

DONKEY READS

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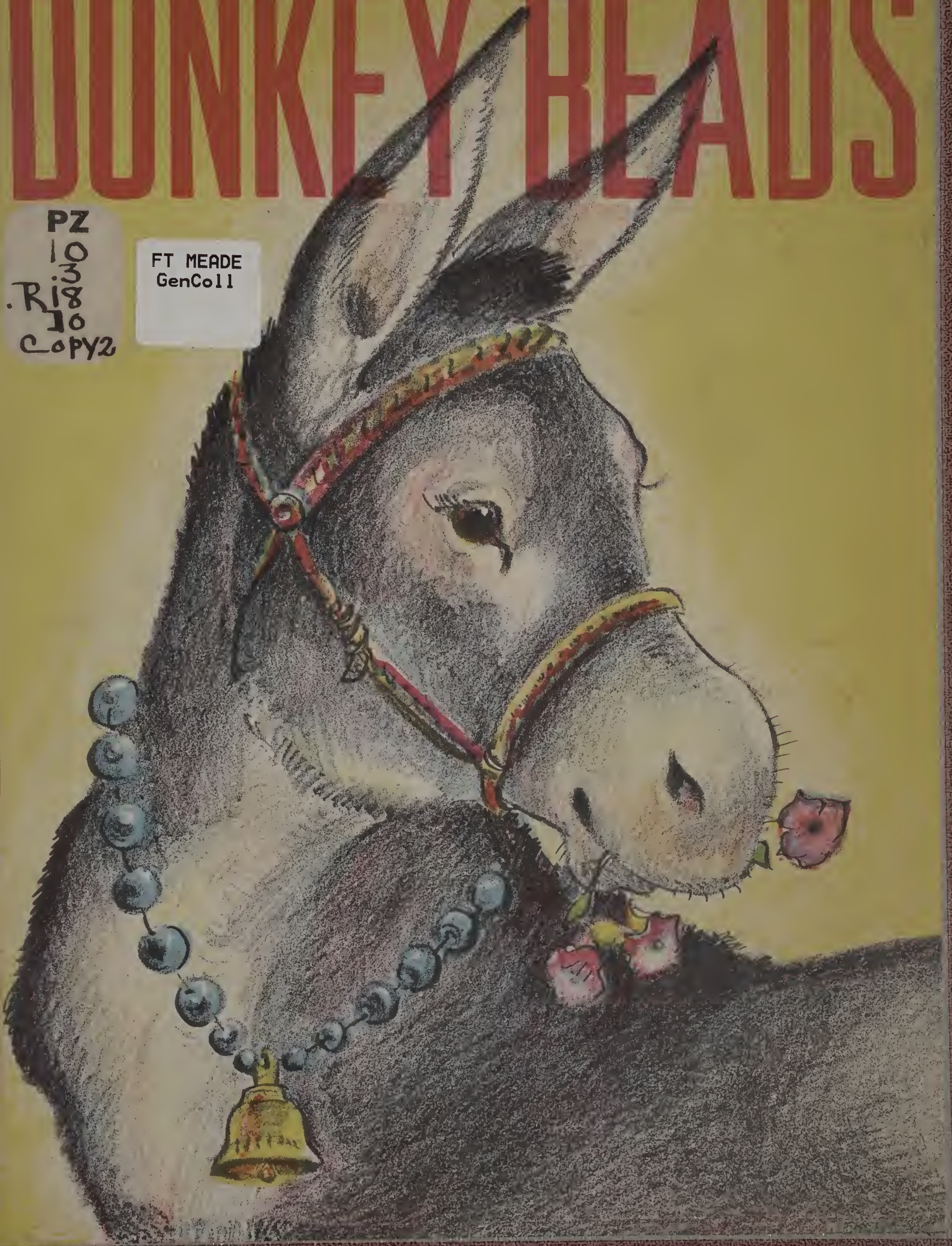
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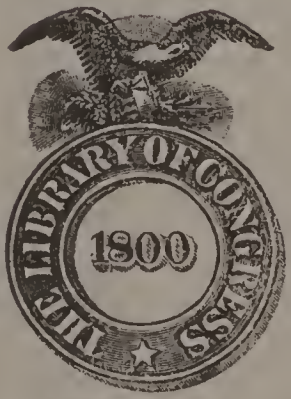
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DONKEY BEADS





The dragging ends of the poplar beams thumped against the cobblestones

DONKEY BEADS

A Tale of a Persian Donkey

By

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JASMINE, CAMEL BELLS, etc.



Pictures by

KURT WIESE

JUNIOR PRESS BOOKS

ALBERT WHITMAN

& CO

CHICAGO

1938

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JUL 13 1938



I

THE RUNAWAY

OLAGH was a little grey donkey that lived in Persia. Like many other little donkeys he had to work hard for his living. But Olagh didn't like work. He was a vain, willful little donkey. He was proud of his grey coat and his small hoofs, but especially he was proud of his long stiff ears.

“With fine handsome ears like mine,” he thought, “I ought to find the right kind of master, one who would appreciate me and treat me as I deserve, instead of piling heavy loads on my back and beating me all day long.”

Now the kind of master Olagh dreamed of was one who would tether him in the petunia bed, bathe him with rose water, feed him with alfalfa and barley and raisins, and load him with nothing heavier than a basket of wild tulips from the mountains.

However, Olagh's master was a man who supplied builders with the long poplar beams used to hold up the flat mud roofs of Persian houses. Every day Olagh had to carry these heavy logs of wood on his back, and sometimes his little legs almost snapped under the weight.

Instead of sleeping in a bed of petunia blossoms, Olagh dreamed his midnight dreams in a cellar underneath his master's house, together with the other donkeys. His stall was a bare earthen floor with sharp rocks jutting out, that stuck into him when he lay down. And as for rose water baths, the only water that dampened his grey hairy sides was that which splashed on him as he forded a ditch or spring freshet, or the few raindrops that fell on him during the scant spring rains.

True, his master did feed him alfalfa sometimes, but he got far more camel-thorn than sweet alfalfa, and only once did he ever taste a raisin. The master had been eating his lunch by the roadside, and dropped a fat brown raisin. Olagh found it.

"That was good," he said to himself as he rolled it around on his tongue. "I must have another." And he nosed about in the dust.

"So you got that raisin I dropped!" The master shouted at him. "Get back in the road and leave my food alone." And he hit Olagh with his stick.

Olagh trembled, and his eyes flashed.

"The very first chance I get, I'll run away and leave you," he tried to say. But the only sound he made was a loud squeaky hee-haw.



Olagh dreamed his midnight dreams in a cellar

The master finished his lunch, and loaded each donkey with a pair of heavy poplar beams. Down the mountainside they started, plodding along single file, far enough apart to let the heavy beams drag behind them. They reached the broad highway that skirted the city walls. It was easier going on the level highway as the load did not pull down so heavily as on the sloping road. Where a narrow high-walled street led off from the main highway the donkeys turned, picking their way carefully.

Clatter, bump! Clatter, bump! The dragging ends of the poplar beams thumped against the cobblestones and the street wall. One had to be careful in the city. Garden walls jutted out at unexpected corners, and sometimes a wide street narrowed so suddenly that there was not room for two carriages to pass abreast. Strings of donkeys often became tangled in braying confusion when they met in these narrow winding streets.

It was nearly sunset when Olagh rounded a bend in the road and saw a carriage coming right ahead of him. Scared by the clatter of hoofs and wheels, he tried to turn. The long poplar beams he was carrying jammed between the walls on either side. He was caught.

The carriage stopped just in time. The driver jumped out and began shouting at Olagh's master. The donkeys became tangled with their awkward loads and started to bray and kick.

"Son of a burnt father!" yelled the carriage driver. "Why have you let this clumsy beast stop my carriage? Can't you keep the road clear for men of affairs?"

"And you, whose grandmother resembled a monkey!" screamed the donkey owner. "Why do you drive at such speed that you terrify the simple, four-footed things? Now I must get help to dislodge the timbers and free the beast. If you stand there screaming at me, I will tell my story to the police and you shall pay for the help. Be off! Away with you!"



“Why have you let this clumsy beast stop my carriage?”

The carriage driver jumped to his seat, turned the horses around, and rattled down the street as fast as he had come. The master pushed and pulled and lifted. In the end he had to untie the ropes which fastened the timbers to Olagh's back. Then the donkey scrambled up from the low step where he had fallen and was ready to go on.

But one timber was still wedged fast against the street walls and the other donkeys were still crowded together. Olagh looked across the timber that barred the street. The master was trying to get the other animals into an orderly line while he waited for someone to come along and help him.

"By the time he can crawl under the timber, I shall be far away," thought the little donkey. "This is my chance! Goodbye, wicked master!" And he dashed down the street, around one bend after another, taking first one turn and then another, until he found himself in a strange part of the city.

Here he stopped, pricked up his long, stiff ears and listened. Yes, the master was following him. Nearer and nearer came the sound of excited shouts. Olagh started down the street again. He saw an open gate. Inside was a beautiful garden of flowers and trees and rosebushes. He went in.





And he dashed down the street

A man whom he had not noticed was standing by the gate.

“What’s this?” cried the man. He was not expecting a strange donkey to walk into his garden.

Just then Olagh’s master came shouting down the street.

“Donkey lost! Donkey lost! Who has seen my donkey?” he bellowed. He was in a hurry to find Olagh so he could get back to the other donkeys that he had left waiting. Olagh trembled when he thought of the beating he would receive.

Quick as a wink, the man in the garden shut his gate and pushed the bolt.

“So you’re a little runaway!” he said to Olagh, and smiled to himself. He stood there, staring at the donkey’s long, stiff ears, until the noise in the street had stopped and even the master’s footsteps could no longer be heard.

