

THE
BOOK OF SINDIBĀD;

THE SEVEN VAZĪRS.

EDITOR'S PREFACE.

THE following translation of "The Story of the King, his Son, the Damsel, and the Seven Vazīrs" was made by Jonathan Scott from a fragment of an Arabic MS. of the *Thousand and One Nights*, procured in Bengal, and published by him, in a volume entitled *Tales, Anecdotes, and Letters, translated from the Arabic and Persian*, in 1800. Scott states, in his preface, that in translating these tales, he had omitted a few objectionable expressions: in reprinting the *Seven Vazīrs*, I have taken the liberty of omitting some others which Scott thought fit to be retained; have adopted a more generally approved system of transliteration for the Arabic words and proper names which occur in the stories; and occasionally have made verbal alterations and emendations. Scott's notes are distinguished by the letter S from those which I have added.

It does not appear that Scott was aware that this tale of the *Seven Vazīrs* is an Arabian version, with some stories omitted and others interpolated, of the ancient Book of Sindibād—indeed it may be doubted whether he knew of such a work at all; nor does he seem to have suspected its affinity to the European romance of the *Seven Sages*, with an English rendering of which he was surely acquainted. Although those tales which are foreign to the original work have probably been inserted in the *Seven Vazīrs* at a comparatively recent period, in recasting some version of the Book of Sindibād for the *Thousand and One Nights*, they are yet of very ancient origin, and widely diffused, as will be seen from the variants and parallels presented in the APPENDIX, and therefore serve as interesting illustrations of the genealogy of popular tales and fictions.

In the Calcutta and Būlāq printed Arabic texts of the *Thousand and One Nights* the tale of the *Seven Vazīrs* occupies the 578th to the 606th Nights. Scott's manuscript seems to have been complete to the 29th Night, after which the division into nights was discontinued, the *Seven Vazīrs* immediately following—probably having been misplaced. I may add, that while the conclusion of this version is greatly abridged, compared with that of the tale as found in the Calcutta and Būlāq texts, the introduction has been much more fully preserved, and corresponds in many points with the oldest Eastern texts of the Sindibād.

W. A. C.

INTRODUCTION.

THERE lived in ancient days a powerful and mighty sultan, who was a wise sovereign, just to his subjects, bountiful to his dependants, and beloved by the whole empire; but he was become gray-bearded and stricken in years, and there had not been allotted to him a son, who might preserve his memory, and inherit the kingdom after him. On this account uneasiness assailed him, and such depression of spirits, that he secluded himself from society, and passed whole days in his private apartments.

At length his subjects began to murmur concerning him.¹ Some said he was dead; others, that an accident had befallen him. On a certain day his queen entered his chamber, and found him thoughtful, reclining his head towards the earth, like one plunged in sorrow.

She approached, and, kissing his hand, said: "Fortune has not persecuted thee, nor have the evils of chance reached thee. God has bestowed upon thee enjoyments, and given thee every delight. What, then, is the cause that I find thee so pensive?"

He replied: "Alas! my years are advanced, my age is drawing to its end, and my kingdom will pass to another family; for I am not blessed with a son, with whom my eyes might be delighted, and who might succeed me in my dominions. On this account extreme sorrow has overcome me."

The queen said: "God will remove thy grief and thy sorrow. The same thoughts which afflicted thy heart have afflicted mine, and what had invaded thy mind was invading mine, when, lo! drowsiness overcame me, and I fell asleep. I dreamt, and saw in my vision a phantom, which revealed to me, saying: 'If the sultan shall be blessed with a son by almighty God, he will with difficulty be preserved from death at a certain period. After that, prosperity will attend him. But if a daughter is born, her father will not love her; and if she lives, she will occasion the ruin of his kingdom. He must not, however, think of a child by any other woman than thyself, and thou shalt be the cause of his having one when the moon and the sign Gemini shall be in conjunction.' I now awoke from sleep, and became thoughtful, reflecting on what I had heard in my vision."

When the sultan heard these words, he said to her: "By God's permission,

¹ The princes of Asia, except prevented by illness, give public audience twice a day. When this has been neglected by the idle or the dissipated, it has generally proved their ruin, or at least been the cause of troublesome commotions, as the powerful chiefs were left uncontrolled by the interference of the sovereign, who at these audiences received the appeals and petitions of the meanest subjects, and redressed their grievances. One of the chief causes of the fall of the khalifate, the Persian and Mogul empires, was the disuse of frequent public audiences.— S.

all will be well;” and the queen did not fail to comfort him until his gloom had passed away. He now quitted his retirement, sat upon the throne of his kingdom, summoned his nobles and his subjects, and entreated their prayers, that God would bless him with a son; when they prayed, and God accepted their prayers.

The night being arrived in which the moon and Gemini entered into conjunction, the queen became pregnant. She informed the sultan of her condition, and he rejoiced with exceeding great joy, and did not refrain, until she had borne her months, and brought forth a son, beautiful as the full moon. Then the sultan made rejoicings from evening till morning, gave alms, and released the prisoners. The infant was suckled nearly two years, when the mother returned to the mercy of God, and they lamented over her with great mourning.

The child did not cease to remain on the bosoms of the nurses and female attendants until he had completed his second year, when his father entrusted him to tutors, that they might teach him what was necessary for princes to acquire.¹

¹ The eighth year of his age passed over, but he had learnt nothing, for every book was to him too difficult. When the tutors represented this to the sultan, he was enraged against his son, and commanded him to be put to death, saying: “This is a disgraceful child, from whom there can no advantage arise.”

There was at the court a man of wisdom, learning, and penetration, deeply versed in every science.² ¹ When he found that the sultan intended to kill his son, he advanced, and kissing the ground before him, said: “O sovereign, be not grieved on account of thy son. Entrust him to me, and I will teach him whatever is necessary in two years.³ I will not deceive you, but instruct him in the sciences, philosophy, and princely accomplishments.”— The sultan exclaimed: “How canst thou make him learn, when every book has been too difficult for him, and his tutors have been wearied out?”— The sage replied: “I pledge myself to do it; and if I do not perfect him in what I have mentioned, act by me as thou shalt think proper.”

Upon this the sultan delivered his son to the sage, who took him to his house, prepared for him a chamber, and wrote upon the walls in yellow and white what he wished him to learn. Then he carried to him what was necessary for him of carpets, food, and utensils, and left him alone in the apartment. He did not permit any person to visit him but himself. Every third day the tutor entered, that he might teach him what was necessary from those books, the contents of which

¹ The period of ablactation in the East is generally at the end of the second year; but there must have been something omitted by the copyist here.— See below, [note](#), page 134.

² In this version the name of the sage does not appear.— See [note 2](#), page 12.

³ See [note](#), page 21.

he had written on the walls, and depict for him fresh lessons; after which he placed round him provisions, locked the door upon him, and departed.

Now it came to pass that the boy, when his mind was at a loss for amusement, studied the lessons written on the walls, which he learnt in a short time. When the tutor found his sense and understanding on every point equal to what was necessary for him, he took him from the apartment, and instructed him in horsemanship and archery; after which he sent to his father, and informed him that his son had learnt whatever was becoming his condition in one year.

The sultan rejoiced exceedingly, and informed his vazīrs of it, who were in number seven. Then he wished to examine his son, and commanded the tutor to bring him with him, in order that he might question him. The tutor consulted the horoscope of the youth, and foresaw that if he should speak before there should pass over his head seven days and nights, there would occur to him imminent danger of death. Upon this the sage addressed the prince, saying: "I have inspected thy nativity, and if from this time thou speakest before seven days are expired, great hazard of life will befall thee."— The prince replied: "What can ensure my safety?"— The tutor answered: "Repair to thy father, but when he speaketh to thee, utter not a word."— The youth exclaimed: "I swear by God, that if thou hadst commanded me that I should not breathe, I would have obeyed thee, on account of what thou hast done for me of kindness and favour." The tutor replied: "Go, and speak not, though they beat thee with scourges, for thou wilt recover of thy wounds, there will be in store for thee great glory, and thou shalt rule the kingdom after thy father." Then the prince said: "Remember thy speech to my father before thou lookedst at my nativity." The tutor replied: "What must be must be; further conversation will not profit. Nothing will occur but felicity to thee, whatever may become of me. Be firm, and trust in God; for whoever trusteth in God is secure."

The prince departed, and repaired to his father, when the vazīrs, with the nobles, officers of state, and the men of science met him on his way. They placed before him an herb, that he might describe its genus and properties; but he did not speak. They importuned him to answer, but he would not utter a word.

Upon this the sultan was affected with grief, and sent for the tutor to punish him; when some of the assembly said, the sage had deserted his house in the night; some, that he had taken poison; and others contradicted this last assertion. There was much disputation among them, but still the prince would not speak.¹ At length the assembly broke up, and there remained only the prince and his father.

The sultan had a concubine, of beautiful person and very young, with the love of whom he was doatingly fascinated. She now entered, and saw the prince

¹ In some of the versions, the assembled sages ascribe the prince's silence to the effect of a drug which his tutor had given him in order that he might learn quickly.

sitting near his father, like an affrighted fawn. She approached near, and said to the sultan: "I perceive thee, my lord, overcome with affliction;" when he related to her the conduct of his son. She replied: "I desire that thou wouldst commit him to my charge, for perhaps he will be affable to me and speak, and I shall discover the cause of his silence."¹

He replied: "Take him with thee." Upon which she led him by the hand, conducted him to her chamber, caressed him, and explained to him her wishes, clasped him to her bosom, and attempted to kiss him; but he rejected her advances. She exclaimed: "I am a young damsel, and thou a young man; I will be thine, and thou shalt be mine. Thy father is become superannuated, must soon depart this life, when thou wilt govern the kingdom after him, and shalt espouse me; but if thou wilt not comply with my desires, I will effect thy destruction. Choose, then, one or the other— happiness or death."²

¹ In the Persian text ([page 25](#)), the damsel is secretly enamoured of the prince, but had never found an opportunity of telling him her love. In the Greek, Hebrew, and old Castilian, she tells the king that the prince had been wont, from a boy, to confide in her, and proposes that she should take him with her, to induce him to speak. —Comparetti is in error when he says that in the present text the prince was, "according to the prevailing opinion, taken to the harem." We see that the assembly had "broken up" before the damsel came in, and asked leave to take the prince with her.

² It is curious that in the other Arabic texts the prince is tempted by the damsel when he is little more than ten years old: and according to the present version, he could have been only nine, since he was eight when the sage undertook to teach him in two years, and "he had learnt whatever was becoming his condition in one year." This absurdity is due to the copyist, who has suppressed a second period of unsuccessful teaching, which is also omitted in the old Castilian translation. In the *Sindibād Nāma*, although the precise age of the prince when he was tempted by the damsel is not mentioned, he must have been about twenty years old, since he was ten when first entrusted to tutors, under whom, "year after year," he made no progress, and he was afterwards six years in charge of Sindibād before he finally undertook to teach him in six months. In the *Mishlé Sandabar*, the unsuccessful period is twelve years and a half, after he was seven years old, during which it is not said that his preceptors were changed; he was, therefore, nineteen and a half when Sandabar took him in hand for six months, which together make up the twenty years, when danger to him was predicted at his birth. The *Libto de los Engannos* is less exact: although the danger to the prince was to happen twenty years after his birth, it actually occurred when he was fifteen and a half years old; his education having been begun at seven, and unsuccessfully conducted for eight years, after which Cendubete finally teaches him in six

When the prince heard this, he was exceedingly enraged against her, and thought within himself: “I will speedily repay thee for thy crimes, when after seven days I shall be able to speak.”¹ The artful damsel, when she perceived his anger, hastened to contrive his ruin. She beat her cheeks, tore her garments, dishevelled her hair, and went before the sultan in that manner. He said: “What can have happened to thee?” She exclaimed: “He, whom thou seest, hath done this, even thy own son, who has plotted the destruction of thy life, and feigned himself dumb. When I entered with him into my chamber, he declared to me his love; and when I refused him, he said: ‘I cannot live without thee, and if thou dost not comply with my desires, I will kill thee, and murder my father.’”²

When the sultan heard these words, his wrath was violent against his son, and he gave orders to have him put to death. He sent for his *vazīrs*; but the tutor had informed them of the circumstances, and why the prince was prevented from speaking for seven days. Upon this the *vazīrs* assembled together, and consulted, saying: “The sultan intends to put his son to death, but there may not be in him any fault, so that when he is dead, our master may repent, when repentance will not avail.”— Then the prime *vazīr* said: “Let us each take charge of him for a day during the seven days, till the whole are expired, and I will be responsible for you all at the conclusion of that period.”

months. That there was a second unsuccessful period, during which Cendubete had charge of him, is evident from the question put to the sage when the eight years had passed without result: “Why have you not instructed the prince in those years that he has been with you?”

¹ See [note](#), page 26.

² In the *Būlāq* and *Calcutta* printed Arabic texts, the introduction to the *Seven Vazīrs* is so much abridged and garbled as to be of no service whatever in showing the original form of this portion of the *Book of Sindibād*. Nothing is said of the unsuccessful attempts to instruct the prince, or of *Sindibād*’s undertaking the task at the peril of his own life: the prince is entrusted to *Sindibād* at the age of five, and when he attains his tenth year he is taught horsemanship and warlike exercises; one day *Sindibād* discovers the threatening aspect of the prince’s horoscope, and— so far is he from concealing himself, as in all other versions— goes at once before the king and acquaints him of the danger to his son’s life should he break silence during the following seven days, and advises him to keep the prince in a secluded place, entertained with mirth and music until the seven days be past. The king accordingly entrusts the young prince to his favourite concubine, with orders to keep him with her for seven days. In the harem were forty apartments, in each of which were ten beautiful slave-girls, all skilled in music: here the prince passed one night; and next day, apparently, he is tempted by the concubine.

The First Vazīr having contrived thus, he repaired to the sultan, kissed the ground, and said: “O sultan, if there were to thee a thousand sons, far be it from thee the death of one of them! Alas, then, when thou hast one only, with whom thou wast blessed after much anxiety and expectation, that thou shouldst command his execution upon the bare assertion of a woman! God only knoweth whether she hath spoken truly or accused him falsely; for there are among the sex women artfully malicious.”

Story of Ahmed the Orphan.

I HAVE heard, O my sovereign, that a certain sultan resolved to educate those unfortunate children who are sometimes abandoned on the highways. As he was passing one day, behold, he saw a male infant upon a heap of rubbish, who appeared beautiful as the moon at the full. He commanded his attendants to convey him to the palace; and they took him up, and committed him to nurses till he grew up, when they placed him at school. The boy learnt the Qur’ān and the sciences and languages. When he had finished his education, the sultan committed to him the care of his treasury; and it came to pass that at length he did nothing but with his advice, and the youth attended in his private chambers.

As he was in waiting one day, the sultan said: “Go to the apartment of Hayātu-‘n-nufūs,¹ and bring me a medicine from her closet.” The youth passed through the chamber of the concubine, and found her with a slave. He took up the medicine, but did not seem to attend to her actions, and returned with haste to the sultan. The name of this youth was Ahmed Yetīm.² Then the sultan said: “What has happened to thee, that I perceive thy colour changed?”— Ahmed replied: “My lord, because I came with hurry and precipitation;” but he did not inform the sultan of what he had discovered.

The concubine Hayātu-‘n-nufūs, being convinced that Ahmed must have beheld herself and her paramour, hastily contrived a scheme against him. She scarred her face, and rent her garments. When the sultan entered, and found her in that situation, he said: “What is thy condition?”— She exclaimed: “From him who is the offspring of adultery no good can proceed.”— The sultan, understanding her meaning, replied: “Conceal this affair, and within this hour I will bring thee his head.” He departed from her, filled with indignation, and ascended his throne.

Ahmed attended, according to custom, but did not suspect what was plotted against him. The sultan beckoned to one of his slaves, and said privately to him:

¹ Life of the Souls;— Scott renders the name, Refresher of the Soul.

² Orphan Ahmed;— according to Scott, The Good Orphan, thus mis-translating the name Ahmed.

“Go to the house of such a person, and remain there. When any one shall say unto thee: ‘Thus saith the sultan, Do that which thou wast commanded to execute,’ strike off his head, place it in this basket, and fasten over it the cover. When I shall send to thee a messenger who will say: ‘Hast thou performed the business?’ commit to him the basket.” The slave replied: “To hear is to obey,” and retired. Soon after, the sultan called to Ahmed Yetīm, and said: “Hasten to a certain house, and say unto such a slave, ‘Execute the commands of the sultan.’”

Ahmed departed, but on the way he saw the man who had been criminal with the concubine, with a number of other slaves, sitting down, drinking and feasting. As they saw Ahmed approaching, they stood up; and the guilty slave thought that if he could detain him from the business of the sultan, he might procure his death. He stopped him, paid obeisance to him, and entreated that he would sit down with them a little while. But Ahmed said: “The sultan hath sent me upon business to a certain house, and I cannot stay.” Upon this the guilty slave replied: “I will perform the commission.” Ahmed answered: “If so, hasten, and say to a slave whom thou wilt find there, that he must execute the orders of the sultan.” The slave said: “To hear is to obey,” and departed.

Ahmed sat down with the rest, while the other proceeded to the house, and said to the person in waiting: “Thus saith the sultan, ‘Complete thy orders.’” He replied: “Most readily,” and drawing his scimitar, struck off the head of the guilty slave, washed it from the blood, placed it in the basket, tied the cover on it, and sat down.

When Ahmed had waited some time for the return of his messenger, he took leave of his company, went to the house, and said to the slave in waiting: “Hast thou performed thy orders?” He replied: “Yes,” and committed the basket to Ahmed, who took it up, and went with it to the sultan; but he did not suspect what was within the basket, nor did curiosity lead him to open it.

When the sultan saw him, he said: “Ahmed, I sent thee upon a commission, but thou hast entrusted it to another.” He replied: “My lord, it is true.” The sultan exclaimed: “Hast thou seen what is contained in this basket?” Ahmed answered: “No; I swear by thy head, I do not know what is within it, nor have I opened it.” The king was astonished, and said: “Take off the covering.” He lifted it up, and, behold! in it was the head of the slave who had done evil with Hayātu-‘n-nufūs.

The sultan exclaimed: “I cannot suppose, Ahmed, that it should be concealed from thee, whether or not this slaughtered man was guilty of a crime which rendered him worthy of death.” Ahmed replied: “Know, my lord, when thou didst send me for the medicine to the chamber of Hayātu-‘n-nufūs, I found this slave in her embraces. I took up the medicine, but did not disclose what I had beheld. When despatched to the house, I found on the way this guilty slave, sitting with his fellows eating and drinking. He stood up, and entreated me to stay among them. I replied: ‘The sultan hath sent me to execute a commission.’ Upon which he said: ‘Sit down I will perform this business,’ and departed.” He then related the other circumstances, until he was entrusted with the basket. Then the sultan

exclaimed: "O Ahmed! none is discerning but God;" related to him the behaviour of the damsel, and what she had accused him of, and said: "I resign her unto thee." Ahmed replied: "I cannot repay the bounties of the sultan with ingratitude; I can have no concern with her." When the sultan heard these words, he commanded her to be put to death. [24]

"This, O sultan," continued the vazīr, "is only one instance of the deceitfulness of women. Trust not to their declarations, for their artful malice is great. Another example of their arts hath reached me."

Story of the Merchant, His Wife, and the Parrot.

THERE was a merchant, who traded largely, and travelled much abroad; he had a wife whom he loved, and to her he was constant.¹ A journey became necessary for him, and he bought for a hundred dinars a parrot, that could speak like a human being, that it might inform him of what passed in the house.

Before he departed upon his journey, he committed to the parrot the charge of watching his wife's conduct. When he was gone, the lady sent to her lover, who was a soldier;² and he came, and abode with her during the time of her husband's absence. The parrot observed all that was done. On the merchant's return, he called for the bird, and asked him what had passed, and was informed of his wife's misconduct. When the merchant heard this intelligence, he was enraged against his wife, beat her severely, and kept himself from her. The wife supposed that her neighbours had accused her; but they declared, upon oath, that they had not spoken to him. Then she said: "None can have informed him but the parrot."

Upon a certain night, the merchant went to visit a friend. Then the wife took a coarse cloth, and put it upon the parrot's cage, and placed over it, on the floor above, the grinding-stones; after which she ordered her slave-girls to grind, throw water over the cloth, and raise a great wind with a fan. Then she took a looking-glass, and made it dazzle in the light of the lamp, by a quick motion.

The bird (being in the dark) supposed that the noise of the grinding was thunder; the gleams from the mirror, lightning; the blasts from the fan, wind; and the water, hard rain.³ In the morning, when the merchant returned to his house,

¹ Vatsyayana, in his *Kama Sutra*, says that a man who is much given to travelling does not deserve to be married.

² A young Turk, according to the Calcutta text.

³ In the Turkish version of this story, as found in the *Forty Vazīrs*, a piece of bullock's hide is stretched over the cage, and beat from time to time to imitate thunder; water is sprinkled on the bird through a sieve; and a mirror

the parrot said: "How fared my lord last night, during the wind, the rain, and the dreadful lightning?" The merchant exclaimed: "Villain, thou liest; for I did not see anything of it;" and the parrot replied: "I only tell thee what I experienced."

The merchant now disbelieved the bird, and put confidence in his wife. He went to her, and sought to be reconciled, but she said: "I will not be reconciled, unless you destroy the mischief-making parrot, who belied me." He killed the bird, and after that remained some time happy with his wife. At length the neighbours informed him of her crimes, when he concealed himself, and detected the soldier with her. The fidelity of the parrot was apparent, but the merchant repented of putting him to death, when repentance would not avail him. He divorced his wife, and took an oath never to marry.¹

"I have thus informed thee, O sultan," added the vazīr, "of the artfulness of women, and proved that rashness produces only fruitless remorse." The sultan, upon this, refrained from the execution of his son.

When night set in, the Damsel came to the sultan, and said: "Why hast thou delayed doing me justice? Hast thou not heard that sovereigns should be obeyed in whatever they command, and that an order not enforced is a sign of weakness? Every one knows what must follow. Do me justice, then, upon thy son, or it will happen to you both, as it happened to the fuller and his son."— Then the king said: "What befell the fuller and his son?" She replied:

Story of the Fuller and his Son.

KNOW, O sultan, that there was a fuller who went daily to wash his cloths on the bank of a river, and with him his son, who used to venture far into the water and swim; which his father forbade, but he would not be prevented. On a certain day, the youth went into a deep part, and his arms became cramped. When the father beheld his situation, he threw himself into the river, hoping to save him; but the youth hung upon his legs, and they were both drowned. [\[5\]](#)

"Do me justice, then, upon thy son. Thy vazīrs pretend that the art of our sex is greater than that of men; but the fact is the contrary, as you will see from the

flashed before it now and again.

¹ See [note, page 34](#); and [Appendix, No. 3](#).

Story of the Sultan and the Vazīr's Wife.

It has been related to me, my lord, that there was a certain sultan much addicted to the love of women, of violent passions. Being one day upon the terrace of his palace, he saw a lady upon the platform of her house, beautiful and elegant; his soul desired her, and he was told that she was the wife of his vazīr. Upon this he sent for the minister, and despatched him on a distant expedition, with orders not to return till he had executed his commission. The vazīr attended to his sovereign's commands, and departed.

When the sultan knew of his departure, he was impatient to see the lady, and repaired to her house. She received him standing, and kissed the ground before him; but she was virtuous, and had no inclination to immodesty. She then said: "Why, O my lord, is this auspicious visit?" He replied: "From the excess of my love and passion for thee." Upon which she kissed the ground, and said: "It is not befitting that I should be thy partner; my heart has never aspired to such an honour."

Then the sultan extended his hands upon her, and tempted her; when she cried: "My lord, this must never be." Observing that he was enraged at her refusal, she dissembled, and said: "Wait, O my lord, until I have prepared a supper, which when thou hast partaken of, I shall be honoured with thy commands."

She then seated the sultan upon the sofa of her husband, and brought him a book from which the vazīr was used to read to her. In it were written admonitions and warnings against adultery, and commands to his wife not to admit any one within doors without his orders. On the perusal of it, the sultan's mind was diverted from the pursuit of his guilty passion.

At length the lady placed a supper before him, consisting of ninety and nine dishes; when the sultan ate a mouthful from every dish. Each was of a different colour, but all of the same sort of food. Then he said to her: "How is this?" She replied: "My lord, I have set a parable before thee. In thy palace are ninety and nine concubines, of different stature and complexion; who, however, form but one kind of food."

The sultan was confounded, and did not importune her. Rising up, he went to perform his ablutions, but left his ring under a cushion of the sofa; and on his return to the palace, forgot to take it with him.¹

When the vazīr returned from his journey, and had visited the sultan, he repaired to his own house, and sat down upon the sofa; and, behold! under the cushion he discovered the sultan's ring, which he knew. Becoming jealous of his wife, he was enraged against her, and secluded himself from her for a whole year; during which he did not go near, nor even inquire after her. When the coolness of her husband became intolerable, the lady complained to her father, and informed

¹ See [page 81, and note](#).

him of his neglect of her for a whole year; upon which the father repaired to the sultan, when the vazīr was present, and said:

“ May God preserve the sultan! I had an elegant garden, which was formed by my own hand, and I watered it until it was the season of its fruits. Then I presented it to thy vazīr, and he ate of its productions until he was satiated, when he deserted and neglected it; and it was spoiled, and reptiles over-ran it; its flowers were injured, and its condition was changed.”

The sultan said to the vazīr: “How sayest thou?” The vazīr replied: “He speaketh the truth in what he hath related. But one day, when I entered the garden, I saw the track of a lion in it; my mind was alarmed, and I refrained from visiting it.”

On hearing this parable, the sultan understood it, recollected that he had forgotten his ring in the house of the vazīr, and knew that by it was meant the track of the lion. He then said: “It is true, O vazīr, that the lion did enter without the consent of the owner’s wife; but the lion did not compel her to commit evil. She is a virtuous woman, and of chaste desires.”

Then the vazīr said: “To hear is to obey;” and he was now convinced that the sultan had not compelled her to dishonour. He returned to his wife, who related to him all that had passed; and he relied upon her truth, her honour, and her fidelity.

“Had she been vicious,” continued the Damsel, “she would have complied with the sultan, when he disclosed his wishes; but know, my lord, that men are more deceitful than women.” [17]

Next morning the sultan commanded the execution of his son; when the Second Vazīr entered, and, kissing the ground, said: “Be not rash in executing thy son. Thou wast not blessed with him till after despairing of issue, and could scarcely credit his existence. He may yet prove to thee the preserver of thy kingdom, and a guardian of thy memory. Be patient, then, my lord, until he shall find a proper opportunity to speak for himself. If thou puttest him to death, thou wilt repent when repentance will not avail. I have heard, O sultan, much of the female sex, of their arts and their stratagems, especially in the

Story of the Officer and the Merchant’s Wife.

THERE was an officer belonging to the body-guard of his prince, who admired a merchant’s wife, and was passionately beloved by her. On a certain day he sent his slave to see whether her husband was at home or absent. When the slave came, not finding her husband, he would have returned; but the lady, on seeing him, would not let him go.

While they were conversing, the officer came up, and she took the slave and locked him in an inner chamber. And, while the officer was with her, suddenly her husband knocked at the door. Upon this the lady said to the officer, who was

much alarmed: "Draw thy scimitar, and go down to the entry, abuse me, and revile me, and say: 'He certainly is with thee, and thou hast concealed him.' When my husband enters, go out, and pursue thy way."

Her husband, on coming in, saw the officer standing in the entry, with a drawn sword in his hand, exclaiming: "Thou wretch! thou hast hidden the lad near thee," and he then hastened home. The merchant said to his wife: "What has been the matter?" She replied: "Thou hast this day saved an unfortunate Mussulman from being murdered." He asked her how that was, and she replied: "I was sitting, thinking upon thee, when a young lad rushed in, and cried: 'Save me from death, and God will save thee from the fire! An officer would murder me without a fault.' Then I took him, and concealed him in my chamber; after which the officer entered, and began to abuse me, and would have killed me, saying, 'He is with thee.' God be praised that you came in, or I should have been a corpse." Her husband said: "God preserve thee from the fire, for what thou hast done I doubt not but he will."

Then she took the lad from the chamber, and he pretended to weep, and thanked her for her kindness; but the husband did not guess the least of the disgrace that had befallen his head from his wife's intrigues. [\[4\]](#)

"This, O sultan, is only one instance of the art of women; alas, that thou shouldst give credit to their accusations!"

When the third night was arrived, the Damsel entered, and kissing the ground, wept, and said: "Wilt thou not, my lord, do me justice upon thy son? And wilt thou not refrain from attending to the stories of thy vazīrs? They are full of wickedness. I have heard, O sultan, of a vazīr who would have murdered the son of his master." He inquired: "In what manner?" She replied:

*Story of the Prince and the Ghūl.*¹

THERE was a certain sultan who had a son, whom he loved with ardent affection. The prince one day begged permission of his father to hunt; upon which the sultan ordered preparations, commanded his vazīr to attend him, and sent with him slaves, domestics, and troops. They advanced towards the chase, and passed through a verdant plain, having groves and rivulets, among which the antelopes sported. The prince pursued and ran down much game of various kinds, and remained long, diverting himself with the sport, in great spirits and enjoyment.

As he was returning homewards, there bounded across the plain an antelope, brilliant as the sun shining in a serene sky; and the vazīr said: "Let us pursue this deer, for my heart longs to take her." When the prince heard this, he

¹ See [note 2, page 55](#).

followed her; and the attendants would have accompanied him, but the *vazīr* forbade them. The antelope did not cease to gain ground, nor the prince to pursue her, till the evening overshadowed, when she disappeared, and darkness came on.

The prince would have returned, but could not find his path, and he fainted with terror; nor could he move from the thirsty desert until the morning. He then prayed to God for deliverance, and travelled on, oppressed with hunger, until mid-day; when, lo! he came to a ruined town, in which owls and ravens had their abodes. While he stopped, astonished at their screamings, a female voice struck his ear, and he beheld a beautiful girl sitting under one of the mouldering walls, weeping bitterly. He addressed her, and said: "Why dost thou lament, and who art thou?" She replied: "Know that I am the daughter of a certain sultan of the north. My father espoused me to the son of my uncle, and detached troops to escort me to him, and we began our journey. When we arrived here, I fell from my carriage, as you see, and my attendants went on, and left me, thinking I was still upon the camel.¹ I have remained here three days, famishing and thirsty, and was despairing of life, when I saw thee."— The prince mounted her behind him, and said: "Comfort thy heart, and dry thine eyes, and say, God be praised, for thy deliverance from this desert."

They now proceeded, and besought assistance from the Almighty.² When they had journeyed some time, they reached a city, ruinous like the first, and the damsel said to him: "Remain here, while I retire a little; I will soon return." The prince helped her down, and waited with his horse, when, behold! the *ghūl* (for such was the pretended damsel) cried to two others, saying: "I have brought a prey

¹ In Arabia, Persia, and other Eastern countries women and children generally travel in litters, of more or less elegant construction according to their rank, secured on the backs of camels and elephants. The pre-Islamite Arabian poet Labīd, in his celebrated *Mu'allaqa*, thus describes the litters which bore away his mistress and her damsels (Lyall's translation):

"The camel-litters of the tribe stirred thy longing, what time they moved
away

And crept into the litters hung with cotton, as the wooden framework
creaked

The litters hung all around, over their frame of wood, with hangings, thin
veils, and pictured curtains of wool."

An interesting account of the various kinds of litters used in India and Persia is cited by Garcin de Tassy in a note to his translation of the romance of *Kāmarupa*, chap, xxiii.

² That is, the *prince* besought, etc.

to feast upon.”¹ When the prince heard this, his heart was chilled. The ghūl came out, and found him pale and trembling. She said: “Prince, why do I behold thy colour changed?” He answered: “I was reflecting on the cause of my sorrows.” She exclaimed: “Seek a remedy for them in the treasures of thy father.” He replied: “They are not to be remedied by treasure or hoards.” She said: “Remedy them by your armies and troops.” He replied: “They are not to be remedied by them.” She continued: “Ask help of the God of power and might; for ye pretend that ye have in the heavens a God who, when ye call upon him, will be gracious, and that he is absolute over all things.” The prince replied: “It is true; and we have no other help but him.” Then he lifted up his face towards heaven, and said: “O Lord, I humbly beseech thee, and implore aid from thee in this crisis, which grieveth and afflicteth me;”² at the same time catching the pretended princess in his arms. Scarcely had he concluded his prayer, when an angel descended from the sky, with a sword of flame, and smote her with it, and destroyed her.³ For this miracle may the Almighty be glorified! The prince after this returned safely to the capital of his father. [\[7\]](#)

“All this danger,” continued the damsel, “occurred from the schemes of the vazīr; and I inform thee, O sultan, that thy vazīrs are also treacherous. Be, then, watchful of their arts.” Upon this the sultan gave orders for the execution of his son.

On the next day the Third Vazīr entered, kissed the ground before the sultan, and said: “Know, O sultan, I would advise thee candidly, and am faithful to thyself and thy son. Be not violent against thy child, the light of thine eyes. It is possible the damsel’s desire of his death may proceed from malice; and I have heard that two great tribes were destroyed for the sake of a drop of honey.” The sultan inquired, upon what occasion, and the vazīr said:

Story of the Drop of Honey.

It has been related to me that there was a hunter, who chased every species of wild animals. One day in his excursion to the mountains, he found a hollow in the rocks, full of honey, with which he filled a vessel he had with him, and returned to the city. He chanced to stop at the door of an oil-merchant, when a little of the honey happening to drop, the merchant’s cat licked it up, and was killed by the

¹ See [page 55, and note 1](#).

² See [note 3, page 55](#).

³ According to the Greek and Syriac texts, and also the old Castilian translation, when the prince had uttered a prayer she fell powerless on the ground.

hunter's dog.¹ Upon this, the merchant killed the dog, at which the hunter was enraged, and having wounded the merchant, went to his quarter, and raised his friends. The merchant also raised his friends, and when the parties met, they fought till they were all destroyed for the sake of a drop of honey. [25]

[I have also heard, continued the third *vazīr*, among instances of female artifice, the

*Story of the Woman and the Rice-Seller.*²

A MAN one day gave his wife a dirham³ to buy rice, and she went to the shop of the rice-seller, and said to him: "Give me rice for this dirham." When he saw that she was possessed of beauty and an elegant form, he began cajoling her, and said to her: "Rice is not good unless with sugar; come within, and I will give thee some." The woman consented, and the dealer ordered his slave to measure a quantity of rice and sugar, but accompanied the order with a private sign, which the youth understood; and while his master was engaged with the woman, he filled her towel with earth and stones. After this the woman took the towel, and went off, thinking that it contained sugar and rice; and when she arrived at her house she placed it before her husband, and went to fetch the caldron. In the meantime her husband opened the towel, and discovered the earth and the stones, and when she came back he said to her: "Did I tell thee that we had a house to build, that thou hast brought earth and stones?" She then perceived that the dealer had tricked her, and said: "O my husband, see what I have done in my confusion: I went for the sieve, and have brought the caldron! For the dirham you gave me dropped from

¹ In other versions, some flies alight upon the spilled honey, a bird attacks the flies, the grocer's cat kills the bird, the hunter's dog worries the cat thus bearing some resemblance to our accumulative nursery rhymes of "The House that Jack Built" and "The Old Woman and the Crooked Sixpence," which appear to find their indirect original, strange to say, in an allegorical hymn in the Talmud.— In the Syriac text, a bee settles on the honey, a weasel seizes the bee, a dog attacks the weasel, and so on.

² Omitted by Scott, "it being too indelicate for translation." After suppressing a few words of the original, the story, as follows, is certainly not more free than any of those he has translated. See also the story in the Persian text, page 46.

³ About sixpence of our money.

my hand in the market-place¹, and I was ashamed before the people to look around for it; so I brought back earth and stones, that you might sift them.” The husband then arose, and took the sieve, and he sat down sifting the earth until his face and his beard were covered with dust; and the poor man knew not what had happened to him.]

On the fourth night the Damsel entered to the sultan, kissed the ground before him, and said: “My lord, you have rejected my cause, delayed my claims, and will not do me justice upon thy son. But God will assist me, as he assisted the son of a certain sultan against his father’s vazīr.” The sultan inquired in what manner that happened, and she related the

Story of the Transformed Prince.

