



# The Porter and the Ladies of Bagdad.

HERE was a porter in Bagdad, who, though a pleasant fellow, was so poor he could not afford to marry, and had little fun in life. One morning a beautiful young woman came up to him, and ordered him to take up the crate in which he carried goods and follow her. She bought most wonderful things—fine fruits, marvelous confections, wines, perfumes, flowers—things so beautiful to the eye that the poor porter was delighted; things that looked so good his mouth watered for a taste, and in such quantities that he soon staggered beneath his load.

She guided him at last to a handsome house, where they both were met by the two sisters of the woman, both younger than she and both of even greater beauty. They paid the porter well, but, seeing him still looking wistfully at the good things, they questioned him about himself, and finding him well educated and gentlemanly, for all his ragged clothes, they asked him to stay and feast with them, but on one condition only—that he would promise never to question them about anything he might see or hear while in their home, no matter how unusual the sights and sounds. The porter promised willingly enough. He had not had such feast as was here promised for many years, and never had he had a chance to eat in the company of such beautiful women, whom he soon perceived were also bright and clever. So the meal was spread in the cool courtyard of the house, and the four sat down and feasted and laughed and sang all the afternoon.

As night drew on, the porter felt that he must leave, and said so, but he was not at all pleased when the three women agreed with him, as he wished to stay away as long as possible from the dark and noisy little room in the poorest part of the city, where he was forced to live. So he cleverly prevailed upon the sis-

ters to invite him to spend the evening with them as well, and then began to sing his best songs and tell his best stories, so that they would not be sorry for their good nature.

They had almost finished their supper when there came a loud knocking at the door. The second sister rose and answered, and came back saying, "My sisters, there are outside three beggars, foreigners, but all of them strangely shaven, and all three blind in the left eye. They ask for food and shelter. Shall I let them in?"

"Why, yes," answered the other two. "They may be interesting men, and have stories to tell that will amuse us. Let them in."

So the beggars came in. They were all three tall, thin men, with no beards such as Mohammedans wear, but with long thin drooping mustaches, and each wearing a patch over his left eye. Being beggars, they stood humbly back, but the three sisters hospitably seated them at the table and gave them plenty to eat and drink, and soon the three hungry beggars were as happy as the poor porter had become.

After they had finished the elder sister asked, "Have you no strange tales to tell, or anything with which you can amuse us this evening?"

To the surprise of all, the beggars called for musical instruments, and played and sang with wonderful skill, after which all recited verses from the Persian poets in a manner which showed that these young men had not all their lives been beggars.

The curiosity of the three lovely sisters was roused, but before they had time to ask further questions there came another knocking at

the door, and the second sister once more went out to answer.

Now it happened that the caliph, Haroun al Rashid, loved dearly to put on a disguise and go unknown about his city at night, seeing how his people lived and often hearing what they thought of him.

On this night, accompanied only by his grand vizier and one of his best slaves, he happened to be passing the house of the three women, when he heard the sounds of mirth and laughter, and in spite of the remonstrances of the grand vizier insisted upon entering to see what the fun was and share it if possible.

When the beautiful woman opened the door and demanded his business he was more determined than ever to go in.

"We are," he said, "merchants from another city, who have lost our way in the dark streets. Could you, in the kindness of your hearts, take us in and let us pass the night in your home?"

The woman looked at them sharply, and seeing they were dressed as foreign merchants would be, and seemed decent, respectable men, she laughed and said, "Yes, we have so much company we might as well have more. Come in."

But when the caliph and the others were seated the elder sister said to all the guests, "You are our guests only upon your promise to question us as to nothing you may see or hear while in this house. Read what is written above our door."

ten above our door."

And the caliph read aloud, "Speak not of that which does not concern thee, lest thou hear that which does not please thee."

"We promise to ask no questions," said all the guests, and the newcomers were fed, and the fun went on, till suddenly the elder sister stopped and said, "We must now to our work."

The second sister then went away, and came back leading by chains two big black dogs, which crouched and whined as though frightened.

The youngest sister bade the men sit back, cleared the center of the courtyard, and the second sister led the dogs there and held them while the elder beat first one and then another till she was exhausted, after which she embraced the poor, whimpering beasts, and the three sisters went over them and bathed the

From the Arabian Nights

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marks of the whip upon their sides with healing salves.

This scene naturally aroused the greatest curiosity among the guests, but the grand vizier said, "You cannot question them. We all promised we would not." However, the caliph could not contain himself, and when at last the eldest woman said, "What are you talking of?" he told her, and asked her why she first beat the dogs and then wept over them.

"Have you, then," cried the woman, "been entertained by us and so soon break your promise to us?"

She called loudly, clapping her hands, and seven fierce black slaves appeared, bound the seven guests, and stood waiting further orders, with drawn swords pressed against the necks of the men.

The porter began to beg for his life, and when they saw signs of relenting the other men begged, too, and at last the women talked together a moment and then the eldest said, "If you can keep us amused a little longer you need not be punished. Who has entertaining stories to tell?"

"Not I," said the porter. "Nothing interesting ever happened to me before tonight, and this tale you know better than I."

That made the women laugh. "You must have had adventures," they said, turning to the three beggars. "Are you brothers?"

"No," they answered, and one added, "but we have seen strange things."

"Tell us, in turn, how each happened to lose his left eye, and go about the world beardless, and if we are amused you may all go unpunished," said the elder sister.

"Agreed!" cried the three beggars. And the caliph, the grand vizier, their slave, and the porter all breathed more easily. The first beggar then began his story.

*(To be continued next Sunday.)*

## The TEENIE WEEENIES LASSO A FROG.

W-H-WH-WH-E'RE'S the Cowboy?" gasped the Dutchman, waddling hurriedly up to the Teenie Weenie back porch, where the Cook sat slicing a grape for lunch. "I saw him a while ago, reading a book under the shade of that mushroom the other side of the house," answered the Cook.

"Danks," and the Dutchman went off, blowing like a steam engine. "Oh, dere you vas," he cried, as he ran up to the Cowboy. "I haf somethings much to tell you."

"Let's hear it," said the Cowboy, closing his book.

"Vell," began the Dutchman. "der Injun and I have found a cowfrog."

"I guess you mean a bullfrog," corrected the Cowboy, smiling.

"Yes, yes—a bullload—bullfrog," cried the excited Dutchman, "and ve vant you to come and threw der lasso over its head, und catch it."

"Sure," cried the Cowboy. "Wait till I get my rope."

Soon, followed by the rest of the Teenie Weenies, the Cowboy and the Dutchman ran off to the big pond at the end of the garden.

"S-s-sh," warned the Indian, as the crowd of excited little people ran up to the pond. "Frog, him sleep, don't wake."

On a mossy log, which lay partly in the water, sat a big green bullfrog, fast asleep.

It was decided that the Dutchman, the Turk, and the Sailor, being the strongest men, should hold the end of the lasso, while the Cowboy threw it over the frog's head.

"Now, as soon as I throw the rope over his head," cried the Cowboy. "you fellows hold on with all your might."

Quietly the four Teenie Weenies tiptoed down the log, and at the proper moment the Cowboy slipped the noose cleverly over the frog's head.

Awakened by this strange thing around his neck, the frog gave a great leap, pulling the four Teenie Weenie sides at the picture the four made.

"Chiminy," said the Dutchman, as he wrung out his dripping coat, "I didn't know dot a bullload was so strong yet!"

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