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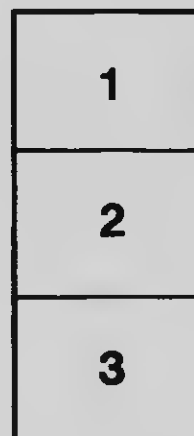
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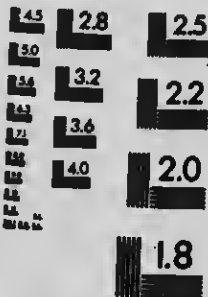
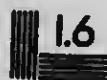
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ALADDIN FROM BROADWAY

By **FREDERIC S. ISHAM**

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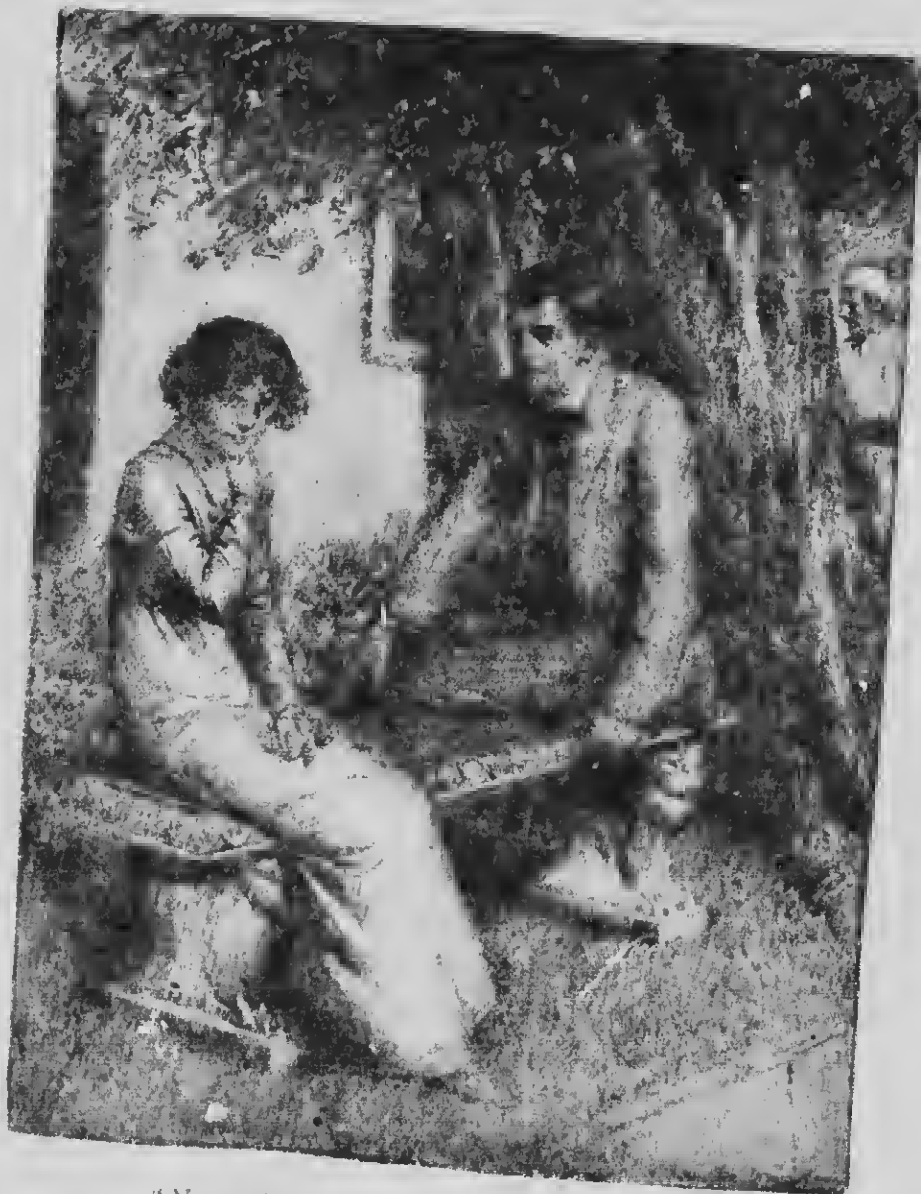
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"Now when a woman, or girl turns away"

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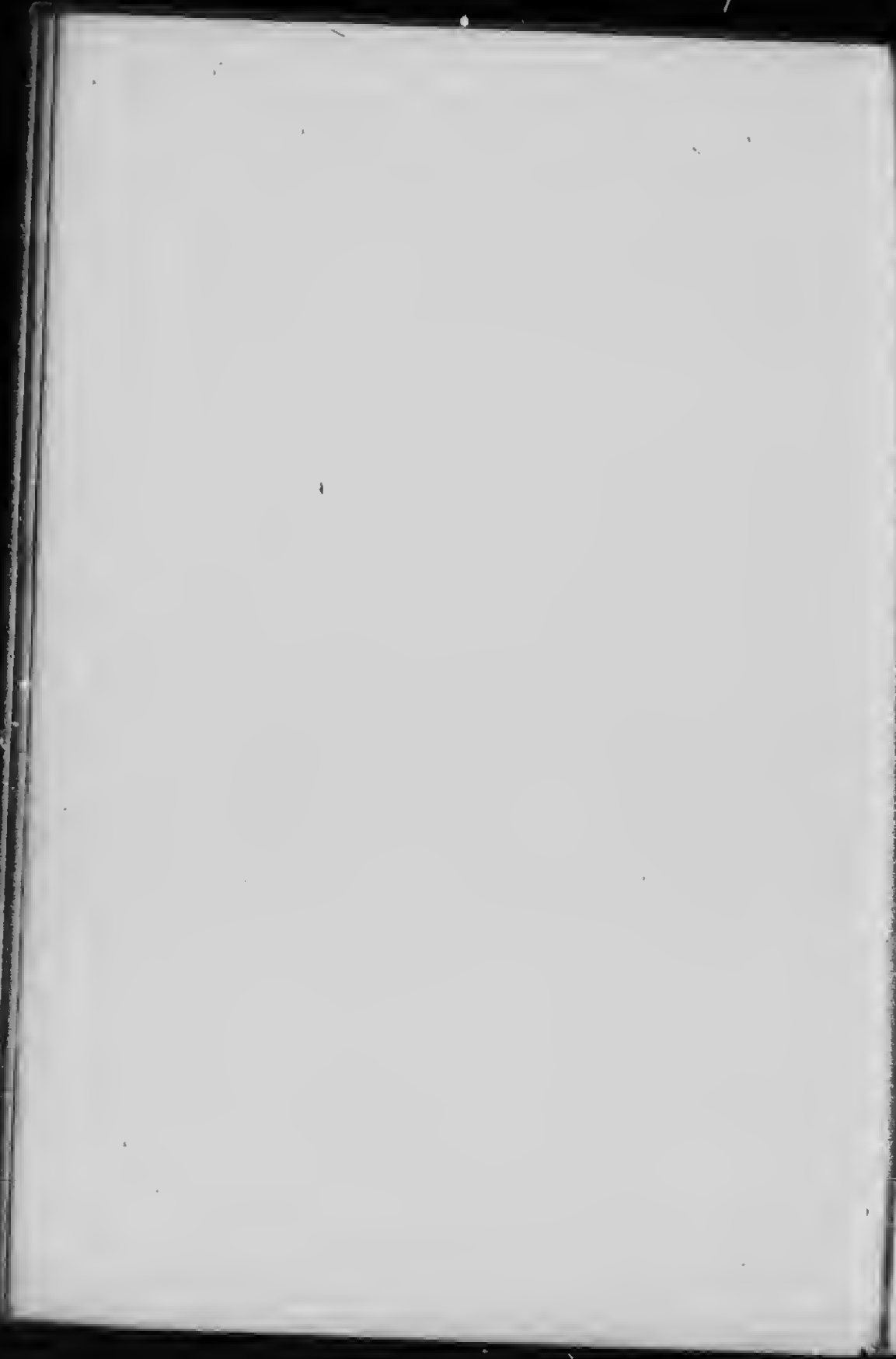
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But if the husband give sentence of divorce to her a third time, saying "Thou art free," or "I divorce you," three times, it is not lawful for him to take her back again, *until she shall have married another husband* and been divorced by that second husband. Then may the first husband remarry her whom he had set from him and no blame shall attach to any of them.

KORAN, CHAPTER II, VERSE 226.



CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I A CASUAL ENCOUNTER	1
II A VOICE FROM AFAR	9
III AN ASTONISHING PROPOSITION	26
IV LIGHT OF LIFE	39
V IN THE GARDEN	60
VI THE SURPRISE	69
VII A CALLER	83
VIII AN INTERRUPTED HONEYMOON	103
IX IN THE STABLE	117
X AT AMAD'S	128
XI THE SUMMONS	142
XII A VERY HOLY MAN	159
XIII MENACING MOMENTS	176
XIV CAPTIVE	192
XV THE CAVALCADE	204
XVI VARYING FORTUNES	216
XVII THE GRAVEYARD	231
XVIII AT THE GATE	246
XIX NEAR THE CITADEL	260
XX AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE	276
XXI THE BRAZIER	293
XXII ONE WAY	310
XXIII A SURPRISE	324
XXIV MARY CARRUTHERS	337
XXV THE MISSION GARDENS	348

ALADDIN FROM BROADWAY

ALADDIN FROM BROADWAY

CHAPTER I

A CASUAL ENCOUNTER

DAMASCUS! "The Street that is called Straight." A dervish sitting on his heels before a pastry-shop, his cloak Biblical, of many hues. Eyes bold, reckless, a little famished-looking. Dark handsome features, too young almost for the beard that shines like a flame across the dun-colored caftan. A beard, which to the western eye seems somewhat superfluous, especially as it is not naturally red, but has been so dyed to proclaim a returned Mecca pilgrim. Beneath the rags, a lithe graceful figure.

"Look at him," said an elderly American woman of the conventional "personally conducted" type, passing at that moment. "What fine examples of physical manhood some of these Mohammedans are!"

ALADDIN FROM BROADWAY

"This one looks as if he might do a Marathon, or one of those long pole, high stunts our college boys go in for," returned her companion, a pert Buckeye miss.

"High stunts, indeed! He looks to me as if he might have been picked up and transported from some wild Afghan frontier. Don't you think so, Lord Fitzgerald?"

The dervish gave a slight start, but neither of the ladies observed. They had turned to a languid, spare, middle-aged gentleman who joined them at that moment.

"I?" said this individual, adjusting a single eyeglass, which he focused on the object of their conversation. "Yes, he does look like one of those beggars we see in northern India, the type our government enlists for soldiers to keep them from being brigands, don't you know." He was decidedly facetious about it.

"You mean you pay them for not robbing you and cutting your throats?"

"Quite so. Cheaper to make martial heroes of them and let them cut one another's throats. Can't quite make this chap out, though." More contemplatively. "He isn't a Jat."

A CASUAL ENCOUNTER

3

For a few minutes they stood there, until the object of their regard turned deliberately and looked at them. His eyes cut up and down over the young lady in an almost insolent appraising fashion, did likewise to the older one, and then passed to Lord Fitzgerald. They took in comprehensively that gentleman's boots, his turned-up trousers, the rough tweed coat and the ultra-smart tourist hat. They stared into the single glass. For a few moments, it was a question which would turn away first, the brilliant, hungry, albeit satirical eyes of the dervish, or the apathetic gray one behind the traditional round "window-pane." But it is against all tradition for any Britisher to let himself be stared out of countenance, especially by a "blooming heathen," and so, probably, the "window-pane" and the gray eye behind it would have won in the visual contest, had not the guide—mixture of Turk, Greek and what-not—a hodge-podge from the ancient cauldron—who gladly threw his fortunes with the despised visitors from the West whenever opportunity offered, now created a diversion.

"These holy pilgrims do not like to be stared at," he observed in low uneasy tones. "And in Damascus, especially."

4 ALADDIN FROM BROADWAY

"Well, by Jove!" The Englishman transferred his stare to the guide. "That's good! A cat may look at a king," he clucked, "but a subject of the king may not— This is delicious! Positively! By Jove!"

"These dervishes are very fanatical," murmured the hodge-podge ingratiatingly.

"Oh, I'm, sure he doesn't look very ferocious," interposed the younger woman airily. "His lips aren't at all like a Mohammedan's. They're more like an American's."

The dervish did not stare. He seemed absorbed now in pious meditation.

"Still I would advise—" And the guide made a motion as if to draw them away. "The city is most disturbed at present."

"Pooh! We're not afraid, are we, aunty?" said the younger with all the spirit of one from the land of the free.

"Not at all, of course, my dear. Only"— somewhat nervously— "it is well to be prudent. Perhaps it is for the best that we are leaving the city to-night. All the other tourists have gone except our-

selves and Lord Fitzgerald here. By the way, when are you leaving, Lord Fitzgerald?"

"Haven't decided." Languidly. "Left my car at Balbeek. My intention, you know, to motor across the desert."

"Dear me!" observed the other. "Aren't you afraid of those wild Bedouins? For my part, I don't see why people do those risky things. Like that young American you were telling us about last night at the hotel, the one you had that ridiculous wager with—"

"You mean Jack Stanton, aunty," interposed the girl.

The dervish murmured another holy passage. His accents seemed rather vicious and he gripped harder the big smooth beads of the string most Mohammedans carry. "As I was going to tell you, Lord Fitzgerald, last night when we were interrupted by that dragoman, I know all about this Mr. Stanton from a chum of mine. Or rather, I know all about his love-affair." The dervish fingered his beads faster. "His people had family, were no end of swells, and all that, only unfortunately, their income

was of a diminishing kind. To make a long story short, Jack Stanton ultimately came in for only paltry fifty thousand and had a lot of expensive tastes. Of course he stood no chance at all with the girl in the case. It is only in novels the poor young man ever does. She married Archie Osborne whose father is one of those 'interlocking directors' and holds the combination on half a dozen or so of our biggest trusts. Fancy a poor man being a rival of the son of an 'interlocker'! Just the same, when she floated up the aisle, to the Lohengrin music, and gave her hand to the gilded youth, I guess it jolted Jack Stanton's heart some. It must have been about that time he made that silly wager with you, Lord Fitzgerald. He wanted to do something desperate. All men do, under the circumstances," she jeered flippantly.

A half articulate sound broke from the dervish's throat. He was growing more and more impatient.

"You say he had but a fortune of fifty thousand?" observed Lord Fitzgerald more gravely. "Then I'm afraid our wager will—"

"My Lord—madam—" The guide interrupted them now imperatively. The dervish had made an

abrupt and emphatic movement. It might have been construed as a menacing one. "That dervish—I have been watching him— We must really go, or I won't be answerable. We are disturbing him, and as I said before, dervishes do not like to be annoyed while at prayer. Sometimes they run amuck and then—"

"Quite right," said the elder lady hurriedly. "We certainly ought not to stay here any longer. Just look how his eyes flash! I don't believe we should even remain in the streets of this city any longer, after all we have heard about the feeling against foreigners. Some of these other people, in passing, have cast decidedly hostile glances upon us."

"Well, I for one, don't believe there's going to be any trouble," observed the younger lady.

"You never can tell. Didn't the guide-book say they murdered five thousand Christians not so long ago in this very city?"

"And left them unburied in the streets!" Sotto voce from the guide.

"Dear me!" The elder woman displayed symptoms of greater nervousness. "Come, my dear!" And linking her arm quickly in that of the younger,

8 ALADDIN FROM BROADWAY,

the two fluttered away, out of the street, and—out of this story. Lord Fitzgerald lingered a moment, as a matter of self and national respect, then followed leisurely.

The dervish looked after the party and a word that was not Allah fell from his lips. Fortunately no one heard it.

CHAPTER II

A VOICE FROM AFAR

THE dervish soon resumed his posturing. A holy man, to be consistent, can not bob his body up and down too often, especially if he is in a busy street where many may observe him. None of the complicated formalities attendant upon the petitions to Allah and the prophet, escaped now this past-master, but it might have been noticed that while his lips murmured *tekbeers*, he kept one eye pretty closely on the people. This sedulousness, however, could be accounted for on natural grounds. Returned pilgrims are usually hungry. This one was dusty and road-worn; his shoes were falling from his feet. He might be looking for a benefactor. But though his plight was apparent, the crowd seemed too busy for benevoience.

From the pastry-shop, however, a man now came and stood at the door with a cake.

"Thank the lady! Thank the most gracious lady who takes pity on your poverty!" said this person.

"I do. I, most unworthy, humbly return thanks," answered the dervish eagerly, whereupon the man threw the cake. Unfortunately one of the many waiting dogs got it. Pandemonium ensued as street boys with sticks and stones set upon the congregated canines. Howls mingled with juvenile yells. Innocent dogs fared no better than the guilty pilferer. In the midst of the hubbub she who had bidden the proprietor throw the cake walked out of the shop. She was slender and richly robed. Her *tezyereh*, or street attire, was of silk, an exquisite light rose, so that her coming seemed to brighten the thoroughfare. Amid squalor and wretchedness—ragged hawkers, carriers and venders of a hundred inconsequential articles—she shone like a flower. Her face, of course, was concealed by the snowy whiteness of the *burko*, or face veil, but as she passed, with supple swaying grace, the dervish caught a glimpse of her eyes.

An instant they seemed to hold him, although he was more or less of a woman-hater by profession and perhaps inclination. "By the beard of the

prophet, but the lady has soulful eyes!" he muttered in choicest Arabic. Then a scoffing light came into his own. "No doubt, too, she knows it," he added, and began again more resolutely to pray. But he was suffered to continue his praiseworthy vocation for only a few moments. He, ragged waif of the roads, was occupying space demanded by others of the high and opulent class.

"Way there! Way there!" peremptory voices called out, and two superb camels, of lordly height, bearing a spacious litter between them, came along. At a command the beasts, bedecked with bright trappings, knelt while an attendant in fine livery and of autocratic bearing, denoting the importance of those he served, opened the door of the litter. The lady, who had attracted the dervish's attention, was about to get in, when one of the camels, annoyed by the snapping of a miserable little yellow dog, made an angry movement and started to rise.

The litter swayed; the lady with a foot on the step was thrown backward and would have been hurled to the ground, but at that moment the dervish sprang forward and caught her. His arms, which had been extended empty-handed toward Mecca, now clasped

a fair sample, or example, of despised femininity. Nay, more—a warm breath fanned his cheek, while those eyes that had forced his attention a few moments before now met his own fully, albeit in startled fashion, affording him abundant opportunity to fortify or amend that first impression of them. They were more than “soulful”; they were big, luminous, haughty, passionate, poetic. One romantically inclined would have searched for a few more adjectives to encompass their attraction. They could talk and tell all manner of things. Allah (Blessed be whose Name) gave them license to practise magic or diablerie; to disturb saints, or sinners; to teach cynical young dervishes, accustomed to solitary dances, that solo whirls are but lonesome business on life’s barren sands.

For a moment, which takes somewhat long in the telling, they—beggar and beautiful lady, brought thus together by bizarre fate—made an interesting if unconventional picture on that ancient street of strange contrasts. Possibly he prolonged the situation longer than the sterner exigencies—to be merely helpful!—demanded, while a light that was not wholly holy or strictly pious began to shine from his

somewhat cynical young gaze. And well it had excuse for so doing, for the lady's eyes alone were not all this fortunate anchorite of the desert was permitted to contemplate! Her veil had been partially swept aside, thus affording an unexpected and most illumining glimpse of a countenance, young, oval, perfect. It dazzled the gaze accustomed to unprepossessing pilgrims' faces and bleak prospects.

The dervish forgot his prophet; his lips on a sudden awoke to a different kind of litany. The *adan* he dared utter now sounded from the minaret of his own daring presumptuousness:

"By the faith, but Damascus holds at least one pearl of wondrous beauty!"

A vivid pink splashed the girl's face. Fortunately no one, save she, had caught the too free compliment of this bold young *mueddin*. The street was, and always is, very noisy daytimes.

"How dare you?"

He only laughed for answer. Roses where had been lilies! The old Persian poets would have likened now the lady's face to a new garden of enchantment.

The *din* around them increased,

14 ALADDIN FROM BROADWAY

"Ho! Demon of a camel!" some one now was yelling.

"Back, dog!" This time it was the dervish himself who was addressed by one of her attendants.

"The dog apologizes to you, lady, for his boldness," he said in quick mocking tones, and released her.

"No, no!" She turned to the attendant who had raised a staff to strike the dervish.

The latter's eyes expressed now a sardonic amusement as they rested on the servant; there was also in their depths a dangerous glitter. The man stood uncertainly.

"He saved me from a bad fall," she added hastily, whereupon the pole was lowered and the lady vanished into the litter. A curtain fell and the camels with their delicate patrician burden swayed imperiously down the Street that is called Straight. The dervish gazed after them, then wheeled rather abruptly to the proprietor of the pastry-shop.

"Who is she?" he demanded.

The proprietor heard him amazed. This ragged fellow presumed greatly, because he had performed

a trifling service. And he, a holy man, in a city where it is not considered good etiquette even to look at one of the fair sex on the street! This bold dervish had dared to do that before the little incident of the litter and now the impudent rascal inquired brazenly about her.

"Who is she? Out upon you!" exclaimed the pastry-man indignantly. "Away from my shop, rank pretender of holiness!"

"Pretender!" For a moment the other, as if a little startled, confronted the shopkeeper, then as people were beginning to gather, he seemed to think better of the impulse to answer angrily and moved on.

"That's what a great lady gets for being charitable," grumbled the proprietor to his assistant, as he reentered his kitchen. "Impudence!"

"Wasn't that the beautiful stepdaughter of —?" the assistant murmured insinuatingly a name.

The cake-man looked around. In the quiet of his own bake-place, despite his indignation against the holy man, he was, himself, not altogether averse to gossiping about women. Very discreetly, of course! Pouring frosting and patting sugar seemed a natural

accompaniment to delicate prittle prattle about dainty femininity in the higher social walks of life. He nodded now assentingly.

"The one that—?" went on the assistant.

"Yes; May and December, I call them."

"Good!" Adjusting a plum on a succulent background.

"A dove, I have heard."

"You mean a young tigress. They say—" He whispered.

"No?" Listening with delight.

"Yes; one of the servants told a servant of—"

"The stepmother will be put out. She was here yesterday."

"She? Ugh!"

Then they put the sweet things in to bake. They had discussed what promised to be a choice scandal for the patrons of sweetmeats. In the inner rooms of the many shops of this kind, women would soon be mouthing it with the other delectable things.

Outside the stream of life flowed on. The dervish was now a part of it. At first he had moved mechanically, but before long he straightened and squared his shoulders. Judging from the quick

glances he cast around him, his mind had again become focused on the ever-changing details of his immediate environment.

Within doors at this hour every one seemed to be eating. The merchant in his shop sat cross-legged, plate on knee. Glimpses into back rooms afforded views of groups convivially busy at the festive board. In many booths, layers of mutton, interlarded with the fat of the tail, turned on spits. Appetizing odors floated in and out of doorways, as if to tantalize the senses of half-starved holy men. Small boys and girls glided hither and thither with steaming bowls of boiled beans. The perambulating donkeys, laden with cocoanuts, fruit and other edibles, paused that the people might buy.

"Oh, console of the embarrassed, have a sweetmeat."

"Honey! Oh, oranges! Relieve me of them."

"How sweet the little vegetable from near the river! Aid in partaking of it." The drivers' voices arose in stentorian invitations, which were not invitations to the penniless.

Now forcing his way between these individuals, the dervish became abruptly conscious that some

one, near at hand, was following and watching him. He half turned and his eyes met, for the fraction of a minute, the deep, clear—devilishly clear—ones of a thick-set, fanatical-looking Mohammedan; then with a quick contemptuous swing of his cloak of rags, the dervish plunged into the crowd. The other, about to follow more quickly, found himself touched on the arm and restrained.

"The saddle for my master's horse—is it finished?" said he who stopped him.

"Yes; I will be at my shop in a moment. Await me there." He would have broken impatiently away, when—

"Why not come now?" said the man.

And Sadi, the saddler, had to acquiesce, for he who addressed him was servant to Amad, the diamond merchant, the richest man in Damascus, and, moreover, a distant relative of Sadi, himself.

"My master trusts the saddle is worthy of the Star of the Desert."

"It is worthy," said the saddlemaker, his malicious eyes turned in the direction the dervish had gone.

"You seemed in a hurry," remarked the servant curiously.

"Some one I wished to speak with. I saw him in the crowd," muttered the other.

"A friend, eh?"

"Yes—a friend." With a curious laugh. "I made his acquaintance at Mecca. But perhaps we'll meet again. Anyhow, it doesn't matter," he had to add politely, though inwardly anathematizing his rich relative and most lucrative customer.

Meanwhile the dervish had turned into a narrower way and one that didn't make even so much as a pretext of being straight as the one that is called so. Faster he moved, soon turning again, choosing now the most crooked and tortuous byways. It may be he selected this route designedly, though a person would have to possess an intimate knowledge of the locality not to go wrong in that maze, or it may be only blind chance led him; at any rate, before long, he brought up in front of an entrance that he regarded not without certain evidence of satisfaction. After glancing through the opening, as if to make sure what lay before him, and then casting a quick

look over his shoulder down the way he had come, he stooped, unfastened his dilapidated shoes, and depositing them at the door, strode boldly forward into the large court of a superb mosque.

Here reigned peace and silence. Near the door a professional letter-writer dozed over his desk. He raised a tired lid; his deep-set old eyes were full of retrospection. Phrases to the moon, set similes about the pomegranate were apt to become cold through disuse in the ancient chambers of his brain. His eyelid again drooped like a weary moth. Ah, in the old times—the good times—the merry times—then a letter-writer had plenty to do.

The dervish passed on. Now he glided across the smooth shining pavement, which felt cool and grateful to his travel-worn feet, while doves, of which there were myriads, made way for him. The whirl of their wings alone disturbed the stillness. Athwart the white slabs of the court the shadow of a minaret lay like a finger admonishing people to holiness. It seemed to bid them enter the enclosed House of Allah, where were soft rugs and praying niches.

But yonder were shady recesses, which had an especial attraction of their own, too, and one of

these—the most isolated—wooded the dervish. There, beneath spreading branches, gleamed a small pool, bathing place for pilgrims. After the interminable dusty roads, over mountain and desert, the sight of the cool water that gushed abundantly forth was most welcome. But before deciding to throw off his cloak and enjoy the luxury of a bath, he once more gazed carefully around him. He was alone; no prying eyes were bent upon him; at one end of the fountain a small space was screened in and there he would be even more secluded. He walked toward it; now his limbs, a lighter hue than the mahogany of his face, gleamed white in the reflections of the limpid surface. He laved himself quickly from head to foot, then drawing his capacious cloak once more around him, he lay down.

Heigho! If one could only sleep away hunger! Still his bath had refreshed him, and since it was impossible to eat, perhaps he might court a few winks of forgetfulness. But his appetite (the appetite of youth) followed in his dreams. The aggravating flesh-pots mingled with wild hostile faces. He saw again the fat sheep sacrificed and left uneaten in the holiest city. Prodigal waste of good chops and

juicy saddles of mutton! Oh, for a nice chop now—such as you get at Sharpe's on Forty-fourth Street, near Broadway—a chop, two or more inches thick, lashed with French fried and a tankard of old musty conveniently near—

“Old musty?” What had he to do with that, he who was supposed never to partake of aught alcoholic? And Sharpe's? What was Sharpe's to him, a good Mohammedan, and very holy man, to boot? By the sacred eyebrow of the prophet, who had himself once fasted three days in a cave, but those were chops which were chops!—

Eh? What now? Voices? Trouble? Perhaps some one had playfully tossed a tankard at a waiter and there was a joyful little mix-up, a brief misunderstanding— But this was not Sharpe's, though there was a voice, and a loud one. The dervish sat up; night had fallen. Beyond the wall on one side, he knew were the tombs. Not likely the voice came from there! On the other side, however, the palatial quarters of the wealthy and aristocratic class basked in the immediate and beneficent proximity of the mosque. The dervish looked in the direction of the houses. As Damascus is the wealthiest as well

as the oldest city, it boasted, he was aware, of a social set, exclusive and princely. Were Aladdin to rub his lamp and be set down in one of yonder mansions, that fortunate poor young man would find himself amid a scene of fairy-like luxuriousness. And were that same poor young man permitted, in these prosaic and less magical days, to look around upon forbidden scenes, he might find there the princess of his dreams.

The dervish listened. His gaze directed itself specifically toward the upper stories, as much as he could see of one of the fairly well-lighted mansions—the tallest—just outside the wall. From this stately edifice came the disturbing tones, a man's, vibrating, quivering with anger. The surroundings were ancient; the setting was that of medieval romance, but the words had a familiar and up-to-date ring:

"I divorce you!"

"Oh, ho!" The modern Aladdin smiled disappointedly. "Nothing more interesting than a little domestic squabble!"

"I divorce you!"

A second time the words rang out. "Look out,

my friend," murmured the listener to himself. "Three times and out, here, you know, by your outlandish laws. Better wait until you're not so angry. Try a water-pipe first, with a soothing dash of hashish. Always try a water-pipe, before proceeding to extremities, unless you would live to regret—"

"I divorce you!"

The dervish yawned. "Well, now you've done it. You certainly have!"

A woman's voice, musical as silver bells, laughed mockingly. Whence came it; from the sky, the shining heavens—a chamber of yonder palace?

"You have all heard?" The man seemed fairly beside himself. "By Allah's will, I have set this witch from me. Her beauty hath made me mad—"

Again that laughter!

"You hear? She defies me. Now by Allah's will it is done. She must go. I will have no more of her."

Silence! From the big house came no further sound.

"A legal divorce, that, all right," the dervish muttered.

Then he yawned again—such comedies, or trage-

dies, are very common—and stretched his lithe figure once more. Life was, indeed, sordid without romance. He looked up at the stars. Strangely enough they seemed now to frame a girl's face—that of the lady of the pastry-shop. He dismissed it and laughed ironically. What had he to do with star dreamings? Had he not outlived them? Broken vows, masculine anger, feminine recriminations, partings—those were the realities the world over, whether in New York or Damascus.

“Were they, indeed?” The stars seemed now to laugh at him. One, like a great pink warm-hued diamond pulsed shamelessly. He turned his back on it and drew his cloak closer. How strong the scent of the flowers! Whence came it—from what garden? He stirred restlessly, then slept again. His next awakening was more startling.

CHAPTER III

AN ASTONISHING PROPOSITION

SOME one touched him. Instantly weariness left him and he sprang to his feet, every muscle tense. Confronting him were two shadows, ominously near in the dim light. At the dervish's involuntary menacing attitude one of the intruders drew slightly back. A faint glow, like quivering diamond dust, revealed the immediate surroundings.

"What do you want?" Beneath his cloak the dervish's fingers gripped something that was neither Koran nor string of beads.

"To speak with you," answered the foremost of the intruders, a little uneasily. As he spoke he glanced back at his companion.

"About what?" demanded the dervish.

"That you will learn later, if you will be good enough to follow us."

"I shall learn now, before following." Grimly.

AN ASTONISHING PROPOSITION 27

"But this—this is no place." The man's tones, though uncertain, as if he, too, had some doubts as to the wisdom and propriety of his purpose, were courteous enough. "In Allah's name, hesitate no longer, but come."

"I am very comfortable where I am." Quietly.

"What do you fear?"

"I don't fear. Only I am too sleepy to stir. Besides, why should I accompany those whom I do not know?"

"We are honorable men, come as your benefactors."

"Do benefactors fall from the sky? And at this hour?" Significantly.

"Deign to follow us, and find out—and for tonight and some days condescend to become our honored guest."

"Guest?" Had he heard aright? The dervish laughed derisively. "What trap is this?"

"It is no trap. You will be well fed, finely clothed and given a fat purse into the bargain."

"You but seek to make merry at my expense." Wearily.

"Words of truth alone fall from our lips. We

were sent hither to find you."

The dervish started slightly. "To find me?"

"Perhaps I should have said, you or any other ragged holy man," answered the visitor with a smile.

"Another would have done as well, and he were that."

"Is it so? Your words do not comport with your errand." Bluntly.

"Why, what can you know of our errand—yet?" In surprise.

"You were sent by a certain saddler, a very disreputable lying fellow." The dervish's eyes gleamed challengingly.

"A saddler? We know nothing of any saddler. At least, not in this matter."

The speaker's tones were earnest and calculated to carry conviction. The dervish regarded him more closely.

"Deign to do as we ask," the man went on eagerly, "and I promise you will be well treated."

"Who are you? Harun-al-Raschid and his grand vizier come to tempt a poor holy man with the riches and luxuries of the world?" the dervish now demanded lightly.

AN ASTONISHING PROPOSITION 29

"We can claim no such distinction." As the foremost of the visitors spoke he exchanged meaning glances with his companion.

"Most dervishes . . . half-witted," murmured the latter.

"All the better . . . for our purpose." Sotto voce from the other. Then to the dervish: "We are but plain citizens of Damascus. Harun-al-Raschid," indulgently, "died many centuries ago. But tell me," abruptly, "are you hungry?"

"Am I?" In spite of himself the dervish's voice was eager. "Why?"

"Because I know of a little café near, which has a cook worthy of a place at the prophet's right hand; where may be had *kawurmeh*—such a stew!—cabob roasted on skewers; fish dressed with oil; a boned fowl stuffed with pistachio nuts—"

"Truly it is the caliph of Bagdad," muttered the dervish. "Or a geni, come in human form to torment me."

The other may have divined that famished glint in the holy one's eyes for he went on more unctuously, rolling his words as if he were rolling over delicacies in his mouth:

"*Kunafeh*, sweetened with sugar or honey— He is very famous for his pastry. It melts on the lips when one has only a small appetite. When one has a large one—" He drew in his breath and finished his sentence by rolling his eyes. "Then when you have dined to repletion, there is the sun-ripened watermelon, and a certain sweet drink this wonderful cook is renowned for—"

"I think," interrupted the dervish rather hastily, "you have sufficiently enumerated the accomplishments of this very interesting man. And I agree with you he is worthy of a seat at the prophet's right hand. But alas, for me are these delicacies forbidden—unattainable, at present, as the delights of Paradise, itself!"

"Not if you go with us." Promptly.

"But the price?"

"We pay."

"You pay *him*. How do I pay *you*?"

"Oh, that is a small matter. We'll talk about it over the good things to eat."

"I'd rather talk about it before I eat them."

"Here's a very honest fellow, indeed!" And one of the intruders nodded approval to his companion.

AN ASTONISHING PROPOSITION 31

"Truly, we are lucky to have found him!" assented the other.

"Or some one else is lucky."

"Some one else, of course!"

The dervish waited. "There is a slight service—a very slight one—you can perform in return for all we are going to do for you," said the spokesman softly.

"What is it?"

"Get married."

"Eh? What?"

"Get married. That is all."

"All! What manner of jest is this?"

"It is no jest. You are to get married and yet not get married."

"How can a man get married and yet not get married?"

"It is very simple. You marry and then you unmarry. You have only to say 'I divorce you' three times in the presence of witnesses."

"Divorce made easy!" Ironically.

"It is the law."

"The Mohammedan law—yes."

"What know we of any other?" In surprise.

"True." Hastily. "But why am I to get married?"

"To meet a little exigency."

"Oh!" The dervish studied more closely his visitor. He was a portly man, a well-to-do shopkeeper, no doubt. And his companion resembled him as one pea is like unto another. "When am I to get married?"

"To-morrow."

"The prophet forbid!"

"It can be arranged."

"Whom am I going to marry?"

"A lady of quality."

"Old?"

"Young."

"Beautiful?"

"As an houri!" This time it was a duet; both visitors spoke at the same moment and their voices were as one.

The dervish frowned. "An houri! You might, at least, have made her ugly."

They noticed this evidence of displeasure on his part, not altogether with disapproval. Obviously this dervish was so holy that the younger and more

AN ASTONISHING PROPOSITION 33

attractive a woman was, the more he disliked the thought of her. "Allah has, indeed, guided us to the right one," murmured the spokesman. And then to the dervish: "What matters it to you if she is beautiful? The marriage is only one of form. She will not molest you."

"You are sure?"

"Positive."

"But why is this marriage necessary?"

"I will explain. We have the honor to serve Amad Ahl-Masr, the affluent jeweler and merchant whose palace overlooks this place."

"Not the tall one?" The dervish showed interest.

"The tallest, of course. Now, a short time past, my friend, benefactor and patron, Amad—"

"Our friend, benefactor and patron!" breathed his companion.

"—took unto himself the fairest of her sex. Such a gala occasion! There were *almas* and singers and entertainments without number. Never did a wedding open more auspiciously, or end more disastrously. For, though devoted to her lord, the lady was young, and—"

"They clashed," said the dervish with a yawn.

"Unfortunately, she being both young and innocent to-day thoughtlessly said, did or thought something that disturbed the beneficent temper of our illustrious patron. Then, in an inadvertent moment, he summoned witnesses and thrice, in a solemn manner, declared the triple divorce, which is a divorce, indeed."

"'Solemn manner'?" The dervish's tone expressed amusement. "And you said his house was the tall one? But proceed. He declared thrice before witnesses 'I divorce you'. That constitutes, without doubt, a legal separation. According to the law of the prophet whose will," bowing ceremoniously, "is that of Allah, the lady is no longer married to your friend, the rich diamond merchant. How did she relish this new-found freedom that was so unceremoniously thrust upon her?"

"She wept copiously."

"What?"

"As if her heart would break." With a mournful shake of the head.

"Indeed?" Dryly. "That, no doubt, accounts for the sound of wailing wafted even here."

They looked at him suspiciously. "She wept *after* she realized fully what she had done."

AN ASTONISHING PROPOSITION 35

"Oh, after?" murmured the dervish. "Well, why not? First scornful laughter, then tears!" He waved his hand airily. "Go on."

"At the spectacle of her grief, the tender heart of the merchant melted almost at once, and he regretted what he had done. He magnanimously forgave her as she knelt imploringly at his feet. He would even have restored her to her old place and position, but alas! There were and are difficulties. The lady, as a divorcée has been obliged, according to the law, to return to her own home, and thence he may not bring her, until— Well, you understand?"

"Quite! She must marry again and be divorced from husband number two, before the law of the prophet permits husband number one that was, through remarriage, again to claim her. All of which is set forth in the Koran, chapter two, verse two hundred and twenty-six."

"Exactly!" They nodded their approval of a dervish so learned in the Book he knew even the numbers of the sacred verses.

"That much I learned at El-Azhar, and much beside," said the dervish. "Also, that when a husband regrets having divorced his wife, he has been

known," shrewdly, "to look around for some pilgrim or poor man, who is called a *mustahall* or husband of convenience."

"That is it. You just say you take her, but you don't. It must, of course, be legally done, though the formalities are brief for a divorcée. As a matter of fact, *we* take charge of you after the ceremony."

"No doubt of that!" From the second man.

"You won't even have to see the bride after you're married to her. Then when a day or two of quiet, rest and meditation have gone by, you earn your new clothes and a fat purse by divorcing before a few witnesses, the lady, and thereupon depart, the richer and the happier, leaving her free to remarry Amad, the diamond merchant. What could be better?"
Rubbing his fat hands.

"What, indeed? You put it convincingly. An ideal way to get married! There wouldn't be any unhappy marriages if all people got married like that."

"Of course not." This holy man, like many *walees* or those "favored of heaven," was certainly rather weak in his wits. His smile now was child-like and bland. The emissaries of the rich diamond

AN ASTONISHING PROPOSITION 37

merchant, however, humored him by being patient.

"How old did you say the lady was?"

"Seventeen."

"And divorced already! Why, before she's forty—" The dervish shook his head mournfully.

"But my predecessor—I mean, my successor-to-be—how has time, the enemy, treated him?"

"He has passed the line when, according to the prophet, a man becomes a man, indeed."