THERE was a sultan, who had an only son, whom he betrothed to the daughter of a great monarch. She was very beautiful, and passionately beloved by the son of her uncle; but her father would not consent to give her to him in marriage, on account of his prior engagement to the sultan. When the young man found that his uncle had affianced her to another, he was exceedingly afflicted, and had no other resource but to send rich presents to the vazīr of the intended bridegroom’s father, and entreat him that he would deceive the prince by some stratagem, so that the match might be broken off. The vazīr accepted the bribe, and promised compliance.

The father of the princess, after some time, wrote to the sultan, requesting that he would send his son, to celebrate the marriage at his court; after which he might return home with his bride. The sultan consented, and despatched the prince under care of his vazīr, with attendants and slaves, and an escort of a thousand horse; he also sent by him a rich present of camels, and horses, and tents, and valuable curiosities.

The vazīr departed with the prince, but resolved to betray him, on account of the bribes he had received from the cousin of the princess. At length they entered a desert, where the vazīr bethought himself of a fountain, named the White Fountain, of which but few persons knew the properties; these were, that

¹ In the Syriac version, the woman says she was frightened by a *calf*; in the 8th Night of Nakhshabī’s *Tūtī Nāma* (where the story is told by the Sixth Vazīr), she says that an *ox*, having got loose, ran at her, and she fell, losing the money among the dust. (This is the 25th tale of Kāderī’s abridgment of the *Tūtī Nāma*, of which an English translation, together with the text, was published, at London, in 1801.) In the Hebrew and the Arabic versions, she was jostled by the crowd in the bazaar, and dropped the coin.

if a man drank of the water, he became a woman; and if a woman drank of it, she became a man. The vazīr encamped at some distance from it, and invited the prince to ride out with him; when he mounted, but did not suspect what the vazīr had devised. They did not cease riding in the wilderness till sunset, when the prince complained that he was overcome with thirst, and unable to converse from the parching of his mouth. The vazīr then brought him to the fountain, and said: "Dismount, and drink."

The prince alighted from his horse, and drank, when lo! he instantly became a woman. On perceiving his condition, he wept aloud, and was overcome with shame, and fainted. On his recovery, the vazīr came up to him with pretended condolences, and said: "What has befallen thee? And whence is this sorrow?" The prince having related what had occurred to him, the vazīr said: "Thy enemies must have done this. A great misfortune and a heavy calamity have certainly come upon thee; for how can the object of our journey be performed when thou art thyself become a bride? I would advise that we return to thy father, and inform him of what has happened." The prince replied: "I swear by the Almighty, that I will not return, until he shall remove from me this affliction, though I should die under it." The vazīr then returned to his troops, and left the prince; who walked onwards, not knowing whither he should proceed.

On the way there met him a horseman, beautiful as the full moon,¹ who saluted him, and said: "Lady, who art thou, and why behold I thee alone in this frightful desert? For I perceive upon thee the marks of distinction, and that thou art sorrowful and afflicted." When the prince heard these kind expressions from the horseman, he put confidence in him, and related what had befallen him. The cavalier said: "Hast thou drank of the White Fountain?" He answered: "Yes;" and the other rejoined: "Comfort thyself, and dry thine eyes, for I will attempt thy delivery." The prince then fell at his feet, and would have kissed them, but he forbade him; when the prince said: "I conjure thee by Allah, tell me, how can relief come to me through thee?" He replied: "I am a jinnī, but will not injure thee."

They travelled all night, and at dawn reached a verdant plain, abounding in trees and rivulets, and upon it lofty edifices; and there they dismounted, and entered one of the palaces. The jinnī welcomed him, and they remained all day feasting in mirth and gladness. At night the jinnī mounted his horse, and taking

¹ In the Rich MS. of the 1001 N. (Brit. Mus.), the treacherous vazīr returns to the king, and informs him of what had happened to the prince; and the king, sorely stricken with grief, endeavours in vain to ascertain the cause of his son's misfortune from masters of the occult sciences.— The prince remained three days and three nights, and neither ate nor drank, and his horse was tied, pasturing in the valley, and he weeping over his fate. But when the fourth day came, behold, a yellow horseman, riding on a yellow horse, and on his head a yellow diadem, etc.— The Būlāq and Calcutta texts are to the same purpose.

the prince behind him, travelled through the dark until daylight, when, lo! they beheld a black plain, frightful and gloomy, which might be compared to the confines of hell. The prince inquired the name of the country, and the jinnī replied: "This country is called the Black Region, and is governed by a prince of the jinn, without whose permission no one dare enter it. Remain here, while I ask for leave, and return." The prince remained a little while, when the jinnī appeared, and conducted him onwards; and they did not stop till they came to a stream of water flowing from a rock, of which the jinnī commanded him to drink. He dismounted, and drank, and his sex returned to him as before.

The prince now praised God, and prayed, and he thanked the jinnī and kissed his hands, and inquired the name of the well. The jinnī replied: "This is the Fountain of Women. If a woman drink of it she becomes a man, by the decree of God. Praise the Lord, then, O my brother, for thy welfare and deliverance."

They travelled the remainder of the day, till they arrived at the dwelling of the jinni, where the prince remained with him in mirth and festivity all that night and the following day; in the evening of which the jinnī said: "Dost thou wish to spend this night with thy bride?" The prince replied: "Certainly; but how, my lord, can I effect it?" The jinnī then called to one of his attendants, whose name was Jāzūr, and said: "Take this youth upon thy back, and do not descend anywhere but upon the terrace of his father-in-law's palace, near the apartment of his bride." Jāzūr replied: "To hear is to obey."

When a third of the night remained, Jāzūr appeared. He was an 'Ifrit of monstrous size, so that the prince was alarmed; but the jinni said: "He will not injure thee; fear him not." He then embraced the prince, took leave, and mounting him upon the back of the 'Ifrit, said: "Bind something over thine eyes." The prince having done so, the 'Ifrit soared with him between heaven and earth; but he perceived no motion, till he was set down on the terrace of his father-in-law's palace, when the 'Ifrit disappeared. The prince slept till near daylight, when his spirits revived, and he descended towards the apartments. The female attendants met him, and saluted him, and conducted him to the sultan, who knew him, and stood up and embraced him, and welcoming him, said: "My son, they usually bring the bridegroom by the gate, but thou comest from the terrace; truly I am astonished at thy proceedings." The prince answered: "If that seems strange, I have still more wonderful events to detail;" and he then related his adventures from first to last, at which the sultan was astonished, and praised God for his deliverance.

The nuptial ceremonies were now commenced, and when the rites were concluded the prince was admitted to his bride, and remained with her a whole month. He then requested leave to return home; upon which his father-in-law presented him with rich gifts, furnished him with an escort. The cousin of the princess died of disappointment. The prince arrived with his bride at the capital of his father in safety; and the sultan rejoiced with exceeding great joy, after being in despair for his son. [\[26\]](#)

“I hope,” said the Damsel, “that God will also revenge me upon thy vazīr and upon thy son.”— The sultan replied: “I will do thee justice immediately,” and issued orders for the execution of the prince.

On the fourth day the Fourth Vazīr came to the sultan, kissed the ground before him, and said: “O sultan, kill not thy son, or thou wilt repent when repentance will not profit thee. A wise man will not act until he hath considered the consequences. I have heard the following anecdote.”¹

* * * * *

[The vazīr then relates, as an example of the artifice and duplicity of women, the]

Story of the Old Woman and the She-Dog.

THERE WAS a certain merchant’s son, who had a handsome wife, and it happened that a libertine, accidentally beholding her, fell in love with her. While the husband was absent on a journey of business, the youth went to an old woman of the neighbourhood, who was on intimate terms with the wife, and disclosed to her his passion, offering her ten dinars² for her assistance.

The cunning old woman went several times to visit the merchant’s wife, and always took with her a little she-dog. One day she contrived the following stratagem. She took flour and minced meat, and kneaded them into a cake, with a good deal of pepper. Then she forced the cake down the animal’s throat, and when the pepper began to heat her stomach, her eyes became wet, as if with tears. The merchant’s wife, observing this, said to the old woman: “My good mother, this dog daily follows you, and seems as if she wept. What can be the cause?” The old woman replied: “My dear mistress, the circumstance is wonderful; for she was formerly a beautiful girl, straight as the letter *alif*, and made the sun ashamed by her superior radiance. A Jewish sorcerer fell in love with her, whom she refused; and when he despaired of obtaining her, he was enraged, and by magic transformed her into a she-dog, as thou seest. She was a friend of mine; she loved me, and I loved her; so that, in her new form, she took to following me wherever

¹ This little prefatory address of the fourth vazīr does not refer to the story which follows in Scott’s translation, but to the tale of THE BATHMAN, which he has very properly suppressed, and it should also have been omitted.— See note, [page 61](#).

² A gold dinar is equivalent to about ten shillings.

I went, for I have always fed her, and taken care of her, on account of our friendship. She weeps often when reflecting on her unfortunate condition.”

When the merchant’s wife heard this, she trembled for herself, and said: “A certain man hath professed love to me, and I did not intend to gratify his criminal passion. But thou hast terrified me with the story of this unhappy damsel, so that I am alarmed lest the man should transform me in like manner.” “My dear daughter,” said the wicked old woman, “I am your true friend, and advise you that if any man makes love to you not to refuse him.” The wife then said: “How shall I find out my lover?” “For the sake of thy peace,” replied the old wretch, “for the love I bear thee, and for fear lest thou shouldst also be transformed, I will go and seek him.”

She then went out, rejoicing that she had gained her ends, and sought the young man, but did not find him at home. So she said to herself: “I will not let this day pass, however, without gaining a reward for my trouble. I will introduce some one else to her, and obtain from him a second present.” She then walked through the streets in search of a proper man; when behold! she met the husband just returning from his journey, whom she did not know. She went up to him, and saluted him, and said: “Hast thou any objection to a good supper and a handsome mistress?” He replied: “I am ready;” upon which she took him by the hand, and leading him to his own house, desired him to wait at the door.

When the man reached his own dwelling, jealousy overcame him, and the world became dark to his eyes. The old woman went to the wife, to inform her of the coming of her lover; whom, when she saw him from the window, she knew, and exclaimed: “Why, mother, thou hast brought my husband!” The old woman, hearing this, replied: “There remains nothing now but to deceive him.” The wife took the hint, and said: “I will meet him, and abuse him for his intrigues, and will say, ‘I sent this old woman as a spy upon thee.’”

She then began to exclaim against the infidelity of her husband, took a sheet of paper, and descended the staircase, and said to him: “Thou shameless man, there was a promise of constancy between us, and I swore unto thee that I would not love another. Luckily, however, I suspected thy falsehood, and when I knew thou wast returning from thy journey, sent this old woman to watch thee, that I might discover thy proceedings, and whether thou wast faithful to thy agreement or not. It is now clear that thou frequentest the dwellings of courtesans, and I have been deceived. But since I know thy falsehood, there can be no cordiality between us; therefore write me a divorce, for I can no longer love thee.”

The husband, on hearing this, was alarmed, and remained for a time in astonishment. He took a solemn oath that he had not been unfaithful to her, and had not been guilty of what she had accused him. He did not cease to soothe her till she was somewhat pacified, when the old woman interfered, and effected a reconciliation between them, for which kindness she was handsomely rewarded. The unfortunate husband little suspected the disgrace he had so narrowly

escaped, [11]

“ This, O sultan,” said the vazīr, “is only one instance of the art and deceit of women. “— The sultan then countermanded the execution of his son.

On the fifth evening the Damsel came to the sultan, holding a cup of poison in her hand, and said: “If thou wilt not do me justice upon thy son, I will drink this poison, and my crime will rest upon thy shoulders. Thy vazīrs say that women are cunning and deceitful, but there is no creature in the universe more crafty than man. For instance:

*Story of the Goldsmith and the Singing Girl.*¹

I HAVE heard that a goldsmith,² who was passionately fond of women, one day entered a friend’s house, and saw upon the wall of an apartment the portrait of a beautiful girl, with which he became enraptured; and love so overcame his heart that his friends said to him: “Thou foolish man, how couldst thou think of loving a figure depicted on a wall, of the original of which thou hast never heard or seen?” He replied: “A painter could not have drawn this portrait unless he had seen the original.” One of his friends observed, that perhaps the painter might have formed it merely from his imagination. He answered: “I hope from heaven comfort and relief; but what you say cannot be proved except by the painter.” They then told him that he lived in a certain town; and the young man wrote to inquire whether he had seen the original of the picture he had painted, or had drawn it from fancy. The answer was that the portrait was that of a singing-girl belonging to a vazīr of Ispahān. ¹ Encouraged by this intelligence, the young man made preparations for a journey, and having departed, travelled night and day until he reached the city, where he took up his abode.

In a few days he made acquaintance with an apothecary, and became intimate with him. Talking upon various subjects, at length they conversed regarding the sultan of Ispahan³ and his disposition; when the apothecary said: “Our sovereign bears inveterate hatred to all practitioners of magic, and if they fall into his hands, he casts them into a deep cave without the city, where they die of hunger and thirst.” Next they conversed about the famous singing-girl of the vazīr, and the young man learned that she was still with him.

¹ In Scott’s translation, the hero of this story is a painter, but a goldsmith, or a jeweller, in four other Arabic texts.

² In a city of Persia, according to the Calcutta and Būlāq texts.

³ Of Kashmīr, according to four other texts.

The young goldsmith now began to plan his stratagems. On the first moonlight night he disguised himself as a robber, and repairing to the palace of the vazīr, fixed a ladder of ropes, by which he gained the terrace, from whence he descended into the court; when lo! a light gleamed from one of the apartments. He entered it, and beheld a throne of ivory, inlaid with gold, on which reposed a lady bright as the sun in a serene sky. At her head and feet were placed lamps, the splendour of which her countenance outshone. He approached, and gazed upon her, and saw that she was the object of his desires. Near the pillow was a rich veil, embroidered with pearls and precious stones. He drew a knife from his girdle, and wounded her slightly on the palm of her hand. The pain awakened the lady, but she did not scream from alarm, believing him to be only a robber in search of plunder; she said: "Take this embroidered veil, but do not injure me." He took the veil, and departed by the same way that he had entered.¹

When daylight appeared, he disguised himself in white vestments, like a holy pilgrim; visited the sultan, and having saluted him, and the sultan having returned the salutation, he thus addressed him: "O sultan, I am a pilgrim devoted to religion, from the country of Khurasan, and have repaired to thy presence because of the report of thy virtues and thy justice to thy subjects, intending to remain under the shade of thy protection. I reached thy capital at the close of day, when the gates were shut. Then I lay down to repose, and was in slumber, when behold! four women issued from a grove, one mounted upon a hyaena, another upon a ram, a third upon a black she-dog, and the fourth upon a leopard. When I saw them, I knew they must be sorceresses. One of them having approached me, began to kick me with her feet, and to strike me with a whip, which appeared like a flame of fire. I then repeated the names of God, and struck at her hand with my knife, which wounded her, but she escaped from me. There dropped from her this veil, which I took up, and found it embroidered with valuable jewels; but I have no occasion for them, for I have given up the world." Having thus spoken, he laid the veil at the sultan's feet, and departed.

On examining the veil, the sultan recognised it as one which he had presented to his vazīr, of whom he demanded: "Did I not bestow upon thee this veil?" The vazīr replied: "You did, my lord; and I gave it to a favourite singing-girl of my own." "Let her be sent for immediately," exclaimed the sultan; "for she is a wicked sorceress." The vazīr went to his palace, and brought the girl before the sultan, who, on seeing the slight wound on her hand, was convinced of the pretended pilgrim's assertion, and commanded her to be cast into the cave of sorcerers.

When the goldsmith found that his stratagem had succeeded, and that the girl was thrown into the cave, he took a purse of a thousand dinars, and went to the keeper of the cave, and said to him: "Accept this purse, and listen to my

¹ In some Arabic versions he wounds her in the shoulder, and takes away part of her ornaments.

story.” After relating his adventures, the goldsmith said: “This poor girl is innocent, and I am the person who has plunged her into misfortune. If thou wilt release her, it will be a merciful action, and I will convey her privately to my own country. Should she remain here, she will soon be among the number of the dead. Pity, then, her condition and my own, and repay thy generosity with this purse.” The keeper accepted the present, and released the girl; and the goldsmith took her with him, and returned to his own city. [27]

“This, O sultan,” said the Damsel, “is but one example of the craft of men. — The sultan then gave orders for the execution of his son.

Next day the Fifth Vazīr presented himself before the sultan, and said: “O my lord, relieve thy son, and be not hasty in his death, lest thou repent, as the man repented, who never afterwards smiled.” The sultan inquired his history, and the vazīr proceeded:

*Story of the Young Man who was taken to the Land of Women.*¹

THERE was a man, possessed of great wealth and master of many slaves, who died, leaving his estates to an infant son. When he reached manhood, he engaged in pleasure and amusements, in feasting and drinking, in music and dancing, with profusion and extravagance, until he had expended the riches his father had left him. He then took to selling his effects and slaves and concubines, till at length, through distress, he was obliged to ply as a porter in the streets for a subsistence.

As he one day waited for an employer, an old man of portly and respectable appearance stopped, and looked earnestly at him for some time. At length the young man said: “Why, sir, do you so earnestly gaze at my countenance? Have you any occasion for my services?” The old man replied: “Yes, my son. We are ten old men, who live together in the same house,² and have at present no person to attend us. If thou wilt accept the office, I trust (God willing) it will afford thee much advantage.” The youth replied: “Most willingly and readily.” Then said the

¹ Scott absurdly entitles this story, “The Ten Old Men and the Decayed Rake. “ In his time, the term “decayed” was often employed to describe a person who “had seen better days,” as a “decayed gentlewoman”— a phrase which seems now-a-days sufficiently ludicrous.— The short title of this story is “Curiosity.”

² “I have with me ten old men in one house,” according to the Bulaq and Calcutta texts that is, ten besides himself.

old man: "You shall serve us, but upon condition that you conceal our situation; and when you see us weeping and lamenting, that you ask not the cause." The young man consented, whereupon his new master took him to a bath, and when he was cleansed, presented him with a handsome dress, and repaired with him to his own house. This proved to be a magnificent palace; its courts surrounded by galleries, and adorned with basins and fountains. All sorts of birds fluttered in the lofty trees which ornamented the gardens, and overshadowed the apartments.

The old man conducted him into one of the pavilions, which was laid over with silken carpets, rich *masnads*,¹ and superb cushions. In this pavilion sat nine venerable old men, all weeping and lamenting, at which he was astonished, but asked no questions. His master then took him to a large chest, pulled out of it a bag containing a thousand dinars, and said: "My son, thou art entrusted by God with this treasure, to expend it upon us and thyself with integrity." The young man replied: "To hear is to obey." He now busied himself in providing for their wants, what was necessary for victuals and raiment, during three years. At length one of the old men died, and they washed his corpse, and buried it in the garden of the palace.

The young man continued to serve them, and the old men died one after another, until nine had departed, and he only remained who had hired him. At last he also fell sick, and the young man despaired of his recovery. So he said to himself: "My master will surely die, and why should I not ask him the cause of their bewailings?" Approaching the couch of the old man, who groaned in the agonies of death, he said: "O my master, I conjure thee by God to acquaint me with the reason of your constant lamentations." "My son," he replied, "there is no occasion for thee to know it, so do not importune me for what will not profit thee. Believe me, I have ever loved and compassionated thee. I dread lest thou shouldst be punished as we have been punished, but wish thou mayest be preserved. Be advised, therefore, my son, and open not yonder locked door." He then pointed out the door to him; after which his agonies increased, and he exclaimed: "I testify that there is no god but God, and that Muhammad is his servant and prophet!" Then his soul fluttered, he turned upon his side, and he was joined to his Lord. The young man washed the corpse, enshrouded it, and buried him by the side of his companions.

After this he took possession of the palace, and diverted himself for some time in examining the treasures it contained. At length his mind became restless for want of employment. He reflected upon the fate of the old men, and on the dying words of his master, and the charge he had given him. He examined the door; his mind was overcome by curiosity to see what could be within it, and he did not weigh the consequences. Satan tempted him to open the door, and he exclaimed with the poet: "What is not to happen cannot be effected by human

¹ A *masnad* is a kind of counterpane, spread on the carpet where the master of the house sits and receives company.

contrivance; but what is to be will be.” He now unlocked the door. It opened into a long dark passage, in which he wandered for three hours, when he came out upon the shore of the ocean. He was astonished, and gazed with wonder on all sides. He would have returned, but lo! a black eagle of monstrous size darted from the air, and seizing him in her talons, soared for some time between heaven and earth. At length it descended with him upon a small island in the ocean, and fled away.

The young man remained a while motionless with terror; but recovering, began to wander about the island. Suddenly a sail arose to his view on the waters, resembling a fleeting cloud in the heavens. He gazed, and the sail approached, till it reached the beach of the island, when he beheld a boat formed of ivory, ebony, and sandal, the oars of which were made of aloes-wood of Comorin, the sails were of white silk, and it was navigated by beautiful maidens, shining like moons. They advanced from the boat, and kissing his hands, said: “Our souls are refreshed at seeing thee, for thou art the master of our country and of our queen.” One of the ladies approached him with a parcel wrapped in rich damask, in which was a royal dress most superbly embroidered, and a crown of gold splendidly set with diamonds and pearls. She assisted him to dress; during which the youth said to himself: “Do I see this in a dream? or am I awake? The old man mentioned nothing of this. He must surely have forbade my opening the door out of envy.”

The ladies then conducted him to the boat, which he found spread with elegant carpets and cushions of brocade. They hoisted the sails, and rowed with their oars, while the youth could not divine what would be the end of his adventure. He continued in a state of bewilderment till they reached land, when behold! the beach was crowded with troops and attendants, gallant in appearance, and of the tallest stature. When the boat anchored, five principal officers of the army advanced to the young man, who was at first alarmed, but they paid their obeisance profoundly, and welcomed him in a tone shrill as the sound of silver. Then the drums beat, the trumpets sounded, and the troops arranged themselves on his right hand and on his left. They proceeded till they reached an extensive and verdant meadow, in which another detachment met them, numerous as the rolling billows or waving shadows.

Lastly appeared a young prince, surrounded by the nobles of his kingdom, but all wore veils, so that no part of them could be seen but their eyes. When the prince came near the young man, he and his company alighted, some of them embraced each other, and after conversing a while, remounted their horses. The cavalcade then proceeded, and did not halt till it came to the royal palace, when the young man was helped from his horse,¹ and the prince conducted him into a

¹ This is the first intimation that the youth rode on horseback to meet the prince: the copyist had probably omitted to state, what other Arabic texts mention, that, when the boat reached the land, four horses of the purest breed were led before him, one of which he selected to ride upon.

splendid hall, in which was the royal throne. The seeming prince ascended it and sat down; and on removing the veil from his face, the young man beheld a beautiful damsel in the supposed prince. While he gazed in astonishment, she said: "Young man, this country is mine, the troops are mine, and I am their queen; but when a man arriveth amongst us, he becomes my superior, and governs in my place." The youth, upon hearing this, was wrapt still more in wonder. And while they were conversing, the *vazīr* entered, who was a stately looking matron, to whom the queen said: "Call the *qāzī* and the witnesses." She replied: "To hear is to obey."

The queen then said to the young man: "Art thou willing that I should be thy wife, and to be my husband?" Hearing this, and beholding her condescending demeanour, he rose up, and kissing the ground, said (as she would have prevented his prostration): "I am not worthy of such high honour, or even to be one of thy humblest attendants." She replied: "My lord, all that thou hast beheld, and what remains unseen by thee of this country, its provinces, people, and treasures are thine, and I am thy handmaiden. Avoid only yonder door, which thou must not open: if thou dost, thou wilt repent when repentance will not avail."— The *vazīr*, *qāzī*, and witnesses, who were all women, now entered, and they were married; after which the courtiers and people were introduced, and congratulated them.

The young man remained for seven months¹ in the height of enjoyment, when one day he recollected his old master, and how he had warned him not to open the door in his palace, which though he had done, yet from his disobedience such unexpected good fortune had befallen him. His curiosity and Satan whispered to him, that within the door which the queen had forbidden him to open, some important scenes must also be concealed. He advanced, opened it, and entered; but found a gloomy passage, in which he had not walked more than twenty steps, when light gleamed upon him. He advanced, and beheld the same eagle that had borne him away. He would now have retreated, but the monster darted upon him, seized him in its talons, ascended, and put him down on the spot where it had first taken him up.

He regretted his lost grandeur, power, and dominion, exclaiming: "When I rode out, a hundred beautiful damsels surrounded me, and were flattered by being permitted to attend me. Alas! I was living in honour, until I rashly ventured upon what I have committed!" For two full months he lamented, crying out: "Alas! alas! if the bird would but once again return!" but in vain. Night and day, weeping, he would exclaim: "I was enjoying my ease until my imprudence ruined me." At length one night, in a restless slumber, he heard a voice saying: "Alas! alas! what is past cannot be recovered," upon which he despaired of seeing again his queen or his kingdom. He then entered the palace of his old masters by the dark passage, fatally convinced of what had occasioned their incessant lamentations.

¹ Seven years, according to the *Būlāq* and *Calcutta* texts.

He employed himself in praying for their souls; and, like them, wept and lamented, until he died. [28]

“Observe, therefore, O sultan,” said the vazīr, “that precipitancy is of ill consequence, and I advise thee from experience.”— The sultan then refrained from executing his son.

On the sixth night the Damsel entered with a dagger in her hand, and said: “O sultan, wilt thou revenge me of thy son? If not, I will instantly put myself to death. Thy vazīrs pretend that woman is more artful than man, wishing to destroy my rights; but I assure thee that man is far more deceitful than woman, which is clear from what passed between a prince and a merchant’s wife.

Story of the Lover in the Chest.

A MERCHANT, who was exceedingly jealous, had a very beautiful wife. From suspicion of her fidelity, he would not dwell in a city among men, but built a house in a most retired situation, that no one might visit her. It was surrounded by lofty walls, and had a strong gateway. Every morning he locked the door, took the key with him, and proceeded to the city to transact business until the evening.

One day, the sultan’s son, riding out for amusement, passed by the house, and cast his eyes on the merchant’s wife, who was walking on the terrace. He was captivated by her beauty, and she was no less charmed with his appearance. He tried the gate, but it was securely fastened. At length he wrote a declaration of his love, and fixed it on an arrow, which he shot upon the terrace. The merchant’s wife read the letter, and returned a favourable answer. He then took the key of a chest, tied it to a note, in which was written, “I will come to thee in a chest, of which this is the key,” and threw it up to her. The prince after this took his leave, and returning to the city, sent for his father’s vazīr, to whom he communicated what had happened, requesting his assistance. “My son,” said the vazīr, “what can I do? I tremble for my character in such a business, and what plan can we pursue?” The prince answered: “I only require thy help in what I have contrived. I mean to place myself in a large chest, which thou must lock upon me, and convey at night to the merchant’s house, and say to him: ‘This chest contains my jewels and treasure, which I am afraid the sultan may seize, and must for a time entrust to thy care.’”

The vazīr having consented to the proposal, the prince entered the chest, which was then locked and conveyed privately to the town-house of the merchant. The vazīr knocked at the door, and the merchant appearing, made a profound obeisance to so honourable a visitant, who requested to leave the chest with him for some days, till the alarm of the sultan’s displeasure should be over. The merchant readily consented, and had the chest for security carried to his country house, and placed in the apartments of his wife. In the morning he went about his

affairs to the city, when his wife, having adorned herself in her richest apparel, opened the chest. The prince came out, embraced her, and kissed her. They passed the day together in merriment, till the merchant's return, when the prince repaired to his place of concealment.

Seven days had passed in this manner, when it chanced that the sultan inquired for his son, and the *vazīr* went hastily to the merchant to reclaim the chest. The merchant had returned earlier than usual to his country house, and was overtaken on his way by the *vazīr*. The lady and the prince, who had been amusing themselves in the court of the house, were suddenly disturbed by a knocking at the gate, and the prince betook himself to the chest, which the wife in her confusion forgot to lock. The merchant entered with his servants, who took up the chest to deliver to the *vazīr*; when lo! the lid opened, and the prince was discovered, half intoxicated with wine. The poor merchant durst not revenge himself upon the son of his sovereign. He conducted him to the *vazīr*, who was overwhelmed with shame at the disgraceful discovery. The merchant, convinced of his own dishonour, and that his precautions had been in vain, divorced his wife, and took an oath never to marry again. [29]

“Such is the wiliness of men,” added the Damsel: “but thy *vazīrs* cannot escape my penetration.”— After hearing this story, the sultan, who doatingly loved the Damsel, gave orders for the execution of his son.

On the sixth day the Sixth *Vazīr* came before the sultan, and said: “Be cautious, my lord, in the execution of your son; be not rash, for rashness is sinful, and the artfulness of women is well known, for God has declared, in the Qur’ān, that their craftiness is beyond all measure.

Story of the Merchant's Wife and her Suitors.

It has been reported to me that there was a woman who had a husband accustomed to travel much on business to distant countries. During one of his journeys, his wife became enamoured of a young man, who returned her fondness. It happened one day that this youth, having been engaged in a brawl, was apprehended by the police, and carried before the *wī*¹ of the city, when it was proved that he was the transgressor, and the *wālī* sentenced him to be imprisoned.

When the lady heard of her lover's confinement, her mind was employed from hour to hour devising means for his release. At length she dressed herself in her richest apparel, repaired to the *wālī*, made obeisance to him, and complained

¹ Chief of police.

that her brother having had a scuffle with another youth, hired witnesses had sworn falsely against him, and he had been wrongfully cast into prison. She added that she could not remain safe without the protection of her brother, and begged that he should be set at liberty. The lady had a great share of beauty, which when the wālī perceived, he desired her to enter his apartment while he gave orders for her brother's release. She guessed his design, and said: "My lord, I am an honourable and reputable woman, and cannot enter any apartments but my own. But if you desire it, you may visit me;" she then mentioned where she resided, and appointed the day when he should come. The wālī was enraptured, and gave her twenty dinars, saying: "Expend this at the bath." She then left him, his heart busy in thinking of her beauty.

The lady next went to the venerable qāzī,¹ and said: "My lord, look upon me," and removed her veil from her face. "What has happened to thee?" inquired the qāzī. She replied: "I have a younger brother, and none but him, for a protector, whom the wālī has imprisoned wrongfully, and whom I beseech thee out of thy compassion to release from his confinement." The qāzī said: "Step in, while I order his release." She answered: "If you mean that, my lord, it must be at my house;" and she made an assignation for the same day she had appointed to the wālī. The qāzī then presented her with twenty dinars, saying: "Purchase provisions and sherbets with part of this sum, and pay for the bath with the remainder."

From the qāzī's house the lady repaired to that of the vazīr, repeated her story, and besought his interference with the wālī for the release of her brother. The vazīr also, smitten with her beauty, made proposals of love, which she accepted, but said he must visit her at her own house, and fixed the same day she had named to the wālī and the qāzī. The vazīr then gave her twenty dinars, saying: "Expend part of this money at the bath, and with the rest prepare for us a supper and wine." She replied: "To hear is to obey."

From the vazīr she proceeded to the hājib,² and said: "My lord, the wālī has imprisoned my brother, who is but a stripling, on the evidence of false witnesses, and I humbly beseech thee for his release." The hājib replied: "Step in, while I send for thy brother." She suspected his designs, and rejoined: "If my lord has business with me— in his house is a constant assemblage of persons— rather let him honour my humble dwelling with his footsteps." Then she assigned the same day she had appointed for the others, informing him of the situation of her house; and the hājib gave her fifty dinars, saying: "Prepare a supper for us with part, and lay out the remainder at the bath."

The lady took the gold, and went to a joiner's shop, and said: "I desire that

¹ The judge and magistrate in Muslim cities, who performs the rites of marriage, settles disputes, and decides civil and criminal cases, according to the Qur'ān.

² Governor of the city.

you will make me a large cabinet, with four compartments, so strong that no single person could burst it open. When thou hast finished it, I will pay thee ten dinars.” The joiner agreed, and she hurried him daily till it was finished, when he carried it to her house upon a camel, and set it up in its place. She offered him the price agreed upon, but the joiner refused it, saying: “My dear lady, I will not take anything, and only desire that I may pass an evening with you.” She replied: “If that be the case, you must add a fifth compartment to the cabinet.” He readily consented, and she fixed the same evening she had appointed for the wālī, the qāzī, the vazīr, and the hājib.

She now went to market, and bought some old garments, which she dyed red, yellow, black, and blue, and made to them whimsical caps of various colours. Then she cooked flesh and fowl, bought wine,¹ and prepared everything for the appointed evening; when she attired herself in her richest apparel, and sat down, expecting her guests.

First the wālī² knocked at the door, and she rose and opened it, and said: “My lord, the house of your slave is yours, and I am your handmaid.” Then, having feasted him till he was satisfied, she took off his robes, and, bringing a black vest and a red cap, said: “Put on the dress of mirth and pleasure;” after which she made him drink wine till he was intoxicated, when lo! there was a knocking at the door, and she said: “My lord, I cannot be cheerful till you have released my brother.” He immediately wrote an order to the jailor to give the young man his freedom, which she gave to a servant to deliver, and had no sooner returned to the wālī when the knocking became louder. “Who is coming?” he inquired. “It is my husband,” replied the lady; “get into this cabinet, and I will return presently and release thee.” Having locked the wālī in the cabinet, she went to the door.

The qāzī now entered, whom she saluted, led in, and seated respectfully. She first filled a cup with wine, and drank to him; and then presented him with meat and wine. The qāzī said gravely: “I have never drunk wine during all my life;” but she persuaded him to drink, saying that company was always dull without wine. After this, she pulled off his magisterial robes, and saying, “My lord, put on

¹ It was formerly the custom at wine-parties in the East for the host and his guests to wear dresses of bright colours, such as red, yellow, and green. Although wine is prohibited by the Qur’ān, it is often privately drunk by Muslims.

² Here I have made considerable alterations: in Scott’s translation (and also in the Calcutta printed text) the qāzī is represented as the first to make his appearance; but we have seen that the first appointment was made with the wālī. It is to be understood that the lady fixed a later hour for each successive suitor, otherwise she might have had two or more on her hands at the same time, which was certainly no part of her plan.

the garments of mirth and pleasure,” dressed him in a robe of yellow and red, with a black cap. Suddenly the door resounded, and the qāzī, alarmed for his reputation, asked: “Who is at the door? what shall we do?” She replied: “I fear it is my husband. Go into this cabinet, until he goes away, when I will release thee, and we shall pass the evening pleasantly together.”

Having locked the qāzī in the cabinet, the lady admitted the vazīr, and, kissing his hand, she said: “Thou hast highly honoured me, my lord, by thy auspicious approach.” Then she set supper before him, and cajoled him to drink till he was merry and frolicsome, when she said: “Disrobe yourself, my lord, put on the vesture of pleasure, and leave the habit of the vazīr for its proper offices.” Smiling at her playfulness, the vazīr undressed, and put on, at the lady’s request, a red vest and a green cap tufted with wool, after which they began to drink and sing, when there was a knocking at the door, and the vazīr, in terror, inquired the cause. “It is my husband,” said the lady; “step into this cabinet, till he is gone.” The vazīr quickly slipped in, upon which she locked the compartment, and hastened to the door.

The hājib now entered, according to appointment, and having seated him, the lady said courteously: “My lord, you have honoured me by your kindness and condescension.” Then she began to undress him, and his robes were worth at least four thousand dinars. She brought him a parti-coloured vest, and a copper cap set with shells, saying: “These, my lord, are the garments of festivity and mirth.” The hājib, having put them on, began to toy and kiss, and she plied him with wine till he was intoxicated. A knocking was again heard at the gate, when the hājib cried out: “Who is this?” and she replied: “My husband; hide in this cabinet, until I can send him away, and I will immediately return to thee.”

The poor joiner was next admitted, and the lady plied him so freely with wine, after he had supped, that he was ready for any kind of foolery; so she bade him take off his clothes, and left him, to fetch a dress, when once more the door resounded, and she exclaimed: “Run into this cabinet, even as thou art, for here is my husband.” He entered,¹ and having locked him in, the lady then admitted her lover, just released from prison by the wall’s order. She informed him of her stratagem, and said: “We must not remain longer here;” upon which the lover went out and hired camels, and they loaded them with all the effects of the house, leaving nothing but the cabinet, strongly secured with five locks, and within it the worthy officers of government and the poor joiner. The lady and her lover set off without further delay, and travelled to another city, where they could be secure from discovery.

