

So it was, that as he thought this he continued to keep eye on Shagpat, and the hunger that was in him passed, and became a ravenous vulture that flew from him and singled forth Shagpat as prey; and there was no help for it but in he must go and state his case to Shagpat, and essay shearing him.

Now, when he was in the presence, he exclaimed, "Peace, O vendor of apparel, unto thee and unto thine!"

Shagpat answered, "That with thee!"

Said Shibli Bagarag, "I have heard of thee, O thou wonder! Wullahy! I am here to render homage to that I behold."

Shagpat answered, "'T is well!"

Then said Shibli Bagarag, "Praise my discretion! I have even this day entered the city, and it is to thee I offer the first shave, O tangle of glory!"

At these words Shagpat darkened, saying gruffly, "Thy jest is offensive, and it is unseasonable for staleness and lack of holiness."

But Shibli Bagarag cried, "No jest, O purveyor to the outward of us! but a very excellent earnest."

Thereat the face of Shagpat was as an exceeding red berry in a bush, and he said angrily, "Have done! no more of it! or haply my spleen will be awakened, and that of them who see with more eyes than two."

Nevertheless Shibli Bagarag urged him, and he winked, and gesticulated, and pointed to his head, crying, "Fall not, O man of the nicety of measure, into the trap of error; for 't is I that am a barber, and a rarity in this city, even Shibli Bagarag of Shiraz! Know me nephew of the renowned Baba Mustapha, chief barber to the Court of Persia. Languishest thou not for my art? Lo! with three sweeps I'll give thee a clean poll, all save the Identical! and I can discern and save it; fear me not, nor distrust my skill and the cunning that is mine."

When he had heard Shibli Bagarag to a close, the countenance of Shagpat waxed fiery, as it had been flame kindled by travellers at night in a thorny bramble-bush, and he ruffled, and heaved, and was as when dense jungle-growths are stirred violently by the near approach of a wild animal in his fury, shouting in short breaths, "A