

The History of Nourjahad

Frances Sheridan

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Schemzeddin was in his two and twentieth year when he mounted the throne of Persia. His great wisdom and extraordinary endowments rendered him the delight of his people, and filled them with expectations of a glorious and happy reign. Amongst the number of persons who stood candidates for the young sultan's favour, in the new administration, which was now going to take place, none seemed so likely to succeed, as Nourjahad the son of Namarand. This young man was about the age of Schemzeddin, and had been bred up with him from his infancy. To a very engaging person was added a sweetness of temper, a liveliness of fancy, and a certain agreeable manner of address, that engaged every one's affections who approached him. The sultan loved him, and every one looked on Nourjahad as the rising star of the Persian court, whom his master's partial fondness would elevate to the highest pinnacle of honour. Schemzeddin indeed was desirous of promoting his favourite, yet notwithstanding his attachment to him, he was not blind to his faults; but they appeared to him only such as are almost inseparable from youth and inexperience; and he made no doubt but that Nourjahad, when time had a little more subdued his youthful passions, and matured his judgment, would be able to fill the place of his first minister, with abilities equal to any of his predecessors. He would not, however, even in his own private thoughts, resolve on so important a step, without first consulting with some old lords of his court, who had been the constant friends and counsellors of the late sultan his father. Accordingly having called them into his closet one day, he proposed the matter to them, and desired their opinion. But before they delivered it, he could easily discover by the countenances of these grave and prudent men, that they disapproved his choice. What have you to object to Nourjahad, said the sultan, finding that they all continued silent, looking at each other? His youth, replied the eldest of the counsellors. That objection, answered Schemzeddin, will grow lighter every day. His avarice, cried the second. Thou art not just, said the sultan, in charging him with that; he has no support but from my bounty, nor did he ever yet take advantage of that interest which he knows he has in me, to desire an encrease of it. What I have charged him with, is in his nature notwithstanding, replied the old lord. What hast thou to urge, cried the sultan, to his third adviser? His love of pleasure, answered he. That, cried Schemzeddin, is as groundless an accusation as the other; I have known him from his childhood, and think few men of his years are so temperate. Yet would he indulge to excess, if it were in his power, replied the old man. The sultan now addressed the fourth: What fault hast thou to object to him, cried he? His irreligion, answered the sage. Thou art even more severe, replied the sultan, than the rest of thy brethren, and I believe Nourjahad as good a Mussulman as thyself. He dismissed them coldly from his closet; and the four counsellors saw how impolitic a thing it was to oppose the will of their sovereign.

Though Schemzeddin seemed displeased with the remonstrances of the old men, they nevertheless had some weight with him. It is the interest of Nourjahad, said he, to conceal his faults from me; the age and experience of these men doubtless has furnished them with more sagacity than my youth can boast of; and he may be in reality what they have represented him. This thought disquieted the sultan, for he loved Nourjahad as his brother. Yet who knows, cried he, but it may be envy in these old men? they may be provoked at having a youth raised to that honour to which each of them perhaps in his own heart aspires. We can sometimes form a better judgment of a man's real disposition, from an unguarded sally of his own lips, than from a close observation of years, where the person, conscious of being observed, is watchful and cautious of every look and expression that falls from him. I will sound Nourjahad when he least suspects that I have any such design, and from his own mouth will I judge him.

It was not long before the sultan had an opportunity of executing his purpose. Having past the evening with his favourite at a banquet, where they had both indulged pretty freely, he invited Nourjahad to a walk by moon-light in the gardens of the seraglio. Schemzeddin leaned on his shoulder as they rambled from one delicious scene to

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another; scenes rendered still more enchanting by the silence of the night, the mild lustre of the moon now at full, and the exhalations which arose from a thousand odoriferous shrubs. The spirits of Nourjahad were exhilarated by the mirth and festivity in which he had passed the day. The sultan's favour intoxicated him; his thoughts were dissipated by a variety of agreeable sensations, and his whole soul as it were rapt in a kind of pleasing delirium. Such was the frame of Nourjahad's mind, when the sultan, with an assumed levity, throwing himself down on a bank of violets, and familiarly drawing his favourite to sit by him, said, *Tell me, Nourjahad, and tell me truly, what would satisfy thy wishes, if thou wert certain of possessing whatsoever thou shouldst desire?* Nourjahad remaining silent for some time, the sultan, smiling, repeated his question. My wishes, answered the favourite, are so boundless, that it is impossible for me to tell you directly; but in two words, I should desire to be possessed of inexhaustible riches, and to enable me to enjoy them to the utmost, to have my life prolonged to eternity. Wouldst thou then, said Schemzeddin, forego thy hopes of paradise? I would, answered the favourite, make a paradise of this earthly globe whilst it lasted, and take my chance for the other afterwards.

The sultan, at hearing these words, started up from his seat, and knitting his brow, Be gone, said he, sternly, thou art no longer worthy of my love or my confidence: I thought to have promoted thee to the highest honours, but such a wretch does not deserve to live. Ambition, though a vice, is yet the vice of great minds; but avarice, and an insatiable thirst for pleasure, degrades a man below the brutes.

Saying this, he turned his back on Nourjahad, and was about to leave him; when the favourite catching him by the robe, and falling on his knees, Let not my lord's indignation, said he, 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, that what I said is far from being the sentiments of my heart; my desire for wealth extends not farther than to be enabled to procure the sober enjoyments of life; and for length of years, let not mine be prolonged a day, beyond that, in which I can be serviceable to my prince and my country.

It is not, replied the sultan, with a mildness chastened with gravity, it is not for mortal eyes to penetrate into the close recesses of the human heart; thou hast attested thy innocence by an oath; it is all that can be required from man to man; but remember thou hast called our great prophet to witness; him thou canst not deceive, though me thou mayest.

Schemzeddin left him without waiting for his reply; and Nourjahad, exceedingly mortified that his unguarded declaration had so much lessened him in his master's esteem, retired to his own house, which immediately joined the sultan's palace.

He passed the rest of the night in traversing his chamber, being unable to take any rest. He dreaded the thoughts of losing the sultan's favour, on which alone he depended for his future advancement; and tormenting himself all night with apprehensions of his disgrace, he found himself so indisposed in the morning, that he was unable to leave his chamber. He spent the day in gloomy reflections without suffering any one to come near him, or taking any repast: and when night came, wearied with painful thoughts, and want of sleep, he threw himself on his bed. But his slumbers were disturbed by perplexing dreams. What had been the subject of his anxiety when awake, served now to embitter and distract his rest: his fancy represented the sultan to him as he had last seen him in the garden, his looks severe, and his words menacing. 'Go wretch, he thought he heard him cry, go seek thy bread in a remote country, thou hast nothing to expect from me but contempt.'

Nourjahad awoke in agonies: Oh heaven, cried he aloud, that I could now inherit the secret wish I was fool enough to disclose to thee, how little should I regard thy threats! And thou shalt, Oh Nourjahad, replied a voice, possess the utmost wishes of thy soul! Nourjahad started up in his bed, and rubbed his eyes, doubting whether he was really awake, or whether it was not his troubled imagination which cheated him with this delusive promise; when behold! to his unutterable astonishment, he saw a refulgent light in his chamber, and at his bed's side stood a youth of more than mortal beauty. The lustre of his white robes dazzled his eyes; his long and shining hair was incircled with a wreath of flowers that breathed the odours of paradise.

Nourjahad gazed at him, but had not power to open his mouth. Be not afraid, said the divine youth, with a voice of ineffable sweetness; I am thy guardian genius, who have carefully watched over thee from thy infancy, though never till this hour have I been permitted to make myself visible to thee. I was present at thy conversation in the garden with Schemzeddin, I was a witness to thy unguarded declaration, but found thee afterwards awed by his frowns to retract what thou hadst said: I saw too the rigour of the sultan's looks as he departed from thee, and know that they proceeded from his doubting thy truth. I, though an immortal spirit, am not omniscient; to God

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only are the secrets of the heart revealed; speak boldly then, thou highly favoured of our prophet, and know that I have power from Mahomet to grant thy request, be it what it will. Wouldst thou be restored to the favour and confidence of thy master, and receive from his friendship and generosity the reward of thy long attachment to him, or dost thou really desire the accomplishment of that extravagant wish, which thou didst in the openness of thy heart avow to him last night?

Nourjahad, a little recovered from his amazement, and encouraged by the condescension of his celestial visitant, bowed his head low in token of adoration.

Disguise to thee, Oh son of paradise, replied he, were vain and fruitless; if I dissembled to Schemzeddin it was in order to reinstate myself in his good opinion, the only means in my power to secure my future prospects: from thee I can have no reason to conceal my thoughts; and since the care of my happiness is consigned to thee my guardian angel; let me possess that wish, extravagant as it may seem, which I first declared.

Rash mortal, replied the shining vision, reflect once more, before you receive the fatal boon; for once granted, you will wish perhaps, and wish in vain, to have it recalled. What have I to fear, answered Nourjahad, possessed of endless riches and of immortality? Your own passions, said the heavenly youth. I will submit to all the evils arising from them, replied Nourjahad, give me but the power of gratifying them in their full extent. Take thy wish then, cried the genius, with a look of discontent. The contents of this viol will confer immortality on thee, and to-morrow's sun shall behold thee richer than all the kings of the East. Nourjahad stretched his hands out eagerly to receive a vessel of gold, enriched with precious stones, which the angel took from under his mantle. Stop, cried the aerial being, and hear the condition, with which thou must accept the wondrous gift I am now about to bestow. Know then, that your existence here shall equal the date of this sublunary globe; yet to enjoy life all that while, is not in my power to grant. Nourjahad was going to interrupt the celestial, to desire him to explain this, when he prevented him, by proceeding thus: Your life, said he, will be frequently interrupted by the temporary death of sleep. Doubtless, replied Nourjahad, nature would languish without that sovereign balm. Thou misunderstandest me, cried the genius; I do not mean that ordinary repose which nature requires: The sleep thou must be subject to, at certain periods, will last for months, years, nay, for a whole revolution of Saturn at a time, or perhaps for a century. Frightful! cried Nourjahad, with an emotion that made him forget the respect which was due to the presence of his guardian angel. He seemed suspended, while the radiant youth proceeded; It is worth considering, resolve not too hastily. If the frame of man, replied Nourjahad, in the usual course of things, requires for the support of that short span of life which is allotted to him, a constant and regular portion of sleep, which includes at least one third of his existence; my life, perhaps, stretched so much beyond its natural date, may require a still greater proportion of rest, to preserve my body in due health and vigour. If this be the case, I submit to the conditions; for what is thirty or fifty years out of eternity? Thou art mistaken, replied the genius; and though thy reasoning is not unphilosophical, yet is it far from reaching the true cause of these mysterious conditions which are offered thee; know that these are contingencies which depend entirely on thyself. Let me beseech you, said Nourjahad, to explain this. If thou walkest, said the genius, in the paths of virtue, thy days will be crowned with gladness, and the even tenor of thy life undisturbed by any evil; but if, on the contrary, thou pervertest the good which is in thy power, and settest thy heart on iniquity, thou wilt thus be occasionally punished by a total privation of thy faculties. If this be all, cried Nourjahad, then am I sure I shall never incur the penalty; for though I mean to enjoy all the pleasures that life can bestow, yet am I a stranger to my own heart, if it ever lead me to the wilful commission of a crime. The genius sighed. Vouchsafe then, proceeded Nourjahad, vouchsafe, I conjure you, most adorable and benign spirit, to fulfil your promise, and keep me not longer in suspense. Saying this, he again reached forth his hand for the golden vessel, which the genius no longer withheld from him. Hold thy nostrils over that viol, said he, and let the fumes of the liquor which it contains ascend to thy brain. Nourjahad opened the vessel, out of which a vapour issued of a most exquisite fragrance; it formed a thick atmosphere about his head; and sent out such volatile and sharp effluvia, as made his eyes smart exceedingly, and he was obliged to shut them whilst he snuffed up the essence. He remained not long in this situation, for the subtle spirit quickly evaporating, the effects instantly ceased, and he opened his eyes; but the apparition was vanished, and his apartment in total darkness. Had not he still found the viol in his hands, which contained the precious liquor, he would have looked on all this as a dream; but so substantial a proof of the reality of what had happened, leaving no room for doubts, he returned thanks to his guardian genius, whom he concluded, though invisible, to be still within hearing, and putting the golden vessel under his pillow, filled as he was with the most delightful ideas,

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composed himself to sleep.

The sun was at his meridian height when he awoke next day; and the vision of the preceding night immediately recurring to his memory, he sprung hastily from his bed; but how great was his surprize, how high his transports, at seeing the accomplishment of the genius's promise! His chamber was surrounded with several large urns of polished brass, some of which were filled with gold coin of different value and impressions; others with ingots of fine gold; and others with precious stones of prodigious size and lustre.

Amazed, enraptured at the sight, he greedily examined his treasures, and looking into each of the urns one after the other, in one of them he found a scroll of paper, with these words written on it.

'I have fulfilled my promise to thee, Oh Nourjahad. Thy days are without number, thy riches inexhaustible, yet cannot I exempt thee from the evils to which all the sons of Adam are subject. I cannot screen thee from the machinations of envy, nor the rapaciousness of power: thy own prudence must henceforth be thy guard. There is a subterraneous cave in thy garden where thou mayst conceal thy treasure: I have marked the place, and thou wilt easily find it. Farewel, my charge is at an end.'

And well hast thou acquitted thyself of this charge, most munificent and benevolent genius, cried Nourjahad; ten thousand thanks to thee for this last friendly warning; I should be a fool indeed if I had not sagacity enough to preserve myself against rapaciousness or envy; I will prevent the effects of the first, by concealing thee, my precious treasure, thou source of all felicity, where no mortal shall discover thee; and for the other, my bounty shall disarm it of its sting. Enjoy thyself, Nourjahad, riot in luxurious delights, and laugh at Schemzeddin's impotent resentment.

He hastened down into his garden, in order to find the cave, of which he was not long in search. In a remote corner, stood the ruins of a small temple, which in former days, before the true religion prevailed in Persia, had been dedicated to the worship of the Gentiles. The vestiges of this little building were so curious, that they were suffered to remain, as an ornament, where they stood. It was raised on a mount, and according to the custom of idolaters, surrounded with shady trees. On a branch of one of these, Nourjahad perceived hanging a scarf of fine white taffety, to which was suspended a large key of burnished steel.

Nourjahad's eager curiosity, soon rendered his diligence successful, in finding the door, to which this belonged; it was within-side the walls of the temple, and under what formerly seemed to have been the altar. He descended by a few steps into a pretty spacious cavern, and by groping about, for there was scarce any light, he judged it large enough to contain his treasures.

Whether his guardian genius had contrived it purely for his use, or whether it had been originally made for some other purpose, he did not trouble himself to enquire; but glad to have found so safe a place, in which to deposite his wealth, he returned to his house; and having given orders that no visitors should approach him, he shut himself up in his chamber for the rest of the day, in order to contemplate his own happiness, and without interruption, to lay down plans of various pleasures and delights for ages to come.

