

Salam

Abdul Salam

35

STEAD'S BOOKS FOR THE BAIRNS—110

*ERNEST BENN'S EDITION*

# THE WISHING CARPET

AND

# THE PRINCESS OF THE SEA

M 35

*ADAPTED FROM GOLLAND'S VERSION IN "THE ARABIAN NIGHTS"*

WITH NEW AND ORIGINAL ILLUSTRATIONS

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Date.....
ERNAKULAM.

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# THE WISHING CARPET



## CHAPTER I.

THERE was once an Indian Sultan who had three sons. The name of the eldest was Hassan, that of the second Ali, and that of the youngest Ahmed. They were all brought up together with their cousin, the Princess Nouronnihar. She was the daughter of the Sultan's younger brother, who died and left her an orphan at a very early age; and the Sultan, out of respect for his brother's memory and compassion for his niece's tender years and desolate condition, took upon himself the care of her education. She was accordingly brought up in the palace with the three youthful princes, who regarded her for a long while as their sister. Being both beautiful and accomplished, and as good and blameless in character as she was beautiful, the Princess Nouronnihar grew

tinguished above all the princesses of her time.

When she had reached a suitable age, the Sultan intended to get her married, and he was thinking seriously about possible suitors for her hand, when he perceived that the three young princes, his sons, had all fallen in love with her.

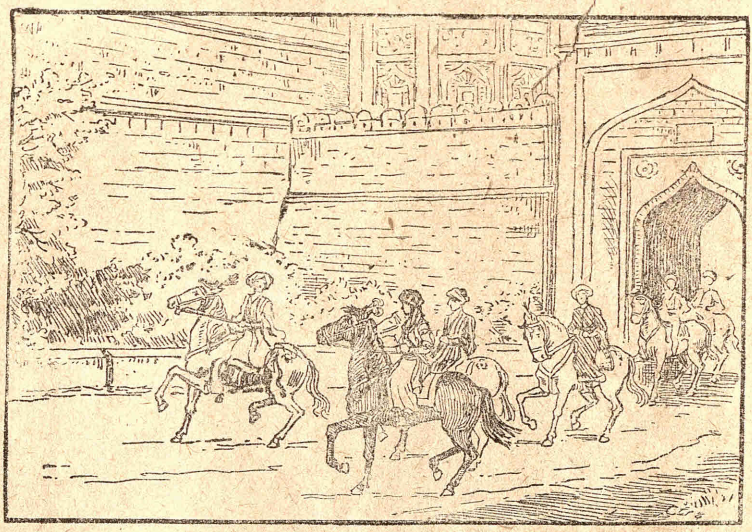
This caused him great concern, for he foresaw that neither of his younger sons would consent to yield to their elder brother. He summoned each of them privately and alone, and talked to them seriously, pointing out the impossibility of one lady being the wife of three persons, and the troubles they would create if each persisted in demanding her for himself. He did all he could to induce them to abide by the choice which the princess might make of any one of the three, or to retire altogether in favour of her being married to some foreign prince. But in vain. Each of the young princes was as obstinate as the others.

At last, after much consideration, the Sultan sent for them all together, and said: "My sons, since I cannot persuade you to be reasonable in regard to your cousin, and as I will not force her to marry any one, I have thought of a plan to please you all and preserve the peace among you, if you will follow my advice. I think it would be better if you all went away for a time, and travelled separately into a different country, so that you might not meet one another. And as you know how greatly I am interested in strange and curious things for my museum, I will promise my niece in marriage to him who shall bring me back the rarest and most singular curiosity. I will further give to each of you a sum of money befitting young men of your rank for travelling expenses, and to enable you to purchase any such curiosity as you may discover."

This offer of the Sultan's greatly pleased the three princes, for they were all attached to their father, and, moreover, each felt assured in his own mind that *he* would certainly prove to be the favourite of fortune. They accepted the



THE SULTAN ADDRESSED HIS SONS.



offer gratefully, and shortly afterwards left home together early one morning, dressed for greater freedom as merchants, each attended by a trusty officer disguised as a slave, and all well mounted and equipped.

They went the first day's journey together, and all slept at the same inn, which was situated where three roads met. Over their supper, which they took together, they agreed each to travel for a year, and to make this inn their rendezvous at the end of that time; whoever came first was to wait for the others, so that they might all return to the Sultan's palace together, just as they had left it.

At break of day the following morning the three princes cordially embraced one another; and, with mutual good wishes, they parted, mounted their horses, and took each a different road.



## CHAPTER II.

PRINCE HASSAN, the eldest brother, had heard wonders of the extent, riches, and splendour of the kingdom of Bisnagar, and accordingly directed his course to the Indian coast. For three months he travelled, sometimes with one caravan, sometimes with another, over deserts and dreary mountains, and through fertile and populous valleys, until he reached Bisnagar, the capital of the kingdom of that name and the residence of its ruler.

On reaching the capital, he took up his abode at a khan, or hotel, frequented by foreign merchants, and at once began to make enquiries as to the quarters where the merchants kept their shops. He learnt that there were four principal quarters in the city, the outer gates of each of which were distant two leagues* from those

*A league is three miles.

of the opposite one. In the centre between these four quarters was the king's castle or palace, surrounded by three courts. Prince Hassan determined to explore the city without delay, and, as soon as he was rested a little, went out and bent his steps to one of these merchants' quarters.

It was large, and divided into several streets or bazaars, all vaulted and shaded from the fierce heat of the sun, and yet excellently lighted. The shops were of the same size and general arrangement; and all the merchants and craftsmen who were occupied with any particular class of merchandise lived in the same street.

Prince Hassan walked slowly through the streets, every now and then stopping to gaze about him in admiration. Here were shops stocked with the finest Indian linen, some of it painted in the brightest colours, with figures of flowers, trees, men, and animals; there, silks and brocades from Persia and China; there again, delicate china cups from Japan, and carpets of all sorts and sizes. Prince Hassan could scarcely believe his eyes. But when he came to the bazaars of the goldsmiths and jewellers, he was completely dazzled by the splendour of the diamonds, pearls, rubies, emeralds, and other precious gems exposed for sale. And if he was amazed to see such masses of riches in one place, he was still more astonished when he remembered that, with the exception of the Brahmins and ministers in the temple of the idols, who profess a life that has nought to do with worldly vanities, there was hardly a man or woman to be seen throughout the kingdom who did not wear necklaces and bracelets, and ornaments for the feet and ankles, made of pearls and other precious stones.

Another thing that Prince Hassan particularly admired was the wealth of roses. Roses, roses everywhere—in the trays of the flower-sellers who crowded the streets, in pots in the merchants' shops, in the houses, in people's hands and on their heads; for these Indians were such lovers of



PRINCE HASSAN GAZED WITH ADMIRATION AT THE CARPET.

the beautiful flower that they would hardly stir without a nosegay, and the whole quarter was fragrant with the sweet scent.

After Prince Hassan had explored the entire quarter, street by street, his thoughts full of the wealth of merchandise therein displayed, he became very tired. A merchant seeing him pass wearily, politely asked him to come in and sit down in his shop and rest. The prince thanked him, and accepted the offer; but he had not been seated many minutes before there came along the bazaar a crier, with a piece of carpet under his arm, which he was offering for sale at thirty purses of gold. It was only a small carpet, about six feet square, somewhat mean and dingy in texture and colour, and the prince was surprised that any one should be so brazen as to ask so high a price for a carpet that appeared to be very inferior to many he had seen in the shops at a much smaller price. He therefore called to the crier, and asked him to let him look at it.

The crier, who took him for a merchant, readily consented, stepped into the shop and unrolled the carpet, which appeared no better on a closer inspection. Prince Hassan examined it well, and then he told the crier that he thought it exorbitantly dear.

"Sir," said the crier, "if the price seems to you exorbitant, what will your amazement be when I tell you that my orders are to raise it to *forty* purses, and not to part with the carpet for less?"

"Then," replied the prince, "there must be something very extraordinary connected with it, of which I know nothing."

"You have guessed right, sir," said the crier, "and you will confess as much when you learn that this is a Wishing Carpet. Whoever sits on it, and then wishes himself in any place whatever, will find himself instantly taken thither, without being stopped by walls, or barriers, or obstacles of any kind."

At this surprising information the prince remembered that the special object of his



HE TOLD THE CRIER THE CARPET WAS VERY DEAR.



ON THE WISHING CARPET.

journey was to find some very singular curiosity to take home for his father's museum, and, bethought him that, if he travelled for months, he was hardly likely to meet with anything more rare and curious than this, or more likely to give complete satisfaction to his father. So he said to the crier, "If this carpet really possesses the virtue you assign to it, I shall not think forty purses too much, and I will make you a present for yourself besides."

"Sir," replied the crier, "I have only told you the truth, and it will be easy for you to convince yourself that I have. If you agree to be the purchaser, I presume you will not have so much money with you at the present moment, and that it will be necessary for me to come with you to the khan where you are lodging. By the leave of this gentleman, we will go into his back shop, and there I will spread the carpet; and if you will take your seat on it with me, and wish that we may be transported into your room at the khan—then, if we do *not* instantly find ourselves there, it shall be no bargain."