Olagh wiggled his beautiful ears and blinked his eyes happily as he looked toward the petunia bed. He had worked hard all day and was tired and hungry. What a comfortable bed those sweet-smelling flowers would make! And they might taste good, too!

Satisfied that the owner would not return, the new master, Bahram, led the little donkey to a half-underground stable above which the house was built, tossed him a few wisps of alfalfa, and shut the flimsy door.

Olagh looked around. The stable was just like his old home, even to the rocks that stuck through the earthen floor! Wasn’t this new master going to let him sleep in the petunia bed after all? No, it seemed he was not. Olagh sadly chewed his alfalfa. What had been the use of running away? He had only exchanged an old master for a new one, and one bed of rocks for another.

Creak! Crank! Creak! Crank! Olagh pricked up his ears and listened. The master was drawing water from the well and

the windlass creaked loudly as he wound the rope that drew up the bucket. The rose water bath at last! Olagh quivered with joy at the thought.

But the new master merely opened the door, set down a square tin bucket of dirty, ill-smelling water, and went away again. After one taste of the water, Olagh turned away with a snort.

“The master brings me dirty water to drink and not a drop of rose water for a bath; I cannot sleep among the petunias; my supper is alfalfa without a single grain of barley or a raisin! What kind of work will he expect me to do tomorrow? Shall I be disappointed in the basket of tulips, too? Perhaps the master will treat me better when he sees me by daylight and finds out how handsome I am.”

The sun had barely lifted its chin above the skyline next morning when the new master opened the stable door and prodded Olagh to make him wake up.

“Get up, you lazy runaway! We’re going on a long journey today.”

“So the new master has noticed my beautiful stiff ears,” thought Olagh sleepily. “He’s going to take me out and show all his friends what a fine, handsome donkey I am! Perhaps we are going on a pleasure trip. Hee-haw! I shall have a splendid time!”





II

THE NECKLACE OF BLUE BEADS

“Get up, I say. You lazy beast! If you eat my alfalfa, you must work for it.”

Olagh did not like the man's voice, and the stick was sharp. So he stood up, shook himself sleepily, and waited patiently while Bahram fitted carpet-strip harness on him and balanced a wooden frame on each side.

“What can this be?” thought Olagh. “Are these crates to carry a basket of red tulips?”



“Get up, I say. You lazy beast!”

Foolish donkey! He did not know that the season for wild tulips had gone. He did not even know that the big earthen jars which Bahram placed in the crates were to carry clear drinking water from a mountain spring to the city. But he did like the long string of bright blue clay beads that Bahram fastened around his neck.

“To keep off the Evil Eye!” Bahram muttered half to himself. “I don’t want you to fall over the precipice, or run away, as you did yesterday.”

Olagh craned his neck and turned his head to admire the beautiful blue beads.

“What a handsome beast I am!” he said to himself. “I have always had beautiful ears, but with this new necklace I shall be the envy of every donkey on the road.” And when the master fastened a tiny, tinkling brass bell to the necklace, Olagh was vainer than ever.

“Hee-haw! Hee-haw!” He brayed with joy.

Bahram opened the street gate and Olagh proudly trotted out, ready for the long journey. Both man and donkey were afraid of meeting Olagh’s old master, but no one spoke to them in the streets except the baker who was hanging out sheets of thin, brown bread on his shop front.

“Peace to you, Bahram!” the baker saluted his friend. “I thought you had quit work to go on a pilgrimage.”

“With you be peace!” the water carrier replied. “So I had, but I find that I must work a little longer.”

“God give you strength!” the baker shouted to Bahram, as man and donkey continued up the street.

Up, up, up the mountainside Olagh climbed, his little brass bell tinkling merrily in the fresh morning air. High up the mountain he climbed, higher than he had ever gone for poplar beams.



Up, up, up the mountainside Olagh climbed

The wide road became a narrow path, and then only a faint track on the stony slope, and still they met no admiring friends.

Beside a great rock Bahram stopped. Olagh saw a pool of water that seemed to come from under the rock. The water was clear and bubbling. Along one side was a big patch of watercress. Olagh lowered his head to drink. Bahram struck him across the nose.

“Stupid beast!” Bahram yelled. “Would you let my water jars slide to the ground and break into a thousand and one pieces?”

Olagh backed away. Bahram lifted the water jars from the crates and set them in a row on the ground. Then he got down on his hands and knees and drank from the cool, bubbling spring.

“Now, runaway! Have your drink,” he said to the donkey. Olagh quickly put his mouth to the water and took a long drink. Then he took a big bite of the juicy, green watercress.

“Almost as good as petunias!” he said to himself. “Perhaps I shall like this new life, after all.” While Olagh took another mouthful of the watercress and nibbled the prickly camel-thorn that grew in scattered patches along the slope, Bahram sat down on a rock and ate his bread and cheese. Then he filled the jars with clear, cool water.

Out of the corner of his eye Olagh watched Bahram and knew that he was ready to load the jars. But he still went on nibbling camel-thorn. Bahram walked over to the donkey and prodded him with a sharp little goad.

Olagh leaped in the air. He had never felt a goad before. It hurt him and he squealed with pain.

The master laughed.

“You won’t play lazybones again, will you?”

Olagh stood quietly while the jars were being placed in the crates, but he watched the master closely, afraid of the sharp goad.



Olagh backed away

At last they were ready to start back to the city. Going down the steep path was difficult. The water jars were heavy and they pressed against his sides. When they reached the city streets, Bahram knocked on one gate after another until he had sold all the water.

“So it was not a pleasure trip, after all,” Olagh thought sadly that night, “and I’ll have work every day, just as I did for the old master.”

Day after day they climbed the mountain and filled the jars at the spring. Day after day they stopped at the same gates and sold the water. Olagh grew tired of going to the same places all the time.

One day, while Olagh was nibbling his camel-thorn, Bahram climbed over the rocks to the top of a waterfall. He wanted to see what lay beyond. But the rocks were wet and slippery. Bahram slipped and hurt his leg. For a long time he lay on the rock with one foot in the water, twisting his face and clenching his hands in pain. Then he tried to get up and go to Olagh. He would ride home and leave the water jars until tomorrow.

“Have patience!” Bahram called to the donkey, as he limped slowly toward the spring. But Olagh had already guessed what the master intended to do.

“Oh, no!” Olagh said to himself. “You are much heavier than the water jars. I’ll never carry you nor any other man!” And the lazy donkey kicked his heels in the air and ran down the mountainside so fast that the rocks and stones rattled after him like a hailstorm.

Poor Bahram! His leg hurt so badly that he could hardly walk and he had to limp along like a chicken on one foot. When at last he reached the city, it was already dark and men were carrying lanterns in the street.

Olagh was nowhere to be seen. Bahram could not complain to the police, for the donkey was not his.

So he limped homeward, saying, "Dirt on my head! It was I, instead of that beast, who should have worn the blue beads. Now I am crippled and my water jars are still on the mountain-side, and the donkey is gone! It is just what I deserve for trying to keep the lazy runaway!"

And what had become of Olagh? He had run so fast that the wooden frame had fallen off and he was now burdened with only the carpet-strip harness and his beautiful necklace of blue beads and the brass bell. When he reached the broad highway at the edge of the city, he stopped still, not knowing which way to go.

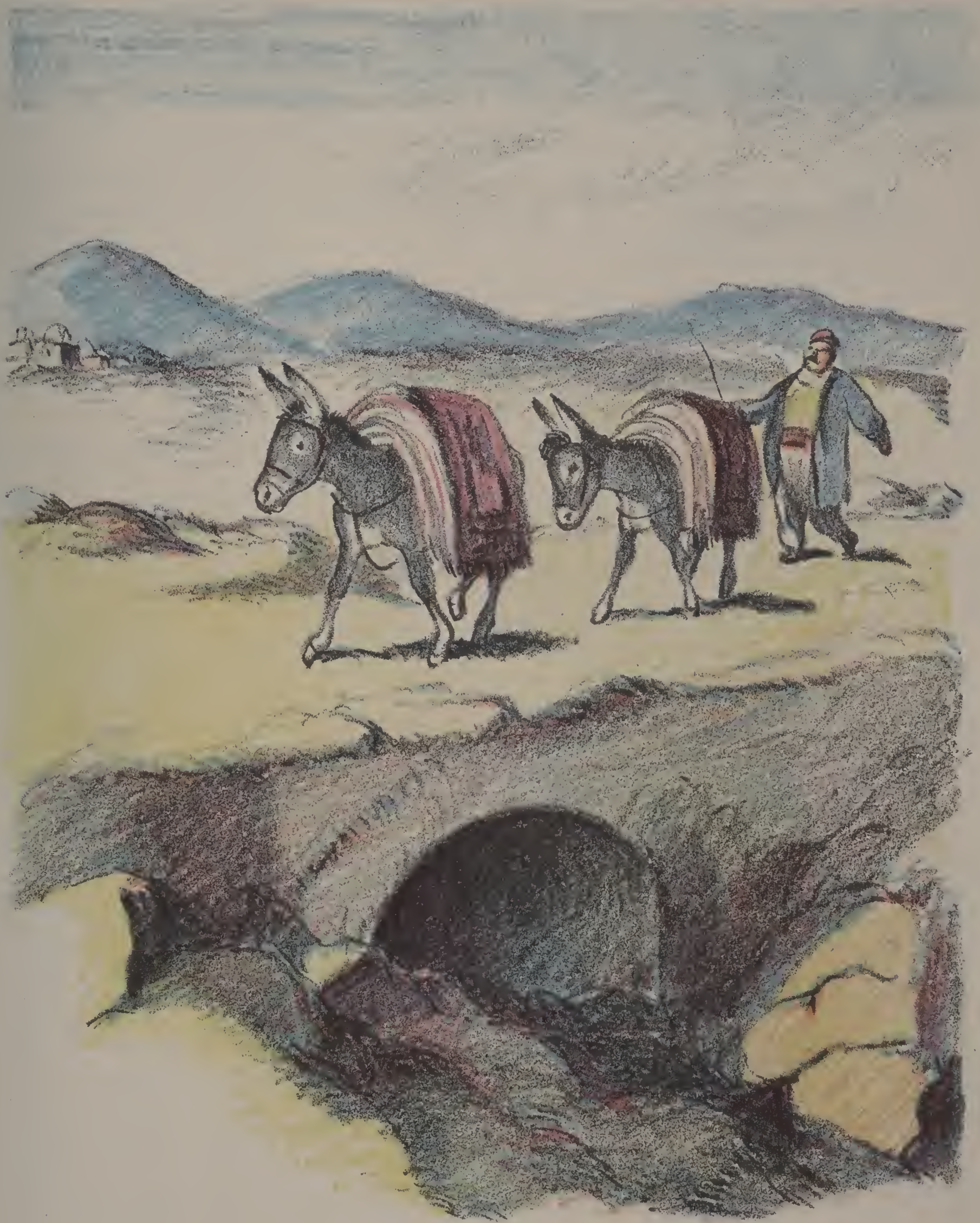




III MORE MASTERS

While Olagh stood wondering on the highway, he saw two donkeys coming towards him. Their backs bulged with heavy loads but they trotted along nimbly, as if they were happy.