"This marriage to me would make her—this rather volatile young lady very happy?"

"It would."

"I should be a great benefactor, then?" With mocking gaiety.

"No doubt."

"Both parties would bless me?" Expansively.

"They would."

"Then why should I hesitate?"

"You don't." Persuasively.

The dervish made no answer. Could they have read what lay behind the inscrutable expression of the face half turned from them now, they would have been startled. More was involved in his decision than they knew. To become the bridegroom

of blushing seventeen and then to dissolve the tie—that would not be difficult. He would be participating in a mere formality, lending himself to a commonplace transaction, frequently employed among Mohammedans when husbands who lost their tempers desired back that which in a moment of anger they had set from them. But the possibilities of other complications, more serious ones?—Were they offset by certain advantages? His present needs were urgent. To get out of Damascus he needed a purse. It was a queer way to make money, yet an honest enough one, if people would quarrel and get divorced and then be foolish enough to want to return to a state of perpetual infelicity. Sweet seventeen! That was about the age of the lady of the pastry-shop. The satirical look faded for a moment from the bold eyes, but immediately returned. His gallantry had nearly cost him a good beating. What a fool to have risked it! A cudgeling for a woman! He laughed softly, derisively.

“You have decided?” inquired the portly man curiously.

“To the café!” was the answer. “Eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow we—get married!”

CHAPTER IV

LIGHT OF LIFE

THE dervish was married next day, at high noon, or somewhere between five and six o'clock, oriental time. As El Sabbagh, the dyer—the dervish's portly friend of the night before—had pointed out, marriages in the case of a widow, or a divorcée, are conducted with comparatively little ostentation. A number of details of the spousal ceremonies of a young girl, unmarried before, are, on the second, or third, occasion, omitted. The guests do not expect to be regaled by sprightly entertainments by dancing girls, or female singers. No torch-bearers march with the groom, and no elaborate repasts, or *mudnat*, are served. But even so, the ceremony is far from simple, from an occidental standpoint.

The dyer, bearing a bundle which proved to contain a new suit of clothes, took the dervish early in hand on the day of the wedding.

"You can put these on," he said, indicating the garments, "while I go and see Light of Life, to arrange about the dowry."

"Light of Life?" The dervish stretched himself more comfortably on the cushions of the divan in the dyer's house where he was temporarily domiciled. "Who is she? Some prospective relative of mine?"

"Your mother-in-law. A charming woman, though," dubiously, "a rather close hand at a bargain."

"You mean *I* have to give a dowry?" Reaching for a cup of coffee.

"Well, Amad has to give it for you."

"Very kind of him! First he gives me his wife, and then a dowry to go with her."

"It was at Light of Life's suggestion." Lugubriously.

"And she dominates the situation?" With a laugh. "I begin to admire my mother-in-law immensely." The dyer gave him a curious look. "By the way, what did you say the name of my wife-to-be is?"

"Fatma."

"Good! I will try to remember. But this Amad?—this dear good Amad, my benefactor—after I have divorced Fatma, and he remarries her, will he have to give her a third dowry?"

"That is as Allah wills!" Resignedly.

"Or Light of Life!" Gaily.

The dyer shrugged. "I'll leave you now to array yourself. Never had a substitute bridegroom before such garments, all embroidered and fine silk. Be ready when I return. The servant will bring water for the religious ablutions. How long does it take you to say your prayers?"

"About three hours."

"Can you not say thirty minutes?" In dismay.

"And so omit some thirty *rekahs*? On your conscience be it!"

But left to himself the dervish forgot to repeat even a single verse. He gazed around him with a quizzical uplifted brow. Dame Fortune was certainly a most capricious mistress. That luxurious couch was in marked contrast to the flagstones he had been lately accustomed to. Lighting his long pipe, he inhaled and exhaled the excellent Persian tobacco with a nice appreciation of its quality. His

42 'ALADDIN FROM BROADWAY

host had been as good as his word and had proved most hospitable. He had even provided a carat weight of ambergris to lend the coffee unusual fragrance. The dervish poured out the last of it from the coffee-pot, and then set down the delicate cup of brass, holding the dainty porcelain, with a sigh of satisfaction. It was long since he had fared so well. He felt hardly awake yet. Was it all a dream? He had gone to sleep a vagabond; he awoke—if he were awake!—in the rôle of an impromptu bridegroom. Rightfully he should be lying now in a little court of the mosque, but four walls enclosed him, while overhead a wooden ceiling restricted the upward gaze to the consideration of a somewhat confused pattern in paneling.

He clapped his hands—more tobacco! A girl, resembling the conventional slave girl of an illuminated eastern manuscript, answered the summons. He gave his order, and—“Send for a barber,” he said suddenly, his last command an afterthought.

When half an hour later the dyer returned, he rubbed his eyes unbelievably. He had brought home the night before a disreputable-looking holy man; he gazed now upon—

"A gallant of gallants!" he exclaimed. His guest's face was clean shaven. Attired in his new garments, he looked like a well-born and distinguished young sheik of the desert. The dyer stared where the beard had been. "Did you not regret to part with it?"

"Why should I? Am I *hadji* (pilgrim) or bridegroom? Do I not wish to represent your friend worthily?"

The argument was unanswerable. Still the dervish had displayed an unexpected largeness of spirit in thus dispensing with the flaming insignia of holiness. The dyer acted as if he scarcely knew whether to be pleased or not.

"Why, your own brother would not know you," he said, at length.

"Wouldn't he?" returned the dervish with a peculiar and satisfied smile. He didn't add that to provide for a remote contingency, rather than to look the part of the conventional bridegroom, had been the real reason for this change of appearance. "Well, I'm ready."

So they sallied forth, not too ostentatiously, the bridegroom on an ass and the dyer astride of a

sturdy little donkey, and presently drew up in front of a house. A thick-lipped, ebony-hued *bowwab*, or doorkeeper, of ferocious aspect, admitted the pair; at the same time a veiled woman who had apparently been waiting for them at once came forward.

"Behold the bridegroom!" said the dyer, not without some complacency. "You see I have been true to my promise, oh, Light of Life."

She regarded the young man hastily; her eyes, in which shone suspicion, doubt and misgiving, fairly bored into him.

"I supposed it was a dervish—a good-for-nothing you were to find," she said in a shrewish voice.

"This is such a one," replied the dyer reassuringly.

"Yes; I am, indeed, a good-for-nothing," interjected the dervish with his most amiable smile.

"You should have seen him last night," put in the dyer hastily. "Such rags! Of course, I had to dress him up, in order that the neighbors—you understand?"

"Humph!" she muttered. "In my early days a slave served on such occasions as this; now because there are no slaves, owing to the cursed Christians,

we must go to the highways and gather in Allah knows whom."

"I trust, madam," said the dervish politely, "to make your daughter a good husband."

"Well," she returned sourly, "there is no time to look further. The guests will soon be here. Follow."

He obeyed. She walked in a special atmosphere of venom all her own, which seemed fairly to radiate from her. When she spoke of the "cursed Christians", her tongue was as if dagger-tipped. A listener might divine that she had as much affection for them as an adder for those it would strike. Dominated by her presence, every nook and corner of the silent house suggested lurking perils. It had a mysterious uncanny look. The dervish glanced back toward the entrance to the street. The door leading out was now closed; the big black giant of a *bowwab* stood near by like a guardian presence suggestive of those overgrown demons that act as outer sentinels to an oriental temple. The eye of the large watcher met the dervish as the latter looked back with an expression that seemed to savor of malicious and infernal cunning, and involuntarily the young man straightened while his gaze became

more keen and alert. Without hesitation, however, he strode after the woman through a narrow doorway. The smooth steps leading upward were slippery and he had to be careful. Once he nearly plunged forward, but the woman did not appear to notice; she glided ahead like a specter.

"Wait!" They had arrived at a small room. She spoke the single word, then vanished. The dyer, too, had mysteriously disappeared. The dervish, left alone, looked around with a slightly strained affectation of nonchalance; he tried to act as if he felt at home, as if this were the most natural place for him to be in. The attempt was not altogether successful. How quiet—how unnaturally quiet it was! He strode to the threshold but to find the door locked. Light of Life had turned the key on the outside when leaving. He was a prisoner? Well, not exactly, perhaps. Still, he couldn't get out. Had they locked him in there merely to sequester him temporarily from inquisitive women servants or other folk? Certainly this was strange treatment to accord a bridegroom. The door looked solid and substantial; the sunlight, gleaming grudgingly through a lattice, showed it to be of old-fashioned

construction. Was the place a trap? If so, he might beat his fists in vain on those walls, he was telling himself, when a man's well-remembered voice, somewhere without, was wafted to him.

Sadi's!—he would have sworn to the saddler's tones. What was he doing there, unless—? The dervish listened more attentively, holding his breath. Now he heard nothing. Silence which seemed deeper, more ominous, ensued. The young man forced a laugh. Of course that could not have been Sadi out there. It was unreasonable to suppose him in this house. Unreasonable! The whole proposition for his (the dervish's) employment, as outlined by the dyer, was logical and clear; it could have veiled no complicated or ulterior motives. Still an Oriental's mind is subtle and devious and he moves to an end in a most roundabout fashion.

The dervish continued to stand stock-still, his head slightly tilted, while around him the air seemed charged with vibrating waves. He was alone and yet the cognizance of another presence, close at hand, suddenly smote him. At one end of the room was a wooden screen separating this cell or apartment from another room; beyond was darkness.

He thought he heard a movement and caught a quick indrawn breath. He knew now some one he could not see was regarding him, looking him up and down, studying him. He could almost feel that burning gaze. It began to be most disconcerting. He salaamed politely.

"Sir or Madam!" He used his most respectful form of salutation, though under his cloak his hand touched and closed on a hard handle. The courteous words evoked no response and anger began to move him. Hazards that can not be grasped are most irritating. He strode nearer to the screen. As much sunshine as could enter here limned his figure.

"Take a good look," he said boldly, "whoever you are!"

A faint breath of perfume was wafted toward him. It seemed vaguely reminiscent—he did not know of what. He heard another sound—a sigh?—and his face changed. It was no man who stood behind that screen. He found himself not so blasé as to be incapable of experiencing a thrill.

"Taking a peep at your husband-to-be?" he laughed. "Woman's curiosity! Well, what do you



"Take a good look," he said boldly, "whoever you are"

think of this piece of masculine merchandise?" No answer. "Fie! A wife who won't talk!" He had time for no more. The key again turned in the lock and Light of Life entered.

"Come," she said curtly.

He went. In the larger apartment to which he was conducted, there were a number of people and he gazed at them sharply, but to his relief Sadi, the saddler, was not among the gathering. The dervish *had* then only fancied he had heard that familiar voice. And obviously there *was* going to be a wedding—his own! His momentary suspicions, though natural, had wronged his good friend, the dyer. More blithely the dervish now held himself.

His bride wasn't there. She never is, for Mohammedan weddings are conducted without her. She is indispensable and yet dispensable. She is present only in spirit; a *wekeel*, or go-between, answers for her. A substitute voice does the consenting. The guests are spared the bride's blushes, as the *wekeel* is usually too old and hardened to supply the substitute ones. The present ceremony *was* very properly conducted. Although the groom had

never looked upon the face of his bride and presumably never would, he was married fast and tight. He couldn't have been married tighter.

The go-between had announced: "I betroth to thee," etc., and he had answered (*he* was allowed to answer in his own voice): "I accept from thee," etc. He had answered very well, with just the right degree of ardency—not enough to have been considered decorous. Then some one murmured: "Now may the blessing—" and the trick was done. Those present continued to chant verses from the Koran. They were doing their best to make the occasion seem a holy one. They were straining every nerve to give it a verisimilitude of solemnity. Their earnestness was really touching. They called down kindly encomiums and shouted up loud petitions in the bridegroom's behalf. They pictured for him a garden of bliss. He strove not to appear too elated. The spectacle of the dyer slipping out after the ceremony—to repair to the palace of Amad, no doubt, and to report progress!—was calculated to prevent the bridegroom's being too overwhelmed by a sense of his own good fortune and felicity. Amad was really the one to be congratulated—not he, the pres-

ent ephemeral bridegroom. For him, Fatma would be but a name like those other Fatmas in the story books.

Even while marrying her his thoughts had perversely leaped to another. When he said, "I take thee, Fatma," it was not Fatma, at all, whom he "took". At this psychological moment, by some freak of fancy, the image of the lady of the pastry-shop had recurred to him. It was very reprehensible, but he had thought of her—that other—whom he had caught to his breast, into whose eyes he had gazed and who had then passed on. Whither? As if he cared! For him, deep dark eyes were only deep dark eyes, and he could contemplate them impersonally as an artist might, Allah be praised! A "burnt child," etc. He had had his lesson. Who she was—whether maid or matron—mattered not. She had come and gone. She had gazed at him with big luminous eyes—he wouldn't deny they were very beautiful eyes—and the time had been when he might, perhaps, have fallen madly in love with them—or her. But that time was past. Exit camels! Exit lady!

From these frivolous considerations of the past,

he was somewhat rudely recalled to the present and to his immediate surroundings. His eyes, cynically introspective, had rested, at first casually, then with swift intentness, on a newcomer, a late-comer—Sadi, the saddler! Yes, that person stood there, in the flesh, before him. He was no myth. He had stepped in when the ceremony was about over and was now one of the guests. Probably he had been at the house earlier, had gone away for some reason or other and returned. The dervish waited for him to speak, as one waits for the inevitable; it was a tense moment. But the other continued to stand grim, silent and motionless.

Some one, however, unconscious of the irony of the act, now drew the saddler forward and introduced him to the bridegroom.

"Distant relative of Amad," said the person who did the introducing.

"Distant relative, did you say?" The young man smiled. So Sadi was there as a relative; his presence portended nothing else—nothing more alarming, or ominous? He did not know who he, the bridegroom, was; he had not recognized him. The dyer's words about his "own brother" not knowing

him recurred reassuringly to the bridegroom. The two men saluted as only those of the same faith greet each other.

"*Teiybeen!*" muttered Sadi.

"Allah bless thee," said the dervish fervently.

That was all. But once or twice the bridegroom felt the other's gaze and divined in it an expression in the least puzzled. The ordeal, however, was fortunately coming to a close. The paid *wekeel* now began to sing the customary praises of the bride:

"She is graceful as a gazelle."

"You set my heart on fire," the bridegroom had to answer.

"Her lips are as sherbet of sugar."

He made an appropriate reply.

"And what a handsome bridegroom!" said one of the ladies present, with a little giggle.

"Can you blame my daughter for falling in love with him?"

Light of Life actually said that. The bridegroom bowed an acknowledgment and, in spite of the thrill of the moment, he had to laugh. What a woman! And how ugly must be the face concealed by that veil! Around him the other women moved like

black shadows. All the guests were now talking vivaciously—all except Sadi, who said no word and whose ill-omened countenance had become set and immovable. The *wekeel* finished her task. The bridegroom had to go now—or to be taken away, to a mosque, to pray to become holy enough to see, for the first time, one whom he wasn't going to see at all.

Bidding ceremonious farewell to his new mother-in-law, Light of Life, he left the house with four male relatives—whether of the bride or Amad, he knew not. The saddler, however, was not of them. The last the young man saw of that person he was gazing after him with bent brows, and in spite of the bridegroom's aplomb, something like a cold chill insinuated itself down his back. He felt less sure of Sadi now; that intrusive individual probably would, or already was beginning to put two and two together. He would most likely question the dyer—to learn more about this substitute bridegroom, where they had found him and how he had appeared. And after making these inquiries what conclusions would the saddler draw! The dervish could imagine, and involuntarily he hastened his steps. He wished to

leave the house and the neighborhood behind him as soon as possible.

He could congratulate himself that those who had charge of his nuptials had *not* accentuated the later features of the occasion with superfluous embellishments, more or less encumbering to expedition. No musicians or hautboys lent unnecessary picturesqueness or slowness to their progress. Procession expenses had been eliminated.

The streets were, as usual, crowded, and the escorting quartet kept close to the bridegroom, as if they imagined he might wish to escape now. He did. Circumstances had arisen that made it desirable for him to get away. From their point of view this would be unfortunate, for if he dodged suddenly among the multitude and disappeared, in what a predicament would he leave the young bride? Married and yet with no husband to produce. Her plight would be worse than before. Accordingly their vigilance never relaxed and they acted more like constables of the *sabit* than new-found relatives. He strove to "make conversation", to throw them off their guard, but they answered curtly. Finding his efforts toward sociability of no avail, he relapsed

56 ALADDIN FROM BROADWAY

into silence and began to fear that there was nothing to do except resign himself. But man proposes and Allah disposes. A great hubbub arose in the street.

"Hi! yi!" A procession of donkeys and camels had stampeded. Distracted people rushed hither and thither; they bore down upon the bridegroom and carried him off; unwittingly they absconded with him. He found himself borne along, this way and that. He was not trying to escape; he was just made to; he couldn't help himself. When finally he managed to separate himself from that kidnaping human current, he stood in a narrow side lane. In what part of the city? Ah, he knew now! Yonder was the Street called Straight and there, at the corner, was a certain little pastry-shop. He eyed it furtively. Now why had fate landed him here? To play tricks on him?—to see if he would stand around for another glimpse of the fair unknown? Nonsense! Why should he wish to see her? He didn't. Nothing was further from his thoughts. He would never have come here of his own accord. Now he was here, he would go away. Let her flutter in or flutter out; let her be as beautiful as a dream

—he would repair placidly—that is, as placidly as other circumstances permitted—about his business. This last was rather vague. He didn't know just what his "business" now was, or what it would be. However, he turned his back upon the shop of a thousand succulent delights and was about to move away, when some one spoke to him.

He regarded this person attentively. No, it was not one of the quartet of guardian relatives who had overtaken and now addressed him. This man was a stranger, of grave and dignified bearing, though dressed in the humble attire of a servant. The bridegroom had seen him before. When? Just prior to the stampede? Yes; that was it. They had been swept on together and the other, too, had apparently emerged here, or not far away.

"I fear you have torn your cloak," said the man in respectful accents. "If you will come with me, the house where I serve is near and I shall see that it is mended."

"Very kind of you," returned the bridegroom mechanically. These courtesies between Mohammedans were common. He followed the other. Why not? He wanted time to think. He *was* at liberty and

he had *not* run away. Should he return to his captors, and what might afterward await him? To stay; to go? If he went?—poor Fatma! If he stayed?—poor dervish! Of course he detested all women, but a man must treat them with a certain consideration. He could picture the poor girl wringing her hands and wailing: "What shall I do?" What should *he* do? And yet—to toss a wife literally to the winds?—hum! it wouldn't be exactly gallant. He could hear them all wailing: "Lost! A husband!" His problem was certainly growing. It promised to become a truly big one. The *sheytan* (devil) take the *dyeri*! The dervish continued to walk after his guide; at the house where that person served, he (the bridegroom) would, at least, find momentary refuge and opportunity to consider. He could determine then what course was best or least disastrous to pursue. He would have to think hard. The house, as the other had said, was close by.

A door opened and closed on the dervish, shutting him from the street. He stood in a flowering space within a mansion. A fountain tinkled in the center of the garden, but he did not see it. His eyes were fastened on some one who arose from its marble

edge. At the same time the servant who had brought him thither mysteriously disappeared. The bridegroom stared as at a vision. He thought himself well schooled against surprises, but this one upset his poise. All his previous thoughts went a-glimmering. His heart, though hardened, accelerated a beat or two. Had he jumped from Tale One Thousand and Two into Tale One Thousand and Three?

CHAPTER V

IN THE GARDEN

IT WAS the lady of the pastry-shop who confronted him. He had no intention of going to look for her, but apparently he had come to her, nevertheless. Or he had been brought thither! Why? He felt like rubbing his eyes or pinching himself to see if it was really true that he stood there, and with her—alone—in that lovely flowery place. A moment before he had been an escaping bridegroom, reveling in the perplexities of his new-found freedom; now he found himself plunged into a different rôle and one that promised to complicate further his already sufficiently embarrassing situation. Not that he was thinking of this!

As on that other occasion when he had met her, it was the immediate personal appeal of the lady herself—or her attractions—which absorbed him. A second meeting with her—and on a more intimate

basis—brought no esthetic disappointment. She was radiantly young and beautiful. Moreover, she made no pretense, this time, of concealing her loveliness; she wore no veil whatever, exposing her face freely to the now unconsciously ardent gaze of the young man. Yet she did this without effrontery—simply, naturally as one who felt no occasion to be ashamed or abashed at Allah's handiwork.

He waited for her to speak, but she did not do so at once. He straightened; then he endeavored to look gallant, but the situation—withal the appeal of her beauty!—struck him as rather preposterous. Here was he, a newly-married man, in another lady's boudoir, or courtyard. It was quite improper, though no doubt it should be very exhilarating. It wasn't really the last, he told himself, though when he looked at her a warmer breath seemed sweeping over him, as a dreamer in an oasis feels at times a wave from the sands wafted through the interstices of his cool retreat.

"I sent for you," she said.

"So I imagined," he answered.

"I had to send for you."

"I am honored." He bowed.

That was as far as they got for the moment. A mutual constraint seemed to fall on them. Perhaps his eyes were too bold, though he didn't intend them to be. What was he to do next? What did she expect of him? Not to make love to her, certainly! And yet she had sent for him. There is only one reason why women do that in the Orient. He gave her a quick elderly-brother kind of look. He would not have believed it of her—with those eyes!—wells of pellucid clearness! She, so young, so fair! An intrigue! He, a cynic, ought not to be surprised, though. Especially as he was a principal in the matter. He ought to feel flattered. He should fall on one knee—press her little hand, or the hem of her gown. Hum! the little hand was inviting enough, if one cared for that rôle. It looked white as a snowflake against the warm-hued gown. It would nestle cosily enough, no doubt, in a man's big palm, the while he murmured words—they hummed in his mind, on a sudden—such words! Most appropriate ones; fine ones; a *sheytan* seemed breathing them in his ear. His eyes glowed with them—the unspoken phrases. Did she read and understand that insidious, if involuntary, masculine, telepathic communication?

She should, logically, all in all considered, have received it gladly and responsively. Instead she seemed to shrink from it. Some instinct now arrested the trend of that too impetuous and unworthy message in the man's brain. His gaze narrowed more critically—not quite impersonally yet, however—the situation was too extraordinary and bizarre! He had to get back to the primal consideration—she had sent for him—she met him alone, unveiled. He shook his head; he began to feel severe and stern again; figuratively he waved aside the imp-like *sheytan* who would have gone on with uncommendable promptings. Under the circumstances it is not surprising that he should behave stupidly.

"I am here," he said. He couldn't think of anything else to say.

"I thank you," she answered. Nothing ardent about that! Nothing ardent about the eyes! Nothing ardent about the inflexible young figure! But logic—what a cynic is logic!—battled with appearances. She had not asked him here—there was no reason why she should have asked him here for the interchange of mere empty platitudes. He remembered his own daring words to her before the pastry-shop. Did they suggest a solution? Modesty—his

own— forbade, and yet—women sometimes did take sudden and most extraordinary fancies. Had she sent for him because—? Impossible! He, the beggar; she, the fine lady! It would be like one of those fantastic tales of the romance reciters to hashish-steeped brains—a tale of the wonderful princess and the poor porter variety! No, no, no! He would have dismissed the possibility but there was that miserable *sheytan* again who always likes to be present on these occasions whispering absurd fancies in his brain.

“Madam,” he said, “are you married?”

“I am.”

He shook his head mournfully. “Thought so,” he muttered. “Thank you for the cake!”

“What cake?”

“The one the dog got.” Listlessly.

“What are you talking about?” she said.

He did not explain, nor did she ask further his meaning. She did not know him; she did not recognize the dervish in him. Of course not! He should have known she wouldn't; he did know, really. He had merely thrown out the words in a casual hopeless sort of way, because he was mentally so en-

tangled by the divers and complicated webs enmeshing him.

She was now nervously clasping and unclasping her hands. She had forgotten his last words; most likely she had hardly heard them; her mind seemed wholly absorbed with thoughts of her own. Though she looked at the young man she seemed scarcely to see him. Her gaze was the antithesis to what the poets would have it under these romantic circumstances, for was he not handsome, young and attractive enough, as men are attractive to women? Yet he suddenly experienced the feeling that he was but a lay figure in her eyes—something to be moved, shifted, adjusted or set, to meet certain requirements, or needs. It was a descent from the sublime, but he didn't feel much hurt about it. After all, a lay figure has a charming irresponsibility of its own. It doesn't have to take the initiative; it is a passive creation. It is not expected to answer for anything. The dervish smiled; she was far off now—not really, but like a figure in a picture you half close your eyes to look at. He was content to contemplate; he permitted his brain to stop working too actively.

"I sent my servant to find you," she went on. He nodded. "He found me." These words immediately struck him as being superfluous, like his presence there.

"I told him to go to the mosque and fetch you," she continued more hurriedly.

"To the mosque?" he murmured with a faint inflection of surprise. "Why there?"

"Because he would find you there!"

"But how did you know?"

"I knew you were to go to—to pray."

"Yes," he said, "I'm supposed to be praying now." His accents were frivolous. He seemed to have jumped from one absurdity into another.

"My servant was to say words that would bring you here," she went on quickly.

"Words?—ah, what words?" Dully.

"Surely you know—since you *are* here."

The dervish made a deprecatory gesture. "Maybe I ought to know, but I don't. I don't seem to know very much," he added humbly. "I didn't get as far as the mosque."

"You didn't?" she said.

"No. With the best intentions I was carried off.

But it was not my fault! Blame the donkeys!"

"I don't understand." She spoke wonderingly.

He explained. The humor of the situation seemed now to appeal to him, but she didn't even smile. "I—I thought it was soon for you to be here," she said.

"I tore my coat. Your man offered to have it mended if I followed him."

"I see now." Her eyes expressed enlightenment.

"Wish I did," he muttered.

"That was why it was so easy—to get you here, I mean." Her gaze studying him clearly.

"Yes, it was just as easy!" Helplessly.

"I feared he might have difficulty, though I hoped and prayed he would not. He was to kneel near you in the great mosque and whisper words to attract your attention. He was to make you come." More excitedly.

"And why should you have wanted to see me—so much?" said the man.

"As I told you, it was necessary." She came nearer, the clear eyes shining with suppressed feeling. "There is something I want you to do."

"Ask it!" He spoke readily. "But first, if you

68 ALADDIN FROM BROADWAY

will pardon my curiosity, how did you happen to know I was going to the mosque at all?"

"I couldn't help knowing."

"Then you are a friend of the family?" he cried.

"I am your wife," she said simply.

CHAPTER VI

THE SURPRISE

"MY WIFE!" He looked at her. "So—? Ah—?" He tried not to appear surprised. "My—" He stopped and looked at her again. "Quite so! I've just been married. Got to have a wife. Can't be married without one!" He studied her more closely. "You! Pardon me—" He stroked his chin. First she had attracted him in front of the pastry-shop—though she didn't know about that!—and then she had married him, or he had married her, or they had married him to her. It didn't much matter how it had come about, only it had happened. "You—my—" he began again.

"Is there any necessity of repeating it?" she said. There was a flush on her face.

"Not at all! Not at all!" he answered absently. His "wife" *was* handsome; there was no denying that. A bride for a sultan, if he wanted a bride; but he, the dervish, didn't! He was sure of that. But that confounded dyer had told him he was to



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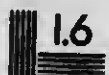
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be married and yet "not be married"! He was not to see the bride. They had deceived him. He ought to feel very indignant; he had a right to. He tried to imagine himself both indignant and annoyed. Why, the girl was even lovelier than he had thought! All the more reprehensible on their part for hoodwinking him like this! Or stay, perhaps they didn't know? Most likely not! This was his wife's doing—hers, alone—*she* wanted to see him.

His brain was now a whirlpool; ideas danced and bobbed about in it like chips on the seething waters. He began to feel mildly intoxicated, not with her, or her beauty, but with the novelty of the moment. His wife!—his bride!—his honeymoon! It promised to be more exciting than he had dreamed. And he had looked forward to a calm and placid period in the seclusion of the dyer's house, where tobacco and coffee and other creature comforts of the lot of a benedict, or of a man who is "married without being married", were to have been his for the asking. The dervish sighed. What we imagine, what we dream, is seldom realized! His gaze returned to Fatma and lingered. He did not have to exercise any great effort of will to keep on looking at her.

"You were telling me? Where were we?" he said. "Which leads me to ask very pertinently, and I trust not impertinently, where am I?" Looking around him.

"You are in my house."

"Your house? I don't understand."

"It belonged to my own mother."

"But aren't you supposed to be at your stepmother's—at her home?"

"I am."

"Then why—?"

"Is it not apparent? I came here to see you?"

"And your stepmother doesn't know?"

"She doesn't."

"Nor—?"

"Any of the others!" She spoke with sudden passionate impatience. Her face at that moment was as wilful as it was proud.

He looked down uncertainly. "Afraid you've been very imprudent," he muttered. "A rendezvous with your own husband!" He gazed at her sardonically. "You really shouldn't—I mean, you ought not to have done it."

"You mean I have been unmindful of the risk to

you? You fear?" The fine eyes could blaze, the red lips curl. How straight the slender figure; like a young palm!

"Hum! And what if I do?"

"I did not think of that."

"You didn't think? When did you think about it at all? Ah, when you were studying me from behind the screen!" She did not deny. "And what if I should say I *were* a little afraid?" he added with a smile.

"I should try to see if your cupidity was not greater than your fears," she returned disdainfully.

"Cupidity? Oh, you mean you would try to buy me?"

"Of course."

"With gold?"

"Gold, or jewels. I have both."

"And you think you could do that—buy me?"

"Of course," she said again. Her tone was matter-of-fact. It seemed to imply that he wasted time in useless quibbling.

He shook his head approvingly. How he had misjudged her! There was no thought of love-making in her eyes. No tender errand of the heart

had brought her here. Her mission, whatever it could be, was of a practical nature. She wanted to buy something. He was like a *tagir*, or merchant who had goods to sell. She was there to bid. Would he have to say in oriental fashion: "Receive it as a gift, my dear patron," and then prepare himself to bargain to the bitter end? Those beautiful eyes were shopping eyes. Better so; far better so! He heaved a commendatory sigh.

"But what if—just suppose the possibility—you couldn't buy, what you wanted to buy, from me?" he threw out tentatively.

"I am rich," she said disdainfully.

She had always an answer. This was certainly a simple one. It said plainer than words that it was, or would be, all a question of "price" with him. And she was prepared to pay. Her manner was as haughty as that of a grand lady. She made him feel very small, though he was taller by a good deal than she. He looked down on her from his superior height with a certain patient apathy. Her hair, like the wing of a dark bird, shaded the fair face, emphasizing its proud pallor and beauty. Above the eyes, which seemed to say they would have what they

wanted, her brows were as two straight soft feathers that had fallen from the wing. The lashes curled long and enticingly beneath. They were most romantic lashes—for bargaining. A poet would have fallen prone before them. The dervish, though, stood his ground.

“What would you have me do?” he said. “Maybe it won’t cost you so much as you think. I am not very avaricious. My wants are simple I—I might even do it for nothing.”

“For nothing?” she repeated incredulously.

“Yes; without charge. That surprises you?”

“It does.”

“You think every man is to be bought and sold like—” He stopped; his voice had begun to have a slightly indignant ring. Ridiculous!

Her lashes had lifted. A faint look of curiosity shone in the eyes they so fully revealed. He came down to the level of his own position abruptly. Hadn’t he bargained with them—that cursed dyer and the other fellow? Oh, folly of follies! Was he not but a *mustahall*—a substitute husband? Could the lady do “business” with him? Of course—from her standpoint! From his?—had he a right

to a standpoint? Would he not have to look at the situation from her point of view? Had they not robbed him of his identity, his own personality? Had they not shorn him of all the finer instincts? He must act, seem and comport himself like a graceless, bold young scoundrel of the desert. He tried to look brigandish; he made a special effort as her eyes were now studying his features. He sought to temper in his own gaze any casual admiration for her charms with the furtive restless gleam of an outlaw on the lookout for stray jewels. He even glanced at the lady's fingers; they were devoid of ornament. He endeavored to appear disappointed, but only succeeded in looking foolish.

"Want me to do something, do you?" he murmured. "Well, what is it?"

She seemed to hesitate. The fine face expressed a shadow of trouble or embarrassment. Perhaps it was not easy to tell him, this paid *mustahall*, what she wanted? Perhaps she would have to unveil some secret one would not reveal willingly to such as he. But she must have gone over all that; she must already have decided to pursue this course. It is, however, easier to determine on a certain plan

than it is to pursue it—when the inevitable moment for action arrives. The lady still hesitated. Her face even flushed. He saw and divined, and straightway he forgot himself for just a moment. He shed the degrading spirit of the *mustahall*; he emerged from that part as from a detestable cocoon. The trouble in her eyes had flashed like a wireless message through the air and somewhere, beneath his gay *kamees*, had found a receiving station.

"What is it?" he cried. And then—"Trust me," he added fervently.

"Trust—you?" said the lady with undisguised amazement. He came to himself with a start.

"Seems to me you've got to," he observed bluntly. He was angry with himself—maybe slightly annoyed with her. Again he strove to look like an unscrupulous villain. It was an anomalous rôle. Fancy trying to make your own wife think you worse than you are! It was against all precedent. Husbands—especially newly-wedded ones—always want their wives to think them a little better than they are. No wonder he found his rôle a trying one! It was unnatural; that's what it was; unnatural. But he hadn't wanted to be married, anyway. At

least, she might be frank and help him out. Had he awakened her suspicions; did she find him different from what she had expected—the conventional *mus'ahall*? That would be awkward—deuced!

“You want me to do something,” he went on. “Is it something your stepmother would approve of?”

“No, no!” No doubt of the emphasis.

“Ah, then, it is something surreptitious,” he murmured brilliantly.

“Would I come here if it were not?” she retorted.

“Your stepmother is your enemy? She has you in her power?” he went on. She did not answer; the dark brows, drawn a little closer together, gave her eyes a more intent look. He walked thoughtfully away a step or two, then turned. “Maybe I can guess the source of your trouble,” he said more lightly. “You have been a little dubious about the advisability of this—this expedient?”

“What do you mean?” Her breast was stirring slightly.

“This marriage!”

“No!”

“Of course, not the marriage itself with me—that was necessary. It wasn't quite that I meant.

What I was about to say was, you have entertained certain doubts concerning possible consequences because of the need of your taking me," with a wave of his hand intended to be reassuring, "for your husband. The whole trouble is right there. You had to have what you didn't want. I sympathize with your position. And when you got what you had to have, but didn't want, you asked yourself what if that which you didn't want, you would have to keep on having?"

She caught her breath quickly. "I don't believe I understand."

"Your mind is naturally timorous under the circumstances. What woman's wouldn't be? That is, what woman of delicate sensibilities?"

"Will you make yourself plainer?" she said disdainfully. This *mustahall* promised to be a most presumptuous fellow.

"I shall try," he laughed. "You have heard of false *mustahalls*, those who do not keep to the strict letter of their bargain?" Her look changed. "You have feared I might prove such a one!" Gaily. Her eyes seemed insistently to bid him go on. "These

fellows fall in love, or pretend to fall in love, for selfish reasons, with those they have married."

"Yes?" Her voice was low, intense. She looked at him as if he exercised, at that moment, a kind of uncanny fascination for her.

"Sometimes these substitute husbands have to be paid very high in piasters to divorce those whom they claim have thrown a spell over them. They are sad rascals. They sigh—they profess reluctance to go—but they go in the end."

"Well?" she said in a still small voice.

"Do I have to explain further? The source of your anxiety is as apparent as yonder cloud in the sky. You fear that now you are my wife—ha! ha!—*I may refuse to divorce you!*"

The red lips parted suddenly as if to speak, but no sound fell from them. The man smiled knowingly.

"It wouldn't be hard for a husband of the moment to pretend that, in this case," he said lightly. "That he had fallen in love with you, I mean!" Shades of the roses, how her face glowed! How the deep eyes flashed with sudden fire! And the proud head

tipped back! He lifted an admonishing hand. "But have no fear! I am not falling in love, or even pretending to fall in love with any one—not even, my wife!" With a bow. "Though she is so—" He paused on the verge of a compliment. "Therefore, reassure yourself. Dismiss these fears. I am a true *mustahall*." Tapping his breast. "I have made my bargain and I keep to it. I do not want a double commission. It—it might ruin my business in the future. You see I make a profession of marrying and then unmarried. And give a *mustahall* a bad name—" He had to explain his magnanimity. "You understand? He would court a diminishing patronage; is it not so?"

She regarded him as if spellbound. The shadow of the cloud passed between them and vanished up the side of the wall. The fountain tinkled most musically. It was the only sound. A big buccaneer of a bee stood almost on its head in its greedy desire to extract all the honey from a wee modest rose. The falling water was soothing. It seemed to sing a sweet little song—a kind of domestic lullaby. What better world than here?—the blue sky overhead?—the scent of the flowers around

you?—it seemed to murmur. The dervish listened. It was a very hypnotic little fountain. It had a voice that entered your ears and filtered down into your breast. It made you lift up your head somewhat, the way callow youthful people do, when recalling favorite lines of poetry seems a worthy occupation. Did its insidious murmur include the lady? Or was she but an unwitting part?

The dervish, or newly married bridegroom, gave his shoulders a characteristic jerk.

"This is your house, I believe you said." He spoke in a dispassionate tone. "Who lives here?"

"A caretaker and his wife," she said mechanically.

"Call them in." Incisively.

"Why?"

"What is to be done, should be done at once. They shall be witnesses."

"What do you mean? What are you going to do?" Breathlessly. He had stepped toward the house.

"What I should do; what I have agreed to do!" Briskly. "I am going to divorce you—set you free, now—at once!"

"But," she began, "that is just what I—"

A loud knocking at the gate interrupted. She stood very still. The man looked around—toward the gate. "Do you think it is—?"

She did not answer. Her servant, the caretaker, appeared from the house. He regarded his mistress inquiringly. She held her fingers to her lips as if cautioning him to be silent, then with a gesture indicated the gate. The servant walked toward it.

CHAPTER VII

A CALLER

“WHO is there?” The servant called out. A voice outside answered, then asked a question. The servant replied negatively.

“But my mistress insists,” came in louder accents from the other side of the gate.

“Tell your mistress that I, the caretaker, and my wife are here alone. Peace go with you!”

“And with you!” returned the man in the street with but little zest. Then footsteps shuffled away as if reluctant to be gone. The servant stepped to his mistress.

“It was—” He murmured a name and once more disappeared. The bridegroom gazed after him admiringly.

“My wife certainly has loyal servants,” he muttered. “Falsehoods flow from his lips like oil.” She did not seem to hear; her face expressed a new

anxiety, and— "Some one from your step-mother's?" he asked quickly.

"Yes."

"They have noted your absence?"

Again she answered mechanically in the affirmative. That he was at large was also probably known, by this time, at the home of Light of Life.

"Will they look for me here?"

"They might." She continued to stand with head down-bent.

"Then they would have to suspect *you* of wanting to see me?" Categorically.

"It is possible—it is even probable."

"They must not find me here." Emphatically.

She raised her dark tragic eyes. "You *do* fear, then, *mustahall!*" she said with unspeakable disdain.

"I might reply you should think of the consequences to you, if I am discovered in this place." More gently.

"Well, well, you are right to fear," she went on, as if not catching his words.

"You mean they would not spare me?" He professed dismay.

"What do you think?"

"I can guess" And he could. Some one would be very jealous of her. The girl's beauty was of the type that fans a flame; her witchery would go to certain masculine brains like the rich wine of Lebanon. Daggers and scimitars loomed large upon the hymeneal horizon of the dervish's immediate future. No cupid's arrow, but a big shining blade would probably pierce his heart. At least, his first matrimonial experience promised not to be dull or monotonous. They would not sit and yawn at each other. He wondered absently what she would do if the worst happened to him? Would she scream, or would she laugh? The latter would perhaps be more appropriate. She had a most musical laugh. He seemed to hear it again wafted down from a housetop, or from the heavens. Was it less than a day since he had looked up at the pink pulsating star? What a big full day it had been!

