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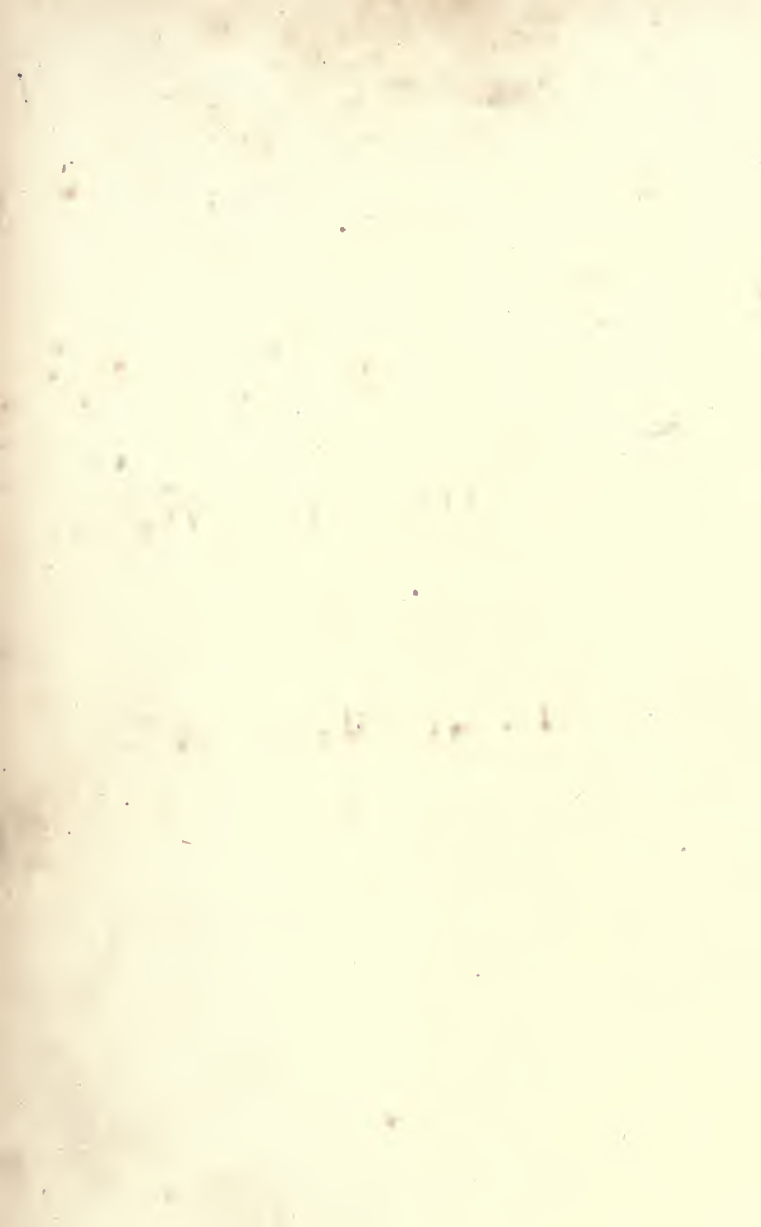
For out of olde felles as men seith
Cometh al this newe coun fro year to year
And out of olde booke in good feith
Cometh al this newe science that men here

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TO BE PUBLISHED IMMEDIATELY,

A COLLECTION OF POEMS,

BY THE AUTHOR OF

THIS VOLUME.



THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE

NEVER

DID RUN SMOOTH.



The
COURSE OF TRUE LOVE

NEVER

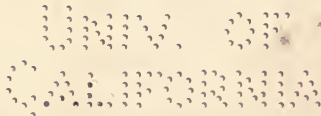
DID RUN SMOOTH

BY
THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH



First Edition

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TO

RICHARD HENRY STODDARD,

Under whose fingers

This Story would have blossomed into true Arabian Roses,

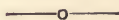
MY SEVEN NIGHTS' RHYMING

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

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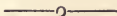
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تكملة الخلاق

P R E F A C E .



*In sooth it was a goodly time,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Al Raschid.*

TENNYSON.