These conditions appeared to be perfectly fair, and the prince accepted them. So, having obtained the merchant's leave, they went into his back shop, spread the carpet, and sat down upon it. The prince then wished himself in his room at the khan. Instantly he found himself there.

No further proof being necessary that the crier had really told the truth about this wonderful Wishing Carpet, Prince Hassan readily counted out to him the forty purses of gold, and, moreover, made him a present of twenty gold pieces for himself.

The prince was overjoyed to think that, on his very arrival in the kingdom of Bisnager, and without any search of his own, he had become possessed of so rare a treasure, which he never doubted would win him the Princess Nouronnihar for his wife; for he considered it in the last degree unlikely, and indeed impossible, that either of his younger brothers could meet with anything to compare

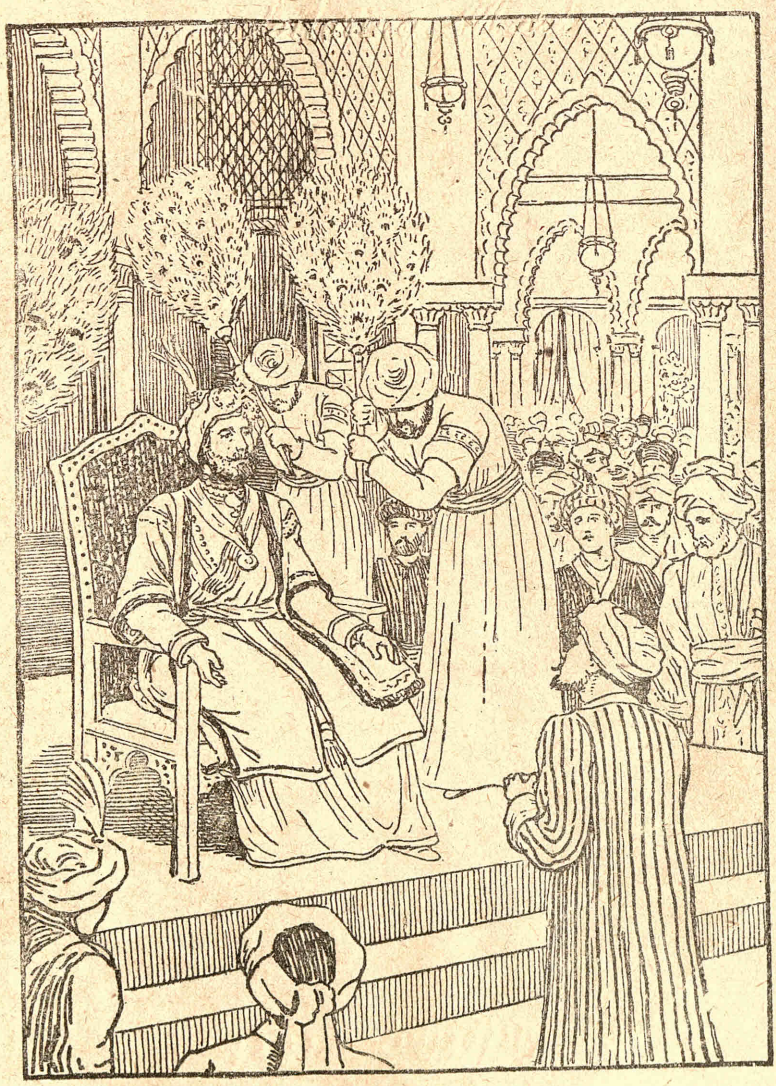
with it. He might indeed have transported himself that very day to the inn which they had agreed upon as their rendezvous; but as it wanted several months yet to the date fixed, and as he was curious to see the King of Bisnager and his court, and to learn all he could about the manners and customs, the laws and religion of the kingdom, he decided to make a longer stay there.

It was the custom of the King of Bisnagar to hold every week a reception for all the foreign merchants visiting his kingdom. In this way Prince Hassan, who remained strictly *incognito*, had frequent opportunities of seeing him. The king, finding him intelligent, handsome, and of exceedingly polite and pleasant manners, took especial notice of him, and asked him for a great deal of information about the country from which he came and the Sultan who ruled over it, the extent and wealth of his dominions, and his methods of government.

When not attending the King's receptions, Prince Hassan made good use of his time in visiting the most remarkable things in and about Bisnagar. Amongst other things, he went to see a heathen temple built entirely of brass. It was ten cubits* square and fifteen high, and the chief ornament it possessed was an idol like a man, life-size, of massive gold; its eyes were two rubies, set so curiously that they seemed to be looking straight at whoever looked that way, on whichever side he might happen to be.

This was not the only temple in the place; there was another, much more renowned. It was in a village, in the midst of a plain, about ten acres in extent. This plain was so thickly planted with rose bushes that it was a veritable rose garden. All round it ran a low wall, about breast high, to keep the cattle out. In the middle of the plain was a terrace, raised up five or six feet above the ground, and paved so beautifully that the joints of the paving-stones

* A cubit is about half a yard.



PRINCE HASSAN BEFORE THE KING.

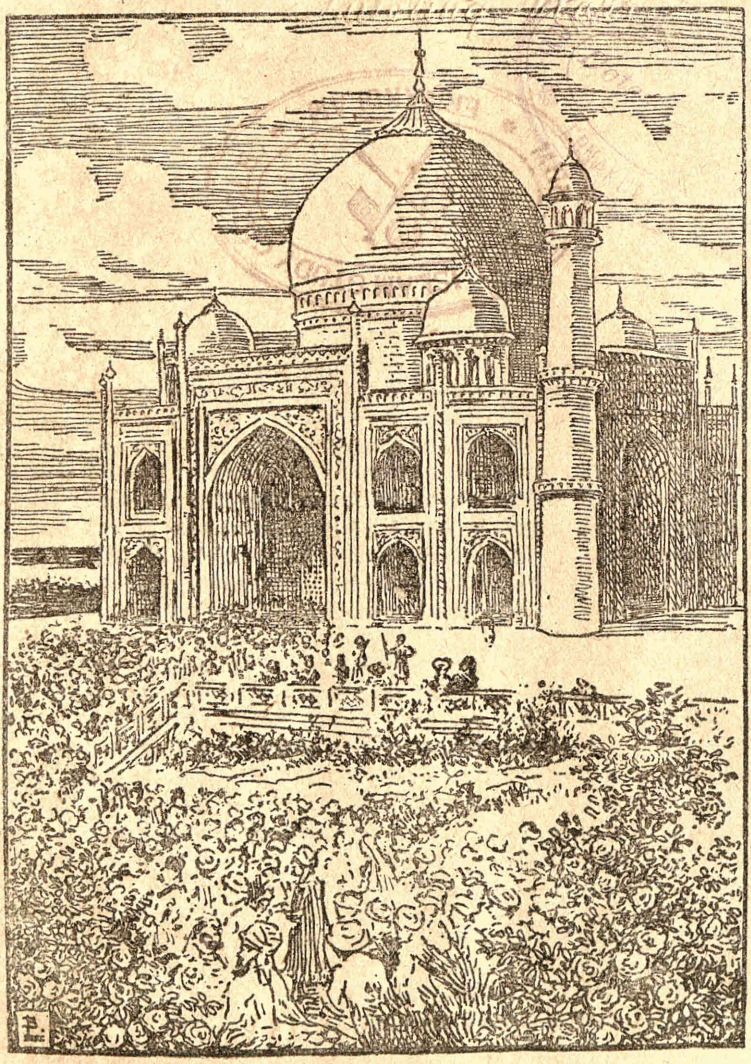
could not be distinguished, and the entire pavement appeared to consist of one single stone. In the midst of this terrace rose the temple, crowned with a dome fifty cubits high, which formed a landmark that could be seen for miles round. If one entered the temple, he found that this dome was adorned inside with three rows of fine paintings, and there was not a space in the entire temple which was not adorned with paintings and figures and idols from one end to another.

Every night and morning there were ceremonies in this temple, followed by concerts, games, dancing, singing, and feasts. The priests of the temple and the inhabitants of the village had nothing to live on but the offerings of pilgrims, who came thither in crowds from every part of the kingdom.

