



There was once a very old fisherman, so poor, that he could scarcely earn enough to maintain himself, his wife, and three children. He went every day to fish betimes in the morning; and imposed it as a law upon himself not to cast his nets above four times a day. He went one morning by moonlight, and coming to the seaside, undressed himself, and cast in his nets. As he drew them towards the shore, he found them very heavy, and thought he had a good draught of fish, at which he rejoiced within himself; but perceiving a moment after that, instead of fish, there was nothing in his nets but the carcass of an ass, he was much vexed.

When the fisherman, vexed to have made such a sorry draught, had mended his nets, which the carcass of the ass had broken in several places, he threw them in a second time; and, when he drew them, found a great deal of resistance, which made him think he had taken abundance of fish; but he found nothing except a basket full of gravel and slime, which grieved him extremely. 'O Fortune!' cried he in a lamentable tone, 'be not angry with me, nor persecute a wretch who prays thee to spare him. I came hither from my house to seek for my livelihood, and thou pronoucest death against me. I have no trade but this to subsist by; and, notwithstanding all the care I take, I can scarcely provide what is absolutely necessary for my family.'

Having finished this complaint, he threw away the basket in a fret, and washing his nets from the slime, cast them the third time; but brought up nothing except stones, shells, and mud. Nobody can express his dismay; he was almost beside himself. However, when the dawn began to appear, he did not forget to say his prayers, like a good Mussulman, and afterwards added this petition: 'Lord, thou knowest that I cast my nets only four times a day; I have already drawn them three times, without the least reward for my labour: I am only to cast them once more; I pray thee to render the sea favourable to me, as thou didst to Moses.'

The fisherman, having finished his prayer, cast his nets the fourth time; and when he thought it was time, he drew them as before, with great difficulty; but, instead of fish, found nothing in them but a vessel of yellow copper, which by its weight seemed to be full of something; and he observed that it was shut up and sealed, with a leaden seal upon it. This rejoiced him: 'I will sell it,' said he, 'at the foundry, and with the money arising from the produce buy a measure of corn.'

He examined the vessel on all sides, and shook it, to see if what was within made any noise, but heard nothing. This, with the impression of the seal upon the leaden cover, made him think there was something precious in it. To try this, he took a knife, and opened it with very little trouble. He presently turned the mouth downward, but nothing came out, which surprised him extremely. He set it before him, and while he looked upon it attentively, there came out a very thick smoke which obliged him to retire two or three paces away.

The smoke ascended to the clouds, and extending itself along the sea and upon the shore, formed a great mist, which, we may well imagine, did mightily astonish the fisherman. When the smoke was all out of the vessel, it reunited itself, and became a solid body, of which there was formed a genie twice as high as the greatest of giants. At the sight of a monster of such unwieldy bulk, the fisherman would fain have fled, but he was so frightened that he could not go one step.

'Solomon,' cried the genie immediately, 'Solomon, great prophet, pardon, pardon; I will never more oppose thy will, I will obey all thy commands.'

When the fisherman heard these words of the genie, he recovered his courage, and said to him, 'Proud spirit, what is it that you say? It is above eighteen hundred years since the prophet Solomon died, and we are now at the end of time. Tell me your history, and how you came to be shut up in this vessel.'

The genie, turning to the fisherman with a fierce look, said, 'You must speak to me with more civility; you are very bold to call me a proud spirit.'

'Very well,' replied the fisherman, 'shall I speak to you with more civility, and call you the owl of good luck?'

'I say,' answered the genie, 'speak to me more civilly, before I kill thee.'

'Ah!' replied the fisherman, 'why would you kill me? Did I not just now set you at liberty, and have you already forgotten it?'

'Yes, I remember it,' said the genie, 'but that shall not hinder me from killing thee: I have only one favour to grant thee.'

'And what is that?' said the fisherman.

'It is,' answered the genie, 'to give thee thy choice, in what manner thou wouldst have me take thy life.'



'But wherein have I offended you?' replied the fisherman. 'Is that your reward for the good service I have done you?'

'I cannot treat you otherwise,' said the genie; and that you may be convinced of it, hearken to my story.

'I am one of those rebellious spirits that opposed the will of Heaven: all the other genii owned Solomon, the great prophet, and submitted to him. Sacar and I were the only genii that would never be guilty of a mean thing: and, to avenge himself, that great monarch sent Asaph, the son of Barakhia, his chief minister, to apprehend me. That was accordingly done. Asaph seized my person, and brought me by force before his master's throne.

'Solomon, the son of David, commanded me to quit my way of living, to acknowledge his power, and to submit myself to his commands: I bravely refused to obey, and told him I would rather expose myself to his resentment than swear fealty, and submit to him, as he required. To punish me, he shut me up in this copper vessel; and to make sure that I should not break prison, he himself stamped upon this leaden cover his seal, with the great name of God engraver upon it. Then he gave the vessel to one of the genii who submitted to him, with orders to throw me into the sea, which was done, to my sorrow.

'During the first hundred years' imprisonment, I swore that if anyone would deliver me before the hundred years expired, I would make him rich, even after his death: but that century ran out, and nobody did me the good office. During the second, I made an oath that I would open all the treasures of the earth to anyone that should set me at liberty; but with no better success. In the third, I promised to make my deliverer a potent monarch, to be always near him in spirit, and to grant him every day three requests, of what nature soever they might be: but this century ran out as well as the two former, and I continued in prison. At last, being angry, or rather mad, to find myself a prisoner so long, I swore that if afterwards anyone should deliver me, I would kill him without mercy, and grant him no other favour but to choose what kind of death he would die; and, therefore, since you have delivered me to-day, I give you that choice.'