THE munificence, wit, and affability of the Barmecides, made them the delight at once of Princes and Slaves; and Giaffer stood so high in the esteem of Haroun Al Raschid, that the Caliph, in order to enjoy his company in the presence of his Royal Sister, the Princess Abbassa, decreed a marriage between them, but with the capricious restriction that they should forbear the privileges of such a union. The lovers, thinking to overcome the Caliph's whim after marriage, conceded to the condition; but they reckoned without their host, as lovers are apt to do. The Caliph proved as ice to all their entreaties. Nature, at length, broke through this despotic prohibition, and—the finale is told in the Poem.

The details which the author has given concerning the Nuptials of Giaffer and Abbassa, are not to be found on the pages of legitimate history; but that the reader may not think these facts lacking in authenticity, the author would refer him to the *Tellmenow Isitsöornot*, a work somewhat rare in this country, but occasionally to be met with at Old Book Stalls. To this same Arabic Wonder-Book is Mr. Poe greatly indebted for his *Thousand and Second Tale*.



P O E M .

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

I.

THE CALIPH MUSES.

AT Bagdad, in his gold kiosk,
Haroun Al Raschid sate one day :
A-through the carven trellis work
The sunshine drifted in, and lay
In argent diamonds on his face ;
And gleamed across the golden lace
That ran like lightning round his robes ;
And seemed to split two crystal globes
Of gold-fish, on two jasmine desks ;
And fired the costly arabesques ;

And, falling on the fountain, turned
Its spray to gems that glowed and burned—

 A spiked knot of chrysolite
That made a splendor in the place !
But most it loved the Caliph's face :
And it was at the noon of day.

On cushions cygnet-soft he lay,
 Unconscious of the garish light ;
Untasted stood his fruit and ice ;
 Unheeded were the winds that drew
 The lemon trees all ways, and blew
The gentlest gales from Paradise !

Without, among the myrtle flowers,
 Two fawns lay sleeping ; a gazelle
Played with its gilded chain, and rung,
 At every step, a silver bell :
Two lovers, down the garden-walks,

Went hand in hand, like May and June ;
And one was as the rising sun,
 And one was as the waning moon !
The fawns may sleep ; the white gazelle
 May spill the lily's cup of dew ;
But, lovers, love did ne'er run smooth :
 The wily Caliph dreams of you !

The sunlight slid from Aaron's brow ;
 Then from his beard of silken wire ;
Then touched his feet, then touched the mats,
 And set their silver fringe on fire :
And still he heeded not the flow
Of time, that evening long ago.
But when the shadow of the mosque,
 Near by, was shattered on the floor,
The Caliph turned and ate his ice,
 And drank the drink forgot before ;

And smiled like one who, having brought
To ripeness some imperfect thought,
Is vain of his own wisdom. Then
This pearl of kings, this flower of men,
Caressed his beard, and softly spake
Like one who murmurs, half awake :—

To have our Vizier ever near,

By Allah's goodness it is clear

*The faithful Barmecide must wed
Our royal sister ; but I swear*

For them shall be no bridal bed!—

May countless Marids torture thee,
And fill thy slumber with despair,
O Caliph ! for thy cruelty !



II.

HOW IT STRUCK THE LOVERS.

THEN through the Palace, north and south,
The edict went from mouth to mouth,

THE PRINCESS AND THE VIZIER WED!

For it was law and gospel then

Whate'er Haroun Al Raschid said.

And nothing loth the Vizier was.

He mused:—*It is the Caliph's whim;*

When we are wed, the Clement God

Will gracious wisdom send to him.

And she:—*We wed, yet do not wed;*

The Just would keep me pure and white. . . .
I will be ice. And yet, for all,
She dreamt about her bridal night!

So, after bath, the slave-girls brought
The precious raiment for her wear,
The misty izar from Mosul,
The pearls and opals for her hair,
The slippers for her little feet,
(Two radiant crescent moons they were,)
And lavender, and spikenard sweet,
And attars, nedd, and heavy musk.

When they had finished dressing her,
(The Eye of Morn, the Heart's Desire!)
Like one pale star against the dusk,
A single diamond on her brow
Trembled with its imprisoned fire!



III.

THE WEDDING FÊTE.

A THOUSAND lanterns, tulip-shaped,
Of amber made, and colored glass,
Were hung like fruit among the trees;
And on the garden-walks and grass
Their red and purple shadows lay,
As if the slave-boys, here and there,
Had spilt a jar of brilliant wine!
The stagnant moonlight filled the air;
The roses spread their crimson tents;
And all the night was sick with scents
Of marjoram and eglantine.