“Hee-haw!” Olagh greeted them, while they were still a little distance off. And as they came nearer he looked at their driver to see what kind of master he was.



He saw two donkeys coming toward him

The man was short and fat, and his face was round and smiling. Even the donkeys looked well fed. Olagh saw that they were laden with rugs—beautiful red and blue rugs with pretty flower designs printed all over them and twined in the borders.

“Now I shouldn’t mind that,” thought Olagh to himself. “Maybe those flowers are petunias. I should like to carry a petunia rug on my back.”

He looked more carefully still at the driver.

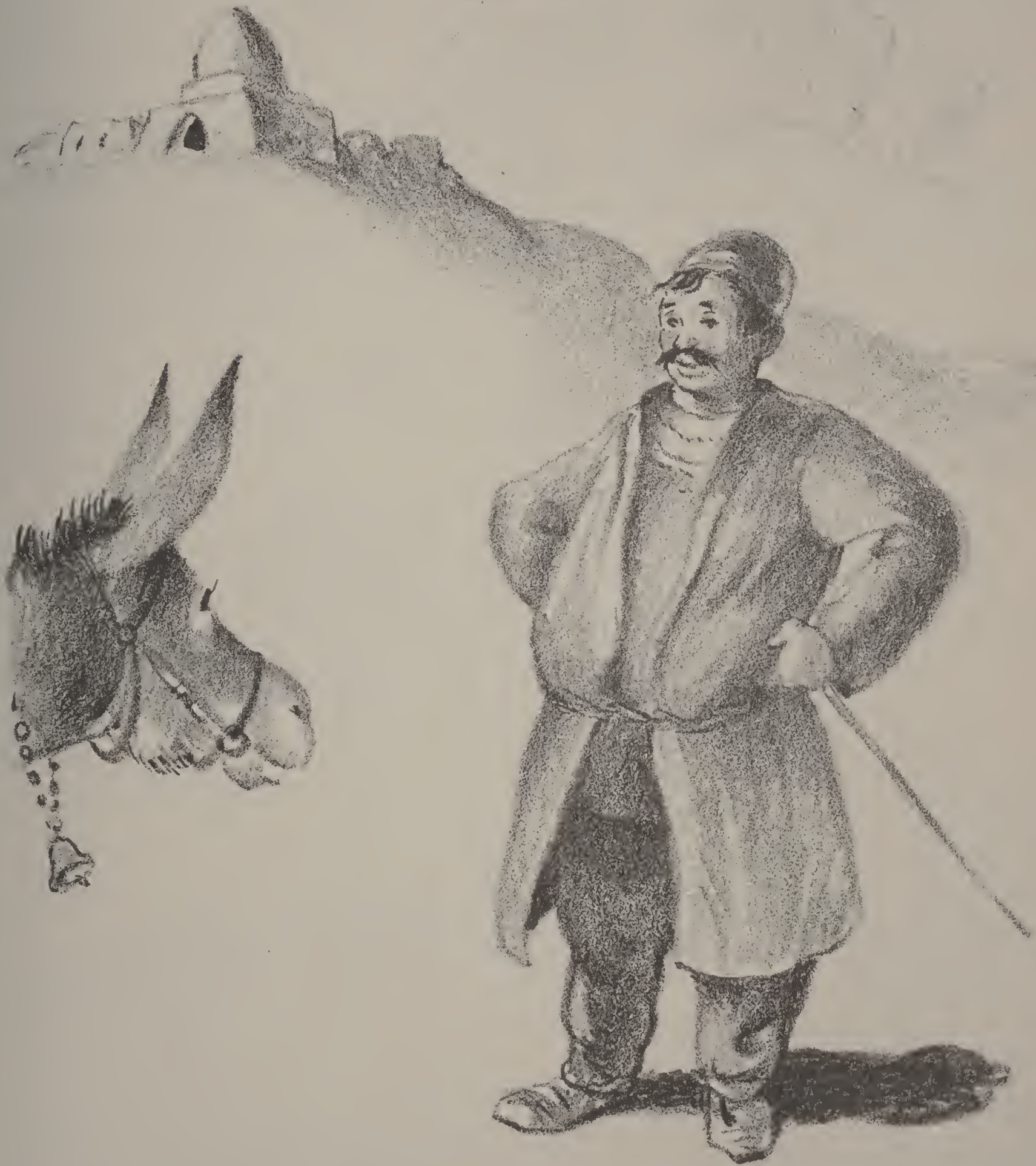
“That man is fat,” he decided, “and so are his donkeys. I’m sure it is because they eat raisins. Who knows? Perhaps this is the very master for whom I have always been looking!”

“Hee-haw!” he brayed. “Dear master, take little Olagh with you! I am such a fine donkey, your rugs will look more beautiful than ever on my back.” And there he stood, wiggling his long ears and tossing his head until the necklace of blue beads rattled and the little brass bell jingled loudly.

“Ha, ha, ha!” The man stopped in the middle of the road and stood there laughing at Olagh until his sides shook. If he, too, had been wearing a bell, it would have jingled even louder than Olagh’s.

Then he looked quickly up and down the road. It was still the hot part of the afternoon when most people stayed indoors. No one was in sight.

“Now may I be blessed in Paradise!” the man chuckled to himself. “I am about to do a good deed. Here is a beast that has lost his master—or, I wonder—has he run away? Whichever it is, there’s no owner in sight. In fact, there’s no one in sight. The poor little beast will have nowhere to sleep tonight and no one to feed him. Surely I should take pity on him! Yes, I, Karim the Kind, although some call me Karim the Lazy, will take this little beast with his blue beads and his fine harness for my very own.”



'Now may I be blessed in Paradise!' the man chuckled



Silly little Olagh came closer to the man and stretched out his neck to show himself off.

“My long stiff ears—aren’t they beautiful?” he wanted to say. But all that came from his throat was a loud hee-haw. And the two rug-laden donkeys, thinking he was greeting them, replied with a chorus of hee-haws of their own.

“Be silent,” the master commanded, “or I shall not be able to do this act of kindness. Here! Stand still, little stranger, while I fasten this big rug on your back. Now that you are almost covered with rugs, no one will know whether you are black or white or brown.”

“I’m grey! I’m grey! Can’t you see my grey ears?” Olagh wanted to tell him, but the man was talking to himself.

“Ah, yes! This is luck for me,” he said. “When the rug merchant in the bazaar sees my rugs spread out over three animals instead of crowded on two, he will think I am indeed rich, and he won’t dare to offer any but the highest prices for my rugs. Those blue beads around this beast’s neck may bring luck to me, too.”



"I'm grey! I'm grey! Can't you see my grey ears?"

All the way to the bazaar Karim petted Olagh, hoping the little donkey would become fond of him and not try to run away. This made the other two donkeys very angry, and they tried to push Olagh against the mud wall that lined each side of the street.

Karim only laughed.

“What stupid animals I have!” he said. “They have the whole street to themselves and yet they all want to crowd over to one side.”

* * * * *

Karim was really a kind master and Olagh was glad he had run away from the water carrier, even though it meant living in a village several miles outside the city. And what's more, Karim was always eating raisins. And there must have been a hole in his pocket, for Olagh could find raisins lying somewhere in the garden almost any time he wanted to look. The new master may have been lazy in some ways, and he carried rugs to the city only when he needed money, but he always kept his animals clean, currying them often and even washing them when they became very dirty.

“But not with rose water,” Olagh complained. “I should enjoy my bath so much more if it smelled sweet!”

When the peddler had a load of rugs ready for the city, he folded them and threw them across the backs of the donkeys. The rugs were heavy and the country road was long. Sometimes Olagh thought his back would break. But once he reached the city, he marched proudly as he led the little procession along the narrow, crooked streets. For did not everyone stop to stare at him, to admire his beautiful blue beads and brass bell and his handsome big ears? Surely they did not stop just to look at a rug!



Olagh could find raisins lying somewhere



Olagh soon found that the peddler spent most of his time in the village—either his own or a nearby village—and that they never remained in the city one single moment after the rugs were sold. This did not please the vain little donkey, for he wanted to be where there were a lot of people to admire him. The few villagers that he did see were busy in their vineyards, or the women were washing clothes in an irrigation stream and had no time to look. And those who were curious or lazy enough to watch Olagh and his procession passing along the road were so stupid they did not even know they were looking at a donkey with the most beautiful ears in the world.