This tale afflicted the poor fisherman extremely: 'I am very unfortunate,' cried he, 'to have done such a piece of good service to one that is so ungrateful. I beg you to consider your injustice and to revoke such an unreasonable oath; pardon me, and heaven will pardon you; if you grant me my life, heaven will protect you from all attempts against yours.'

'No, thy death is resolved on,' said the genie, 'only choose how you will die.'

The fisherman, perceiving the genie to be resolute, was terribly grieved, not so much for himself as for his three children, and the misery they must be reduced to by his death. He endeavoured still to appease the genie, and said, 'Alas! be pleased to take pity on me, in consideration of the good service I have done you.'

'I have told thee already,' replied the genie, 'it is for that very reason I must kill thee.'

'That is very strange,' said the fisherman, 'are you resolved to reward good with evil? The proverb says, "He who does good to one who deserves it not is always ill rewarded." I must confess I thought it was

false; for in reality there can be nothing more contrary to reason, or to the laws of society. Nevertheless, I find now by cruel experience that it is but too true.'

'Do not lose time,' replied the genie, 'all thy reasonings shall not divert me from my purpose; make haste, and tell me which way you choose to die.'

Necessity is the mother of invention. The fisherman bethought himself of a stratagem. 'Since I must die then,' said he to the genie, 'I submit to the will of heaven; but, before I choose the manner of death, I conjure you by the great name which was engraver upon the seal of the prophet Solomon, the son of David, to answer me truly the question I am going to ask you.'

The genie finding himself bound to a positive answer trembled, and replied to the fisherman, 'Ask what thou wilt, but make haste.'

The genie having thus promised to speak the truth, the fisherman said to him, 'I wish to know if you were actually in this vessel. Dare you swear it by the Great Name?'

'Yes,' replied the genie, 'I do swear by that Great Name that I was; and it is a certain truth.'

'In good faith,' answered the fisherman, 'I cannot believe you. The vessel is not capable of holding one of your feet, and how is it possible that your whole body could lie in it?'

'I swear to thee, notwithstanding,' replied the genie, 'that I was there just as thou seest me here. Is it possible that thou dost not believe me after this great oath that I have taken?'

'Truly, I do not,' said the fisherman; 'nor will I believe you unless you show it me.'

Upon which the body of the genie was dissolved, and changed itself into smoke, extending itself as formerly upon the sea and shore, and then at last, being gathered together, it began to re-enter the vessel, which it continued to do by a slow and equal motion in a smooth and exact way, till nothing was left out, and immediately a voice said to the fisherman, 'Well, now, incredulous fellow, I am all in the vessel; do not you believe me now?'

The fisherman, instead of answering the genie, took the cover of lead, and speedily shut the vessel. 'Genie,' cried he, 'now it is your turn to beg my favour, and to choose which way I shall put you to death; but it is better that I should throw you into the sea, whence I took you: and then I will build a house upon the bank, where I will dwell, to give notice to all fishermen who come to throw in their nets to beware of such a wicked genie as thou art, who hast made an oath to kill him that shall set thee at liberty.'

The genie, enraged, did all he could to get out of the vessel again; but it was not possible for him to do it, for the impression of Solomon's seal prevented him. So, perceiving that the fisherman had got the advantage of him, he thought fit to dissemble his anger. 'Fisherman,' said he, in a pleasant tone, 'take heed you do not do what you say, for what I spoke to you before was only by way of jest, and you are to take it no otherwise.'

'Oh genie!' replied the fisherman, 'thou who wast but a moment ago the greatest of all genii, and now art the least of them, thy crafty discourse will avail thee nothing. Back to the sea thou shalt go. If thou hast been there already so long as thou hast told me, thou mayst very well stay there till the day of judgment. I begged of thee, in God's name, not to take away my life, and thou didst reject my prayers; I am obliged to treat thee in the same manner.'

The genie omitted nothing that might prevail upon the fisherman. 'Open the vessel,' said he; 'give me my liberty, I pray thee, and I promise to satisfy thee to thy heart's content.'

'Thou art a mere traitor,' replied the fisherman; 'I should deserve to lose my life if I were such a fool as to trust thee. Notwithstanding the extreme obligation thou wast under to me for having set thee at liberty, thou didst persist in thy design to kill me, I am obliged in my turn, to be as hard-hearted to thee.'

'My good friend fisherman,' replied the genie, 'I implore thee once more not to be guilty of such cruelty; consider that it is not good to avenge oneself, and that, on the other hand, it is commendable to return good for evil; do not treat me as Imama treated Ateca formerly.'

'And what did Imama do to Ateca?' replied the fisherman.

'Ho!' said the genie, 'if you have a mind to hear, open the vessel: do you think that I can be in a humour to tell stories in so strait a prison? I will tell you as many as you please when you let me out.'

'No,' said the fisherman, 'I will not let you out; it is vain to talk of it. I am just going to throw you to the bottom of the sea.'

'Hear me one word more,' cried the genie. 'I promise to do thee no hurt; nay, far from that, I will show thee how thou mayest become exceedingly rich.'

The hope of delivering himself from poverty prevailed with the fisherman.

'I might listen to you,' said he, 'were there any credit to be given to your word. Swear to me by the Great Name that you will faithfully perform what you promise, and I will open the vessel. I do not believe you will dare to break such an oath.'

