

and gold. Then the kings of the place erected temples, laid out walks, constructed fountains, and turned the garden into a paradise. When Shedad came to the throne he found it in a transition state. Thousands of workmen were employed on the works. A wall had been built around it and a palace within was nearly finished. Stairways and arcades and pavilions were built at intervals through the grounds, and shaft and plinth and carved entablature lay waiting to be put in place, while massive blocks of hewn and smooth and polished stones—syenite from the quarries of Thebes, alabaster and lapis lazuli from the Grecian Isles, sard and porphyry and noble serpentine—were ready for their designated places in temple or palace, graceful kiosk or gaudy pavilion. Shedad finished the work. At vast expense he employed more workmen, conveyed, with unimagined labor, vaster and more costly materials from distant countries, and at last sat down in a spot which for loveliness and extravagant expense had never been equaled.

When Al Ammin stood at length within the Garden he thought he must surely have entered Paradise. Thousands of lamps lent the whole place just light enough to appear more beautiful than even the wondrous reality. The voice of the nightingale was heard from many a bushy dell. Odors of spices and aromatic plants perfumed the air. The light danced and trembled on the fluttering leaves of date and palm and stately cedar trees, and the rich hues of the costly stones gleamed in the favorable light till Al Ammin really believed every edifice was built of pure gems. He had not much time given him for wonder, however, for Malec led him through an avenue bordered with acacia, mimosa and myrrh, to a marble stairway, descending which they entered a barge, lined with purple stuff embroidered with gold, and were rowed across the artificial lake to another stairway. Ascending this they found themselves in front of a small peristyle of exquisite proportions. In front was an area paved with white marble and porphyry in squares and in the center was a fountain throwing jets of rose water. Ascending the steps of the building, they entered an ante room, and from that a hall of considerable size. The floor of this hall was tessellated, the roof arched and painted with constellations and the signs of the zodiac. At the entrance stood two small pillars. At the farther end was a throne on a raised dais, overhung by a canopy, and on the throne sat King Modac.

The King motioned to Malec to withdraw, and sat silent till he had left the hall, Al Ammin, meanwhile standing in an expectant attitude waiting for the King to speak.

"Al Ammin," said the latter at length, "I have sent for thee to take counsel of thee concerning the affairs of the people."

"The King," said Al Ammin, "hath sent for his servant to be merry with him."

"Nay," said the King, "but to take counsel with thee. I have heard of thee that thou art a wise and a prudent man. It has also been told me that King Shedad, whom God hath punished for his oppression of the people, left thee on post for two days, and then punished thee because sleep overtook thee."

"O King," Al Ammin replied, "I am not wise and prudent in mine own affairs; how then should I be skilled in the wisdom of those who govern men? For mine own matter, I was left two days at my post, but I think not King Shedad, but one of his servants was in fault."

"But he should have spared thee," said Modac. "A just king would have restored thee."