"No, they would not spare you," she said calmly, fatalistically and conclusively.

"They?" he repeated. That, of course, meant "him"—his predecessor at the altar! The dervish regarded her in a far-away manner. Somehow, it

didn't seem possible she had ever been married before; he didn't know why it didn't, but it didn't. The impression was very strong, though he couldn't exactly explain it. Only it was as if she appeared in a rôle she did not fit. She was so very young, so girlish-looking, despite her proud ways—so—so—everything that didn't harmonize, or dovetail with what was! But, after all, so much that was, seemed impossible.

"That would be too bad," he remarked, jumping back to her last words.

"I don't believe you *are* afraid," she said suddenly.

"Oh, yes, I am. Only perhaps I am forgetting to show it. So much else to think about!"

"You do but jest," she said haughtily. And yet did her eyes gleam on him with a little more favor?

"I assure you I am feeling most uncomfortable," he remarked.

"Why do you say what is not so?" Severely.

"Wish I knew what was so and what wasn't!" he murmured. "For example, why should they cut a man's throat for seeing his own wife? Most illogical! Now, if it were some other man's wife—"

He paused abruptly. "Which reminds me there was something I was going to do when we were interrupted. If you will kindly overlook the unavoidable delay, I shall now proceed to--"

"No; no; that is just what you mustn't do," exclaimed the girl feverishly.

"I beg your pardon--"

"That is why I sent for you—that you would not do it!"

"Not?" He blinked slightly. The sun was very bright here and shone in his eyes. "You mean I—that you want me, *not* to divorce?"

"Yes."

"Not to set you free?"

"Yes. I wish to remain your wife!"

He lifted his hand to his brow. He had been treated to a few surprises before, but this one seemed of rather larger dimensions than the others. Had he heard correctly? As far as he knew there was nothing wrong with his hearing. He turned the words over in his mind. They were certainly simple and direct enough; there was no chance for a misunderstanding. She wanted to continue to be his wife! She! He was not to be permitted to

remain a mere nuptial chimera. He was, if she had her way, to become a connubial fixture. He looked at her with a smile—a rather silly one.

"Is it a jest?" he thought of saying, but he didn't. A few moments before she had accused him of jesting. He knew she, however, was in deadly earnest, tragically so. Her expression left no doubt in his mind on that score.

"I wish to remain your wife!"

The words were reechoing in his brain. The fountain seemed to whisper them—the leaves to murmur them. Under some circumstances, a man might have felt flattered by such a declaration from one whose provocative graces were comparable to those of the fabled *horeyehs* of Paradise, but the dervish hugged no pleasing unction of this nature to his soul.

"Would you mind explaining?" he said in a matter-of-fact a tone as he could muster.

"Is—is it necessary?" she asked.

"No—a. I suppose not. Explanations, a waste of time!" Ironically.

"That is quite true." She accepted his words literally. "We shall come to an understanding, the

sooner." Her tone was almost businesslike. She had regained, in a great measure, her equipoise. He regarded her with mild wonder. Her character seemed to develop amazingly; her resourcefulness was remarkable. Her determination promised to brook no opposition; to sweep aside all obstacles. His wife was not a "wishy-washy" being. Quite the contrary! "What I expect from you modifies, of course, your original arrangement," she continued. "Therefore, you should receive extra compensation. I have come prepared. Here"—thrusting her hand into the bosom of her dress—"are jewels, a fortune to such as you."

The man looked at them. She was no niggardly pay-mistress—that was certain. And what a setting for the gleaming and glistening baubles—that soft rosy palm she held extended! It seemed to invite kisses rather than to offer jewels. Did she notice now an involuntary quickening of his gaze and misinterpret it? "Well, why don't you take them since they attract you so? Extra work, extra compensation!" The red lips curving. "Even you, who professed to being a conscientious *mustahall*, need have no compunctions." From her accents it

was evident she did not think he would have any, and as she spoke she let the gems slip from her hand to a brass table. He could take them when he would. But the fellow seemed prone to prolong the interview unduly. Perhaps he was deeper than she thought.

"It is asking a good deal," he temporized. "It is more than I bargained for." It was, indeed! "I—I wouldn't have entered, at all, upon this tender relationship," he blundered on, "had I not understood—"

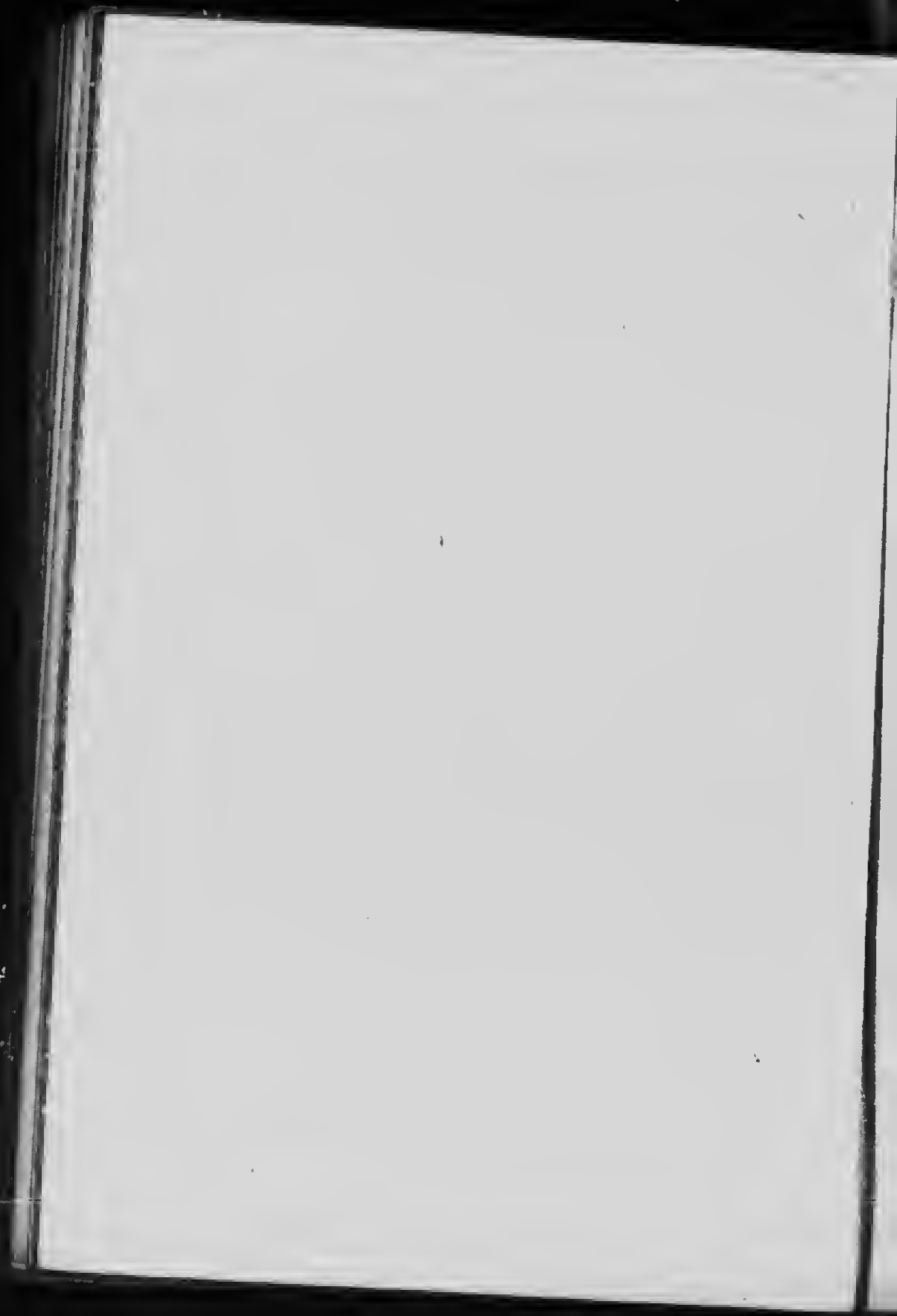
"You were to divorce me immediately afterward?"

"Exactly!"

"But why should *you* be so particular?" Her voice began to show the nervous tension she labored under. The little hand that had extended the jewels was now tightly closed at her side. "A wife, more or less, what does it matter to you? You go away; you forget about it; you can marry as many times as you please. It is the law—the law for men! Even the lower! As for me, I remain; I am still a wife—yours! No one can gainsay that." There was a glad thrill in her voice.



"Here are jewels, a fortune to such as you"



"You call *that* being a wife?" He could not resist the desire to scoff. Her satisfaction was too preposterous. She seemed fairly to exult in that way of being married—of becoming a kind of phantom bride!—she who was not a phantom at all, but a radiant and most alluring actuality. "I either want a wife or I don't want one. I certainly don't want one that way. Besides, why is it necessary? It isn't. Didn't you weep to be taken back by the other?"

"What?"

"Weep! And how can you go back to him, if you remain my wife?" he went on glibly. "You can't be the wife of both of us—that is, at the same time. A man may have two wives, but a wife can't have two husbands."

"Who told you I—wept to be taken back?" said the girl in low tense tones.

"El Sabbagh."

"He lied." Succinctly.

"Eh?" The dervish stared at the slender figure, the uplifted head. "You didn't want to be taken back," he said incredulously.

"I didn't; I don't!" She forgot apparently, for

the moment, that he was only a *mustahall*, and spoke with burning intensity. Though she stood very still she seemed quivering with emotion. The man could not but be acutely aware of it.

"Then why," he asked helplessly, "did you marry me?"

"It was you, or some one else. The bride has no voice. The *wekeel* speaks. The bride may be wringing her hands above. She is forced to marry, if others will it."

"Hum!" he muttered. Perhaps *she* had been "wringing her hands," because she had to marry him. And now that she had him, and could get rid of him, she didn't want to.

"A girl? What is she?" There was a smoldering resentment in the wonderful passionate eyes. "Nothing! But a man—any man—even the meanest *mustahall*, has every privilege under the law. He can marry and divorce at will. Or he can keep his wife as long as he wishes. So it is necessary to deal with such as you," mockingly, "to buy my freedom!"

"Freedom?" he said. "Do you call it buying your freedom, to tie yourself to me?"

"Isn't it?"

He pondered. A paradox! In remaining his wife, she was free. What, however, did that make of him? A nullity! Manhood protested. This imperious young woman took a good deal for granted. To be a cipher for a day or two might be endured, but to be one for a hundred or a thousand days—to permit one's self to become an endless multiplication of ciphers? It was not to be borne. He would assert himself. He would gird on his armor. He had need to. He recognized the danger in the situation for him. He had had experience in woman's ways, or wiles, and here, there was sorcery in the air. Every perfumed breath warned him. Youth and beauty in distress! What an undermining combination! Blessed be those powers of resistance which he had cultivated!

He drew himself up to his full stature. "I beg your pardon," he said distantly but gently, "what you ask is quite—"

He got no further. It may be she was not so assured as she seemed, that her confident bearing was more or less assumed, for the straight proud figure seemed to waver, and she put out her hand

with a most human and impulsive gesture—not at all the grand dame kind of a gesture! For the moment she seemed unequal to the stronger part and gave evidence of a palpable and feminine weakness which threatened to play havoc with that earlier haughty composure.

“You must not refuse—you must not!” She was very girlish as she spoke, appealingly so. “I have really brought them all—all!”

“All?” he said, as not understanding.

“Yes.” Eagerly. “All my jewels! Every one.”

“Oh!” His face grew sterner. She thought he might want to bargain further—that he was only holding off because he might get more. He was beginning to feel annoyed. Her persistence was as disconcerting as her methods for keeping a husband were questionable. To buy—to wheedle—any way to have her own way! How like the sex!

“See here!” he began roughly, and stopped. Something in her eyes stopped him—a light that was not a bargaining light. He could not speak roughly to her, so he bit his lip impatiently and strode to and fro. The girl watched him. He passed the table with the jewels on it and felt like kicking it over. He

laughed savagely. A fine predicament! He looked at her almost resentfully. How some men would welcome the chance to marry her. His predecessor, for example! But she wouldn't have him, no doubt, because he was willing and available. Woman's perversity! In the case of that other, however, it would, of course, be a real marriage; not such foolish business as this! He glowered at her charms and quickly she looked away. From his six feet or so of superb masculinity he gazed down at her with frowning disapproval. Her face was sad now—confound it! What a face it was, too, when sad! How one of his painter friends who were always looking for the intangible and the inexpressible would exclaim at the sight of it. The brow like snow—the perfect profile—the eyes fixed as if studying the future!

“See here,” he began again roughly, when she stepped suddenly to him. Her manner was feverish.

“It came to me, when I looked at you from behind the screen at Light of Life's, that you might not be quite like the others,” she said rapidly. “I mean—I do not know quite what I mean!—but you were not just as I thought you, a paid *mustahall*,

would be. That thought occurred to me but I dismissed it. It was too preposterous. I forgot it. *Mustahalls* are *mustahalls*. But it came to me again."

"Again?" he repeated.

"Just now!"

"Why?"

"I can't exactly tell. Perhaps it was when you passed the table and looked at them—" Her white hand indicated the jewels. "Your face seemed to say—"

"What?" He could not but smile. His wife was certainly a versatile young woman. She had penetration and was a good deal of a sibyl.

"I can't just define it," she said, almost wearily, "only"—looking at him and yet beyond him—"if I can't make you do what I want without them, it may be I can't—with them. I don't know why. It is hard to understand. You must be different from other *mustahalls*.

He regarded her now, not annoyedly, but contemplatively. Her powers of divination might prove disastrous. He was skating on thin ice.

"Suppose I didn't divorce you?" he began.

"Yes—?" Joyously.

"What would your—Amad say?"

"He—" Her voice became almost fierce. She certainly looked her aversion for that person.

"You see, he—he employed me," suggested the dervish gently.

"But he misrepresented—"

"That is true." The dervish started.

"He told you I wept. I!—I!" Her laugh was like the murmur of an icy brook.

Involuntarily the dervish shivered. "And I asked particularly about that, too," he observed. "They assured me—I mean the dyer—that I should be a benefactor."

"And you wouldn't have consented, if you had known I hated him?"

"Amad?"

"Yes, yes; if you had known I both hate and despise—that I would kill myself rather than ever go back to him?"

"Kill yourself?" he repeated. His pulses were beating stronger. It was as if he had unconsciously, even against his will, caught a little of her excitement, the tense feeling under which she labored—

which seemed to carry her on, without thought now —“You!”

“You wouldn’t have consented if you had known that?” she asked again. “Tell me quick. I must know. Tell me!”

He started to answer impetuously; he almost did. The girl had temperament; she was most convincing and he had been nearly swept along by her. But he caught himself in time.

“I think I should have considered further before embarking on the enterprise,” he returned after a moment’s forced hesitation.

“You would?” There was both gladness and triumph in her tone. His answer seemed as much, if not more, than she had expected. “I was not wrong, then, though I dared not believe—” She came closer to the young man and a contagious exhilaration seemed to emanate from her. He felt it subtly.

He moved slightly. “At least I should have made a few inquiries before committing myself,” he confessed rather stiffly. Deuce take it! What extraordinary physical beauty the girl possessed! The idea of standing so close to your wife and being afraid of touching her! He felt, on a sudden, he wanted

to get away—not that there was really any danger of his making a fool of himself. Not at all; he had long since got past that sort of thing. However it was time to go.

“All right,” he said briskly. “I’ll not divorce you.” After all, his keeping her as his wife did mean little to him. His objections had been more sentimental than practical. He could afford to waive them magnanimously. “Besides, I’ve carried out half my contract with them,” he laughed. “Enough to pay for the square meal they gave me! I imagine we’re about quits, under the circumstances.”

“Allah reward you,” said the girl. Was there moisture in her eyes?

“Pooh!” He waved a hand. “As you pointed out, it is nothing for me to do. A few wives, more or less—eh? What is she about now?” This last to himself.

For the girl had turned quickly, picked up an object from somewhere and stepped back with it. “A Koran,” she said. “I had it ready.”

“For what?” The moisture had already vanished from her eyes.

“For the oath you are to take; one no Moham-medan would dare break.”

"Oh, I have to take an oath?" Truly his wife was very businesslike; she certainly took no chances. "Couldn't you stretch a point," he went on with accents slightly hurt, "and trust me?"

"I could," said the girl, "only," practically, "this way is better. If you broke the oath you would be plunged into Hades."

"But suppose I swore never to divorce you, and you changed your mind some day? Women do, you know. What would you do then?" he demanded.

"I shall not change my mind. I don't ever want to get married again."

"You may only think you don't. You are rather young, and—ahem!—not unattractive. Perhaps the right man may come along some day and—"

"I hate all men." With finality.

"But you may not always. And then to be encumbered with me? That would be awkward, wouldn't it? Suppose we modify the oath?" Suspicion began to shine in the dark eyes that studied him. She had been brought up in a hard school. "Suppose I swear to keep you for my wife, as long as you want me to?"

"But I shall never see you again."

"Hum! That is so."

She bent forward quickly, the Koran in her hands. "Put your hand on it," she said.

He did so. The glory of her dark hair waved before him—almost touched him. His fingers were on the book. They thrilled, but not through contact with it. Her own fingers were touching his. That could hardly be avoided for the book was not large. A wave of sweetness seemed ascending from the sacred volume into his arms. It seemed getting into his head, too.

"I solemnly swear that I will keep thee, Fatma," said a voice. It was soft, low and penetrating.

"I solemnly swear that I will keep thee, Fatma—" How solemn his own voice! He couldn't help feeling somewhat sober. He heard no longer the fountain or saw the flowers. He saw only her, the background a strange blur.

"—keep thee, Fatma, for my wife, forever—"

"—keep thee, Fatma, for my wife, forever!" It was done. He had taken the oath. He looked deep into her eyes. They seemed to invite him, though of course they didn't mean to. But they were the

kind of eyes that would invite any man—any real human man—without intending to. He felt he was about to do something foolish, perhaps—she was his forever—a most desirable possession! He was forgetting himself, when suddenly the girl started back. The book fell from her hand.

CHAPTER VIII

AN INTERRUPTED HONEYMOON

THE servant had again come out of the house and approached them. Obviously he had serious news to impart, for his customary grave demeanor had undergone a change. The man's face showed excitement.

"Oh, my mistress, Amad-Ahl-Masr is here!"

"Here?" she exclaimed wildly. "Where?"

"At the side entrance to the house. There are others with him, and he says if we do not unlock the door, they will force their way in."

"Quick!" The girl turned to the dervish and there was consternation on her features. "You must go!"

"Go?" His fingers yet thrilled from the touch of hers.

"Yes. He will demand that you carry out your contract with him and divorce me—"

"And as I can not, now?"

"He would try to find a way to make you. He

will stop at nothing. He would make you prisoner, or, if necessary, he would kill you. You must get away—far, far away, somewhere—”

“All right. I’ll go. I’ll do my best.” And he started, though a little reluctantly, for the gate. He would have liked to see Amad. Confound him! He wondered what he was like, the man who had once wooed and won her? Not that he, the dervish, was jealous of him and her past. That was impossible; he had only met the girl for the first time yesterday. But he was a bit curious. He would confess to that.

“One moment!” She pushed quickly past him to the lattice of the gate and an exclamation of disappointment fell from her lips. “You can’t go out that way.”

“Why not?” He experienced an odd passiveness. She was directing the affair. Her dark eyes glowed with excitement—perhaps, too, with a little dread.

“Two of his servants are out there in the street, near by, and—yes—there is that doorkeeper from Light of Life’s. He stands at the corner and watches. You could not pass them.”

"I could try."

"No, no! They have their instructions. And if you did not give yourself up at once, they would not spare you."

He knew that assassination, as a fine art, still existed in Mohammedan countries. Men disappeared and influence stifled inquiry. Amad had influence. His feelings could be imagined when he learned definitely that the dervish had no intention of setting his "wife" free. His rage would be unbounded that the substitute husband had dared come here, at all, and meet her. He might still give the latter a chance to carry out the original program, as a matter of expediency, but if the dervish did not?—Well, his speedy demise would release her from all ties and Amad would then be free to force his attentions once more on her—to remarry her.

The dervish's life was therefore really very precious to her though not for disinterested reasons. Circumstances had ordained that henceforth he would be to her as the apple of her eye. He had to live, for her sake. Was she considering all that—her own plight if anything happened to him? He studied the proud lovely face. She certainly seemed

most anxious. Her eyes shone with solicitude—for him. That was good. She clasped and unclasped her hands, as if trying to think fast—how to get rid of him, now? He was a perpetual appendage, but he was also an encumbrance. He appreciated her embarrassment—the problem she had to solve—and strove to assist her.

“Perhaps there is some other way to get out of the house—to eliminate myself?” he suggested.

“Except for this gate and the side entrance, there is no way,” she answered feverishly.

“Isn’t there a canal at the back? Thought I heard one go singing by.”

“There is a canal but—” She turned to the servant. “Go to the side door. Find some excuse to keep them out yet, just a little while. Say I am considering—say anything—that we will open in a few moments.”

The man nodded hastily and vanished. His eyes were comprehensive but dubious.

“You were saying there is a canal?” continued the dervish briskly. “Any windows looking out upon it?”

AN INTERRUPTED HONEYMOON 107

"Only a basement window. But you must not go that way."

"*Must* not—from a wife?"

"The canal is swift and deep just now. The mountain rains have made it more a torrent than a canal. It is very dangerous."

"And I might get drowned? That wouldn't do," he laughed.

She did not answer. Her glance swept nervously toward the house.

"I can think of nothing!—nothing!" There was helplessness, almost despair in her voice.

"Which brings us back to the canal," said the dervish cheerfully. "Some one has to decide, and in this case, I don't think there is much time—"

"There isn't!"

"Then I'll exercise a husband's prerogative, and command. The aqueous exit! So be it. There! there!" He raised his hand. "Not a word. It is determined. I am authority itself. And now another thing—to get out of Damascus safely, I must discard these garments. I must have others. Don't contradict me. We haven't a minute to waste,

unless—you know the alternative. Just listen and obey." Even in that moment of emergency her eyes dilated slightly. He was certainly most unceremonious in his manner for a nameless vagabond of the desert. "Can you find me an extra suit of your man's?" he demanded.

"Yes, yes," said the girl.

"Then get it for me."

Just an instant she hesitated; then—"Come!" she said hastily. Imperious though she might be, her own strategic ability had for the moment failed her. She was at a loss what to do herself, and so permitted him to "take the lead," figuratively. It was she who literally led the way to the house. The man smiled. His first domestic victory! Also, his last! Sobering thought! Now a household despot—no other autocrat so mighty!—in a few moments, what?

His mind did not linger on lugubrious contingencies, however, as he followed his wife across the court. It was briefly employed in esthetic contemplation. She certainly had a charming neck. Beneath the masses of hair, a tiny lock nestled on the white skin. He had not noticed it before. It was

a most fascinating little lock, for one so haughty and proud-looking. It seemed to have been wound around Cupid's finger itself, to curl so coquettishly. Nothing stand-offish about *it*! It seemed to lure a lover's fingers, to invite a man to his own destruction. That is, if a man did not have himself perfectly under control, as he had.

As they entered the house and passed into the *mandarah*, they could hear voices at the side entrance. The dervish paused while the girl went on. The caretaker was speaking and he was obviously doing his best, making the most of a thankless task.

"It is true I told the servant of Light of Life my mistress was not here," the dervish heard him say. "It is also true that she is in the house now. But she was not here then. She arrived since."

"Liar!" came from without. "We have had the place well guarded. And that beggar of a dervish—he is even now here with her—"

"Impossible!" Fervently. "By the beard of the prophet, what would my mistress want with such as he? A lady finely bred!—a low *mustahall*!"

"He was seen to enter by the neighbors. I have their word." More shrilly.

"That fellow. Oh, he was but a seller of licorice water. Allah has cursed my good wife with a sweet tooth and the *erk-rose* but came to the door with his cup and went away again. By the sacred tomb of the prophet I even swear it is so, as you will see when presently I shall have orders to admit you." Again an answer from without, which was followed by: "Such impatience! And from one who has really no right to come here, at all! She is not your wife now, though she will soon enjoy that honor once more. And I shall be the first to rejoice for her. But meanwhile is it fit to bring scandal upon her—you, an ex-husband? The law is plain in the matter. We could refuse to admit you altogether, but we won't." Truly the fellow had a ready tongue. "My mistress is most complaisant. She has nothing to fear. She will even see you, and very shortly. My wife is with her just now—in the bath. Soon, however, she will be attired, and then—though, with proper precautions, and veiled, she may admit—"

Expostulations from the other side of the door! That angry voice the dervish remembered so well yesterday night in the inner court of the mosque! Threats! Matters were coming to a climax. Amad

AN INTERRUPTED HONEYMOON 111

was not in a mental condition to cool his heels long on the door-step. "I will give you five minutes to open and deliver unto me this fellow. Not a minute longer! We know he is here and he can't get away. Why defer?"

A shadow fell across the black and white marble pavement near where the dervish stood, and turning, he saw the girl; over her arm were garments. At the end of the apartment was a recess, with arches, and this she indicated. There was no need for words. She waited without, while he entered. The recess, containing vessels of perfume, is designed particularly for rest and meditation. The dervish did not indulge in either, though the thought did cross his mind: Under proper conditions, what a place for a road-worn rover, after the shocks and knocks of the world—with one—the one, to bring you the water-pipe—and then, to recline, exhaling the fragrant tobacco, and to dream, the while you regard beauty through veils of smoke, or apostrophize it in the original Arabic, with such words as—

"Hasten," said the girl without.

But he hadn't been wasting any time. Having hastily thrown off his outer garments, he donned

those she had brought him. Then thrusting the gay clothes his predecessor, Amad, had provided, under a frame made of palm sticks, where they would not, most likely, be found at once, the dervish rejoined the girl. He was no longer a bridegroom, but a sober-looking serving man. Silently they moved out of the *mandarah*, through the less ornate servants' apartments, until they reached a stone stairway, leading down.

He did not permit her to pause now, but went down first. She followed with a taper. Her eyes were wide and bright and she moved mechanically as if she were doing something through no volition of her own. In the dim light she appeared like some beautiful young tragedy princess. The young man's manner, however, was neither tragic nor somber. He cast a comprehensive glance around him, then turned to the casement. The masonry was old and in a few moments, with the aid of a stick of firewood, he had pried loose the iron bars and removed them. It was not a difficult task. Then he looked out; the surface of the canal was near, and the waters ran swiftly.

"We call it the 'black death', when it is swollen

like that," breathed the girl. She had set down the light and looked over his shoulder. Swirling, seething, the dark current ran beneath houses and through subterranean places.

He turned his head; he was listening now, not to the mad waters, but to sounds above. Amad was coming in, and they hadn't unlocked the door to admit him. The din he caught apprised the dervish of the manner of the other's entrance. She, too, looked around. But the head of the stairway still was dark. Only the flickering candle lighted the basement. Without, not a star's reflection touched the surface of the water. Like ink it rushed along.

"You ought not—I really have no right to let you go this way—" the girl half faltered. Did she really care just a little bit, if anything happened to him, thought the dervish. But again came that damning reflection—the reason for solicitude on her part! Ladies of high degree do not care what becomes of *mustahalls*. They, the beggars and the dervishes, are only the flies of the desert. One, more or less, what matter?

"It is the only way," he answered. "And I'm a fine swimmer, so don't worry. No cause! I'm go-

ing to get safely away. Not the slightest doubt in my mind about that. And then I'll put a big distance between us. Seas shall separate us," he added cheerfully. She did not appear so reassured by his words as she should have been, and so he took another tack. "Amad won't, of course, harm you. And he can't marry you. Why, you can laugh at him. As you did before! And snap your fingers! The game is yours. I'd stay, if it would do any good. But I'm distinctly *de trop!*" He ended with a laugh.

Her hand touched his arm, though she was unaware of the gesture. Her eyes swept back to the doorway and he saw in them a new expression.

"Why, you aren't afraid? You!" he exclaimed, wonderingly.

It was fear he saw shining in their depths.

"You fear to have me leave you—to meet Amad?" he cried.

She threw back her head. "Afraid to meet him! Never!" There was contempt in her eyes, disdain—no fear now.

"Good," he said approvingly. He believed her; she had spirit, courage; she was only overwrought. "Always bear this in mind: It is only I against

whom his anger or his malignity can be turned. The *zabit* magistrate will protect you. The law is very strict. There must be absolute evidence that a woman is divorced, before another man may take her."

"Yes, yes; I know," said the girl. Did the proud lips tremble slightly? He reached over and patted her shoulder. Fancy patting the shoulder of a haughty young goddess! The girl drew suddenly back, but he did not notice. His eyes were now bent again toward the staircase. A light had flickered above, then vanished.

"Good-by," he said, with a grave smile.

She did not answer.

"That *wekeel* was a fool," he said.

"What *wekeel*?"

"The one who described you to me. As if any *wekeel* could do justice to you!"

"What are you saying?"

"Did Amad ever tell you, you had beautiful eyes?"

"Go! go!" she murmured half incoherently. Above the sounds were very close now.

"I little thought when I saw you before the pastry-shop that I should be married to you to-day."

"Pastry-shop?" She caught his words, but they meant nothing to her then.

"You threw me the cake. Very good of you! Only a dog got it."

The light flared again above. They were coming down.

"You made a poor dervish forget his prayers."

"Quick!" Her eyes were appealing. "Go! go!" they implored him now.

He went, but first he bent over her; he hadn't the remotest intention of doing it, but he did; his lips swept hers. "A kiss! One can surely give his wife a kiss in parting." His gay reckless laugh rang out. The girl started back and her face was crimson. She stood alone now—but not for long.

CHAPTER IX

IN THE STABLE

A SERVANT, several hours later, opened the garden gate of a house on the other side of the town and stepped slowly in the darkness down the smooth stone steps leading to the water. He had almost reached the last of them when, uttering a startled exclamation, he dropped his bucket. One of his bare feet had come in contact with a damp object—a man—dead?—drowned? The figure lay huddled up just beyond the reach of the water. For a moment the servant seemed uncertain whether to go or stay. He ended by stooping over the man and dragging him up the slippery steps. Staggering with his burden—no light one—across the lawn, he opened the door of an outbuilding and allowed the figure to slide to the ground. A great gaunt Damascus dog which had been curled up in a corner, uncoiled himself and came up to nose the stranger. A moment the servant stood puffing, then going to a

kettle simmering above a few charcoal embers in a brazier, he half filled a cup with water, poured into it a few drops of a gin-colored liquid, called "whisky" by the natives, and thrust the mixture upon his unexpected, and more or less unwelcome guest.

The latter, after a few moments' persistent effort on the part of the servant, mechanically swallowed the contents of the cup, whereupon the servant threw a ragged and odorous blanket over him and returned to his belated task. He hurried out with another bucket and, came back with it filled. He bestowed no further attention on his guest. Allah had permitted the latter to swallow; ergo, he was not dead. It was enough. The servant's concern now lay solely in a horse, a magnificent beast, big-boned and with a small head. As he wiped the splashes of mud from him, the man grumbled. The Moslem Beelzebub take a master who stayed out late and brought the peerless Star of the Desert home in such a condition! However, he polished the big beauty sedulously and when he had finished, the Star fairly shone. Drawing back to contemplate his work, the servant became aware that his guest was sitting up.

"That's a good horse," said the guest, with the eye of a connoisseur.

The other assented.

"I presume," continued the guest in a rather weak voice, "you brought me here?"

"My back tells me so," returned the servant, grudgingly. "You were out there on one of the steps."

"Yes, I remember getting on them and wondering if I would slide off. Then I didn't remember anything more until just now."

The servant threw a fine blanket over the horse; he had to be served royally; picturesque tassels hung from the edge. "How came you in the canal?" the servant asked curtly.

"How? Hum! Let me see; my head is in a whirl." It was, indeed. Oh, for the fluent tongue of his wife's servant—the caretaker! "Didn't I have an argument with some Christian converts?" He held his head, as if striving to collect his shattered ideas.

"Most likely!" returned the servant. "There are many such—too many! Dogs!" He ejaculated and spat.

"I recall being set upon. I was one among many, and—"

"They threw you into the canal!"

"No; I jumped in, to escape." Honestly. "None too soon, I tell you. They almost had me—"

"It was a brave deed," commented the servant.

"They were fiends."

"They always are."

"They would have cut me to pieces."

"We will cut them in pieces," said the servant.

"Red days are in store. We shall have to exterminate them once more. May the time be near!" With which invocation he lay down and was soon snoring loudly.

His guest did not fall to sleep so easily. His body ached for he had been dashed and bumped about until he was covered with bruises. How far he had come and how he had managed to escape drowning, he did not know. He had swept in and out of black infernos. Once he had been pinned in somewhere among the supports of a house. The experience was not a pleasant one; he did not like to think of it. His thoughts were still chaotic, however, for he couldn't think of anything very clearly. He retained

only confused impressions. He wondered if it were his wedding-day still, or the day after? How many hours had passed? He saw his bride again as he had seen her at that moment of parting.

What madness had caused him to take leave of her in that manner? It was not chivalrously done. but what sweet lips the girl had! Or are only stolen sweets the best? Had he, the cynic, acquired new and dangerous knowledge? Had his own temerity bred in him a certain fever—the wish to see once more her whom he would never see again? That act of inconsideration would then react upon himself. So would she be avenged—if it were so.

But, of course, he was only a little feverish and imaginative to-night—there had been a chill in the water and he had fought with the current so long! He could imagine all kinds of things—her hatred of him now, for example! He had caught one look in her eyes before he had jumped into the canal. She had certainly been surprised. He didn't quite know whether he was sorry or glad for what he had done. His brain ought to be singing *meâ culpâ*, but it wasn't—at least, perceptibly. A honeymoon, without a kiss? Just fancy! He would have been

a dolt not to have done it when her lips were so near. Such lips; like poppies! He *was* feverish, confound it! Fancy his thoughts dwelling on such a little thing as a kiss! It was attaching too much importance to the matter. He would forget it—just as he would forget her—he would have to, of course. No use remembering a wife you're never going to behold more! So he turned over and composed himself phlegmatically for slumber.

But it didn't come. Other arms than those of Morpheus wooed him. Deuce take the whole affair! Most inconsiderate of Number One to have broken in upon him like that! Had it not been for Amad and his foolish jealousy, he would have taken leave of the girl in circumspect, orderly and decorous fashion. But Amad's coming had bred an atmosphere of chaos; excitement was in the air. It was a time when men comport themselves irrationally. It was an unnatural, concentrated kind of leavetaking. *Multum in parvo*, as it were. Too much *multum*, he grumblingly told himself. On one hand Amad, thirsting for his blood; and on the other the water hissing most unamiably; between them the girl, fashioned as if by the divine chisel of Prax-

iteles. A devil and a deep sea species of situation! It had brought out unexpected and primal instincts in him. A cave man—that's what he had been for the fraction of a second. Even the water hadn't quite cooled his ardo-. But the thought had come to him while struggling with it that he must live, for her sake. Amad mustn't get her, because she didn't want him to. Did he himself also not want him to now? Of course not; he was purely disinterested. Or, at least, he might as well be. No use of his really wanting her always for himself! He would be like a child crying for the moon. Luckily he didn't want her—so he reiterated. He had done that once or twice before, mentally. Their separation for all eternity actually and truly had begun. He was here and she, somewhere else. Thus it would be; only more so—for he would be farther away—much farther—soon. And it was well! It was best. It couldn't be better. Star of the Desert kicked the side of his stall.

"Peace, thou king of thy kind," the snoring servant woke up long enough to say.

The Star ceased further demonstrations; perhaps the flattery soothed him. Then a curtain seemed

drawn down upon the dervish's mental activities. The god of slumber relented finally and was kind to him.

The daylight shining in the stable awoke him. He was stiff, but his head felt clearer. He looked about him. In his stall, the king of his kind munched, turning occasionally to eye the intruder with suspicion. The latter walked over to him and the king looked dangerous. But the dervish liked horses, and beneath the stroking fingers his royal highness soon became less haughty. A few minutes later the servant walked in, bringing dates, bread and water, and followed by the big canine.

"Eat," he said laconically, setting these before his guest.

The guest, however, first said his prayers. It wouldn't have done to miss them.

"By the faith, he prays well," murmured the servant. "It is good fortune to have such a one in the house."

"Then shall I stay with you a short while," said the other unexpectedly. The thought had come to him that he might find it difficult, if not impossible,

to get out of the city now. Amad would have every gate well watched. It might be better to rest here for a day or two, until the first excitement, attendant on the dervish's escape, had subsided. Then he would stand a better chance of stealing forth undetected. Perhaps, too, he would hear of some caravan leaving and might find opportunity amid the confusion of its departure to take his own. Besides, his joints ached still, and he could imagine himself not up to the mark if certain exigencies arose. A brief period in which he could think and plan would certainly not come amiss.

The servant looked doubtful, however. "The master likes not idlers," he observed, "though you do seem both a good and a pious man!" The dervish had added a posture or two, more than necessary, to his prayers, for effect.

"Why need I idle?" he now hastened to say. "Is there no work to be done? Here, in the garden, for example? Yonder bushes are not well-kept, and there is some weeding to be attended to in that bed."

"It is even as you say," the servant thoughtfully admitted. "The boy who helped me, a lazy rascal,

has taken to his heels, and one pair of hands can not do all, with the Star to look after. But the wage? My master pays little. A few coppers a day—"

"Charge your master what you will for my wage, and add it to your own. I have taken a vow to toil for no more than bare sustenance." Fanatical Mohammedans sometimes do this.

The proposition seemed to impress the servant. Indeed the dervish could not have found a better way for the attainment of his purpose. The prospect of a little household graft is to a Moslem servant what the magnet is to iron. It draws him irresistibly. His whole life is made up of petty grafts. He would rather cheat and make so much money than to acquire the same amount honestly. So he looked upon the dervish with new favor. Perhaps Allah had a purpose in depositing the latter on his door-step. "Allah is good. Blessed be his will!" he murmured. "It sounds fair."

"Then I am engaged?"

"You are."

"Good!" The dervish surveyed the back of the house, dimly seen through the foliage. It appeared an imposing residence. And that garden—it offered

a snug asylum. The sunshine sifted invitingly through the trees and warmed the earth. Yes, it was a nice enough place for a hunted man. Did he wish, too, just to catch a word of news about her before he left? To make absolutely certain all was well with her? Of course it was, but—it might be possible to let her know, through some messenger, that he was still alive. It would relieve any doubts she might have. He had told her he wasn't going to be killed, yet she might entertain fears that he had not been able to oblige her by still remaining in the land of the living. No one would think of looking for him here. It was an ideal refuge. Besides, the labor would be light; no Mohammedan works hard.

"I'll begin on the trees," said the dervish. Yes; he would let her know he was safe; that any apprehensions she might have of being now a merry widow were groundless. "Those branches need attention. By the way"—again looking toward the house—"who is your master?"

"Amad Ahl-Masr," said the other.

"What?" The young man wheeled swiftly.

CHAPTER X

AT AMAD'S

SNIPPING leaves in the garden of her former husband, almost under his very nose! It was not arduous work, yet there was also nothing monotonous about it. What had decided him to remain? In the first place, he could not very well run away, after having told the servant he wanted to find lodgment there. How could he have receded either with logic or grace? If he had showed disinclination to stay, his conduct would excite suspicion. He couldn't take to his heels without attempting explanations, because the garden gate, opening on the street, was locked. He would have to get himself discharged and then shown to the door. He didn't see exactly how he could do that.

