

NOURJAHAD,

AN

Eastern Tale:

WITH

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Nourjahad,



Delivering the key of his Treasure.

N O U R J A H A D,
OR
THE FOLLY
OF
UNREASONABLE WISHES,
AN
EASTERN TALE.

With Three Copper-plates.

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N O U R J A H A D,

A N

E A S T E R N T A L E.

SCHEMZEDDIN was in his twenty-second year when he ascended the throne of Persia. His wisdom and extraordinary endowments rendered him the delight of his people, and filled them with expectations of a happy and glorious reign.

Of all the persons who surrounded the monarch's throne, none appeared to possess the sultan's favor and confidence like Nourjahad, the son of Namarand. Nourjahad was about the same age with Schemzeddin, and had been bred up with him from his infancy. To a very engaging countenance and person, Nourjahad added a liveliness of temper, and an agreeable manner of address, that won the affections of every one who approached him. The sultan loved him affectionately, and the people expected to see him elevated to the highest pinnacle of honour.

Schemzeddin was indeed desirous of promoting his favourite, but notwithstanding his attachment to him, the monarch would not appoint Nourjahad to the rank of minister of state, till he had consulted some old lords about the court, who had been the constant friends and able counsellors of the late sultan, his father. Accordingly, having called them into his closet one morning, he proposed the matter to them, and desired their opinion; but he perceived that these grave and prudent men disapproved the choice he had made of Nourjahad, to fill an office so important in its management to the welfare of the state.

They accused him of avarice and a boundless love of pleasure, and the sultan dismissed them with evident marks of displeasure, but he said to himself:—

“It is the interest of Nourjahad to conceal his faults from me, and my attachment may blind me to his defects. I will probe Nourjahad’s soul. From himself, I will judge of himself, and if he passes through the trial unsullied, he shall be second only to myself in the empire.”

Shortly after the sultan invited Nourjahad to walk with him one evening by

moonlight, in the garden of the seraglio. Schemzeddin leaned on the shoulder of his favorite, as they rambled from one delicious scene to another; rendered still more enchanting by the silence of night, the mild lustre of the moon, and the fragrance which arose from a thousand odoriferous shrubs. "Tell me, Nourjahad," said the sultan, carelessly throwing himself upon a bank of violets, and inviting his favorite to sit near, "Tell me truly, what would satisfy thy wishes, if thou were certain of possessing all thou couldst desire?"

Nourjahad remained some time silent, till the sultan with an affected smile of levity, repeated the question.

"My wishes," answered the favorite, "are boundless. I should desire to be possessed of inexhaustible riches, and I should also desire to have my life prolonged to eternity."

"Wouldst thou then," said Schemzeddin, "forego the hopes of Paradise?"

"I would," answered the favorite, "make a paradise of this earthly globe, by the variety of my pleasures, and take my chance for the other afterwards."

"Begone," said the sultan, starting

from his seat, “thou art no longer worthy of my love. I thought to have promoted thee to the highest honours, but such a sordid wretch does not deserve to live. Ambition, though a vice, is the advice of great minds, but avarice, and an insatiable thirst for pleasure, degrades a man below the brute.”

Thus saying he was about to depart, but Nourjahad falling on his knees, and holding the sultan's robe, said,—“Let not my lord's indignation be kindled against his slave, for a few light words, which fell from him only in sport. I swear to thee, my prince, by our holy prophet Mahomet, that my real desire for wealth extends no further, than to be enabled to procure the sober enjoyments of life, and as for length of years, let not mine be prolonged a day beyond that in which I can be serviceable to my sovereign, and my country.”

“It is not,” replied the sultan, mildly, “for mortal eyes to penetrate into the secret recesses of thy heart. Thou hast called our great prophet to witness thy oath; remember God thou canst not deceive, though me thou mayest.”

Schemzeddin then left him, without wait-

ing his reply, and Nourjahad retired to his own house, which joined to the Sultan's palace.

He passed the rest of the night in traversing his chamber, regretting his imprudence, and tormenting himself with apprehensions of his disgrace. The next day he was unable to quit his apartment, and at night wearied with his anxieties, he threw himself on his couch, and fell into a deep sleep, from which he was roused by a voice that said—"Nourjahad! Nourjahad! awake, and possess the secret wishes of thy soul."

He started from his couch, and beheld a youth of more than mortal beauty, whose shining hair was encircled with a wreath of flowers, that shed around him the most fragrant perfumes.

"Fear not!" said the youth, I am thy guardian genie. I have power to grant thy wishes, be they what they may. Wouldst thou be restored to the favor and confidence of the sultan, thy master; or wouldst thou rather see the wish accomplished, which thou breathed last night to Schemzeddin, in the gardens of the royal palace."

Nourjahad bowed his head and answer-

ed, "Disguise to thee, O son of Paradise, were vain and fruitless. If I dissembled to Schemzeddin, it was to reinstate myself in his good opinion, by whose favor alone I have been able to exist; but my heart pants to possess that wish I declared to the sultan, and that alone."

