

CONDENSED CLASSICS

THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

By the PRINCESS SHEHERAZADE
Continuation by Alfred S. Clark



The marvelous tales that Scheherazade told to King Shahriar's stories of love and adventure and magic cannot be attributed to any one author for the very good reason that there never was an author. They are popular stories that, perhaps about the year 1450, were put into the present form by a professional story-teller, presumably a Persian.

In primitive communities where few of the people can read, and where books are difficult to get, these professional readers are in great demand. They pick up here and there tales that appeal to all and bind them into a long narrative. Some people have thought that Homer's long poems originated in this way.

Everywhere in the near east the traveler finds these story-tellers today. An eager audience collects to hear them, each paying a small fee for the privilege of listening. The entertainer declines as he walks to and fro and always stops his narrative just before an exciting climax, so that he will be assured of listeners on the morrow. His audience follows his recital with breathless interest, especially when he illustrates thrilling episodes with lively pantomime.

Year after year these groups of listeners gathered venturously ago. The story-teller discarded the tales that did not hold the attention of his listeners. Gradually the process of elimination went on until only the best were handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. Then some unknown benefactor of mankind had them written down and connected them with the framework of Scheherazade and Shahriar. And these are the Arabian Nights that have delighted children and grown men and women for decades.

SHEHERAZADE was a vizier's daughter and when she besought her father to wed her to King Shahriar it was cause for grief to the vizier. For each day was it Shahriar's wont to put to death his bride of the day before. It befell, however, that Sheherazade had her will. As she had hoped, the king was wakeful and to beguile him she began a story of magic. Dawn broke before she had finished and so eager was Shahriar to hear it all that he gave no order for her execution.

For a thousand and one nights did this befall while Sheherazade told tales of love, war and sorcery, of kings, beggars and rogues, of lands where diamonds were more plentiful than pebbles and bigger than eggs, of intrigues in the lanes and bazaars of Oriental cities. In towns and deserts and far islands did necromancers work their wills. Horses flew; dogs talked; mermaids and creatures greater than whales peopled the deeps; ogres and enormous apes crept out of forests; birds so great that their wings darkened the day swooped from the skies. Here, too, were lovers in palaces and hovels, bold and cowardly, yet all so enamored that they swooned at the very thought of the beloved. Underlying all was the colorful Orient, with barbers and porters jostling caliphs and princesses in the thronged and picturesque lanes of three cities whose very names conjure up romance—Bagdad, Cairo and Damascus.

Now these are the best liked of Sheherazade's tales:

The Story of Aladdin's Lamp.

Of Aladdin, son of a poor tailor in China, a prankish scamp. An African magician guided him to a subterranean cave where he found the lamp that summoned the genie. Out of nothing, news did this genie spread banquets for Aladdin and robe him in rich raiment. He provided him retinues of slaves, hearing basins heaped high with precious stones, who carried to the king Aladdin's suppliance for the hand of the beautiful Princess Badroul-boudour. In a night did the genie raise a palace of glowing wonders, of shining marble and gold and silver, with windows incrustured with diamonds, emeralds and rubies, with fragrant gardens and open courts. So Aladdin married the princess and they knew great joy. But the magician returned, stole the lamp and in a trice transported the palace and the princess to Africa. Then was Aladdin woeful, but by magic he found his beloved, poisoned the magician, seized the lamp and came to China, where he and Badroul-boudour lived happily ever afterward.

The Story of Sinbad.

Of Sinbad the sailor and his marvelous voyages. Wherein it is related that Sinbad landed upon what seemed an island but which was a great fish that sank into the sea. And of other voyages and greater wonders, of which one marvels most at the adventure with the roc, the bird so huge that it feeds its young with elephants. Sinbad had fastened himself to the roc's leg and it bore him to an impenetrable valley strewn with precious stones from which he escaped by binding him-

self to a sheep's entrails and was borne away by a vulture. And of the giant who roasted men and whom Sinbad blinded with a red-hot iron. And of the terrible Old Man of the Sea who sat upon Sinbad's shoulders and could not be shaken off until he was intoxicated with wine and Sinbad slew him.

The Story of the Forty Thieves.

