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en-nl: Nicky van Foreest

en-tr: Onur Kilic

en-es: Cesar Sala

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Everyday

Everyday I get up at 7 o'clock. I go to the bathroom. I wash my hands. I wash my face. Then I go to the kitchen. I have breakfast. For breakfast I eat bread. I eat cheese. I eat olives. I eat tomatoes. I eat an egg. I eat honey. I eat butter I drink tea. I drink milk.

I go to the bathroom again. I wash my hands. I brush my teeth and have a shower. And then I go to the bedroom. I take off my pyjamas. I put on my socks. I put on my trousers. I put on my shirt. I put on my school uniform.

I get on the school bus and go to school. I listen to the teachers. I learn English. I learn mathematics. I learn physics. I learn geography. I learn history. I learn arts. I learn science.

I have lunch at twelve o'clock. At lunchtime I play football with my friends in the school garden.

In the afternoon I get on the school bus again at three o'clock. I come back home. I go to the bedroom. I take off my uniform. I put on my trainers. I put on my track suit. I play basketball with my friends. And then I come back home again.

I go to the bathroom. I have a shower. I play computer games. I have dinner at 6 o'clock in the evening. After dinner I do my homework. I watch television.

I put my books in my schoolbag. I put my pencil in my schoolbag. I put my ruler in my schoolbag. I put my eraser in my schoolbag. I put my pencil sharpener in my schoolbag.

I go to the bathroom. I brush my teeth. And then I go to the bedroom. I take off my socks. I take off my sweater. I take off my shirt. I put on my pyjamas. I go to bed and I sleep.

My daily rhythm

I'm at work. It is evening. I'm going home. I take my keys. I lock my room. I'm going to the elevator. I press the button. I'm going downstairs. I'm going to my bike. I'm going to sit on my bike. I am cycling home.

I come home. I open the door. I go inside. I take off my coat. I hang my coat. I'm taking my shoes off. I put on slippers. I'm going to the bathroom. I'm going to the living room. I'm going to sit on the couch. I pick up the newspaper. I read the newspaper. I drink wine. I'm hungry.

I'm going to the kitchen. I make food. I grab a plate. I grab a knife. I grab a fork. I grab a spoon. I grab a glass. I'm going to the table. I sit on a chair. I eat. I'm thirsty. I drink water. I eat a desert. I'm ready. I'm not hungry anymore. I bring my plate to the kitchen. I wash my plate. I dry off my plate. I clear my plate. I clear my knife. I clear my fork. I clear my spoon. I clear my glass. I turn on the television. I am watching television. It is very boring. I turn off the television. I'm making tea. I grab a glass. I pour in tea. I'm drinking tea. I read a book.

I'm tired. I have become tired. I have become tired of the whole day. Tired of everything that I have done today. I want to sleep. I'm going to my bedroom. I brush my teeth. I take a shower. I dry off myself. I put on my pajamas. I am going to bed. I'm going to lie in bed. I'm going to lie under the covers. I lay my head down. I lay my head on the pillow. I turn off the light. I can't sleep. Now I fall asleep. I am sleeping. I'm dreaming.

The alarm goes off. I wake up again. It is 7 o'clock. It is morning. It is 7 o'clock in the morning. I turn off the alarm. I get up. I get up from bed. I'm going to the bathroom. I am washing myself. I brush my teeth. I comb my hair. I'm going to my bedroom again. I pull out my pajamas. I put on my pants. I put on my sweater. I put on my socks. I'm going downstairs. I make coffee. I cycle to work.

Taking a Showering

I have been running. I am sweaty. I am going to take a shower. I undress. I turn on the tap. I wait until the water is warm. We have a thermostat. That regulates the water temperature. That's handy. So that the water is not too hot. The water is also not too cold. I waited a moment. The water is just right now. I'm going to be in the shower. I'm going to wash my hair. I take the shampoo bottle. I take the bottle with my hand. With my right hand. I am right-handed. I put shampoo in my hand. In my left hand. I put the shampoo in my hair. I wash my hair. I wash out the shampoo. Now I take the soap. I wash my armpits, with soap. Otherwise I stink. That's what my wife says. Then I wash all over. I turn off the tap.

I grab a towel. I dry myself off. I also dry off between my toes. My father always said that. 'Dry off well between your toes. Otherwise you'll get pain between your toes. Then the skin goes wrong.' When I dry off, I think of my father. About what he told me. My father is dead now for two years. I think of him every day. After taking a shower. By small things, which he taught me. Like drying off between your toes. You often read about fathers, in books. That fathers were important. That dads did important things. But I do not think those big things are important. My father was nice. Because he showed me how to do small things. And so I never have pain between my toes. I like that better. Precisely because of those small things, I think of him. Small things I do every day.

I hang up the towel again. I hang it over the heating. I hang the towel neatly. Then it can dry well. I turn on the heating a bit. I open the window. The air inside is humid. The humid air has to go outside. Through the window the moist air can go out. The new air can enter. Then the towel dries quickly. The wall of the shower thus also gets dry. I'm going out of the bathroom. I close the door to the bathroom. I'm going to my bedroom.

I put on my clothes. I go back to the bathroom again. I comb my hair. My mother thought it important. She liked combed hair. When I comb my hair, I think of my mother. She is also dead for a few years. I also think about her every day. For example, when I comb my hair. Also by other things. But always when combing my hair.

I can't tell my parents anymore. They don't know that I think of them. With small things. And that I don't forget them. What would my children remember? What would they remember from me? Maybe that they should not scream. Or that they have to close the door. Who knows. I'll probably never know.

Shave

My cheeks are prickly. That's what my children say. Then they do not want a hug. So I have to shave myself. I'm going to the bathroom. I open the tap. I wait for the hot water. Hot water is required for shaving. I do not know why. People say it. Maybe it's nonsense. But I do it anyway. Out of habit.

I take the plug. I put the plug in the drain. Then the water can not go away. It stays in the sink. I wait until there is enough water in the sink. I close the tap. I grab the shaving soap. Some people call it shaving cream. I put shaving soap on my hand. Then I put it on my cheeks. And under my nose. And on my neck. I take my razor blade. Some people call it a scraper. I'm going to shave myself. I scratch the hairs of my cheeks. You always have to be careful. Especially at your nose. Otherwise, you cut yourself. Razor blades are very sharp.

Now it is ready. I wash my cheeks. I take the towel. I dry my face. I put the razor blade away. I put the shaving soap away. I put them both on top of the cupboard. Then my son can not take it. That way he can't reach it. If he will play with it, he'll cut himself with it. I do not want that. He also shouldn't play with the shaving soap. Then he will empty the entire container.

Now I rinse the sink. All little hairs must go away. All soap must also go away. In earlier times I sometimes forgot. Then the sink remained dirty. My girlfriend then called me. She said: 'You have to clean up. You have to clean the sink. I do not accept it like this. And I also do not like it. I want to use a clean sink. Not one with hair. Or with soap.'

I said: 'Sorry. I will not forget. Next time I will do it myself. And you do not have to call me. And if I forget, just call me. Then I just do it. And then I'll really remember.'

I forgot again a week later. Then she called me back. I cleaned the sink. Then I never forgot again. Now I still think about it. Every time I've shaved. And if I clean the sink. That is more than thirty years ago. And yet I still know.

Now my cheeks are shaved. And completely smooth. I go quickly downstairs. What will my children say? My son is drawing. 'I shaved,' I say. 'Oh,' he says. He continues drawing. He does not look up. My daughter reads a book. She does look up. 'Daddy, you look beautiful.' She says. 'How soft your cheeks are. Come here fast. For a hug. Thank you for shaving. It makes me very happy.'

Grandmother's Soup

A long time ago I was eighteen years old. I wanted to eat cauliflower. I did not know why. But I wanted it anyway. But I didn't want raw cauliflower. Suddenly I knew. I could make soup. Cauliflower soup.

I called my grandmother. I thought she would know. I called up. 'Grandma, how to make cauliflower soup?' She said: 'Boy, what an odd question. I have lived for a long time. For almost eighty years. But nobody ever asked me that. Never before. But I can tell you how to do it.'

Take a pan. Put it on the stove. Grab a water jug. Or a measuring cup. Put water in the pan. About a liter. Cut the cauliflower into pieces. Especially the stalk must be small. Otherwise not everything is done. Or you have hard pieces in your soup. Together with very soft parts. I do not like that myself. But maybe you want it differently. Put the cauliflower in the water. Put one stock cube in the water. Not more. Otherwise it will be too salty. A lot of salt is not good for you. Turn on the fire. Put a lid on the pan. When the water is boiling, turn down the fire. So that the water just boils. Wait about ten minutes. Then the cauliflower is cooked. Take something to make the cauliflower even smaller. For example, a potato masher. Mash the cauliflower into pieces. If you like that, at least. You can also take a hand blender. Then the soup becomes completely smooth. Do you want to make a bonded soup?'

I said: 'I do not know what that is.'

She said: 'Then I will teach you that too. And then you immediately know what bound soup is. You have to make a roux. You have to take a pan. Not too small, not too big. Put butter in it. About a tablespoon. 50 grams or so. Let the butter melt. When the butter has melted, add some flour. A tablespoon or so. That you stir well. You have to get a kind of sauce. If you end up with a big ball, you have taken too much flour. Then you have to add some butter. If it is still very watery, you need to add more flour. Just check. It's self explanatory. And otherwise you practice with it. You have to boil that roux for a small while. One minute or so, slightly longer. That small bubbles come. Then the flour is cooked. Now you add small scoops of soup to the roux. If you add all the soup, in one go, you'll get lumps. That is not what you'll like. And also not tasty. And it looks a bit yucky. Soup with thick flour clumps. So you have to add a little soup at a time. And then stir well. With a whisk. Until everything is mixed well. And again completely smooth. And then you put some soup again. And then you stir again. And if your pan is half full, then pour the roux into the other pan. The one with the cauliflower. Now you stir everything again. And then you're done. You can put some pepper on the soup.'

You can do this for sure. And if doesn't work, then you just call again. Bye, my boy.'

I said: 'Thank you, Grandma. You really helped me. I will try. I remember what you have told. And, if I have another crazy question, I'll call you back again. Bye Grandma.'

A Walk by the Park

I am going to walk in the park. Together with my wife. I put on a coat. My wife puts on her coat. We put on our shoes. It's cold. My wife puts on gloves. I put my hands in my coat pockets. I do not often have cold hands. My wife also puts on a hat. I do not wear a hat. She also wears a scarf. I do not wear a scarf. I just close my coat. All the way up.

We go outside. We take a right. We walk across the pavement. At the roundabout we go left. We cross the street. First we look to the left. And then to the right. Whether cars are coming. Or cyclists. Or mopeds. Or buses. Or trucks. When the road is free, we cross. We walk past the park. There are trees. We hear birds. There are leaves on the ground. It's autumn. Most trees no longer have leaves. The grass is full of leaves. We continue walking. You can see the ponds in the park. That is where the ducks swim. The geese also swim. And swans.

A dog passes. The dog is running loose. That's not allowed. But people do it anyway. They have their dog shitting in the grass. They have to clean up that. With a plastic bag. But the dog owners usually do not. They do not feel like it. And then they leave it lying. For children, to step in. And for parents, to clean their children.

Recently someone had his dog take a dump in the grass. And walked away. My wife saw that. She said very loudly: 'Dirty pig.' The man came to us. Then he walked to a trash can. He put his hand in the trash. He got something out. It was pretty scary. It was late at night. What would he take out of the trash? But it was a plastic bag. With a dog's dump in it. He said he had cleaned it that afternoon. But then his dog had to again. And that this time he forgot the bags. He was angry. That my wife insulted him. She said he should bring more bags. And that he was a filthy guy. And then we walked on.

It was very strange. What type of person is putting his hand in a trash can? To take out a dog's dump?

Bums get bread from trash cans. But most people do not. I do not know if tramps still do that. Nowadays, people with dogs have to clean up that dog shit, and put it in a plastic bag.

Like this, for a tramp, every bag becomes a surprise. What would be in a plastic bag? A few sandwiches from a boy of 15? Made by his mother, and put in a bag. And that boy did not feel like it. But he threw away the bread. Otherwise his mother would ask: 'Why don't you eat your sandwiches?' Or would it be a 'product' of a dog? That way every plastic bag becomes exciting again.

My wife and I walk on again. And talk about anything and everything. Sometimes we talk about that man, but not today. Now we talk about other things. How often we have walked there. What are we going to do tomorrow. When it gets warm outside again.

Fire

In ancient times our ancestors didn't know how to make fire. Then they learnt how to make fire. They used fire to keep their homes warm. They used fire to communicate with each other. They used fire to cook their food.

But sometimes our house catches fire. Sometimes people lose their homes. Sometimes people even lose their lives. When a fire begins, we dial the emergency number. We speak very clearly. We give the address. Firemen arrive quickly. The firemen know what to do. They rescue the people in the building.

If there are some injured people, they take them to the hospital in an ambulance. Doctors examine them. They take their temperature. The nurses give them injections. Some people have operations.

The rest of the firemen put out the fire.

Flying

In ancient times people didn't know how to fly. They made wings. They attached the wings to their shoulders. They climbed mountains. They tried to fly but they didn't succeed. They failed. So they gave up flying with wings.

They tried something else. They made a balloon. They made fire under the balloon. They heated the air in the balloon. They attached a basket under the balloon. They put three animals in the basket. They tied the basket to the ground with a rope. The first balloon flew up. They made another balloon. They made fire under the balloon. They heated the air in the balloon. They attached a basket under the balloon. They put two men in the basket. They tied the basket to the ground with a rope. The second balloon flew up. They made yet another balloon. They put two men in the basket. But this time they didn't tie the basket to the ground with a rope. The third balloon flew up. They made different balloons. They put hydrogen in the balloons. Hydrogen is a dangerous gas. Some balloons exploded. Some people were killed. Some people were injured. So they gave up flying in a balloon.

In 1903 the Wright brothers made a glider in America. They made a small engine. They put the small engine in the glider. The first plane flew up. The Wright brothers became famous.

Nowadays there are modern aeroplanes. They carry cargo and passengers from one continent to another. From Asia to Europe. From America to Africa. From Australia to Antarctica. They carry cargo and passengers from one country to another. From Turkey to China. From Japan to Germany. From France to Russia. From Saudi Arabia to Italy. From Korea to Greece. From Iran to Irak. From Spain to England.

Traffic

Cars and buses are traffic Lorries and trams are traffic. Bicycles and motorcycles are traffic. Pedestrian walking on the pavements are traffic. If there are a lot of cars in the streets, there maybe a traffic jam. If the streets and roads are narrow, we must make them wide. If there are some corners, drivers can't see each other and cars crash into each other. An accident happens. Some people are killed and some people are injured. So we must make the streets and roads straight.

If pedestrians want to cross the street, they look right and left and cross the street. Sometimes they use pedestrian crossings. There are white lines on the street. There are yellow lamps. The traffic lights flash. All the cars stop. The pedestrians cross the street because the pedestrians are superior to the cars. If they want to cross the street, they sometimes use bridges and subways. If there are no pedestrian crossings, no footbridges, no subways, they use traffic lights. When it is red, they stop. When it becomes yellow, they get ready. When it is green, they cross the street.

There are police officers. They direct the traffic. Pedestrians must obey the traffic rules. If they don't obey the traffic rules, they break the law. Then the police officer will give them a traffic fine. He punishes them.

Sometimes it is rainy, and the streets may be slippery. Pedestrians carry umbrellas, so they can't see very well, and they may fall down. And an accident may happen, Pedestrians may be injured. So drivers should drive carefully.

Airport

When you go to an airport, you can see a lot of people. Not all of them are passengers. Some of them are passengers. Some of them are relatives and friends.

When you look through the window, you can see a lot of planes at the airport. A pilot boards a plane and goes into the cockpit. He starts the engine. The plane goes to the runway, and it goes on the runway faster and faster, and takes off. First the wheels under the plane appear. The plane ascends. When it reaches a certain height, they disappear. Because the wheels go inside the body of the plane.

There is a big building at the airport. It is called the control-tower. The people in the control-tower control the planes. They sometimes say, 'It is not your turn. Circle in the air.' They sometimes say, 'It is your turn. You can land.' They sometimes say, 'It is your turn. You can take off.' When they make mistakes, the planes crash into each other, and an accident happens. So they must be careful.

Swimming

If you want to learn how to swim go to a swimming pool. Because it is safe to learn swimming in a swimming pool. If you don't know how to swim don't swim in the sea. Because big waves may drown you. If you are not frightened and excited, you can float on the water. You don't sink into the water. Don't swim in deep water. Swim in shallow water. You won't drown.

Don't go swimming alone. Go with a friend. If you drown, your friend can help you. If you are tired, don't go swimming. Because swimming is tiring. You may drown.

If a red flag is flying on a beach, don't go swimming. Because there may be big waves in the sea and swimming may be dangerous. You may drown.

If one of your friends drowns, fetch a lifeguard. He knows how to help your friend. When he helps your friend, don't crowd around him. Then he may not help your friend.

The elephant and his friends

One day an elephant wandered into the forest in search of friends. He saw a monkey on a tree. 'Will you be my friend?', asked the elephant. The monkey said: 'You are too big. You cannot swing from trees like me.' Next, the elephant met a rabbit. He asked whether he would be friends. But the rabbit said: 'You are too big to play in my burrow.' Then the elephant met a frog. He asked: 'Will you be my friend?' 'How can I?', said the frog. He said: 'You are too big to leap about like me.' The elephant was upset. He met a fox next. He asked the fox, 'Will you be my friend?' The fox said: 'Sorry sir, you are too big.'

The next day, the elephant saw all the animals in the forest running for their lives. The elephant asked them what the problem was. The bear said: 'There is a tiger in the forest. He is trying to gobble us all up.' The animals all ran away to hide. The elephant wondered what he could do to save everyone in the forest. Meanwhile, the tiger kept up eating whoever he could find. The elephant went to the tiger and said, 'Please mister tiger, do not eat up these poor animals.' 'Mind your own business,' growled the tiger. The elephant had no choice but to give the tiger a hefty kick. The frightened tiger ran for his life.

The elephant ambled back into the forest to announce the good news to everyone. All animals thanked the elephant. They all said: 'You are just the right size to be our friend.'

The lion and the mouse

A little mouse lives in a big forest. One day he is hungry. So he walks in the forest and looks for some food.

Suddenly he meets a lion. The lion roars. The mouse is frightened. And the lion catches the mouse. The mouse screams, 'Please, Mr Lion, let me go. If you let me go, one day I will help you.' The lion is surprised. Then he says, laughing, 'You are small. I am big. How can you help me?' The mouse begs, 'Please, give me permission to go.' I have children at home. They are hungry. They are waiting for me. Have mercy on us.' The lion hears these words and becomes sad. Then the lion says, 'Yes, you can go. However from now on, walk carefully.' The mouse says, 'Thank you very much.' The lion says: 'You're welcome.'

The next week the mouse is hungry again. The mouse walks in the forest again. He looks for some food again. He meets the same lion again, But this time he is under a tree in a trap. He goes to the lion. He says, 'Wait for me. I will help you.' He climbs the net. He bites one rope after the other, until the lion is free. At last the lion is free. He says, 'Thank you.' The mouse says, 'You're welcome.'

The story of the elephant and the mouse

An elephant and a mouse were very good friends. On a day, while walking in the forest, they saw a big bag filled with peanuts. The two friends liked peanuts a lot, so they were very excited.

They decide to carry the bag to their nest. The elephant tried to lift the bag, but to no avail. The bag was so heavy that it was impossible to move it. He tried it a few times. But it did not work. Eventually he gave up. Disappointed they went back to their nest. The elephant was so tired that he fell asleep right away.

When he woke up, he was surprised. Because the bag with peanuts was standing next to him. How did this happen?, he asked the mouse. It was impossible to move it. To this, the mouse said: 'You are right. I couldn't carry the bag, but I could carry one peanut. And so I did: one peanut per time.'

The moral of this story. If you chop up a goal, that seems to lie beyond your capabilities, into small pieces that you can handle, nothing is impossible.

Cinderella

Cindrella was a beautiful girl. She was so beautiful that everybody fell in love with her. She lived many years ago. She didn't have a father and a mother, so she lived with her aunt. Her aunt had two daughters. They were very ugly. They were so ugly that nobody fell in love with them. They had long noses, small eyes and ears. They were jealous of Cindrella, so they always scolded Cindrella: 'Go to the kitchen, do the washing up. Do the cleaning. Do the cooking. Do the sweeping' Cindrella went to the kitchen and cried.

One day a message came from the King. The King's son, the prince, was old enough to marry. There was a party in the palace. All the beautiful girls in the country would come to the party. The prince was going to choose his wife.

The ugly sisters decided to go to the party. They wore beautiful clothes. They were very happy because they wanted to marry the prince. Cindrella wanted to go to the party too. She went to her aunt and asked politely 'Sweet aunt. Please, may I go to the party?' Her aunt answered rudely, 'No, you can't. Go to the kitchen immediately.' Poor Cindrella went to the kitchen. A coach came in front of the house. The aunt and her ugly daughters got in the coach and went to the palace.

While Cindrella was crying in the kitchen, she heard a voice. She looked up, and saw an old lady with a stick with a shining star at the top. 'Don't cry Cindrella' said the old lady. 'I will help you. First bring me a pumpkin and a Mouse trap with two mice in it.' Cindrella stopped crying. She went to the cellar. She brought a pumpkin and a mouse trap with two mice in it. The old lady waved her stick at the pumpkin. The pumpkin changed into a coach. She waved her stick at the mice. The mice changed into two white horses. She waved her stick at Cindrella. Cindrella wore a white dress made of silk with silver buttons. She wore glass shoes. Cindrella got into the coach. The old lady whispered, 'Don't forget to come back before midnight, Cindrella.'

Cindrella went to the palace. She danced with the prince. The prince and Cindrella fell in love with each other. She forgot the time. When the clock began to strike 12, she remembered the old lady's words. She ran out of the palace. She went home but she forgot one of the glass shoes on the steps.

The prince found the glass shoe and ordered the soldiers to find Cindrella. The soldiers went to the aunt's house. The ugly sisters argued with each other. They pretended to put on the glass shoe, but they couldn't because their feet were big and fat. The glass shoe fitted Cindrella perfectly, and she put it on.

Cindrella and the prince married. They lived happily ever after.

The frog prince

A beautiful princess lives in a palace in Egypt. The princess has a golden ball. She likes her ball very much.

One day she plays with her golden ball in the garden of the palace. The ball falls into the well in the garden. The princess cries and cries. Just then a frog jumps in front of the princess. The frog says, 'Don't cry, princess. I will help you but from now on we will play together, and we will sleep together. Promise me.' The princess looks at the ugly, slimy frog. She doesn't like him but she has to say, 'yes'. The frog jumps into the well. Soon he brings the golden ball to the princess. The princess is very pleased.

She takes the golden ball and goes to the palace. She shuts the door. The frog is outside the palace. The princess is inside the palace. The frog knocks on the door. The king opens the door. 'What would you like', asks the king. 'I would like to speak to the princess', says the frog. The king goes to the princess and asks about the matter. The princess tells the story. The king says, 'A promise is a promise. Keep your promise. Don't break your promise.' The princess goes to the door. She takes the frog to her bedroom and puts him on her bed.

'Kiss me', says the frog. The princess doesn't want to kiss the slimy frog but the king says, 'A promise is a promise. Keep your promise. Don't break your promise.' The princess kisses the ugly frog. The frog changes into a handsome prince.

The princess falls in love with the prince. The prince falls in love with the princess. They live happily ever after.

The Lost Ring

One day a man goes home. He says to his wife, 'I have a present for you because today is Valentine's Day.' The man puts his hand into his pocket and takes a golden ring out of his pocket. While he is giving it to his wife, he drops it on the floor. He looks for it on the floor but he can't find it because it is dark inside.

He goes out into the street under a street lamp. He looks for it under the street lamp. Just then another man comes along and asks, 'What are you looking for?' The man answers, 'I am looking for my golden ring.' The other man asks, 'Where did you lose it?' The man answers, 'I lost it inside the house.' The other man says, 'You are foolish. You lost it inside the house but you are looking for it under the street lamp.' The man says, 'It is dark inside, so I can't see it. But it is light under the street lamp. Here I can see clearly.'

The rabbit and the tortoise

One day a rabbit and a tortoise meet in the forest. The rabbit teases the tortoise, 'You are slow but I am fast. I can run very fast but you can't.' The tortoise is angry with the rabbit. He challenges him, 'Let's have a race!'

The next day the rabbit and the tortoise meet under a tree. A fox comes along and starts the race. 'Ready, steady, go!' says the fox. The rabbit runs and runs. And then he stops and looks back. There is no tortoise. The rabbit thinks, 'The tortoise is slow. I am fast. I will go under a tree and rest.' The rabbit goes under a tree, crosses his legs. He yawns and goes to sleep. In his sleep he snores. He usually itchs. He often coughs. He rarely laughs. He never burps. He sometimes hiccups. He sometimes sneezes. His stomach rumbles. He sometimes passes wind.

The tortoise walks slowly but steadily. He goes to the finishing line. All the animals applaud him. He becomes the champion. They give him a medal.

Act like the Others

Jack and Lydia are on holiday in France with their friends, Mike and Anna. Mike loves to visit historical buildings. Jack agrees to sightsee some historical buildings with him. Lydia and Anna decide to shop in the city. ‘See you boys when we get back!’ the girls shout.

In the village Jack and Mike see a beautiful old church, but when they enter the church, a service is already in progress. ‘Shh! Just sit quietly, so that we don’t stand out. And act like the others!’ Mike whispers. Since they don’t really speak French, Jack and Mike quietly sit down.

During the service, they do what the rest of the crowd does, they stand up, kneel and sit . ‘I hope we blend in and don’t look like tourists!’ Mike tells Jack.

After a while, the priest makes an announcement and the man who sits next to Jack and Mike stands up. ‘We should stand up, too!’ Jack whispers to Mike. So, Jack and Mike stand up with the man. Suddenly, all the people burst into laughter!

After the service, Jack and Mike approach the priest, who speaks English. ‘What’s so funny?’ Jack asks. With a smile on his face the priest says, ‘Well boys, there is a new baby born, and it’s tradition to ask the father to stand up.’ Jack and Mike look at each other and Mike shakes his head. He smiles and says, ‘I guess we should first understand what people do before we act like the others!’

Gulliver and the little people

In ancient times, ships didn't have any engines. They had sails. The wind pushed the sails and the ships sailed away. The sailors discovered new countries. They wrote books about their discoveries.

Gulliver was a doctor on a ship. One day there was a very bad storm. The ship hit a rock, and broke into pieces. All the crew in the ship except Gulliver sank in the sea and drowned. Gulliver swam to the shore. He was very tired. He went to sleep.

When he woke up, he could not move because he was tied to the ground with a rope. His long hair was pinned to the ground. Some little creatures climbed on his hips, waist, chest, neck, chin, lips, tongue, moustache, cheek, eye-lid, eye-lash, eye-brow, and fore-head. Gulliver shouted with a loud voice. All the little creatures ran away. They shot their little arrows into Gulliver but they didn't hurt him.

They wanted to speak to Gulliver So they made a platform. They stood on the platform. They talked to Gulliver. Gulliver wanted some food because he was hungry. They gave Gulliver some food, vegetables, and fruit. Gulliver put them in his mouth. He chewed and swallowed them. They went through his throat into his stomach. His stomach digested the food. The food changed into blood. The blood went through his vessels to his heart. His heart pumped the blood to his lungs, liver, kidneys and brain. Gulliver opened his eyes.

They put wheels under the platform. They put Gulliver on the platform. Five hundred horses pulled the platform. There were a lot of guards around it. They were carrying torches.

They went to another city because their king lived there. There were small houses there. Gulliver had to crawl to get into the houses. So they built a big house for Gulliver. They joined five hundred mattresses. They made a big mattress. Gulliver went to bed. They next morning he woke up refreshed.

A man came to Gulliver and pointed at an island in the middle of the sea. He said, 'The people living on that island are our enemies. Tomorrow they are going to attack us.' Gulliver said, 'Don't worry. I will help you.' Gulliver took iron bars and bent them. He turned them into hooks. He tied strings to them. He went to the island. He pulled them to the shore. They became very happy.

Just then the king came. He wanted all the enemy ships, but Gulliver didn't like war, He liked peace. The king and the little people got angry with Gulliver. They wanted to kill Gulliver so he got into a ship and went away. He didn't come back again.

Ali Baba and the forty thieves

Once there was an old man. His name was Ali Baba. He was a woodcutter. And he was very poor.

One day he was working in the forest. He heard a noise. He climbed up a tree and hid behind the tree. He saw forty men on their horses. They were carrying bags full of gold coins and jewels. They went to the front of a big rock. The leader of the men said, 'Open Sesame.' 'Open Sesame' was a magic word. A big door opened in the rock. And they went into a cave. Ali Baba thought they were thieves.

He waited on the tree. Soon the forty men got out of the cave and rode away. Ali Baba climbed down the tree. He went to the front of the rock and said, 'Open Sesame!' The door opened again. Ali Baba went into the cave. He saw a lot of gold coins and jewels. He put some gold coins and jewels into bags and tied the bags onto the horse.

He went home. He knocked on the door. His wife opened the door. When she saw the cold coins and jewels, she hugged and kissed Ali Baba. She had never kissed him before.

Ali Baba and his wife began to count the cold coins, but they couldn't finish them. So Ali Baba said to his wife, 'Go to my brother Kasim and ask for a scale.' Kasim was Ali Baba's brother. His wife went to Kasim's house. Kasim's wife opened the door. She gave a scale to Ali Baba's wife but she wanted to know what they would weigh. So she put some honey under the scale. Ali Baba and his wife weighed the cold coins and jewels. And then his wife gave the scale back to Kasim's wife.

She looked at the bottom of the scale. She saw a cold coin stuck under the scale. She said to Kasim, 'Let's go to Ali Baba's and learn where they had found the cold coins.' Kasim and his wife went to Ali Baba's house. Ali Baba told them the story and gave them the magic word.

That evening Kasim went to the cave and cried the magic word. The door opened. Kasim went into the cave. He put some gold coins and jewels into bags but he forgot the magic word. The door didn't open. Just then the forty thieves came into the cave and saw Kasim. They killed him. Kasim didn't go home that evening.

Ali Baba was worried about Kasim, so he went to the forest. He looked for his brother, but he could only find his dead body. He put his dead body on the horse and went to the cemetery. He dug a grave. He buried Kasim's dead body and went to the village.

The forty thieves went to the cave. When they couldn't find Kasim's dead body, they realised someone knew their secret. They went to the village and asked, 'Who died yesterday?' Someone said, 'Ali Baba's brother died yesterday.' They found Ali Baba's house and put a cross on Ali Baba's door. That evening they would come back and kill Ali Baba.

But Ali Baba had a clever servant. When she saw the cross, she thought someone would harm her master, and she put crosses on all the doors of the houses in the village. That evening the forty thieves went to the village to kill Ali Baba but they couldn't find Ali Baba's house. They went to the mountains again.

The head of the thieves put the other thieves into oil jars and went to Ali Baba's house. He knocked on the door. Ali Baba opened the door. The head of the thieves asked, 'I am a Merchant. I have been travelling for a long time I am tired. Can I stay in your house this evening?' Ali Baba said, 'Yes, of course!'

While they were having dinner the lights went out. At that time there was no electricity. They used oil in lamps. Ali Baba's servant went to the oil jars to take some oil for the

lamp. She opened the lid of an oil jar. She saw one of the thieves in the oil jar. She suspected something. She went to the kitchen. She boiled some oil. She poured the boiling oil onto the heads of the thieves. The thieves screamed and kicked the bucket . The head of the thieves ran away.

Ali Baba gave some gold coins to his servant. They lived happily ever after.

The Shepherd Boy

A shepherd boy lives in a village in China. He looks after sheep in the mountains everyday. One day he is bored. He plays a trick on the villagers. He screams, 'Wolf! Wolf! Come and help me!' All of the villagers go to the mountains to help the shepherd boy, but the shepherd boy says, 'There is no wolf. The wolf heard you and ran away.' The villagers go back to their village. The shepherd boy laughed behind them, 'You are foolish. I played a trick on you, however you believed me.'

The next week he is bored again. He plays the same trick on the villagers. He screams, 'Wolf! Wolf! Come and help me!' Most of the villagers go to the mountains to help the shepherd boy, but the shepherd boy says, 'There is no wolf. The wolf heard you and ran away.' The villagers go back to their village. The shepherd boy laughed behind them, 'You are foolish. I played a trick on you, however you believed me.'

The next week the shepherd boy is bored again. He plays the same trick on the villagers again. He shouts, 'Wolf! Wolf! Come and help me.' Some of the villagers go to the mountains to help the shepherd boy, but the shepherd boy laughs at the villagers, 'You are foolish. I played a trick on you, however you believed in me.' The villagers are very angry with the shepherd boy and go back to their village again.

One day the shepherd boy is very tired. He goes to sleep under a tree. When he wakes up, it is dark outside. A black wolf comes towards him. He is frightened, and he trembles. He shouts, 'Wolf! Wolf! Come and help me!' None of the villagers goes to the mountains to help the shepherd boy because they don't believe him.

The wolf looks at the lambs and the shephard boy. He thinks: 'These lambs are delicious, but this shepherd boy is more delicious.' The wolf eats him.

That evening the shepherd boy doesn't go to the village, so the villagers are worried about the shepherd boy. They go to the mountains and look for the shepherd boy but they can't find the shepherd boy. They can find only a few bones.

Don't tell lies. Tell the truth.

The king's nightingale

A nightingale is a small bird. It sings beautifully. One day a king of China was sitting by the window. He heard the singing of a nightingale. He liked it very much.

He ordered his soldiers to bring the nightingale to the palace. The soldiers went to the forest. They looked for the nightingale. At last they found him and said to him, 'Come to the palace with us'. He said, 'I don't want to come with you because I am free and happy in the forest.' 'They begged him, 'Please, come with us because the king wants you.' The nightingale said, 'Yes.' They went to the palace together. They put the nightingale in a golden cage. He sang beautifully. The king was very happy. Everybody was very happy in the palace.

One day a man from a neighbouring country brought a present for the king's birthday. It was a nightingale but it was not a real nightingale. It was a toy nightingale. It had a key. There were jewels on its body. The king wound the toy nightingale. It began to sing beautifully. The king listened to the toy nightingale. He didn't listen to the real nightingale. The real nightingale was cross with the king. He flew through the window into the forest and didn't come back again.

One day the toy nightingale fell off the table and broke into two pieces. It didn't sing again. All the clockmakers in the country came to repair it. The best clockmaker undid its screws with a screwdriver. He mended it. He said, 'It can sing only once a year.' The king was very sad. He went to bed and didn't open his eyes. All the doctors in the country came to the palace. They examined the king. They prescribed medicine. They gave an injection to the king. He didn't open his eyes. There was a rumour among the people. Everybody whispered with each other, 'The king is dead.'

One day the real nightingale came to the window at dawn. He sang beautifully. The king opened his eyes. 'My real friend has come,' he said. They lived happily ever after.

The moon in the well

A foolish man lives in a village in Russia. One day he goes to a well. He looks into the well. He sees the moon in the well. He is very surprised because he thinks the moon fell into the well. He says to himself, 'I must pull it out.' He runs home and takes a hook.

He goes to the well again. He unties the rope from the bucket and ties it to the hook. He puts the hook into the well. He pulls it, but it doesn't come out of the well because it is under a big stone. It is stuck under the big stone. He pulls it again with all his strength.

Suddenly the hook comes out of the well. The man falls onto his back. His legs are up. He looks into the sky. He sees the moon in the sky. He says, 'I am clever. I have put the moon back into the sky.'

Rabbit

There was a rabbit imagining himself to be a lion. One day this rabbit convened all rabbits in the vicinity on a high hill. He said that he would frighten the wolf, the jackal, and the fox in case they would pass over the rough path below. The rabbits listened to it motionless.

Ten minutes later, a wolf was passing there. What a sight, a rabbit came shouting and calling at a high speed toward itself. The wolf became frightened in this situation, and fleeing away at full speed, got out of sight. in the vicinity

Nessie – the Loch Ness Monster

Have you heard of Nessie, the Loch Ness Monster? Loch Ness is a very large, deep lake in Scotland. Many people think a monster lives in it. The first report of Nessie was back in the sixth century. A man called St Columba reported seeing a monster in the water, but he told the monster to go back, and he was safe.

Then, in 1933, Nessie was seen again by George Spicer and his wife. She crossed the road in front of their car. ‘What a beautiful day for a picnic. But there is a monster. Arghhh!’ The next year, a photo was taken of Nessie, which became very famous. It was taken by a doctor, but the photo turned out to be fake.

Since then, there have been several more sightings of Nessie. Some people have tried to take photos and videos. But Nessie is very shy and the pictures are not very clear. People have also tried exploring the lake, but it is very deep and very dark. Some people watched the lake, while other people used equipment like underwater cameras, microphones and sonar to scan the lake carefully. People have even explored the lake in submersibles.

No one has found anything definite. There are lots of possible explanations for what people have seen in Loch Ness. Maybe the monster is just a giant eel, a large bird, a tree or a seal. A few people even think it could be a plesiosaur, which is a type of dinosaur.

So, what do you think? Do you believe that Nessie, the Loch Ness Monster, really exists?

Boys will be Boys

The two brothers loved each other. But sometimes they argued with each other. Sometimes they yelled at each other. Sometimes they pushed each other. Sometimes they hit each other. Sometimes they got into a fight with each other.

Bobby was the older brother. Billy was the younger brother. Bobby was older than Billy. Billy was younger than Bobby.