The genie swore to him, and the fisherman immediately took off the covering of the vessel. At that very instant the smoke came out, and the genie having resumed his form as before, the first thing he did was to kick the vessel into the sea. This action frightened the fisherman.

'Genie,' said he, 'what is the meaning of that? Will you not keep the oath you just now made?'

The genie laughed at the fisherman's fear, and answered: 'No, fisherman, be not afraid; I only did it to please myself, and to see if thou wouldst be alarmed at it; but to persuade thee that I am in earnest, take thy nets and follow me.' As he spoke these words, he walked before the fisherman, who took up his nets, and followed him, but with some distrust.

They passed by the town, and came to the top of a mountain, from whence they descended into a vast plain, and presently to a great pond that lay betwixt four hills. When they came to the side of the pond, the genie said to the fisherman, 'Cast in thy nets and catch fish.' The fisherman did not doubt of catching some, because he saw a great number in the pond; but he was extremely surprised when he found that they were of four colours--white, red, blue, and yellow. He threw in his nets, and brought out one of each colour. Having never seen the like, he could not but admire them, and, judging that he might get a considerable sum for them, he was very joyful.

'Carry those fish,' said the genie, 'and present them to the sultan; he will give you more money for them than ever you had in your life. You may come every day to fish in this pond; and I give you warning not to throw in your nets above once a day, otherwise you will repent it. Take heed, and remember my advice.' Having spoken thus, he struck his foot upon the ground, which opened and swallowed up the genie.

The fisherman, being resolved to follow the genie's advice exactly, forebore casting in his nets a second time, and returned to the town very well satisfied with his fish, and making a thousand reflections upon his adventure. He went straight to the sultan's palace.

The sultan was much surprised when he saw the four fishes. He took them up one after another, and looked at them with attention; and, after having admired them a long time, he said to his first vizier, 'Take those fishes to the handsome cook-maid that the Emperor of the Greeks has sent me. I cannot imagine but that they must be as good as they are fine.'

The vizier carried them himself to the cook, and delivering them into her hands, 'Look,' said he, 'here are four fishes newly brought to the sultan; he orders you to dress them.' And having so said, he returned to the sultan his master, who ordered him to give the fisherman four hundred pieces of gold of the coin of that country, which he accordingly did.

The fisherman, who had never seen so much cash in his lifetime, could scarcely believe his own good fortune. He thought it must be a dream, until he found it to be real, when he provided necessaries for his family with it.

As soon as the sultan's cook had cleaned the fishes, she put them upon the fire in a frying-pan with oil; and when she thought them fried enough on one side, she turned them upon the other; but scarcely were they turned when the wall of the kitchen opened, and in came a young lady of wonderful beauty and comely size.

She was clad in flowered satin, after the Egyptian manner, with pendants in her ears, a necklace of large, pearls, bracelets of gold garnished with rubies, and a rod of myrtle in her hand. She came towards the frying-pan, to the great amazement of the cook, who stood stockstill at the sight and, striking one of the fishes with the end of the rod, said, 'Fish, fish, art thou in thy duty?'

The fish having answered nothing, she repeated these words and then the four fishes lifted up their heads all together, and said to her, 'Yes, yes; if you reckon, we reckon; if you pay your debts, we pay ours; if you fly, we overcome, and are content.' As soon as they had finished these words, the lady overturned the frying-pan, and entered again into the open part of the wall, which shut immediately, and became as it was before.

The cook was greatly frightened at this, and, on coming a little to herself, went to take up the fishes that had fallen upon the hearth, but found them blacker than coal, and not fit to be carried to the sultan. She was grievously troubled at it, and began to weep most bitterly. 'Alas!' said she, 'what will become of me if I tell the sultan what I have seen, I am sure he will not believe me, but will be enraged.'

While she was thus bewailing herself, in came the grand vizier, and asked her if the fishes were ready. She told him all that had happened, which we may easily imagine astonished him; but, without speaking a word of it to the sultan, he invented an excuse that satisfied him, and sending immediately for the fisherman, bade him bring four more such fish, for a misfortune had befallen the other ones. The fisherman, without saying anything of what the genie had told him, but in order to excuse himself from bringing them that very day, told the vizier that he had a long way to go for them, but would certainly bring them to-morrow.

Accordingly the fisherman went away by night, and, coming to the pond, threw in his nets betimes next morning, took four such fishes as before, and brought them to the vizier at the hour appointed. The minister took them himself, carried them to the kitchen, and shut himself up all alone with the cook: she cleaned them and put them on the fire, as she had done the four others the day before. When they were fried on one side, and she had turned them upon the other, the kitchen wall opened, and the same lady came in with the rod in her hand, struck one of the fishes, spoke to it as before, and all four gave her the same answer.

After the four fishes had answered the young lady, she overturned the frying-pan with her rod, and retired into the same place of the wall from whence she had come out. The grand vizier being witness to what had passed said, 'This is too surprising and extraordinary to be concealed from the sultan; I will inform him.' Which he accordingly did, and gave him a very faithful account of all that had happened.

The sultan, being much surprised, was impatient to see it for himself. He immediately sent for the fisherman, and said to him, 'Friend, cannot you bring me four more such fishes?'

The fisherman replied, 'If your majesty will be pleased to allow me three days' time, I will do it.' Having obtained his time, he went to the pond immediately, and at the first throwing in of his net, he caught four fishes, and brought them at once to the sultan. The sultan rejoiced at it, as he did not expect them so soon, and ordered him four hundred pieces of gold.