It may be, also—for where there is a will, there's a way—he didn't quite want himself discharged. There was a certain weird fascination about being a bona-fide member of Amad's own household. Pri-

marily the dervish had been entertained very charmingly by her and now he was being employed, indirectly, by him. He seemed doomed to be a kind of family fixture. He wouldn't intentionally have intruded upon Amad, but now that he was here, he experienced anew, and more emphatically, the desire to gaze upon him. In fact, his curiosity had developed amazingly in that respect.

He wanted to know what manner of man that more or less lucky Number One was. Was he short, or tall; handsome or the reverse? Had he the bearing of a lover? Did he carry himself like a hero? Had his good looks carried all (that is, her) before them? Was their divorce merely another case of temperamental disagreement? Would she some day feel sorry and want to go back to him? He didn't like to think about that, but he had to. It belonged to the contingencies. These handsome fellows, externally, are sometimes not very handsome inwardly. Maybe he had neglected her. No; no one would ever neglect *her*. The dervish promptly dismissed that preposterous contingency. Perhaps he could gage the affair better when he saw Amad, and he would risk a good deal to that end. To leave Da-

mascus without beholding his predecessor would leave an aching void forever in the adventure. It would be like a story uncompleted; or a play that broke off in the middle. Ethically, he ought to see Amad. He had to.

But what if Amad saw him? That was another question and an important one. Would he recognize the dervish? Did he know him by sight? Had Amad arranged with the dyer to gaze upon the luckless and now well-hated *mustahall*? It was possible; for the dyer and his whilom guest had ridden past Amad's house when they had repaired to Light of Life's. The dervish recalled now they had gone somewhat out of their way to pass in front of Amad's imposing residence. He had thought nothing of their so doing at the time, but now the circumstance seemed fraught with significance. He remembered looking up at Amad's house and fancying he detected a pair of eyes gleaming behind a lattice. It might have been merely a curious maid servant, or it might have been Amad. The dervish was inclined to the latter conclusion.

It followed then, that he must see Amad, without being seen by him. That might not be so difficult,

for Amad, of course, would never dream he was there, and his position, as only an assistant gardener, or stable boy, would keep the dervish very much in the background. Amad might hunt for him feverishly without; he would scour the highways and the byways of the city, but he certainly wouldn't look for him in his own back yard. This then must be the spot of all spots for safety. It was either that, or the most dangerous. Which? At that moment, through the branches behind which he stood, he saw a face.

A man stood at a back window of the house and was looking out. He was well over seventy. In his evil and wizened visage, above the white beard like ashes on his breast, his eyes were glowing coals of fire. They were angry eyes and also most determined. He was gorgeously dressed, his robes being of the finest texture and the details of his attire, besides indicating his opulence and worldly importance, denoted further that he could boast of being a *sherf*, or descendant of the prophet. His turban was of dark green and on it shone a superb jewel. Pictorially he was perfect. He could have dominated in a great canvas by Fortuny.

The observer in the garden had given a great start. Was that Amad?—that? Fortunately, the leaves fairly screened the dervish, for in his surprise he forgot to turn away his face. That, his predecessor—that? He could almost have laughed. The dyer had said Amad was of just the “right” age. The right age? That wicked-looking old man—beside whom she was as a beautiful white flower!

But perhaps this was *not* Amad, at all; only some other member of the household, some relative? Her grandfather-in-law! He was old enough for that, the dervish muttered to himself savagely through his teeth.

“You—” The man at the window, whoever he was, called out a name loudly. The voice had a familiar sound. At first, the dervish thought it meant to summon him. But this was not so. The servant who had befriended the dervish the night before came hastily out of the stable and hurried into the house. A moment later the dervish saw him at the elderly person’s side.

“I am here, Amad Ahl-Masr. What is your pleasure?”

The dervish scarcely needed now the confirmation of those words to assure him of the truth, and the tragedy of one so young, so fair, married to this man, came over him as a shock. He shouldn't have felt that way, he told himself, but he did. Spring wedded to winter! It often happened. There were reasons for it happening. Nice, practical, worldly reasons! The girl had beauty—wonderful beauty. In a mental background he saw Light of Light, and the dervish scowled. An evil woman that! Indignation began to seethe in his brain. He forgot he was a sentimental iconoclast and should only shrug his shoulders or lift his eyebrows over these things. He forgot that he, also, cut no heroic figure, a husband who had been bought for her, a Number Two, and not much of a Number Two, at that. He experienced a rather vivid interest in what Amad was saying to the servant. The latter's prompt appearance had relieved what might have been a somewhat embarrassing contretemps. There was a possibility it might even yet develop into one. Indeed, there was a strong probability it would.

"Who is that fellow?" Amad pointed. His voice

was savage. He had probably slept little. The *mustahall's* escape must have enraged him beyond measure.

The dervish, with his back to the house, gave a stronger snip with the shears. Would the servant relate how he, the dervish, had come there? Amad would, in that event, put two and two together. The dervish drew his breath. The revelation of Amad's personality had injected a new element of interest in the affair. That liar of a dyer! He was a bigger one than the dervish had dreamed. To think that he had ever permitted himself to be pitted against her in an unequal contest with this villainous old man! Dolt that he had been! And what scoundrels they were! He could have squeezed that dyer's windpipe and found it a pleasant diversion. A pander of youth! Pah! The young man did not stop to think just then, that youth sometimes makes the mistake of thinking it may endure age when accompanied by great coffers of diamonds and gold, and, too late, learns its mistake. This bit of pessimism did not insinuate itself into his worldly-wise mind at the moment. Perhaps a certain pair of lips had given a vacillating touch to his

cynicism. It sometimes has that effect, making an unreasoning vassal of its victim. A dangerous fealty!

"Who is that fellow?" Amad had asked.

Luckily the servant had reasons of his own for not entering into particulars as to just how he had come by his new assistant.

"He is a most competent helper," replied the servant, "whom I have engaged to take the place of the unreliable fellow who left a fortnight since."

"He comes well recommended?"

"Excellently," lied the man. The grafting instinct could not be resisted. It was fortunate for the dervish he had promised the fellow his wages. "I know him well. And for pay, he will be content with—" A moment he hesitated, then mentioned an amount.

"More than enough!" returned the old man. "But never mind. I called you to—" He murmured a few instructions which the dervish did not hear and the two receded from the window.

The young man continued to snip, but not always advisedly. His heart was not in his task. What was going on in the big house? He did not like

Amad's expression. The latter was, no doubt, much put out, yet there was a certain assurance or wicked pertinacity in his eyes, auguring no disposition to accept the seemingly inevitable. He was obviously one not easily defeated. What, however, could he do? Were not his hands tied? The dervish could conceive of no means whereby the other could encompass his purpose now. Her second marriage was, by this time, a matter of record on the pages of the official register at the *zabit*. Yet in spite of this reassuring fact, the young man experienced a new disquietude. The very silence of the garden seemed menacing, and a premonition that trouble was in the air seized him. Amad could, of course, resort to violence and carry her off. The dervish, however, did not believe he would proceed to this extremity, for the rich diamond merchant had both position and reputation to maintain. He was an important person in the community and would guard his own dignity and good name as a jewel of price. He would not stamp himself as a free-booter. He had too much wisdom and cunning for that. What then?

The day seemed interminable. After a time the man servant returned and saddled the Star. As the

fellow led the horse with its picturesque and barbaric trappings to the gate the dervish ventured a query. Was the master going out? The servant replied curtly that curiosity ill became one of the other's humble position, and the dervish was forced to accept the rebuke in silence although he had become almost fiercely inquisitive. Was the girl still in her own house? And Light of Life?—what, at that moment, was her attitude toward her stepdaughter? Slowly—too slowly time went by! About the middle of the morning, the dervish ventured uneasily toward the gate, approaching near enough, amid the shrubbery, to ascertain that it was locked. The servant took no chances of his new assistant escaping. He needed that extra wage. The dervish glanced at the wall, twenty feet high. It would not be easy to get over that. Did he wish to leave Amad's service already? Not exactly! But a great restlessness to know at once what had become of the girl moved him.

Seconds dragged into minutes, and minutes into hours. Once he heard soldiers go by and caught the sound of muttering voices without. Momentarily they diverted his attention. Was anything amiss in

the city? These people seemed excited. He remembered the servant's words of last night—the conversation between Fitzgerald and the guide, which he had overheard a few days before—the talk of an uprising against the Christians. One usually happened about every so often. He, himself, had listened to murmurings in the bazaars and in the courts of holy places for some time. But the soldiers receded and he heard no more of them. The quiet that followed seemed greater than before and his thoughts quickly reverted once more to that other channel.

It was now the siesta hour. He looked toward the house door, the one by which the servant had entered. Not a sound came from within. Amad, no doubt, had gone out, and certain of his trusted servants, also, to search for him. A moment the young man hesitated; that house exercised an extraordinary attraction for him. He wanted to master its secrets, if there were any. He wished to behold its chambers of mystery and penetrate into the veritable sanctum sanctorum of its master. The dervish laid down the snippers and walked softly but swiftly toward the entrance in the rear wall, which was as

solid and forbidding as that of a prison; the door yielded and he entered.

He found himself in a dimly lighted storeroom, and for a few moments stood listening, but he caught no sound. A narrow stairway led upward, and after making sure no one observed him, he started to mount it. At the top he peered furtively into a beautiful *mandarah*, or apartment where visitors are received. It was empty and he ventured first to linger before it; then to enter. None of the servants would probably intrude there, at this hour of the day, in the master's absence. Swiftly the dervish studied his surroundings. The room was sumptuously furnished. Rugs, each of which was worth a fortune, were lavishly scattered about. A collector would have turned green with envy at sight of them. The paneled ceiling shone with rich hues. On a low silver table were writing materials, including a gold-decorated ink-horn, and an ivory *mittah*. In a corner stood a mighty safe. It was the only discordant note; bulky, European, obtrusive. It suggested, however, a practical turn of mind on the part of its owner. Amad wasn't going to trust his treasures

to flimsy artistic oriental strong-boxes. That safe was an indication of his character. What he got, he meant to keep. He wouldn't let others take from him, if he could help it.

The dervish stood there motionless for some moments. He did not realize how long. The place seemed to hold him, to exercise a haunting, but not altogether agreeable fascination for him. He did not see it empty, but pictured Amad there, and not alone. Another—in the first flower of girlhood—had once been mistress of the great house. She, his wife? Incredible! He could not believe—and yet he had to. The atmosphere of that palatial interior began to be depressing. He experienced a decided melancholy—perhaps because he hadn't eaten anything since early morn and then had partaken only of a few dates. One can't be cheerful on an empty stomach. At any rate, he had had enough of Amad's house!

About to leave the room and descend to the garden, the dervish heard suddenly a noise from the front—a loud knocking, at the street door, no doubt. It awakened the house to a new and unexpected life; a woman servant came down from somewhere and

there was the sound of scurrying feet in different directions. Siestas, long drawn out by domestics, had been rudely interrupted. An agitated hum from remote quarters seemed to say the master had returned before he was expected.

But it was not the master. The dervish heard the smooth oily voice of his old friend, the dyer, bidding certain others to step into the *mandarah*.

"We were to wait here the coming of Amad Ahl-Masr," he said to a servant without.

"Be pleased to go in and wait," came the answer.

They were now at the door; the young man would have retreated the way he had entered the house, but it was too late. He looked around him; the window was barred; he could not escape thither. Then his eye fell on the safe that stood in a corner. Between it and the wall was a little space, and quickly he availed himself of that scanty place for concealment.

CHAPTER XI

THE SUMMONS

THE room, like most Moslem apartments, was fortunately but dimly lighted. The dervish was not very comfortable, however, either in mind or body, and he might be less so shortly. His desire for information was certainly about to be gratified, but at what cost to himself? He tried not to think of the future; the present was sufficiently interesting. Though certain projections in the steel strong-box cut into a shoulder and arm, he felt no pain. He heard a servant moving about, probably bringing in the vessel of silver or brass, containing charcoal for coffee. Soon the fragrance of it was wafted to him—other odors, too; that of burning benzoin or aloes-wood, in the *mankal*, mingled with the delicate aroma of the “mountain tobacco” of Syria, in *narghiles*. The atmosphere was sensuous and still; no one spoke until these preliminary arrangements for comfort had been completed and the attendant had

departed. Then the dervish heard the voice of Sadi, the saddler. His Nemesis! He was there. He could have well dispensed with him—an older friend than the dyer—antedating his acquaintance with Amad, or her!

“You were telling me the search for this—dervish has been unavailing,” Sadi began. He hesitated before the word “dervish,” but it might have been inadvertent.

“It has.” The dyer’s voice was mournful. They were all seated now on Amad’s cushions, while before them the water-bottles bubbled steadily. “I regret no trace has yet been found of him. The fellow has completely disappeared.”

“The search has been thorough?” Again the saddler spoke.

“Can you doubt it? Even the low carriers of water, the hawkers, the *sakka sharbeh* and others of that class have been enlisted in the task. And do they not know all the nooks and corners? Could a mouse escape them, half-beggars themselves—accustomed to all kinds of sleeping places? No, no, if the scoundrel were alive in the city, he would have been found by this time. He has been drowned,”

"Perhaps not," observed Sadi thoughtfully. "You do not know his resourcefulness. I mean," he added hastily, "you may see by what he did last night, he is not one without expedients. He might have escaped the swift waters. He is strong and supple—an athlete. That is, I should infer so from the look I had of him," in a peculiar tone, "that day of the wedding. Also, he is a *hadji* (pilgrim from Mecca), and has crossed deserts. He has faced death a few times before, and," slowly, "escaped. Though we have not discovered him he still may be hidden somewhere in Damascus. The *hemales* may have overlooked some place in their search. He may even be nearer than we know." The dervish hardly breathed now. Sadi's perceptions were keen. In the past he had been the deuce of a bore and he promised to become even more tiresome in the future.

"I hold he is dead," said the dyer with conviction. "Allah," piously, "would not permit a person of such iniquity to go unpunished. Never before was there ingratitude so foul! Our revered friend, Amad, raised him from the dirt. We fed and clothed him,

only to be betrayed basely. The scoundrel sold him out. A blackmailing *mustahall!* a—" The dyer's indignation was getting the better of him and more forcible epithets fell from his lips. Perhaps they were but a mild repetition of those he had heard from Amad. The old saw that listeners seldom hear good of themselves was certainly true in this case. The dervish should have felt so small that the insufficient space into which he was squeezed would have proven all too sufficient. There was no doubt that the dyer himself was feeling small for he had experienced the full weight of the diamond merchant's disapproval. The dervish had been the choice of the dyer—had been vouched for by him. And in what a position had the dervish left his sponsor? A scurvy trick!

"He seemed so holy, too!" Sadi smiled oddly. "Who would not have trusted him?" bemoaned the dyer bitterly. "Why, he knew his Koran as well as the preacher in the alcove who addresses the pilgrims, before they walk around the sacred black stone. Verses fairly dripped from his lips." Again Sadi smiled, but said nothing. "And when he prayed,

he never skipped a word. Surely any man would have been deceived by a dissembler so base! The worthy may always be fooled by the unworthy."

There was martyrdom in the dyer's tone; he was attempting to justify himself. "I, so frank—so honest!" he murmured. "To have innocently served our esteemed patron so ill!" He puffed vigorously like a big aggrieved baby at a bottle. His fat cheeks worked bellows-fashion, when full seeming almost to burst with resentment.

The others said nothing. One was the dyer's companion on the memorable night when the dervish had consented to be married. He, too, looked downcast. A reflection of the dyer's emotions seemed to have descended on him. As the other was a satellite of Amad, so this person may have been a satellite of the dyer. They were touched with the same stick. The fourth man of the party was a stranger to the dervish. At least, he did not know his voice when he heard it later. The dervish did not attempt to peer out upon the little company. His position was sufficiently precarious without taking any unnecessary risks. He felt that Sadi was there for some peculiar purpose of his own, which,

perhaps, he kept to himself. And the presence of the other three—what did it portend? They had not come merely to smoke and drink coffee.

“Shall we permit this bandit of the desert—this thief, if not worse—to laugh in his sleeve?” The dyer put out a closed fist. He was surrounded with smoke now like a disgruntled volcano.

“Allah forbid!” Two lesser volcanoes rumbled an echo. Sadi was silent. He seemed thinking. He reached for a cardamom seed and held it over his coffee, as if debating whether or not to drop it in, but finally decided on a little perfumed flavor for his beverage.

“There is a saying, duplicity should be met with duplicity,” went on the dyer.

“It is a good saying.”

“How much truer is it that, when a scoundrel robs you, you are entitled to resort to any means to get back your treasure? Especially when that treasure is one so great as our patron has lost! For as the prophet says: ‘More precious than any other possession, a shapely young houri is the true solace of a man’s declining years!’ ”

“Well said!” They fairly smacked their lips over

this sentiment. The dervish bit one of his. To think of her at their mercy! Sybarites! Libertines! He wondered to how much more of this kind of talk he would have to listen? He could imagine the smirk on the dyer's fat face. Again he seemed to see Amad's wicked eyes in the evil old face. And he, the dervish, had been the ally or the dupe of this precious crowd! He had actually lent himself to their cause. But for that unconscious wrong he had done her, he wou'd atone if he could. They made other comments in this connection, very personal ones, as some men may over pipes, albeit with much ostensible sympathy for Amad's loss. The sly libidinous scoundrels! And they dared talk about his dishonesty and baseness! He wanted to spring out and bump their heads together. But indignation against them was tempered by another feeling—even a stronger one. The dyer's hypocritical words about the end justifying the means?—or something of that kind?—what did they signify?

"Well, Amad will soon have his pearl back again."

"No doubt. Only, suppose this robber of a substitute husband were not really dead?"

The "robber of a substitute husband's" heart was

beating faster. The little place could hardly contain him now. Amad soon to have his "pearl back again"!

"What if the canal hadn't really swallowed the *mustahall*?" continued the last speaker.

"What matter"—with a cunning laugh—"after what we are to do, is done?"

"True! He would not dare, then, to appear."

"The oaths of four men—"

"Not to mention Light of Life!"

"He would be denounced as a vile impostor, if he attempted to gainsay us."

"But he is dead," said the dyer. "And that probably disposes of his making more trouble. Yet when I think of him—how Amad caused me to serve him even like the son of a sultan, and how he repaid all that charity, I might wish it were not so and that he stood here for me to deal with!"

"Yes; if he were only here," they murmured regretfully and sucked at their tubes, when a clatter of hoofs was heard without. The dyer got up. "There is our worthy friend and patron now," he said.

They hastily abandoned pipes and cushions and

moved toward the door. "And Fatma, the beloved?" continued one of the men. "She is safe, where no brigand may again force his unwelcome presence upon her?"

"Amad has looked to that," answered the dyer significantly. "At first I thought he would kill her. But he did not. Her beauty melted his rage. Perhaps her tears—" Again that fiction! "Be that as it may, you can rest assured no one will again be permitted to approach his dearest, his most precious treasure. She is now as safe as his bags of gold in yonder safe in the corner," he laughed.

A moment later their eyes swept back to the big iron receptacle alluded to. A corner of the dervish's cloak protruded very slightly from the other side. He could not have helped it, the space was so small. That tiny bit of dun-colored garment seemed to attract the attention of one of the men—the dyer's satellite—for his gaze lingered. It was more sober than the other tints and did not quite harmonize; it could not belong to a cushion or hanging. Was this circumstance about to dawn upon him? Would his somewhat sluggish mind become involved in a deductive process which proceeding from a small

enough cause would lead to a large and startling effect—a most disagreeable one for the dervish? Luckily for the latter, at that psychological moment the voice of Amad was heard. It claimed attention. It stimulated the others and it stimulated the satellite's satellite to one end. He did not wish to be outdone in alacrity in paying his respects to the rich diamond merchants. The dyer, Sadi and the other man were already at the threshold. The fellow quickly followed the trio through the doorway, out toward the front to meet him whose advancing footsteps might already be heard ringing on the marble. That tread did not seem to imply infirmity of purpose; it had a definite combative sound.

The dervish behind the safe waited no longer, but got up swiftly; they might intercept him but he dared not remain there so must needs take a desperate chance. The heavy rugs drowned the sound of his footsteps as he passed like a flash across the room. Without, he saw that the dyer and the others were turned from him, and in the dim light he darted across a shadowy space, reached the back stairway, and, undetected, crept softly down it.

In the rear of the garden once more, the mind of the dervish was in a whirl. They were going to restore her to Amad and he couldn't prevent it. A preposterous assertion, in view of the law, unless?— They could perjure themselves by swearing that Amad had never really divorced her; that they had been present and heard him say "I divorce you" only twice. This would constitute the "lesser separation" and the diamond merchant could take her back without vexatious formalities. But Amad had already acquiesced in that second marriage ceremony; he had offered no objection to it. The written records showed it and all his minions or hirelings could not swear it away. Yet those words, the "oaths of four men?"—what did they mean?—what could they?

A sudden baneful light illumined his mind. The four persons could swear that he, the substitute husband, had *already pronounced the triple divorce in their presence*. Oh, it was simple; the very acme of simplicity and devilishness! And their affidavits would be entered after the record of the second marriage, in a great glazed parchment book in the chamber of public documents. Amad would probably pay for an extra illumined letter or two as

special reward for the poor *mugawir* or student who transcribed the text. He might even have it done in beautiful vowel-pointed Arabic which costs double. The diamond merchant was still in the contest—very much so; in fact, it was he, the dervish, who now seemed distinctly out of it. He appeared almost ludicrously helpless; and she? What could courage avail her now? Light of Life was no doubt watching the girl closely. The dyer had intimated as much—that she was practically a prisoner, and the dervish could imagine the vindictiveness of that virago as a warden. The old termagant might even attempt to beat her. Moslem stepmothers are quite capable of doing that. The dervish's fists closed, and the veins pulsed on his forehead at the thought.

He saw Amad glance out of the window once with a grim smile. That facial change was diabolically expressive. They were "fixing up things" in there and they were wasting no time about it. Obstacles had but added a few degrees of fervor to Amad's impatience. It needed little imagination to picture the detestable scene being enacted within: the dyer "nibbing" the pen, his ink-horn close at

hand; the others watching, the saddler somewhat aloof; the diamond merchant, with malignant shrewdness, suggesting a word here and there. They would certainly divorce her completely and beyond peradventure. There wouldn't be a flaw in the divorce. It would be as perfect as one of Amad's own diamonds—the black kind. As a benedict, the dervish wouldn't have a leg to stand on. He would be lucky if he saved his neck.

Night descended, a most funereal sort of night, and found him working mechanically. He had wrought all manner of havoc among the vines and was now clipping just to hear the sound of the snippers. The servant came out and called him into the stable for supper. He was not hungry and he wanted to stay in the garden but he had no excuse for remaining there. So he forced down his throat a few more dates and a crust.

"In the name of Allah!" The servant uttered the customary words before eating. He, too, appeared absent-minded, and spoke perfunctorily.

"Any news in the town?" said the dervish. He had no desire to make conversation, but he thought the servant might tell something of his

master, where the latter had gone when he had ridden forth on the Star, and what he had done.

At his question, the servant looked at him curiously and the dervish noted in his eyes an unusual suppressed gleam. "News?" repeated the man and pointed to a window. "What does that look like?"

"A reflection in the sky," said the dervish dully.

"It is that." Significantly.

"Some house in the poor quarter aflame, I suppose?" In the same tone.

"Some house, or houses," answered the man.

"Soldiers went by to-day," said the dervish. But he was not thinking of the soldiers, or the flames, or anything that might portend.

"A wonderful night," supplemented the servant, with covert meaning.

"Is it?" replied the dervish, with gaze far away.

"Don't you think so?" The servant asked the question sharply. Was the dervish stupid or less pious than he had seemed?

"I? Surely it is a wonderful night."

"But not for Christians!" breathed the man softly. "And not one may leave the city now for the exits are all watched. Any left in town will be

destroyed. It is the will of Allah. Several inspired holy men have so proclaimed and it can not be otherwise."

"Indeed? And was it on this business your master went forth to-day?—to bait the dogs of unbelievers—to set the populace against them—?"

"My master's business is *his* business," retorted the servant shortly. "You would do well to remember—"

"I should like to go out this evening," interrupted the dervish suddenly.

"Why?" Surprised.

"Perhaps even I, too, may have the blessed chance to strike a blow for the prophet. Do you think I have any love for these Christians? After working hard all day, is not a man entitled to a little pious diversion which will give him a better place in Paradise?" He spoke with enthusiasm—the spirit of a fanatic. "Do you come with me, out there in the streets," he added.

"I?" said the servant somewhat falteringly. "But there is talk of rioting. Think of the danger!"

"Shall a true believer think of that?" the dervish replied scornfully.

"There is work for me to do here—much work."

"Then let *me* go. I would see at least a few of these native Christians well beaten."

"And so find redress for the tumble they gave you in the water?" The dervish did not answer and the servant continued. "The motive, no doubt, is commendable, but what if you don't come back?" The man was obviously considering the possibly brief duration of his own surreptitious increase in wage.

"Why should I not come back? Haven't I plenty to eat here? Give me the key of the outer gate." He did not attempt to disguise his eagerness for he knew the other would construe it in his own fashion.

The servant pondered. Perhaps it was as well to let this excellent assistant have a little leeway. His one weakness seemed to be a desire to beat, or to see others beat Christians; but as this was a virtue, as long as he gratified the propensity at night, out of working hours, it might be unreasonable to seek to curb it. So—"Well, you may go," said the man. "You needn't take the key, though. I'll let you in when you return."

The dervish murmured an acknowledgment and

moved swiftly toward the gate. To get out and go to *her*, at any cost—that, now, was what he must do. He had learned all that was necessary at Amad's. He could not see what he could accomplish by remaining here longer, though how to get to her? He could not plan; he would have to depend on doing what was best when the emergency arose. But, primarily, he must leave that garden. Perhaps this agitation against the Christians might divert those who were seeking for him. Or that turbulence might prove but an additional note of hazard. He didn't know how this might be. The future would tell.

"Are you going to open?"

The servant had a key in his hand, but he took an exasperatingly long time in fitting it in the ancient lock.

"Patience! Now I have it," replied the man and was about to turn the key and swing open the gate, when from the rear of the house, a maid servant, with covered face stepped rapidly toward them.

"The master wishes to see the new helper," she announced, looking at the dervish.

CHAPTER XII

A VERY HOLY MAN

“ME?” For an instant the young man looked at the gate as if tempted to essay a forcible egress, but there were bolts as well as locks to be considered. “Why does he wish to see me?”

“That is not for me to say,” she returned sharply. “Go at once.”

“And perhaps be discharged?” The dervish assumed a lugubrious tone.

“As to that,” said the woman who had been regarding him closely, “you need not fear. You seem a likely enough fellow.”

“Nevertheless”—he was fighting for time, though vainly, no doubt—“I may not please him.” The words had a senseless sound, but what could he say? He must play the part of half-fool. The man servant might well esteem him that, in view of his unbusinesslike proclivities. The dervish hoped so.

He must rely on the man to come to his rescue now for certainly he had no desire for an interview with Amad at that moment. "See here," to the man servant, "tell the most gracious master I've gone on an errand, to get oats for Star of the Desert. My head becomes confused sometimes in the presence of my superiors, and when I am questioned about wages?" he ended significantly.

"Eh?" said the man servant, starting in the least.

"Well, perhaps I could go and say—"

"You'll do nothing of the kind," interrupted the maid servant curtly. "As for you, my fine fellow," to the young man, "fie on such modesty! You look as if you could hold your head up. Besides," reassuringly, "the master is feeling very amiable. He has even given us little gifts, sweetmeats to celebrate with. Perhaps he may have a present for you."

"Why," asked the dervish, "is he so amiable?"

"A man usually is, under the circumstances." She was regarding him more favorably. Truly this new servant was a handsome fellow, not very bright-witted, but a woman can forgive that—sometimes, indeed, it is a merit in a man.

"What circumstances?" the other asked as unconcernedly as he could.

She toyed with her veil, lifting it a little as if inadvertently. "It is the night before his wedding. He is to be married to-morrow morning."

"To-morrow?" The dervish stood like a statue. The miscreants had certainly expedited matters. Amad meant to act quickly, to take no chances by delay. "To-morrow!" the dervish repeated. Whatever emotion this information may have caused him, they could read no sign of it on his face.

"Yes, it is very romantic," went on the woman servant. "You, of course, being a stranger, know nothing of the circumstances. He was married to her before and divorced her. Then she married another and that other divorced her, too. So now she is free." The dervish had fathomed their knavish plan correctly—of course! "But come! Do you not, also, wish him good fortune?"

"I?"

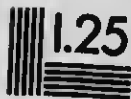
"Yes; all the others have, or will, bend before him and implore Allah's blessing on his head."

"It might not be so acceptable from me, not a house-servant, only a stableman," muttered the



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dervish. She answered him more sharply, however, and he followed her. He had to, for she would not be put off.

What could Amad want with him? Flowers, perhaps, for the morrow, from the garden? It would be the dervish's business to cut them, to strew the house with them, to transform it into a veritable bower, in keeping with the joyous occasion. He breathed hard a moment. But perhaps Amad had sent for him for another reason. The rich diamond merchant might have become suspicious of his new assistant gardener. Amad had hunted the city over for him in vain. Some inkling of how the dervish had been cast up by the waters on the stone steps leading from Amad's garden to the canal, might have fallen from the man servant's lips during the day. He had been with his master on his ride and the two might have talked, or the master might have questioned the man more closely.

As they walked toward the house, the woman glanced once or twice at this handsome new servant of Amad's. She stepped rather close to him as they traversed the dim passageway but he appeared quite unmindful of a tentative friendliness in her

manner. Even when at the head of the stairs she suffered her veil to be swept aside to reveal her ripe lips, he showed no interest. They might have been the crimson painted lips of a china doll for any temptation they had for him, and—"Truly a stupid fellow!" she murmured. Then pointing, "There is the door," she observed. As if the dervish did not know! He had been glad enough to pass out of it safely once before that day. Would he be as fortunate on this occasion?

"Is he alone?" the dervish asked in a low voice. His eyes had begun suddenly to glitter.

"I don't know. Sadi, the saddler, was with him. I was to admit you when he left."

The saddler possibly still there! And Amad had sent for the dervish! Ominous circumstance, or coincidence. But very little seemed to matter now. The dervish felt about as puissant as a babe. Amad had worsted him. He was going to be married on the morrow—this fact kept repeating itself in the dervish's brain. It stood out above all else.

"Wait!" said the woman, unmindful of the other's preoccupation. "I will see if you may enter now." And she went forward. He followed. A

sound of low voices was heard. "We shall have to stay here a moment or two," she went on in subdued tones. "The master bade me fetch you when the other three left. Sadi, the saddler, asked permission to speak with him alone, and he granted it. But I didn't think he would let him take up so much of his time, for the master isn't over-fond of poor relatives. What can he have to say that is so interesting?"

"Allah knows," muttered the dervish, though he, too, had an idea, himself.

The woman looked at him more coquettishly. Why not? Repression makes the Mohammedan woman bold. Treated as a prisoner, with suspicion, her wings are too often ready when opportunity is kind. And this fellow's eyes, when she met them, seemed now fairly to burn. What hidden fires! She did not realize that flame was essentially and unalterably non-amatory—that it was disposed more to blast than to caress.

"What nice eyes you have!" she murmured. Then with a low laugh: "My eye!" It was a term of Arab endearment. It meant: "Light of my eye," or "One favored (for the moment) by my eye."

"Perhaps I'd better go down again," suggested the dervish. He had not even noticed her crude advances.

But she motioned the dervish to remain. "What *can* keep the master so long? I heard him say he would give the saddler but a minute—"

"It must be important," again muttered the dervish.

She regarded him with a knowing smile. "Shall we listen?" her look said. A servant's prerogative! Or, at least, a house-servant's. They stole nearer.

"Why did you not speak of this sooner?" Amad's tense voice, within, was heard to say.

"I wished to make sure," Sadi answered.

"And now you are sure?" Incisively.

"Yes." There was triumph in the saddler's voice.

"Something he left behind him, when he went so hurriedly last night, makes me so. Something which dropped from the clothes he changed and which was thrust with them under the settee in the *suffeh!*"

"You have it?" Quickly.

Sadi's reply was inaudible. They spoke in lower tones now—excitedly. Their accents were staccato,

denoting keen interest, but what they said was still unintelligible to the dervish. Were they examining that "something" that had once been all in all to him? Yet he had not even noticed its loss. His mind must have been strongly engrossed otherwise. Even now he felt an odd apathy that they should have it—though it represented a fortune, his all, and he had left it behind him, in her house. The fact didn't seem to matter so much, somehow. It seemed so outweighed by more cogent extraneous circumstances. For some time only meaningless exclamations and sounds came from within. The evil wizened old face and the fanatical younger one were in all likelihood bowed together over the "something."

"I remember a legend of an Englishman—" they heard Amad say in a rasping voice, but his other words were lost.

"What are they talking about?" murmured the woman at the dervish's side.

He shrugged. He felt no great concern over Sadi's "discovery." A few days ago it would have meant everything to him, but now—an extra hazard or two—when his life was already forfeited! The

morrow—that's what he was thinking of—the irrevocable morrow! The bride might be wringing her hands, but what could she do? The girl's words came back to him with poignant significance. There are worse things than death—so that Sadi's words, now heard, had almost a frivolous, unmeaning sound.

"I ran across him accidentally one day after dusk, in our holy city of Mecca. He had his arm in a hole in one of the enclosure walls of the mosque. He had removed a few of the bricks. When he saw I had discovered him, he made some excuse about a miracle-hole, and of drawing virtue from the tomb of a relative of the prophet on the other side, but I learned there was no tomb near. Then I remembered the legend or story you speak of—"

Sadi's satisfaction seemed painfully irrelevant to, at least, one of the listeners. It was also pitifully puerile. No doubt the saddler was mentally computing a reward for services. What are rich relatives for, except to bestow largess? And what better time to impress a sense of obligation upon this one than on the eve of his marriage? Besides, it is fine to be rewarded for having accomplished something

most gratifying unto yourself—that you have long striven to attain. It is like killing two birds with one stone. Sadi served his own fanatical desires at the same time he served Amad. He, no doubt, pressed hard now his own importance on the latter. If the rich diamond merchant had only seen fit to have employed him (the saddler) in a certain delicate mission, instead of that blundering dyer, what a deal of fuss and bother would have been avoided!

“I suspected at Light of Life’s.” The saddler spoke complacently. “Had I been consulted—but then, at that late moment, what could I, without authority, do? Besides, one should not speak upon mere suspicion, however strong. What if I had been in error? The law against slanderers is severe. Sometimes they are beaten and there are both prisons and fines for them, as a penalty. I who am a poor man dared not risk—”

“You have done well,” interrupted the diamond merchant, as if impatient of further explanation. “At least, you are not a fool, like many others. And no doubt you are right. This proof is conclusive. To think of the insult to our sacred religion!” Explosively. “But that is neither here nor there now,”

he went on more calmly. "That idiot of a dyer tells me you do not think the fellow is dead?"

"What fellow? Who can they be talking about?" breathed the woman servant in the dervish's ear. She did not ask it as a question—how could the young man, a newcomer in that household, enlighten her? She was but voicing her own perplexities.

The dervish did not answer. Sadi's reply to the diamond merchant was the same as he had made to the dyer and the others, only he gave now more emphatically his reasons for his belief.

"I do not agree with you in this, for obvious reasons." Amad snapped back. "Think of the reward I offered for any information concerning him! And not one trace of him, living, has been found."

"Nor dead, either," said Sadi significantly. "The water is swift, but he is strong. On the march, men fell and camels, too, and the beggarly pilgrims stripped the flesh from the bones of the beasts. But he always had strength to go on."

"Tut! What an obstinate fellow you are!" cried Amad angrily. "However, to entertain the impossible as a probability—"

He murmured hastily some instructions. What they were could not be heard. "A fit time, eh, if your foolish surmise should prove true?" Amad chuckled grimly. "He had better be dead than to have the people know all this, now—when they are so aroused. It will be your business to acquaint them with the facts. Let it once be known this fellow has kissed the sacred black stone—"

"And offered a goat for holy sacrifice at Mecca—"

"He dared do even that?" Amad almost shouted. A moment he was very vehement, religious indignation superseding tender anticipations. The lover was replaced by the bigot.

Outside the door the dervish listened with apparent indifference. To the woman servant he was a stoic, indeed; a man without emotion or curiosity. Her own face was eloquently expressive of bewilderment. She couldn't make head or tail out of all this talk. She had caught "Death to the Christians!" "Meddlers! Interferers!" And then she heard Amad in peremptory tones tell Sadi to go, whereupon she herself retreated quickly.

The interview was at an end and she did not wish

to be detected eavesdropping. A moment later Sadi appeared at the threshold.

"You had better go to the master now." The woman servant again turned to the dervish. Sadi had left the house. He had noticed the woman and also her companion at the farther end of the dark hall, but they appeared only as shadows to him, for Amad wasted no candles or lanterns to light the way, when his humbler friends and relations departed from his august presence. Perhaps it afforded him malicious amusement to hear them stumble a bit. He might even have been capable of smiling, if one barked a shin on a *kursi*, or other substantial article of furniture. So Sadi's footsteps had receded in comparative and unostentatious gloom, and the click of the bolt of the *dubbeh*, as the pins of wood dropped into place, had announced the closing and locking of the street door after him.

"I am ready." The dervish appeared, at last, reconciled to the inevitable. He started once more forward, when—

"Remember your manners," spoke the mentor sharply, "and what will be expected of you." She was fast losing any concern she may have had for

the fellow. Never was a mere stableman more oblivious to his own interests. "As you enter posture and pray Allah to bestow upon him the delights of paradise."

"Must I say that?" There was again that odd glimmer in the dervish's eyes.

"Of course. Have you any objection?"

"Oh, no. It will give me much pleasure—much!"

Then as if to charge his memory, "The delights of paradise," he murmured queerly. She eyed him disdainfully. A woman of the East does not like to have her little attempts at flirtation pass completely unmarked.

"Go, fool!" she said, and walked away herself. She wasn't enough interested now even to remain near for further eavesdropping. Yet had she lingered, she would have been rewarded for her pains. It was well for the dervish, though, that she didn't. He watched her vanish before he stepped across the threshold into the *mandarah*.

Amad looked up quickly at his entrance. The oil lamps of the apartment gave a restful but not a vividly illumining light. The dervish noted the circumstance. Did Amad know him, and, if so, would he recognize him in sober serving attire?

A sharp voice bade the fervish draw nearer and, posturing low, he did so. In fact, he postured so low, the diamond merchant could see little, or nothing, of his face. "Delights of paradise! Delights of paradise!" he murmured hoarsely. "Felicity! Allah grant felicity! I am the new servant, may it please the illustrious master."

The words seemed to content Amad; he had apparently, with Sadi's going, set aside all tumultuous thoughts. Upon a tray before him were many jewels of wondrous size and beauty, and they now occupied his attention agreeably. His keen eyes were admiring them for their beauty and appraising them for their value as he picked up a handful and let them run through his fingers. Had he been making a selection for his bride? How her youth and loveliness would set off those beautiful emeralds and diamonds! He would lavish gems upon her, the better to enjoy them, and as she would belong to him he would be none the poorer. Sometimes he would bedeck her with pearls. It would depend upon his mood. His wicked eyes were full of the thought. The newcomer dared not meet them.

"Felicity!" he murmured, still posturing low, but drawing nearer.

"I hear you." Approval appeared on Amad's face. Here was a solicitous servant, and a most respectful one, judging by the way he could bend his broad back. "I sent for you to give you instructions for the morrow. You—"

"May Allah shower his blessings," interrupted the dervish more fervently, but still nearer and bending ever lower. "Garlands of joy—wreaths of—"

"Yes, yes," said Amad impatiently. There was such a thing as being over-congratulated. Still he strove to be complaisant, in keeping with the happy spirit of the occasion.

