long concealed the guilt of my husband Ahmed, whose alliance is a disgrace to the royal blood! He is no astrologer, but an associate of thieves, and by that means alone did he discover the royal treasure. If any doubts are entertained of my speaking the truth, let his majesty command Ahmed to recover the emerald which the servants of the king of Seestan have stolen. Surely the man who by his wonderful art ascertained where all the treasure of the kingdom was concealed, will find it an easy matter to discover a single precious stone."

The king, who loved his son-in-law, was grieved by this information. Still, as the honor of his family was concerned, he resolved to put Ahmed to the test,

and, if he found him an impostor, to vindicate the royal dignity by his condign punishment. He therefore sent for Ahmed, told him what had happened, and added, "I give you twenty days to discover who stole the emerald. If you succeed, you shall be raised to the highest honors of the state. If not, you shall suffer death for having deceived me."

Poor Ahmed quitted the presence quite disconsolate. The princess, perceiving his affliction, inquired the cause. Ahmed was by nature as sincere as he was pious and humble. He related, without concealment or disguise, every event of his past life, and concluded with these words: "You must see, from what I have said, how incapable I am of doing what your father enjoins. My life must answer for it; and my only consolation is, that I shall, in twenty days, relieve you from a husband whom from this time you must despise."

"I only love you the better, my dear Ahmed, for your sincerity and truth," said

the princess. "One who has been so favored by Heaven must be dear to every pious heart. Be of good cheer; I will turn astrologer this time, and see whether I can find out the thief. All I require is, that you endeavor to be composed, while I consult the stars and make my calculations."

Ahmed, delighted with this proof of affection, and reassured by the confidence of her manner, promised to be obedient, and said he would only venture to assist her exertions by his earnest prayers to that Power which had never deserted him.

The princess immediately invited the messengers from the king of Seestan to her palace. They were surprised at the invitation, and still more at their reception. "You are strangers," she said to them, "and come from a powerful king; it is my wish to show you every attention. As to the lost emerald, think no more of it; it is a mere trifle. I will intercede with the king, my father, to give himself no further concern on the

subject, being convinced that it has been lost by one of those strange accidents for which it is impossible to account.”

The princess entertained the strangers for several days, and during that time the emerald seemed to be forgotten. She conversed with them freely, inquiring particularly of Seestan, and the countries they had seen on their travels. Flattered by her condescension, they became confident of their safety, and were delighted with their royal patroness. The princess, seeing them completely off their guard, turned the conversation one evening on wonderful occurrences, and after each had related his story, said, “I will now recount to you some events of my own life, which you will, I think, deem more extraordinary than any you have ever heard.

“I am my father’s only child, and have therefore been a favorite from my birth. I was brought up in the belief that I could command whatever this world can afford, and was taught that

unbounded liberality is the first and most princely of virtues. I early resolved to surpass every former example of generosity. I thought my power of doing good, and making everybody happy, was as unlimited as my wish to do so; and I could not conceive the existence of misery beyond my power to relieve. When I was eighteen I was betrothed to my cousin, a young prince, who excelled all others in beauty of person and nobleness of mind, and I fancied myself at the summit of happiness. It chanced, however, that on the morning of my nuptials I went to walk in a garden near the palace, where I had been accustomed to spend some hours daily from my childhood. The old gardener, with whose cheerfulness I had often been amused, met me. Seeing him look very miserable, I asked him what was the matter. He evaded a direct answer; but I insisted upon his disclosing the cause of his grief, declaring at the same time my determination to remove it.

“ ‘ You cannot relieve me,’ said the old man, with a deep sigh ; ‘ it is out of your power, my beloved princess, to heal the wound of which I am dying.’

“ My pride was roused, and I exclaimed, ‘ I swear — ’

“ ‘ Do not swear ! ’ said the gardener, seizing my hand.

“ ‘ I do swear,’ I repeated, irritated by the opposition. ‘ I will stop at nothing to make you happy ; and I further swear that I will not leave this spot until you reveal the grief which preys upon you.’

“ The old man, seeing my resolution, spake with tremulous emotion as follows : ‘ Princess, you know not what you have done. . Behold a man who has dared for these two years to look upon you with an eye of admiration ; his love has at length reached such a pitch that without you he must be wretched forever ; and unless you consent to meet him in the garden to-night, and become his bride instead of that of the prince, he must die.’