As soon as the sultan had received the fish, he ordered them to be carried into his room, with all that was necessary for frying them; and having shut himself up there with the vizier, the minister cleaned them, put them in the pan upon the fire, and when they were fried on one side, turned them upon the other; then the wall of the room opened, but instead of the young lady there came out a black man, in the dress of a slave, and of gigantic stature, with a great green staff in his hand. He advanced towards the pan, and touching one of the fishes with his staff, said to it in a terrific voice, 'Fish, art thou in thy duty?'

At these words, the fishes raised up their heads, and answered 'Yes, yes; we are; if you reckon, we reckon; if you pay your debts, we pay ours; if you fly, we overcome, and are content.'

The fishes had no sooner finished these words than the black man threw the pan into the middle of the room, and reduced the fishes to a coal. Having done this, he retired fiercely, and entering again into the hole of the wall, it shut, and appeared just as it did before.

'After what I have seen,' said the sultan to the vizier, 'it will not be possible for me to be easy in my mind. These fish without doubt signify something extraordinary.' He sent for the fisherman, and said to him, 'Fisherman, the fishes you have brought us make me very uneasy; where did you catch them?'

'Sir,' answered he, 'I fished for them in a pond situated between four hills, beyond the mountain that we see from here.'

Know'st thou that pond?' said the sultan to the vizier,

'No, sir,' replied the vizier, 'I never so much as heard of it: and yet it is not sixty years since I hunted beyond that mountain and thereabouts.'

The sultan asked the fisherman how far was the pond from the palace.

The fisherman answered that it was not above three hours' journey.

Upon this, there being daylight enough beforehand, the sultan commanded all his court to take horse, and the fisherman served them for a guide. They all ascended the mountain, and at the foot of it they saw, to their great surprise, a vast plain, that nobody had observed till then, and at last they came to the pond which they found really to be situated between four hills, as the fisherman had said. The water of it was so transparent that they observed all the fishes to be like those which the fisherman had brought to the palace. The sultan stood upon the bank of the pond, and after beholding the fishes with admiration, he demanded of his emirs and all his courtiers if it was possible that they had never seen this pond, which was within so little a way of the town.





They all answered that they had never so much as heard of it.

'Since you all agree,' said he, 'that you never heard of it, and as I am no less astonished than you are, I am resolved not to return to my palace till I know how this pond came here, and why all the fish in it are of four colours.' Having spoken thus he ordered his court to encamp; and immediately his pavilion and the tents of his household were pitched upon the banks of the pond.

When night came, the sultan retired to his pavilion and spoke to the grand vizier by himself.

'Vizier, my mind is very uneasy; this pond transported hither; the black man that appeared to us in my room. and the fishes that we heard speak; all this does so much excite my curiosity that I cannot resist the impatient desire I have to satisfy it. To this end I am resolved to withdraw alone from the camp, and I order you to keep my absence secret.'

The grand vizier said much to turn the sultan from this design. But it was to no purpose; the sultan was resolved on it, and would go. He put on a suit fit for walking, and took his scimitar; and as soon as he saw that all was quiet in the camp, he went out alone, and went over one of the hills without much difficulty. He found the descent still more easy, and, when he came to the plain, walked on till the sun rose, and then he saw before him, at a considerable distance, a great building. He rejoiced at the sight, and hoped to learn there what he wanted to know. When he came near, he found it was a magnificent palace, or rather a very strong castle, of fine black polished marble, and covered with fine steel, as smooth as a looking-glass. Being highly pleased that he had so speedily met with something worthy of his curiosity, he stopped before the front of the castle, and considered it attentively.

The gate had two doors, one of them open; and though he might have entered, he yet thought it best to knock. He knocked at first softly, and waited for some time. Seeing nobody, and supposing they had not heard him, he knocked harder the second time, and then neither seeing nor hearing anybody, he knocked again and again. But nobody appeared, and it surprised him extremely; for he could not think that a castle in such good repair was without inhabitants. 'If there is nobody in it, said he to himself, 'I have nothing to fear; and if there is, I have wherewith to defend myself.'

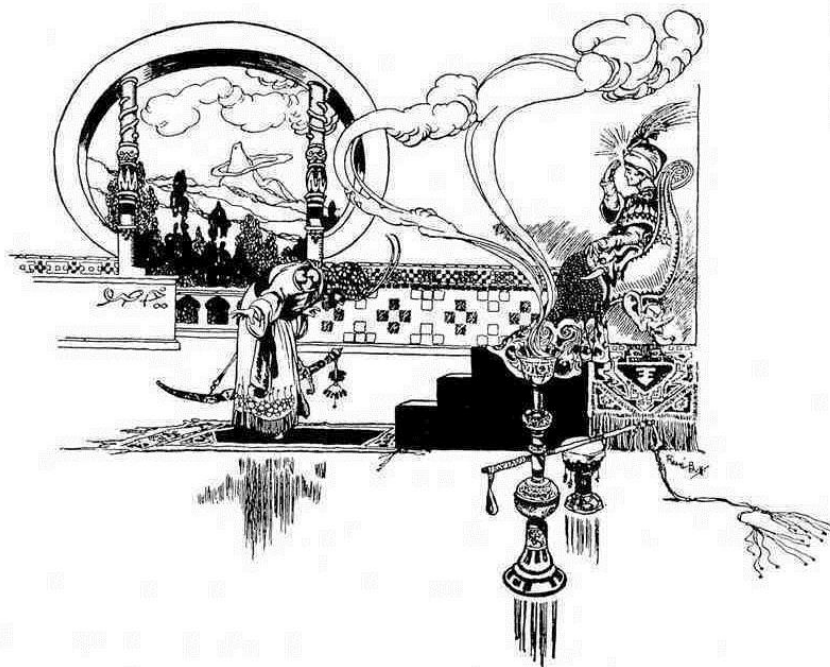
At last he entered, and when he came within the porch, he called out, 'Is there nobody here to receive a stranger, who comes in for some refreshment as he passes by?' He repeated the same two or three times; but though he shouted, nobody answered. The silence increased his astonishment he came into a very spacious court, and looked on every side, to see if he could perceive anybody; but he saw no living thing.