The few villagers he did see were busy in their vineyards

“Hee-haw!” Olagh groaned one night as he tried to settle himself comfortably against a rock in his bed. “No one appreciates me here. I think it is time to run away again!”

But try as he might, the master was forever watching him, and he never found a chance to escape. Karim had always been afraid that the new donkey would run away again, and he decided that now was the time to do something. So he brushed Olagh carefully, put on the fine carpet harness, and even polished his brass bell. Then he opened the gate.

“Hehhhh! he bawled harshly at the top of his voice, and urged the donkey into the street.

“This at last is my day of triumph,” Olagh thought to himself. “I look fine today and the master is taking me out alone. Hee-haw! Hee-haw! Make way for The Beautiful One!”

Karim chuckled to himself at his plan, as he walked along the street. At the edge of the village he saw the butcher. Several sheep were in a nearby pen.

“Peace to you!” Karim greeted the butcher. “You seem to be busy today. Now, me! My business is falling off since the days have grown colder.”

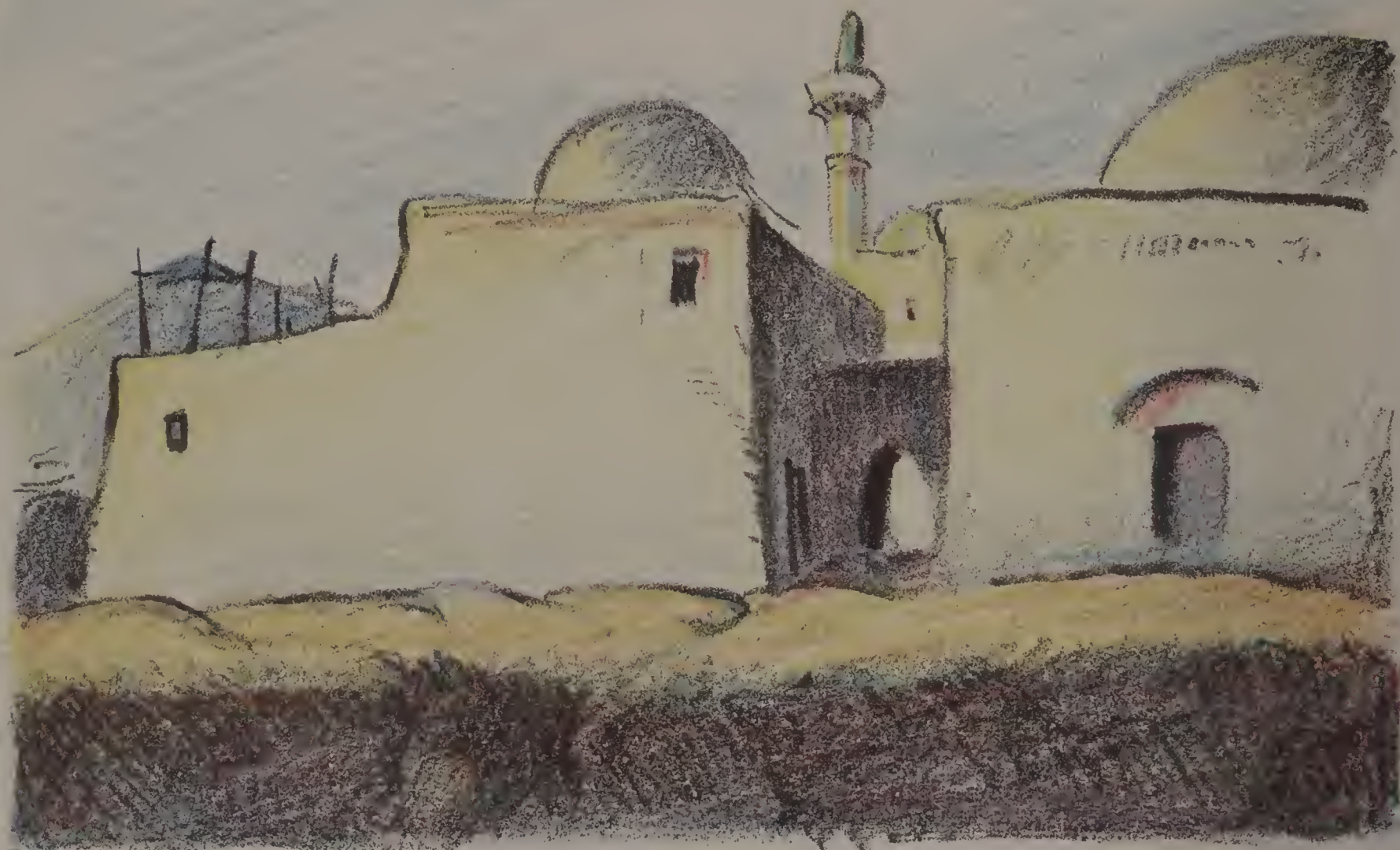
“With you be peace!” the butcher replied. “Yes, I am busy today. I am getting ready to take some fresh meat to the city.”

“So I see,” Karim answered. “And since you are so busy, you should have another donkey. I have very little rug business in the winter time and I want to get rid of one of my beasts. Come, friend, let us make a bargain.”

Karim told the butcher how strong Olagh was and what a gentle disposition he had. But the butcher saw the old scars Olagh had received from his first master and decided that perhaps he was not such a gentle donkey, after all.

“And besides! Just see how fat he is! He must be very lazy!” the butcher shouted. He really intended to buy Olagh, but he wanted to buy him as cheaply as possible. At last the two men agreed on a price, and Karim walked away with the silver coins jingling in his pocket and a big grin on his face.





IV WOLVES

“He doesn’t even notice my ears,” Olagh thought bitterly, as the butcher put a halter on him and tied him fast. “All he thinks of is my strong back.”

Poor Olagh! What a life he led now! First of all, the butcher took off the fine carpet harness. Then he filled two goatskin bags with fresh, raw meat and placed them on Olagh’s back. Another donkey was given the same kind of load, and away they all started for the city.



The butcher took off the fine carpet harness

“Hehhhh!” bellowed the butcher, as he prodded them with a sharp stick. “Hurry up, there! I have to be in the city when the shops open, and I don’t want this meat to spoil on the way.”

“Hee-haw yourself!” Olagh shrieked back at him. But the stick was very sharp, so he kicked up his heels and went running down the road so fast he almost lost the goatskin bags.

Day after day they carried fresh meat to the city. Then the weather began to grow much colder, and Olagh opened his eyes one morning to find everything deeply covered with snow.

“This is fine,” he thought. “I shall not have to carry meat today.”

But, alas! the master cut up meat for the goatskin bags just as he had always done. Though the village was only a short distance from the city, the snow was so deep that Olagh could hardly walk. When they reached the city, they found the streets full of snow that had been shoveled from the flat housetops and the donkeys could hardly squeeze through the narrow passageways with their bulging bags.

On their homeward way they had to walk so slowly that it was dark long before they reached the village. The butcher was frightened and kept urging the donkeys to go faster and faster.

“It’s the wolves,” he said. “I am sure I see their yellow eyes shining in the dark. Hurry! Hurry! Or we shall be all eaten alive! They always come out when the snow is heavy!”

Olagh felt sure that the blue beads would protect him from harm. But he hurried along as best he could so that the others should not leave him behind.

That night, as he snuggled close to the other donkey to keep warm, he did some thinking.

“Suppose the wolves did come! Would they try to bite my beautiful ears? Oh, I should weep if they tore off my ears! My



The snow was so deep that Olagh could hardly walk



beauty would be gone forever. I must leave this place and return to the city.”

The next time the butcher got ready to go to the city, Olagh looked longingly at his fine carpet-strip harness that hung from a peg on the wall. He would have liked to take it with him.

“No,” he thought, “it is better to run away now and save my ears than to wait for some day when I am wearing my fine harness.” And he started sadly down the road.

Once inside the city he began to plan his escape. His eyes shone eagerly as he thought of running away again. He must wait, he decided, until the bags had been taken off his back, so he could run faster.



Olagh looked longingly at his fine carpet-strip harness

As soon as the meat was sold, Olagh began to watch for his chance. But the butcher stayed close behind the animals and Olagh began to think he would have to return to the village . . . and perhaps meet the hungry wolves . . . when suddenly—

Thump! A man on a flat housetop close to the street threw a great shovelful of snow from his roof into the street. It landed right on top of the butcher and knocked him down.

Olagh heard the sound and turned around. Here was his chance! Tossing his head in the air, he charged past the other donkey and ran as fast as he could through the narrow street. Then he turned a sharp bend and saw before him an open space with streets running in three directions. Which should he take?

In one street the snow was piled so deep he knew he never could run fast, and in another a man was coming toward him, balancing a roll of bread on his head. Had Olagh ever seen that man before? He looked again.

It was his first master, the one who sold poplar beams!

What should he do? Olagh was sure he would be caught, with one master at his heels and another in front of him. But no, the man must have been thinking about his bread for supper, or perhaps some snowflakes blew in his eyes. Anyway, he did not see Olagh.

So the little donkey ran down the third street as fast as his legs could carry him. But where should he go? He must hide from the butcher, who might now be looking for him. He looked at all the doorways along the street, hoping he could slip inside somewhere. But they were all shut tight.

Olagh was just shoving his nose against a door to see if he could push it open, when he noticed a man squatting in the snow near by. The man was a dirty ragged beggar waiting for someone to give him a penny, but he might be able to help a poor runaway



Olagh heard the sound and turned around



animal. Olagh went up to him and rubbed his cold nose against the man's shoulder.

"Ha! ha!" laughed the beggar. "Do I look like a donkey, that this beast should come up to me and mistake me for one of his friends? Ha! Ha!" And he laughed so loud that Olagh thought he was trying to say, "Hee-haw!"

So Olagh answered with a soft little hee-haw and rubbed his nose against the man again.