Whilst Nourjahad was rich only in speculation, he really thought that he should be able to keep his word with the genius. That the employing his wealth to noble and generous purposes, would have constituted great part of his happiness; and that without plunging into guilt, he could have gratified the utmost of his wishes. But he soon found that his heart had deceived him, and that there is a wide difference between the fancied and actual possession of wealth. He was immediately absorbed in selfishness, and thought of nothing but the indulgence of his own appetites. My temper, said he, as he lay stretched at length on a sofa, does not much incline me to take any trouble; I shall therefore never aspire at high employments, nor would I be the sultan of Persia, if I might; for what addition would that make to my happiness? None at all; it would only disturb my breast with cares, from which I am now exempt. And which of the real, substantial delights of life, could I then possess, that are not now within my power? I will have a magnificent house in town, and others in the country, with delicious parks and gardens. What does it signify whether or not they are dignified with the names of palaces? or whether I am attended by princes or slaves? The latter will do my business as well, and be more subservient to my will. There are three particulars indeed, in which I will exceed my master. In the beauties of my seraglio; the delicacies of my table; and the excellence of my musicians. In the former of these especially, King Solomon himself shall be outdone. All parts of the earth shall be explored for women of the most exquisite beauty; art and nature shall combine their utmost efforts, to furnish the boundless variety and elegance of my repasts; the sultan's frigid temperance shall not be a pattern to me. Then no fear of surfeits; I may riot to excess, and bid defiance to death.

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Here he started, on recollection that he had not requested the genius to secure him against the attacks of pain or sickness. I shall not however be impaired by age, said he, and this too perhaps is included in his gift. But no matter; since I cannot die, a little temporary pain will make me the more relish my returning health. Then, added he, I will enjoy the charms of music in its utmost perfection. I will have the universe searched for performers of both sexes, whose exquisite skill both in instrumental and vocal harmony, shall ravish all hearts. I shall see the line of my posterity past numeration, and all the while enjoy a constant succession of new delights. What more is there wanting to consummate happiness, and who would ever wish to change such an existence, for one of which we are entirely ignorant? Here he paused. But are there not, he proceeded, some things called intellectual pleasures? Such as Schemzeddin used to talk of to me, and for which, when I was poor, I fancied I had a sort of relish. They may have their charms, and we will not leave them quite out of our plan. I will certainly do abundance of good; besides, I will retain in my family half a score of wise and learned men, to entertain my leisure hours with their discourse. Then when I am weary of living in this country, I will set out with some chosen companions to make a tour through the whole earth. There shall not be a spot of the habitable world, which contains any thing worthy of my curiosity, that I will not visit; residing longest in those places which I like best: and by this means I may pass through two or three centuries, even before I have exhausted the variety of my prospects: after that I must content myself with such local enjoyments, as may fall in my way.

With such thoughts as these he entertained himself, waiting for the hour when his slaves should be retired to rest, as he had resolved to take that opportunity of burying his treasure.

He had tried the weight of the urns one by one; those which contained the gold he found so extremely heavy that it was impossible for him to lift them. Those which held the jewels, he could easily carry. Accordingly, when every one in his house was asleep, he loaded himself with his pleasing burdens; and having from each of the repositories which held the gold, filled several large purses for his immediate expences, he conveyed the rest by many journeys to and from the cave, all safe to his subterranean treasury; where having locked them up securely, he retired to his apartment, and went to bed.

For the three succeeding days his thoughts were so perplexed and divided, that he knew not which of his favourite schemes he should first enter upon. Satisfied with having the means in his power, he neglected those ends for which he was so desirous of them. Shall I, said he, purchase or set about building for myself a magnificent palace? Shall I dispatch emissaries in search of the most beautiful virgins that can be obtained? and others, at the same time, to procure for me the rarest musicians? My household, meanwhile, may be established, and put on a footing suitable to the grandeur in which I purpose to live. I will directly hire a number of domestics, amongst which shall be a dozen of the best cooks in Persia, that my table at least may be immediately better supplied than that of the sultan. I am bewildered with such a multiplicity of business, and must find out some person, who, without giving me any trouble, will undertake to regulate the oeconomy of all my domestic concerns.

In these thoughts he was so immersed, that he entirely forgot to pay his court to Schemzeddin; and without any other enjoyment of his riches, than the pleasure of thinking of them, he sat for whole days alone, alternately improving on, or rejecting, such systems of happiness as arose in his mind.

The sultan, mean time, offended at his absenting himself, without offering any excuse for it, especially as their last parting had been a cold one; was so disgusted at his behaviour, that he sent one of his officers to forbid him his presence, and charge him never more to appear at court. Tell him, however, said he, that I have not so far forgot my former friendship for him, as to see him want a decent support; that house, therefore, in which he now lives, I freely bestow on him; and shall moreover allow him a pension of a thousand crowns yearly. Bid him remember that this is sufficient to supply him with all the sober enjoyments of life. These being his favourite's own words, the sultan thought proper to remind him of them.

Nourjahad received this message with the utmost indifference; but without daring to shew any mark of disrespect. Tell my lord the sultan, said he, that I would not have been thus long without prostrating myself at his feet, but that I was hastily sent for to visit a kinsman, whose dwelling was some leagues from Ormuz; and who in his last hours was desirous of seeing me. He died very rich, and has made me his heir. The thousand crowns a year therefore, my royal master may please to bestow on some one who wants them more, and is more deserving of his bounty, than I; wretch that I am, to have forfeited my prince's favour! The house that his goodness bestows on me, with all gratitude I thankfully accept, as it will daily remind me that Schemzeddin does not utterly detest

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his slave. Saying this, he presented the officer with a handsome diamond, which he took from his finger, and begged him to accept of it as a token of his respect for him, and submission to the sultan's pleasure.

Though Nourjahad had given such a turn to his acceptance of the house, his true reason was, that having his treasure buried in the garden, he thought he could not without great difficulty, and the hazard of a discovery, remove it. Thus had he already, in two instances, been obliged to depart from truth, in consequence of his ill judged and pernicious choice.

The house which the sultan had given him, was handsome and commodious; and he thought by enlarging and furnishing it magnificently, it would sufficiently answer the purpose of his town residence; besides, as it was a royal grant, he was sure of remaining unmolested in the possession of it.

He now bent his thoughts on nothing but in giving a loose to his appetites, and indulging without controul in every delight which his passions or imagination could suggest to him. As he was not of an active temper, he put the conduct of his pleasures into the hands of one, whom he had lately received into his service. This man, whose name was Hasem, he found had good sense, and a quickness of parts, which he thought qualified him for the trust he reposed in him. To him he committed the care of regulating his family, and appointed him the director of his household. In short, under Hasem's inspection, who on this occasion displayed an admirable taste, his house was soon furnished with every thing that could charm the senses, or captivate the fancy. Costly furniture, magnificent habits, sumptuous equipages, and a grand retinue, fully gratified his vanity. By Hasem's diligence his seraglio was soon adorned with a number of the most beautiful female slaves, of almost every nation, whom he purchased at a vast expence. By Hasem's care, his board was replenished with the most delicious products of every climate; and by Hasem's management he had a chosen band of the most skilful musicians of the age; and by Hasem's judgement and address, he had retained in his house some of the most learned and ingenious men of all Persia, skilled in every art and science. These were received into his family for the instruction and entertainment of his hours of reflection, if he should chance to be visited with any such.

Behold him now arrived at the height of human felicity; for, to render his happiness incapable of addition, he had distinguished amongst the beauties of his seraglio, a young maid, so exquisitely charming and accomplished, that he gave her the intire possession of his heart; and preferring her to the rest of his women, past whole days in her apartment. By Mandana he found himself equally beloved; a felicity very rare amongst Eastern husbands; and longing to unbosom himself to one, on whose tenderness and fidelity he could rely, to her he disclosed the marvellous story of his destiny. His mind thus disburthened of this important secret, which he had often longed to divulge, but could find none whom he dared to trust with the discovery, he had not one anxious thought remaining. He gave himself up to pleasures, he threw off all restraint, he plunged at once into a tide of luxurious enjoyments; he forgot his duty towards God, and neglected all the laws of his prophet. He grew lazy and effeminate; and had not his pride now and then urged him to display to the wondering eyes of the public, the magnificence of his state, he would seldom have been inclined to go out of his house.

Thus possessed of every thing that his soul could wish, he continued for the space of three moons, without any interruption, to wallow in voluptuousness: When one morning just as he was preparing to set out for a beautiful villa, which Hasem had recommended to him for his rural retirement, and which he purposed to buy if it answered his description, he was prevented by a messenger from the sultan. It was the same person who once before had been sent to him, to forbid him the court. I am sorry, my lord, said he, on entering Nourjahad's apartment, to be a second time the bearer of unwelcome tidings; but Schemzeddin, hearing of the extraordinary grandeur and magnificence in which you live, a magnificence indeed equal to that of the sultan himself, would needs know whence you derive your wealth, which seems so much to surpass that of any of his subjects; and has commanded me to conduct you to his presence, in order to give an account of it.

Nourjahad was exceedingly startled at this unexpected summons; but it was in vain to dispute the sultan's orders, and he was forced, though with great reluctance, to accompany the officer to the palace of Schemzeddin.

He entered it trembling, fearful to declare a falsehood to his sovereign, yet still more unwilling to confess the truth.

In this suspense the officer left him, to acquaint the sultan of his arrival. He waited not long before he was admitted to the royal presence.

Whence is it, Nourjahad, said the sultan, that thy imprudence hath drawn on thee the attention of my whole empire, insomuch that the representations made to me of thy pomp and luxury, now renders it necessary to

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enquire into thy riches. They seem indeed to be immense. Who was that relation that bequeathed them to thee, and wherein do they consist?

Though Nourjahad had endeavoured to prepare himself with proper answers to all those questions, which he naturally expected would be asked on the occasion, he was nevertheless confounded; he could not utter the lies he had framed with the unabashed look of sincerity; his speech faltered, and his colour changed. Schemzeddin saw his confusion. I perceive, said he, there is some mystery in this affair which thou hast no mind to discover; I pray heaven that thou hast used no sinister means to come at the great wealth which I am told thou possessest! Confess the truth, and beware of prevaricating with thy prince.

Nourjahad, frightened at the difficulties he found himself involved in, fell at the sultan's feet. If my lord, said he, will give me a patient hearing, and forgive the presumption of his servant, I will unfold such wonders as will amaze him, and at the same time utter nothing but the strictest truth. The sultan turned coldly towards him; but by seeming to attend to his explanation, encouraged him to proceed.

He then gave a faithful relation of the vision he had seen, with all the consequences of that miraculous event. Schemzeddin suffered him to conclude his narration without interruption; but instead of shewing any marks of surprize, or appearing to credit what he said, looking at him with the utmost indignation, Audacious wretch, cried he, how darest thou presume thus to abuse my patience, and affront my understanding with the relation of so ridiculous a forgery? Go tell thy incredible tales to fools and children, but dare not to insult thy sovereign with such outrageous falsehoods.

Though Nourjahad was terrified at the sultan's anger, he nevertheless persisted in his declaration, confirming all he had said by the most solemn oaths. The sultan commanded him to be silent. Thou art mad, said he; I perceive now that the riches thou hast acquired, let the means be what they may, have turned thy brain; and I am now more than ever convinced of the sordidness of thy mind, when the unexpected acquisition of a little wealth could thus pervert thy judgment, and teach thee to impose on thy master for truth, the monstrous chimeras of thy wild fancy. Thy folly be on thy head; for a little, a very little time must, with the unbounded extravagance of which thou art guilty, dissipate what thy friend hath left thee; and when thou art again reduced to thy former state, thou wilt be glad to sue to my bounty for that which thou didst lately with so much arrogance reject. Go, unhappy Nourjahad, continued he, (his voice a little softened) the remembrance of what thou once wert to me, will not permit me to see thee fall a victim to thy own desperate folly. Should it be publicly known that thou hast thus endeavoured by lies and profanation to abuse the credulity of thy prince, thou wouldst find that thy boasted immortality would not be proof against that death, which he should think himself obliged, in justice to his own honour and dignity, to inflict on so bold an impostor. Hence, miserable man, pursued he, retire to thy house; and if thou art not quite abandoned, endeavour by a sober and regular conduct to expiate thy offences against heaven and thy sovereign; but as a punishment for thy crime, presume not, without my leave, to stir beyond the limits of thy own habitation, on pain of a more rigorous and lasting confinement.

Nourjahad, thunder-struck at this unexpected sentence, was unable to reply; and the sultan having ordered the captain of his guards to be called, committed his prisoner to his hands; telling him if he suffered Nourjahad to escape, his head should answer it.

Filled with resentment and discontent, Nourjahad was conducted back to his own house; at all the avenues of which he had the mortification to see guards posted, agreeably to the charge given by the sultan.

He retired pensively to his closet, where, shutting himself up, he now for the first time repented of his indiscretion in the choice he had made.

Unfortunate that I am, cried he, what will riches or length of days avail me, if I am thus to be miserably immured within the walls of my own dwelling? Would it not have been better for me to have requested the genius to restore me to the favour of my prince? Schemzeddin always loved me, and would not fail to have promoted me to wealth and honours; mean while I should have enjoyed my liberty, which now methinks, as I am debarred of it, appears to me a greater blessing than any I possess. Unhappy Nourjahad, what is become of all thy schemes of felicity! He was even weak enough to shed tears, and gave himself up to vexation for the remainder of the day.

His mind, however, was by pleasure rendered too volatile to suffer any thing to make a lasting impression on him; and he had still too many resources of happiness in his power, to give himself up to despair. It is true, said he, I am debarred of my liberty, but have I not still a thousand delights in my possession? The incredulous sultan, satisfied with punishing me, will give himself no farther concern about me, provided I do not attempt to escape;

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and thus withdrawn from the public eye, envy will not endeavour to penetrate into the recesses of a private dwelling. I will secure the fidelity of my servants, by my liberality towards them. Schemzeddin's resentment will not last; or if it should, even as long as he lives, what is his life, the scanty portion of years allotted to common men, to my promised immortality?

Having thus reconciled his thoughts to his present situation, he resolved, in order to make himself amends for the restraint on his person, to indulge himself with an unbounded freedom in his most voluptuous wishes. He commanded a banquet to be prepared for him that night, which exceeded in luxury and profusion any of the preceding. He ordered all his women, of which he had a great number, adorned with jewels and dressed in their richest habits, to attend on him whilst he was at supper, permitting none but Mandana the favour to sit down with him. The magnificence of his apartments were heightened by a splendid illumination of a thousand torches, composed of odoriferous gums, which cast a blaze of light that vied with the glories of the sun. His musicians, both vocal and instrumental, were ordered to exert the utmost stretch of their art, and to sooth his mind with all the enchanting powers of harmony. Himself attired in robes, such as the kings of Persia were used to wear, was seated under a canopy of silver tissue, which he had put up for the purpose; and assuming the pomp of an Eastern monarch, suffered the illusion to take such possession of his mind, that if he were not before mad, he now seemed to be very near distraction.