“Shocked by this unforeseen declaration, and trembling at the thought of my oath, I tried to reason with the old gardener, and offered him all the wealth I possessed. ‘I told you,’ he replied, ‘beautiful princess, that you could not make me happy. I endeavored to prevent your rash vow; and nothing but that should have drawn from me the secret of my heart. Death, I know, is my fate; for I cannot live and see you the wife of another. Leave me to die. Go to your husband; go to the enjoyment of your pomp and riches; but never again pretend to the exercise of a power which depends upon a thousand circumstances that no human being can regulate or control.’

“This speech conveyed a bitter reproach. I would have sacrificed my life a hundred times, sooner than stain my honor by marrying this man; but I had made a vow in the face of Heaven, and to break it seemed sacrilege. Besides, I earnestly wished to die undeceived in my

favorite notion that I could make all who came near me happy. Under the struggle of these different feelings, I told the gardener his desire should be granted, and that I would be in the garden an hour before midnight. After this assurance I went away, resolved in my own mind not to outlive the disgrace to which I had doomed myself.

“I passed the day in the deepest melancholy. A little before midnight I contrived to dismiss my attendants, and, arrayed in my bridal apparel, which was covered with the richest jewels, I went towards the garden. I had not proceeded many yards, when I was met by a thief, who, seizing me, said, ‘Let me strip you, madam, of these unnecessary ornaments: if you make the least noise, instant death awaits you.’ In my state of mind such threats frightened me little. I wished to die, but I wished, before I died, to fulfil my vow. I told my story to the thief, beseeching him to let me pass, and pledging my word to return,

that he might not be disappointed of his booty. After some hesitation, he allowed me to proceed.

“I had not gone many steps, when I encountered a furious lion, which had broken loose from my father’s menagerie. Knowing the merciful nature of this animal towards the weak and defenceless, I dropped on my knees, repeated my story, and assured him, if he would let me fulfil my vow, I would come back to him as ready to be destroyed as he could be to make me his prey. The lion stepped aside, and I went into the garden.

“I found the old gardener all impatience for my arrival. He flew to meet me, exclaiming I was an angel. I told him I was resigned to my engagement, but had not long to live. He started, and asked what I meant. I gave him an account of my meeting with the thief and the lion. ‘Wretch that I am!’ cried the gardener; ‘how much misery have I caused! but bad as I am, I am not worse than a thief, or a beast of prey,

which I should be, did I not absolve you from your vow, and assure you the only way in which you can now make me happy, is by forgiving my wicked presumption.'

"I was completely relieved by these words, and granted the forgiveness desired; but having determined, in spite of the gardener's remonstrances, to keep my promises to the thief and the lion, I refused to accept his protection. On leaving the garden, the lion met me. 'Noble lion,' I said, 'I am come, as I promised you.' I then related to him how the gardener had absolved me from my vow, and I expressed a hope that the king of beasts would not belie his renown for generosity. The lion again stepped aside, and I proceeded to the thief, who was still standing where I left him. I told him I was now in his power, but that, before he stripped me, I must relate to him what had happened since our last meeting. Having heard me, he turned away, saying, 'I am not meaner than a

poor gardener, nor more cruel than a hungry lion: I will not injure what they have respected.'

“Delighted with my escapes, I returned to my father’s palace, where I was united to my cousin, with whom I lived happily till his death; persuaded, however, that the power of human beings to do good is very limited, and that when they leave the narrow path marked out for them by their Maker, they not only lose their object, but often wander far into error and guilt, by attempting more than it is possible to perform.”

The princess paused, and was glad to see her guests so enchanted with her story that it had banished every other thought from their minds. After a few moments she turned to one of them, and asked, “Now which, think you, showed the greatest virtue in his forbearance,—the gardener, the thief, or the lion?”

“The gardener, assuredly,” was his answer; “to abandon so lovely a prize, when so nearly his own.”

“And what is your opinion?” said the princess to his neighbor.

“I think the lion was the most generous,” he replied. “He must have been very hungry; and in such a state it was great forbearance to abstain from devouring so delicate a morsel.”

