

The Adventures of the Caliph Haroun Alraschid

VI.

Of the extravagant Profusion of Nouredin.

After this, the caliph made wars, and sent troops to devastate the possessions of the empress Irene, because she had broken faith with him. And while his principal army was thus employed, the King of the Khozars made war upon the caliph, and committed great ravages before he could be conquered.

Now, the caliph being pleased with the conduct of his cousin Mohammed, the son of Zeini, made him sultan of Balsora, which was tributary to the caliphs. Mohammed, for the better ordering of his government, must needs have two viziers, instead of one; not considering that one good vizier is enough, that two bad are worse than one good, and that a bad and a good together, either make each other of no effect, or the bad gets the upper hand.

The names of these two viziers were Fadladdin and Mowein. Fadladdin was mild and benevolent; Mowein was cruel and crafty. The Sultan loved Fadladdin more than Mowein, and conversed with him on his most private affairs. One day he said unto him, "O Fadladdin! is there such a thing as a sensible woman to be found on the earth? My harem is filled with women who are destitute of intelligence, and who weary me to death with their prattle. Where shall one who has intellect and talents that have been carefully cultivated be found, that one might have some pleasure in hearing her?"

"Doubtless," returned Fadladdin, "such a woman may be found; but her value must so far exceed that of slaves who have no recommendation but their beauty, that I question if she could be obtained for less than ten thousand pieces of gold."

"Receive, then, ten thousand pieces of gold from my treasury, and buy me such a slave, if thou canst find her," said the Sultan, "for such an one would be better worth ten thousand pieces of gold than ten inferior slaves would be worth a thousand pieces each; even as a large pearl is worth ten times the price of a cluster of small ones." "Give me time, O Sultan!" said Fadladdm, "and I doubt not I shall content thee." Then he went about, inquiring privately among the slave merchants for such a slave as the sultan desired; but for a long time no one approaching to his requirements could be found. At length a slave merchant laid

hold of his stirrup one day as he was about to ride by him, and said in a low voice, "O my lord! such a slave as thou art in quest of, I have found. She is a Persian girl, beautiful as the day; but, what is more to the purpose, she is endowed with rare understanding, is well read in history and science, can write verses and compute, can converse with wit and discretion, sing well, and play on divers instruments. Her price is ten thousand pieces."

Said the vizier, "I object not to the price, if she be all that thou sayest. Let me see her; where is she?" Then the slave merchant said, "Follow me," and took him to the slave. When her veil was raised, Fadladdin said, "She is less beautiful than I expected." "She is indeed a good deal tanned with her long journey," said the merchant, "and is over-fatigued and languid; but let her rest quietly in thy palace for ten days, and she will recover, and thou wilt find her all I have said." "Good," said Fadladdin; and the slave was sent to his palace, and he put her in charge of his wife, strictly commanding her not to let her be seen by their son Nouredin.

Now the vizier's son was a young man endowed by nature with everything that might have made him great and good, and withal so comely and sweet-tempered, that every one took pleasure in him; but being an only child, he had been much spoiled by his parents, and accustomed to have every wish gratified, without counting the coil. He was ignorant as an infant of seven days of the value of money, or of the pains requisite to acquire it; and, having an exalted opinion of the virtue of generosity, he was lavish and profuse in his donations to others (which cost him nothing), to such a degree, that he would have given away his head, had it been transferable, to the first person that asked him. His gifts, so recklessly bestowed, were little valued by the receivers, the more so that they were seldom persons in real want; therefore, while he was courted and flattered by designing companions, he had no real friend.

Now it chanced that Nouredin, going hastily one day into his mother's apartments, when she was absent at the bath, he obtained a sight of the Persian slave, who, through quiet and kindness, had recovered her good Looks; and was surprised into love. He immediately hastened to his father, and requested him to give him the slave for his wife. The vizier, astonished and very angry to find he had seen her, denied his request, and said she was reserved for the sultan, and much more expensive a wife than he could afford him. Nouredin persisting in entreating for her, his father became incensed, and forbade him his presence. Thereupon the young man retired, moody and disappointed, resolving not to be foiled.

Before the difference was made up between the father and son, Fadladdin took cold, coming out of the bath, and presently sickened and died. Thereupon Nouredin heartily grieved for him, and regretted having thwarted him. He shut himself up in his chamber, a prey to grief; but as this was foreign to his nature,

he at length came forth, and gave orders, as matter of the house, that a feast should be prepared, and guests invited.

