

of golden light through it all that make them the finest story tellers in the world. So in this volume we have taken many stories from the Arabs, to get that fine touch of genius in the telling which gives them their perfection.

Can we fix the dates of these Arabian stories? Only in a very general way. Some of them came from Cairo, some from Syria, some from the Euphrates and Tigris valleys, some from Persia and India and China; and they were gathered together, it would appear, in the century before Shakespeare was born, by some big-hearted, humorous fellow, among the great anonymous benefactors of mankind. But he made no claim of inventing them. If he had he would have been laughed at for his pains. For old men had heard them from their grandfathers, generation after generation, and the gray grandsires always began to tell them, saying: "So 'twas told to me when I was such a tiny child as thou art."

Many of these Arabic tales take us back to the golden time of good Harun al Raschid, who used to disguise himself of an evening and go forth in Bagdad's streets with his Wazir Ja'afar, descendant of the Barmecide fire worshippers, and Ishak the cupbearer and Masrur the Eunuch, the Sworder of his vengeance, going out by the postern gate and taking boat on the river Tigris. That was eleven hundred years ago and more, before the eventful Christmas day when Charlemagne was crowned emperor. A man of vigor and valor, of an alert and subtle spirit, worker of justice and protector of the weak was that same caliph; he has won the hearts of all story tellers and story hearers through a thousand years.

So these tales have surged to and fro, under many moons, in ceaseless tide since the world was young. Flying on the wings of night from one to another of those Eastern lands where the sun bronzes all faces that are not veiled, they have rested now in some Himalayan fastness, now in some pillared temple by the Ganges, now in a lane in Bagdad, now under the shadow of Turkish minarets. They are of no one land, but are part of the common riches of mankind.

## *Oriental Mystery Stories*

### *The Power of Eloquence*

*From the Japanese of Kikuchi Jun*

UWOZUMI SEZAEMON, a rich inhabitant of the province of Etchigo, had a daughter of sixteen summers, by name Yuki-no, "the field of snow." Her marvelous beauty equaled her sparkling wit. She was a skillful musician, sang most charmingly, and excelled in making verses. The hearts of her parents exulted when they saw her perfections, and many were the suitors who demanded her hand in marriage. But Sezaemon, who deemed no youth a match for his fair girl, would not come to a decision, and ever put off the moment of separation, so that folks began to liken her to beautiful Komatchi, pledged to maidenhood.

Alas! how fickle is fortune! A grave sickness overtook the maiden; for many moons she lay pining on her couch, till at last she faded and sank to sleep, at the very moment when she should have burst forth in all the brightness of her beauty, like a sweet flower whose petals are strewn by the tempest. Her parents were in despair, and would not be comforted.

Yet needs must that they busy themselves about their daughter's burial. They brought her body in state to the monastery of Gokuraku, where the tombs of her ancestors were.

Some three months after the sad ceremony there was a knocking, long after midnight, at the monastery door. The porter peered through the wicket, and beheld a young man in rich vestments, whose twin swords with richly carved hilts of ivory declared him to be of noble birth. The porter hastened to open the door to him, and asked what he desired. The young man, announcing his titles



and degree, said that he wished to see the master of the monastery, and slipped some pieces of money into the hands of the porter, who was delighted with this good fortune, and led him into the presence of the chief Bonze, prior of the monastery.

The young man seemed to be eighteen or nineteen years old; his eyes were bright, his hair black and shining, his face full of charm, noble and sweet.

He first saluted the worthy priest most honorably, kneeling, and advancing toward him on his knees, and then addressed him thus:

"I am the son of a noble of Kyoto; disaster overtook my family, bringing us to poverty, so that I had to leave Kyoto and migrate hither. And now I have a pressing desire to make known to you. This is the cause of my coming at so late an hour, though I am unknown to you. I know not how you will receive my prayer, for it concerns a matter of profound secrecy, and if ever it should come to be known——"

His voice broke, and he could not complete his sentence. Drawing from his purse five pieces of gold, he laid them on his fan, presenting it point forward to the reverend prior.

