

What the Rose Did to the Cypress

by Andrew Lang

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What the Rose did to the Cypress [1]

Once upon a time a great king of the East, named Saman-lalposh, [2] had three brave and clever sons--Tahmasp, Qamas, and Almas-ruh-baksh. [3] One day, when the king was sitting in his hall of audience, his eldest son, Prince Tahmasp, came before him, and after greeting his father with due respect, said: 'O my royal father! I am tired of the town; if you will give me leave, I will take my servants to-morrow and will go into the country and hunt on the hill-skirts; and when I have taken some game I will come back, at evening-prayer time.' His father consented, and sent with him some of his own trusted servants, and also hawks, and falcons, hunting dogs, cheetahs and leopards.

At the place where the prince intended to hunt he saw a most beautiful deer. He ordered that it should not be killed, but trapped or captured with a noose. The deer looked about for a place where he might escape from the ring of the beaters, and spied one unwatched close to the prince himself. It bounded high and leaped right over his head, got out of the ring, and tore like the eastern wind into the waste. The prince put spurs to his horse and pursued it; and was soon lost to the sight of his followers. Until the world-lighting sun stood above his head in the zenith he did not take his eyes off the deer; suddenly it disappeared behind some rising ground, and with all his search he could not find any further trace of it. He was now drenched in sweat, and he breathed with pain; and his horse's tongue hung from its mouth with thirst. He dismounted and toiled on, with bridle on arm, praying and casting himself on the mercy of heaven. Then his horse fell and

surrendered its life to God. On and on he went across the sandy waste, weeping and with burning breast, till at length a hill rose into sight. He mustered his strength and climbed to the top, and there he found a giant tree whose foot kept firm the wrinkled earth, and whose crest touched the very heaven. Its branches had put forth a glory of leaves, and there were grass and a spring underneath it, and flowers of many colours.

Gladdened by this sight, he dragged himself to the water's edge, drank his fill, and returned thanks for his deliverance from thirst.

He looked about him and, to his amazement, saw close by a royal seat. While he was pondering what could have brought this into the merciless desert, a man drew near who was dressed like a faqir, and had bare head and feet, but walked with the free carriage of a person of rank. His face was kind, and wise and thoughtful, and he came on and spoke to the prince.

'O good youth! how did you come here? Who are you? Where do you come from?'

The prince told everything just as it had happened to him, and then respectfully added: 'I have made known my own circumstances to you, and now I venture to beg you to tell me your own. Who are you? How did you come to make your dwelling in this wilderness?'

To this the faqir replied: 'O youth! it would be best for you to have nothing to do with me and to know nothing of my fortunes, for my story is fit neither for telling nor for hearing.' The prince, however, pleaded so hard to be told, that at last there was nothing to be done but to let him hear.

'Learn and know, O young man! that I am King Janangir [4] of Babylon, and that once I had army and servants, family and treasure; untold wealth and belongings. The Most High God gave me seven

sons who grew up well versed in all princely arts. My eldest son heard from travellers that in Turkistan, on the Chinese frontier, there is a king named Quimus, the son of Timus, and that he has an only child, a daughter named Mihr-afruz, [5] who, under all the azure heaven, is unrivalled for beauty. Princes come from all quarters to ask her hand, and on one and all she imposes a condition. She says to them: "I know a riddle; and I will marry anyone who answers it, and will bestow on him all my possessions. But if a suitor cannot answer my question I cut off his head and hang it on the battlements of the citadel." The riddle she asks is, "What did the rose do to the cypress?"

'Now, when my son heard this tale, he fell in love with that unseen girl, and he came to me lamenting and bewailing himself. Nothing that I could say had the slightest effect on him. I said: "Oh my son! if there must be fruit of this fancy of yours, I will lead forth a great army against King Quimus. If he will give you his daughter freely, well and good; and if not, I will ravage his kingdom and bring her away by force." This plan did not please him; he said: "It is not right to lay a kingdom waste and to destroy a palace so that I may attain my desire. I will go alone; I will answer the riddle, and win her in this way." At last, out of pity for him, I let him go. He reached the city of King Quimus. He was asked the riddle and could not give the true answer; and his head was cut off and hung upon the battlements. Then I mourned him in black raiment for forty days.

After this another and another of my sons were seized by the same desire, and in the end all my seven sons went, and all were killed. In grief for their death I have abandoned my throne, and I abide here in this desert, withholding my hand from all State business and wearing myself away in sorrow.'

Prince Tahmasp listened to this tale, and then the arrow of love for that unseen girl struck his heart also. Just at this moment of his ill-fate his people came up, and gathered round him like moths round a light. They brought him a horse, fleet as the breeze of the dawn; he set his

willing foot in the stirrup of safety and rode off. As the days went by the thorn of love rankled in his heart, and he became the very example of lovers, and grew faint and feeble. At last his confidants searched his heart and lifted the veil from the face of his love, and then set the matter before his father, King Saman-lal-posh. 'Your son, Prince Tahmasp, loves distractedly the Princess Mihr-afruz, daughter of King Quimus, son of Timus.' Then they told the king all about her and her doings. A mist of sadness clouded the king's mind, and he said to his son: 'If this thing is so, I will in the first place send a courier with friendly letters to King Quimus, and will ask the hand of his daughter for you. I will send an abundance of gifts, and a string of camels laden with flashing stones and rubies of Badakhsham In this way I will bring her and her suite, and I will give her to you to be your solace. But if King Quimus is unwilling to give her to you, I will pour a whirlwind of soldiers upon him, and I will bring to you, in this way, that most consequential of girls.' But the prince said that this plan would not be right, and that he would go himself, and would answer the riddle. Then the king's wise men said: 'This is a very weighty matter; it would be best to allow the prince to set out accompanied by some persons in whom you have confidence. Maybe he will repent and come back.' So King Saman ordered all preparations for the journey to be made, and then Prince Tahmasp took his leave and set out, accompanied by some of the courtiers, and taking with him a string of two-humped and raven-eyed camels laden with jewels, and gold, and costly stuffs.

By stage after stage, and after many days' journeying, he arrived at the city of King Quimus. What did he see? A towering citadel whose foot kept firm the wrinkled earth, and whose battlements touched the blue heaven. He saw hanging from its battlements many heads, but it had not the least effect upon him that these were heads of men of rank; he listened to no advice about laying aside his fancy, but rode up to the gate and on into the heart of the city. The place was so splendid that the eyes of the ages have never seen its like, and there, in an open square, he found a tent of crimson satin set up, and beneath it two

jewelled drums with jewelled sticks. These drums were put there so that the suitors of the princess might announce their arrival by beating on them, after which some one would come and take them to the king's presence. The sight of the drums stirred the fire of Prince Tahmasp's love. He dismounted, and moved towards them; but his companions hurried after and begged him first to let them go and announce him to the king, and said that then, when they had put their possessions in a place of security, they would enter into the all important matter of the princess. The prince, however, replied that he was there for one thing only; that his first duty was to beat the drums and announce himself as a suitor, when he would be taken, as such, to the king, who would then give him proper lodgment. So he struck upon the drums, and at once summoned an officer who took him to King Quimus.