Now, there were ten of his chief companions, who gladly obeyed his summons when they found that he was possessed of wealth: they cheered him with their mirth, they flattered him, they praised the service of his table; and whenever any one of them especially commended a cup or a dish, he said to his steward, "Set that apart for my friend."

The faithful old man, who had been long in the late vizier's service, beheld with grief his young master's table thus stripped; the more so as his cunning companions, finding their desires thus answered, scrupled not to lay baits for Everything their hearts coveted. The next morning the old steward presented himself to Noureddin and said, "O my master! hast thou not heard the saying, 'He who expendeth and doth not calculate, is soon reduced to poverty?'" This profuse extravagance and these magnificent presents will soon exhaust all thy property." But Noureddin laughed in his face, and said, "Old man, speak when thou art spoken to. Of all that thou sayest, I am not going to attend to one word." Then the steward cast up his eyes, and went in great trouble to Noureddin's mother, who was still in the house, but living very retired, mourning her widowhood. At the steward's recommendation, she sent for her son, and earnestly besought him to control his expenses; but he smiled without saying anything, and went out and bought her some jewels. Then his mother went to the Persian slave, whose name was Enis Eljelis; and she said, "O Enis Eljelis! thou canst wind my son round thy finger. Persuade him not to ruin himself, I pray thee." Then Enis Eljelis kissed her hand and said, "O lady, thy kindness towards me has been so great, that I will do for thee whatsoever I can: howbeit, I fear he will not listen to me any more than to thee."

Noureddin presently returned from the bazaar, bringing Enis Eljelis gold and silver stuffs, jewels, perfumes, and all manner of rich presents; whereupon she took occasion to tell him that happiness depended very little upon wealth, and that she wished he would be somewhat less lavish. Then he said, "If happiness depends very little upon wealth, why should I be careful to retain it, O Enis Eljelis? As long as I have enough for dinner, I shall concern myself very little about what will be left for supper." And, without heeding her, he continued daily to feast his friends; and, whensoever they admired anything small or great, he said, "It is a gift," and sent it home to them. Thus, not only his table, but his house became despoiled; his money and credit next departed; and he found himself a ruined man.

Then he remembered the warnings of the Persian slave; and he went to her with head abased, and said unto her, "O Enis Eljelis! knowest thou what hath befallen me? I have not a penny." She said, "O my lord! I have long foreseen this; but, now it hath befallen, do not despair, but consider of some remedy." He said, "I will apply to those friends whom I have enriched by my gifts. Peradventure, they

will give me something in return." She said, "It will be lost labour; thou hast not one true friend among them. However, if thou art so minded, go and try."

So he arose instantly, and went to his ten companions, one after another; and every one of them denied themselves to him, and pretended to be from home. Then his heart desponded, and he returned to Enis Eljelis and said, "There is not one of them will give me so much as a cake of bread, nor even see me." Then she answered and said, "O my lord! said I not that they would not profit thee?" "Not one of them," rejoined he, "would shew me his face." Then she said, "Sell off all thy furniture that is left, little by little, according to the wants of the day; sell also my jewels, and sell thy slaves; till we confider what to do." Then he did so, and when he had nothing left, he came to her again, and said, "What shall I now do?" She said, "Apply to thy good mother, if haply she will assist thee." But he said, "I will not impoverish my mother, nor let her know how much I am straitened, for she herself is less affluent than when my father was alive." Enis Eljelis answered, "Well said;" and after a long silence, she said to him, "There is but one way thou now hast of raising money. I am but thy slave, sell me." Then the colour rose in his face, even unto his temples, and he said, "O Enis Eljelis! is it so easy for us to part? I thought thou lovedst me!" She said, "I do love thee, O Noureddin, more than words can express; but what else canst thou do?" And they both wept fore.

Then Enis Eljelis said, "It must be done. Go and do it, therefore, at once, for the longer we tarry, the heavier will be our parting." But he was very reluctant, and flung himself on the ground, and refused to go. At length, after many words, she persuaded him, and he went forth with her to the slave merchants, with eyes red with weeping. The first whom he took aside was the merchant who had sold the Persian slave to Fadladdin. As soon as he heard she was again in the market, he raised his eyes and hands, and said, "No need to recount to me her value. Is she not Enis Eljelis? She will not remain long on thy hands."

Then, with Noureddin's concurrence, he went into the slave market, where were Turkish and Greek, Circassian, Georgian, and Abyssinian slaves on sale; and he lifted up his voice, and cried, "O merchants! Everything that is round is not a nut; nor is everything long a banana; nor is everything that is red meat; nor is everything tawny a date! O merchants, the famous Persian slave, Enis Eljelis is on sale; who can equal her? With what sum will ye open the sale?"