¹ In the Calcutta text, on the arrival of the joiner, she complains that the fifth compartment of the cabinet is too small; he steps into it, to show that there is room for several men, upon which she locks him in, like the others.

Meanwhile the unfortunate lovers in the cabinet were in a woeful condition.¹ At length they became aware of each other's presence, and began to converse, and, notwithstanding their distress, could not refrain from laughing at each other. In the morning the landlord of the house, finding the gate open, entered, but hearing voices from the cabinet, he was alarmed, and summoned a number of the neighbours. Then the landlord exclaimed: "Are you men or jinn that are in this cabinet?" They replied: "If we were jinn, we should not remain here, nor should we want any one to open the doors. We are only men." The neighbours cried out: "Let us not open the cabinet, but in presence of the sultan;" upon which the qāzī exclaimed: "O my people, let us out 'Conceal what God has concealed!'² and do not disgrace us. I am the qāzī." They replied: "Thou liest, and it is impossible. For if thou art the qāzī, how earnest thou to be confined here? Thou art an impostor; for our worthy qāzī, thou impious wretch, is a man who subdueth his passions. Be silent, lest he hear thee, and bring thee to punishment." After this the qāzī durst not speak, and was silent.

Then they brought several porters, who took up the great cabinet, and carried it to the palace of the sultan,³ who, on being informed of the affair, sent for carpenters and smiths, and caused it to be broken open in his presence, when lo! he discovered the wālī, the qāzī, the vazīr, the hājib, and the poor joiner. "What brought thee here, O reverend qazi?" inquired the sultan. The qazi exclaimed: "God be praised, who hath providentially saved thee, O sultan, from what hath befallen us!" He then issued from the cabinet in his coloured vest and fool's cap, as did the rest of his companions in their ridiculous dresses, but the poor joiner in his birth-day habit. The sultan laughed till he almost fainted, and commanded the adventures of each to be written, from first to last. He also ordered search to be made for the merchant's wife, but in vain, for she had escaped with the robes, valuables, and weapons of the foolish gallants. [30]

¹ A short passage, humorous but coarse, is here omitted. Scott states in his preface that he had suppressed "a few expressions rather too plainly descriptive of natural situations;" this is one which he has retained his notions of "delicacy" being apparently somewhat vague. In the Calcutta text, as well as in Scott's version, the compartments of the cabinet are made "one above the other," in order to introduce the little incident.

² A quotation from the Qur'an.— S.

³ According to the Calcutta text, the suitors were three days in the cabinet before the neighbours broke into the house and released them, when they became the objects of derision; and the woman having taken away all their clothes, they had to send to their own houses for others before they could appear in the streets.

“From this story,” said the vazīr, “consider, O sultan, how deep is the artifice of women, and how little dependence should be placed upon their declarations.”¹

On the seventh night the Damsel kindled a funeral pile, and affected to cast herself into it, when her attendants prevented her, and carrying her forcibly to the sultan, informed him of her attempt on her own life. The sultan exclaimed: “What could have induced thee to such rashness?” She replied: “If thou wilt not credit my assertions, I will certainly throw myself into the fire, when thou wilt be too late regretful on my account, as the prince repented of having unjustly punished the religious woman.” The sultan desired to know the particulars, and the Damsel said:

Story of the Devout Woman and the Magpie.

A CERTAIN pious woman, who made pilgrimages to various parts of the world, in the course of one of them came to the court of a sultan, who received her with welcome reverence. One day his queen took the good woman with her to the bath, and handed her a string of jewels, worth two thousand gold dinars, to take charge of while she bathed. The religious woman placed it upon the sajjāda,² and began to say her prayers. Suddenly a magpie alighted from the roof of the palace, and fled away with the string of jewels in its claws, unobserved by the pilgrim, and ascended to one of the turrets.

¹ Scott has omitted the second story of the sixth vazīr, “it being too free to bear translation.” It is a humorous but very indecent tale of a man who, on the Night of Power (*Al Qadar*, the night on which the whole of the Qur’ān was revealed to Gabriel, who afterwards communicated it to Muhammad piecemeal), was granted THREE WISHES, and acting by his wife’s advice, after his third wish was accomplished, found himself no better than before. The story probably suggested the still more obscene fabliau of “Les quatre souhaits de Saint Martin,” and is similar in design to one of our nursery tales. (See also [pp. 71-73](#).) An analogous Hindu story is found in the *Panchatantra*, to the following effect: A poor weaver was about to cut down a large sisu-tree, to make a loom, when the spirit of the tree called to him to desist, and he should be granted a boon. Having consulted a friend as to what he should ask and rejected his advice, he applied to his wife, who counselled him to ask an extra head and pair of arms, so that he should be able to do double work. He obtained this boon, and returning to the village was stoned for a goblin by his fellow-villagers. *Moral*: He who neither exercises his own judgment nor follows a friend’s advice brings on his own ruin

² A prostration cloth, mat, or carpet.

When the queen came from the bath, she searched for the string of jewels, but not finding it, demanded it of the pilgrim, who said: "It was here this instant, and I have not moved from this place. Whether any of your domestics may have taken it up or not, I cannot tell." The queen was enraged, and complained to the sultan, who commanded the pilgrim to be scourged till she should discover the jewels. She was beaten severely, but confessed nothing; after which she was imprisoned, and remained a long time in durance; till one day the sultan, sitting upon the terrace of the palace, beheld a magpie, with the string of jewels twisted round its claws. He commanded the bird to be caught, released the pilgrim, of whom he entreated pardon, kissed her hands, begged forgiveness of God for what he had done, and would have made atonement to her by a valuable present, but she would not accept it. She left the court; and having resolved in her mind, for the remainder of her life, not to enter the house of any one, retired to the mountains, till she died. May God have mercy upon her!¹

The Damsel then related, as an example of the crafty disposition of men, the

*Story of Prince Bahrain and Princess Ed-Detina.*²

THERE was formerly a princess, than whom no one of her time was more skilful in horsemanship and throwing the lance and javelin. Her name was Ed-Detmà. Many powerful princes demanded her in marriage, but she would not consent, having resolved to wed only him who should overcome her in combat, saying: "Whoever worsts me, I will be his; but should I prove victorious, he shall forfeit his weapons and his horse, and I will stamp upon his forehead with a hot iron this inscription: 'The Freedman of Ed-Detmà.'"³

Many princes attempted to gain her, but she foiled them, seized their weapons, and marked them as she had signified. At length the prince of Persia, named Bahram, hearing of her charms, resolved to obtain her; for which purpose he quitted his kingdom, and underwent many difficulties on his journey, until he reached his destination. He then entrusted his property to a respectable

¹ This is similar to our popular tale of "The Maid and the Magpie;" only in the latter, with more art, the reader is not informed of the bird's theft until the stolen article is discovered.

² "Rumta" in Scott's translation, and no doubt also, by a blunder of the copyist, in the manuscript. The name is Ed-Detmà in all other Arabic texts.—"The Amazon" is the short title by which this story is distinguished.

³ Scott has "the Slave," etc., but the other texts have, very properly, the "Freedman" the vanquished losing their arms and steeds, but having their liberty restored them.

inhabitant, and visited the sultan; to whom he presented a valuable offering. The sultan seated him respectfully, and inquired the object of his visit. "I am come from a distant country," replied the prince, "anxiously desirous of an alliance with thy daughter." The sultan said: "My son, I have no power over her; for she has resolved not to wed, unless her suitor shall vanquish her in combat." The prince answered: "I accept the conditions;" upon which the sultan informed his daughter, who accepted the challenge.

On the appointed day a numerous crowd assembled in the maydan,¹ where the sultan with his nobles appeared in great pomp. Ed-Detmà advanced, arrayed in dazzling habiliments; and the prince came forth, elegant in person, and superbly accoutred. They immediately encountered; the earth vibrated from the shock of their horses, and violent was the charge of weapons on both sides. The sultan viewed with admiration the majestic demeanour of the prince; and Ed-Detmà, perceiving his superior valour and agility, dreaded being vanquished. She artfully withdrew her veil, when her countenance appeared as the resplendent moon suddenly emerging from a dark cloud. The prince was fascinated with her beauty, and his whole frame trembled. The princess, observing his confusion, threw her javelin at his breast, and he fell from his horse, and she returned exulting to the palace.

The prince rose up, much mortified at his discomfiture, and returned to the city, pondering upon the deceit she had practised, and resolved to try a stratagem upon her. After some days, he fixed to his face a long white beard, like that of a venerable old man, clothed himself in the dress of a devotee, and repaired to a garden which he was informed the princess visited every month. He formed an intimacy with the keeper of it, by making him presents, till he had drawn him over to his interest. He then pretended to understand the cultivation of a garden, and the management of plants. The keeper therefore entrusted them to his care, and he watered them carefully, so that the shrubs became fresher and the blossoms more beautiful under his management.

At the usual time, the ferashes² came, and spread carpets, and made other preparations for the reception of the princess. Bahram, on her approach, took some jewels and scattered them in the walks, when the princess and her attendants, seeing an old man, apparently trembling with age, stopped and inquired what he was doing with the jewels. He replied: "I would purchase a wife with them, and would have her from among you." At this the ladies laughed heartily, and said: "When thou art married, how wilt thou behave to thy wife?" He said: "I would just give her one kiss, and divorce her." Then said the princess jestingly, and pointing to one of her ladies: "I will give thee this girl for a wife," upon which he advanced, kissed the damsel in a tremulous manner, and gave her

¹ Open space for martial exercises and sports.

² Servants, who have charge of tents, etc.

the jewels. After laughing at him for some time, the princess and her attendants quitted the garden.

The like scene was enacted for several days, the prince every time giving richer jewels to the lady he espoused; till at length the princess thought to herself: "Every one of my maidens has obtained from this dotard jewels richer than is in the possession of most sovereigns, and I certainly am more worthy of them than my attendants. He is a decrepid wretch, and can do me no harm." She then went alone to the garden, where she beheld the old man scattering jewels which were invaluable, and said: "I am the sultan's daughter, wilt thou accept me as a wife?" He advanced, and presented her with such a number of jewels that she was delighted beyond measure, and became anxious that he should give her one kiss, and let her depart like the other ladies. The prince, suddenly clasping her in his arms, exclaimed: "Dost thou not know me? I am Bahrain, son of the sultan of Persia, whom thou overcamest only by stratagem, and I have now vanquished thee in the same manner. On thy account I exiled myself from my friends and country, but I have now obtained my desires."

The princess remained silent, not being able to utter a word from confusion. She retired in anger to the palace, but, upon reflection, did not disclose what had passed, through fear of disgrace.¹ She said to herself: "If I have him put to death, what will it profit me? I can now do nothing wiser than marry him, and repair with him to his own country." Having thus resolved, she sent a trusty messenger to inform him of her intentions, and appointed a night to meet him. At the time fixed upon the prince was ready to receive her; they mounted their horses under cover of the night, and by daylight had travelled a great distance. They did not slacken their speed day or night until they were beyond the reach of pursuit, and arrived at the capital of Persia in safety. The prince then despatched rich presents by an ambassador to the sultan her father, entreating that he would send an envoy to ratify the marriage of his daughter. The sultan having duly complied, the qāzī and proper witnesses attended; and they were married amid the greatest rejoicings, and the prince lived long with her in perfect felicity. [31]

"Such," said the Damsel, "is the artfulness of men." When the sultan had heard these stories, he again gave orders that his son should be put to death.

On the following day the Seventh Vazīr approached the sultan, and, after the usual obeisance, said: "Forbear, my lord, to shed the blood of thy innocent

¹ "What had passed" is much more explicitly described in the original text; this royal amazon was, in fact, treated by the prince as Dinah the daughter of Jacob was by Shechem, though one would hardly guess so much from Scott's ingenious rendering of the scene. I shall only add here that the prince's stratagem may be compared with the story in the *Hitopadesa* (i, 8) of "The King's Son and the Merchant's Wife."

son; for thou hast none but him, and may not have another, when thou hast put him to death. Attend not to the malicious accusations of concubines, for the deceit of bad women is astonishing, and is exemplified in the

Story of the Burnt Veil.

THERE was a certain merchant, very rich, who had an only son, whom he loved exceedingly. One day he said to the young man: "My son, tell me whatever thou desirest of the pleasures of life, that I may gratify thee." The youth replied: "I long for nothing so much as to visit the city of Bagdad, and see the palaces of the khalif and the vazīrs that I may behold what so many merchants and travellers have so rapturously described." The merchant observed: "I do not approve of such an excursion, because it would occasion your absence from me."—"My dear father," said the young man, "you inquired my wish, and this is it, and I cannot willingly give it up." When the father heard this, being unwilling to vex his son, he prepared for him an adventure of merchandise of the value of thirty thousand dinars, and recommended him to the care of some eminent merchants, his particular friends.

The youth was amply provided with requisites for the journey, and, attended by many slaves and domestics, he travelled unceasingly till he reached the celebrated capital of Islam, where he hired a handsome house near the grand market. For several days he rode about the city, and beheld such splendid scenes that his mind was bewildered amidst the magnificence of the buildings, the richness of the shops, and the spaciousness of the markets. He admired the dome-crowned palaces, their extensive courts, and regular arcades; the pavements of variously-coloured marbles, the ceilings adorned with gold and azure, the doors studded with nails of silver, and painted in fanciful devices.

At length, he stopped at a mansion of this description, and inquired the rent by the month; and the neighbours told him that the monthly hire was ten dirhams. The young merchant exclaimed in astonishment: "Are ye speaking the truth, or do ye only jeer me?" They replied: "We swear, my lord, that we speak the truth exactly; but it is impossible to reside in that house more than a week or a fortnight, without being in hazard of death a circumstance well known in Bagdad. The rent originally was twenty gold dinars monthly, and is now reduced to ten silver dirhams."¹

The young man was now still more surprised, and said to himself: "There must be some reason for this, which I wish to find out, and am resolved to hire the house." He did so; and, casting all fear from his mind, took possession, brought his goods, and resided some time in it, employed in business and

¹ Twenty gold dinars are equivalent to ten pounds, and ten silver dirhams, to five shillings of our money.

amusement. At length, sitting one day at his gate, he beheld an old woman (may God's vengeance rest upon her!), who was a cunning go-between under a religious garb. When the old jade saw the young man reclining upon a mastaba¹ spread with nice carpets, and that he had every appearance of affluence around him, she bowed to him,² and he returned her salute. She then gazed steadfastly at him, upon which he said: "Dost thou want my services, good mother? Dost thou know me, or mistake me for one whom I may resemble?" She answered: "My lord, and my son, I know thee not; but when I beheld thy beauty and manliness, I thought upon a circumstance, which, with God's blessing, I will relate." The youth exclaimed: "God grant it may be a fortunate one!" She said: "How long hast thou resided in this house?" On his replying, two months, she exclaimed: "That is wonderful, my son! For every one who before resided in it for more than a week or a fortnight either died or, being taken dangerously ill, gave it up. I suppose thou hast not opened the prospect-room or ascended the terrace?" When she had thus spoken, she went away, and left the young man astonished at her questions.

Curiosity made him immediately examine closely all the upper apartments of the mansion, till at length he found a secret door, almost covered with cobwebs, which he wiped away. He then opened the door, and, hesitating to proceed, said to himself: "This is wonderful! What if I should meet my death within?" Relying, however, upon God, he entered, and found an apartment having windows on every side, which overlooked the whole neighbourhood. He opened the shutters, and sat down to amuse himself with the prospect. His eyes were speedily arrested by a palace more elegant than the others, and while he surveyed it, a lady appeared upon the terrace, beautiful as a hūrī; her charms would have ravished the heart, changed the love of Majnūn,³ torn the continence of Joseph, overcome the patience of Job, and assuaged the sorrow of Jacob:⁴ the chaste and devout would

¹ A platform, of stone or brick, built against the front wall of a house or shop.

² The salute in Asia, from men and women, is a gentle inclination of the body, at the same time touching the forehead with the right hand. For this double action we have no expression; the Arabic one is *es-salam*.— S.

³ Majnūn and Laylī are the names of two Arabian lovers, whose constancy is celebrated throughout Islam; they are the Romeo and Juliet, the Abelard and Heloise, of Oriental poets and romance writers. The great Persian Nizāmī (13th century) composed a beautiful poem on the Loves of Laylī and Majnūn, which has been translated into English verse by Atkinson.

⁴ The sorrow of Jacob at the loss of his son Joseph is proverbial among the Muslims: according to the Qur'ān, he wept himself blind, but his sight was restored by the virtue of Joseph's upper garment, brought from Egypt on the

have adored her, and the abstinent and the pilgrim would have longed for her company.

When the merchant's son beheld her, love took possession of his heart. He sank down on the carpet, and exclaimed: "Well may it be said, that whoever resides in this mansion will soon die from hopeless love of this beautiful damsel!" He quitted the apartment, locked the door, and descended the staircase. The more he reflected the more he was disturbed, and both rest and patience forsook him. Then he went and sat down at his gate, when, lo! after a short interval, the old woman appeared, devoutly counting her beads, and mumbling prayers.¹ When she came near, he saluted her, and said: "I was at ease and contented until I looked out of the apartment you mentioned, and beheld a young lady, whose beauty has distracted me; and if thou canst not procure me her company, I shall die with disappointment."² She replied: "My son, do not despair on her account, for I will accomplish thy desires." Then she consoled him, and he gave her fifty dinars, with many thanks for her kindness, saying: "My dear mother, assist me to the purpose, and you may demand what you please." The old woman replied: "My son, go to the great market, and inquire for the shop of our lord Abū-'l Fat-h the son of Qaydām, the great silk merchant, whose wife this lady is. Approach him with all civility, and say that you want a rich veil,³ embroidered with gold and silver, for your concubine. Return with it to me, and your desires shall be gratified." The young man hastened to the bazār of the chief merchants, and was soon directed to the person he inquired after, who was also a broker of merchandise to the khalif Harūnu-'r-Rashīd. He easily found such a veil as he was directed to purchase, for which he paid a hundred gold dinars, and returned home with it to the old woman, who took a live coal, and with it burned three holes in the veil, which she then took away with her.

She then proceeded to the young lady's house, and knocked at the gate. When the lady inquired who was there, the old woman said: "It is I, Ummu

return of his sons from their second journey to buy corn.

¹ It is a custom of Muslim devotees to hang round the neck, in several circumvolutions, a string of many hundreds of beads. The object is either to employ these beads in repeating certain ejaculations in praise of God, or to make others believe that the wearer is accustomed to so employ them.— *Lane*.

² According to *Syntipas*, before the youth engaged the services of the old woman, he had introduced himself into the lady's house, and been repulsed.

³ In *Syntipas* it is a mantle, and in the *Libra de los Engannos*, "a cloth, which he [the lady's husband] keeps hidden."

Maryam,¹ on which the merchant's wife, knowing her to be a humble acquaintance of her mother, said: "My dear aunt,² my mother is not here, but at her own house." The old woman said: "Daughter, the hour of prayer approaches, and I cannot reach my house in time to perform my ablutions. I request, therefore, that I may make them in your house, as I am secure of having pure water here."³

The door was now opened, and the hypocritical jade entered, counting her beads, and mumbling her prayers for the welfare of the young lady, her husband, and her mother. She then took off her drawers,⁴ girded her vest round her waist, and a vessel of water being brought, performed her ablutions; after which she said: "Show me, good daughter, a pure spot, free from pollution, to pray upon." The young lady replied: "You may pray upon my husband's carpet." The old woman now muttered her prayers, during which, unperceived by the merchant's wife, she slipped the burnt veil under the cushion at the head of the husband's carpet, and then, rising up from her devotions, she thanked the young lady, warned her against meeting the eyes of licentious men, and took her leave. Soon after this the merchant returned home, sat down upon his carpet to repose himself, and his wife brought him a collation, of which he ate. She then set before him water, and he washed his hands, after which he turned to take a napkin from under his cushion to wipe them, when, lo! he discovered the veil which he had that day sold to the young man, and instantly became suspicious of his wife's fidelity. For some time he was unable to speak. On reflection, he resolved that his disgrace should not become public among his brother merchants, or reach the ears of the khalif, whose agent and broker he was, lest he should be dishonoured at court. He kept the discovery of the veil to himself; but, in a little time, addressing his wife, desired that she would go and visit her mother.

¹ The Mother of Mary. In Arabia, the mother is generally addressed in this way as a mark of respect for having borne children, and the eldest gives the title.— S

² Answering to our obsolete term of aunt, or naunt, by which old women of inferior degree were formerly addressed. See Shenstone's "Schoolmistress." —S.

³ It is a religious point with Muhammadans to have pure water for their ablutions; and in their law-books many chapters define how it may be defiled.— S.

⁴ It is unlawful for the Muhammadans to pray in silk that touches the skin. For this they have, to save trouble, a salvo, namely, a stuff called *mashrū'* or legal, made of silk and cotton mixed. If the upper garment only be of silk it is of no injury to devotion. — S.

The lady, supposing from this that she was indisposed, put on her veil, and hastened to the house of her mother, whom, however, she found in good health, and that no ill had befallen her. The mother and daughter sat down, and were talking of indifferent matters, when suddenly several porters entered the house, loaded with the wife's effects, her marriage dower, and a writing of divorce. The old lady in alarm exclaimed: "Knowest thou not, daughter, the cause of thy husband's displeasure?" The wife replied: "I can safely swear, my dear mother, that I know not of any fault of which I can have been guilty, deserving this treatment." The mother wept bitterly for the disgrace of her daughter, and the wife lamented her separation from her husband, whom she ardently loved. She continued to grieve night and day; her appetite failed her, and her beauty began to decay.

In this manner a month passed away. At the expiry of this period the old woman Ummu Maryam came to visit the young lady's mother, and after many fawning caresses sat down. When she had told the common news, she said: "I heard, sister, that my lord Abū-l Fat-h had divorced your daughter his wife, on which account I have fasted some days and spent the nights in prayer, in hopes that God may restore her condition." The mother replied: "May God grant us that blessing!" The old woman then inquired after her daughter, and the mother said: "She is grieving for the loss of her husband; her heart is breaking; she feels no pleasure in company, which is disgustful to her, and I fear that, should her lamentations and sorrow continue, they will occasion her death." Then the old woman asked: "Does thy daughter wish to be reconciled to her husband?" The mother replied, that she did. "If so," said the old woman, "let her abide with me for a night or two. She will see proper company; her heart will be refreshed; and society will relieve her depression of mind." The mother assented to the propriety of her observations, gained the consent of her daughter, prevailed upon her to dress herself, and sent her home with Ummu Maryam, who conducted her to the house of the merchant's son.

The young man, when he saw his beloved, rejoiced as if he had gained possession of the world. He ran to her, saluted her, and kissed her between the eyes. The affrighted lady was overcome with shame and confusion; but he addressed her with such tenderness, made such ardent professions, and repeated so many elegant verses, that at length her fears were dispelled. She partook of a collation, and drank of various wines. Every now and then she looked at the young man, who was beautiful as the full moon, and love for him at length fascinated her mind. She took up a lute, and played and sang in praise of his accomplishments, so that he was in such ecstasies that he would have sacrificed his life and property to her charms.¹

¹ In *Syntipas* the young man accomplishes his purpose by force. The Arabian version of the incident may not, perhaps, be a very great improvement; but Mr Lane gives a still less objectionable turn to the story at this point.— See his 1001 N., [vol. iii, p. 161, note 35](#).

In the morning the old woman returned, and said: "My children, how passed you the evening?" The young lady replied: "In ease and happiness, my dear aunt, by virtue of your supplications and midnight prayers." On this the old woman said roughly: "Thou must now accompany me to thy mother." The young merchant flattered her, and giving her ten gold dinars, said: "I pray thee let her remain with me this day." She took the gold, and then repaired to the mother of the young lady, to whom, after the usual salutations, she said: "Sister, thy daughter bids me inform thee that she is better, and her grief is removed; so that I hope you will not take her from me." The mother replied: "Since my daughter is happy, why should I deny thee, even should she remain a month; for I know that thou art an honest and pious woman, and that thy dwelling is auspicious."

After this the young lady remained seven days at the house of the young merchant, during which on each morning Ummu Maryam appeared, saying to her: "Return with me to thy mother;" and the young man entreated for another day, giving her regularly ten gold dinars. Having received the present, she always visited the mother, and gave her agreeable tidings of her daughter's health. On the eighth day, however, the mother said to the old woman: "My heart is anxious about my daughter; and truly her long absence seems extraordinary;" and Ummu Maryam, pretending to be affronted, replied: "Sister, dost thou cast reflections upon me?" She then repaired to the house of the young merchant, brought away the lady, and conducted her to her mother, but did not enter the house.

When the mother saw that her health and beauty were restored, she was delighted, and said: "Truly, daughter, my heart was anxious concerning thee; and I began to suspect Ummu Maryam, and treated her unkindly because of thy long absence."—"I was not with her," replied the young lady, "but in pleasure and happiness, and in repose and safety. I have obtained through her means health and contentment; so that I conjure thee, my dear mother, to ease her mind, and be grateful for her kindness." Hearing this, the mother arose, and went immediately to the house of the old woman, entreated her pardon, and thanked her for her kindness to her daughter. Ummu Maryam accepted her excuses, and the old lady returned home with her mind relieved.

Next morning the wily Ummu Maryam visited the young merchant, and said: "My son, I wish you to repair the mischief you have done, and to reconcile a wife to her husband." "How can that be effected?" he asked. "Go to the warehouse of Abū-ʿl Fat-h the son of Qaydam," she replied, "and enter into conversation with him, till I shall appear before you; then start up, and lay hold of me, abuse me roundly, and say: 'Where is the veil I gave thee to darn, which I bought of my lord Abū-ʿl Fat-h, the son of Qaydām?' If he asks thee the cause of thy claim upon me, answer him thus: 'You may recollect that I bought a veil of you for a hundred gold dinars, as a present to my concubine. I gave it to her, and she put it on, but soon after, while she was carrying a lamp, some sparks flew from the wick, and burnt it in three places. This old woman was present, and said that she would take it to the lace-darner, to which I consented, and I have never seen

her since till this moment.’ ”

The young merchant accordingly went to the great market, and coming to the shop of my lord Abū-ʿl Fat-h, the son of Qaydām, he made him a profound obeisance, which Abū-ʿl Fat-h returned, but in a gloomy and sulky manner. The youth, however, seated himself, and began to address him on various subjects, when Ummu Maryam appeared, with a long rosary in her hands, the beads of which she counted, while repeating aloud the attributes of the Deity. He immediately started up, ran and laid hold of her, and began to abuse her, when she exclaimed: “I am innocent, and thou art innocent!” A crowd soon gathered around them, and Abū-ʿl Fat-h, coming from his shop, seized the young man, and demanded: “What is the cause of this rude behaviour to a poor old woman?” He replied: “You must recollect, sir, that I bought of you a rich veil for a hundred dinars. I gave it to my concubine, who shortly afterwards dropped some sparks from a lamp, which burnt the veil in three places. This cursed hypocritess was present at the time, and offered to carry it immediately to the lace-darner. She took it, accordingly, and I have not set eyes upon her again till now, though more than a month has elapsed.”

Ummu Maryam assented to the veracity of this statement, and said: “My son, I honestly intended to get the veil mended; but, calling at some houses on my way to the darner, I left it behind me, but where I cannot recollect. I am, it is true, a poor woman, but of pure reputation, and have nothing wherewith to make up the loss of the veil. ‘Let the owner, then,’ said I to myself, ‘believe that I have cheated him, for that is better than that I should occasion disturbances among families by endeavouring to recover the veil.’ This is the whole matter; ‘God knows the truth, and God will release from difficulty the true speaker.’ ”

When Abū-ʿl Fat-h heard these words his countenance changed from sorrowful to glad. He thought tenderly of his divorced wife, and said in his mind: “Truly I have treated her harshly.” He then begged pardon of God for his jealousy, and blessed him for restoring to him again his happiness. To his inquiry of the old woman, whether she frequented his house, she replied: “Certainly; and also the houses of your relations. I eat of your alms, and pray that you may be rewarded both in this world and the next. I have inquired for the veil at all the houses I visit, but in vain.”— “Did you inquire at my house?” said the merchant. “My lord,” replied the old woman, “I went yesterday, but found no one at home, when the neighbours informed me that my lord had for some cause divorced his wife.”

Addressing the young man, Abū-ʿl Fat-h said: “Sir, I pray you, let this poor old woman go, for your veil is with me, and I will take care that it shall be properly repaired;” on which Ummu Maryam fell down before the merchant and kissed his hands, and then went her way. Abū-ʿl Fat-h now took out the veil in the presence of the young man, and gave it to a darner; and was convinced that he had treated his wife cruelly, which indeed was the case, had she not afterwards erred through the temptations of that wicked old woman. He then sent to his wife, requesting her to return, and offered her what terms she pleased; and she complied with his

desire, and was reconciled;— but my lord Abū-ʿl Fat-h the son of Qaydām little knew what had befallen him from the arts of Ummu Maryam. [16]

When the *vazīr* had ended his story, “Consider, O sultan,” he said, “the cunning of bad women, their wiles, and their artful contrivances.”— The sultan again gave orders to stay the execution of his son.

ON the eighth morning, when the impediment was done away against his speaking, the prince sent to the *vazīrs* and his tutor, who had concealed himself, and desired them to come to him. On their arrival, he thanked them for their services to his father, and what they had done to prevent his own death, adding: “By God’s help, I will soon repay you.”

The *vazīrs* now repaired to the sultan, informed him of the cause of his son’s obstinate silence, and of the arts of the damsel. The sultan rejoiced exceedingly, and ordered a public audience to be held, at which the *vazīrs*, the officers of state, and the learned men appeared. The prince entered, with his tutor, and, kissing the ground before his father, prayed eloquently for his welfare and that of his *vazīrs* and his tutor. The whole assembly were astonished at his fluency of speech, his propriety of diction, and his accomplished demeanour. The sultan was enraptured, and ran to him, kissed him between the eyes, and clasped him to his bosom. He did the same to the tutor, thanked him for his care of the prince. The tutor said: “I only commanded him to be silent, fearful for his life during these seven days, which were marked in his horoscope as unfortunate, but have ended happily.”¹ Then the sultan said: “Had I put him to death, in whom would have been the crime— myself, thee, or the damsel?” On this question the assembly differed much in their opinions, and the prince, observing their altercations, said: “I will solve this difficulty.” The assembly with one voice exclaimed: “Let us hear,” and the Prince said:

¹ In the Calcutta text, the king asks Sindibād why the prince had kept silence during these seven days, and the sage replies in terms similar to the above, that he had foreseen the danger he should be in if he spoke; yet in the introduction it is stated that the king was warned of this danger by the sage, and took precautions to avert it by secluding the prince in the women’s apartments. (See [note 2](#).)

Story of the Poisoned Food.

I HAVE heard of a certain merchant to whom there came unexpectedly a visitor; upon which he sent a female domestic to buy laban¹ in the market. As she was returning with it upon her head in an uncovered vessel, she passed under a tree, on which was a serpent, from whose mouth fell some drops of venom into the laban. Her master and his guest ate of it, and both died. [19]

“Whose, then, was the fault?” asked the prince: “the girl’s, who left the vessel uncovered? or her master’s, who gave the laban to his guest?”

Some said it was the master’s fault, because he did not examine the laban first. The prince replied: “No one was in fault; their time was come and their residence in this world at an end. Had my death taken place, no one would have been guilty but my father’s concubine.”

When the assembly heard this, all were astonished at the prince’s eloquence and wisdom, and raised their voices in applause, saying: “O sultan, thy son is most accomplished!” Then the sultan commanded a ponderous stone to be tied to the feet of the artful and wicked concubine, and she was cast into the sea. The tutor was rewarded, and invested with an embroidered robe of great value. The sultan delighted in his son, and abdicating his throne, gave it up to the prince, who made all happy by his justice and clemency.



[Home](#)

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¹ Sour curds.

APPENDIX

No. III—pp. 31 and 141.

THE MERCHANT, HIS WIFE, AND THE PARROT.

THERE must be few readers who are not familiar with this story through the *Arabian Nights' Entertainments*, but it was popular several centuries before that celebrated collection was rendered into English from Galland's French translation, as it is one of the tales of the *Seven Wise Masters* and the [Seven Sages](#), old English prose and metrical versions of the *Historia Septem Sapientum Romæ*, or of *Dolopathos*, which are Latin and French adaptations of the Book of Sindibād. In our common version of the *Thousand and One Nights*, the Story of the Parrot is told (in the introduction) by King Yunan, when his counsellors urged him to put the sage Dūbān to death; but in the Būlāq and Calcutta printed Arabic texts, the king says: "I should repent after it, as King Sindibād repented of killing his falcon;" then follows the well-known story of the king who killed his falcon, under the mistaken idea that it had, from mere wantonness, repeatedly dashed from his hand the cup of spring water, when he was about to drink, and afterwards found that a venomous serpent lay coiled at the spring-head.¹

The 68th chapter of Swan's *Gesta Romanorum* seems imitated from the Story of the Parrot: A certain king had a fair but vicious wife. It happened that her husband having occasion to travel, the lady sent for her gallant, and rioted in every excess of wickedness. Now one of her handmaids, it seems, was skilful in interpreting the song of birds, and in the court of the castle there were three cocks. During the night, while the gallant was with his mistress, the first cock began to crow. The lady heard it, and said to her servant: "Dear friend, what says yonder cock?" She replied: "That you are grossly injuring your husband." "Then," said the lady, "kill that cock without delay." They did so, but soon after, the second cock crew, and the lady repeated her question. "Madam," said the handmaid, "he says, 'My companion died for revealing the truth, and for the same cause I am prepared to die.'" "Kill him!" cried the lady, which they did. After this, the third cock crew. "What says he?" asked she again. "Hear, see, and say nothing, if you would live in peace." "Oh, don't kill him," said the lady.

The frame, or leading story, of the Persian collection of Nakhshabī, entitled,

¹ This story also occurs in the *Anvar-i Suhayli*, or Lights of Canopus, a Persian version, by Husain Vā'iz, of the work generally known in Europe as the Fables of Pilpay. Mr Lane thought fit in his admirable translation to substitute for this tale that of the Merchant and the Parrot, although in his (the Būlāq) text it is found in its proper place, in the tales of the *Seven Vazirs*.

Tūtī Nāma, Parrot-Book, or Tales of a Parrot, is similar to our tale: A man bought, for a large sum of money, a wonderful parrot, that could talk eloquently and intelligently, and shortly afterwards, a sharyk—a species of nightingale, according to Gerrans, “which imitates the human voice in so surprising a manner, that, if you do not see the bird, you cannot help being deceived” and put it in the same cage with the parrot. When he was about to set out on a distant journey, he told his wife, that, whenever she had any important affair to transact, she must first ask the advice of the parrot and the sharyk, and do nothing without their sanction. Some months after he was gone, his wife saw from the roof of her house a very handsome young prince pass along the street with his attendants, and immediately became enamoured of him. The prince also perceived the lady, and sent an old woman to solicit an assignation with her on the same evening. The lady consents to meet him, and having arrayed herself in her finest apparel, proceeds to the cage, and first consults the sharyk upon the propriety of her intended intrigue; but the bird forbade her to go, upon which the lady in a rage seized the faithful bird, and dashed it on the ground, so that it instantly died. She then represented her case to the parrot, who, having witnessed the fate of his unhappy companion, prudently resolved to temporise with the amorous dame, and accordingly “commiserated her situation, quenched the fire of indignation with the water of flattery, and began a tale conformable to her temperament,” which he took care to protract till morning. In this manner, night after night, the parrot contrives to keep the lady at home until her husband’s return.— The first story the parrot relates, according to Gerrans (and also in Kāderī’s abridgment; but it is the 5th in MS. No. 2573, in the India Office), is of a merchant, who, having occasion to travel, left his wife and house in charge of a sagacious parrot—a cockatoo, according to Gerrans. During his absence his wife had an intrigue with a young man, who came to the house every evening; but on the merchant’s return, the discreet bird, while giving a faithful account of all other transactions, said not a word in reference to the lady’s merry pranks. The husband soon hears of them, however, from his neighbours, and punishes his wife. Suspecting the parrot to have blabbed, the lady goes at night to the cage, takes out the bird, plucks off all its feathers, and throws it into the street. In the morning, when the merchant misses his favourite bird, she tells him that a cat had carried it away, but he discredits her story, and thrusts her out of doors. Meantime the parrot had taken up his abode in a burying-ground, to which the poor wife now also retires; and the parrot advises her to shave her head and remain there fasting during forty days, after which she should be reconciled to her husband. This she does, and at the end of the prescribed period the parrot goes to his old master, and upbraids him with his cruel treatment of his innocent wife, adding that she had been fasting forty days in the burying-ground. The merchant hastens to seek his wife, asks her forgiveness, and they live together ever afterwards in perfect harmony. “In like manner,” adds the story-telling parrot, “I shall conceal your secret from your husband, or make your peace with him if he should find it out.”