Bobby climbed into a tree. His kite was in the tree. He could not reach his kite. He fell out of the tree. Billy laughed. He laughed when he saw Bobby fall to the ground. Bobby was not hurt. But he was angry. 'Why are you laughing?' he asked Billy. 'That was funny!' Billy said. Bobby said it wasn't funny. Billy said it was funny. Bobby pushed Billy. Billy pushed Bobby. Bobby punched Billy in the stomach. Billy punched Bobby in the stomach. They put their arms around each other. They wrestled on the ground. They rolled around and around.

Their mom came outside. 'What are you two doing?' she asked. She separated them. She said, 'You shouldn't hit each other. That's not nice. Wait till your father gets home.' She sent them to their rooms.

Hercules

Hercules was a strong and brave man. He lived in Greece. The King was jealous of Hercules. People might make Hercules the King. Therefore he wanted to get rid of Hercules. He set difficult tasks for Hercules to keep him away from the country so that he would not be a possible threat to him (the King).

Once he asked Hercules to get three golden apples. Some trees were said to bear golden apples. These trees were said to be in a place called Hesperides. But no one knew the way to Hesperides. So the King thought of Hesperides. Hercules would be away for a longer period.

Hercules set out on the journey. At first he met three maidens during the journey. Hercules asked them the way to Hesperides. They told him to ask the old man of the sea. But they also warned him, 'Hold the old man of the sea tightly. Otherwise he will escape. No one else knows the way.'

Hercules saw the old man. He was sleeping on the shore. He was looking strange. He had long hair and a beard. Hercules walked to him without making any noise. Then he seized him very firmly. The old man of the sea opened his eyes. He was surprised. He changed himself into a stag. He tried to free himself from the grip of Hercules. But Hercules held him tight. Then the old man changed himself into a sea-bird and then to other animal forms. But he could not free himself from the clutches of Hercules, because Hercules was making his clutches tighter and tighter.

Finally the old man said to Hercules, 'Who are you? What do you want from me?' Hercules replied, 'I am Hercules. Tell me the way to Hesperides.' The old man said, 'It is an island. Go along the sea-shore. You will meet a giant. He will show you the way to Hesperides.'

Hercules continued his journey. He met the giant. The giant was very huge and strong. He was sleeping on the shore. Hercules woke him up. The giant was angry. He struck Hercules with a club. Hercules charged at the giant. He lifted the giant and threw him down. But the giant got up immediately. He had become ten times stronger. Hercules threw him down again and again. But each time the giant rose up much stronger. Then Hercules lifted the giant high up in the air. But he did not throw him down. The giant slowly lost all his strength. He now pleaded with Hercules to put him down on the earth. Hercules asked him to tell the way to Hesperides. The giant asked Hercules to meet Atlas. He told him the way to the place where Atlas was.

Hercules continued his journey. He, at last, met Atlas. 'Why do you want the golden apples?' asked Atlas. 'My King has ordered me to get him these three golden apples,' said Hercules. 'It is a long way from here to that place. Only I can go there. Hold this sky for me. I shall get them for you,' said Atlas. Hercules agreed. He held the sky on his shoulders. Atlas walked away. He was back in a short time. He put down the three golden apples at the foot of Hercules. Hercules thanked Atlas.

He requested Atlas to take back the sky from him. 'Take back the sky?' said Atlas cunningly. 'I have held it for a thousand years. I shall come back after another thousand years!' Hercules was astonished at what Atlas told him. But he did not express his astonishment. He recovered his senses and replied, 'Oh! In that case, will you please hold the sky for a little while? I shall make a pad for my shoulders to support the sky. Then I shall take back the sky from you.' Thus Hercules talked very quietly. Atlas agreed. Atlas took back the sky from Hercules. Hercules immediately collected the three golden apples.

He bid Atlas goodbye with a mischievous smile on his face. Then he walked away towards Greece leaving Atlas speechless and surprised.

Hercules reached his homeland Greece after many days of travel. He gave the three golden apples to the King. The King was surprised to have got the golden apples from Hercules. He was happy. But he pretended not to have been satisfied. But secretly, he was planning to send away Hercules on another perilous adventure.

Donkey of Hodja

Nasruddin Hodja took his donkey to the market place and sold it for 30 dinars.

The man who bought it immediately put it up for auction. 'Look at this fine animal!' he shouted to passersby. 'Have you ever seen a better specimen of a donkey? See how clean and strong it is!' And he went on to list the many qualities of the animal. At the end of his sales talk a man said he would give 40 dinars for it. Another man offered 50. A third offered 55.

Hodja who was watching was amazed at the interest everyone was showing in the donkey. 'What a fool I was to think it an ordinary animal,' thought Hodja. 'It is an incomparable beast, one in a million...'

He suddenly realized that the owner had received a good offer and was about to close the bidding. '75 dinars once...' said the man. '75 dinars twice...' '80 dinars!' said Hodja.

Hodja the King

Let us enjoy reading this story about Mulla Nasruddin Hodja.

Hodja, deep in thought was walking down a road near the palace when he bumped into a man. The man got very angry and began to curse and shout at Hodja. 'Do you know who I am?' he screamed. 'I am the king's Advisor!' 'That is nice,' said Hodja. 'As for me I am a king.' 'A king?' asked the man. 'Over which country do you rule?' 'I rule over myself,' said Hodja. 'I am master of my passions. You would never find me losing my temper as you did just now.'

The man apologized and went away feeling very ashamed of himself.

Speedy Ox

A horse race was about to be held and the contestants were being lined up. Mulla Nasruddin Hodja came with an ox and asked that it be included in the race. 'Have you gone mad?' said the organizers. 'What chance does an ox have against horses?' 'You talk that way because you do not know anything about my ox,' said Hodja. 'When it was a mere calf it could run almost as fast as a pony. Now that it is older it should be able to run even faster.'

Hodja and the Scholar

Nasruddin Hodja, ferrying a scholar across a river, said something ungrammatical to him. 'Have you never studied grammar?' asked the scholar. 'No,' said Hodja. 'Then half your life has been wasted,' said the scholar, looking pityingly at him.

Sometime later Hodja turned to his passenger. 'Have you ever learnt to swim?' he asked. 'No,' said the scholar. 'Then your whole life has been wasted,' said Hodja. 'We're sinking.'

The Hidden Treasure

Once, there was an old man who had four sons. All four of them were very lazy. One day, the old man fell sick and was counting his last days in bed. He worried a lot about his sons' future as the young men hesitated a lot to work. The sons believed that luck would favour them. The old man's health deteriorated every day and he decided to talk to his sons about their future. However, his sons did not listen to him. Finally, the old man decided to play a trick to let his sons realize the importance of work.

He called all his sons and let them sit near him on his bed. He said that he had a treasure box with gold coins and expensive gems for them and wanted to share the treasure equally among the four of them. The young men were very happy and asked where his father had placed the treasure. The old man replied, 'I cannot exactly remember the place where I have hidden the treasure. However, the treasure box is buried in our land. I'm really not sure about the place where I have hidden the treasure box.' Even though the lazy young sons were happy, they were sad that the old man had forgotten the place where the treasure was hidden.

After a few days, the old man died. The sons decided to dig the land to find the treasure box. They worked very hard and dug their land. They could not find any treasure box in the land.

Finally, they decided to dig a spot in their land that was a bit different from the rest of the area. The sons believed that the treasure was buried in that spot. They dug the specific spot deeply, but got nothing but water.

A passerby who noticed the land and the water flowing from the spot talked to the sons about farming. Upon his advice, the four sons sowed vegetable seeds, and planted greens and flowering plants in their land. Since the land was very fertile with abundant water, within a few weeks, it became a fertile garden with nutritious vegetables and greens. The four sons sold the vegetables at a good price and earned a good amount of money.

Then they realized that it was 'hard work' that was referred to as 'Treasure Box' by their father. Gradually, the four sons overcame their laziness, worked hard, earned more money and lived happily.

Hard work always pays.

Sweet Quarrels

One day Mulla Nasruddin quarrelled with his wife. He shouted at her till she could not bear it and fled to her neighbor's house. The Mulla followed her there. The neighbors managed to placate the angry husbands and served the couple tea and sweetmeats.

When they returned to their house some time later, they began quarrelling again. When Nasruddin began shouting at her, his wife again opened the door to run out. 'This time, go to the baker's house,' he advised. 'He makes delicious bread.'

The Relatives of Donkey

Hodja was on his way to the market with a basketful of vegetables which he had loaded on his donkey. Halfway the donkey suddenly stopped. Hodja tried to coax it to move forward again but the animal would not budge. In anger and desperation Hodja began to belabor it with a stick.

People began to gather around them. 'Why are you beating the poor creature?' asked one man. 'Stop beating it at once!' ordered a second man. 'What a cruel man you are!' said a third.

Hodja gave his donkey an admiring look. 'If I had known you had so many relatives to defend you, I would never have hit you,' he said. 'I can see you come from a large and loud-mouthed family.' The men who had commented strode away indignantly and the crowd dispersed leaving Hodja to deal with his donkey as he thought fit.

The Donkey Who Would Sing

A wild donkey once lived in the woods. He had no friends and lived all alone.

One day a jackal passing by saw the donkey. He went up to the donkey and said, 'What is the matter? Why do you look so sad, my dear fellow?' The donkey turned to the jackal and said, 'I have no friends and am very lonely.' 'Well, don't worry. I will be your friend from today,' the jackal comforted him. From that day, the donkey and jackal became very good friends. They were always seen together.

One moonlit evening, the jackal and the donkey were strolling through the woods. It was a cool and pleasant evening. As they walked on, they came to the outskirts of a village bordering the woods. There in front of them was a grove of fruit trees. 'Ah. Look! How wonderful and delicious the fruits look,' said the donkey. 'Let's eat some of them.' 'Okay,' said the jackal. 'But let's do it very quietly.' They entered the grove and silently started to eat the fruits. After eating enough, they lay under a tree happy and content.

'That was delicious, but there is something missing tonight,' said the donkey. 'What is that?' asked the jackal. 'Why, music of course,' answered the donkey, looking a little surprised. The jackal asked, 'Where are we going to get music from?' The donkey said. 'Don't you know that I am an accomplished singer?' The jackal was alarmed. 'Remember, we are in an orchard. If the farmer hears us, we will be in trouble. If you want to sing let us go away from here,' he advised the donkey. 'You think I can't sing, don't you?' asked the donkey in a hurt voice. 'Wait till you hear me.'

The jackal realised that the donkey was not willing to take his good advice. He moved away and hid himself behind a clump of trees. The donkey threw back his head and started his song. 'He . . . haw, hee-haw,' he brayed aloud.

The farmers, hearing the loud braying, came rushing with sticks and gave the foolish donkey a severe beating that left the donkey feeling sore all over.

After the farmers had left, the jackal went over to his friend. He said. 'Is this the prize you won for your singing?' 'They don't appreciate good music,' replied a hurt and ashamed donkey.

Romeo en Juliet

Many years ago in Verona, Italy, there were two families. 'We are the Capulets.' 'We are the Montagues.' These families are always fighting.

The Montagues have a son, Romeo. The Capulets have a daughter, Juliet. One night the Capulets have a party and Romeo goes. He meets Juliet and they fall in love. Juliet's cousin, Tybalt, sees Romeo and is very angry. 'He's a Montague! Get him!' 'Oh Romeo, why are you a Montague?'

Romeo and Juliet talk and decide to get married. They know that their families will be very angry so they go to Friar Lawrence and are married in secret.

The next day, Tybalt sees Romeo. He is still angry with Romeo and wants to fight him. Romeo doesn't want to fight but his best friend, Mercutio, does. 'If you won't fight him, I will!' Mercutio fights Tybalt. Tybalt kills Mercutio! Romeo is so upset he fights Tybalt and kills him in turn! The Prince of Verona is very angry and sends Romeo away.

Juliet goes to Friar Lawrence for help. 'Here is a special drink. You will sleep for two days. Your family will think you are dead but you will wake up. Then you and Romeo can be free together.'

Friar Lawrence sends Romeo a letter to tell him the plan. But Romeo doesn't get the message. He hears that Juliet is dead!

Romeo is so upset he buys some poison and goes to see Juliet. 'Now I will stay with you forever.' Too late, Juliet wakes up! She sees what happened. 'Oh no! You didn't leave any poison for me but here is your knife.' Romeo and Juliet are both dead.

Friar Lawrence tells the Capulets and Montagues what happened. They are so sad they agree not to fight any more.

The fox who got caught

Once upon a time, there was a hungry fox that was looking for something to eat. He was very hungry. No matter how hard he tried, the fox could not find food. Finally he went to the edge of the forest and searched there for food.

Suddenly he caught sight of a big tree with a hole in it. Inside the hole was a package. The hungry fox immediately thought that there might be food in it, and became very happy. He jumped into the hole. When he opened the package, he saw slices of bread, meat and fruit in it! An old woodcutter had placed the food in the tree trunk before he began to cut down trees in the forest. He was going to eat it for his lunch. The fox happily began to eat.

After he finished eating, he felt thirsty and decided to leave the hole and drink some water from a nearby spring. However, no matter how hard he tried, he could not get out of the hole.

Do you know why? Yes, the fox had eaten so much food that he became too big to fit through the hole!

The fox was very sad and upset. He told himself, 'I wish I had thought a little before jumping into the hole.'

The Sleeping Beauty

Once upon a time, there was a Queen who had a beautiful baby daughter. She asked all the fairies in the kingdom to the christening, but unfortunately forgot to invite one of them, who was a bit of a witch as well. She came anyway, but as she passed the baby's cradle, she said, 'When you are sixteen, you will injure yourself with a spindle and die!' 'Oh, no!' screamed the Queen in horror. A good fairy quickly chanted a magic spell to change the curse. When she hurt herself, the girl would fall into a very deep sleep instead of dying.

The years went by, the little Princess grew and became the most beautiful girl in the whole kingdom. Her mother was always very careful to keep her away from spindles, but the Princess, on her sixteenth birthday, as she wandered through the castle, came into a room where an old servant was spinning. 'What are you doing?' she asked the servant. 'I'm spinning. Haven't you seen a spindle before?' 'No. Let me see it!' The servant handed the girl the spindle and she pricked herself with it and with a sigh, dropped to the floor. The terrified old woman hurried to tell the Queen.

Beside herself with anguish, the Queen did her best to awaken her daughter but in vain. The court doctors and wizards were called, but there was nothing they could do. The girl could not be wakened from her deep sleep. The good fairy who managed to avoid the worst of the curse came too, and the Queen said to her, 'When will my daughter waken?' 'I don't know,' the fairy admitted sadly. 'In a year's time, ten years or twenty?' the Queen went on. 'Maybe in a hundred years' time. Who knows?' said the fairy. 'What would make her waken?' asked the Queen weeping. 'Love,' replied the fairy. 'If a man of pure heart were to fall in love with her, that would bring her back to life!' 'How can a man fall in love with a sleeping girl?' sobbed the Queen, and so heart-broken was she that, a few days later, she died.

The sleeping Princess was taken to her room and laid on the bed surrounded by garlands of flowers. She was so beautiful, with a sweet face, not like those of the dead, but pink like those who are sleeping peacefully. The good fairy said to herself, 'When she awakens, who is she going to see around her? Strange faces and people she doesn't know? I can never let that happen. It would be too painful for this unfortunate girl.' So the fairy cast a spell; and everyone that lived in the castle — soldiers, ministers, guards, servants, ladies, pages, cooks, maids and knights —, all fell into a deep sleep, wherever they were at that very moment. 'Now,' thought the fairy, 'when the Princess wakes up, they too will awaken, and life will go on from there.' And she left the castle, now wrapped in silence.

Not a sound was to be heard, nothing moved except for the clocks, but when they too ran down, they stopped, and time stopped with them. Not even the faintest rustle was to be heard, only the wind whistling round the turrets, not a single voice, only the cry of birds. The years sped past. In the castle grounds, the trees grew tall. The bushes became thick and straggling, the grass invaded the courtyards and the creepers spread up the walls. In a hundred years, a dense forest grew up.

Now, it so happened that a Prince arrived in these parts. He was the son of a king in a country close by. Young, handsome and melancholy, he sought in solitude everything he could not find in the company of other men: serenity, sincerity and purity.

Wandering on his trusty steed he arrived, one day, at the dark forest. Being adventurous, he decided to explore it. He made his way though slowly and with a struggle, for the trees and bushes grew in a thick tangle. A few hours later, now losing heart, he was about to turn his horse and go back when he thought he could see something through the

trees . He pushed back the branches . Wonder of wonders! There in front of him stood a castle with high towers. The young man stood stock still in amazement, ‘I wonder who this castle belongs to?’ he thought.

The young Prince rode on towards the castle. The drawbridge was down and, holding his horse by the reins, he crossed over it. Immediately he saw the inhabitants draped all over the steps, the halls and courtyards, and said to himself, ‘Good heavens!’ ‘They’re dead!’ But in a moment, he realised that they were sound asleep. Wake up!’ he shouted, but nobody moved. Still thoroughly astonished, he went into the castle and again discovered more people, lying fast asleep on the floor.

As though led by a hand, in the complete silence, the Prince finally reached the room where the beautiful Princess lay fast asleep. For a long time he stood gazing at her face, so full of serenity, so peaceful, lovely and pure; and he felt spring to his heart that love he had always been searching for and never found. Overcome by emotion, he went to the girl, lifted her little white hand and gently kissed it . At that kiss, the princess quickly opened her eyes, and waking from her long sleep, seeing the Prince beside her, murmured, ‘Oh, you have come at last! I was waiting for you in my dreams. I’ve waited so long!’ Just then, the spell was broken.

The Princess rose to her feet, holding out her hand to the Prince. And the whole castle woke up too. Everybody rose to their feet and they all stared round in amazement, wondering what had happened. When they finally realised, they rushed to the Princess, more beautiful and happier then ever.

A few days later, the castle that only a short time before had laid in silence, now rang with the sound of singing, music and happy laughter at the great party given in honour of the Prince and Princess, who were getting married. They lived happily ever after, as they always do in fairy tales.

Half the Reward

Mahesh Das was a citizen in the kingdom of Akbar. He was an intelligent young man. Once when Akbar went hunting in the jungle, he lost his way. Mahesh Das who lived in the outskirts helped the king reach the palace. The emperor rewarded him with his ring. The Emperor also promised to give him a responsible posting at his court.

After a few days Mahesh Das went to the court. The guard did not allow him to enter. Mahesh Das showed the guard the ring which the king had given him. Now the guard thought that the young man was sure to get more rewards by the king. The greedy guard allowed him inside the court on one condition. It was that Mahesh Das had to pay him half the reward he would get from the Emperor. Mahesh Das accepted the condition.

He then entered the court and showed the ring to the King. The King who recognized Mahesh asked him 'Oh young man! What do you expect as a reward from the King of Hindustan?' 'Majesty! I expect 50 lashes from you as a reward.' replied Mahesh Das. The courtiers were stunned. They thought that he was mad. Akbar pondered over his request and asked him the reason. Mahesh Das said he would tell him the reason after receiving his reward. Then the king's men whipped him as per his wish.

After the 25th lash Mahesh Das requested the King to call the guard who was at the gate. The guard appeared before the King. He was happy at the thought that he was called to be rewarded. But to his surprise, Mahesh Das told the King, 'Jahampana! This greedy guard let me inside on condition that I pay him half the reward I receive from you. I wanted to teach him a lesson. Please give the remaining 25 lashes to this guard so that I can keep my promise to him.' The King then ordered that the guard be given 25 lashes along with 5 years of imprisonment.

The King was very happy with Mahesh Das. He called him Raja Birbal and made him his chief minister.

Making a Difference

Ryokan was a Zen teacher of repute. One day a fisherman saw him walking on the beach soon after a storm. The storm had washed up thousands of starfish on the shore, and they were beginning to dry up. Soon all of them would be dead. Ryokan was picking up starfish and throwing them into the sea.

The fisherman caught up with the teacher and said, 'Surely, you cannot hope to throw all these starfish back into the sea? They will die in their thousands here. I've seen it happen before. Your effort will make no difference.' 'It will to this one,' said Ryokan, throwing back yet another starfish into the sea.

Birbal shortens the Road

The Emperor Akbar was traveling to a distant place along with some of his courtiers. It was a hot day and the emperor was tired of the journey. 'Can't anybody shorten this road for me?' he asked, querulously. 'I can,' said Birbal. The other courtiers looked at one another, perplexed. All of them knew there was no other path through the hilly terrain. The road they were traveling on was the only one that could take them to their destination.

'You can shorten the road?' said the emperor. 'Well, do it.' 'I will,' said Birbal. 'Listen first to this story I have to tell.'

And riding beside the emperor's palanquin, he launched upon a long and intriguing tale that held Akbar, and all those listening, spellbound. Before they knew it, they had reached the end of their journey. 'We've reached it?' exclaimed Akbar. 'So soon?' 'Well,' grinned Birbal, 'you did say you wanted the road to be shortened.'

Birbal Turns Tables

Emperor Akbar was narrating a dream. The dream began with Akbar and Birbal walking towards each other on a moonless night. It was so dark that they could not see each other and they collided and fell. ‘Fortunately for me,’ said the Emperor. ‘I fell into a pool of payasam. But guess what Birbal fell into?’ ‘What, your Majesty?’ asked the courtiers. ‘A gutter!’ The court resounded with laughter. The emperor was thrilled that for once he had been able to score over Birbal.

But Birbal was unperturbed. ‘Your Majesty,’ he said when the laughter had died down. ‘Strangely, I too had the same dream. But unlike you I slept on till the end. When you climbed out of that pool of delicious payasam and I out of that stinking gutter, we found that there was no water with which to clean ourselves, so guess what we did?’ ‘What?’ asked the emperor, warily. ‘We licked each other clean!’

The emperor became red with embarrassment and resolved never to try to get the better of Birbal again.

A Wise Counting

Emperor Akbar was in the habit of putting riddles and puzzles to his courtiers. He often asked questions which were strange and witty. It took much wisdom to answer these questions.

Once he asked a very strange question. The courtiers were dumb folded by his question. Akbar glanced at his courtiers. As he looked, one by one the heads began to hang low in search of an answer. It was at this moment that Birbal entered the courtyard.

Birbal who knew the nature of the emperor quickly grasped the situation and asked, 'May I know the question so that I can try for an answer.' Akbar said, 'How many crows are there in this city?' Without even a moment's thought, Birbal replied 'There are fifty thousand five hundred and eighty nine crows, my lord.'

'How can you be so sure?' asked Akbar. Birbal said, 'Make your men count, My lord. If you find more crows it means some have come to visit their relatives here. If you find less number of crows it means some have gone to visit their relatives elsewhere.'

Akbar was pleased very much by Birbal's wit.

Question for Question

One day Akbar said to Birbal: ‘Can you tell me how many bangles your wife wears?’ Birbal said he could not. ‘You cannot?’ exclaimed Akbar. ‘You see her hands every day while she serves you food. Yet you do not know how many bangles she has on her hands? How is that?’ ‘Let us go down to the garden, Your Majesty,’ said Birbal, ‘and I’ll tell you.’

They went down the small staircase that led to the garden. Birbal turned to the emperor: ‘Your Majesty,’ he said, ‘You go up and down this staircase every day. Can you tell me how many steps there are in the staircase?’ The emperor grinned sheepishly and quickly changed the subject.

Birbal's Sweet Reply

One day the Emperor Akbar startled his courtiers with a strange question. 'If somebody pulled my whiskers what sort of punishment should be given to him?' he asked. 'He should be flogged!' said one courtier. 'He should be hanged!' said another. 'He should be beheaded!' said a third.

'And what about you, Birbal?' asked the emperor. 'What do you think would be the right thing to do if somebody pulled my whiskers?' 'He should be given sweets,' said Birbal. 'Sweets?', gasped the other courtiers. 'Yes', said Birbal. 'Sweets, because the only one who would dare pull His Majesty's whiskers is his grandson.'

So pleased was the emperor with the answer that he pulled off his ring and gave it to Birbal as a reward.

Birbal the Servant

One day Akbar and Birbal were riding through the countryside and they happened to pass by a cabbage patch. 'Cabbages are such delightful vegetables!' said Akbar. 'I just love cabbage.' 'The cabbage is king of vegetables!' said Birbal.

A few weeks later they were riding past the cabbage patch again. This time however, the emperor made a face when he saw the vegetables. 'I used to love cabbage but now I have no taste for it.' said Akbar. 'The cabbage is a tasteless vegetable' agreed Birbal. The emperor was astonished. 'But the last time you said it was the king of vegetables!' 'I did,' admitted Birbal, 'But I am your servant, Your Majesty, not the cabbage's.'

Birbal The Wise

Ram and Sham both claimed ownership of the same mango tree. One day they approached Birbal and asked him to settle the dispute. Birbal said to them: 'There is only one way to settle the matter. Pluck all the fruits on the tree and divide them equally between the two of you. Then cut down the tree and divide the wood.'

Ram thought it was a fair judgment and said so. But Sham was horrified. 'Your Honor' he said to Birbal 'I've tended that tree for seven years. I'd rather let Ram have it than see it cut down.' 'Your concern for the tree has told me all I wanted to know,' said Birbal, and declared Sham the true owner of the tree.

The Sharpest Shield and Sword

A man who made spears and shields once came to Akbar's court. 'Your Majesty, nobody can make shields and spears equal to mine,' he said. 'My shields are so strong that nothing can pierce them and my spears are so sharp that there's nothing they cannot pierce.' 'I can prove you wrong on one account certainly,' said Birbal suddenly. 'Impossible!' declared the man. 'Hold up one of your shields and I will pierce it with one of your spears,' said Birbal with a smile.

Birbal Is Brief

One day Akbar asked his courtiers if they could tell him the difference between truth and falsehood in three words or less. The courtiers looked at one another in bewilderment. ‘What about you, Birbal?’ asked the emperor. ‘I’m surprised that you too are silent.’ ‘I’m silent because I want to give others a chance to speak,’ said Birbal. ‘Nobody else has the answer,’ said the emperor. ‘So go ahead and tell me what the difference between truth and falsehood is – in three words or less.’

‘Four fingers’ said Birbal. ‘Four fingers?’ asked the emperor, perplexed. ‘That’s the difference between truth and falsehood, your Majesty,’ said Birbal. ‘That which you see with your own eyes is the truth. That which you have only heard about might not be true. In fact, more often than not, it’s to be false.’ ‘That is right,’ said Akbar. ‘But what did you mean by saying the difference is four fingers?’ ‘The distance between one’s eyes and one’s ears is the width of four fingers, Your Majesty,’ said Birbal, grinning.

The Well Dispute

Once there was a complaint at King Akbar's court. There were two neighbors who shared their garden. In that garden, there was a well that was possessed by Iqbal Khan. His neighbor, who was a farmer, wanted to buy the well for irrigation purposes. Therefore they signed an agreement between them, after which the farmer owned the well. Even after selling the well to the farmer, Iqbal continued to fetch water from the well.

Angered by this, the farmer had come to the court to get justice from King Akbar. King Akbar asked Iqbal the reason for fetching water from the well even after selling it to the farmer. Iqbal replied that he had sold only the well to the farmer but not the water inside it.

King Akbar wanted Birbal who was present in the court listening to the problem, to solve the dispute. Birbal came forward and gave a solution. He said 'Iqbal, You say that you have sold only the well to the farmer. And you claim that the water is yours. Then how come you can keep your water inside another person's well without paying rent?' Iqbal's trickery was countered thus in a tricky way.

The farmer got justice and Birbal was fairly rewarded.

List of blinds

Once King Akbar questioned Birbal if he knew the number of blind citizens of their kingdom. Raja Birbal had requested Akbar to give him a week's time. The next day Raja Birbal was found to be mending shoes in the town market. People were astonished to see Birbal doing such work. Many of them started to question 'Birbal!! What are you doing?' Once when he was asked this question by someone he started writing something.

It continued for a week when on the 7th day King Akbar himself asked Birbal the same question. Giving him no answer, Birbal reported at the court the next day and handed over a note to King Akbar. Akbar read the note when he found that it was a big list of blind people.

Emperor Akbar was stunned when he found his own name in the list. Angered by this, Akbar asked Birbal the reason for writing his name in the list. Birbal said, 'O! My majesty! Like all other people you also saw me mending slippers but you still asked me what I was doing. Therefore I had to include your name too.' Akbar started laughing at this and everyone enjoyed Birbal's sense of humor.

A Handful of Answers

A young student of Zen was going to the market to buy vegetables for the monastery where he was studying. On the way he met a student from another monastery. 'Where are you going?' asked the first student. 'Wherever my legs take me,' replied the other. The first student pondered over the answer as he was sure it had some deep significance. When he returned to the monastery, he reported the conversation to his teacher, who said: 'You should have asked him what he would do if he had no legs.'

The next day the student was thrilled to see the same boy coming towards him. 'Where are you going?' he asked and without waiting for a reply continued, 'Wherever your legs take you, I suppose. Well, let me ask you.' 'You're mistaken,' interrupted the other boy. 'Today I'm going wherever the wind blows.' This answer so confused the first boy that he could not think of anything to say. When he reported the matter to his teacher, the old man said: 'You should have asked him what he would do if there were no wind.'

Some days later the student saw the boy in the market again and rushed to confront him, confident that this time he would have the last word. 'Where are you going?' he asked, 'Wherever your legs take you or wherever the wind blows? Well, let me ask you. 'No, no,' interrupted the boy, 'Today I'm going to buy vegetables.'

The Lazy Dreamer

Once, in a small village, there lived a poor Brahmin. He was very learned, but did nothing all day. He lived on the alms the villagers gave him every day.

One day, as usual, the Brahmin got up in the morning, performed his morning rituals and set out to beg for alms. As he went from door to door, people gave him several things. Some gave dal. Others gave him rice and yet others gave him vegetables. But one generous lady gave the Brahmin a large measure of flour. 'Ah! What good luck. I will not have to beg for alms for a long time,' thought the Brahmin to himself. He went home and cooked his lunch.

After he had eaten, the Brahmin put the flour into a large mud pot and hung it near his bed. 'Now, it will be safe from rats,' he said to himself as he lay down in his cot for an afternoon nap.

He began to think, 'I will save this flour until there is a famine. Then I will sell it at a very good price. With that, I will buy a pair of goats. Very soon, I will have a large flock of goats. With their milk, I will make more money. Then I will buy a cow and a bull. Very soon I will also have a large herd of cows. Their milk will fetch me a lot of money. I will become very rich. I will build for myself, a huge palace and get married to a beautiful woman. Then we will have a little son. I will be a proud father. In a few months my son will start crawling. He will be mischievous and I will be very worried that he may come to some harm. I will call out to my wife to take care of him. But she will be busy with house work and will ignore my call. I will get so angry, I will kick her to teach her a lesson like this.'

The Brahmin threw out his leg up. His foot hit the pot of flour hanging overhead and it came down with a resounding crash, spilling the flour all over the dirty floor. The lazy Brahmin realised that his foolishness and vanity had cost him a precious measure of flour.

The laziness and foolishness taught him a lesson. Thereafter he lived an active life which took to heights.

The siege of Vienna (1683)

The 'siege of Vienna' was the siege of Vienna by the Ottomans in 1683 and started on 14 juli that year. It was an important event in the world history. The well organised army, amounting to 138.000 men, of the Ottomans, that almost never had lost, lost to an army of 70.000 Europeans.

The Ottoman empire had conquered in the centuries before all of South-East Europe. But the Ottomans wanted more. The archduchy of Austria, that belonged to the holy Roman empire, was badly defended. It was also weakened by ongoing wars against the Ottomans.

The Ottomans themselves had a high morale (which means that the soldiers were optimistic), good canons, and a special unit: the Janisars. These were specially trained soldiers that were deployed at weak spots of the enemy. It seemed that Vienna would fall soon. The outer wall was already captured, and it seemed just a matter of time until the Ottomans would win. But things went differently.

Vienna was apparently completely surrounded and the citizens of Vienna had nearly lost all hope. It seemed like it would become a repetition of Constantinople. But it didn't.

It was early in the morning, September 11, 1683. Like in a fairy tale, the Polish king John III Sobieski arrived with a large army. He conjured up a cunning plan to defeat the Turkish, and he succeeded. First the Polish and German foot soldiers took turns in the attack. When the Ottoman army tried to escape to safety by making large movements, the Austrian-Polish heavy cavalry (soldiers on horses) attacked from the right. They caused enormous damage.

At 13h it was all over: The Ottomans were defeated, Vienna was saved. The Ottomans escaped through Hungary and arrived in Belgrade.

There the leader of the Ottomans, Kara Mustafa, received a present from the sultan. It contained a black scarf. He had to hang himself.

Dogs¹

Dogs are domesticated mammals, not natural wild animals. They were originally bred from wolves. They have been bred by humans for a long time, and were the first animals ever to be domesticated.

Today, some dogs are used as pets, others are used to help humans do their work. They are a popular pet because they are usually playful, friendly, loyal and listen to humans. Thirty million dogs in the United States are registered as pets. Dogs eat both meat and vegetables, often mixed together and sold in stores as dog food. Dogs often have jobs, including as police dogs, army dogs, assistance dogs, fire dogs, messenger dogs, hunting dogs, herding dogs, or rescue dogs.

They are sometimes called 'canines' from the Latin word for dog – canis. Sometimes people also use 'dog' to describe other canids, such as wolves. A baby dog is called a pup or puppy. A dog is called a puppy until it is about one year old.

Dogs are sometimes referred to as 'man's best friend' because they are kept as domestic pets and are usually loyal and like being around humans.

Dogs have four legs and make a 'bark,' 'woof,' or 'arf' sound. Dogs often chase cats, and most dogs will fetch a ball or stick.

Dogs can smell and hear better than humans, but cannot see well in color because they are color blind. Due to the anatomy of the eye, dogs can see better in dim light than humans. They also have a wider field of vision.

Like wolves, wild dogs travel in groups called packs. Packs of dogs are ordered by rank, and dogs with low rank will submit to other dogs with higher rank. The highest ranked dog is called the alpha male. A dog in a group helps and cares for others. Domesticated dogs often view their owner as the alpha male.

Different dog breeds have different lifespans. In general, smaller dogs live longer than bigger ones. The size and the breed of the dog change how long the dog lives, on average. Breeds such as the Dachshund usually live for fifteen years, Chihuahuas can reach age twenty. The Great Dane, on the other hand has an average lifespan of six to eight years; some Great Danes have lived for ten years.

All dogs are descended from wolves, by domestication and artificial selection. This is known because DNA genome analysis has been done to discover this. They have been bred by humans. The earliest known fossil of a domestic dog is from 31,700 years ago in Belgium. Dogs have lived with people for at least 30,000 years. In 2013, a study was published that showed that the skull and teeth of a canid, dated to 33,000 years ago, had characteristics closer to a dog than to a wolf, and the authors conclude that 'this specimen may represent a dog in the very early stages of domestication, i.e., an "incipient" dog.' The researchers go on to suggest that it was, however, a line that did not lead to modern dogs. Genetically, this material is closer to that of a modern dog than to that of a wolf. Other signs of domestication are that sometimes, dogs were buried together with humans. Evidence of this is a tomb in Bonn, where a man of about 50 years of age, a woman of about 25 years of age, the remains of a dog, plus other artifacts were found. Radiocarbon dating showed that the human bones were between 13.300 and 14.000 years old.

Dogs are often called 'man's best friend' because they fit in with human life. Dogs can serve people in many ways. For example, there are guard dogs, hunting dogs, herding dogs, guide dogs for blind people, and police dogs. There are also dogs that are trained to smell

¹<https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dog>

for diseases in the human body or to find bombs or illegal drugs. These dogs sometimes help police in airports or other areas. Sniffer dogs (usually beagles) are sometimes trained for this job. Dogs have even been sent by Russians into outer space, a few years before any human being. The first dog sent up was named Laika, but she died within a few hours.

The Donkey and The Dog

A carpenter had a donkey and a dog. Both the donkey and the dog helped their master in many ways. One night, a few thieves broke into the house of the carpenter. The dog heard them and started barking. The carpenter got up and so did the neighbors. ‘What is that? A dog. Let us run,’ said the thieves. They feared some dangerous consequences. By that time many people gathered in the street. They tried to run away but they were caught by the people. The carpenter said, ‘I am glad I had this dog in my house. I am sure the thieves would have looted me if my dog had not barked.’ The carpenter was highly proud of the dog. Every one praised the dog.

From that day, the donkey started thinking, ‘The master thinks that the dog is a more useful animal than me.’ The donkey decided he will show his master, the carpenter, that he too could be useful just like the dog.

A few days passed. One night, it so happened that the two thieves again entered the carpenter’s house. The thieves became aware of the animals, present in the house. ‘We should be careful, friend! I have heard that a dog guards this house,’ one thief said to the other. As the thieves peeped in, they saw the dog sitting just outside the main door. ‘It seems the dog is quite alert,’ said one thief. ‘It is better to leave this house alone. We had better go at once,’ the other thief said and the two thieves fled.

But unknown to the thieves, the donkey was watching all this. He thought, ‘It is a good opportunity for me to show my master that I too can be useful to him. The thieves have run away. If I start shouting, the master will think that I have driven the thieves away and out of this house.’ And the foolish donkey started braying loudly.

When the carpenter heard the donkey bray at this odd hour, he got angry. He came out with a stick and thrashed the donkey. ‘This will teach him not to bray at night,’ he screamed. The donkey got all the thrashes in silence. It did not know what was taking place. Just then the dog came to the donkey and said, ‘It is better to do your duties than try to be like me.’

The donkey knew that the dog was right. Daarna bleven de ezel en de hond vrienden.