"I will even deliver verses and special prayers," mumbled this new and most sedulous servitor. "Verses and chapters, without number—"

"I know that prayer is good," said Amad sharply, "and that it is good for servants to be pious in their masters' behalf, but there are, also, many practical matters to be attended to, and of these I will speak. I desire you to see that many flowers—"

It was to provide flowers, then, that he had been summoned thither. Flowers for Amad's wedding-day! The dervish was now close to the heavy inlaid table behind which the merchant was seated.

"Look up," commanded Amad imperiously, "and listen."

The dervish did look up, but he, also, did more than that. He reached out and grasped the other, stifling with an iron grip the yell about to issue from the throat of the startled and amazed diamond merchant.

"Keep quiet, or—" There were no felicitations in his tones now. The sharp point of a dagger pricked Amad's skin and the latter's eyes blazed with sudden recognition. Amad *did* know, then, who he was.

"You!" he managed to murmur, murderous rage and hate in his gaze. "What--do you want?"

"That," said the young man, "you will soon learn."

CHAPTER XIII

MENACING MOMENTS

HALF an hour later the dervish, at least outwardly calm and tranquil, returned to the stable. The lean Damascus dog gave a low growl as he entered and regarded him with red suspicious eyes as if he felt all was not quite well, but the man, his employer by proxy, only glanced at the dervish inquiringly. "It was about the flowers," said the latter carelessly.

"You had a pleasant interview?"

"Very."

"And left him in an amiable mood?"

"Hum? He was transported with joy." As he spoke the dervish glanced quickly over his shoulder toward the house. All was still there—for the moment. But any instant there might come—

"Perhaps I, too, had better go and congratulate the master," said the servant suddenly.

"I wouldn't." Hastily. "When he dismissed me

he remarked he had important papers to look over."

"Did you say anything about your wages?" asked the man suspiciously.

"On my word, no."

"Did he give you anything?" Jealously.

"Only this." Showing a small box. "*Sheereh* (Hashish)."

"*Sheereh?*" Delighted.

"Of the best quality. Try some." The dervish tried to speak unconcernedly, glancing again as if casually toward the house.

"Later. I have work to do now."

"Defer it." A smiling invitation succeeded a sudden hard compression of the dervish's lips.

But the other declined, turning toward the stall of Star of the Desert. An instant the dervish looked down, then the pupils of his eyes changed in the least, and with tread lithe as a panther, he stepped after the stableman, when suddenly the dog again growled. The man looked around. "Eh?" he said. The lean creature was half standing, his hair bristling, his red eyes on the dervish. The latter, however, now stood with bent shoulders, his head inclined over the box, the contents of which he ap-

peared to be inhaling. His attitude was both innocent and absorbed.

"U-um!" he murmured appreciatively.

"Is it so good?"

"Catch." Tossing the box to the other. The fellow opened it and inhaled. Again the dervish darted a look toward the house. The dog whined.

"Shut up," said the stableman to the dog. "Don't know what's the matter with him. He's been uneasy like that for some time."

"How'd you like it?" The dervish changed the subject quickly, indicating the box.

"Nor porter's *bast*, that!" grunted the man with approval. A moment he fingered the box, as if tempted, while the dervish watched him steadily, but he ended by extending the little receptacle once more to the dervish.

The latter took it, concealing his disappointment. "Got a water-pipe?" he said, as the stableman started to groom the horse.

"Yes, over in the corner there."

The dervish walked to the place indicated and brought forth a smoking outfit. He filled the bowl of the water-pipe, and applied a coal from the bra-



"Stifing with an iron grip the yell about to issue from
the throat of the diamond merchant"

zier. He didn't want to smoke; he wasn't inured to this insidious oriental pastime, but he felt he had no choice, so he puffed as superficially as possible, blowing the smoke in the direction of his busy companion. The latter continued at his task but gradually his motions became more slothful and he sniffed. Then, for a few moments his hand suspended operations on the shining flank of the Star. Would he never make up his mind to desist from work and enjoy himself? The dervish waited, his features masked with indifference, though feeling the while like a man on the verge of a precipice. He knew the effect of the smoke on users of the drug and this man, he was sure, by his complexion and other signs, had the habit. The stableman at length turned around.

"Don't smoke it all," he said jestingly.

"There's one way of obviating that," answered the dervish quickly, and held toward him the silver and amber mouthpiece. The stableman took it and breathed in. His face expressed no disappointment. "By Allah! here's aroma!" he muttered.

"Go on," urged the dervish as the other would have desisted.

But the stableman gazed indecisively toward the Star. "I'd better finish my work first."

"When the master told us to enjoy ourselves?"

"Did he say that?"

"Of course."

"It is not like him."

"The occasion is most unusual."

"True; the night before his wedding!" The fellow yet seemed to vibrate, however, between duty and pleasure, and inwardly the dervish anathematized him. Every instant was precious; every fraction of a second meant so much to him. Well, if he wouldn't smoke?— The dervish got up and once more moved toward the stableman, when again the dog made a sound. The stableman turned to give him a kick, and in doing so, swung some little distance from the dervish and facing him. "Doesn't act as if he liked you," grunted the man.

"Yes, I've noticed that," returned the other with a smile somewhat strained.

The stableman walked toward the door of the stable. "Wait," he said.

"Where are you going?"

"To the house for another pipe. I've concluded

to take your advice. The work can wait on such a night."

"But the household is asleep. Why should you disturb them?"

"The women servants are always willing to wait on a man. They esteem it is a privilege. At least," grinning, "one of them will."

"Nevertheless, you are but putting yourself to unnecessary trouble." As he spoke, the dervish extended a detaining hand and touched the other's sleeve. It was a hazardous expedient, with that watchful sentinel of a dog just behind him, but the dervish could not let this fellow go to the house. It was the last thing he wished him to do. "One pipe is surely enough for both," he went on with a semblance of good fellowship. "So we can smoke in more friendly fashion. You needn't be afraid of my getting more than my share, for when it comes to smoking, I've a weak head."

"Well, I've a strong one," boasted the other, and sat down. "I learned the virtues of this stuff when a *sakka* (seller of water)."

The stableman puffed at last, drawing the smoke deep down, while the dervish selected a position

where he could see the house through the stable window, over the other's shoulder. He divided his attention between the man and the house. A flicker of light passing before one of the dark windows at the back of the dwelling was not calculated to reassure the young man. He breathed heavily. Some servant going to bed? No—coming down. He listened closer but for the moment heard nothing alarming. The great, scrawny dog, too, seemed all attention, sitting like a guardian gargoyle on his haunches and focusing his uncannily bright eyes on the dervish. His owner meanwhile appeared contented enough, muttering new encomiums on the mixture in the bowl of the pipe.

"Though I'm surprised the master should have given you such," he added wonderingly. "Surely it is the kind he reserves only for his guests?"

"As I told you the master is feeling most amiable. He is going to give presents to us all on the morrow."

"Is he, indeed?"

"He especially mentioned you."

"He did?" Delighted.

"An 'old and valued servant', he called you."

"Not so very old in service here," put in the other. "I haven't been with him but—"

"I believe he said 'valued', not 'old', come to think of it."

"You seem a little mixed on what he did say" observed the stableman suspiciously.

"Not at all. I—"

"If I thought he didn't really give you this, but that you—"

"Took it? Now Allah forbid— You forget I came well recommended for honesty, that it was you, yourself who—" Laughing.

"Well, well!" grumbled the stableman. After all, what did it matter? In every Mohammedan household peculation is practised by the servants and this fellow stole nothing more valuable than hashish which he generously shared with—? A door leading from the house into the garden at that moment suddenly slammed. The dervish straightened but the stableman did not seem to notice; no doubt he thought some one was locking up; he now reminded the dervish it was his turn.

"Not yet," said the latter protestingly. His manner was airy, though between words he listened in-

tently for any further sounds from the house. "As I told you, I have a weak head, and—"

But the stableman insisted. "I'll have no *ibnees* (little boys) in my employ," he observed jocosely—perhaps with a touch of malice, too. The drug affects people differently, and in the stableman's eye, behind that look of pleasure might be detected a glint of truculence. At another time possible belligerency on the fellow's part would have only amused the dervish, but now, with that cursed descendant of street dogs eying him with the concentrated sharpness bred by generations of thieving and hustling under difficulties, the dervish felt as if he were being enmeshed in his own net. That dog, under certain circumstances, would arouse the household, if the household did not soon arouse itself.

As he smoked, the dervish became aware he had nerves in his finger-tips. Bees, too, began to buzz in his herd. Suddenly he stopped smoking. Foot-steps coming from the house could be heard on the gravel walk.

"Who can that be?" The dervish got up.

"Odd any one should come out here at this time," said the stableman expectantly.

Fingers now fumbled at the latch of the barn door, which, a moment later, swung back, revealing the half-veiled features of the woman servant who had shown the dervish into the presence of the diamond merchant.

"I came to see if the master had gone forth on the Star," she observed, looking toward the stall.

"Why do you come to see that?" asked the stableman.

"Because an orderly from the governor's staff has been sent to consult with him. About this uprising against the Christians, no doubt. The master is a member of the advisory cabinet, you know."

"He is not, then, in the *mandarah*?" said the stableman.

"Apparently not. I knocked, and there was no reply." Her eyes, as she spoke, turned to the dervish. Did they convey a question? Conscience might have interpreted that look almost as a challenge. He had been last with the diamond merchant.

The dervish smiled. It was a very charming smile. No one would have seen anything strained or unnatural about it. "I believe the master did say something about going out," he observed, as if not quite sure of the point.

"On foot?" Incredulously. She stared at him. Then the dark brows drew together. "He never walks on the public streets."

"Never? Who shall say that on such a night as this?" Twirling his fingers lightly. "Love upsets all habits."

"Your wits are improving," she commented, eying him more sharply. "Perhaps you are not such a fool—"

"No, indeed."

"The master, too, may have smoked a little to compose himself," suggested the stableman, "and if you knocked louder—"

She started to go. "Why such a hurry?" said the dervish quickly, in what was intended to be a very sweet and ingratiating tone. He observed that the stableman now smoked as if he were going through deep breathing exercises. His eyes were beginning to shine brighter.

The woman tossed her head. "There's better company for you," she said tartly, and pointed to the dog. A moment later her sandals crunched once more on the gravel. The dervish, with face still turned toward the door and smile somewhat frozen, waited. Would the woman take the stableman's advice? Or would Amad be left to sleep in peace? Something warm touched the young man's hand, then was thrust into it. He looked down with sudden loathing.

"No, no!" To smoke now? It was impossible.

"Yes, yes." And the fellow meant it. His eyes were very keen, a little surprised, too, as at the abruptness of the other's refusal; they were also more truculent. They said plainly: "Conviviality, or fisticuffs? Choose!"

The dervish hesitated. Every fiber in him revolted. He *was* about to choose, when the dog put in a low growl. It turned the scale. Willy-nilly, he accepted the convivial rôle.

The bees had come back. They hummed louder than ever in the dervish's brain, though toward the last he had merely pretended to smoke. How many times had he and this fellow taken turns? The

stableman's head rolled a little now on his shoulders and his lips chanted rude love songs—not too delicate effusions that he had picked up near the stands of the story-tellers. They had sunk in and now they came out. Also he exhibited a disposition to become maudlinly confidential. He even started to speak of the master and his young bride; how it was house gossip on one occasion that the latter—

But the dervish did not hear; she, too, was in his thoughts—differently. The world seemed turning around; it was a topsyturvy world. He hardly saw the stableman now for the girl's face was between them. He distinguished it plainly in the cloud of smoke, as he had seen it the last time. Now it floated toward the ceiling, then it came nearer, only to recede and vanish beyond in the darkness. Behind that diaphanous bluish nebula, the Star of the Desert occasionally attracted attention to himself by kicking.

"Your turn!" breathed a voice uncertainly. The dervish caught himself up with a jerk, only to become aware that the dog stood now squarely between him and the man. That diabolical beast! It had sinews like whip-cords; its mouth, through the

smoke, seemed to possess the gripping possibilities of a steel trap. The stableman and it had changed places. The man was the beast; the beast represented intelligence. It watched over him. Even when he bestowed upon it now another forcible evidence of his regard, as a matter of habit, it only moved just beyond reach of the iron shod boot. This common mangy canine of the gutters, almost as big as a young heifer, appeared to have as many watchful heads as that fabled quadruped of the infernal regions. It was no mere cur any longer; it looked like a super-cur. It inspired an enormous respect.

The dervish tried to think, to marshal his ideas more clearly and the moments slowly passed. Again he bowed his head. He felt sleepy. The dog seemed to regard this as a kind of truce and closed one eye. Damascus dogs seldom sleep with both eyes closed. It isn't healthy.

In the dervish's brain those busy bees seemed at length to be folding their wings; they were settling on flowers in the coziest fashion—bright red flowers— The stableman now leaned back while little puffs of smoke came spasmodically from his

lips; then the tube fell from his fingers, uncoiled gently and stretched out like a thing of life at his feet. He was in Elysium. Unseraphic snores issued from his mouth and a caravan could have passed over him without dissipating his dreams or disturbing his bliss.

But the dervish neither saw nor heard him. He, too, experienced a delightful lassitude. Peace after storm! Tranquillity! Blissful lure of the senses! Dreamtime! The girl, fair as a peri, at the portals of paradise! But Amad?—what had become of him? He had seized him and—what was that noise?—

In his stall the Star kicked loudly and the dervish, with a herculean effort, staggered to his feet. He had to throw off that lassitude, to rise above it. The dog, too, got up and each looked at the other a moment. Then the dervish went to the window and opened it. His head reeled but the fresh air revived him a little and he drew in great draughts.

Suddenly he heard a sound from the house—like a pounding or beating on the floor and some one calling out. That might be fancy, or it might be the woman servant again at the door of the *man-*

darah, knocking louder this time. Or it may have come from the front. In that case, another caller! He turned toward the snoring stableman, to stoop over him, but suddenly stopped. The devil was to pay in earnest! Some one surely could be heard calling shrilly now—the woman who had been to the barn? Exclamations, wailings, shouts soon followed. Lights flashed at the windows. He had stayed too long. The dervish straightened and his hand grasped the heavy iron shears he had been using that afternoon. The super-cur saw. Certainly it had the sporting instinct. It had waited for the man to make the first move. But now it sprang.

CHAPTER XIV

CAPTIVE

AT one of the latticed windows of Light of Life's home the young girl, a little while later, stood looking out into the night. She was as much captive as if the aga of police had ordered her into custody. Light of Life trusted her now less than ever and would guard her charge most closely until the morrow. After that, it would be Amad's turn again. "And little do I envy him the task!" the stepmother had said to the girl. "Shameless one that you are!" The other's dark eyes had smoldered, but she made no reply. She received Light of Life's alternate sighs and invectives concerning her conduct alike with scornful indifference.

Her face now was pale, but there was still that smoldering light in her eyes. She walked from the lattice restlessly, then returned to it. The discreetly guarded opening looked out into the street. Any one gazing from it had a restricted view of



William Van Dreeser

"She was as much captive as if the agha of police had ordered her into custody"

the world, about half a block or so of narrow thoroughfare and an equally curtailed vision of the heavens. The sky wore a peculiar aspect; the clouds had a sickly yellowish hue which did not come from the moon, or the constellations above. Nowhere in the world are the stars brighter, but to-night there were no stars. Sometimes scurrying feet disturbed the stillness; again there were distant rat-atat sounds from afar, but to these the girl listened with odd apathy. Though the heavens might fall, Amad and Light of Life would not be turned from their purpose. How fast the hours went! The little clock in a recess of the room showed the night well advanced, yet she had no desire to sleep. Her hand lifted and touched something hard in the bosom of her dress, a small vial. Well, Syrian poisons act quickly. She wished Amad much joy of his bargain. She could fancy his and Light of Life's concern. Perhaps that last person wouldn't get her commission. That would be funny. The old diamond merchant had the reputation of being penurious at times.

"Still up?" One of the subjects of her thoughts had noiselessly entered the room and Light of Life

regarded the girl sourly. "You should retire, so as to look well for the morrow."

Look well! That, too, struck the girl as funny. "Why should I look well?" she asked, with that expression in the dark eyes which the elder woman did not like; it was an expression that, indeed, infuriated her.

"For your wedding, of course. A girl usually wants to look well on her wedding-day."

"But to-morrow isn't going to be my wedding-day."

"Isn't it? Why not?"

The girl was silent, though she could feel the other's eyes on her, keenly, curiously. Light of Life knew how difficult it was to handle the perverse minx. What was in her mind now? What would she not give to break that obstinate temper, to bend the other to her will? "Why not?" the elder woman repeated challengingly. "Do you hope to draw a dagger again as you did before, brazen that you are!"

"Do you call that brazen?" laughed the girl. But it was not a gay infectious laugh. "You have no right to attempt to force me to this. You can not marry me again to that horrible old man. You de-

celved me—lied to me before, but now?—I was never his wife; I never will be. It is inconceivable—impossible! Besides, you can not do it, because I am still a wife. That—that *mustahall* did not divorce me.”

“Oh, yes, he did,” said Light of Life sweetly.

“I don’t believe it.”

“We have the affidavits of four persons who heard him.”

“Affidavits! Lies, you mean.” So that was how they would overcome the difficulty. The dervish might not really be dead, then; he might reappear. There was a chance; and these people would take no chances.

“Take care how you impugn the word of four honest men,” said Light of Life severely.

“Honest men? Friends of Amad, no doubt, and of yours!” A little wildly.

“And if so?” Darkly.

“Perjurers!”

“You do not know what you are saying,” Light of Life answered with an accent of contempt. “Therefore I overlook it. You are young and foolish, as well as headstrong and reckless. Fortunately, you have others to guide you.”

"You—who have always hated me!"

"Have a care!"

"Though why?— Unless it is because my mother was a Christian and I, as a child, was brought up in a little mission!"

"Do not speak of it! Luckily, we rescued you in time."

"Would you had left me there," said the girl bitterly.

"This, to me, who have ever shown you a mother's care? This, my reward? Well, Allah will repay."

"Allah! You mean Amad," laughed the girl.

"Impudent jade!" Light of Life was losing her temper in earnest; she could have struck those laughing flower-like lips. "It is most generous of him to take you back at all."

"I will dispense with his generosity," said Fatma in the same tone.

"To take you back at all," repeated Light of Life, "after your—shall I say immoral conduct? Your meeting this shameless vagabond alone like that! Had you no regard for your reputation?"

"Was he not my husband?" again laughed the girl.

Oh, those red defiant lips! How Light of Life hated them! "You picked him out. Or Amad did." Her merriment was strange, unnatural.

"Such language! I believe you were taken with him—this handsome vagabond from nowhere! Oh, you should blush. I blush for you."

"You!" said the girl in the same tone. "You!"

Light of Life looked at the girl sharply. Had some of her own servants been gossiping? Had they whispered how she had, on one or two occasions, shed the light of her condescension in surreptitious quarters? The elder changed the subject.

"Well, he is dead," she murmured with satisfaction. "This beggar who has made all the trouble!"

"Dead? Then how could he have divorced me?"

Light of Life pressed her thin lips together. She had been caught in a trap. "How could they have made the affidavits?"

"It is sufficient we have them," retorted the elder woman. "He—he was killed afterward. By some native Christians," she added.

The dark eyes only answered. Their mirthless mirth alone replied. The girl might well believe he was dead, but not "afterward." Again she stood at

the casement and heard the sibilant seething of dark waters. Again she saw the handsome reckless face of this vagabond husband of hers just before— A sudden rush of color came to her face. Her eyes suddenly flashed. How often had she lived over that last mad moment! But he had paid—paid—the presumptuous fellow! Was she glad? The color receded and left her paler than before. At least, he was brave. The fire died completely out of the dark eyes and left them dreamy. At that moment they were very soulful, young and poetic eyes. He had leaped to his death with a laugh—

Below came a knocking at the gate leading into the court.

“Who can that be, at this late hour?” Light of Life turned. Perhaps she was not sorry to terminate the interview. “Some message pertaining to tomorrow, no doubt! I shall see,” she added and left the room.

The girl gazed mechanically down into the street before the house. “A message pertaining to the morrow.” What interest could it, or the messenger, have for her? Vaguely in the dim light she discerned the figure of a horseman. His mount seemed

nervous and struck impatiently at the stones with his hoofs, so that she saw a spark or two fly. The man, also, showed impatience and knocked again in more peremptory fashion, whereupon the sleepy *bowwab*, grumbling about people who came at unseemly hours, opened the gate. The horseman thrust out an arm; the light from the lattice fell on it and on something white which he held toward the displeased Abyssinian.

"A message from Amad Ahl-Masr," said the horseman gruffly. "To be delivered at once! Not an instant's delay! My master says it is most important."

The *bowwab* answered in more respectful tones and took the message, upon which the rider spoke to his horse, wheeled and dashed away. The girl watched him disappear, and the *bowwab* again locked the gate. She could hear his shuffling steps crossing the court, then the rather noisy slap, slap of his slippers on the stairs. He had been aroused from slumber himself and he didn't care how many others of the sleeping household he disturbed. Light of Life awaited his coming at the head of the stairs.

"From Amad Ahl-Masr? Why should he be writ-

ing so late? Nothing has happened I trust," the girl heard her say.

Then slap, slap! The slippers were descending the stairs and the *bowwab* returned to his hard bed of burlap near the gate. The girl as from a great, great distance, now caught the crackling of paper in the adjoining room. Then silence followed. Silence of considerable duration. Light of Life had opened and was reading the message. Still the other felt not the slightest concern in its contents. She wished only to be left alone. But even this wish was not to be granted. There was a louder rustling in the next apartment, the door was thrown open and Light of Life again entered—or this time, she fairly rushed in. Something obviously had happened. She held the message in her hand and the paper shook, while consternation was written on her sallow and unprepossessing countenance.

"Get ready to leave the house at once."

The girl looked at her. "Why at once?" she said.

"Why? Read." And Light of Life thrust the message before her.

The girl scanned it.

"Have just learned the Christian quarter will be fired to-night. As your house is near, the danger is great. Leave at once with your daughter for my residence. The wedding can take place here. I am making all arrangements for it and for the reception of yourselves and as many servants as you may choose for your escort."

After this, a big blotch of red sealing-wax and the imprint of a great seal.

"His seal," murmured Light of Life. "Do I not know it? He keeps it in his big safe. But the post-script—read that."

It expressed greater perturbation on the part of the writer:

"In the name of Allah, lose not a moment."

"There! What do you think of that?" said Light of Life.

"I think that he is old and nervous," replied the girl scornfully. "I don't believe there is any danger."

"He is prudent, and in a position to know," snapped the other.

"If you are afraid, do you go and leave me." The

girl's eyes lighted with a faint spark of hope, but Light of Life didn't answer.

The latter struck a gong; a woman servant appeared, and to her the mistress of the house gave hurried orders in a voice which fear dominated. The servant listened attentively, bowed and went.

Soon from below in the court came the sound of horses' hoofs. Nags, donkeys and asses had been hurriedly pressed into service. Bundles were brought from the house while servants jabbered; one or two swore. The great *bowwab* wasted many words; he was like a giant child superintending the details of this hurried departure.

"Come," now said Light of Life authoritatively to the girl. That tone meant "no nonsense!"

"You will not go and leave me?" suggested the other almost gently. "I have no fear of what may happen here."

"Will you come, or—?" Light of Life's tones became menacing. She would waste no more time.

The shapely shoulders of the girl lifted. She knew she had no alternative. They would take her, willy-nilly. If she held back they would provide for her the *hodag*, or closed litter. The giant *bowwab*

might, in that case, be her personal attendant. She had no choice, indeed. She must go, or—her hand reached to her breast. Yet she delayed a little. She would start with them. Yes; she could do that. An enigmatic expression played around the sweet fresh lips. She felt distinctly—how distinctly!—something cold and hard against her warm young breast. She liked to feel it. It reassured her, and with a smile she followed the elder woman from the room.

CHAPTER XV

THE CAVALCADE

THEY rode forth, an imposing enough cavalcade, the girl at her stepmother's side, well toward the front, not because she wished to ride there, but because the other had indicated her desires in this regard. The dusky *bowwab* commanded the outriders and was prepared to shout to any who might get in their way. But the street before them was fairly deserted. His mistress had selected a roundabout route, remote from the Christian quarter, in order to incur no unnecessary risks. Gazing back, however, after they had galloped on some little distance, Light of Life noted that a number of persons had arrived in the vicinity of the domicil they had so recently left. She could not make out the figures of these people—they were too far away—but she saw that they carried *shealehs*, or watchmen's torches. Moreover the night breeze seemed to waft

to her the sound of excited voices. That might be only perturbed fancy, but they had certainly stopped at, or near, her house. A dire possibility assumed the dimensions of a startling conclusion. Light of Life's nerves weren't any too strong at the moment.

These people might have come there because it had been rumored that the girl's own mother had been a Christian, and that she, the child, when very young, had imbibed the foul heresies. The elder woman had been through one "holy massacre," and she knew that on the last memorable and terrible occasion, some not Christians, had been too quickly dealt with by the frenzied devotees. She gave, therefore, the order to make all haste. The sooner they were at the diamond merchant's house, the better.

The girl by her side heard and smiled. How puerile the other's apprehensions seemed to her at that moment! Her own horse being a poor one—had Light of Life designedly seen to that?—now fell back a little. Light of Life did not notice this fact, however; she was too concerned with her own fears, and quickly the girl glanced around her. But any slight hope she may have had of being able to escape was quickly shattered. She was well guarded.

Before and behind her were servants who, doubtless, had been carefully instructed. It would be foolish for her to attempt to get away. She would only make herself ridiculous before all these serving men and the others. Already one of the former pressed closer to her side. This was going rather far, for servants, according to the punctilious code of Moslem etiquette, are not supposed to ride by the side of their young mistresses. They were treating her as a criminal might expect to be treated. She forbore, nevertheless, to speak reprovingly to this forward one of her guards; to do so would be only to lower herself. She proudly refused even to look at him. After all, what did it matter? The ride would soon be over and she had made up her mind never again to enter Amad's house.

Furtively her hand sought her breast. The fellow was riding very close now. A single motion of the arm, however, and it would make very little difference whether any of the guard were far or near. Yet still she hesitated, fingering the vial. Once it had held delicate perfume. How different its contents now! She started to draw it forth, when the horse of the guard who had just annoyed

her by pressing too close, now brushed her own mount.

"Pardon," the fellow muttered in a low hoarse voice.

The girl's hand fell to her side. She was half mindful to reprove this overzealous one of her escort, only if she did, he might answer he served Light of Life, not her; that the older woman was his mistress. Better endure; it could not be for long. So she did not speak or look at him. She still professed to seem unaware of his presence. Though his careless or unmannerly action had deferred her purpose, she yet held the vial. Her fingers continued to retain it, even when her hand had dropped. It lay hard and reassuring in her palm and gave her courage. With it she could defy them all. There was one way to escape. They couldn't prevent it. She could laugh at bars and locks and chains—and Light of Life and Amad, that horrible old satyr—

An odd exhilaration seemed now to uplift her; her spirit felt free as the wind. One, a poor beggar, had paid for his fealty to her. Well, she regretted only that. At the instant, she forgot her resentment toward him, remembering only his service. The

dark eyes were dreamy, lustrous. She might have been riding through space, for these people around were nothing to her. They were but shadows. The red curving young lips wore a smile. Any one to look at her would have said: "How happy this bride! She must be thinking of the bridegroom."

For some time they rode thus and she bethought herself once more of her purpose when again that mettlesome horse of the presumptuous guard, disturbed perhaps by unwonted sounds from the distance, became slightly unmanageable and touched for the second her own spiritless nag. She might scarcely have noticed it, but at the same instant a hand grasped and distinctly pressed her arm. Intentionally? The fellow's fingers were loosened in a moment. In the dark no one could have seen the quick motion.

"Pardon!" again came the low hoarse voice.

But in the girl's face there was no "pardon." At that over-familiar, insolent touch, the vial, in her surprise, had fallen from her fingers. It had fallen to the earth, and, perhaps, had been broken. At any rate it was gone beyond recall. She could not stop and turn back to get it. Her most precious posses-

sion was lost. Her face flamed with passionate anger against him—this insulting and blundering domestic—who had robbed her of it. She looked at him with flashing eyes.

“How dared you?” she breathed in choked tones. Her pride was in arms. She could have struck him with her riding-whip.

It is probable that he—and he alone—heard, but he did not answer. His face was half turned from her and he seemed impervious to his offense. He was tall and rode superbly. This fact dawned on her and surprised her; ordinary household servants do not ride like that. Moreover, his mount was splendid. An impression of something familiar about the rider gradually crept over her. She could not see him very well, in that dim light, but the horse, she now made sure was Star of the Desert.

The fellow, then, must be from Amad's. The others of the escort who had noted him must have concluded likewise. What more natural than that the diamond merchant should send a servant, or a representative, to meet Light of Life and her charge on this occasion? Perhaps he was the messenger? But that person had ridden away. This

fellow, then, could not be the messenger, unless he had drawn rein and waited at some street corner for the party to pass. But Amad's messenger surely would not have done that. There would be no reason for his so doing. He would have stayed at Light of Life's house if his instructions had been to make one of this hasty prenuptial procession. He—

At that moment the fellow turned his face fully toward her. He did so just when a flicker of light from one of the few grudging street-lamps could pass over his features.

"Do not seem surprised—" he whispered.

A sharp exclamation, however, fell from the girl's lips. She could not help it. Her mood had been tense and strained and she felt as if she were looking at a ghost. She stared almost helplessly at the face; then it receded and darkness claimed it. The rider had quietly dropped back. Light of Life looked around.

"In Allah's name, what is it?"

"My—my horse stumbled."

"Only that?" Doubtingly.

"I—I thought I should be thrown. It is a poor beast."

"Humph! The horse is well enough. You should learn to ride better than that. Keep with me."

The girl was obliged to do so. Light of Life now gazed suspiciously back. At first she noticed nothing unusual. Her escort came clattering behind numerically reassuring. The fellow who had behaved so rudely to her charge was only one among many. Light of Life did not pause to count the members of her party. She had no time for mathematical calculations. She looked at the fellow—or the indistinct outline that was he, and might be any one—and then beyond him, when her gaze was abruptly arrested. Farther down the road appeared lights—people riding after them. Light of Life conceived this as a just cause for alarm. These might be the persons who had paused before her house. They might be intent now on overtaking her and her party, so she gave the command to push on faster than ever. Fortunately they were drawing near the diamond merchant's home and once within that palatial abode Light of Life's party would be as safe as in a fortress.

He, who had so startled the young girl, saw, also, those people coming after them. He shared Light

of Life's opinion, too, that they were trying to overtake them, but not for the reasons that estimable lady attributed to them. Riding now at the rear of the party, the young man looked back to survey their pursuers intently. An expression of grim amusement came to his face, though his heart-beat pounded. What a dear, superlatively comic old lady his mother-in-law could be on occasion! How she was whacking the ribs of her noble steed! And these other members of her escort, how some of them were whacking! Asses, donkeys and nags bobbed up and down in most ludicrous fashion.

That tragic ghost of a smile faded, however, from the young man's features. "He laughs best who laughs last." And Light of Life's turn might come. Indeed, it seemed as if it would come very soon. Already before them, he could see the lights of Amad's dwelling. The upper floors were all illuminated; the windows shone as if a fête were in progress. But a single intervening street separated them now from the great house—their destination. The end was near; it appeared inevitable.

Nearer to Amad's house! Nearer! The young man looked toward the girl. He could hardly see

her for the intervening figures, and pressed suddenly forward, drawing his cloak up about the lower part of his face. So a Mohammedan protects his mouth and nostrils when the night air is cold. Passers-by, thus muffled, can hardly be told for friend or foe. He was now close behind the young girl, who had fallen back a little—whether by accident or design, he could not tell—and, under pretext that his horse was again unmanageable, he pressed directly in front of her. He was then between her and Light of Life. That person looked at him; she saw but the steady cold eyes. She saw the girl, near enough. She saw the house of Amad, reassuringly close. So she said nothing; she only gave her horse another whack.

Clatter! clatter! A donkey sang. Awful melody! Behind them now some of the escort were calling out. What were they saying? That those coming after were friends—sent by Amad? Impossible!

Bewildered, Light of Life looked around. At the same moment, the young man, now riding at the girl's side, bent toward her and said something. Again louder voices from behind. Confusion!

There had been "no need for their leaving the house?" What was that? Who was yelling? That awful donkey! More ear-splitting music! The evil one take the beast! Why did it choose this psychological moment for its stentorian vocal performance? Was it jealous of the row the others were making? Did it desire to show that its lung-power could dominate all creation?

The foremost of those following seemed to have come up and mingled with the van of Light of Life's party. It was like the meeting of two lively, converging currents, producing at the point of contact a turbulent and up-tossing eddy. Now they were at the cross street. Amad's house, yawning with eager and evil hospitality, loomed almost before them, when the young man again said something to the girl. At that low, tense, yet supplicating command the slender figure swayed toward him and the next moment she was swept from her horse and on his. Light of Life saw and threw up her hands.

The Star sped down the cross-road. The last glimpse the dervish had of his mother-in-law she was waving her arms like an animated scarecrow. She may have been screaming, too, but if so, he did

not hear it for all the other noise and clatter. Some of the escort came after them, but futilely; the Star was now a shooting star for velocity.

"Delight of my soul," the young man muttered—to the horse, of course, for thus do Arabs speak to their equine friends. The "delight" tossed his kingly head and sped on. It was not a race, but a walk-away.

CHAPTER XVI

VARYING FORTUNES

TO the dervish it was more than that. It was something unreal, unbelievable. He could hardly credit his own good fortune. It had all been too easy. It was almost as easy as magic—as some deed of the magical youth on the magical horse, in one of the magical tales, eighty-three or thirty-eight of the *Elf Legends*. In that astonishing story the young man on the magical horse had but to speak to the beast and tell it to fly and straightway they had gone hurtling through the air to the palace of enchantment, set on a mountainside.

But the dervish couldn't quite do that; he couldn't turn a quadruped into a biplane. He couldn't even transform a quadruped into a quadruplane. He didn't possess the old wizard's art. So he did the next best thing. He urged the Star along as best he might on terra firma. And for a mere, ordinary,

mortal, young man his satisfaction or elation was quite sufficient.

A few days ago he would have scoffed at the preposterousness of it all. He carry off a young lady? Absurd! Yet here he was doing it, and—yes, there was no doubt about it—doing it with eagerness and zest. More than that, he felt a subtle intoxication stealing over him. He strove to fight it off. He told himself it didn't exist. But it did and he began to realize it. He stole a look at her. By Allah! how beautiful she was. He had almost forgotten how beautiful. He held her close. It wouldn't do to let her fall. That was the excuse he put to himself. It would be an awful *faux pas* to do that. But he knew he wanted to hold her close, that he liked to. And what was this sensation? Electricity, or felicity? The former, of course. He looked at her more frequently, perhaps because he couldn't help it, just letting the Star go. The present—the present—that's what concerned him. He was surprised it was so. Greatly!

A lock of her hair made a playground of his cheek; it danced around like an elf of mischief. Her breath almost mingled with his. Divine

warmth! He had to hold back words. He felt a mighty ebullition seething within him. It was difficult to keep it in check. He was not he. In love? Not at all. It could not be. Oh, no!

And yet, strangely enough, at this very moment, he discovered he didn't want to lose her now. He didn't wish ever to let her go. The realization came to him like a blow—no, a bitter-sweet one. She was dear to him—inexpressibly. That was it. She was as sweet as the flowers, as lovely as a star. Similes smote him. He was amazed. If he could only just say something, and yield to this amazing emotion. He was no longer an automaton, a puppet, a figure in a farce. He was real and she was real. She was not distant either, something hardly to be touched, a mere "proposition." She was near and—for the moment—she seemed to belong to him. He could, at least, imagine it was so; he wished it were; that she were his, not just for a little while, but for always—as long as the suns and stars continued to whirl. There! He had said it to himself, anyway. He had put his head in the golden yoke, or was it an iron one that would chafe?

He rode on in a glamour. He was not merely car-

rying her off. He was undergoing a kind of miracle process, rediscovering himself, as it were. This ride was certainly bringing matters to a focus. It was concentrating a myriad scattered emotions into one big emotion, or single shaft of inner light, the way a magnifying-glass gathers up the sunbeams into one bright burning disk, which is sometimes rather scorching, too. He felt that scorching touch now. All was not altogether sweet. What caused that bitter with the sweet?

Amad! He looked into the young face, with the long lashes and sweet proud lips. That past! He would have blotted it out, if he could. But it existed, irrevocably. His face became set and very stern. He *was* jealous, and he knew it. She would never have belonged to that other. It was all wrong. Nothing could make it right. Nature herself cried out against it. Just then they came to an open market place. The girl stirred.

"You were that messenger?"

"Yes." He spoke almost brusly. Was he angry at himself for discovering in himself this new and extraordinary capacity to mix in other people's affairs and make them an intimate part of his own

being? Was he annoyed that he couldn't merely shrug his shoulders, say it was all none of his business and let it go at that? She looked at him wonderingly but he did not explain further. He hated explanations. Again she stirred. Now that they were standing still, that close personal propinquity seemed, perhaps, more marked. He forgot not to hold her quite so closely, that it was hardly necessary now.

"Where are we going?" Slight constraint in the girl's tones!

"Where?" He started. Where, indeed? Here he had just been riding on with very little thought of what would happen. He had merely been enjoying himself; no, not exactly that. There were too many thorns on this rose *d'amour* that had blossomed and bloomed in his soul, or brain, or breast, or somewhere.

"We can't go on like this. They know the Star." He spoke half to her; half to himself. "Better get down here; good place to consider."

His thoughts were in a whirl, as he helped her down. Near by were camel stalls. He led the way

to one and fastened the Star to a ring in the wall. At least the place offered a temporary refuge.

"Do you see anything of them?" she asked, looking back.

"No. We're safe enough for now."

He felt a new constraint. The situation was anomalous. What were they doing here, anyway? His heart was still beating fast.

"Rather ridiculous to come back like this, after having parted forever, eh?" he remarked.

She looked at him but made no reply. What enigmatic eyes! Apathy on her part. At least, it seemed like apathy.

He experienced an odd irresolution. Confound it, she acted just as if being carried off like this was but an ordinary and commonplace episode. She did not seem at all excited or disturbed, or exultant. He wondered what she did feel.

"Sorry I came back?" he asked.

He forgot she had inclined her figure toward him when he had spoken to her during that ride. He only remembered that she was going to that palatial house. Women and girls are changeable. Perhaps

she had become reconciled to that remarriage. That "re." How he hated it now! Yes, hated. He didn't dodge the issue. He met it fairly, or let it hit him. He resented the "re." It was a miserable, despicable little word. To be *remarried*—that's what she had been going to do, when he had intervened. She didn't act glad that he had done that. She was silent, thoughtful. It was possible that Light of Life had persuaded her to make the best of a bad, or a good, bargain. Out of the strangeness of the moment a superlatively great cynicism now insinuated itself. It began to shoot up and flourish like a bamboo in a tropical clime.

"I saw him," he said.

"Who?" she asked.

"Him." Drawing himself up. "Amad." He strove to speak easily, lightly, but in a back chamber of his brain was still that picture—the *mandarah* at the diamond merchant's house, not vacant, as the young man had seen it, but peopled with two—the old man and her, his young bride.

"You did?" She seemed bewildered.

"Yes, I worked for him."

"I don't understand."

He looked at her. The green monster sat in the little chamber in the back of his brain and the green monster glowered at the picture. The green monster spoke; it is a way the green monster has. It doesn't matter whether people are to blame, or not. It is a very illogical monster. It jumps at conclusions.

"To think of their having married you to him. You! Him!" he muttered.

It was ungenerous. He knew it, but he couldn't help it. He didn't seem to have such perfect control over himself as he had had half an hour or so ago. He let the monster growl.