The *Tūtī Nāma* of Nakhshabī was composed about A.D. 1320; it was preceded, according to Pertsch, by a similar Persian work, by an unknown author, which was based upon a Sanskrit book, now lost, of which the *Suka Saptatī*, Seventy Tales of a Parrot, is only an abstract, and other sources. And here the question is suggested: Was the Sindibād story of the Husband and the Parrot imitated or adapted from the frame, or leading tale, of the original Sanskrit Parrot-Book, or was the idea of the latter taken from the Book of Sindibād? However this may be, the principal story of the *Tūtī Nāma* presents some points of resemblance to incidents in one of the numerous legends of the famous hero Rasalū, which are current in the Panjāb, namely, the story of Rāja Sirikop and Rasalū, kindly communicated to me by General James Abbott, from a small work which he had printed for private circulation, at Calcutta, in 1851. The conclusion of this legend seems to be the original of our old European tale of the cruel knight who caused the heart of his wife's paramour to be dressed and served up to her for supper. Rasalū, having slain the inhuman Rāja Sirikop, who played at dice for the heads of his guests, took away his infant daughter Kokla, and, when she was of age, married her. The Rana Kokla had seldom the society of her husband, as he was passionately devoted to the chase, but he left behind him, as spies upon her conduct, two birds, which could talk intelligently, a parrot and a mina, or hill starling. While Rasalū was absent on a hunting excursion, his young and lonely bride was seated at her window one day, when the handsome Rāja Hodi chanced to see her as he rode past. "And she saw him, and he took the place which Rasalū had left vacant in her heart. . . So Rana Kokla threw him down a rope, which she tied firmly to the balcony. And Rāja Hodi clambered up to the balcony by this rope, and entered the chamber of Rana Kokla. And the mina exclaimed: 'What wickedness is this?' Then Hodi went straight 'to the mina's cage and wrung its neck. So the parrot, taking warning, said: 'The steed of Rasalū is swift; what if he should surprise you? Let me out of my cage, and I will fly over the palace, and will inform you the instant he appears in sight.' And Kokla said: 'O excellent bird! do even as thou hast said,' and she released the bird from its cage. Then the parrot flew swift as an arrow to Dumtūr, and alighting upon Rasalū 's shoulder, as he hunted the stag, exclaimed: 'O Raja, a cat is at your cream!'" The sequel is nearly identical with the catastrophe of the story in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Day iv, Nov. 9, and the French tradition of Raoul de Coucy and the Lady of Fayel.— It is possible that the two birds of Rasalū may have suggested the frame of the Sanskrit prototype of the *Tūtī Nāma*. At all events, the legends of Rasalū and other ancient Indian heroes have been time out of mind the stock-in-trade of the wandering bards of the Panjāb, from whom General Abbott obtained this wild tale, among many others.¹

¹ In August last year (1883) Captain R. C. Temple, Cantonment Magistrate at Ambala, Panjāb, commenced the issue, in monthly parts (Trubner & Co., London), of "The Legends of the Panjāb," a work which must

Wonderfully-gifted parrots are the principal characters in many of the Hindū tales. The facility with which this bird imitates human speech, together with the doctrine of metempsychosis and the allied notion of a person being able by magical power to transfer his own soul into the dead body of any animal or bird, upon which, for example, the romance of King Vikram is based— probably induced the fablers of India to adopt the parrot as the favourite character in their fictions. But apart from the marvellous parrot of Oriental romance, it would appear from the accounts of grave authors, Western as well as Eastern, that the bird is not only capable of repeating words and phrases which it has been taught, but is possessed of considerable intelligence. Locke, in his *Essay on the Human Understanding*, relates a curious anecdote of a parrot which answered rationally several questions which it was asked by Prince Maurice, one of which was: “What do you there (i.e. at Marignan)?” The parrot replied: “I look after the chickens.” The prince laughed, and said: “You look after the chickens!” to which the parrot replied: “Yes, I; and I know well enough how to do it,” at the same time clucking in imitation of the noise made by the hen to call together her young ones.— Willoughby tells of a parrot which, when one said, “Laugh, Poll, laugh,” laughed, accordingly, and the instant after screamed out, “What a fool you are to make me laugh!” Rhodiginus mentions a parrot that could recite correctly the whole of the Apostles’ Creed, and of another that could repeat a sonnet from Petrarch. But these feats dwindle into insignificance when compared with the accomplishments of parrots referred to by the Arabian historian El-Ishāki (cited by Lane, *1001 Nights*, i, p. in, note 22), one of which could repeat the 36th chapter of the Qur’ān, the other recited the whole of the Qur’ān!— Goldsmith relates that a parrot belonging to Henry VII, having been kept in a room next to the Thames, in his palace at Westminster, had learned to repeat many sentences from the boatmen and passengers. One day, sporting on its perch, it fell into the water. The bird had no sooner discovered its situation than it called out: “A boat! twenty pounds for a boat!” A waterman, happening to be near the place where the parrot was floating, immediately took it up and restored it to the king, demanding, as the bird was a favourite, that he should be paid the reward it had called out. This was refused; but it was agreed that, as the parrot had offered a reward, the man should again refer to its determination for the sum he was to receive. “Give the knave a groat!” the bird screamed the instant the reference was made. ([Back](#))

prove invaluable to students of comparative folk-lore.

No. IV—pp. 35 and 148.
THE DOUBLE INFIDELITY.

A VARIANT— possibly the original— of this widely-diffused story is found in the *Hitopadesa*, Book ii, Fable, 7, as follows:

“In the town of Dwárávati a certain farmer had a wife, a woman of loose conduct, who used to amuse herself with the magistrate of the town and with his son. One day, as she sat diverting herself with the magistrate’s son, the magistrate himself arrived. When she saw him, she shut his son in the cupboard, and began sporting in the same manner with the magistrate. In the meantime, the herdsman her husband returned from the fold. On seeing him, she said: ‘O magistrate, do you, taking your staff, and putting on the appearance of anger, depart with haste.’ This was done; and now the herdsman, coming up, asked his wife: ‘Wherefore came the magistrate here?’ She replied: ‘For some cause or other, he is angry with his son, who, running away, came here, and entered the house. Him I have made safe in the cupboard. His father, seeking him, and not finding him in the house, is therefore going off in a rage.’ Then having made the youth come out of the cupboard, she showed him to her husband.”

The 9th tale of the *Disciplina Clericalis* of Peter Alphonsus is evidently a modification of the story:

“In former times there was a good man, who, on setting out on a distant journey, left his wife in charge of her mother. This old woman brought to the house a young man whom her daughter loved. It happened that, while they were seated at table, the husband returned unexpectedly and knocked at the door. The young woman rose to open the door to her husband. But the mother (who lived with the friend of her daughter) did not know what to do, because there was no place in which to hide him. So, while the daughter was opening the door to her husband, the old woman took a drawn sword and handed it to the youth, and told him to stand with it drawn at the door; and if the husband said anything to him, he should answer nothing. The youth did as the old woman told him; and when the door was opened, the husband of the girl saw him, and he stood quite still, and said: ‘Who art thou?’ He did not say a word, but held the drawn sword in his hand, and the husband was perplexed at this. The old woman said to him: ‘Fair son, be quiet; let none hear you.’ Then the husband wondered more than before, and said: ‘Fair lady, who is he?’ The old woman said to him: ‘Three men were following him just now; we opened the door and let him enter here, and because he feared lest you be one of them, he will not answer you.’ ‘Lady,’ said the husband, ‘you did well;’ and he entered and called to the lover of his wife, and caused him to dine with him.”

This is also one of the Fabliaux; but it must have been from another version,

more closely resembling the Sindibād tale, that Boccaccio derived his story of the lady of Florence and her two lovers (*Decameron*, Day vii, Nov. 6): To the one called Leonetto she was much attached; but the other, Lambertuccio, only procured her good-will by the power which he possessed, in consequence of his high rank and influence, of doing her an injury. While residing at a country seat, the husband of this lady left her for a few days, and on his departure she sent for Leonetto to bear her company. Lambertuccio, also hearing of the absence of the husband, came to the villa soon after the arrival of her favoured lover. Scarcely had Leonetto been concealed, and Lambertuccio occupied his place, when the husband unexpectedly knocked at the outer gate. At the earnest entreaty of his mistress, Lambertuccio runs down with a drawn sword in his hand, and rushes out of the house, exclaiming: "If ever I meet the villain again!" Leonetto is then brought forth from concealment, and the husband is informed, and believes, that he had sought refuge in his villa from the fury of Lambertuccio, who, having met him on the road, had pursued him with an intention of putting him to death.— *Dunlop*.

From Boccaccio the story was reproduced in *Tarlton's Newes out of Purgatorie* (a catchpenny book), printed about 1590; and eleven years later Samuel Rowlands turned it into verse, in his *Knave of Clubs*, under the title of "The Cuckold:" the lady's lovers are a courtier and a captain;— the former is hidden away on the arrival of the son of Mars, who, when the lady hears that her husband is coming, is instructed how to comport himself in his retreat:

So downe the staires he goes,
With rapier drawne, such feareful looks he showes,
The cuckold trembles to behould the sight,
And up he comes, as he had met some spright.
Ah, wife, said he, what creature did I meete?
Hath he done any harme to thee, my sweete?
A verier ruffian I did never see;
The sight of him hath almost distracted me.
My loving husband, as I heere sate sowing,
Thinking no harme, or any evill knowing,
A gentleman comes up the staires amaine,
Crying, Oh, helpe me, or I shall be slaine:
I of compassion, husband (life is deere),
Under your bed in pittie hid him heere;
His foe sought for him with his rapier drawne,
While I with teares did wash this peece of lawne.
But when he saw he could not finde him out
(After he tossed all my things about),
He went downe swaggering even as you met him,
My saving the poore man so much did fret him.
A blessed deede, quoth he; it proves thee wise:

Alas! the gentleman uneasie lies;
Wife, call him forth; I hope all danger 's past;
Good Bettris, looke that all the doores be fast.
Sir, you are welcome to my house, I vow,
I joy it is your sanctuary now,
And count myself most happy in the thing,
That such good fortune did you hither bring.
Sir, said the courtier, hearty thanks I give,
I will requite your kindness if I live.

But the story had found its way into an English jest-book many years before its appearance in *Tarlton's Newes*, even before Boccaccio's tales were translated in Paynter's *Palace of Pleasure*. In *Tales and Quiche Answeres, very Pleasant and Mery to Rede*, 1535, it is told of an innkeeper's wife near Florence. While she was entertaining one lover, another came "up the ladder," and she bade him be off." But for all her words, he would not go away, but still pressed to come in. So long they stood chiding that the good-man came upon them, and asked them why they bawled so. The woman, not unprovided with a deceitful answer, said: Sir, this man would come in perforce to slay or mischief another that is fled into our house for succour, and hitherto I have kept him back.— When he that was within heard her say so, he began to pluck up his heart, and say he would be revenged on him without. And he that was without made a face as he would kill him that was within.— The foolish man her husband inquired the cause of their debate, and took upon him to set them at one. And so the good silly man spake and made the peace between them, yea, and farther, he gave them a gallon of wine."

In all the Eastern texts, excepting the Persian and Scott's versions, the story of the Double Infidelity is preceded by another, related by the same *vazīr*:

THE INFECTED LOAVES.

A CERTAIN man was very particular in his food, and could not eat anything that he suspected to be unclean. In the course of a trading journey he came to a town, and sent his servant to buy some bread. The servant returned with two loaves, which his master relished so much that he told him always to procure him the same bread. This he did for some time (25 days, according to the Breslau text), until one day the servant returned without any bread, saying that the woman of whom he had hitherto bought the loaves had no more to sell. The merchant then sends for the woman, and asks her how the bread she had sold his servant was so pleasantly flavoured. She explains, to the infinite disgust of the man who was so particular in his food— and doubtless the explanation will be not less

disgusting to the reader that her master had suffered from blisters on his back, for which the doctor prescribed a poultice of flour mixed with honey and oil;— she took the poultice each day, when it was removed for a fresh one, and made it into a loaf, which the merchant's servant had bought of her daily. But now that her master was cured (in the Breslau text he was dead), she could supply no more loaves. [\(Back\)](#)

No. V— pp. 37 and 144.
THE FULLER AND HIS SON.

IN three other Arabic texts of the *Seven Vazīrs*, this rather pointless story— which, however, belongs to the original Book of Sindibād— is followed by a second related by the Damsel, of

*THE BLACKGUARD,*¹

who devised a diabolical plan to procure the disgrace of a merchant's wife, whose virtue he had unsuccessfully attempted. The story is very objectionable in its details, and must therefore be passed over. [\(Back\)](#)

No. VII pp.—50 and 150.
THE PRINCE AND THE GHŪL.

THE pretended damsel's account of herself differs materially in the Persian text from that in the *Seven Vazīrs* and other versions. In the Persian she represents herself as having become enamoured of the prince from seeing his beauty from the terrace of her mansion; then she "points to her abode," and they proceed "till they reach a desolate spot." This is certainly not quite so plausible as what she says in the Arabic texts— that she fell from her litter on the way to be married to a certain prince. The conclusion, too, varies quite as much, so far as we possess it in the Persian MS.— In the old Castilian version the Damsel introduces this tale of the "female devil" by warning the king, most absurdly, that his *vazīrs* would kill him, "*as a vazīr once killed a king,*" since it relates that the son of the king was not killed, but returned in safety to his father.— In the Hebrew version the story of the Changed Sex is fused with this tale.

The Shah's own Story-teller gave Sir John Malcolm the following account of the nature and habits of ghūls, while "the Elchee" and his suite were passing

¹ Alfāsīk: a worthless, impudent fellow; a scoundrel, etc.

through one of their favourite haunts: “The natural shape of these monsters is terrible, but they can assume those of animals, such as cows or camels, or whatever they choose, often appearing to men as their relations or friends, and then they do not only transform their shapes, but their voices also are altered. The frightful screams and yells which are often heard amid these dreaded ravines are changed for the softest and most melodious notes; unwary travellers, deluded by the appearance of friends, or captivated by the forms, or charmed by the music of these demons, are allured from their path, and after feasting for a few hours on every luxury are consigned to destruction. The number of these ghūls,” added the worthy Hajjī, “has greatly decreased since the birth of the Prophet, and they have no power to hurt those who pronounce his name in sincerity and faith.” (*Sketches of Persia*, [ch. xvi.](#))— In Russian Folk Tales the Baba Yagas perform the part of Ghūls, Rākshasas, etc. Luckily for their intended victims, they are endowed with but a small store of intellect, and are generally outwitted by the interesting heroes and heroines. ([Back](#))

No. X.

THE BOAR AND THE HERDSMAN.

There was sometime an emperor, the which had a great forest, wherein was a wild boar, which was so cruel and so fierce, that he killed and devoured men going through the forest. The emperor therefore being right heavy, proclaimed throughout all his dominions, that whosoever he was that could slay the boar, should have his only daughter to wife, and therewith his empire after his death: and as this was in places proclaimed, there was not one man found that durst give this adventure. But there was a shepherd who thought in himself: Might I the boar overcome and slay, I should not only advantage myself, but also my generation and kindred. So then he took his shepherd’s staff in his hand and went to the forest: and as the boar had of him a sight, he drew towards the herdsman, but he for fear climbed upon a tree, and then the boar began to bite and gnaw the tree. So the herd thought shortly that he would have overthrown it. This tree was loaden with great plenty of fruit, and the herd gathered and plucked thereof, and cast them to the boar, insomuch that when he was filled therewith, he laid him down to sleep: the which when the herd perceived, by little and little descended the tree, and with the one hand he clawed the boar, and with the other held him upon the tree, and seeing that the boar slept very soundly, he drew out his knife, and smote the boar to the heart, and killed him. And so shortly after he wedded the emperor’s daughter: and after the death of her father, he was made emperor.

Then said she [the empress], My lord, wot ye not what I have said? He said, Right well. Then said she, This mighty boar betokeneth your most noble person, against whom may no man withstand, neither by wisdom nor with strength. This

shepherd, with his staff, is the person of your ungracious son, who with his staff of cunning, beginneth to play with you, as the herdsman clawed the boar, and made him to sleep and after killeth him. In the same manner the masters of your son, by their false fables and narrations claw you, and glose with you, until the time that your son slay you, that he may reign. Then said the emperor, God forbid that they should do to me as he did to the wild boar: and he said unto her, This day my son shall die: and she answered, If you do so, then do ye wisely.

The story of the Wild Boar is not found in any of the texts of the *Seven Vazirs*. ([Back](#))

No. XI—pp. 61 and 162.
THE GO-BETWEEN AND THE SHE-DOG.

It is very significant that in this story as related in the *Disciplina Clericalis* of Alphonsus (A.D. 1106), the fabliau of *La vielle qui séduisit la jeune fille*, the *Gesta Romanorum* (13th century), and the collection of mediæval tales written in Latin, edited, for the Percy Society, by Wright (No. xiii, *De dolo et arte vetularum*), the incident of the Libertine Husband does not occur; but— as in the Sanskrit *Suka Saptatī* and our Persian *Sindibād Nāma* the scruples of the virtuous matron are done away by the old hag's device, and the lover is introduced to her. In the *Suka Saptatī* the lady is the wife of a prince; a young man becomes enamoured of her, and his mother, seeing him fading away because of his love, adopts the expedient of the dog, and persuades her to grant her son an interview.

The oldest form of the story is probably that of the Cunning Siddhikari, in the *Kathā Sarit Sāgara*: A Buddhist priestess has been employed by four young merchants to corrupt Devasmitā, the wife of a merchant, and with this object she pays a visit to the virtuous lady. The narrative thus proceeds:

“As she approached the private rooms of Devasmitā, a she-dog, that was fastened there with a chain, would not let her come near, but opposed her entrance in the most determined way. Then Devasmitā, seeing her, of her own accord sent a maid, and had her brought in, thinking to herself: ‘What can this person be come for?’ After she had entered, the wicked ascetic gave Devasmitā her blessing, and, treating the virtuous woman with affected respect, said to her: ‘I have always had a desire to see you, but to-day I saw you in a dream, therefore I am come to visit you with impatient eagerness; and my mind is afflicted at beholding you separated from your husband, for beauty and youth are wasted when one is deprived of the society of one's beloved.’ With this and many other speeches of the same kind she tried to gain the confidence of the virtuous woman in a short interview, and then, taking leave of her, she returned to her own house. On the second day she took with her a piece of meat full of pepper-dust, and went again to the house of Devasmitā, and there she gave that piece of meat to the

she-dog at the door, who gobbled it up, pepper and all. Then, owing to the pepper-dust, the tears flowed in profusion from the animal's eyes, and her nose began to run. And the cunning ascetic immediately went into the apartment of Devasmitá, who received her hospitably, and she began to cry. When Devasmitá asked her why she shed tears, she said, with affected reluctance: 'My friend, look at this dog weeping outside here. This creature recognised me to-day as having been its companion in a former birth, and began to weep; for that reason my tears gushed through pity.' When she heard that, and saw that she-dog outside apparently weeping, Devasmitá thought for a moment to herself: 'What can be the meaning of this wonderful sight?' Then the ascetic said to her: 'My daughter, in a former birth, I and that dog were the two wives of a certain Brāhman. And our husband frequently went about to other countries on embassies by order of the king. Now while he was away from home I lived with other men at my pleasure, and so did not cheat the elements of which I was composed, and my senses, of their lawful enjoyment. For considerate treatment of the elements and senses is held to be the highest duty. Therefore I have been born in this birth with a recollection of my former existence. But she, in her former life, through ignorance, confined all her attention to the preservation of her character, therefore she has been degraded and born again as one of the canine race; however, she too remembers her former birth.'¹ The wise Devasmitá said to herself: 'This is a novel conception of duty; no doubt this woman has laid a treacherous snare for me;?' and so said to her: 'Reverend lady, for this long time I have been ignorant of this duty, so procure me an interview with some charming man.' Then the ascetic said: 'There are residing here some young merchants that have come from another country, so I will bring them to you.'

The wicked ascetic returns home delighted with the success of her stratagem. Meanwhile Devasmitá resolves to punish the four young merchants. So calling her maids, she instructs them to prepare some wine mixed with *datura* (a stupifying drug), and to have a dog's foot of iron made as quickly as possible. Then she causes one of her maids to dress herself to resemble her mistress. The ascetic introduces one of the young libertines into the lady's house in the evening, and then returns home. The maid, disguised as her mistress, receives the young merchant courteously, and, having persuaded him to drink freely of the drugged wine till he becomes senseless, the other maids strip off his clothes, and, after branding him on the forehead with the dog's foot, during the night push him into a filthy ditch. On recovering consciousness he returns to his companions, and tells them, in order that they should share his fate, that he had been robbed. The three other young merchants in turn visit the house of Devasmitá, and receive the same treatment. Soon afterwards the pretended devotee, ignorant of the result of her device, visits the lady, is drugged, her ears and nose are cut off, and she is

¹ "This contrivance," remarks Professor H. H. Wilson, "is quite consistent with the Hindu notion of the metempsychosis, and is clearly of Indian origin."

flung into a foul pond. In the sequel, the lady, disguised in man's apparel, proceeds to the country of the young libertines, where her husband had been residing for some time, and, going before the king, petitions him to assemble all his subjects, alleging that there are among his citizens four of her slaves who had run away. Then she seized upon the four young merchants, and claimed them as her slaves. The other merchants indignantly cried out that these were reputable men, and she answered that if their foreheads were examined they should be found marked with a dog's foot. On seeing the merchants thus branded, the king was astonished, and Devasmitā thereupon related the whole story, and all the people burst out laughing, and the king said to the lady: "They are your slaves by the best of titles." The other merchants paid a large sum to the chaste wife to redeem these four from slavery, and a fine to the king's treasury. And Devasmitā having received the money, and recovered her husband, was honoured by all men, returned to her own city, and was never afterwards separated from her beloved.

It will be observed that in this old Indian version the denouement is more moral than in any others: instead of the lady yielding, she entraps successively the four young merchants and their go-between, and punishes all of them in the most edifying manner. ([Back](#))

No. XIII—p. 65.
THE FATHER-IN-LAW.

THIS story is found in the 8th Night of Nakhshabī's *Tūtī Nāma* (where it is told by the 5th vazlr) and also in the modern version of its Sanskrit prototype, the *Suka Saptatī*. Readers of Lane's translation of the *Thousand and One Nights* will probably recollect a more elaborate conversation by signs in the touching story of 'Aziz and 'Azlza, where the young man's cousin and betrothed interprets the amorous lady's symbols; for instance: She tucked up her sleeves from her forearms, and opening her five fingers, struck her bosom with them (with the palm and five fingers); next she raised her hands, and held forth a mirror from the lattice, and took a red handkerchief and retired with it; after which she let it down from the lattice towards the street three times, letting it down and raising it, and then wringing and twisting it with her hand and bending down her head; meaning thereby: "Come hither after five days; seat thyself at the shop of the dyer [indicated by the dipping and wringing of the red handkerchief], until my messenger shall come to thee."— Lane remarks, that "the inability of numbers of Eastern women in families of the middle classes to write or read, as well as the difficulty or impossibility existing of conveying written letters, may have given rise to such modes of communication."

Another example of conversing by signs occurs in the Story of the Minister's Son, in the Sanskrit collection entitled *Vetalapanchavinsati* (Twenty-five Tales of

a Demon). The prince and his companion, the minister's son, discover a lady bathing in a tank; and the prince and the damsel become immediately enamoured of each other. The lady took a lotus from her garland of flowers, and put it in her ear; she then twisted it into an ornament called *dantapatra*, or tooth-leaf; then she took another lotus and placed it significantly upon her heart. The minister's son explains these signs: the lady lives in such a place; she is the daughter of a dentist there; her name is Padmavati, and her heart is wholly the prince's. An old woman (as usual) acts as go-between. The lady scolds her, strikes her on both cheeks with her two hands smeared with camphor; meaning: "Wait for the remaining ten nights of moonlight, for they are unfavourable for an interview." A second time the old woman goes to the lady, who again pretends to be angry with her, and strikes her on the breast with three fingers dipped in red dye; meaning:—"I cannot receive you for three nights." A third time the lady receives her more graciously, but, instead of letting her go into the street by the usual way, she places her in a seat with a rope fastened to support it, and lets her down from a window into the garden of the house, where she must climb a tree, cross the wall, and let herself down by another tree, and go to her own house; thus indicating to the prince the way by which he was to be admitted into the house.

Cardonne, in his *Mélanges de Littérature Orientale*, gives a variant of our story, with additions, from a Persian or Turkish collection. After the father-in-law (a merchant of Agra) has failed to convince his son of his wife's infidelity, by displaying the anklets, he is still resolved to open his eyes to her true character, at whatever cost. "There was at Agra a mysterious reservoir, much admired, constructed by some wise men, who had brought water into it under the conjunction of certain planets. The virtue of the water consisted in trying all kinds of falsehood. A woman, suspected of infidelity, swore she had been faithful, and was thrown into this tank, called the Tank of Trial; if she swore falsely, she instantly sank to the bottom, but if truly, she swam on the surface. The enraged father-in-law cited the lady to this tank, according to the right of every head of a family. Conscious of her guilt, the lady studied how to clear herself in the eyes of the world. Acquainting her gallant of her situation, she begged him to counterfeit madness, and to seize her in his arms the moment she was to undergo the trial. The lover, solicitous to save the honour and life of his mistress, made no difficulty to expose himself to the eyes of the spectators, and found an opportunity to approach and embrace her, which he effected by subjecting himself to a few blows, being deemed insane by those who did not know him.

"The suspected wife advanced to the edge of the tank, and, raising her voice, cried: 'I swear that I have never touched any man but my husband and that madman who has just insulted me. Let this water be my punishment if I have sworn falsely.' Having thus spoken, she threw herself into the tank. The water buoyed her up in the sight of all present, who unanimously declared her innocent, and she returned triumphant to the arms of her husband, who had always thought her faithful. But the old man could not give up the opinion he had formed

from the evidence of his own eyes; he kept constant watch in the garden, but the lover and the lady discontinued their meetings.

“The vigilance of the father-in-law did not, however, abate. The king of India, being informed of his indefatigable care and attention, thought him a very proper person to superintend his harem, and appointed him to that responsible office. The old man discharged his duties with great severity; every one trembled before him, and his eyes seemed to penetrate the walls of the seraglio, even to its inmost recesses. One night as the unrelenting old fellow was going his usual rounds, he perceived the prince’s elephant mounted by its driver. This privileged animal advanced to the balcony of the king’s favourite wife, which opened, and the elephant, taking the lady upon his trunk, conducted her to his rider. After some time the lady was brought back again in the same manner, and set down in her balcony. The aga could not help laughing at the docility of the animal, the confidence of the lady, and the happiness of the guide. The adventure having taught him that the sultan was no more fortunate than his son, he took comfort, and resolved to keep the lady’s intrigue more secret than he had done that of his daughter-in-law.

From a fabliau, possibly, Margaret Queen of Navarre obtained the material of the 45th tale of her *Heptameron*, in which an officious neighbour, looking from his window, discovers a lady and her gallant in the garden; when she sees that they are being thus watched, she sends her lover away, and, going into the house, persuades her husband to spend what remains of the night with her in the same spot. In the morning the neighbour meets the husband and tells him of his wife’s misconduct, but is answered: “It was I, gossip, it was I.”

No. XVI pp.—73 and 198.

THE CONCEALED ROBE—THE BURNT VEIL.

AN error in the translation of the story of the Concealed Robe falls to be corrected in this place: pp. 76, 77, “One day the vile hag,” etc., it is not the old woman who visits the lady at her mother’s house, after she ran away from her husband’s violence, but the same “effeminate one” who concealed the robe, and who not only conducts her to her lover, but also makes peace between the husband and wife. The only part the old woman takes in the intrigue is to engage the services of the “effeminate one”—in the original, *mukhannas*, which means a hermaphrodite, and has another signification, which need not be here explained for, although she “had now cleared her hands from the affairs of the world, she had formerly managed many such matters.” (I may as well mention that I had originally suppressed the circumstance of the want of sex on the part of the individual employed by the old woman, and, somehow, neglected to alter the terms in pages 76, 77.)— The

wretched being who is so comically described in the text would doubtless readily obtain access to the women's apartments of any house in Persia or India; and as Eastern tales of common life are considered to faithfully reflect the manners and customs of the age in which they were composed, it may be concluded that eunuchs and epicene individuals were formerly employed in those countries as go-betweens in affairs of gallantry. It is hardly to be supposed, surely, that the author of the *Sindibād Nāma* deliberately substituted this hermaphrodite go-between for the conventional old woman of the same story as found in other versions. But I shall not take upon myself to say whether this peculiar turn of the story in the Persian text is evidence of its greater antiquity. I may add, that it will be observed that in the Persian version of the story the cloth, or robe, is not burnt, nor is the lady divorced, apparently, as in the Arabian and other texts; and perhaps the most remarkable difference is, that it is the young man himself who suggests that the husband should be reconciled to his wife. The story is so differently told in the Persian text from the Greek, Arabic, and other versions, that Falconer could only have cursorily looked at it in the MS. when he referred his reader to the tale as given in Jonathan Scott's *Seven Vazīrs*. Professor Comparetti has stated, in his "Researches," that the Story of the Burnt Cloth is not in the Persian text of the *Sindibād*. He was, perhaps, misled by the French translator of Falconer's analysis, in the *Revue Britannique*, who may have omitted the brief allusion which Falconer makes to the story, in these words: "The vazīr [i.e. the sixth] next relates the Story of the Stratagem of the Old Woman with the Merchant's Wife and the Young Man, which, being told in the *Seven Vazīrs* ('Tales,' etc., p. 168), need not be here repeated."—As this is one of the "secondary" tales of the vazīrs, which Professor Comparetti conceives was added when the tales of the Libertine Husband and the Old Woman and the She-Dog were fused together, it is of some importance to find it in the Persian text, and told so differently, as well as these two stories separately.

In some of the Arabian texts of the *Seven Vazīrs*, the story of the Burnt Veil is followed by the tale of

THE LADY IN THE GLASS-CASE,

which is almost identical with the well-known story in the introduction to the *Arabian Nights*. The original is perhaps found in the *Katha Sarit Sāgara*, section seventh, to the following effect: Two young Brāhmans travelling are benighted in a forest, and take up their lodging in a tree near a lake. Early in the night a number of people come from the water, and having made preparations for an entertainment retire; a Yaksha (or genie) then comes out of the lake with his two wives, and spends the night there; when he and one of his wives are asleep, the other, seeing the youths, invites them to approach her, and, to encourage them, shows them a hundred rings received from former gallants, notwithstanding

her husband's precautions, who keeps her locked up in a chest at the bottom of the lake. The Hindu story-teller is more moral than the Arab: the youths reject her advances; she wakes the Yaksha, who is going to put them to death, but the rings are produced in evidence against the unfaithful wife, and she is turned away with the loss of her nose.— The story is repeated in the next section with some variation: the lady has ninety and nine rings, and is about to complete the hundred, when her husband, who is Naga (or snake-god) wakes, and consumes the guilty pair with fire from his mouth.— *Dr. H. H. Wilson.*— There is a variant of this story in the Persian romance of *Hatim Tai* (a pre-Islamite chieftain, renowned throughout the East for his unbounded generosity and liberality): A king, on a hunting excursion, loses his way and is separated from his attendants; he comes to a beautiful garden, in which is a palace, and an artificial lake, sits down, and, as he is performing his ablutions, catches hold of an iron chain in the water, pulls it towards him, and behold, it is attached to a chest, which opens, and discovers a woman of surpassing beauty. After conversing with her, the king takes a ring from his finger and offers it to her as a memento, but she tells him that she has already a string of rings, of which she cannot tell the number, nor can she recollect which lover gave her a particular ring.— Forbes says there is a similar tale in *Nakhshabī*, near the beginning, but I have failed to find it in that work.

[\(Back\)](#)

No. XVII—pp. 80 and 144.
THE LION'S TRACK.

THIS story is told by the first *vazīr* in all the versions, save the Persian *Sindibād Nāma*, where it is related by the seventh *vazīr*, and two of the Arabian texts, namely, Scott's MS. and the Rich MS. in the British Museum, where it is, not inappropriately, told by the Damsel, since it tells rather against men than women, the king being the aggressor, and the "wile" of the lady being in defence of her own virtue. — As an instance of the "hashy" manner in which the *Book of the Thousand and One Nights* has been put together, it may be mentioned that in the Calcutta printed Arabic text (which hardly differs at all from that printed at Būlāq), this tale of the Sultan and the Virtuous Wife is also related separately from the *Seven Vazīrs*— Night 404. A variant of the story is found in a Turkish collection, entitled '*Ajā'ibu-l-Ma'asir*, Marvels of Memorials (*i. e.* of Traditions, etc.), which Cardonne translated, under the title of "La Pantoufle du Sultan," in his *Mélanges de Littérature Orientale*. This version differs in some particulars from that of Scott. The sultan sends the *vazīr* a written order to proceed on some business to a distant place. The *vazīr*, in his haste to depart, leaves on the sofa the sultan's

order. Instead of the lady giving the sultan a book to read while she prepares supper for his entertainment, she recites to him two distichs, to the effect that the lion would scorn to devour what the wolf leaves, and deigns not to quench his thirst in the river which had been polluted by the dog. "These words immediately convinced the sultan that he had nothing to hope for there; he retired greatly disconcerted, and in his confusion forgot *one of his slippers*. The vazīr, in the meantime, having in vain searched for the prince's order, recollected that he had left it on the sofa, and was obliged to return home for it. The sultan's slipper, which had lain till then unperceived, gave him a too clear conviction of the monarch's real designs, and his motive for sending him away. Tormented at once by ambition and jealousy, he concerted means to divorce his wife without the loss of his dignity. Having despatched his business, he returned to give the sultan an account of his commission, and pretended to his wife that, as the sultan had just given him a sumptuous palace, it was necessary for her to pass a few days with her father, in order that he might have leisure to furnish it, presenting her at the same time with a hundred pieces of gold." The rest of the story agrees with the Arabian and other versions.

Boccaccio has adapted the first part of the Arabic version for the 5th Novel, Day i, of his *Decameron*. The Marchioness of Monferrat, while her husband was absent— being engaged in the crusade against the Turks— was visited by Philip, King of France, who had become enamoured of her from the accounts he had heard of her beauty and virtue. The lady, suspecting his designs, bought up all the hens she could, and caused them to be dressed in as many different ways as possible. When the king perceived the uniform character of the fare, he said: "Madam, are only hens bred in this country?" "Not so," the lady replied; "but women, however they may differ in dress and titles, are the same here as in other places." The king felt the force of the rebuke, and presently departed. ([Back](#))

No. XIX—pp. 88 and 213.
THE POISONED GUESTS.

WE have in the Persian text of this ancient tale a curious parallel to a custom which prevailed in Europe during the Middle Ages. The house of the bountiful man is represented as having "neither door, nor lock, nor *porter*." In the *Mabinogion*, we read: "If it should be said that there was a porter at Arthur's palace, there was none;" on which Lady Charlotte Guest remarks: "The absence of a porter was formerly considered as an indication of hospitality, and as such is alluded to by Rhys Brychan, a bard who nourished at the close of the 15th century:

The stately entrance is without porters,
And his mansions are open to every honest man."