The Donkey and The Cotton

Enjoy reading this story. There once lived a salt merchant. He had a donkey for his assistance. Every morning, he would load a sack of salt on the donkey and go to the nearby town to sell it.

On the way, they had to walk across a pond. One day, while crossing the pond, the donkey thought, 'Ooh! This load is so heavy that I become exhausted very soon. I wish I could get some of this load taken off my back.' Just then the donkey tripped and fell into the water.

Fortunately, the donkey was not hurt. But the sack of salt on the donkey's back fell into the water. Both the donkey and the salt became wet. Some of the salt in the sack got dissolved, making the load on the donkey lighter. The donkey felt very happy about the reduction in the weight of the sack of salt on its back. The merchant did his best to help the donkey to get up and they carried on their journey.

From that day, it became a regular practice for the donkey to slip and fall in the pond whenever they crossed the pond to the market. This would dissolve some salt in the sack thus reducing the weight and relieving the donkey of some load. The merchant was not aware of the donkey's cunningness. This continued for a few days.

One day, the merchant noticed the donkey deliberately slipping and landing with the sack into the water. 'Oh! So this is the way I am losing my salt everyday', he thought. He decided to teach the donkey a lesson.

Next morning, instead of loading a sack of salt, the merchant loaded a sack of cotton on the donkey's back. As usual they had decided to reach the market by crossing the same pond. While crossing the same pond, the donkey, as usual, slipped and fell into the pond, hoping that after some time the weight of the sack would go reduced. As usual, both the donkey and the cotton would become wet. But this time, when he got up, the load on his back seemed heavier. 'Ooh! The Load seems to have gotten heavier,' thought the donkey. The donkey was astonished at what had taken place against the usual result.

The merchant looked at the donkey and said, 'Dear friend, I saw you fall into the water of the pond deliberately every day with the malicious intention of reducing the weight of the salt. So, I loaded a sack of cotton today. Cotton when wet gets more weight and becomes heavier. Now you will have to carry it to the town.'

The poor donkey had learnt his lesson.

The Cunning Bats

Many years ago, the members of the jungle did not have any King. The animals said, 'The lion must be the King of this jungle.' While the birds said, 'The Hawk must be the King.' There were many discussions and debates, but no final decision could be taken.

The bats were cunning. They approached the animals and said, 'Since we too are animal, we would like our dear lion to be the King. He is surely the most powerful among us.' And the animals thought that the bats were on their side. The bats then went to the birds. 'Since we are birds, our dear Hawk must be made the King of this forest. He is so royal and dignified,' they said. And the birds thought that the bats were on their side.

A few days went by. One day the birds came to know that the cunning bats were not honest. They informed the animals about this. 'So the bats think they are clever, let us teach them a good lesson,' said the animals.

So, the next day, the birds and the animals made peace with each other. The lion was made the King.

The newly crowned King addressed to the bats, 'You must choose the group to which you belong.' The bats thought. 'We must join the animals because the lion is the King.' 'We are animals!' the bats announced. 'But you have wings. No animal has wings. You must join the birds,' said all the animals. 'Bats have babies. They do not lay eggs. And birds lay eggs. Since, the bats give birth to young babies without eggs, they can not be birds,' said the birds. The bats felt helpless. They just stood there, not knowing what to do.

Since then, the cunning bats have been hiding during the daytime in deserted places. They come out for food only at night when the others are asleep.

The Clever Bull

There was a forest with many birds and animals. Once, a bull wandering in the forest came upon a cave. Near the cave was a big pond and lush green grass. 'This is an ideal place for me to settle down,' the bull thought. So, he made the cave his home.

Many days passed. The bull became quite healthy, grazing in the meadows. The bull was happy and peaceful living in that cave. He had made many friends in that forest.

One day, the bull was resting outside his cave house. A lion happened to come by that way. The lion was happy to have spotted a bull after a long time. 'Aha! A bull! He is so healthy too,' thought the majestic lion, licking his lips in anticipation of a good meal. The bull too noticed the lion. He could sense danger. 'I must be on my guard now,' the bull thought and decided to do something to hide himself from the lion. When the lion came close to the bull, the clever bull looked into the cave and called out, 'Darling, do not cook anything for dinner. I have just spotted a lion. I am waiting for it to come near.' When the lion heard the bull, he returned around and ran for his life.

A jackal saw the lion running breathlessly. 'Why are you running, Mr. Lion?' asked the jackal. The lion told him all that had happened. 'The bull has made a fool out of you,' replied the jackal. And the jackal added, 'Come with me. Together we can feast on the bull.' But the lion was too scared to believe the jackal. The jackal understood why the lion was hesitating to come with him. 'Alright then! Tie your tail with mine and let me lead you to the cave of the bull. In case the bull attacks, then I will be the one who will get caught first,' the jackal said. The lion agreed to this plan of action prepared by the jackal. And then the lion and the jackal tied their tails together.

They set off to the bull's cave. Both the lion and the jackal went near the cave where the bull was. When the bull saw the lion coming with the jackal, he thought, 'I am sure that cunning jackal knows I fooled the lion.' Without panicking, the bull cried out to the jackal, 'I had asked you to bring me two lions, rather than one. Do you want me to keep my children hungry?'

Even this time the lion did not realize that the bull was again fooling him. He was terrified. He ran as fast as he could run dragging the jackal with him over stones and thorns. The clever bull outwitted his enemies and saved himself from its enemies. Both the lion and the jackal never returned that way.

Thereafter the bull lived a peaceful and happy life with his wife and children.

The Stone-Cutter

Once upon a time there lived a stone-cutter, who went every day to a great rock in the side of a big mountain and cut out slabs for gravestones or for houses. He understood very well the kinds of stones wanted for the different purposes, and as he was a careful workman he had plenty of customers.

For a long time he was quite happy and contented, and asked for nothing better than what he had. Now in the mountain dwelt a spirit which now and then appeared to men, and helped them in many ways to become rich and prosperous. The stone-cutter, however, had never seen this spirit, and only shook his head, with an unbelieving air, when anyone spoke of it. But a time was coming when he learned to change his opinion.

One day the stone-cutter carried a gravestone to the house of a rich man, and saw there all sorts of beautiful things, of which he had never even dreamed. Suddenly his daily work seemed to grow harder and heavier, and he said to himself: 'Oh, if only I were a rich man, and could sleep in a bed with silken curtains and golden tassels, how happy I should be!' And a voice answered him: 'Your wish is heard; a rich man you shall be!' At the sound of the voice the stone-cutter looked round, but could see nobody. He thought it was all his fancy, and picked up his tools and went home, for he did not feel inclined to do any more work that day.

But when he reached the little house where he lived, he stood still with amazement, for instead of his wooden hut was a stately palace filled with splendid furniture, and most splendid of all was the bed, in every respect like the one he had envied. He was nearly beside himself with joy, and in his new life the old one was soon forgotten.

It was now the beginning of summer, and each day the sun blazed more fiercely. One morning the heat was so great that the stone-cutter could scarcely breathe, and he determined he would stay at home till the evening. He was rather dull, for he had never learned how to amuse himself, and was peeping through the closed blinds to see what was going on in the street, when a little carriage passed by, drawn by servants dressed in blue and silver. In the carriage sat a prince, and over his head a golden umbrella was held, to protect him from the sun's rays. 'Oh, if I were only a prince!' said the stone-cutter to himself, as the carriage vanished round the corner. 'Oh, if I were only a prince, and could go in such a carriage and have a golden umbrella held over me, how happy I should be!' And the voice of the mountain spirit answered: 'Your wish is heard; a prince you shall be.'

And a prince he was. Before his carriage rode one company of men and another behind it; servants dressed in scarlet and gold bore him along, the coveted umbrella was held over his head, everything his heart could desire was his.

But yet it was not enough. He looked round still for something to wish for, and when he saw that in spite of the water he poured on his grass the rays of the sun scorched it, and that in spite of the umbrella held over his head each day his face grew browner and browner, he cried in his anger: 'The sun is mightier than I; oh, if I were only the sun!' And the mountain spirit answered: 'Your wish is heard; the sun you shall be.'

And the sun he was, and felt himself proud in his power. He shot his beams above and below, on earth and in heaven; he burnt up the grass in the fields and scorched the faces of princes as well as of poorer folk.

But in a short time he began to grow tired of his might, for there seemed nothing left for him to do. Discontent once more filled his soul, and when a cloud covered his face, and hid the earth from him, he cried in his anger: 'Does the cloud hold captive my rays, and

is it mightier than I? Oh, that I were a cloud, and mightier than any!’ And the mountain spirit answered: ‘Your wish is heard; a cloud you shall be!’

And a cloud he was, and lay between the sun and the earth. He caught the sun’s beams and held them, and to his joy the earth grew green again and flowers blossomed.

But that was not enough for him, and for days and weeks he poured forth rain till the rivers overflowed their banks, and the crops of rice stood in water. Towns and villages were destroyed by the power of the rain, only the great rock on the mountain side remained unmoved. The cloud was amazed at the sight, and cried in wonder: ‘Is the rock, then, mightier than I? Oh, if I were only the rock!’ And the mountain spirit answered: ‘Your wish is heard; the rock you shall be!’

And the rock he was, and gloried in his power. Proudly he stood, and neither the heat of the sun nor the force of the rain could move him. ‘This is better than all!’ he said to himself.

But one day he heard a strange noise at his feet, and when he looked down to see what it could be, he saw a stone-cutter driving tools into his surface. Even while he looked a trembling feeling ran all through him, and a great block broke off and fell upon the ground. Then he cried in his wrath: ‘Is a mere child of earth mightier than a rock? Oh, if I were only a man!’ And the mountain spirit answered: ‘Your wish is heard. A man once more you shall be!’

And a man he was, and in the sweat of his brow he toiled again at his trade of stone-cutting. His bed was hard and his food scanty, but he had learned to be satisfied with it, and did not long to be something or somebody else. And as he never asked for things he had not got, or desired to be greater and mightier than other people, he was happy at last, and heard the voice of the mountain spirit no longer.

A Sleepy Teacher

A schoolteacher used to take a short nap every afternoon. When his pupils asked him why he did so, he said that he went to dreamland to meet ancient sages. One extremely hot day some of the pupils fell asleep in the afternoon. When the school-teacher chided them, they said, 'We went to meet the sages in dreamland.' 'What did they say?' demanded the teacher. 'We asked them if a school teacher came there every afternoon, but they said they had seen no such person.'

Four Friends

Once upon a time in a small village lived four Brahmins named Satyanand, Vidhyanand, Dharmanand and Sivanand. They had grown up together and became good friends. Satyanand, Vidhyanand and Dharmanand were very knowledgeable. But Sivanand spent most of his time eating and sleeping. He was considered foolish by everyone.

Once famine struck the village. All the crops failed. Rivers and lakes started to dry up. The people of the villages started moving to other villages to save their lives. 'We also need to move to another place soon or else we will also die like many others,' said Satyanand. They all agreed with him. 'But what about Sivanand?' asked Satyanand. 'Do we need him with us? He has no skills or learning. We cannot take him with us,' replied Dharmanand. 'He will be a burden on us.' 'How can we leave him behind? He grew up with us,' said Vidhyanand. 'We will share what ever we earn equally among the four of us.' They all agreed to take Sivanand along with them. They packed all necessary things and set out for a nearby town.

On the way, they had to cross a forest. As they were walking through the forest, they came across the bones of an animal. They became curious and stopped to take a closer look at the bones. 'Those are the bones of a lion,' said Vidhyanand. The others agreed. 'This is a great opportunity to test our learning,' said Satyanand. 'I can put the bones together.' So saying, he brought the bones together to form the skeleton of a lion. 'Dharmanand said, 'I can put muscles and tissue on it. Soon a lifeless lion lay before them. 'I can breathe life into that body,' said Vidhyanand.

But before he could continue, Sivanand jumped up to stop him. 'No. Don't! If you put life into that lion, it will kill us all,' he cried. 'Oh you coward! You can't stop me from testing my skills and learning,' shouted an angry Vidhyanand. 'You are here with us only because I requested the others to let you come along.'

'Then please let me climb that tree first,' said a frightened Sivanand running towards the nearest tree. Just as Sivanand pulled himself on to the tallest branch of the tree Vidhyanand brought life into the lion. Getting up with a deafening roar, the lion attacked and killed the three learned Brahmins.

The Dog and the Sparrow

A shepherd's dog had a master who took no care of him, but often let him suffer the greatest hunger. At last he could bear it no longer; so he took to his heels, and off he ran in a very sad and sorrowful mood.

On the road he met a sparrow that said to him, 'Why are you so sad, my friend?' 'Because,' said the dog, 'I am very very hungry, and have nothing to eat.' 'If that be all,' answered the sparrow, 'come with me into the next town, and I will soon find you plenty of food.'

So on they went together into the town: and as they passed by a butcher's shop, the sparrow said to the dog, 'Stand there a little while till I peck you down a piece of meat.' So the sparrow perched upon the shelf: and having first looked carefully about her to see if anyone was watching her, she pecked and scratched at a steak that lay upon the edge of the shelf, till at last down it fell. Then the dog snapped it up, and scrambled away with it into a corner, where he soon ate it all up. 'Well,' said the sparrow, 'you shall have some more if you will; so come with me to the next shop, and I will peck you down another steak.'

When the dog had eaten this too, the sparrow said to him, 'Well, my good friend, have you had enough now?' 'I have had plenty of meat,' answered he, 'but I should like to have a piece of bread to eat after it.' 'Come with me then,' said the sparrow, 'and you shall soon have that too.' So she took him to a baker's shop, and pecked at two rolls that lay in the window, till they fell down: and as the dog still wished for more, she took him to another shop and pecked down some more for him. When that was eaten, the sparrow asked him whether he had had enough now. 'Yes,' said he, 'and now let us take a walk a little way out of the town.'

So they both went out upon the high road; but as the weather was warm, they had not gone far before the dog said, 'I am very much tired-I should like to take a nap.' 'Very well,' answered the sparrow, 'do so, and in the meantime I will perch upon that bush.' So the dog stretched himself out on the road, and fell fast asleep.

Whilst he slept, there came by a carter with a cart drawn by three horses, and loaded with two casks of wine. The sparrow, seeing that the carter did not turn out of the way, but would go on in the track in which the dog lay, so as to drive over him, called out, 'Stop! stop! Mr Carter, or it shall be the worse for you.' But the carter, grumbling to himself, 'You make it the worse for me, indeed! what can you do?' cracked his whip, and drove his cart over the poor dog, so that the wheels crushed him to death.

'There,' cried the sparrow, 'thou cruel villain, thou hast killed my friend the dog. Now mind what I say. This deed of thine shall cost thee all thou art worth.' 'Do your worst, and welcome,' said the brute, 'what harm can you do me?' and passed on.

But the sparrow crept under the tilt of the cart, and pecked at the bung of one of the casks till she loosened it; and then all the wine ran out, without the carter seeing it. At last he looked round, and saw that the cart was dripping, and the cask quite empty. 'What an unlucky wretch I am!' cried he.

'Not wretch enough yet!' said the sparrow, as she alighted upon the head of one of the horses, and pecked at him till he reared up and kicked. When the carter saw this, he drew out his hatchet and aimed a blow at the sparrow, meaning to kill her; but she flew away, and the blow fell upon the poor horse's head with such force, that he fell down dead. 'Unlucky wretch that I am!' cried he.

‘Not wretch enough yet!’ said the sparrow. And as the carter went on with the other two horses, she again crept under the tilt of the cart, and pecked out the bung of the second cask, so that all the wine ran out. When the carter saw this, he again cried out, ‘Miserable wretch that I am!’

But the sparrow answered, ‘Not wretch enough yet!’ and perched on the head of the second horse, and pecked at him too. The carter ran up and struck at her again with his hatchet; but away she flew, and the blow fell upon the second horse and killed him on the spot. ‘Unlucky wretch that I am!’ said he.

‘Not wretch enough yet!’ said the sparrow; and perching upon the third horse, she began to peck him too. The carter was mad with fury; and without looking about him, or caring what he was about, struck again at the sparrow; but killed his third horse as he had done the other two. ‘Alas! miserable wretch that I am!’ cried he.

‘Not wretch enough yet!’ answered the sparrow as she flew away; ‘now will I plague and punish thee at thy own house.’ The carter was forced at last to leave his cart behind him, and to go home overflowing with rage and vexation.

‘Alas!’ said he to his wife, ‘what ill luck has befallen me!—my wine is all spilt, and my horses all three dead.’ ‘Alas! husband,’ replied she, ‘and a wicked bird has come into the house, and has brought with her all the birds in the world, I am sure, and they have fallen upon our corn in the loft, and are eating it up at such a rate!’ Away ran the husband upstairs, and saw thousands of birds sitting upon the floor eating up his corn, with the sparrow in the midst of them. ‘Unlucky wretch that I am!’ cried the carter; for he saw that the corn was almost all gone.

‘Not wretch enough yet!’ said the sparrow; ‘thy cruelty shall cost thee thy life yet!’ and away she flew. The carter seeing that he had thus lost all that he had, went down into his kitchen; and was still not sorry for what he had done, but sat himself angrily and sulkily in the chimney corner.

But the sparrow sat on the outside of the window, and cried ‘Carter! thy cruelty shall cost thee thy life!’ With that he jumped up in a rage, seized his hatchet, and threw it at the sparrow; but it missed her, and only broke the window. The sparrow now hopped in, perched upon the window-seat, and cried, ‘Carter! it shall cost thee thy life!’ Then he became mad and blind with rage, and struck the window-seat with such force that he cleft it in two: and as the sparrow flew from place to place, the carter and his wife were so furious, that they broke all their furniture, glasses, chairs, benches, the table, and at last the walls, without touching the bird at all.

In the end, however, they caught her: and the wife said, ‘Shall I kill her at once?’ ‘No,’ cried he, ‘that is letting her off too easily: she shall die a much more cruel death; I will eat her.’

But the sparrow began to flutter about, and stretch out her neck and cried, ‘Carter! it shall cost thee thy life yet!’ With that he could wait no longer: so he gave his wife the hatchet, and cried, ‘Wife, strike at the bird and kill her in my hand.’

And the wife struck; but she missed her aim, and hit her husband on the head so that he fell down dead; and the sparrow flew quietly home to her nest.

The Lion and the Elephant

The Lion, for all his size and strength, and his sharp teeth and claws, is a coward in one thing: he can't bear the sound of a cock crowing, and runs away whenever he hears it. He complained bitterly to Jupiter for making him like that; but Jupiter said it wasn't his fault: he had done the best he could for him, and, considering this was his only failing, he ought to be well content. The Lion, however, wouldn't be comforted, and was so ashamed of his timidity that he wished he might die.

In this state of mind, he met the Elephant and had a talk with him. He noticed that the great beast cocked up his ears all the time, as if he were listening for something, and he asked him why he did so.

Just then a gnat came humming by, and the Elephant said, 'Do you see that wretched little buzzing insect? I'm terribly afraid of its getting into my ear: if it once gets in, I'm dead and done for.'

The Lion's spirits rose at once when he heard this: 'For,' he said to himself, 'if the Elephant, huge as he is, is afraid of a gnat, I needn't be so much ashamed of being afraid of a cock, who is ten thousand times bigger than a gnat.'

The Three Wisemen and The Camel

Once there lived a man in a small village in Arabia. He had a camel. Whenever he went on a journey, he went along with his camel. At one such journey, he lost his camel unexpectedly.

He was in search of his camel. He asked everyone, 'Have you seen my camel.' But everywhere his effort was in vain.

One day when he came through a city he met three wise men on his way. As usual he asked the wise men 'Has any one of you seen my camel?' The three wise men thought for a while and began to speak. The man asked them curiously, 'Have you seen my camel on your way?' The first wise man asked him, 'Is your camel's one eye blind?' The man replied quickly, 'Yes, yes my camel's one eye is blind.' 'Have you seen my camel on your way' the man asked the second wise man. The second wise man asked him, 'Is your camel lame?' The man became curious and said, 'Yes, yes he is lame!' 'Have you seen my camel' again he asked the third wise man. The third wise man asked, 'Was your camel carrying honey on one side and grain on the other side?' On hearing these words, the owner of the camel became happy and asked them 'Have you all seen my camel? Please tell me.'

Now the three wise men replied, 'We have never seen your camel?' 'You three are fooling me now' Don't make fun of me', the man said in anger. The three wise men said calmly. 'We are not fooling you man. We didn't see your camel anywhere'.

The man got angry and took them to the King for enquiry. He said to the King, 'The three men have stolen my camel, my Lord'. He also described what they had said. The king asked the three what had happened. The three men denied that they had ever seen it. The King asked them then how they could tell the identity of the camel lost. The first man told the king that he had seen the grass eaten on only one side. 'So I assumed that the camel must be blind in one eye', he said. The second man said that he had seen the grains scattered on one side and the honey on the other side. 'So I assumed that the camel was carrying the grains on one side and honey on the other side', he said. The third man described that the hoof marks of the camel were lighter on one side than the other. 'So we came to a conclusion that the camel must be lame', He said.

The courtiers including the king wondered about the cleverness of the three. So the king declared that they were not thieves and he asked the owner of the camel to search on the way the three wise men had come. The camel man went out of the court bending his head in search of his camel.

The king appointed the three as his ministers and ruled according to their advice.

The Travelling Musicians

An honest farmer had once an ass that had been a faithful servant to him a great many years, but was now growing old and every day more and more unfit for work. His master therefore was tired of keeping him and began to think of putting an end to him. But the ass, who saw that some mischief was in the wind, took himself slyly off, and began his journey towards the great city. 'For there,' thought he, 'I may turn musician.'

After he had travelled a little way, he spied a dog lying by the roadside and panting as if he were tired. 'What makes you pant so, my friend?' said the ass. 'Alas!' said the dog, 'my master was going to knock me on the head, because I am old and weak, and can no longer make myself useful to him in hunting; so I ran away; but what can I do to earn my livelihood?' 'Hark ye!' said the ass, 'I am going to the great city to turn musician: suppose you go with me, and try what you can do in the same way?' The dog said he was willing, and they jogged on together.

They had not gone far before they saw a cat sitting in the middle of the road and making a most rueful face. 'Pray, my good lady,' said the ass, 'what's the matter with you? You look quite out of spirits!' 'Ah, me!' said the cat, 'how can one be in good spirits when one's life is in danger? Because I am beginning to grow old, and had rather lie at my ease by the fire than run about the house after the mice, my mistress laid hold of me, and was going to drown me; and though I have been lucky enough to get away from her, I do not know what I am to live upon.' 'Oh,' said the ass, 'by all means go with us to the great city; you are a good night singer, and may make your fortune as a musician.' The cat was pleased with the thought, and joined the party.

Soon afterwards, as they were passing by a farmyard, they saw a cock perched upon a gate, and screaming out with all his might and main. 'Bravo!' said the ass; 'upon my word, you make a famous noise; pray what is all this about?' 'Why,' said the cock, 'I was just now saying that we should have fine weather for our washing-day, and yet my mistress and the cook don't thank me for my pains, but threaten to cut off my head tomorrow, and make broth of me for the guests that are coming on Sunday!' 'Heaven forbid!' said the ass, 'come with us Master Chanticleer; it will be better, at any rate, than staying here to have your head cut off! Besides, who knows? If we care to sing in tune, we may get up some kind of a concert; so come along with us.' 'With all my heart,' said the cock; so they all four went on jollily together.

They could not, however, reach the great city the first day; so when night came on, they went into a wood to sleep. The ass and the dog laid themselves down under a great tree, and the cat climbed up into the branches; while the cock, thinking that the higher he sat the safer he should be, flew up to the very top of the tree, and then, according to his custom, before he went to sleep, looked out on all sides of him to see that everything was well. In doing this, he saw afar off something bright and shining and calling to his companions said, 'There must be a house no great way off, for I see a light.' 'If that be the case,' said the ass, 'we had better change our quarters, for our lodging is not the best in the world!' 'Besides,' added the dog, 'I should not be the worse for a bone or two, or a bit of meat.'

So they walked off together towards the spot where the cock had seen the light, and as they drew near it became larger and brighter, till they at last came close to a house in which a gang of robbers lived. The ass, being the tallest of the company, marched up to the window and peeped in. 'Well, Donkey,' said Chanticleer, 'what do you see?' 'What

do I see?' replied the ass. 'Why, I see a table spread with all kinds of good things, and robbers sitting round it making merry.' 'That would be a noble lodging for us,' said the cock. 'Yes,' said the ass, 'if we could only get in'; so they consulted together how they should contrive to get the robbers out; and at last they hit upon a plan.

The ass placed himself upright on his hind legs, with his forefeet resting against the window; the dog got upon his back; the cat scrambled up to the dog's shoulders, and the cock flew up and sat upon the cat's head. When all was ready, a signal was given, and they began their music. The ass brayed, the dog barked, the cat mewed, and the cock screamed; and then they all broke through the window at once, and came tumbling into the room, amongst the broken glass, with a most hideous clatter!

The robbers, who had been not a little frightened by the opening concert, had now no doubt that some frightful hobgoblin had broken in upon them, and scampered away as fast as they could. The coast once clear, our travellers soon sat down and dispatched what the robbers had left, with as much eagerness as if they had not expected to eat again for a month.

As soon as they had satisfied themselves, they put out the lights, and each once more sought out a resting-place to his own liking. The donkey laid himself down upon a heap of straw in the yard, the dog stretched himself upon a mat behind the door, the cat rolled herself up on the hearth before the warm ashes, and the cock perched upon a beam on the top of the house; and, as they were all rather tired with their journey, they soon fell asleep.

But about midnight, when the robbers saw from afar that the lights were out and that all seemed quiet, they began to think that they had been in too great a hurry to run away; and one of them, who was bolder than the rest, went to see what was going on. Finding everything still, he marched into the kitchen, and groped about till he found a match in order to light a candle; and then, espying the glittering fiery eyes of the cat, he mistook them for live coals, and held the match to them to light it.

But the cat, not understanding this joke, sprang at his face, and spat, and scratched at him. This frightened him dreadfully, and away he ran to the back door; but there the dog jumped up and bit him in the leg; and as he was crossing over the yard the ass kicked him; and the cock, who had been awakened by the noise, crowed with all his might.

At this the robber ran back as fast as he could to his comrades, and told the captain how a horrid witch had got into the house, and had spat at him and scratched his face with her long bony fingers; how a man with a knife in his hand had hidden himself behind the door, and stabbed him in the leg; how a black monster stood in the yard and struck him with a club, and how the devil had sat upon the top of the house and cried out, 'Throw the rascal up here!'

After this the robbers never dared to go back to the house; but the musicians were so pleased with their quarters that they took up their abode there; and there they are, I dare say, at this very day.

Cinderella (2)

Once upon a time, there lived an unhappy young girl. Unhappy she was, for her mother was dead, her father had married another woman, a widow with two daughters, and her stepmother didn't like her one little bit. All the nice things, kind thoughts and loving touches were for her own daughters. And not just the kind thoughts and love, but also dresses, shoes, shawls, delicious food, comfy beds, as well as every home comfort. All this was laid on for her daughters.

But, for the poor unhappy girl, there was nothing at all. No dresses, only her stepsisters' hand-me-downs. No lovely dishes, nothing but scraps. No nice rests and comfort. For she had to work hard all day, and only when evening came was she allowed to sit for a while by the fire, near the cinders. That is how she got her nickname, for everybody called her Cinderella. Cinderella used to spend long hours all alone talking to the cat. The cat said, 'Meow', which really meant, 'Cheer up!' You have something neither of your stepsisters have and that is beauty.' It was quite true. Cinderella, even dressed in rags with a dusty grey face from the cinders, was a lovely girl. While her stepsisters, no matter how splendid and elegant their clothes, were still clumsy, lumpy and ugly, and they always would be.

One day, beautiful new dresses arrived at the house. A ball was to be held at Court and the stepsisters were getting ready to go to it. Cinderella, didn't even dare ask, 'What about me?' for she knew very well what the answer to that would be. 'You? My dear girl, you're staying at home to wash the dishes, scrub the floors and turn down the beds for your stepsisters. They will come home tired and very sleepy.' Cinderella sighed at the cat. 'Oh dear, I'm so unhappy!' and the cat murmured 'Meow.'

Suddenly something amazing happened. In the kitchen, where Cinderella was sitting all by herself, there was a burst of light and a fairy appeared. 'Don't be alarmed, Cinderella,' said the fairy. 'The wind blew me your sighs. I know you would love to go to the ball. And so you shall!' 'How can I, dressed in rags?' Cinderella replied. 'The servants will turn me away!'

The fairy smiled. With a flick of her magic wand, Cinderella found herself wearing the most beautiful dress, the loveliest ever seen in the realm. 'Now that we have settled the matter of the dress,' said the fairy, 'we'll need to get you a coach. A real lady would never go to a ball on foot! Quick! Get me a pumpkin!' she ordered. 'Oh of course,' said Cinderella, rushing away. Then the fairy turned to the cat. 'You, bring me seven mice!' 'Seven mice!' said the cat. 'I didn't know fairies ate mice too!' 'They're not for eating, silly! Do as you are told, and remember, they must be alive!' Cinderella soon returned with a fine pumpkin and the cat with seven mice he had caught in the cellar. 'Good!' exclaimed the fairy. With a flick of her magic wand—wonder of wonders! The pumpkin turned into a sparkling coach and the mice became six white horses, while the seventh mouse turned into a coachman, in a smart uniform and carrying a whip.

Cinderella could hardly believe her eyes. 'I shall present you at Court. You will soon see that the Prince, in whose honour the ball is being held, will be enchanted by your loveliness. But remember! You must leave the ball at midnight and come home. For that is when the spell ends. Your coach will turn back into a pumpkin, the horses will become mice again and the coachman will turn back into a mouse, and you will be dressed again in rags and wearing clogs instead of these dainty little slippers! Do you understand?' Cinderella smiled and said, 'Yes, I understand!'

When Cinderella entered the ballroom at the palace, a hush fell. Everyone stopped in

mid-sentence to admire her elegance, her beauty and grace. 'Who can that be?' people asked each other. The two stepsisters also wondered who the newcomer was, for never in a month of Sundays, would they ever have guessed that the beautiful girl was really poor Cinderella who talked to the cat!

When the prince set eyes on Cinderella, he was struck by her beauty. Walking over to her, he bowed deeply and asked her to dance. And to the great disappointment of all the young ladies, he danced with Cinderella all evening. 'Who are you, fair maiden?' the Prince kept asking her. But Cinderella only replied: 'What does it matter who I am! You will never see me again anyway.' 'Oh, but I shall, I'm quite certain!' he replied.

Cinderella had a wonderful time at the ball, but, all of a sudden, she heard the sound of a clock: the first stroke of midnight! She remembered what the fairy had said, and without a word of goodbye she slipped from the Prince's arms and ran down the steps. As she ran she lost one of her slippers, but not for a moment did she dream of stopping to pick it up! If the last stroke of midnight were to sound... oh, what a disaster that would be! Out she fled and vanished into the night.

The Prince, who was now madly in love with her, picked up her slipper and said to his ministers, 'Go and search everywhere for the girl whose foot this slipper fits. I will never be content until I find her!' So the ministers tried the slipper on the foot of all the girls... and on Cinderella's foot as well... Surprise! The slipper fit her perfectly. 'That awful untidy girl simply cannot have been at the ball,' snapped the stepmother. 'Tell the Prince he ought to marry one of my two daughters! Can't you see how ugly Cinderella is! Can't you see?'

Suddenly she broke off, for the fairy had appeared. 'That's enough!' she exclaimed, raising her magic wand. In a flash, Cinderella appeared in a splendid dress, shining with youth and beauty. Her stepmother and stepsisters gaped at her in amazement, and the ministers said, 'Come with us, fair maiden! The Prince awaits to present you with his engagement ring!' So Cinderella joyfully went with them, and lived happily ever after with her Prince. And as for the cat, he just said 'Meow'!

The Princess and the Pea

There was once a prince, and he wanted a princess, but then she must be a real Princess. He travelled right around the world to find one, but there was always something wrong. There were plenty of princesses, but whether they were real princesses he had great difficulty in discovering; there was always something which was not quite right about them. So at last he had come home again, and he was very sad because he wanted a real princess so badly.

One evening there was a terrible storm; it thundered and lightnined and the rain poured down in torrents; indeed it was a fearful night. In the middle of the storm somebody knocked at the town gate, and the old King himself sent to open it. It was a princess who stood outside, but she was in a terrible state from the rain and the storm. The water streamed out of her hair and her clothes; it ran in at the top of her shoes and out at the heel, but she said that she was a real princess. 'Well we shall soon see if that is true,' thought the old Queen, but she said nothing.

She went into the bedroom, took all the bed clothes off and laid a pea on the bedstead: then she took twenty mattresses and piled them on top of the pea, and then twenty feather beds on top of the mattresses. This was where the princess was to sleep that night.

In the morning they asked her how she slept. 'Oh terribly bad!' said the princess. 'I have hardly closed my eyes the whole night! Heaven knows what was in the bed. I seemed to be lying upon some hard thing, and my whole body is black and blue this morning. It is terrible!'

They saw at once that she must be a real princess when she had felt the pea through twenty mattresses and twenty feather beds. Nobody but a real princess could have such a delicate skin.

So the prince took her to be his wife, for now he was sure that he had found a real princess, and the pea was put into the museum, where it may still be seen if no one has stolen it.

Now this is a true story.

The Emperor's New Clothes

Many years ago there was an Emperor, who was so excessively fond of new clothes that he spent all his money on them. He cared nothing about his soldiers, nor for the theatre, nor for driving in the woods except for the sake of showing off his new clothes. He had a costume for every hour in the day, and instead of saying, as one does about any other king or emperor, 'He is in his council chamber,' here one always said, 'The Emperor is in his dressing-room.'

Life was very gay in the great town where he lived; hosts of strangers came to visit it every day, and among them one day two swindlers. They gave themselves out as weavers, and said that they knew how to weave the most beautiful stuffs imaginable. Not only were the colours and patterns unusually fine, but the clothes that were made of the stuffs had the peculiar quality of becoming invisible to every person who was not fit for the office he held, or if he was impossibly dull.

'Those must be splendid clothes,' thought the Emperor. 'By wearing them I should be able to discover which men in my kingdom are unfitted for their posts. I shall distinguish the wise men from the fools. Yes, I certainly must order some of that stuff to be woven for me.'

He paid the two swindlers a lot of money in advance so that they might begin their work at once.

They did put up two looms and pretended to weave, but they had nothing whatever upon their shuttles. At the outset they asked for a quantity of the finest silk and the purest gold thread, all of which they put into their own bags, while they worked away at the empty looms far into the night.

'I should like to know how those weavers are getting on with the stuff,' thought the Emperor; but he felt a little queer when he reflected that any one who was stupid or unfit for his post would not be able to see it. He certainly thought that he need have no fears for himself, but still he thought he would send somebody else first to see how it was getting on. Everybody in the town knew what wonderful power the stuff possessed, and every one was anxious to see how stupid his neighbour was.

'I will send my faithful old minister to the weavers,' thought the Emperor. 'He will be best able to see how the stuff looks, for he is a clever man, and no one fulfils his duties better than he does!'

So the good old minister went into the room where the two swindlers sat working at the empty loom.

'Heaven preserve us!' thought the old minister, opening his eyes very wide. 'Why, I can't see a thing!' But he took care not to say so.

Both the swindlers begged him to be good enough to step a little nearer, and asked if he did not think it a good pattern and beautiful colouring. They pointed to the empty loom, and the poor old minister stared as hard as he could, but he could not see anything, for of course there was nothing to see.

'Good heavens!' thought he, 'is it possible that I am a fool. I have never thought so, and nobody must know it. Am I not fit for my post? It will never do to say that I cannot see the stuffs.'

'Well, sir, you don't say anything about the stuff,' said the one who was pretending to weave.

'Oh, it is beautiful! quite charming!' said the old minister, looking through his specta-

cles; 'this pattern and these colours! I will certainly tell the Emperor that the stuff pleases me very much.'

'We are delighted to hear you say so,' said the swindlers, and then they named all the colours and described the peculiar pattern. The old minister paid great attention to what they said, so as to be able to repeat it when he got home to the Emperor.

They pointed to the empty loom, and the poor old minister stared as hard as he could, but he could not see anything, for of course there was nothing to see.

Then the swindlers went on to demand more money, more silk, and more gold, to be able to proceed with the weaving; but they put it all into their own pockets. Not a single strand was ever put into the loom, but they went on as before weaving at the empty loom.

The Emperor soon sent another faithful official to see how the stuff was getting on, and if it would soon be ready. The same thing happened to him as to the minister; he looked and looked, but as there was only the empty loom, he could see nothing at all.

'Is not this a beautiful piece of stuff?' said both the swindlers, showing and explaining the beautiful pattern and colours which were not there to be seen.

'I know I am not a fool!' thought the man, 'so it must be that I am unfit for my good post! It is very strange, though! However, one must not let it appear!' So he praised the stuff he did not see, and assured them of his delight in the beautiful colours and the originality of the design. 'It is absolutely charming!' he said to the Emperor. Everybody in the town was talking about this splendid stuff.

Now the Emperor thought he would like to see it while it was still on the loom. So, accompanied by a number of selected courtiers, among whom were the two faithful officials who had already seen the imaginary stuff, he went to visit the crafty impostors, who were working away as hard as ever they could at the empty loom.

'It is magnificent!' said both the honest officials. 'Only see, your Majesty, what a design! What colours!' And they pointed to the empty loom, for they thought no doubt the others could see the stuff.

'What!' thought the Emperor; 'I see nothing at all! This is terrible! Am I a fool? Am I not fit to be Emperor? Why, nothing worse could happen to me!'