Of All Baba and his discovery of the stone that swung wide when a voice cried "Open, Sesame!" In the cave was the booty of forty thieves and All Baba took home sacks bulging with gold and silver. The robbers traced him and in the guise of a merchant the captain lodged with him. In the yard were stored great jars, one filled with oil and the others concealing the thieves. It would it have fared with All Baba had not Morgiana, a cunning slave, detected the trick and with boiling oil scalded to death the wicked miscreants. The captain escaped, but returned in a new disguise and again did Morgiana save her master by stabbing his enemy. So All Baba married her to his son and he lived joyously upon treasures from the cave.

Many Other Fascinating Stories.

Of the Magic Horse of ebony and ivory, so fashioned that its rider, by pressing divers buttons, could fly whither he willed. It bore a Persian prince to a great palace in a metropolis girl about with greenery. There he looked into the eyes of a princess and they were enraptured. It befell that they rode away on the Magic Horse, but before they were wed an evil man abducted the princess. The disconsolate prince wandered far and at last he found her whom he loved and again they journeyed through the air to his home, where they were married with exceeding pomp and lived happily.

Of a poor fisherman who drew his net from the sea and found therein but a brass bottle. He cut open the top and there streamed forth a cloud of smoke. It collected and, behold! it was a genie, so huge that his head was in the clouds. He would have killed his rescuer had not the wily fisherman insisted that never could he have come from the bottle. The silly genie squeezed himself inside, whereupon the fisherman clapped on the top, nor would he remove it until the genie swore to serve him faithfully. This oath it was that led to the finding of the ensorcelled prince with legs turned to stone and the lake wherein swam fish of four colors that had once been men. After marvelous happenings the prince was made as other men and the fish were men and women. And the fisherman was so rewarded that he was the wealthiest man of his time.

Of Prince Camaralzaman and the Princess Badoura, beautiful beyond compare, and of how each saw the other in sleep and was smitten with great love. But when they awakened they saw not one another for they had been brought together by genii who had carried Badoura out of China to the confines of Persia. Grief so afflicted both that they sickened and were insane from sorrow. Then a messenger from Badoura journeyed far over land and sea until he found Camaralzaman and returned with him to China, where the lovers were wedded. But while they were traveling to Camaralzaman's land he wandered away. Badoura dressed herself in his raiment and passed herself for a man. It befell that she found favor in the eyes of a king and was married to a princess. And Camaralzaman too came to this land and knew not his wife who heaped honors upon him. At last she revealed herself and was known as a woman and Camaralzaman took also to wife the princess whom Badoura had married and they were happy together.

Of a merchant who, swatting death at the hands of a cruel genie, was joined by three old men, one leading a gazelle, another two black hounds, and the third a mule. Now it is related that the gazelle and the mule had been wicked wives transformed by magic and likewise had the hounds been evil brothers. When the genie was told these stories of enchantment, he was so diverted that he spared the merchant's life.

About Harun-al-Rashid.

And of many tales concerning the Caliph Harun-al-Rashid and his going disguised into the lanes and bazaars of Bagdad, where he chanced upon strange people who told him strange stories of magic. Once he supped with three ladies of dazzling beauty and with him were a porter dazed with the magnificence he saw and three mendicants, sons of kings, all blind in the left eye. Not knowing the Caliph they told of their fantastic adventures and sufferings and he rewarded them. And again he encountered a beggar who implored him to strike him, a youth who spurred cruelly a mare upon which he rode and a rope-maker who had risen suddenly from poverty to affluence. Their tales too did he hear and them too did he reward. Nor should Abu-Hassan, the wazir, be forgotten, whose trickery in pretending that he and his wife were dead won so much gold and so many laughs from the Caliph. And of like import is the mad tale of the humpback who seemed dead and of the talkative barber who restored him to life, of all those who had believed themselves murderers of the humpback and of the amazing tales that they related.

So it came to pass that by the end of the thousand and one nights Shahriar was so delighted in the cleverness of Sheherazade that he wedded her again with regal pomp and they lived happily ever after.