Perceiving nobody in the court, the sultan entered the great halls, which were hung with silk tapestry; the alcoves and sofas were covered with stuffs of Mecca, and the porches with the richest stuffs of India, mixed with gold and silver. He came afterwards into a magnificent court, in the middle of which was a great fountain, with a lion of massive gold at each corner; water issued from the mouths of the four lions, and this water, as it fell, formed diamonds and pearls, while a jet of water, springing from the middle of the fountain, rose almost as high as a cupola painted after the Arabian manner.

On three sides the castle was surrounded by a garden, with flower-pots, fountains, groves, and a thousand other fine things; and to complete the beauty of the place, an infinite number of birds filled the air with their harmonious songs, and always stayed there, nets being spread over the trees, and fastened to the palace to keep them in. The sultan walked a long time from apartment to apartment, where he found everything very grand and magnificent. Being tired with walking, he sat down in a room which had a view over the garden, and there reflected upon what he had already seen, when all of a sudden he heard lamentable cries.

He listened with attention, and distinctly heard these sad words: 'O Fate! thou who wouldst not suffer me longer to enjoy a happy lot, and hast made me the most unfortunate man in the world, forbear to persecute me, and by a speedy death put an end to my sorrows. Alas! is it possible that I am still alive, after so many torments as I have suffered?'

The sultan, touched at these pitiful complaints, rose up, and made toward the place whence he heard the voice; and when he came to the gate of a great hall, he opened it, and saw a handsome young man, richly dressed, seated upon a throne raised a little above the ground. Melancholy was painted on his looks. The sultan drew near, and saluted him; the young man returned him his salute, by a low bow with his head; but not being able to rise up, he said to the sultan, 'My lord, I am very sure you deserve that I should rise up to receive you, and do you all possible honour; but I am hindered from doing so by a very sad reason, and therefore hope you will not take it ill.'



'My lord,' replied the sultan, 'I am very much obliged to you for having so good an opinion of me: as to your not rising, whatever your excuse may be, I heartily accept it. Being drawn hither by your complaints, and distressed by your grief, I come to offer you my help. I flatter myself that you would willingly tell me the history of your misfortunes; but pray tell me first the meaning of the pond near the

palace, where the fishes are of four colours. What is this castle? how came you to be here? and why are you alone?'

Instead of answering these questions, the young man began to weep bitterly. 'How inconstant is fortune!' cried he: 'she takes pleasure in pulling down those she had raised up. Where are they who enjoy quietly their happiness, and whose day is always clear and serene?'

The sultan, moved with compassion, prayed him forthwith to tell him the cause of his excessive grief. 'Alas! my lord,' replied the young man, 'how can I but grieve, and my eyes be inexhaustible fountains of tears?' At these words, he lifted up his gown, and showed the sultan that he was a man only from the head to the waist, and that the other half of his body was black marble.

The sultan was strangely surprised when he saw the deplorable condition of the young man. 'That which you show me,' said he, 'while it fills me with horror, so excites my curiosity that I am impatient to hear your history, which, no doubt, is very extraordinary, and I am persuaded that the pond and the fishes have some part in it; therefore I beg you to tell it me. You will find some comfort in doing so, since it is certain that unfortunate people obtain some sort of ease in telling their misfortunes.'

'I will not refuse you this satisfaction,' replied the young man, 'though I cannot do it without renewing my grief. But I give you notice beforehand, to prepare your ears, your mind, and even your eyes, for things which surpass all that the most extraordinary imagination can conceive.'

'You must know, my lord,' he began, 'that my father Mahmoud was king of this country. This is the kingdom of the Black Isles, which takes its name from the four little neighbouring mountains; for those mountains were formerly islands: the capital, where the king, my father, had his residence, was where that pond now is. 'The king, my father, died when he was seventy years of age; I had no sooner succeeded him than I married, and the lady I chose to share the royal dignity with me was my cousin. Nothing was comparable to the good understanding between us, which lasted for five years. At the end of that time I perceived that the queen, my cousin, took no more delight in me.'

'One day I was inclined to sleep after dinner, and lay down upon a sofa. Two of her ladies came and sat down, one at my head, and the other at my feet, with fans in their hands to moderate the heat, and to hinder the flies from troubling me.'

They thought I was fast asleep, and spoke very low; but I only shut my eyes, and heard every word they said. 'One of them said to the other, "Is not the queen much in the wrong not to love such an amiable prince as this?" "'Certainly," replied the other; "for my part, I do not understand it. Is it possible that he does not perceive it?"

"'Alas!" said the first, "how would you have him perceive it? She mixes every evening in his drink the juice of a certain herb, which makes him sleep so soundly that she has time to go where she pleases; then she wakes him by the smell of something she puts under his nose."