'Oh, it is beautiful!' said the Emperor. 'It has my highest approval!' and he nodded his satisfaction as he gazed at the empty loom. Nothing would induce him to say that he could not see anything.

The whole suite gazed and gazed, but saw nothing more than all the others. However, they all exclaimed with his Majesty, 'It is very beautiful!' and they advised him to wear a suit made of this wonderful cloth on the occasion of a great procession which was just about to take place. 'It is magnificent! gorgeous! excellent!' went from mouth to mouth; they were all equally delighted with it. The Emperor gave each of the rogues an order of knighthood to be worn in their buttonholes and the title of 'Gentlemen weavers.'

Then the emperor walked along in the procession under the gorgeous canopy, and everybody in the streets and at the windows exclaimed, 'How beautiful the Emperor's new clothes are!'

The swindlers sat up the whole night, before the day on which the procession was to take place, burning sixteen candles; so that people might see how anxious they were to get the Emperor's new clothes ready. They pretended to take the stuff off the loom. They cut it out in the air with a huge pair of scissors, and they stitched away with needles without any thread in them. At last they said: 'Now the Emperor's new clothes are ready!'

The Emperor, with his grandest courtiers, went to them himself, and both the swindlers

raised one arm in the air, as if they were holding something, and said: 'See, these are the trousers, this is the coat, here is the mantle!' and so on. 'It is as light as a spider's web. One might think one had nothing on, but that is the very beauty of it!'

'Yes!' said all the courtiers, but they could not see anything, for there was nothing to see.

'Will your imperial majesty be graciously pleased to take off your clothes,' said the impostors, 'so that we may put on the new ones, along here before the great mirror?'

The Emperor took off all his clothes, and the impostors pretended to give him one article of dress after the other of the new ones which they had pretended to make. They pretended to fasten something round his waist and to tie on something; this was the train, and the Emperor turned round and round in front of the mirror.

'How well his majesty looks in the new clothes! How becoming they are!' cried all the people round. 'What a design, and what colours! They are most gorgeous robes!'

'The canopy is waiting outside which is to be carried over your majesty in the procession,' said the master of the ceremonies.

'Well, I am quite ready,' said the Emperor. 'Don't the clothes fit well?' and then he turned round again in front of the mirror, so that he should seem to be looking at his grand things.

The chamberlains who were to carry the train stooped and pretended to lift it from the ground with both hands, and they walked along with their hands in the air. They dared not let it appear that they could not see anything.

Then the Emperor walked along in the procession under the gorgeous canopy, and everybody in the streets and at the windows exclaimed, 'How beautiful the Emperor's new clothes are! What a splendid train! And they fit to perfection!' Nobody would let it appear that he could see nothing, for then he would not be fit for his post, or else he was a fool.

None of the Emperor's clothes had been so successful before.

'But he has got nothing on,' said a little child.

'Oh, listen to the innocent,' said its father; and one person whispered to the other what the child had said. 'He has nothing on; a child says he has nothing on!'

'But he has nothing on!' at last cried all the people.

The Emperor writhed, for he knew it was true, but he thought 'the procession must go on now,' so held himself stiffer than ever, and the chamberlains held up the invisible train.

The Little Mermaid

Once upon a time, in a splendid palace on the bed of the bluest ocean, lived the Sea King, a wise old triton with a long flowing white beard. He lived in a magnificent palace, built of gaily coloured coral and seashells, together with his five daughters, very beautiful mermaids. Sirennetta, the youngest and loveliest of them all, also had a beautiful voice, and when she sang, the fishes flocked from all over the sea to listen to her. The shells gaped wide, showing their pearls and even the jellyfish stopped to listen.

The young mermaid often sang, and each time, she would gaze upwards, seeking the faint sunlight that scarcely managed to trickle down into the depths. ‘Oh, how I’d love to go up there and at last see the sky, which everyone says is so pretty, and hear the voices of humans and smell the scent of the flowers! You’re still too young!’ said her mother. ‘In a year or two, when you’re fifteen. Only then will the King let you go up there, like your sisters!’

Sirennetta spent her time wishing for the world of humans, she listened to her sisters’ stories, and every time they returned from the surface, she would ask them questions, to satisfy her curiosity. And as she waited for the day when she too would be allowed to reach the surface of the sea and meet the unknown world, Sirennetta spent her time in her wonderful sea garden. The seahorses kept her company, and sometimes a dolphin would come and play. Only the unfriendly starfish never replied when she called.

At last, her long-desired birthday came. The night before, Sirennetta could not sleep a wink. In the morning, her father called her and, stroking her long golden hair, slipped a lovely carved flower into her locks. ‘There, now you can go to the surface. You’ll breathe air and see the sky. But remember! It’s not our world! We can only watch it and admire! We’re children of the sea and have no soul, as men do. Be careful and keep away from them; they can only bring bad luck!’

In a second, Sirennetta had kissed her father and was darting smoothly towards the surface of the sea. She swam so fast with flicks of her slender tail, that even the fish could not keep up with her. Suddenly she popped out of the water. How wonderful! For the first time, she saw the great blue sky, in which as dusk began to fall, the first stars were peeping out and twinkling. The sun, already over the horizon, trailed a golden reflection that gently faded on the heaving waves. High overhead, a flock of gulls spotted the little mermaid and greeted her arrival with shrieks of pleasure. ‘It’s so lovely!’ she exclaimed happily.

But another nice surprise was in store for her: a ship was slowly sailing towards the rock on which Sirennetta was sitting. The sailors dropped anchor and the ship swayed gently in the calm sea. Sirennetta watched the men go about their work aboard, lighting the lanterns for the night. She could clearly hear their voices. ‘I’d love to speak to them!’ she said to herself. But then she gazed sadly at her long flexible tail, her equivalent of legs, and said to herself: ‘I can never be like them!’

Aboard ship, a strange excitement seemed to seize the crew, and a little later, the sky became a spray of many coloured lights and the crackle of fireworks filled the sky. ‘Long live the captain! Hurray for his 20th birthday. Hurray! Hurray .many happy returns!’ Astonished at all this, the little mermaid caught sight of the young man in whose honour the display was being held. Tall and dignified, he was smiling happily, and Sirennetta could not take her eyes from him. She followed his every movement, fascinated by all that was happening.

The party went on, but the sea grew more agitated. Sirenetta anxiously realized that the men were now in danger: an icy wind was sweeping the waves, the ink black sky was torn by flashes of lightning, then a terrible storm broke suddenly over the helpless ship. In vain Sirenetta screamed: 'Look out! Beware of the sea.' But the howling wind carried her words away, and the rising waves swept over the ship. Amidst the sailors' shouts, masts and sails toppled onto the deck, and with a sinister splintering sound, the ship sank.

By the light of one of the oil lamps Sirenetta had seen the young captain fall into the water, and she swam to his rescue. But she could not find him in the high waves and, tired out, was about to give up, when suddenly there he was on the crest of a nearby wave. In an instant, he was swept straight into the mermaids arms. The young man was unconscious and the mermaid held his head above water in the stormy sea, in an effort to save his life. She clung to him for hours trying to fight the tiredness that was overtaking her.

Then, as suddenly as it had sprung up, the storm died away. In a grey dawn over a still angry sea, Sirenetta realized thankfully that land lay ahead. Aided by the motion of the waves, she pushed the captain's body onto the shore, beyond the water's edge. Unable herself to walk, the mermaid sat wringing her hands, her tail lapped by the rippling water, trying to warm the young captain with her own body.

Then the sound of approaching voices startled Sirenetta and she slipped back into deeper water. 'Come quickly! Quickly!' came a woman's voice in alarm. 'There's a man here! Look, I think he's unconscious!' The captain was now in good hands. 'Let's take him up to the castle!' 'No, no! Better get help.' And the first thing the young man saw when he opened his eyes again was the beautiful face of the youngest of a group of three ladies. 'Thank you! Thank you for saving my life.' he murmured to the lovely unknown lady.

From the sea Sirenetta watched the man she had snatched from the waves turn towards the castle, without knowing that a mermaid had saved his life. Slowly swimming out to sea, Sirenetta felt that there on the beach she had left behind something she could never bring herself to forget. How wonderful those tremendous hours in the storm had been, as she had battled with the elements. And as she swam down towards her father's palace, her sisters came to meet her, anxious to know what had kept her so long on the surface.

Sirenetta started to tell her story, but suddenly a lump came to her throat and, bursting into tears, she fled to her room.

She stayed there for days, refusing to see anyone or to touch food. She knew that her love for the young captain was without hope, for she was a mermaid and could never marry a human. Only the Witch of the Deep could help her. But what price would she have to pay?

Sirenetta decided to ask the Witch. 'So you want to get rid of your fishy tail, do you? I expect you'd like to have a pair of woman's legs, isn't that so?' said the nasty Witch scornfully, from her cave guarded by a giant squid. 'Be warned!' she went on. 'You will suffer horribly, as though a sword were cutting you apart. And every time you place your feet on the earth, you will feel dreadful pain!'

'It doesn't matter!' whispered Sirenetta, with tears in her eyes. 'As long as I can go back to him!' 'And that's not all!' exclaimed the Witch. 'In exchange for my spell, you must give me your lovely voice. You'll never be able to utter a word again! And don't forget! If the man you love marries someone else, you will not be able to turn into a mermaid again. You will just dissolve in water like the foam on the wave!' 'All right!' said Sirenetta, eagerly taking the little jar holding the magic potion.

The Witch had told Sirennetta that the young captain was actually a prince, and the mermaid left the water at a spot not far from the castle. She pulled herself onto the beach, then drank the magic potion. An agonizing pain made her faint, and when she came to her senses, she could mistily see the face she loved, smiling down at her.

The witch's magic had worked the spell, for the prince had felt a strange desire to go down to the beach, just as Sirennetta was arriving. There he had stumbled on her, and recalling how he too had once been washed up on the shore, gently laid his cloak over the still body, cast up by the waves. 'Don't be frightened!' he said quickly. 'You're quite safe! Where have you come from?' But Sirennetta was now dumb and could not reply, so the young man softly stroked her wet cheek. 'I'll take you to the castle and look after you,' he said.

In the days that followed, the mermaid started a new life. She wore splendid dresses and often went out on horseback with the prince. One evening, she was invited to a great ball at Court. However, as the Witch had foretold, every movement and each step she took was torture. Sirennetta bravely put up with her suffering, glad to be allowed to stay near her beloved prince. And though she could not speak to him, he was fond of her and showered kindness on her, to her great joy. However, the young man's heart really belonged to the unknown lady he had seen as he lay on the shore, though he had never met her since, for she had returned at once to her own land.

Even when he was in the company of Sirennetta, fond of her as he was, the unknown lady was always in his thoughts. And the little mermaid, guessing instinctively that she was not his true love, suffered even more. She often crept out of the castle at night, to weep by the seashore. Once she thought she could spy her sisters rise from the water and wave at her, but this made her feel sadder than ever.

Fate, however, had another surprise in store. From the Castle ramparts one day, a huge ship was sighted sailing into the harbour. Together with Sirennetta, the prince went down to meet it. And who stepped from the vessel, but the unknown lady who had been for long in the prince's heart? When he saw her, he rushed to greet her. Sirennetta felt herself turn to stone and a painful feeling pierced her heart: she was about to lose the prince for ever. The unknown lady too had never forgotten the young man she had found on the beach and soon after, he asked her to marry him. Since she too was in love, she happily said 'yes'.

A few days after the wedding, the happy couple were invited for a voyage on the huge ship, which was still in the harbour. Sirennetta too went on board, and the ship set sail. Night fell, and sick at heart over the loss of the prince, Sirennetta went on deck. She remembered the Witch's prophecy, and was now ready to give up her life and dissolve in the sea.

Suddenly she heard a cry from the water and dimly saw her sisters in the darkness. 'Sirennetta! Sirennetta! It's us, your sisters! We've heard all about what happened! Look! Do you see this knife? It's magic! The Witch gave it to us in exchange for our hair. Take it! Kill the prince before dawn, and you will become a mermaid again and forget all your troubles!'

As though in a trance, Sirennetta clasped the knife and entered the cabin where the prince and his bride lay asleep. But as she gazed at the young man's sleeping face, she simply blew him a furtive kiss, before running back on deck.

When dawn broke, she threw the knife into the sea. Then she shot a parting glance at the world she was leaving behind, and dived into the waves, ready to turn into the foam of the sea from whence she had come, and vanish. As the sun rose over the horizon, it cast a

long golden ray of light across the sea, and in the chilly water, Sirenetta turned towards it for the last time.

Suddenly, as though by magic, a mysterious force drew her out of the water, and she felt herself lifted high into the sky. The clouds were tinged with pink, the sea rippled in the early morning breeze, and the little mermaid heard a whisper through the tinkling of bells: 'Sirenetta, Sirenetta! Come with us.' 'Who are you?' asked the mermaid, surprised to find she had recovered the use of her voice. 'Where am I?' 'You're with us in the sky. We're the fairies of the air! We have no soul as men do, but our task is to help them. We take amongst us only those who have shown kindness to men!'

Greatly touched, Sirenetta looked down over the sea towards the prince's ship, and felt tears spring to her eyes. The fairies of the air whispered to her: 'Look! The earth flowers are waiting for our tears to turn into the morning dew! Come along with us.'

The Snow Queen

There is a legend that, once upon a time, a beautiful fairy, the Snow Queen, lived on the highest, most solitary peaks of the Alps. The mountain folk and shepherds climbed to the summits to admire her, and everyone fell head over heels in love with her. Every man would have given anything, including his life, to marry her. Indeed, their lives are just what they did give, for Fate had decided that no mortal would ever marry the Snow Queen.

But in spite of that, many brave souls did their best to approach her, hoping always to persuade her. Each suitor was allowed to enter the great ice palace with the crystal roof, where the Queen's throne stood. But the second he declared his love and asked for her hand, thousands of goblins appeared to grasp him and push him over the rocks, down into bottomless abysses. Without the slightest emotion, the Queen would watch the scene, her heart of ice unable to feel anything at all.

The legend of the crystal palace and the beautiful heartless Queen spread as far as the most distant alpine valley, the home of a fearless chamois hunter. Fascinated by the tale, he decided to set out and try his luck. Leaving his valley, he journeyed for days on end, climbing the snowclad mountain faces, scaling icebound peaks and defying the bitterly cold wind that swept through the alpine gullies. More than once he felt all was lost, but the thought of the lovely Snow Queen gave him new strength and kept him moving onwards.

At last, after many days climbing, he saw glinting in the sunshine before him, the tall transparent spires of the ice palace. Summoning all his courage, the young man entered the Throne Room. But he was so struck by the Snow Queen's beauty that he could not utter a word. Shy and timid, he did not dare speak. So he knelt in admiration before the Queen for hours on end, without opening his mouth. The Queen looked at him silently, thinking all the while that, provided he did not ask her hand in marriage, there was no need to call the goblins.

Then, to her great surprise, she discovered that his behaviour touched her heart. She realised she was becoming quite fond of this hunter, much younger and more handsome than her other suitors. Time passed and the Snow Queen dared not admit, not even to herself, that she would actually like to marry the young man.

In the meantime, the goblins kept watch over their mistress; first they were astonished, then they became more and more upset. For they rightly feared that their Queen might be on the point of breaking the Law and bringing down on the heads of all the Mountain People the fury of Fate. Seeing that the Queen was slow to give the order to get rid of her suitor, the goblins decided to take matters into their own hands.

One night, as dusk fell, they slipped out of the cracks in the rock and clustered round the young chamois hunter. Then they hurled him into the abyss.

The Snow Queen watched the whole scene from the window, but there was nothing she could do to stop them. However, her icy heart melted, and the beautiful cruel fairy suddenly became a woman. A tear dropped from her eye, the first she had ever shed. And the Snow Queen's tear fell on to a stone where it turned into a little silvery star. This was the first edelweiss... the flower that grows only on the highest, most inaccessible peaks in the Alps, on the edge of the abyss and precipice .

Bluebeard

Once upon a time, in the fair land of France, there lived a very powerful lord, the owner of estates, farms and a great splendid castle, and his name was Bluebeard. This wasn't his real name, it was a nickname, due to the fact he had a long shaggy black beard with glints of blue in it. He was very handsome and charming, but, if the truth be told, there was something about him that made you feel respect, and a little uneasy.

Bluebeard often went away to war, and when he did, he left his wife in charge of the castle. He had had lots of wives, all young, pretty and noble. As bad luck would have it, one after the other, they had all died, and so the noble lord was forever getting married again. 'Sire,' someone would ask now and again, 'what did your wives die of?' 'Hah, my friend,' Bluebeard would reply, 'one died of smallpox, one of a hidden sickness, another of a high fever, another of a terrible infection. Ah, I'm very unlucky, and they're unlucky too! They're all buried in the castle chapel,' he added.

Nobody found anything strange about that. Nor did the sweet and beautiful young girl that Bluebeard took as a wife think it strange either. She went to the castle accompanied by her sister Anna, who said: 'Oh, aren't you lucky marrying a lord like Bluebeard?' 'He really is very nice, and when you're close, his beard doesn't look as blue as folk say!' said the bride, and the two sisters giggled delightedly. Poor souls! They had no idea what lay in store for them!

A month or so later, Bluebeard had the carriage brought round and said to his wife, 'Darling, I must leave you for a few weeks. But keep cheerful during that time, invite whoever you like and look after the castle. Here,' he added, handing his bride a bunch of keys, 'you'll need these, the keys of the safe, the armoury and the library keys, and this one, which opens all the room doors. Now, this little key here,' and he pointed to a key that was much smaller than the others, 'opens the little room at the end of the great ground floor corridor. Take your friends were you want, open any door you like, but not this one! Is that quite clear?' repeated Bluebeard. 'Not this one! Nobody at all is allowed to enter that little room. And if you ever did go into it, I would go into such a terrible rage that it's better that you don't!' 'Don't worry, husband,' said Bluebeard's wife as she took the keys, 'I'll do as you say.'

After giving her a hug, Bluebeard got into his carriage, whipped up the horses and off he went. The days went by. The young girl invited her friends to the castle and showed them round all the rooms except the one at the end of the corridor. 'Why shouldn't I see inside the little room? Why? Why is it forbidden?'

Well, she thought about it so much that she ended up bursting with curiosity, until one day she opened the door and walked into the little room.

Of all ghastly horrors! Inside, hanging on the walls were the bodies of Bluebeard's wives: he had strangled them all with his own hands!

Terror stricken, the girl ran out of the room, but the bunch of keys slipped from her grasp. She picked them up without a glance and hurried to her own room, her heart thumping wildly in her chest. Horrors! She was living in a castle of the dead! So that is what had happened to Bluebeard's other wives! The girl summoned up her courage and she noticed that one of the keys — the very key to the little room — was stained with blood. 'I must wipe it clean, before my husband comes back!' she said to herself. But try as she would, the blood stain wouldn't wash away. She washed, she scrubbed and she rinsed it; all in vain, for the key was still red.

That very evening, Bluebeard came home. Just imagine the state his poor wife was in! Bluebeard did not ask his wife for the keys that same evening, but he remarked, 'You look a little upset, darling. Has anything nasty happened?' 'Oh, no! No!' 'Are you sorry I came back so soon?' 'Oh, no! I'm delighted!' But that night, the bride didn't sleep a wink.

Next day, Bluebeard said: 'Darling, give me back the keys,' and his wife hurriedly did so. Bluebeard remarked, 'There's one missing, the key to the little room!' 'Is there?' said the young girl shaking, 'I must have left it in my room!' 'All right, go and get it.' But when Bluebeard's wife put the key into his hand, Bluebeard turned white and in a deep hoarse voice demanded: 'Why is this key stained with blood?' 'I don't know,' stammered his wife. 'You know very well!' he retorted. 'You went into the little room, didn't you? Well, you'll go back again, this time for good, along with the other ladies in there. You must die!' 'Oh no! I pray you!' 'You must die!' he repeated.

Just then, there was a knock at the door and Anna, Bluebeard's wife's sister, entered the castle. 'Good morning,' she said, 'you seem rather pale.' 'Not at all, we're quite well,' replied Bluebeard. His wife whispered in his ear, 'Please, please give me ten minutes to live!' Bluebeard replied, 'Not more than ten!'

The girl ran to her sister Anna who had gone up to one of the towers and asked her, 'Anna, do you see our brothers coming? They promised they would come and see me today!' But Anna replied, 'No, I don't see anyone. What's wrong? You look agitated.' 'Anna, please,' said the shaken girl, 'look again! Are you sure you can't see someone?' 'No,' said her sister, 'only one or two peasants.'

Just then the voice of Bluebeard boomed up to them, 'Wife, your time is up! Come here!' 'I'm coming!' she called, but then said to her sister: 'Oh Anna, aren't our brothers coming?' 'No,' replied Anna. Again Bluebeard shouted up. 'Come down at once! Or I'll come up!' Trembling like a leaf, his wife went downstairs.

Bluebeard was clutching a big knife and he grabbed his bride by the hair. 'Sister, I can see two horsemen coming!' called out Anna from the tower that very moment. Bluebeard made a horrible face, 'They too will die!' His wife knelt to implore, 'Please, please don't kill me. I'll never tell anyone what I saw! I'll never say a word!' 'Yes, you'll never say a word for eternity!' snarled Bluebeard, raising his knife. The poor girl screamed, 'Have pity on me!' But he fiercely replied, 'No! You must die!'

He was about to bring the knife down on the girl's delicate neck, when two young men burst into the room: a dragon and a musketeer. They were his wife's brothers. Drawing their swords, they leapt towards Bluebeard, who tried to flee up some stairs, but was caught and killed.

And that was the end of the sad story. Bluebeard's poor wives were given a Christian burial, the castle was completely renovated and the young widow, some time later, married a good and honest young man, who helped her to forget the terrible adventure.

And that young lady completely lost all her sense of curiosity.

Old Sultan

A shepherd had a faithful dog, called Sultan, who was grown very old, and had lost all his teeth. And one day when the shepherd and his wife were standing together before the house the shepherd said, 'I will shoot old Sultan tomorrow morning, for he is of no use now.' But his wife said, 'Pray let the poor faithful creature live; he has served us well a great many years, and we ought to give him a livelihood for the rest of his days.' 'But what can we do with him?' said the shepherd, 'he has not a tooth in his head, and the thieves don't care for him at all; to be sure he has served us, but then he did it to earn his livelihood; tomorrow shall be his last day, depend upon it.'

Poor Sultan, who was lying close by them, heard all that the shepherd and his wife said to one another, and was very much frightened to think tomorrow would be his last day; so in the evening he went to his good friend the wolf, who lived in the wood, and told him all his sorrows, and how his master meant to kill him in the morning.

'Make yourself easy,' said the wolf, 'I will give you some good advice. Your master, you know, goes out every morning very early with his wife into the field; and they take their little child with them, and lay it down behind the hedge in the shade while they are at work. Now you lie down close by the child, and pretend to be watching it, and I will come out of the wood and run away with it; you must run after me as fast as you can, and I will let it drop; then you may carry it back, and they will think you have saved their child, and will be so thankful to you that they will take care of you as long as you live.'

The dog liked this plan very well; and accordingly so it was managed. The wolf ran with the child a little way; the shepherd and his wife screamed out; but Sultan soon overtook him, and carried the poor little thing back to his master and mistress. Then the shepherd patted him on the head, and said, 'Old Sultan has saved our child from the wolf, and therefore he shall live and be well taken care of, and have plenty to eat. Wife, go home, and give him a good dinner, and let him have my old cushion to sleep on as long as he lives.' So from this time forward Sultan had all that he could wish for.

Soon afterwards the wolf came and wished him joy, and said, 'Now, my good fellow, you must tell no tales, but turn your head the other way when I want to taste one of the old shepherd's fine fat sheep.' 'No,' said the Sultan; 'I will be true to my master.' However, the wolf thought he was in joke, and came one night to get a dainty morsel. But Sultan had told his master what the wolf meant to do; so he laid wait for him behind the barn door, and when the wolf was busy looking out for a good fat sheep, he had a stout cudgel laid about his back, that combed his locks for him finely. Then the wolf was very angry, and called Sultan 'an old rogue,' and swore he would have his revenge.

So the next morning the wolf sent the boar to challenge Sultan to come into the wood to fight the matter. Now Sultan had nobody he could ask to be his second but the shepherd's old three-legged cat; so he took her with him, and as the poor thing limped along with some trouble, she stuck up her tail straight in the air. The wolf and the wild boar were first on the ground; and when they espied their enemies coming, and saw the cat's long tail standing straight in the air, they thought she was carrying a sword for Sultan to fight with; and every time she limped, they thought she was picking up a stone to throw at them; so they said they should not like this way of fighting, and the boar lay down behind a bush, and the wolf jumped up into a tree.

Sultan and the cat soon came up, and looked about and wondered that no one was there. The boar, however, had not quite hidden himself, for his ears stuck out of the bush;

and when he shook one of them a little, the cat, seeing something move, and thinking it was a mouse, sprang upon it, and bit and scratched it, so that the boar jumped up and grunted, and ran away, roaring out, 'Look up in the tree, there sits the one who is to blame.' So they looked up, and espied the wolf sitting amongst the branches; and they called him a cowardly rascal, and would not suffer him to come down till he was heartily ashamed of himself, and had promised to be good friends again with old Sultan.

Aladdin and The Magic Lamp

Long time ago in China, there lived a poor boy, whose name was Aladdin. Aladdin lived with his mother. One day a rich and distinguished looking man came to their house and said to Aladdin's mother, 'I am a merchant from Arabia and want your son to come with me. I will reward him handsomely.' Aladdin's mother instantly agreed. Little did she know that the man pretending to be a rich merchant was in reality a magician.

Next day, Aladdin, having packed his belongings, left with the 'merchant'. After many hours of traveling the 'merchant' stopped. Aladdin too stopped, surprised that they should stop in such a desolate spot. He looked around; there was nothing in sight for miles.

The 'merchant' pulled out some colored powder from his pocket and threw it on the ground. The next instant the whole place was filled with smoke. As the smoke cleared, Aladdin saw a huge opening in the ground; it was a cave. The 'merchant' turned to Aladdin and said, 'I want you to go inside this cave; there will be more gold than you have ever seen; take as much as you want. You will also see an old lamp; please bring that back to me. Here, take this ring; it will help you.' Aladdin was very suspicious but he decided to do as was told.

He lowered himself into the cave, thinking all the while that it would be difficult to climb out without help. Aladdin entered the cave and, just like the 'merchant' had said, saw gold, jewelry, diamonds and other valuables. He filled his pockets. When this was done, he looked for the lamp; it was lying in the corner, full of dust and dirty. He picked it up and ran to the cave's opening and shouted to the 'merchant', 'I have your lamp. Can you please pull me out?' 'Give me the lamp,' said the 'merchant'. Aladdin was not sure that he would be pulled out if he gave back the lamp; so he said, 'First, please pull me out.'

This angered the 'merchant'. With a loud cry, he pulled out the same colorful powder and threw it on the cave opening, sealing it with a huge boulder. Aladdin was depressed. He thought, 'That was no rich merchant; he was surely a magician. I wonder why this lamp was so important to him.' As he was thinking he rubbed the lamp. All of sudden a strange mist filled the room and from the mist emerged a strange looking man. He said, 'My master, I am the genie of the lamp, you have rescued me; what would your wish be?' Aladdin was scared but he said in quivering voice, 'Ta.. Take me back home.'

And the next moment Aladdin was home hugging his mother. He told her of the magician and the lamp. Aladdin again summoned the genie. This time when the genie appeared he was not scared. He said, 'Genie, I want a palace, not an old hut.' Again to Aladdin and his mother's amazement in front of them was a magnificent palace.

Time passed. Aladdin married the Sultan's daughter and was very happy. It so happened that the evil magician got to know of Aladdin's good fortune. He came by Aladdin's palace pretending to exchange old lamps for new. The princes, Aladdin's wife, not knowing the value of the lamp to Aladdin, called out to the magician to wait.

As soon as the magician saw the lamp he grabbed it from the princess' hand and rubbed it. The genie appeared, 'you are my master and your wish is my command,' he said to the magician. 'Take Aladdin's palace to the great desert faraway from here,' ordered the magician.

When Aladdin came home, there was no palace and no princess. He guessed it must be the evil magician who had come to take revenge on him. All was not lost, Aladdin had a ring that the magician had given to him. Aladdin pulled out that ring and rubbed it.

Another genie appeared. Aladdin said, 'Take me to my princess.'

Soon, Aladdin was in Arabia with his princess. He found his lamp lying on a table next to the magician. Before the magician could react, Aladdin jumped for the lamp and got hold of it. As soon as he had the lamp, Aladdin rubbed it.

The genie appeared again and said, 'My master, Aladdin, it is indeed good to serve you again. What is it that you wish?' 'I want you to send this magician to another world so that he never harms anybody,' said Aladdin. Aladdin's wish was carried out; the evil magician disappeared forever.

The genie carried Aladdin, the princes and the palace back to China. He stayed with Aladdin for the rest of his life.

The Ruined Man Who Became Rich Again Through a Dream

There lived once in Baghdad a very wealthy man, who lost all his substance and became so poor, that he could only earn his living by excessive labour. One night, he lay down to sleep, dejected and sick at heart, and saw in a dream one who said to him, 'Thy fortune is at Cairo; go thither and seek it.' So he set out for Cairo; but, when he arrived there, night overtook him and he lay down to sleep in a mosque.

Presently, as fate would have it, a company of thieves entered the mosque and made their way from thence into an adjoining house; but the people of the house, being aroused by the noise, awoke and cried out; whereupon the chief of the police came to their aid with his officers. The robbers made off; but the police entered the mosque and finding the man from Baghdad asleep there, laid hold of him and beat him with palm rods, till he was well-nigh dead. Then they cast him into prison, where he abode three days, after which the chief of the police sent for him and said to him, 'From whence art thou?' 'From Baghdad,' answered he. 'And what brought thee to Cairo?' asked the magistrate. Quoth the Baghdadi, 'I saw in a dream one who said to me, "Thy fortune is at Cairo; go thither to it." But when I came hither, the fortune that he promised me proved to be the beating I had of thee.'

The chief of the police laughed, till he showed his jaw-teeth, and said, 'O man of little wit, thrice have I seen in a dream one who said to me, "There is in Baghdad a house of such a fashion and situated so-and-so, in the garden whereof is a fountain and thereunder a great sum of money is buried. Go thither and take it." Yet I went not; but thou, of thy little wit, hast journeyed from place to place, on the faith of a dream, which was but an illusion of sleep.' Then he gave him money, saying, 'This is to help thee back to thy native land.'

Now the house he had described was the man's own house in Baghdad; so the latter returned thither, and digging underneath the fountain in his garden, discovered a great treasure; and thus God gave him abundant fortune.

The Enchanting Horse

Once a young man from India was flying around the world on a magical horse. He landed on a palace of the Persian Sultan. The Sultan was an adventurous person. So he was always attracted by strange feats. He wondered when he saw a young man on the horse flying in the sky. 'Where are you coming from, young man?' The Sultan asked the young man. The young man replied. 'I am from India. The Sultan asked the young man to sell his flying horse to him. The young man agreed with one condition that he should give the princess in marriage to him. The Sultan agreed but he wanted to test the horse. He asked his son to fly the horse to test it.

So the Persian prince mounted the horse. He turned the key to start the horse. The horse flew high in the air. All the courtiers and Sultan cheered him. Sometime later the horse and the prince were out of sight. Even hours later the prince did not return. The Sultan grew worried. The Sultan said, 'Your horse had taken my son somewhere. I don't know where he is. So you are responsible for that.' So he ordered that the young man to be imprisoned till his son returned to the palace.

The Prince was flying in the air and he could not turn the key of the horse to bring it down. He tried again and again but in vain. Finally he turned the key. The horse was controlled by him but he lost the way back to his kingdom. So he wandered over many places in the air and reached his kingdom some days later. When he reached the palace, the Sultan was delighted to see him. So he freed the young man but he refused to give his daughter to him. So the young man wanted to take revenge on the Sultan.

One day he got a chance. The princess fell ill. The court physician came to cure her and failed. Then the other physicians tried and they also failed. The Sultan announced a good reward to the man who could cure her.

The young man thought that it was a good chance to avenge the sultan. He disguised himself as a physician and met the Sultan and said, 'I will try to cure her illness.' He asked the Sultan to bring the enchanting horse near her which he had taken from the Indian youth. The Sultan ordered his men to bring the horse near her. The young man went near the princess and sat beside her. He chanted some magical words near her face. At once the princess got up from her bed. She was fresh and happy to see the young man. On seeing this, the Sultan and others cheered them. But suddenly the disguised young man took the princess and put her on the horse and flew away.

The young man revenged the Sultan and at the same time got his reward. The Sultan had promised him the enchanting horse also. He went to his land and lived happily.

The Monkey Advisor

Long ago there lived a poet. He always searched a calm place for composing new poems. One day he went to a forest nearby to find a calm place. At one place he thought, 'It is the best place for me to write poems.' The place was quiet and surrounded by trees full of flowers. So he sat there and began to think.

When he was trying to write a poem there entered an evil spirit with anger. The place was very calm. So the sudden appearance of the devil made him frightened. The devil asked the poet 'Eeye...! Who are you?' in a fierce voice. The poet was stunned for a while on hearing the voice. The face was so ugly that he was afraid to look at the face. When the devil opened his mouth, fire came out and his eyes seemed to be balls of fire. The poet was so frightened that his tongue stammered.

A little later again the devil spoke, 'How dare you enter our place?' On hearing the roaring of the devil the poet said 'I am an innocent poet, I want to write poem in a lonely and calm place. So I came here. I didn't know that this place was yours. I don't have any bad aim. If you give me a little time, I will quit the place.' But the bad devil was not ready to hear his voice and began to curse him, 'I won't excuse you. You made a big mistake. You should be punished for that. So you will turn into a monkey from now.' All of a sudden the poet became a monkey, grey in color. The devil saw the monkey poet and said, 'Oh! Ha! You shall be like this for many years.' Then he left the place.

The monkey poet cried and cried for a while. But he could not do anything except weeping. As he got hungry he began to eat fruits and nuts and sleep on trees like real monkeys. He could not talk and write poems as he did earlier. He walked on the earth and leaped on the trees for days.

One day he reached a seashore and luckily found a ship which was ready to leave. The monkey poet in no time jumped on to the ship and moved here and there over the top. The passengers saw the monkey on the ship and started to shout. 'Monkey! Monkey!! Let anyone come and throw this away' They said with fear. One of the passengers quickly came forward and threw him into the sea. Some passengers shouted, 'Kill him!

Now the captain of the ship came there and saw the monkey struggling in the water. He was a kind-hearted man. So he asked the passengers, 'No! No, you don't worry about the monkey. It will not harm you. This poor creature looks strange. I can manage him.' The Monkey poet was safe. He thanked the captain for his timely help. Then he sat in a corner silently without any misbehaviour.

Finally the ship reached a port—that was Baghdath. With a little smile, it thanked the captain. It jumped from the ship and wandered on the roads of Baghdath. Just then he heard the news that the king wanted a good Advisor to him. To get selected all had to write a letter of worthy words. The best letter writer would be given the post of the Chief advisor. The Monkey poet also wrote a letter to the king and participated in the competition. He wrote a letter of fine message.

When the king read the letters, he very much liked the monkey's letter. So he ordered the writer of the letter to be brought before him soon. The courtiers came with the news to the monkey poet who sprung before the king at once. The King saw the monkey with wonder and said: 'This poor monkey! You all say this creature wrote the letter!'. One of the minister said: 'This is true my lord. It was written by the monkey, my lord.' All the courtiers and the crowded public around the king, cheered the monkey. They wondered, 'He can't talk. But how can he write a letter of such quality?' The monkey stood before

the king majestically.

But the king wanted to test the monkey and asked it to write the same letter now with the same words. The monkey poet readily took a pen and a paper and quickly started to write the same letter. The king and the others were in great surprise on his way of writing. They said: 'This is not an ordinary monkey.'

The king turned back and called his daughter. She was a princess of magical powers. In no time she found that he was not a monkey, he was a poet of intelligence. She said that he had been cursed by some evil spirit. The Princess chanted some mantra and removed the curse on the monkey. In a few minutes the monkey poet changed to a real human poet.

The poet smiled happily at the courtiers and they cheered him. The pet thanked the princess for her help. The King announced his firm decision to appoint the poet as his chief advisor. He served the court as a faithful advisor and served the king loyally for many years.

The Enchanted Horse (2)

The people were rejoicing in Shiraz, Persia. They were happily celebrating the feast of the New Year. That day the Sultan had arranged for great fairs and festivals in the main square of the city. The Sultan sat on his throne and watched his subjects celebrating.

Just then the crowd stopped amidst their actions and looked surprised. They saw a man riding a wooden horse that was decorated with silk and jewels as a real horse. The horse looked elegant and so did the young man riding it. The Sultan, too, was surprised to see him. The young man dismounted the horse, bowed to the Sultan and said, 'Greetings, Your Majesty, I am an Indian, the owner of this horse that has magic powers. All I have to do is sit on it and tell where I want to be and in the blink of an eye, I am there.' The crowd gasped to hear the power of the special horse. The Sultan recovered after hearing this and then said, 'Welcome, Indian. Now you'll have to prove that your words are true.' 'I'll go through any test you want me to prove it.' 'Alright,' the Sultan ordered. 'Go to the mountain to the east of my kingdom. Bring to me a leaf from the palm tree that stands there.'

The Indian bowed low and mounted the horse. Then he turned a tiny screw that was located in the horse's neck. And then the Indian was not to be seen as the horse had flown off. Just a few seconds later, the Indian appeared on the horseback at the city square. He dismounted the horse and placed the palm leaf in the Sultan's hand.