Intoxicated with pleasure, the historian who writes his life, affirms that this night Nourjahad for the first time got drunk.

Be that as it may, it is certain that having retired to rest, he slept sounder and longer than usual; for on his awaking, and missing Mandana from his side, whom he had made the partner of his bed, he called out to the slave who always attended in his antichamber, in order to enquire for her, resolving to chide her tenderly for leaving him.

He called loud and often, but nobody answering him, as he was naturally choleric, he jumped out of bed, and stepping hastily into the outer chamber, he found that none of the slaves were in waiting. Enraged at this neglect, he called several of his domestics by their names, one after another; when at length, after he was almost out of breath with passion, a female slave appeared, who was one of those appointed to wait on Mandana.

The damsel no sooner perceived him, than giving a loud shriek, she was about to run away; when Nourjahad, provoked at her behaviour, catching her roughly by the arm, Where is thy mistress, said he, and whence arises that terror and amazement in thy countenance? Alas! my lord, answered the slave, pardon my surprize, which is occasioned by my seeing you so unexpectedly. Nourjahad now perceiving that in his hurry he had forgot to put on his cloaths, concluded that it was that circumstance which had alarmed the damsel, and turning from her, Foolish woman, said he, go tell Mandana that I desire to see her. Ah, my lord, replied the maid, I would she were in a condition to come to you. Why, what is the matter, said Nourjahad, no ill I hope has befallen the dear light of my life? Is she sick? Methinks she went to bed last night in perfect health. Last night! my lord, replied the slave, and shook her head. Trifler, cried Nourjahad, what means that motion? Where is thy mistress? Speak! She is, I hope, said the slave, gone to receive the reward of her goodness! Here she began to weep. Oh Heaven, cried Nourjahad, is my dear Mandana dead? She is, answered the damsel, redoubling her tears, and I shall never have so kind a mistress.

Alas! replied Nourjahad, by what fatal accident am I thus suddenly deprived of the adorable creature?

It was not suddenly, my lord, replied the slave, Mandana died in childbed. Ah traitress, cried Nourjahad, how darest thou thus mock the sorrow of thy master, and traduce the chastity of my beloved. Thou knowest it is not more than three moons since I received her a virgin to my arms, and doest thou presume to impose so ridiculous a story on me as that of her having died in childbed? My lord, answered the slave, it is more than three years since Mandana died. Audacious wretch, cried Nourjahad, wouldst thou persuade me out of my senses? With this he pinched the slave so hard by the arm, that she screamed out.

The noise she made brought several of the servants into the room, who, on seeing Nourjahad, all shewed manifest tokens of fear and surprize. What is the reason of all this, cried he out in a rage, are ye all leagued in combination against me? Be quick and explain to me the cause of this distraction which appears amongst you.

Hasem, who had run in amongst the other domestics, took upon him to answer for the rest. It is not to be wondered at, my lord, said he, that your slaves seem surprized at seeing you thus as it were raised from the dead; but if they are amazed, their joy doubtless is equal to their wonder; mine I am sure is unutterable, to behold my

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lord once more restored to his faithful servants, after we had almost despaired of your ever more unclosing your eyes.

You talk strangely, said Nourjahad, a little staggered at what he saw and heard. He just then recollected the terms on which he had received the important gift from the genius; and began to suspect that he had endured one of those preternatural slumbers, to which he had subjected himself. How long may I have slept, said he? Four years and twenty days exactly, answered Hasem; I have reason to know, for I counted the melancholy hours as they passed, and seldom quitted your bed-side. It may be so, said Nourjahad, I have been subject to these trances from a boy, but this has lasted rather longer than usual. He then commanded all his slaves to withdraw, retaining only Hasem, with whom he wanted to have some discourse.

Tell me now, said he, (when they were alone) and tell me truly, is all I have heard real, and is Mandana actually dead? Too true, my lord, replied Hasem, Mandana died in childbed, and dying left her infant son to my care. Is my child alive, said Nourjahad eagerly? He is, my lord, answered Hasem, and you shall see him presently: Mandana called me to her, continued he, when she found herself dying.

Hasem, said she, be careful of your lord; Heaven will one day restore him to you again. See that you manage his household with the same prudence and regularity that you would if he himself were to inspect into your conduct; for be assured he will sooner or later exact a just account of your proceedings. Here are the keys of his coffers. I ventured to take them from under his pillow, where I knew he kept them. I have husbanded his fortune with oeconomy, and have hitherto kept order and harmony in his family: On you it rests to preserve it in the same condition. Nourjahad will not fail to reward your diligence and fidelity. It is not expedient that any one should know the condition to which he is reduced. His life is governed by a strange fatality. You have nothing to do therefore, but to give out that he is seized with a lingering distemper, which confines him to his bed. Let no impertinent enquirers see him, and all curiosity about him will soon cease. These, proceeded Hasem, were almost the last words that my beloved mistress spoke. I have punctually complied with her orders. Your condition has been kept a profound secret from every one but your own family, and they all love you too well to betray their trust. Your women are all immured within the sacred walls of your seraglio, and though they murmur at their situation, they fail not to offer up their daily prayers that Heaven would restore you to them. I will now, continued he, present your son to you; it will be some consolation to you to see that charming pledge of Mandana's love. Saying this, he withdrew, but soon returned leading in the child, who was as beautiful as a little cherub.

Nourjahad melted into tears at the sight of him, and renewed his complaints for the loss of his adored Mandana. He saw that the child's age seemed to agree exactly with the account he had received; and now fully convinced of the truth of his misfortune, Oh Heaven, cried he, clasping the young boy to his bosom, what would I give that my dear Mandana were now here to partake of the pleasure I feel in this infant's caresses; gladly would I consent to have three ages cut off from the number of my years, to have her more precious life restored. But my felicity would then be too great, and I must submit to the destiny which I myself have chosen. Prudent Hasem, said he, observing he looked surprised, thou dost wonder at the words which thou hast heard me speak, but I will not conceal from thee the marvellous story of my life. Thy fidelity and zeal deserve this confidence; besides, it is requisite that I should trust some discreet person with my important secret, since Mandana, on whose tenderness and loyalty I could depend, is no more.

Nourjahad then acquainted Hasem with the wonderful mystery of his life. He did not, however, divulge the circumstance of his concealed treasure; he judged from his own heart, that it would not be altogether advisable to lay such a tempting bait in the way even of the most virtuous and steady mind; but contented himself with telling him that his genius constantly supplied him with riches, as his occasions required. Hasem listened to him with astonishment; but assured him, after what had already past, he doubted not a tittle of the truth of what he had been told, amazing and almost incredible as it appeared.

My lord, said he, you may securely rely on my zeal and diligence, so long as you are pleased to entertain me in your service. That I shall do during your life, interrupted Nourjahad: But, replied Hasem, what if one of those unmerciful long trances should continue for a length of time much beyond that from which you are but now awakened, and that I should happen to die before you recover your senses, who knows in that case what might be the consequences? It is an accident exceedingly to be dreaded, replied Nourjahad; Heaven knows to what indignities I might be exposed, perhaps to be buried alive, and condemned to pass a century or two in a dismal sepulchre. The thought makes me shudder, and I almost repent of having accepted life on such conditions. As I

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have no warning, continued he, when those fatal slumbers will overpower me, (for who can always be guarded against the starts of passion, or what man is so attentive to that impertinent monitor within, as to hear his whispers amidst the hurry of tumultuous pleasures?) As I know not, I say, when I am to be condemned to that state of insensibility, or how long I shall continue in it, I can only conjure thee if I should happen to be seized with another trance during thy life, (which, considering my disposition, is not impossible) that thou wilt observe the same conduct which thou hast lately done; and if the angel of death should summon thee away before my senses are loosed from their mysterious bands, that thou wilt with thy dying breath, commit the secret to some one faithful person of my family, whom thou thinkest most fit to be relied on, for a punctual discharge of their duty. As I shall never part with any of my servants, till the inevitable stroke of death separates them from me, and shall constantly supply their places with the worthiest persons that can be found, I think I cannot fail of a succession of people, from amongst whom, one at least may always be found, in whose secrecy and truth I may safely confide.

Without doubt, my lord, answered Hasem, you may by such wise measures as these, be always guarded against the worst that may befall you.

Though Nourjahad had, by thus providing against evil events, exceedingly relieved his mind from the fears by which it was agitated, lest any ill should happen to him during his slumbers; yet was his heart far from being at ease. The loss of Mandana preyed upon his spirits. He had no relish for the charms of his other women. Mandana's superior loveliness was always present to his eyes: The delicacies of his table grew tasteless; Mandana's sprightly wit was wanting to give a relish to the feast. The melodious concerts of music with which he was wont to be so delighted, now only served to overwhelm him with melancholy: Mandana's enchanting voice was not heard, which used to swell his heart to rapture.

In short, for a time he took pleasure in nothing but the caresses and innocent prattle of his little son, whom by his tenderness and endearments he had taught to love him.

I am unhappy, my dear Hasem, would he often say; the loss of Mandana imbitters all my joys, and methinks I begin to look forward with disgust.

My lord, said Hasem, there is nothing which has befallen you but what is common to all. Every one may naturally expect to see the death of some person or other whom they love; but you who are endowed with so miraculous a life must needs look to drop a tear over a thousand graves.

Melancholy reflection, said Nourjahad! it occurred not to me in this light when I made my choice. I knew indeed I must of necessity bury hundreds of succeeding generations; but said I to myself, I shall insensibly contract new amities, as I perceive the old ones are likely to be dissolved by the hand of time. My heart, said I, shall never feel a vacuity, for want of fit objects of desire. A new beauty will naturally take place of her whose charms begin to decline; thus the ardors of love will be supplied with perpetual fuel; and upon the same principle will the social joys of friendship be unremitting. I considered the world as a flower garden, the product of which was to delight my senses for a certain season. The bloom is not made to last, thought I, but it will be succeeded by a fresh blow, whose sweetness and variety will equal the former, and intirely obliterate them from my memory. I thought not, alas, that before the spring ended, a cruel blast might suddenly destroy my fairest flower.

Would you, my lord, said Hasem, if it were in your power, absolve your genius from his promise, seeing your life must be perpetually subject to such misfortunes?

Not so neither, answered Nourjahad; time is a never-failing remedy for grief; I shall get over this, and be better prepared against the next assault of evil.

In effect, Nourjahad kept his word, and soon returned to his former way of living.

He had the mortification, however, to find himself still a prisoner. Hasem told him that the sultan had not yet taken off the restraint, under which he had formerly laid him; and whether it was through forgetfulness or design, the guards still maintained their posts about his house. This Nourjahad was himself convinced of, by seeing them from his windows.

It is strange, said he, that Schemzeddin should retain his resentment against me for so long a time; especially as he might have been convinced of the truth of what I asserted, by the extraordinary state in which I have lain all this while. You forget, my lord, said Hasem, that this was an absolute secret, no one from under your own roof knowing a word of the matter. Such was Mandana's last injunctions, and your faithful servants never divulged a tittle of it.

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Did not my friends come to visit me, said Nourjahad, during that interval in which I slept? Those whom you called your friends, answered Hasem, came as usual, during the first month of your dormant state; but being refused admittance, under pretence that your health was so much declined, that you were not in a condition to receive them, they soon desisted from their visits; and finding they could no more be entertained with feasting and jollity, they have never since inquired after you.

Ungrateful wretches, said Nourjahad! I cast them off for ever. Yet it is an irksome thing to live without friends. You Hasem are a prudent and honest man, but still you are my servant; I cannot therefore consider you on that footing of equality which friendship requires. There is one man, said Hasem, who has shewn himself grateful and compassionate; and those two virtues never come alone, but are ever found attended with many others. Oh name him, said Nourjahad. It is Zamgrad, replied Hasem, that officer of the sultan's whom you once obliged by a trifling present of a ring; he never fails sending every day to enquire after your welfare. Nay, he has often called himself, and expressed an honest sorrow for the ill state of health to which I told him you were reduced; tenderly blaming the sultan for his rigorous confinement of you.

Worthy Zamgrad, said Nourjahad, thou, thou alone shalt be the chosen friend of my heart; the rest of my worthless acquaintance I from this minute discard.

I will write to Schemzeddin, pursued he; perhaps he may now relent and restore me to my liberty. I long to shift the scene, and remove to some place where Mandana's image may not be so often revived in my memory. Wert thou not, Hasem, about to procure for me a noble seat in the country, which I was going to take a view of that day on which the good Zamgrad came to carry me before the sultan? If I might but retire thither, I should think myself happy.

Alas, my lord, replied Hasem, that fine seat cannot now be your's. You may remember I made only a conditional agreement with the owner of it, depending on your approbation of the place after your having seen it. I recollect it, said Nourjahad, but may it not still be mine? By no means, answered Hasem; the owner has long since disposed of it to another.

That is unlucky, said Nourjahad; but we can easily find another. Be it your care to look out for one, whilst I endeavour to move the sultan in my favour.

Hasem was not slow in executing his master's orders. In three days he told him he had seen a villa, which seemed to him to surpass all the descriptions of Eden in its primary state of beauty. It is but at the distance of ten leagues from Ormuz, said he. The house and gardens are in compleat order, and your may purchase the whole for fifty thousand pieces of gold. The sultan himself hath not in his possession any thing more delightful. I will have it, said Nourjahad: Get the money ready, you have the keys of my coffers, and they contain more than that sum.

My lord, answered Hasem, when you last saw them they did contain much more; but you will be pleased to recollect that it is above four years since, and that your household has been maintained during that time; which, notwithstanding I have used the utmost oeconomy, must needs have somewhat diminished your treasury. I had forgot, replied Nourjahad, but I will soon supply you with the gold you want.

Accordingly he paid a visit to the subterraneous cave that very night; where finding every thing as he had left it, he loaded himself with a quantity of gold, sufficient to prevent the necessity of drawing from his hidden store of wealth for a considerable time.

Intent now on the pursuit of his pleasures, he neglected not applying to the sultan for a repeal, or at least a mitigation of his sentence. He writ to Schemzeddin a letter in terms full of humility; thinking if he could remove his incredulity by convincing him that the extraordinary fact he had related, was nothing more than the truth, that the sultan would no longer deny him his liberty. He scrupled not to acquaint him, that he had been for more than four years in a profound sleep, for the confirmation of which fact, strange as it might seem to his majesty, he desired leave to appeal to every one of his own household, and conjured the sultan to take the trouble of informing himself more fully from some of his people, whom he might cause to be brought into his presence and privately examined, as he confessed he did not wish to have so uncommon an event divulged.

Nourjahad from this expedient had great hopes of obtaining his desire; but the event turned out contrary to his expectations.

Zamgrad two days after brought him an answer from the sultan in writing: Nourjahad laid the paper on his head, then kissing the seals, he broke them open, and read as follows.

"I have not been unmindful of thy motions, and I was pleased to hear from time to time, that for these four

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years past, order and decency have been preserved in thy dwelling. I flattered myself that this was owing to thy having returned to a sense of thy duty. But my hope deceived me, when I found that Nourjahad was by a violent malady which seized him (doubtless the effects of his intemperance) disqualified from indulging in those excesses in which he was wont to riot."