When the king saw how very young the prince looked, and that he was still drinking of the fountain of wonder, he said: 'O youth! leave aside this fancy which my daughter has conceived in the pride of her beauty. No one can answer her riddle, and she has done to death many men who had had no pleasure in life nor tasted its charms. God forbid that your spring also should be ravaged by the autumn winds of martyrdom.' All his urgency, however, had no effect in making the prince withdraw. At length it was settled between them that three days should be given to pleasant hospitality and that then should follow what had to be said and done. Then the prince went to his own quarters and was treated as became his station.

King Quimus now sent for his daughter and for her mother, Gulrukh, [6] and talked to them. He said to Mibrafruz: 'Listen to me, you cruel flirt! Why do you persist in this folly? Now there has come to ask your hand a prince of the east, so handsome that the very sun grows modest before the splendour of his face; he is rich, and he has brought gold and jewels, all for you, if you will marry him. A better husband you will not find.'

But all the arguments of father and mother were wasted, for her only answer was: 'O my father! I have sworn to myself that I will not marry, even if a thousand years go by, unless someone answers my riddle, and that I will give myself to that man only who does answer it.'

The three days passed; then the riddle was asked: 'What did the rose do to the cypress?' The prince had an eloquent tongue, which could split a hair, and without hesitation he replied to her with a verse: 'Only the Omnipotent has knowledge of secrets; if any man says, "I know" do not believe him.'

Then a servant fetched in the polluted, blue-eyed headsman, who asked: 'Whose sun of life has come near its setting?' took the prince by the arm, placed him upon the cloth of execution, and then, all merciless and stony hearted, cut his head from his body and hung it on the battlements.

The news of the death of Prince Tahmasp plunged his father into despair and stupefaction. He mourned for him in black raiment for forty days; and then, a few days later, his second son, Prince Qamas, extracted from him leave to go too; and he, also, was put to death. One son only now remained, the brave, eloquent, happy-natured Prince Almas-ruh-bakhsh. One day, when his father sat brooding over his lost children, Almas came before him and said: 'O father mine! the daughter of King Quimus has done my two brothers to death; I wish to avenge them upon her.' These words brought his father to tears. 'O light of your father!' he cried, 'I have no one left but you, and now you ask me to let you go to your death.'

'Dear father!' pleaded the prince, 'until I have lowered the pride of that beauty, and have set her here before you, I cannot settle down or indeed sit down off my feet.'

In the end he, too, got leave to go; but he went a without a following and alone. Like his brothers, he made the long journey to the city of Quimus the son of Timus; like them he saw the citadel, but he saw there the heads of Tahmasp and Qamas. He went about in the city, saw the tent and the drums, and then went out again to a village not far off. Here he found out a very old man who had a wife 120 years old, or rather more. Their lives were coming to their end, but they had never beheld face of child of their own. They were glad when the prince came to their house, and they dealt with him as with a son. He put all his belongings into their charge, and fastened his horse in their out-house. Then he asked them not to speak of him to anyone, and to keep his affairs secret. He exchanged his royal dress for another, and next morning, just as the sun looked forth from its eastern oratory, he went again into the city. He turned over in his mind without ceasing how he was to find out the meaning of the riddle, and to give them a right answer, and who could help him, and how to avenge his brothers. He wandered about the city, but heard nothing of service, for there was no one in all that land who understood the riddle of Princess Mihr-afruz.

One day he thought he would go to her own palace and see if he could learn anything there, so he went out to her garden-house. It was a very splendid place, with a wonderful gateway, and walls like Alexander's ramparts. Many gate-keepers were on guard, and there was no chance of passing them. His heart was full of bitterness, but he said to himself: 'All will be well! it is here I shall get what I want.' He went round outside the garden wall hoping to find a gap, and he made supplication in the Court of Supplications and prayed, 'O Holder of the hand of the helpless! show me my way.'

While he prayed he bethought himself that he could get into the garden with a stream of inflowing water. He looked carefully round, fearing to be seen, stripped, slid into the stream and was carried within the great walls. There he hid himself till his loin cloth was dry. The garden was a very Eden, with running water amongst its lawns, with

flowers and the lament of doves and the jug-jug of nightingales. It was a place to steal the senses from the brain, and he wandered about and saw the house, but there seemed to be no one there. In the forecourt was a royal seat of polished jasper, and in the middle of the platform was a basin of purest water that flashed like a mirror. He pleased himself with these sights for a while, and then went back to the garden and hid himself from the gardeners and passed the night. Next morning he put on the appearance of a madman and wandered about till he came to a lawn where several pert-faced girls were amusing themselves. On a throne, jewelled and overspread with silken stuffs, sat a girl the splendour of whose beauty lighted up the place, and whose ambergris and attar perfumed the whole air. 'That must be Mihrafuz,' he thought, 'she is indeed lovely.' Just then one of the attendants came to the water's edge to fill a cup, and though the prince was in hiding, his face was reflected in the water. When she saw this image she was frightened, and let her cup fall into the stream, and thought, 'Is it an angel, or a peri, or a man?' Fear and trembling took hold of her, and she screamed as women scream. Then some of the other girls came and took her to the princess who asked: 'What is the matter, pretty one?'

'O princess! I went for water, and I saw an image, and I was afraid.' So another girl went to the water and saw the same thing, and came back with the same story. The princess wished to see for herself; she rose and paced to the spot with the march of a prancing peacock. When she saw the image she said to her nurse: 'Find out who is reflected in the water, and where he lives.' Her words reached the prince's ear, he lifted up his head; she saw him and beheld beauty such as she had never seen before. She lost a hundred hearts to him, and signed to her nurse to bring him to her presence. The prince let himself be persuaded to go with the nurse, but when the princess questioned him as to who he was and how he had got into her garden, he behaved like a man out of his mind--sometimes smiling, sometimes crying, and saying: 'I am hungry,' Or words misplaced and random, civil mixed with the rude.

'What a pity!' said the princess, 'he is mad!' As she liked him she said: 'He is my madman; let no one hurt him.' She took him to her house and told him not to go away, for that she would provide for all his wants. The prince thought, 'It would be excellent if here, in her very house, I could get the answer to her riddle; but I must be silent, on pain of death.'

Now in the princess's household there was a girl called Dil-aram [7]; she it was who had first seen the image of the prince. She came to love him very much, and she spent day and night thinking how she could make her affection known to him. One day she escaped from the princess's notice and went to the prince, and laid her head on his feet and said: 'Heaven has bestowed on you beauty and charm. Tell me your secret; who are you, and how did you come here? I love you very much, and if you would like to leave this place I will go with you. I have wealth equal to the treasure of the miserly Qarun.' But the prince only made answer like a man distraught, and told her nothing. He said to himself, 'God forbid that the veil should be taken in vain from my secret; that would indeed disgrace me.' So, with streaming eyes and burning breast, Dil-aram arose and went to her house and lamented and fretted.