Gay barges, rowed with silver oars,
 Ploughed through the Tigris in the light
Which from the Palace windows gleamed—
A fall of gold, quick shafts of flame
 That burnt the edges of the night!
And from the open portals came
Such music that the heavens hung mute:
A houri playing on a lute!
 Sweet water-falls in unseen dells!
The trilling of some marvellous bird!
And ever and anon were heard
 The dancers' silvery ankle-bells.

Within a spacious marble hall,
 The Caliph's Chamber of Nine Domes,
(Six hemispheres of jasper, propt
 By agate columns carved like Gnomes,
And three, like lilies newly blown,

Of silver,) on a glittering throne,
A gorgeous god, a jewelled Fate,
The great Haroun Al Raschid sate,
And round about on either hand,
The royal guests from Samarcand,
The lords and emirs of the land!
Before him, on a cloth of gold

Sown thick with stars and crescents, stood
The lovers. On Abbassa's cheek,
Like roses, blushed the modest blood;
Her form was like the papyrus reed,
And graceful as the palm-tree's fan;
Her eyes were gems; her eyebrows' arch,
The thin new moon of Ramadan!
And half a head above the throng,
O'erlooking Sultan, King, and Shah,
The Vizier breathed the golden air
About him, like a splendid star.

IV.

HOW THE LITTLE MAIDEN WEPT.

THE music sang itself to death ;
The lamps died out in their perfume :
Abbassa, on a silk divan,
Sate in the moonlight in her room.
Her handmaids loosed her scented hair
With lily fingers ; from her brow
Released the diamond, and unlaced
The robe that held her bosom's snow ;
Removed the slippers from her feet,

And led her to an ivory bed. . . .
Go place this alabaster lamp
Beside the window there, she said;
So if he wake at dead of night,
He'll say,—“It is Abbassa's light!”
Then she laid down upon the bed
With folded hands, a happy maid!
And Slumber kissed her on the eyes,
And led her to the Land of Shade.

Her sleep was gentle as a child's,
An hour or more : and then she sighed ;
Then stretched her arms out in the dark :
And then awoke. *My lord!* she cried ;
Then waited, with her cheeks aflame,
For answer. But no answer came.
I did but dream! And then she wept.
Alas! she sighed, *I do not weep*

*Because, awake, I have not found
The one I thought of in my sleep ;
And yet, and yet—O, heart of mine,
I cannot tell thee WHY I weep !*



V.

HOW GIAFFER PASSED THE NIGHT.

HE could not sleep, for lo! he saw
A pair of eyes that banished rest,
A star-sweet face, with clouds of hair,
That fain would lie upon his breast.
And straight he thought how fair she was—
How some kind fairy, at her birth,
Had left a glory on her brow,
And taught her all the charms on earth!
Her hair, he said, is silken night;
Her eyes in tender mist are drowned;

Her mouth—a little ruby place,
Where pearls for Sultans may be found!
And with this sort of Eastern talk,
He made the moments seem less long;
But, wearying of forced delight,
He brooded on his cruel wrong,
And bit the blood into his lips,
And tore the turban from his head:—
By Allah! that must be the lamp
In Beauty's chamber! Giaffer said.
And lo! it was Abbassa's room,
Abbassa's room just opposite!
And in the window was a light,
That stretched across the garden's gloom,
And seemed a bridge of fire, whereon
The Vizier might have stolen to her:
And there he stood, and did not stir
Until the rising of the sun.

VI.

HEARTS AND CROWNS.

THREE nights did Giaffer watch this light,
Till morning blossomed in the sky :
Three nights Abbassa had her dream,
And wept ; and, weeping, wondered why !
And, on the fourth, as sick Haroun
Walked through the garden, breathing spice,
The Vizier broke upon his thought,
And knelt before the Caliph thrice :—
*Three nights, O Caliph ! have I lain
In yonder chamber all alone—*

And thrice the Caliph passed him by.

O Heart of Ice! O Ear of Stone!

Thou giv'st thy slave a cup of gall

To drink from—as if thou wert Fate!

The Caliph, angered, turned and cried,

Now may Hath Ridwan shut the gate

Of Heaven upon me when I die,

But I will slay thee with this hand

If thou forgetest what is writ—

Let slaves obey when kings command!