"Rash mortal," replied the youth, "reflect once more before you receive the fatal boon, for once granted you will wish in vain to have it recalled."

"What can I have to fear?" demanded Nourjahad, "when I am possessed of endless riches, and immortality?"

"Your own passions," replied the youth.

"I will submit to all the evils they may inflict," said he, "give me but the means of gratifying them in their full extent."

"Take thy wish!" cried the genius, with a look of disdain and discontent. "The contents of this phial bestows immortality upon thee, and to-morrow's sun beholds thee richer than all the kings of the east."

Nourjahad eagerly stretched his hand to receive a vessel of gold, enriched with precious stones. "Hold!" cried the youth, there is one condition annexed

to this dangerous gift. You will live to eternity, but you will be subject to fits of deep sleep, which will last for months, for years, nay, perhaps for a whole century.

“Horrible!” cried Nourjahad.

“It is worth considering,” said the genius, “decide not too hastily; for if thou pervertest the power thou wilt possess, and incline thy heart to vice, thou wilt be punished with this suspension of thy faculties, which will last in proportion to the error thou hast committed.”

“I accept the condition,” cried Nourjahad, “for though I mean to enjoy all the pleasures of life, I will never commit any crimes—and after all, what is twenty, thirty, or even fifty years of sleep, for a man who is to live to all eternity.”

“Here then,” said the genius, “swallow this liquid, and possess thy wish!”

Nourjahad applied the vessel to his lips, and drank a liquid so potent in its effect, that he fell back in a temporary trance, and when he again opened his eyes, the apparition had vanished, and his chamber was in total darkness.

He would have considered all that had passed as a dream, had he not still held

the empty golden vessel in his hand, which he now placed under his pillow, and filled with delightful expectations, he again composed himself to sleep.

The sun was in its meridian when he awoke the next day, but how great was his surprise, how high his transport, to see that his chamber was filled with large urns containing gold and silver coin, diamonds, and all kinds of precious stones; on one of them was placed a scroll of paper containing these words:

“Thy days are without number, thy riches inexhaustible, thy prudence be thy guard! in thy garden is a subterraneous cavern, where thou mayest conceal thy treasure. I have marked the spot. Farewell.”

Nourjahad having examined with increasing delight his treasures, hastened to the garden. In a remote corner near the ruins of an antient temple, he perceived a key of polished steel, hanging to a scarf of white taffety, and suspended at the branch of a tree. He was not long before he discovered a door behind the ruin, and opening it with the key, he descended by a few steps into a spacious cavern.

Nourjahad, glad to have so convenient a place in which to deposit his treasure, returned to the house, and ordered that no visitors should be admitted to him. This one day he resolved to pass in laying down plans of various pleasures to be enjoyed for ages to come.

Before the visit of the genie, Nourjahad imagined, that if he had these boundless riches he should employ them to notable and generous purposes, but he had deceived himself; there exists a wide difference between the fancied and actual possession of wealth, for Nourjahad now absorbed in selfishness, thought only of the indulgence of his own appetites.

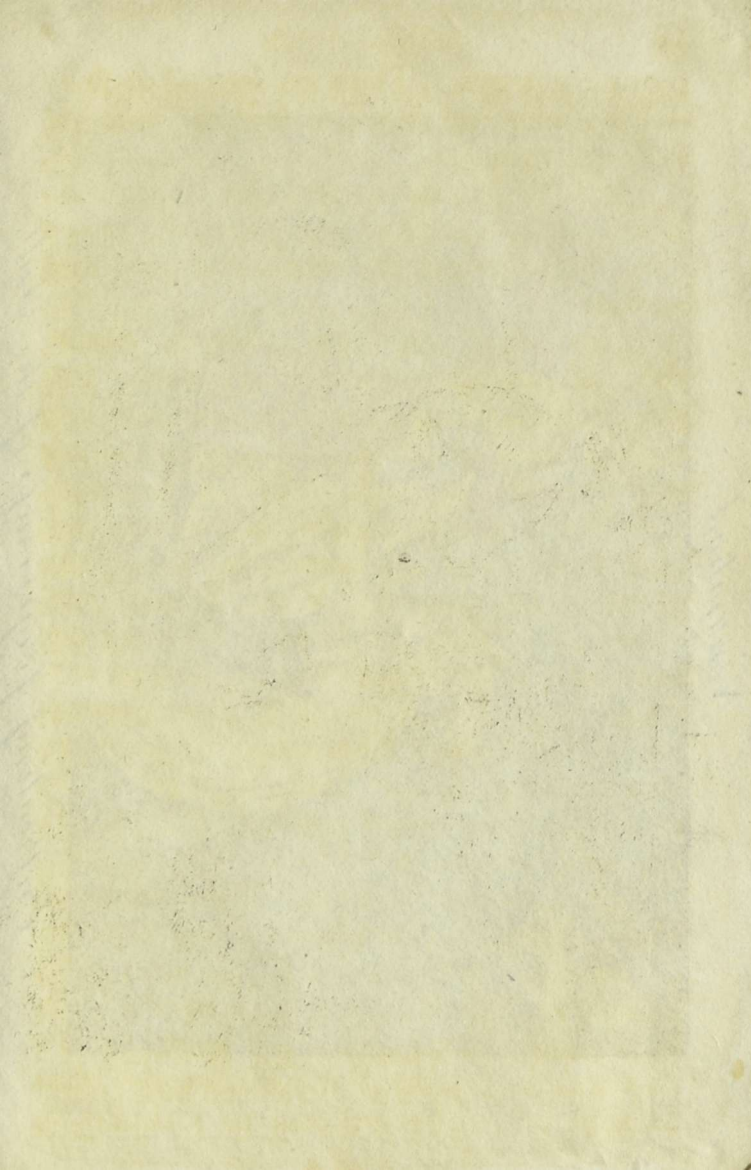
“My temper,” said he, as he lay stretched at his ease, upon a sofa, “does not incline me to take much trouble. I shall not aspire to high employments about the court, but I will have the finest palaces and gardens, the most splendid equipages, the most beautiful slaves in my seraglio, and the temperance of the sultan Schemzeddin shall be no pattern for me. Every corner of the earth shall be searched for dainties to supply my table, and bands of the choicest musicians shall entertain me while I enjoy my sump-