"Now, what are you doing here?" the beggar asked, when Olagh refused to go away. "Are you lost? No one seems to be coming along to look for you. Maybe you are a runaway. I have half a mind to keep you."

The beggar stood up and flapped the snow out of his rags. Olagh could now see how bony and dirty the man was.



"I have half a mind to keep you."

“Oh, dear!” he thought. “I have made another mistake. This man will give me no barley or raisins. He certainly doesn’t smell like either rose water or petunias. I feel sure he has never had a bath himself, so I don’t suppose he will ever give me one!”

Olagh decided to go farther down the street and try his luck with someone else. But the beggar seized him quickly and climbed on his back. The little donkey was so surprised he did not have time to run and, try as he might, he could not throw the man off.

The rider kicked his heels into the donkey’s sides and hurried him along to a very poor part of the city. Olagh was so ashamed that he kept his head down and never once looked to see who might be passing.

“The very idea!” he complained to himself. “A handsome beast like me having to carry that dirty bundle of rags! And there’s a man inside those rags, too. I have to carry a man on my back. Why, it was bad enough to carry water jars when I worked for Bahram. What I always wanted was to carry a basket of tulips, but this man is no tulip! Hee-haw!”

A big tear rolled out of his eye and down his long, hairy nose. It stopped on his lip and froze there.

At last they reached a very tiny gate. The beggar had to climb down before the donkey could squeeze through.

“What a small garden,” Olagh thought with disgust. “Why, there isn’t room to have even one petunia here. They could never have a whole bed of flowers. I shall run away again tomorrow.”

Yes, the garden was too small to have a bed of petunias, even if there had been no snow on the ground. There was not so much as a shed on the place. So the beggar took Olagh right into the house. It had only one room, in which the whole family lived.

Olagh stared at the woman and babies just as much as they stared at him.



The rider kicked his heels into the donkey's sides



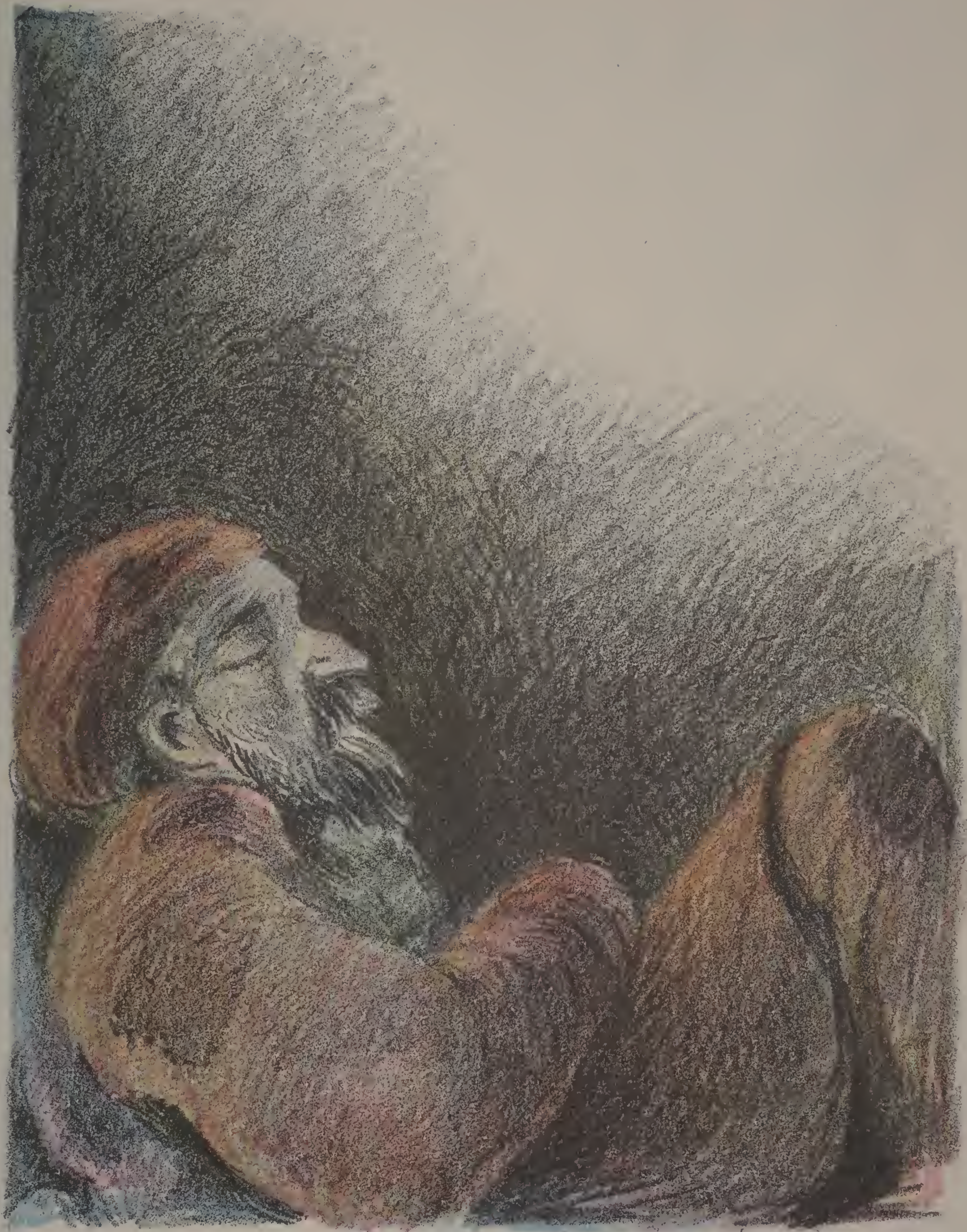
“Well, well!” said the woman to her husband, “you must have been lucky today. Now we shall be as rich as the king!”

“Yes,” replied the beggar. “We shall be rich, for I shall sell this donkey first thing tomorrow morning before his master comes to look for him.”

Without a bite of supper, Olagh settled down for the night. Once he felt something pressing against his side and thought there must be a rock in the floor. But it was only the beggar, who had crawled over close to the donkey to keep warm.

Next morning the beggar climbed onto Olagh’s back and rode down to the bazaar. Olagh tried again to throw him off and run away, but the beggar held tight.

When they reached the Big Caravanserai, they went inside.



But it was only the beggar

It was a large open building without a roof. Everywhere were boxes and bundles on the ground. Men were hurrying back and forth with papers in their hands. A string of donkeys stood in the middle of the place, waiting for someone to load them.

A tall thin man, with a long Turkish towel wrapped around his neck to keep him warm, was carrying packages to the donkeys.

The beggar led Olagh straight to this man.

“Peace be with you!” the beggar said politely.

“Peace!” the man replied and kept on working. “I have no coins to give away.”

The beggar drew himself up grandly, as if his rags were velvet and silk brocades.

“I am not asking for alms,” he said. “I have something to sell, something that you can use.” And he pointed at Olagh.

The man set down his bundles and looked at the little grey donkey.

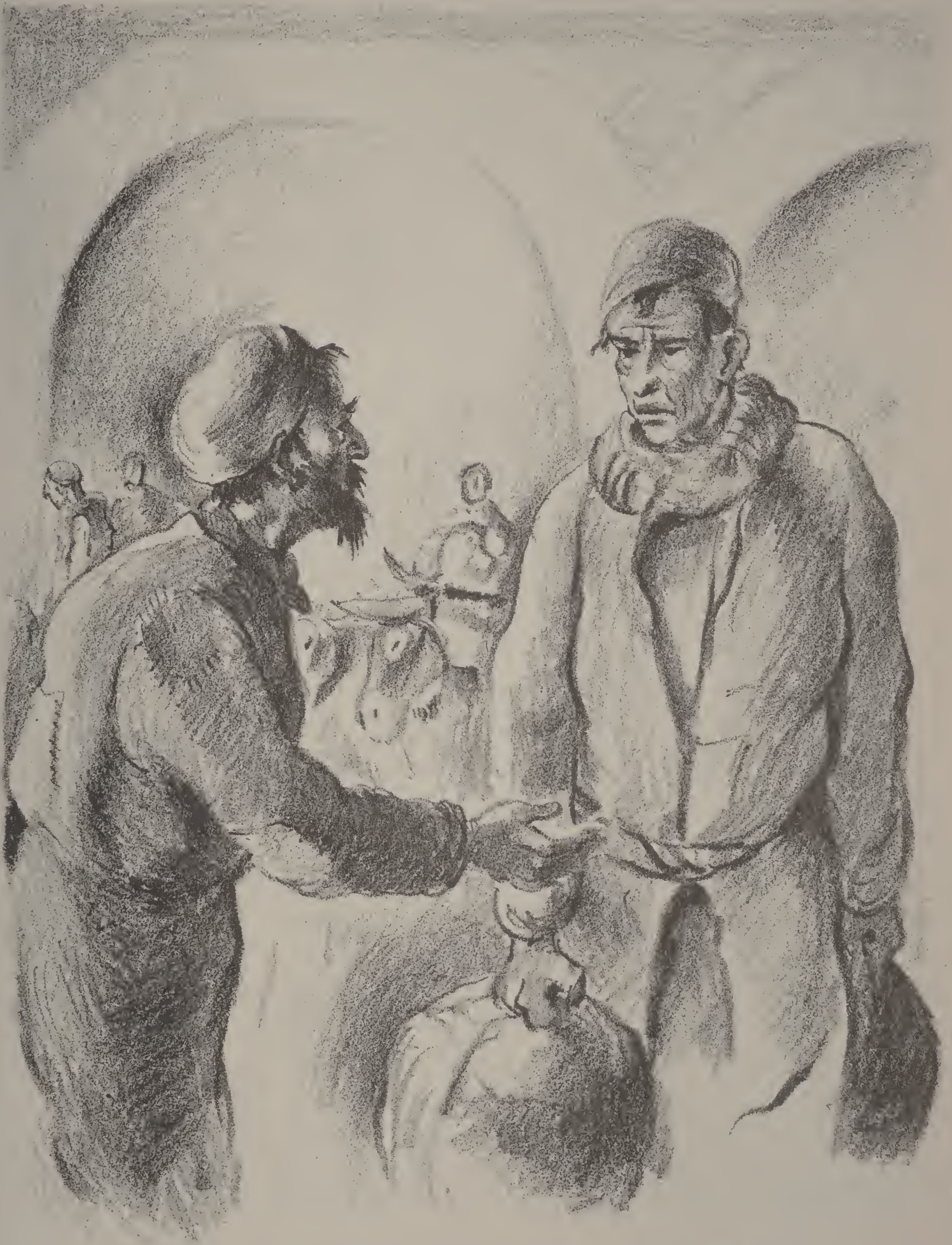
“Yes,” he said. “I could use another beast to carry bundles for the merchants. But I have no money to spare.”