Then one of the slave merchants said, "With four thousand and five hundred pieces of gold."

At this time it befell that the evil-hearted vizier Mowein passed through the market; and seeing Noureddin there, who was leaning against a wall, with his heart ready to burst, he thought within himself, "What can the son of Fadladdin do here, having nothing left wherewith to purchase slaves? Is he compelled to sell one? If it be indeed so, how pleasant to my heart!" Then he heard the merchants talking among themselves of the rare qualities of the Persian slave, who was worth ten thousand pieces of gold; but none of them could afford to bid more than four

thousand. Then Mowein thought within himself, "Aha! this is the slave that Fadladdin purchased for the sultan, but kept by him on pretence she was tanned and out of health. I shall now have her under the price." Then he went to the slave merchant who had undertaken the sale, and said to him, "What need of more words? I bid four thousand five hundred pieces of gold, and thou shalt have five hundred for thyself."

The slave broker hurried to Nouredin, and said to him eagerly in a low voice, "Alas, my lord! the slave is lost to thee without price." "How so?" said Nouredin. "The vizier Mowein" replied the broker, "hath desired to have her for four thousand five hundred pieces of gold; and I know, from his evil heart, that he will write thee an order upon one of his agents for the money, and then send privately to him, and desire him to give thee nothing. If I were in thy place, I would approach the slave girl, and smite her on the head, and say, 'Woe unto thee! art thou now sufficiently punished for thine evil temper by being put up to sale? Come home, now, and conduct thyself better henceforth.'"

Nouredin instantly sprang forward and did as the broker had counselled, so that it seemed as though he had only brought Enis Eljelis to the market for a mock sale for the sake of punishment. The vizier Mowein ground his teeth with despite, and went his ways and made complaint to the sultan that Nouredin had defrauded him once and again of the Persian slave. Then the sultan, being enraged, commanded that forty men should instantly go and raze Nouredin's house to the ground, and bring him and Enis Eljelis to him captives.

A friend of the late vizier Fadladdin, hearing this command given, took horse and galloped to Nouredin's house, and bade him instantly fly for his life. Wherefore Nouredin, scarcely allowing himself time to say farewell to his mother, and receive from her a few pieces of gold, took Enis Eljelis by the hand, and escaped with her through a private door into some by-streets to the riverside, where they found a light vessel on the point of sailing for Bagdad, the Abode of Peace. Having reached Bagdad, Nouredin paid the shipmaster five gold pieces, and then, with Enis Eljelis, walked at hazard from the landing-place along the bank, till they came to a green alley paved with pebbles, having a light roof of trellis-work of canes extending the whole length of it, from which depended water-pots of water; and on either side the alley, a stone bench, even to the end, which was closed by a carved gate.

Then said Nouredin to the slave, "Behold! this is pleasant! and he sat down to rest on the stone bench; and in another moment, so tired was he and spent, that he fell fast asleep. Then Enis Eljelis tenderly covered him with her veil, that the mosquitos should not assail him; and being very weary, she also rested on the bench, and fell asleep, covering her face with a portion of her veil, for her heart was heavy with care for Nouredin, and for herself.

Now this trellised alley was the passage from the river to the caliph Haroun's garden, called for its beauty the Garden of Delights, and containing a

banqueting-house with eighty latticed windows and eighty lamps. This garden was under the care of an old man called Sheikh Ibrahim; and it had lately happened that on his return to it after a short absence, he had found some intruders of suspicious character diverting themselves within it; whereon he gave information to the caliph, who bade him keep his charge more carefully for the future, and punish any intruders as he should think fit.

Sheikh Ibrahim, entering the alley soon after Nouredin and the slave had fallen asleep, spied them out, and became inflamed with indignation, exclaiming within himself, "Ha! do these insolent wretches take this place for a khan? It is in my power to kill them, and I will at all events give them a good beating." He then fetched a thick palm-slick, and wielding it over his shoulder to give it the greater force, was about to bring it down upon them, when he thought within himself, "Hold! I will just see who they are first."

Then, gently lifting the veil from Nouredin's face, so as not to waken him, he muttered, "Ha! a comely young fellow! from the smoothness of his brow and the placidity of his features, I should consider him likely to be a well-nurtured youth. His dress, too, though well worn, belongs to the upper classes. His hands are too white and well formed to have been inured to work. His face is unfurrowed by care; what a good looking youth! Would that heaven had blessed me with such a son!"