tuous banquets. Then no fear of surfeits —I will eat and drink to excess, and bid defiance to death.”

Here Nourjahad started, for he remembered the genius had not promised to secure him against the attacks of pain and sickness.

“ Perhaps,” said he after a pause, that advantage may be included. Besides a little temporary pain now and then will be nothing: I shall the more enjoy my returning health. But I recollect that Schemzeddin used to talk of wisdom, and intellectual pleasures, as being the greatest enjoyment. Well, I can purchase those too; I will have half a score wise, and learned men always at my command to entertain me with their conversation, and when I am weary of living in this country, I will make a tour of the earth, and see every curiosity the habitable world contains.”

For three whole days, Nourjahad was taken up with considering what scheme of pleasure he should begin with, and having entirely forgot to pay his court to Schemzeddin, the monarch on the fourth day was so offended at his absence, that he sent one of his officers to forbid him



Nourjahad,



Entreating forgiveness of the Sultan.

his presence for ever. "Tell him, however," said the sultan, "that in remembrance of my former favor, I will allow him one thousand crowns a year for his support, and grant him the house he now lives in."

Nourjahad received this message with great indifference; not daring, however, to shew any mark of disrespect, he answered, "Tell my lord the sultan, that I would not have been thus long without throwing myself at his feet, but I was hastily sent for to visit a dying friend at some leagues distance, who has made me his heir. The thousand crowns, therefore, my royal master will be pleased to bestow on some one who wants them more than I do; but the house I will thankfully accept, and it will daily remind me, that Schemzeddin does not utterly detest his slave."

Nourjahad gave this turn to his acceptance of the house, which it would have been very inconvenient to have retired from, as he had already deposited his treasures in the subterraneous cavern of the garden. Thus, he had already, in two instances, departed from the truth, in consequence of his ill-judged indulgence of unreasonable wishes.

He now bent his thoughts wholly on pleasure. He employed one Hasem, the principal of his domestics, to regulate his household, and furnish him with every gratification of costly furniture, magnificent habits, and a princely retinue. His slaves were all perfectly beautiful, and his table was daily furnished with the most expensive and rarest products of every country. A few men of science and learning were invited to his house, for the instruction and entertainment of his leisure hours, but leisure hours he had none, for he was either gratifying his appetites, or surfeited with excess.

Among the beauties of his seraglio he had selected a young maid, so perfect in loveliness, and so highly accomplished, that he gave her his entire affections, and made her his bride. By Mandana he was equally beloved, and longing to unbosom himself to some one on whose fidelity he could rely, he disclosed to her the marvellous story of his destiny. His mind thus relieved of its secret, he had not one anxious thought remaining, and plunged at once into a sea of luxurious enjoyments. He forgot his duty towards God, and neglected all the laws of the

Prophet Mahomet. The cries of distress or the sufferings of poverty no longer melted his heart. Becoming daily more sensual and avaricious, his boundless wealth seemed scarcely sufficient to gratify his wishes. He soon grew idle and effeminate, and the pride he took in displaying the pomp of his retinue to the wondering eyes of the people, was the only motive that incited him to action.

He thus continued to wallow in voluptuousness for three months uninterruptedly, when one day, as he was preparing to set out for a beautiful villa, he had purchased for a rural retirement; the officer who had forbade his appearance at court, arrived from the sultan. "I am sorry, my lord," said he, "to be a second time, the messenger of ill-tidings; but the sultan hearing of the extraordinary splendour and magnificence in which you live, would needs know whence you derive your wealth, and has commanded me to conduct you to his presence."