“I will sell cheap,” the beggar replied. “You are my first customer this morning.”

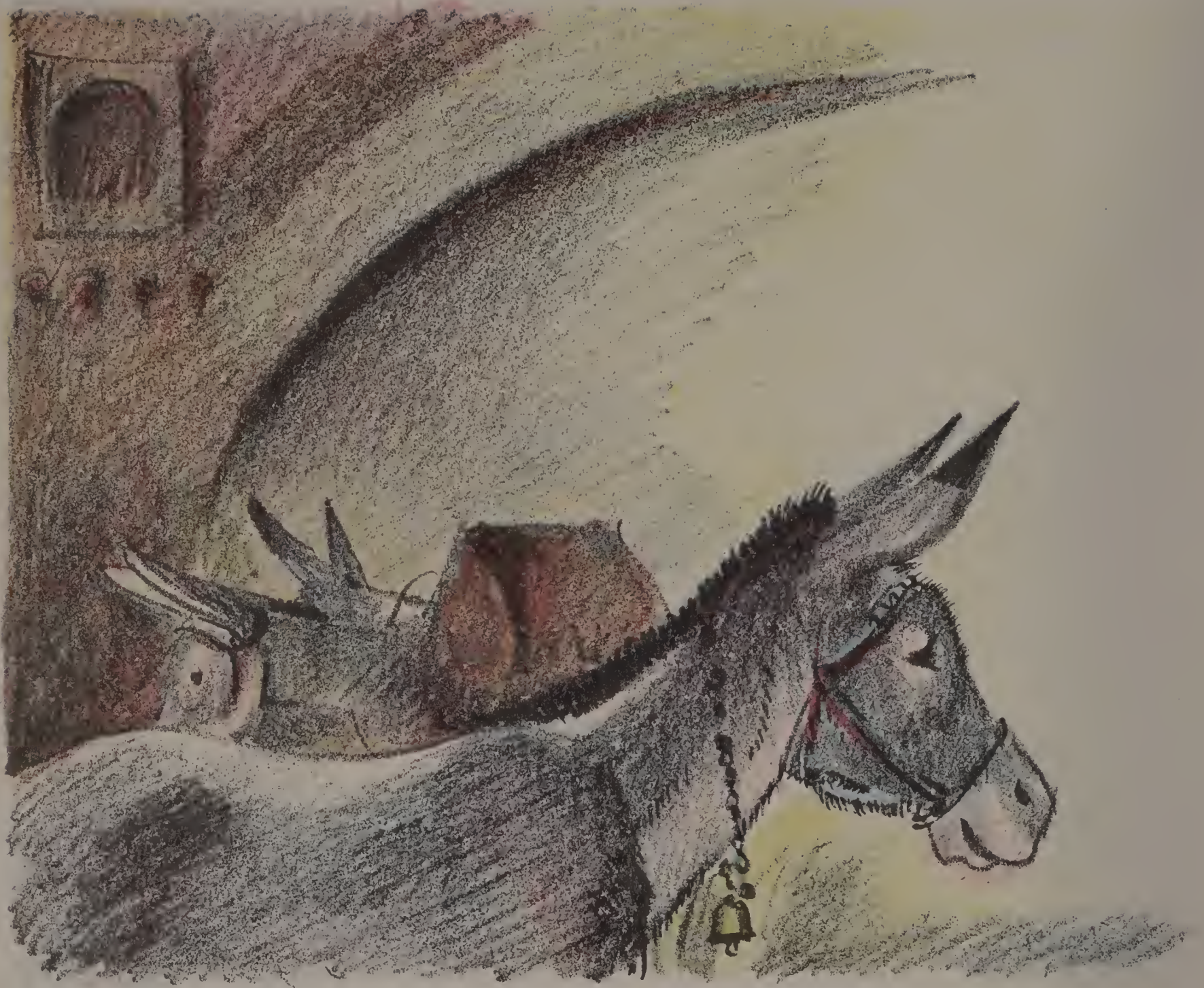
Finally they agreed on a price. Olagh watched eagerly to see how much the man thought he was worth. With sharp eyes he saw the tall man lay two big silver coins in the beggar’s hand.

“Hee-haw! Hee-haw!” he screamed angrily. He had been insulted. The man had paid only two coins for him, only two coins for a donkey with the most beautiful ears in the world! How Olagh hated that beggar!

“May you be stung by a scorpion! May you be bitten by a thousand fleas!” he cried, but no one understood him. The beggar was hurrying away as fast as he could and all he heard was a loud, squeaky hee-haw.



"I have something to sell, something that you can use."



V

THE BEADS BRING LUCK AT LAST

“Surely I am worth more than two coins,” Olagh thought angrily, and he waggled his ears and stretched his neck to try to get a better look at himself. “My ears are just as long as they always were and in this cold weather they have been stiffer than ever.”

And the tall man was thinking, “Now, why did that man sell so cheaply? Did he steal this beast? Maybe I shall have trouble with the police.”



“Now, why did that man sell so cheaply?”

He was right. While Olagh and the other donkeys were carrying bolts of new cloth to a merchant in the bazaar, the butcher and a policeman came to the Big Caravanserai looking for a donkey with long, grey ears.

Olagh was not there when they came, and the men who were working there had been too busy to notice the beggar selling a donkey to one of the porters. So the butcher and policeman went away to search elsewhere in the city.

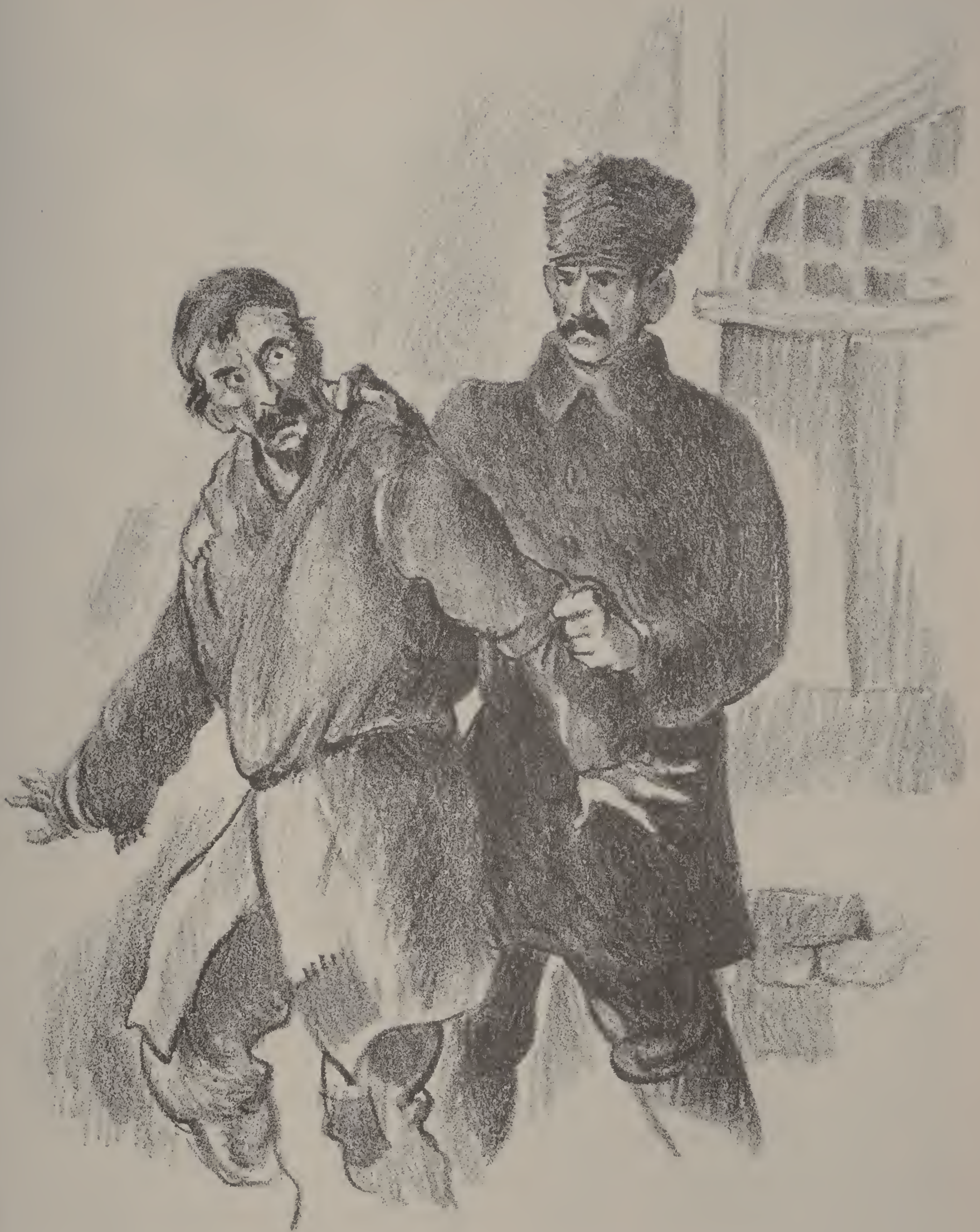
After the beggar had sold Olagh, he returned to his corner on the street and crouched down to wait for some one to give him a penny. Once he took out the two coins and looked at them. Just then a policeman came along and saw the two big coins. He knew that beggars did not receive so much money as that from the kind-hearted people who passed by, so he took the man to jail.