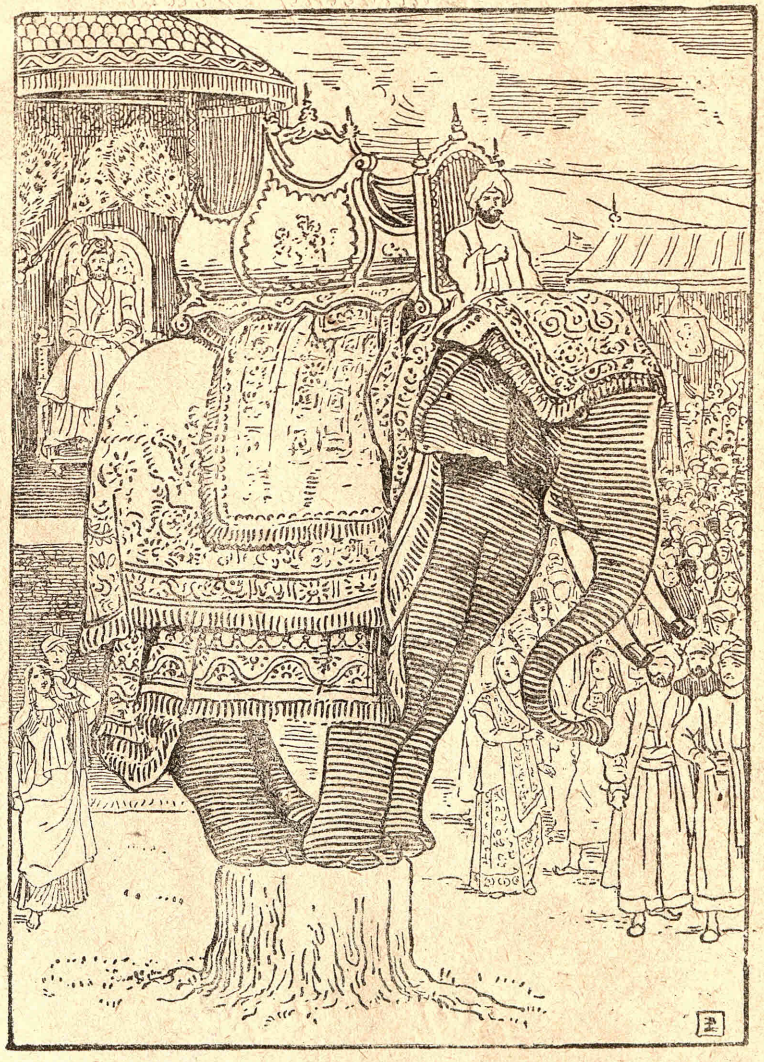
Prince Hassan also witnessed the solemn assembly or durbar which at Bisnagar took place every year. All the governors of provinces, all the commanders of fortresses, all the chief rulers and magistrates of towns, all the most learned Brahmins, were obliged to be present, and some of them lived so far away that it took them four months to come and four more to go home again after it was over. This durbar, attended by innumerable multitudes of Indians, met in a plain of vast extent, so far as the eye could reach.* In the centre of the plain was a square of great length and breadth, on each side of which was erected a huge scaffolding to afford seats for those who were invited by the king. These scaffoldings were magnificently adorned and furnished inside, and on the outside were painted fine landscapes, full of all kinds of beasts, birds, and insects—even flies and gnats being drawn and painted as naturally as possible.

On each side of the square, sumptuously harnessed, and each bearing on his back a

* This description of an Indian durbar hundreds of years ago reminds one curiously of the great Coronation Durbar held at Delhi on January 1st, 1903, to commemorate the accession of King Edward VII., at which several elephants were present who had been trained to salute with their trunks.



THE TEMPLE



THE PERFORMING ELEPHANT.

square wooden castle, finely gilt, were a thousand elephants, all drawn up in line, at a little distance one from another. These were what Prince Hassan liked best of all. The largest of all the elephants presently left the ranks, and advanced to where the stump of a tree, about two feet high, was fixed into the ground. The elephant took his place, all four feet at once, on this stump, and stood there beating time to the music with his trunk. Another elephant balanced himself on a great board laid over a beam, like a see-saw, and kept time with the music by see-sawing up and down.

Prince Hassan might have stayed at Bisnager till the year agreed upon was ended; for, owing to his Wishing Carpet, there was no need for him to make the long journey back. But his thoughts ran so much upon the Princess Nouronnihar, and he was so well satisfied with all the wonders that he had already seen, that he decided to quit the kingdom not long after the durbar, and to return and wait quietly at the inn until his two brothers arrived; for although he was bound in honour not to attempt to see the princess, he fancied that he would feel easier and happier if he were nearer her.

Accordingly he one day paid the landlord of the khan for his apartment, and appointed an hour when he might come for the key, without saying how or when he and his attendant meant to go. Then he and the disguised officer whom he had brought with him went into his room, shut the door, leaving the key on the outside, and spread the carpet on the floor. The two sat down upon it, and the prince wished.

Immediately they found themselves at the inn many hundreds of miles away. Here Prince Hassan engaged a room, and lived quietly with his officer, under the guise of a merchant, until, several weeks later, his brothers arrived.

GOVT. VERNACULAR INSTITUTION TRIVANDRUM.



PRINCE ALI IN SHIRAZ.

## CHAPTER III.

PRINCE ALI, after he had taken farewell of his elder and younger brothers at the cross roads, rode away for some distance, until he met with a caravan that was travelling into Persia. He asked permission to join it, which was granted, and, after four months' travelling, arrived at the city of Shiraz. Here he took a lodging in a khan frequented by some merchants in precious stones, with whom he had made friends on the journey, and with whom he passed for a jeweller.

The following morning, while his friends the merchants were opening and arranging their bales of merchandise, Prince Ali went out to explore that quarter of the city in which they sold precious stones, gold and silver work, brocades, silks, fine linens, and other choice and valuable wares. This, at Shiraz, was known as the Bezestein. It was a spacious and well-built hall, something like a covered market, arched over and supported by large pillars; while along the walls, both inside and outside, were small shops. Prince Ali soon rambled through the Bezestein, and saw with amazement and admiration the prodigious quantities of precious wares that were stored here and exposed for sale.

In and out, along the pavement, between the pillars, went several criers carrying things to sell. Prince Ali leaned against a pillar and watched them for some time. He noticed one crier in particular, who seemed to have nothing to sell except a single plain tube of ivory, about a foot long and an inch thick, which he was offering for thirty purses of gold. Prince Ali thought the crier must be mad to ask such an exorbitant price fo an ordinary elephant's t and presently he left hi and went to one of th near, where a mercha standing at his door.



'Sir,' said Prince Ali, addressing him, "will yo

good as to look at that crier with the ivory tube? Pray, sir, is he mad? I am very much deceived if he is not."

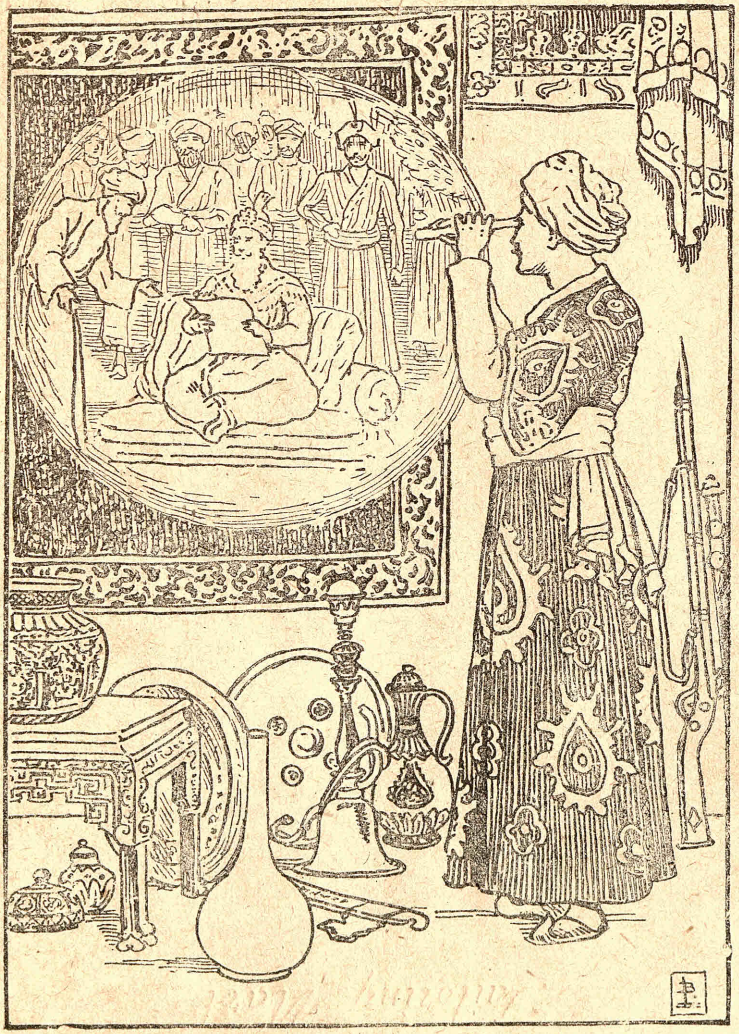
"Indeed, sir," replied the merchant, "he was certainly in his right senses yesterday. I can assure you that he is one of the best criers we have, and the one who is always chosen when anything of especial value is to be offered for sale. If he cries that ivory tube at thirty purses of gold, it must be worth that, or even more, for some reason that is not apparent. He will come by presently, and then we will call him; in the meantime will you not come in, and sit down on my sofa, and rest yourself?"