Then, uncovering the face of Enis Eljelis, "Ha!" said he, "this is doubtless his wife. Poor damsel, she is more care-worn than he is. Even in sleep, her face is full of anxious thought. A tear trembles on her long eyelashes, like a dewdrop on the edge of a violet. Verily she is comely. I would she were my daughter."

Then, his purpose towards them having quite changed, he dropped his thick stick, and tickled their hands with a flower till they awoke. "Who art thou, good old man?" said Nouredin, suddenly opening his eyes and arising. "Nay, who art thou, my son?" said Sheikh Ibrahim, "and who is this damsel?" Then a tear trembled in Nouredin's eye, and he said, "Alas, my lord! we are strangers! We have just arrived from Balsora, and know not where to go." Then Sheikh Ibrahim said, "O my son! GOD hath commanded us to shew kindness unto strangers. Will ye enter my garden, and take refreshment therein?" And they said, "Readily."

Then he led the way, and unlocked the gate, and admitted them into the caliph's garden, wherein were all manner of stately trees, and all manner of fruits and flowers, and all manner of singing birds. When they had sufficiently admired the beauty of the garden, Sheikh Ibrahim conducted them into the banqueting-house, and made them seat themselves on cushions at an open window, while he fetched from a store-room of which he had the key, cakes and sweetmeats of various kinds. Then they ate, and were refreshed, and pressed him to eat; and he ate like wise. Then said Nouredin, "Good Sheikh! we cannot eat without drinking, haft thou any beverage?" "Truly," replied the Sheikh, "here is abundance of clear spring water." "O "Sheikh!" then said Nouredin, "my strength

is expended and needs restoration. I pray thee, let us have a little wine.” “Wine, my son?” exclaimed Sheikh Ibrahim, “what words are these which I hear? Wine have I tasted none these thirteen years, for the prophet hath cursed its drinker and its presser and its carrier.” Then said Nouredin laughing, “If thou be neither its drinker, nor its presser, nor its carrier, will aught of the curse fall on thee?” “Truly not,” replied Sheikh Ibrahim. Then said Nouredin, “Take this piece of gold and go forth, and wheresoever wine is to be had, buy some, and make the man bring it hither for us. So shalt thou be neither its drinker, nor its presser, nor its carrier.”

Then Sheikh Ibrahim laughed and said, “Verily thou art an ingenious youth. I am about to be too indulgent;” and he went forth and obtained the wine. It was now growing dusk; and when Sheikh Ibrahim returned, Enis Eljelis said, “Kind Sheikh! may I light the lamps?” “One of them will be enough,” said he; and he gave her a light. But she, full of cheerfulness, and encouraged by his indulgence, went on lighting them all, saying, “Let me behold how beautiful the banqueting house will look, though it be but for a moment.” Then he chid her, but without severity, saying, “Thou must have thy frolic, my daughter,” Then she returned, and sate between him and Nouredin, and discoursed wittily, and related amusing stories, so that they knew not how time went.

Meanwhile, the caliph Haroun, happening to look forth from one of the windows of his palace on the Tigris, it being now moonlight, was amazed to behold the glare of many lamps reflected on the river from the windows of his banqueting-house; and he hastily summoned Gaifar the Barmecide, and said to him angrily, “Gaifar! what meaneth this? Who has dared to light up my banqueting-house?”

Gaifar looked forth and was confounded; and he said, “It must be Sheikh Ibrahim’s doing. I now remember that he bade me request thy permission, O caliph, to entertain some of his respectable friends there, on an evening when thou shouldst be absent; but I forgot it.” “Then, Gaifar” said the caliph, “thou hast been faulty in two instances. Thou hast left me in ignorance that my banqueting-house would be occupied, and thou hast left Sheikh Ibrahim in ignorance that thou hast forgotten to prefer his request. And now, for thy punishment, thou shalt immediately go forth with me, and we will privately see how the good, simple-hearted old man entertaineth his respectable friends.” Gaifar said, “I hear and obey.”

Then they went forth, and coming to the garden gate, found it open. “This is negligent,” said the caliph, “the old man in admitting his respectable friends, needed not to have left the gate open for all Bagdad.” Gaifar held his peace. “Doubtless,” said the caliph, “the Sheikh’s friends are men of like age and sobriety with himself, and we shall find them gravely discoursing on virtue and piety. Whether it be so, or whether it be not, I will learn.” Then, having reached the outer wall of the banqueting-house, and hearing voices at one of the windows, he said

to Gaifar in a low voice, "I will climb this tall walnut-tree and look in." "O caliph!" said Gaifar, with misgiving, "is it certainly for thy safety?" But he answered, "Tut! didst not thou and I climb trees when we were boys? I trust I am yet supple and sure footed." Then, with ease he climbed the tree, smiling in his heart, and thinking, "This vizier of mine is reluctant I should look in."