The original form of our story of the Poisoned Guests seems to be found in

the 13th of the Twenty-five Tales of a Demon (*Vetāla Panchavimati*). The wife of a man named Harisvāmin having been stolen from him one night by a Vidyādhara prince, he gave away all his wealth to the Brāhmans, and resolved to visit all the holy waters, and wash away his sins, after which he hoped he might find his beloved wife again; and the story thus proceeds:

“Then he left his country, with his Brāhman birth as his only fortune, and proceeded to go round to all the holy bathing-places in order to recover his beloved. And as he was roaming about, there came upon him the terrible lion of the hot season, with the blazing sun for mouth, and with a mane composed of his fiery rays. And the winds blew with excessive heat, as if warmed by the breath of sighs furnished forth by travellers grieved at being separated from their wives. And the tanks, with their supply of water diminished by the heat, and their drying white mud, appeared to be showing their broken hearts. And the trees by the roadside seemed to lament on account of the departure of the glory of spring, making their wailing heard in the shrill moaning of their bark, with leaves, as it were, lips, parched with heat. At that season Harisvāmin, wearied out with the heat of the sun, with bereavement, hunger and thirst, and continual travelling, disfigured, emaciated and dirty, and pining for food, reached in the course of his wanderings a certain village, and found in it the house of a Brāhman named Padmanābha, who was engaged in a sacrifice. And seeing that many Brāhmans were eating in his house, he stood leaning against the door-post, silent and motionless. And the good-wife of that Brāhman named Padmanābha, seeing him in this position, felt pity for him, and reflected: ‘Alas, mighty is hunger! Whom will it not bring down? For here stands a man at the door, who appears to be a householder, desiring food, with downcast countenance; evidently come from a long journey, and with all his senses impaired by hunger. So is not he a man to whom food ought to be given?’ Having gone through these reflections, the kind woman took up in her hands a vessel full of rice boiled in milk, with ghee and sugar, and brought it, and courteously presented it to him, and said: ‘Go and eat this somewhere on the bank of the lake, for this place is unfit to eat in, as it is filled with feasting Brāhmans.’

“He said: ‘I will do so,’ and took the vessel of rice and placed it at no great distance under a banyan-tree on the edge of the lake; and he washed his hands and feet in the lake, and rinsed his mouth, and then came back in high spirits to eat the rice. But while he was thus engaged a kite, holding a black cobra with its beak and claws, came from some place or other, and sat on that tree. And it so happened that poisonous saliva issued from the mouth of that dead snake, which the bird had captured and was carrying along. The saliva fell into the dish of rice which was placed underneath the tree, and Harisvāmin, without observing it, came and ate up that rice. As soon as in his hunger he had devoured all that food, he began to suffer terrible agonies, produced by the poison. He exclaimed: ‘When fate has turned against a man, everything in this world turns also; accordingly this rice, dressed with milk, ghee, and sugar, has become poison to me.’ Thus

speaking, Harisvāmin, tortured with the poison, tottered to the house of that Brāhman who was engaged in a sacrifice, and said to his wife: 'The rice which you gave me has poisoned me; so fetch me quickly a charmer who can counteract the operation of poison; otherwise you will be guilty of the death of a Brāhman.' When Harisvāmin had said this to the good woman, who was beside herself to think what it could all mean, his eyes closed, and he died. Accordingly the Brāhman who was engaged in a sacrifice drove out of his house his wife, though she was innocent and hospitable, being enraged with her for the supposed murder of her guest. The good woman, for her part, having incurred groundless blame from her charitable deed, and so become branded with infamy, went to a holy bathing-place to perform penance. Then there was a discussion before the superintendent of religion as to which of the four parties, the kite, the snake, and the couple who gave rice, was guilty of the murder of a Brāhman, but the question was not decided."

This forms the 16th tale of the Tamil version (*Vedāla Cadai*) and the 12th of the Hindī (*Baitāl Pachisī*); in the latter, the traveller, having placed the dish of food at the foot of a fig-tree, went into the tank to wash his face and hands; meanwhile a black snake, gliding from the roots of the tree, thrust its venomous mouth into the food, and then went away.— An incident resembling this story is found in the *Bahār-i Dānish* (Story of the First Companion): A snake bites the lip of the lady's paramour while he lies asleep, and kills him; then it dropped some of its poison into the goblet of wine, which the lady when she awoke drank, and she also died.

[\(Back\)](#)

No. XXIV—p. 137.

AHMED THE ORPHAN.

THIS remarkable tale, of which variants were current throughout Europe during the Middle Ages, does not belong to the original Book of Sindibād, and is found in only two of the five Arabic texts of the Seven Vaztrs represented in our Comparative Table, namely, Scott's MS. and the Rich MS. in the British Museum. Its earliest appearance in European literature seems to have been in the spiritual tales, or *Contes Devots*, written in the 12th and 13th centuries, under the title of "D'un Roi qui voulut faire brûler le fils de son Seneschal," from which it was probably taken by the compiler of the first Italian collection of tales, *Cento Novelle Antiche*, and by the author of the Anglican *Gesta Romanorum*, both of which works were composed about the end of the 13th century; it is also found in the continental *Gesta*, translated by Swan. The 68th of the *Novelle Antiche* is to the following effect: An envious knight is jealous of the favour a young man enjoys with the king. As a friend, he bids the youth hold back his head while serving this prince, who, he says, was disgusted with his foul breath, and then acquaints his

master that the page did so from being offended with his Majesty's breath. The irascible monarch forthwith orders his kiln-man to throw the first messenger he sends into the furnace, and the young man is accordingly despatched on some pretended errand, but happily passing a monastery on his way, tarries for some time to hear mass. Meanwhile, the contriver of the fraud, impatient to learn the success of his stratagem, sets out for the house of the kiln-man, and arrives before his intended victim. On inquiring if the commands of the king have been fulfilled, he is answered that they will be immediately executed, and, as the first messenger on the part of the sovereign, is forthwith thrown into the furnace.¹

This forms the 95th chapter of the Anglican *Gesta Romanorum*, edited for the Roxburgh Club, by Sir Fredrick Madden, and No. 70 of Herrtage's recent edition, published for the Early English Text Society, in which the youth, who is an orphan and the king's nephew, is called Fulgentius, and in place of a knight is an envious steward, who tells his master that his favourite says that his Majesty has leprosy. Fulgentius hearing a chapel-bell, on his way to the lime-pits, goes in to hear mass, and afterwards (having got up earlier than usual) falls asleep in the chapel. When he awakes, he hastens to the lime-pits, inquires, as he was instructed, "Have you done the commandment of the king?" and learns that the steward had met the fate intended for himself. Cinthio has the story in his *Hecatommithi* (viii, 6), written in the 16th century, and it is also found in the *Anecdotes chrétiennes de l'abbé Reyre*, t. i, under the title of "Les Deux Pages." From an Alsatian tradition Schiller, it is said, composed his ballad, "Der gang nachdem elsenhammer," which is well known to English readers through Mr. Bowring's excellent translation, entitled, "Fridolin; or the Walk to the Iron Foundry." Schiller's version bears a slight resemblance to our Arabian tale of Ahmed in one point: Robert the huntsman, having long cherished in vain a guilty passion for the countess, in revenge falsely accuses the page Fridolin to the Count Savern of the crime which he had been but too willing himself to commit:

Then to two workmen beckons he,
And speaks thus in his ire:
The first who's hither sent by me,
Thus of ye to inquire—
Have ye obeyed my lord's word well?
Him cast ye into yonder hell,
That into ashes he may fly,
And ne'er again torment mine eye.

In the Turkish tales of the *Forty Vazirs*, the lady's 22nd story is another variant. Instead of a page, the favourite is a courtier, of whom another is envious. Having privately told the king that his favourite went about asserting that his

¹ Dunlop's History of Fiction, 4th Ed., p. 205.

Majesty was leprous, and that he could not endure his breath, the envious courtier caused a Tātār pie to be cooked, strongly seasoned with garlic, and invited the favourite to his house. They ate together of the pie, and immediately after went to the court; on the way thither the envious man warned his “friend” not to approach too near the king because of his garlic-tainted breath. Accordingly the favourite held his sleeve close to his mouth, and stood a little way off. The king naturally thought that this confirmed the report, and gave him a letter to the chief magistrate, telling him at the same time to keep whatever he was offered. The envious man persuaded the favourite to give him the letter, for the sake of the expected present, saying that he should always have the king’s countenance. The result of delivering the letter was different from the courtier’s expectations; its contents were: “Seize him who gives this letter into thy hand, and spare him not, but flay him alive, and stuff his skin with grass, and set it upon the road, that, when I pass, I may see it there.” Some days afterwards the king perceives the stuffed skin of the envious courtier, and sends for his former favourite, who explains the whole affair from first to last.

There are innumerable variants of the story current in India, where, indeed, it had its origin, one of which is a Bengali folktale, translated by Mr. C. H. Damant, under the title of “The Minister and the Fool,” in the *Indian Antiquary*: The minister, in the course of a journey, meets with the fool, and, being struck with some of his remarks, takes him into his service. One day the rāja hears three birds talking together, and requests his minister to inform him what they had been saying. The fool, knowing the speech of birds, gives his master the required information, which he at once communicates to the rāja; but, jealous lest he should learn that it was the fool’s wit which had solved his question, he determines to have the fool put to death, and accordingly gives him a sealed letter to the executioner. On his way the fool meets the minister’s son, who desires him to pick a nosegay of flowers for him. The fool replies that he will do so immediately after he has delivered the letter; but the youth would brook no delay, and told him to remain in the garden and pick the flowers, while he himself delivered the message. When the minister saw the fool in the garden, and learned that his own son had done the fatal errand, he was frantic with grief.

A parallel incident is found in the *Kathā Sarit Sāgara*: In the Story of Sundaraka, the king is persuaded by his wife, in order that he may acquire magic power, to consent to practise the horrible rite of eating human flesh. The narrative thus proceeds (Professor Tawney’s translation, [vol. i, pp. 162-3](#)):

“Having made him enter into the circle, previously consecrated, she said to the king, after he had taken an oath: ‘I attempted to draw hither, as a victim, that Brāhman named Phalabhūti, who is so intimate with you; but the drawing him hither is a difficult task: so it is the best way to initiate some cook in our rites, that he may himself slay him and cook him. And you must not feel any compunction about it, because by eating a sacrificial offering of his flesh, after the ceremonies are complete, the enchantment will be perfect, for he is a Brāhman of

the highest caste. ‘When his beloved said this to him, the king, though afraid of the sin, consented; alas! terrible is compliance with women! Then that royal couple had the cook summoned, and, after encouraging him, and initiating him, they both said to him: ‘Whoever comes to you to-morrow morning and says, “The king and queen will eat together to-day, so get some food ready quickly,” him you must slay, and make for us secretly a savoury dish of his flesh.’ The cook consented, and went to his own house. Next morning, when Phalabhūti arrived, the king said to him: ‘Go and tell the cook in the kitchen, “The king, together with the queen, will eat to-day a savoury mess, therefore prepare as soon as possible a splendid dish.”’ Phalabhūti said: ‘I will do so,’ and went out. When he was outside, the king’s son, whose name was Chandraprabhā, came to him, and said: ‘Have made for me this very day, with this gold, a pair of ear-rings, like those you had made before for my noble father.’ Phalabhuti, in order to please the prince, immediately proceeded, as he was ordered, to get the ear-rings made, and the prince went readily with the king’s message, which Phalabhūti told him, alone to the kitchen; and when he delivered the king’s message the cook, true to his agreement, at once put him to death with a knife, and made a dish of his flesh, which the king and queen ate, after performing their ceremonies, not knowing the truth. After spending the night in remorse, the next morning the king saw Phalabhūti arrive with the ear-rings in his hand. So being bewildered, he questioned him about the ear-rings immediately; and when Phalabhūti had told him his story, the king fell on the earth, and cried out: ‘Alas, my son!’ blaming the queen and himself; and when the ministers questioned him, he told them the whole story, and repeated what Phalabhūti had said every day: ‘The doer of good will obtain good, and the doer of evil, evil.’”

Closely allied to the class of stories above cited is the 20th chapter of Swan’s *Gesta Romanorum*: A king, belated while hunting, takes shelter for the night in the hut of an exiled courtier, whom he does not recognise. During the night the count’s wife gives birth to a fine boy, upon which the king hears a voice telling him that the child just born should be his son-in-law. In the morning the king orders his squires to take the infant from his mother and destroy him; but, moved to compassion, they place it upon the branches of a tree, to secure it from wild beasts, and then kill a hare, and convey its heart to the king. A duke, passing through the forest, hears the cries of a child, and, discovering it, wraps it in the folds of his cloak, and takes it to his wife to bring up. In course of time, when the child is grown a handsome youth, the king suspects him to be the same who was predicted to be his son-in-law, and despatches him with a letter to the queen, commanding her to put the bearer to death. On his way he goes into a chapel, and there having fallen asleep, a priest, seeing the letter suspended from his girdle, has the curiosity to open it; and after reading the intended wickedness, he alters the purport thus: “Give the youth our daughter in marriage,” which the queen does accordingly.

Dr. Dasent, in his *Popular Tales from the Norse*, gives a variant of this under

the title of “ [Rich Peter the Pedlar](#);” and Dr. A. C. Fryer presents similar incidents in the first story of his charming little work, recently published, *English Fairy Tales from the North Country*, in which a beautiful maiden takes the place of the miller’s son, and a sorcerer knight that of Peter the Pedlar.— Professor Tawney has pointed out, in the *Indian Antiquary*, the exact resemblance which a story in the *Kathākosa* bears to the Norse tale: A merchant named Sāgarapota, of the town of Rājagriha, hearing it prophesied that a young beggar named Dāmanna (he was, however, the son of a merchant who had died of the plague) would inherit all his property, makes Dāmanna over to a Chandāla to be killed. The Chandāla, instead of killing him, cuts off his little finger, and Dāmanna, having thus escaped death, is adopted by the merchant’s cowherd. In the course of time the merchant recognises Dāmanna. In order to insure his being put out of the way, he sends him with a letter to his son Samudradatta. But when Dāmanna reaches the outskirts of the town of Rājagriha he feels fatigued, and falls asleep in the temple. Meanwhile the daughter of that very merchant, named Vishā, came to the temple to worship the divinity. “She beheld Dāmanna with the large eyes and the broad chest.” Her father’s handwriting then caught her eye, and she proceeded to read the letter. In it she read the following distich:

Before this man has washed his feet, do thou with speed
Give him poison [*visham*], and free my heart from anxiety.

The lady immediately concluded that she herself (*Vishā*) was to be given to the handsome youth, and that her father had in his hurry made a slight mistake in orthography. She, therefore, makes the necessary correction, and replaces the letter. Samudradatta carries out his father’s orders, and the merchant returns to Rājagriha to find Dāmanna married to his daughter Visha. The termination of the story is the same as that of Phalabhūti and its European parallels, the tales of Fulgentius, Fridolin, etc. The merchant Sāgarapota arranges a second time to kill Dāmanna, whom he will send to the temple of the goddess of the city. But, as the bridegroom and bride are going to the temple of the goddess, Samudradatta, the son of the merchant Sāgarapota, meets them, and insists on performing the worship in their stead. “Having taken the articles for offering, Samudradatta went off, and as he was entering the temple of the goddess, he was despatched by Khadgila, who had gone there before.”

The incident of a person being made the unconscious bearer of his own death-warrant is as old at least as the Biblical story of King David and Uriah; while classical legend furnishes a familiar example in the tale of Bellerophon; and another instance (not so well known) is found in Arabian tradition, in the story of the celebrated pre-Islamite poets Tarafa and Mutalammis, who, having offended the King of Hīra, by composing satires upon his drunken habits, were sent by him with letters to the governor of Bahrayn, ordering him to put the bearers to death;— Mutalammis having learned the nature of the missive he carried destroyed it, and

urged his friend to turn back with him, but Tarafa declined to do so, and continued his fatal journey. But in these tales, Western and Eastern, which I have cited, there is the same fundamental outline the same sequence of identical incidents, which indicate, without any possibility of doubt, that they have all been derived from a common source. ([Back](#))

No. XXV—p. 154.
THE DROP OF HONEY.

A SOMEWHAT analogous story to this occurs in the Ottoman romance of the *Forty Vazirs*; it is related by the 30th vazir, and Mr. E. J. W. Gibb has translated it as follows:

HOW TWO TRIBES WENT TO WAR BECAUSE OF A GOAT.

An Arab of the tribe of Benī ‘Aqīl took a goat to a city with the purpose of selling it. An Arab of the tribe of Benī Nefir wished to buy that goat. The owner of the goat wanted eight baghdādās as the price; the purchaser offered six. The owner of the goat swore he would divorce his wife if he gave it for an aspre less than eight baghdadas. And the purchaser swore he would divorce his wife if he gave an aspre more than six. Then the two of them began to quarrel. The Arab who wished to buy took up a stone and threw it at the owner of the goat; it hit his head, which smashed like a rotten gourd. His kinsfolk heard this, and they came and smote that other man, and killed the killer. As a man of each tribe had been slain, they fell one upon another. Every one came on his horse, with his arms, to the field, and they began to fight with each other, so that hills of slain arose, and blood flowed in streams. At length the tribe of Benī ‘Aqīl was victorious and put to flight the tribe of Benī Nefir. That tribe went to the Prince of the Abyssinians and asked help. So the Prince of Abyssinia gave them 200 horsemen, and the Nefir prince again fell upon the ‘Aqīl prince, and they began to fight with one another. At length the fortune of the ‘Aqīl prince was changed into disaster, and the Benī Nefir army returned with victory and triumph.

Feuds, often originating in trifles, are still common among the desert Arabs, and this story is probably of Arabian invention, if not the narrative of an actual occurrence. ([Back](#))

No. XXVI—p. 156.
THE CHANGED SEX.

It is unfortunate that a *lacuna* in the Persian MS. text (see p. 80 of the present volume) deprives us of the whole of this story, since it probably represented a version nearer to the original than that found in *Syntipas*, which is very confused towards the conclusion: after the transformation, the prince meets with a peasant, who agrees to become a woman in his place, on condition that his proper sex be restored to him at the end of four months; the prince then proceeds to the court of his intended father-in-law, marries the princess, and contrives to evade the fulfilment of his promise to the peasant.— In the *Libra de los Engannos* the story is similarly garbled, a “devil” taking the place of the rustic. In the *Mishlé Sandabar*, the prince, after his transformation, passes the night near the enchanted fountain; in the morning he meets in the forest a troop of girls, to whom he discloses his rank and present misfortune, and they direct him to the other fountain. There can be little doubt, I think, that the Arabian version has better preserved the original form of the story, though, strangely enough, nothing is said of the punishment of the treacherous *vazīr*.

The idea of enchanted fountains whose waters produced remarkable moral or physical transformations in such as drank of or bathed in them is very ancient, and was probably borrowed from classical legends by the mediaeval romancists. In chap. xiv of the *Gesta Romanorum*, a king leaves his daughter in the care of his secretary, who is warned not to allow her to drink of a certain fountain that affected all who drank of it with leprosy. The princess, in spite of all precautions, contrives to reach this fountain, and immediately after drinking of it becomes a leper. In dismay the secretary seeks advice of a holy man, who directs him to a mountain, where he will find a peculiar kind of stone, and a rod. He is to strike the stone with the rod until moisture exudes from it, then smear the affected parts of the damsel’s body with the liquid, and she will be restored to health and beauty.

According to the classical legend, there were two springs in Bœotia, of which one was believed to increase, the other to take away, the memory. Cupid’s two arrows— one of gold, which created love, the other of lead, which instilled hate may have suggested the idea of the two fountains in Claudian’s picture of the gardens of Venus (*De Nupt. Honor, et Mar*, l. 69):

Two fountains glitter in the solar beam;
This spouts a sweet, and that a bitter, stream,
Where Cupid dips his darts, as poets dream—

which again seems to have been imitated by Ariosto, in the *Orlando Furioso* (c. i, st. 77, 78):

Then, as at hazard, she directs her sight,
Sounding in arms, a man on foot she spies,
And glows with sudden anger and despite;
For she the son of Aymon eyes.

Her more than life esteems the youthful knight,
While she from him, like crane from falcon, flies—
Time was the lady sighed, her passion slighted;
Tis now Rinaldo loves, as ill requited.

And this effect two different fountains wrought,
Whose wondrous waters different moods inspire.
Beth sprang in Arden, with rare virtue fraught:
This fills the heart with amorous desire;
Who taste that other fountain were untaught
Their love, and change for ice their former fire.
Rinaldo drank the first, and vainly sighs;
Angelica the last, and hates and flies.¹

So, too, in Berni's *Innamorato*, there are the Fountains of Love and of Disdain.— In the old Spanish romance of *Diana*, by Montemayor, we are told of a fountain that possessed at once the qualities of inspiring love and producing indifference: The priestess of Diana, who knew by inspiration all the misfortunes of her guests, and had traced in her mind a plan for their future happiness, conducted them to the interior of the temple, and filled three cups from an enchanted stream. This beverage having been quaffed by Sereno, Sylvanus, and Sylvania, they instantly fell into a profound sleep, in which they remained for a considerable time. Sereno awoke in a state of the most perfect indifference for his once much loved Diana, while Sylvanus and Sylvania, forgetting their former attachments, arose deeply enamoured of each other, and employed the most ardent expressions of affection.²

But more closely resembling the enchanted springs of our tale of the Transformed Prince are the magical streams in the Hindū romance of Somasekhara and Chitrasekhara,³ which recounts the adventures of two princes, one of whom meets a monkey, who, in his gambols, plunges into a pool, and comes out a man; then leaping into another pool, issues a monkey as before. And in the Indian collection, *Sinhāsana Dwātrinsati*, Thirty-two Tales of a Throne, we read of a magical well which transforms a monkey into a woman, whenever a certain pious hermit comes to converse with her, and again into a monkey before

¹ Rose's translation, and note on passage.

² Dunlop's *History of Fiction*, 4th Ed., p. 332. Some of the most interesting scenes in Shakspeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Dunlop remarks, seem to have been suggested by the transference of love occasioned by the potion of the priestess.

³ Wilson's *Catalogue of the Mackenzie Collection*, vol. i, p. 51.

he retires.¹ In the *Tūtī Nāma* (35th Night of India Office MS No. 2573; tale 23 of Kāderī's abridgment), a Brāhman, in love with the daughter of the king of Babylon, receives from a magician a globule, which, put into the mouth, instantly changes man into a woman, and he is thus enabled to gain access to the damsel. In the Turkish *Tūtī Nāma*, a sorceress takes the place of the magician, and gives the enamoured youth a seal instead of a globule. But this story is found in a much older work, the *Vetāla Panchavinsati*, 15th tale. ([back](#))

No. XXVII—p. 166.
THE GOLDSMITH AND THE SINGING GIRL.

EASTERN fiction presents numerous instances of princes becoming enamoured of the portraits of beautiful women; in the *Kathā Sarit Sāgara* occur two examples: the story of the handsome King Prithvirūpa (Tawney's translation, [vol. i, p. 490](#)), and the story of Sundārasena and Mandāravatī ([vol. ii, p. 370](#)). In Gomberville's romance of Polexandre the African prince Abdu-'l-Malik falls in love with the portrait of Alcidiana, and a similar incident is found in the romance of Agesilaus of Colchos. The notion, nevertheless, is undoubtedly of Oriental origin.

Our story of the Goldsmith is an Arabian variant of a tale in the *Dasa Kumara Charita*, Adventures of Ten Princes, a most entertaining romance, in Sanskrit, by Dandin, of the 6th century, according to Dr. Albrecht Weber.² The following translation of this tale, by Dr. H. H. Wilson, is taken from the *Oriental Quarterly Magazine*, of Calcutta, 1828, where it first appeared:

Story of Nitambavati.

In Surasena is a city called Mathura, where dwelt a youth of family, who was addicted to loose pleasures and to vicious society, and, being a lad of spirit, he was so often entangled in broils that he was called Kalaha Kataka. One day he

¹ I am indebted for a loan of a manuscript translation of this collection to the courtesy of Mr. F. F. Arbuthnot, author of a very interesting little work, *Early Ideas: a Group of Hindoo Stories*, by Anaryan (Allen & Co., London), which contains a compendious account, with specimens, of the most important Indian romances.

² *History of Indian Literature*, by Albrecht Weber (London, 1878), [p. 213](#), note.— This work is singular among the Sanskrit romances in being written in prose.

saw, in a painter's possession, the picture of a girl, with whose charms he became violently enamoured. After some solicitation, he prevailed on the painter to tell him who the original was, and having learnt that she was the wife of Anantakirtti, a merchant of Ujjayni, and her name Nitambavati, set off in the disguise of a mendicant for that city. Having got access to the house, under pretence of soliciting alms, he obtained a sight of the lady, and found her still more fascinating than her picture.

With a view to effect his projects, he solicited and obtained the care of the cemetery, and with the clothes of the dead he attached to his interests a female Sramanika, or Buddha devotee. This woman he employed to convey a message from him to Nitambavati, inviting her to come and see him, to which she sent back an angry and indignant reply. He was not discouraged, but desired his messenger to return to the merchant's wife, and say to her, as from himself: "Persons like us, who are fully acquainted with the insufficiency of life, and only desirous of final emancipation, cannot be suspected of entertaining any purpose adverse to the reputation of a woman of respectability. The message I lately conveyed to you I only intended to try your merit, as I was afraid such youth and beauty could scarcely be satisfied with a man so advanced in years as your husband. I was mistaken, and the result has so much pleased me that I am anxious to confer upon you a proof of my esteem. I should wish to see you a mother, but the planet under which your husband was born has hitherto opposed it. The evil influence, however, may be counteracted if you will be content to assist. Accompany me to a grove at night, where I will bring you a seer versed in incantations. You must put your foot in his hand whilst he conveys into it his charms; then, as if angry, kick your husband in the breast, when the evil influence will be expelled, and you will be blessed with progeny, and your husband will venerate you as a goddess: there is nothing to be afraid of."

Nitambavati, with some little difficulty, consented, and, being apprised of her intentions, the false saint awaited her at the appointed place. She came as was directed, and put her foot into his hand; he pretended to rub it, muttering imaginary charms all the time, until he had taken off her golden anklet, when, making a sudden cut at her thigh with a knife, which he had covertly prepared, he inflicted a gash in the upper part of it, and then quickly withdrew. Nitambavati, full of pain and terror, and reviling herself for her own folly, and ready to the Sramanika for having exposed her to such peril, returned home, and, privately dressing her wound, kept her bed for some days.

The rogue in the meantime offered the anklet to Anantakirtti for sale; he knew it to be that of his wife, and inquired how the vendor had come by it; he refused to tell, and the merchant threatened him with punishment, on which Kalaha Kataka professed himself ready to communicate the truth to the guild (or committee of merchants). He was accordingly taken before them, when he desired the merchant to send for his wife's anklets. She replied that she had lost one of them; it was large, and had slipped off, but she forwarded the other. The anklet

in the possession of the supposed mendicant, being compared with this, was found to correspond, and there remained no doubt of their owner. The ascetic, being then questioned as to the circumstances under which he had gained possession of it, replied as follows:

“You are aware, gentlemen, that I was employed to take charge of the graves of the deceased. As some people wished to deprive me of my fees by burning the bodies by night, I kept watch at all hours. Last night, I saw a dark-complexioned woman dragging the half-burnt fragments of a dead body from the funeral-pile, when, to punish her horrible design, I made a cut at her with my knife, and wounded one of her thighs, as she turned to escape: she ran off, however, dropping one of her anklets as she fled, and I thus became possessed of it.”

The account thus given inspired all the auditors with horror. Nitambavati was unanimously pronounced a sakini, or witch. She was turned out of his house by her husband, and rejected with abhorrence by all the citizens. In this distress she repaired to the cemetery, where she was in the act of putting a period to her existence, when she was prevented by her lover. He threw himself at her feet, and told her that, unable to live without her, he had adopted this contrivance to obtain her person, and entreated her to rely upon the fervour and faithfulness of his regard. His entreaties and protestations were at last successful, combined with the consciousness of her helpless situation, and Nitambavati rewarded his ingenuity with her affection.

A considerably different form of the story is found in the *Vetala Panchavinsati*, Twenty-five Tales of a Demon, namely, that of

The Minister's Son,

of which the commencement has already been given in [p. 249](#). The prince having gained entrance into the house of his beloved Padmavati, in the way she had indicated by signs to the old go-between, he marries her by the Gandharva form (in which the consent of parents is dispensed with), and, after passing some time happily in her society, visits his friend the minister's son, who is still lodging with the go-between. While the prince is there, a great outcry is heard in the streets, that the raja's son had disappeared; upon which the minister's son details to him a cunning plan for carrying off the damsel to their own country, which he consents to adopt. Accordingly the prince returned to Padmavati, and when she was sound asleep he marked her on the hip with an iron spike which he had brought with him for the purpose, and, taking her ornaments, quitted the house and rejoined his friend. Next morning the minister's son went to the cemetery, and there disguised himself as an ascetic; and, having made the prince assume the garb of a disciple, he said to him: “Take this necklace, which is part of this set of ornaments, and offer it for sale in the market, but ask a high price for it, so that it may attract attention; and should the police arrest you, say, ‘My spiritual

preceptor gave it me to sell.” The pretended disciple is arrested by the police (who had been informed of the lady’s loss), and answering them as he had been instructed, the sham devotee is at once sent for. On being asked how the necklace came into his possession, he replied: “I am an ascetic, in the habit of constantly wandering in the forest, and as I was by chance in the cemetery at night, I saw a company of witches collected from different quarters. And one of them brought the prince, with the lotus of his heart laid bare, and offered him to [the god] Bhairava. And the witch, who possessed great powers of delusion, being drunk, tried to take away my rosary while I was reciting my prayers, making horrible contortions with her face. And, as she carried the attempt too far, I got angry, and marked her on the loins with my trident;¹ and then I took this necklace from her neck, which I must now sell, as it does not suit an ascetic.” The magistrate informed the king of this extraordinary affair, and he concluded that it must be the pearl necklace which the dentist’s daughter had lost; so he sent a trusty old woman to see if she was really marked on the loins. When this was ascertained, the king consulted the pretended ascetic as to how Padmavati should be punished, and by his advice she was banished from the city. “In the evening the minister’s son and the prince rode out of the city, and found Padmavati lamenting; then they mounted her upon a horse, and took her to their own country, where the prince lived happily with her.”

It seems strange that a prince should have required to employ so many artifices to obtain a dentist’s daughter for his wife. The exact meaning of the Sanskrit word which Tawney has rendered “dentist,” namely, *dantaghātaka*, appears to be doubtful; and the name of the lady’s father, Sangrāmavardhana, having, as Tawney remarks, “a warlike sound,” perhaps he may have been, as he is represented in the Hindi version (*Baital Pachisi*), a powerful rāja.

The original story may very possibly date centuries before our era. In all the three versions, the Goldsmith, Nitambavati, and the Minister’s Son, the catastrophe is the same— the stealing of the ornaments, the wounding of the girl, and the charge of witch-craft, although differently brought about in each. The first and the third are alike in this respect: the youth gains entrance to the girl’s chamber by means of a rope, and she is wounded and robbed while asleep. The incident of the portrait occurs only in the first and the second. We must therefore conclude that the Arabian translator derived the materials of his story from a version perhaps Persian combining incidents of both the Hindu tales. ([back](#))

No. XXVIII—p. 170.
THE FORBIDDEN DOORS; OR, CURIOSITY.

¹ The trident, or three-pronged fork; the weapon is peculiar to the god Siva, of whom the disguised son of the minister pretended to be a votary.

It is a peculiarity of Fairyland that there are certain rooms which the fortunate mortal who has entered the enchanted palace is expressly forbidden to enter, or doors which he must on no account open, or cabinets which he must not unlock, if he would continue in his present state of felicity. This story of the Young Man who was taken to the Land of Women bears a very close resemblance to that of the [Third Royal Mendicant](#) in the *Thousand and One Nights*, but it is perhaps better told, at least in some texts of the *Seven Vazīrs*. Both may be compared with the Story of Saktideva in the *Kathā Sarit Sāgara* ([vol. i, p. 223](#) of Tawney's translation, now in course of publication at Calcutta): Saktideva is conveyed by a monstrous bird— one of the race of Garūda, the bird of Vishnū, and the prototype of the “Roc” of the Arabian Tales to the Golden City, the residence of female Vidyādharas (a species of fairies), the queen of whom welcomes him as her husband. Having occasion to leave him for a time, the queen gives him strict charge not to ascend to the middle terrace of the palace. But, impelled by curiosity, he goes there, and sees much to marvel at, and coming to a lake discovers by the side of it a horse with a jewelled saddle. Saktideva approaches to mount him, but the steed kicks him into the lake, and on his rising to the surface he finds himself standing in the middle of a garden pond in his native city.

Fairyland has, among its numerous marvels, subaqueous halls of dazzling light, as we find from the following tale in the *Hitopadésa*, in which there is also a forbidden thing to tempt curiosity (ch. ii, fab. 6 Johnson's translation):

The Queen of the Fairies.

One day, as I was in the pleasure-garden, I heard from a voyaging merchant that, on the fourteenth day of the month, in the midst of the sea which was near, beneath what had the appearance of a kalpa-tree, there was to be seen, seated on a couch variegated with the lustre of strings of jewels, a certain damsel, as it were the goddess Lakshmī, bedecked with all kinds of ornaments, and playing on a lute. I therefore took the voyaging merchant, and, having embarked in a ship, went to the place specified. On reaching the spot, I saw her exactly as she had been described; and, allured by her exquisite beauty, I leaped after her into the sea. In an instant I reached a golden city; where, in a palace of gold, I saw her reclining on a couch, and waited upon by youthful sylphs. When she perceived me at a distance, she sent a female friend, who addressed me courteously. On my inquiry, her friend said: “That is Ratnamanjarī, the daughter of Kandarpakeli, king of the Vidyādharas. She has made a vow to this effect: ‘Whosoever shall come and see the city of gold with his own eyes shall marry me.’” Accordingly I married her by that form of marriage called Gandharva: after the conclusion of which I remained there a long while delighted with her. One day she said to me in private: “My beloved husband, all these things may be freely enjoyed; but that picture of the fairy Swarnarekhā must never be touched.” Some time afterwards, my

curiosity being excited, I touched Swarnarekhā with my hand. For so doing, I was spurned by her although only a picture, with her foot beautiful as the lotus, and found myself alighted in my own country. Since then I have been a miserable wanderer over the earth.

Subaqueous halls and forbidden rooms, doors, or other objects are common to the popular fictions of almost every country of Europe and Asia. Those gifted ones who can discover “a rich truth in a tale’s pretence” may perhaps be disposed to regard stories of forbidden rooms as distorted versions of the Fall of Man: it is just possible, however, that their conception is due to hashish, or some other narcotic which constitutes the Paradise of Fools! ([back](#))

No. XXIX—p. 178.
THE LOVER IN THE CHEST.

DOUBTLESS a chest has been frequently found very convenient for concealing a gallant or for conveying him to his mistress; however this may be, or have been, it is a common expedient in tales of intrigue, Western as well as Eastern. In the Norse tale of Big Peter and Little Peter, a woman hides her lover, a priest, in a big chest on hearing her husband’s knock at the door. Similar instances abound in the early Italian novels; and in Balzac’s *Contes Drolatiques*, one of the canon’s nephews (story of the Devil’s Heir) tells him how he carries on an intrigue with the wife of a jeweller, by being shut up every night in a chest, to which she goes, under pretence of getting some *medicine*.

The story of the Lover in the Chest is in some versions of the *Seven Vazīrs* followed by another, also told by the Damsel:

The Slave-Boy who pretended to know the Language of Birds.

A young slave, learning that his master and his wife were to spend the morrow in a suburban garden, went secretly there and buried beneath three trees some fruit, comfits, and wine. The husband sent his wife, escorted by the young slave, before him to the garden, promising to join her in a short time. As the lady and the slave were walking up and down the garden, a crow, sitting on a tree, croaked, upon which the young slave exclaimed: “Thou sayest truly.” His mistress asked him what he meant by such a remark, and he replied that the bird had said there was some fruit at the foot of such a tree. She desired him to search, and he produced the fruit; and, in like manner, when the bird croaked a second and a third time, the comfits and wine were unearthed, with which they regaled themselves. After this, the crow again croaked, and the slave-boy, pretending to be angry and shamefaced, threw a stone at it. The lady rebuking him for his

ingratitude to a bird that had provided them with such good things, the slave-boy replied that it had made a very improper suggestion to him. She insists upon knowing what it was the bird had said this time, and after much seeming reluctance he told her, when, to his great delight, she very cordially approved of the bird's suggestion, but just at this moment the husband made his appearance and so the story ends, lamely enough. ([back](#))

No. XXX—p. 181.
THE LADY AND HER SUITORS.