Prince Ali thanked the merchant, and accepted his kind offer. Presently the crier passed by, and the merchant alled to him. The man pped into the shop, and the hant, waving his hand ls the Prince, said, "Be so to tell this gentleman, ed me just now if you your right senses, what an by offering a common tube like that, w[illegible]ch does not appear to be worth much, for thirty purses. I should be greatly astonished myself if I did not know you to be a sensible man."

"Sir," said the crier, turning to Prince Ali, "you are not the only person who has taken me for a madman on account of this tube. You shall judge of that for yourself when I have told you of its rare and curious peculiarity. This tube, sir, as you see," he added, holding it out, "is furnished with a piece of glass at each end. Now if you look through one of them, and at the same time wish to see anything not here present, you will at once behold it."

"Assuredly," returned Prince Ali, "I will make you every apology for insulting you, if you can convince me of the truth of what you say. He took the ivory tube carefully in his hands. "Show me at which end I must look."

The crier showed him, and he placed it to his eye, wishing at the same time to see the Sultan, his father. Immediately he perceived him sitting on his throne, in the midst of



THE MAGIC TUBE AND WHAT IT REVEALED.

his council, and in perfect health. Then he wished again, to see the Princess Nouronnihar; and, looking into the tube, he perceived her smiling and in a very pleasant humour, with her maids of honour about her.

Prince Ali needed no further proof to convince him that this tube was the most valuable thing he was likely to meet with, not only in Shiraz, but in all the world. He felt that he must not let slip the chance of procuring so rare and curious a treasure for his father's museum. So he said to the crier, "I am very sorry that I should have allowed myself to have so bad an opinion of you, but I hope to make amends by buying this tube. What is the lowest price which the owner has set upon it?"

The crier replied that, though he had cried it at thirty purses of gold, his orders were that he was on no account to part with it for less than forty; and that if Prince Ali doubted his word, he was ready to take him to his employer. Prince Ali replied that he was quite assured of his good faith; so he rose and led the way to his khan, where he counted out the money to the crier.

Prince Ali was quite overjoyed with his bargain, for he thought it not only unlikely but impossible that either of his brothers could bring back any curiosity which would give half so much satisfaction to his father as his ivory tube. He regarded his princess as already won, and with, a light heart, now devoted himself to visiting all the interesting and curious sights in and about Shiraz, until the caravan with which he had come should return to India.

When, after a considerable time, the caravan was ready to start, Prince Ali joined it again, and, after a journey of several months, arrived in good time at the inn which was their appointed rendezvous. Here he found Prince Hassan already arrived; but as they had still to wait for their youngest brother, Prince Ahmed, each of them preserved strict silence concerning his own adventures and success.



THE PRINCE COMPLETES THE BARGAIN.

STUDY CIRCLE
ERNAKULAM



THE CRIER WAS OFFERING WHAT LOOKED LIKE AN APPLE.

## CHAPTER IV.

When Prince Ahmed quitted his brothers near the inn, he took the road that, after a prolonged journey, led to Samarcand, in Central Asia.

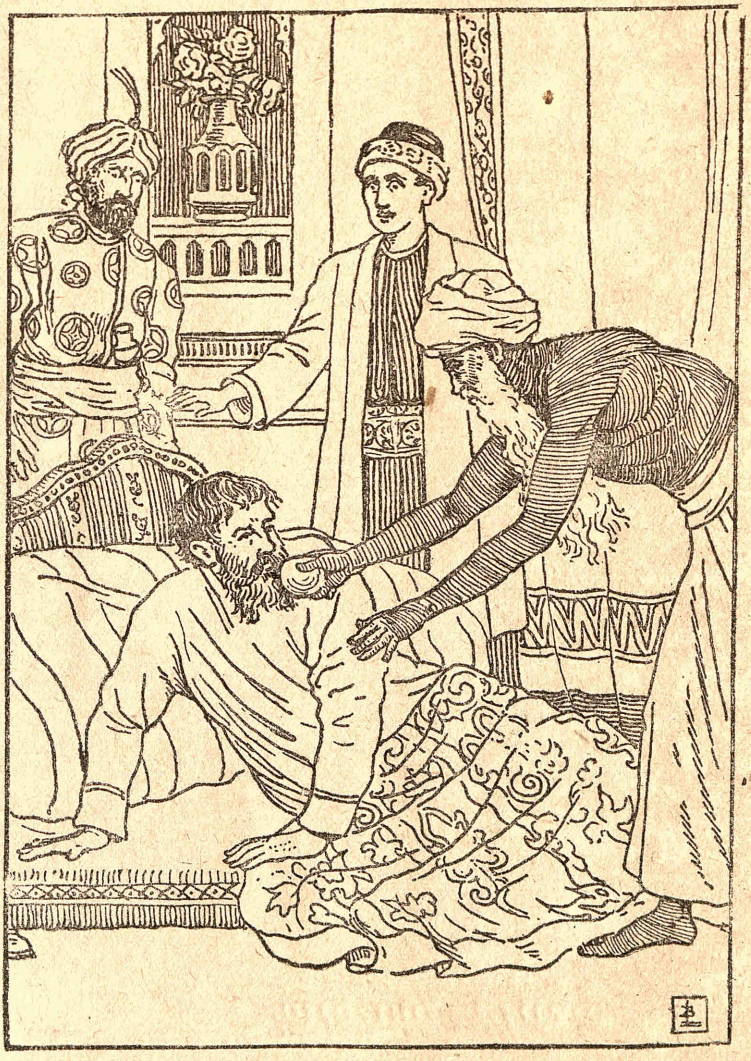
The day after his arrival he went, as his brothers had also done, into the merchants' bazaar. He had not walked about there long, greatly admiring and wondering at the rich merchandise he saw displayed, when a crier passed him, offering for sale what appeared to be nothing but a common imitation apple, at the price of thirty-five purses of gold.

Prince Ahmed stopped the crier, and said, "Will you let me see that apple? And pray tell me what peculiarity there is about it, which makes you put so very high a price upon what appears to be merely a paltry toy?"

"Sir," said the crier, putting the apple into his hand, "the outside appearance of this apple is indeed ordinary enough; but he who possesses it is the master of an invaluable treasure; as I think you will agree when you hear what it can do. This apple, sir, can cure sick persons of the most fatal diseases—fevers, pleurisy, plague, and any other severe illness; indeed, even if the sick person is dying, it can immediately restore him to perfect health. This is done in the easiest possible manner: you merely have to hold the apple to the sick person's nose and to let him smell it."

"If what you tell me is true," replied Prince Ahmed, "this is indeed a wonderful apple. But how is a plain man like myself, who might wish to become its possessor, to be convinced that there is no deception about it, or that you are not praising it overmuch?"

"Sir," answered the crier, "this apple is well known all through the city of Samarcand. You have but to ask any of



IN A FEW MINUTES THE MAN RECOVERED.

the merchants whom you see here in the bazaar, and to hear what they say; several of them would not be alive now if they had not benefited by this excellent remedy. It is the result of all the researches of a very celebrated philosopher, belonging to this city, who applied himself all his life to the study of plants and minerals and their effects upon human beings, and who was thus able at last to bring about the most surprising cures. Unfortunately, he fell ill very suddenly, and died before he had time to try his own remedy, and left his wife and a large family of young children very badly off; so, in order to procure money to support and provide for her family, the widow has resolved to sell it."

While the crier was thus explaining to Prince Ahmed the astonishing virtues of the apple, a great many persons had gathered about them; and one of them, a merchant, now said to Prince Ahmed, "Sir, a friend of mine is at this moment dangerously ill, and his life is despaired of; would not this be a favourable opportunity to test the apple's value?"

Prince Ahmed accepted the proposal, and, turning to the crier, said, "If you can really cure this sick man by letting him smell the apple, I will gladly buy it of you for forty purses."

The crier, whose orders were to sell it at that price, readily consented to try the experiment; and he added that there need be no fear of its being a failure, for the virtues of the apple could never wear out.

The merchant led the way to the house of his sick friend, and Prince Ahmed and the crier accompanied him. They went up into the room where the sick man was lying, so ill as to be quite unconscious. The crier gently held the apple to his nose, and in a few minutes he got up quite well, and asked what was the matter.

Prince Ahmed, being convinced by the evidence of his own eyes, immediately concluded the bargain. He took the crier to his khan, counted out to him forty purses, and

received the apple. As there was no caravan returning to India just at present, he employed the time until it started in seeing all that was curious and worth seeing in and about Samarcand, especially the Sogda Valley, which is regarded by the Arabians as one of the four paradises of the earth, on account of its gardens and fields and palaces, and its quantities of fruit of all kinds.

It was with the greatest impatience that Prince Ahmed awaited the starting of the caravan, for he felt assured in his own mind that neither of his brothers would be able to produce anything nearly equal to his wonderful apple, and that the Princess Nouronnihar would be his. At length he was able to set off on his long journey, which he accomplished quite safely, and arrived in perfect health at the inn, where Prince Hassan and Prince Ali were awaiting him.