The girl started. Then her eyes flashed. She seemed to awake. Those words, perhaps, stung her. She apparently forgot this fellow was but a *mustahall*, a nobody. She only heard a voice and resented it—a voice that seemed to say that she had given her youth for gold, even to one such as— Her face burned.

"That horrible old man! You think that I—" Breathlessly, passionately. "But I never was!—really!—and never would be."

"What!" The word rang out.

"Never!" she repeated. "It is preposterous, in-

credible!" She did not look at him. She did not see him. It was as if he were not there.

"They both lied to me—Light of Life and he. His daughter had just died, and he pretended—" Her voice died away. "I was to take her place—the ceremony was to be a mere formality. And then—and then—"

He listened as if entranced. He could not move. "The old scoundrel!" he half breathed.

"I drew my dagger. I think I even laughed. It—it was so preposterous. And then he divorced—"

That was all. All? His heart was hammering now. He felt a greater emotion than when, at the critical moment, he had snatched her away from them.

"But—" he managed to say, "you were riding back, to his house? You had not, then, made up your mind to—to make the best of it?" It was awkwardly expressed, he knew.

"Made up my mind?" The sweet lips curved softly, almost mockingly. "When you touched my arm, I dropped something."

"Something?"

"A vial."

"A vial?" He continued to look at her. He began to see her meaning. That straight direct look told him there was no fear in it. "By Allah," he muttered hoarsely. "That—that old wretch! And the old cat!" He meant his beloved mother-in-law. The girl smiled now—actually smiled. Or, maybe it was only the ghost of a smile. Perhaps his vehemence appealed to her. Or, perhaps she wondered why he was so vehement?

"And to think," burst from him, "I spared him!"

"You mean, you had him in your power?"

"Yes; I could have put it out of his power ever to have annoyed you again."

"Killed him?" The dark eyes were on him.

"Yes. Why not?"

"But you couldn't?"

"He was old, and defenseless!"

Defenseless? She stared at him. The word was not included in the code of Mohammedan ethics where an enemy is concerned. Mohammedans do not spare.

"You are sorry I didn't?" he demanded. "You blame me?"

"No, no."

He was glad of that. His "wife" was an angel. After all she had endured! He gazed at her adoringly. The old green monster had by this time retired so far into the dark chamber that he seemed to have vanished. An odd, almost irresponsible exhilaration succeeded that other emotion.

Not Amad's wife! And "never had been!" The words continued to vibrate in his brain. Did he dream? No, it was no dream. But he mustn't dwell on it too long. There were practical matters to consider. Their present situation? It was more than precarious. He gazed at her now with what was intended to be a practical look.

"See here," he said. "We've got to get out of this—Damascus, I mean. You can't stay here now, nor can I. Tell you the reason." He stopped; then reconsidered. There was no time to tell her that now. He had to formulate plans, or to go back to those he had partially formulated before something had happened to interrupt the mental process of ways and means. "We've got to get out," he repeated, as if to emphasize it to himself as well as to her, "but the Star is too well-known and we can't ride up to the

gate, or one of the exits. By Jove"—did she notice he had said Jove, not Allah?—"I've got it. You stay here. No one will find you. And I'll go over to an exit near by. Maybe we can get out. Anyhow, I'll have a look around and see how matters stand."

"But"—the dark eyes lingered on him—"you mean I must remain here alone?"

"Only for a few moments."

"Why should I not go with you?"

"Wouldn't do. The danger—"

"Then it will be dangerous?"

"Not for one," he answered hastily. Her eyes *were* apprehensive. Another kind of thrill shot through him. But modesty immediately drove it away. Of course, she would be apprehensive; if he didn't come back, she would be left there alone. That would not be agreeable—just the opposite.

"Don't you worry," he reassured her. "I'll be back in a few minutes. I will see that nothing happens to me—for your sake," he added with a laugh.

A moment the sheer beauty of her eyes held him, then he tore himself away. He seemed walking on air. Dangers did not exist. "Not Amad's—not—"

The girl watched him disappear in the shadows of the low structures flanking that side of the open space. For some time she stood motionless like a shadow herself. Then she moved across the doorway to see better. The moments passed. How still the deserted market now! No one was in sight. What must have seemed a long time passed as she continued to gaze in the direction he had gone. Now she moved a little way in that direction also.

"A few moments," he had said. Her brows drew together. She hesitated, then returned to the stall. For a considerable period she did not stir. Behind her, the Star munched quietly at titbits of fodder he found on the ground. No sound from without. Only that same dread silence! She moved once more through the doorway and looked toward the exit from the city, or where she imagined it must be. A smoldering fire seemed to burn now in her veins. She could not stand still. She ventured again in the direction of the gate, or exit—farther, this time. Still she did not see him—this adventurer, bandit, or whatever he was,—only no holy dervish, she was sure.

She ventured farther; how far she did not know.

Then suddenly she realized, or realization was brought home to her. She heard voices behind and looked around. A spark!—a *shealeh*, or watchman's torch! She would have retraced her steps hurriedly, when the fellow carrying the torch began to wave it. Ribbons of flame played in the air. He and those with him saw her and, for the moment, she didn't know what to do. She could not get back to the stall now. There came into her eyes the look of a hunted wild creature as she gazed upon these people drawing near.

"Quick!" A voice at her very ear caused her to turn, and she could not suppress an exclamation. It was he, the dervish. He had returned through a narrow street leading into the square. His face was almost stern; he was terribly disappointed on her account. If only she had remained where he had left her, he might easily have joined her when these rioters, or looters, had gone by. He had come to bring her good news, glorious news. There were but two guards at the gate, and one of the two seemed rather overcome with Arab whisky. The others had probably gone a-looting. Amad had spread the alarm, no doubt, by this time, but it had

not yet reached this quarter. All this he had hastened back as soon as he could to tell her. They, two, might have been able to get out of the city by this gate. But now?—he glanced toward the watchman and those others.

“Come!” He indicated the side street. They turned and darted into the narrow way. It was the best that could be done.

CHAPTER XVII

THE GRAVEYARD

HE soon turned into an open doorway, drawing her after him. Before them the narrow street ended in a pocket. He had been expecting it. Streets here—or apologies for the same—had a habit of doing that. The house they entered, as well as others in that district, had been looted and was partially destroyed. Its walls, like those of many of the poorer class of Damascus dwellings, were of mud that had become almost as hard as brick, or the damage from the flames would have been greater. The interior, however, had been fairly gutted and the woodwork charred. A stairway leading to the low second story looked as if it would hardly stand, but up this the dervish went quickly, motioning her to follow. She did so. At the top he closed and bolted a door, then stood listening. There was a possibility the man with

the torch and those accompanying him had not observed them enter.

But that possibility was not realized. Soon he heard voices near the entrance. Some one expressed doubt they had turned in here; some one else insisted they had. That some one else's voice caused the dervish to start. Those tones had a familiar ring; he thought he knew them. He had little time for speculation, however, for the fellows below had now entered. He glanced hastily around him, noting that the room was small and that a narrow slit in the wall alone served for a window. They had not greatly improved a desperate situation by turning in here; the pocket had apparently been exchanged for a trap.

The young man regarded the girl quickly. He had opportunity for only a few words. She must now act as he would tell her. These fellows would do her no bodily harm; the presence of his Nemesis, the saddler, among them, guaranteed that; it was he they desired to vent their holy resentment upon. He feared he could do little for her henceforth; he strove to speak steadily; he would not let her see what those words cost him. She must get into com-

munication with a certain Lord Fitzgerald, an Englishman, who might yet be in Damascus. If that person had returned to England, she must somehow get word to him; he had influence; he might even be able to set the international machinery in motion in her behalf, to see that justice was done her. "He is a friend of mine," he whispered hoarsely. "Tell him that you are the wife of Jack—"

He got no further, for bending closer to look at her, he saw that she seemed not to be listening to him and a half-groan escaped his lips. His words had apparently meant nothing to her. Those sounds below had drowned the whispered injunction, engrossed her attention. From the street in front, too, were wafted fragments of the *Khutbet enneat*, the chant the pious ones sing when they indulge in the ungentle occupation of Christian baiting. The ominous tones constituted a weird accompaniment to the voices below. He had no time to repeat his words, for the fellows were on the stairs. There seemed little he could do, but mechanically he picked up a three-legged stool. He didn't indulge in any inner false heroics. In the story books he would be able to hold the stairway and emerge victoriously

from the unequal contest; in real life he knew these affairs turn out differently. He was certainly rather skeptical at the moment and regarded his weapon of defense ruefully. He didn't look at the girl; he was afraid the sight of her would unnerve him.

The fellows were at the door now. It wouldn't intervene long between him and them. The dervish swung his stool. He began to feel a little more interest. A crash, disproportionate to the mere yielding of the door, ensued, and the girl closed her eyes. That sound was like the crack of doom. Dust of plaster mingled with the smoke. It was hard to breathe. Why was it not the end? Why did these people not enter? A moment she waited, then looked again, to gaze out this time into an open space.

Had a *karameh*, or miracle, been performed? The dervish stood as surrounded by a vapor. That was the way the poor venders of street miracles looked when they burned a little perfumed something in a brazier for stage effect. But this vapor was not perfumed. Quite the contrary! And this miracle worker had waved a stool instead of a wand. Now he dropped it; she heard him laugh, but rather

fiercely. Then she saw some one clinging to the threshold (the stairs seemed to have disappeared) and that some one was endeavoring to pull himself up to the floor on which they stood. But he didn't. He indulged instead in a parabola—and not of his own choosing—to the ground below. That some one was Sadi, and his features were distorted with rage; next he emitted a howl.

The dervish might have used the heavy stool and so removed Sadi from his sphere of bigotry and usefulness, or uselessness, forever; but he preferred the less sanguinary, if more ignominious, method of the boot. It seemed to give better vent to his feelings. His foot had swung back in true football fashion, lunged forward like a thunderbolt, and the saddler became as not. That howl was succeeded by silence from him. The others, however, still made a noise; no doubt they had suffered a few bruises or scratches, when the stairway avenged the indignity heaped upon it and that erstwhile more or less peaceful home, by ceasing to perform its wonted functions for these active antagonists of Christian domesticity.

The young man was now busy at the roof and the

stool became a wrecking implement. It isn't hard to wreck a Damascus house, especially when there's been a fire to weaken the tile and rafters. In a few moments the dervish had made an opening, lifted himself through it and reached down his hands to his companion. In a few moments more, having descended the slanting second story roof to the lower one of an outhouse, they easily reached the ground and stood in a peaceful and pretty apricot orchard. He breathed deeply. Here was an agreeable transition. It was as if they had at last attained the enchanted garden that went with the magical horse.

He looked at his princess, no sternness in his eyes now. He forgot she had disregarded his injunction and left the camel stall, or if he didn't, he overlooked her disobedience. A princess, of course, obeys only her own caprices. He looked at her long, as if to make sure she was really and truly there. No doubt about it!—and—yes!—that faint reflected light from the sullen yellowish clouds showed a slight smudge on her cheek. That, too, was a variation from the story books. Fancy a princess with a smudge! The young man chuckled.

He rather gloried in that smudge. He didn't tell her about it. He let it stay there. It seemed an antidote to imperiousness, to wave away stand-offishness, to draw her irresistibly, whether she knew it or not, just a shade nearer his own state of irresponsible vagabondage. Incidentally he experienced a fine feeling of comradeship. The only difficulty was, it wouldn't, and couldn't, last. He was walking in some one else's garden, which, by the way, it behooved him to leave as quickly as possible; he was a trespasser as well as an abductor, and—well, yes, "horse thief." For a double-, treble-, or quadruple-dyed criminal, though, he was fairly contented—for the moment. He hugged the fleeting seconds, in lieu of her—only one can't, linguistically hug a stately young princess!—to one's breast. They were to him what small coin is to a miser. They were the ha'pence and farthings of bliss—good enough for a beggar.

"What were you saying when those people came up the stairs?" she asked suddenly as they walked rapidly on.

"Never mind now," he answered, looking down at her. "Fortunately, it doesn't matter."

238 ALADDIN FROM BROADWAY

"You were angry with me?" A little haughtily.

"Angry? With you?" In surprise.

"Yes. When you found I had left the stall I could see it."

"You must be mistaken." He smiled rather frivolously—at the smudge. The girl's brows drew together.

"What"—abruptly—"did you discover at the exit?"

"Not much."

"Many guards?"

"No—a."

"Fewer than you expected?" Her voice was more imperious. She divined, perhaps, he was trying to keep something from her.

"Maybe."

"We could have got out?" quickly.

"Hard to tell what we could have done," he answered evasively. "I—well, I'm no prophet. By Allah!" His voice suddenly changed.

"What is it?"

"Look!" Hoarsely.

She gazed back in the direction indicated. Flames were now bursting from the roof of the house they

had just left; the fellows must have heaped combustibles in the room below and set fire to them. The girl could not repress a shudder, thinking what might have been their fate, but there was a steely look in the young man's eyes. His fists closed. "Devils!" he muttered.

But Sadi?—why had he permitted this diabolical act? He had recognized the dervish; he must have concluded the girl with him was the bride-to-be of his wealthy relative. The saddler could have had no desire to see her destroyed in this awful manner. Her life was sacred in Sadi's eyes, at least. It must be, then, the saddler did not know; that his fall had temporarily deprived him of his senses. But later?—He would recover; he would, also, probably investigate, and his search would show that his worst fears were not realized. And then?—

It behooved them, indeed, to get away from here. Faster now he urged her on. *Their* enchanted garden—ominous circumstance!—ended abruptly—at a graveyard. A low stone fence separated them from it. He helped her over and for some moments they groped and stumbled forward as best they might. He did not ask her if she were afraid of

iblees, or other dread spirits that are supposed to haunt the cities of the dead. He took it for granted that she was not. It was no time to think of the supernatural. Yet yonder? What were *they*? Phantoms? They seemed to bob up right out of the earth to confront them. Some ran away. One or two stayed. The girl must have moved close to her companion, for she felt his hand on her arm. She was frankly glad, too, to feel the warm gripping fingers. He, at any rate, was flesh and blood. Those other ghostly things? One of them now spoke.

It—or rather he—asked if they, too, were fugitives. The girl gave a quick nervous laugh; it was a relief to hear that voice, though it sounded querulous. She could make out the speaker now; he had a long white beard and seemed to resent their coming. The dervish answered. Yes, they, too, were fugitives. Grumblings! Not only from the one, but from the others. Grudging phantoms! They apparently wanted the graveyard all to themselves. The reason soon became manifest.

Had the newcomers been followed, was the next question. The dervish replied in the affirmative.

Greater perturbation! Voices mixed; two or three talking at once, excitedly, though in low tones. Let this couple either go back, or walk on. They must not remain here. The first-comers wished to be left alone; they had their women folk to look after. The women folk came up and gave prima facie evidence there were women folk. Their big bold eyes studied the girl. The dervish studied them, and as he did so, enlightenment came to him.

Poor stage people—strolling Hebrew players!—that's what they were. On the ground were several bundles, their properties. He had once seen them perform. Ting! ting! He heard again the *ood* and the *nay*; saw, in fancy, the little café, full of smoke. He listened to the shrill voices, the odd dissonances. These women were the descendants of the singing girls, or *almahs* of the First Chronicles. Their ancestors had, perhaps, danced for King Solomon. Now their masters, or auditors, were base Moslems.

About to move on, the dervish hesitated. His eye again turned toward the bundles and then shifted to the girl. There was a question in his look. He seemed considering. Also, he lingered—

inexplicably!—or so it seemed to her. He even wasted the precious moments to indulge in apparently superfluous conversation. It was certainly mysterious.

“But surely they will not harm you?” It was more a statement than a question, and he did not make it idly. A purpose was framing in his mind. It might prove feasible if the girl were amenable. But, of course, she would be. She would see the necessity for acceding to his plan, however mad, or rash, it might seem to her at first. Again he cast a quick glance over his shoulder toward the house they had left. The glow from the fire had almost died out. That meant the others might be here any moment. He scarcely heard the old man’s vehement answer.

“Not harm?” Had they, the poor strollers, not been driven from their lodgings? And from pillar to post? Had they not lost many of their possessions? And would they not have lost their lives, perhaps, if they had not fled?

“Perhaps not,” the dervish answered hastily, though reassuringly. “They may remember they will want more entertainment from you in the future. Anyhow,” with a quick shift of tone, “as

fugitives should help fugitives, I have a slight favor to ask."

"A favor? From us? God in Israel! Why should *we* grant favors?"

"Because it will be good policy," he answered crisply. As he spoke he once more gazed quickly back. "They may spare you. They probably will. But as for me—" He shrugged. "There is nothing they wouldn't like to do with me—hang, draw and quarter! And I fancy, too, it would go hard with any in whose company I am found."

"You tell us that, and yet—?" The patriarch fairly gasped. "Be off!"

"Yes, be off!" exclaimed the others.

"On condition!" He got to it at last.

The patriarch drew in his breath and looked at his band. It was not difficult to read his thought. He was fortified by but two effeminate-looking youths and the women. And this fellow appeared both formidable and dangerous.

"We might just as well stay, and be taken here as anywhere else," the dervish went on coolly. "Since misery likes company, you know!"

"But why do you wish to bring misfortune upon us?" half wailed the old man.

"I do not wish only—you have your women folk to consider. I have mine. My wife!" His voice took on a certain warmth. "A man must protect his own. And she—she belongs to me." He dared say that, and with a fervor that sounded real, stepping closer as he spoke. The girl drew slightly away. The wonderful eyes were startled, luminous, a little antagonistic. He might even have placed a proprietary hand on her; he looked quite capable of it.

"What's the condition?" The patriarch regarded him sourly. "Anything to get rid of a madman!"

The dervish stated it clearly, concisely, and the girl started now. What?—did he think, then, that she?—it *was* madness. "Our only chance," he said to her in a low tone, reading her thoughts. The patriarch, however, protested mightily.

"As if we had not already been sufficiently robbed!" He raised his hands to heaven.

"But this will not be robbery," he insisted in a livelier tone. "We pay. See." He took the girl's hand and drew a ring from one of her fingers. She was too surprised to resist. "For your sake!" *Sotto voce*. And then, aloud—"Look at it!" The patriarch did. The others crowded around. "Hurry," said

THE GRAVEYARD

215

the dervish, "or it will be too late." As he spoke, he glanced for the last time toward the apricot orchard.

"It is a bargain," said the patriarch. Which meant that the stone was good.

A short time later, an old man and a boy left the cemetery by the main entrance on the other side.

CHAPTER XVIII

AT THE GATE

ON outward appearance they resembled two romantic types that had not yet disappeared from Mohammedan civilization. Aboo-Zeydee, poet-reciter, and his pupils were figures still well known in certain localities where conditions were most unchanging. They walked as if in a hurry. Occasionally the seemingly old man looked at his companion. By Allah! Here was a handsome boy, almost too handsome. A youth's bright turban set off the proud oval face and the dark romantic eyes; its folds also concealed her hair. Her cloak came just below the knees and in her hand she carried the customary musical instrument of the class to which she was supposed to belong, a *kanoon*. Their progress attracted no especial attention from any they met and, arrived at the gate, the old man stepped forward boldly as if taking it for granted

they would be permitted to pass out. A guard, however, promptly intervened.

"Have you a permit to leave?"

"No."

"Then you can't," said the guard shortly.

"But we have an engagement in the country to entertain country folk. We must." The old man spoke vigorously.

"It is impossible."

"This is extraordinary in our case. It is a wedding we are to attend. We can't disappoint them. You can see who we are."

"Yes, I can see." As he spoke the soldier's eye swept over them. The girl bore his gaze with clear-eyed steadiness, though she now held back a little in the shadow. "That's a fine-looking boy of yours. Is he a good player?"

"Of course. Why do you ask?"

"I can't—I'll tell you what I'll do." Abruptly. The fellow, as the dervish surmised, had been drinking. His expression became somewhat good-natured. "We'll stretch orders a trifle in your case, and let you out—"

"Thanks!" Eagerly.

"That is," added the fellow, "if you pay for the privilege!"

"Pay! How should poor reciters be able to pay, with living so expensive!"

"Oh, I don't mean pay in piasters. You shall pay with a song! It's tiresome here." Yawning.

"And we need a little entertainment to enliven us. What do you say?" To the others of the guard.

"These two people look harmless enough. Shall we let them out for a song?" The others assented, crowding around. They, too, seemed to have been partaking of the insidious Arabic beverage.

"Make it a tale," the dervish said hastily, "though a short one, for we shall be late if we delay here too long."

"No, no; it's a song we want. And not from you, old graybeard. We don't want any of your croakings. It's the boy we would hear."

"The boy?" Hastily. "He is tired. He—he has been working hard all evening, and it is late. I won't have him sing any more. It might spoil his voice for the wedding." The dervish protested vehemently. She, sing for that low riff-raff of Turkey soldiery? Never! It would be impossible for

her to do it. Besides, he didn't know whether she *could* sing, or play. He hadn't asked her. He had relied upon the costumes serving them solely as a disguise at first. Later, if need be, he would teach her to strum on a few strings, while he reeled off the usual high-flown yarns. He did not doubt his ability in that respect, but she?—

"The boy is new to the art. I have just bought him from his parents as an apprentice," he went on hurriedly. "You will have to excuse him. But I have a fine and merry mad tale—"

"The evil one take you and your tales!" cried the guard angrily. "It's the boy we would hear, and I tell you he shall give us a song, or—"

A few wild strident chords from the *kanoon* interrupted. The girl stopped further discussion by singing; and she *could* sing; no doubt about that. Not a large voice, but one with a thrill in it, or a lilt like a bird's. The dervish hardly knew what she sang; his brain for the moment had become rather confused. A love song, of course! No want of passion, either! He felt in a half dream as mechanically he squatted *aboo*-fashion on the earth. His hoarse croakings—they were "croakings," in

imitation of an old man, and a rather poor imitation at that—came in with the refrains. He did not know what it was all about, but he made his voice tremble; he put a wonderful tremolo in it. That might pass for passion; it sometimes does. A rose and a nightingale!—that's what they seemed to him at that moment. He had to croak though in order not to be left out of it; what was the use of pretending he was an *aboo* if he didn't croak, but parenthetically, between his own occasional exertions, he received an impression of moonlight in a grove, the shimmering spots, the traditional bird with a thorn against its breast, or something of the kind. The song seemed to end where it ought not; it stopped on something minor and unresolved. But it was the end. It was as if some one had hit the bird with a rock.

The dervish threw off the glamour. It was very wonderful, at least to him. He didn't look at her now. He was afraid he might not appear gruff enough. He just sprang to his feet and started for the exit.

"And now you've had your song!" he said to them and waved an imperious hand toward her. Thus



"He felt in a half dream as mechanically he squatted
aboo-Fashion on the earth"



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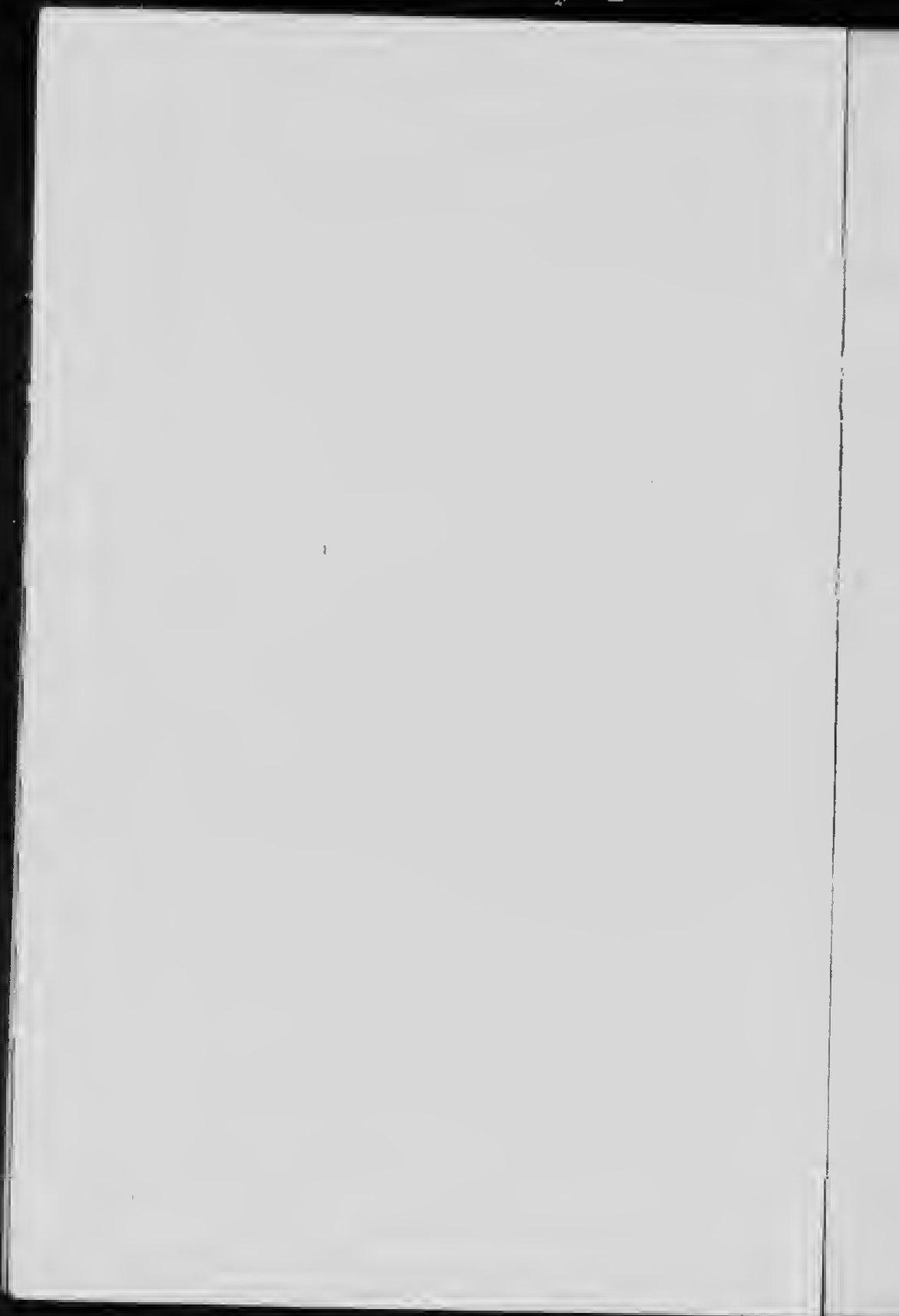


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do masters peremptorily order around the boys whose services they have purchased from the parents. His gesture said brusly: "Hurry up. We've got to go. No more fooling around here!" He seemed like a tyrant. He wanted to appear so. Nightingales—moonlight—love-throbs like the beating of the sea—what had he, to all intents and purposes an old man, to do with them? "Come." More peremptorily. Out there was freedom with her! And paradise!

Yes; by Allah, the genuine bona-fide paradise of the Bible. It occurred to him all of a sudden. Think of it! Tramps in the real actual Garden of Eden, located indubitably by the geographers and watered by the same two old rivers. For the moment he experienced a dizzy sensation. It didn't last.

"Hold on," said the guard. Some one had dashed up—or given a farcical semblance of dashing up—on horseback. The dervish was almost out of the gate, but the girl was yet in. The soldiers promptly intervened between her and that (to him) irrefutable Elysium. He came back. He was about to wax indignant, but he changed his mind for the moment. Instead, he looked at the newcomer and

continued to look at him. The dyer! Should they bolt for the exit? Alas! he might get out, though it was doubtful, but she— Those soldiers had guns and they weren't blunderbusses, either, with barrels about twelve feet long, inlaid with mother-of-pearl and other useless, non-sanguinary ingredients. These sons of the desert leaned nonchalantly and picturesquely upon weapons quite up-to-date. They, themselves, enacted the ornamental; quite proper blackguards for a canvas, they appeared—Fortuny would have enjoyed a dab at them; but their weapons were twentieth century and serviceable. It would have been inconsistent, as well as inexpedient, for a fourteenth century (or so) *aboo* and his pupil to try conclusions with a twentieth century (or so) later brand of firearms. It would be like anachronism.

The dervish sighed—to himself. He glanced at the girl and then, sidewise, toward paradise. That horseman was the dread angel with the flaming sword. The dervish waited, not patiently. The conversation seemed to him now inconsequential, trivial, though it was far from that.

"More orders, I suppose," grumbled the guard.

"Everybody is sending them. First, it is the chief magistrate and then the general at the fortress."

"This is from the chief magistrate," said the dyer, handing a paper. His oleaginous countenance, at one time so placid, showed new and deeper traces of worry. As if he had not sufficiently suffered in reputation already from the actions of this fellow whom he had introduced into his patron's house, without this new and culminating disaster! Thus spoke his dejected mien. Truly Allah had blinded his eyes, thrown dust on the heart of his judgment and led him to a viper of unparalleled malignity and ingenious audacity. He was having a very busy night; he had not long ago come from a very unpleasant scene between Light of Life and his revered patron. The latter was getting the worst of it when the dyer had left. Now, at the remembrance of it, the satellite wiped the perspiration from his brow. His grouchy glance swept toward the dervish.

"So it is thus you keep watch, making merry with idle vagabonds?" The dyer tried to pass along some of the ill-humor he had endured from others. It is human nature to do so.

"What harm—a little music?" retorted the guard.
"Besides, we have kept good watch."

"You will need to," snapped the other, shaking a fat and admonitory finger. "Have you read?"

"This paper states that some scoundrel of a Christian has carried off the bride-to-be of the rich diamond merchant, Amad Ahl-Masr."

"It is even true." Bitterly. The girl stood farther back in the shadow.

"May the Compassionate One smite him guilty of such a crime!" muttered the dervish in the background. "May he restore the priceless pearl to the bosom of the rightful owner."

"A good prayer!" said the guard approvingly, but the dyer seemed not to hear.

"In the message from the magistrate you will find full instructions," he said to the soldier importantly.

"See that they are carried out."

"To the letter," answered the fellow.

"And look to yourselves!" With a frown in the direction of the vagabond-reciter and his boy.

"The scoundrel and she whom he has carried off are still in the city. They must not be suffered to leave. Special orders have been despatched to all

the gates and exits. They may hide while it is dark, but after the morning prayer we will have them."

"And make short shift of the fellow," observed the guard sympathetically.

"Short?" The dyer's fat jaws came together with a crack. He seemed biting off something. "He not only stole his wife, but his horse, the pride of his stable."

"An unpardonable crime, that last," said the soldier. "A man might sometimes forgive the former, but—"

"You will find the description of them here," observed the dyer with another frown. "Also, information about the reward. Remember my patron is a man of much influence with the military as well as with the civic authorities."

"We shall remember!" And no doubt the fellow was impressed.

"May Allah restore—" again muttered the poet-reciter, but this time in a low tone intended only for the soldiers near at hand.

Again the dyer's glance swung back toward the dervish and his companion. Did he know her; had he ever seen her unveiled? It was unlikely. Still

he was a frequent visitor to Amad's house. He might accidentally—or those eyes? Women do not veil their eyes and her eyes would not be easily forgotten. The dervish held his breath; then stole a sidelong look at the girl. She stood with lashes down-bent. Her attitude still expressed indifference. The musical instrument trailed from her fingers to the ground. The light touched her hand; it was very small—too small. And so fine and shapely! Why did the dyer not say something? Probably but a second or two passed, yet they seemed interminable.

Suddenly the dyer struck his nag and, bobbing up and down like a man not accustomed to such strenuous activities, he disappeared in the night. Joy followed his going. As he vanished like an irrelevant hobgoblin, the dervish turned once more to the girl. He tried to appear testy and crusty, as would an old fellow put out. But in fancy he could smell the odors of the country. Paradise! The Gardes of Fden! or El Genneh, according to the Arabic—"a flowering place." It was all the same. A rose, or paradise, by any name—

"Well, what are you waiting for?" he said.

She responded with alacrity. More than that! She arose to the occasion, and—"Coming, master!" she said, though with mockery in dark passionate eyes. But the soldiers still did not make way for them, and—

"Here, tell your fellows to let us go," the dervish, yet more testily, exclaimed to the guard.

"Sorry," said the guard slowly, and somewhat sheepishly, "but I can't."

"Can't, after—didn't you get your song?" the dervish demanded in just anger. His voice sounded warm, but a chill ran over him.

"That is quite true, we got the song, and if I had my way—"

"A bargain's a bargain!" Energetically.

"I know, but this paper—these new orders—I dare not disobey them. I might have made an exception before, but not now."

"What does the paper say?" The dervish strove to conceal evidence of the turbulent emotions that surged through him. El Genneh?—was it receding from them, like a mirage?

"This order countermands all others and decrees no one shall leave the city to-night. This applies

to all, not only Christians. Even permits that have already been issued are not to be recognized, unless signed by no less a person than the governor of the province himself."

"Surely that is tyranny—quite needless—and I again demand—" In a louder voice. But he knew it would not avail. He had a dire foreknowledge to that effect.

"Spare your breath," said the soldier coolly. "As for the song, here are a few piasters." And he tossed several coppers on the ground. But the dervish let them lie there.

"A soldier's word—" he began once more. Then bowed his head. Of what avail were words? The pulses on his temples were drumming, yet he had to continue to act a part. "A broken engagement?—What will they think of me? What?—"

"One moment," said the guard, and his gaze was bent down the narrow street, where now, not one but a number of horsemen, preceded by two fellows with torches, could be seen approaching. "Yonder, if I am not mistaken, comes he, of whom we were speaking."

The *kanoon* fell from the girl's hand; the pupils

of her eyes seemed suddenly to dilate, and the color left her cheek. Amad! There was no doubt of it.

"Since we can not get out—" The dervish began to retreat.

"Why don't you stay and appeal to *him?*" called out the guard. "A word to the powers that be from one of his rank and position, and you might—"

"No, no!" Hastily. "Why should we bother one so illustrious, and at such a time? He would be too concerned in his own great affairs to be interested in—" The dervish did not finish the sentence. The words trailed off as he started somewhat hurriedly from the exit, with the girl close at his heels.

CHAPTER XIX

NEAR THE CITADEL

HAD not the guard and the soldiers been especially concerned in the great man's approach, they could not have failed to note that somewhat undue celerity in the departure of the peripatetic two. The dervish displayed a precipitancy rather out of keeping with his age and dignity, and differing decidedly from the manner of his approach. His joints now did not seem to need oiling. He had to hurry, and as it was, he reached the shadow of an outjutting house none too soon. The diamond merchant, and those with him, rode up, and by, even as he stepped quickly back, drawing the girl to his side. Like a yellow mask in the night, they saw Amad's face flash past. And never was mask set with more evil expression, while concentrated keenness, fury and diabolical persistency glowed from the eyes.

The dervish felt his companion shiver as if she were cold. His arm was before her now, pressing her close to the wall, for the shadow in front of them extended but a little way out. He felt her quick breathing and said something in a low whisper—whether words of encouragement, passion, or only of caution—he did not know. That little strip of black! It was their only protection and they stole along it now, keeping as near as possible to the wall. From the direction of the gate, they heard Amad's voice, loud, rasping and disagreeable. Now an angle of wall projected several feet, intersecting the ribbon of black. Though sharp eyes from afar might see them, they glided quickly around it and continued to move on. Whither? He felt he was but temporizing with the inevitable, at best, that his efforts were puny, ineffectual, and—almost—ludicrous! He could move only just so far in any given direction and then he had to stop.

He tried to think, but walking now with her down-bent, he did not seem to be able to marshal his thoughts to any purpose. A sense of his own insufficiency weighed on him like lead. His optimism had suffered a rude shock. It really mat-

tered little which way they went, since the exits and gates were all absolutely closed to them now. Only by means of a special permit from the governor himself, could they get out of the city. The governor? Why, that fanatical high official was as far removed from them as the moon. The dervish could as well hope to attain to the one as the other. Meanwhile—there was no dodging the painful fact—time was passing; the morn would come, and find them here. In his own mind he faced that contingency squarely. What would it mean for them—now? How had they improved, or ameliorated, their prospects? Out there, these togs would have served them. Those who sought would not have found them. Inquiry would have failed to locate a holy dervish and a fair young girl. They would have vanished as into thin air.

But here, it was different. Her face was too well-known to many women to go long unrecognized. Could she hope to escape Light of Life's venomous eyes? And those other women? How they would spy and watch for her! Not only for the reward! Oh, no; not only for that! She had offended the Mohammedan sense of propriety, that bugaboo as

big as the Colossus of Rhodes! They would neglect their household duties to avenge that. Cats on the trail? Rather! And Light of Life the black one, general whipper-in! What chance for the quarry?

The girl suddenly looked at him and spoke. Her quiet voice startled him. It was as if she had read his thoughts. "It is the end."

"Oh, no; not at all," he hastily reassured her, endeavoring to make his tones light. "Not at all!" he repeated cheerily.

"It is." No fear in her voice; nor did her lips tremble.

"Pooh!" He threw out the deprecatory ejaculation with a short laugh. But that laugh, somehow, didn't seem to fit. He experienced the very human desire to take her in his arms, to reassure her *that* way—though a very irrational and illogical way, no doubt!—to press his lips to those long sweeping lashes, shading the deep doubting eyes, to drive trouble from the sweet proud lips with masculine caresses, the way the leading "heavies" do in the plays, center of stage. Only he didn't feel a right to the center of the stage. A humiliating consciousness

of his especial eligibility to the "back row" tempered sweet temptation with reticence. He had played the game and lost. He had not made good. As a husband even of convenience, he was a fizzle. As a hero—he rang like a perforated piaster. "I expect we'd better try some of the other exits," he said with attempted enthusiasm. But it, too, rang as if it had a hole in it. It was a counterfeit attempt. How could it be otherwise, with those now penetrating eyes of the girl upon him?

"I should never have done it," she said slowly, regretfully.

"What?"

"Married you."

"Very sorry—to have disappointed you—not to have come up to your expectations—" Lucky he hadn't tried the stage way; that—"Don't worry, my dear!" dialogue. "It'll come out all right," with incidental business, underscored with red ink.

"I didn't mean exactly that," she interjected.

"Thanks! Awfully good of you!"

"You heard what that dyer and the guard said at the gate?—about what would happen to you?"

"Oh, yes. Yes, indeed."

"Don't you mind?"

"Do—" He was about to say it, to affix a "you," but he didn't. Brute! To think of himself, at such a moment, or what she thought of him, which was the same thing. Egotism of the male! Rank selfishness! No effacement of the big "I"—or me!

"'Short shift'—that's what the guard said," she went on, almost musingly.

"Did he?" Absently.

She shot a quick look at him. Her gaze was puzzled. A poseur? No.

"I don't like to think that it's my fault that you may be—" she went on, in the least unsteadily.

"Your fault?" He interrupted. "You mean that 'short shift' business for me?" He regarded her eagerly, but her look was only steady, deep and troubled, as a very conscientious person's might be. She had scruples, a fine moral sense. He understood very well. "Why," he said quickly, reassuringly. He *could* reassure her on this point. He was glad he could reassure her about something. "They'd make that—whatever they mean by it—of me, anyway, if they could get me. They would have, even if I'd never laid eyes on you—never!" Even as he

spoke, that dread contingency smote him like a tragedy. Never to have seen her!

"I—don't understand," she faltered.

She did—before long. He gave a sudden exclamation. He was not looking at her now; his gaze had passed over and beyond her.