Now whenever the princess commanded the prince's attendance, Dil-aram, of all the girls, paid him attention and waited on him best. The princess noticed this, and said: 'O Dil-aram! you must take my madman into your charge and give him whatever he wants.' This was the very thing Dilaram had prayed for. A little later she took the prince into a private place and she made him take an oath of secrecy, and she herself took one and swore, 'By Heaven! I will not tell your secret. Tell me all about yourself so that I may help you to get what you want.' The prince now recognised in her words the perfume of true love, and he made compact with her. 'O lovely girl! I want to know what the rose did to the cypress. Your mistress cuts off men's heads because of this riddle; what is at the bottom of it, and why does

she do it?' Then Dil-aram answered: 'If you will promise to marry me and to keep me always amongst those you favour, I will tell you all I know, and I will keep watch about the riddle.'

'O lovely girl,' rejoined he, 'if I accomplish my purpose, so that I need no longer strive for it, I will keep my compact with you. When I have this woman in my power and have avenged my brothers, I will make you my solace.'

'O wealth of my life and source of my joy!' responded Dil-aram, 'I do not know what the rose did to the cypress; but so much I know that the person who told Mihr-afruz about it is a negro whom she hides under her throne. He fled here from Waq of the Caucasus--it is there you must make inquiry; there is no other way of getting at the truth.' On hearing these words, the prince said to his heart, 'O my heart! your task will yet wear away much of your life.'

He fell into long and far thought, and Dil-aram looked at him and said: 'O my life and my soul! do not be sad. If you would like this woman killed, I will put poison into her cup so that she will never lift her head from her drugged sleep again.'

'O Dil-aram! such a vengeance is not manly. I shall not rest till I have gone to Waq of the Caucasus and have cleared up the matter.' Then they repeated the agreement about their marriage, and bade one another goodbye.

The prince now went back to the village, and told the old man that he was setting out on a long journey, and begged him not to be anxious, and to keep safe the goods which had been entrusted to him.

The prince had not the least knowledge of the way to Waq of the Caucasus, and was cast down by the sense of his helplessness. He was walking along by his horse's side when there appeared before him an old man of serene countenance, dressed in green and carrying a staff,

who resembled Khizr. [8] The prince thanked heaven, laid the hands of reverence on his breast and salaamed. The old man returned the greeting graciously, and asked: 'How fare you? Whither are you bound? You look like a traveller.'

'O revered saint! I am in this difficulty: I do not know the way to Waq of the Caucasus.' The old man of good counsel looked at the young prince and said: 'Turn back from this dangerous undertaking. Do not go; choose some other task! If you had a hundred lives you would not bring one out safe from this journey.' But his words had no effect on the prince's resolve. 'What object have you,' the old man asked, 'in thus consuming your life?'

'I have an important piece of business to do, and only this journey makes it possible. I must go; I pray you, ill God's name, tell me the way.'

When the saint saw that the prince was not to be moved, he said: 'Learn and know, O youth! that Waq of Qaf is in the Caucasus and is a dependency of it. In it there are jins, demons, and peris. You must go on along this road till it forks into three; take neither the right hand nor the left, but the middle path. Follow this for a day and a night. Then you will come to a column on which is a marble slab inscribed with Cufic characters. Do what is written there; beware of disobedience.' Then he gave his good wishes for the journey and his blessing, and the prince kissed his feet, said good-bye, and, with thanks to the Causer of Causes, took the road.

After a day and a night he saw the column rise in silent beauty to the heavens. Everything was as the wise old man had said it would be, and the prince, who was skilled in all tongues, read the following Cufic inscription: 'O travellers! be it known to you that this column has been set up with its tablet to give true directions about these roads. If a man would pass his life in ease and pleasantness, let him take the right-hand path. If he take the left, he will have some trouble, but he

will reach his goal without much delay. Woe to him who chooses the middle path! if he had a thousand lives he would not save one; it is very hazardous; it leads to the Caucasus, and is an endless road. Beware of it!

The prince read and bared his head and lifted his hands in supplication to Him who has no needs, and prayed, 'O Friend of the traveller! I, Thy servant, come to Thee for succour. My purpose lies in the land of Qaf and my road is full of peril. Lead me by it.' Then he took a handful of earth and cast it on his collar, and said: 'O earth! be thou my grave; and O vest! tee thou my winding-sheet!' Then he took the middle road and went along it, day after day, with many a silent prayer, till he saw trees rise from the weary waste of sand. They grew in a garden, and he went up to the gate and found it a slab of beautifully worked marble, and that near it there lay sleeping, with his head on a stone, a negro whose face was so black that it made darkness round him. His upper lip, arched like an eyebrow, curved upwards to his nostrils and his lower hung down like a camel's. Four millstones formed his shield, and on a box-tree close by hung his giant sword. His loin-cloth was fashioned of twelve skins of beasts, and was bound round his waist by a chain of which each link was as big as an elephant's thigh.

The prince approached and tied up his horse near the negro's head. Then he let fall the Bismillah from his lips, entered the garden and walked through it till he came to the private part, delighting in the great trees, the lovely verdure, and the flowery borders. In the inner garden there were very many deer. These signed to him with eye and foot to go back, for that this was enchanted ground; but he did not understand them, and thought their pretty gestures were a welcome. After a while he reached a palace which had a porch more splendid than Caesar's, and was built of gold and silver bricks. In its midst was a high seat, overlaid with fine carpets, and into it opened eight doors, each having opposite to it a marble basin.

Banishing care, Prince Almas walked on through the garden, when suddenly a window opened and a girl, who was lovely enough to make the moon writhe with jealousy, put out her head. She lost her heart to the good looks of the prince, and sent her nurse to fetch him so that she might learn where he came from and how he had got into her private garden where even lions and wolves did not venture. The nurse went, and was struck with amazement at the sun-like radiance of his face; she salaamed and said: 'O youth! welcome! the lady of the garden calls you; come!' He went with her and into a palace which was like a house in Paradise, and saw seated on the royal carpets of the throne a girl whose brilliance shamed the shining sun. He salaamed; she rose, took him by the hand and placed him near her. 'O young man! who are you? Where do you come from? How did you get into this garden?' He told her his story from beginning to end, and Lady Latifa [9] replied: 'This is folly! It will make you a vagabond of the earth, and lead you to destruction. Come, cease such talk! No one can go to the Caucasus. Stay with me and be thankful, for here is a throne which you can share with me, and in my society you can enjoy my wealth. I will do whatever you wish; I will bring here King Qulmus and his daughter, and you can deal with them as you will.'

'O Lady Latifa,' he said, 'I have made a compact with heaven not to sit down off my feet till I have been to Waq of Qaf and have cleared up this matter, and have taken Mihrafuz from her father, as brave men take, and have put her in prison. When I have done all this I will come back to you in state and with a great following, and I will marry you according to the law.' Lady Latifa argued and urged her wishes, but in vain; the prince was not to be moved. Then she called to the cupbearers for new wine, for she thought that when his head was hot with it he might consent to stay. The pure, clear wine was brought; she filled a cup and gave to him. He said: 'O most enchanting sweetheart! it is the rule for the host to drink first and then the guest.' So to make him lose his head, she drained the cup; then filled it again and gave him. He drank it off, and she took a lute from one of the singers and played upon it with skill which witched away the sense of

all who heard. But it was all in vain; three days passed in such festivities, and on the fourth the prince said: 'O joy of my eyes! I beg now that you will bid me farewell, for my way is long and the fire of your love darts flame into the harvest of my heart. By heaven's grace I may accomplish my purpose, and, if so, I will come back to you.'