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CONDENSED CLASSICS

THE PILOT

By JAMES FENIMORE COOPER
Continuation by Alfred Clark



Cooper was born in New Jersey in 1796, but when only about a year old removed to his father's almost feudal domain at Cooperstown, New York, where he died in 1851. There he learned to know the wilderness which plays so important a part in his books, and there, too, he probably acquired that headstrong self-assertiveness and disregard of the opinions of others which made him, while one of the few most widely read authors in the world, one of the most cordially detested individuals to be found. He had a positive genius for setting in bad. While Dickens and Kipling deeply wounded one nation by their American Notes, they were pigeons in this respect compared to Cooper. He could exasperate any and everybody and apparently cultivated with pleasure his habitual aptitude. Lowell wrote of him as "Cooper, who's written six volumes to prove he's as good as a lord." An English magazine described him as a "stiff-necked, egotistical, avaricious, a 'well-to-do,' a 'grub,' and a 'villain.'" The "New Yorker" pleasantly wrote of him: "He is as proud of blackguarding as a Schvabner is of billingsgate. It is as natural to him as breathing to sneer at or growling to a hulk. He has the scorn and contempt of every well informed American."

On a late afternoon of a winter's day, during the American Revolution, a rakish schooner and a majestic frigate anchored well inside a little bay on the northeastern coast of England. A whaleboat drove shoreward, a young officer scrambled up the steep cliffs and a few minutes later a mysterious stranger was transferred to the frigate's deck. He answered to the name of "Mr. Gray" and was said to be merely a pilot, but he was greeted with surprising deference.

For no ordinary man would these vessels have ventured so near that coast of sandbars and hidden rocks. The wind was a mere ruffle of air. But the incessant mutter of the long, slow waves foretold that a storm was brewing. Ever more fitfully and faintly blew the land-breeze; the mutter of the waters grew deeper. Only here and there did a few stars twinkle between the fast gathering clouds. It was time to beat out to open sea. If it were not even now too late, men swarmed aloft and hung up the yards; sails fluttered out; the anchor was pulled in; the frigate gathered headway. Then the faint breeze died. The spread of canvas was hung useless; the currents drove the ship shoreward.

With a roar the wind came suddenly from the east. White spray dashed from the bow. Yet the Pilot paced the quarter-deck seemingly oblivious to danger. But open water was far ahead and suddenly from the forecastle came that dreaded cry, "Breakers! breakers, dead ahead!" The Pilot shook off his trance of thought. His orders thundered forth, sailors sprang hither and thither at his bidding, the frigate swung about at his cry of "Hold on everything!" Tortuously she picked her way through the twisting channels, in darkness amid the howlings of the great winds.

She shivered from bow to stern as a hundred men loosed the huge mainsail. The jib was torn treg with a crash like a cannon's blast, but the big sail held and the frigate bowed like a reed in the wind. White foam showed dimly upon both sides, but the Pilot kept the ship, as by a miracle, within a narrow ribbon of dark water. He took the wheel himself. Time and again the frigate seemed to have reeled free from peril; time and again she plunged anew toward a welter of white water. But she drove ever on and at last she rode the great waves of the open sea.

Not the storm alone had these ships dared. They were American vessels, lurking about an enemy's coast. This little bay had a peculiar fascination for two young lieutenants aboard, Edward Griffith and Richard Barnstable. Not far inland lived Colonel Howard, a Tory who had fled from America when the colonists revolted. With him dwelt his niece, Cecilia Howard, beloved by Griffith, and his ward, Katherine Plowden, betrothed to Barnstable. In St. Ruth's abbey lingered, too, Christopher Dillon, a poor kinsman anxious to better his condition by wedding the wealthy Cecilia. Redcoats lent a picturesqueness to the venerable abbey, for a small garrison under Captain Borroughcliffe had been summoned by the owner. For aught that men knew, John Paul Jones himself might be aboard these ships hovering nearby.

While reconnoitering the next night, "Mr. Gray" and Griffith were captured, but Borroughcliffe's drunkenness enabled them to escape. Griffith was, however, retaken.

The impetuous Barnstable, fretting offshore with his enormous coxswain, Long Tom Coffin, had been nearly cut off from his schooner by an English cutter, but he scrambled aboard safely and the drum beat to quarters. While

broadides roared and the decks grew slippery with blood, the little fighting ships met and grappled. Before Barnstable could lead his boarders to the enemy's deck, Coffin tumbled into the sea. Shouting "Revenge Long Tom!" the lieutenant rushed with his men upon the foe. It was fighting at close quarters and the issue was in doubt when the drenched and furious coxswain emerged from the sea and with his harpoon pioned the English captain to his mast. In a few minutes the Americans were masters of the cutter. Covering in that scene of bloodshed the victors discovered the crafty Dillon, who pledged to be sent off as a hostage, promising to return in person or to have Griffith delivered in his stead.