"This visitation from heaven, I thought would have produced salutary effects on thy mind, and hoped if the angel of health were again to revisit thy pillow, that thou wouldst make a different use of thy recovered strength. How must my indignation then be roused against thee, abandoned as thou art to perdition, to find thou persistest in thy enormous folly and wickedness; and continuest to abuse the patience of thy benefactor and sovereign master, with such unparalleled falsehoods. A prince less merciful than myself, would no longer delay to punish thee with death: But I give thee thy wretched life. Spend it if thou canst in penitence. Nay, I will so far indulge thee, as to permit thee, for the more perfect recovery of thy health, to retire to thy house in the country; but at the peril of thy head presume not to stir beyond the bounds of thy own habitation."

Nourjahad now too late found his error in endeavouring to force belief of a thing which appeared so incredible; and wished he had rather availed himself of the sultan's prepossessions in favour of the story propagated by his servants, as he found that would have been the wiser course.

What a world is this, said he to Zamgrad, (after having read the letter) where he who ought to be the rewarder of truth, and the dispenser of justice, shuts his ears against conviction, and condemns an innocent man for endeavouring to set him right? But I will not involve you in the punishment imposed on my imaginary guilt, by requiring your belief of what I have in vain endeavoured to convince the incredulous Schemzeddin.

I know not, my lord, replied Zamgrad, what has passed between the sultan and you; of this only I am certain, that he seems exceedingly enraged against you. I would it were in my power, from the respect I bear you, to mitigate his resentment.

I thank thee, gentle Zamgrad, said Nourjahad; I find thou, of all my numerous acquaintance, art the only man who has shewn any attachment to me. If the friendship of one labouring under the displeasure of his prince, be worth thy accepting, I offer thee mine, and conjure thee to grant me yours in return. The base ingratitude I have already experienced from the rest of my pretended friends, has determined me to disclaim all society with them: if thou wilt sometimes visit me in my retirement, thou wilt find Nourjahad not undeserving of thy kindness.

Zamgrad promised to see him as often as he could, and took his leave.

However vexed Nourjahad was at his disappointment, in finding himself, by being still debarred of his liberty, deprived for a time at least from executing one of his favourite purposes, that of travelling all over the world, he yet contented himself with the reflection, that this project was only postponed to another opportunity; and that he should have time enough for executing his design, after Schemzeddin, and many of his posterity were in their graves. I will not waste my hours, said he, in fruitless languishment for what I cannot at present attain, but make the most of the good which now offers itself to my acceptance.

He ordered Hasem to pay down the money forthwith, for that fine seat: I will remove thither, said he, immediately; and make myself some recompence by all the means that art can devise, for that cruel long trance, which overpowered me so unseasonably: I hope I shall not be visited by another for these fifty or sixty years at least.

Hasem's diligence kept pace with his lord's impatience: He got every thing in readiness for his reception at his rural mansion: and to avoid the notice which might be taken of so numerous a seraglio, and such a train of domestics, the prudent Hasem advised that they should set out and travel by night. This precaution, said he, will prevent the malice of your enemies from making ill-natured representations of your conduct to the sultan; and as you yourself are supposed by every body in Ormuz to have laboured under a long and painful illness, I think, to give colour to this report, it would be most advisable for you to be carried in a litter. As Nourjahad loved his ease, he readily enough consented to this proposal, and in this manner suffered himself to be conveyed to his new habitation.

On his arrival he found Hasem had not exaggerated in his description of this place. The house, or rather palace, for such it might be called, infinitely exceeded his expectations; but above all, the gardens were so delicious, that his senses were ravished with delight. He declared that those mansions of joy prepared for the reception of the faithful, could not exceed them; and forgetting that this paradise was to be his prison, he ordered that a pavilion of light brocade should be reared for him in the midst of his garden, where he purposed to enjoy the cool hours of the

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evening, amidst the noise of falling waters, and the wild notes of innumerable birds, who had taken up their residence in this terrestrial paradise.

Behold him now once more, in the possession of every thing, for which the heart of man in the wildest wishes of Epicurean phrenzy, could pant. He gave the reins to his passions; he again became the slave of voluptuous appetites: He submitted a second time to the power of beauty; he invented new modes of luxury; and his delightful abode became the scene of every licentious pleasure.

The delicacies and profusion in which he himself wallowed, made him forget that there were wants or miseries amongst his fellow-creatures; and as he had but little intercourse with mankind, except with those who flattered his follies, or administered to his loose pleasures, he became hardened to all the social affections. He ceased to relieve the poor, because they never came in his way; and with a heart naturally generous and benevolent, he lived only for himself.

Immersed in sensual gratifications, he lost all relish for any others. The poets and sages whom he entertained in his house, began to grow irksome to him. He derided the wisdom and philosophy of the latter; and if they attempted to entertain him with learned or grave discourses, he laughed at them; and at length thinking their company tedious, he turned them out of his house.

His bards would have shared the same fate, if they had not by a timely address rendered their art subservient to his depraved inclinations. They composed nothing but pieces filled with adulation on himself, or light verses in praise of one or other of his mistresses; these were set to melting airs, and sung accompanied by the lute.

Thus did Nourjahad pass his days. Every rising sun beheld some fresh outrage on the laws of temperance and decency; and the shades of every night descended on his unatoned offences.

The delightful season of the year, winged with pleasures, was now almost fled, when one of the most extravagant projects came into the head of Nourjahad, that ever entered the imagination of man.

As the gardens of his palace were exceedingly delicious, he vainly fancied that they must be very like the regions of paradise (where all good Mussulmen are received after death) and that in order to make the resemblance perfectly complete, he would cause the women of his seraglio to personate the Houris; those beautiful virgins who are given as a reward to all true believers. He himself would needs represent Mahomet; and one of his mistresses whom he loved best, and who was indeed the handsomest of them, he would have to appear under the name and character of Cadiga, the favourite wife of the great Prophet.

The idea, wild and profane as it was, was notwithstanding readily adopted by all the people about him, no one presuming to dispute his will. Nor were the women on this occasion much inclined to do so, as it served them for a very agreeable amusement.

Some debates however arose amongst them on account of the dresses proper to be worn on this occasion; as none of them remembered to have read in the Koran what sort of habits the Houris wore; and some of the ladies gave it as their opinion that those beauties went naked.

After many disputes on the subject, however, they struck a sort of medium, and agreed to be attired in loose robes of the thinnest Persian gauze, with chaplets of flowers on their heads.

Nourjahad approved of the invention, and gave orders to Hasem to prepare for this celestial masquerade, with all possible diligence; charging him to leave nothing out, that could render the entertainment worthy of Mahomet himself.

Neither art nor expence were spared on this extraordinary occasion. He gave commandment that the fountains which adorned his garden should be so contrived, that instead of water, they should pour forth milk and wine; that the seasons should be anticipated, and the early fragrance of the spring should be united with the more vivid colours of the glowing summer. In short, that fruits, blossoms, and flowers, should at once unite their various beauties, to embellish this terrestrial paradise.

The diligence of Hasem was so active, that every thing was got in readiness, even sooner than Nourjahad expected. He descended into his garden to take a survey of these wondrous preparations; and finding all exactly to his mind, he gave orders to his women to hold themselves prepared to act their parts; telling them that on that very evening he would give them a foretaste of the ravishing pleasures they were to enjoy, in the happy regions of light.

The weather was extremely hot, and Nourjahad, in order to take a view of the magnificent decorations, having fatigued himself with wandering through his elysium, retired to his apartment, and threw himself down on a

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sopha, with intent to take a short repose, the better to prepare himself for the excesses of the night: leaving orders with Hasem and Cadiga to awake him from sleep before sunset.

Nourjahad, however, opened his eyes without any one's having roused him from his slumbers; when perceiving that the day was almost closed, and finding that his commands had been neglected, he flew into a violent passion, suspecting that his women had prevailed on Hasem, to grant them this opportunity whilst he he slept, of indulging themselves in liberties without that restraint to which they were accustomed in his presence.

Enraged at the thought, he resolved to have them called before him, and after severely reprimanding them, and punishing Hasem proportionally to his fault, to have his women all locked up, and postpone his festivity till he was in a better humour to relish it.

Impatient, and even furious at his disappointment, he stamped on the floor with his foot; when immediately a black eunuch presented himself at the door. Go, said he, his words almost choaked with indignation, go and bid my women one and all hasten directly into my presence.

The slave retired in respectful silence; and presently after all the ladies of his seraglio entered his apartment. They were, according to the custom, covered with veils, but on appearing in their lord's presence, they threw them off. But, Oh Heaven! what was Nourjahad's anger and astonishment, when instead of the beautiful Houris whom he expected to see, to behold a train of wrinkled and deformed old hags.

Amazement and rage for a while suspended the power of speech: When the foremost of the old women approaching, and offering to embrace him, he thrust her rudely from him: Detestable fiend, said he, whence this presumption? where are my slaves? Where is Hasem? and the women of my seraglio? The traitresses! they shall pay dearly for thus abusing my indulgence.

The old women at this all fell upon their faces to the ground; but the first who had advanced addressing herself to speak, Avaunt! cried Nourjahad, begone wretches, and rid my sight of such hideous aspects.

Alas, my lord, replied the old woman, have you intirely forgot me? has time left no traces to remind you of your once beloved Cadiga? Cadiga! thou Cadiga? do not provoke me, said Nourjahad, or by Allah I'll spurn thee with my foot.

The old women now all set up a lamentable cry, Miserable wretches that we are, said they, beating their withered breasts, it had been happy for us if we had all died in our youth, rather than have thus out-lived our lord's affections!

Evil betide ye, said Nourjahad, who in the name of deformity are ye all? Hereupon the beldames cried out with one voice, Your mistresses! the once admired and loved partners of your bed, but the relentless hand of time has made such cruel ravage on our charms, that we do not wonder thou shouldst find it impossible to recollect us.

Nourjahad now began to suspect that he had been over-powered by a second trance. Why, how long, in the devil's name, have I then slept, said he?

Forty years and eleven moons, answered the lady who called herself Cadiga. Thou liest, I am sure, said Nourjahad, for it appears to me but as yesterday since I ordered thee (if thou really art Cadiga) to awake me at a certain hour, that I might enjoy the glorious entertainment prepared for me in the gardens of the Houris.

I do remember it, said Cadiga, and we your faithful slaves were to personate those beautiful virgins. Alas, alas, we are not now fit to represent those daughters of paradise! Thou art fitter, said Nourjahad, to represent the furies. I tell thee again, it cannot be many hours since I first fell into a slumber.

It may well seem so, answered Cadiga, buried as your senses have been in forgetfulness, and every faculty consigned to oblivion, that the interval of time so past must be quite annihilated; yet it is most certain that you have slept as long as I tell you.

Nourjahad upon this examined the faces of the old women one after the other, but finding them so totally different from what they once were, he swore that he did not believe a word they said. Thou Cadiga! said he, the black-browed Cadiga, whose enchanting smiles beguiled all hearts; thou art wonderously like her I confess!

Yet that I am that identical fair one, answered she, I shall be able to convince you, from a remarkable signature which I bear on my bosom, and which still remains, though the rest of my person is so entirely changed.

Saying this, she uncovered her breast, on which the figure of a rose-bud was delineated by the hand of nature. Nourjahad well remembered the mark; he had once thought it a beauty, and made it the subject of an amorous sonnet, when the bosom of the fair Cadiga was as white and as smooth as alabaster.

Convinced by this proof, that these women were really what they pretended to be, Nourjahad could not conceal

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his vexation. By the Temple of Mecca, said he, this genius of mine is no better than he should be, and I begin to suspect he is little less than an evil spirit, or he could not thus take delight in persecuting me for nothing.

Ah, my lord, said Cadiga, I am not ignorant of the strange fate by which your life is governed. Hasem, your faithful Hasem, communicated the secret to me with his dying breath. Is Hasem dead, cried Nourjahad? He is, my lord, answered Cadiga, and so is the worthy Zamgrad. What is become of my son, said Nourjahad? I hope he has not shared the same fate. It were better that he had, replied Cadiga, for it is now some five and twenty years since he ran away from the governor in whose hands the wise Hasem had placed him for his education; and having in vain endeavoured to prevail on that honest man to bury you, that giving out you were deceased, he might take possession of all your wealth, finding he could not succeed in his unnatural design, he took an opportunity of breaking open your cabinet, and securing all the treasure he could find, stole secretly away, and has never been heard of since.

Ungrateful viper! exclaimed Nourjahad; and thou cruel genius, thus to imbitter a life, which was thy own voluntary gift; for thou camest to me unasked.

Had not, proceeded Cadiga, myself and the rest of your women consented to give up all our jewels to Hasem, who turned them into money, we must long ere this have been reduced to want; for your unworthy son stripped you of all your wealth; but Hasem conducted every thing with the same regularity and care as if you had been awake, discharging such of your domestics as he thought unnecessary, and replacing such as died in your service; and it is not many days since the good old man was himself summoned away by the angel of death.

Tell me, said Nourjahad, does Schemzeddin still live?

He does, replied Cadiga, but bending under the weight of age and infirmities, he is become so intolerably peevish that no one dares speak to him. Indeed he is at times so fantastical and perverse, that it is secretly whispered he is not perfectly in his senses. It may very well be, said Nourjahad, that he is doating by this time, for he cannot be much less than seventy years old. The genius has in this article been faithful to his promise; for I, though nearly of the same age, find myself as vigorous and healthy as ever, but I give him little thanks for this, seeing he has defrauded me of such an unconscionable portion of my life.

My lord, said Cadiga, there is one circumstance which may in some measure reconcile you to what has already happened. You know, by the severity of the sultan, you have been the greatest part of your days a prisoner; which condition, however it might have been alleviated by the pleasures which surrounded you, must nevertheless have by this time grown exceedingly irksome, had you all the while been sensible of your restraint; and you would now probably have been so palled with the repetition of the same enjoyments, that I know not whether your good genius, has not, instead of cruelty, shewn an extreme indulgence, in rendering you for such a number of years unconscious of your misfortune; especially as the sultan, by what I learnt from Hasem, has, notwithstanding the length of time since he first deprived you of your liberty, never reversed the barbarous sentence.

What thou hast said, has some colour, replied Nourjahad, and I am very much inclined to think thou hast hit upon the truth. Sage Cadiga, pursued he, what thou hast lost in beauty, thou hast gained in wisdom; and though I can no longer regard thee with tenderness, I will still retain thee in my service, and constitute thee governess over my female slaves; for I must have my seraglio supplied with a new race of beauties. For the rest of those hags, as I do not know of any thing they are now good for, I desire to see them no more. Be gone, said he to them, I shall give orders to Cadiga concerning you.

When Nourjahad was left alone, he began seriously to reflect on his condition. How unhappy I am, said he, thus to find myself at once deprived of every thing that was dear to me; my two faithful friends, Hasem and Zamgrad, all the blooming beauties of my seraglio, who used to delight my eyes; but above all, my son, whose ingratitude and cruelty pierces me more deeply than all my other losses; and that rigid spirit who presides over my life, to take advantage of those hours of insensibility, to deprive me of all my comforts! Yet why do I reproach my protector for that? the same ills might have befallen me, had the progress of my life been conducted by the common laws of nature. I must have seen the death of my friends, and they might possibly have been snatched from me in a manner equally sudden and surprising as their loss now appears.