The Sultan was convinced of the magical horse's power. He was now determined to possess it. So he said, 'Dear Indian, what price do you ask for this enchanted horse of yours?' The Indian said, 'Your Majesty, I got this magical animal in exchange for my one and only beautiful daughter. I gave my daughter to the man who created this horse. Then, my daughter told me that I would never give up this horse for anything but for something that equals its true value.'

The Sultan offered, 'Go on, Indian. Tell me what you want in exchange. I have mansions full of jewels and gold. I have prosperous cities of which you can become the ruler.' 'Thank you, Your Majesty, but none of these do I desire. I think I can let you have the horse in exchange of your daughter's hand in marriage.' The Sultan smiled while the crowd murmured in discussion. But this reply by the Indian angered Prince Firoz Shah. He was the Sultan's son, Prince of Shiraz.

The Sultan was in deep thought for he thought this to be a worthy bargain. The Sultan addressed Prince Firoz. 'Prince Firoz, why don't you ride the horse and see if it works well even with other riders on its back?' The Prince mounted the horse. Then the Indian instructed him how to operate the enchanted wooden horse. The Prince heard only that he had to turn a screw to start his ride. He did so and off he flew. The eager Prince had not heard how he was to stop the horse when required.

As the Prince flew off on the enchanted horse's back, the Sultan and his subjects grew worried about if he would be able to come back safely. The Sultan waited for hours yet there was no sign of the Prince. Now the worried Sultan grew angry, too. Seeing his anger, the Indian explained, 'Your Majesty, do not be angry. The young Prince was impatient and did not hear all the instructions. It is not my fault at all.' 'Do you think that he'll keep flying all the time? Will he never land back on earth?' the Sultan enquired angrily. 'No, Your Majesty,' the Indian said. 'The Prince will come down to land if he would locate and turn the second screw on the horse's neck.' 'But he may land in the deep sea or a high mountain!' exclaimed the Sultan. 'No, Your Majesty, it won't happen. The magical horse

can sense danger and will never land in such places. He'll only go where he is instructed to go.'

The Sultan was not convinced by the Indian's reply. He called his guards and said, 'Take him and put him into prison for ninety days. If the Prince returns safe and sound, he'll be freed or he would be killed as a punishment.'

Meanwhile Prince of Shiraz was flying riding on the enchanted horse. He felt very scared that he had not learnt the way to land the horse. By chance his eyes fell on the screw below the horse's ear. He turned the screw in the opposite direction and the horse started descending. Soon the horse landed on the roof of a large palace.

The Prince of Shiraz dismounted the horse. He saw a doorway. He opened it stealthily and descended the steps that he saw. He soon reached a large hall. Many guards were sleeping there. They had kept their weapons by their side. The Prince then saw a light at one end of the hall. As he reached the spot, he saw some curtains. Moving the curtains aside, he peeped in. His eyes met the most breathtaking scene of his life. A beautiful ivory skinned maiden with long lustrous hair and rosy red lips lay on a bed in deep sleep. Many of her maids were by her side. But all of them were dozing. 'Oh! She is so beautiful!' the Prince exclaimed. 'Surely she must be the princess of this land,' the Prince approached the bed.

The sound of his steps woke up the maiden. She was very surprised to see a young handsome man in her bedchamber in the middle of the night. 'Do not fear,' the Prince said. 'I am the Prince of Shiraz, due to a chain of unbelievable events, I have been brought in your presence. I hereby seek your help and protection.' The maiden spoke, 'I am the Princess of Bengal. You are now in my kingdom and you'll be treated as an honoured guest.' Then the Princess summoned her chambermaids. They took the prince to the guest-room to refresh and rest himself. The Princess was very impressed by Prince Feroz and had fallen in love with him.

The next morning the Princess of Bengal dressed in her most beautiful silk garments and the choicest of her precious jewels. Then she went to meet the Prince of Shiraz. They both sat down for breakfast. There the Prince of Shiraz told his strange story to the Princess of Bengal. In the most beautiful words, he declared his love for the Princess. The Princess was overwhelmed and she, too, confessed her love for the Prince. The Prince stayed as a royal guest there for sixty days and spent beautiful moments with his beloved.

After sixty days, he remembered that his father, the king of Persia would be waiting for him. So he went to the Princess of Bengal and said, 'Dear, I must leave for Shiraz now. Let us go to your father, the King of Bengal. I will ask his permission to take you as my wife. Then we will reach Shiraz, take my father's permission and we will soon get married.' So the Prince of Shiraz and the Princess of Bengal took the King of Bengal's permission.

Then they mounted the enchanted horse and flew off to Shiraz. The Prince landed near a rest house at the outskirts of Shiraz. He made the Princess comfortable there. Then he went to his palace to meet the King of Persia. The Sultan, the courtiers and all the subjects were delighted to see the Prince safe and healthy. After seeking the Sultan's permission, the Prince was happy. The Sultan ordered wedding preparations to be made. He declared that he himself would go to fetch the Princess of Bengal from the rest house to the palace next morning.

The Sultan ordered the Indian to be released from prison. Then as the Indian left the prison, he had a plain mind. He wanted to take revenge. The Indian went to the rest house. There he addressed the guard, 'Guards, the Sultan has sent me to fetch the Princess of

Bengal.' The Indian had the enchanted horse and he mounted the horse with the Princess and flew off. As he was flying, the Sultan who was strolling on the roof of his palace saw both of them. He called after them but to no avail.

The Prince was informed about this and he felt sad and angry indeed. That night he dressed up as a wandering sage and left the city. He went in search of his beloved, the Princess of Bengal.

The Indian soon flew and landed in a valley in Kashmir. When they stopped, the Princes of Bengal started calling for help. Hearing her calls, the Sultan of Kashmir came to her rescue. He had been hunting in a nearby forest. On enquiry, the Princess of Bengal told all what had occurred and the Sultan of Kashmir heard attentively. Soon the Sultan of Kashmir ordered his guards to put the Indian's life to an end. Thus the cruel Indian died.

The Princess of Bengal then left with the Sultan of Kashmir to live in his palace. Next morning many maids came to the Princess. They said, 'We've been sent to dress you up as a bride. Our Sultan wishes to marry you.' The Princess of Bengal heard this and soon fainted. When she recovered, the Sultan informed her that the ceremony would take place before sunset. Now the Princess had a whole day to make her plan of escape.

She decided that she would act mad so that the Sultan would refuse to marry her. The Princess started talking nonsensically. Then she laughed and cried one after the other. The Sultan of Kashmir thought he would marry her a few days later when she would be better. But the Princess grew violent day by day. She now started throwing vases and cushions at anyone who entered her chamber. None of the doctors in Kashmir could cure her.

Now the Prince of Shiraz had reached Kashmir. He heard all about the Princess of Bengal and was happy beyond words to have found his lost beloved. He dressed as a doctor. Then he presented himself in the Sultan of Kashmir's court. He said, 'Your Majesty, I am a learned doctor. I request your permission to offer my services. I will surely cure the Princess of Bengal's madness and then you can take her as your wife.' The Sultan of Kashmir said, 'Respected sir, if you'll cure her, I'll give you all the wealth you'll ask for.'

Then the doctor, who was the Prince, requested to be left alone with the Princess of Bengal in her chamber. Once alone, the Prince of Shiraz revealed his true identity to the Princess of Bengal. Then they both devised a plan to escape the clutches of the Sultan of Kashmir.

After a few hours the Prince of Shiraz went to the Sultan and said, 'Your Majesty, I've found out the cause of the Princess of Bengal's madness. When she rode the enchanted horse, some of its magical power entered her body. Tomorrow morning the enchanted horse must be placed in the city square. The princess shall sit on it. I will put some magical perfume on both of them and she'll be cured.'

Next morning, the Sultan of Kashmir, his courtiers and the people came to see the curing of the Princess. Soon the Princess of Bengal's arrival would be decked in precious jewels and silk robes.

Then the Princess mounted the enchanted horse. The Prince, dressed as doctor, lit a coal fire. Then he put some perfumed powder in the coal. A cloud of smoke rose up. The doctor crossed his hand over his heart. He circled the horse thrice and uttered a magical chant. As the smoke grew thicker, the horse, the Princess and the doctor were no longer visible to the spectators at all. Then the Prince mounted the horse, turned the screw and instructed it to leave for Shiraz. In a second, they had taken flight. As the enchanted horse

took flight, he called the Sultan of Kashmir and said, 'Remember, dear Sultan, to marry a Princess, you first need her consent.' Thus, the loving couple escaped the clutches of the Sultan of Kashmir.

They soon reached Shiraz and were joined in marriage among great pomp and show that befits a royal marriage.

Omar and Scheherazade

Once upon a time, on the island of Kaledan, lived a king who was famous all over the East, well-loved by his subjects and respected even by his enemies. In spite of having a good and beautiful wife, his life was not always happy. After years of marriage, they had no children and were afraid they would never know the joy of a family. However, at long last, one splendid spring morning, a handsome baby boy was born and his delighted parents called him Omar. In the language of Kaledan, this means 'shining light'.

The years went by and Omar grew into a fine-looking youth, brave, intelligent and kind-hearted. On his eighteenth birthday, the king sent for his son. 'Omar, now that you've come of age, you must find a wife. Choose one of the many princesses you've met and whose only dream is of marrying you.' 'Father,' said Omar respectfully, 'I've no intention of getting married. I'm still young and I'd rather wait till the time is ripe. I want to think about it for at least another year.' The king agreed and Omar spent the year studying with the wisest and cleverest teachers in the kingdom. And though he got to know a number of girls, he did not fall in love.

When twelve months had passed, the young prince was again summoned to his father. 'Well, son,' said the king anxiously, 'when am I to announce your engagement?' 'Alas, father, I still haven't met the right girl,' was Omar's reply. The king lost his temper. 'Omar! You must stop wasting time. You're a grown man now and I want to see your heirs. Think of the future and make up your mind without delay.' 'I'm sorry, father, I can't do that just yet. I'm not in love and so I can't get married.' The king, who could not bear to be crossed in such an important matter, went into a rage. He shouted for the guards and ordered them to shut the prince in an old castle in the forest.

In the meantime, lovely sweet-natured Princess Scheherazade was a maiden whose home was in China. When she became sixteen years old, her father insisted she marry one of the princes that flocked to court her. But Scheherazade was waiting to meet a true love. And since nothing the king, her father, did served to change her mind, he locked the princess up in one of the palaces. 'I'd rather be a prisoner,' said the princess, 'than have a husband I didn't love.'

Meantime, Omar spent lonely sad days in the castle where he was held prisoner. However, two invisible genies, Abhu and Dhabi were amusing themselves, unknown to the prince, by secretly watching his movements. One day Abhu said to his friend, 'Omar is the most handsome person in the whole world.' 'Not so!' exclaimed Dhabi. 'The most beautiful person in the world is Scheherazade, the King of China's daughter.' The genies started to argue, then decided to ask Lilibeth, the daughter of the genie king to judge the matter. Lilibeth's advice was this, 'Go to China, cast a sleeping spell over the princess and bring her to Omar's castle. When you see them together, then you'll soon see which is the most beautiful.'

That very night Abhu and Dhabi flew all the way to China. The two genies sent the princess to sleep and carried her to Omar's castle. 'They're so lovely, they seem made for each other,' remarked the genies, gazing at the two young people together. 'If only they could get to know each other.' And in the hope that they might, the genies hid behind a curtain and waited .

Not long afterwards, Scheherazade opened her eyes and, when she saw Omar at her side, her heart began to thump. This was the man she would like to marry. So she took off one of her ring and slipped it on to his finger as a token of love. Then she went back to

sleep. On awakening a little later, Omar set eyes on Scheherazade and was overwhelmed by her beauty.

‘If this girl is as kind as she is beautiful, she would make a wonderful wife,’ said Omar to himself as he gazed at her in amazement. Then he took off a ruby ring and slipped it onto the princess’s finger. Drowsy again, he fell asleep.

Abhu and Dhabi crept out from behind the curtain, wide-eyed. ‘They’ve fallen in love,’ said Dhabi. ‘What are we to do now? Take Sheherazde home again. But if they have really fallen in love, they’ll move heaven and earth to meet again.’

And so, when Omar awoke, Scheherazade had vanished. Confused and upset, the prince asked his guards and servants if they had seen her. When the king heard the story, he told Omar, ‘My lad, you are losing your head over a girl you dreamed about!’ ‘No, she wasn’t a dream,’ the prince insisted. ‘This is the ring she left me!’

Omar was lovesick. The king called doctors and wise men, but there was nothing they could do, for Omar was losing his will to live.

And far away, Scheherazade was pining in sorrow. The king was certain his daughter must have dreamt it all. How otherwise could she have met the mysterious young man? The only person who believed the princess was Marzuan, a childhood friend, and he offered to search for the missing youth. Scheherazade handed him Omar’s ruby ring. Marzuan set out that same day but, though he travelled far and wide, no one could give him a clue as to the young man’s identity. In the meantime, Abhu and Dhabi secretly followed in his tracks.

One day, a merchant told Marzuan that, on the island of Kaledan, there was a lovesick prince. Feeling that this might be the very person he was seeking, Marzuan took a passage on a ship bound for Kaledan. After days of sailing, a terrible storm broke, driving the ship onto a reef, where it sank. Clinging to a floating spar, Marzuan held on till the storm died away, then headed for the shore.

The beach was deserted, but in the distance he could see the turrets of a castle. Then, as he was getting his strength back, he saw a horseman approach. ‘Where am I?’ Marzuan asked the stranger. ‘On the island of Kaledan,’ replied the horseman. ‘Who are you?’ Marzuan jumped to his feet. ‘I’m a doctor, and famous in my own land. I hear that a prince here is seriously ill, and I’d like to try and cure him.’ ‘Yes,’ replied the horseman, ‘Prince Omar is indeed seriously ill, but it seems his illness is fatal.’ Disturbed by his words, Marzuan said, ‘Take me to him straight away.’

When admitted to Omar’s presence, without saying a word, Marzuan showed him the ruby ring. Omar uttered a shriek and leapt to his feet. The onlookers stared in surprise. ‘This is the ring I gave to the girl I want to marry!’ the prince exclaimed joyfully. ‘That young lady is Scheherazade. She lives in far off China and is dying to see you again,’ Marzuan told him instantly. Omar was delighted. In finding the girl of his dreams, he would be truly happy. He presented Marzuan with a jewelled sword and a splendid horse, as fast as the wind, as a token of thanks. Then he told him to take him as quickly as could be to the beautiful princess.

Overcoming all the difficulties that it had to face during the long journey, the cheerful procession led by Omar and Marzuan, many days later, reached distant China. When they reached Scheherazade’s city, Omar announced his arrival by sending a messenger with a letter for the princess and a diamond ring. At long last, the couple had met again. They exchanged their first, affectionate words and found they really were meant for each other. Sure of their feelings and anxious to start a new life together, Omar and Scheherazade

quickly asked the king's permission to get married as soon as possible.

The invisible genies, Abhu and Dhabhi too, were at the wedding, a few days later. 'Scheherazade really is lovely!' Dhabhi exclaimed. 'Yes, but Omar...' said Abhu. 'Are you looking for an argument again?' demanded Dhabhi. Just then, Lilibeth, the genie king's daughter appeared. 'We still haven't decided which is the better-looking,' said Abhu and Dhabhi. 'Well, I'd say they are the best-looking couple in the world,' said Lilibeth. 'And I'm certain their children will be even more handsome.' And so the argument finally ended to everybody's satisfaction, and the two genies hugged each other contentedly.

The Arabian Nights

In the chronicles of the ancient dynasty of the Sassanidae, who reigned for about four hundred years, from Persia to the borders of China, beyond the great river Ganges itself, we read the praises of one of the kings of this race, who was said to be the best monarch of his time. His subjects loved him, and his neighbors feared him, and when he died he left his kingdom in a more prosperous and powerful condition than any king had done before him.

The two sons who survived him loved each other tenderly, and it was a real grief to the elder, Schahriar, that the laws of the empire forbade him to share his dominions with his brother Schahzeman. Indeed, after ten years, during which this state of things had not ceased to trouble him, Schahriar cut off the country of Great Tartary from the Persian Empire and made his brother king.

Now the Sultan Schahriar had a wife whom he loved more than all the world, and his greatest happiness was to surround her with splendour, and to give her the finest dresses and the most beautiful jewels. It was therefore with the deepest shame and sorrow that he accidentally discovered, after several years, that she had deceived him completely, and her whole conduct turned out to have been so bad, that he felt himself obliged to carry out the law of the land, and order the grand-vizir to put her to death. The blow was so heavy that his mind almost gave way, and he declared that he was quite sure that at bottom all women were as wicked as the sultana, if you could only find them out, and that the fewer the world contained the better. So every evening he married a fresh wife and had her strangled the following morning before the grand-vizir, whose duty it was to provide these unhappy brides for the Sultan. The poor man fulfilled his task with reluctance, but there was no escape, and every day saw a girl married and a wife dead.

This behaviour caused the greatest horror in the town, where nothing was heard but cries and lamentations. In one house was a father weeping for the loss of his daughter, in another perhaps a mother trembling for the fate of her child; and instead of the blessings that had formerly been heaped on the Sultan's head, the air was now full of curses.

The grand-vizir himself was the father of two daughters, of whom the elder was called Scheherazade, and the younger Dinarzade. Dinarzade had no particular gifts to distinguish her from other girls, but her sister was clever and courageous in the highest degree. Her father had given her the best masters in philosophy, medicine, history and the fine arts, and besides all this, her beauty excelled that of any girl in the kingdom of Persia.

One day, when the grand-vizir was talking to his eldest daughter, who was his delight and pride, Scheherazade said to him, 'Father, I have a favour to ask of you. Will you grant it to me?'

'I can refuse you nothing,' replied he, 'that is just and reasonable.'

'Then listen,' said Scheherazade. 'I am determined to stop this barbarous practice of the Sultan's, and to deliver the girls and mothers from the awful fate that hangs over them.'

'It would be an excellent thing to do,' returned the grand-vizir, 'but how do you propose to accomplish it?'

'My father,' answered Scheherazade, 'it is you who have to provide the Sultan daily with a fresh wife, and I implore you, by all the affection you bear me, to allow the honour to fall upon me.'

'Have you lost your senses?' cried the grand-vizir, starting back in horror. 'What has

put such a thing into your head? You ought to know by this time what it means to be the sultan's bride!

'Yes, my father, I know it well,' replied she, 'and I am not afraid to think of it. If I fail, my death will be a glorious one, and if I succeed I shall have done a great service to my country.'

'It is of no use,' said the grand-vizir, 'I shall never consent. If the Sultan was to order me to plunge a dagger in your heart, I should have to obey. What a task for a father! Ah, if you do not fear death, fear at any rate the anguish you would cause me.'

'Once again, my father,' said Scheherazade, 'will you grant me what I ask?'

'What, are you still so obstinate?' exclaimed the grand-vizir. 'Why are you so resolved upon your own ruin?'

But the maiden absolutely refused to attend to her father's words, and at length, in despair, the grand-vizir was obliged to give way, and went sadly to the palace to tell the Sultan that the following evening he would bring him Scheherazade.

The Sultan received this news with the greatest astonishment.

'How have you made up your mind,' he asked, 'to sacrifice your own daughter to me?'

'Sire,' answered the grand-vizir, 'it is her own wish. Even the sad fate that awaits her could not hold her back.'

'Let there be no mistake, vizir,' said the Sultan. 'Remember you will have to take her life yourself. If you refuse, I swear that your head shall pay forfeit.'

'Sire,' returned the vizir. 'Whatever the cost, I will obey you. Though a father, I am also your subject.' So the Sultan told the grand-vizir he might bring his daughter as soon as he liked.

The vizir took back this news to Scheherazade, who received it as if it had been the most pleasant thing in the world. She thanked her father warmly for yielding to her wishes, and, seeing him still bowed down with grief, told him that she hoped he would never repent having allowed her to marry the Sultan. Then she went to prepare herself for the marriage, and begged that her sister Dinarzade should be sent for to speak to her.

When they were alone, Scheherazade addressed her thus:

'My dear sister; I want your help in a very important affair. My father is going to take me to the palace to celebrate my marriage with the Sultan. When his Highness receives me, I shall beg him, as a last favour, to let you sleep in our chamber, so that I may have your company during the last night I am alive. If, as I hope, he grants me my wish, be sure that you wake me an hour before the dawn, and speak to me in these words: "My sister, if you are not asleep, I beg you, before the sun rises, to tell me one of your charming stories." Then I shall begin, and I hope by this means to deliver the people from the terror that reigns over them.' Dinarzade replied that she would do with pleasure what her sister wished.

When the usual hour arrived the grand-vizir conducted Scheherazade to the palace, and left her alone with the Sultan, who bade her raise her veil and was amazed at her beauty. But seeing her eyes full of tears, he asked what was the matter. 'Sire,' replied Scheherazade, 'I have a sister who loves me as tenderly as I love her. Grant me the favour of allowing her to sleep this night in the same room, as it is the last we shall be together.' Schahriar consented to Scheherazade's petition and Dinarzade was sent for.

An hour before daybreak Dinarzade awoke, and exclaimed, as she had promised, 'My dear sister, if you are not asleep, tell me I pray you, before the sun rises, one of your charming stories. It is the last time that I shall have the pleasure of hearing you.'

Scheherazade did not answer her sister, but turned to the Sultan. ‘Will your highness permit me to do as my sister asks?’ said she.

‘Willingly,’ he answered. So Scheherazade began.

The Merchant and The Genie

Sire, once upon a time there was a merchant who possessed great wealth in land and in merchandise. He had to take journeys to arrange his affairs.

One day he mounted his horse, taking with him a small wallet containing a few biscuits and dates as he had to pass through the desert. Having finished his business, he set out on his return journey. On the fourth day of his journey, he turned out of his road to rest under some trees. He found at the foot of a large walnut-tree a fountain of clear and running water. He dismounted, fastened his horse to a branch of a tree and sat by the fountain. He ate some dates and biscuits. When he had finished this frugal meal, he washed his face and hands in the fountain.

He heard a thunderous noise. There appeared before him an enormous genie, white with rage, coming towards him, with a curved sword in his hand. 'Arise,' the Genie cried in a terrible voice, 'and let me kill you as you have killed my son!' As he uttered these words he gave a frightful yell. The merchant was much terrified at the hideous face of the monster and answered him tremblingly. 'Alas! good sir. I know not you, nor your son.' 'I shall kill you,' repeated the Genie, 'as you have killed my son.' 'But,' said the merchant, 'how can I have killed your son? I do not know him and I have never even seen him.' 'When you arrived here, did you not sit down on the ground,' asked the Genie, 'and did you not take some dates from your wallet and whilst eating them did you not throw the seeds about?' 'Yes,' said the merchant, 'I certainly did.' 'Then,' said the Genie, 'the seeds you flung away struck my son in the eye and killed him So I shall kill you.' 'Ah. Sir, forgive me. I had no intention to kill your son,' cried the merchant. 'I will have no mercy on you.' answered the Genie.

He seized the merchant by the arm, threw him on the ground and lifted his saber to cut off his head. The merchant pleaded to the Genie to allow him to see his wife and children and promised to return to the Genie. Scheherazade, at this point, seeing that it was day, and knowing that the Sultan always rose very early to attend the council, stopped speaking.

'Indeed, sister,' said Dinarzade, 'this is a wonderful story.'

'The rest is still more wonderful,' replied Scheherazade, 'and you would say so, if the sultan would allow me to live another day, and would give me leave to tell it to you the next night.'

Schahriar, who had been listening to Scheherazade with pleasure, said to himself, 'I will wait till to-morrow; I can always have her killed when I have heard the end of her story.'

All this time the grand-vizir was in a terrible state of anxiety. But he was much delighted when he saw the Sultan enter the council-chamber without giving the terrible command that he was expecting.

The next morning, before the day broke, Dinarzade said to her sister, 'Dear sister, if you are awake I pray you to go on with your story.'

The Sultan did not wait for Scheherazade to ask his leave. 'Finish,' said he, 'the story of the genius and the merchant. I am curious to hear the end.'

So Scheherazade went on with the story. This happened every morning. The Sultana told a story, and the Sultan let her live to finish it.

When the merchant saw that the Genie was determined to cut off his head, he said, 'One word more, I entreat you. Grant me a little delay, a short time to go home and bid my wife and children farewell and to make my will. When I have done this I will come

back here and you shall kill me.'

'But,' said the Genie. If I grant you the delay you ask, I am afraid that you will not come back.' 'I give you my word of honour,' answered the merchant, 'that I will come back without fail.' 'How long do you require?' asked the Genie. 'I ask you for a year's grace,' replied the merchant. 'I promise you that exactly after twelve months I shall be waiting under these trees to give myself up to you.' On this the Genie left him near the fountain and disappeared. The merchant, having recovered from his fright, mounted his horse and went on his road.

When he arrived home, his wife and children received him with the greatest joy. But instead of embracing them, he began to weep so bitterly that they soon guessed that something terrible had happened to him. 'What has happened, asked his wife.' 'Alas!' answered her husband. 'I have only a year to live.' Then he told them what had passed between him and the genius, and how he had given his word to return at the end of a year to be killed. When they heard this sad news they were in despair, and wept much.

The next day the merchant began to settle his affairs. He paid all his debts. He gave presents to his friends and large alms to the poor. He set his slaves at liberty and provided for his wife and children. The year soon passed away and he was obliged to depart. When he tried to say good-bye, he was quite overcome with grief and with difficulty tore himself away.

At length he reached the place where he had first seen the genius, on the very day that he had appointed. He dismounted and sat down at the edge of the fountain where he awaited the Genie in terrible suspense.

Whilst he was thus waiting, an old man leading a red deer came towards him. They greeted one another and then the old man said to him. 'May I ask, brother, what brought you to this desert place, where there are so many evil genii about? To see these beautiful trees one would imagine it was inhabited, but it is a dangerous place to stop long in.' The merchant told the old man why he was obliged to come there. He listened in astonishment.

'This is an incredible affair. I should like to be a witness of your interview with the Genie.' So saying he sat down by the merchant.

While they were talking, another old man came up, followed by two black dogs. He greeted them and asked what they were doing in that place. The old man who was leading the red deer told him the problem of the merchant and the Genie. The second old man had no sooner heard the story than, he too decided to stay there to see what would happen.

He sat down by the others and was talking when a third old man arrived. He asked why the merchant who was with them, looked so sad. They told him the story and he also resolved to stay with them.

They soon saw in the distance a thick smoke, like a cloud of dust. This smoke came nearer and nearer and then, all at once, it vanished and they saw the Genie who without speaking to them, approached the merchant, sword in hand, and, taking him by the arm, said, 'Get up and let me kill you as you killed my son.' The merchant and the three old men began to weep and groan.

Then the old man leading the red deer threw himself at the monster's feet and said, 'O Prince of the Genii, I beg of you to stay your fury and to listen to me. I am going to tell you my story and that of the red deer I have with me and if you find it more marvelous than that of the merchant whom you are about to kill, you can do away with his punishment.' The Genie thought for a while and then said, 'Very well. I agree to this.'

The Story of the First Old Man and of the Hind

I am now going to begin my story (said the old man), so please attend.

This hind that you see with me is my wife. We have no children of our own, therefore I adopted the son of a favorite slave, and determined to make him my heir.

My wife, however, took a great dislike to both mother and child, which she concealed from me till too late. When my adopted son was about ten years old I was obliged to go on a journey. Before I went I entrusted to my wife's keeping both the mother and child, and begged her to take care of them during my absence, which lasted a whole year. During this time she studied magic in order to carry out her wicked scheme. When she had learnt enough she took my son into a distant place and changed him into a calf. Then she gave him to my steward, and told him to look after a calf she had bought. She also changed the slave into a cow, which she sent to my steward.

When I returned I inquired after my slave and the child.

'Your slave is dead,' she said, 'and as for your son, I have not seen him for two months, and I do not know where he is.'

I was grieved to hear of my slave's death, but as my son had only disappeared, I thought I should soon find him. Eight months, however, passed, and still no tidings of him; then the feast of Bairam came.

To celebrate it I ordered my steward to bring me a very fat cow to sacrifice. He did so. The cow that he brought was my unfortunate slave. I bound her, but just as I was about to kill her she began to low most piteously, and I saw that her eyes were streaming with tears. It seemed to me most extraordinary, and, feeling a movement of pity, I ordered the steward to lead her away and bring another. My wife, who was present, scoffed at my compassion, which made her malice of no avail.

'What are you doing?' she cried.

'Kill this cow. It is the best we have to sacrifice.'

To please her, I tried again, but again the animal's lows and tears disarmed me.

'Take her away,' I said to the steward, 'and kill her; I cannot.'

The steward killed her, but on skinning her found that she was nothing but bones, although she appeared so fat. I was vexed.

'Keep her for yourself,' I said to the steward, 'and if you have a fat calf, bring that in her stead.'

In a short time he brought a very fat calf, which, although I did not know it, was my son. It tried hard to break its cord and come to me. It threw itself at my feet, with its head on the ground, as if it wished to excite my pity, and to beg me not to take away its life.

I was even more surprised and touched at this action than I had been at the tears of the cow.

'Go,' I said to the steward, 'take back this calf, take great care of it, and bring me another in its place instantly.'

As soon as my wife heard me speak this she at once cried out, 'What are you doing, husband? Do not sacrifice any calf but this.'

'Wife,' I answered, 'I will not sacrifice this calf,' and in spite of all her remonstrances, I remained firm.

I had another calf killed; this one was led away. The next day the steward asked to speak to me in private.

‘I have come,’ he said, ‘to tell you some news which I think you will like to hear. I have a daughter who knows magic. Yesterday, when I was leading back the calf which you refused to sacrifice, I noticed that she smiled, and then directly afterwards began to cry. I asked her why she did so.’

‘Father,’ she answered, ‘this calf is the son of our master. I smile with joy at seeing him still alive, and I weep to think of his mother, who was sacrificed yesterday as a cow. These changes have been wrought by our master’s wife, who hated the mother and son.’

‘At these words, oh Genius,’ continued the old man, ‘I leave you to imagine my astonishment. I went immediately with the steward to speak with his daughter myself. First of all I went to the stable to see my son, and he replied in his dumb way to all my caresses. When the steward’s daughter came I asked her if she could change my son back to his proper shape.’

‘Yes, I can,’ she replied, ‘on two conditions. One is that you will give him to me for a husband, and the other is that you will let me punish the woman who changed him into a calf.’

‘To the first condition,’ I answered, ‘I agree with all my heart, and I will give you an ample dowry. To the second I also agree, I only beg you to spare her life.’

‘That I will do,’ she replied; ‘I will treat her as she treated your son.’

Then she took a vessel of water and pronounced over it some words I did not understand; then, on throwing the water over him, he became immediately a young man once more.

‘My son, my dear son,’ I exclaimed, kissing him in a transport of joy. ‘This kind maiden has rescued you from a terrible enchantment, and I am sure that out of gratitude you will marry her.’

He consented joyfully, but before they were married, the young girl changed my wife into a hind, and it is she whom you see before you. I wished her to have this form rather than a stranger one, so that we could see her in the family without repugnance.

Since then my son has become a widower and has gone travelling. I am now going in search of him, and not wishing to confide my wife to the care of other people, I am taking her with me. Is this not a most marvellous tale?

‘It is indeed,’ said the genius, ‘and because of it I grant to you the third part of the punishment of this merchant.’

When the first old man had finished his story, the second, who was leading the two black dogs, said to the genius, ‘I am going to tell you what happened to me, and I am sure that you will find my story even more astonishing than the one to which you have just been listening. But when I have related it, will you grant me also the third part of the merchant’s punishment?’

‘Yes,’ replied the genius, ‘provided that your story surpasses that of the hind.’

With this agreement the second old man began in this way.

The Story of the Second Old Man and the Two Black Dogs

Great prince of the genii, you must know that we are three brothers—these two black dogs and myself. Long time back, ours was a happy and prosperous family. We were three brothers who loved each other very much. In due time, our old father became very ill. He left for heaven and willed each of us a thousand gold dinars. We were clever so we invested in various shops and soon became well-to-do merchants.

One day my eldest brother had the idea of expanding his trade connections in other kingdoms. He decided to travel to other lands across the sea for this purpose. He then sold all his shops, luxury items and the house to get some money. For buying a variety of goods, he set sail in a beautiful trade ship. Nearly a year went by, but we heard nothing from him.

One afternoon, as I sat fanning myself at the shop, a beggar approached me. He was looking very weak. He was barely covered in tattered clothes. I picked a silver coin from my pocket and gave it to him. Seeing this, the poor beggar burst out in tears. ‘Oh! What fate!’ he cried bitterly. ‘A brother is giving another alms in pity.’ I gave him a second look. Suddenly I recognised him to be my eldest brother. I consoled him and took him home. After a warm bath and some delicious hot lunch, my brother told me his sad tale. He said that he could not earn as much as he had invested in his new ventures. The heavy losses had made him poor and he had reached back home with great difficulty.

I had by then earned two thousand gold dinars in my business so I gave one thousand gold dinars to my eldest brother. I encouraged him to start a new business.

Some months later, my second brother decided to seek foreign lands to expand his business. I narrated our eldest brother’s example to him but he insisted on going for trading overseas. He soon joined a caravan that was ready to leave for a foreign land. He, too, went with many hopes and a lot of goods. For a year, I heard no news of his business ventures. When a year went by, one fine morning he arrived at my doorstep much in the same state as my elder brother.

He told me that his caravan had been looted by bandits and he lost everything. Once again I lent my thousand dinars to my other brother too. He was happy to begin his business again. Soon both my brothers did well in their ventures and prospered. We lived happily and together again.

One fine morning, both my brothers came to me and said, ‘Brother, all three of us must go on a long journey to expand our business. We’ll trade together and amass wealth.’ I refused because I had seen my brothers becoming penniless after such adventurous business trips. But they persisted. After refusing their request for nearly five years, I gave in.

After making necessary arrangements, the three of us bought grand goods to sell. My brothers spent all their money to buy the goods. I, thus, took six thousand dinars that I had and gave them a thousand dinars each. I kept one thousand dinars for my use. Then I dug a safe hole in my house and buried the three thousand dinars that I was left with. Then we loaded the goods on a large ship and set sail. Nearly two months after sailing, we anchored at a port.

We made a lot of money by trading there.

When we got ready to leave, a beautiful but poor woman approached me. She bowed to me and kissed my hand. Then she said, ‘Sir, please be kind enough to accept me as your wife. I have nobody to care for me and nowhere to stay.’ I was taken aback. I said, ‘Dear woman, I don’t even know you. How can you expect me to marry a stranger?’ The

woman pleaded tearfully and persuaded me to take her as my wife. She promised to be loyal and loving and soon we were married after the required arrangements were made.

As we set sail, she took on the role of a caring wife. She was soft-spoken, hard working and always ready to serve me or help my brothers. I was very happy to have her as a wife. My happiness was not favoured by my brothers who grew jealous day by day. Their resentment took shape of a plot to kill me and my wife. Thus, one night, as my wife and I were in deep sleep, my two brothers threw us aboard.

My wife who was a fairy used her powers to save both of us. Soon we found ourselves on an island. Then my wife said, 'Dear, I am a fairy. I married you for I saw a kind-hearted man who would be a fit husband for me. You have taken good care of me but I am very hurt and angry at the way your ungrateful brothers have treated you. I'll punish them by sinking their ship.'

I was horrified. 'Please don't do that. After all they are my brothers. Let's forgive and forget.' But nothing could stop my angry fairy wife. She declared that her fury would end only after she avenged herself. Then she chanted some magic words!

I stood before my house in my hometown. My fairy wife was by my side. I opened the door to welcome her into her new home. I saw two sinister black dogs just inside the door. I was surprised. 'Dear, I don't know where these black dogs came from. I never had any pets either.' I explained. 'I know, dear,' my fairy wife said. 'These black dogs are your own ungrateful brothers. I changed them into black dogs to punish them. Now you can treat them anyway you wish. I must take your leave now. The spell cast by me will last for ten years. You can contact me after that time.' My fairy wife told me where her home was and vanished into thin air.

The ten years are nearly passed, and I am on the road to find her. As in passing I met this merchant and the old man with the hind, I stayed with them. This is my history, O prince of geni! Do you not think it is a most marvellous one? 'Yes, indeed,' replied the genius, 'and I will give up to you the third of the merchant's punishment.'

Then the third old man made the genius the same request as the other two had done, and the genius promised him the last third of the merchant's punishment if his story surpassed both the others. So he told his story to the genius, but I cannot tell you what it was, as I do not know. But I do know that it was even more marvellous than either of the others, so that the genius was astonished, and said to the third old man, 'I will give up to you the third part of the merchant's punishment. He ought to thank all three of you for having interested yourselves in his favour. But for you, he would be here no longer.'

So saying, he disappeared, to the great joy of the company. The merchant did not fail to thank his friends, and then each went on his way. The merchant returned to his wife and children, and passed the rest of his days happily with them.

'But, sire,' added Scheherazade, 'however beautiful are the stories I have just told you, they cannot compare with the story of the Fisherman.'

The Story of the Fisherman

Sire, there was once upon a time a fisherman so old and so poor that he could scarcely manage to support his wife and three children. He went every day to fish very early, and each day he made a rule not to throw his nets more than four times. He started out one morning by moonlight and came to the sea-shore. He undressed and threw his nets, and as he was drawing them towards the bank he felt a great weight. He thought he had caught a large fish, and he felt very pleased. But a moment afterwards, seeing that instead of a fish he only had in his nets the carcase of an ass, he was much disappointed.