Now she saw that she could not in any way change his resolve, she told her nurse to bring a certain casket which contained, she said, something exhilarating which would help the prince on his journey. The box was brought, and she divided off a portion of what was within and gave it to the prince to eat. Then, and while he was all unaware, she put forth her hand to a stick fashioned like a snake; she said some words over it and struck him so sharply on the shoulder that he cried out; then he made a pirouette and found that he was a deer.

When he knew what had been done to him he thought, 'All the threads of affliction are gathered together; I have lost my last chance!' He tried to escape, but the magician sent for her goldsmith, who, coming, overlaid the deer-horns with gold and jewels. The kerchief which that day she had had in her hand was then tied round its neck, and this freed it from her attentions.

The prince-deer now bounded into the garden and at once sought some way of escape. It found none, and it joined the other deer, which soon made it their leader. Now, although the prince had been transformed into the form of a deer, he kept his man's heart and mind. He said to himself, 'Thank heaven that the Lady Latifa has changed me into this shape, for at least deer are beautiful.' He remained for some time living as a deer amongst the rest, but at length resolved that an end to such a life must be put ill some way. He looked again for some place by which he could get out of the magic garden. Following round the wall he reached a lower part; he remembered the Divine Names and flung himself over, saying, 'Whatever happens is by the will of God.' When he looked about he found that he was in the very same place he had jumped from; there was the palace, there the

garden and the deer! Eight times he leaped over the wall and eight times found himself where he had started from; but after the ninth leap there was a change, there was a palace and there was a garden, but the deer were gone.

Presently a girl of such moon-like beauty opened a window that the prince lost to her a hundred hearts. She was delighted with the beautiful deer, and cried to her nurse: 'Catch it! if you will I will give you this necklace, every pearl of which is worth a kingdom.' The nurse coveted the pearls, but as she was three hundred years old she did not know how she could catch a deer. However, she went down into the garden and held out some grass, but when she went near the creature ran away. The girl watched with great excitement from the palace window, and called: 'O nurse, if you don't catch it, I will kill you!' 'I am killing myself,' shouted back the old woman. The girl saw that nurse tottering along and went down to help, marching with the gait of a prancing peacock. When she saw the gilded horns and the kerchief she said: 'It must be accustomed to the hand, and be some royal pet!' The prince had it in mind that this might be another magician who could give him some other shape, but still it seemed best to allow himself to be caught. So he played about the girl and let her catch him by the neck. A leash was brought, fruits were given, and it was caressed with delight. It was taken to the palace and tied at the foot of the Lady Jamila's raised seat, but she ordered a longer cord to be brought so that it might be able to jump up beside her.

When the nurse went to fix the cord she saw tears falling from its eyes, and that it was dejected and sorrowful 'O Lady Jamila! this is a wonderful deer, it is crying; I never saw a deer cry before.' Jamila darted down like a flash of lightning, and saw that it was so. It rubbed its head on her feet and then shook it so sadly that the girl cried for sympathy. She patted it and said: 'Why are you sad, my heart? Why do you cry, my soul? Is it because I have caught you? I love you better than my own life.' But, spite of her comforting, it cried the more. Then Jamila said: 'Unless I am mistaken, this is the work of my wicked

sister Latifa, who by magic art turns servants of God into beasts of the field.' At these words the deer uttered sounds, and laid its head on her feet. Then Jamila was sure it was a man, and said: 'Be comforted, I will restore you to your own shape.' She bathed herself and ordered the deer to be bathed, put on clean raiment, called for a box which stood in an alcove, opened it and gave a portion of what was in it to the deer to eat. Then she slipped her hand under her carpet and produced a stick to which she said something. She struck the deer hard, it pirouetted and became Prince Almas.

The broidered kerchief and the jewels lay upon the ground. The prince prostrated himself in thanks to heaven and Jamila, and said: 'O delicious person! O Chinese Venus! how shall I excuse myself for giving you so much trouble? With what words can I thank you?' Then she called for a clothes-wallet and chose out a royal dress of honour. Her attendants dressed him in it, and brought him again before the tender-hearted lady. She turned to him a hundred hearts, took his hand and seated him beside her, and said: 'O youth! tell me truly who you are and where you come from, and how you fell into the power of my sister.'

Even when he was a deer the prince had much admired Jamila now he thought her a thousand times more lovely than before. He judged that in truth alone was safety, and so told her his whole story. Then she asked: 'O Prince Almas-ruh-bakhsh, do you still wish so much to make this journey to Waq of Qaf? What hope is there in it? The road is dangerous even near here, and this is not yet the borderland of the Caucasus. Come, give it up! It is a great risk, and to go is not wise. It would be a pity for a man like you to fall into the hands of jins and demons. Stay with me, and I will do whatever you wish.'

'O most delicious person!' he answered, 'you are very generous, and the choice of my life lies in truth in your hands; but I beg one favour of you. If you love me, so do I too love you. If you really love me, do not forbid me to make this journey, but help me as far as you can.'

Then it may be that I shall succeed, and if I return with my purpose fulfilled I will marry you according to the law, and take you to my own country, and we will spend the rest of our lives together in pleasure and good companionship. Help me, if you can, and give me your counsel.'

'O very stuff of my life,' replied Jamila 'I will give you things that are not in kings' treasuries, and which will be of the greatest use to you. First, there are the bow and arrows of his Reverence the Prophet Salih. Secondly, there is the Scorpion of Solomon (on whom be peace), which is a sword such as no king has; steel and stone are one to it; if you bring it down on a rock it will not be injured, and it will cleave whatever you strike. Thirdly, there is the dagger which the sage Timus himself made; this is most useful, and the man who wears it would not bend under seven camels' loads. What you have to do first is to get to the home of the Simurgh, [10] and to make friends with him. If he favours you, he will take you to Waq of Qaf; if not, you will never get there, for seven seas are on the way, and they are such seas that if all the kings of the earth, and all their wazirs, and all their wise men considered for a thousand years, they would not be able to cross them.'

'O most delicious person! where is the Simurgh's home? How shall I get there?'

'O new fruit of life! you must just do what I tell you, and you must use your eyes and your brains, for if you don't you will find yourself at the place of the negroes, who are a bloodthirsty set; and God forbid they should lay hands on your precious person.'

Then she took the bow and quiver of arrows, the sword, and the dagger out of a box, and the prince let fall a Bismillah, and girt them all on. Then Jamila of the houri-face, produced two saddle-bags of ruby-red silk, one filled with roasted fowl and little cakes, and the other with stones of price. Next she gave him a horse as swift as the breeze of the morning, and she said: 'Accept all these things from me;

ride till you come to a rising ground, at no great distance from here, where there is a spring. It is called the Place of Gifts, and you must stay there one night. There you will see many wild beasts--lions, tigers, leopards, apes, and so on. Before you get there you must capture some game. On the long road beyond there dwells a lion-king, alla if other beasts did not fear him they would ravage the whole country and let no one pass. The lion is a red transgressor, so when he comes rise and do him reverence; take a cloth and rub the dust and earth from his face, then set the game you have taken before him, well cleansed, and lay the hands of respect on your breast. When he wishes to eat, take your knife and cut pieces of the meat and set them before him with a bow. In this way you will enfold that lion-king in perfect friendship, and he will be most useful to you, and you will be safe from molestation by the negroes. When you go on from the Place of Gifts, be sure you do not take the right-hand road; take the left, for the other leads by the negro castle, which is known as the Place of Clashing Swords, and where there are forty negro captains each over three thousand or four thousand more. Their chief is Taramtaq. [11] Further on than this is the home of the Simurgh.'