My women, had I seen them every day, must necessarily by this time have grown old and disgustful to me; and I should certainly before now, have discarded two or three generations of beauties. My son too, would, in his heart, have been the same thankless and perfidious creature that he has now shewn himself, had the eye of watchful authority been constantly open on his conduct; and there is only this difference perhaps, between me and

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every other parent, that I have lived to see my offspring trampling on filial duty, riotously seizing on my wealth, leaving my family to poverty, and not so much as bestowing a grateful thought on him who gave him being, and by whose spoils he is enriched; whilst other fathers, deceived by a specious outside, in the full persuasion of the piety, justice, and affection of their children, have descended to the grave in peace, whilst their heirs, with as little remorse as my graceless child, have laughed at their memories.

I see it is in vain, proceeded he, to escape the miseries that are allotted to human life. Fool that I was to subject myself to them more by ten thousand fold than any other can possibly experience! But stop, Nourjahad, how weak are thy complaints? thou knowest the conditions of thy existence, and that thou must of necessity behold the decay and dissolution of every thing that is mortal; take comfort then, and do not embitter thy days by melancholy reflections, but resolve for the future to let no events disturb thy peace, seize every fleeting joy as it passes, and let variety be thy heaven, for thou seest there is nothing permanent.

As Nourjahad was never used, but on occasions of distress, to make use of his reason or philosophy, he no sooner found an alleviation of the evil, than he put them both to flight, as impertinent intruders. He did not therefore long disturb himself with disagreeable reflections, but resolved as soon as possible to return to those pleasures which he thought constituted the felicity of man's life.

He gave himself but little concern about those treasures of which his son had robbed him, knowing he had an inexhaustible fund of wealth, of which, agreeably to the genius's promise, he could not be deprived.

From Cadiga he learnt that his house at Ormuz was in the same condition he had left it; Hasem having taken care to place a diligent and faithful servant there, on whom he might rely with equal security as on himself; and he had the farther precaution, added Cadiga, not long before his death, to solicit, through Zamgrad's means, the sultan's permission for your return thither. This, said he, may be necessary in case our lord awakes before Schemzeddin's decease, and should have a desire to quit this place, he may do it without the trouble of a fresh application.

And has the sultan granted this, cried Nourjahad?

He has, answered Cadiga, as a matter of great indulgence: for having, as he said, heard that your profusion was unbounded, finding there were no hopes of reclaiming you, he had determined to confine you for the remainder of your life, with this liberty however, that you might make choice either of this palace or your house at Ormuz for your prison.

Fool, cried Nourjahad, he little imagines how impotent are his threats, when he speaks of confining me for life! I would however *he* were dead, that I might be rid of this irksome restraint; but it cannot last much longer, for the days of Schemzeddin must needs draw towards a period. I will not, mean while, bestow any farther thought on him, but avail myself of that liberty which he has allowed me, and return to Ormuz; for I am weary of this solitude, seeing I have lost every thing that could render my retirement agreeable.

Do thou, said he, see that every thing is prepared for my reception. I would have my seraglio filled once more, otherwise my house, when I enter it, will appear a desert to me, and I shall be at a loss how to divert the tedious hours which may yet remain of my confinement. I will depend on thy experience and skill in beauty, to make choice of such virgins, as you think will well supply the place of those I have lost.

I have a friend, said Cadiga, a merchant, who deals in female slaves; and he has always such a number, that it will be easy to select from amongst them some whose charms cannot fail to please you. I will order him to repair to your house, and bring with him a collection of the rarest beauties he has in his possession; you may then chuse for yourself.

Be it so, said Nourjahad, I leave the conduct of every thing to thee; if I approve of the damsels, I shall not scruple at any price for their purchase.

The day being come for his return to Ormuz, full of pleasing eagerness to behold the divine creatures which he was told waited his arrival, he set out with a splendid equipage, but had the mortification to behold his chariot surrounded by a party of the sultan's guards, with drawn sabres in their hands, to repress the curiosity of those who might approach the chariot, to gaze at the person who was conducted in so unusual a manner.

I could well excuse this part of my retinue, said Nourjahad, as he passed along, but there is no resisting the commands of this whimsical old fellow Schemzeddin. Being thus conducted to his house, the guards as before posted themselves round it.

However chagrined Nourjahad was at this circumstance, he was resolved it should not interrupt his pleasures.

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He found the young slaves whom Cadiga had prepared all waiting his arrival. They were richly cloathed, and standing together in a row, in a long gallery through which he was to pass. On his entering, the merchant to whom they belonged, ordered the women to unvail.

Nourjahad examined them one after the other, but none of them pleased him. One had features too large, and another's were too small; the complexion of this was not brilliant, and the air of that wanted softness; this damsel was too tall, and the next was ill proportioned.

Dost thou call these beauties, said Nourjahad, angrily? By my life they are a pack of as awkward damsels as ever I beheld.

Surely, my lord, cried the merchant, you do not speak as you think. These young maids are allowed by all good judges to be the most perfect beauties that ever were seen in Persia: The sultan himself has none equal to them in his seraglio.

I tell thee, man, said Nourjahad, they are not worthy even to wait on those of whom I myself was formerly master. I know not that, my lord, answered the merchant, but this I am sure of, that I can have any sum which I shall demand for their purchase. Then thou must carry them to some other market, cried Nourjahad, for to me they appear fit for nothing but slaves.

Cadiga, who was present, now taking Nourjahad aside, said, These, my lord, these damsels are less charming than those of which you were formerly possessed, but the taste for beauty is quite altered since that time: You may assure yourself that none will be offered to your acceptance that will exceed these. Were I and my companions, whom you once so much admired, to be restored to our youth again, we should not now be looked upon; such is the fantastic turn of the age.

If this be so, said Nourjahad, I shall be very unfashionable in my amours; for the present, however, I shall content myself with some of the most tolerable of these maidens, till I have time and opportunity of supplying myself with better.

Saying this, he selected half a dozen of those young slaves, whom he thought the most agreeable, and having paid the merchant what he demanded for them, dismissed the rest.

Nourjahad having now once more established his household, and perceiving that these damsels upon a longer acquaintance were really amiable, expected to find himself restored to his former contentment and alacrity of spirits. But in this he was deceived. He was seized with a lassitude that rendered his days tiresome. The vacancy he found in his heart was insupportable. Surrounded by new faces, he saw nobody for whom he could entertain either love or friendship. This is a comfortless life, would he exclaim to himself, yet how often, during the date of my existence, must this situation, melancholy as it is, recur to me. A friend shall no sooner be endeared to me by long experience of kindness and fidelity, without which it is impossible I should regard him; than death will deprive me of him, as it has already done of Hasem and Zamgrad; and how many bright eyes am I doomed to see for ever closed, or what is as mortifying to behold, their faded lustre. There is but one way, said he, to guard against those evils: I will no more contract friendships amongst men, nor ever again suffer my mind to be subdued by female charms. I will confound all distinction by variety, nor permit one woman to engross my heart; for I find by sad experience, even after such an amazing length of time, that the bare idea of my dear Mandana, inspires me with more tenderness, than ever I experienced from the fondest blandishments of all the beauties I have since possessed.

Nourjahad endeavoured to banish those melancholy thoughts by others more agreeable; but he had no resources within himself. He had nothing to reflect on, from which he could derive any satisfaction. My life, said he, appears like a dream of pleasure, that has passed away without leaving any substantial effects: and I am even already weary of it, though in fact, notwithstanding my advanced age, I have enjoyed it but a short time, dating from that period whence my immortality commenced.

He tried to read to divert his distempered thoughts; but from books he could receive no entertainment. If he turned over the pages of philosophers, moralists, or expounders of the mysteries of his religion, What have I to do with thy tedious lessons, or dry precepts, said he? Thou writest to men like thyself, subject to mortality; thou teachest them how to live, that they may learn how to die; but what is this to me? as I am not subject to the latter, thy advice can be of little use to me in regard to the former.

He had next recourse to the poets; but their works gave him as little pleasure as the others. Absorbed as he had been in the grosser pleasures of sense, he had lost those fine feelings, which constitute that delicate and pleasing

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perception we have, of such images, as are addressed to the heart. He knew the fallacy and even essence of all sensual enjoyments; and to the most warm descriptions of love, and the most pathetic pictures of grief he was equally insensible.

Poor wretches, said he, on reading a fine elegy written by a lover on the death of his mistress, doomed as thou wert to a short span of life, and a narrow circle of enjoyments, thou magnifiest every thing within thy confined sphere. One single object having engrossed thy whole heart, and inspired thee with transports, thou dost immortalize her charms. Her death (despairing to supply her place) filled thy eyes with tears, and taught thee to record thy own sorrows with her praises. I partake not of thy pleasures or thy pains; none but such as are liable to the same fate can be affected by thy sentiments.

When he read of the death of heroes and kings, and the destruction of cities, or the revolution of empires, How circumscribed, said he, is the knowledge of a paltry historian! Who is at the pains of collecting the scanty materials which a life of forty or fifty years perhaps affords him, and then he makes a mighty parade of learning, with the poor pittance for which he has been drudging all his days. How infinitely superior will my fund of information be, who shall myself be an eye-witness to events as extraordinary as these, and numbered a thousand times over; for doubtless the same things which have happened, will happen again. What curiosity can you incite in me, who shall infallibly see the same chain of causes and effects take place over and over again, in the vast round of eternity.

The accounts of travellers, descriptions of the manners and customs of various countries, and books of geography, afforded him a little more entertainment. All these places, said he, I shall visit in my own proper person, and shall then be able to judge whether these accounts are just.

Whilst he endeavoured to fill up the vacuity he found in his mind, his time was spent at best but in a sort of insipid tranquillity. The voluptuary has no taste for mental pleasures.

He every now and then returned to his former excesses, but he had not the same relish for them as before. Satiety succeeded every enjoyment. In vain did his slaves torture their invention to procure new delights for him. The powers of luxury were exhausted, and his appetites palled with abundance.

He grew peevish, morose, tyrannical; cruelty took possession of his breast; he abused his women and beat his slaves, and seemed to enjoy no satisfaction but that of tormenting others.

In vain did the prudent Cadiga, who had still some little influence over him, expostulate with him on the enormity of his behaviour.

How darest thou, said he, presume to dictate to thy master, or to censure his conduct! To whom am I accountable for my actions? To God and our prophet, answered Cadiga, with a boldness that provoked Nourjahad's wrath. Thou liest, said he, as I am exempt from death, I never can be brought to judgment, what then have I to fear from the resentment, or hope from the favour of the powers whom thou namest?

But hast thou no regard, said Cadiga, for the laws of society, nor pity for the sufferings of thy fellow creatures, whom thou makest to groan every day under thy cruelty?

Foolish woman, said Nourjahad, dost thou talk to me of laws, who think myself bound by none. Civil and religious laws are so interwoven, that you cannot pluck out a single thread without spoiling the whole texture, and if I cut the woof, thinkest thou that I will spare the weft, when I can do it with impunity? The privilege of immortality which I enjoy, would be bestowed on me to little purpose, if I were to suffer the weak prejudices of religion, in which I am no way concerned, to check me in any of my pursuits. And what can the feeble laws of man do? My life they cannot reach. Yet thou art a prisoner notwithstanding, answered Cadiga. True, replied Nourjahad, but even in my confinements I have surfeited with delights. Schemzeddin's death must soon give me that liberty, which considering the race of uncontrouled freedom I have before me, I do not now think worth attempting. I shall then expatiate freely all over the globe; mean while I tell thee, woman, I am weary of the dull round of reiterated enjoyments which are provided for me; my sensual appetites are cloyed, I have no taste for intellectual pleasures, and I must have recourse to those which gratify the malevolent passions.

Thou art not fit to live, cried Cadiga, with a warmth of which she had cause to repent; for Nourjahad, enraged at her reply, plucked a poniard from his girdle, Go tell thy prophet so, said he, and plunged it into the side of the unfortunate slave, who fell at his feet weltering in blood.

The brutal Nourjahad, so far from being moved with this spectacle, turned from her with indifference, and quitting the chamber, entered the apartments of his women, to whom with barbarous mirth he related what he had

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done.

Though he had now lost all relish for delicate pleasures, or even for the more gross enjoyments of sense, he nevertheless indulged himself in them to excess; and knowing he was not accountable to any one for the death of his slave, he thought no more of Cadiga; but after a day spent in extravagant debauchery sunk to repose.

But his eyes were opened to a different scene from that on which he had closed them. He no sooner awoke than he perceived a man sitting at his bed's-foot, who seemed to be plunged in sorrow; he leaned pensively on his arm, holding a handkerchief before his eyes.

What mockery is this, said Nourjahad, didst thou suppose me dead, and art thou come to mourn over me?

Not so, my lord, replied the man, I knew that you still lived; but the sultan is dead, the good Schemzeddin is no more! I am glad of it, replied Nourjahad, I shall now obtain my liberty. Who then is to reign in Ormuz? Doubtless, my lord, answered the man, the prince Schemerzad, the eldest son of Schemzeddin. Thou ravest, cried Nourjahad, Schemzeddin has no son. Pardon me, my lord, said the man, the sultana Nourmahal was delivered of this prince the very hour on which the unfortunate Cadiga died by your hand. Thou art insolent, replied Nourjahad, to mention that circumstance; but if so, we have indeed got a very young successor to the throne. My lord, answered the man, Schemerzad is allowed to be one of the most accomplished and wise young princes in all Persia. That is marvellous, cried Nourjahad, bursting into a fit of laughter, a sultan of four and twenty hours old must needs be wonderously wise and accomplished. Nay, my lord, replied the man, the prince is this day exactly twenty years of age.

(Nourjahad, on hearing this, looked in the face of the man, whom, from his dress, supposing he had been one of his slaves, he had not regarded before, but now perceived he was a stranger.) Twenty years old! cried he, starting up, thou dost not tell me so! Most certain, said the man. Schemzeddin was so far advanced in years before the birth of the prince, that he despaired of ever having a child; yet had the righteous monarch the satisfaction to see his beloved son arrive at manhood, and adorned with such virtues as made him worthy to fill his father's throne. When did the old sultan die, cried Nourjahad? His funeral obsequies were performed last night, answered the man, and the people of Ormuz have not yet wiped the tears from their eyes. It should seem then, said Nourjahad, that I have slept about twenty years! if so, prithee, who art thou? for I do not remember ever to have seen thy face before.

My name, answered the stranger, is Cozro, and I am the brother of Cadiga, that faithful creature whom thy ungoverned fury deprived of life. How darest thou mention her again, cried Nourjahad, art thou not afraid to share the same fate thyself for thy presumption?