'You may guess, my lord, how much I was surprised at this conversation; yet, whatever emotion it excited in me, I had command enough over myself to dissemble, and pretended to awake without having heard one word of it.

'The queen returned, and with her own hand presented me with a cup full of such water as I was accustomed to drink; but instead of putting it into my mouth, I went to a window that was open, and threw out the water so quickly that she did not notice it, and I put the cup again into her hands, to persuade her that I had drunk it.

'Soon after, believing that I was asleep, though I was not, she got up with little precaution, and said, so loudly, that I could hear it distinctly, "Sleep, and may you never wake again!"

'As soon as the queen, my wife, went out, I got up in haste, took my scimitar, and followed her so quickly, that I soon heard the sound of her feet before me, and then walked softly after her, for fear of being heard. She passed through several gates, which opened on her pronouncing some magical words; and the last she opened was that of the garden, which she entered. I stopped there that she might not perceive me, and looking after her as far as the darkness permitted, I perceived that she entered a little wood, whose walks were guarded by thick palisades. I went thither by another way, and slipping behind the palisades of a long walk, I saw her walking there with a man.

'I listened carefully, and heard her say, "I do not deserve to be upbraided by you for want of diligence; you need but command me, you know my power. I will, if you desire it, before sunrise, change this great city, and this fine palace, into frightful ruins, which shall be inhabited by nothing but wolves, owls, and ravens. If you wish me to transport all the stones of those walls, so solidly built, beyond the Caucasus, and out of the bounds of the habitable world, speak but the word, and all shall undergo a change."

'As the queen finished these words, the man and she came to the end of the walk, turned to enter another, and passed before me. I had already drawn my scimitar, and the man being nearest to me, I struck him on the neck, and made him fall to the ground.



I thought I had killed him, and therefore retired speedily, without making myself known to the queen, whom I chose to spare, because she was my kinswoman.

'The blow I had given was mortal; but she preserved his life by the force of her enchantments; in such a manner, however, that he could not be said to be either dead or alive. As I crossed the garden, to return to the palace, I heard the queen cry out lamentably.

'When I returned home, being satisfied with having punished the villain, I went to sleep; and, when I

awoke next morning, found the queen there too.

'Whether she slept or not I cannot tell, but I got up and went out without making any noise. I held my council, and at my return the queen, clad in mourning, her hair hanging about her eyes, and part of it torn off, presented herself before me, and said: "Sir, I come to beg your majesty not to be surprised to see me in this condition. I have just now received, all at once, three afflicting pieces of news."

"Alas! what is the news, madam?" said I.

"The death of the queen my dear mother," answered she; "that of the king my father, killed in battle; and that of one of my brothers, who has fallen down a precipice."

'I was not ill-pleased that she made use of this pretext to hide the true cause of her grief. "Madam," said I, "I am so far from blaming your grief that I assure you I share it. I should very much wonder if you were insensible of so great a loss. Mourn on, your tears are so many proofs of your good nature. I hope, however, that time and reason will moderate your grief."

'She retired into her apartment, and gave herself wholly up to sorrow, spending a whole year in mourning and afflicting herself. At the end of that time she begged leave of me to build a burying-place for herself, within the bounds of the palace, where she would remain, she told me, to the end of her days. I agreed, and she built a stately palace, with a cupola, that may be seen from hence, and she called it the Palace of Tears. When it was finished she caused the wounded ruffian to be brought thither from the place where she had caused him to be carried the same night, for she had hindered his dying by a drink she gave him. This she carried to him herself every day after he came to the Palace of Tears.

'Yet with all her enchantments she could not cure the wretch. He was not only unable to walk and to help himself, but had also lost the use of his speech, and gave no sign of life but by his looks. Every day she made him two long visits. I was very well informed of all this, but pretended to know nothing of it.

'One day I went out of curiosity to the Palace of Tears to see how the queen employed herself, and going to a place where she could not see me, I heard her speak thus to the scoundrel: "I am distressed to the highest degree to see you in this condition. I am as sensible as yourself of the tormenting pain you endure, but, dear soul, I constantly speak to you, and you do not answer me; how long will you be silent? Speak only one word. I would prefer the pleasure of always seeing you to the empire of the universe."

'At these words, which were several times interrupted by her sighs and sobs, I lost all patience, and, showing myself, came up to her, and said, "Madam, you have mourned enough. It is time to give over this sorrow, which dishonours us both. You have too much forgotten what you owe to me and to yourself."

"Sir," said she, "if you have any kindness left for me, I beseech you to put no restraint upon me. Allow me to give myself up to mortal grief, which it is impossible for time to lessen."

'When I saw that what I said, instead of bringing her to her duty, served only to increase her rage, I gave over, and retired. She continued for two whole years to give herself up to excessive grief.

'I went a second time to the Palace of Tears while she was there. I hid myself again, and heard her speak thus: "It is now three years since you spoke one word to me. Is it from insensibility or contempt? No, no, I believe nothing of it. O tomb! tell me by what miracle thou becamest the depository of the rarest treasure that ever was in the world."

'I must confess I was enraged at these words, for, in short, this creature so much doted upon, this adored mortal, was not such an one as you might imagine him to have been. He was a black Indian, a native of that country. I say I was so enraged that I appeared all of a sudden, and addressing the tomb in my turn, cried, "O tomb! why dost not thou swallow up this pair of monsters?"