“You both seem to me quite wrong,” said the third, impatiently; “the thief had by far the most merit. Gracious Heavens! to have within his grasp such wealth, and to refrain from taking it! I could not have believed it possible, unless the princess herself had assured us of the fact.”

The princess now, assuming an air of dignity, said to the first who spoke, “You, I perceive, are an admirer of the ladies;” to the second, “You are an epicure;” and then turning to the third, who was already pale with fright, “You, my friend, have the emerald in your possession. You have betrayed yourself, and nothing but an immediate confession can save your life.”

The guilty man's countenance removed all doubt ; and when the princess renewed her assurances of safety, he threw himself at her feet, acknowledged his offence, and gave her the emerald, which he carried concealed about him. The princess rose, went to her husband, and said, "There, Ahmed, what do you think of the success of my calculations?" She then related the whole circumstance, and bade him carry the jewel to her father, adding, "I trust he will feel a greater admiration than ever for my husband, the wonderful astrologer !"

Ahmed took the emerald in silent astonishment, and went with it to the king, of whom he requested a private audience. On its being granted, he presented the emerald. The king, dazzled by its brilliancy and size, loaded his son-in-law with the most extravagant praises, extolling him as superior to any astrologer who had ever been seen in the world. Poor Ahmed, conscious how little he deserved such praise, threw himself at

the king's feet, and begged that he might be allowed to speak the truth, as he was readier to die than to continue imposing on his majesty's goodness. "You impose on me!" said the king; "that is impossible. Did you not recover my treasure? Have you not brought me this emerald?"

"True, O king," said Ahmed, "I have done so, but without possessing that science for which I have gained a reputation." He then told his history from first to last with perfect sincerity. The king showed great displeasure while listening to his earlier adventures; but when Ahmed related the story of the emerald, intermingling his tale with fervent expressions of admiration for the wonderful wisdom and virtue of the princess, he heard him with delight. After he had finished, the king summoned his vizier and chief counsellors, and desired that his daughter also might attend; and when they were all assembled, he spake as follows: "Daughter, I have learnt the history of thy husband from his own lips. I have also heard much in

confirmation of the belief I have long entertained, that thy knowledge and goodness are even greater than thy beauty. They prove that thou wert born to rule ; and I only obey the will of Heaven, and consult the happiness of my people, when I resign my power into thy hands, being resolved to seek that repose which my declining years require. As to thy husband, thou wilt dispose of him as it pleases thee. His birth, I always knew, was low, but I thought that his wisdom and learning raised him to a level with the highest rank ; these, it now appears, he does not possess. If thou deemest his alliance a disgrace, divorce him. If, on the other hand, thou art willing to keep him as thy husband, do so, and give him such share as thou thinkest fit in the authority which I now commit to thee.”

The princess knelt to kiss her father's hand, and answered, “ May my father's life and reign be prolonged for his daughter's happiness, and for that of his subjects ! I am a weak woman, altogether

unequal to the task which his too fond love would impose on me. If my humble counsel is listened to, my father will continue to govern his people, whose gratitude and veneration will make obedience light, and rule easy. As to Ahmed, I love and esteem him ; he is sensible, sincere, and pious, and I deem myself fortunate in having for my husband a man so peculiarly favored and protected by Heaven. What, my dear father, are high rank or brilliant talents without religion and virtue ? They are as plants which bear gaudy blossoms, but yield no fruit.”

The king was delighted with his daughter's wisdom and affection. “Your advice,” he said, “my beloved daughter, shall be followed. I will continue to govern my kingdom, while you and Ahmed shall assist me with your counsels.”

The good cobbler was soon afterwards nominated vizier ; and the same virtue and piety which had obtained him respect in the humblest sphere of life,

caused him to be loved and esteemed in the high station to which he was elevated.

The designs of Sittâra were discovered, but her guilt was pardoned. She was left with a mere subsistence, a prey to disappointment; for she continued to the last to sigh for that splendor she had seen displayed by the chief astrologer's wife at the Hemmâm; thereby affording a salutary lesson to those who admit envy into their bosoms, and endeavor to attain their ends by unreasonable and unjustifiable means.

THE END.