I do not value my life, answered Cozro; having acquitted myself well of my duty here, I am sure of my reward in those blessed mansions, where avarice, luxury, cruelty and pride, can never enter. Strike then, Nourjahad, if thou darest; dismiss me to endless and uninterrupted joys, and live thyself a prey to remorse and disappointment, the slave of passions never to be gratified, and a sport to the vicissitudes of fortune.

Nourjahad was confounded at the undaunted air with which Cozro pronounced these words; he trembled with indignation, but had not courage to strike the unarmed man who thus insulted him; wherefore, dissembling his anger, I see, said he, that thou partakest of thy sister Cadiga's spirit; but answer me, How camest thou hither, and in what condition are the rest of my family? I will tell thee, answered Cozro. When Cadiga found herself dying, she sent for me: I was then a page to one of the emirs of Schemzeddin's court. She made me kneel by her bed-side and take a solemn oath, to perform with fidelity and secrecy what she should enjoin me. She then told me the secret of your life, and conjured me to watch and attend you carefully. I have hitherto, said she, had the conduct of his house; do you supply my place, and do not let Nourjahad, when he awakes from his trance, be sensible of the loss of the unfortunate Cadiga.

She then called in your principal slaves, and delivering to me in their presence the keys with which you had entrusted her, she told them they were henceforth to obey me, as they had done her. Tell my lord, said she to me, that I forgive him the death which his cruelty inflicted on a woman who loved him to the latest minute of her life. In pronouncing these words, she expired.

I knew not till then, pursued Cozro, that thou hadst been the murderer of my sister; but she was no sooner dead, than the slaves informed me of the manner of her death. My resentment against thee was proportioned to the horror of thy guilt; and had I thrown myself at the feet of Schemzeddin, and implored justice on thy crimes, neither thy riches nor thy immortality would have availed thee, but thou wouldst have been condemned by a

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perpetual decree, to have languished out thy wretched existence in a vile dungeon.

And what hindered thee, cried Nourjahad, from pursuing thy revenge, seeing I was not in a condition to resist thee? My reverence for the oath I had taken, answered Cozro, and fear of offending the Almighty!

Nourjahad, at this reply, was struck with a secret awe which he could not repel; he remained silent whilst Cozro proceeded.

I obtained permission of the master whom I served, to leave him, and entered immediately on my new employment; but I found I had undertaken a difficult task. Thou hadst rendered thyself so odious to thy women, that not one of them retained the smallest degree of love or fidelity towards thee. In spite of my vigilance they made thy hated seraglio the scene of their unlawful pleasures; and at length having bribed the eunuchs who guarded them, they all in one night fled from thy detested walls, taking with them the slaves who had assisted them in their purpose. Pernicious spirit, exclaimed Nourjahad, are these the fruits I am to reap from thy fatal indulgence! The rest of your servants, pursued Cozro, I endeavoured to keep within the bounds of their duty. And how didst thou succeed, cried Nourjahad? But ill, replied Cozro; they all declared that nothing could have induced them to stay so long with a master of so capricious and tyrannical a humour, but the luxury and idleness in which thou permittedst them to live; and finding I managed your affairs with oeconomy, they one after the other left your house; neither promises nor threats having power to prevent those who stayed longest in thy service, from following the example of the first who deserted thee; so that I alone of all thy numerous household have remained faithful to thee: I, who of all others, had the most reason to abhor thee! But I have now acquitted myself of the trust which was reposed in me, and I leave thee as one condemned to wander in an unknown land, where he is to seek out for new associates, and to endeavour by the power of gold, to bribe that regard from men, which his own worth cannot procure for him.

Unfortunate wretch that I am, cried Nourjahad, pierced to the quick with what he had just been told, what benefit have I hitherto received from my long life, but that of feeling by miserable experience, the ingratitude and frailty of man's nature. How transitory have been all my pleasures! the recollection of them dies on my memory, like the departing colours of the rainbow, which fades under the eye of the beholder, and leaves not a trace behind. Whilst on the other hand, every affliction with which I have been visited, has imprinted a deep and lasting wound on my heart, which not even the hand of time itself has been able to heal.

What have thy misfortunes been, said Cozro, that are not common to all the race of man? Oh, I have had innumerable griefs, said Nourjahad. After a short enjoyment (during my fatal slumbers) the grave robbed me of Mandana, whilst she was yet in the bloom of youth and beauty. I lamented her death, tears and heaviness of heart were my portion for many days. Yet remembering that sorrow would not recall the dead, I suffered myself to be comforted, and sought for consolation in the society of my other women, and the fond and innocent caresses of an infant son, whom Mandana left me. Joy and tranquillity revisited my dwelling, and new pleasures courted my acceptance; but they again eluded my grasp, and in one night (for so it appeared to me) my son like an unnatural viper, forgetting all my tenderness, plundered and deserted me. The two faithful friends in whom I most confided, had closed their eyes for ever; and the beauties of my seraglio, whom I had last beheld fresh and charming as the lillies of the field, I now saw deformed with wrinkles and bending under the infirmities of age.

Yet these afflictions I surmounted; and resolved once more to be happy. And wert thou so, interrupted Cozro? No, replied Nourjahad, the treacherous joys deceived me; yet I still looked forward with hope, but now awake to fresh disappointment. I find myself abandoned by those whose false professions of love had lulled me into security, and I rouse myself like a savage beast in the desert, whose paths are shunned by, all the children of men.

Nourjahad could not conclude this speech without a groan, that seemed to rend his heart.

As thou art, said Cozro, exempt from punishment hereafter, dost thou think also to escape the miseries of this life? Mistaken man, know, that the righteous Being, whose ordinances thou defiest, will even here take vengeance on thy crimes. And if thou wilt look back on thy past life, thou wilt find (for I have heard thy story) that every one of those several ills of which thou complainest, were sent as scourges to remind thee of thy duty, and inflicted immediately after the commission of some notorious breach of it.

The death of Mandana was preceded by a brutal fit of drunkenness, by which, contrary to the laws of our prophet, thou sufferedst thyself to be overtaken. Then it was thy good genius, to punish thee, plunged thee into that temporary death, from which thou didst awake to grief and disappointment: But thou madest no use of the admonition, but didst permit thyself to be again swallowed up by intemperance; and not content to tread the

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ordinary paths of vice, thou turnedst out of the road, to the commission of a crime, to which thou couldst have no temptation, but the pride and licentiousness of thy heart. Thy profanation of our holy religion, in presuming to personate our great prophet, and make thy concubines represent the virgins of paradise, was immediately chastised as it deserved, by a second time depriving thee of those faculties, which thou didst prostitute to such vile purposes.

The ills with which thou foundest thyself surrounded on awaking from thy trance, served to no other purpose than to stir up thy resentment against the power who governed thy life. And instead of reforming thy wickedness, thou soughtest out new ways of rendering thyself still more obnoxious to the wrath of Heaven. In the wantonness of thy cruelty, thou stainedst thy hand in blood; and that same night, were thy eyelids sealed up by the avenging hand of thy watchful genius, and thy depraved senses consigned for twenty years to oblivion! See then, continued Cozro, if a life which is to be a continued round of crimes and punishments in alternate succession, is a gift worthy to be desired by a wise man? for assure thyself, Oh Nourjahad, that by the immutable laws of heaven one is to be a constant concomitant of the other, and that either in this world or the next, vice will meet its just reward.

Alas, replied Nourjahad, thou hast awakened in me a remorse of which I was never sensible before; I look back with shame on the detested use I have made of those extraordinary gifts vouchsafed me by my guardian spirit.

What shall I do, Oh Cozro, to expiate the offences I have committed? For though I have no dread of punishment hereafter, yet does that ætherial spark within, inspire me with such horror for my former crimes, that all the vain delights which this world can afford me, will not restore my mind to peace, till by a series of good actions I have atoned for my past offences.

If thou art sincere in thy resolutions, replied Cozro, the means, thou knowest, are amply in thy power. Thy riches will enable thee to diffuse blessings amongst mankind, and thou wilt find more true luxury in that, than in all the gratifications wherewith thou hast indulged thy appetites.

It shall be so, replied Nourjahad; my treasures shall be open to thee, thou venerable old man, and do thou make it thy business to find out proper objects, whereon charity and benevolence may exert their utmost powers.

Enquire out every family in Ormuz whom calamity hath overtaken, and provided they did not bring on their distresses by their own wilful misconduct, restore them to prosperity. Seek out the helpless and the innocent; and by a timely supply of their wants, secure them against the attacks of poverty, or temptations of vice. Search for such as you think have talents which will render them useful to society; but who, for want of the goods of fortune, are condemned to obscurity; relieve their necessities, and enable them to answer the purposes for which nature designed them. Find out merit wherever it lies concealed, whether withheld from the light by diffidence, chained down and clogged by adversity, obscured by malice, or overborn by power; lift it up from the dust, and let it shine conspicuous to the world.

Glorious task! cried Cozro; happy am I in being the chosen instrument of Nourjahad's bounty, and still more happy shall he be in seeing the accomplishment of his good designs.

We must not stop here, said Nourjahad; I will have hospitals built for the reception of the aged and the sick; and my tables shall be spread for the refreshment of the weary traveller. No virtuous action shall pass by me unrewarded, and no breach of the laws of temperance, justice, or mercy, shall escape unreprieved. My own example, so far as it can influence, shall henceforth countenance the one, and discourage the other.

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

Nourjahad now found the anxiety under which he had but a little before laboured, exceedingly relieved. My mind, said he, is much more at ease than it was; let us not delay to put our design sign in execution. I will lead you to the place where my treasure is concealed, which I never yet discovered to any one. Saying this, he took Cozro by the hand, and conducted him to the cave.

Thou seest here, said he, riches which can never be exhausted; thou mayest perceive that I have not yet sunk a third part of one of these urns which contain my wealth; yet have I with monstrous profusion lavished away immense sums. Five more such urns as these are yet untouched. Those six which thou seest on the right hand, contain wedges of the finest gold, which must be equal in value to the others. These six, which are ranged on the left, are filled with precious stones, whose worth must be inestimable: The wealth of Ormuz would not purchase a single handful. Judge then, my friend, if I need be sparing in my liberality.

Cozro expressed his astonishment at the sight of these wonders. If thou wouldst be advised by me, said he,

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thou wouldst secretly remove from Ormuz, and carry thy treasures with thee. Thou mayest deposit part of them in each of the different countries through which thou passest in thy progress all over the earth. By this means thou mayest have it in thy power to distribute with more ease thy bounty wherever thou goest; and be always provided with riches in what part soever of the world thou shalt chuse for a time to take up thy residence. Thy long abode in this city will draw observations on thee sooner or later; and thy person's not having undergone any change from length of time, will bring on thee the suspicion of magic; for tradition will not fail to inform posterity of thy strange history.

You counsel well, replied Nourjahad; as I am now at liberty, I will retire from Ormuz. You, my dear Cozro, shall accompany me; your prudent counsel shall be my guide; and when I shall be deprived of you by death, I will still endeavour to follow your wise precepts.

Come, continued he, I am in haste to enter on my new course of life, let us both go into the city and try to find out proper objects on which to exert our charity. I shall pass without observation, and unknown, as few of my contemporaries can now be living, and I will not leave the country which gave me birth, without first making it feel the effects of that beneficence which thou hast awakened in my heart.

Deserving of praise as thou art, said Cozro, thou for the present must suppress thy ardor to do good; for though by the death of Schemzeddin thou art no longer a prisoner, thou art not nevertheless yet at liberty to leave thy house. Why not? answered Nourjahad, who is there now to prevent me?

The young sultan, replied Cozro, deeply afflicted for the death of his father, and out of a pious regard to his memory, has given strict commandment, that all his subjects should observe a solemn mourning for him, during the space of twenty days; in which time all the shops, and places of public resort (except the mosques) are to be shut up, and no business of any kind transacted; nor are any persons to be seen in the streets, excepting those who visit the sick, and the slaves who must necessarily be employed to carry provisions, on pain of the sultan's heavy displeasure.

This edict was published yesterday, and the people of Ormuz all love the memory of Schemzeddin, and the person of their present sultan too well, not to pay an exact obedience to it.

If so, said Nourjahad, I will not by my example encourage others to infringe their duty; yet as the relieving of the poor is in itself meritorious, I would not wish to be withheld from doing it so long as twenty days: How many virtuous people may be during that time pining for want! more especially as this prohibition must cut off all intercourse between man and man, and deprive many poor wretches of the charitable succour they might otherwise receive. I think therefore that thou, Cozro, in thy slave's habit, mayst go forth unsuspected; and by privately seeking out, and alleviating the miseries of our fellow citizens, do an act of more real benefit, than can result from the strictest conformity to this pageant of sorrow, which many in their hearts I am sure must condemn.

Cozro approving of these sentiments, readily agreed to the expedient, and taking a large purse of gold with him to distribute as occasion might serve, immediately set out in order to execute his lord's commands.

Nourjahad now entered on a total reformation in his way of living. He rose at day break, and spent the morning in study or meditation. Luxury and intemperance were banished from his board; his table was spread with the plainest dishes, and he wholly abstained from excess in wine. His slumbers were sweet, and he found his health more vigorous.

I will no more, said he, enslave myself to the power of beauty. I have lived to see the decay of a whole seraglio of the fairest faces in Persia, and have sighed for the ingratitude of the next generation that succeeded them. I will not then seek out for those destroyers of my quiet, for whose death or infidelity I must for ever complain. Mandana was the only woman who ever really deserved my love; could I recal her from the grave, and endue her with the same privilege of which I am myself possessed, I would confine myself to her arms alone; but since that is impossible, I will devote myself to the charms of virtue, which of all things she most resembled.

Whilst Nourjahad was thus resolving to correct the errors of his past life, his virtue was not merely in speculation. He never laid him down to rest, without the satisfaction of having made some one the better for him. Cozro, who constantly spent the day in enquiring out and relieving the distressed, failed not to return every night to give an account of his charitable mission, and to infuse into his master's bosom, the (till now unfelt) joy which springs from righteous deeds.

The heart of Nourjahad was expanded, and glowed with compassion for those sufferings which Cozro feelingly described as the lot of so many of his fellow creatures. As charity and benevolence rose in his breast, he

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found his pride subside. He was conscious of his own unworthiness. He kneeled, he prayed, he humbled himself before the Almighty, and returned thanks to God for enabling him to succour the unfortunate.

In this happy frame of mind he continued for eighteen days; there wanted but two more to the expiration of the mourning for the sultan, when Nourjahad was to be at full liberty to pursue in his own person the dictates of his reformed, and now truly generous and benevolent heart.

He was sitting alone in his apartment, waiting the arrival of Cozro, in the pleasing expectation of receiving some fresh opportunity of doing good. The hour of his usual return was already past, and Nourjahad began to fear some accident had happened to him; but he little knew that a black cloud hung over him, which was ready to pour down all its malignity on his own head.

As he mused on what might be the occasion of Cozro's long stay, he heard a loud knocking at his door. It was immediately opened by one of his slaves, and a man, who by his habit he knew to be one of the cady's officers, rudely entered his chamber.