AN imperfect MS. text of the *Thousand and One Nights* preserved in the Bodleian Library, Oxford,¹ has two different versions of this story, namely, Nights 726-728, the Lady of Cairo and her Three Gallants, and, Nights 738-743, the Lady of Cairo and her Four Suitors. This text does not appear to contain the *Seven Vazirs*, unless it was in the missing portion, Nights 167-305. Of the first version I know nothing, but presume it is somewhat similiar to that in the present volume, since Scott has selected, in vol. vi of his edition of the *Arabian Nights*, the [second for translation](#), though he had to suppress parts of it. In this version the lady—unlike the heroine of our tale—is described as virtuous. Her lovers are the judge, the collector-general of port-duties, the chief of the butchers, and a rich merchant. She informs her husband of her plan to punish them, and at the same time reap some profit. The judge comes first, and presents her with a rosary of pearls. She makes him undress, and put on a robe of yellow muslin and a parti-coloured cap— her husband all the while looking at them through an opening in the door of a closet. Presently there is heard a loud knock at the street door, and, on the pretence that it is her husband, the judge is pushed into an adjoining room. The three other suitors, as they successively arrive, bring each also a valuable present, and are treated in the same manner. The husband now enters, and his wife tells him to the consternation, no doubt, of the imprisoned suitors that in returning from the bazaar that day she had met with four antic fellows, whom she had a great mind to bring home with her for his amusement. He affects to be vexed that she had not done so, since he must go from home to-morrow. The lady then says that they are, after all, in the next room, upon which the husband insists on their being brought before him, one after another. So the judge is dragged forth in his absurd attire, and compelled to dance and caper like a buffoon, after which he is made to tell a story, which bears a curious resemblance

¹ This MS. was brought from Constantinople by Wortley Montagu, at the sale of whose collection it was purchased by Professor White, of Oxford, who transferred it to Dr. Jonathan Scott, from whom it was purchased for the Bodleian Library.

to the Turkish tale in the *Forty Vazīrs* included in our illustrations of Women's Wiles— see [page 261](#); only in place of a king we have here an officer, and instead of a real lover concealed in a chest, it is a conceited tailor who has fallen in love with the lady, whom she thus punishes with fright, by first arousing and then doing away her husband's jealousy.— The judge, having told his story, is dismissed. The three other suitors go through the same performance, but their stories (albeit told in presence of the “virtuous” lady) Scott found to be unfit for translation.

In the Persian tales ascribed to a dervish of Ispahān, Arouya, the virtuous wife of a merchant, entraps, also with her husband's sanction, a qāzī, a doctor, and the city governor. And in the *Bahār-i Dānish*, a lady named Gohera, whose husband is in the hands of the police, makes assignations with the kutwal (police magistrate) and the qāzī, one of whom is entrapped in a large jar, the other in a chest, and next morning she causes porters to carry them before the sultan, who orders them to be punished and her husband to be set at liberty.

In various parts of India the story seems to be very popular. Mr. G. H. Damant has published, in the *Indian Antiquary*, 1873, a translation of a folk-tale of Dinajpur, entitled “The Touchstone,” in the concluding portion of which a young woman consents to receive at her house the kutwal at the first watch of the night; the king's counsellor at the second watch; the king's minister at the third watch; and the king himself at the fourth watch. She smears the kutwal with molasses, pours water on him, covers his whole body with cotton wool, and then secures him close to the window. The counsellor is hidden under a mat; the minister, behind a bamboo screen; and when the king comes, last of all, and sees the frightful figure of the kutwal in the window, he asks what it is, and she replies that it is a rākshasa, upon which king, minister, and counsellor flee from the house in dread of the monster. The kutwal is then released and makes the best of his way home in his hideous condition. (Mr. Damant gives a Bengali variant in the *Indian Antiquary*, 1880, in the story of Adi's Wife, who entraps the kutwal, the nazīr, the vazīr, and the king in a wardrobe.)

In Miss Stokes' amusing *Indian Fairy Tales* ([No. 28](#)), a merchant's clever wife, during his absence, takes four hanks of thread to the market to sell, and is accosted, in turn, by the kutwal, the vazīr, the qāzī, and the king, to each of whom she grants an interview at her house, at different hours, and contrives to entrap them into chests. In the morning she hires four stout coolies, who take the chests on their backs, and proceeding to the houses of her suitors, disposes of them to their sons for various sums of money, telling each that the chest contained something he would value far beyond the sum she asked.

The oldest extant form of this wide-spread tale is found in the *Kathā Sarit Sāgara*, of which the following is a translation, by Dr. H. H. Wilson:

Upakosā and her Four Lovers.

Whilst I was absent, my wife, who performed with pious exactitude her ablutions in the Ganges, attracted the notice and desires of several suitors, especially of the king's domestic priest, the commander of the guard, and the young prince's preceptor, who annoyed her by their importunities, till at last she determined to expose and punish their depravity. Having fixed upon the plan, she made an appointment for the same evening with her three lovers, each being to come to her house an hour later than the other. Being desirous of propitiating the gods, she sent for our banker to obtain money to distribute in alms; and when he arrived he expressed the same passion as the rest, on her compliance with which he promised to make over to her the money that I had placed in his hands; or, on her refusal, he would retain it to his own use. Apprehending the loss of our property, therefore, she made a similar assignation with him, and desired him to come to her house that evening at an hour when she calculated on having disposed of the first comers, for whose reception, as well as for his, she arranged with her attendants the necessary preparations.

At the expiration of the first watch of the night, the preceptor of the prince arrived. Upakosā affected to receive him with great delight; and after some conversation, desired him to take a bath, which her attendants had prepared for him, as a preliminary to any further intimacy. The preceptor made not the slightest objection, on which he was conducted into a retired and dark chamber, where his bath was made ready. On undressing, his own clothes and ornaments were removed, and, in their place, a small wrapper given to him, which was a piece of cloth smeared with a mixture of oil, lamp-black, and perfumes. Similar cloths were employed to rub him after bathing, so that he was of a perfect ebon colour from top to toe. The rubbing occupied all the time till the second lover (the priest) arrived, on which the women exclaimed: "Here is our master's most particular friend!— in, in here, or all will be discovered," and hurrying their victim away, they thrust him into a long and stout wicker basket, fastened well by a bolt outside,¹ in which they left him to meditate upon his mistress.

The priest and the commander of the guard were secured, as they arrived, in a similar manner, and it only remained to dispose of the banker. When he made his appearance, Upakosā, leading him near the baskets, said aloud: "You promise to deliver me my husband's property?" And he replied: "The wealth your husband entrusted to me shall be yours." On which she turned towards the baskets, and said: "Let the gods hear the promise of Hiranyugupta!" The bath was then proposed to the banker. Before the ceremony was completed the day began to dawn, on which the servants desired him to make the best of his way home, lest the neighbours should notice his departure; and with this recommendation they forced him, naked as he was, into the street. Having no alternative, the banker hastened to conceal himself in his own house, being chased all the way by the

¹ In Professor Tawney's translation the lady gets a large trunk made, with a fastening outside, in which her lovers are entrapped.

dogs of the town.

So soon as it was day, Upakosā repaired to the palace of Nanda, and presented a petition to the king against the banker, for seeking to appropriate the property entrusted to him by her husband. The banker was summoned. He denied having ever received any money from me. Upakosā then said: “When my husband went away, he placed our household gods in three baskets; they have heard this man acknowledge his holding a deposit of my husband’s, and let them bear witness for me.” The king, with some feeling of surprise and incredulity, ordered the baskets to be sent for, and they were accordingly produced in the open court. Upakosa then addressed them: “Speak, gods, and declare what you overheard this banker say in our dwelling. If you are silent, I will unhouse you in this presence.” Afraid of this menaced exposure, the tenants of the baskets immediately exclaimed: “Verily, in our presence the banker acknowledged possession of your wealth.” On hearing these words, the whole court was filled with surprise, and the banker, terrified out of his senses, acknowledged the debt, and promised restitution.

The business being adjusted, the king expressed his curiosity to see the household divinities of Upakosā, and she very readily complied with his wish. The baskets being opened, the culprits were dragged forth by the attendants, like so many lumps of darkness. Being presently recognised, they were overwhelmed with the laughter and derision of all the assembly. As soon as the merriment had subsided, King Nanda begged Upakosā to explain what it all meant, and she acquainted him with what had occurred. King Nanda was highly incensed, and, as the punishment of their offence, banished the criminals from the kingdom. He was equally pleased with the virtue and ingenuity of my wife, and loaded her with wealth and honour. Her family likewise were highly gratified by her conduct, and she obtained the admiration and esteem of the whole city.¹

By whatever way this story may have journeyed to Europe, it was turned into a humorous but, in some of its details, very objectionable *fabliau* (interesting, however, as an illustration of manners) in the 13th century, under the title of Constant du Hamel, ou la Dame qui atrappa un Prêtre, un Prevost, et un Forestier. In this version a lady is importuned, as its title indicates, by three suitors, who, on her refusal, persecute her husband. To put a stop to their active malice, she consents to receive them, one somewhat later than another, so that by the time the first is stripped for the bath, the second arrives, and, pretending it is her husband, she hides him in a bin full of feathers, and so too with the second and third; in the end they are ignominiously bundled out of doors, well feathered, and hasten home, with all the curs of the town barking and snapping at their heels. This is the only version that agrees with the Hindu original in the incident of the bath.

¹ The device of the virtuous Devasmitā, in punishing the four young libertines (see [p. 246](#)), bears some analogy to this exploit of Upakosā.

The old English metrical tale of the Wright's Chaste Wife (written by one Adam of Cobsam, 15th century), if partly borrowed from, is certainly a very great improvement on, the *fabliau*. This is an abstract of it:

The Wright's Chaste Wife.

A wright marries the daughter of a poor widow, whose only dower is a garland that will remain fresh while she continues chaste, but will wither when she becomes unfaithful. After a time the wright, thinking it likely that men would come to tempt his wife when he was from home, constructs in his house a lower room, the walls of which he makes as smooth as a mirror, and in the floor above a crafty trap-door, which would give way the moment a man touched it with his foot, and precipitate him into the pit below, out of which it was impossible to escape. Just at this time the lord of the town sent for him to build him a hall— a job of two or three months. The lord observes the wright's garland, and, learning that it is a proof of his wife's chastity, determines to visit her. He goes accordingly, and offers her forty marks. She asks him to lay the money down, and then conducts him to the room with the trap-door, and he no sooner puts his foot on it than down he tumbles into the room below. He begs and prays the dame to have pity on him, but she says: "Nay; you must wait till my husband sees you." Next day he asks for some food, but she tells him he must first earn it. "Spin me some flax," says she. The lord consents; so she throws him the tools and the flax, and he works away for his food. The steward next sees the Wright's garland, and he too must visit the goodwife, whom he offers twenty marks, which she pockets, and then leads him into the same trap, where, after suffering some days' hunger, he spins flax for his meat. Then the proctor, seeing the wright's garland, asks him all about it, and in due course, after depositing twenty marks with the dame, he joins the lord and the steward in the wright's crafty trap for men of their sort. There all three spin and spin away, as if for their very lives, until at length the wright has finished his three months' job, and comes home. His wife tells him of her prisoners, and sends for their wives, and each takes away her own shamefaced and penitent spouse.

We have here a parallel to the Hindū story of the virtuous Devasmitá, as related in the *Kathá Sarit Ságará*: Guhasena, a young merchant, is compelled to leave his wife, Devasmitá, for a short season, on business matters. The separation is painful to both, and the pain is aggravated by fears on the wife's part of her husband's inconstancy. To make assurance doubly sure, a couple of divine lotus flowers of a red colour are obtained in a dream, the hues of which, the married pair are told, will fade should either prove untrue.¹ Guhasena falls in with boon

¹ Some such marvellous indication of unsullied honour is exceedingly common in European romance. It is not always the same. In Ariosto the test is

companions, who, learning the purport of his lotus and the virtue of his wife, set off to put it to the proof. (*Wilson.*) The rest of the story is already detailed in [pp. 244-247](#).

A somewhat similar tale occurs in Nakhshabī's *Tūfī Nāma* (4th Night of the India Office MS. No. 2573), as follows: A soldier's wife, on his taking leave of her to enter the service of a nobleman, gives him a nosegay, which, she says, will remain fresh so long as she preserves her chastity. The nobleman, marvelling that any one should be able to procure a fresh nosegay every day in the middle of winter, inquires of the soldier how it was, and learns that its perennial freshness is a token that his wife continues faithful. The nobleman sends one of his cooks to try to form an intimacy with the soldier's wife, but she craftily entraps him; and the second cook, being next despatched to see what has become of his chief, meets with a similar reception. Finally the nobleman himself, with his attendants—among whom is the soldier—proceeds to visit this paragon of virtue. The soldier's wife receives him courteously, and his two cooks, dressed as female slaves, wait upon him at supper. The happy soldier then returns his wife the nosegay, still fresh and blooming.

A curious variant is given in Narain Sawney's *Select Tamil Tales*, Madras, 1839, in which Ramakistnan (the Scogin of India) entraps the rāja and his domestic chaplain, whom he persuades to disguise themselves as women, on the pretence that he will introduce them to the beautiful wife of a man who has lately come to lodge at his house. The jester having locked them, as they successively arrive, in the same room, when they recognise each other, they are heartily ashamed, and softly request to be let out, but this the jester does only after he has extracted from them a solemn promise that they would forgive him a hundred offences every day.

To return to English variants. The well-known tale of the Monk and the Miller's Wife belongs to the same cycle of stories, in which a woman punishes objectionable wooers by entrapping them and exposing them to public ridicule:

a cup, the wine of which is spilled by the unfaithful lover who attempts to drink from it; this device also occurs in the romances of Tristram, Perceval, and La Morte d'Arthur, and is well known in La Fontaine's version, "La coupe enchantée." Spenser has derived his Girdle of Florimel from these sources, or more immediately from the *fabliau*, "Le Manteau mal taille," an English version of which is published in Percy's *Reliques*, "The Boy and the Mantle." In the *Gesta Romauonim*, the test is the whimsical one of a shirt which will require neither washing nor mending as long as the wearer is true. There are not wanting, however, instances of such a test as this of the lotus in Somadeva. In *Amadis de Gaul* it is a garland [as also in the Wright's Chaste Wife]; in *Perce Forest*, it is a rose, which, borne by a wife or a maiden of immaculate virtue, preserves its freshness, but withers if the wearer is unchaste.— *Dr. H. H. Wilson.*

The Monk and the Miller's Wife.

A monk having visited, with amorous intent, the virtuous wife of a miller, during her husband's absence, she affects to be pleased to see him, and they sit down together to a plentiful supper. But hardly have they eaten a mouthful when footsteps are heard approaching the house, and the monk, in dismay, asks what that can be. The wife answers that it is probably her husband come back unexpectedly, and bids him get into the great chest in the meantime, which he loses no time in doing, and the goodwife fastens it down upon him, and keeps him confined there in fear and trembling all the long night. In the morning she causes the miller's men to carry the chest into church at the hour of mass, where she opens it, and discovers the monk in presence of all assembled.

From the [1st Novel, Day ix](#), of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, John Lydgate (circa 1430) perhaps borrowed the idea of his metrical tale of

The Lady Prioress and her Three Wooers.

A knight, a parish priest, and a merchant are suitors to a lady prioress, who thus gets rid of them all. As the condition of her love, the knight is to lie, like a dead body sewed in a sheet, in the chapel in the wood, with two tapers burning beside him. She next tells the priest that she has a cousin lying dead in the chapel; but as he died in debt, his burial is forbidden [because the debtor had arrested the body]; therefore she has sent for him, in order that, if he would win her love, he should bury her kinsman. The priest accordingly goes to the chapel, with mattock and shovel, and says the dirge at the feet of the knight, who had duly assumed the part of a dead body. The lady prioress now sends for the merchant, tells him the dead man lying in the chapel owed her a sum of money, and she wished him to prevent the burial [to see whether his relatives would not pay the debt], which the priest was to perform that same night. "Shame would it be for us to lose our money, as we shall do if he is buried before it is paid." She therefore proposes that the merchant should dress himself up like the devil, and, when the priest is about to bury the body, leap in at the choir door like a fiend. The merchant consents, and, duly dressed up, goes to the chapel door, and "roars as devils seemed to do." The priest, in mortal terror, rushes through the window, breaking both it and his head. The knight can endure this no longer, so he rises up, at which the "devil" also runs away; while the "corpse," equally frightened, flies off in another direction, and the three suitors spend a wretched night, hiding from each other. Next morning, the priest tells the lady prioress of all his mishaps, how the devil appeared, and the body rose up. "I wis," quoth she, "I never yet had a lover who died a good death." "Then," says Mass John, "that will serve for ale and meat; thou shalt never be wooed by me." When the knight came, she told him that he did not brook the bargain; so he, too, went away. She threatened the merchant

that she would tell his wife and all the country of his wickedness; but he purchased her silence by giving twenty marks to the convent, and after his death endowed it in fee for ever.

A parallel to Lydgate's tale is found in Thorpe's Netherlandish story of the Wicked Lady of Antwerp.— The Norse tale of the Mastermaid (Dr. Dasent) is the only version, so far as I know, in which magical arts are employed in punishment of the suitors. The heroine of this tale takes shelter in the hut of a cross-grained old woman, who is killed by an accident, and she is thus left alone. A constable, passing by and seeing a beautiful maiden, falls in love with her, and bringing a bushel of silver, she consents to marry him; but at night, when they are about to go to bed, she says that she has forgot to make up the fire: this the dutiful bridegroom undertakes to do himself, but no sooner has he taken hold of the shovel, than she cries out: "May you hold the shovel, and the shovel hold you, and may you heap burning coals over yourself till morning breaks." So there stood the constable all night heaping hot coals upon himself till daybreak, when he was released from the spell and ran home, dancing with pain, to the amusement of all who saw him on the way. In like manner, on the second night, the maiden casts her spells over the attorney, who is made to hold the handle of the porch-door till morning; and on the third night, the sheriff is compelled to hold the calf's tail and the calf's tail to hold him till morning breaks, when he goes home in a sorry plight. ([back](#))

No. XXXI—p. 192.

PRINCE BAHRAM AND PRINCESS ED-DETMÄ.

NOTHING is more common in Oriental romance than for a beautiful, spoiled, and self-willed princess to impose certain hard conditions on her suitors: they must solve dark riddles; or answer knotty questions; or undertake a perilous journey to the confines of the earth— nay, even into jinnistān, the land of the jinn, or genii— in order to procure some wonderful talisman upon which the lady has set her heart.

The present story calls to mind the classical legend of Atalanta, who would marry only him that should outstrip her in a footrace, but all of her competitors whom she overtook were to be killed on the spot by the dart with which she had armed herself; and who was ultimately vanquished by Hippomenes, who threw in the course, at some distance from each other, three golden apples from the gardens of the Hesperides, which Atalanta stopped to pick up, and thus enabled Hippomenes to reach the goal before her.— This tale is reproduced in Berni's *Orlando Innamorato*, where the daughter of the King of the Distant Isles makes the same condition with two suitors, Ordauro and Folderico; the latter, an old man, wins the race by the device of the golden apples.

Morier, in his *Second Journey to Persia*, relates a similar tradition, the conclusion of which is, however, tragical (he does not seem to have observed its affinity to the classical story of Atalanta): In former days a king of Persia promised his daughter in marriage to any one who would run before his horse all the way from Shīrāz to Ispahān. One of his running-footmen nearly accomplished the feat, having reached to the eminence now marked by the Shatir's Tower, when the king, fearful that he should be obliged to keep his promise, dropped his whip. The ligatures which encompassed the footman's body were such that, in the state he then was, he knew for certain that if he stooped to the ground to pick up the whip his death would immediately follow; therefore he contrived to take up the whip with his foot, carried it to his hand, and presented it to the king. This trick having failed, the king then dropped his ring, upon which the footman, who saw that his fate was decided, exclaimed: "O king, you have broken your word; but I will show you my submission to the last," so saying, he stooped, picked up the ring, and died.— The Shatir's Tower was, it is said, afterwards erected on the spot where the footman fell dead, to commemorate his exploit and his fidelity to the king.

Amazon princesses are favourite characters in old romances. In the *Nibelungenlied*, Queen Brunhilda did battle with all her suitors, and was finally conquered only by the aid of magical power. In Berni's burlesque *Innamorato*, Marphisia, a young Indian queen, made a vow never to lay aside her armour till she had taken three kings captive, namely, Charlemagne, Gradasso, and Agrican. In the Arabian story of 'Omar Bin Nu'man, a princess wrestles with the hero, and throws him, more by the *weakening* power of her fully-developed charms than by her personal strength and skill, though she possessed both these necessary qualifications of an athlete. The same lady afterwards, disguised as a knight, and armed *cap-à-pie*, encounters her lover in single combat— an incident which seems imitated from an episode of the Arabian romance of 'Antar:

*Story of Jaida and Khālid*¹

Muhārib and Zāhir, the fathers respectively of Khālid and Jaida, were brothers. Muhārib was chief of the tribe of Zebīd, and Zāhir was his counsellor. The brothers quarrelled, and Zāhir struck his tents, and cast his lot with the kindred tribe of Sa'd. Zāhir's wife becoming pregnant, he said to her that if a son were born, he would be most welcome; but if a girl, she was to conceal the fact, and let it appear to the world that they had a male child, in order that his brother should not exult over him. In due course a daughter was born, and was called in private Jaida, but Jūdar in public, that it might appear she was a boy. About the same time Muhārib had a son born to him, whom he called Khālid. The daughter of Zāhir was brought up as a boy, and taught to ride on horseback; and she soon

¹ From my epitome of this celebrated romance in [Arabian Poetry for English Readers](#).

became famous in all the exercises befitting a noble warrior, accompanying her father to battle, in which she ever took a prominent part. Khālid was also one of the most illustrious horsemen of the age, universally acknowledged as an intrepid warrior and a valiant hero.

The fame of his cousin Jaida (Jūdar) having reached him, Khālid, after his father's death, visited his uncle, and spent ten days in jousting with the horsemen of the family. Jaida became deeply enamoured of him, and her mother, on learning this, revealed the secret of her sex to Khālid's mother, and suggested that their children should be united in marriage. But when Khālid was told by his mother that his cousin was a woman, he was greatly chagrined, slighted her love for him, and hastened back to his own tribe.

Jaida, enraged at finding herself thus scorned, resolved to be revenged on her cousin, and, disguising herself, set out for the land of Zebīd. Arrived there, she entered a tent of public entertainment, close-visored, like a horseman of the Hijāz. After proving her superiority to the best cavaliers in the course, she encountered Khālid for three days in succession, without either of them obtaining any advantage, when she discovered herself to her cousin, whose hatred was now suddenly converted into love. But Jaida rejected him, and returned home.

Khālid hastened to his uncle and demanded Jaida in marriage. His cousin at length consented, on the condition that he should provide for slaughter at her wedding feast a thousand camels belonging to Ghashm, son of Malik, surnamed the Brandisher of Spears. These Khālid procured by plundering the tribe of 'Āmir; but on his return Jaida imposed a further condition— that her camel should be led by the captive daughter of a prince. Khālid again set out with his horsemen, and, assailing the family tribe of Mu'āwiyya, son of Nizal, took captive his daughter Amīma; and his marriage with Jaida was immediately celebrated, when the daughter of Mu'āwiyya held the bridle of her camel, "and the glory of Jaida was exalted among women and among men."

In another Arabian romance, Delhama, of which Lane has given an account in his [*Modern Egyptians*](#), two amazons figure prominently. One of these is a woman called Esh-Shumsta, or the Grizzle, "whom the heroes of her time held in great fear on account of her prowess and strength." The Emīr Dārim resolved to attack her. She mounted her horse in haste, on hearing of his approach, and went forth to meet him and his party. For a whole hour she contended with them; killed the greater number, and put the rest to flight, excepting the Emīr Dārim, whom she took prisoner, and led in bonds, disgraced and despised, to her fortress. His ten sons, hearing of his misfortune, set forth with their attendants to rescue the Emīr, but they are taken prisoners and most of their followers are slain by Esh-Shumsta, who, however, is in the end overthrown and put to death by El-Gūndūba, the adopted son of the Emīr. Afterwards El-Gūndūba in the course of his adventures encounters in single combat another amazon, called Kattalet esh Shugān, or the Slayer of Heroes.

Richardson, in the Dissertation prefixed to his Arabic and Persian

Dictionary, relates some curious historical anecdotes of the bravery of Arabian women in turning the tide of battle against the Greeks. There can be no doubt that Europe has owed much of its institutions of chivalry to the Arabs, and an interesting chapter on this subject might be compiled from authentic Arabian history, as well as from their romancists and poets. ([back](#))

No. XXXII
THE SEVEN WISE MASTERS.

ALTHOUGH the Western versions (or imitations, rather) of the Book of Sindibād, known generally under the title of the Seven Wise Masters, possess but little in common with the Eastern texts, besides the outline of the connecting tale, yet a brief analytical account of one of the old English metrical texts may perhaps add somewhat to the usefulness of the present work. This version, entitled the *Seven Sages*, is believed to have been composed—probably from the French—about the end of the 14th century, and has been printed, from a MS. in Cambridge University Library, in the publications of the Percy Society, vol. xvi, with an interesting introductory essay by Thomas Wright. An analysis of another version, in the famous Auchinleck MSS., is given by Ellis, in his *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances*, and the text was afterwards printed in Weber's Northern Romances. "Few works," remarks Dunlop, "are more interesting and curious than the Seven Wise Masters, in illustrating the genealogy of fiction, or its rapid and almost unaccountable transition from one country to another."

Introduction.

IN Rome was a renowned emperor, "as the book tells us;" his name was Dioclecius; and he had a wife, called Helie. He had one only son, and when the child was seven years old, he was entrusted to the care of Seven Wise Masters, who undertook to instruct him in the space of seven years. They took him from the city into the country, in order that he should not learn any wickedness; and at once began to teach him the seven sciences, by means of lessons which they painted upon the wall of his chamber.¹ Thus when the prince lay on his bed he might con his lesson upon the wall. Ere the seven years were gone he was master of the seven sciences—"there was none but he had good skill in." Then said the

¹ The "seven sciences" anciently were: astronomy, arithmetic, music, medicine, logic, grammar, and rhetoric—"good sense" being, according to Pope, "worth all the seven."—The method of teaching the prince by means of lessons painted on the walls is identical with that described in the Eastern texts (see pp. 22, 23 and pp. 130, 131).

masters to each other: "This child waxeth very wise. Let us therefore prove him." So they secretly placed beneath each of the posts of his bed four ivy leaves. And in the morning the prince said to them: "Of a surety, either the roof of my room has become lower, or the floor is risen." "He is a wise man, I wis," they exclaimed.

Now while the child was thus with his masters, his mother died—"as we schalle alle dye." And soon after she was dead, the emperor's courtiers urged him to take another wife; and as he was "jolyf of blode," he desired them to seek out for him a fitting wife, which they did, and the emperor was married to the woman according to the law, and for some time he lived in great solace with her.¹ One day she was told of the child, the emperor's lawful heir, how he was so comely and so wise, and she began to hate the child from that hour, and resolved to have him put to death. So she bribed a magician to contrive that if the prince should speak a word during seven days and seven nights he should instantly die.² After this, "in a merry morning of May," she said to the emperor that she longed to see his son, whom she loved as if he was her own, though she had not yet beheld him; and the emperor promised to despatch messengers at once to bring his son to court:

But the emperour wist nought
What was hire wickkyd thought—
An evyl deth mot scho dey !

The messengers arrive at the house of the Seven Wise Masters, and command them, in the emperor's name, to bring the prince to court within three days. They go into an arbour in the evening, "for solace," and there one of them discovers from the aspect of the moon and stars that the prince's stepmother has by magic planned his death. The prince himself takes an observation of the heavenly bodies, and perceives the danger he should be in if he spoke during the next seven days and seven nights, and proposes that each of his masters should, by their wisdom, save his life one day, to which they readily agree.³

When the prince appears before his father he is dumb. His stepmother comes with her maidens, and welcomes him, but he utters not a word. She then obtains leave to take him with her into her own chamber, where having tempted

¹ In another English MS. text, in Cambridge University Library, the mother of the prince died before he was entrusted to the masters; and the emperor, who was "old and hoar," by advice of his bold barons, and "covetyse of heritage," married again.

² In the *Septent Sapientum*, the stepmother does not employ magical arts to effect her wicked purpose.

³ In the *Liber de Septem Sapientibus* the danger to the prince is foretold him in a dream, which is interpreted by his tutors, after consulting the stars.

him in vain, she accuses him to the emperor of having sought to dishonour his couch.¹ — During the seven following days the Queen and the Seven Wise Masters by turns relate tales to the emperor, who alternately condemns to death and reprieves his son, according as he is moved by the arguments of the accuser and defenders.

I— The Queen relates the story of

The Tree and its Branch,

that is, a creeper, which had gradually absorbed all the vigour of the tree, so that it died.

II— The First Master relates the story of

The Knight and the Greyhound,

There was a valiant knight which had one only son, the which he loved so much, that he ordained for his keepers three nowrishers. The first should give him suck, and feed him. The second should wash him, and keep him clean: and the third should bring him to his sleep and rest. The knight had also a greyhound and a falcon, which he also loved right well. The greyhound was so good, that he never run at any game, but he took it, and held it till his master came. And if his master disposed him to go into any battel, if he should not speed therein, anone as he should mount upon his horse, the greyhound would take the horse-tail in his mouth, and draw backward, and would also cry and howl marvelouslie loud. By these signs, and the due observation thereof, the knight did always understand that his journey should have very ill success. The falcon was so gentle and hardy, that he was never cast off to his prey but he took it.

The same knight had much pleasure in justing and tourney, so that upon a time under his castle he proclaimed a tournament, to the which came many great lords and knights. The knight entered into the tourney, and his ladie went with her maidens to see it: and as they went out, after went the nowrishers, and left the child lying alone there in the cradle, in the hall: where the greyhound lay near the wall, and the hawk or falcon standing upon a perch. In this hall there was a serpent lurking, or hid in a hole, to all them of the castle unknown, the which when he perceived that they were all absent, he put his head out of his

¹ According to this version, the prince was only fourteen years old when he was solicited by the queen, since he was seven when placed under his tutors, and had “finished his education” in less than other seven years. In the *Septem Sapienttim* he is sixteen years under the tutors. See above, [note 2](#).

hole, and when he saw none but the child lying in the cradle, he went out of his hole towards the cradle, for to have slain the child. The noble falcon perceiving that, and he beholding the greyhound that was sleeping, made such a noise and rustling with her wings presently, that the greyhound awoke, and rose up: and when he saw the serpent nigh the child, anone against him he leapt, and they both fought so long together, until that the serpent had grievously hurt and wounded the greyhound, that he bled so sore, that the earth about the cradle was all bloody. The greyhound, when that he felt himself grievously wounded and hurt, start fiercely upon the serpent, and fought so sore together, and so eagerly, that between them the cradle was overcast with the child, the bottome upward. And because that the cradle had four pomels like feet, falling towards the earth, they saved the childs life and his visage from any hurt. What can be more exprest to make good the wonder in the preservation of the child? Incontinently hereafter, with great pain the greyhound overcame and slew the serpent, and laid him down again in his place, and licked his wounds.

And anon alter the justs and tourney was done, the nowrishers came first into the castle, and as they saw the cradle turned the up side down upon the earth, compassed round about with blood: and that the greyhound was also bloody, they thought and said amongst themselves, that the greyhound had slain the child: and were not so wise as to turn up the cradle again with the child, for to have seen what was thereof befallen. But they said, Let us run away, lest that our master should put or lay the blame upon us, and so slay us. As they were thus running away, they met the knight's wife, and she said unto them, Wherefore make ye this sorrow, and whither will ye run? Then said they, O lady, wo and sorrow be to us, and to you. Why, said she, what is there happened? show me. The greyhound, they said, that our lord and master loved so well, hath devoured and slain your son, and lyeth by the wall all full of blood. As the lady heard this, she presently fell to the earth, and began to weep and cry piteouslie, and said, Alace, O my dear son, are ye slain and dead? What shall I now do, that I have mine only son thus lost? Wherewithal came in the knight from the tourney, beholding his lady thus crying and making sorrow, he demanded of her wherefore she made so great sorrow and lamentation. She answered him, O my lord, that greyhound that you have loved so much hath slain your only son, and lyeth by the wall, satiated with the blood of the child. The knight, very exceeding angry, went into the hall, and the greyhound went to meet him, and did fawn upon him, as he was wont to do, and the knight drew out his sword, and with one stroke smote off the greyhound's head, and then he went to the cradle where the child lay, and found his son all whole, and by the cradle the serpent slain; and then by diverse signs he perceived that the greyhound had killed the serpent for the defence of the child. Then with great sorrow and weeping he tare his hair, and said, Wo be to me, that for the words of my wife, I have slain my good and best greyhound, the which hath saved my child's life, and hath slain the serpent: therefore I will put myself to penance: and so he brake his sword in three pieces, and went towards the Holy

Land, and abode there all the days of his life.

III— The Queen relates the story of

The Boar and the Herdsman,

a prose version of which will be found in [pp. 242-244](#). It is stated, in p. 242, that this form of the story was taken into the *Historia Septem Sapientium Romæ* from the *Mishlé Sandabar*, but it occurs in earlier Western texts, such as, for instance, *Les Sept Sages* and the *Liber de Septem Sapientibus*. Des Longchamps thought this story was suggested by the classical legend of the Boar of Erymanthus, slain by Hercules, to which it certainly bears some resemblance.

IV— The Second Master relates the story of

Hippocrates and his Nephew;

the latter having cured the son of the king of Hungary, and induced the queen to confess that the child's real father was a foreign prince who had been on a visit to her husband, his uncle Hippocrates, envious of his skill and fame, slew him in his garden after his return home.

The incident of the discovery of the spurious son occurs in the *Cento Novelle Antiche* (nov. 2), where a Greek king is found to be the son of a baker; in the Arabian Tale of the [Sultan of Yaman and his Three Sons](#) (vol. vi of Jonathan Scott's edition of the *Arabian Nights*), where a certain sultan is proved to be the son of a cook; and in the Lady's 2nd tale in the *Forty Vaztrs*.

V— The Queen relates the story of

The Robbery of the King's Treasury.

A certain king's counsellor, having wasted all his wealth and become reduced to great straits, with the assistance of his son, breaks into the royal treasury and takes away a large quantity of gold. The king, having discovered the robbery, sets a large vessel filled with pitch close to the place where the breach had been made in the wall, in order to entrap the robber when he next came there. The counsellor, having once more fallen into poverty, went again one night with his son to procure a fresh supply of gold, and on entering the treasury, through the opening in the wall, instantly fell up to the neck in the vessel of pitch. Calling to his son, he warned him not to enter and attempt his release, for it was impossible; but desired him to draw his sword and cut off his head and carry it away, so that he should not be recognised and his family disgraced. The son accordingly cuts

off his father's head, carries it home, and recounts the whole particulars of the misadventure.

In the *Septan Sapientum*, the robber of the king's treasury is a knight, who had spent all his wealth at tourneys and similar idle sports. After the son had taken home his father's head, the king is informed of the headless body found in his treasury, and orders it to be drawn at the tails of horses through the principal streets to the gallows, charging his soldiers to bring before him any persons whom they observed affected with excessive grief. As the body was being drawn past the knight's house, one of his daughters uttered loud cries of sorrow, upon which the son quickly drew his knife and wounded his hand, so that the blood flowed freely. The soldiers entered the house, and inquired the cause of the loud cries they had just heard, when the son, showing his wounded hand, said that his sister had been alarmed at seeing his blood, upon which the soldiers, satisfied with this explanation, quitted the house.

This story has been adapted from Herodotus, who relates it of Rhampsinitus, King of Egypt, and his architect, who in building the royal treasury left a stone loose, but so nicely fitted in that it could not be discovered by any one ignorant of the secret: his two sons, after his death, frequently enter the treasury by this means, until at length one of them is entrapped, as above. A similar legend is found in Pausanias, B. ix, c. 37, relating to the treasury of Hyrieus. It occurs also in the *Kathá Sarit Ságara*, eighth section, in the tale of Ghata and Karpara, which bears a very close analogy to the leading incidents of the story in Herodotus, especially the device of drugging the soldiers that guarded the body. From the *Seven Wise Masters* it was probably taken by Ser Giovanni (Day ix, Nov. i), and by Bandello (Par. i, nov. 25). The story is also found in an old French romance, *L'Histoire du Chevalier Berinus*, in which Herodotus has been imitated in the concluding incident, of the king's daughter's attempt to discover the clever thief; and it forms one of the exploits of the [Shifty Lad](#) in Campbell's *Tales of the West Highlands*.