Vexed with having such a bad haul, when he had mended his nets, which the carcase of the ass had broken in several places, he threw them a second time. In drawing them in he again felt a great weight, so that he thought they were full of fish. But he only found a large basket full of rubbish. He was much annoyed.

‘O Fortune,’ he cried, ‘do not trifle thus with me, a poor fisherman, who can hardly support his family!’

So saying, he threw away the rubbish, and after having washed his nets clean of the dirt, he threw them for the third time. But he only drew in stones, shells, and mud. He was almost in despair.

Then he threw his nets for the fourth time. When he thought he had a fish he drew them in with a great deal of trouble. There was no fish however, but he found a yellow pot, which by its weight seemed full of something, and he noticed that it was fastened and sealed with lead, with the impression of a seal. He was delighted.

‘I will sell it to the founder,’ he said; ‘with the money I shall get for it I shall buy a measure of wheat.’

He examined the jar on all sides; he shook it to see if it would rattle. But he heard nothing, and so, judging from the impression of the seal and the lid, he thought there must be something precious inside. To find out, he took his knife, and with a little trouble he opened it. He turned it upside down, but nothing came out, which surprised him very much. He set it in front of him, and whilst he was looking at it attentively, such a thick smoke came out that he had to step back a pace or two. This smoke rose up to the clouds, and stretching over the sea and the shore, formed a thick mist, which caused the fisherman much astonishment. When all the smoke was out of the jar it gathered itself together, and became a thick mass in which appeared a genius, twice as large as the largest giant. When he saw such a terrible-looking monster, the fisherman would like to have run away, but he trembled so with fright that he could not move a step.

‘Great king of the genii,’ cried the monster, ‘I will never again disobey you!’ At these words the fisherman took courage. ‘What is this you are saying, great genius? Tell me your history and how you came to be shut up in that vase.’

At this, the genius looked at the fisherman haughtily. ‘Speak to me more civilly,’ he said, ‘before I kill you.’ ‘Alas! why should you kill me?’ cried the fisherman. ‘I have just freed you; have you already forgotten that?’ ‘No,’ answered the genius; ‘but that will not prevent me from killing you; and I am only going to grant you one favour, and that is to choose the manner of your death.’ ‘But what have I done to you?’ asked the fisherman. ‘I cannot treat you in any other way,’ said the genius, ‘and if you would know why, listen to my story.

‘I rebelled against the king of the genii. To punish me, he shut me up in this vase of copper, and he put on the leaden cover his seal, which is enchantment enough to prevent

my coming out. Then he had the vase thrown into the sea. During the first period of my captivity I vowed that if anyone should free me before a hundred years were passed, I would make him rich even after his death. But that century passed, and no one freed me. In the second century I vowed that I would give all the treasures in the world to my deliverer; but he never came.

‘In the third, I promised to make him a king, to be always near him, and to grant him three wishes every day; but that century passed away as the other two had done, and I remained in the same plight. At last I grew angry at being captive for so long, and I vowed that if anyone would release me I would kill him at once, and would only allow him to choose in what manner he should die. So you see, as you have freed me to-day, choose in what way you will die.’

The fisherman was very unhappy. ‘What an unlucky man I am to have freed you! I implore you to spare my life.’ ‘I have told you,’ said the genius, ‘that it is impossible. Choose quickly; you are wasting time.’

The fisherman began to devise a plot. ‘Since I must die,’ he said, ‘before I choose the manner of my death, I conjure you on your honour to tell me if you really were in that vase?’ ‘Yes, I was,’ answered the genius. ‘I really cannot believe it,’ said the fisherman. ‘That vase could not contain one of your feet even, and how could your whole body go in? I cannot believe it unless I see you do the thing.’

Then the genius began to change himself into smoke, which, as before, spread over the sea and the shore, and which, then collecting itself together, began to go back into the vase slowly and evenly till there was nothing left outside. Then a voice came from the vase which said to the fisherman, ‘Well, unbelieving fisherman, here I am in the vase; do you believe me now?’

The fisherman instead of answering took the lid of lead and shut it down quickly on the vase. ‘Now, O genius,’ he cried, ‘ask pardon of me, and choose by what death you will die! But no, it will be better if I throw you into the sea whence I drew you out, and I will build a house on the shore to warn fishermen who come to cast their nets here, against fishing up such a wicked genius as you are, who vows to kill the man who frees you.’

At these words the genius did all he could to get out, but he could not, because of the enchantment of the lid. Then he tried to get out by cunning. ‘If you will take off the cover,’ he said, ‘I will repay you.’

‘No,’ answered the fisherman, ‘if I trust myself to you I am afraid you will treat me as a certain Greek king treated the physician Douban. Listen, and I will tell you.’

The Story of the Greek King and the Physician Douban

In the country of Zouman, in Persia, there lived a Greek king. This king was a leper, and all his doctors had been unable to cure him, when a very clever physician came to his court.

He was very learned in all languages, and knew a great deal about herbs and medicines. As soon as he was told of the king's illness he put on his best robe and presented himself before the king.

'Sire,' said he, 'I know that no physician has been able to cure your majesty, but if you will follow my instructions, I will promise to cure you without any medicines or outward application.'

The king listened to this proposal. 'If you are clever enough to do this,' he said, 'I promise to make you and your descendants rich for ever.'

The physician went to his house and made a polo club, the handle of which he hollowed out, and put in it the drug he wished to use. Then he made a ball, and with these things he went the next day to the king.

He told him that he wished him to play at polo. Accordingly the king mounted his horse and went into the place where he played. There the physician approached him with the bat he had made, saying, 'Take this, sire, and strike the ball till you feel your hand and whole body in a glow. When the remedy that is in the handle of the club is warmed by your hand, it will penetrate throughout your body. Then you must return to your palace, bathe, and go to sleep, and when you awake to-morrow morning you will be cured.'

The king took the club and urged his horse after the ball which he had thrown. He struck it, and then it was hit back by the courtiers who were playing with him. When he felt very hot he stopped playing, and went back to the palace, went into the bath, and did all that the physician had said. The next day when he arose he found, to his great joy and astonishment, that he was completely cured. When he entered his audience-chamber all his courtiers, who were eager to see if the wonderful cure had been effected, were overwhelmed with joy.

The physician Douban entered the hall and bowed low to the ground. The king, seeing him, called him, made him sit by his side, and showed him every mark of honour. That evening he gave him a long and rich robe of state, and presented him with two thousand sequins. The following day he continued to load him with favours.

Now the king had a grand-vizir who was avaricious, and envious, and a very bad man. He grew extremely jealous of the physician, and determined to bring about his ruin. In order to do this he asked to speak in private with the king, saying that he had a most important communication to make. 'What is it?' asked the king.

'Sire,' answered the grand-vizir, 'it is most dangerous for a monarch to confide in a man whose faithfulness is not proved, You do not know that this physician is not a traitor come here to assassinate you.' 'I am sure,' said the king, 'that this man is the most faithful and virtuous of men. If he wished to take my life, why did he cure me? Cease to speak against him. I see what it is, you are jealous of him; but do not think that I can be turned against him. I remember well what a vizir said to King Sindbad, his master, to prevent him from putting the prince, his son, to death.'

What the Greek king said excited the vizir's curiosity, and he said to him, 'Sire, I beg your majesty to have the condescension to tell me what the vizir said to King Sindbad.' 'This vizir,' he replied, 'told King Sindbad that one ought not believe everything that a mother-in-law says, and told him this story.'

The Story of the Husband and the Parrot

A good man had a beautiful wife, whom he loved passionately, and never left if possible. One day, when he was obliged by important business to go away from her, he went to a place where all kinds of birds are sold and bought a parrot. This parrot not only spoke well, but it had the gift of telling all that had been done before it. He brought it home in a cage, and asked his wife to put it in her room, and take great care of it while he was away. Then he departed. On his return he asked the parrot what had happened during his absence, and the parrot told him some things which made him scold his wife.

She thought that one of her slaves must have been telling tales of her, but they told her it was the parrot, and she resolved to revenge herself on him.

When her husband next went away for one day, she told one slave to turn under the bird's cage a hand-mill; another to throw water down from above the cage, and a third to take a mirror and turn it in front of its eyes, from left to right by the light of a candle. The slaves did this for part of the night, and did it very well.

The next day when the husband came back he asked the parrot what he had seen. The bird replied, 'My good master, the lightning, thunder and rain disturbed me so much all night long, that I cannot tell you what I have suffered.'

The husband, who knew that it had neither rained nor thundered in the night, was convinced that the parrot was not speaking the truth, so he took him out of the cage and threw him so roughly on the ground that he killed him. Nevertheless he was sorry afterwards, for he found that the parrot had spoken the truth.

'When the Greek king,' said the fisherman to the genius, 'had finished the story of the parrot, he added to the vizir, 'And so, vizir, I shall not listen to you, and I shall take care of the physician, in case I repent as the husband did when he had killed the parrot.' But the vizir was determined.

'Sire,' he replied, 'the death of the parrot was nothing. But when it is a question of the life of a king it is better to sacrifice the innocent than save the guilty. It is no uncertain thing, however. The physician, Douban, wishes to assassinate you. My zeal prompts me to disclose this to your Majesty. If I am wrong, I deserve to be punished as a vizir was once punished.'

'What had the vizir done,' said the Greek king, 'to merit the punishment?' 'I will tell your Majesty, if you will do me the honour to listen,' answered the vizir.

The Story of the Vizir Who Was Punished

There was once upon a time a king who had a son who was very fond of hunting. He often allowed him to indulge in this pastime, but he had ordered his grand-vizir always to go with him, and never to lose sight of him. One day the huntsman roused a stag, and the prince, thinking that the vizir was behind, gave chase, and rode so hard that he found himself alone. He stopped, and having lost sight of it, he turned to rejoin the vizir, who had not been careful enough to follow him. But he lost his way.

Whilst he was trying to find it, he saw on the side of the road a beautiful lady who was crying bitterly. He drew his horse's rein, and asked her who she was and what she was doing in this place, and if she needed help. 'I am the daughter of an Indian king,' she answered, 'and whilst riding in the country I fell asleep and tumbled off. My horse has run away, and I do not know what has become of him.'

The young prince had pity on her, and offered to take her behind him, which he did. As they passed by a ruined building the lady dismounted and went in. The prince also dismounted and followed her. To his great surprise, he heard her saying to some one inside, 'Rejoice my children; I am bringing you a nice fat youth.' And other voices replied, 'Where is he, mamma, that we may eat him at once, as we are very hungry?'

The prince at once saw the danger he was in. He now knew that the lady who said she was the daughter of an Indian king was an ogress, who lived in desolate places, and who by a thousand wiles surprised and devoured passers-by. He was terrified, and threw himself on his horse. The pretended princess appeared at this moment, and seeing that she had lost her prey, she said to him, 'Do not be afraid. What do you want?' 'I am lost,' he answered, 'and I am looking for the road.' 'Keep straight on,' said the ogress, 'and you will find it.'

The prince could hardly believe his ears, and rode off as hard as he could. He found his way, and arrived safe and sound at his father's house, where he told him of the danger he had run because of the grand-vizir's carelessness. The king was very angry, and had him strangled immediately.

The Story of the Speaking Head

'Sire,' went on the vizir to the Greek king, 'to return to the physician, Douban. If you do not take care, you will repent of having trusted him. Who knows what this remedy, with which he has cured you, may not in time have a bad effect on you?'

The Greek king was naturally very weak, and did not perceive the wicked intention of his vizir, nor was he firm enough to keep to his first resolution. 'Well, vizir,' he said, 'you are right. Perhaps he did come to take my life. He might do it by the mere smell of one of his drugs. I must see what can be done.' 'The best means, sire, to put your life in security, is to send for him at once, and to cut off his head directly he comes,' said the vizir. 'I really think,' replied the king, 'that will be the best way.'

He then ordered one of his ministers to fetch the physician, who came at once. 'I have had you sent for,' said the king, 'in order to free myself from you by taking your life.' The physician was beyond measure astonished when he heard he was to die. 'What crimes have I committed, your majesty?' 'I have learnt,' replied the king, 'that you are a spy, and intend to kill me. But I will be first, and kill you. Strike,' he added to an executioner who was by, 'and rid me of this assassin.' At this cruel order the physician threw himself on his knees. 'Spare my life,' he cried, 'and yours will be spared.'

The fisherman stopped here to say to the genius: 'You see what passed between the Greek king and the physician has just passed between us two.'

'The Greek king,' the fisher went on, 'had no mercy on him, and the executioner bound his eyes. All those present begged for his life, but in vain. The physician on his knees, and bound, said to the king: 'At least let me put my affairs in order, and leave my books to persons who will make good use of them. There is one which I should like to present to your majesty. It is very precious, and ought to be kept carefully in your treasury. It contains many curious things the chief being that when you cut off my head, if your majesty will turn to the sixth leaf, and read the third line of the left-hand page, my head will answer all the questions you like to ask it.'

The king, eager to see such a wonderful thing, put off his execution to the next day, and sent him under a strong guard to his house. There the physician put his affairs in order, and the next day there was a great crowd assembled in the hall to see his death, and the doings after it. The physician went up to the foot of the throne with a large book in his hand. He carried a basin, on which he spread the covering of the book, and presenting it to the king, said: 'Sire, take this book, and when my head is cut off, let it be placed in the basin on the covering of this book; as soon as it is there, the blood will cease to flow. Then open the book, and my head will answer your questions. But, sire, I implore your mercy, for I am innocent.'

'Your prayers are useless, and if it were only to hear your head speak when you are dead, you should die.' So saying, he took the book from the physician's hands, and ordered the executioner to do his duty.

The head was so cleverly cut off that it fell into the basin, and directly the blood ceased to flow. Then, to the great astonishment of the king, the eyes opened, and the head said, 'Your majesty, open the book.' The king did so, and finding that the first leaf stuck against the second, he put his finger in his mouth, to turn it more easily. He did the same thing till he reached the sixth page, and not seeing any writing on it,

'Physician,' he said, 'there is no writing.' 'Turn over a few more pages,' answered the head. The king went on turning, still putting his finger in his mouth, till the poison in

which each page was dipped took effect. His sight failed him, and he fell at the foot of his throne.

When the physician's head saw that the poison had taken effect, and that the king had only a few more minutes to live, it cried, 'Tyrant, see how cruelty and injustice are punished.' Scarcely had it uttered these words than the king died, and the head lost also the little life that had remained in it.

That is the end of the story of the Greek king, and now let us return to the fisherman and the genius. 'If the Greek king,' said the fisherman, 'had spared the physician, he would not have thus died. The same thing applies to you. Now I am going to throw you into the sea.'

'My friend,' said the genius, 'do not do such a cruel thing. Do not treat me as Imma treated Ateca.' 'What did Imma do to Ateca?' asked the fisherman. 'Do you think I can tell you while I am shut up in here?' replied the genius. 'Let me out, and I will make you rich.'

The Story of the Four Fish

The hope of being no longer poor made the fisherman give way. 'If you will give me your promise to do this, I will open the lid. I do not think you will dare to break your word.' The genius promised, and the fisherman lifted the lid. He came out at once in smoke, and then, having resumed his proper form, the first thing he did was to kick the vase into the sea. This frightened the fisherman, but the genius laughed and said, 'Do not be afraid; I only did it to frighten you, and to show you that I intend to keep my word; take your nets and follow me.'

He began to walk in front of the fisherman, who followed him with some misgivings. They passed in front of the town, and went up a mountain and then down into a great plain, where there was a large lake lying between four hills.

When they reached the lake the genius said to the fisherman, 'Throw your nets and catch fish.' The fisherman did as he was told, hoping for a good catch, as he saw plenty of fish. What was his astonishment at seeing that there were four quite different kinds, some white, some red, some blue, and some yellow. He caught four, one of each colour. As he had never seen any like them he admired them very much, and he was very pleased to think how much money he would get for them.

'Take these fish and carry them to the Sultan, who will give you more money for them than you have ever had in your life. You can come every day to fish in this lake, but be careful not to throw your nets more than once every day, otherwise some harm will happen to you. If you follow my advice carefully you will find it good.' Saying these words, he struck his foot against the ground, which opened, and when he had disappeared, it closed immediately.

The fisherman resolved to obey the genius exactly, so he did not cast his nets a second time, but walked into the town to sell his fish at the palace.

When the Sultan saw the fish he was much astonished. He looked at them one after the other, and when he had admired them long enough, 'Take these fish,' he said to his first vizir, 'and given them to the clever cook the Emperor of the Greeks sent me. I think they must be as good as they are beautiful.'

The vizir took them himself to the cook, saying, 'Here are four fish that have been brought to the Sultan. He wants you to cook them.' Then he went back to the Sultan, who told him to give the fisherman four hundred gold pieces. The fisherman, who had never before possessed such a large sum of money at once, could hardly believe his good fortune. He at once relieved the needs of his family, and made good use of it.

But now we must return to the kitchen, which we shall find in great confusion. The cook, when she had cleaned the fish, put them in a pan with some oil to fry them. When she thought them cooked enough on one side she turned them on the other. But scarcely had she done so when the walls of the kitchen opened, and there came out a young and beautiful damsel. She was dressed in an Egyptian dress of flowered satin, and she wore earrings, and a necklace of white pearls, and bracelets of gold set with rubies, and she held a wand of myrtle in her hand. She went up to the pan, to the great astonishment of the cook, who stood motionless at the sight of her. She struck one of the fish with her rod, 'Fish, fish,' said she, 'are you doing your duty?' The fish answered nothing, and then she repeated her question, whereupon they all raised their heads together and answered very distinctly, 'Yes, yes. If you reckon, we reckon. If you pay your debts, we pay ours. If you fly, we conquer, and we are content.'

When they had spoken the girl upset the pan, and entered the opening in the wall, which at once closed, and appeared the same as before.

When the cook had recovered from her fright she lifted up the fish which had fallen into the ashes, but she found them as black as cinders, and not fit to serve up to the Sultan. She began to cry. 'Alas! what shall I say to the Sultan? He will be so angry with me, and I know he will not believe me!'

Whilst she was crying the grand-vizir came in and asked if the fish were ready. She told him all that had happened, and he was much surprised. He sent at once for the fisherman, and when he came said to him, 'Fisherman, bring me four more fish like you have brought already, for an accident has happened to them so that they cannot be served up to the Sultan.' The fisherman did not say what the genius had told him, but he excused himself from bringing them that day on account of the length of the way, and he promised to bring them next day.

In the night he went to the lake, cast his nets, and on drawing them in found four fish, which were like the others, each of a different colour. He went back at once and carried them to the grand-vizir as he had promised. The grand-vizir then took them to the kitchen and shut himself up with the cook, who began to cook them as she had done the four others on the previous day. When she was about to turn them on the other side, the wall opened, the damsel appeared, addressed the same words to the fish, received the same answer, and then overturned the pan and disappeared.

The grand-vizir was filled with astonishment. 'I shall tell the Sultan all that has happened,' said he. And he did so. The Sultan was very much astounded, and wished to see this marvel for himself. So he sent for the fisherman, and asked him to procure four more fish. The fisherman asked for three days, which were granted, and he then cast his nets in the lake, and again caught four different coloured fish. The sultan was delighted to see he had got them, and gave him again four hundred gold pieces.

As soon as the Sultan had the fish he had them carried to his room with all that was needed to cook them. Then he shut himself up with the grand-vizir, who began to prepare them and cook them. When they were done on one side he turned them over on the other. Then the wall of the room opened, but instead of the maiden a black slave came out. He was enormously tall, and carried a large green stick with which he touched the fish, saying in a terrible voice, 'Fish, fish, are you doing your duty?' To these words the fish lifting up their heads replied, 'Yes, yes. If you reckon, we reckon. If you pay your debts, we pay ours. If you fly, we conquer, and are content.' The black slave overturned the pan in the middle of the room, and the fish were turned to cinders. Then he stepped proudly back into the wall, which closed round him.

'After having seen this,' said the Sultan, 'I cannot rest. These fish signify some mystery I must clear up.'

He sent for the fisherman. 'Fisherman,' he said, 'the fish you have brought us have caused me some anxiety. Where did you get them from?' 'Sire,' he answered, 'I got them from a lake which lies in the middle of four hills beyond yonder mountains.' 'Do you know this lake?' asked the Sultan of the grand-vizir. 'No; though I have hunted many times round that mountain, I have never heard of it,' said the vizir.

As the fisherman said it was only three hours' journey away, the sultan ordered his whole court to mount and ride thither, and the fisherman led them.

They climbed the mountain, and then, on the other side, saw the lake as the fisherman had described. The water was so clear that they could see the four kinds of fish swimming

about in it. They looked at them for some time, and then the Sultan ordered them to make a camp by the edge of the water.

When night came the Sultan called his vizir, and said to him, 'I have resolved to clear up this mystery. I am going out alone, and do you stay here in my tent, and when my ministers come to-morrow, say I am not well, and cannot see them. Do this each day till I return.'

The grand-vizir tried to persuade the Sultan not to go, but in vain. The Sultan took off his state robe and put on his sword, and when he saw all was quiet in the camp he set forth alone. He climbed one of the hills, and then crossed the great plain, till, just as the sun rose, he beheld far in front of him a large building. When he came near to it he saw it was a splendid palace of beautiful black polished marble, covered with steel as smooth as a mirror.

He went to the gate, which stood half open, and went in, as nobody came when he knocked. He passed through a magnificent courtyard and still saw no one, though he called aloud several times. He entered large halls where the carpets were of silk, the lounges and sofas covered with tapestry from Mecca, and the hangings of the most beautiful Indian stuffs of gold and silver. Then he found himself in a splendid room, with a fountain supported by golden lions. The water out of the lions' mouths turned into diamonds and pearls, and the leaping water almost touched a most beautifully-painted dome. The palace was surrounded on three sides by magnificent gardens, little lakes, and woods. Birds sang in the trees, which were netted over to keep them always there.

Still the Sultan saw no one, till he heard a plaintive cry, and a voice which said, 'Oh that I could die, for I am too unhappy to wish to live any longer!' The Sultan looked round to discover who it was who thus bemoaned his fate, and at last saw a handsome young man, richly clothed, who was sitting on a throne raised slightly from the ground. His face was very sad.

The sultan approached him and bowed to him. The young man bent his head very low, but did not rise. 'Sire,' he said to the Sultan, 'I cannot rise and do you the reverence that I am sure should be paid to your rank.' 'Sir,' answered the Sultan, 'I am sure you have a good reason for not doing so, and having heard your cry of distress, I am come to offer you my help. Whose is this palace, and why is it thus empty?' Instead of answering, the young man lifted up his robe, and showed the Sultan that, from the waist downwards, he was a block of black marble.

The Sultan was horrified, and begged the young man to tell him his story. 'Willingly I will tell you my sad history,' said the young man.

The Story of the Young King of the Black Isles

You must know, sire, that my father was Mahmoud, the king of this country, the Black Isles, so called from the four little mountains which were once islands, while the capital was the place where now the great lake lies. My story will tell you how these changes came about.

My father died when he was sixty-six, and I succeeded him. I married my cousin, whom I loved tenderly, and I thought she loved me too.

But one afternoon, when I was half asleep, and was being fanned by two of her maids, I heard one say to the other, 'What a pity it is that our mistress no longer loves our master! I believe she would like to kill him if she could, for she is an enchantress.'

I soon found by watching that they were right, and when I mortally wounded a favourite slave of hers for a great crime, she begged that she might build a palace in the garden, where she wept and bewailed him for two years.

At last I begged her to cease grieving for him, for although he could not speak or move, by her enchantments she just kept him alive. She turned upon me in a rage, and said over me some magic words, and I instantly became as you see me now, half man and half marble.

Then this wicked enchantress changed the capital, which was a very populous and flourishing city, into the lake and desert plain you saw. The fish of four colours which are in it are the different races who lived in the town; the four hills are the four islands which give the name to my kingdom. All this the enchantress told me to add to my troubles. And this is not all. Every day she comes and beats me with a whip of buffalo hide.

When the young king had finished his sad story he burst once more into tears, and the Sultan was much moved.

'Tell me,' he cried, 'where is this wicked woman, and where is the miserable object of her affection, whom she just manages to keep alive?'

'Where she lives I do not know,' answered the unhappy prince, 'but she goes every day at sunrise to see if the slave can yet speak to her, after she has beaten me.'

'Unfortunate king,' said the Sultan, 'I will do what I can to avenge you.'

So he consulted with the young king over the best way to bring this about, and they agreed their plan should be put in effect the next day. The Sultan then rested, and the young king gave himself up to happy hopes of release. The next day the Sultan arose, and then went to the palace in the garden where the black slave was. He drew his sword and destroyed the little life that remained in him, and then threw the body down a well. He then lay down on the couch where the slave had been, and waited for the enchantress.

She went first to the young king, whom she beat with a hundred blows. Then she came to the room where she thought her wounded slave was, but where the Sultan really lay. She came near his couch and said, 'Are you better to-day, my dear slave? Speak but one word to me.' 'How can I be better,' answered the Sultan, imitating the language of the Ethiopians, 'when I can never sleep for the cries and groans of your husband?' 'What joy to hear you speak!' answered the queen. 'Do you wish him to regain his proper shape?' 'Yes,' said the Sultan; 'hasten to set him at liberty, so that I may no longer hear his cries.' The queen at once went out and took a cup of water, and said over it some words that made it boil as if it were on the fire. Then she threw it over the prince, who at once regained his own form. He was filled with joy, but the enchantress said, 'Hasten away from this place and never come back, lest I kill you.' So he hid himself to see the end of the Sultan's plan.

The enchantress went back to the Palace of Tears and said, 'Now I have done what you wished.' 'What you have done,' said the Sultan, 'is not enough to cure me. Every day at midnight all the people whom you have changed into fish lift their heads out of the lake and cry for vengeance. Go quickly, and give them their proper shape.' The enchantress hurried away and said some words over the lake. The fish then became men, women, and children, and the houses and shops were once more filled. The Sultan's suite, who had encamped by the lake, were not a little astonished to see themselves in the middle of a large and beautiful town.

As soon as she had disenchanted it the queen went back to the palace. 'Are you quite well now?' she said. 'Come near,' said the Sultan. 'Nearer still.' She obeyed. Then he sprang up, and with one blow of his sword he cut her in two.

Then he went and found the prince. 'Rejoice,' he said, 'your cruel enemy is dead.' The prince thanked him again and again. 'And now,' said the Sultan. 'I will go back to my capital, which I am glad to find is so near yours.' 'So near mine?' said the King of the Black Isles. 'Do you know it is a whole year's journey from here? You came here in a few hours because it was enchanted. But I will accompany you on your journey.' 'It will give me much pleasure if you will escort me,' said the Sultan, 'and as I have no children, I will make you my heir.'

The Sultan and the prince set out together, the Sultan laden with rich presents from the King of the Black Isles.

The day after he reached his capital the Sultan assembled his court and told them all that had befallen him, and told them how he intended to adopt the young king as his heir. Then he gave each man presents in proportion to his rank.

As for the fisherman, as he was the first cause of the deliverance of the young prince, the Sultan gave him much money, and made him and his family happy for the rest of their days.

The Story of the Three Calenders

In the reign of the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid, there lived at Bagdad a porter who, in spite of his humble calling, was an intelligent and sensible man. One morning he was sitting in his usual place with his basket before him, waiting to be hired, when a tall young lady, covered with a long muslin veil, came up to him and said, 'Pick up your basket and follow me.' The porter, who was greatly pleased by her appearance and voice, jumped up at once, poised his basket on his head, and accompanied the lady, saying to himself as he went, 'Oh, happy day! Oh, lucky meeting!'

The lady soon stopped before a closed door, at which she knocked. It was opened by an old man with a long white beard, to whom the lady held out money without speaking. The old man, who seemed to understand what she wanted, vanished into the house, and returned bringing a large jar of wine, which the porter placed in his basket. Then the lady signed to him to follow, and they went their way.

The next place she stopped at was a fruit and flower shop, and here she bought a large quantity of apples, apricots, peaches, and other things, with lilies, jasmine, and all sorts of sweet-smelling plants. From this shop she went to a butcher's, a grocer's, and a poulterer's, till at last the porter exclaimed in despair, 'My good lady, if you had only told me you were going to buy enough provisions to stock a town, I would have brought a horse, or rather a camel.' The lady laughed, and told him she had not finished yet, but after choosing various kinds of scents and spices from a druggist's store, she halted before a magnificent palace, at the door of which she knocked gently. The porterness who opened it was of such beauty that the eyes of the man were quite dazzled, and he was the more astonished as he saw clearly that she was no slave. The lady who had led him hither stood watching him with amusement, till the porterness exclaimed, 'Why don't you come in, my sister? This poor man is so heavily weighed down that he is ready to drop.'

When they were both inside the door was fastened, and they all three entered a large court, surrounded by an open-work gallery. At one end of the court was a platform, and on the platform stood an amber throne supported by four ebony columns, garnished with pearls and diamonds. In the middle of the court stood a marble basin filled with water from the mouth of a golden lion.

The porter looked about him, noticing and admiring everything; but his attention was specially attracted by a third lady sitting on the throne, who was even more beautiful than the other two. By the respect shown to her by the others, he judged that she must be the eldest, and in this he was right. This lady's name was Zobeida, the porterness was Sadie, and the housekeeper was Amina. At a word from Zobeida, Sadie and Amina took the basket from the porter, who was glad enough to be relieved from its weight; and when it was emptied, paid him handsomely for its use. But instead of taking up his basket and going away, the man still lingered, till Zobeida inquired what he was waiting for, and if he expected more money.

'Oh, madam,' returned he, 'you have already given me too much, and I fear I may have been guilty of rudeness in not taking my departure at once. But, if you will pardon my saying so, I was lost in astonishment at seeing such beautiful ladies by themselves. A company of women without men is, however, as dull as a company of men without women.' And after telling some stories to prove his point, he ended by entreating them to let him stay and make a fourth at their dinner.

The ladies were rather amused at the man's assurances and after some discussion it was

agreed that he should be allowed to stay, as his society might prove entertaining.

'But listen, friend,' said Zobeida, 'if we grant your request, it is only on condition that you behave with the utmost politeness, and that you keep the secret of our way of living, which chance has revealed to you.' Then they all sat down to table, which had been covered by Amina with the dishes she had bought.

After the first few mouthfuls Amina poured some wine into a golden cup. She first drank herself, according to the Arab custom, and then filled it for her sisters. When it came to the porter's turn he kissed Amina's hand, and sang a song, which he composed at the moment in praise of the wine. The three ladies were pleased with the song, and then sang themselves, so that the repast was a merry one, and lasted much longer than usual.

At length, seeing that the sun was about to set, Sadia said to the porter, 'Rise and go; it is now time for us to separate.'

'Oh, madam,' replied he, 'how can you desire me to quit you in the state in which I am? Between the wine I have drunk, and the pleasure of seeing you, I should never find the way to my house. Let me remain here till morning, and when I have recovered my senses I will go when you like.'

'Let him stay,' said Amina, who had before proved herself his friend. 'It is only just, as he has given us so much amusement.'

'If you wish it, my sister,' replied Zobeida; 'but if he does, I must make a new condition. Porter,' she continued, turning to him, 'if you remain, you must promise to ask no questions about anything you may see. If you do, you may perhaps hear what you don't like.'

This being settled, Amina brought in supper, and lit up the hall with a number of sweet smelling tapers. They then sat down again at the table, and began with fresh appetites to eat, drink, sing, and recite verses. In fact, they were all enjoying themselves mightily when they heard a knock at the outer door, which Sadie rose to open. She soon returned saying that three Calenders, all blind in the right eye, and all with their heads, faces, and eyebrows clean shaved, begged for admittance, as they were newly arrived in Bagdad, and night had already fallen.

'They seem to have pleasant manners,' she added, 'but you have no idea how funny they look. I am sure we should find their company diverting.'

Zobeida and Amina made some difficulty about admitting the new comers, and Sadie knew the reason of their hesitation. But she urged the matter so strongly that Zobeida was at last forced to consent.

'Bring them in, then,' said she, 'but make them understand that they are not to make remarks about what does not concern them, and be sure to make them read the inscription over the door.' For on the door was written in letters of gold, 'Whoso meddles in affairs that are no business of his, will hear truths that will not please him.'

The three Calenders bowed low on entering, and thanked the ladies for their kindness and hospitality. The ladies replied with words of welcome, and they were all about to seat themselves when the eyes of the Calenders fell on the porter, whose dress was not so very unlike their own, though he still wore all the hair that nature had given him. 'This,' said one of them, 'is apparently one of our Arab brothers, who has rebelled against our ruler.'

The porter, although half asleep from the wine he had drunk, heard the words, and without moving cried angrily to the Calender, 'Sit down and mind your own business. Did you not read the inscription over the door? Everybody is not obliged to live in the same way.'

'Do not be so angry, my good man,' replied the Calender; 'we should be very sorry

to displease you,' so the quarrel was smoothed over, and supper began in good earnest. When the Calenders had satisfied their hunger, they offered to play to their hostesses, if there were any instruments in the house. The ladies were delighted at the idea, and Sadie went to see what she could find, returning in a few moments laden with two different kinds of flutes and a tambourine. Each Calender took the one he preferred, and began to play a well-known air, while the ladies sang the words of the song. These words were the gayest and liveliest possible, and every now and then the singers had to stop to indulge the laughter which almost choked them. In the midst of all their noise, a knock was heard at the door.

Now early that evening the Caliph secretly left the palace, accompanied by his grand-vizir, Giafar, and Mesrour, chief of the eunuchs, all three wearing the dresses of merchants. Passing down the street, the Caliph had been attracted by the music of instruments and the sound of laughter, and had ordered his vizir to go and knock at the door of the house, as he wished to enter. The vizir replied that the ladies who lived there seemed to be entertaining their friends, and he thought his master would do well not to intrude on them; but the Caliph had taken it into his head to see for himself, and insisted on being obeyed.

The knock was answered by Sadie, with a taper in her hand, and the vizir, who was surprised at her beauty, bowed low before her, and said respectfully, 'Madam, we are three merchants who have lately arrived from Moussoul, and, owing to a misadventure which befel us this very night, only reached our inn to find that the doors were closed to us till to-morrow morning. Not knowing what to do, we wandered in the streets till we happened to pass your house, when, seeing lights and hearing the sound of voices, we resolved to ask you to give us shelter till the dawn. If you will grant us this favour, we will, with your permission, do all in our power to help you spend the time pleasantly.'

Sadie answered the merchant that she must first consult her sisters; and after having talked over the matter with them, she returned to tell him that he and his two friends would be welcome to join their company. They entered and bowed politely to the ladies and their guests. Then Zobeida, as the mistress, came forward and said gravely, 'You are welcome here, but I hope you will allow me to beg one thing of you—have as many eyes as you like, but no tongues; and ask no questions about anything you see, however strange it may appear to you.'

'Madam,' returned the vizir, 'you shall be obeyed. We have quite enough to please and interest us without troubling ourselves about that with which we have no concern.' Then they all sat down, and drank to the health of the new comers.

While the vizir, Giafar, was talking to the ladies the Caliph was occupied in wondering who they could be, and why the three Calenders had each lost his right eye. He was burning to inquire the reason of it all, but was silenced by Zobeida's request, so he tried to rouse himself and to take his part in the conversation, which was very lively, the subject of discussion being the many different sorts of pleasures that there were in the world. After some time the Calenders got up and performed some curious dances, which delighted the rest of the company.

When they had finished Zobeida rose from her seat, and, taking Amina by the hand, she said to her, 'My sister, our friends will excuse us if we seem to forget their presence and fulfil our nightly task.' Amina understood her sister's meaning, and collecting the dishes, glasses, and musical instruments, she carried them away, while Sadie swept the hall and put everything in order. Having done this she begged the Calenders to sit on a sofa on one side of the room, and the Caliph and his friends to place themselves opposite. As to the

porter, she requested him to come and help her and her sister.

Shortly after Amina entered carrying a seat, which she put down in the middle of the empty space. She next went over to the door of a closet and signed to the porter to follow her. He did so, and soon reappeared leading two black dogs by a chain, which he brought into the centre of the hall. Zobeida then got up from her seat between the Calenders and the Caliph and walked slowly across to where the porter stood with the dogs.

‘We must do our duty,’ she said with a deep sigh, pushing back her sleeves, and, taking a whip from Sadie, she said to the man, ‘Take one of those dogs to my sister Amina and give me the other.’

The porter did as he was bid, but as he led the dog to Zobeida it uttered piercing howls, and gazed up at her with looks of entreaty. But Zobeida took no notice, and whipped the dog till she was out of breath. She then took the chain from the porter, and, raising the dog on its hind legs, they looked into each other’s eyes sorrowfully till tears began to fall from both. Then Zobeida took her handkerchief and wiped the dog’s eyes tenderly, after which she kissed it, then, putting the chain into the porter’s hand she said, ‘Take it back to the closet and bring me the other.’

The same ceremony was gone through with the second dog, and all the while the whole company looked on with astonishment. The Caliph in particular could hardly contain himself, and made signs to the vizir to ask what it all meant. But the vizir pretended not to see, and turned his head away.

Zobeida remained for some time in the middle of the room, till at last Sadie went up to her and begged her to sit down, as she also had her part to play. At these words Amina fetched a lute from a case of yellow satin and gave it to Sadie, who sang several songs to its accompaniment. When she was tired she said to Amina, ‘My sister, I can do no more; come, I pray you, and take my place.’

Amina struck a few chords and then broke into a song, which she sang with so much ardour that she was quite overcome, and sank gasping on a pile of cushions, tearing open her dress as she did so to give herself some air. To the amazement of all present, her neck, instead of being as smooth and white as her face, was a mass of scars.