How comes it, said the stranger, that thou hast had the temerity, in contempt of our sovereign lord's commands, to employ thy emissary about the city at a time when thou knowest that so strict an injunction has been laid on all people to keep within their houses, none being permitted to stir abroad but for the absolute necessities of life, or in cases of imminent danger?

Far be it from me, replied Nourjahad, to disobey our mighty sultan's orders; but I understood that slaves had permission to go unquestioned on their master's business. And what business, answered the man, can thy slave have from morning to night in so many different quarters of the city?

Nourjahad, who did not care to be himself the trumpeter of his own good deeds, hesitated to give an answer.

Ha, ha, cried the stranger, I see plainly there is something dangerous in thy mystery, and that the money which thy slave has been distributing amongst such a variety of people, is for a purpose very different from that which he pretends. A likely matter it is indeed that a private man should bestow in charity such sums as Cozro acknowledges he has within these few days distributed!

Yet nothing is more certain, replied Nourjahad, than that Cozro has spoke the truth. We shall see that, replied the officer, in a tone of insolence; Cozro is already in prison, and my orders are to conduct thee to him.

Nourjahad, exceedingly troubled at hearing this, replied, He was ready to go with him; and the officer led him out of his house.

It was now late at night; they passed along the streets without meeting any one, and soon reached the place wherein Cozro was confined. It was the prison where such persons were shut up as were accused of treason against the state.

Here he found the unfortunate Cozro in a dungeon. Alas, cried he, as soon as his master entered, why do I see thee here? Say rather, my dear Cozro, replied Nourjahad, what strange fatality has brought *thee* to this dismal place?

I can give no other account, answered Cozro, but that in returning home this night, I was seized on in the street by some of those soldiers who were employed to patrol about the city, to see that the sultan's orders were punctually observed; and being questioned concerning my business, I told them that I had been relieving the wants of indigent people, and saving even from perishing, some poor wretches who had not where-withal to buy food.

That is an idle errand, replied one of them, and might have been deferred till the term of mourning was expired; however, if you will give me a piece of gold, I will let you pass for this time, otherwise both you and your employer may happen to repent of having transgressed the sultan's commands. I made no scruple, pursued Cozro, to take out my purse, in which there were ten sequins left. I gave one of them to the soldier, but the rapacious wretches seeing I had more money, were not content with this, but insisted on my giving the whole amongst them. I refused; some angry words ensued; one of the miscreants struck me, and I returned the blow. Enraged at this, they hurried me before the cady, to whom they accused me of having disobeyed the edict, and assaulted the sultan's officers in the discharge of their duty. I was not heard in my defence, having four witnesses against me, but was immediately dragged to this horrid prison; and the sultan himself, they say, is to take cognizance of my offence.

Oh, Heaven, cried Nourjahad, to what mischiefs does not the love of gold expose us! See, my friend, into what misfortunes thou art plunged by the sordid avarice of those vile soldiers. But why, why didst thou hesitate to give

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up that paltry sum which thou hadst in thy purse, to obtain thy liberty? I do not repent what I have done, answered Cozro, and shall contentedly suffer the penalty I have incurred, since it was in so good a cause.

If the sultan is just, replied Nourjahad, the punishment ought only to fall on me, who alone am guilty, since what thou didst was by my command.

Here the officer who had conducted Nourjahad to prison, and who was present at this discourse, interposed, and addressing himself to Nourjahad, Thou hast not as yet been accused to the sultan, said he, and it is not too late to extricate even thy slave from this troublesome affair; it is but making a handsome present to the cady, and I will undertake this matter will go no farther. I am willing to do so, replied Nourjahad, eagerly; name your demand, and you shall have it. Provided I am allowed to go home to my own house, I will fetch the money; and if you are afraid of my escaping, you yourself may bear me company.

I will not consent to it, replied Cozro; neither liberty nor life are worth purchasing on base conditions. I will submit my cause to Schemerzad's justice; the cause of uprightness and truth; my own innocence shall be my support, and I will dare the worst that fraud and malice can suggest against me.

In vain did Nourjahad urge him to accept the profered terms; he remained inflexible to all the arguments he could use to persuade him; wherefore, finding him determined, he was obliged to desist; and Cozro, after passing the remainder of the night in quiet and profound sleep, though without any other bed than the bare earth, was at dawn of day called forth to appear before the sultan.

The reflections Nourjahad made on the resolute behaviour of Cozro, served not a little to fortify his mind. How noble must this man's soul be, said he, which sets him thus above the reach of adversity? and with what contempt he looks down on the glorious prospects he has before him, when put in the balance with his integrity. Surely it is not in this life he places his happiness, since he is so ready to forego the pleasures he might enjoy with me, in that participation of wealth and liberty which I have promised him. How superior is my servant to me, who but for his example, should now sink under my fears; but he has resources which I have not. Alas, why did I barter my hopes of paradise for the vain, the transitory, the fallacious joys which this vile world bestows! Already I have tried them; what do they inspire but satiety and disgust. I never experienced true contentment, but during the time, short as it is, since I abjured those follies in which I once delighted: And I am now persuaded, that after having past a few, a very few years more in the enjoyment of such gratifications as I have not yet had an opportunity of tasting, that I shall grow even weary of the light, and wish to be dismissed to that place, where we are told no sorrows can approach.

Nourjahad was buried in these reflections, when he was roused by the return of Cozro. The glimmering light which a lamp afforded, struck full on the face of his friend (for he no longer considered him as a servant) and he rejoiced to see Cozro's chearful countenance, by which he judged that he had nothing to fear.

I am come, said Cozro, approaching Nourjahad, and kissing his hand, to bid thee adieu, for from this day, we are to be for ever divided! It is that thought only which makes our separation grievous: Had I hopes of ever beholding thy face in the mansions of light, I should go to death with the same alacrity with which I close my eyes in slumber.

Good Heaven, cried Nourjahad, doest thou talk of death? Can it be, is it possible that thy life is in danger?

What is the life, about which thou art anxious? replied Cozro; our being here is but a shadow; that only is real existence which the blessed enjoy after their short travel here. And know, Oh Nourjahad, I would not yield up my expectations of the humblest place in paradise for the sovereign rule of the whole earth, though my days were to be extended to the date of thy life, and every wish of my soul gratified to the utmost. Think then, with how little reluctance I shall leave a world, wherein I am sure of meeting nothing but oppression, treachery, and disappointment, where mercy is construed into treason, and charity is called sedition!

And art thou then doomed to die? said Nourjahad, pale and trembling at the thought, though convinced it was a predicament in which he could never stand.

I am, answered Cozro, my offence was found capital. Disobedience to the sultan's edict alone, incurred a heavy punishment; but my crime was, by the malice of my accusers, so highly aggravated, that the penalty became death. They charged me with having distributed money for evil purposes, amongst persons disaffected to the state, and with having beat and abused those officers who first detected me. In vain did I offer all the pleas that truth could suggest; my enemies, exasperated at losing the sum which they hoped to have extorted from you, swore to the facts of which I was accused, and the rigid sultan condemned me to death. What thy fate is to be, I know not;

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but since it is thy misfortune to be doomed to perpetual life, better purchase thy freedom on any terms, than be condemned to languish for years in a prison, for such probably will be thy lot.

Oh that I could die with thee! said Nourjahad, miserable that I am, thus to be deprived of thy counsel and friendship, at a time when I so much stood in need of them; but wherefore, my friend, why should we submit to the tyranny of the sultan? though thou art condemned, there may yet be found means to deliver thee. The keeper of the prison will gladly set a price on thy liberty; a hundred thousand pieces of gold shall be thy ransom; and I shall think myself rich by the purchase! And what is to become of thee, replied Cozro? I will buy my own freedom at the same rate, answered Nourjahad, and we will both fly from Ormuz together. And leave your treasures behind you, cried Cozro, for it will be impossible to convey from hence such a vast mass of riches without discovery.

I value them no longer, said Nourjahad; they can never yield me any permanent enjoyment. The saving thy life is the only good turn I now expect from them. That once accomplished, I shall desire to retain no more of them than what will support me above want, and I will leave the rest to be for ever hid in the bosom of the earth, where they now lie, that they may never more become a snare to others as they have been to me.

Praised be our holy prophet, said Cozro, that has at length endued the heart of Nourjahad with wisdom. Pursue the purposes of thy soul; effect thy own freedom as soon as possible, since no comfort can visit thee in the gloom of this frightful prison; but tempt not Cozro back to a life which he despises. I tell thee again, there is nothing in this world to be put in competition with the glories I have in prospect in that state to which I am now hastening. Why then, Nourjahad, wouldst thou retard my felicity, or wish me to hazard, for the sake of delusive pleasures, those transcendent joys which await the virtuous.

The energy with which Cozro delivered himself, pierced Nourjahad to the inmost soul. A holy ardor was kindled in his breast, which he had never felt before; he found his faculties enlarged, his mind was transported above this world; he felt as it were unimbodied, and an involuntary adjuration burst from his lips. 'Oh, holy prophet, said he, take, take back the gift, that I in the ignorance and presumption of my heart so vainly sought, and which too late I find a punishment instead of a blessing! I contemn riches, and for ever cast them from me; suffer me then to yield up my life; for there can be no true happiness but in beholding thee, Oh Mahomet, face to face, in the never-fading fields of paradise!'

Saying this, he prostrated himself on the ground, and continued for some time in mental prayer.

Cozro observed an awful silence whilst he continued in this posture. When Nourjahad arose from the earth, May our great prophet, said Cozro, hear your prayers; and were he even now to grant them, all the favours he has already bestowed on you would be poor and contemptible to this last best boon. Farewel, said he, I must now leave thee, I was only permitted to come and bid thee adieu. May the Supreme grant thy petition, then shall we again meet in the mansions of happy spirits. Nourjahad embraced him, and Cozro withdrew.

Being now left at liberty to his own thoughts, he made bitter reflections on the strangeness of his fate. Fool, fool that I was, cried he aloud, beating his breast, to prefer so rash, so impious a petition to the prophet, as to desire the everlasting laws of nature to be overturned, to gratify my mad luxurious wishes. I thought the life of man too short for the enjoyment of those various and unbounded pleasures which wealth could procure; but it is long since I have found my error. Well did my guardian spirit say I should repent of the gift I had implored, when it should be too late. I do indeed repent; but Oh, thou benign intelligence, if thou hast remaining any favour for thy inconsiderate unhappy charge, descend once more to my relief, and if possible restore me to that state, for which I was designed by my creator; a poor mortal, liable to, and now longing for the friendly stroke of death.

He had scarce pronounced these words, when his prison doors flew open; a refulgent light flashed in, which illuminated the whole dungeon, and he beheld his guardian genius standing before him, exactly as he had appeared to him before. Thy prayers are heard, said he, Oh son of frailty, and thy penitence is accepted in the sight of the Most High. I am sent down again by our prophet to reassume that gift which thou art now satisfied must make thee miserable. Yet examine thy heart once more before I pronounce thy irrevocable doom; say, art thou willing again to become subject to the common lot of mortals?

Most willing, replied Nourjahad; yet I wonder not, my seraphic guide, that thou shouldst doubt the stability of my mind; but in this last purpose of it I am sure I shall remain unshaken.

If so, replied the shining vision, thy guardian angel consigns thee to the arms of death, with much more joy than he conferred on thee riches and immortality. Thou hast nothing more to do, than to prostrate thyself with thy

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face to the earth. Remain this evening in fervent prayer, and await what shall befall thee to-morrow.

Nourjahad made no reply, but falling with his face to the ground, he soon found the dungeon restored to its former gloom, the light and the guardian spirit vanishing together in an instant.

He continued in devout prayer till night; when the keeper of the prison entered his dungeon to bring him some refreshment.

The sultan, said he, purposes to examine you to-morrow, and much I fear you will have as rigorous a sentence passed on you, as that which has been already executed on Cozro. Is he then dead, cried Nourjahad, mournfully? He is, replied the keeper; it is but an hour since I saw him deprived of breath; but he received the blow with such an heroic firmness, that thou wouldst have thought he rather enjoyed a triumph, than suffered an ignominious death.

Happy, happy Cozro! cried Nourjahad; thou art now beyond the reach of misfortune, whilst I, perhaps, may be doomed to sustain for years a wretched life.

Thy life, said the keeper, may be nearer a period than thou art aware of. The sultan is covetous, and surrounded by needy favourites, whom the report of your immense wealth has made eager for your destruction; for you cannot be ignorant, that should you die, involved as it is said you are, in Cozro's guilt, your treasures would be confiscated to the sultan. From this circumstance I have heard it whispered, your head is already devoted; and this perhaps was the true cause of Cozro's death, and will give the better colour to your's. It is not, however, added he, even yet too late to prevent the danger; had not your slave been obstinate, he might now have been alive, and out of the reach of harm. You have the same means of preservation in regard to your own person, still in your power; and if you will make it worth my while to run the risque, I will this night set you at liberty.

And dost thou think, said Nourjahad; that I have profited so little by the example of my noble friend, as to accept of thy offer, sordid and treacherous as thou art? If thou art base enough to betray thy trust for gold, know that the mind of Nourjahad is above receiving a favour from such a wretch. As for my wealth, let the sultan take it; my only wish is to part with that and my life also.

That wish may speedily be accomplished, said the keeper, in an angry tone, and to-morrow perhaps you may repent of your folly, when you find yourself condemned to follow your noble friend to the other world. Nourjahad made no reply; and the keeper sullenly departed.

Nourjahad spent the night in prayers and meditation; he found peace and tranquillity restored to his breast, and perfectly resigned to the will of the prophet, he waited the event of the next day with the utmost composure.

In the morning the keeper of the prison entered to him. Follow me, said he; thou art going to appear before the sultan, who himself is to be thy judge; a rigorous one thou wilt find him, but thy folly be on thy own head, who didst proudly refuse the proffer I made thee of liberty and life.

Lead on, said Nourjahad, it is not for such men as thou art, to censure a conduct, to which thou dost not know the motive.

He was now carried out of the dungeon, and ordered to ascend a chariot, in which the captain of the sultan's guards was already placed, to receive his prisoner. The chariot was surrounded by soldiers; and in this manner he was conducted to the presence of the sultan.

Schemerzad was seated on a throne, in the hall of his palace, wherein he was used to distribute justice. The emirs, and great officers of his court, were standing round him.

Nourjahad stood before him with his eyes bent to the ground; and however awed he might be at the presence of his royal master, and the august assembly which surrounded him, yet the dignity of conscious innocence, and the perfect reliance he had on the Supreme Judge of his judge, rendered him superior to every thing. His deportment was modest and respectful, yet did he discover no symptom of fear.

The sultan made a sign for every one present to withdraw, but one person who stood on the lower step of his throne, and whom Nourjahad judged to be his prime visier.

What hast thou to say, presumptuous man, said Schemerzad, in a stern voice, what excuse canst thou offer for daring, in contempt of my edict, to employ thy agent (during the time set apart for mourning) in going about the city from day to day; ostentatiously displaying thy ill-timed liberality amongst my subjects; endeavouring, as I am informed, to conciliate their affections, for purposes dangerous to me, and the safety of my crown. What hast thou to offer in answer to this charge?