## CHAPTER V.

Directly Prince Ahmed arrived, the three brothers embraced, and congratulated one another upon having returned safe and sound from their travels, to the place from whence they had set out.

"Brothers," said Prince Hassan, as the eldest, "we shall have time enough afterwards to entertain each other with our travellers' tales. Let us come at once to the matter which it is of the greatest importance for each of us to know. Let us each show the curiosity we have brought home, that we may do ourselves justice beforehand, and be able to form some idea upon which of us the Sultan our father is likely to bestow the princess.

"To set the example," con-



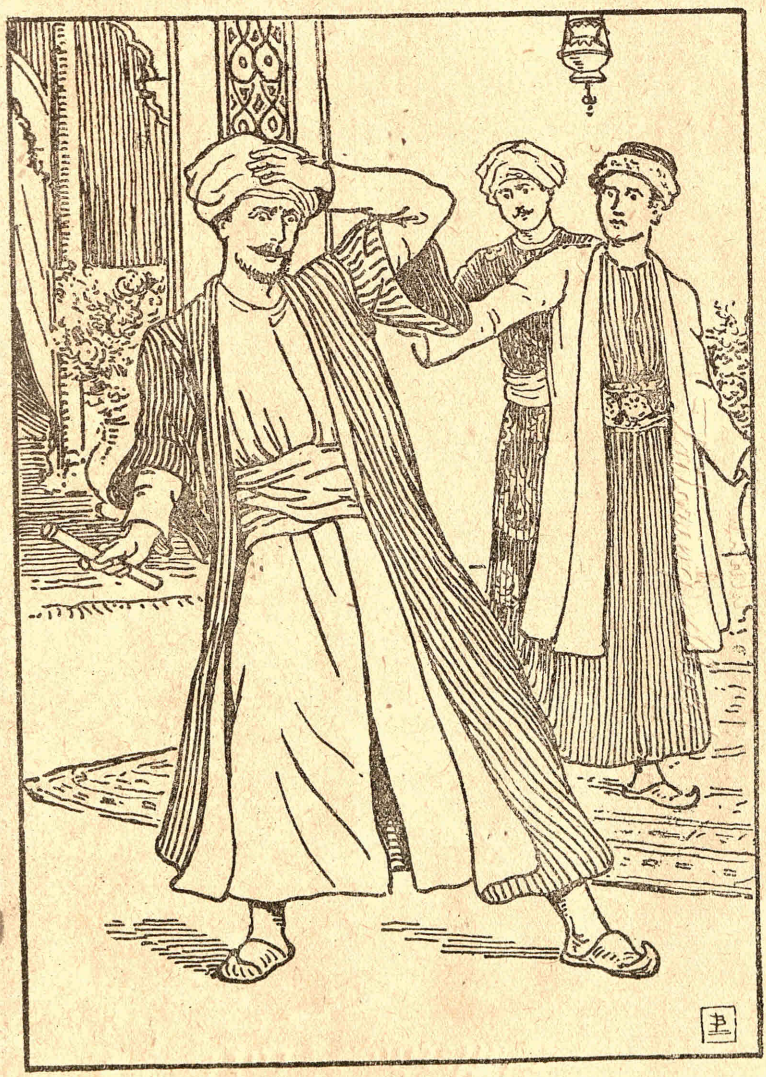
PRINCE AHMED MEETS HIS BROTHER.

tinued Prince Hassan, "I will tell you that the curiosity I have brought from the kingdom of Bisnager is this carpet upon which I am sitting. It looks ordinary enough, but I paid down forty purses of gold for it, and you will agree that this price was not too high, when I tell you that whoever sits upon it, as I am doing now, and wishes to be taken to any place, however distant, immediately finds himself there. I made use of no other means than this wonderful carpet when returning hither from Bisnager, and my servant can tell you how long we took on the journey."

Prince Hassan here ended, and looked at his brothers. There was silence for a moment, and then Prince Ali said, "I must confess, brother, that your carpet is one of the most surprising things I have ever heard of, if it has the virtue you speak of, which indeed I do not doubt. Still, you must allow that there may be other things, I do not say more wonderful, but, at any rate, equally wonderful in another way. This ivory tube," he said, as he showed it to his brothers, "does not appear to be any more of a curiosity than Hassan's carpet. It cost me as much, and you will acknowledge that I have not been cheated when I tell you that, by looking through one end, you can see whatever you wish to behold. Take it," said Prince Ali, offering the tube to his eldest brother, "and try the experiment for yourself."

Prince Hassan took the tube, and eagerly put it to his eye in his anxiety to see the Princess Nouronnihar and to know how she was. Prince Ali and Prince Ahmed kept their eyes upon him, and what was their consternation to see him suddenly change countenance, and appear stricken with extraordinary pain and grief.

"Alas, my brothers!" cried Prince Hassan, in tones of anguish, "to what purpose have we taken long and exhausting journeys? In a few minutes our dear princess will breathe her last! I saw her lying motionless in her bed, with her women all about her in tears."



"IN A FEW MINUTES THE PRINCESS WILL BE DEAD."

Prince Ali took the tube out of his brother's hand, and after he had looked, with dreadful apprehension, passed it to Prince Ahmed.

Directly Prince Ahmed saw that it was really as his brother had said, and that the princess's end was near, he wasted no time, but broke in: "Brothers, she is indeed at death's door, but, provided we make haste, I have here the means that will restore her to life. Let us sit upon the wishing carpet without delay and transport ourselves to the palace."

The three princes immediately placed themselves upon the carpet and wished, and in the twinkling of an eye they found themselves in the Princess Nouronnihar's sick-room.

The sudden appearance of the three young men, who were so little expected that at first they were not recognized, frightened the attendants, who could not imagine how they had got into a part of the palace where men were not allowed to come. But Prince Ahmed gave them no time to object to their presence. Quickly he approached the bedside and held the apple to the princess's nose.

A few moments passed in suspense; then the princess opened her eyes, turned her head from side to side, looking with surprise at the number of anxious and weeping persons present, and then sat up, just as if she had waked from a sound sleep, and said she wished to be dressed. Her women joyfully informed her that she owed her recovery from a dangerous illness to the three princes, her cousins, and she thanked them heartily. They then retired, and while the princess was dressing, went to pay their respects to the Sultan, their father.

The Sultan was delighted to see them, and embraced them most affectionately, not only because of their safe return, but out of joy for the wonderful recovery of his niece, who had been given over by the court physicians, and whom he loved as if she had been his own daughter.

The princes then presented each the curiosity which he had brought home from his travels: Prince Hassan his



QUICKLY HE HELD THE APPLE TO HER NOSE.

wishing carpet, which he had taken care not to leave in the princess's apartments; Prince Ali his ivory tube, and Prince Ahmed his marvellous apple. When each had offered his present, and had explained its strange and curious virtues, they begged the Sultan to pronounce their fate, and to declare upon which of them he would bestow the princess for his wife, according to promise.

The Sultan listened very kindly and without interruption to all that they had to say, and then remained for some time in silence, as if he were thinking what answer to give them. At last he said, "I would decide in favour of one of you, my sons, with pleasure, if I could do so with justice; but consider a moment whether I can. It is true that to Prince Ahmed's apple my niece, the princess, is indebted for her cure; but consider whether it could have been of any service to her but for Prince Ali's tube, which showed you the danger she was in, and Prince Hassan's carpet, which brought you all hither in the nick of time.

"Your tube, Prince Ali, first informed you and your brothers that you were likely to lose your cousin; but consider whether this would have helped you, or her, but for your elder brother's carpet, which brought you here, and your younger brother's apple, which was of such invaluable aid after you arrived.

"As to your carpet, Prince Hassan, consider that it would have been of but little practical use, had you not known by the aid of Prince Ali's tube when and where to come, and if Prince Ahmed's apple had not been available to rescue the princess from the jaws of death after you had flown hither on the carpet.

"Therefore, neither the carpet, nor the tube, nor the apple has the least advantage one over the other, but all are perfectly equal. Therefore, I cannot grant the princess to any of you on these grounds, and the only real advantage which you have derived from your travels —and that quite equally—is



THE SULTAN GIVES HIS DECISION.

that you have all three together helped to restore the princess to health.