Nourjahad was exceedingly startled at this unexpected summons, but he dared not dispute the sultan's orders; and he followed the officer to the palace of Schemzeddin. He entered trembling,

and prostrated himself at the foot of the throne.

“Whence is it Nourjahad,” said Schemzeddin, “that I am compelled by the murmurs of my people, to enquire into the source of the extraordinary wealth that thou hast displayed. Who was the friend that bequeathed thy riches to thee, and what are their amount?”

Nourjahad, terrified at the dangers that threatened him, fell at the feet of the sultan, and related the visit of the genie, and its miraculous consequences. But the sultan sternly commanded him from his presence, and likewise ordered that he should be conducted back to his own house, from whence he was not to stir without permission from the sultan, on pain of death.

Nourjahad, filled with grief and vexation, was led like a prisoner back to his own palace, and had the mortification to find the gates of his dwelling surrounded by the sultan's guards.

He retired to his closet, repenting that had made so imprudent a choice. “If,” said he, “I had asked the genie to restore me to Schemzeddin's favor, he would have advanced me to the highest offices

of the state; I should have enjoyed my liberty, and have been respected, but now I am only envied and hated; and of what use is my wealth since I am confined to one house? Unfortunate Nourjahad, where are all they schemes of felicity?"

In two or three days he was more reconciled to his lot, and ordered a sumptuous banquet to be prepared; his musicians were commanded to exercise their utmost art, to soothe his mind with all the enchanting powers of harmony; his apartments were illuminated with thousands of torches, composed of fragrant spices, and shedding delightful odours, and his slaves decked in the most costly jewels: himself, attired in robes such as the kings of Persia used to wear, was seated under a canopy of silver tissue. With all these splendid preparations, Nourjahad sat down to his banquet, unsatisfied and dispirited, but resolved to elevate himself in some way; he forgot the laws of the religion he professed, which enjoins sobriety, for the historian who relates his life, affirms that Nourjahad that night, for the first time in his life,—got drunk.

In this state, he was carried insensible to bed, and when he next awoke from a

sound slumber, he missed his beloved Mandana, and called aloud for his slaves; but no one answered. Being very passionate, he jumped out of bed, and ran into the antichamber, yet found none of his slaves in waiting; enraged at this, he was about to descend the stairs, when a female slave appeared, who no sooner perceived him, than she gave a shriek, and was going to run away, but Nourjahad seizing her roughly by the arm, commanded her to go and tell Mandana that he desired to see her.

“Alas! my lord,” said the slave, “I wish she were in a condition to come to you.”

“What do you mean,” cried he, “I hope she is not sick? I am sure she went to bed in perfect health last night!”

“Last night, my lord! alas, alas!”

“Wretch!” exclaimed Nourjahad, “what do you mean?—

“My lord, Mandana has been dead more than three years.”

“Infamous creature, I’ll teach you to trifle thus with your master,” and he shook her so violently that her screams brought several other domestics, and among the rest, Hasem, to her rescue.

“ My lord,” said Hasem, “ pardon your slave, and suffer us to rejoice in your recovery, when we had despaired of your ever unclosing your eyes; having slept four years and twenty days !”

At this instant Nourjahad, with some confusion, recollected the condition the genie had affixed to his gift. He ordered every one but Hasem to withdraw, and when they were alone, he said, “ Tell me then, Hasem, is Mandana really dead ?”

“ She is, my lord; and when she was dying, she called me to her, and ordered me to take charge of the household; assuring me that you would one day revive again. Here, my lord are the keys of the coffers she delivered to me, and I have endeavoured to preserve order and decorum in the management of your affairs; and your condition has been kept a profound secret from every one but your own family.”

Nourjahad shed torrents of tears to the memory of Mandana, and for a long time he felt disgusted with every thing around him; but as time passed away, his grief diminished, and he began to feel some inclination to return to his former excesses. He had the prudence to re-

late to Hasem the mystery of his destiny to prevent the likelihood of being buried alive, should another deep sleep fall upon him.

Having taken this precaution, he selected from his seraglio a beauty, named Cadiga, and married her. And now he once more delivered himself up to intemperence of every kind. He forgot that there were wants and distresses among his fellow creatures. He lived only for himself, and his heart became as hard as the coffers which held his misapplied treasures. The poets and sages whom he entertained in his house, began to grow irksome to him, and at length thinking their company tedious, he turned them out of his palace.

One day the most extravagant project came into his head that ever filled the imagination of man; because his gardens were very beautiful, he fancied they must resemble the gardens of Paradise, and he ordered the women of his seraglio to personate the *Houries*, those angelic beings who are said to be the companions of true believers in the Mahometan Paradise. He called himself the Prophet Mahomet, and gave orders to Hasem to prepare for the

celestial masquerade. Neither art nor excellence were spared on this extraordinary occasion. The fountains were ordered to run with milk and wine, instead of water; and fruits, blossoms, and flowers were gathered together to embellish this terrestrial paradise.