Having stored these things in the prince's memory, she said: 'You will see everything happen just as I have said.' Then she escorted him a little way; they parted, and she went home to mourn his absence.

Prince Almas, relying on the Causer of Causes, rode on to the Place of Gifts and dismounted at the platform. Everything happened just as Jamila had foretold; when one or two watches of the night had passed, he saw that the open ground around him was full of such stately and splendid animals as he had never seen before. By-and-by, they made way for a wonderfully big lion, which was eighty yards from nose to tail-tip, and was a magnificent creature. The prince advanced and saluted it; it proudly drooped its head and forelocks and paced to the platform. Seventy or eighty others were with it, and now encircled it at a little distance. It laid its right paw over its left, and the prince took the kerchief Jamila had given him for the purpose, and rubbed the dust

and earth from its face; then brought forward the game he had prepared, and crossing his hands respectfully on his breast stood waiting before it. When it wished for food he cut off pieces of the meat and put them in its mouth. The serving lions also came near and the prince would have stayed his hand, but the king-lion signed to him to feed them too. This he did, laying the meat on the platform. Then the king-lion beckoned the prince to come near and said: 'Sleep at ease; my guards will watch.'. So, surrounded by the lion-guard, he slept till dawn, when the king lion said good-bye, and gave him a few of his own hairs and said: 'When you are in any difficulty, burn one of these and I will be there.' Then it went off into the jungle.

Prince Almas immediately started; he rode till he came to the parting of the ways. He remembered quite well that the right-hand way was short and dangerous, but he bethought himself too that whatever was written on his forehead would happen, and took the forbidden road. By-and-by he saw a castle, and knew from what Jamila had told him that it was the Place of Clashing Swords. He would have liked to go back by the way he had come, but courage forbade, and he said, 'What has been preordained from eternity will happen to me,' and went on towards the castle. He was thinking of tying his horse to a tree which grew near the gate when a negro came out and spied him. 'Ha!' said the wretch to himself, 'this is good; Taram-taq has not eaten man-meat for a long time, and is craving for some. I will take this creature to him.' He took hold of the prince's reins, and said: 'Dismount, man-child! Come to my master. He has wanted to eat man-meat this long time back.' 'What nonsense are you saying?' said the prince, and other such words. When the negro understood that he was being abused, he cried: 'Come along! I will put you into such a state that the birds of the air will weep for you.' Then the prince drew the Scorpion of Solomon and struck him--struck him on the leathern belt and shore him through so that the sword came out on the other side. He stood upright for a little while, muttered some words, put out his hand to seize the prince, then fell in two and surrendered his life.

There was water close at hand, and the prince made his ablution, and then said: 'O my heart! a wonderful task lies upon you.' A second negro came out of the fort, and seeing what had been done, went back and told his chief. Others wished to be doubled, and went out, and of every one the Scorpion of Solomon made two. Then Taram-taq sent for a giant negro named Chil-maq, who in the day of battle was worth three hundred, and said to him: 'I shall thank you to fetch me that man.'

Chil-maq went out, tall as a tower, and bearing a shield of eight millstones, and as he walked he shouted: 'Ho! blunder-head! by what right do you come to our country and kill our people? Come! make two of me.' As the prince was despicable in his eyes, he tossed aside his club and rushed to grip him with his hands. He caught him by the collar, tucked him under his arm and set off with him to Taram-taq. But the prince drew the dagger of Timus and thrust it upwards through the giant's armpit, for its full length. This made Chil-maq drop him and try to pick up his club; but when he stooped the mighty sword shore him through at the waist.

When news of his champion's death reached Taram-taq he put himself at the head of an army of his negroes and led them forth. Many fell before the magic sword, and the prince laboured on in spite of weakness and fatigue till he was almost worn out. In a moment of respite from attack he struck his fire-steel and burned a hair of the king-lion; and he had just succeeded in this when the negroes charged again and all but took him prisoner. Suddenly from behind the distant veil of the desert appeared an army of lions led by their king. 'What brings these scourges of heaven here?' cried the negroes. They came roaring up, and put fresh life into the prince. He fought on, and when he struck on a belt the wearer fell in two, and when on a head he cleft to the waist. Then the ten thousand mighty lions joined the fray and tore in pieces man and horse.

Taram-taq was left alone; he would have retired into his fort, but the prince shouted: 'Whither away, accursed one? Are you fleeing before me?' At these defiant words the chief shouted back, 'Welcome, man! Come here and I will soften you to wax beneath my club.' Then he hurled his club at the prince's head, but it fell harmless because the prince had quickly spurred his horse forward. The chief, believing he had hit him, was looking down for him, when all at once he came up behind and cleft him to the waist and sent him straight to hell.

The king-lion greatly praised the dashing courage of Prince Almas. They went together into the Castle of Clashing Swords and found it adorned and fitted in princely fashion. In it was a daughter of Taram taq, still a child. She sent a message to Prince Almas saying, 'O king of the world! choose this slave to be your handmaid. Keep her with you; where you go, there she will go!' He sent for her and she kissed his feet and received the Mussulman faith at his hands. He told her he was going a long journey on important business, and that when he came back he would take her and her possessions to his own country, but that for the present she must stay in the castle. Then he made over the fort and all that was in it to the care of the lion, saying: 'Guard them, brother! let no one lay a hand on them.' He said goodbye, chose a fresh horse from the chief's stable and once again took the road.

After travelling many stages and for many days, he reached a plain of marvellous beauty and refreshment. It was carpeted with flowers--roses, tulips, and clover; it had lovely lawns, and amongst them running water. This choicest place of earth filled him with wonder. There was a tree such as he had never seen before; its branches were alike, but it bore flowers and fruit of a thousand kinds. Near it a reservoir had been fashioned of four sorts of stone--touchstone, pure stone, marble, and loadstone. In and out of it flowed water like attar. The prince felt sure this must be the place of the Simurgh.' he dismounted, turned his horse loose to graze, ate some of the food Jamila had given him, drank of the stream and lay down to sleep.

He was still dozing when he was aroused by the neighing and pawing of his horse. When he could see clearly he made out a mountain-like dragon whose heavy breast crushed the stones beneath it into putty. He remembered the Thousand Names of God and took the bow of Salih from its case and three arrows from their quiver. He bound the dagger of Timus firmly to his waist and hung the scorpion of Solomon round his neck. Then he set an arrow on the string and released it with such force that it went in at the monster's eye right up to the notch. The dragon writhed on itself, and belched forth an evil vapour, and beat the ground with its head till the earth quaked. Then the prince took a second arrow and shot into its throat. It drew in its breath and would have sucked the prince into its maw, but when he was within striking distance he drew his sword and, having committed himself to God, struck a mighty blow which cut the creature's neck down to the gullet. The foul vapour of the beast and horror at its strangeness now overcame the prince, and he fainted. When he came to himself he found that he was drenched in the gore of the dead monster. He rose and thanked God for his deliverance.