'I had scarcely finished these words when the queen, who sat by the Indian, rose up like a fury. "Cruel man!" said she, "thou art the cause of my grief. I have dissembled it but too long; it is thy barbarous hand which hath brought him into this lamentable condition, and thou art so hard-hearted as to come and insult me.'

"Yes," said I, in a rage, "it was I who chastised that monster according to his deserts. I ought to have treated thee in the same manner. I repent now that I did not do it. Thou hast abused my goodness too long."

'As I spoke these words I drew out my scimitar, and lifted up my hand to punish her; but she, steadfastly beholding me, said, with a jeering smile, "Moderate thy anger." At the same time she pronounced words I did not understand, and added, "By virtue of my enchantments, I command thee immediately to become half marble and half man." Immediately I became such as you see me now, a dead man among the living, and a living man among the dead.

'After this cruel magician, unworthy of the name of a queen, had metamorphosed me thus, and brought me into this hall, by another enchantment she destroyed my capital, which was very flourishing and full of people; she abolished the houses, the public places and markets, and reduced it to the pond and desert field, which you may have seen; the fishes of four colours in the pond are the four sorts of people, of different religions, who inhabited the place. The white are the Mussulmans; the red, the Persians, who worship fire; the blue, the Christians; and the yellow, the Jews. The four little hills were the four islands that gave the name to this kingdom.

I learned all this from the magician, who, to add to my distress, told me with her own mouth these effects of her rage. But this is not all; her revenge was not satisfied with the destruction of my dominions, and the metamorphosis of my person; she comes every day, and gives me over my naked shoulders an hundred blows with an ox-goad, which makes me all over gore; and, when she has done, she covers me with a coarse stuff of goat's-hair, and throws over it this robe of brocade that you see, not to do me honour, but to mock me.'

After this, the young king could not restrain his tears; and the sultan's heart was so pierced with the story, that he could not speak one word to comfort him. Presently he said: 'Tell me whither this perfidious magician retires, and where may be the unworthy wretch who is buried before his death.'

'My lord,' replied the prince, 'the man, as I have already told you, is in the Palace of Tears, in a handsome tomb in form of a dome, and that palace joins the castle on the side of the gate. As to the magician, I cannot tell precisely whither she retires, but every day at sunrise she goes to see him, after having executed her vengeance upon me, as I have told you; and you see I am not in a condition to defend myself against such great cruelty. She carries him the drink with which she has hitherto prevented his dying, and always complains of his never speaking to her since he was wounded.'

'Unfortunate prince,' said the sultan, 'never did such an extraordinary misfortune befall any man, and those who write your history will be able to relate something that surpasses all that has ever yet been written.'

While the sultan discoursed with the young prince, he told him who he was, and for what end he had entered the castle; and thought of a plan to release him and punish the enchantress, which he communicated to him. In the meantime, the night being far spent, the sultan took some rest; but the poor young prince passed the night without sleep, as usual, having never slept since he was enchanted; but he had now some hope of being speedily delivered from his misery.

Next morning the sultan got up before dawn, and, in order to execute his design, he hid in a corner his upper garment, which would have encumbered him, and went to the Palace of Tears. He found it lit up with an infinite number of tapers of white wax, and a delicious scent issued from several boxes of fine gold, of admirable workmanship, all ranged in excellent order. As soon as he saw the bed where the Indian lay, he drew his scimitar, killed the wretch without resistance, dragged his corpse into the court of the castle, and threw it into a well. After this, he went and lay down in the wretch's bed, took his scimitar with him under the counterpane, and waited there to execute his plan.

The magician arrived after a little time. She first went into the chamber where her husband the King of the Black Islands was, stripped him, and beat him with the ox-goad in a most barbarous manner. The poor prince filled the palace with his lamentations to no purpose, and implored her in the most touching manner to have pity on him; but the cruel woman would not give over till she had given him an hundred blows.

'You had no compassion,' said she, 'and you are to expect none from me.'

After the enchantress had given the king, her husband, an hundred blows with the ox-goad, she put on again his covering of goat's-hair, and his brocade gown over all; then she went to the Palace of Tears, and, as she entered, she renewed her tears and lamentations; then approaching the bed, where she thought the Indian was: 'Alas!' cried she, addressing herself unawares to the sultan; 'my sun, my life,' will you always be silent? Are you resolved to let me die, without giving me one word of comfort. My soul, speak one word to me at least, I implore you.'

The sultan, as if he had waked out of a deep sleep, and counterfeiting the language of the Indians, answered the queen in a grave tone, 'There is no strength or power but in God alone, who is almighty.'

At these words the enchantress, who did not expect them, gave a great shout, to signify her excessive joy. 'My dear lord,' cried she, 'do I deceive myself? Is it certain that I hear you, and that you speak to me?'

'Unhappy wretch,' said the sultan, 'art thou worthy that I should answer thee?'

'Alas!' replied the queen, 'why do you reproach me thus?'

'The cries,' replied he, 'the groans and tears of thy husband, whom thou treatest every day with so much indignity and barbarity, hinder me from sleeping night and day. I should have been cured long ago, and have recovered the use of my speech, hadst thou disenchanting him. That is the cause of the silence which you complain of.'

'Very well,' said the enchantress; 'to pacify you, I am ready to do whatever you command me. Would you have me restore him as he was?'

'Yes,' replied the sultan, 'make haste and set him at liberty, that I be no more disturbed with his cries.'