"Deign," he said, "to accept this modest present, which I offer, not to buy your favor, but only as a token of my humble obedience. You will make me happy, if you will have the kindness to employ it for the needs of worship."

The Bonze, who was fond of money, could not conceal his joy at receiving so rich a present. His face, which had been overcast and stern, burst into a beaming smile, and he said, with unctuous sweetness: "It is not common to find young people of your age animated by such a fervent religious spirit, for to-day few have any devotion. You are certain to receive pardon for all the sins of your past life, and to be received by our Lord Buddha into the abode of the blest, where you will enjoy eternal bliss and everlasting joy. But what is it you desire of me? Speak

without fear, speak openly, for I keep all secrets that are intrusted to me."

But the young man still hesitated. He opened his mouth to speak, but his voice died away on his trembling lips. At last he seemed to make up his mind, and said: "So be it! Since it is useless to delay any longer, I will reveal to you the secret of my heart, whatever shame it may bring me. But I beg of you, make certain that none may remain within earshot, lest we be overheard."

"It is past midnight," said the Bonze. "Listen! everyone is already snoring. Who, then, could overhear what you have to tell me?"

Then the young man, his eyes downcast, and a blush of shame, which suffused his cheeks, but adding to his charms, began thus to speak:

"One day, a year ago, when I had gone into the country to admire the pretty flowers of sweet spring time, I met an adorable maiden, whose beauty put even the flowers to shame. My eyes were dazzled, my heart was perturbed. I followed her footsteps at a distance, and learned from the maid servant who accompanied her, walking a few paces behind her, that she was Uwozumi's daughter. From that moment, I was so deeply in love with her that I could think of naught else from morn till eve; and every night I dreamed of her ravishing beauty. Unable to withstand the force of my passion, I employed all possible means to win over the servant maid, and after difficulties without number I at last was able to declare my burning love to her whose radiant image possessed my heart. Mutual trust sprang up between us, and we swore to love each other to the end of our days.

"Alas! Heaven mocked at our design! What is more inconstant than human life? It is compared to the dew of the morning, but the dew ever lasts a certain space. Farewell, my beloved, farewell for ay. The door of death opened for thee in the flower of thy springtide. Can it be true, or is it but an evil dream? But why give way to my sorrows before you, reverend sir? She whom I



loved so desperately is no more; nor can aught console me for my irremediable loss. As the days flit by my sorrow increases; naught in life attracts me; I long only for death. I would fain join in the other world her who has all my love. My own desire in this world is to open her grave, once more to embrace her upon this earth. O venerable priest, have pity on my grief! Grant me this last request, after which death will seem to me infinitely sweeter than life."

Greatly perturbed by so strange a request, the Bonze tried to console the youth, and to wean him from his plan. But the despairing young man's plan seemed only the more firmly fixed in his heart. "I know well," he said, "that a grave cannot be opened without the magistrate's order duly sealed; I know that you will oppose reasons to my entreaties; but my determination is only the firmer, and my grief is stronger than the whole world. Little do I reckon of the heavy punishment that may overtake me.

"If you finally refuse me this last wish which I have revealed to you—well, my resolution is taken. I shall die on the spot!" And seizing his dagger, he was about to plunge it in his throat. The priest in terror stopped him, and consented to his request, but first he made him swear an oath. The young man drew a little blood from his finger to seal the bond, and promised to reveal nothing.

The girl's tomb was on the hillside, behind the monastery. The Bonze led his strange visitor thither. The hour was very late; there was a dampness in the air that bedewed their faces; a light breeze stirred through the darkness. In silence they went forward. Soon the tombs in regular rows began to show through the veil of mist, and the Bonze stopped. Pointing to a newly made grave he said "It is hers."

"At last!" cried the young man, attaining his desire, and, seizing the gravestone, he raised it from the tomb without visible effort. Then he opened the coffin, and rained kisses on the lifeless form of the maiden. The

Bonze withdrew in grief and horror, and watched his strange visitor from afar.