The nest of the Simurgh was in the wonderful tree above him, and in it were young birds; the parents were away searching for food. They always told the children, before they left them, not to put their heads out of the nest; but, to-day, at the noise of the fight below, they looked down and so saw the whole affair. By the time the dragon had been killed they were very hungry and set up a clamour for food. The prince therefore cut up the dragon and fed them with it, bit by bit, till they had eaten the whole. He then washed himself and lay down to rest, and he was still asleep when the Simurgh came home. As a rule, the young birds raised a clamour of welcome when their parents came near, but on this day they were so full of dragon-meat that they had no choice, they had to go to sleep.

As they flew nearer, the old birds saw the prince lying under the tree and no sign of life in the nest. They thought that the misfortune which for so many earlier years had befallen them had again happened and

that their nestlings had disappeared. They had never been able to find out the murderer, and now suspected the prince. 'He has eaten our children and sleeps after it; he must die,' said the father-bird, and flew back to the hills and clawed up a huge stone which he meant to let fall on the prince's head. But his mate said, 'Let us look into the nest first for to kill an innocent person would condemn us at the Day of Resurrection.' They flew nearer, and presently the young birds woke and cried, 'Mother, what have you brought for us?' and they told the whole story of the fight, and of how they were alive only by the favour of the young man under the tree, and of his cutting up the dragon and of their eating it. The mother-bird then remarked, 'Truly, father! you were about to do a strange thing, and a terrible sin has been averted from you.' Then the Simurgh flew off to a distance with the great stone and dropped it. It sank down to the very middle of the earth.

Coming back, the Simurgh saw that a little sunshine fell upon the prince through the leaves, and it spread its wings and shaded him till he woke. When he got up he salaamed to it, who returned his greeting with joy and gratitude, and caressed him and said: 'O youth, tell me true! who are you, and where are you going? And how did you cross that pitiless desert where never yet foot of man had trod?' The prince told his story from beginning to end, and finished by saying: 'Now it is my heart's wish that you should help me to get to Waq of the Caucasus. Perhaps, by your favour, I shall accomplish my task and avenge my brothers.' In reply the Simurgh first blessed the deliverer of his children, and then went on: 'What you have done no child of man has ever done before; you assuredly have a claim on all my help, for every year up till now that dragon has come here and has destroyed my nestlings, and I have never been able to find who was the murderer and to avenge myself. By God's grace you have removed my children's powerful foe. I regard you as a child of my own. Stay with me; I will give you everything you desire, and I will establish a city here for you, and will furnish it with every requisite; I will give you the land of the Caucasus, and will make its princes subject to you.'

Give up the journey to Waq, it is full of risk, and the jins there will certainly kill you.' But nothing could move the prince, and seeing this the bird went on: 'Well, so be it! When you wish to set forth you must go into the plain and take seven head of deer, and must make water-tight bags of their hides and keep their flesh in seven portions. Seven seas lie on our way--I will carry you over them; but if I have not food and drink we shall fall into the sea and be drowned. When I ask for it you must put food and water into my mouth. So we shall make the journey safely.'

The prince did all as he was told, then they took flight; they crossed the seven seas, and at each one the prince fed the Simurgh. When they alighted on the shore of the last sea, it said: 'O my son! there lies your road; follow it to the city. Take thee three feathers of mine, and, if you are in a difficulty, burn one and I will be with you in the twinkling of an eye.'

The prince walked on in solitude till he reached the city. He went in and wandered about through all quarters, and through bazaars and lanes and squares, in the least knowing from whom he could ask information about the riddle of Mihr-afruz. He spent seven days thinking it over in silence. From the first day of his coming he had made friends with a young cloth-merchant, and a great liking had sprung up between them. One day he said abruptly to his companion: 'O dear friend! I wish you would tell me what the rose did to the cypress, and what the sense of the riddle is.' The merchant started, and exclaimed: 'If there were not brotherly affection between us, I would cut off your head for asking me this!' 'If you meant to kill me,' retorted the prince, 'you would still have first to tell me what I want to know.' When the merchant saw that the prince was in deadly earnest, he said: 'If you wish to hear the truth of the matter you must wait upon our king. There is no other way; no one else will tell you. I have a well-wisher at the Court, named Farrukh-fal, [12] and will introduce you to him.' 'That would be excellent,' cried the prince. A meeting was arranged between Farrukhfal and Almas, and then the amir took him

to the king's presence and introduced him as a stranger and traveller who had come from afar to sit in the shadow of King Sinaubar.

Now the Simurgh had given the prince a diamond weighing thirty misqals, and he ordered this to the king, who at once recognised its value, and asked where it had been obtained. 'I, your slave, once had riches and state and power; there are many such stones in my country. On my way here I was plundered at the Castle of Clashing Swords, and I saved this one thing only, hidden in my bathing-cloth.' In return for the diamond, King Sinaubar showered gifts of much greater value, for he remembered that it was the last possession of the prince. He showed the utmost kindness and hospitality, and gave his wazir orders to instal the prince in the royal guest-house. He took much pleasure in his visitor's society; they were together every day and spent the time most pleasantly. Several times the king said: 'Ask me for something, that I may give it you.' One day he so pressed to know what would please the prince, that the latter said: 'I have only one wish, and that I will name to you in private.' The king at once commanded every one to withdraw, and then Prince Almas said: 'The desire of my life is to know what the rose did to the cypress, and what meaning there is in the words.' The king was astounded. 'In God's name! if anyone else had said that to me I should have cut off his head instantly.' The prince heard this in silence, and presently so beguiled the king with pleasant talk that to kill him was impossible.

Time flew by, the king again and again begged the prince to ask some gift of him, and always received this same reply: 'I wish for your Majesty's welfare, what more can I desire?' One night there was a banquet, and cupbearers carried round gold and silver cups of sparkling wine, and singers with sweetest voices contended for the prize. The prince drank from the king's own cup, and when his head was hot with wine he took a lute from one of the musicians and placed himself on the carpet border and sang and sang till he witted away the sense of all who listened. Applause and compliments rang from every side. The king filled his cup and called the prince and gave it

him and said: 'Name your wish! it is yours.' The prince drained off the wine and answered: 'O king of the world! learn and know that I have only one aim in life, and this is to know what the rose did to the cypress.'

'Never yet,' replied the king, 'has any man come out from that question alive. If this is your only wish, so be it; I will tell you. But I will do this on one condition only, namely, that when you have heard you will submit yourself to death.' To this the prince agreed, and said: 'I set my foot firmly on this compact.'

The king then gave an order to an attendant; a costly carpet overlaid with European velvet was placed near him, and a dog was led in by a golden and jewelled chain and set upon the splendid stuffs. A band of fair girls came in and stood round it in waiting.