The Calenders and the Caliph looked at each other, and whispered together, unheard by Zobeida and Sadie, who were tending their fainting sister. ‘What does it all mean?’ asked the Caliph. ‘We know no more than you,’ said the Calender to whom he had spoken. ‘What! You do not belong to the house?’ ‘My lord,’ answered all the Calenders together, ‘we came here for the first time an hour before you.’

They then turned to the porter to see if he could explain the mystery, but the porter was no wiser than they were themselves. At length the Caliph could contain his curiosity no longer, and declared that he would compel the ladies to tell them the meaning of their strange conduct. The vizir, foreseeing what would happen, implored him to remember the condition their hostesses had imposed, and added in a whisper that if his Highness would only wait till morning he could as Caliph summon the ladies to appear before him. But the Caliph, who was not accustomed to be contradicted, rejected this advice, and it was resolved after a little more talking that the question should be put by the porter. Suddenly Zobeida turned round, and seeing their excitement she said, ‘What is the matter—what are you all discussing so earnestly?’

‘Madam,’ answered the porter, ‘these gentlemen entreat you to explain to them why you should first whip the dogs and then cry over them, and also how it happens that the fainting lady is covered with scars. They have requested me, Madam, to be their mouthpiece.’ ‘Is

it true, gentlemen,' asked Zobeida, drawing herself up, 'that you have charged this man to put me that question?' 'It is,' they all replied, except Giafar, who was silent.

'Is this,' continued Zobeida, growing more angry every moment, 'is this the return you make for the hospitality I have shown you? Have you forgotten the one condition on which you were allowed to enter the house? Come quickly,' she added, clapping her hands three times, and the words were hardly uttered when seven black slaves, each armed with a sabre, burst in and stood over the seven men, throwing them on the ground, and preparing themselves, on a sign from their mistress, to cut off their heads.

The seven culprits all thought their last hour had come, and the Caliph repented bitterly that he had not taken the vizir's advice. But they made up their minds to die bravely, all except the porter, who loudly inquired of Zobeida why he was to suffer for other people's faults, and declared that these misfortunes would never have happened if it had not been for the Calenders, who always brought ill-luck. He ended by imploring Zobeida not to confound the innocent with the guilty and to spare his life.

In spite of her anger, there was something so comic in the groans of the porter that Zobeida could not refrain from laughing. But putting him aside she addressed the others a second time, saying, 'Answer me; who are you? Unless you tell me truly you have not another moment to live. I can hardly think you are men of any position, whatever country you belong to. If you were, you would have had more consideration for us.'

The Caliph, who was naturally very impatient, suffered far more than either of the others at feeling that his life was at the mercy of a justly offended lady, but when he heard her question he began to breathe more freely, for he was convinced that she had only to learn his name and rank for all danger to be over. So he whispered hastily to the vizir, who was next to him, to reveal their secret. But the vizir, wiser than his master, wished to conceal from the public the affront they had received, and merely answered, 'After all, we have only got what we deserved.'

Meanwhile Zobeida had turned to the three Calenders and inquired if, as they were all blind, they were brothers. 'No, madam,' replied one, 'we are no blood relations at all, only brothers by our mode of life.' 'And you,' she asked, addressing another, 'were you born blind of one eye?' 'No, madam,' returned he, 'I became blind through a most surprising adventure, such as probably has never happened to anybody. After that I shaved my head and eyebrows and put on the dress in which you see me now.'

Zobeida put the same question to the other two Calenders, and received the same answer. 'But,' added the third, 'it may interest you, madam, to know that we are not men of low birth, but are all three sons of kings, and of kings, too, whom the world holds in high esteem.'

At these words Zobeida's anger cooled down, and she turned to her slaves and said, 'You can give them a little more liberty, but do not leave the hall. Those that will tell us their histories and their reasons for coming here shall be allowed to leave unhurt; those who refuse—', and she paused, but in a moment the porter, who understood that he had only to relate his story to set himself free from this terrible danger, immediately broke in, 'Madam, you know already how I came here, and what I have to say will soon be told. Your sister found me this morning in the place where I always stand waiting to be hired. She bade me follow her to various shops, and when my basket was quite full we returned to this house, when you had the goodness to permit me to remain, for which I shall be eternally grateful. That is my story.'

He looked anxiously to Zobeida, who nodded her head and said, 'You can go; and take

care we never meet again.'

'Oh, madam,' cried the porter, 'let me stay yet a little while. It is not just that the others should have heard my story and that I should not hear theirs,' and without waiting for permission he seated himself on the end of the sofa occupied by the ladies, whilst the rest crouched on the carpet, and the slaves stood against the wall.

Then one of the Calenders, addressing himself to Zobeida as the principal lady, began his story.

The Story of the First Calender

In order, madam, to explain how I came to lose my right eye, and to wear the dress of a Calender, you must first know that I am the son of a king. My father's only brother reigned over the neighbouring country, and had two children, a daughter and a son, who were of the same age as myself.

As I grew up, and was allowed more liberty, I went every year to pay a visit to my uncle's court, and usually stayed there about two months. In this way my cousin and I became very intimate, and were much attached to each other. The very last time I saw him he seemed more delighted to see me than ever, and gave a great feast in my honour. When we had finished eating, he said to me, 'My cousin, you would never guess what I have been doing since your last visit to us! Directly after your departure I set a number of men to work on a building after my own design. It is now completed, and ready to be lived in. I should like to show it to you, but you must first swear two things: to be faithful to me, and to keep my secret.'

Of course I did not dream of refusing him anything he asked, and gave the promise without the least hesitation. He then bade me wait an instant, and vanished, returning in a few moments with a richly dressed lady of great beauty, but as he did not tell me her name, I thought it was better not to inquire. We all three sat down to table and amused ourselves with talking of all sorts of indifferent things, and with drinking each other's health. Suddenly the prince said to me, 'Cousin, we have no time to lose; be so kind as to conduct this lady to a certain spot, where you will find a dome-like tomb, newly built. You cannot mistake it. Go in, both of you, and wait till I come. I shall not be long.'

As I had promised I prepared to do as I was told, and giving my hand to the lady, I escorted her, by the light of the moon, to the place of which the prince had spoken. We had barely reached it when he joined us himself, carrying a small vessel of water, a pickaxe, and a little bag containing plaster.

With the pickaxe he at once began to destroy the empty sepulchre in the middle of the tomb. One by one he took the stones and piled them up in a corner. When he had knocked down the whole sepulchre he proceeded to dig at the earth, and beneath where the sepulchre had been I saw a trap-door. He raised the door and I caught sight of the top of a spiral staircase; then he said, turning to the lady, 'Madam, this is the way that will lead you down to the spot which I told you of.'

The lady did not answer, but silently descended the staircase, the prince following her. At the top, however, he looked at me. 'My cousin,' he exclaimed, 'I do not know how to thank you for your kindness. Farewell.' 'What do you mean?' I cried. 'I don't understand.' 'No matter,' he replied, 'go back by the path that you came.'

He would say no more, and, greatly puzzled, I returned to my room in the palace and went to bed. When I woke, and considered my adventure, I thought that I must have been dreaming, and sent a servant to ask if the prince was dressed and could see me. But on hearing that he had not slept at home I was much alarmed, and hastened to the cemetery, where, unluckily, the tombs were all so alike that I could not discover which was the one I was in search of, though I spent four days in looking for it.

You must know that all this time the king, my uncle, was absent on a hunting expedition, and as no one knew when he would be back, I at last decided to return home, leaving the ministers to make my excuses. I longed to tell them what had become of the prince, about whose fate they felt the most dreadful anxiety, but the oath I had sworn kept me silent.

On my arrival at my father's capital, I was astonished to find a large detachment of guards drawn up before the gate of the palace; they surrounded me directly when I entered. I asked the officers in command the reason of this strange behaviour, and was horrified to learn that the army had mutinied and put to death the king, my father, and had placed the grand-vizir on the throne. Further, that by his orders I was placed under arrest.

Now this rebel vizir had hated me from my boy-hood, because once, when shooting at a bird with a bow, I had shot out his eye by accident. Of course I not only sent a servant at once to offer him my regrets and apologies, but I made them in person. It was all of no use. He cherished an undying hatred towards me, and lost no occasion of showing it. Having once got me in his power I felt he could show no mercy, and I was right. Mad with triumph and fury he came to me in my prison and tore out my right eye. That is how I lost it.

My persecutor, however, did not stop here. He shut me up in a large case and ordered his executioner to carry me into a desert place, to cut off my head, and then to abandon my body to the birds of prey. The case, with me inside it, was accordingly placed on a horse, and the executioner, accompanied by another man, rode into the country until they found a spot suitable for the purpose. But their hearts were not so hard as they seemed, and my tears and prayers made them waver.

'Forsake the kingdom instantly,' said the executioner at last, 'and take care never to come back, for you will not only lose your head, but make us lose ours.' I thanked him gratefully, and tried to console myself for the loss of my eye by thinking of the other misfortunes I had escaped.

After all I had gone through, and my fear of being recognised by some enemy, I could only travel very slowly and cautiously, generally resting in some out-of-the-way place by day, and walking as far as I was able by night, but at length I arrived in the kingdom of my uncle, of whose protection I was sure.

I found him in great trouble about the disappearance of his son, who had, he said, vanished without leaving a trace; but his own grief did not prevent him sharing mine. We mingled our tears, for the loss of one was the loss of the other, and then I made up my mind that it was my duty to break the solemn oath I had sworn to the prince. I therefore lost no time in telling my uncle everything I knew, and I observed that even before I had ended his sorrow appeared to be lightened a little.

'My dear nephew,' he said, 'your story gives me some hope. I was aware that my son was building a tomb, and I think I can find the spot. But as the prince wished to keep the matter secret, let us go alone and seek the place ourselves.'

He then bade me disguise myself, and we both slipped out of a garden door which opened on to the cemetery. It did not take long for us to arrive at the scene of the prince's disappearance, or to discover the tomb I had sought so vainly before. We entered it, and found the trap-door which led to the staircase, but we had great difficulty in raising it, because the prince had fastened it down underneath with the plaster he had brought with him.

My uncle went first, and I followed him. When we reached the bottom of the stairs we stepped into a sort of ante-room, filled with such a dense smoke that it was hardly possible to see anything. However, we passed through the smoke into a large chamber, which at first seemed quite empty. The room was brilliantly lighted, and in another moment we perceived a sort of platform at one end, on which were the bodies of the prince and a lady, both half-burned, as if they had been dragged out of a fire before it had quite consumed

them.

This horrible sight turned me faint, but, to my surprise, my uncle did not show so much surprise as anger.

'I knew,' he said, 'that my son was tenderly attached to this lady, whom it was impossible he should ever marry. I tried to turn his thoughts, and presented to him the most beautiful princesses, but he cared for none of them, and, as you see, they have now been united by a horrible death in an underground tomb.' But, as he spoke, his anger melted into tears, and again I wept with him.

When he recovered himself he drew me to him.

'My dear nephew,' he said, embracing me, 'you have come to me to take his place, and I will do my best to forget that I ever had a son who could act in so wicked a manner.' Then he turned and went up the stairs.

We reached the palace without anyone having noticed our absence, when, shortly after, a clashing of drums, and cymbals, and the blare of trumpets burst upon our astonished ears. At the same time a thick cloud of dust on the horizon told of the approach of a great army. My heart sank when I perceived that the commander was the vizir who had dethroned my father, and was come to seize the kingdom of my uncle.

The capital was utterly unprepared to stand a siege, and seeing that resistance was useless, at once opened its gates. My uncle fought hard for his life, but was soon overpowered, and when he fell I managed to escape through a secret passage, and took refuge with an officer whom I knew I could trust.

Persecuted by ill-fortune, and stricken with grief, there seemed to be only one means of safety left to me. I shaved my beard and my eyebrows, and put on the dress of a calender, in which it was easy for me to travel without being known. I avoided the towns till I reached the kingdom of the famous and powerful Caliph, Haroun-al-Raschid, where I had no further reason to fear my enemies. It was my intention to come to Bagdad and to throw myself at the feet of his Highness, who would, I felt certain, be touched by my sad story, and would grant me, besides, his help and protection.

After a journey which lasted some months I arrived at length at the gates of this city. It was sunset, and I paused for a little to look about me, and to decide which way to turn my steps. I was still debating on this subject when I was joined by this other calender, who stopped to greet me.

'You, like me, appear to be a stranger,' I said. He replied that I was right, and before he could say more the third calender came up. He, also, was newly arrived in Bagdad, and being brothers in misfortune, we resolved to cast in our lots together, and to share whatever fate might have in store.

By this time it had grown late, and we did not know where to spend the night. But our lucky star having guided us to this door, we took the liberty of knocking and of asking for shelter, which was given to us at once with the best grace in the world. This, madam, is my story.

'I am satisfied,' replied Zobeida; 'you can go when you like.' The calender, however, begged leave to stay and to hear the histories of his two friends and of the three other persons of the company, which he was allowed to do.

The Story of the Second Calendar

‘Madam,’ said the young man, addressing Zobeida, ‘if you wish to know how I lost my right eye, I shall have to tell you the story of my whole life.’

I was scarcely more than a baby, when the king my father, finding me unusually quick and clever for my age, turned his thoughts to my education. I was taught first to read and write, and then to learn the Koran, which is the basis of our holy religion, and to better understand it, I read with my tutors, the ablest commentators, on its teaching, and committed to memory all the traditions respecting the Prophet, which have been gathered from the mouth of those who were his friends. I also learnt history, and was instructed in poetry, versification, geography, chronology, and in all the outdoor exercises in which every prince should excel. But what I liked best of all was writing Arabic characters, and in this I soon surpassed my masters, and gained a reputation in this branch of knowledge that reached as far as India itself.

Now the Sultan of the Indies, curious to see a young prince with such strange tastes, sent an ambassador to my father, laden with rich presents, and a warm invitation to visit his court. My father, who was deeply anxious to secure the friendship of so powerful a monarch, and held besides that a little travel would greatly improve my manners and open my mind, accepted gladly, and in a short time I had set out for India with the ambassador, attended only by a small suite on account of the length of the journey, and the badness of the roads. However, as was my duty, I took with me ten camels, laden with rich presents for the Sultan.

We had been travelling for about a month, when one day we saw a cloud of dust moving swiftly towards us; and as soon as it came near, we found that the dust concealed a band of fifty robbers. Our men barely numbered half, and as we were also hampered by the camels, there was no use in fighting, so we tried to overawe them by informing them who we were, and whither we were going. The robbers, however, only laughed, and declared that was none of their business, and, without more words, attacked us brutally. I defended myself to the last, wounded though I was, but at length, seeing that resistance was hopeless, and that the ambassador and all our followers were made prisoners, I put spurs to my horse and rode away as fast as I could, till the poor beast fell dead from a wound in his side. I managed to jump off without any injury, and looked about to see if I was pursued. But for the moment I was safe, for, as I imagined, the robbers were all engaged in quarrelling over their booty.

I found myself in a country that was quite new to me, and dared not return to the main road lest I should again fall into the hands of the robbers. Luckily my wound was only a slight one, and after binding it up as well as I could, I walked on for the rest of the day, till I reached a cave at the foot of a mountain, where I passed the night in peace, making my supper off some fruits I had gathered on the way.

I wandered about for a whole month without knowing where I was going, till at length I found myself on the outskirts of a beautiful city, watered by winding streams, which enjoyed an eternal spring. My delight at the prospect of mixing once more with human beings was somewhat damped at the thought of the miserable object I must seem. My face and hands had been burned nearly black; my clothes were all in rags, and my shoes were in such a state that I had been forced to abandon them altogether.

I entered the town, and stopped at a tailor’s shop to inquire where I was. The man saw I was better than my condition, and begged me to sit down, and in return I told him

my whole story. The tailor listened with attention, but his reply, instead of giving me consolation, only increased my trouble.

‘Beware,’ he said, ‘of telling any one what you have told me, for the prince who governs the kingdom is your father’s greatest enemy, and he will be rejoiced to find you in his power.’

I thanked the tailor for his counsel, and said I would do whatever he advised; then, being very hungry, I gladly ate of the food he put before me, and accepted his offer of a lodging in his house.

In a few days I had quite recovered from the hardships I had undergone, and then the tailor, knowing that it was the custom for the princes of our religion to learn a trade or profession so as to provide for themselves in times of ill-fortune, inquired if there was anything I could do for my living. I replied that I had been educated as a grammarian and a poet, but that my great gift was writing.

‘All that is of no use here,’ said the tailor.

‘Take my advice, put on a short coat, and as you seem hardy and strong, go into the woods and cut firewood, which you will sell in the streets. By this means you will earn your living, and be able to wait till better times come. The hatchet and the cord shall be my present.’

This counsel was very distasteful to me, but I thought I could not do otherwise than adopt it. So the next morning I set out with a company of poor wood-cutters, to whom the tailor had introduced me. Even on the first day I cut enough wood to sell for a tolerable sum, and very soon I became more expert, and had made enough money to repay the tailor all he had lent me.

I had been a wood-cutter for more than a year, when one day I wandered further into the forest than I had ever done before, and reached a delicious green glade, where I began to cut wood. I was hacking at the root of a tree, when I beheld an iron ring fastened to a trapdoor of the same metal. I soon cleared away the earth, and pulling up the door, found a staircase, which I hastily made up my mind to go down, carrying my hatchet with me by way of protection. When I reached the bottom I discovered that I was in a huge palace, as brilliantly lighted as any palace above ground that I had ever seen, with a long gallery supported by pillars of jasper, ornamented with capitals of gold. Down this gallery a lady came to meet me, of such beauty that I forgot everything else, and thought only of her.

To save her all the trouble possible, I hastened towards her, and bowed low. ‘Who are you?’ she said. ‘A man or a genius?’ ‘A man, madam,’ I replied; ‘I have nothing to do with geni.’ ‘By what accident do you come here?’ she asked again with a sigh. ‘I have been in this place now for five and twenty years, and you are the first man who has visited me.’

Emboldened by her beauty and gentleness, I ventured to reply, ‘Before, madam, I answer your question, allow me to say how grateful I am for this meeting, which is not only a consolation to me in my own heavy sorrow, but may perhaps enable me to render you lot happier,’ and then I told her who I was, and how I had come there.

‘Alas, prince,’ she said, with a deeper sigh than before, ‘you have guessed rightly in supposing me an unwilling prisoner in this gorgeous place. I am the daughter of the king of the Ebony Isle, of whose fame you surely must have heard. At my father’s desire I was married to a prince who was my own cousin; but on my very wedding day, I was snatched up by a genius, and brought here in a faint. For a long while I did nothing but weep, and would not suffer the genius to come near me; but time teaches us submission, and I have

now got accustomed to his presence, and if clothes and jewels could content me, I have them in plenty. Every tenth day, for five and twenty years, I have received a visit from him, but in case I should need his help at any other time, I have only to touch a talisman that stands at the entrance of my chamber. It wants still five days to his next visit, and I hope that during that time you will do me the honour to be my guest.'

I was too much dazzled by her beauty to dream of refusing her offer, and accordingly the princess had me conducted to the bath, and a rich dress befitting my rank was provided for me. Then a feast of the most delicate dishes was served in a room hung with embroidered Indian fabrics.

Next day, when we were at dinner, I could maintain my patience no longer, and implored the princess to break her bonds, and return with me to the world which was lighted by the sun.

'What you ask is impossible,' she answered; 'but stay here with me instead, and we can be happy, and all you will have to do is to betake yourself to the forest every tenth day, when I am expecting my master the genius. He is very jealous, as you know, and will not suffer a man to come near me.'

'Princess,' I replied, 'I see it is only fear of the genius that makes you act like this. For myself, I dread him so little that I mean to break his talisman in pieces! Awful though you think him, he shall feel the weight of my arm, and I herewith take a solemn vow to stamp out the whole race.'

The princess, who realized the consequences of such audacity, entreated me not to touch the talisman.

'If you do, it will be the ruin of both of us,' said she; 'I know genii much better than you.' But the wine I had drunk had confused my brain; I gave one kick to the talisman, and it fell into a thousand pieces.

Hardly had my foot touched the talisman when the air became as dark as night, a fearful noise was heard, and the palace shook to its very foundations. In an instant I was sobered, and understood what I had done. 'Princess!' I cried, 'what is happening?' 'Alas!' she exclaimed, forgetting all her own terrors in anxiety for me, 'fly, or you are lost.'

I followed her advice and dashed up the staircase, leaving my hatchet behind me. But I was too late. The palace opened and the genius appeared, who, turning angrily to the princess, asked indignantly,

'What is the matter, that you have sent for me like this?' 'A pain in my heart,' she replied hastily, 'obliged me to seek the aid of this little bottle. Feeling faint, I slipped and fell against the talisman, which broke. That is really all.'

'You are an impudent liar!' cried the genius. 'How did this hatchet and those shoes get here?' 'I never saw them before,' she answered, 'and you came in such a hurry that you may have picked them up on the road without knowing it.' To this the genius only replied by insults and blows. I could hear the shrieks and groans of the princess, and having by this time taken off my rich garments and put on those in which I had arrived the previous day, I lifted the trap, found myself once more in the forest, and returned to my friend the tailor, with a light load of wood and a heart full of shame and sorrow.

The tailor, who had been uneasy at my long absence, was, delighted to see me; but I kept silence about my adventure, and as soon as possible retired to my room to lament in secret over my folly. While I was thus indulging my grief my host entered, and said, 'There is an old man downstairs who has brought your hatchet and slippers, which he picked up on the road, and now restores to you, as he found out from one of your comrades where

you lived. You had better come down and speak to him yourself.' At this speech I changed colour, and my legs trembled under me. The tailor noticed my confusion, and was just going to inquire the reason when the door of the room opened, and the old man appeared, carrying with him my hatchet and shoes.

'I am a genius,' he said, 'the son of the daughter of Eblis, prince of the genii. Is not this hatchet yours, and these shoes?' Without waiting for an answer—which, indeed, I could hardly have given him, so great was my fright—he seized hold of me, and darted up into the air with the quickness of lightning, and then, with equal swiftness, dropped down towards the earth. When he touched the ground, he rapped it with his foot; it opened, and we found ourselves in the enchanted palace, in the presence of the beautiful princess of the Ebony Isle. But how different she looked from what she was when I had last seen her, for she was lying stretched on the ground covered with blood, and weeping bitterly.

'Traitor!' cried the genius, 'is not this man your lover?' She lifted up her eyes slowly, and looked sadly at me. 'I never saw him before,' she answered slowly. 'I do not know who he is.' 'What!' exclaimed the genius, 'you owe all your sufferings to him, and yet you dare to say he is a stranger to you!'

'But if he really is a stranger to me,' she replied, 'why should I tell a lie and cause his death?' 'Very well,' said the genius, drawing his sword, 'take this, and cut off his head.' 'Alas,' answered the princess, 'I am too weak even to hold the sabre. And supposing that I had the strength, why should I put an innocent man to death?'

'You condemn yourself by your refusal,' said the genius; then turning to me, he added, 'and you, do you not know her?' 'How should I?' I replied, resolved to imitate the princess in her fidelity. 'How should I, when I never saw her before?' 'Cut her head off,' then, 'if she is a stranger to you, and I shall believe you are speaking the truth, and will set you at liberty.'

'Certainly,' I answered, taking the sabre in my hands, and making a sign to the princess to fear nothing, as it was my own life that I was about to sacrifice, and not hers. But the look of gratitude she gave me shook my courage, and I flung the sabre to the earth.

'I should not deserve to live,' I said to the genius, 'if I were such a coward as to slay a lady who is not only unknown to me, but who is at this moment half dead herself. Do with me as you will—I am in your power—but I refuse to obey your cruel command.'

'I see,' said the genius, 'that you have both made up your minds to brave me, but I will give you a sample of what you may expect.' So saying, with one sweep of his sabre he cut off a hand of the princess, who was just able to lift the other to wave me an eternal farewell. Then I lost consciousness for several minutes.

When I came to myself I implored the genius to keep me no longer in this state of suspense, but to lose no time in putting an end to my sufferings. The genius, however, paid no attention to my prayers, but said sternly, 'That is the way in which a genius treats the woman who has betrayed him. If I chose, I could kill you also; but I will be merciful, and content myself with changing you into a dog, an ass, a lion, or a bird—whichever you prefer.'

I caught eagerly at these words, as giving me a faint hope of softening his wrath. 'O genius!' I cried, 'as you wish to spare my life, be generous, and spare it altogether. Grant my prayer, and pardon my crime, as the best man in the whole world forgave his neighbour who was eaten up with envy of him.' Contrary to my hopes, the genius seemed interested in my words, and said he would like to hear the story of the two neighbours; and as I think, madam, it may please you, I will tell it to you also.

The Story of the Envious Man and of Him Who Was Envied

In a town of moderate size, two men lived in neighbouring houses; but they had not been there very long before one man took such a hatred of the other, and envied him so bitterly, that the poor man determined to find another home, hoping that when they no longer met every day his enemy would forget all about him. So he sold his house and the little furniture it contained, and moved into the capital of the country, which was luckily at no great distance. About half a mile from this city he bought a nice little place, with a large garden and a fair-sized court, in the centre of which stood an old well.

In order to live a quieter life, the good man put on the robe of a dervish, and divided his house into a quantity of small cells, where he soon established a number of other dervishes. The fame of his virtue gradually spread abroad, and many people, including several of the highest quality, came to visit him and ask his prayers.

Of course it was not long before his reputation reached the ears of the man who envied him, and this wicked wretch resolved never to rest till he had in some way worked ill to the dervish whom he hated. So he left his house and his business to look after themselves, and betook himself to the new dervish monastery, where he was welcomed by the founder with all the warmth imaginable. The excuse he gave for his appearance was that he had come to consult the chief of the dervishes on a private matter of great importance.

‘What I have to say must not be overheard,’ he whispered; ‘command, I beg of you, that your dervishes retire into their cells, as night is approaching, and meet me in the court.’

The dervish did as he was asked without delay, and directly they were alone together the envious man began to tell a long story, edging, as they walked to and fro, always nearer to the well, and when they were quite close, he seized the dervish and dropped him in. He then ran off triumphantly, without having been seen by anyone, and congratulating himself that the object of his hatred was dead, and would trouble him no more.

But in this he was mistaken! The old well had long been inhabited (unknown to mere human beings) by a set of fairies and genii, who caught the dervish as he fell, so that he received no hurt. The dervish himself could see nothing, but he took for granted that something strange had happened, or he must certainly have been dashed against the side of the well and been killed. He lay quite still, and in a moment he heard a voice saying, ‘Can you guess whom this man is that we have saved from death?’

‘No,’ replied several other voices.

And the first speaker answered, ‘I will tell you. This man, from pure goodness of heart, forsook the town where he lived and came to dwell here, in the hope of curing one of his neighbours of the envy he felt towards him. But his character soon won him the esteem of all, and the envious man’s hatred grew, till he came here with the deliberate intention of causing his death. And this he would have done, without our help, the very day before the Sultan has arranged to visit this holy dervish, and to entreat his prayers for the princess, his daughter.’

‘But what is the matter with the princess that she needs the dervish’s prayers?’ asked another voice.

‘She has fallen into the power of the genius Maimoum, the son of Dimdim,’ replied the first voice.

‘But it would be quite simple for this holy chief of the dervishes to cure her if he only knew! In his convent there is a black cat which has a tiny white tip to its tail. Now to

cure the princess the dervish must pull out seven of these white hairs, burn three, and with their smoke perfume the head of the princess. This will deliver her so completely that Maimoum, the son of Dimdim, will never dare to approach her again.'

The fairies and genii ceased talking, but the dervish did not forget a word of all they had said; and when morning came he perceived a place in the side of the well which was broken, and where he could easily climb out.

The dervishes, who could not imagine what had become of him, were enchanted at his reappearance. He told them of the attempt on his life made by his guest of the previous day, and then retired into his cell. He was soon joined here by the black cat of which the voice had spoken, who came as usual to say good-morning to his master. He took him on his knee and seized the opportunity to pull seven white hairs out of his tail, and put them on one side till they were needed.

The sun had not long risen before the Sultan, who was anxious to leave nothing undone that might deliver the princess, arrived with a large suite at the gate of the monastery, and was received by the dervishes with profound respect. The Sultan lost no time in declaring the object of his visit, and leading the chief of the dervishes aside, he said to him, 'Noble scheik, you have guessed perhaps what I have come to ask you?'

'Yes, sire,' answered the dervish; 'if I am not mistaken, it is the illness of the princess which has procured me this honour.'

'You are right,' returned the Sultan, 'and you will give me fresh life if you can by your prayers deliver my daughter from the strange malady that has taken possession of her.'

'Let your highness command her to come here, and I will see what I can do.'

The Sultan, full of hope, sent orders at once that the princess was to set out as soon as possible, accompanied by her usual staff of attendants. When she arrived, she was so thickly veiled that the dervish could not see her face, but he desired a brazier to be held over her head, and laid the seven hairs on the burning coals. The instant they were consumed, terrific cries were heard, but no one could tell from whom they proceeded. Only the dervish guessed that they were uttered by Maimoum the son of Dimdim, who felt the princess escaping him.

All this time she had seemed unconscious of what she was doing, but now she raised her hand to her veil and uncovered her face.

'Where am I?' she said in a bewildered manner; 'and how did I get here?'

The Sultan was so delighted to hear these words that he not only embraced his daughter, but kissed the hand of the dervish. Then, turning to his attendants who stood round, he said to them, 'What reward shall I give to the man who has restored me my daughter?'

They all replied with one accord that he deserved the hand of the princess.

'That is my own opinion,' said he, 'and from this moment I declare him to be my son-in-law.'

Shortly after these events, the grand-vizir died, and his post was given to the dervish. But he did not hold it for long, for the Sultan fell a victim to an attack of illness, and as he had no sons, the soldiers and priests declared the dervish heir to the throne, to the great joy of all the people.

One day, when the dervish, who had now become Sultan, was making a royal progress with his court, he perceived the envious man standing in the crowd. He made a sign to one of his vizirs, and whispered in his ear, 'Fetch me that man who is standing out there, but take great care not to frighten him.' The vizir obeyed, and when the envious man was brought before the Sultan, the monarch said to him, 'My friend, I am delighted to see you

again.' Then turning to an officer, he added, 'Give him a thousand pieces of gold out of my treasury, and twenty waggon-loads of merchandise out of my private stores, and let an escort of soldiers accompany him home.' He then took leave of the envious man, and went on his way.

Now when I had ended my story, I proceeded to show the genius how to apply it to himself.

'O genius,' I said, 'you see that this Sultan was not content with merely forgiving the envious man for the attempt on his life; he heaped rewards and riches upon him.'

But the genius had made up his mind, and could not be softened.

'Do not imagine that you are going to escape so easily,' he said.

'All I can do is to give you bare life; you will have to learn what happens to people who interfere with me.'

As he spoke he seized me violently by the arm; the roof of the palace opened to make way for us, and we mounted up so high into the air that the earth looked like a little cloud. Then, as before, he came down with the swiftness of lightning, and we touched the ground on a mountain top.

Then he stooped and gathered a handful of earth, and murmured some words over it, after which he threw the earth in my face, saying as he did so, 'Quit the form of a man, and assume that of a monkey.' This done, he vanished, and I was in the likeness of an ape, and in a country I had never seen before.

However there was no use in stopping where I was, so I came down the mountain and found myself in a flat plain which was bounded by the sea. I travelled towards it, and was pleased to see a vessel moored about half a mile from shore. There were no waves, so I broke off the branch of a tree, and dragging it down to the water's edge, sat across it, while, using two sticks for oars, I rowed myself towards the ship.

The deck was full of people, who watched my progress with interest, but when I seized a rope and swung myself on board, I found that I had only escaped death at the hands of the genius to perish by those of the sailors, lest I should bring ill-luck to the vessel and the merchants. 'Throw him into the sea!' cried one.

'Knock him on the head with a hammer,' exclaimed another.

'Let me shoot him with an arrow,' said a third; and certainly somebody would have had his way if I had not flung myself at the captain's feet and grasped tight hold of his dress. He appeared touched by my action and patted my head, and declared that he would take me under his protection, and that no one should do me any harm.

At the end of about fifty days we cast anchor before a large town, and the ship was immediately surrounded by a multitude of small boats filled with people, who had come either to meet their friends or from simple curiosity. Among others, one boat contained several officials, who asked to see the merchants on board, and informed them that they had been sent by the Sultan in token of welcome, and to beg them each to write a few lines on a roll of paper.

'In order to explain this strange request,' continued the officers, 'it is necessary that you should know that the grand-vizir, lately dead, was celebrated for his beautiful handwriting, and the Sultan is anxious to find a similar talent in his successor. Hitherto the search has been a failure, but his Highness has not yet given up hope.'

One after another the merchants set down a few lines upon the roll, and when they had all finished, I came forward, and snatched the paper from the man who held it. At first they all thought I was going to throw it into the sea, but they were quieted when they saw

I held it with great care, and great was their surprise when I made signs that I too wished to write something.

‘Let him do it if he wants to,’ said the captain.

‘If he only makes a mess of the paper, you may be sure I will punish him for it. But if, as I hope, he really can write, for he is the cleverest monkey I ever saw, I will adopt him as my son. The one I lost had not nearly so much sense!’

No more was said, and I took the pen and wrote the six sorts of writing in use among the Arabs, and each sort contained an original verse or couplet, in praise of the Sultan. And not only did my handwriting completely eclipse that of the merchants, but it is hardly too much to say that none so beautiful had ever before been seen in that country. When I had ended the officials took the roll and returned to the Sultan.

As soon as the monarch saw my writing he did not so much as look at the samples of the merchants, but desired his officials to take the finest and most richly caparisoned horse in his stables, together with the most magnificent dress they could procure, and to put it on the person who had written those lines, and bring him to court.

The officials began to laugh when they heard the Sultan’s command, but as soon as they could speak they said, ‘Deign, your highness, to excuse our mirth, but those lines were not written by a man but by a monkey.’

‘A monkey!’ exclaimed the Sultan.

‘Yes, sire,’ answered the officials.

‘They were written by a monkey in our presence.’

‘Then bring me the monkey,’ he replied, ‘as fast as you can.’

The Sultan’s officials returned to the ship and showed the royal order to the captain.

‘He is the master,’ said the good man, and desired that I should be sent for.

Then they put on me the gorgeous robe and rowed me to land, where I was placed on the horse and led to the palace. Here the Sultan was awaiting me in great state surrounded by his court.

All the way along the streets I had been the object of curiosity to a vast crowd, which had filled every doorway and every window, and it was amidst their shouts and cheers that I was ushered into the presence of the Sultan.

I approached the throne on which he was seated and made him three low bows, then prostrated myself at his feet to the surprise of everyone, who could not understand how it was possible that a monkey should be able to distinguish a Sultan from other people, and to pay him the respect due to his rank. However, excepting the usual speech, I omitted none of the common forms attending a royal audience.

When it was over the Sultan dismissed all the court, keeping with him only the chief of the eunuchs and a little slave. He then passed into another room and ordered food to be brought, making signs to me to sit at table with him and eat. I rose from my seat, kissed the ground, and took my place at the table, eating, as you may suppose, with care and in moderation.

Before the dishes were removed I made signs that writing materials, which stood in one corner of the room, should be laid in front of me. I then took a peach and wrote on it some verses in praise of the Sultan, who was speechless with astonishment; but when I did the same thing on a glass from which I had drunk he murmured to himself, ‘Why, a man who could do as much would be cleverer than any other man, and this is only a monkey!’

Supper being over chessmen were brought, and the Sultan signed to me to know if I would play with him. I kissed the ground and laid my hand on my head to show that I

was ready to show myself worthy of the honour. He beat me the first game, but I won the second and third, and seeing that this did not quite please I dashed off a verse by way of consolation.

The Sultan was so enchanted with all the talents of which I had given proof that he wished me to exhibit some of them to other people. So turning to the chief of the eunuchs he said, 'Go and beg my daughter, Queen of Beauty, to come here. I will show her something she has never seen before.'

The chief of the eunuchs bowed and left the room, ushering in a few moments later the princess, Queen of Beauty. Her face was uncovered, but the moment she set foot in the room she threw her veil over her head.

'Sire,' she said to her father, 'what can you be thinking of to summon me like this into the presence of a man?'

'I do not understand you,' replied the Sultan.

'There is nobody here but the eunuch, who is your own servant, the little slave, and myself, yet you cover yourself with your veil and reproach me for having sent for you, as if I had committed a crime.'

'Sire,' answered the princess, 'I am right and you are wrong. This monkey is really no monkey at all, but a young prince who has been turned into a monkey by the wicked spells of a genius, son of the daughter of Eblis.'

As will be imagined, these words took the Sultan by surprise, and he looked at me to see how I should take the statement of the princess. As I was unable to speak, I placed my hand on my head to show that it was true.

'But how do you know this, my daughter?' asked he.

'Sire,' replied Queen of Beauty, 'the old lady who took care of me in my childhood was an accomplished magician, and she taught me seventy rules of her art, by means of which I could, in the twinkling of an eye, transplant your capital into the middle of the ocean. Her art likewise teaches me to recognise at first sight all persons who are enchanted, and tells me by whom the spell was wrought.'

'My daughter,' said the Sultan, 'I really had no idea you were so clever.'

'Sire,' replied the princess, 'there are many out-of-the-way things it is as well to know, but one should never boast of them.'

'Well,' asked the Sultan, 'can you tell me what must be done to disenchant the young prince?'

'Certainly; and I can do it.'

'Then restore him to his former shape,' cried the Sultan.

'You could give me no greater pleasure, for I wish to make him my grand-vizir, and to give him to you for your husband.'

'As your Highness pleases,' replied the princess.