Now it befell that the wine which Sheikh Ibrahim had bought, being newly made, had mounted into Nouredin's head, his stomach being weak from sorrow and spare Living; and he had persuaded the old man to pledge him. Sheikh Ibrahim thought, "I will take but one very little drop, just to grace my guest; but when he had taken one he thought, "As much sin in one draught as in twenty;" wherefore, when the caliph looked in upon him, he was replenishing his own cup and Nouredin's, and making very merry. The caliph then beckoned with his finger to Gaifar, who forthwith climbed up into the tree after him; and he beheld the caliph's eyes burning like lamps in a dark cavern; and the caliph said unto him, "O dog of a vizier! look now, and behold with thine eyes how Sheikh Ibrahim and his respectable companions converse on virtue and piety. What seest thou?" Gaifar replied and said, "I see a very pretty girl and a handsome young man sitting with Sheikh Ibrahim; and verily they appear to be drinking something that is not as colourless as water. What can it be, O caliph? Let us listen and hear what they say."

Then the caliph, who was secretly laughing, listened and heard the Sheikh say to Enis Eljelis, "O damsel! thou art as entertaining as thou art beautiful. Whence comest thou, and who is thy father?" Then the eyes of Enis Eljelis suddenly filled with tears, and she said, "Ask me not, good Sheikh. Verily the portion of a slave is hard. I was the darling of my father, and the darling of my mother; but misfortune hath long separated us." The Sheikh said, "Verily I wish thou wert my daughter. I knew not thou wast a slave. Is thy master kind to thee?" pointing to Nouredin, who was yielding to sleep. Enis Eljelis said, "Truly he is kind; but misfortune hath overtaken him, and he may sell me to-morrow." Then she swallowed down her tears, and said, "Let us talk of these things no more. Hast thou a lute, or any Instrument of music? I will play and sing unto thee."

Sheikh Ibrahim arose and brought a lute, and behold, it was the lute of the caliph's principal musician. Then the caliph, when he saw it, whispered to Gaifar, and said, "What impertinence is herein manifest! If the girl sing not well, I will behead you all; but if she sing well, I will only behead thee!" "O caliph," then answered Gaifar, "Heaven grant she may sing badly!" "Wherefore?" said the caliph; "That thou mayest behead us all," said Gaifar, "and then we shall keep one another company." The caliph laughed within himself; and Enis Eljelis, having tried the lute, began to sing to it so well, that the caliph whispered, "O Gaifar! never during the course of my existence have I heard such incomparable singing as this! Alternately mournful and gay, she melts my soul with her sweetness." "Perhaps," saith Gaifar, "the caliph's anger hath departed from him?" "Perhaps it

has," said the caliph. Then, after listening a little longer, "Come," said he, "I must descend, and approach them more nearly." "O caliph," said Gaifar, "if you enter upon them suddenly, they will be abashed, and Sheikh Ibrahim will die of fear." "Then," said the caliph, "we will concert some disguise." So they descended from the tree, and walked along the river-side, till they came to a fisherman about to throw his nets.

Now the caliph had given orders that fishermen were not to come to that spot; because the noise of their singing disturbed him in the banqueting-house. So he went softly up behind the fisherman, and suddenly putting his hand on his shoulder, addressed him by name, and said, "Kerim!"

The fisherman, starting violently when he saw the caliph, whom he knew by sight, hastily cried, "O Prince of the Faithful! I came not here in mockery of the mandate; but impelled by poverty, and the wants of my family." The caliph replied, "Thou art forgiven. Attend now to my commands, and let us change garments." The fisherman was mute with surprise, for the caliph's robe was flowing and of rich satin; whereas his own was a coarse woollen gown patched in a hundred places. However, he obeyed without speaking; and the caliph, throwing off his upper robe and the veil that was attached to his turban, hastily buttoned the fisherman's gown around his neck, and as hastily pulled it half off again, exclaiming, "O man! this gown contains fleas!"