Then, with ill words, twelve negroes dragged in a lovely woman, fettered on hands and feet and meanly dressed, and they set her down on the bare floor. She was extraordinarily beautiful, and shamed the glorious sun. The king ordered a hundred stripes to be laid on her tender body; she sighed a long sigh. Food was called for and tablecloths were spread. Delicate meats were set before the dog, and water given it in a royal cup of Chinese crystal. When it had eaten its fill, its leavings were placed before the lovely woman and she was made to eat of them. She wept and her tears were pearls; she smiled and her lips shed roses. Pearls and flowers were gathered up and taken to the treasury.

'Now,' said the king, 'you have seen these things and your purpose is fulfilled.' 'Truly,' said the prince, 'I have seen things which I have not understood; what do they mean, and what is the story of them? Tell me and kill me.'

Then said the king: 'The woman you see there in chains is my wife; she is called Gul, the Rose, and I am Sinaubar, the Cypress. One day I

was hunting and became very thirsty. After great search I discovered a well in a place so secret that neither bird nor beast nor man could find it without labour. I was alone, I took my turban for a rope and my cap for a bucket. There was a good deal of water, but when I let down my rope, something caught it, and I could not in any way draw it back. I shouted down into the well: "O! servant of God! whoever you are, why do you deal unfairly with me? I am dying of thirst, let go! in God's name." A cry came up in answer, "O servant of God! we have been in the well a long time; in God's name get us out!" After trying a thousand schemes, I drew up two blind women. They said they were peris, and that their king had blinded them in his anger and had left them in the well alone.

"Now," they said, "if you will get us the cure for our blindness we will devote ourselves to your service, and will do whatever you wish."

"What is the cure for your blindness?"

"Not far from this place," they said, "a cow comes up from the great sea to graze; a little of her dung would cure us. We should be eternally your debtors. Do not let the cow see you, or she will assuredly kill you."

'With renewed strength and spirit I went to the shore. There I watched the cow come up from the sea, graze, and go back. Then I came out of my hiding, took a little of her dung and conveyed it to the peris. They rubbed it on their eyes, and by the Divine might saw again.

"They thanked heaven and me, and then considered what they could do to show their gratitude to me. "Our peri-king," they said, "has a daughter whom he keeps under his own eye and thinks the most lovely girl on earth. In good sooth, she has not her equal! Now we will get you into her house and you must win her heart, and if she has an inclination for another, you must drive it out and win her for yourself. Her mother loves her so dearly that she has no ease but in her

presence, and she will give her to no one in marriage. Teach her to love you so that she cannot exist without you. But if the matter becomes known to her mother she will have you burned in the fire. Then you must beg, as a last favour, that your body may be anointed with oil so that you may burn the more quickly and be spared torture. If the peri-king allows this favour, we two will manage to be your anointers, and we will put an oil on you such that if you were a thousand years in the fire not a trace of burning would remain."

'In the end the two peris took me to the girl's house. I saw her sleeping daintily. She was most lovely, and I was so amazed at the perfection of her beauty that I stood with senses lost, and did not know if she were real or a dream. When at last I saw that she was a real girl, I returned thanks that I, the runner, had come to my goal, and that I, the seeker, had found my treasure.

'When the peri opened her eyes she asked in affright: "Who are you? Have you come to steal? How did you get here? Be quick! save yourself from this whirlpool of destruction, for the demons and peris who guard me will wake and seize you."

'But love's arrow had struck me deep, and the girl, too, looked kindly on me. I could not go away. For some months I remained hidden in her house. 'We did not dare to let her mother know of our love. Sometimes the girl was very sad and fearful lest her mother should come to know. One day her father said to her: "Sweetheart, for some time I have noticed that your beauty is not what it was. How is this? Has sickness touched you? Tell me that I may seek a cure." Alas! there was now no way of concealing the mingled delight and anguish of our love; from secret it became known. I was put in prison and the world grew dark to my rose, bereft of her lover.

'The peri-king ordered me to be burnt, and said: "Why have you, a man, done this perfidious thing in my house?" His demons and peris collected amber-wood and made a pile, and would have set me on it,

when I remembered the word of life which the two peris. I had rescued had breathed into my ear, and I asked that my body might be rubbed with oil to release me the sooner from torture. This was allowed, and those two contrived to be the anointers. I was put into the fire and it was kept up for seven days and nights. By the will of the Great King it left no trace upon me. At the end of a week the pert-king ordered the ashes to be cast upon the dust-heap, and I was found alive and unharmed.

'Peris who had seen Gul consumed by her love for me now interceded with the king, and said: "It is clear that your daughter's fortunes are bound up with his, for the fire has not hurt him. It is best to give him the girl, for they love one another. He is King of Waq of Qaf, and you will find none better."

'To this the king agreed, and made formal marriage between Gul and me. You now know the price I paid for this faithless creature. O prince! remember our compact.'

'I remember,' said the prince; 'but tell me what brought Queen Gul to her present pass?'

'One night,' continued King Sinaubar, 'I was aroused by feeling Gul's hands and feet, deadly cold, against my body. I asked her where she had been to get so cold, and she said she had had to go out. Next morning, when I went to my stable I saw that two of my horses, Windfoot and Tiger, were thin and worn out. I reprimanded the groom and beat him. He asked where his fault lay, and said that every night my wife took one or other of these horses and rode away, and came back only just before dawn. A flame kindled in my heart, and I asked myself where she could go and what she could do. I told the groom to be silent, and when next Gul took a horse from the stable to saddle another quickly and bring it to me. That day I did not hunt, but stayed at home to follow the matter up. I lay down as usual at night and pretended to fall asleep. When I seemed safely off Gul got up and

went to the stable as her custom was. That night it was Tiger's turn. She rode off on him, and I took Windfoot and followed. With me went that dog you see, a faithful friend who never left me.

'When I came to the foot of those hills which lie outside the city I saw Gul dismount and go towards a house which some negroes have built there. Over against the door was a high seat, and on it lay a giant negro, before whom she salaamed. He got up and beat her till she was marked with weals, but she uttered no complaint. I was dumfounded, for once when I had struck her with a rose stalk she had complained and fretted for three days! Then the negro said to her: "How now, ugly one and shaven head! Why are you so late, and why are you not wearing wedding garments?" She answered him: "That person did not go to sleep quickly, and he stayed at home all day, so that I was not able to adorn myself. I came as soon as I could." In a little while he called her to sit beside him; but this was more than I could bear. I lost control of myself and rushed upon him. He clutched my collar and we grappled in a death struggle. Suddenly she came behind me, caught my feet and threw me. While he held me on the ground, she drew out my own knife and gave it to him. I should have been killed but for that faithful dog which seized his throat and pulled him down and pinned him to the ground. Then I got up and despatched the wretch. There were four other negroes at the place; three I killed and the fourth got away, and has taken refuge beneath the throne of Mihr-afruz, daughter of King Quimus. I took Gul back to my palace, and from that time till now I have treated her as a dog is treated, and I have cared for my dog as though it were my wife. Now you know what the rose did to the cypress; and now you must keep compact with me.'

'I shall keep my word,' said the prince; 'but may a little water be taken to the roof so that I may make my last ablution?'

To this request the king consented. The prince mounted to the roof, and, getting into a corner, struck his fire-steel and burned one of the Sirurgh's feathers in the flame. Straightway it appeared, and by the

majesty of its presence made the city quake. It took the prince on its back and soared away to the zenith.

