

"Nay," said the old man sadly, "we will lodge where we are. The air is pleasant, our wants are few, and we are amply supplied if they were more. We will not put thy hospitality to the proof."

"Nevertheless, my lord," said Zohair, "let me prevail upon thee to tarry with thy servant. Else how shall I prostrate myself before the ruler of the day when he shall arise, and say that all things have been done that my hand hath found to do—the fatherless comforted, the needy cared for, the wayfarer entertained? Let me prevail upon my lord to abide with me to-night."

"It is no merit to aid those who are not in distress," said the stranger, "nor to relieve those who are not in want. Lo, the poor are on thy right hand and on thy left. Keep thy substance for them, and thou shalt have honor of men."

"Are not," Zohair returned, "all things vain which come not from God; and will not all honors decay but those which he confers? Is it not better to suffer in doing good than to gain great store by suffering the stranger to perish by the way? Our wise men teach us that one fault destroyeth the level though it be but a small one, one omission breaketh the circle; one deflection from a right angle destroyeth the square."

The old man looked up sharply. "Nay then," said he, "I see thou hast learned wisdom from the wise, and with the words of the Just King hast thou spoken. Let it be as thou hast said, oh my brother, for I am taught that brethren should dwell together in unity."

Provender was brought for the animals, and the strangers took up their abode for the night under Zohair's hospitable roof. The veiled female was attended to her apartments by the females of the household; the tall servant consigned to the care of Ilhareth; and the old man sat down in company with Zohair to his frugal evening meal.

For some time little was said; for Zohair was as yet entirely ignorant of the name and character of his guest; and curiosity under such circumstances was compelled to restrain itself. On the other hand, the old man appeared unusually reticent.

But when the servants had retired and the traveler and his host were alone, the former began questioning Zohair in a low tone and in carefully guarded phraseology. The replies seemed not to be altogether satisfactory, and at length the old man relapsed into silence. But Zohair, who had answered shortly and suspiciously the questions put to him, at once brightened up and said:

"I think thou hast acquired knowledge from the servants of Solomon, the king who reigns in Jerusalem?"

"It is even as thou sayest," answered the old man.

"Nay then," returned Zohair, "we are brethren, though not the sons of one mother. I have the word passed down from Kahtan, our great father. This Solomon hath changed and corrupted the old order and ritual; nevertheless come with me. The solemn arcana, the words of might and dread he would not dare to change. Come with me."

They retired together to a little apartment where they remained a considerable time. When they emerged a smile was on both faces, and all reserve between the men had vanished.

The night had long fallen, and all the members of Zohair's household