

PREFACE

Galland translated the "Thousand and One Nights," he had only a small portion of the original work before him; and as all the English editions now obtainable, except that of Lane, are simply translated from Galland's version, they are equally incomplete. The masterly edition of Mr. Lane, made from the best Egyptian editions, would, however, leave nothing to be desired if he had not been limited for space, which forced him to omit several highly interesting stories. Again, different versions of the original book include very different tales, and therefore it occurred to the Editor of the present volume that a series of the best fairy tales which Galland and Lane have not included, might not be uninteresting to English readers; and should this volume be favourably received, ample materials exist for a second series of equal interest, without touching the stones which are, properly speaking, novelettes rather than fairy tales. It may be mentioned that since this volume was first projected, a new and complete translation from the Arabic of the entire work has been announced as nearly ready for publication; but it is obvious that, apart from its bulk and costliness, the new work is intended for scholars only, and by no means for the general public.

Of the six stories in the present volume, the first two are derived from Weil's German version, and are believed to have never appeared in English before. The remainder were translated by Jonathan Scott at the beginning of the present century, the first from an Indian and the remainder from a Syrian manuscript. It now remains to make such preliminary remarks on each of the tales here published as appear to be absolutely necessary.

I. *The Adventures of Zaher and Ali.* This story is remarkable for its moral tone, which is far higher than customary in Arabian tales, as well as for the friendly manner in which Christians are mentioned in it. There can be little doubt, from the description of the island to which Zaher was carried by the genius after leaving King Amrad, that we have a hyperbolical though not wholly incorrect description of the Island of Teneriffe, probably written long before it was known to Europeans.

II. *Joodar of Cairo and Mahmood of Tunis.* Joodar's meeting with the Moors is almost the same adventure as that related in Lane's "Story of Joodar"; but the present tale presents us with no other points of similarity. The accounts of enchanted cities and underground passages, etc., in the "Thousand and One Nights" appear to reflect the impression made by the fading glories of Egypt upon the Arab conquerors.

III. *The Labourer and the Chair.* In the collection of Eastern Tales by Petit de la Croix, called the "Thousand and One Days," there is a similar story of an impostor with a flying box, who passes himself off as the Prophet Mohammed. But he is more unfortunate than the labourer, for he burns his box with fireworks, and is thus prevented from ever returning to the princess.

IV. *Mazin of Khorassan*. This story is nearly the same as Lane's "Hasan of El Basrah"; but the account of the hero's adventures after setting out in search of his wife differs so much that it has been thought worth while to include Scott's story in the present volume. After the first few pages, Mazin is always spoken of, without any explanation, as "Mazin of Bassorah." It therefore seemed better to add a few words transferring the scene of the flight of Mazin's wife to Bagdad, a more appropriate locality than either.

The Islands of Wah-wak, seven years' journey from Bagdad, in the story of Hasan, have receded to a distance of a hundred and fifty years' journey in that of Mazin. There is no doubt that the Ara Islands, near New Guinea, are intended; for the wonderful fruits which grow there are birds of Paradise, which settle in flocks on the trees at sunset and sunrise, uttering this very cry.

V. *Abu Neut and Abu Neuteen*. This story is chiefly interesting as combining three others; viz., "Aboo Kcer and Aboo Seer," "The Envier and the Envied," and "The Jealous Sisters." But though containing incidents borrowed from all three, it has no more than a general resemblance to any of them.

VI. *The Fisherman's Son*. This story has been included because it contains the nucleus of the well-known story of Aladdin, the original of which has not yet been discovered, while doubts have even been thrown on its being of Oriental origin at all.

Although the Arabs frequently undertook long voyages, they never seem to have ventured into the open sea willingly, but merely to have coasted along from one country or island to another.

In conclusion, it may be mentioned that translations made from Tunisian and Syrian MSS. of the "Thousand and One Nights" appear to resemble each other more closely than the standard Egyptian MSS. It is possible that they more nearly represent the original form of a work current throughout the East, while the more artistic Egyptian editions represent a later and more modernized form of the work.

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