The enchantress went immediately out of the Palace of Tears. she took a cup of water, and pronounced words over it, which caused it to boil, as if it had been on the fire. Then she went into the hall, to the young king her husband, and threw the water upon him, saying, 'If the Creator of all things did form thee so as thou art at present, or if He be angry with thee, do not change. But if thou art in that condition merely by virtue of my enchantments, resume thy natural shape, and become what thou wast before.'

She had scarcely spoken these words, when the prince, finding himself restored to his former condition, rose up freely, with all imaginable joy, and returned thanks to God.

Then the enchantress said to him, 'Get thee gone from this castle, and never return here on pain of death!'

The young king, yielding to necessity, went away from the enchantress, without replying a word, and retired to a remote place, where he patiently awaited the success of the plan which the sultan had so happily begun.

Meanwhile the enchantress returned to the Palace of Tears and, supposing that she still spoke to the black man, said 'Dearest, I have done what you ordered.'

The sultan continued to counterfeit the language of the blacks. 'That which you have just now done,' said he, 'is not sufficient for my cure. You have only eased me of part of my disease; you must cut it up by the roots.'

'My lovely black man,' replied she, 'what do you mean by the roots?'



'Unfortunate woman,' replied the sultan, 'do you not understand that I mean the town, and its inhabitants, and the four islands, which thou hast destroyed by thy enchantments? The fishes every night at midnight raise their heads out of the pond, and cry for vengeance against thee and me. This is the root cause of the delay of my cure. Go speedily, restore things as they were, and at thy return I will give thee my hand, and thou shalt help me to rise.'

The enchantress, filled with hope from these words, cried out in a transport of joy, 'My heart, my soul, you shall soon be restored to health, for I will immediately do what you command me.' Accordingly she went that moment, and when she came to the brink of the pond, she took a little water in her hand, and sprinkling it, she pronounced some words over the fishes and the pond, and the city was immediately restored. The fishes became men, women, and children; Mahometans, Christians, Persians, or Jews; freemen or slaves, as they were before; every one having recovered his natural form. The houses and shops were immediately filled with their inhabitants, who found all things as they were before the enchantment. The sultan's numerous retinue, who had encamped in the largest square, were astonished to see themselves in an instant in the middle of a large, handsome, and well-peopled city.

To return to the enchantress. As soon as she had effected this wonderful change, she returned with all diligence to the Palace of Tears. 'My dear,' she cried, as she entered, 'I come to rejoice with you for the return of your health: I have done all that you required of me; then pray rise, and give me your hand.'

'Come near,' said the sultan, still counterfeiting the language of the blacks. She did so. 'You are not near enough,' said he, 'come nearer.' She obeyed. Then he rose up, and seized her by the arm so suddenly, that she had not time to discover who it was, and with a blow of his scimitar cut her in two, so that one half fell one way, and the other another. This done, he left the carcass at the place, and going out of the Palace of Tears, he went to look for the young King of the Black Isles, who was waiting for him with great impatience. 'Prince,' said he, embracing him, 'rejoice; you have nothing to fear now; your cruel enemy is dead.'

The young prince returned thanks to the sultan in such a manner as showed that he was thoroughly sensible of the kindness that he had done him, and in return, wished him a long life and all happiness. 'You may henceforward,' said the sultan, 'dwell peaceably in your capital, unless you will go to mine, where you shall be very welcome, and have as much honour and respect shown you as if you were at home.'

'Potent monarch, to whom I am so much indebted,' replied the king, 'you think, then, that you are very near your capital?'

'Yes,' said the sultan, 'I know it; it is not above four or five hours' journey.'

'It will take you a whole year,' said the prince. 'I do believe, indeed, that you came hither from your capital in the time you speak of, because mine was enchanted; but since the enchantment is taken off, things are changed. However, this shall not prevent my following you, were it to the utmost corners of the earth. You are my deliverer, and that I may show you that I shall acknowledge this during my whole life, I am willing to accompany you, and to leave my kingdom without regret.'

The sultan was extremely surprised to learn that he was so far from his dominions, and could not imagine how it could be. But the young King of the Black Islands convinced him beyond a possibility of doubt. Then the sultan replied, 'It is no matter: the trouble of returning to my own country is sufficiently recompensed by the satisfaction of having obliged you, and by acquiring you for a son; for since you will do me the honour to accompany me, as I have no child, I look upon you as such, and from this moment I appoint you my heir and successor.'

The conversation between the sultan and the King of the Black Islands concluded with the most affectionate embraces; after which the young prince was totally taken up in making preparations for his journey, which were finished in three weeks' time, to the great regret of his court and subjects, who agreed to receive at his hands one of his nearest kindred for their king.

At last the sultan and the young prince began their journey, with a hundred camels laden with inestimable riches from the treasury of the young king, followed by fifty handsome gentlemen on horseback, well mounted and dressed. They had a very happy journey; and when the sultan, who had sent couriers to give notice of his delay, and of the adventure which had occasioned it, came near his capital, the principal officers he had left there came to receive him, and to assure him that his long absence had occasioned no alteration in his empire. The inhabitants came out also in great crowds, received him with acclamations, and made public rejoicings for several days.

On the day after his arrival, the sultan gave all his courtiers a very ample account of the events which, contrary to his expectation, had detained him so long. He told them he had adopted the King of the Four Black Islands, who was willing to leave a great kingdom to accompany and live with him; and as a reward for their loyalty, he made each of them presents according to their rank.

As for the fisherman, since he was the first cause of the deliverance of the young prince, the sultan gave him a plentiful fortune, which made him and his family happy for the rest of their days.