The fisherman could not refrain from laughing, nor could the caliph and Gaifar. "O my lord," said the fisherman, "you will cease to regard them in the course of a week." "A week!" then repeated the caliph, "however, it is too late now to change my purpose. Haft thou already caught any fish?" "Only one," said Kerim. "Give it me then," said the caliph; and he took it and proceeded with Gaifar to the front entrance of the banqueting-house, where he had left Mesrour waiting. When Mesrour saw the caliph, he took him for a real fisherman, and said, "O Kerim! what brought thee hither? Save thyself by flight, for the caliph is at hand." Then the caliph nearly destroyed himself with laughing, and he said, "O Mesrour! is it thus that thou judgest of a kernel by its shell? Return to the palace and bring me fresh apparel, for I shall not desire to wear this old garment longer than is needful. And do thou, O Gaifar, remain where thou art till I summon thee." Gaifar therefore stood beneath the trees, and Mesrour departed, while the caliph advanced and knocked at the door of the banqueting-house. Sheikh Ibrahim cried aloud, "Who is there?" "It is I," replied the caliph. "Who is I?" said the Sheikh. "I am Kerim, the fisherman," said the caliph, "and I bring thee an excellent fish." "O Sheikh!" then said Enis Eljelis, "let us have the fish for supper; for as yet we have had only fruit and cakes." On this, Sheikh Ibrahim went to the door and said, "Come in with thee, then, thou rogue, thou robber, thou breaker of the caliph's laws! Where is thy fish?" The caliph offered it without speaking. "O Sheikh!" cried Enis Eljelis, "this fish is of an excellent sort! I wish it were fried." "I wish it were," said the Sheikh, "O Kerim! thou shouldst have fried it in the first instance, before

thou broughtest it hither. Go, fry it now, in the little kitchen adjoining this banqueting-house; thou wilt find all things ready to thy hand." "On my head be it!" said the caliph. "Be quick!" cried the Sheikh after him. So he returned hastily to Gaifar. "O Gaifar!" said he, "hast thou ever fried a fish? They say I must fry it, and fry it quickly. Come and shew me how." "Give me the fish," says Gaifar, "I think I can fry it." "By the tombs of my ancestors," said the caliph, "I will fry it myself!" Then they repaired to the kitchen, where they lighted a fire, and found eggs, salt, marjoram, and everything needful; and the caliph tucked up his sleeves and fried the fish on one side, and then turned it skilfully and fried it on the other. Then he took it off the gridiron and laid it on a banana leaf, and carried it with some limes to Sheikh Ibrahim. "O Kerim, thou hast done well!" said the Sheikh, "and since thou art but a poor man, here are three pieces of gold for thee." The caliph kissed them and put them in his bosom. "Why departest thou not, O Kerim?" said the Sheikh. "I pray thee, O Sheikh Ibrahim!" said the caliph, "prevail on the damsel to sing me a song ere I go, for I am exceedingly fond of music." "Gratify him, then, Enis Eljelis" said Nouredin drowsily. Therefore Enis Eljelis took up the lute and sang him one of her best songs, so that the caliph's soul was transported, and he cried, "Heaven bless thee! Heaven bless thee!" "Dost thou admire her so much?" said Nouredin, rubbing his eyes, "then take her, my friend, as a gift. I make her a present unto thee!"

The caliph, unaware of the extravagant liberality of Nouredin which in this last instance he carried to madness, thought he must be intoxicated or dreaming, and looked at him with surprise; but Enis Eljelis, who too well knew Nouredin's thoughtless disposition, burst into tears and said, "O my master! is it thus thou castest me off like a dead leaf? and hast thou no regard for me?" Then Nouredin stood, confused at what he had done, completely sobered and awakened. The caliph, perceiving his distress, said, "What aileth thee, young man, that thou hast done this? and who art thou, and how comest thou here?" forgetting his assumed character in the interest he took in him, and speaking with gentleness in his natural voice. Nouredin, without considering how his manner was inconsistent with his apparel, made answer and said, sighing deeply, "O friend! I am the victim of misfortune. My father was one of the two viziers of the sultan of Balsora, and died, leaving me considerable wealth. I knew nothing of money, and by my thoughtless profusion, lost all my possessions, except only this slave, worth all the rest. The friends I had enriched in my prosperity refused to see me in my adversity; and the vizier Mowein by his misrepresentations induced the sultan to command that my house should be destroyed, and that I and my slave should be taken captive. Thereupon we fled, and reached Bagdad this day, without knowing any one in the city; nor should we have known where to find food or shelter but for the kindness of this good old man." "And whither wouldest thou now repair?" said the caliph. "I know not. The earth is wide," said Nouredin. "The Prince of the Faithful is just and generous but I know not how to present myself unto him.