As for Olagh, he was happy to live in the city again.

“My beautiful long ears are safe now,” he told himself. “The wolves won’t come into the city—especially among the shops—and that seems to be where my new master works. Once more the blue beads have kept off the Evil Eye, for I should not have liked to return to the village with the butcher.”

He thought it was great fun to stand idly in the Big Caravanserai and watch the camels come swinging in through the gate with loads of new cloth and sugar, colored paper and soap and perfume—with all kinds of things from foreign lands. It would soon be New Year’s, the first day of spring, and the merchants were filling their shops with cloth for new dresses and suits; and with dishes and glasses and food for all the parties that people would give during the big holiday.

Soon came New Year’s—ten days to celebrate the beginning of the new year. The master put big splashes of henna stain on all his donkeys. Olagh was a light grey and the patches of red-



The policeman took the man to jail



dish brown stain looked beautiful on him. On every donkey's tail was tied a bunch of paper flowers. Olagh's flowers were blue and yellow, to match his blue beads and brass bell. Some of the other donkeys wore paper flowers of red and purple and pink, but Olagh was the most splendid of them all.

After New Year's had passed, the air grew warmer. One day Olagh saw a man driving a donkey through the streets with a basketful of bright red tulips. The sight of the tulips gave Olagh spring fever.



Some of the other donkeys wore paper flowers

“Hee-haw!” he cried. “That is what I have always wanted to do—to go up the mountainside and get wild flowers. How I should like to carry a basketful of flowers through the street and have everyone stop to admire me!”

For several days he had been watching the master, wondering whether he would lay out any petunia beds in the big garden where all the donkeys stayed at night. Most people had big beds of flowers in their gardens, but this man never planted any. Perhaps he thought that the donkeys would eat his flowers.

So once more Olagh began to think about running away.

“The wolves won’t bother me now, and my ears will be safe. Perhaps I can find that man with the tulips and he will let me carry his basket of flowers.”

But he was not so lucky as he had been and could not find a chance to run away. The days grew longer and warmer, the wild tulips on the mountainside must have dried up long ago, and still Olagh had not escaped. As he went about his work each day, he sometimes passed gardens where he could smell the sweet-scented petunias already in bloom.

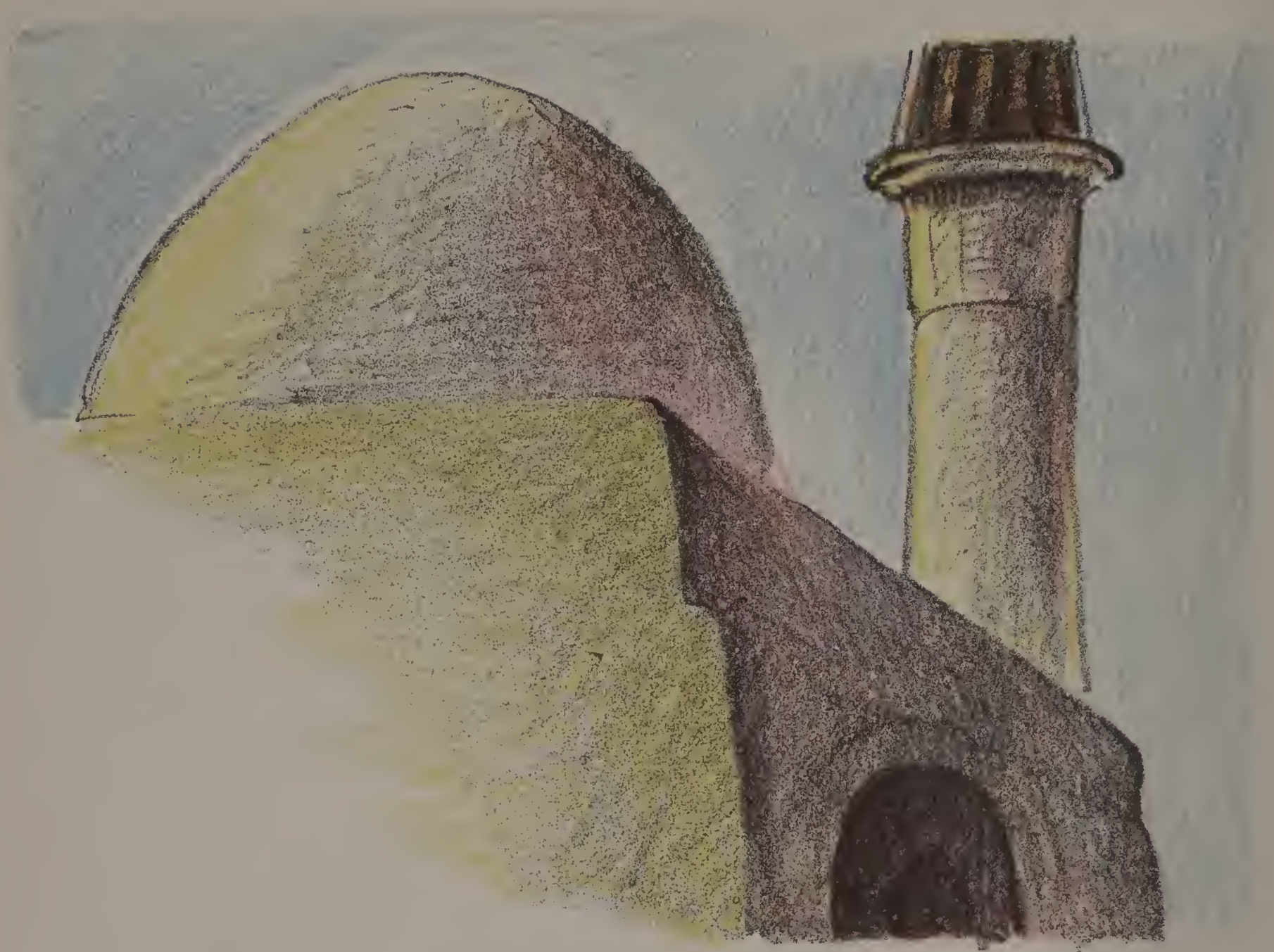
“Hee-haw! Hee-haw!” he shrieked one day. “Why must I always carry ugly bundles and sleep on the hard ground when there is a bed of petunias waiting somewhere for me?”

All that day he watched the master closely. It was a very hot day and the master became tired. Early in the afternoon, long before sunset, the man quit work and drove his donkeys homeward. Olagh happened to be at the end of the procession. The master opened the gate and walked ahead into the garden. The donkeys followed him in—all but Olagh. He quietly picked his way over the cobblestones so the master would not hear him. After he had passed a bend in the street, he stopped to listen.