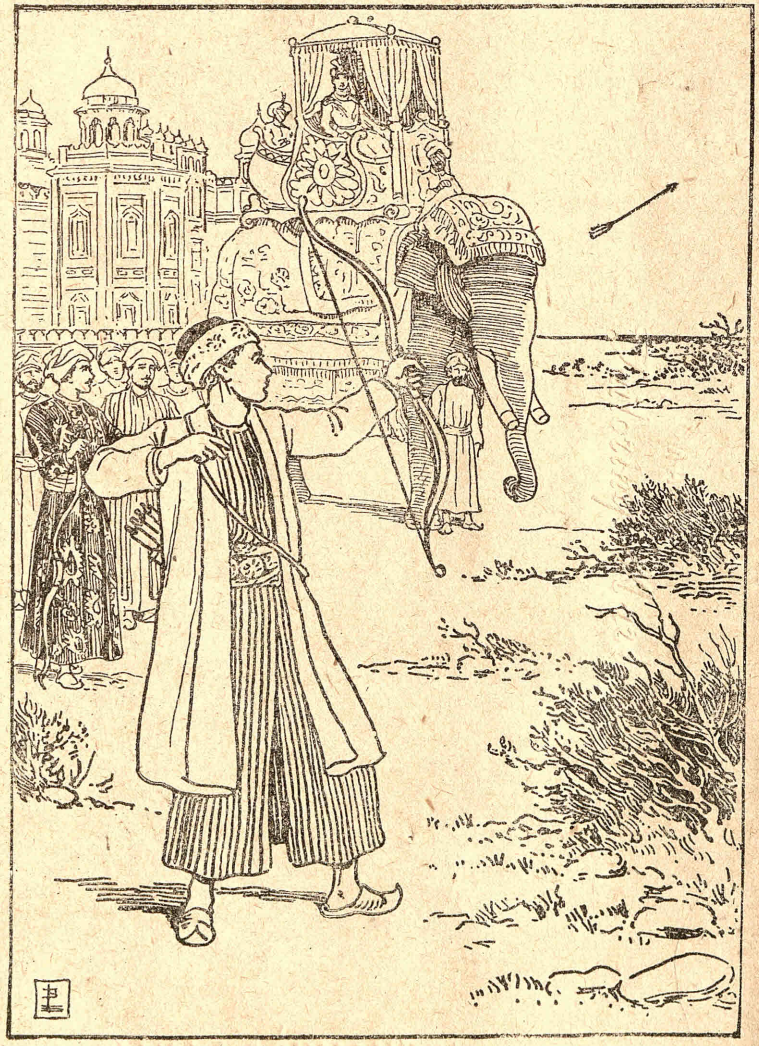
"Though I greatly regret to be obliged to come to this decision, I cannot justly come to any other. But I do not wish to leave you any longer in suspense, and therefore I must adopt some other means of deciding between you. Go then, taking each of you a bow and a single arrow, to the wide plain outside the city gates where the horses are exercised. I will come to you as soon as I have seen these superb curiosities, for which I thank you all most heartily, placed in my museum, where they will be always ready to use in case of need. Then when I have joined you, you shall each shoot your arrow, and I will bestow the Princess Nouronnihar upon him who shoots the furthest."

The three princes, acknowledging the justice of their father's decision, and having nothing to say against his new proposal, went forth to provide themselves with bows and arrows, and betook themselves to the plain outside the walls, followed by a great crowd of people.

The Sultan joined them; and as soon as he arrived, Prince Hassan, as the eldest, bent his bow and shot his arrow. Prince Ali shot next, and his arrow was seen to fall a good way beyond his brother's. Prince Ahmed shot last of all, but nobody could decide where his arrow fell; and although every one searched far and wide for it all over the plain, it could not be found, and so was given up for lost. The Sultan accordingly decided in favour of Prince Ali; and the wedding was celebrated a few days later with much magnificence and public rejoicing.

When the wedding was over, Prince Hassan decided that, as he could not marry the Princess Nouronnihar, he would never marry any one; so he renounced his right to the throne after his father, and entered a monastery for dervishes,* under the discipline of a famous sheik, who had retired from the world with a large number of dis-

* Dervish, a Mohammedan monk.

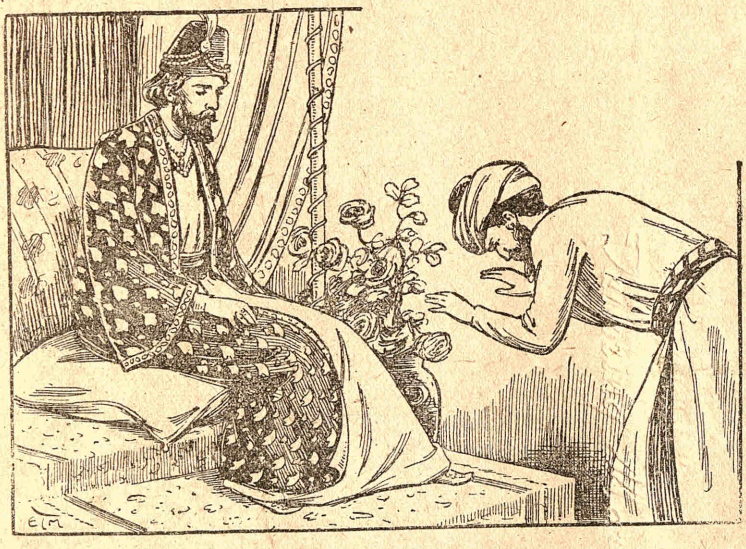


PRINCE AHMED SHOT LAST OF ALL.

ciples, into a very agreeable solitude.

Prince Ahmed went off again on his travels, and after a time married a beautiful fairy, who lived in a magnificent palace below the earth. At a later date he succeeded his father, and he and the fairy became Sultan and Sultana of the Indian dominions.

# THE PRINCESS OF THE SEA.



THERE was once a king of Persia, who at the beginning of his reign had greatly distinguished himself in the wars which he had been obliged to wage against neighbouring monarchs, and who afterwards enjoyed such peace and prosperity at home as rendered him the happiest of kings. His only trouble was that he had no son and heir to succeed him.

One day he was holding a *levée*, or reception, at which were present all the foreign ambassadors and distinguished strangers who then happened to be in the land.

Among the guests there appeared a merchant from a far country, who presently sent a message to the king, asking if he would graciously grant him a private interview, as he had something of the highest importance to disclose.

The king gave orders for

the merchant to be shown into a private room, and when the *levée* was over and the rest of the company had retired, he sent for him, and asked what was the business which had brought him to the palace.

"Sir," said the merchant, "I have brought with me to your city the most beautiful and charming female slave whom one could possibly find if he searched every corner of the earth. I beg your Majesty simply to see her, for if you do you will surely wish to make her your wife."

The king commanded the fair slave to be brought to him. No sooner had he beheld a lady whose grace and beauty surpassed anything he had ever before seen, or even imagined, than he fell in love with her; and, after dismissing the merchant with rich and costly presents, decided to marry her at once.

As soon as they were married, the king gave orders to the matrons and women-servants of the palace to arrange for his beauteous slave-wife the finest apartments, and particularly charged them to dress her in the richest robes, to offer her the finest pearl necklaces, the most splendid diamonds and other precious stones to choose from, and to let her want for nothing. He then left her alone for three days, to become a little accustomed to her new life. Hitherto he had not directly spoken to her, out of respect.

The king's palace was situated upon an island, and the king's apartments looked straight out upon the sea. The suite of rooms which the women-attendants arranged for the beautiful slave had an even pleasanter outlook, for the waves beat gently against the foot of the wall.

At the end of three days the slave, magnificently attired, was alone in her boudoir, leaning her face against one of the windows that faced the sea, when the king, being informed that he might pay her a visit, entered.

The slave turned her head a little. She at once recognized the king, but without showing the least surprise, or even rising from her seat to receive him, she took not the slightest



SHE WAS ALONE, IN A WINDOW BY THE SEA.

notice, and turned to look out of the window again, as if he had been the most insignificant person on earth.

The king was very much surprised to find that so lovely and elegant a lady should be so very ignorant of manners. He decided that this must be due to her having had very little education, and very little home-training in even the first rules of politeness. Accordingly he felt that he must begin by setting her a good example; so he went gently towards her, took her hand and kissed it, and addressed her in very kind and courteous tones. The slave let him do as he pleased without making the least objection, but she answered him not a word, and took no more notice of him than before.

"My dear love," said the king at last, "you neither answer me, nor give me any reason to suppose that you are honouring me with your attention. This obstinate silence on your part is chilling me. At least tell me the reason. Is it because you are mourning for your own country, your friends, your relations? And, if so, cannot the king, your husband, who loves you so much, comfort you, and make you amends for what you have lost?"

But the beautiful slave steadily kept her eyes fixed on the ground, and would neither answer nor look at him. Dinner was served, and they dined together in absolute silence, for the king himself was becoming too much astonished to try to say anything more.

As soon as dinner was over, he went to the women whom he had appointed to be his wife's attendants and asked them if *they* had heard her speak.

"Sir," said one of them, after a moment's silence, "we have not seen her open her lips, nor have we heard her speak, any more than your Majesty has done just now. We have rendered her every kind of service — we have dressed her, combed her hair, waited upon her. We have often asked, 'Madam, do you wish for anything? Is there anything we can do for you?



THEY DINED TOGETHER IN SILENCE.

You have but to command us'; but we have never been able to draw a word from her. We are quite unable to tell whether her silence is due to dumbness, pride, sorrow, or mere stupidity. We regret that this is all we are able to inform your Majesty."

The king, upon hearing the reply of the women, was even more astonished than he had been before. Believing in his own mind that his wife's silence might, perhaps, be due to some overwhelming sorrow, he did his very best to divert and amuse her, but in vain.