They had been walking through a comparatively quiet neighborhood for a turbulent city, and had come to a short thoroughfare, not far from that inconsequential structure or series of structures, fancifully termed the citadel. It housed soldiers, or those nondescripts who bore arms; hence, by a stretch of oriental imagination, the occidental nomenclature! But it was not the "citadel" which concerned the dervish; indeed, he was at the moment unaware that, by the irony of fate, he had walked almost straight into the lion's mouth and taken her with him. His gaze was directed in another quarter, where, under the shadow of the big guns—if there were any in the citadel—stood a low building, bearing on its front some kind of official shield. It was not this structure, however, that held the attention of the young man. An unexpected object stood in front of it. How it ever got there, through the narrow and

tortuous streets, Allah only knew, but there it was, large, aggressive, self-assertive, emitting an odor, offensive no doubt, to nostrils accustomed only to the more delicate aroma of musk or sandal-wood. This object itself, though so unlooked for, the dervish was only aware of, inasmuch as it revealed something else. In front of the shadowy outlines of the mechanical body stood a man, and the light of a lamp shone full on his face. He seemed to be examining the mechanism of his car which operation caused him to squeeze the tighter a monocle he wore in his right eye, thereby bringing into play around said eye innumerable little wrinkles. He was middle-aged, English, and had on a traveling suit, topped by the customary snug little cap whose popularity reaches from pauper to peer. But whether he had just come or was just going was not at the moment apparent. A trunk, rugs and sundry other paraphernalia of traveling were affixed to, and deposited in, the car, and a solicitous native chauffeur who went with the rest of the luggage, had placed himself on the front seat. The Englishman suddenly straightened. Apparently he had found his examination not altogether satisfactory.

"That — and that — out of order again," he said in technical parlance. "Well, let her go, anyhow. Maybe she'll carry us somewhere, where we'll find somebody who knows something." Evidently he did not entertain a high opinion of his driver's mechanical ability. The dervish moved nearer. They *were* going then. The chugl chugl now sounded fast, though wheezily, then stopped altogether. The Englishman about to step in, paused. "Perhaps we shall and perhaps we shan't," he muttered, and just then the dervish made his presence felt.

"A tale!" he exclaimed loudly. "Your lordship seems to have a few moments to spare. Will not your lordship graciously deign to listen?"

"Eh?" The Englishman stared at the imposing figure of the old man who thus rather startlingly accosted him. "How the deuce do you know that I—?"

"It is a trick the fellows of this class have learned," spoke up the native driver in fairly good English. "They call every white man, 'my lord,' and every white woman 'milady,' to drum up trade. It works well, they say, especially among the women."

"Indeed?" Languidly, and waving the *aboo* from him. "No, I don't want any of your tales, my good fellow. As you see," with fine sarcasm, "we are otherwise occupied."

"But I have so many excellent tales—so many—" persisted the fellow eagerly. "Romances of Antar and Delemeh—you—you *must* stay and listen."

"Evidently I must stay," observed his lordship ironically, "but that I must listen to your tales, my good man, is not so—eh?" This last with a slight change of tone.

"Fitzgerald!" Whence came the word? From the white bearded lips? It was but a whisper, a breath. The nobleman shifted his position; he even looked around him. Of course, he must have been mistaken, though he would have sworn that romance-reciter had spoken his name—which was manifestly impossible, however. How should one of the vagabonds of the deserts—wandering minstrels, truly—know him by name? Had some one called from the house? He glanced in that direction and then toward the driver of the car. The countenance of that person—whom his lordship, for want of some one better, had brought with him from

Cairo—showed only concern for the car. He was fussing at some part of the mechanism near his feet. Obviously, *he* had not heard that spoken name which seemed to float from nowhere. Fitzgerald shrugged, felt in his pocket and tendered something to the *aboo*, who now, to his lordship's astonishment, had the temerity to edge closer, as if he actually wished to interpose his forward and objectionable person between the departing visitor and his machine. A faint flash of the clear blue eye behind the monocle! So a star may twinkle on a frosty night.

"And now, take yourself off, my man!" His lordship could dispose in light and airy but effective fashion of objectionable people when he wanted to. "No further time to waste on you." But this fellow was not so easily got rid of. He lingered like one of the flies of Egypt and his lordship's voice became more strident: "Don't you hear when you're spoken to, my good—"

Same whisper! New innumerable wrinkles around the monocle! Chug! chug! The motor again started and stopped. The driver threw up his hands; then waited for his master to tell him what to do. Perhaps he wondered why his lordship didn't soundly

cuff this beggarly story-reciter and send him about his business. Instead his lordship actually paused and stroked his chin. Of what was his lordship thinking? The driver of the car stirred himself with a motion as near impatience as one of his class dared indulge in, turning his head sidewise toward his master. The latter's fingers had lifted mechanically from chin to mustache. Instead of stroking, he was now twirling, absently, nonchalantly. So he might have stood and twirled, leaning against the mantel of his club at home, his expression that of one whose thoughts might be anywhere or nowhere. Some people with that vacuous expression would be credited with a total absence of thought. Others, like his lordship, thought deepest and most profoundly behind a facial blank.

"I say"—his lordship bestirred himself as from a profound apathy, at the same time feeling in his coat—"must have left my cigar case in my room. Go and see—" Calling the driver by name.

"But did your lordship not have it a few moments ago?" asked the driver in surprise. "I thought I saw your lordship draw it out and—"

"Oh, I mean the other one, the cigarette."

The driver shrugged inwardly. He did not understand why he should be sent for a cigarette case when the car needed attention. His primitive mind could not grasp these vagaries of conduct on his master's part. But his not to reason why, so he got out, contenting himself with a sad and reproachful glance toward his lordship to which, however, that person remained quite oblivious. He was still twirling. Only when the door of the house closed on the servant did his fine shapely fingers cease that gentle caressing motion. Then suddenly he turned on the seeming romance-reciter—

"And now will you be good enough to explain?"

A low chuckle answered. "So you don't remember me?"

"Who the dev—?"

The girl was now staring at them both in amazement. She could not understand unless the terrors of that night had turned the dervish's brain, or unless he had been crazy before. Some dervishes go crazy with holiness. But her dervish did not seem that type. Besides, crazy men do not chuckle like that. And he was speaking English—the language

she had spoken way back in her childhood days and later at the mission school—perfectly.

“The last time I saw your lordship, we dined together.”

“What the—?”

“We had—” He began to rattle off the names of dishes. His memory was very good in this respect. He mentioned French names of viands and wines softly, in a tense whisper. No one over at the citadel must hear. That frowning fortress might look like a joke, but it wasn't.

His lordship stood as if an iota of emotion—the very smallest, tiniest particle—was surging through his brain. “Stanton!” he said. “Jack Stanton!”

“At your service!” Again that low chuckle.

The iota seemed to increase, not greatly, but just perceptibly. “By Jove!” said his lordship.

“The cigarette case is not there, my lord,” the driver, returning, announced firmly, as if to establish beyond dispute this momentous fact. At the same time his glance, more aggrieved, swept over the persistent pair. “What! Not gone yet?” he vociferated indignantly. “How dare you continue to

annoy his lordship?" Then to his master: "Your lordship need only say the word and I will give them the pommeling they deserve—"

His lordship yawned. "Better reserve your strength to overhaul it," indicating the car, "at once. So you will make yourself more useful. You should have seen to it before."

"It was all right when I brought it here," answered the man rather sullenly.

"No doubt!" Skeptically. "It always is, only it isn't. How long will it take you to put the thing in order?"

"Three-quarters of an hour, at least. Perhaps an hour."

"An hour! So be it. No longer! Understand? As for you," regarding the tale-reciter, "I've changed my mind. You may reel off a yarn or two." The seeming story-teller burst forth into a flow of grateful and appreciative Arabic, which the other dryly interrupted. "Come," he said.

"Well, I'm blowed!" said the native driver explosively. He had picked up a few sailor expressions and a good deal of sailor knowledge at Port Said. The trio were going into the house. Tales at

that hour! *He* thought *his* master mad. Most Englishmen are. First he wouldn't, then he would. Tales, indeed? The driver began to tinker. It was a cat-o'-nine-tails he would like to have bestowed upon them.

CHAPTER XX

AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE

"CIGARETTE, Stanton?"
"Thanks." Absently.

They found themselves now in a comfortable and rather commodious apartment of the building; the two men near an open fireplace, *sans* fire—for the night was warm—and the girl in a shadowy corner. Jack Stanton removed the long white beard of the *aboo*, at the same time glancing restlessly at a clock on the mantel.

"That time right?" he asked, indicating the hour—a little after midnight.

"As near right as any clock in this town, where you have to compute God's time from Allah's," replied the other, filling two glasses.

"Like reckoning from centigrade to Fahrenheit," said the American. "But I stopped trying to keep track of the hours, until to-night," he went on with a quick glance in the direction of the girl.

The other noticed that look. "Good-looking boy!" he observed casually. "Went to—to Mecca with you?" In a lower tone.

"No." Shortly.

"Recent acquisition, then?"

"Yes."

"Helps carry out your present rôle, to trot him along, I suppose?" remarked the elder man.

Jack Stanton did not answer; likewise he refused brandy and soda. "Not to-night. Some other time," he murmured absently.

"Oh, all right." Fitzgerald smoked, waiting for the other to speak, but for several moments the younger man remained silent. There was an indentation in his brow that indicated thought, and once or twice he glanced toward the window in front of which stood the car, as if an occasional sound from that direction interested him.

"Where were you going just now?" he asked after that pause.

"Lebanon. Moslem troubles in Europe have somewhat upset the faithful. Things getting rather warm here. Of course it will probably blow over soon, Usually does. Still, I'm not so young and

adventuresome as I was once, and there's a chance of history repeating itself. Result, another bloody massacre; not mere vaporizing and fireworks. So far, I imagine, it's only been the latter, with a few native Christians' houses burned, etc. To-morrow may be as peaceful as a Scotch Sunday. However, I've begun to get bored or prudent in my old age. You see I'm the only white chap I know of, except yourself—and you aren't white, any more—left in the old burg."

"You are sure you *can* leave, then?" quickly. "You have the special permit to do so?"

"Of course." Lifting his brows superciliously. "You don't imagine, my dear boy, any one could keep a Briton anywhere, if he didn't want to stay, do you?"

"I know they can keep an American longer than he wishes to be kept," replied Stanton ruefully. Whereupon Fitzgerald regarded him with a slight interrogation. Stanton, however, only looked once more restlessly at the clock and then toward the window, the shade of which was drawn. Outside, he could hear a faint metallic tapping. "Fitzgerald," he said suddenly, "I've a great favor to ask."

"Ask it." Promptly.

"Not for myself, though!"

"Why not for yourself?" Languidly.

"One condition of our wager was that I should not ask, or accept help from any white man while in this country. So far I've kept to that."

"Indeed? Speaking of which"—the nobleman sipped as unconcernedly as if he were in the grill room of the Carleton, instead of in a veritable vortex of hostile seething Mohammedanism—"did you get there, as your countrymen say? To Mecca?"

"Yes, and no."

"Very lucid. Perhaps you'll explain."

"Between you and me, personally, I did. Between us, as parties of the wager, I didn't."

"You mean you didn't get the proof—the little prayer book my countryman buried some years ago in one of the sacred walls of the holy city?"

"I got it, and lost it. I found it all right and then, in a thoughtless moment, left it behind me at a place where I changed my cloak. Oversight, or rank carelessness, you might call it. I—I was thinking of something else." Again he glanced toward the girl.

She was sitting up very straight now and seemed to gaze upon the two as from a great distance. Perhaps the transition for her was too extraordinary, too unexpected, to permit of her grasping at once all the circumstances pertaining to it. This dervish—or Jack Stanton, as he called himself—sat there like a total stranger to her. The holy man—the supposedly pious Moslem, with the coat of many patches, whbm the dyer had found in the court of the mosque—what had become of him? Truly he had not been what he seemed, but that he should be what he now seemed—or actually was?— It was more inexplicable than some tale or fantasy of the imagination fashioned to regale a sultan's whimsical mood! She forgot her costume, the turban, the boy's cloak, though, after all, the last was not so different from a lady's *sebleh*.

"Thinking of something else?" Fitzgerald repeated the other's words. "Something more important than the wager?" With a faint inflection of incredulity.

"Infinitely more important," returned Stanton, with a smile which momentarily brightened the strained expression of his countenance.

"Yet your entire fortune was involved in that wager, though had I known it at the time—"

"I beg your pardon!" The young man's tone was momentarily more formal. Then it was succeeded by a franker expression. "And if so? Don't men risk their all every day on the Street that isn't Straight. Dear old dad left me fifty thousand—dollars, I mean. You see he served his country better than himself. I was training with the wrong crowd, the little brothers of the rich, and as long as I couldn't hold up my end, I thought I might as well take a long shot." He arose nervously and walked to the window. Outside now was silence. He seemed more concerned in that than in what he was saying and drew the curtain aside. "Pardon me. Just wanted to see if that fellow was there. Apt to jump their jobs, over here, when things don't go just right. Don't wish to appear officious," apologetically, "but—" He broke off; there was a nervous glitter in his eye which rather belied the nonchalant bearing.

"As your lordship remarked just now, the sum was rather large. But you remember you said no American had ever done it!" With an engaging

smile. "Believe I told you that was because no American had ever thought it worth while trying. Engaged in bigger things, or some such boastful rot! We'd been having a few, you remember. And then, somehow, it all seemed up to me. Your manner *was* rather English, you know, old chap." Fitzgerald said nothing, but he was regarding the other attentively, as if he realized in some degree the secret strain his visitor labored under. "Besides, I had a tip from myself that I could turn the trick," he ended after a moment's pause.

"Ah, yes." Fitzgerald nodded. "Your father was consul-general in a Syrian seaport town and you were born and bred among the followers of Allah, I believe?"

"Exactly. Knew my Koran at ten years of age. Was a prodigy." He talked though he seemed to take little interest in his words. Quarter after twelve by the clock! Only a quarter of an hour had passed, and twice that interval must elapse before Fitzgerald could hope to be off. Half an hour yet of enforced inactivity!

"Yes; ran away from school to loaf in the bazaars," he muttered, and looked, not at his host,

but beyond him, while speaking. He *had* planned it out now, what he was going to do, and what she, too, must do. "Made friends with all the porters, hawkers, the fakirs and the rest of that crew in a kid's paradise. Picked up dialects galore. And tales? Just used to drink them in! Then dad was recalled—" He broke off abruptly. What irrelevancy! Though perhaps it had helped that other train of thought, the more serious one. He knew now very clearly—too clearly—his own course of action. It was not altogether a pleasant one, but that didn't matter, or shouldn't. He turned suddenly to Fitzgerald with a quick energetic movement of the body.

"That favor I spoke of?" he said. "I want you, when you leave to-night, to take a passenger with you."

"Yourself?"

"We'll—I'll think of that, later. I mean this—my assistant here."

"Your boy?"

"My wife!"

For the second time that night, the nobleman was betrayed into an exhibition of emotion. This time it

wasn't a little teeny-weeny exhibition; he gave not a barely perceptible movement, but a plainly perceptible one. Indeed, that involuntary movement might have been characterized as a start. Lord Fitzgerald started palpably. The monocle even fell from his eye. And it hadn't done that, without its owner deliberately intending it to do so, for years. It was a very misbehaved monocle on this occasion. The nobleman gathered it in his fingers admonishingly, affixed it once more with unusual firmness, and then stared persistently, not to say aggressively, not at the speaker, but at him, or her, indicated by the speaker.

He saw the girl's face but for one poignant and fleeting instant; the great leather chair in which she sat concealed the lithe figure. Then he didn't see all her face, but only the profile. The dark eyes had met his with a look like that in the eyes of a too venturesome deer that is encountered on the verge of a woody place. The deer would have disappeared into the semi-gloaming and the wild fragrant depths. But the girl could not do that. So she did the next best thing and looked away. An Englishman can have very disconcerting eyes, especially when they

are blue, like a cold sea. It was too shadowy in the corner to establish the fact definitely, but invisible fingers seemed to be dragging rose-leaves across that part of the pale proud face yet displayed to the free, open, questioning, critical, wondering, incredulous gaze of the peer from the snug little isle. Amid that somewhat supposititious tint, like the tender pink of an afterglow, the girl's lips—this, also, did not appear quite a positive fact—seemed a little unsteady. Maybe, too, her breast moved and she trembled—she had had enough to disturb her—but if so, the chair (good old English, from Staple, the universal furnisher—English sitting-rooms provided anywhere on the globe!) concealed the fact. Those cavernous depths of leather were calculated to hide, conceal or ameliorate any evidence of undue sensitiveness, thrill, or excitation of feeling on the part of any one. That was because it was a British chair in a British sitting-room. The turban looked piquant enough, in that austere setting, but she was not of the piquant order.

Fitzgerald yawned—out of revenge for the start he had been betrayed into. The window-pane in his eye was now like any other window-pane, calm

and immovable. It had recovered its wonted impassiveness. It was glassy (ought to be!) and reflected objects on its outer surface. He who looked into it, or attempted to do so, saw only these superficial reflections. Stanton got up and crossed to the big chair.

"Mind waiting here a moment?" he asked softly. "There's something I'd like to say to his lordship privately."

She did not answer; his hand trailed over the back of the luxurious leather, touched caressingly, though swiftly, the girl's cloak, then he went out. Still she did not move; that chair, like a great black sarcophagus, seemed to have swallowed her.

Jack Stanton returned alone to the room where she was. Fitzgerald had gone out to superintend and hasten, if possible, the operations of the native driver. The young man now spoke cheerfully. It was all arranged. Everything had turned out beautifully. Couldn't be better! He had told his lordship a little something about her history and his lordship had committed himself unqualifiedly to her cause. Fitzgerald had expressed an opinion about Amad, and Mohammedans in general, and it

was not a flattering one. The nobleman's presence was most opportune; it was providential; he would save her.

The young man paused to look at her now, a certain exhilaration in his gaze. He had a few moments to spare; Fitzgerald had promised to toot the horn the moment the car was ready. The girl had listened quietly with strange bright lights in the deep dark eyes, but she had answered nothing; she had not demurred. How could she? She had to leave the city that night without fail, and here was a way, a safe one.

As Fitzgerald's personal servant, or Arab boy—his own had deserted him at the first talk of trouble—no one would question her presence in the car, Stanton again went on. The nobleman's permit read: "His lordship So and So, etc., accompanied by his servants," and it was signed by the governor himself. The gates would fly open before it, or the soldiers, guarding the exits, would step aside like magic at sight of the name of the high dignitary.

After all, that costume she wore would serve some purpose, he remarked with an attempt at jocular-ity, although not the purpose he had expected.

Not theirs to be two vagabonds of the highway, to sing or dance their way along, in right merry romantic fashion! She had played and sung only one song, but he would remember it. Of course he was sorry she had to go as a servant, but it would only be for a very short time. Besides, empresses as well as princesses (playfully) had escaped from palaces, or cities, in humble disguise. Only the last century one of the former had been glad to flee with a dentist. She, his princess of his thousand and second night (with a laugh) was at last fleeing with a peer of the realm. Said peer had also kindly promised to entrust her to the missionaries upon reaching the seaport town about to-morrow night. Those missionaries would never give her up now; her safety was assured with them. She would have a long run, but it would be a pleasant one, through a delightful country, after a fine exhilarating climb among the Biblical cedars.

His eyes had glowed though he did not feel glad, in one way, as he told her all this.

"You—you, too— It is providential for you, also," she said. She was standing near him now, very near.

"Yes, of course." His tones were practical and matter-of-fact. No use of calling her attention to the impracticability of his accompanying them! He—the romance-reciter would only emphasize by his presence the danger of their detecting her. With so many things to think of it had not yet occurred to her that it might be difficult to account for a romance-reciter in the car. Besides he had other reasons for wishing to remain—reasons that he had communicated to Lord Fitzgerald. That last person had called him a madman and bestowed upon him a few other friendly, unflattering epithets—but never mind! Jack Stanton always went ahead in his own way.

"Of course," he repeated, this time more absently. He was striving not to be too inordinately cognizant of those wonderful eyes and the sweet enticing lips. Never had the former seemed so wonderful or the latter so sweet as now. They seemed to sing not of El Genneh but El Genseh, lost, the garden unattained. He felt a sudden heart hunger, something sharper and keener, even, than that other appetite a healthy young pilgrim may develop in the barren waste places, and looked away. "Mighty lucky!" he

murmured in what were intended to be accents of blithe satisfaction.

She was regarding him in a troubled way. "Are there any others in Damascus who know what I do now?" she asked suddenly.

"Maybe. One or two." Indifferently. He was not thinking of them now.

"And that you have been to Mecca?"

"Oh, yes."

She stood very straight and still as if thinking. "You should have told me how necessary it was for you to leave the city," she remonstrated gently with him at length.

"Not worth bothering about!" he murmured rather weakly.

The dark brows drew together slightly. "You should have told me—you should," she repeated, with a touch of her old imperiousness. "I did not, of course, realize all it meant to you, when I asked you that—what I did, at my house," she went on rather hurriedly. "I see now all—all that it *did* mean."

He tried to think of an answer. Just the adequate one wasn't forthcoming. "Don't think of it!" he compromised by saying.

"You—you even once let me say you might be a coward," she challenged him.

"Did I? Maybe, under certain circumstances, I might—"

"It was brave!—and—and chivalrous!" the flashing red lips said. And the wonderful eyes seemed to repeat the words.

It quite took his breath away. He shifted. Also, he flushed painfully. And yet she spoke as if not to him, but to herself. He might have, at that moment, been very distant from her. She was not bombarding him with open flattery or crude praise. At least, she was not intending to. Indeed, she seemed scarcely to see him.

"Though why—?" The dark eyes still looked at him and yet beyond. Her brow was perplexed. "Why should you, afterward—?" She paused. She *did* look at him now. Disconcerting depths of questioning eyes!

"Why?" He understood what she meant. Why should he have lingered in Damascus, afterward? He might have got out before the uprising. At least, he might have made the attempt. Instead, he had lingered, inexplicably, foolishly—according to the point of view. "Why?" The bright turban

danced before his eyes. Anomalous little turban! Framing not a boy's but a girl's lips—a girl's eyes! That lad's cloak, too!—it seemed to mock him; futilely to attempt to deceive him—him! He smiled scoffingly. Again he heard the nightingale's song—he stepped toward her.

“Why?” The word reiterated like a thunderous echo from a great mountainside. Almost had he answered her, not discreetly, circumspectly, but madly, passionately; almost had he told her—sweeping her to him close!—close!—when—

Honk! honk! resounded outside. The horrible squawk froze the words on his lips. What sixty or seventy horse-power crow had alighted in his paradise? His arms fell to his side. He smiled rather feebly. Then he side-stepped. The archaic wild dervish vanished; the irresponsible nomad receded. The gentleman—an artificial production, perhaps, but useful on occasions—looked out of his eyes.

“Time to go,” he said quietly.

Honk! honk!

Stanton winced. “Why the deuce doesn't Fitzgerald get one of those Gabriel trumpets?” he muttered.

CHAPTER XXI

THE BRAZIER

WELL, she was gone. The car had whirled away. And only at the last moment had she suddenly realized that Jack Stanton, alias the dervish, did not intend to accompany them. Perhaps, too, at the same moment there may have occurred to her the reason thereof, or one of the reasons why he did not go. Standing in the shadow on the other side of the walk, so as not to seem too conspicuously interested in the proceedings, should any passers-by approach, the dervish saw the girl start as the driver closed the doors of the car. He saw, too, that involuntarily she half arose. But at the same instant the driver reached forward, and the car, under his none too skilful manipulation, had literally leaped forward. She looked around; an instant his strained gaze received the impression of a white face and startled eyes, then the car turned a corner.

How long ago was that? A minute, or five minutes? Or ten? At any rate, there was no use in standing there any longer and slowly he turned away. Alone! Well, the sensation of loneliness should not be a novel one to a man who had slept nights and nights on the sands. But even the solitude of the desert was not like unto this solitude. However, nothing gained by thinking of it! He squared his shoulders and marched on. Then he stopped once more, overwhelmed by something he hadn't thought of before.

He must be sure—know—know to a certainty, she had actually been able to leave the city, that she was out there, at this moment, in the Garden of Eden, speeding away with another. There was a possibility that the motor might have broken down once more, or—or—that some other unforeseen misfortune had arisen.

He accelerated his pace to the nearest exit, the one the nobleman had said he would leave by. There, his half fears were at once alleviated. The car *had* gone out, some ten or fifteen minutes ago. She was safe!—safe! No doubt of it. The words rang through his brain. Amad could never again

reach her, to persecute her. She was beyond his power and machinations. Allah be praised!

"Ten or fifteen minutes ago!" That meant they were miles from the city wall by now, and going fast! Right through, or across, the mythical place of primeval bliss, the original seat of this sometime joyous world. And on a comparatively virgin road for motorists! No constables to stop them; no one to arrest them for speeding; no glass strewn on the way. Paradise in that respect is still paradise. An up-to-date one! He looked out over the blissful prospect. Not much to see. Too dark! But he got a whiff of the country—those nice smells that are the lineal descendants of the ambrosial odors of the poets. He could—and did—take a good sniff of them. It was the next best thing to being in paradise himself. It was probably as near as he would get to it for some time. He had business, for the present, in the "other place," or back there in the city which in some respects might remind one of the other place.

So he turned away, after murmuring something—for the benefit of the soldiers he had questioned—about canines of Englishmen who went away and

forgot to reimburse poor romance-reciters they had employed for the entertainment of guests. He voiced this pretext with an attempt at woeful accents. "Gone!" He strove to wail, but it was not easy, with his heart athrill. He retreated quickly from the neighborhood now, plunging straight into the heart of the city. Overhead the clouds were darker; that sickly glow was gone. Had the fanatics wearied of their work? The city, too, seemed quieter, for the moment, though it might be but the quiet before another storm. At any rate, he felt safe enough. His now was the assurance of the faithful (tight-rope walkers into heaven) who, by faith, are supposed to be able to cross Es Sirat, that bridge finer than a hair and sharper than a sword, spanning Gehenna, the Arabian pit. He did not at the moment conceive of danger to himself. Why should he? As a romance-reciter, no one would question him. Her, they might have recognized, but him, and alone, they would not know; he could carry out the rôle successfully unless?—

A sudden misgiving disturbed his aplomb. The strolling players *might* tell, under certain circumstances, how a mad reckless fellow had forced those

costumes from them. For a moment his figurative bridge wavered and wobbled. Then he came once more to a balance. He even shrugged fatalistically. He had to take that risk. No way of getting around it! Dismissing consideration of unpleasant and disagreeable contingencies for pleasant and agreeable reveries, he went on. He let the future take care of itself, it was the past now that claimed his thoughts—if a period of forty-eight hours or so may be dignified by the epochal word. But it was the past for him. All the rest did not seem to matter. It was irrelevant, trifling and could be dismissed with a snap of the fingers.

An impression he had received that day in front of the pastry-shop and which he had thought no more about, recurred to him now, oddly and forcibly. She did not look or seem like one of Mohammedan parentage. So instinct had whispered when he had held her a few palpitating seconds in his arms. She was too fine, subtle, poetic, romantic—too everything that doesn't enter into the coarser fiber and make-up of the woman or girl of that country and faith. For the first time he found himself actually pondering thereon, though somewhat laboriously.

The dyer, imbibing impiously and too well, had let fall a few mysterious words concerning her parentage that night before the wedding, when he had treated the new-found and half-starved bridegroom-to-be in the little café around the corner. The young man had scarcely listened, at the time; he was interested in the *commestibles*, and *not* in his future "wife!" She had meant nothing to him—then. Nothing! Fancy that! He tried now to bring back what the dyer had ambiguously sputtered, or spluttered, over potations, but he didn't succeed very well. Something about the girl's own mother?—the Greeks?—the Rumanians?—or had it been the stalwart and romantic Montenegrins?

He gave it up. Hunger, instead of curiosity, had occupied him when he might have sounded the dyer further. Another—good old Sherlock, for example—in his place, on that occasion, would have scented something wrong in Denmark, or Damascus, and started at once deducting or deducing, instead of introducing mere *warak mahsle*, *khiyar* and other outlandish species of viands into his system. He, Jack Stanton, alias the dervish, should have divined immediately a romance and a mystery and proceeded

accordingly with Machiavellian circumlocution and caution; instead he had only plunged into the game blindly, haphazardly, a veritable football of fortune, or misfortune, as the events of this night would decide. And, considering what lay before him and the absence of those peculiar gifts of the popular investigator, the latter was not unlikely.

For all the rather chaotic trend of his thoughts, he had been moving on, not aimlessly, but as if bent upon some destination and going the shortest way to it. Passing through a covered portion of a bazaar, he came upon a number of fruit stalls; these he rapidly left behind him. The shadow of a great tree cast its black outlines momentarily before him, but he forgot to pause and murmur the customary pious words at the sight of the sylvan monarch, planted at the birth of the revered Mohammed. Instead he plunged at once into a small lane, at the end of which were well-known and historic bazaars, where all the artisans, plying a certain trade, were congregated and huddled up together. On busy days they stitched and stitched and waxed their threads in a kind of wearisome unison. They looked more or less alike and were set in almost identical back-

grounds. So they had appeared a thousand years, or more, ago, and so they would appear, if left to follow their own bent, a thousand years, or more, hence. A funereal silence now pervaded the quarter; the bright backgrounds were blanks; the workers had, for the most part, receded long ago into the mysterious abysses at the backs of their shops or booths. Maybe a few of them were abroad with the other hoodlums and had not yet returned home.

Passing noiselessly back and forth amid the limited confines of this ill-lighted neighborhood, Jack Stanton scrutinized and studied, as best he might, a number of shop-fronts, particularly the larger and more pretentious ones. Half a dozen of the latter he had carefully gazed upon and apparently to no purpose, when finally he again stopped. A few Arabic characters over the entrance to this place he made out with difficulty, but they seemed to satisfy him, to be what he was looking for.

Casting burglarious glances up and down the narrow way, he tried now the door and found it, of course, locked. The lock, though, was of wood, and the sliding bolt, with tiny pins set in it, of the same material. A modern expert in opening doors—

house, or safe—would have chortled with glee over that lock. It was antediluvian, paleozoic. True, it would keep out our camels, or dromedaries. But as for people?—Perhaps it was supposed to exercise a mere moral effect upon them. Stanton applied a knife; he was not an expert, but he managed to slide the bolt back. The door yielded and he entered.

In the interior of the shop, quietude reigned. He listened. Not a sound! Quietly he closed the door and slid back the bolt. Then he began to make his way through a litter of dark objects, some hanging and some on the floor, when the woodwork creaked loudly and again he paused. But still he heard nothing to alarm him and once more went forward toward a tiny streak of yellow. In the rear of the shop he found a dim light, as he looked in between low hanging draperies before entering. Drawing the curtains closely together after him, so the light should not be visible to any who might pass in front of the shop, he ventured to turn up the wick of the small hanging lamp. It cast brighter reflections upon the cheap draperies and the thick rugs in the small room and metamorphosed dim shapeless ob-

jects into pistol holders, straps, stirrups and saddles, highly embroidered, heaped up, or hanging, an overflow of wares from without.

The intruder did not lay a pillaging finger on this fair and goodly array of merchandise; indeed, he hardly glanced at it, or saw it only as a part of the whole. Yet his swift anxious looks swept every part of that chamber. He looked on shelves and under rugs; he peered into corners; he felt in out of the way places. He glanced in jugs and jars; he turned a *mibkara* (perfume vessel) upside down. He shook an empty big-mouthed water-bottle; he examined all the cushions thoroughly; he unrolled a mattress and felt every part of it. He tossed the mattress aside. Then, having only his labor for his pains, he sat down and looked thoughtful.

His opportunity was now—he would probably never have another chance—and yet only failure had rewarded his efforts. Since mere visual activity, supplemented by eager and nimble fingers, had not been productive of results, he tried to reason the thing out, to concentrate every mental faculty in the process.

What he sought was really valuable only to him.

It meant little to them; true, it might be deemed a link in the chain of evidence against him, but, after all, it was an unnecessary one now. It had satisfied Sadi, had served to crystallize his suspicions, but in itself—to them? Why, there were prayer-books and prayer-books, galore; you could find them even in the Christian quarter in that conservative old city itself. Their proof, par excellence, of his "crime," in their eyes—the one proof, incontrovertible, of the same—was the man himself. Let them catch him, produce him, tear off his cloak, and the rest would be simple. His skin would proclaim the truth, for it was unlikely the dye extended much beyond face, shoulders, and hands and arms, and if it did, it could easily be washed off or removed.

All this being so, how would the saddler now regard the little article Stanton had lost, and, what was more important, what would Sadi do with it? Would he keep it, would he hide it, would he give it to Amad, or—another course of action, in this connection suggested itself.

That object, for all true believers, possessed, definitely and unqualifiedly, deleterious and injurious attributes. The mere personal possession of it

might bring all manner of ill-luck, or trouble, for thus strongly does superstition reign in the minds of these people. *Iblees*, spirits, the evil eye, bad genii and what-not, are real menaces to them. They murmur proprietary words on many occasions—"Allah akbar!"—and work out a score of charms. When they do not work them out themselves, they have others work them out for them and pay for this task.

Now, it might be, Sadi would not continue to keep such an object on his person, to permit it to rub its pernicious pages against those of his precious Koran. But Amad for the same reason would not want it in his house. A train of untoward events, once started, is not easy to stop, and an English prayer-book that has reposed, undetected for a long while, even in the holiest city itself, should be handled with tongs. That such profanation had been possible proved it a veritable instrument of the devil, a malicious child of the *sheytans*, or black ones, themselves. No, Sadi would not run the risk of carrying it long, if Stanton was any judge of Mohammedan character. Perhaps the saddler would put it in his tiny safe, in that outer office? And so

cause his gold to turn into filthy piasters, or vanish altogether? Hardly!

The eye of the young man, half-introspective, chanced to rest on a *mankal*, or brazier. He hardly knew he was looking at it, but subconsciously, his regard deepened. Then, consciously, he became aware of the fact and suddenly he got up and walked over to the copper receptacle. A few flakes of dead ashes yet smelled of frankincense, and he swept them aside. Whereupon an exclamation fell from his lips and he snatched at something, or part of something. Charred paper—that's what it was! All that remained of the little volume! His brain leaped rapidly, irrevocably, to the conclusion. The saddler had procured from a fakir the customary dyed salts, certain seeds, and a few chips of fragrant bark, and had had a little incantation scene all to himself while consigning the prayer-book to the coals.

The young man stared blankly at the ashes that had once been paper, and the moment was a bitter one for him. He had lost, and he had an especial reason for wanting to win now. Intact, or reasonably so, the little volume would have meant ten,

thousand pounds to him. Nay, more! For now that this souvenir of his pilgrimage was practically destroyed, he would be out his own ten thousand pounds, his all. He shook his head sadly. One hundred thousand dollars! It seemed a lot of money—enough to start housekeeping with, if one was lucky enough to find a wife—a real one—not a pretended one. With that hundred thousand, he might have had more courage to hope; to woo and win, to have and to hold. Incidentally, to provide! Of course, love laughs at poverty, and very properly. But it would not be easy to tell her what a confounded ass he had been—how he had lost his little all—to say: “Behold! I have reduced myself to nothing. Share it.” That would be magnanimous, generous! A fine courtship! He had wedded her before as a tramp. He didn’t have to play at the rôle now. It fitted him to a nicety, was the heritage of his own efforts.

Well, she was in good hands, at least, he could tell himself. Fitzgerald would look to it that she was well taken care of and that justice would be done. The nobleman would like nothing better than

to see to that. He might even hope to dig out of the situation some kind of political leverage. Englishmen have a genius for doing that. Allah be praised this influential peer *would* be interested, Stanton repeated to himself again, but at the same time sighed. He felt, as never before, his own insufficiency. He even—so humble had he become before the catastrophe of the prayer-book!—saw himself eliminated, cut off, then and there, forever, as far as she was concerned. What right had such a bally bungler as he to hope? None in the world!

Disgusted, he was about to turn away from the brazier and leave the place, when the impulse was abruptly arrested. From outside, he caught suddenly the sound of footsteps—Sadi's? Stanton drew himself up and stood listening. He heard the bolt slide back, and peering between the curtains he saw the saddler enter. The fact did not greatly disturb him. Abruptly he realized that Sadi, somehow, didn't interest him so much as formerly. Sadi's sudden entrance ought to have given him a great thrill, an enormous shock. Instead, he experienced almost a mild ennui. Damascus, the sad-

bler—all the rest of them, the whole pack, rather bored him now. The breathless excitement of but a short time ago was gone. Why? Because she had gone? Was that it? He waited for Sadi to see him and speak. He anticipated his action. Of course, he would start back.

He did. *He*, Sadi, was not bored. *He* felt no ennui at the moment. The situation had for him no yawns. There was nothing soporific about it; his eyes seemed to bulge. He paled; that is, his complexion receded to a sickly yellow. Alarm, bewilderment, enlightenment succeeded one another on his eloquent visage.

"The masquerading Christian who went to Mecca!" he stammered.

Stanton smiled, almost ingratiatingly. So Sadi knew him. In spite of the costume of the romance-reciter! He had not probably jumped to a conclusion who he was, merely because he had discovered him in his humble *mandarah*. The Hebrew players must have told; they had, perhaps, found it to their advantage to do so.

"Come in," said Stanton, with the manners of a host. At that moment he felt no special enmity

against the other. The mischief had been done. No use kicking against the pricks. A man who has lost sometimes experiences a gentle magnanimity toward the world, even for his enemies therein. Perhaps the emotion bears some relation to "that tired feeling."

CHAPTER XXII

ONE WAY

SADI would have obeyed the other's invitation, but not in the manner it was extended. He showed a disposition to behave like unto the proverbial bull in the china shop. He looked as if he wanted to toss things around, Stanton included. Indeed, he started forward to do so, then suddenly stopped. Stanton stifled a yawn.

"Good!" he said. "Too small a place to muss around in! Might destroy some of the bric-a-brac."

The saddler looked at him; or rather, at a small glittering object Stanton had, at the last moment, insisted upon the players giving him for good measure—a mere trifle from one of the magic bundles that had contained a small armament of cheap weapons. That little plaything Stanton now handled carelessly; it had occurred to him it might serve for moral effect in certain exigencies. One such exigency was now. For how was Sadi to

know it was a stage property, that it wasn't loaded, and maybe wouldn't have gone off if it had been, or if it had been and had gone off, it would probably have blown up the shooter?

The saddler paused with an ugly grimace that did not improve the appearance of his somewhat battered countenance. Stanton waved the weapon.

"Go away," he said nonchalantly. "Or if you must remain, don't get boisterous."

Sadi glowered. When a man waits for you in your own house, he does so, of course, but for one purpose. And when the intruder told him to go away, he implied that he preferred to shoot him through the back. It would be safer, and was the favorite mode of assassination. Sadi refused though to turn around; he preferred to be shot in front. Cowardice was not one of his weaknesses. Perhaps if the first bullet didn't strike home, he might manage to slit the other's throat. He breathed a pious request to Allah, the Compassionate, that this gentle wish might come true. Stanton was contemplating him now in a far-away, non-anxious manner that implied disconcerting confidence in his weapon and his ability to cope with the situation.

"Why *did* you have to intrude?" he asked reproachfully.

The tremendous effrontery of the question seemed to stagger Sadi. He looked around on his own household goods, his own wares, the result of his own toil, and doubts began to flutter in his brain. Was the fellow a madman, or an offshoot of the devil, one of those black spirits that dwell in the chain of mountains called Kaf? Certainly enough mischief had followed in the wake of this *mustahall* to justify the belief he might be one of those denizens from the cavernous depths who, according to tradition, visits cities and homes, just to create dissensions, and—yes, make love to other men's wives with a felicity that is more human than superhuman.

Instinctively Sadi murmured the mystical "*de-stoor*," the two syllables that are always efficacious with spirits and never fail to cause them to evaporate. But still the other did not vanish from his fireside, or the side of his brazier. That, at least, was reassuring. Besides, a spirit wouldn't have to borrow clothes from poor strollers; he could just will himself to look any part he pleased, from beggar to heart-breaker. The saddler did fear spirits;

having established in his own mind that his visitor was not one, his courage revived rapidly.

"What do you want?" he now demanded savagely. Of course he knew what the other wanted,—he wanted him. But he asked the question, anyhow.

"I don't want anything now," answered the visitor gently.