His word of honor was trusted and he was sent away with Long Tom. He luckily overheard Dillon's treacherous plot to outtrap Barnstable's waiting party. The resourceful old seaman engaged Borroughcliffe and drove Dillon, at the point of his harpoon, back to the waiting schooner. By this time, however, a battery on the cliff brought down the schooner's mainmast. She was driven from her course by heavy seas. The masts were felled and anchors dropped, but she plunged on like a hobbing cork in rapids. Barnstable would have stayed by his ship, but suddenly Long Tom seized him and hurled him over the bulwarks. "God's will be done with me," Coffin cried, above the wind's roar. Dillon's lifeless body was rolled upon the shore, but Long Tom's stayed with the sea to which he had dedicated his life.

Surprise succeeded surprise at the abbey. Barnstable marched his shipwrecked mariners into the building and they took possession, but they were soon made prisoners by the redcoats. Then the mysterious figure of the Pilot appeared at the door and behind him loomed the marines from the frigate. Colonel Howard, an unwilling prisoner, was marched away with Cecilia and Katherine, who could not be downcast at the triumph of their lovers.

Captain Borroughcliffe was freed, as was another inmate of the abbey, Alice Dismore. She had recognized the Pilot in his disguise when he was first captured. They had been lovers, but she was so staunch in her love for her king and she so hated bloodshed that she had broken her troth to this "Mr. Gray," whom she addressed as John. She reminded him that did she but once could aloud his true name the whole countryside would ring with it. What that name was is never revealed, but there was but one sea rover who could strike stark terror into all English hearts.

On board the frigate repeated conferences were held between the captain, Griffith and "Mr. Gray." Suddenly out of the fog drove a mountainous ship of the line. The drum beat aboard the frigate, sailors leaped nimbly about the deck, clearing for action. The women were led below and gradually order resolved itself out of the chaos of shouting men. A terrific roar filled the air as three tiers of guns blazed a broadside from the English ship. A few sails and ropes were cut, but the frigate's sailing power was hardly affected. One chance ball struck the captain and hurled him to death. Griffith succeeded to the command and he was appalled, as he saw the frigate hemmed about. To the east loomed the great ship of war and far in the northeast the sails of another frigate.

"What are we to do?" cried Griffith. "Fight them! fight them!" shouted the Pilot. "Let me proclaim your name to the men," Griffith appealed. But the Pilot refused. "Should we come to a grapple," he said, "I will give forth the name as a war-cry and these English will quail before it."

The ship of war was distanced, but she cut off a retreat and the frigate ahead had been re-enforced by two others. The foremost maneuvered with the American frigate for position. Broadides crashed and they grappled. The American guns raked her foe and left her helpless, with useless ropes dangling from shattered masts. The deck was cleared and as another enemy appeared, Griffith shouted, "Hoist away of everything!" Fifty men flew aloft upon the spars and white canvas was spread from every mast. The frigate lunged ahead, but it could not outstrip its rival, and the bait to give battle had enabled the ship of the line to draw up.

Then, for a few breathless moments, the Pilot leaped into command. Breakers loomed ahead, but he drove the vessels straight into the shoals, into narrow passages where white foam bubbled perilously close. The enemy dared not follow, and when night fell pursuit was hopeless.

Colonel Howard, fatally wounded in the battle, lived long enough to see Cecilia Howard and Katherine Plowden wedded by the chaplain to their lovers. His last words were spoken to Griffith. "Perhaps I may have mistaken my duty to America—but I was too old to change my politics or my religion; I—I—I loved the king—God bless him—"

The frigate drove on to Holland, where the Pilot landed in a small boat that dwindled into a black speck and disappeared in the setting sun. Twelve years later Cecilia Griffith saw her husband's face cloud as he read in the newspaper of the death of a great man, but not even then did he divulge his name. He had promised to keep it secret. He said only, "Our happiness might have been wrecked in the voyage of life had we not met the unknown Pilot of the German ocean."

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