On the day the festivities were to commence, the weather being extremely hot, Nourjahad, who had been viewing the preparations with childish impatience, laid down on a couch to take a short repose, leaving orders to be awakened before sunset.

Nourjahad, however, opened his eyes without any one's having disturbed his slumbers, and finding the day already closed, he sprung up, in a violent passion, and stamping on the floor, ordered the slave who appeared, to bid his women one and all to hasten into his apartment.

While he was resolving to punish their neglect with the greatest severity; they appeared, throwing up their veils as they entered his apartment. But, Oh heavens! what was Nourjahad's anger, and astonishment, when instead of the beautiful Houries he expected to see, he beheld only a train of withered and deformed old women.

Surprise and indignation deprived him of the power of speech, till the foremost stepped forward, and offered to embrace him. He pushed her from him, crying, "Avaunt, fiend, Where are my slaves? Where is Hasem? Where are the women of my seraglio?"

"Alas! my lord! have you entirely forgot me, forgot your beloved Cadiga?"

"Thou Cadiga? detested wretch, thou liest! This very day, my Cadiga was as beautiful as an angel; and thou resemblest nothing but a fury."

"Alas! my lord, you have not seen your Cadiga these forty years and eleven months, till this moment. "What!" cried Nourjahad, "have I slept so long as forty years and eleven months?"

"Yes, my lord, and we your faithful wives have in the mean time undergone the natural transformation from youth to age."

"By the temple of Mecca!" exclaimed Nourjahad, "this genius of mine is no better than an evil spirit, or he could not take such delight in persecuting me."

"Ah, my lord!" cried Cadiga, "I am not ignorant of the strange fate by which your life is governed; Hasem, your faith-

ful Hasem, communicated to me with his dying breath.

“Is Hasem dead?”

“Yes, my lord, he died some months since, bequeathing to me your secret, and the care of your person and household.”

Nourjahad now ordering them all to withdraw, threw himself again on his couch—“I see,” said he, “the folly of my expectations. Mandana and Hasem are dead, and Cadiga is grown old and ugly, and already totters on the brink of the grave. I lose all whom I love, and my immortality does not secure me from affliction, nor can I purchase happiness with all my wealth. Fool that I was to desire a step beyond the bounds of prudence and moderation. A friend shall no sooner become endeared to me, than death will deprive me of him, and if I marry again how many bright eyes am I doomed to see for ever closed? Ah! it is a comfortless life that I have chosen. I find too late, that my boundless riches cannot purchase happiness.”

Nourjahad now grew peevish, morose, and tyrannical. Cruelty took possession of his breast; he abused his women, beat his slaves, and seemed to enjoy no satis-

faction, but that of tormenting others. Cardiga ventured to expostulate with him.

“To whom am I accountable,” said he, “for my actions?”

“To God and our Prophet.”

“Thou liest,” he replied, “as I am exempt from death, I can never be brought to judgment.”

“But hast thou no regard for the laws of society, nor pity for the sufferings of thy fellow creatures?”

“Foolish woman! dost thou then talk to me of laws who think myself bound by none?”

“Thou art a monster, and not fit to live!” said the undaunted Cardiga.—

“Go tell thy Prophet so?” exclaimed Nourjahad, plucking a poinard from his side, and plunging it into her bosom.— She fell at his feet, weltering in her blood; and he left the chamber, without shewing the least concern for the deed he had committed.

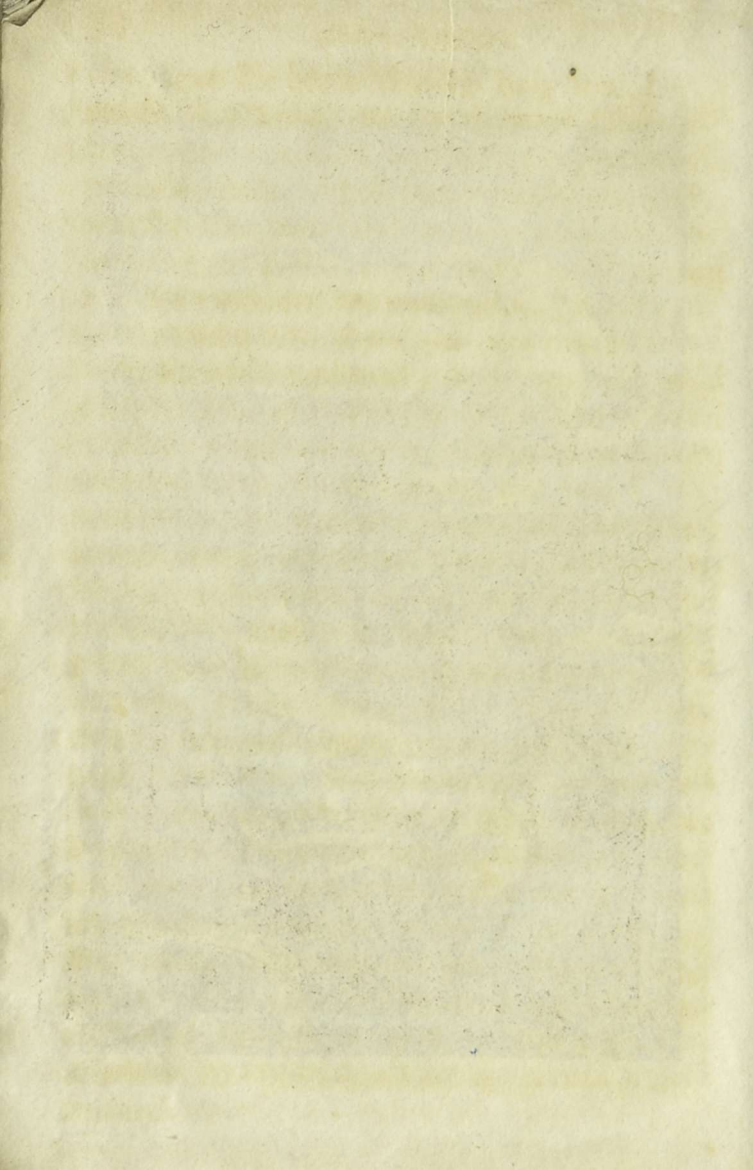
That night he went to rest as usual, and when he awoke again, he beheld a man, sitting near the foot of his couch, weeping, “What is the matter?” asked Nourjahad.