The saddler's brain juggled with this reply. He couldn't make anything of it. That annoyed him.

"I did want something," went on the other. "But there's no use crying for the moon!"

More mystification! Sadi opened and closed his big fists aggressively. Stanton, behind that careless manner, now watched him narrowly. "Ten shots, half a second delivery!" he murmured, apostrophizing his weapon. "The burglar's antipathy! That's what it's called in the advertisements." His cheerful eyes yet held Sadi at a distance. But they wouldn't long; nor the weapon, either! The saddler was hesitating; his face was dark as a thundercloud. The other felt it coming—Sadi would call his play.

"What have you done with her?" now burst from him aggressively.

"Suppose we leave the lady out of the question! And now"—as well get it over!—"what is it to be, peace or war? Up to you to decide. I was going when you came."

"Oh, you were?" With brutal incredulity. "You weren't waiting for me, then?"

"No, my friend! And even now, though I might slay you as a sheep at the sacrifice, I will spare you if you will be good!"

"Perhaps you weren't expecting me?" Sadi's eyes shone with low cunning.

"I did not expect the pleasure." Stifling a yawn, real or affected. "I did not come to get you, but *it*. You, as an individual, are nothing to me. It would not grieve me if you lived to be as old as Methusalem. I don't want your money or your life. All I do want—or did"—glancing swiftly toward the brazier—"was my own property. Something you deprived me of—a little prayer-book—" Sadi suddenly raised a hand to his breast.

"What!" Stanton's voice now rang out sharply, in accents of surprise. "So much for deduction! You've got it. You've actually got it. You haven't destroyed it—" The saddler did not answer. "I'll

trouble you for that book," went on the young man in that same different tone. "And at once!"

He held the property weapon now pointed straight at Sadi's heart. His manner was brusque and determined. It might succeed; it might win out; it was a final attempt. It would, no doubt, have prevailed with many, but not with the saddler. Those changed accents on the contrary, acted upon him as a red flag on a bull; the saddler made a rush, whipping as he did so, a long blade from his cloak. Stanton saw him coming and raised the arm with the futile weapon. He brought it down violently, not on Sadi; the property pistol struck the lamp overhead. Bits of glass fell around them, and in the darkness that ensued Sadi came up against a hard wall. That jarred him violently, but he recovered in an instant, and rushed toward the front door; the fellow must not get out. He was not trying to. A moment the saddler waited expectantly. Farther back now he heard the other, then nearer, as if circling toward him. Sadi followed the sound and sprang toward it, striking—striking. Now the other was in a corner. Allah! What joy! The saddler tasted in advance the pleasures of paradise. His turn had

come at last. The sharp blade no longer fanned the air. It came in contact with a palpable but yielding substance. It sank in. Elysium! The angels (or houris) sang. Was that a groan? For Sadi, it was like the sweetest strain from the harp of the angel, Israfil.

The saddler stood still to listen. The groan was repeated. Then silence! The fellow was down. He did not even use his weapon; it must be he was unable to. Not long ago the saddler had felt the boot. Now the boot was on the other leg. Injuries, old and new, would be atoned for. Sadi waited. Then his taunting voice arose. He exhausted the vocabulary of a camel-driving dialect. Still no answer; no sound—only that of his own hoarse breathing. Yet stay!—he did catch a barely perceptible swishing, as of a body dragging itself along the floor. The fellow spoke now in a faint voice—a plea for mercy? The saddler would show him that—oh, yes. Those tones again guided the other, but this time, the dog of a Christian seemed like water flowing through the hand. It was impossible to seize him. Nor could Sadi's blade again find him. But he, stepping swiftly aside, had evi-

dently located the saddler for the latter felt a rush of air. Then suddenly music became discord. It was as if the house had fallen down, or the world had been rent asunder. And in that general cataclysm subsequent proceedings interested Sadi no more.

A man appeared at the door of the saddler's shop a few moments later, and after peering in either direction, stepped out, closing the door behind him. Stanton walked uncertainly though quickly, being anxious to leave the neighborhood behind him as soon as possible. Before he had gone far, however, he felt obliged to stop, at a dark angle of the street, to bind up as well as he could, with a scarf snatched from the shop, a deep and nasty gash on his shoulder. Even as he did so he became aware of a certain faintness stealing over him. Yet behind this feeling that other one of exhilaration predominated.

He had it—his proof that he had been to Mecca—that tiny volume, which was as valuable to him as a wonderful diamond. He was a hundred thousand dollar vagabond now, a veritable king of beggars. The thought buoyed his footsteps; he

forgot weakness, or fought it down. He seemed like one walking in a wild dream. But it was not an unpleasant one—on the contrary. He found himself actually enjoying this after-midnight promenade, in a strange kind of way. He didn't know whether he had killed Sadi or not. He didn't much care. He had struck him with the pot of brass, the saddler's perfume jug, or heating apparatus. He had smote Sadi with his own "fireside," rather an ironical procedure, but a necessary one. The saddler's skull was thick though and he might survive to make himself a nuisance, perhaps, some day, to some other Christian. That lay with Providence.

An irresponsible feeling of momentary triumph on Stanton's part became abruptly shadowed. Another thought, or question, disconcerting, baffling, had occurred to him. What service would that book or little souvenir be to him, when he couldn't get out of the city? He paused and leaned against the wall of a house; he realized he felt more giddy, a bit light-headed. What a mockery of fate if he yielded to growing weakness now, with that key to success, under propitious circumstances, right in his hand. "Success!" he repeated longingly, the while he

gripped the tiny object tighter. Then his mind seemed to drift somewhat from pertinent considerations; his brain seemed capable of queer little lapses. He chuckled sardonically, incongruously. Something tickled his funny-bone.

To think that this little thing in his fist had been buried so long in a holy wall, in the holy city! And yet it was said Englishmen had so sense of humor. An autobiography of his little souvenir would be good enough for Punch. An English prayer-book, high church, in the sacred masonry; almost at the foot of the tomb of the Prophet, himself! Stanton would have liked to meet the son of the tight little isle who had thought out that jokelet; all by himself. Had it been Ruffianly Dick, he of the "unabridged?" Fitzgerald had told him when they two had arranged details in old Manhattan town. Stanton tried to think—but caught himself up with a jerk.

The idea of cudgeling his brain, or clogging it, with inconsequential minutiae at such a moment! His thoughts now focused steadily on that element in the situation revealed by the coming of Sadi. Prior to this second brief but spirited interview

with the saddler, Stanton had calculated that, alone, he might tarry in the city, in the event he was unable to leave, without too great danger, relying upon the garments of an *aboo* for protection. But that comforting reflection had been dissipated. Sadi had learned about the transaction in the graveyard, and had recognized at once in the romance-reciter, his former acquaintance of the march. Had he imparted his information to others? No doubt of it! Stanton could hardly venture now to tell many tales on the street corners, or in the cafés of Damascus. Confound the strollers! They probably had been but too glad to nibble at the reward the diamond merchant was sure to have offered. Stanton sighed. He seemed to be getting back to where he had been some time ago.

He had to leave town. The conclusion was like a retrogression. How long ago had he been thinking the same thing, with her at his side? An hour, two hours? It must be nearly two o'clock by this time. But he must not think of that, or of her now. Only it was difficult to avoid doing so. He had not realized how near and dear she had become. Why, she was indispensable. That was the word. Indis-

pensable! He had to have her. She was necessary to his existence. Where she went, he would follow, though to the ends of the world. He no longer felt physical weakness, or told himself he didn't. The cut on his shoulder was nothing; he was slightly unsteady, that was all, but strong—strong enough to get out of the intolerant city. He experienced only savage anger now against those who would keep him here; they had no right to attempt to do so; he would break the bars of this Moslem prison, he did not much care how, nor at what risk to himself. To-night—it must be to-night he would go. Reiteration! Helpless, hopeless, almost childish reiteration! But, at least, he didn't have to think of her now in any plans he might make. He did not have to ask her to share any risks, the way he had when he had left her in the market place.

The market place? Suddenly he started. The stall? The Star of the Desert? Was the greatest stallion still there, where he had left him? It was possible. It was even most likely. Amad was probably devoting his efforts principally to guarding the exits at present. He would play "safe." He couldn't very well rake that city of mystery

and a myriad hiding-places while it was dark. He would wait for the morn to do that. Then perhaps the fanatics would have wearied of burning and looting in the native Christian quarter and be more ready to devote themselves to the diamond merchant's personal concerns. There was too much confusion in the city to have conducted a very systematic search as yet.

The young man started toward the market place. If only he could reach there, mount the Star, and "rush" one of the exits, or attempt to do so! It seemed rather a mad expedient, but it might not be impossible. Indeed, the things that look hardest, are sometimes the least difficult. Had he not seen that demonstrated in the great college game? The unexpected succeeded. He himself had once been selected by his team to pull off a stunt, seemingly about as unachievable as this one. But it had been at a crisis; all was lost unless something of the kind could be accomplished. And he, the lucky half-back, had turned the trick. That goal had been for glory; this was for paradise. It was guarded by soldiers who should be sleepy by this time. And if not sleepy, fairly inebriated! They had had an early

start. Besides, they probably couldn't shoot straight anyhow. The thoroughfare was dark; he could manage to get fairly close, before—

Yes; he would do it. Nerve would carry a man far. Even as he told himself this, he stumbled, but recovered with a feeling of surprised impatience and continued. He saw at length the open space of the market before him and paused to rest. Not long!—consciousness might leave him, he had certainly lost a bit of blood, and the day would come and find him there. It would not be dark much longer. Soon would be heard the call to morning prayer. He must hasten—hasten— And with an effort he did.

Now he was at the entrance of the square. His hand brushed against the wall and he groped his way along. At last he stood before the stall. A low whinny greeted him. Pegasus!—Garden of Eden!—cedars of Solomon—"song of songs"—his thoughts were chaotic. He hardly knew what he did. But he managed to unfasten Pegasus. It took him some time to mount. Good old Pegasus!—how still he stood!—seemed to know. Goal!—garden!—song!—clinging with one hand to the pommel of the saddle, swaying like a drunkard, he rode forth.

CHAPTER XXIII

A SURPRISE

IN the street of the bazaars the story-tellers told, the next day, how he got out. It had *not* been such a difficult matter. Surprised, some of the guard had swallowed the aromatic hempen cuds they had been chewing. Others had barely evaded the violent rush of the great stallion, maddened when his rider had unexpectedly lashed him. A few desultory detonations had enlivened the situation, without, apparently, affecting the result. "The Vanishing Bridegroom," the story-tellers called him. The bride had vanished yet more mysteriously. She had simply become as not and no one knew why. The narrative made an excellent one for the listeners in the narrow Damascan streets, the fiction-makers infusing into it a spice of the supernatural. Else how could they explain the climax?

How could the lady have been whisked away, unless the substitute bridegroom was in reality a genie or an afrit? These mischievous and uncanny ones like to assume human shape, to fool people, or work havoc in the homes of husbands, notably old gentlemen married to young brides. This genie had the gift of appearing anyhow, anywhere. First, he was a ragged dervish, then a wonderfully handsome young man. He had made love to the fair young bride right under the former husband's nose. He had set them all at cross-purposes. He had played a merry mad game of hide-and-seek.

Amad heard this version of the tale and his rage was frightful to behold. His domestic affairs made a theme for street-corner entertainment, to the accompaniment of a *kanoon!* The story of his infelicities listened to by the gaping multitude! Intolerable! He told Light of Life what he thought of her, what a fine guardian she had been. And Light of Life told him what she thought of him. Fool! ever to have divorced the young minx. And then ever to have allowed himself to be tied and gagged by the fellow. She had the better of the argument. She always did have. Amad was fool-

ish to indulge in recriminations. He retired from the field of battle with strange rumblings in his chest.

When he had recovered a little he tried to induce authority to step in and stop the story-teller on the street corner, but the *zabit* of police shrugged in a lukewarm manner at his request. Story-tellers had inalienable rights. For six hundred years they had been accorded privileges. Besides, the hero of this tale was supposed to be a genie, one of those evil spirits of the air and it is not wise to interfere in such cases. It might be displeasing to the genie. He might, in revenge, haunt the *zabit's* home. One has to be very polite to these supernatural beings.

Amad scoffed at the official and explained when a genie was not a genie, and why, but the head of police only listened incredulously. The rich diamond merchant could not explain the lady's disappearance. If that wasn't magic, the *zabit* was no judge of magic, and there was no such thing as magic. And every true follower of the faith knew magic did exist, and, like lightning, was apt to strike anywhere. The visitor had better go home and make the best of it. Nothing would be gained by attempt-

ing to cross a spirit of the air. Perhaps some day the aforesaid spirit would condescend to return the young lady.

Again Amad used camel language. "Return?" He almost choked. The substitute husband was an American, he protested, a dog of a foreigner, who had been to Mecca. The *sabit* looked queer. No doubt this caller was a little touched in the head by his loss. The diamond merchant went on that he would prove his assertions by Sadi, but he couldn't just now. The saddler was at present indisposed, unconscious. Some one had considerably damaged his head. It was a mystery how it had happened. Perhaps, suggested the official, it was more magic. The genie was angry. Are not the tales full of instances of their wrath? And thereupon the magistrate called before him the guard at the gate and questioned him. They, scenting which way the wind blew, affirmed that from the horse's nostrils had come flames. When he snorted, sparks flew. This was the easiest way out of a predicament for them. Perhaps, too, by this time, they had almost persuaded themselves there had been fiery indications. Ergo, the horse was enchanted, and,

ergo again; you couldn't be expected to stop an enchanted horse. Thus *they* crawled out of a hole.

Amad left, but not to go home. He had already sent horsemen down the way which is the shortest way to the sea. He, himself, now followed these horsemen and with others of his friends and satellites. They might yet catch the fellow, or at least find some trace of him. They did. Amad, after a long, long ride, came up with those he had despatched earlier. They had paused at the boundary line beyond which lies a non-Moslem zone. In that independent *liwa*, over which presides a Christian governor, appointed with the consent of the powers, any Christian is safe. No Mohammedan may harm him. Amad might have proceeded farther, but to what purpose? Just to shake his fist at his enemy? If he did more than that, the five powers, or one of them, would settle with him. He could not escape; he would be sought for, wherever he was, and dragged forth. He gritted his teeth. Then there was a bitterer pill to swallow.

Tied to a bush at the very border of the accursed zone, the diamond merchant saw the Star of the Desert. The noble animal looked pretty well tuck-

ered out, though the young man had selected an excellent grazing spot for his equine friend, removed the saddle and made him as comfortable as possible. As Amad swung on to the scene the Star was engaged in nibbling languidly succulent blades on the mountain of holy associations. A shot or two had grazed him, but, no doubt, he would be right enough soon. Fastened to the saddle fluttered a bit of white; it was a message hastily scrawled on a rather disreputable bit of paper. The diamond merchant seized and visually devoured it.

"To the illustrious, etc., etc., Amad Ahl-Masr:" —the fellow could be polite, exquisitely so—"Herewith, I am returning your property." The reader groaned. The "property" continued to nibble. "Thank you for the loan. I have rubbed him down well. Farewell! We meet no more. Our acquaintance, though short, has been sweet. I have enjoyed my stay in your—oh, so interesting city. I was a stranger and you took me in. For courtesies and attentions a thousand thanks. I shall never forget your hospitality. Remember me to our mutual friends, Sadi, the dyer, and—"

Here he mentioned one or two others. The name, "Jack Stanton," followed.

Amad regarded the note and he didn't say a word. There are limitations even to camel language. Below the signature was more writing.

"My regards to dear Light of Life. What a charming woman! Cherish her. Preserve her as the apple of your eye. My one regret is that I can't take my dear mother-in-law with me. I pass her on to you. I owe you something and thus pay my debt. Pardon bad writing. I have a little cut. Don't worry. It doesn't amount to anything. I am feeling much better. You will be so pleased to learn this. The mountain air has such tonic properties. Once more affectionate salutations, etc.

"Postscript No. 2: Note the marks on the road. What do they spell for you? Rubber? Ever hear of tires? Automobiles?"

A flood of knowledge suddenly illumined the reader's brain. The mystery of the vanishing lady was no longer a mystery. A far up the mountain now he thought he saw something flutter—a ragged cloak of a distant wayfarer on the road. But he saw, also, houses; the fellow was leaving desolation behind him. Amad suppressed the temptation to follow. Among these non-Moslem people it would be hazardous to attempt to molest the fellow. Revenge would be sweet but he was

old and cautious. The evil one take that zone of safety for dogs of Christians! And Amad prayed inwardly that in that old, old town of his, there might be a general massacre of all foul unbelievers. Unfortunately, it did not seem as if his wish would come to pass. The rioting and looting of the night before had, after all, been of a desultory and non-sanguinary character. No true prophet of blood had arisen at the opportune moment, as had been the case on other occasions. The diamond merchant, however, yet savagely hoped for the best—or the worst—and tearing the message into a hundred bits, he turned back.

Several days later, he whom Amad had discerned afar, stood on a hill, some distance to the west, and gazed down upon a little seaport town. His look was eager, expectant. His quest was done, or practically had come to an end. From this port he could take a ship for anywhere. He had won his wager, but he was not thinking of that. His quickening gaze rested on the walls of the solid old mission buildings, not so far away. Bright spots—oranges in groves—danced around them. Stan-

ton hastened downward and his stride was once more vigorous. The patriarchal beard of the romance-reciter had been discarded. He didn't need it any longer.

One of the first persons he met in the town's principal winding little street was Lord Fitzgerald, on foot. Stanton hailed him joyfully.

"Eh? What? Oh!—" said his lordship. This young American was certainly a surprise-maker.

"She is here?" were his next words.

"Yes." The Englishman nodded toward the mission buildings.

"And well?" Eagerly.

Again an affirmative. Stanton laughed. He experienced a kind of somnambulistic feeling. What a wonderful haven the town seemed after all the little vicissitudes of the past. He walked on hardly noting where he was going.

"Have any difficulty getting here?" he asked, after a few moments.

"No. Only once or twice your—the lady wanted to jump out."

"You—did not let her, I hope?" In quick alarm.

"Naturally not." Dryly.

"But why should she have—?" The young man began, then stopped. "Unaccustomed to cars, I suppose. Don't believe she ever saw one before."

"No doubt that was it," observed Fitzgerald, studying the eager intent face of his companion. "The case has quite puzzled the missionaries," he added.

"What case?"

"Hers."

"My wife's?"

"Hum!" said the Englishman.

Stanton turned on him. "Why do you say that?"

"Are you sure the lady *is* your wife?"

"The Mohammedan ceremony is as binding as any other." There was a truculent accent in the young man's tone.

"Yes, but you are a Christian," said Fitzgerald with a smile.

"But the lady isn't—"

"Is, too."

"I beg your pardon."

"Is, too," repeated Fitzgerald.

"She has been converted?"

"She never has been a Mohammedan, at all."

The young man stared at him.

"When one of the contracting parties is a Christian, a Mohammedan marriage may still be considered binding," observed the nobleman. "When both are, it is not binding. Therefore, you never were a real substitute husband. You were only an imitation imitation-husband. Your bride was only an imitation imitation-bride. A *mustahall* is only a shadow of a husband. You"—Fitzgerald seemed to enjoy his own wit—"were but a shadow of a shadow."

The young man stopped. He eyed the other savagely. "Why don't you say something?" he growled. "I don't like a lot of words."

"Has it never occurred to you, yourself, that the young lady might not be a Mohammedan?" asked the other.

"What do you know? You have heard something? What is it?"

"The girl's mother was Greek."

"Greek? You are sure?" Bewildered.

"Positive. Her father was English."

"I—I don't understand." Here was the opening of a new chamber of mysteries. He strove to re-

adjust his ideas to new conditions. Was he pleased, glad, his wife was *not* a Mohammedan? He hardly knew at the moment. It was the girl he wanted. He had given the subject of her nationality no thought. She—she was all in all—everything—

“But how?” he began.

“Sshh!” said Fitzgerald.

They had reached a gate and paused before it. Around them were orange trees. Afar they saw a figure passing in the garden. The young man gave a slight exclamation. The girl was dressed in European costume and was walking with an old man, presumably the chief missionary. She did not look toward them; her head was down-bent; the wonderful face seemed much paler. The two men did not move; Stanton scarcely breathed. His burning gaze followed her as she went by on the distant winding walk. Oh, the grace, the charm of her! In that garb he seemed to see her anew. Forgetful of all, bewildered, perhaps a little dazed, he was about to spring forward, when the nobleman touched his arm.

“Ahem!” said Fitzgerald. “Those—aw!—togs are all right in the desert, you know, but—”

Stanton paused. The other was right. His cloak

was ragged and soiled; sleeping in it had not improved it. His face was dyed. He was in a Christian country, or a segment of one, and he had been about to rush irresistibly toward her—he, a vagabond of the desert, a scarecrow for garments; he might even have been capable of clasping her in his arms, willy-nilly. Had that actually been his impulse? And with those clothes stained with blood, too, as if the vagabond had been in some low tavern brawl—

No, no; Fitzgerald was right. Trust an Englishman for the proprieties. Stanton laughed. A "bawth"—a change of attire—

Mechanically he followed his lordship on, past the mission garden. He turned his back on it—and her. As he did so, he felt a sudden chill; the world of convention once more claimed him; he was about to become a civilized being. "Not his wife"—and never had been! He experienced a dread premonition. Before, he might have claimed her; he had intended to. But now? Uneasiness seized his soul.

CHAPTER XXIV

MARY CARRUTHERS

"AS I told you, on her father's side, she is"—Fitzgerald paused impressively—"English." The two now were seated in the nobleman's room in the one fairly pretentious hotel the town boasted. Stanton had had his "bawth". He had shaved. The first application of a mild chemical wash had partly removed the dye. Another application would remove it entirely. In the meantime, his tall figure enveloped in a voluminous bathrobe, he listened intently to his host.

"Her father was from Devon—good family," the nobleman went on. He rather emphasized the latter fact. "The young lady's mother, also, had excellent connections—excellent! Blue blood, a bit of property on both sides, I fancy." Fitzgerald's voice trailed off. Stanton stirred uneasily. He hoped the blood wouldn't be too blue; that they wouldn't remove her altogether from the sphere of his hopes.

They couldn't very well make a princess out of his "wife", the way they do in the story books, unless through her mother she might inherit—maybe, she would prove to be a Lady Somebody, or an Honorable Miss— Awful thought! She, a daughter of romance! Those wonderful deep dark poetic eyes belonging to an "Honorable Miss"—Perish the possibility! He drew up his legs; he hugged them with strong sinewy arms. Were the icy fingers of an artificial civilization reaching out to grab her from him, to whisk her away from him even as he had whisked her away from them? Irony of fortune! Perhaps he was too anxious, but something seemed to point to trouble. Anyway, he would fight the specter—

"The father, like Byron, took a good deal of interest in the sanguinary struggles of Greece," continued the nobleman. "He was a man of rather solitary habits and a good deal of a traveler. The mother lived in a small principality bordering on the domains of the 'sick man of Europe'. My countryman saw her, fell in love with her—she must have been a very beautiful woman—and married her. For a while they were happy. Then business called

the husband home. During his absence, a tragedy befell. The little principality had long been a seat of intermittent strife and turmoil. It still is, and will be, until the followers of the prophet are driven out of Europe. Even then—" Fitzgerald made a cynical gesture. "In some localities war becomes a habit. But to return:

"During the husband's absence, the Turks, half brigands, half soldiers, made one of their periodical descents. They looted, pillaged and killed in the usual manner. The girl's mother, among those spared, on account of her beauty, was carried off.

"But the husband?" Stanton's eyes sparkled. "Did he make no move? Did he not move heaven and earth to—"

"He would, no doubt, have done so, but, unfortunately, just at this time, he was himself stricken down in London. An old trouble, I understand. Was taken to a hospital and died there. Exact details are hard to get at. Remember this happened long ago. He may never have learned what befell his wife. Home office, too, may never have known. Outrages of this kind were frequent. The mother may have been reported dead.

"As a matter of fact, she was not slain, but carried to a fanatical Moslem center and thereafter was lost to the world. Nothing so uncommon in that." Stanton nodded. He was intensely interested. "Shortly after her captivity, the mother gave birth to a child. Later, to avoid being sold into the positive slavery which, as you and I know, existed then, the mother became the wife of a Mussulman. Apparently he was not a bad sort of chap for his kind. Anyhow he seems to have been generous enough to his Christian wife. Presented her with a fine house in Damascus, don't you know."

Stanton *did* know. "Yes; I've been there." He spoke absently.

"Have, eh?" His lordship eyed him sharply. The young man's attention, for an instant, was out of the window. It was immediately recalled. "Odd how some of those Moslem fellows do take to their Christian wives," resumed Fitzgerald. "The big Mogul of India, for example, was inordinately fond of his. About the time of the marriage, or shortly after, the child, by the English father, was placed in a mission. Just how this came about is somewhat a matter of conjecture. Perhaps the mother stipulated it as a

condition and he agreed. Possibly it secretly pleased him to dispense with this reminder of the past. The mother, though yielding to the inevitable, herself, may have welcomed the chance to restore the child to a civilization where she belonged. At any rate, a member of a caravan brought her here. An old preacher—you saw him to-day—then connected with the mission, thinks he remembers an old camel man, white-bearded, venerable, asking for some paper that vouched for the child's safe delivery. One can fancy the mother, far, far away, a prisoner, if you will, though a wife, waiting for that paper—her heart torn, yet thankful, wafting prayers across distance. There's a situation for you."

Fitzgerald paused. Stanton's mind was making pictures. The white-bearded camel man, the child, the camels—he could see them winding over sandy places, the long shadows of the great ungainly beasts, the little one nestling, perhaps, as a snowflake on a broad breast, beneath a venerable beard—on—on—rhythmically on—the child, wonderful, beautiful—now lispng beneath the somber shadow of those great trees whereof the temple of Solomon was builded, heedless of destination—minding not

the whither, the how, the where?—a mite in a great caravan—big-eyed, smiling confidently into swarthy faces—

“After the mother died”—Fitzgerald had plunged again into the narrative—“the Mohammedan husband took unto himself a second favorite, or principal wife, Light of Life. Now comes another epoch in the child’s life. The old preacher remembers some one presenting a paper *for* the child. He doesn’t remember very vividly, for he is getting old and absent-minded. Has worked in many missions so very, very long! The old missionary was not satisfied to give her up, however, and later she was removed surreptitiously—smuggled away—”

“But why should they—Light of Life have wanted—” began Stanton.

“Her back? There are several reasons. More conjecture! The girl was beautiful. The step-mother may have been avaricious—”

“*May* have been!” From the young man, sotto voce.

“She may have planned to sell her in marriage to some benign old Mussulman of means.”

“No doubt that was it!”

"Also, Light of Life may have been most devout, a fanatic. In rescuing the child from the dogs of Christians and their pernicious influence, she was performing a service to Allah. The missions did what they could to find some trace of her but without success. Light of Life saw to that."

"Light of Life!" Stanton murmured something softly in Arabic. It was not a blessing on the head of his ex-stepmother-in-law.

"And the English father—how did you find out about—?"

"From a few old pieces of jewelry. The young lady brought them away with her. Perhaps you did not know she was the possessor of several fine examples of the goldsmith's art?"

"Oh, yes, I did." Dryly. "Didn't she try to bribe me with them once?" Stanton's eyes became half whimsical, half tender.

"Bribe? For what?"

"Never mind."

"Man of mystery!" laughed the nobleman. "Evidently you did not examine the pieces very closely."

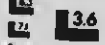
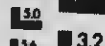
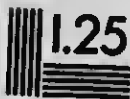
"I did not."

"That you should have done, my good and incor-



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ruptible friend. Had you done so, you would have discovered on one or two of them certain marks—old tracings of a coat of arms—English. Knew it very well. Questioned the young lady. Seems there is a caretaker and his wife, Christians themselves, who were devoted to her mother. The latter, just before she died, gave these old trinkets to them, to keep for the child. This service they faithfully performed. When she showed them to me I began to wonder. Happened to know something of the father's family. Used cable. Kept the wires sizzling as you Americans say. You know the result. Verified all the facts. Traced record of marriage, too. How'd she happen to show me the jewelry? Oh, she didn't try to bribe *me*. No such luck! Not so sure I'd be so incorruptible. Truth is, well, you know, the lady had some vague ideas about the wolf at the door, between ideas about something else that might, or might not have happened at Damascus, and, chafing aside, she felt impelled to—you understand? Didn't want to be a burden on the mission folks. No danger of that now," the nobleman added. "She can get along nicely—very nicely, indeed!"

The other did not pursue the subject. "She knows all this?" he asked abruptly.

"She does."

"What's—" Stanton swallowed—"What's her name?" Fancy having to ask the name of one whom once you fondly imagined was your wife!

"Mary Carruthers."

"Carruthers? Miss Carruthers." Stanton repeated the name like a child in the first grade saying his letters. "Mary Carruthers—" It wasn't a bad name. In fact it was a very nice name. But it was like getting acquainted with her all over again. He sighed. Then he brightened. Allah be praised she was not an Honorable Miss Anybody. He had been spared that. He felt confused, however. He couldn't help it. He had felt that way before, only this was a new variety of the mixed-up feeling. Maybe, he would have to ask somebody for her hand. There might appear a brand-new lot of relatives and meddlers and people who advise. Sometimes these people talk of "grand matches," or desirable matches. "Desirable?" That was 'e word. Was he desirable? Some of that fanciful patch of new relatives might have doubts. There might be

an Anglo-Saxon Light of Life among them—a regular terror. His heart sank. He could imagine as many obstacles as a timorous boy sees boggy faces on tree trunks in a forest at dusk time.

“Sure you aren’t a romance-reciter?” he said gruffly to the nobleman.

“I haven’t the talent,” answered that person. “I leave the job to you.”

“Humph!”

Fitzgerald eyed him with mild inquiry. The young man did not seem so pleased as he ought to be. Perhaps because he had lost that wager—

“Here’s the prayer-book,” Stanton said brusksly, at that moment.

“The little Mecca souvenir?” It was Fitzgerald’s turn to be surprised.

“Yes.” Indifferently.

“But I thought—you said you lost it.”

“Did.” Laconically. “But got it again.”

“I congratulate you.” The nobleman was generous.

“Thanks.” With no enthusiasm.

“You win.”

“Do I?” Stanton knew well enough he had won

the wager. But he wondered if he would ever win?—

“You deserve success, old man,” said Fitzgerald warmly.

“Thanks!” Again. The young man was now rubbing the chemical “wash” once more on his face and shoulders. “Hang this stuff! It works slowly.” He would be indoors a long time at this rate. He would have to stay in—he couldn’t go out half renovated. He was neither one thing nor the other.

“Maybe if you put it on a little stronger?” suggested Fitzgerald sympathetically.

“And get skinned?” scoffed the young man. “No, thank you,” he grumbled.

“Patience, then,” counseled the other.

Stanton’s reply was inaudible.

CHAPTER XXV

THE MISSION GARDENS

SOME time later, he strode forth. He wore European clothes. They didn't fit very well, but they were the best that could be procured. He had had the hotel proprietor send out for them. After the loose flowing, if sometimes disreputable, garb he had been accustomed to so long, these garments seemed stiff and uncomfortable. But he carried them well. "If only I could get in touch with a real live American tailor!" he said to himself yearningly. He longed for that subtle cut, which only the "artists" of his native land can impart. He felt he wasn't doing justice to himself in these duds. He wasn't at all like the picturesque bridegroom who had invaded her courtyard. He was different and she was different. Would everything else be different?

He again reached the mission gardens and walked through the gate. But he walked slower now.

What? Timid? Like a young man who has to force himself to call upon the adored object of his bashful fancy. Stanton frowned. Of course he felt as bold as a lion. It was only these clothes that bothered him—that made him feel strange. They must have been cut by a sheep-shearer, he grumbled to himself. And that hat? He took it off and surveyed it scornfully. One of those English lids that are imported by the hundreds to the seaport towns of the world, for natives and poor exiles! All this time, he hadn't progressed very far in the garden. His heart was pounding furiously. He had never known it to cut up so before. His stiff shirt—hadn't worn one for months!—creaked and he didn't seem to have room enough for deep breathing. He paused to readjust himself.

He?—unsophisticated?—hesitating? Why, hadn't he taken her in his arms—yes, in his arms—that evening at the casement, and hadn't he?—yes, he had. Stanton flushed slightly. He hadn't hesitated then. No one could have been bolder. But this wasn't quite like— Those confounded mission walls were so solid-looking and conventional! He would have to go up to them and knock on the door. He

would say: "Is Miss Carruthers in?" It would seem almost like asking for a stranger. And then once inside with his very soul pinched by four eminently conventional walls, he or she would say: "So glad to see you! You are well, I trust?" Following which would come introductions to the very worthy people, her friends, and a nice conventional conversation—platitudinous, more or less sprightly, maybe—instructive, perhaps—

But the situation had to be met. He went on. Creak! creak! That shirt was certainly starched hard as a board all over. Hang native laundries! And the hat pinched his head. He missed the soft caressing folds of the head-covering of the wild people of the desert. His head felt light without the turban. Perhaps he was a bit light-headed. He was going to see her. He reiterated it. He began now to forget everything else. Doubts and misgivings suddenly evaporated. The single, bald, important fact expanded and filled his being. He was going to see her—soon—now—

Yes; now! For she had come out. Allah be praised, she was alone. She came toward him; she saw him. The dimming day softened any differences

in him. His eyes, his expression though—that last was not different; she must remember that look. Burning, admiring!— He stood as first he had before her, when the sight of her face, in front of the pastry-shop, had awakened the fiery poet in him. Something in him had called out to her then, as voices call from a tower at prayer time. Then and now—that past and this present seemed one—they were one. He started toward her impetuously, but stopped. None of that now—that old manner! He mustn't forget.

“Miss Carruthers—” he began. It seemed rather absurd, but how else could he address her? His voice had a lugubriously formal sound. The girl gave him her hand quickly, and he clasped it eagerly. Nothing formal about that clasp of his! Her hand was delightfully soft and warm. It imparted a glow all over him. Then somehow he managed to release the hand, though it required a heroic effort. He felt he was practising enormous self-denial. He looked at her, maybe not so conventionally as he imagined.

“I—we are so glad. Lord Fitzgerald sent me word you were here.”

"Yes, got in to-day." He spoke as if he had arrived in the most conventional manner. In a Pullman, perhaps.

"He told me, too, how you managed to get out of Damascus."

"No trick at all," he answered.

She looked at him. "*Won't*—won't you sit down?" A constraint seemed abruptly to have descended between them. "Or, would you rather go into the house?"

"I would *not* rather go into the house," he returned emphatically. "I mean"—in answer to a somewhat surprised glance—"it is very pleasant out here, isn't it? And we have so much to say!" He hadn't quite meant that last, or, at least, to put it just that way.

They found themselves on the bench, but for one who had so much to say, he was strangely quiet. It was not easy to adjust himself to the new conditions. He looked at the European dress. She certainly looked well in it, though. So graceful!—so slender!—with those sweetly delicate curves—

"Yes, no trick at all!" he said, for want of something better to say. "You—you are comfortable here?"

"Most."

"Looks like a nice place."

"It is."

They *had* lapsed into the conventional. It seemed inevitable—a part of that process of readjusting, or finding themselves anew. He was just like any other young man who might call upon her. He didn't like it. He frowned. Then he half sighed. Was this the end—the very end? Had he only been nourishing a mirage in his breast? Of course, she was friendly—very. No denying that. He regarded her furtively, while a period of silence ensued. "Much to say!" What a joke! Doubts began to pop into his mind, numerically as many as the stars in the heavens. How self-possessed she was—and tranquil. Ominously so! He couldn't even think of platitudes now. He had asked if she liked it here, if she was comfortable. What else remained to be said? He looked around.

"I suppose you will be going to England soon?"

"I suppose so. We—I have hardly made any plans yet."

"Permit me to congratulate you on the felicitous turn of your fortunes," he observed. "I am glad—very glad."

"Thank you." Simply. And then—"I—I do thank you so much for all—"

"Don't!" He waved his hand. She was going to profess gratitude for the little bit—the very little he had done for her. He had a very hungry feeling. It was not her gratitude he wanted, but more—more—He clasped and unclasped his strong fingers, looking straight before him. Their conversation seemed doomed to be punctuated with long silences.

"We—I went every day to the caravansaries to inquire about you," the girl said after an interval.

"That was very kind of you."

"We hoped to hear from some of the camel men that you were safe."

Another perfunctory acknowledgment!

"And then we heard nothing—nothing—"

Was there a slight catch in Mary Carruthers' voice? He must be mistaken. The wish was father to the thought.

"Yes; news doesn't travel very fast over here," observed the young man. Then he crossed the other leg.

She looked at him. His face was handsome, but somber. He was reflecting. That lion-like boldness

he had attempted to assume had once more deserted him. In her actual presence modesty seemed somehow the more fitting garment. What an irony of fate that he should be made to feel thus, now when he had her all to himself. No menacing hands reached out toward him. No daggers flashed in the air. He didn't have to say something and then jump and run. The conditions ought to be propitious, as the astrologers say—only they weren't. He crossed the other leg. The world was awry. He might be sitting in Central Park with an almost strange young lady. Or in Regents' Park. This last as a concession to her ancestry on her father's side! They seemed drifting farther and farther away.

It was the silence now that was punctuated with talk—brief remarks. He became moody, but what tranquillity now was Mary Carruthers'! He wondered if she didn't feel anything. Yet she looked as if she could feel! What were those wonderful deep, dark eyes given to her for? Perhaps those eyes would shine on some other fellow somewhere—when she had taken her place in the world to which she belonged. He would be but an incident

in that other life of hers—that more disagreeable one which she would like to forget. Perhaps she *would* be able to forget it, and him. And he would gradually and gradually fade away like dissolving mist, until—

“Know my name?” he asked suddenly. He experienced a weird sensation of jocularity as he spoke.

“Of course!” Again with slight surprise. No doubt, she thought his manner rather strange. She couldn’t see down into the depths—that gloomy, dark, black *de profundis* of a lover’s soul.

Of course! His question had been rather foolish. She had heard his name at Damascus when they had met Fitzgerald. And she probably had heard it once or twice since—

“Prove it!” He experienced anew that abrupt sensation of unreasonable frivolity. Maybe, he just wanted to hear her say it. “Prove it!” he challenged her.

“Mr. Jack Stanton,” said the girl readily.

“Mister?” he scoffed recklessly. “Among old friends? In my country, old friends call each other by first names. It’s Tom, Dick, Harry, or—Say ‘Jack’.”

She did so at once, willingly. "Jack."

He let the word sink in. He seemed to like to hear the sound of his own name immensely—on her lips. He gazed at her rapturously. Then he remembered and gazed away. Then he looked at her once more. Then he said quite abruptly and unexpectedly: "Mary, I love you."

He was quite surprised at himself. He hadn't expected to say it just then, or like that. Why, his tone was hardly tender.

A longer silence than ever—a most portentous one—brimming with catastrophes! Miss Carruthers did not look at him now. He saw only part of that lovely profile. Now when a woman or girl turns away?—The very poise of her head seemed to spell tragedy for him. The impression grew and grew. He arose.

"You—you are going?" said the girl quickly. There *was* a catch in her voice, by Allah!

"No," he said suddenly. For the fraction of a second he had caught the look in her eyes. He would never leave her now. Of that, he was sure.

"Mary!"

She, too, had arisen, and he caught her to him.

"Mary!"

358 ALADDIN FROM BROADWAY

The breeze, in the orange trees, sang of orange-flowers.

"We'll have a Christian wedding, this time."

"And a wedding ring!" laughed the pale dark princess of his dreams. "That is, if a beggar can afford a--?"

"Rather. And the bride'll be there. Fancy that!" Ecstatically. "A wedding with the bride present! And a real honeymoon afterward. A real one!" The thought was almost too exhilarating. He turned to her.

And what followed was just like any other love scene.

THE END

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