Queen of Beauty rose and went to her chamber, from which she fetched a knife with some Hebrew words engraven on the blade. She then desired the Sultan, the chief of the eunuchs, the little slave, and myself to descend into a secret court of the palace, and placed us beneath a gallery which ran all round, she herself standing in the centre of the court. Here she traced a large circle and in it wrote several words in Arab characters.

When the circle and the writing were finished she stood in the middle of it and repeated some verses from the Koran. Slowly the air grew dark, and we felt as if the earth was about to crumble away, and our fright was by no means diminished at seeing the genius, son of the daughter of Eblis, suddenly appear under the form of a colossal lion.

'Dog,' cried the princess when she first caught sight of him, 'you think to strike terror into me by daring to present yourself before me in this hideous shape.'

'And you,' retorted the lion, 'have not feared to break our treaty that engaged solemnly we should never interfere with each other.'

'Accursed genius!' exclaimed the princess, 'it is you by whom that treaty was first broken.'

'I will teach you how to give me so much trouble,' said the lion, and opening his huge mouth he advanced to swallow her. But the princess expected something of the sort and was on her guard. She bounded on one side, and seizing one of the hairs of his mane repeated two or three words over it. In an instant it became a sword, and with a sharp blow she cut the lion's body into two pieces. These pieces vanished no one knew where, and only the lion's head remained, which was at once changed into a scorpion. Quick as thought the princess assumed the form of a serpent and gave battle to the scorpion, who, finding he was getting the worst of it, turned himself into an eagle and took flight. But in a moment the serpent had become an eagle more powerful still, who soared up in the air and after him, and then we lost sight of them both.

We all remained where we were quaking with anxiety, when the ground opened in front of us and a black and white cat leapt out, its hair standing on end, and miauing frightfully. At its heels was a wolf, who had almost seized it, when the cat changed itself into a worm, and, piercing the skin of a pomegranate which had tumbled from a tree, hid itself in the fruit. The pomegranate swelled till it grew as large as a pumpkin, and raised itself on to the roof of the gallery, from which it fell into the court and was broken into bits. While this was taking place the wolf, who had transformed himself into a cock, began to swallow the seed of the pomegranate as fast as he could. When all were gone he flew towards us, flapping his wings as if to ask if we saw any more, when suddenly his eye fell on one which lay on the bank of the little canal that flowed through the court; he hastened towards it, but before he could touch it the seed rolled into the canal and became a fish. The cock flung himself in after the fish and took the shape of a pike, and for two hours they chased each other up and down under the water, uttering horrible cries, but we could see nothing. At length they rose from the water in their proper forms, but darting such flames of fire from their mouths that we dreaded lest the palace should catch fire. Soon, however, we had much greater cause for alarm, as the genius, having shaken off the princess, flew towards us. Our fate would have been sealed if the princess, seeing our danger, had not attracted the attention of the genius to herself. As it was, the Sultan's beard was singed and his face scorched, the chief of the eunuchs was burned to a cinder, while a spark deprived me of the sight of one eye. Both I and the Sultan had given up all hope of a rescue, when there was a shout of 'Victory, victory!' from the princess, and the genius lay at her feet a great heap of ashes.

Exhausted though she was, the princess at once ordered the little slave, who alone was uninjured, to bring her a cup of water, which she took in her hand. First repeating some magic words over it, she dashed it into my face saying, 'If you are only a monkey by enchantment, resume the form of the man you were before.' In an instant I stood before her the same man I had formerly been, though having lost the sight of one eye.

I was about to fall on my knees and thank the princess but she did not give me time. Turning to the Sultan, her father, she said, 'Sire, I have gained the battle, but it has cost me dear. The fire has penetrated to my heart, and I have only a few moments to live. This would not have happened if I had only noticed the last pomegranate seed and eaten it like

the rest. It was the last struggle of the genius, and up to that time I was quite safe. But having let this chance slip I was forced to resort to fire, and in spite of all his experience I showed the genius that I knew more than he did. He is dead and in ashes, but my own death is approaching fast.'

'My daughter,' cried the Sultan, 'how sad is my condition! I am only surprised I am alive at all! The eunuch is consumed by the flames, and the prince whom you have delivered has lost the sight of one eye.' He could say no more, for sobs choked his voice, and we all wept together.

Suddenly the princess shrieked, 'I burn, I burn!' and death came to free her from her torments.

I have no words, madam, to tell you of my feelings at this terrible sight. I would rather have remained a monkey all my life than let my benefactress perish in this shocking manner. As for the Sultan, he was quite inconsolable, and his subjects, who had dearly loved the princess, shared his grief. For seven days the whole nation mourned, and then the ashes of the princess were buried with great pomp, and a superb tomb was raised over her.

As soon as the Sultan recovered from the severe illness which had seized him after the death of the princess he sent for me and plainly, though politely, informed me that my presence would always remind him of his loss, and he begged that I would instantly quit his kingdom, and on pain of death never return to it. I was, of course, bound to obey, and not knowing what was to become of me I shaved my beard and eyebrows and put on the dress of a calender. After wandering aimlessly through several countries, I resolved to come to Bagdad and request an audience of the Commander of the Faithful.

And that, madam, is my story.

The other Calender then told his story.

The Story of the Baked head²

The present Khon-khor³ of Roum is a staunch Mussulman and a rigid upholder of the true faith. Upon his coming to the throne, he announced his intention of doing away with many customs common to the infidels, which had crept into the administration of the state during the reign of his predecessor; and he thought it his duty to endeavour to restore things to their primitive simplicity and to adopt a mode of government purely Turkish. Accordingly he resumed a custom which had almost got into disuse,—that of going about the city in tebdil, or disguise; and he was so careful about the disguises which he adopted, and the people whom he admitted into his secrets on these occasions, that he took all sorts of precautions, and invented all sorts of schemes of secrecy, in whatever related to his dresses, and the characters in which he chose to appear.

It is not long ago that considerable discontent prevailed throughout Turkey, and rebellion threatened to break out in Constantinople itself. He was then very anxious to ascertain the temper of the public mind; and, in his usual wary manner, determined to get a suit made that would make him undiscoverable by even his own immediate attendants.

He usually sent for different tailors at different times, and in different places. On this occasion he ordered his favourite slave, the white eunuch Mansouri, to bring him one of no repute, with all the requisite secrecy, at midnight, in order that he might receive instructions about a dress.

The slave in great humility made his bash ustun (on my head be it), and went his way to execute the command.

Close to the gate of the Bezesten, or cloth-market, he saw an old man in a stall, so narrow that he could scarce turn himself about in it, who was taken up in patching an old cloak. He was almost bent double with constant labour at his shopboard; and his eyes seemed not to have benefited by his application, for a pair of glasses were mounted on his nose. ‘This is precisely the man I want,’ said the slave to himself: ‘I am sure he can be of no repute.’ So intent was he upon his work, that he did not heed the salutation of ‘Peace be with you, friend!’ with which Mansouri accosted him; and when he did look up, and saw the well-dressed personage whom he thought had spoken, he continued his work, without making the usual reply; for he could not suppose that the salutation was meant for such a poor devil as he.

However, finding that he was the object of the eunuch’s attention, he doffed the spectacles, threw away his work, and was about getting on his legs, when he was stopped, and requested not to disturb himself. ‘What your name?’ said Mansouri. ‘Abdallah,’ said the tailor, ‘at your service; but I am generally called Babadul by my friends and the world at large.’ ‘You are a tailor, are you not?’ continued the slave. ‘Yes,’ said the other, ‘I am a tailor as well as the muezzin at the little mosque in the fish-market. What more can I do?’ ‘Well, Babadul,’ said Mansouri, ‘have you a mind for a job,—a good job?’ ‘Am I a fool,’ answered the old man, ‘that I should dislike it? Say what it is.’ ‘Softly, my friend,’ remarked the eunuch; ‘we must go on slow and sure. Will you suffer yourself to be led blindfolded at midnight wherever I choose to take you, for a job?’ ‘That’s another question,’ said Babadul; ‘times are critical, heads fly in abundance, and a poor tailor’s may go as well as a vizier’s or a capitan pacha’s. But pay me well, and I believe I would make

²J.J. Morier, *The Adventures of Hajji Baba*, 1824

³*Khon-Khor*—literally ‘Blood drinker’; so the Sultan of *Roum* or Turkey is styled in Persia. *Khon-Khor*—letterlijk ‘bloed drinker’; aldus wordt de sultan van *Roum* of Turkije getypeerd in Perzië.

a suit of clothes for Eblis, the foul fiend, himself.' 'Well, then, you agree to my proposal?' said the eunuch, who at the same time put two pieces of gold in his hand. 'Yes, most surely,' said Babadul, 'I agree. Tell me what I am to do, and you may depend upon me.'

Accordingly they settled between them that the eunuch was to come to the stall at midnight, and lead him away blindfolded.

Babadul, being left alone, continued his work, wondering what could be the job upon which he was to be so mysteriously employed; and, anxious to make his wife partaker of the news of his good luck, he shut up his stall earlier than usual, and went to his house, that was situated not far from the little mosque in the fish-market, of which he was the muezzin.

Old Dilferib, his wife, was almost as much bent double as her husband; and in consequence of the two gold pieces, and contemplation of more which they expected to receive, they treated themselves to a dish of smoking kabobs, a salad, dried grapes, and sweetmeats, after which they consoled themselves with some of the hottest and most bitter coffee which the old woman could make.

True to his appointment, Babadul was at his stall at midnight, where he was as punctually met by Mansouri. Without any words, the former permitted himself to be blindfolded, whilst the latter led him away by the hand, making many and devious turns, until they reached the imperial seraglio; there, stopping only to open the private iron gate, Mansouri introduced the tailor into the very heart of the sultan's private apartments. The bandage over his eyes was taken off in a dark chamber, lighted up only by a small lamp, which stood on the shelf surrounding the top of the room, but which was splendidly furnished by sofas of the richest brocade, and by carpets of the most costly manufacture. Here Babadul was commanded to sit, until Mansouri returned with a bundle, wrapped in a large shawl handkerchief: this being opened, a sort of dervish's dress was displayed to the tailor, and he was requested to look at it, to consider how long he would be making such a one, and then to return it again, duly folded up, to its shawl covering. In the meanwhile, Mansouri told him to stay there until he should return to take him away again, and then left him.

Babadul, having turned the dress over and over again, calculated each stitch, and, come to his proper conclusions, packed it up in the handkerchief, as he had been commanded; but no sooner had he done this than a man of lofty demeanour and appearance, whose look made the poor tailor shrink within himself, came into the room, took up the bundle, and walked away with it, without uttering a single word.

A few minutes after, as Babadul was pondering over the strangeness of his situation, and just recovering from the effects of this apparition, a door opened in another part of the apartment, and a mysterious figure, richly dressed, came in, bearing a bundle, equally covered with a shawl, about the size of that which had just been taken away; and making the lowest prostrations before the tailor, in great apparent trepidation, approached him, placed it at his feet, kissed the ground, and retreated without saying a word, or even looking up.

'Well,' said Babadul to himself: 'this may be something very fine, and I may be some very great personage, for aught I know; but this is very certain, that I had rather be patching my old cloak in the stall than doing this job, however grand and lucrative it may be. Who knows what I may have been brought here for? These comings in and goings out of strange-looking people, apparently without tongues in their heads, do not argue well. I wish they would give me fewer bows and a greater supply of words, from which I might learn what I am to get by all this. I have heard of poor women having been sewn up in

sacks and thrown into the sea. Who knows? Perhaps I am destined to be the tailor on such an occasion.'

He had scarcely got thus far in his soliloquy when the slave Mansouri re-entered the room and told him, without more words, to take up the bundle; which having done, his eyes were again blindfolded, and he was led to the spot from whence he came. Babadul, true to his agreement, asked no questions, but agreed with the slave that in three days the dress should be ready for delivery at his stall for which he was to receive ten more pieces of gold.

Having got rid of his companion, he proceeded with all haste to his house, where he knew his wife would be impatiently waiting his return; and as he walked onwards he congratulated himself that at length he had succeeded in getting indeed a job worth the having, and that his fate had finally turned up something good for his old age. It was about two o'clock in the morning when he reached the door of his house. He was received by his wife with expressions of great impatience at his long absence; but when he held up the bundle to her face, as she held up the lamp to his, and when he said, 'Mujdeh, give me a reward for good news:—see, I have got my work, and a handsome reward we shall get when it is finished,' she was all smiles and good humour.

'Leave it there till we get up, and let us go to bed now,' said the tailor. 'No, no,' said the wife, 'I must look at what you have got before I retire, or I shall not be able to sleep': upon which, whilst he held up the lamp she opened the bundle. Guess, guess at the astonishment of the tailor and his wife, when, instead of seeing a suit of clothes, they discovered, wrapped in a napkin, in its most horrid and ghastly state, a human head!

It fell from the old woman's hands and rolled away some paces, whilst the horror-struck couple first hid their faces with their hands, and then looked at each other with countenances which nothing can describe.

'Work!' cried the wife, 'work, indeed! pretty work you have made of it! Was it necessary to go so far, and to take such precautions, to bring this misfortune on our heads? Did you bring home this dead man's head to make a suit of clothes of?'

'Anna senna! Baba senna! Curses be on his mother! Perdition seize his father!' exclaimed the poor tailor, 'for bringing me into this dilemma. My heart misgave me as that dog of a eunuch talked of blindfolding and silence to me: I thought, as true as I am a Turk, that the job could not consist only in making a suit of clothes; and sure enough this dog's son has tacked a head to it. Allah! Allah! what am I to do now? I know not the way to his home, or else I would take it back to him immediately, and throw it in his face. We shall have the bostangi bashi and a hundred other bashis here in a minute, and we shall be made to pay the price of blood; or, who knows, be hanged, or drowned, or impaled! What shall we do, eh, Dilferib, my soul, say?'

'Do?' said his wife; 'get rid of the head, to be sure: we have no more right to have it palmed upon us than anybody else.' 'But the day will soon dawn,' said the tailor, 'and then it will be too late. Let us be doing something at once.' 'A thought has struck me,' said the old woman. 'Our neighbour, the baker, Hassan, heats his oven at this hour, and begins soon after to bake his bread for his morning's customers. He frequently has different sorts of things to bake from the neighbouring houses, which are placed near the oven's mouth over-night: suppose I put this head into one of our earthen pots and send it to be baked; no body will find it out until it is done, and then we need not send for it, so it will remain on the baker's hands.'

Babadul admired his wife's sagacity, and forthwith she put her plan into execution.

When the head had been placed in a baking-pan, she watched a moment when nobody was at hand, and set it on the ground, in the same row with the other articles that were to be inserted in Hassan's oven. The old couple then double-barred the door of their house, and retired to rest, comforting themselves with the acquisition of the fine shawl and napkin in which the head had been wrapped.

The baker Hassan and his son Mahmûd were heating their oven, inserting therein thorns, chips, and old rubbish at a great rate, when their attention was arrested by the extraordinary whinings and barking of a dog, that was a constant customer at the oven for stray bits of bread, and much befriended by Hassan and his son, who were noted for being conscientious Mussulmans.

'Look, Mahmûd,' said the father to the son, 'see what is the matter with the dog: something extraordinary is in the wind.'

The son did what his father bade him, and seeing no reason for the dog's noises, said, 'Bir chey yok, there is nothing,' and drove him away.

But the howlings not ceasing, Hassan went himself, and found the dog most extremely intent upon smelling and pointing at the tailor's pipkin. He jumped upon Hassan, then at the pot, then upon Hassan again, until the baker no longer doubted that the beast took great interest in its contents. He therefore gently drew off the lid, when need I mention his horror and surprise at seeing a human head staring him in the face?

'Allah! Allah!' cried the baker; but being a man of strong nerves, instead of letting it fall, as most people would have done, he quietly put on the lid again, and called his son to him.

'Mahmûd,' said he, 'this is a bad world, and there are bad men in it. Some wicked infidel has sent a man's head to bake; but thanks to our good fortune, and to the dog, our oven has been saved from pollution, and we can go on making our bread with clean hands and clear consciences. But since the devil is at work, let others have a visit from him as well as ourselves. If it be known that we have had a dead man's head to bake, who will ever employ us again? We must starve, we must shut up our oven; we shall get the reputation of mixing up our dough with human grease, and if perchance a hair is found, it will immediately be said that it came from the dead man's beard.'

Mahmûd, a youth of about twenty, who partook of his father's insensibility and coolness, and who, moreover, had a great deal of dry humour and ready wit, looked upon the incident in the light of a good joke, and broke out into a hearty laugh when he saw the ugly picture which the grinning head made, set in its earthen frame.

'Let us pop it into the shop of Kôr Ali, the barber, opposite,' said the youth; 'he is just beginning to open it, and as he has but one eye, we shall be better able to do so without being seen. Do, father,' said Mahmûd, 'let me; nobody shall discover me; and let it be done before there is more daylight.'

The father consented; and Mahmûd catching the moment when the barber had walked to the corner of the street to perform certain ablutions, stepped into his shop, and placed the head on a sort of takcheh, or bracket on the wall, arranged some shaving towels about it, as if it had been a customer ready seated to be shaved, and, with a boy's mischief in his heart, stepped back to his oven again, to watch the effects which this new sort of customer would have upon the blind barber.

Kôr Ali hobbled into his shop, which was but ill lighted by a glimmering of daylight that hardly pierced through the oil-papered windows, and looking about him, saw this figure, as he supposed, seated against the wall ready to be operated upon.

‘Ha! peace be unto you!’ said he to it: ‘you are rather early this morning; I did not see you at first. My water is not yet hot. Oh, I see you want your head shaved! but why do you take off your fese (skull-cap) so soon? you will catch cold.’ Then he paused. ‘No answer,’ said the barber to himself. ‘I suppose he is dumb, and deaf too perhaps. Well, I am half blind: so we are nearly upon equal terms: however, if I were even to lose my other eye,’ addressing himself to the head, ‘I dare say, my old uncle, I could shave you for all that; for my razor would glide as naturally over your head, as a draught of good wine does over my throat.’

He went methodically about his preparations; he took down his tin basin from a peg, prepared his soap, then stropped his razor on the long bit of leather that was fastened to his girdle. Having made his lather, he walked up to the supposed customer, holding the basin in his left hand, whilst his right was extended to sprinkle the first preparation of water on the scone. No sooner had he placed his hand on the cold head, than he withdrew it, as if he had been burnt. ‘Eh! why, what’s the matter with you, friend?’ said the barber; ‘you are as cold as a piece of ice.’ But when he attempted a second time to lather it, down it came with a terrible bounce from the shelf to the floor, and made the poor shaver jump quite across his shop with the fright.

‘Aman! aman! O mercy, mercy!’ cried K r Ali, as he thrust himself into the furthest corner without daring to move: ‘take my shop, my razors, my towels,—take all I have; but don’t touch my life! If you are the Shaitan, speak; but excuse my shaving you!’

But when he found that all was hushed after the catastrophe, and that nothing was to be feared, he approached the head and taking it up by the lock of hair at the top, he looked at it in amazement. ‘A head, by all the Im ms!’ said he, accosting it: ‘and how did you get here? Do you want to disgrace me, you filthy piece of flesh? but you shall not! Although K r Ali has lost one eye, yet his other is a sharp one, and knows what it is about. I would give you to the baker Hassan there, if his rogue of a son, who is now looking this way, was not even sharper than this self-same eye; but now I think of it, I will take you where you can do no harm. The Giaour Yanaki, the Greek kabobchi (roast meat man), shall have you, and shall cut you up into mincemeat for his infidel customers.’ Upon this K r Ali, drawing in one hand, in which he carried the head, through the slit on the sides of his beniche, or cloak, and taking up his pipe in the other, he walked down two streets to the shop of the aforesaid Greek.

He frequented it in preference to that of a Mussulman, because he could here drink wine with impunity. From long practice he knew precisely where the provision of fresh meat was kept, and as he entered the shop, casting his eye furtively round, he threw the head in a dark corner, behind one of the large sides of a sheep that was to be used for the kabobs of the day. No one saw him perform this feat; for the morning was still sufficiently obscure to screen him. He lighted his pipe at Yanaki’s charcoal fire, and as a pretext for his visit, ordered a dish of meat to be sent to him for breakfast; a treat to which he thought himself fully entitled after his morning’s adventure.

Yanaki, meanwhile, having cleaned his platters, put his skewers in order, lit his fires, made his sherbets, and swept out his shop, went to the larder for some meat for the shaver’s breakfast. Yanaki was a true Greek:—cunning, cautious, deceitful; cringing to his superiors, tyrannical towards his inferiors; detesting with a mortal hatred his proud masters, the Osmanlies, yet fawning, flattering, and abject whenever any of them, however low in life, deigned to take notice of him. Turning over his stock, he looked about for some old bits that might serve the present purpose, muttering to himself that any carrion was

good enough for a Turk's stomach. He surveyed his half sheep from top to bottom; felt it, and said, 'No, this will keep'; but as he turned up its fat tail, the eye of the dead man's head caught his eye, and made him start, and step back some paces. 'As ye love your eyes,' exclaimed he, 'who is there?' Receiving no answer, he looked again, and again; then nearer, then, thrusting his hand among sheep's heads and trotters, old remnants of meat, and the like, he pulled out the head—the horrid head—which he held extended at arm's length, as if he were afraid it would do him mischief. 'Anathemas attend your beard!' exclaimed Yanaki, as soon as he discovered, by the tuft of hair on the top, that it had belonged to a Mussulman, 'Och! if I had but every one of your heads in this manner, ye cursed race of Omar! I would make kabobs of them, and every cur in Constantinople should get fat for nothing. May ye all come to this end! May the vultures feed on your carcasses! and may every Greek have the good fortune which has befallen me this day, of having one of your worthless skulls for his football!' Upon which, in his rage, he threw it down and kicked it from him; but recollecting himself he said, 'But, after all, what shall I do with it? If it is seen here, I am lost for ever: nobody will believe but that I have killed a Turk.'

All of a sudden he cried out, in a sort of malicious ecstasy, "Tis well I remembered,—the Jew! the Jew!—a proper place for such a head was never thought or heard of; and there you shall go, thou vile remnant of a Mahomedan!"

Upon which he seized it, and hiding it under his coat, ran with it down the street to where the dead body of a Jew lay extended, with its head placed immediately between its legs.

In Turkey, you must know, when a Mahomedan is beheaded, his head is placed under his arm, by way of an honourable distinction from the Christian or Jew, who, when a similar misfortune befalls them, have theirs inserted between their legs, as close to the seat of dishonour as possible.

It was in that situation then that Yanaki placed the Turk's head, putting it as near, cheek by jowl, with the Jew's, as the hurry of the case would allow. He had been able to effect this without being seen, because the day was still but little advanced, and no one stirring; and he returned to his shop, full of exultation at having been able to discharge his feelings of hatred against his oppressors, by placing one of their heads on the spot in nature, which, according to his estimation, was the most teeming with opprobrium.

The unfortunate sufferer on this occasion had been accused of stealing and putting to death a Mahomedan child (a ceremony in their religion, which they have been known to practice both in Turkey and Persia), and which created such an extraordinary tumult among the mob of Constantinople, that, in order to appease it, he had been decapitated. His execution had taken place purposely before the door of a wealthy Greek, and the body was ordered to remain there three days before it was permitted to be carried away for interment. The expectation that the Greek would be induced to pay down a handsome sum, in order that this nuisance might be removed from his door, and save him from the ill luck which such an object is generally supposed to bring, made the officer entrusted with the execution prefer this spot to every other. But, careless of the consequences, the Greek shut up the windows of his house, determined to deprive his oppressors of their expected perquisite; and so the dead Jew remained exposed his full time. Few excepting those of the true faith ventured to approach the spot, fearful that the Mohamedan authorities would, in their wanton propensities to heap insults upon the Giaours, oblige some one of them to carry the carcass to the place of burial; and thus the horrid and disgusting object was left abandoned to itself, and this had given an opportunity to the kabobchi, Yanaki, to

dispose of the head in the manner above related, unseen and unmolested. But when, as the day advanced, and as the stir of the streets became more active, this additional head was discovered, the crowd, which gathered about it, became immense. It was immediately rumoured that a miracle had been performed; for a dead Jew was to be seen with two heads. The extraordinary intelligence flew from mouth to mouth, until the whole city was in an uproar, and all were running to see the miracle. The Sanhedrim immediately pronounced that something extraordinary was about to happen to their persecuted race. Rabbins were to be seen running to and fro, and their whole community was now poured around the dead body, in expectation that he would perhaps arise, put on his heads, and deliver them from the grip of their oppressors.

But as ill luck would have it for them, a Janissary, who had mixed in the crowd and had taken a close survey of the supernumerary head, exclaimed in a mixture of doubt and amazement, 'Allah, Allah, il Allah! these are no infidel's heads. One is the head of our lord and master, the Aga of the Janissaries.' Upon which, seeing more of his companions, he called them to him and making known his discovery, they became violent with rage, and set off to communicate the intelligence to their Orta.

The news spread like wildfire throughout the whole of the corps of the Janissaries, and a most alarming tumult was immediately excited: for it seems that it was unknown in the capital that their chief, to whom they were devotedly attached, and one of their own selection, had been put to death.

'What!' said they, 'is it not enough to deal thus treacherously with us, and deprive us of a chief to whom we are attached; but we must be treated with the greatest contempt that it is possible for men to receive? What! the head of our most noble Aga of the Janissaries to be placed upon the most ignoble part of a Jew! what are we come to? We alone are not insulted; the whole of Islam is insulted, degraded, debased! No: this is unheard-of insolence, a stain never to be wiped off, without the extermination of the whole race! And what dog has done this deed? How did the head get there? Is it that dog of a Vizier's work, or has the Reis Effendi and those traitors of Frank ambassadors been at work? Wallah, Billah, Tallah! by the holy Caaba, by the beard of Osman, and by the sword of Omar, we will be revenged!'

We must leave the tumult to rage for a short time; we must request the reader to imagine a scene, in which the Jews are flying in all directions, hiding themselves with great precaution against enraged Turks, who with expressions like those just mentioned in their mouths, are to be seen walking about in groups, armed to their teeth with pistols and scimitars, and vowing vengeance upon everything which came in their way. He must imagine a city of narrow streets and low houses, thronged with a numerous population, dresses the most various in shape and the most lively in colours, all anxious, all talking, all agog as if something extraordinary was to happen; in the midst of whom I will leave him, to take a look into the interior of the sultan's seraglio, and to inquire in what his eminency himself had been engaged since we last noticed him.

On the very same night of the tailor's attendance, the sultan had given a secret order for taking off the head of the Aga of the Janissaries (the fomentor of all the disturbances which had lately taken place among his corps, and consequently their idol); and so anxious was he about its execution, that he had ordered it to be brought to him the moment it was off. The man entrusted with the execution, upon entering the room where he had been directed to bring the head, seeing some one seated, naturally took him for the sultan, and, without daring to look up, immediately placed the burden at his feet, with the prostrations which

we have ready described as having been performed before the tailor. The sultan, who not a minute before had taken away the bundle containing the dervish's dress, had done so in the intention of deceiving his slave Mansouri himself; so anxious was he of being unknown in his new disguise even to him; and intended to have substituted another in its stead; but not calculating either upon the reception of the head, or upon Mansouri's immediate return to the tailor, he was himself completely puzzled how to act when he found the tailor was gone, led off by his slave. To have sent after them would have disconcerted his schemes, and therefore he felt himself obliged to wait Mansouri's return, before he could get an explanation of what had happened; for he knew that they would not have gone away without the dress, and that dress he had then in his possession. In the meanwhile, anxious and impatient to know what had become of the expected head, he sent for the officer who was entrusted with the execution; and the astonishment of both may be imagined when an explanation took place.

'By my beard!' exclaimed the sultan, having thought awhile within himself; 'by my beard, the tailor must have got the head!' His impatience for Mansouri's return then became extreme. In vain he fretted, fumed, and cried 'Allah! Allah!' It did not make the slave return a minute the sooner, who, good man, would have gone quietly to rest had he not been called upon to appear before the sultan.

As soon as he was within hearing, he called out, 'Ahi! Mansouri, run immediately to the tailor—he has got the head of the Aga of the Janissaries instead of the dervish's dress—run, fetch it without loss of time, or something unfortunate will happen!' He then explained how this untoward event had occurred. Mansouri now, in his turn, felt himself greatly embarrassed; for he only knew the road to the tailor's stall, but was totally unacquainted with his dwelling-house. However, rather than excite his master's anxiety in a higher degree, he set off in quest of the tailor, and went straight to his stall, in the hopes of hearing from the neighbours where his house was. It was too early in the day for the opening of the Bezesten, and except a coffee-house that had just prepared for the reception of customers, where he applied and could gain no intelligence, he found himself completely at a standstill. By the greatest good luck, he recollected Babadul had told him that he was the muezzin to the little mosque in the fish-market, and thither he immediately bent his steps. The azan, or morning invitation to prayers, was now chanting forth from all the minarets, and he expected that he might catch the purloiner of his head in the very act of inviting the faithful to prayers.

As he approached the spot, he heard an old broken and tremulous voice, which he imagined might be Babadul's, breaking the stillness of the morning by all the energy of its lungs; and he was not mistaken, for as he stood under the minaret, he perceived the old man walking round the gallery which encircles it, with his hand applied to the back of his ear, and with his mouth wide open, pouring out his whole throat in the execution of his office. As soon as the tailor saw Mansouri making signs to him, the profession of faith stuck in his throat; and between the fright of being brought to account for the head, and the words which he had to pronounce, it is said that he made so strange a jumble, that some of the stricter Mussulmans, his neighbours, who were paying attention to the call, professed themselves quite scandalized at his performance. He descended with all haste, and locking the door after him which leads up the winding staircase, he met Mansouri in the street. He did not wait to be questioned respecting the fate of the horrid object, but at once attacked the slave concerning the trick, as he called it, which had been put upon him.

'Are you a man,' said he, 'to treat a poor Emir like me in the manner you have done, as if my house was a charnel-house? I suppose you will ask me the price of blood next!'

'Friend,' said Mansouri, 'what are you talking about? do not you see that it has been a mistake?'

'A mistake, indeed!' cried the tailor, 'a mistake done on purpose to bring a poor man into trouble. One man laughs at my stupid beard, and makes me believe that I am to make a suit of clothes for him—another takes away the pattern—and a third substitutes a dead man's head for it. Allah! Allah! I have got into the hands of a pretty nest of rogues, a set of ill-begotten knaves!'

Upon which Mansouri placed his hand upon the tailor's mouth, and said, 'Say no more, say no more; you are getting deeper into the dirt. Do you know whom you are abusing.'

'I know not, nor care not,' answered Babadul; 'all I know is that whoever gives me a dead man's head for a suit of clothes can only be an infidel dog.'

'Do you call God's viceregent upon earth, you old demi-stitching, demi-praying fool, an infidel dog?' exclaimed Mansouri in a rage, which entirely made him forget the precaution he had hitherto maintained concerning his employer. 'Are your vile lips to defile the name of him who is the Alem penah, the refuge of the world? What dirt are you eating, what ashes are you heaping on your head? Come, no more words; tell me where the dead man's head is, or I will take yours of in his stead.'

Upon hearing this, the tailor stood with his mouth wide open, as if the doors of his understanding had just been unlocked.

'Aman, aman, Mercy, mercy, O Aga!' cried Babadul to Mansouri, 'I was ignorant of what I was saying. Who would have thought it? Ass, fool, dolt, that I am, not to have known better.' Bismillah! in the name of the Prophet, pray come to my house; your steps will be fortunate, and your slave's head will touch the stars.'

'I am in a hurry, a great hurry,' said Mansouri. 'Where is the head, the head of the Aga of the Janissaries?'

When the tailor heard whose head it had been, and recollected what he and his wife had done with it, his knees knocked under him with fear, and he began to exude from every pore.

'Where is it, indeed?' said he. 'Oh! what has come upon us! Oh! what cursed kismet (fate) is this?' 'Where is it?' exclaimed the slave, again and again, 'where is it? speak quick!' The poor tailor was completely puzzled what to say, and kept floundering from one answer to another until he was quite entangled as in a net. 'Have you burnt it?' 'No.' 'Have you thrown it away?' 'No.' 'Then in the name of the Prophet what have you done with it? Have you ate it.' 'No.' 'Is it lying in your house?' 'No.' 'Is it hiding at any other person's house?' 'No.'

Then at last quite out of patience, the slave Mansouri took Babadul by his beard, and shaking his head for him, exclaimed with a roar, 'Then tell me, you old dotard! what is it doing?'

'It is baking,' answered the tailor, half choked: 'I have said it.'

'Baking! did you say?' exclaimed the slave, in the greatest amazement; 'what did you bake it for? Are you going to eat it?'

'True, I said: what would you have more?' answered Babadul, 'it is now baking.' And then he gave a full account of what he and his wife had done in the sad dilemma in which they had been placed.

'Show me the way to the baker's,' said Mansouri; 'at least, we will get it in its singed

state, if we can get it in no other. Whoever thought of baking the head of the Aga of the Janissaries? Allah ilallah!’

They then proceeded to the baker Hassan’s, who was now about taking his bread from his oven. As soon as he became acquainted with their errand, he did not hesitate in telling all the circumstances attending the transmission of the head from the pipkin to the barber’s bracket; happy to have had an opportunity of exculpating himself of what might possibly have been brought up against him as a crime.

The three (Mansouri, the tailor, and the baker) then proceeded to the barber’s, and inquired from him what he had done with the head of his earliest customer. K"or Ali, after some hesitation, made great assurances that he looked upon this horrid object as a donation from Eblis himself, and consequently that he had thought himself justified in transferring it over to the Giaour Yanaki, who, he made no doubt, had already made his brother-infidels partake of it in the shape of kabobs. Full of wonder and amazement, invoking the Prophet at each step, and uncertain as to the result of such unheard-of adventures, they then added the barber to their party, and proceeded to Yanaki’s cook-shop.

The Greek, confounded at seeing so many of the true believers enter his house, had a sort of feeling that their business was not of roast meat, but that they were in search of meat of a less savoury nature. As soon as the question had been put to him concerning the head, he stoutly denied having seen it, or knowing anything at all concerning it.

The barber showed the spot where he had placed it, and swore it upon the Koran.

Mansouri had undertaken the investigation of the point in question, when they discovered symptoms of the extraordinary agitation that prevailed in the city in consequence of the discovery which had been made of the double-headed Jew, and of the subsequent discovery that had produced such great sensation among the whole corps of Janissaries.

Mansouri, followed by the tailor, the baker, and the barber, then proceeded to the spot where the dead Israelite was prostrate; and there, to their astonishment, they each recognized their morning visitor—the head so long sought after.

Yanaki, the Greek, in the meanwhile, conscious of what was likely to befall him, without loss of time gathered what money he had ready at hand, and fled the city.

‘Where is the Greek?’ said Mansouri, turning round to look for him in the supposition that he had joined his party; ‘we must all go before the sultan.’

‘I dare say he is run off,’ said the barber. ‘I am not so blind but I can see that he it is who gifted the Jew with his additional head.’

Mansouri now would have carried off the head; but surrounded as it was by a band of enraged and armed soldiers, who vowed vengeance upon him who had deprived them of their chief, he thought it most prudent to withdraw. Leading with him his three witnesses, he at once proceeded to the presence of his master.

When Mansouri had informed the sultan of all that had happened, where he had found the head of the Aga of the Janissaries, how it had got there, and of the tumult it had raised, the reader may better imagine than I can describe the state of the monarch’s mind. To tell the story with all its particulars he felt would be derogatory to his dignity, for it was sure to cover him with ridicule; but at the same time to let the matter rest as it now stood was impossible, because the tumult would increase until there would be no means of quelling it, and the affair might terminate by depriving him of his crown, together with his life.

He remained in a state of indecision for some time, twisting up the ends of his mustachios, and muttering Allah! Allah! in low ejaculations, until at length he ordered the

prime vizier and the müfti to his presence.

Alarmed by the abruptness of the summons, these two great dignitaries arrived at the imperial gate in no enviable state of mind; but when the sultan had informed them of the tumult then raging in the capital, they resumed their usual tranquillity.

After some deliberation it was resolved, that the tailor, the baker, the barber, and the kabobchi should appear before the tribunal of the müfti, accused of having entered into a conspiracy against the Aga of the Janissaries, and stealing his head, for the purposes of baking, shaving, and roasting it, and that they should be condemned to pay the price of his blood; but as the kabobchi had been the immediate cause of the tumult by treating the head with such gross and unheard-of insult, and as he was a Greek and an infidel, it was further resolved that the Müfti should issue a fetwah, authorizing his head to be cut off: and placed on the same odious spot where he had exposed that of the Aga of the Janissaries.

It was then agreed between the sultan and his grand vizier, that in order to appease the Janissaries a new Aga should be appointed who was agreeable to them, and that the deceased should be buried with becoming distinction. All this (except killing the Greek, who had fled) was done, and tranquillity again restored to the city. But it must further be added to the honour of the sultan, that he not only paid every expense which the tailor, the baker, and the barber were condemned to incur, but also gave them each a handsome reward for the difficulties into which they had so unfortunately been thrown.

I have much curtailed the story, particularly where Mansouri proceeds to relate to the sultan the fate of the head, because, had I given it with all the details the dervish did, it would have been over long. Indeed I have confined myself as much as possible to the outline; for to have swelled the narrative with the innumerable digressions of my companion a whole volume would not have contained it. The art of a story-teller (and it is that which marks a man of genius) is to make his tale interminable, and still to interest his audience. So the dervish assured me; and added, that with the materials of the one which I have attempted to repeat, he would bind himself to keep talking for a whole moon, and still have something to say.