Nourjahad prostrated himself to the ground. Mighty sultan, said he, I have nothing to offer in extenuation of

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my fault, with regard to the first part of the charge. I acknowledge that I distributed money amongst your majesty's subjects, and that at a time too when every act (but those of absolute necessity) was interdicted. I offer not to palliate this breach of my duty.—

Audacious wretch, interrupted the sultan, 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 riotous and intemperate abuse of that wealth, which ought to have been employed to better purposes.

Wouldst thou persuade me then, cried Schemerzad, that charity was thy motive! It was, illustrious sultan, replied Nourjahad; I have spoke the truth, and to convince your majesty that I have no sinister designs against the ever sacred person of my sovereign, I will now voluntarily yield up that treasure to thee, which had I been vile enough to have so employed, would have bought the fidelity of more than half thy subjects, though every man of them had stood near the heart, and throne of Schemerzad.

The undaunted manner in which Nourjahad spoke these words, made Schemerzad shake on his imperial seat; but quickly reassuming the majesty of his station, Do then as thou hast spoken, said he, and I will believe thee.

If your majesty will permit me, said Nourjahad, to go to my house, and will send a proper person with me, I will deliver up into his hands all my wealth, requesting no more than will supply my wants so long as heaven permits me to live.

I will not trust thee out of my sight, said Schemerzad; thou mayest as well instruct some one in my presence where to find the riches of which I hear thou art possessed, and I will send for them.

Nourjahad then informed the sultan of the subterraneous cave in his garden; and delivering him the key, told him he would there find all the wealth of which he was master.

Schemerzad immediately dispatched his visier, ordering him to have the riches he should find, immediately conveyed to his treasury. He then commanded Nourjahad to retire into a saloon, that was separated from the hall only by a curtain, and there wait the return of the visier; before whom, the sultan said he had some farther questions to put to him.

As the gardens of Nourjahad joined to those belonging to the royal palace, the visier was not long in going and returning. Nourjahad heard him talk to Schemerzad, and straight he was called on to come forth, and stand before the sultan: But Schemerzad now accosted him in a voice like thunder. Perfidious and insolent slave, said he, art thou not afraid of instant death falling on thee, for daring thus to falsify before thy sovereign lord and master? Say, before thou art cut off by torture from the face of the earth, where thou hast concealed thy wealth! for well thou knowest, there is nothing contained in that cave, which thou pretendest with so much care to lock up.

Nothing! replied Nourjahad, in amazement. By the head of our prophet, when I last was there, it contained more than would purchase thy whole empire a thousand times over. It was but the very day on which I was dragged to prison, that I saw it; the key has never since been out of my pocket; who then could possibly have conveyed away my treasure?

As Nourjahad applied himself to the visier whilst he spoke, that minister thinking himself reflected on by his words, replied scornfully, Thou thinkest perhaps it is I who have robbed thee, and that I have framed this story to deceive the sultan, and ruin thee. I do not say so, answered Nourjahad; but this I am sure of, that no human being but thyself knew where to find my treasure. Some dæmon, perhaps, replied the visier, with an air of contempt, has removed it thence.

Nourjahad now recollecting suddenly, that his guardian spirit had probably reclaimed this, as well as the other gift, replied coolly, It is not at all unlikely; a certain genius, who watches over my motions, has undoubtedly carried away my wealth.

Do not think, said the sultan, that affecting to be out of thy senses, shall preserve thee from my wrath.

Your majesty, said the visier, had best order that his head be instantly struck off, for daring to impose on your credulity, and abuse your clemency in suffering him to out-live that slave, who obstinately persisted in refusing to discover his master's riches.

Did Cozro do so? cried Nourjahad: He did, answered the visier; but we will see whether thou wilt persevere in the denial, and to the latest minute of thy life preserve the firmness of thy slave.

And who is it that thou callest a slave, thou minister of cruelty? said Nourjahad boldly: The soul of Cozro raised him infinitely more above thee, than the rank of the sultan of Persia lifts him above the meanest of his

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subjects. — My lord, pursued he, throwing himself at Schemerzad's feet, I have no other plea to offer for my life; I call Heaven to witness I have spoken nothing but the truth; the severest tortures you can inflict on me will extort no more. I was willing to make a voluntary sacrifice of my riches: I am now as ready to yield my life.

Art thou not then afraid to die? said Schemerzad.

No, mighty sultan, answered Nourjahad, I look upon death to a virtuous man, as the greatest good the Almighty can bestow!

The sultan, instead of making any reply, clapped his hands; and Nourjahad supposing it was a signal to have him seized and carried to execution, rose up, and stood with an intrepidity in his looks, that shewed how little he was affected with the near prospect of death.

But instead of the slaves whom he expected to see coming to lay hold on him, he beheld standing close to the throne of Schemerzad, his guardian genius, just in the same celestial form in which he had twice before appeared to him!

Awed and amazed, Nourjahad started back, and gazed at the heavenly vision. Not daring to trust his senses, he remained mute, and motionless, for some minutes; but he was roused from his deep attention, by a loud burst of laughter, which broke at once from the sultan, the visier, and the guardian genius.

This new and extraordinary incident threw Nourjahad into fresh astonishment; when, without giving him time to recover himself, the angelic youth, snatching from his head a circlet of flowers intermixed with precious stones, which encompassed his brows, and shaded a great part of his forehead; and at the same time throwing off a head of artificial hair which flowed in golden ringlets down his shoulders; a fine fall of brown hair which was concealed under it succeeded, dropping in light curls on his neck and blushing cheeks; and Nourjahad, in the person of his seraphic guide, discovered his beloved and beautiful Mandana!

Whatever transports the sight of her would at another time have inspired in the breast of Nourjahad, his faculties were now too much absorbed in wonder, to leave room for any other passion. Wherefore, not daring to approach her, the sultan, willing to put an end to his suspense, cried out, Look up, Nourjahad, raise thy eyes to thy master's face, no longer the angry Schemerzad, thy offended prince, but the real Schemzeddin, thy friend and kind protector.

Nourjahad, who before, out of respect and awful distance, had not ventured to look in the sultan's face, now fixed his eyes earnestly upon him. By the life of Schemerzad, said he, if I were not certain that all this is illusion, and that thy illustrious father, my royal and once beloved master, is dead, thou art so very like him, that I should swear that thou wert the real sultan Schemzeddin himself; such at thy years was his countenance and features.

The sultan at this burst into a second fit of laughter. And for whom, said the visier, (who had by this time taken off his turban, and a false beard which he wore) for whom wouldst thou take me?

By Mahomet, cried Nourjahad, falling back a step or two, I should take thee for my old friend Hasem, if I were not convinced that the good man died above twenty years ago.

It is time, said the sultan, descending from his throne, and taking Nourjahad by the hand, it is now time to undeceive thee, and explain to thee the mystery of all those extraordinary events, which seem to have bewildered thy senses.

Know then, Nourjahad, that the adventure of thy guardian genius was all a deception, and a piece of machinery of my contrivance. You are now convinced, by the evidence of your own eyes, that your celestial intelligence was no other than this young damsel.

I had a mind to make trial of thy heart, and for this purpose made choice of this charming virgin, for whom I own I had entertained a passion, but found I could not gain her affections. She had seen you from the windows of the womens apartments, walking with me in the gardens of the seraglio, and had conceived a tenderness for you, which he frankly confessed to me, declaring at the same time, she would never give her love to any other. Though she was my slave, I would not put a constraint upon her inclinations; but told her, if she would assist me faithfully in a design I had formed, I would reward her, by bestowing her on you.

She readily assented to my proposal, and having previously prepared every thing for my purpose, I equipped her as you see.

It was not difficult for me to introduce her into your chamber, by a private door which you know communicates between your apartments, and certain lodgings in my palace.

I myself stood at the door, whilst she entered as you slept, and contrived to throw that light into your chamber,

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which disclosed to you the wonderful vision. I overheard all your discourse, and could scarce contain my laughter, when you so greedily received that marvellous essence from Mandana; which you supposed would confer immortality; but which was in reality nothing more than a soporific drug, of so potent a nature, that the fumes of it alone, were capable of throwing the person who smelt to them into a profound sleep. It had quickly this effect on you; and I took that opportunity of conveying into your chamber those coffers which you thought contained such immense treasures; but which in truth were as great counterfeits as your guardian angel. The supposed precious stones, were nothing more than false gems, which I procured from a skilful lapidary, who had given them such an extraordinary polish and lustre, that they might well pass for jewels of inestimable value, on one better skilled in those matters than you were.

The ingots of gold were all base metal, which I got from the same artist. Nothing, in short, was real, but the money, part of which I was very willing to sacrifice to my experiment; though, as I have managed it, the largest sums which thou in thy extravagance hast expended, were returned into my coffers.

As I naturally supposed, that so long as the money lasted you would not have recourse to the other treasures, I was not afraid of having the fraud detected. The cave, which was an accidental circumstance, but of which I had long known, was by my contrivance made the repository of thy riches.

When thou wert settled in the full possession of thy imaginary felicity, thou mayst remember that Hasem was first recommended to thy service; Mandana too was amongst other slaves presented to thy view. No wonder that her charms captivated thy heart. Her love to thee was as pure as it was fervent; but thy boundless wishes were not to be restrained; and forgetting all the rational principles that thou didst at first lay down to regulate thy conduct, thou gavest thyself up to all manner of vile excesses, and didst shew the depravity of the human heart, when unrestrained by divine laws.

It was now time, I thought, to punish thee, and to shew thee the vanity of all earthly enjoyments. By opiates infused into thy wine that night on which thou didst debase thyself by drunkenness, I threw thee into a found sleep; and though it lasted not much longer than the usual term of ordinary repose, it yet gave me an opportunity of making such farther dispositions, as I thought necessary for the carrying on of my design.

I laid hold of this juncture to withdraw Mandana from thy arms, promising however to restore her to thee, if I found thee ever worthy of her.

I believe it is needless to inform you, that the confinement I laid you under was for no other end than to cut off all intercourse between you and any others than those of your own household, every one of whom were of my placing about you, even to the ladies of your seraglio, who were no others than the prettiest slaves I could find, amongst those who attended on my own women.

Every one entrusted with my secret, were tied down by the most solemn oaths to keep it inviolably; and this with a promise of reward, served, as the event has shewn, to secure their fidelity.

There was not an action of thy life but I was made acquainted with; and whilst thou didst triumph in the joys of my successful illusion, I sometimes pitied thy weakness, and sometimes laughed at thy extravagance.

That magnificent palace of which thou thoughtest thyself master, was one which I had borrowed for the purpose from an emir who was in my secret, and who was himself often present in disguise amongst your slaves, a witness to your extravagancies. I will not encrease thy confusion by reminding thee of the inordinate excesses thou wert guilty of in thy retirement. Thou canst not have forgot the project of creating for thyself an earthly paradise. This was the second crisis I laid hold on to punish thee; and by tearing thee from thy impious pleasures, to remind thee that crimes cannot be committed with impunity. A second sleep, procured as the former was, but of somewhat a longer duration, gave me full opportunity to make a total change in the face of thy affairs. Hasem (whom thou didst suppose to be dead) remained still secretly concealed in thy house, to be as it were the grand spring to move all the rest of thy domestics. The hags whom thou hadst imposed upon thee for the decayed beauties of thy seraglio, were really a set of notable old dames, whom he had tutored for the purpose: Thy former mistresses, who were insignificant slaves, were dismissed. She who personated the feigned Cadiga, acted her part to admiration, and with the artful contrivance of having a rose-bud painted on her breast, a mark which your young favourite really bore from nature, she had cunning and address enough to impose herself on you for the very Cadiga whom you formerly loved.

I believe, proceeded the sultan, you are by this time convinced, that there was nothing supernatural in the several events of your life, and that you were in reality nothing more than the dupe of your own folly and avarice.

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Thou mayst remember after this period, that, sated with voluptuousness, thy licentious heart began to grow hardened; and from rioting without controul in pleasures, which, however criminal in themselves, carry at least with them the excuse of temptation, thou wantonly didst stir up, and indulge the latent cruelty of thy nature. Thy ungoverned passions led thee to an act of blood! thou piercest with thy poniard the honest creature who remonstrated with thee on thy evil works; but Heaven did not, however, permit thee to deprive her of life.

See, Nourjahad, of what the heart of man is capable, when he shuts his eyes against the precepts of our holy prophet. Thou stoodst as it were alone in the creation, and self-dependent for thy own happiness or misery, thou lookedst not for rewards or punishments in that invisible world, from which thou thoughtest thyself by thy own voluntary act excluded.

This last barbarous deed, however, called aloud for chastisement; and thou wast for the third time deceived with a belief that thou hadst slept a number of years, in which many mortifying revolutions had happened in thy family.

I was now resolved to be myself an eye-witness of thy behaviour, and to try if there was any spark of virtue remaining in thy soul which could possibly be rekindled.

I disguised myself in the habit of a slave; and having altered my face, and my voice, I presented myself to thee under the name of Cozro. Thou knowest what passed between us on thy first awaking from thy compelled slumbers, and that I heard and saw with what indifference thou receivedst the news of my supposed death. But I will not reproach thee with ingratitude—let the memory of *that* be buried with the rest of thy errors.

I had soon the satisfaction to find that thou wast as it were a new man. The natural goodness of thy disposition, thy reason, thy experience of the deceitfulness of wordly enjoyments, joined to the remorse which thou couldst not help feeling, for a series of vice and folly, at length roused thee to a just sense of what thou owedst to the dignity of thy own nature, and to the duties incumbent on thee towards the rest of thy fellow-creatures.

I now discovered, with joy, that thou hadst intirely divested thyself of that insatiable love of pleasure, to which thou hadst before addicted thyself, and that thou no longer didst regard wealth, but as it enabled thee to do good. There was but one trial more remained. If, said I, his repentance be sincere, and he has that heroism of mind which is inseparable from the truly virtuous, he will not shrink at death; but, on the contrary, will look upon it as the only means by which he can obtain those refined enjoyments suited to the divine part of his nature, and which are as much superior in their essence, as they are in their duration to all the pleasures of sense.

I made the trial—The glorious victory, Oh Nourjahad, is thine! By thy contempt of riches, thou hast proved how well thou deservedst them; and thy readiness to die, shews how fit thou art to live.—

In the space of fourteen moons (for it is no longer since I first imposed on thy credulity the belief of thy miraculous state) thou hast had the experience of four times so many years. Such assuredly would be the vicissitudes of thy life, hadst thou in reality possessed what thou didst in imagination. Let this dream of existence then be a lesson to thee for the future, never to suppose that riches can ensure happiness; that the gratification of our passions can satisfy the human heart; or that the immortal part of our nature, will suffer us to taste unmixed felicity, in a world which was never meant for our final place of abode. Take thy amiable Mandana to thee for a wife, and receive the fixed confidence and love of Schemzeddin.

The history says that Nourjahad was from that minute raised to be the first man in power next to the sultan; that his wisdom and virtue proved an ornament and support to the throne of Persia during the course of a long and prosperous life; and that his name was famous throughout the Eastern world.

FINIS.