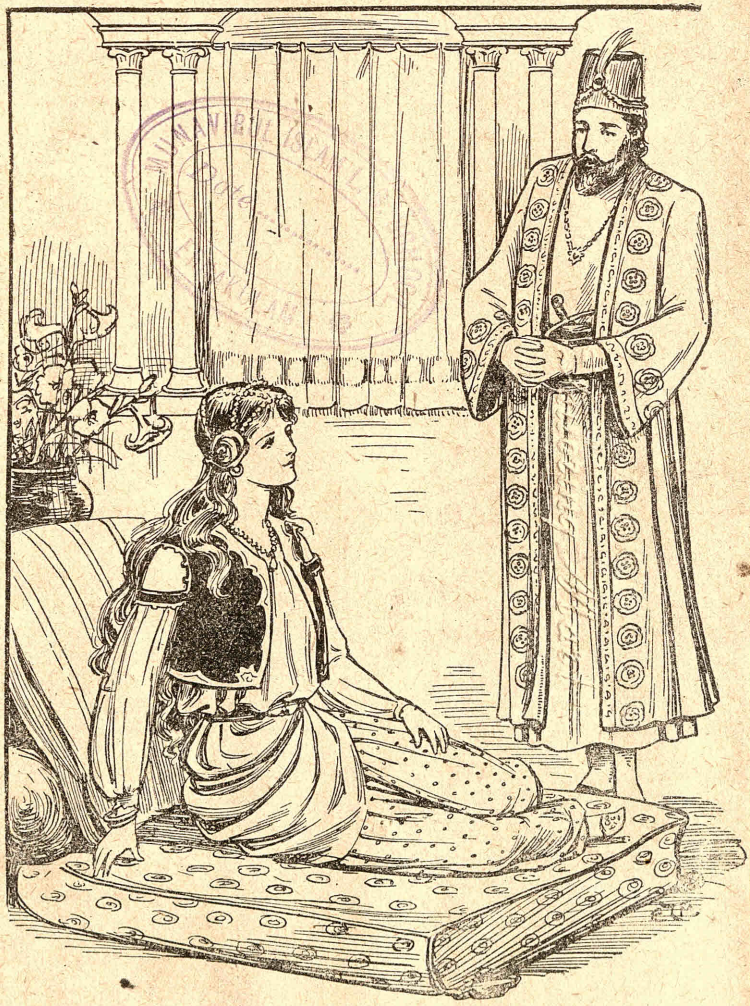
A year thus passed, and one day there were great rejoicings in the capital, for to the king of Persia and his silent slave-queen there was born a son and heir. The king had the little prince named Beder, and in his happiness he made one more attempt to get a word from his wife.

"My beloved queen," he said, "I cannot tell what your thoughts are; for my own part nothing is wanting to complete my joy but a word from you, even if it be only a single word. An inner voice tells me that you are not really dumb. Break this long silence, I beseech, I implore you, and after that I care not how soon I die!"

The queen had listened, as usual, with downcast eyes; but, regarding her attentively, the king was overjoyed to see a faint smile about her mouth. He made an exclamation of delight, and stood waiting, almost breathless with eagerness.

At last the queen for the first time raised her head and met his eyes. Again she smiled, and this time very pleasantly; and now, opening her lips, she spoke.

"Sire," she said, "I have so many things to tell your Majesty that I do not know where to begin. But, in the first place, as in duty bound, I thank you most heartily for all your great kindness towards me, and I beg and implore Heaven to bless and prosper you all your life long. And next, I will say that, if we had never had a child, I was resolved never to love you—I beg you to pardon my frankness of speech—and to remain



AT LAST THE QUEEN RAISED HER HEAD.

silent for ever. But now that our child is born, I love you as I ought to do."

The king embraced her tenderly. "Light of my eyes," he said, "I could have had no greater joy than that which you have now given me."

For the moment he said no more, but, going out, he sent for his grand vizier, or prime minister, and ordered him to distribute presents of money among the hospitals, the very poor, and those who had especially given themselves to religion. This was his thank-offering to Heaven.

He then returned to the queen, and, seating himself by her, entreated her to tell him what were the very powerful reasons she must have had for keeping silence towards him for a whole year, although she saw him, and heard him speak, and ate and drank with him every day.

"I will now tell you all," replied the queen. "Think of the horror which a woman in my position must have felt at being sold for a slave, far from her own country and without hope of ever seeing it again; at being torn away for ever from mother, brother, friends, and relations. The love of our native land is as natural as our love for our parents; and the loss of freedom is intolerable to any person who is not wholly destitute of sense, and who knows how to value it properly. Are not these reasons enough to explain why I kept silent in the way which has seemed to your Majesty so extraordinary?"

"Yes, my love," replied the king thoughtfully, "I fully agree with what you say. Still, I have always hitherto been of opinion that a beautiful lady like yourself, whom an evil fate had condemned to be a slave, might reasonably think herself happy that she had met with a king for her master."

"Sire," replied the slave-queen, "whatever may be a slave's position, there is no king on earth who has a right to tyrannize over her will. But when the slave is of royal blood, and in no respect inferior to the king who bought her, I leave your Majesty to

judge for yourself of her misery, and the desperate deeds to which her anguish might drive her."

At this the king turned and gazed at her in astonishment. "Madam," he said, "is it possible that you are of royal blood? I beseech you, explain to me all this mystery. Who are your parents? And, above all, what is your name?"

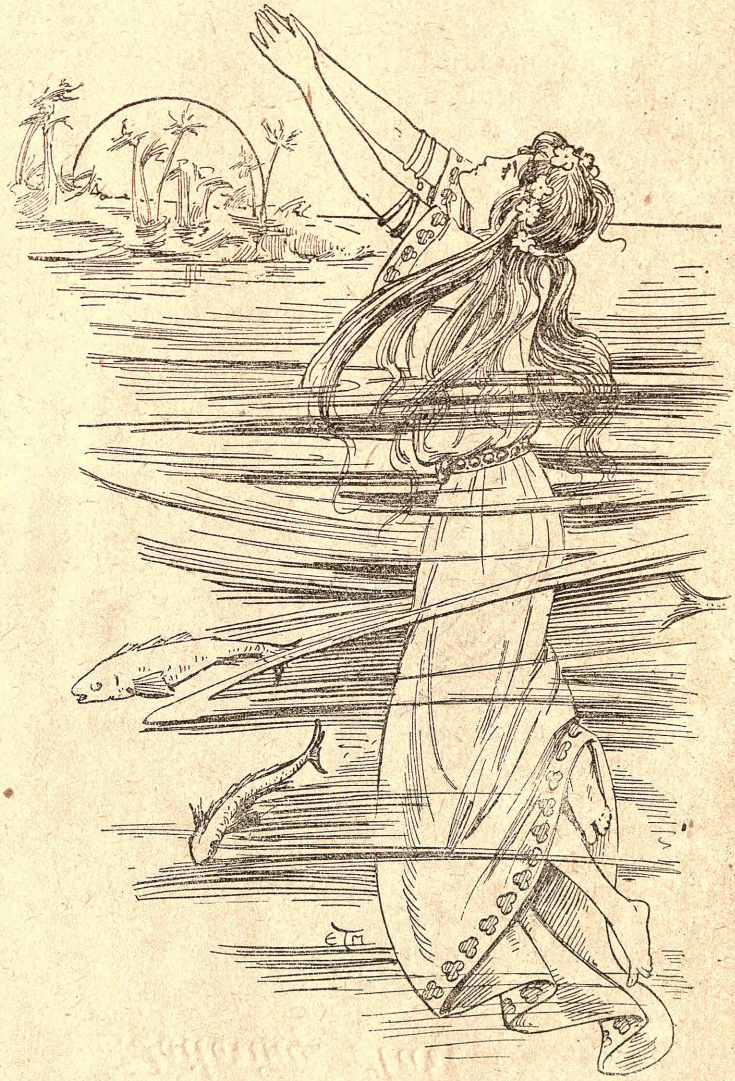
"Sire," she replied, "my name is Rose-of-the-Sea. My father, who is now dead, was one of the greatest and most powerful monarchs who have ruled over the bottom of the ocean. When he died he was succeeded in the kingdom by the queen, my lady mother, and my brother, King Saleh.

"We enjoyed profound peace and happiness, until, in an evil day, another monarch of the sea came against us with a mighty army. My relations and myself had barely time to escape, with a few trusty attendants, to a secure and inaccessible hiding-place that we knew of.

"From this retreat the king, my brother, did everything he could think of in order to drive the usurper out of our dominions; but for a long while all his efforts were in vain, and he began to be greatly concerned on my account.

"'My dear sister,' he said to me one day, 'I may fail in my attempt to recover my kingdom; and what will happen to me, in that case, I cannot at present foresee. I should not so greatly mind my own misfortunes, were it not that I am haunted by a dread of what may possibly happen to you. To save you from all unforeseen dangers, I would gladly see you happily married; but in our present miserable condition I see no chance of being able to find you a suitable husband among the princes of the sea. I should, therefore, be greatly relieved if you could bring your mind to the idea of marrying one of the princes of the earth. I am certain that any of them might be proud to share his crown with you, and I will do all that lies in my power to bring this to pass.'