With this he drew his farajah

Around him, and with haughty frown

Paced through the garden as before.

One wears a turban, one a crown,

So Giaffer mused, then be it said

The difference 'twixt the slave and king

Is this—the Crown upon the head!

Man's heart need not be finely wrought,

If so he wear a jewelled ring
Upon his brows! Go to, Haroun!
Thou art the slave and I the king.
The pitying heart endures for aye—
The crown must lie this side the grave:
Then greater than a heartless king,
O Allah! is thy crownless slave!
 So saying, Giaffer smoothed his brow,
 And with his thought on some device
 For love's sake, sauntered up and down
 The moonlit garden, breathing spice.



VII.

THE AFRITES GIVE GIAFFER A HINT.

Now when the Palace lights were out,
And there was neither sound nor sight
Of life within the lofty halls,
And Bagdad's minarets and mosques,
And garden-places and kiosks,
Were turned to marble by the white
Round moon—it chanced that Giaffer stood
Pensive within a little wood
Of mulberry and citron trees,
Where a low fountain made for him

A fairy music, and each breeze
Came heavily laden with the dim
Sweet opiate from the lotus flowers.
This spot was haunted by the powers
Of Rest, and whosoever came
In the still midnight there to weep
On the world's usage, or in shame,
The airy spirits put to sleep!

No sooner strayed the Vizier here,
Than viewless Afrites, of no size,
Floated around his face, and threw
The dust of slumber in his eyes!
And while he slept upon the grass,
Within the fountain's speary rain,
A dream of an unknown delight
Burst like a blossom in his brain!
He thought Abbassa and himself

Were sitting at a gorgeous feast,
The like of which was never spread
For any Caliph in the East,
Or any King, alive or dead!
Such amber pears, and grapes of jet,
Such sweetly-swelling mignonette,
Such salvers, piled with richest food,
Such slender urns of precious wine,
Such—ah! when fancy makes a feast,
It costs no more to have it fine!
And so, (he dreamt,) until the peep
Of dawn they feasted, laughed, and sung;
Then music, with its honeyed tongue,
Breathed sweetest secrets to their sleep!

Thus ran the dream. When Giaffer woke
'Twas dawn indeed: the dewy air
Was rife with fresh mimosa blooms.

He heard the call to morning prayer :
 Then he arose, and bathed his face,
 And smiled; and by this smile he meant :
To-night we'll have a feast like that,
God help us, in the Caliph's tent—
The silk pavilion that he raised
For our especial use, I think.
He'll sleep!—a little piece of bhang
Would flavor well his evening drink!



VIII.

IN THE PAVILION.

MESROUR, *go bring my golden cup,
That I may drink my evening drink!*

And even as Al Raschid said,

The cup was brought, a golden-pink
Great goblet rough with emeralds.

He sipped and sipped, and slumber crept
Upon him. *Stop the music, slave!*

The king would sleep. And lo! he slept.

Now, near the northern palace-gate,

A place as still as still could be,

Haroun, like Kubla Khan, did once
“A stately pleasure-dome decree”—
A grand pavilion, under which
 It was his royal wont to sit
And smoke the ripe Latakian leaves,
 And laugh at Giaffer’s pleasant wit;
And here his Georgians danced for him,
 (He loved a dainty foot and hand;)
And here he drank his iced sherbét,
 Until his Highness could not stand.
And here the Vizier spread a feast,
 And here the happy lovers sate—
O Caliph! you may watch and watch,
 Love laughs at locksmiths soon or late!

And there they were, the truant twain,
 Despite the Caliph’s cruel ban:
They looked into each other’s eyes,

And sipped the wines of Astrakhan ;
They smiled at time, and laughed at fate,
And scorned the Caliph as they ate
The juicy fig, the spicy lime,
The nectarines from Oman brought,
The rosy peaches that had caught
The taste and tint of summer time ;
And slyly from their finger-tips
Threw kisses to each other's lips.

The scented fountain spread in air
A tangled net of crystal thread ;
And round about the silken tent
The lanterns glimmered, white and red ;
And fairy fingers passed the fruit,
And fairy fingers touched the lute,
And silver laughter cut the air—
O, merrily the time went by !

Now, while the lamps burnt bright within,
The moon stole down behind the sky!

I.