He might think fit to send me back to Balsora.” “To Balsora thou shalt go,” said the caliph, “I will write a letter to the sultan, and he shall do thee no Injury.” “Thou?” repeated Nouredin in surprise, “art thou not, then a poor fisherman?” “Be that as it may,” said the caliph, “I have power to do what I say. Bring me implements of writing, O Sheikh Ibrahim.” Then the Sheikh, who perceived who he was and stood trembling, obeyed without a word. The caliph then began to write; and Nouredin, who, not knowing who he was, and doubtful whether he could write, took the liberty of looking over his shoulder, beheld him, to his amazement, write as follows: —

“In the Name of GOD the Compassionate, the Merciful!

To proceed. This letter is from Haroun, the son of Mohadi, to his highness Mohammed the son of Zeini, who hath been encompassed by my beneficence, and whom I constituted viceroy of a part of my dominions. Be it known to thee that I am highly displeased at certain things which have lately occurred at Balsora, and now I desire that on the arrival of Nouredin, the son of Fadladdin, who is the bearer of this letter, thou wilt divest thy self of the regal authority and seat him in thy place; so disobey not my commands, and peace be with thee!”

The caliph gave the letter to Nouredin, who kissed it and placed it in his turban, and then bade him immediately depart, saying, “As for thy slave, thou hast given her unto me.” Nouredin cast a rueful look at Enis Eljelis, who was bathed in tears, but dared not disobey the caliph’s orders, and set forth without exchanging with her so much as a word. Mesrour now entering with the dress he had been sent for, the caliph flung the old fisherman’s coat out of the window, and with haste put on his own robes; desiring Mesrour to conduct Enis Eljelis to the palace, and give her an apartment to herself, with suitable attendance. Then, beholding her distress, he said mildly unto her, “Know that I have appointed thy master sultan of Balsora, and in due time thou shalt see him again, and become his wife. Meanwhile, I but keep thee in ward.”

As for Nouredin, he obtained the means of performing his journey with the few pieces of gold that yet remained unto him; and on reaching Balsora, he went straight to the sultan, kissed the ground before him, and delivered the letter. The Sultan, recognising the caliph’s writing, kissed it three times, saying, “I hear and pay obedience to the Prince of the Faithful!” Then when he opened and read it, his countenance fell; but without a word, he sent for his emirs and four cadies, and proceeded to divest himself of the regal office. But the vizier Mowein, suddenly seizing the letter, tore it in fragments, chewed it and swallowed it. The Sultan, amazed, said, “What hath caused thee to act thus?” Mowein replied, “On my head be it. This is no true letter, but an impudent forgery of Nouredin who can lose nothing and may gain something by it: would not the caliph certainly have sent his mandate by an accredited agent, or at the least have bidden a chamberlain to accompany Nouredin? but he hath come alone and ignominiously.” “What is to be done, then?” said the Sultan. “Give him in charge to me,” said the vizier, “and

I will send him back with an officer to Bagdad, to know whether he be a true man and the bearer of a true mandate or no." So the Sultan said, "Good!" but Mowein, instead of doing as he had said, carried Nouredin away, and caused him to be beaten till he was insensible. Then he cast him, chained, into a prison; and bade the jailor torture him day and night. Howbeit the jailor, who had loved Fadladdin, loosed Nouredin's chain, and gave him a carpet, and supplied him with food, and treated him with lenity. Nouredin, being left to himself, in darkness and silence, and considering that he was in the power of his implacable enemy, brooded over many thoughts in his mind, and reflected how unprofitable and inconsiderate had been the whole course of his life. He regretted having so madly squandered his wealth, small portion of which would have enabled him to live in comfort with Enis Eljelis, and he lamented that he had not listened to her advice. Thus he continued forty days; and on the forty-first day, a present arrived from the caliph to the sultan, which the sultan took as a signal that he was in favour; but one of his council said, "Perhaps it was designed for the new sultan, Nouredin", Then said Mowein, "It were better to have slain Nouredin out of hand, for then there would have been an end of him." "Now thou hast reminded me of him," said the Sultan, "I think it will be best at once to strike off his head."

Mowein received the order with joy, and proclaimed throughout the city, "He who wisheth to witness the decapitation of Nouredin the son of Fadladdin, let him resort to the square before the palace." On this, all the city lamented, even to the boys in the schools, and the tradesmen in the shops. Then Nouredin was brought forth, clad in rags and placed on a mule, in the presence of Mowein, to be conduced to the place of execution. The slaves who led him forth, whispered unto him, "Shall we fall upon Mowein, and slay him? we can but die once." But Nouredin replied to them, "Let us not resist the will of heaven, nor do evil that good may ensue to us." Then, looking towards Mowein, he said, "Ah, mine enemy! art not thou also liable to misfortune? Exult not too much to-day, lest evil befall thee to-morrow." The revengeful Mowein replied, "He who liveth after his enemy a single day, hath tasted the cup of sweetness."