“Schemzeddin is dead! my lord—the good sultan is no more!”

Souryabad,



Awakened by the voice of the Genius.



“ I am glad of it,” cried Nourjahad, “ I shall now have my liberty. Who is next to reign in Ormuz?”

“ Doubtless, my lord, the Prince Schemerzad, the eldest son of Schemzeddin.”

“ Slave, Schemzeddin had no son.”

“ Pardon me, my lord, the prince was born the very hour, Cardiga died by your hand; and he is esteemed the wisest and most accomplished prince of his age.”

“ Thou art very insolent methinks to mention Cardiga before me, and a Sultan of four and twenty hours old, must needs be very wise and accomplished.”

“ Nay, my lord,” replied the man, “ the prince this very day is twenty years old.”

Nourjahad on hearing this, looked in the face of the man, and perceived him to be a stranger—“ Twenty years old?” said he, starting up, “ it should seem then that I have slept twenty years; and who art thou, for I do not remember ever to have seen thy face before? and how camest thou hither?”

“ My name,” answered the stranger, “ is Cozro. I am the brother of Cadiga,

who sent for me when she was dying, and made me swear by our holy Prophet to her, that I would watch and attend on you carefully. I did not know till afterwards, that you had murdered my sister, and when I did learn it I could scarce refrain from inflicting vengeance on thee.

“ And pray what restrained thee ? ”

“ Reverence for my oath, and the fear of offending the Almighty. ”

Nourjahad was struck with awe at this answer, but he continued silent while Cozro proceeded to inform him, that his slaves, even those he had most trusted, had plundered his coffers and absconded. ”

“ Alas ! ” cried Nourjahad, “ my treacherous joys have deceived me, I am bereft of hope, I am like a savage beast in the desert, whose paths are shunned by all mankind. ”

“ Nourjahad, ” said Cozro, “ I have heard thy story from Cadiga ; and know, Oh, mistaken man, that thy misfortunes are the consequences of thy crimes. Thou hast abused the power vested in thy hands, and by the immutable laws of heaven, either in this world or the next, vice will receive its punishment, and virtue its reward. ”

“ Alas !” replied Nourjahad, “ thou hast awakened in me a remorse, of which I was never sensible before. I look back with shame and horror on my past life. What shall I do, Oh, Cozro, to expiate my offences ?”

“ If thy repentance is sincere,” replied Cozro, “ the means are amply in thy power. Thy riches will enable thee to diffuse blessings among mankind.”

“ It shall be so,” exclaimed Nourjahad with rapture. “ My treasures shall be open to thee, thou good old man. Enquire out every family in Ormuz, whom calamity hath overtaken, and restore them to prosperity. Seek the helpless and the innocent, and by a timely supply of their wants, secure them against the attacks of poverty, or temptations of vice. Find out merit wherever it lies concealed, clogged by adversity, or obscured by malice ; lift it up from the dust, and let it shine conspicuous to the world !”

“ Blessed be the purpose of thy heart !” said Cozro, “ and prosperous be the days of thy life !”

Nourjahad now sent Cozro forth on his benevolent errand, and only waited to

have himself released from the prohibition Schemzeddin had laid upon him, to join Cozro in his mission. No notice had yet been taken of a petition he had sent to the new sultan, for the restoration of his liberty, but Nourjahad bore that with patience, and spent his days in his closet, laying plans for the benefit of his fellow creatures. He was now temperate in all his appetites, and returned to the strict exercise of all the sacred duties of his religion.