He heard the master come out of the gate, shout for him, and



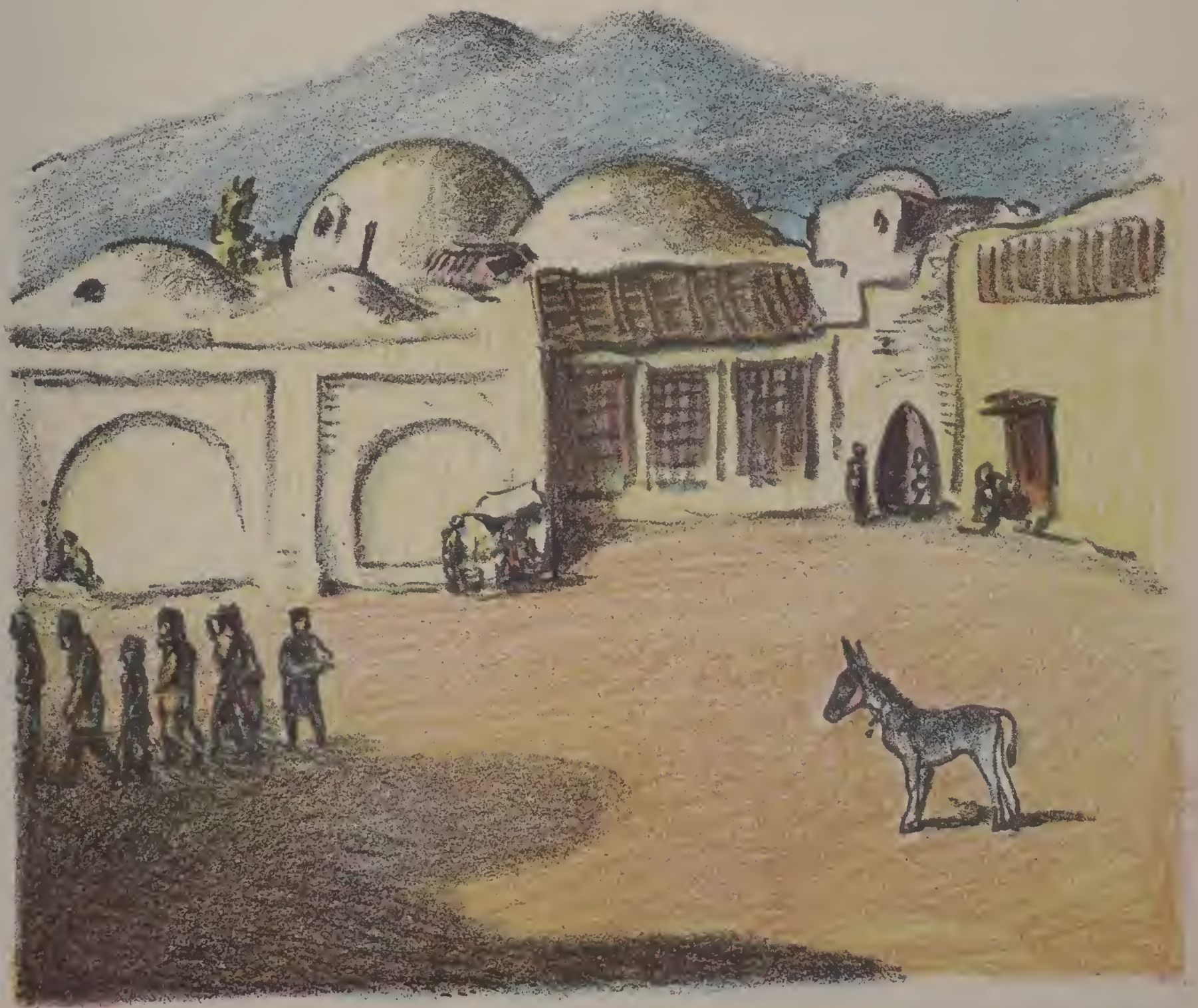
“Hee-haw! Hee-haw!” he shrieked one day



start up the street in the other direction. Then Olagh quietly walked along until he came to another bend in the street.

This time he came to a broad open space. A big mosque stood on one side and many people were going in to say their evening prayers. Olagh did not stop to watch them. He began to hurry, in case his master might turn around and come the other way. He started up a narrow street and there met a *mullah*, or priest, who was walking to the mosque for sunset prayers.

Seeing Olagh, the *mullah* exclaimed, "*Mashallah!* Wonderful! What have we here, a donkey without a master? Then clearly the little beast belongs to the Church and I will take him for my own use."



A big mosque stood on one side

Olagh wiggled his ears at the stranger as much as to say, "See what tall, stiff ears I have! Wouldn't you like to be my new master?"

The *mullah* looked up the street. No one was in sight. He seized the donkey firmly and climbed on his back.

"Hee-haw! Hee-haw!" Olagh screamed and tried to throw the rider off. "I'd rather carry water jars or bundles of cloth or rugs than a man."

But the *mullah* clung tightly and presently Olagh stopped kicking. When they reached the mosque, the *mullah* led the donkey to a courtyard and tied him to a window.

After the people had said their prayers standing, kneeling, and bowing down to the ground, the *mullah* came out climbed on Olagh once more. He sat stiff and straight and carried his walking stick in one hand. In the street they stopped while the *mullah* bought a penny's worth of raisins from an old man who squatted beside his basket on the cobblestones. The old man spilled his raisins and Olagh ate a half dozen before anyone could stop him. He was certainly a greedy donkey.

As the *mullah* rode homeward, Olagh sniffed the air. His nostrils quivered.

"Rose water! It is rose water I smell. This new master of mine uses so much rose water on himself that I too shall smell sweet!"

At his own gate the *mullah* dismounted, and led Olagh through. He looked about the garden and frowned.

"There is no place for the beast to sleep tonight. He will have to stand in the garden under the almond tree."

Then he went indoors, where his tea was already steaming on the samovar.

In the garden it was dark. But Olagh's eyes were sharp. Not



Olagh ate a half dozen



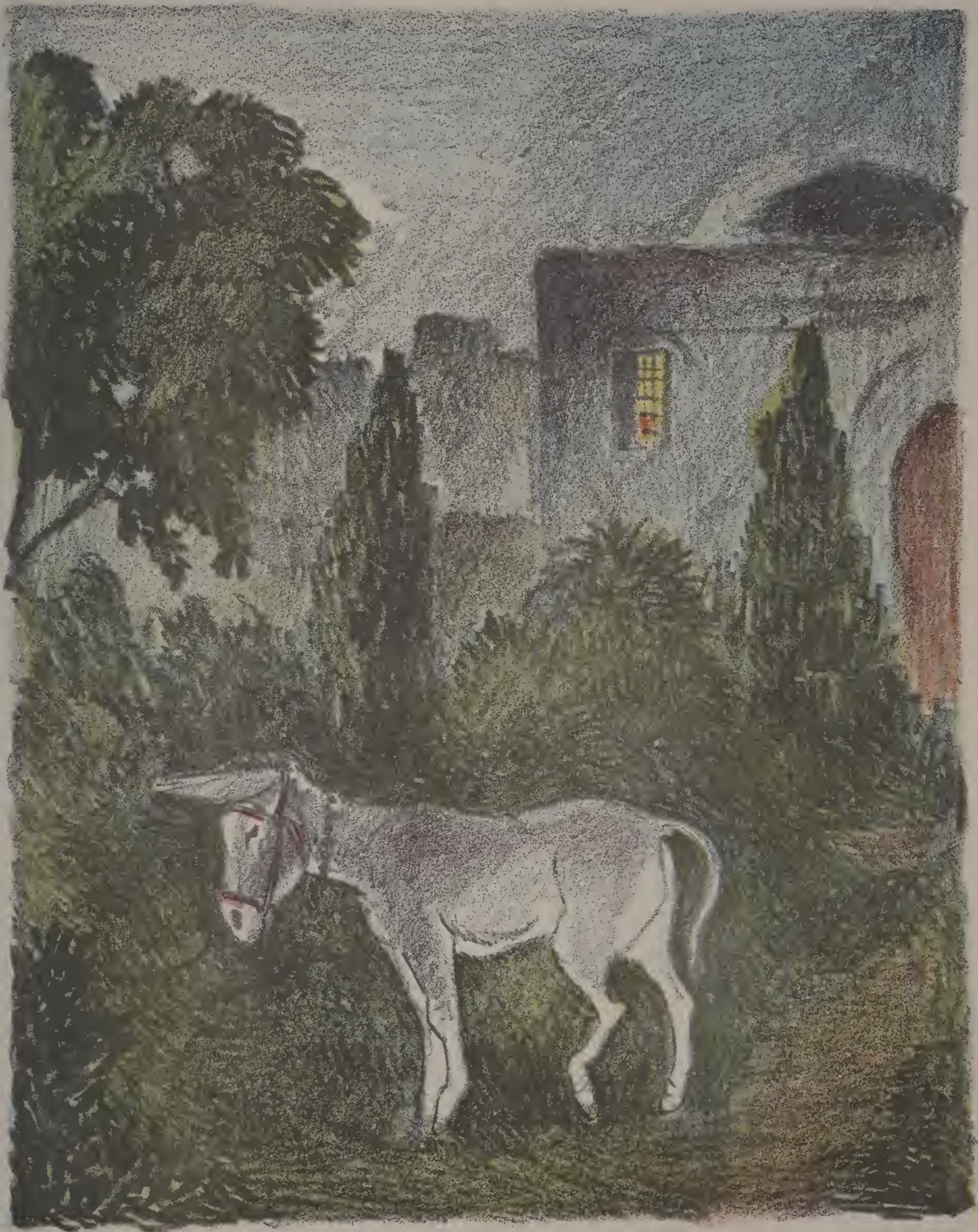
far from the almond tree he saw a bed of purple and white petunias.

So a part of his wish at least had come true!

There in the soft dusk he stood and thought drowsily over all the many things that had happened to him. He felt very contented.

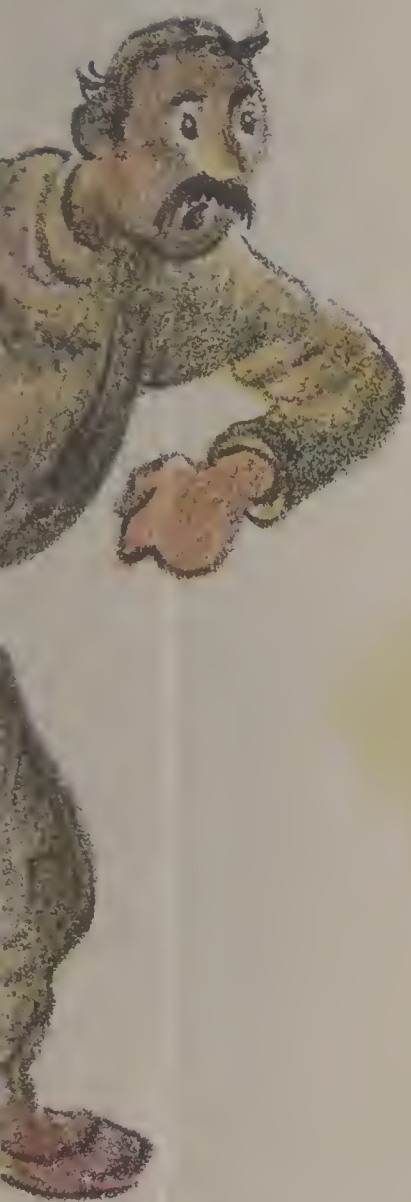
“It was perhaps wicked for me to run away and leave my masters,” he decided. “Some of them were good to me. One of them—Bahram—was hurt, and I ran away and left him on the mountainside. I always wanted to carry a basket of tulips, and now I am being punished by having to carry a man. I thought I would never carry a man, and now I shall have to carry him every day.

“But I shan’t mind that, after all. The blue beads really have brought me luck. I had raisins for my supper tonight, my master uses so much rose water that I shall smell like a flower, and tonight—*tonight I shall lie down and sleep in the petunia bed!*”

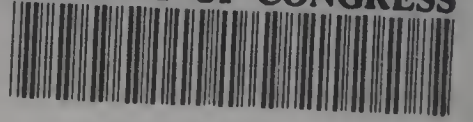


There in the soft dusk he stood





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