Nouredin was then paraded through the streets, the criers proclaiming before him, "This is the smallest recompense of whoso forgeth a letter from the caliph to the sultan." At length they reached the place of blood; where the executioner drew near and said unto him, "I am a slave under command. If thou hast any last direction to give, impart it to me, for there remaineth not of thy life more than until the sultan shall give the signal." Nouredin replied, "I ask but a cup of cold water, for I am parched with thirst."

While the water was being brought to him, lo! a cloud of dust in the distance, and the sound of the trampling of many horses' feet, and a cry among the people, "A messenger from Bagdad!" Then the sultan's heart trembled, and he said to Mowein, "Learn the news." But Mowein replied, "After that thou shalt first have beheaded this man." But the Sultan said, "We will hear the news first."

Meantime, the streets leading to the square resounded with deafening shouts; the crowd parted to make way for the newly arrived; and Gaifar the Barmecide, on a horse covered with foam, and followed by several attendants, dashed into the square, and alighted before the palace.

Now the cause of his coming was this.— The caliph, being occupied with state affairs of magnitude, had spent thirty days without remembering the affair of Nouredin; when, one day, happening to pass near the apartment of Enis Eljelis, he was arrested by the sound of her sweet and mournful voice, chanting to a plaintive air.—

“Thine image is ever before me, whether by night or by day; my heart never ceaseth to think of thee.”

“O thou in whom my soul delighteth! why am I thus neglected as a rose-tree that hath neither sun nor water?”

The caliph immediately entered her chamber, and found her bitterly weeping. She fell at his feet and exclaimed, “O caliph, always just and always happy! suffer thy slave to remind thee of thy promise, that thou wouldest send me to Nouredin! Lo, these thirty nights mine eyes have known no sleep!” Then he said, “Girl, my heart smites me, for verily I had forgotten thee;” and he summoned Gaifar the Barmecide. Then said the caliph, “For thirty days have I heard no news of Nouredin, and it is possible that some evil may have befallen him at the hands of the sultan of Balsora. I desire, therefore, that thou journey thither immediately, and see how it fares with him, and whether my commands have been obeyed.”

Therefore Gaifar proceeded immediately to Balsora; and when he entered the city, he said, “What means this crowd?” And the people replied, “It is because Nouredin, who is much beloved, is about to be put to death.” Then Gaifar rode forward in haste, and went into the presence of the Sultan, and confirmed the caliph’s will respecting him, that he should be deposed in favour of Nouredin, and arrested the vizier Mowein, and liberated Nouredin, and brought him into the palace and installed him with honour; whereat all the people rejoiced.

Then, after three days, Gaifar prepared to return to Bagdad; and Nouredin said, “I have a longing desire to see and speak with the Prince of the Faithful.” Gaifar said, “Good. Prepare thyself for travelling, and after morning prayers we will proceed to Bagdad together.” They therefore travelled to the abode of peace in company, riding side by side, and discoursing by the way; and when they presented themselves to the caliph, with the sultan and vizier as prisoners, the caliph gave his jewelled sword into the hand of Nouredin, and said, “Strike off the head of thine enemy.” But Nouredin said, “O Prince of the Faithful! I cannot. Pardon the sultan, I beseech thee, for he hath been beguiled, and reinstate him at Balsora before me, and suffer me to live under thine eye.” Then the caliph said, “Be it so; but Mowein at least shall die. Advance thou, Mesrour, and strike off his head.” So Mesrour advanced and struck off the head of Mowein. Then said the caliph to Nouredin, who had turned aside his head shuddering, “Ask of me what

thou wilt.” He said, “O my lord! I desire but one thing— that thou wilt give me Enis Eljelis for my wife.” The caliph said, “Be it so. Send for cadies and witnesses, and bring Enis Eljelis from the apartments of my sister Abbassa, where she hath abode since Gaifar departed for Bagdad” Then the cadies and witnesses were sent for; and the Princess Abbassa, who had conceived a great friendship for Enis Eljelis, bestowed on her dresses of honour, and jewels, and gold. Then the marriage took place, and the caliph bestowed on Nouredin one of his palaces, with a pension and attendants, and he stood continually in the presence of the caliph; and his wife stood in the presence of Abbassa.

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