One day he was surprised to find that Cozro did not return at his usual time, but was still more amazed to see an officer attended by a guard, enter his apartment, and accuse him of employing an agent to distribute large sums of money in the city, to bring about a revolt among the people. It was in vain that Nourjahad attempted to refute the charge. He was called a traitor, was dragged from his house, and lodged in one of the dungeons of the state prison.

At midnight, the jailor entered with some bread and water, and from him he learned that his accomplice, as they called Cozro, refusing to confess the particulars

of the treason in which he was concerned, was already condemned to death, and that the bell now tolling was the signal for his execution.

Nourjahad prostrated himself on the ground. "Alas!" cried he, am I then to cause the death of the most virtuous man I know. Ah, why was I not content with the common lot of mortals, Oh, holy Prophet!" he exclaimed, "take back the gift which I, in the ignorance and presumption of my heart, so vainly desired; and which, too late, I find a punishment instead of a blessing."

He had scarce pronounced these words when the door of his dungeon flew open, and his guardian genius, all radiant with light, stood before him. "Nourjahad," he said, "thy prayers are heard, yet examine thy heart once more. Art thou willing to become poor again, and subject to death, the common lot of mortals?"

"Most willing," replied Nourjahad.

"Then joyfully do I resume the dangerous gift I bestowed on thy erring wishes. Prostrate thyself with thy face to the earth, and await what shall befall thee."

The door of the dungeon then closed, and Nourjahad continued in prayer and meditation, till the dawn of the following morning, when the keeper of the prison, appeared to lead him to the presence of the sultan.

He was now carried out of the dungeon, and placed in an open carriage, between two officers, with drawn sabres in their hands. The chariot was surrounded by soldiers, and in this manner he was conducted to the hall of audience, where the sultan was seated on his throne, with his emirs, his nobles, and all the great officers of his court standing round him.

Nourjahad stood before the sultan with his eyes bent upon the ground; his deportment was modest and respectful, but supported by conscious innocence, he discovered no symptoms of fear.

Schemerzad made a sign for every one to withdraw, except the grand vizier, who stood on the steps of the throne.

“Art thou prepared,” demanded the sultan, “to make a full confession of thy treasonable designs? Say, audacious wretch! to what end was thy profusion employed?”

“To obtain a blessing from heaven,” answered Nourjahad; “and by relieving the wants and afflictions of others, to make some atonement for my own intemperate abuse of wealth, which ought to have been employed to better purposes.”

“Wouldst thou persuade me that charity was thy only motive?”

“It was illustrious sultan. I have spoken the truth, and to convince your majesty, that I never harboured any treasonable design against your person or government, I am ready at this moment to deliver into your hands that immense treasure which had I been vile enough so to have employed it would have bought the fidelity of half your subjects.”

“Do then,” said the sultan, “as thou hast spoken, and I will believe thee.”

“If your majesty will permit any one to go with me to my house; I will deliver into his hands all my wealth, and if, my lord permits me to live; I will henceforward labour to support myself.”

“No,” replied the sultan, “I will not trust thee from my sight; instruct my vizier where to find thy treasures.”

Nourjahad then delivered up the key of

the subterraneous cavern which contained the urns full of gold and precious stones, and directed the vizier in what part of the garden he was to find the entrance of the cavern.

As the gardens of Nourjahad joined those of the royal palace, the vizier was not long in going and returning, but he brought word that there was not a single urn nor any vestige of treasure concealed in the cavern. Nourjahad instantly recollected that his guardian spirit had probably reclaimed this, as well as the other gift, and said, "A genie who watches over my motions, has doubtless carried away my wealth."

"Wretch," cried the sultan, "darest thou suppose that affecting to be mad can save thy forfeit life?"

"My lord," replied Nourjahad, prostrating himself at the foot of the throne, "I call heaven to witness, I have spoken nothing but the truth. The severest tortures you can inflict will extort no more. I was willing to sacrifice the wealth I believed myself to possess, and I am now as ready to yield up my life."

“Art thou not afraid to die?” said Schemerzad.

“No, mighty sultan; I look upon death to a virtuous man to be the forerunner to everlasting happiness.”

On this the sultan arose, and clapped his hands, which Nourjahad supposed was the signal for his execution; but instead of slaves to seize him, he beheld his guardian genie standing close to the throne of Schemerzad. Awed and amazed, he started back, and gazed on the vision, when the angelic youth casting off the circlet that bound his forehead, and throwing off a head of artificial flaxen hair that flowed upon his shoulders, a fall of brown hair dropped in light curls upon his blushing cheeks; and Nourjahad beheld in the person of his seraphic guide, his beloved and beautiful Mandana.

At the same moment, the sultan, exclaimed, “Look up, Nourjahad! raise thy eyes to thy master’s face; no longer the angry Schemerzad, but Schemzeddin, thy friend and protector.”

“And for whom wouldst thou take me?” said the vizier, throwing aside his turban.

“By Mahomet,” cried Nourjahad, “if I do not dream, I behold the royal Schem-zeddin, and in thee, vizier, my faithful slave, Hasem.”