"These words so astonished



"I SUDDENLY MADE A SPRING UP FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA."

me that, being somewhat headstrong and unreasonable, I fell into a violent passion. 'Brother,' I said indignantly, 'I am surprised at you! I, like yourself, am descended on both sides from kings of the sea. I have no intention of marrying beneath me, any more than my ancestors did; and as for the princes of the earth, I would not even look at them.'

"My brother tried very hard to make me believe that the kings of the earth were quite as good as the kings of the sea. This only made me still more indignant, for I knew that he did not himself believe what he was saying; and then he became angry in turn, and said several bitter things that stung me to the quick.

"It was in this reckless and peevish temper that I suddenly made a spring straight up from the bottom of the sea into the air above. As I came down again I landed on an island.

"I lived for a little while on this island happily enough, but one day a prince of the earth surprised me as I lay asleep. He and his servants seized upon me, and carried me off to his house, where he told me I must marry him. I refused to do so, and he tried to compel me; but I made him repent of his insolence. Then in revenge he sold me as a slave to the very merchant who brought me hither: a humane, sensible, and well-behaved person, who throughout our long journey never gave me the least cause for complaint.

"But for the extreme kindness, courtesy, and affection with which your Majesty has treated me from the very first, and at all times, I assure you that I should not have remained here in your palace. I would have cast myself out of this very window into the sea, and have gone in search of my family.

"That, sire, is my story; and I trust your Majesty will never more think of me as a slave, but as a princess of the highest rank, and your equal in every respect."

It is impossible to describe the king's astonishment when he heard the queen's tale. He plied her with a dozen ques-

tions about the kingdoms of the sea, their rulers, cities, palaces, and forms of government. "There is still one thing that puzzles me," he said at last, after the queen had answered many questions, "and that is, how is it possible for you to live under water without being drowned?"

"Sire," said the queen, with a smile, "to us that is quite easy. We can walk about the bottom of the sea as easily as you do on land; we can breathe in the water as you do in the air; and what is more remarkable still, the sea never wets our clothes. Further, we can see perfectly under water, and to a vast distance; and we can transport ourselves whither we please in the twinkling of an eye, and so have no need of carriages or horses. The sea-kings have a few horses, it is true, but they are only used in processions upon days of public rejoicing. There are a thousand other curious things about the sea-kingdoms with which I could entertain your Majesty, but I must beg of you to let me postpone them to some future time, as I wish now to speak of something of more importance. I have a great desire to see my mother again, and to be reconciled to my brother. I pray your Majesty, therefore, to let me send for them."

"My lady queen," replied the king, "you are mistress here. Do whatever you please: and I will receive your family with all due honour."

The queen now summoned one of her women, and bade her bring in a small brazier containing some live coals. The attendant obeyed, and then retired; and the king, who had withdrawn into a curtained recess, whence he could see without being seen, saw the Queen take a piece of aloes out of a box and put it into the fire. A smoke arose, and she then repeated some unknown words, and looked out of the window.

In a few moments the sea began to be disturbed; then the waves parted, and out of them arose a tall, handsome young man, with moustache of a bright sea-green colour, and a lady, advanced in years and of majestic appearance,



THE QUEEN TOOK SOMETHING FROM A BOX AND PUT IT INTO THE FIRE.

attended by five young ladies of surpassing gracefulness.

The company came forward, borne upon the surface of the waves. When they reached the foot of the palace walls, they sprang nimbly up on to the window-sill, one after another, and entered the room. Queen Rose-of-the-Sea tenderly embraced the queen, her mother, King Saleh, her brother, and the princesses, her relations, and the whole family showed the greatest delight at being once more re-united. Then they sat down on sofas, and talked for a long while about all that had happened since they were parted, and Queen Rose-of-the-Sea was greatly rejoiced to learn that her brother had driven out the usurper, and now reigned once more in peace and prosperity over his ancestral kingdom.

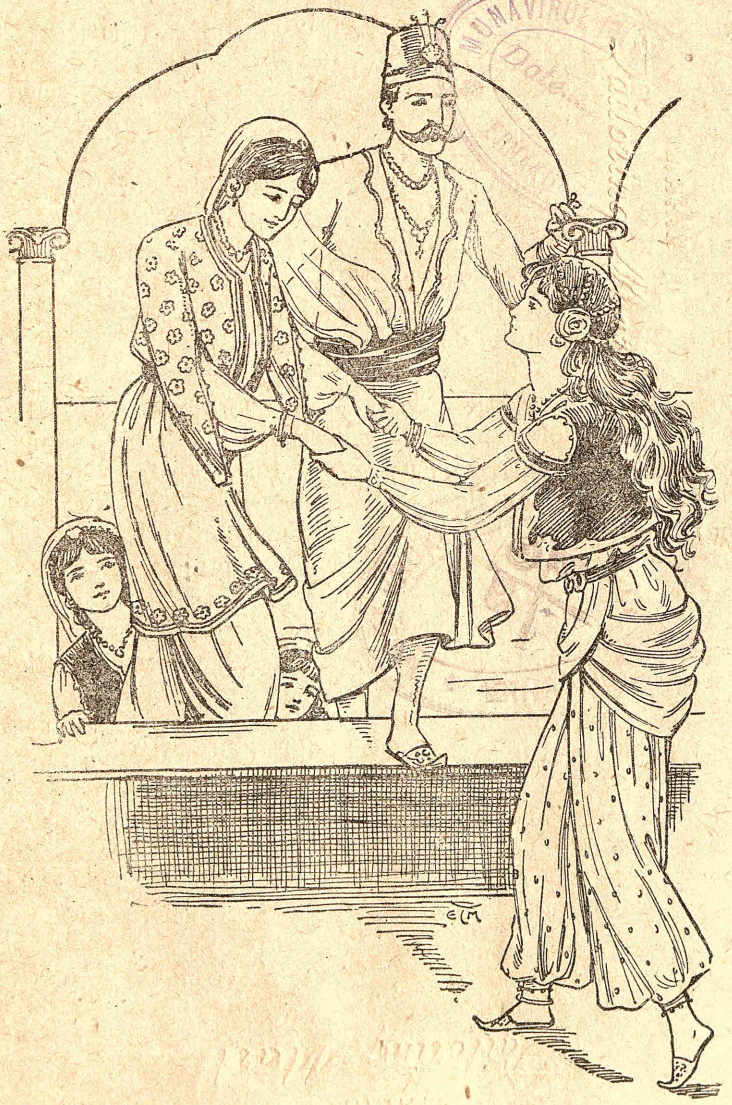
Not knowing yet that his sister was married, King Saleh said very kindly that he hoped she would return with them at once, as he was now in a position to provide handsomely for her future.

This put the king, who was still in the curtained recess, into the utmost alarm. "Alas! alas!" he said to himself, "if my dear queen listens to her brother and goes away with him, I shall surely die of grief!" But the queen soon put him out of his fears.

"Brother," she said, smiling, "you are not aware that I have a husband, whom I love dearly and who loves me dearly. He is a most wise, religious, and kind-hearted king, of an excellent disposition. Besides, I have a child, little Prince Beder. I hope that neither you nor my mother, nor any of the princesses, my relations, will disapprove of the marriage I have made, for it is an equal honour to the kings of the earth and the kings of the sea."

At this moment the attendants entered with a meal which the queen had ordered to be served. The king came forward, and they all sat down together, and talked very pleasantly over their meal.

Presently the nurse entered with little Prince Beder in her arms, to show him to his grandmother and uncle and



THEY ALL ENTERED THE PALACE.

the young princesses. King Saleh was so pleased with his little nephew that he seized him in his arms, and took several turns about the room, dancing and tossing him in the air, to the child's delight; when, all at once, in a transport of joy, he jumped straight out of window with the baby, and disappeared in the depths of the sea.

The king of Persia, who was totally unprepared for such conduct, set up a hideous cry, fully believing that he would never see his dear little son again, or only see him drowned. But the queen said, quietly smiling, "Let not your Majesty be afraid. Beder is my son as well as yours, and he shares the privilege we have of living equally well on land and in the sea."

In a few moments they saw the sea agitated; then King Saleh sprang out of the waves, bearing on his arm the little prince, and re-entered by the window. The baby laughed and crowed, and his clothes were as dry as his royal uncle's.

Queen Rose's family stayed a few days at the palace, and then took their departure, as their presence at home was becoming absolutely necessary. The king of Persia said he was very sorry that it was not in his power to return their visit in their own dominions, but that as they had once found their way to his palace, he hoped they would often come again. Many tears were shed on both sides, and they could hardly tear themselves away from one another's embrace; but at last the royal visitors sorrowfully took leave, and sank beneath the sea.

"Had I not seen such wonders with my own eyes," said the king to Queen Rose, after they were gone, "I could never have believed them."

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