After a time King Sinaubar said: 'That young man is a long time on the roof; go and bring him here.' But there was no sign of the prince upon the roof; only, far away in the sky, the Simurgh was seen carrying him off. When the king heard of his escape he thanked heaven that his hands were clean of this blood.

Up and up flew the Simurgh, till earth looked like an egg resting on an ocean. At length it dropped straight down to its own place, where the kind prince was welcomed by the young birds and most hospitably entertained. He told the whole story of the rose and the cypress, and then, laden with gifts which the Simurgh had gathered from cities far and near, he set his face for the Castle of Clashing Swords. The king-lion came out to meet him; he took the negro chief's daughter---whose name was also Gul--in lawful marriage, and then marched with her and her possessions and her attendants to the Place of Gifts. Here they halted for a night, and at dawn said good-bye to the king-lion and set out for Jamila's country.

When the Lady Jamila heard that Prince Almas was near, she went out, with many a fair handmaid, to give him loving reception. Their meeting was joyful, and they went together to the garden-palace. Jamila summoned all her notables, and in their presence her marriage with the prince was solemnised. A few days later she entrusted her affairs to her wazir, and made preparation to go with the prince to his own country. Before she started she restored all the men whom her sister, Latifa, had bewitched, to their own forms, and received their blessings, and set them forward to their homes. The wicked Latifa herself she left quite alone in her garden-house. When all was ready they set out with all her servants and slaves, all her treasure and goods, and journeyed at ease to the city of King Quimus.

When King Quimus heard of the approach of such a great company, he sent out his wazir to give the prince honourable meeting, and to ask what had procured him the favour of the visit. The prince sent back word that he had no thought of war, but he wrote: 'Learn and know, King Quimus, that I am here to end the crimes of your insolent daughter who has tyrannously done to death many kings and kings sons, and has hung their heads on your citadel. I am here to give her the answer to her riddle.' Later on he entered the city, beat boldly on the drums, and was conducted to the presence.

The king entreated him to have nothing to do with the riddle, for that no man had come out of it alive. 'O king!' replied the prince, 'it is to answer it that I am here; I will not withdraw.'

Mihr-afruz was told that one man more had staked his head on her question, and that this was one who said he knew the answer. At the request of the prince, all the officers and notables of the land were summoned to hear his reply to the princess. All assembled, and the king and his queen Gul-rakh, and the girl and the prince were there.

The prince addressed Mihr-afruz: 'What is the question you ask?'

'What did the rose do to the cypress?' she rejoined.

The prince smiled, and turned and addressed the assembly.

'You who are experienced men and versed in affairs, did you ever know or hear and see anything of this matter?'

'No!' they answered, 'no one has ever known or heard or seen aught about it; it is an empty fancy.'

'From whom, then, did the princess hear of it? This empty fancy it is that has done many a servant of God to death!'

All saw the good sense of his words and showed their approval. Then he turned to the princess: 'Tell us the truth, princess; who told you of this thing? I know it hair by hair, and in and out; but if I tell you what I know, who is there that can say I speak the truth? You must produce the person who can confirm my words.'

Her heart sank, for she feared that her long-kept secret was now to be noised abroad. But she said merely: 'Explain yourself.'

'I shall explain myself fully when you bring here the negro whom you hide beneath your throne.'

Here the king shouted in wonderment: 'Explain yourself, young man! What negro does my daughter hide beneath her throne?'

'That,' said the prince, 'you will see if you order to be brought here the negro who will be found beneath the throne of the princess.'

Messengers were forthwith despatched to the garden house, and after awhile they returned bringing a negro whom they had discovered in a secret chamber underneath the throne of Mihr-afruz, dressed in a dress of honour, and surrounded with luxury. The king was overwhelmed with astonishment, but the girl had taken heart again. She had had time to think that perhaps the prince had heard of the presence of the negro, and knew no more. So she said haughtily: 'Prince! you have not answered my riddle.'

'O most amazingly impudent person,' cried he, 'do you not yet repent?'

Then he turned to the people, and told them the whole story of the rose and the cypress, of King Sinaubar and Queen Gul. When he came to the killing of the negroes, he said to the one who stood before them: 'You, too, were present.'

'That is so; all happened as you have told it!'

There was great rejoicing in the court and all through the country over the solving of the riddle, and because now no more kings and princes would be killed. King Quimus made over his daughter to Prince Almas, but the latter refused to marry her, and took her as his captive. He then asked that the heads should be removed from the battlements and given decent burial. This was done. He received from the king everything that belonged to Mihr-afruz; her treasure of gold and silver; her costly stuffs and carpets; her household plenishing; her horses and camels; her servants and slaves.

Then he returned to his camp and sent for Dil-aram, who came bringing her goods and chattels, her gold and her jewels. When all was ready, Prince Almas set out for home, taking with him Jamila, and Dil-aram and Gul, daughter of Taram-taq, and the wicked Mihr-afruz, and all the belongings of the four, packed on horses and camels, and in carts without number.

As he approached the borders of his father's country word of his coming went before him, and all the city came forth to give him welcome. King Saman-lal-posh--Jessamine, wearer of rubies--had so bewept the loss of his sons that he was now blind. When the prince had kissed his feet and received his blessing, he took from a casket a little collyrium of Solomon, which the Simurgh had given him, and which reveals the hidden things of earth, and rubbed it on his father's eyes. Light came, and the king saw his son.

Mihr-afruz was brought before the king, and the prince said: 'This is the murderer of your sons; do with her as you will.' The king fancied that the prince might care for the girl's beauty, and replied: 'You have humbled her; do with her as you will.'

Upon this the prince sent for four swift and strong horses, and had the negro bound to each one of them; then each was driven to one of the four quarters, and he tore in pieces like muslin.

This frightened Mihr-afroz horribly, for she thought the same thing might be done to herself. She cried out to the prince: 'O Prince Almas! what is hardest to get is most valued. Up till now I have been subject to no man, and no man had had my love. The many kings and kings sons who have died at my hands have died because it was their fate to die like this. In this matter I have not sinned. That was their fate from eternity; and from the beginning it was predestined that my fate should be bound up with yours.'

The prince gave ear to the argument from pre-ordainment, and as she was a very lovely maiden he took her too in lawful marriage. She and Jamila, set up house together, and Dil-aram and Gul set up theirs; and the prince passed the rest of his life with the four in perfect happiness, and in pleasant and sociable entertainment.

Now has been told what the rose did to the cypress.

Finished, finished, finished!

Footnotes:

[Footnote 1: Translated from two Persian MSS. in the possession of the British Museum and the India Office, and adapted, with some reservations, by Annette S. Beveridge.]

[Footnote 2: Jessamine, ruby-decked.]

[Footnote 3: Life-giving diamond.]

[Footnote 4: World-gripper.]

[Footnote 5: Love-enkindler.]

[Footnote 6: Rose-cheek.]

[Footnote 7: Heartsease.]

[Footnote 8: Elias.]

[Footnote 9: Pleasure.]

[Footnote 10: Thirty-birds.]

[Footnote 11: Pomp and Pride.]

[Footnote 12: Of happy omen.]