“It is even so,” said the sultan, “I loved you, Nourjahad, too well not to endeavour to work your reformation. I employed the beautiful Mandana to personate your guardian angel. I introduced her into your chamber, through a secret door, unknown to you, which communicates with a gallery in the royal palace. You fell into the snare. The liquid you drank was an opiate, and while you slept we conveyed the urns into your chamber, filled from the royal treasury. When you were settled in your imaginary felicity, Hasem offered himself to your service, and I had Mandana, who already loved you passionately, presented to you. No wonder her charms captivated your heart. As I foresaw, you yielded to all manner of excess, and I, to awaken your remorse, had an opiate administered, and withdrew Mandana from your arms. The confinement I laid you under, was to prevent your having any communication beyond your own household, and you were

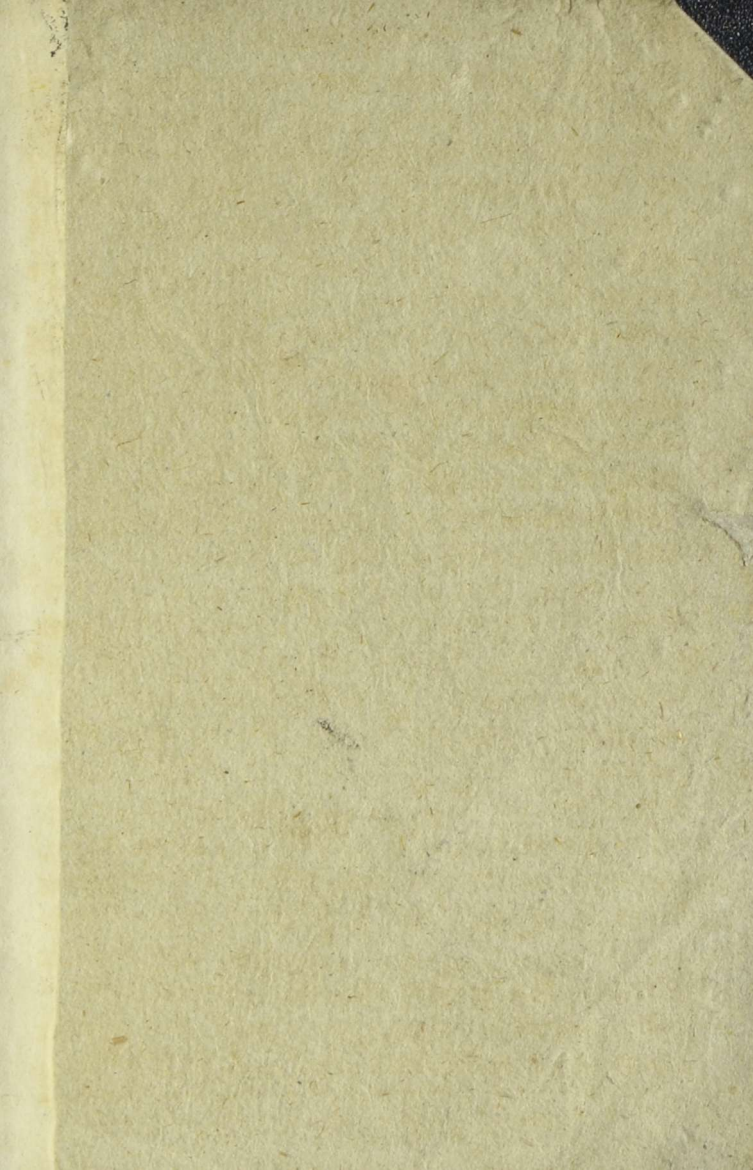
served only by my slaves, who were bound by solemn oaths to keep my secret. You did not suspect that you had slept only a night instead of four years, but you were not reformed, and we imposed on you that you had had a second sleep of longer duration. Your beautiful slaves were conveyed away in the night, and old women introduced, instructed to personate them, which they did admirably, and Hasem, whom you supposed to be dead, remained secretly in your house to govern the mechanism of our plot. Still you continued to rebel against the laws of God and man, and at length stained your hand with blood—happily you did not take the life you aimed at; she who personated Cadiga still lives. I now determined myself to be an eye witness of your conduct, and to try if any spark of virtue remained in your soul, which could be rekindled. When you awoke the next morning, I presented myself as Cozro; and I had soon the satisfaction to find thee a new man.

“Fourteen months only have elapsed since we began our trial. The greatest part of the sums expended have returned

to my coffers, and that which has been otherwise disposed of, I do not regret, since I find Nourjahad become worthy to be the friend of Schemzeddin. Take back thy amiable wife, Mandana, and receive the fixed confidence, and love of thy sultan."

History says, that Nourjahad was raised to the highest offices of state; that his wisdom and virtue proved an ornament and support to the Persian throne during the course of a long and prosperous life; and that his name became famous throughout the Eastern world.

THE END.



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