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THE SHAVING OF SHAGPAT

THE THWACKINGS

It was ordained that Shibli Bagarag, nephew to the renowned Baba Mustapha, chief barber to the Court of Persia, should shave Shagpat, the son of Shimpoor, the son of Shoolpi, the son of Shullum; and they had been clothiers for generations, even to the time of Shagpat, the illustrious.

Now, the story of Shibli Bagarag, and of the ball he followed, and of the subterranean kingdom he came to, and of the enchanted palace he entered, and of the sleeping king he shaved, and of the two princesses he released, and of the Afrite held in subjection by the arts of one and bottled by her, is it not known as 't were written on the finger-nails of men and traced in their corner-ropes? As the poet says:

Ripe with oft telling and old is the tale,
But 't is of the sort that can never grow stale.

Now, things were in that condition with Shibli Bagarag, that on a certain day he was hungry and abject, and the city of Shagpat the clothier was before him; so he made toward it, deliberating as to how he should procure a meal, for he had not a dirhem in his girdle, and the remembrance of great dishes and savoury ingredients were to him as the illusion of rivers sheening on the sands to travellers gasping with thirst.

And he considered his case, crying, "Surely this comes of wandering, and 't is the curse of the inquiring spirit! for in Shiraz, where my craft is in favour, I should be sitting now with my uncle, Baba Mustapha, the loquacious