The sorrow-stricken youth, altogether given up to his grief and his love, remained there, uttering bitter complaints and filled with a preternatural joy, which was terrible and incomprehensible. A half hour passed thus, and still he could not tear himself away from the lifeless form of his beloved. At last he laid the sad vestiges of his charmer once more in the tomb, arranging them with tender care, covering them with earth, and putting back the tombstone as before. Thereafter he rejoined the priest, and poured out to him his unbounded gratitude.

A year after the death of Yuki-no, "the field of snow," the whole family had come together in Uwozumi's house, for the anniversary service to her spirit. Her father and mother wept at the memory of the happy days of their beloved child; they beheld her once more in memory; charming, frank, delighting them with her countless fancies and pretty jests, amusing herself by weaving flower wreaths for her brow, singing sweet ditties, and dancing lightly with her companions. They laid on the family altar all the little things that she had loved best. And meanwhile the Bonzes repeated their prayers, and the whole family, ranged in a circle around them, shed tears.

Just as the sun was setting behind the mountain, a pilgrim Bonze presented himself at the door, ringing his little bell and uttering prayers. They took him in, offering him hospitality for the night, and set pure food before him. After a short time, he addressed the master of the house and his wife, saying: "I have come from afar solely in order to communicate to you something of great moment concerning your daughter. I beg you to send to a distance all your servants, so that I may speak freely to you, after which I shall not regret all the pain and weariness of my coming." They led him immediately to a remote apartment, and begged him to begin at once what he had to tell, because it was already late.

The Bonze drew himself together, took his rosary in both



hands and passed it between his fingers, then several times repeating the invocation to Amida Buddha, he began as follows:

"While I was traveling through the province of Etchigo, I ascended Mount Tateyama, and passed through a valley called Jigoku Dani. Not a living creature was in sight; not a hut was visible that could serve as a shelter. The sun had already set, darkness had begun to envelope the earth, and I was obliged to take shelter under the branches of an ancient tree. The wind whistled, and the cold, damp air pierced me to the bone, so that my eyelids, though heavy with sleep, refused to close. The night descended in thick darkness. All at once a slender flame, half reddish, half bluish, passed flickering before my eyes, now growing dim, now glowing brightly, now fading and then lighting up again; in a word, something mysterious, strange, indefinable, like everything that comes from the other world. At the same time I heard what seemed to be a plaintive voice approaching me. It was in vain that I lent all my attention, for I could distinguish nothing clearly. I thought that I must be the sport of some illusion, such as the fox witches and badger wizards impose on human beings. Then at last I went to sleep, my head leaning on my arm for a pillow. But while I slept I saw arise before me the specter of a young girl, who might have been about sixteen. Her pale, haggard face peered through her long black hair, which fell in disorder to the ground. Red blood flowed from a wound in her body and stained her white raiment. At last she began to speak to me in trembling tones, giving me three objects which she held in her hands: 'Sadly taking my own life,' she said, 'at the moment when my youth was about to burst into bloom, and when I should have been a joy to my parents' hearts, I left them in inconsolable sorrow. All my regrets have not been enough to expiate this crime, and I am now condemned to suffer night and day in a lake of blood. But I have been told that I may be set free, and may enter the abodes of the blessed, if some one will make an offering for my soul of a thousand copies of

the holy texts, and will bury on a holy mountain or in some sacred stream these three objects which I give to you. If this be not done, my soul will return to the earth, to be imprisoned in the body of some animal, and I shall never regain a human form. Ah! how happy would I be if I could change my wretched state for the happiness of eternal paradise. Therefore I beg you to journey to my native province, and to tell to my parents all that I have said to you.'

