

“‘You can have my watch and my purse if you will let me go,’ said he.

“‘Sir,’ said I, ‘I am as honorable a man as you are yourself.’

“‘Who are you, then?’

“‘My name is of no importance.’

“‘What do you want with me?’

“‘It is a bet.’

“‘A bet? What d’you mean? Do you understand that I am on the government service, and that you will see the inside of a jail for this?’

“‘That is the bet. That is the sport,’ said I.

“‘You may find it poor sport before you finish,’ he cried. ‘What is this insane bet of yours, then?’

“‘I have bet,’ I answered, ‘that I will recite a chapter of the Koran to the first gentleman whom I should meet in the street.’

“‘I do not know what made me think of it, save that my translation was always running in my head. He clutched at the door-handle, and again I had to hurl him back into his seat.

“‘How long will it take?’ he gasped.

“‘It depends on the chapter,’ I answered.

“‘A short one, then, and let me go!’

“‘But is it fair,’ I argued. ‘When I say a chapter I do not mean the shortest chapter, but rather one that should be of average length.’

“‘Help! help! help!’ he squealed, and I was compelled again to adjust his cravat.

“‘A little patience,’ said I, ‘and it will soon be over. I should like to recite the chapter which would be of most interest to yourself. You will confess that I am trying to make things as pleasant as I can for you?’