O, cease, sweet music! let us rest:

Dawn comes, sang Giaffer, hateful dawn!

Henceforth let day be counted night,

And midnight called the morn!

II.

O, cease, sweet music! let us rest:

A tearful, languid spirit lies

(Like the dim scent in violets),

In Beauty's gentle eyes.

III.

There is a sadness in sweet sound

That quickens tears! O, music, lest

*We weep with thy strange sorrow, cease!
Be still, and let us rest.*

Lo! while he sang, the broidered screen
Which hid the door was thrust aside,
And in Haroun Al Raschid strode
Before the bridegroom and the bride!

Ho! dog of Viziers, what is this?

Ye drug my wine to give me rest!

So sleep thou! And with this he struck

The Vizier thrice upon the breast;

And where he struck, the crimson blood

Gushed out, and O, it flowed apace.

Then Giaffer turned as pale 's the moon.

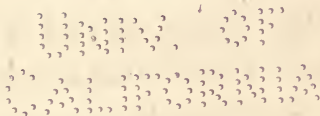
Then forward fell upon his face,

And kissed Abbassa's feet, and died!

And great Haroun Al Raschid cried—

So die they whom the Caliph hates!

Then three black Mamlouks, three grim fates,
Took poor Abbassa by the hair,
And thrust her from the Palace gates!



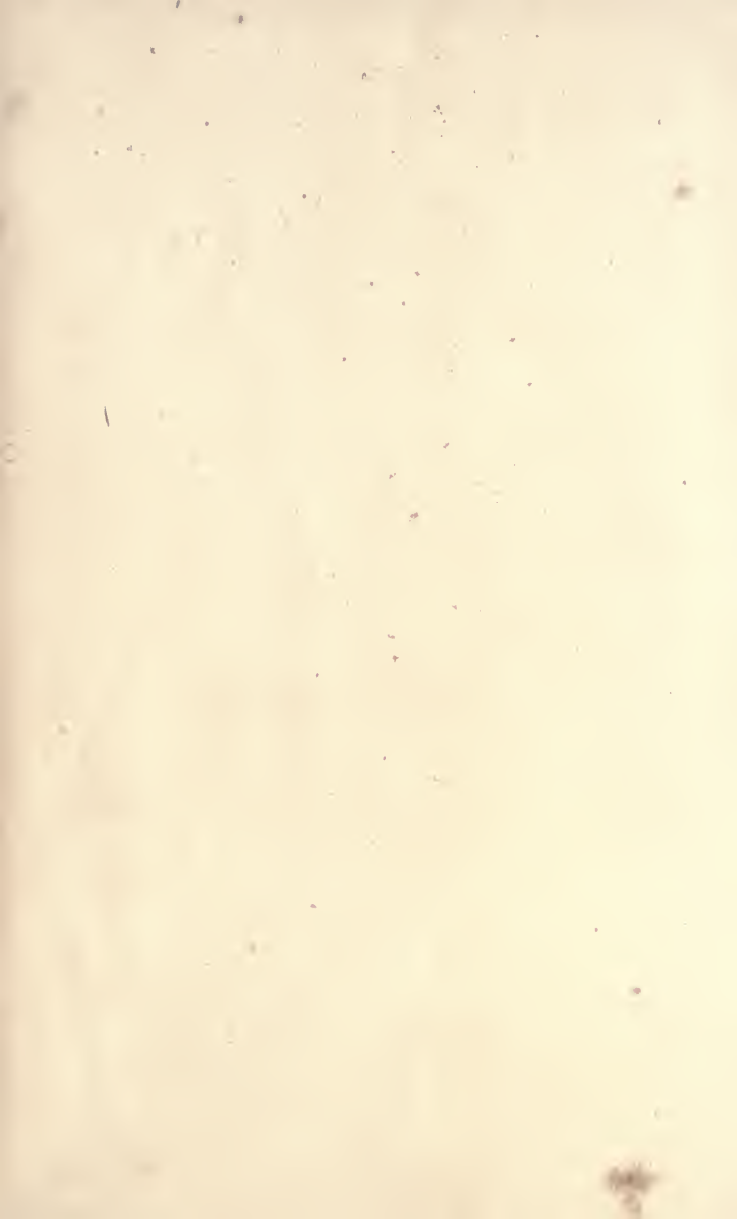


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