"Hardly had she uttered these words when her image disappeared like a wreath of mist which vanishes away in the sky. Only the murmur of a nearby spring broke the silence of that solitude. I noted it then, hearing it distinctly. I was awake, lying stretched at the root of the tree where I had lain down to rest. I had awakened indeed from a dream, but how could I explain this wonder? I really held in my hands the three objects which the specter had given to me! I lighted a fire of withered leaves, and examined them in the glow of the flame. They were a little bag filled with sacred objects, a linen sleeve, and a cord tied round a few locks of hair, the first cut from a baby's head. They were wrapped together in a piece of paper, on which was written her name, her abode, and the day of her birth. Here are the three objects!" said the Bonze, and ceased speaking.

The father and mother examined them attentively, and, to their great astonishment, recognized the inscription which they themselves had traced and placed in the tomb of their beloved. Unable to check their feelings, they burst into sobs, and knew not what to do or say. Finally wiping away the tears which trickled over his cheeks, Uwozumi said:

"To-day is the very anniversary of the death of our dear child, and I cannot for a moment doubt that she came to you to implore your protection, to save her from the place of punishment. We pray you, therefore, venerable priest, to visit for her all the holy places of the west, and to bury these three objects, as she instructed you. As for the thou-



sand copies of the holy texts, we will pay you for them twice, four times their value. Have pity on our tears, and grant us what we beg of you." Then they offered five hundred gold pieces to the pilgrim Bonze, as the price of the holy texts, and a hundred more for the cost of his journey.

But the Bonze shook his head, and replied: "We Bonze pilgrims pass our lives in traveling from place to place. What use, then, would money be to me? Our home is in every mountain, every river, every place where our footsteps rest." Saying this, he rose and made ready to take leave of his sorrow-stricken hosts. But they held him by the sleeve, and begged him to accept their money. Resisting until they forced him to comply, he at last accepted it, and said, as he departed: "Remember that, despite my age, despite the weariness of my long journey, I consent to do what you demand, in favor of your daughter and all your family."

"Oh, venerable saint!" they cried, falling down before him, their hands joined in entreaty. All the family accompanied him far on his way, and at last the Bonze departed, his pilgrim's staff in his hands.

The bystanders watched him depart, and disappear gradually from view, and even after he was out of sight their eyes remained fixed on the spot where he had disappeared, and they thought they still could see him, so deeply was his image graven on their minds.

After he had traveled seven or eight leagues, the Bonze plunged into a forest, and directed his steps toward an old ruined temple, which was in the depths of the forest. At the sound of his steps the door opened, and a young man ran to meet him.

The Bonze pulled off his wig and false beard, and showed his real form, young and vigorous. The two looked at each other and exchanged a smile. "Well played!" cried the young man. "It could not have been better planned," replied the other. "Now to Niigata to taste the sweets of life." So dividing their plunder, they set out. The false

Bonze was the young man who had visited Yuki-no's tomb, whence he had taken the three objects which served to confirm his story.

*The Dishonest Goldsmith and the Ingenious Painter*

*From the Turkish*

IT is narrated by a person of veracity that once in the land of Adjem (Persia) a master goldsmith and a painter of talent for a time formed an association together, and lived on terms of brotherly intimacy. After this, being disposed to travel, they entered into a covenant to remain faithful to each other, and not to go one step beyond their association—that one should not act without the consent of the other, nor in any manner be treacherous to the other's interests.

Having made this agreement, they set out upon their journey. Their means being rather limited, on coming to a great convent, they put up there as guests. The monks of that convent, being pleased with them, showed them respect and tokens of esteem. They, particularly the painter, covered the walls of the convent with curious paintings; and the monks paid him much attention, and begged them to remain awhile with them. Having assented to this, they spent some time in the convent; and the monks placed so much confidence in them as to disclose to them the places containing the gold and silver idols of the convent. So one day they collected all these idols, and at night they made their escape with them. On reaching a city in a country of Islamites, they took up their abode there; when, according to their agreement, they put the gold and silver into a box, and spent only as much of it as their necessities required.

It so happened that the goldsmith married a parson's daughter, and the expenses of the association were thus