VI— The Third Master relates the story of

The Husband Shut Out.

The wife of a certain old man was in the habit of stealing out at nights when he was sound asleep, and meeting her lover. It happened one night that the husband awoke, and, missing his spouse from beside him, at once concluded that she was unfaithful; so he rose up, and securely bolted the outer door. A little before daybreak the truant wife returned, and finding the door fast, she

Bygan loud to crye,
And badde the devle hys neke to breke
That the doore hadde steke.

The goodman, however, was not to be moved by her entreaties or threats, and bade her begone, adding that in the morning he should expose her to all their friends and relations, yea, and to the whole town. In vain she continued to beg to be let in; the justly incensed husband was obdurate. At length she declared that she would not live to suffer such disgrace, and taking up a great stone she plunged it into the well, and then stole quietly close to the door. The husband, supposing the plash he had heard to be caused by her throwing herself into the well, began to relent, for he was doatingly fond of her, in spite of her levity and misconduct; so he hastened to undo the fastenings of the door, and went to the well to draw her forth if possible. Meanwhile the artful wife quickly slipped into the house, bolted the door, and went up stairs to her warm bed— “an evyl deth mote scho dee!” The poor man, having fruitlessly searched into and all round the well for his wife, returned to the house, to find himself in turn shut out. Now there was a law in that town that all husbands found in the streets after a certain hour were to be taken up by the watchmen and severely punished. The husband therefore knocks repeatedly at the door, but his wife bids him return to his leman, with whom he has passed the night. The noise of their altercation attracts the watchmen, who come up, and ask what it is all about, to which the wife from the window replies, that it is her husband come back from spending the night with his leman she had endured his misconduct too long, and now they may take him away and punish him. So the poor man is arrested, and thus “thorow his wyf he was schent.”

This tale seems to have been taken into the *Liber de Septem Sapientibus* from Alphonsus (Fab. 13), who probably derived it from the Arabian story-tellers. It is one of the *fabliaux* of the Trouvères (Le Grand, iii, 143), and the [4th novel, Day vii](#), of the *Decameron*. Dunlop says it is “the origin of the *Calandra* of Cardinal Bibbiena, the best comedy that appeared in Italy previous to the time of Goldoni; it also forms the groundwork of one of Dancourt’s plays, and probably suggested to Moliere the plot of his celebrated comedy, *George Dandin*.”—It has also suggested the plot of one of the plays of Hans Sachs, *Das Weib im Brunnen*.

VII— The Queen then relates the story of

The King and his Seneschal.

A certain king, whose body was all swollen, or leprous, desires his seneschal to procure him a mistress, and, on being reminded how repulsive his person was to women, tells him to take from his treasury whatever money might be necessary

for the purpose. The seneschal's cupidity induces him to introduce his own wife to the king at night— having terrified her into compliance with his drawn sword. In the morning the seneschal repeatedly knocks at the door of the king's chamber, and is told to go away; at length he informs the king that the woman is his wife, upon which the king, having opened the window and discovered this to be the fact, declares that he will not part with her now, upbraids the seneschal for selling his virtuous wife for a paltry sum of money, and orders him, on pain of death, to quit the kingdom immediately.

This story is similiar to that of the Bathkeeper, which occurs in nearly all the Eastern texts of the Book of Sindibād, where, however (especially in the Arabian versions), it is related with some very objectionable details. In the Seven Wise Masters it is put into the mouth of the Queen, as it is made to tell solely against men; but in the Eastern texts of the *Sindibād*, it is related by one of the vazīrs, the woman being represented as yielding a not unwilling consent though even thus its appropriateness as one of the vazīrs' tales is questionable. In the *Historia Septem Sapientum Romæ*, and its derivatives— English and Scottish, Spanish, Armenian, Russian, etc. this story is rather clumsily joined with another. It does not occur in Dolopathos; I was induced to state, in [note, p. 61](#), that the story is found in this old text by Goedeke's comparative table of the versions of the Wise Masters (*Orient und Occident*, iii, pp. 422, 423), where I mistook "senes" for "senesc. " (senescalcus). In the same table the story does not appear in the contents of Holland's Scottish version, though it forms part of another tale, as in the *Septem Sapientum*.

The form which the tale of the Seneschal in the Wise Masters and that of the Bathman in the Eastern texts of the Book of Sindibād assume in the *Hitopadeśa* (Book i, fab. viii and ix) is to the following effect: A young and wealthy prince, becoming enamoured of the blooming wife of a merchant, employed an old woman to solicit her to grant him an interview, which she refused, saying that she was devoted to her husband. The old woman, after reporting the failure of her mission, advises the prince to enter the service of the merchant, who confides to him his most important affairs. One day, at the suggestion of the old woman, the prince, being anointed fresh from the bath, said to the merchant that he must perform a vow to Gaurī for the space of a month, and, beginning that day, requested the merchant to bring him every evening a young woman of good family, and she should be honoured by him in due form. Accordingly, the merchant, having brought a young woman of that description, presented her, and afterwards concealed himself to watch what he would do. The prince, without so much as touching the young lady, having done homage to her at a distance, with vestures, jewellery, perfumes, and sandal, dismissed her immediately in the care of a guard. On seeing this, the merchant became confident; and his mind being biassed by the lust of gain, he brought his own wife and presented her the result, however, was very different from his expectations, and he was overwhelmed with grief.

VIII— The Fourth Master relates the story of

The Wise Old Man and his Foolish Wife.

There was a certain wise and prudent knight who, in his old age, married a young and foolish wife. The lady, being with her spouse, fell in love with a priest. She told her mother of her lover, and the mother advised her to hold fast to the old knight; but if she was determined to do such a thing, she should first prove her husband. So the young wife caused the gardener to cut down a pear-tree, of which the knight was very fond, and lay it in the hall. When the husband discovers the tree, he inquires of her where it came from, and she tells him it was cut down by her orders in the garden. "Well," says he, quietly, "now that it is hewn down it can't be helped." The lady returns to her mother and relates how her husband was not angry at her cutting down his favourite tree. "Try him again," says the mother; "you do not know what he thinks of the matter." The foolish young wife next slays the knight's favourite hound, and tells him that she did so because it had lain on her dress. "Dame," quoth he, "thou mightest have drawn thy clothes together, and let my dog live: slay no more, though he lie on thy clothes; if thou dost, I shall certainly be wroth." Once more she repairs to her mother. "Old men," says the mother, "will endure much wrong; but try him again." Soon after this the knight has a noble company assembled at his house; and when all are seated at table, his wife fastens the keys suspended from her girdle to a corner of the cloth, and then suddenly rising, "drow doun coppys and dyschys ilkone," making a sad mess of the clothes of the guests. At this the good knight was full wroth, and after the guests were gone, he led his wife into a chamber, where, with the help of his brother, he bled her in the arm,¹ leaving only so much blood in her body as would keep in life, and then laid her down on a fair bed. When she recovered from her swoon, he gave her meat and drink, and said to her: "Dame, lie thou still. Thou shalt have meat and drink at will. But whenever thou waxest mad again, thou shalt be let blood." "Mercy, my lord," she cries, "and I will surely anger thee no more." "If so," says the wise and prudent old man, "then do I forgive thee thy three offences."

Than wald scho no more
Lever of the clerkis lore,
For fere to be let bloode;
But heldir alga.t trew and good.

Keller, in his introduction to the *Roman des Sept Sages*, refers, among other parallels to this story, to the Fabliau De la femme qui voulut éprouver son Mari

¹ In the *Septem Sapientum* the old man, more appropriately, employs a barber.

(Le Grand, iii, 177), and to Boccaccio's tale of Lidia and Pyrrhus (*Decameron*, [Day vii, nov. 9](#)). It also occurs in the *Contes et joyeux devis* of Bonaventure des Périers, and in the *Contes*, etc. , of the Abbé Prévôt.

IX— The Queen relates the story of

Merlins Pillar.

In the city of Rome a pillar was set up by the enchanter Merlin, on the top of which was a mirror that shone over all the town, and gave the people warning of any approaching foreign invasion. Two clerks undertake to destroy this safeguard of the city, in order that the King of Apulia should march upon it unawares.

Virgilius is substituted for Merlin in some texts, and, in place of a mirror, two brazen images, which threw a golden ball to each other as a warning to the citizens that an enemy was advancing to attack the city.

Vincent of Beauvais, in the 13th century, describes Virgil's magical tower, which is also the subject of a chapter in the legendary history of Virgilius— see Mr. William J. Thoms' *Early Prose Romances*, [vol. ii, pp. 20-22](#). This story, with some variations, is reproduced in the *Pecorone* of Ser Giovanni; it was very popular in Europe during the Middle Ages: numerous parallels are referred to in Keller's edition of the oldest German text of the Wise Masters— *Einleitung*, pp. 57-59.

X— The Fifth Master relates the story of

The Burgess and the Magpie.

which is similar to the tale of the Merchant and his Parrot— pp. [31](#), [141](#), and [222](#).

XI— The Queen relates the story of

The Seven Evil Counsellors,

who had, by their magical arts, contrived to render the king blind whenever he went out of his palace, in order that they might increase their own wealth by defrauding him and the people. The child Merlin advises the king to put his seven evil counsellors to death, after which his sight would be restored; this the king does accordingly, and afterwards raises Merlin to the highest offices of state.— The tale is taken from the romance of Merlin.

Wright has remarked that this story is of Indian origin, and is found in several Eastern collections, but he does not specify any of them.

XII— The Sixth Master relates the story of

The Widow who was Comforted.

There was a knight, a rich sheriff, who was doatingly fond of his wife. One day as he sat with her, and they jested together, a knife which he had in his hand chanced to wound her slightly, at which he was so much grieved that he died the next day. His widow, distracted with grief, vowed that nothing should part her from her husband, and so took up her abode beside his grave. At nightfall she made a good fire, for it was the cold winter tide, and she continued to weep and wring her hands, lamenting the loss of her loving spouse. Now near this place were the bodies of three thieves that had been hanged, and a certain knight had to watch that they were not stolen, as quitrent of his lands.

Than the knyght was both zong and bolde,
He was swith sore a-colde,
And at the chappel fyer he sawe light,
And rode thyderward ful ryght.

He dismounted from his steed and approached the fire, saying to the widow: "Dame, by thy leave I will warm myself." The lady answered: "Yea, sir, welcome art thou, if thou thinkest no evil, but to sit and make thee warm." This knight was without a wife, and he thought the lady would suit him very well, so he began forthwith to woo her, and her heart inclined towards him, for she saw he was a comely and a manly knight, and he soon won her love. After a while, the knight went to see whether the bodies of the three thieves were still on the gallows, when, behold, one of them was stolen; so he returned to the widow, and told her that in consequence of this he should lose his lands and heritage.

Sire, quod the lady, tho [then],
There-fore he nought wo,
Ne make thou dole there-fore,
Ne schal nouzt thy lond be lore.
To thys berial we wyl goone,
And dyggyn uppe the cors anone,
And hangye hym in his stede,
As fayer as the othyr dyde.

"But," says the knight, "the thief had a great wound on his head, and if your husband's body were examined and found without such a wound, still should I

lose my lands.” “Let not that trouble thee,” quoth she; “thou hast both sword and dagger: with either of them do thou give him such a wound as the thief had.” “Assuredly,” answers the knight, “I could never smite a dead man.” Then the lady drew a knife from her sheath, “that was keen and sharply ground,” and wounded the head of her husband, and putting up the knife, she said, “Now, sir, shall we be gone?” But the knight recollects that the thief had lost two of his front teeth, and the lady, without hesitation,

In hyr bond scho took a stoon,
And knockyd out twa teeth anoon!

She then advises the knight to hang her husband’s body on the gallows, before day begins to dawn, which is done accordingly.

In the *Septem Sapientum*, and some other versions, the knight, after these proofs of the widow’s affection for her dead husband, sternly upbraids her, saying that her husband had loved her so much that he died because he had inadvertently shed a little of her blood, but she had not scrupled to mutilate his body: he would therefore have nothing further to do with such a wanton— a more appropriate conclusion of the story, the sole object of the relator being to illustrate the levity and heartlessness of women.

This tale is identical with the episode of the Widow of Ephesus in Petronius Arbiter, which Dunlop had little doubt was originally a Milesian or Sybarite fable. However this may be, it is found in the Talmud, forming one of the supplementary paragraphs which are scattered through the Mishna and Gemara (see Hershon’s [Talmudic Miscellany, p. 28](#)). It also occurs in the *Cento Novelle Antiche* (nov. 56), the author of which may have taken it either from the *Liber de Septem Sapientibus* or from the Fabliau De la Femme qui se fist Putain sur la fosse de son Mari. For many other parallels see Keller’s *Roman des Sept Sages*, Einleitung, clix-clxvii.

Davis, in his work on the Chinese (ch. xiv), relates a somewhat similar story, which he thought was the original of the tale of The Nose in Voltaire’s *Zadig*: A philosopher observed a widow fanning the earth over her husband’s grave, and, inquiring the reason for such a strange proceeding, was informed by the sorrowing lady that she had promised her dying husband not to marry again before the earth on his grave was perfectly dry: “And now, as it occurred to me that the surface of this ground, which has been newly tempered, would not very soon dry, I thought I would just fan it a little.” The philosopher approved of her plan, and obtained her fan as a souvenir. Returning home, he told his wife of this adventure, and showed her the fan, which she snatched from him and tore into shreds, declaring the woman to be a heartless hussy;— for her own part, were he to die, she should never marry again. Shortly after this the philosopher was taken suddenly ill, and died. The lady was inconsolable. Preparations were made for the funeral; friends and acquaintances assembled, amongst whom was a young and very handsome

student, attended by his servant. He informs the lady that he had purposed becoming a disciple of the late philosopher, and had come to attend his obsequies. The widow falls in love with him, and conveys this to him through his old servant. After several objections which the student raised had been removed by the amorous widow, he consents to marry her, but suddenly falls into convulsions. His servant tells her the only remedy is the brain of a man, recently dead, dissolved in wine. Quoth the lady, readily: "My husband has been dead only a few days; open his coffin, and take the remedy from thence." The coffin was immediately opened, when, to the consternation of the widow, the philosopher rose up, for he had only been pretending to be dead, and had created all the scene by magical arts.— In Voltaire's story, a lady had vowed not to marry a second husband so long as the rivulet continued to flow past the grave of her lately deceased spouse, and was now busy contriving to turn its course in a different direction. Zadig's wife tells him of this, and professes disgust at such heartlessness. Zadig, not long after, pretends to have died suddenly; his intimate friend visits the sorrowing widow, makes love to her, falls suddenly ill the nose of a dead man applied to the part affected is the only cure; so the lady immediately takes a sharp knife, and repairs to her husband's tomb, intending to cut off his nose, but Zadig arises, and scoffs at his wife for her hollow professions of affection.

Our old English jest-books abound in satirical tales of "widows' tears, which shrink, like Arno, in the summer." The [tenth jest in *Mery Tales and Quicks Answeres*](#), a collection of facetiae which has been more than once cited in these notes, is as follows:

"There was a yonge woman, the whiche for her husbände, that laye a dyenge, sorowed oute of all measure, wherfore her father came often to her and sayde: daughter, leaue your mourninge; for I haue prouyded for you an other husbände, a farre more goodly man. But she did not onely continue in her sorowe, but also was greatly displeased, that her father made any motion to her of an other husbände. As sone as she had buryed her husbände, and the soule mass was songe, and that they were at dyner, betwene sobbynge and wepynge she rowned [i.e. whispered] her father in the eare, and sayde: father, where is the same yonge man, that ye said shuld be min husband? Lo, thus may ye se, that women sorowe ryght longe, after theyr husbändes be departed."

Of the same class is the jest in *A Hundred Mery Tales* — the book referred to by Beatrice, in *Much Ado about Nothing*, when she says to Benedick: "Will you tell me who told you that I was disdainful, and that I had my good wit out of the *Hundred Merry Tales*?" — of the woman who followed her fourth husband's bier and wept; not because of his death, as she told a gossip, but because she was not this time, as on former occasions, sure of a new husband; and another in the same collection, of the woman kneeling at the mass of requiem, while the corpse of her husband lay in the chapel, and a young man whispering "that he myght be

her husbände," she replied: "Syr, by my trowthe, I am sory that ye come so late, for I am sped all redy. For I was made sure yesterday to another man."

XIII— The Queen's seventh and last story is of

The Siege of Rome.

The city of Rome was besieged by three Saracen knights, and its defence undertaken by seven wise men, one of whom (named Janus, or Genus, in some of the versions) devised a stratagem with a mirror, or two glittering swords, which caused the Saracens to decamp in mortal terror.

This stupid story is not found in the *Liber de Septem Sapientibus*, but occurs in the Roman des Sept Sages.

XIV— The Seventh Master now appears before the king, and, having predicted that on the following day the prince will recover his speech, relates the story of

The Two Dreams; or, the Knight of Hungary.

A certain noble knight of Hungary dreamt of seeing a very beautiful lady, but knew her not; and it so happened that the lady whom he saw in his dream that same night dreamt also of him. Next day the knight of Hungary took horse and arms, and proceeded in quest of the lady. Three weeks and more did he ride, sorely sighing for his lady-love, till he came to a town, where was a fair castle, strongly fortified. He takes up his lodging at the inn, and, questioning mine host regarding the castle and its owner, he learns that it belongs to a lord who has a fair jewel of a wife, of whom he is so jealous that two years ago he built a strong tower at one end of the castle, in which he confines her, with one maiden as her companion; and he always carries the key of the tower, which is never opened save when he himself visits her. The knight had already seen the lady looking out of the tower window, and recognised her as the object of his dream. He goes on the following day to the castle, and offers his services to the old lord, who heartily bids him welcome; and the knight, being a good and valiant warrior, conquers all his enemies, so that the old man loved him fondly, and made him steward of his lands.

One day, when the steward chanced to be under the tower, the lady perceived him and recognised him as the same she had seen in her dream, and contrived to communicate with him by means of a rope made of rushes let down from the window. The knight now planned a crafty device by which he should enjoy the society of his lady-love unknown to her husband. He built a tower at some distance from the castle, and caused an underground passage to be made,

leading direct from it to the lady's chamber. When all was completed, he visited the young wife, who gave him a ring as a keepsake, telling him, should her husband see it and appear suspicious, to bring it back to her at once. The old lord recognises his wife's ring on the steward's finger, "as he sat at meat," and, after examining it, hastens to the tower; but the steward having reached the lady's chamber by the private way and restored the ring, on the husband demanding to see the ring, she at once produces it, to his great satisfaction.¹ At length the lovers resolve to elope, and the lady counsels the steward to tell the old lord that, having slain a great man in his own country, he had been banished, and that his lady-love was coming to him with some tidings regarding his heritage. The old lord would, of course, ask to see the lady, and she herself would play her part. The knight accordingly tells his lord this story, and invites him to a banquet at his own tower. Before he arrives, his wife, dressed in the costume of the knight's country, has reached the banqueting hall by the secret passage, prepared to enact the part of the crafty knight's leman. The old lord, on seeing her, thinks she is remarkably like his own wife; but then he recollected the affair of the ring, and there might also be two women exactly alike. At this juncture the lady pretends to swoon, is taken out, and returns with all speed by the private way to her chamber, where, having changed her dress, she is found by her husband, whom she embraces with every token of affection. He was "blythe as bird on bough," and remained with her all night. On the day following the crafty knight sends all his property on board a ship, and goes to take leave of the old lord, as he is to return at once, with his lady-love, to his own country. The knight and the old lord's wife who has resumed the character of the supposititious lady of Hungary— are accompanied by the deceived husband "into the sea a mile or two, with mynstrelsy and many manner of melody," and then he bids them farewell. On his return home, he proceeds, as usual, to the tower, and finds his bird has flown:

¹ In the *Septem Sapientum*, a king takes the place of the old lord, and he and the knight, on a hunting excursion, having dismounted during the noontide heat, the king recognises the ring on the knight's finger while the latter is asleep. On awaking, the knight suspects from the king's countenance that the ring has betrayed him, and, feigning illness, obtains leave to return home. This incident may be compared with the legend of Kentigern (or St. Mungo) and the Ring, in which the queen's gift to her paramour is discovered by the jealous king under similar circumstances but here the likeness ends: the finding of the ring in the stomach of a fish belongs to another cycle of folk-tales.

Than sayed he, walaway!
That ever was he man boren!
Than was all hys myrthe lorne.
He lepe out of the tour anoon,
And than brake hys neke boon.

Wright says that this story appears to be taken from some Eastern collection, since a similar tale is found in Von Hammer's supplementary tales of the *Thousand and One Nights*.— Berni has adapted it, in the *Orlando Innamorato*— omitting the incidents of the two dreams: Folderico, the old knight who gained, by the artifice of the golden balls in the foot-race (see above, [p. 323](#)), the daughter of the King of the Distant Isles, shut her up in a tower where he kept his treasure, and Ordauro, the unsuccessful suitor, who is beloved by the lady, plays the part of the crafty Knight of Hungary.— Dunlop has pointed out that the tale of the Two Dreams corresponds exactly with the plot of the *Miles Gloriosus* of Plautus; the *Fabliau Le Chevalier a la Trappe* (Le Grand, iii, 157); a tale in the fourth part of *Massuccio*; and the story *Du Vieux Calender* in Gueulette's *Contes Tartares*.

The notion of two young people simultaneously dreaming of each other, though total strangers, is essentially Oriental, and numerous instances might be cited from Asiatic fiction. In the Hindu romance of *Vāsavadattā*, by Subhandu (7th century), as analysed by Colebrooke in vol. x of the *Asiatic Researches*, Candaspacētu, a young and valiant prince, saw in a dream a beautiful maiden, of whom he became desperately enamoured. Impressed with the belief that a person such as seen by him in his dream had a real existence, he resolves to travel in search of her, and departs, attended only by his confidant Macaranda. While reposing under a tree in a forest at the foot of the Vindhya mountains, where they halted, Macaranda overhears two birds conversing; and from their discourse he learns that the Princess Vasavadattā, having rejected all the suitors who had been assembled by the king her father for her to make choice of a husband, had seen Candaspacētu in a dream, in which she had even learnt his name. Her confidante Tamālika, sent by her in search of the prince, has arrived in the same forest, and is discovered there by Macaranda. She delivers the prince a letter from the princess, and conducts him to the king's palace. He obtains from the princess the avowal of her love, and her confidante reveals to him the violence of her passion. The subsequent adventures of the lovers have nothing in common with the exploits of the Knight of Hungary.— In another Indian romance (now known chiefly, if not solely, through the Persian translation) Prince Kāmarupa dreams of Kāmalata and she dreams of him, having never seen or heard of each other before.— In the 39th tale of the *Tūtī Nāma* (33rd of Kāderī's abridgment), an emperor of China dreams of a beautiful damsel, and being sorely smitten with love for the creature of his dreaming fancy, he can find no peace of mind. One of his vazīrs, who is an excellent portrait painter, receiving from the emperor a minute description of the lady's features, draws the face, and the emperor

acknowledges the likeness to be very exact. The *vazīr* then goes abroad with the portrait, to see whether any one can recognise the original of it. In the course of his wanderings, he meets with an old ascetic, who at once recognises the portrait as that of the Princess of Rūm, who, he says, has an unconquerable aversion for men, ever since she beheld, in her garden, a peacock basely desert his mate and their young ones, when the tree on which their nest was built had been struck by lightning: she believed that all men were equally selfish, and was resolved never to marry. The *vazīr* returns to his royal master and recounts to him these interesting particulars regarding the object of his affection, and undertakes to conquer the aversion of the princess, which he does, by exhibiting before her a painting of a male deer sacrificing his life for the safety of his mate and their fawn.— The frame of the Persian Tales ascribed to a dervish of Ispahān seems to have been adapted from this story of the *Tūtī Nāma*, in which, as Gerrans has remarked, in the preface to his incomplete translation, the nurse “Sutlumene ransacks her invention to combat the obstinacy of the princess Farrukhnaz, who, from the impression of a dream, had formed as unfavourable an opinion of men as the Sultan of the Indies [in the *Arabian Nights*] had preconceived of women.”

Next day the Prince presents himself before his Majesty and relates the particulars of his stepmother’s wickedness towards himself. And here in the *Septem Sapientum* and its derivatives is interpolated the incident referred to in [note, pp. 286-7](#), of the discovery of the queen’s paramour disguised as one of her female attendants: the prince requests that the queen be summoned, with all her maidens, and when the latter have been ranged in such order that every one of them could be distinctly seen, according to Holland’s old Scottish metrical version¹—

Than said the Childe: Father, lift up zour Ene,
Behald how langthat ze haue blindit bene
With zour Emprice that is zour Maryit quene,
And that zoung wenche that all is cled in giene,
Quhilk is hour Mayd² unto zour awin Empres,
Quhome scho hes mair in fauour and kindnes,
Than euer scho had, I dar weill tak on me,
Sen thay first met than to zour Maiestie.
Quhome I desire, gif it plesit zour grace,

¹ *The Sevin Scages translatit out of Prois in Scottis Meter be John Rolland*. Written in 1560, printed in 1575. The original spelling is here reproduced (the letter z represents y— *zoitr*, your); but to facilitate the reading of this passage, I have inserted a few commas

² Bower maiden.

To be uncled¹ befor zow in this place.
That being done, richt weill ze sail persauē,
Sic ane bour Mayd, and sic Emprice ze haue.
To quhome answerit this Nobill Empreour:
Thou knawis, sone, it is not my honour,
It will be schame to me and to vs all,
Ane naikit Mayd befor us for to call.
Than said the Chylde: ane Mayden gif scho be,
All the greit schame thairof beis laid on me;
Gif scho be not ane zoung Mayd as ze tell,
Than let all schame remane still with her sell.
The Empreour than commandit that be done:
The officers thay unbecked² hir sone.
The clais of tane,³ it weill appeirit than
It was na Mayd, bot always was a man.

XIV— The Prince then relates the story of

The Ravens.

A knight and his son row over to an island where only a hermit lived. Three ravens are conversing together, and father remarks to his son that it would be interesting to know what they were talking about. The youth, who understood the language of birds, replied that he could tell, but was afraid of giving offence to his father by the communication. Being assured that he might speak freely, the youth then said that the ravens had prophesied that he should become a great man, and that his father should one day hold a basin of water while he washed his hands, and his mother should wait upon him with a towel. Incensed at this, the father cast his son into the sea, but the lad, being able to swim, contrived to reach the shore, and was taken up by a fisherman, who sold him to the warden of a castle. In course of time, it happened that the king was much annoyed at being followed constantly whenever he went abroad by three ravens, who kept up a loud chattering as if in hot dispute. The king offered the hand of his daughter in marriage to any one who would explain the meaning of the three ravens always following him, and the youth, being introduced to his Majesty, explained that the ravens were two males and one female; that during a time of scarcity the female bird's mate had driven her away, and she had been fed and supported by the

¹ Undressed.

² Undressed.

³ The clothes taken off.

young male raven; but now the old male bird had returned to claim his mate, and the female would have none of him, but elected the young male that had befriended her in adversity for her mate. The king then ruled that the old male bird should depart and trouble the happy pair no more. On hearing this decision the birds flew away. After this the youth married the king's daughter, and ruled the kingdom jointly with his royal father-in-law. Years passed on, and the youth's father having fallen into poverty, he and his wife, for shame thereof, quitted their native country, and came to the land where their own son was become so eminent. He hears of this, and visits them, with a grand retinue, at their humble abode. The aged couple, not knowing him, of course, make haste to receive him with all reverence, and the father holding the basin of water, and the mother the towel, thus was the ravens' prophecy fulfilled. The youth then discovered himself, embraced his parents, and made them comfortable for the remainder of their lives.

In the *Septem Sapientum* and its derivatives, such as our old English prose and Rolland's Scottish metrical versions, this story is greatly amplified by the interpolation of a series of adventures which form the plot of the romance of *Amis and Amiloun*,— It is found in the *Cento Novelle* of Sansovino, (Day viii, nov. 4), and in the novels of Lope de Vega, *El pronostico cumplido*; and many other parallels exist in Asiatic and European fiction; for instance: in the Arabian tale of the [Second Royal Mendicant](#); in the *Bakhtyār Nāma*, story of the [King of Persia and his Son](#); in [chapter 79](#) of the Anglican *Gesta Romanorum*; in the classical legend of Danae; in the *Bāgh o Bahār*, story of the [Second Darvīsh](#); in Ralston's *Tibetan Tales*, story of the [Fulfilled Prophecy](#); and in *Syntipas*, story of Destiny, or the Son of the Sage pp. 280-282. This last, though undoubtedly of Eastern origin (as is evident from the incident of the youth breaking through the wall of the king's palace, the common practice of Asiatic thieves since the days of Job xxiv, 26), may yet be considered as faithfully reflecting the universal belief in Europe during the Middle Ages, based upon such scripture texts as inculcate faith in an overruling Providence, directly controlling the destinies of every human being.

Conclusion.

The prince having related the story of the Ravens, his stepmother acknowledged her wickedness, through the fiend's incitement, and she was put to death. And thus was the child's life saved, and the emperor rewarded the Seven Wise Masters who had told the tales against the vile traitress the child's stepmother. The emperor remained a widower for the remainder of his life, for he durst no more deal with women, lest they should work further evil.

The following is a comparative table of the tales in (1) the two early English metrical versions of the *Seven Sages*, 13th and 14th centuries, edited by Weber and Wright; (2) the French metrical *Roman des Sept Sages*, about 1284, edited by Keller; (3) the Latin prose text, *Liber de Septem Sapientibus*, edited by Goedeke;¹ and (4) the Latin prose version, *Historia Septem Sapientum Roma*, Geneva, 1492, and its derivatives:

SEVEN WISE MASTERS. Ellis. Weber. Wright		ROMAN DES SEPT SAGES. Keller	LIBER DE VII SAP. Goedeke.	HIST. VII SAP. Copland, Rolland.
Queen 1	Tree and Branch	Id.	Id.	Id.
1 st Sage	Dog and Snake	Id.	Id.	Id.
Queen 2	Wild Boar	Queen 3	Id.	Id.
2 nd Sage	Hippocrates	Id.	Id.	5 th Sage
Queen 3	King's Treasury	Queen 5	Id.	Id.
3 rd Sage	Husband Shut Out	Id.	4 th Sage	2 nd Sage
Queen 4	King and Seneschal	Queen 2	Id.	Queen 6
4 th Sage	Wise Old Man	Id.	3 rd Sage	Id.
Queen 5	Merlin's Pillar	Queen 7	Id.	Id.
5 th Sage	Burgess and Magpie	Id.	Id.	3 rd Sage
Queen 6	VII Evil Councillors	Id.	Id.	Queen 4
6 th Sage	Widow Comforted	Id.	Id.	7 th Sage
Queen 7	Siege of Rome	Queen 4	...	Queen 6
7 th Sage	Two Dreams	Id.	...	Queen 7
Prince	Ravens	Id.	Id.	Id.
 {	Queen 7, Daughter	...
 {	7 th Sage, Stepmother	...

¹ Orient und Occident, iii, 385-423.

It will be observed that our old English versions have the same stories that occur in the *Sept Sages*, though not all in the same order; while the *Liber de Septem Sapientibus* has, in place of the Siege of Rome and the Dreams, two tales which reappear in several other texts represented in Goedeke's comparative table, and are as follows:

The Spoiled Daughter.

There was a soldier, who, having a pet daughter, disdained to correct her in youth. At length she became pregnant by a shield-bearer; and the soldier, not daring to take vengeance upon him, beat his daughter almost to death. When recovered, in her father's absence, she fled to a distant land. At last she was followed by her father, and found in the house of a certain prince. When the daughter observed this, she approached the lady of the land and the prince in whose friendly abode she sojourned, and said, concerning her father, that he was a low character, who had followed her through various countries to corrupt her. Then the wretched father was taken and hung from a gibbet. Observing that her father was now dead, she secretly went off to her own country, where she continued her evil life.

The Bad Stepmother.

There was a certain citizen, who had a son by his former wife. His stepmother hated him, and, that she might accomplish his destruction, she stole a golden vessel entrusted to the young man to keep, and concealed it in the straw bed in the youth's room. Some days after, the stepmother stirred up her husband to examine the bed in the young man's room. On this account, as well as on account of other misdeeds falsely alleged by the stepmother, the youth was drowned on a charge of attempted parricide. When the relatives of the drowned youth knew this, they slew the stepmother. The relatives of the stepmother slew the citizen, and thus son and stepmother and father died.

In the *Historia* a new story has been inserted, namely,

The Three Knights and the Lady,

for which see above, pp. 288, 289, and, to make room for it, the tales of the King and his Seneschal and the Siege of Rome have been very clumsily joined together.

Wright says that the Latin *Historia Septem Sapientum Roma* "appears to have been translated direct from the Hebrew (*Mishlé Sandabar*), and it served as the groundwork of all other mediæval versions." It is surprising how he could make such an assertion, since he has given, in the same essay in which it occurs, an

analysis of the Hebrew text of the Sindibād, from which the *Historia* differs as much as it does from all the other Eastern texts. It is true that four of the tales of the *Historia*—namely, the Dog and the Snake, the King and his Seneschal (first part of the Siege of Rome in this version), the Wild Boar, and the Burgess and his Magpie—are variants of tales belonging to the original Book of Sindibād, but they are also found in much earlier texts of the Wise Masters; and if it be conceded that the story of the Three Knights and the Lady is adapted from the Hebrew tale of the Hunchbacks (which is not at all probable see p. 289; and observe that the *Historia* dates about the end of the 15th century), it is surely very slight ground on which to base the theory of the Hebrew version being the source of this Latin prose text. As to the *Historia* forming the groundwork of “all other mediæval versions,” the comparative table in p. 351 shows that precisely the contrary is the fact that it was based upon mediæval versions. The cause of this mistake, in which Wright is far from being singular, can now be explained:

In the 13th century a French metrical version, entitled *Dolopathos*, was composed by a trouvère named Herbers, from a Latin work by a Cistercian monk, Johannes de Alta Silva. It was supposed by Des Longchamps and other investigators that the work of this monk was the *Historia Septem Sapientum Romæ*, and therefore that the variations occurring in *Dolopathos* were to be ascribed to Herbers. But Montaiglon, the editor of *Dolopathos*, among others, did not accept this view; he assumed two Latin sources: the *Historia*, by an unknown author, and the lost work of the monk of Alta Silva (Haute Seille). And Mussaffia has rendered this last view certain; the work of Johannes de Alta Silva having been discovered by him, in 1864, in the Imperial Library at Vienna, and found to be quite different from the *Historia*, but to correspond exactly with the *Dolopathos*. Johannes dedicates his *Opusculum de rege vel Septem Sapientibus* to Bishop Bertrand of Metz. Now Haute Seille at its foundation, in 1140, was assigned to the see of Toul, and in 1184 was transferred from Toul to Metz. Bertrand occupied the see of Metz from 1179 to his death, in 1212; and as Johannes would naturally dedicate his work to his own bishop, it would fall between 1184 and 1212; and probably wishing to commend himself to the new bishop, who was a lover of study, when the cloister passed to Metz, he wrote his work.¹

An Italian version, entitled *Erasto*, based upon current European texts, was printed, at Mantua, in 1558, of which a French translation, *Histoire Pitoyable du Prince Erastus*, was made in 1572. From the French it was rendered into English, under the title of *History of Prince Erastus and the Seven Wise Masters of Rome*, in 1674, by Francis Kirkman, a voluminous scribbler. This version comprises some tales which are not found in the earlier texts, but occur in the Italian novels and other collections.

The mediæval romance of the Seven Wise Masters must have been one of the most popular books in England during the 16th and 17th centuries; and even,

¹ Goedeke, in *Orient und Occident*, iii, 395.

among the common people, until comparatively recent times; judging from the numerous editions of the prose version which are preserved in our great libraries. The Latin *Historia* seems to have been translated into English, perhaps from a French rendering, in the beginning of the 16th century, and first printed by Wynkyn de Worde. A copy of this *editio princeps* in the British Museum commences thus:

Here begynneth thystorye of ye vii Wyse Maysters of rome conteynynge ryght fayre and ryght ioyous narracons and to ye reder ryght delectable;

and the colophon:

Thus endeth the treatyse of the seuen sages or wyse maysters of Rome. Emprinted in flet strete in ye sygne of the sone by me Wynkyn de worde. [410, black letter, 80 leaves, with several page woodcuts: *circa* 1505.]

According to Ellis, the *Seven Wise Masters* was “translated from the French into English, first printed by W. Copland, without date, but between 1548 and 1567.” It would appear, however, from the title of Copland’s edition (only one copy of which was known to exist, and it disappeared many years ago; I do not know whether it has turned up again), that it was a reprint of Wynkyn de Worde:

Here beginneth thystorye of the seuen wyse Maysters of Rome conteynynge ryght faire and ryght ioyous narracios, and to the reder ryght delectable. [Col.] Thus endeth the treatyse of the seuen sages or wyse Maysters of Rome. Imprinted at London in Flete Strete at the sygne of the Rose Garland, by me William Copland. [8vo, black letter, *circa* 1550.]

The black letter copy in the Glasgow University Library, which I have made use of occasionally in the course of these notes, is supposed to be a reprint of Copland’s edition, by Sanders, one of the early Glasgow printers, about the end of the 17th century. It has been well thumbed, and wants three leaves at the beginning, and probably one leaf at the end.

Besides the *editio princeps* of Wynkyn de Worde, there are copies of twelve other prose editions of the *Seven Wise Masters* in the British Museum, viz.— London, 1671, 8vo; 1684, 12mo; 1687, 8vo, B.L.; 1697, 8vo, B.L.; Glasgow (Robert Sanders, son of the printer above mentioned), 1713, 8vo; Newcastle,? 1760, 12mo; London,? 1780, 12mo; Boston, 1794, 12mo; London,? 1750, 12mo;? 1785, 12mo;? 1805, 12mo; and Warrington,? 1815, 12mo: the four last are chap-books. The Bodleian Library, Oxford, has two prose editions, 1653 and 1682; and a curious metrical version entitled: *Sage and prudente Saynges of the Seuen wyse Men*, by Robert Brenant, with a comment, London, 1553, small 8vo, black letter. In 1575 was printed at Edinburgh John Holland’s Scottish metrical version, but it was written in 1560. There are imperfect copies of this work, dated 1620, in the Advocates’ Library, Edinburgh, and in the Glasgow University Library. It was

reprinted (in black letter, 4to), with an Introduction by David Laing, for the Bannatyne Club, in 1835.

A wretched catchpenny imitation of the *Wise Masters* was published in 1663, under the title of *The Seven Wise Mistresses of Rome*, which was reprinted as a chap-book, within quite recent years, at Dublin.

No. XXXIII

DOLOPATHOS; OR, THE KING AND THE SEVEN SAGES.

HAVING furnished some account of the group of Western texts of the *Seven Wise Masters*, as they are fairly represented by our early English metrical versions, I now present, in conclusion, an abstract of another and very different text—moreover, the earliest form in which the romance appeared in Europe entitled *Dolopathos; sive, de Rege et eptem Sapientibus* (the work of Johannes de Alta Silva, referred to in p. 354, above), edited by Professor Hermann Oesterley, and published at Strassburg, 1873; of which no description has hitherto appeared in English.¹

Introduction.

THERE was formerly in Sicily a wise and just king, called Dolopathos. The Roman emperor Augustus having bestowed on him Agrippa, the sister of the empress, the result of their union was a son. Before his birth it was declared by “the diviners and mathematicians” that the child would be a son; that he would become a great philosopher, suffer many evils from snares laid for him, but rule in his father’s place, and become a worshipper of the true God. The child was named Luscinius, and left seven years with the nurses, after which the task of his education was undertaken by Virgil. The great wisdom and learning of Luscinius caused him to be envied by those who could not equal him, and he was invited to a banquet where they designed to poison him. He went, accompanied by Virgil, and when the poisoned cup was presented, Luscinius at once declared its nature, and challenged his enemies to taste it. They knew they must now die of poison, or be accused by Virgil to Caesar, and slain; so they drank the cup, and died.

Luscinius looks one day into the astronomical books, and suddenly falls senseless on the floor. By the aid of Virgil and others the prince recovers, and informs his tutor that he found from the astronomical rules that his mother had died, that his father had married again, and that ambassadors were then on the way to convey him home from Virgil;— these events had caused him sorrow, and

¹ This text forms part of a miscellaneous MS. volume preserved in the Library of the Athenaeum at Luxemburg.

he had swooned. Virgil comforts him, and induces him to promise that, after leaving him, he would speak to no one on the way home, or in his country, or to the king or the queen, or to the princes, or to any one until he again saw him (*i.e.* Virgil). The messengers arrive, and take Luscinius away with them. Discovering that he is dumb, they fear the king's wrath, but he keeps them from suicide by signs, and by writing that by-and-by he should recover the use of his tongue.

Meanwhile Dolopathos makes great preparations for the reception of his son, who at length arrives, and is greeted with loud strains of music, but it is not discovered that he is dumb. Next morning the king has a private interview with his son, whom he proposes to crown in his own stead, but the prince does not reply. The king is angry; Luscinius shows signs of affection, upon which the king rages against Virgil and the messengers. Luscinius writes that he is dumb through grief at his mother's death. The king's counsellors advise the use of music, the company of girls, wine, good food, pleasant objects, etc. The queen enters, and undertakes to carry out this plan. In the queen's apartments the immodest bearing of the damsels towards the prince failing to shake his constancy, the queen herself tempts him, with amorous gestures, but has finally to confess to her maidens that she has also failed, and they advocate revenge—propose to accuse him of attempting to violate the queen: “varium et semper mutabile femina!” So they scratch and disfigure themselves before Luscinius, tear their clothes, and the queen rushes with clamour into the king's council-room, and accuses the prince—her maids attest the truth of her complaint, and Dolopathos expresses his grief, sorrow, and anger.

Luscinius is brought forward, and is still dumb and unmoved. Sentence is demanded by the queen's relatives and friends. Dolopathos calls upon the assembled grandees to decide. At first they say that the laws do not provide for such a case, but being urged, they pronounce sentence of death by burning, which is ratified by Dolopathos. A great fire is accordingly kindled next day, but the people, captivated by the appearance of Luscinius, murmur at the severity of the sentence, and no one is willing to obey the king's command to throw Luscinius into the flames. Just then one of the Seven Wise Men, by chance, comes riding up on a white mule, and, ascertaining the cause of the great assemblage, remonstrates with the king on his credulity and injustice, and relates the story of

The Dog and the Snake,

which is common to all the Western and most of the Eastern texts. The king then remands his son to prison. But Next Day the counsellors again sentence him to be burnt, and when a great fire was prepared and a crowd had assembled to witness the execution, another of the Seven Wise Men opportunely comes to the spot, and obtains a reprieve for Luscinius by relating the story of

The King's Treasury,

which reappears in later Western texts , (see p. 330), but is here related with variations: After the king discovers that his treasury has been robbed, he takes counsel of a wise old man, who had formerly been himself a great robber, but, though now deprived of sight, often gave the king excellent advice. The old man suggests that a quantity of green grass should be taken into the treasury and placed on a fire; then, closing the gate, the king should walk round the building, and observe whether smoke escaped through any part of the walls. This the king does, and perceiving smoke issuing from between stones which were not cemented, the precise place where the robbers had gained entrance was at once ascertained. The youth's device of stealing his father's body (omitted in other texts, but occurring in Herodotus and in the Indian story of Ghata and Karpara—see p. 332) is peculiar: The king, still acting by the old man's advice, causes the corpse to be guarded by twenty horsemen in white armour and twenty in black. The youth disguises himself, one side in white and the other in black, so that he is mistaken as he rides past the two lines of horsemen by each as belonging to their own party.

On the Third Morning the king and his princes assemble as before; a great fire is kindled and the king's son is about to be cast into it, when, lo, an aged man of reverend aspect, on a black horse, and bearing a green olive branch, advances to the king. On learning the cause of the concourse, he says: "I am a Roman by nation, and am called one of the Seven Wise Men. Out of the treasury of my heart I offer things new and old to the kings and princes of the world. Seeing chance has brought me hither, if thou wilt hear me, I will tell thee a story old, indeed, but perhaps new to thee." The king commands silence, and the wise man begins the story of

The Best Friend.

In the early days of Rome, a king, dying, left the throne to a young son. A protracted siege soon followed; the city was oppressed by famine; and the king, acting on the advice of counsellors of his own age, ordered all the old men and women to be slain, as they consumed food, but were useless for defence. All who concealed their parents were also to be put to death. Thus the sons became more cruel than the enemy to their fathers. One wise old man was concealed in an underground cave by his son, whose wife was aware of the fact, but with an oath to keep the secret. By-and-by peace was concluded. The young king had no advisers skilled in law and wisdom. His young counsellors drew him into every wickedness; vice ran riot in the realm, the impious triumphed, and the innocent suffered. The country now had cause to remember the saying of the wise man: "Woe to the state whose king is a boy, and whose princes feast together till morning." But the youth who had concealed his father brought before him all

causes referred to him. The old man pointed out the proper decisions, and thus the youth came into favour, was able somewhat to restore order and law, and was made chief counsellor. Hence arose hatred towards him, and plots were laid by his former associates. They suspected that his father was alive and taught him this wisdom. Openly they durst not say so. They persuaded the king to appoint a time for plays, games, and feasts, and to order every one to bring forward (1) his best friend, (2) his worst enemy, (3) as good a mimic and (4) as faithful a servant as he had. This was agreed to. Some brought as the friend a father, others a wife, and so on. But the youth, instructed by his father, who detected the evil design, brought forward a dog, an ass, his little son, and his wife. At the noise of the people and the sound of the music, the stolid ass became excited, and made the palace echo with his braying. Soon all were attracted to the spot. Ridiculed by the wits, the youth, when questioned by the king, said:

“My dog is my best friend. He does not fear to accompany me wherever I go, encountering with me the danger of streams and robbers, and the sharp fangs of wild beasts. For me, he despises even death itself, and often refreshes me and my guests with the excellent game he captures. Away from me, he is never happy, beside me, never sad. Truly, O king, I have nowhere found so faithful and sincere a friend, nor do I think you have any better.

“I have brought forward to you my ass, the most faithful and patient of servants. For he, every morning, going out to the forest, returns thence laden with firewood; when this is removed from his back, he carries corn to the mill, and brings it back ground; then he sets off with the buckets to the well, and returns with them full. Although he does all this day by day, without murmur or reluctance, he demands no costly dress, or expensive food, but is satisfied if a little hay or chaff follows his daily toil. I ask, O king, where shall I find such a servant? Clearly, nowhere.

“But whom, as a mimic, could I bring forward better than my little son? For he daily shows me new sports, and, while he attempts to imitate what he sees or hears, puts on comic expressions, mumbles the words he cannot utter plainly, and when he completely fails to say what he thinks, expresses it by signs and bodily gestures. In the same hour, we find him joyful and sad, weeping and laughing, and that not artificially, as with others, but he acts simply, incited by his nature and age, and looking for no reward from me.

“Finally, I have brought here my wife, the greatest enemy I have.” But the wife, seeing she had been reserved for this indignity, remembering the confidence, pity, and humanity exercised towards her husband and his father, was goaded into fury, and could scarcely allow her husband to finish the words. “O worst and most ungrateful of men,” said she, “who, unmindful of the kindness and pity which I have shown for many years now towards your father, withdrawn from death and kept in a cave— now to regard me before the king and all the people as an enemy!” But the young man replied:

“You see, O king, that what I said concerning my wife is true, who, for a single word, both betrays my concealed father and brings me under sentence of death. So a certain very wise old man, instructing his son, commanded him to be especially on his guard against her who lay in his bosom, that is, his wife, wishing it to be understood that she was a false friend. For against open enemies it is easy to be on the watch, but no one can avoid a wife, or fair-faced friend, who is always about, because they pretend to inordinate love by their words, and plan snares in their hearts.”

But the king, having admired the skill of the young man, and understanding the truth of his words, anticipated his accusers: “Go,” said he to him; “you and your father are safe; delay not to bring him to the games.” The old man was therefore led from the cave, and on account of his surprising wisdom, the king appointed him a judge and father of the city and country. In a short time he restored the ancient condition of things, expelled vice, implanted good, restored quiet, and, dying, left behind him many followers of virtue.

“Hear then,” adds the wise man, “my story ends, and going away, O king, I ask from thee nought else but that you grant your son his life for this day, knowing that something is concealed which, if you knew, will free you from murder and your son from punishment.”

This story, found in different forms in mediaeval works, and probably of Talmudic origin, is reproduced, with variations, in the *Gesta Romanorum*, Tale 124, to this effect: A certain noble knight, having offended his king, is to be pardoned on condition that he enter the royal hall of audience on foot and riding at the same time, and bring with him his most attached friend, the best jester, and his most deadly foe. One evening a pilgrim comes to the knight’s castle to claim his hospitality, and after he has retired, the knight, saying to his wife that pilgrims often carried much gold about with them, proposes to rob and murder their guest, which has the lady’s approval. But the knight, rising early next morning, dismisses the pilgrim, and, killing a calf, he cuts it into pieces, and puts them into a sack, which he then gives to his wife, desiring her to hide it, saying that only the head, legs, and arms of the pilgrim were in the sack—the rest he had himself concealed in the stable. On the day appointed, the knight proceeds to the king’s palace, accompanied by his dog, his child, and his wife. He enters the royal hall, with one leg over his dog, as if he was riding. The king is amused with his ingenuity, and then asks him for his best friend. The knight, drawing his sword, wounds his dog, who runs away, howling with pain; but on the knight calling him back, he immediately returns, and fawns upon him. “This,” says he, “is my true and faithful friend.” Then the king asks for his worst enemy; upon which the knight strikes his wife a severe blow. Enraged at this affront, the lady exclaims: “Why dost thou smite me? Dost thou forget that thou didst slay a pilgrim in thy house?” The knight then gave her a second blow. “Wretch!” she

cries, “dost thou think I cannot tell where I placed the sack containing parts of the murdered man, and that the rest of him lies in the stable?” Messengers are despatched to search the places indicated by the woman, and they return with the flesh and bones of the calf, upon which the king bestows great gifts and honours on the knight, and ever after held him in great esteem.

On the Fourth Morning the prince is again led out to be burnt, when an aged man, robed in a toga, and seated on a mule, presents himself before the king, and relates the story of

The Hard Creditor.

There was once a nobleman who had a strongly fortified castle and many other possessions. His wife died, leaving him an only daughter, whom he caused to be instructed in all the liberal arts, so far as wisdom could be acquired from the discipline and books of the philosophers, in order that she might thus know how to secure her inheritance. In this hope he was not deceived. She became skilled in all the liberal arts, and also acquired a perfect knowledge of magic. After this it came to pass that the nobleman was seized with an acute fever, took to his bed, and died, bequeathing all his goods to his daughter. Possessed of her father's wealth, she resolved she would marry no man unless his wisdom was equal to her own. She had many noble suitors, but, denying none, she offered to share her couch with any one who should give her a hundred marks of silver, and when the morrow came, if they were mutually agreeable, their nuptials should be duly celebrated. Many youths came to her on this condition, and paid the stipulated sum of money, but she enchanted them by her magical arts, placing an owl's feather beneath the pillow of him who was beside her, when he at once fell into a profound sleep, and so remained until at daybreak she took away the feather. In this way she spoiled many of their money, and acquired much treasure. It happened that a certain young man of good family, having been thus deluded, resolved to circumvent the damsel, so, proceeding to a rich slave [freedman?], whose foot he had formerly cut off in a passion, he asked him for a loan of one hundred marks, which the lame one readily gave, but on this condition, that if the money was not paid within a year, he might take the weight of one hundred marks from the flesh and bones of the young man. To this the youth lightly agreed, and signed the bond with his seal. With the hundred marks he went a second time to the damsel, and removing by accident the owl's feather from under his pillow, thus did away the spell, and, having accomplished his purpose, he was next day married to her in presence of their friends.

Forthwith prosperous times came to the young man, he forgot his creditor, and did not pay the money within the appointed time; whereupon the lame one rejoiced that he had found an opportunity of revenge. He appeared before the king, who was then on the throne, raised an action against the youth, exhibited the

bond as evidence, and demanded justice to be executed. The king, though horrified at the bargain, had no alternative but to order the youth to come before him to answer the action of the accuser. Then the youth, at length mindful of the debt, and afraid of the king's authority, went to court, with a very great crowd of his friends, and plenty of gold and silver. The accuser exhibited the bond, which the youth acknowledged, and, by order of the king, the chiefs pronounced sentence, namely, that it should be lawful for the lame one to act as specified in the bond, or to demand as much money as he pleased for the redemption of the youth. The king therefore asked the lame one if he would spare the youth on receiving double money. He refused, and the king was attempting for many days to prevail upon him to agree, when, lo, the youth's wife, having put on man's attire, and with her countenance and voice altered by magical arts, dismounted from a horse before the king's palace, and approached and saluted the king. Being asked who she was, and whence she came, she replied that she was a soldier, born in the most distant part of the world, that she was skilled in law and equity, and was a keen critic of judgments. The king, being glad at this, ordered the supposed soldier to be seated beside him, and committed to her for final decision the lawsuit between the lame one and the youth. Both parties being summoned, she said: "For thee, O lame one, according to the judgment of the king and the princes, it is lawful to take away the weight of one hundred marks of flesh. But what will you gain, unless indeed death, if you slay the youth? It is better that you accept for him seven or ten times the money." But he said he would not accept ten times, or even one thousand times, the sum. Then she ordered a very white linen cloth to be brought, and the youth to be stripped of his clothing, bound hand and foot, and stretched thereon. Which done, "Cut," said she to the lame one, "with your iron, where ever you wish your weight of marks. But if you take away more or less than the exact weight by even the amount of a needle's point, or if one drop of blood stains the linen, know that forthwith thou shalt perish by a thousand deaths, and, cut into a thousand pieces, thou shalt become the food of the beasts and the birds, and all thy kin shall suffer the same penalty, and thy goods shall become state property." He grew pale at this dreadful sentence, and said: "Since there is no one, God alone excepted, who can be so deft of hand, but would take away too much or too little, I am unwilling to attempt what is so uncertain. Therefore I set the youth free, remit the debt, and give him one thousand marks for reconciliation." Thus, then, the youth was set free by the prudence of his wife, and returned in joy to his own house.

"Who, then," adds the sage, "may not hope, O king, that this youth may be freed by skill? Wishing that you may be warned by this example, I ask that you will prolong the life of your son till to-morrow." And the king grants his petition.

We have here, in all probability, the oldest European version of the story of the "pound of flesh," which forms part of the plot of Shakspeare's Merchant of

Venice. The tale of the bond is of Eastern origin, and may have come into France by way of Italy, or through the Moors of Spain. Ser Giovanni has adapted it in *Il Peccerone*, Day iv, Novel 1, a work written about 1378, but not printed till 1558. In this Italian version, in place of the magical influence of the owl's feather, the lady drugs her suitor's wine with soporific ingredients, and a Jew lends him ten thousand ducats on the same condition as the cripple in the above. When the stipulated period has elapsed, the Jew refuses to accept ten times the money, and at this crisis, according to Dunlop, "the new-married lady arrives, disguised as a lawyer, and announces, as was the custom in Italy, that she had come to decide difficult cases; for in that age delicate points were not determined by the ordinary judges of the provinces, but by doctors of law, who were called from Bologna and other places at a distance." The pretended lawyer decides that the Jew is entitled to his pound of flesh, but should be put to death if he drew one drop of blood from his debtor.— The story of the bond occurs in a somewhat different form in the Anglican *Gesta Romanomm*, and also in the old ballad of Gernutus, or the Jew of Venice. It is the 13th of the Pleasing Stories in Gladwin's *Persian Moonstee*, and forms the leading incident of the Persian tale of the Qāzī of Emessa;— in the latter the debtor is a Muslim merchant, and the hard creditor is a Jew, enamoured of the merchant's virtuous wife.

On the Fifth Morning, the queen having renewed her complaint, accusing Dolopathos of being dilatory, unjust, and unworthy of the name and honour of king, for having allowed so shameless a youth to live so many days, the prince is again about to be burnt, when another of the Seven Wise Men appears, and relates the story of

The Widow's Son.

There was a certain Roman king once advancing with his army against his enemies, who had seized a very large part of his kingdom; and it happened that his army passed through a certain village. There a poor widow, with an only son, had a little house, one only of the many in the world. She had a little hen; and as the army passed before the house, the king's son, a mere boy, let fly the hawk, which, after the manner of the nobles, was perched on his hand, at the widow's hen. The hawk was choking the wretched little creature with its crooked claws, when the widow's son ran to aid the little bird, and killed the hawk with a stroke from a stick. On this account the king's son was indignant, and raging in his fury, in revenge for the hawk, he thrust through and killed the widow's son. What then could the poor widow do, deprived of her only son, and her only property? In her excitement, she ran after the king, followed him with tears, and demanded with her voice and sobs that her son unjustly slain should be avenged. The king, being of a mild and pitying disposition, was greatly affected. Stopping, therefore, he pleasantly and quietly advised the widow to await his return from the enemy,

saying: "Then, as you wish, I shall avenge your son." But the widow said: "And what will happen if you fall in war? Who will avenge my son?" "I shall entrust that to him who shall succeed me in the kingdom." "And what reward," said she, "wilt thou receive, if another avenge him who was slain when you were alive and reigning?" "None," said he. Then said the widow: "Do you, therefore, what you would command to others, so that you may acquire praise from men and reward from the gods." The king, moved as well by the argument of the widow as by pity, put off the war, and returned to the city. When it was known that his son was the murderer of the widow's son, "Thy hen," said he, "as I think, was fully compensated for by the death of the hawk. But for the dead son, I give thee choice of two things: For either, if you wish, I will slay my son, or, if you rather decree that he should live, I give you him in place of the dead son, that he may cherish you as his mother, adore you as queen, honour you as lady, and may serve you all the days of your life." So she, deeming it more useful for her that the king's son should live than die, took him instead of the dead one, and was transferred from the hut to the palace, and exchanged her rags and apron for purple robes.

"See, O king," adds the sage, "imitate the action of this most just and pious monarch; consider how you can hold to the rigour of justice, and yet by your prudence save your son. But if you do not wish to alter the sentence of your chiefs, this at least I may obtain from you, that you allow him the space of this day. For to-morrow, as to-day, you can easily find wood and fire with which to burn your son."

A similar tale to this last is related of more than one Oriental potentate. Several of the khalifs are represented by historians as being equally strict dispensers of justice, and the incident is probably a historical fact.

On the Sixth Morning, the prince is once more about to be thrown into the fire, when "a certain old man of venerable hoariness, dressed in a Roman toga, passing with gentle step through the centre of the crowd of men and women, and admired of many, came to the king." After learning the occasion of such a large assemblage of people, he related to the king and his grandees the story of

The Master-Thief.

A very famous and cruel robber, having amassed much wealth, settled down to a quiet and orderly life; but finding his three sons resolved to follow the same profession, he refused to grant them a farthing of his money. The youngest son, concealed in a bundle of fodder, is introduced into the royal stables, and makes off at night with the queen's celebrated steed and his valuable trappings, but is observed and followed. He and his brothers are caught. The father refuses to

ransom them; but the queen offers to set them free if the old robber will relate some of the most terrible incidents of his former career.

He relates how he and his comrades were captured by a giant whose abode they had plundered; how the giant ate them one by one; how he himself blinded the giant while pretending to cure his sore eyes, and how he eluded the giant for several days by now clinging to the beams of the roof, now taking refuge among his flock of sheep, from which he selected one daily for his food. At length the giant threw him a ring, which he put on his linger, and which caused him to shout, "Here I am! here I am!" thus betraying his whereabouts. As the ring could not be removed, he cut off his finger, and the spell ceased.— Escaped at length, he comes upon the bodies of three robbers who had been lately hanged. He reaches the hut of a poor woman, whom ghuls had ordered to cook her son for their revels; he takes away one of the dead robbers and gives it to the old woman as a substitute for her son, and then occupies the place of the body he had removed, to conceal the trick. The ghuls came, however, and seizing him, were about to devour him, when, lo, a sound as of a loud rushing wind caused them to vanish, and thus he escaped a second great peril.

A remarkably close parallel to this story is found in Campbell's *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, [vol. i, pp. 145-148](#), in the Tale of Connal, but the sequence of the incidents is curiously changed: Connal saw, in the upper part of a cave, a fine fair woman, "who was thrusting the flesh stake at a big lump of a baby, and every thrust she would give the spit, the babe would laugh, and she would begin to weep. Connal spoke, and he said: 'Woman, what ails thee at the child without reason?' 'Oh,' said she, 'since thou art an able man thyself, kill the baby and set it on this stake, till I roast it for the giant.' He caught hold of the baby, and he put a plaid that he had on about the babe, and he hid it at the side of the cave. There were a great many dead bodies at the side of the cave, and he set one of them on the stake, and the woman was roasting it. Then was heard under ground trembling and thunder coming, and he would rather that he was out. Here he sprang in the place of the corpse that was at the fire, in the very midst of the bodies. The giant came, and he asked: 'Was the roast ready?' He began to eat, and he said: 'Fiu fau hoagrigh! It's no wonder that thy own flesh is tough; it is tough on thy brat.' When the giant had eaten that one, he went to count the bodies; and the way he had of counting them was, to catch hold of them by the two smalls of the leg, and to toss them past the top of his head; and he counted them backwards and forwards thus three or four times; and as he found Connal somewhat heavier, and that he was soft and fat, he took that slice out of him from the back of his head to his groin. He roasted this at the fire, and he ate it, and then he fell asleep. Connal winked to the woman to put the flesh stake in the fire. She did this, and when the spit grew white after it was red, he thrust the spit through the giant's heart, and the giant was dead." We have here a distorted version of the exploit of the Master-Thief of our tale— the blinding of the giant,

which, again, is evidently taken from the similar adventure of Ulysses with Polyphemus. The man-eating giant, or ghūl, may be compared with world-wide legends of dragons and rākshasas that devoured citizens— preferably beautiful maidens, at the rate of one each week or month;— the oldest extant form being found in a beautiful episode of the *Mahābharata*, which has been rendered into graceful English verse by Dean Milman, under the title of the Brāhman's Lament.— To return to the Tale of Connal: "Then Connal went and he set the woman on her path homewards, and then he went home himself. His stepmother sent him and her son to steal the whitefaced horse from the king of Italy. . . A company came out, and they were caught. The binding of the three smalls was laid on them straitly and painfully. 'Thou big red man,' said the king, 'wast thou ever in so hard a case as that?'" Connal then relates his adventures, being promised pardon if he could tell of his having been in a worse plight during his past career.

On the Seventh Morning, the execution of the prince is prevented by the appearance of another old man, who, after the usual questions and replies, relates, as an example of the malice of women, the story of

The Swan-Children.

A young man, in eager pursuit of a stag white as snow, chased it into a deep and distant forest, where it escaped. In attempting to retrace his way, he came upon a fountain in which a beautiful nymph was bathing. In her hand she held a golden chain, wherein lay her power. Snatching away the chain, the youth seized the nymph, and she was constrained to become his wife. During the night she awoke her husband, being ashamed at learning the fact from the stars that she had conceived six sons and a daughter. He comforts her, and brings her home to his castle. His mother dislikes the wife, and plots her ruin; but being unable to accomplish it at once, she contrives a horrible scheme. The wedded nymph gives birth to six sons and a daughter, with golden chains, like collars, round their necks. The grandmother sends the infants away to be killed by a trusty servant, whose conscience smites him, and he leaves them unharmed at the foot of a tree, where they are found by a philosopher, taken to his cave, and fed for seven years. The grandmother presents to her son seven little whelps as the offspring of his wife. In horror, he orders his wife to be degraded, and exposed to all indignities at the hands of the people. For seven long years she is thus treated, until she becomes as ugly and wretched as she had formerly been fair and happy.

When out one day hunting in the woods, the father observes seven children with golden chains on their necks. He pursues them, and they suddenly disappear. He reports the strange sight, and his mother in alarm questions the servant, who confesses that he had not killed the babes as he had promised. For three days this servant is sent by her to scour the woods for the children, but in

vain. On the fourth day he finds the six boys, transformed into swans, at play in a river, and their sister on the bank holding their golden chains. While she is watching the frolics of the swans, the servant steals up to her and snatches away the chains, but she escapes with her own chain. On his return, the joyful grandmother takes the chains to a goldsmith, and requests him to make a little cup out of the gold. In vain the workman tries fire and hammer; the chains yield to neither, save that a link of one of them appears a little battered. The goldsmith weighs them, takes the same quantity of other gold, makes it into a cup and gives it to the old woman, who conceals it and keeps it unused.

By the loss of their chains it becomes impossible for the swans to resume their proper form. They lament their condition, and, with their sister, now also transformed into a swan, they fly away to seek some lake or river suitable for a permanent abode; and select the lake beside which their father's castle stands. The nobleman is delighted with their beauty and the sweetness of their music, and gives strict command for their protection. Food is also daily thrown to them. But their sister, resuming her human form, goes every day to beg at the castle, like an orphan. She divides the alms with the wretched nymph, her mother, who is kept degraded and loathsome at the castle; she weeps over her and pities her, still ignorant of their relationship. Other portions of the alms she divides with the swans, her brothers, who ever meet her with joyous demonstrations. At night she returns to the castle, and sleeps with her wretched mother. It soon begins to be whispered that the orphan is like the nobleman's wife, and, questioned by him, she confesses that she knows not her parents, but tells the story of the swans, her brothers. The grandmother becomes again alarmed, and at her order the servant follows the girl to the side of the lake, where he attempts to kill her with a sword. At this juncture the nobleman, who is returning from the field, comes up, and strikes the sword out of the servant's hand. In his fear, the servant relates the whole story of the exposure of the children, the theft of the chains, and so on. The grandmother is compelled to produce the cup; the goldsmith is sent for, and the chains are restored. The swans now resume the human form, excepting the one whose chain had the battered ring;— he continued still in the form of a swan, and is the same, so celebrated in story, who, with his golden chain, draws the armed soldier in the little boat. Thus the father recovered his children, and the children were restored to their father. The degraded mother was restored to dignity, and, with care, in time recovered her former beauty, while the wicked old crone was condemned to suffer the lot she had devised for her unfortunate but innocent daughter-in-law.

This beautiful fairy tale, under the title of Helyas, the Knight of the Swan, and considerably amplified and modified, was one of the favourite romances during mediæval times. The golden chain which the damsel wore round her neck having been obtained by the young nobleman, and thus compelling her to submit to his will, may be compared to the feather dress of the fairies in the Persian tale

of King Bahram Ghūr and the Perī Hasn Bānū, and in the better-known Arabian tale of Hasan of Basra. In like manner, in Ralston's *Russian Folk Tales*, a youth discovers on the sea shore twelve birds which turn into maidens, and he steals the shift of the eldest, who must, in consequence, become his wife.— In the Farō islands it is still believed that the seal casts off its skin every ninth night, and becomes a maiden; should her skin be stolen she must continue in human form. And in the Shetland islands the superstition is current (according to Hibbert) that when mermaids wish to visit the upper world, "they put on the *ham*, or skin, of some fish, but woe to those who lose their *ham*, for then are all hopes of return annihilated, and they must stay where they are."— The six children of our tale who were deprived of their chains immediately became swans, but could not return to human form until their chains were restored; yet the damsel caught bathing in the fountain, when the nobleman took possession of her chain, underwent no transformation— a piece of inconsistency common enough in fairy tales.

This tale of the Swan-Children and of the inveterate malice of their grandmother may be a Western survival of a myth which was the common heritage of the whole Aryan race. In Miss Frere's *Old Deccan Days*— a very entertaining collection of modern versions of ancient Indian fictions the story of "[Truth's Triumph](#)" presents a curious parallel to the leading incident of our tale: The twelve wives of a rāja, envious of his new wife, who had borne him one hundred boys and a girl, at one time, resolve to destroy them. A nurse is bribed to throw them on a dung-heap to be devoured by rats, and put stones in their cradles. They persuade the rāja that his favourite wife has given birth to stones. The rats foster the children, but some years afterwards they are discovered and thrown into a well, and so on. Ultimately they are restored to the rāja, who puts all the envious rānīs to death.— In the Norse tale of "Twelve Wild Ducks" (who are so many princes thus transformed), the old and spiteful queen, jealous of her son's young wife Snow White and Rosy Red, takes away her baby, and accuses her to her son of having killed and eaten it. She does the same each time the princess has a baby. At length the children are discovered in a well. And the Arabian tale of the Three Sisters who envied their Youngest Sister must be well known, in which the three baby boys and the baby girl are successively delivered to a servant to be destroyed, but are providentially preserved.

On the Eighth Morning, the king, having been again bitterly reproached by his wife for listening to the idle tales of old men, and allowing his son to live, declares that he will throw him into the flames with his own hands, if others are still unwilling to do so; but, just as he is about to commit this terrible crime, the philosopher Virgil rides up, is greeted by his pupil Luscinius, and relates the story of

The Husband Shut Out,

which differs from the old English metrical versions in the catastrophe: instead of leaving her husband to be taken up by the watchmen, the woman admits him, after he has solemnly promised to allow her to go out whenever she wished. (See [p. 332.](#))

Conclusion.

Having ended his story, the sage orders the prince to be unfettered and richly robed, and Luscinus then informs his father of the cause of his silence, of the lascivious conduct of the queen and her maidens, and why they had plotted his destruction. The king commands his wife and her damsels to be thrown into the fire prepared for the prince. Dolopathos and Virgil die the same year; the ashes of the king are inurned at Palermo, and those of the philosopher at Mantua. Luscinus ascends the throne, governs his subjects well and wisely, and finally is converted to the Christian faith.

No. XXXIV

ADDITIONAL NOTE.

The Tank of Trial — p. 250.— I understand, from Professor Comparetti's note on Nakhshabī's story of the Father-in-Law (*Researches*, etc, p. 41), that the 15th tale of the *Suka Saptatī*' is similar to the version I have cited from Cardonne's *Mélanges* in the incident of the "water trial," to which a close parallel is found in the legendary "life" of Virgilius, as follows (from Thorns' *English Prose Romances*, [ii](#), [pp. 34-36](#)):

Than made Virgilius at Rome a metall serpente with his cunnyng, that who so euer put his hande in the throte of the serpente, was to sware his cause ryght and trewe; and if hys cause were false he shulde nat plucke his hande out a geyne; and if it were trewe they shulde plucke it out a geyne without any harme doynge. So it fortunod that there was a knyght of Lumbardye that mystrusted his wife with one of his men that was moost set by the conseyte of his wyfe: but she excused hyr selfe ryght noblye and wysely. And she consented to goo with hym to Rome to that serpent, and there to take hyr othe that she was not gyilty of that, that he put apon hyr. And therto consented the knyght: and as they were bothe in the carte, and also hyr man with hyr, she sayd to the man; that when he cam to Rome that he shulde clothe him with a foles-cote, and dysgyse hym in such maner that they shulde nat knowve hym, and so dyd he; and when the day was come that he shulde come to the serpent, he was there present. And Virgilius knowinge the falsenes of the woman by his cunnyng of egromancy, and than

sayd Virgilius to the woman: “With drawe your othe and swere nat;” but she wolde nat do after hym, but put hyr hande into the serpentis mouthe: and when hyr hande was in, she sware before hyr husbunde that she had no more to do with hym than with that fole that stode hyr by: and by cause that she sayd trowthe she pulled out hyr hande a geyne out of the throte of the serpent nat hurt: and than departed the knyght home, and trusted her well euer after. And Virgilius hauing therat great spyte and anger that the woman hade so escaped destroyed the serpent: for thus scaped the lady a waye fro that great daunger. And spake Virgilius, and sayde: that the women be ryght wyse to enmagen ungraceousenes, but in goodnes they be but innocentes.

“It is curious,” says Mr. Thorns, “that at this day there is a chapel at Rome called Santa Maria, built in the first ages of the church, which is likewise denominated ‘Bocca della verita,’ on account of a large round mask, with an enormous mouth, fixed up in the vestibule. Tradition says that in former times the Romans, in order to give a more solemn confirmation to oaths, were wont to put their hands into this mouth, and if a person took a false oath his hand would be bitten off.”



[Home](#)

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