

*The Melancholist and the Sharper*

*From the Arabic*

THERE was once a Richard hight 'Ajlan, the Hasty, who wasted his wealth, and concern and chagrin got the mastery of him, so that he became a Melancholist and lost his wit. There remained with him of his moneys about twenty dinars and he used to beg alms of the folk, and whatso they gave him in charity he would gather together and add to the gold pieces that were left him. Now there was in that town a Sharper, who made his living by roguery, and he knew that the Melancholist had somewhat of money; so he fell to spying upon him and ceased not watching him till he saw him put into an earthen pot that which he had with him of silvers and enter a deserted ruin, where he sat down, and straightway began to dig a hole, wherein he laid the pot and covering it up, smoothed the ground as it had been. Then he went away and the Sharper came and taking what was in the pot, restored it to its former place. Presently 'Ajlan returned, with somewhat to add to his hoard, but found it not; so he bethought him of who had followed him and remembered that he had found that Sharper assiduous in sitting with him and questioning him. So he went in search of him, assured that he had taken the pot, and gave not over looking for him till he saw him sitting; whereupon he went to him and the Sharper saw him. Then the Melancholist stood within earshot and muttered to himself and said, "In the pot are sixty ducats and I have with me other twenty in such a place and to-day I will unite the whole in the pot." When the Sharper heard him say this to himself, muttering and mumbling, repeating and blundering in his speech, he repented him of having taken the sequins and said, "He will presently return to the pot and find it empty; wherefore that for which I am on the lookout will escape me; and meseemeth 'twere best I replace the dinars, so he may see them and leave all which is with him in the pot,

and I can take the whole." Now he feared to return to the pot at once, lest the Melancholist should follow him to the place and find nothing and on this wise his arrangements be marred; so he said to him, "O 'Ajlan, I would have thee come to my lodging and eat bread with me." Therefore the Melancholist went with him to his quarters and he seated him there and going to the market, sold somewhat of his clothes and pawned somewhat from his house and bought the best of food. Then he betook himself to the ruin and replacing the money in the pot, buried it again; after which he returned to his lodging and gave the Melancholist to eat and drink, and they went out together. The Sharper walked away and hid himself, lest his guest should see him, while 'Ajlan repaired to his hiding-place and took the pot. Presently the Sharper returned to the ruin, rejoicing in that which he deemed he should get, and dug in the place, but found naught and knew that the Melancholist had outwitted him. So he began buffeting his face for regret, and fell to following the other whitherso he went, to the intent that he might win what was with him, but he failed in this, because the Melancholist knew what was in his mind and was assured that he spied upon him; so he kept watch over himself. Now, had the Sharper considered the consequences of haste and that which is begotten of loss therefrom, he had not done on such wise.

*Lakshadatta and Labdhadatta*

*From the Sanskrit*

THERE was on the earth a city named Lakshapura. In it there lived a king named Lakshadatta, chief of generous men. He never knew how to give a petitioner less than a lac of coins, but he gave five lacs to anyone with whom he conversed. As for the man with whom he was pleased, he lifted him out of poverty, for this reason his

name was called Lakshadatta. A certain dependent named Labdhadatta stood day and night at his gate, with a piece of leather for his only loin-rag. He had matted hair, and he never left the king's gate for a second, day or night, in cold, rain, or heat, and the king saw him there. And, though he remained there long in misery, the king did not give him anything, though he was generous and compassionate.

Then, one day the king went to a forest to hunt, and his dependent followed him with a staff in his hand. There, while the king seated on an elephant, armed with a bow, and followed by his army, slew tigers, bears, and deer, with showers of arrows, his dependent, going in front of him, alone on foot, slew with his staff many boars and deer. When the king saw his bravery, he thought in his heart, "It is wonderful that this man should be such a hero," but he did not give him anything. And the king, when he had finished his hunting, returned home to his city, to enjoy himself, but that dependent stood at his palace-gate as before. Once on a time, Lakshadatta went out to conquer a neighboring king of the same family, and he had a terrible battle. And in the battle the dependent struck down in front of him many enemies, with blows from the end of his strong staff of acacia wood. And the king, after conquering his enemies, returned to his own city, and though he had seen the valor of his dependent, he gave him nothing. In this condition the dependent Labdhadatta remained, and many years passed over his head, while he supported himself with difficulty.

And when the sixth year had come, king Lakshadatta happened to see him one day, and feeling pity for him, reflected, "Though he has been long afflicted, I have not as yet given him anything, so why should I not give him something in a disguised form, and so find out whether the guilt of this poor man has been effaced, or not, and whether even now Fortune will grant him a sight of her, or not?" Thus reflecting, the king deliberately entered his treasury, taking with him a lemon in his hand. And upon his return

therefrom, he held an assembly of all his subjects, having appointed a meeting outside his palace, and there entered the assembly all his citizens, chiefs, and ministers. And when the dependent entered among them, the king said to him with an affectionate voice, "Come here"; then the dependent, on hearing this, was delighted, and coming near, he sat in front of the king. Then the king said to him, "Utter some composition of your own." Then the dependent recited the following *Āryā* verse—"Fortune ever replenishes the full man, as all the streams replenish the sea, but she never even comes within the range of the eyes of the poor." When the king had heard this, and had made him recite it again, he was pleased, and gave him the lemon which he had carried. And the people said, "This king puts a stop to the poverty of everyone with whom he is pleased; so this dependent is to be pitied, since this very king, though pleased with him, after summoning him politely, has given him nothing but this lemon; a wishing-tree in the case of ill-starred men, often becomes a *palāsa*-tree." These were the words which all in the assembly said to one another in their despondency, when they saw that, for they did not know the truth.

But the dependent went out, with the lemon in his hand, and when he was in a state of despondency, a mendicant came before him. And that mendicant, named *Rájavandin*, seeing that the lemon was a fine one, obtained it from that dependent by giving him a garment. And then the mendicant entered the assembly, and gave that fruit to the king, and the king, recognizing it, said to that hermit, "Where, reverend sir, did you procure this lemon?" Then he told the king that the dependent had given it to him. Then the king was grieved and astonished, reflecting that his guilt was not expiated even now. The king Lakshadatta took the lemon, rose up from the assembly, and performed the duties of the day. And the dependent sold the garment, and after he had eaten and drunk, remained at his usual post at the king's gate.

And on the second day the king held a general assembly,

and everybody appeared at it again, citizens and all. And the king, seeing that the dependent had entered the assembly, called him as before, and made him sit near him. And after making him again recite that very same Áryá verse, being pleased, he gave him that very same lemon which he had given him before. And all there thought with astonishment—"Ah! this is the second time that our master is pleased with him without his gaining by it." And the dependent, in despondency, took the lemon in his hand, and thinking that the king's good will had again been barren of results, went out. At that very moment a certain official met him, who was about to enter that assembly, wishing to see the king. He, when he saw that lemon, took a fancy to it, and regarding the omen, procured it from the dependent by giving him a pair of garments. And entering the king's court, he fell at the feet of the sovereign, and first gave him the lemon, and then another present of his own. And when the king recognized the fruit, he asked the official where he got it, and he replied, "From the dependent." And the king, thinking in his heart that Fortune would not even now give the dependent a sight of her, was exceedingly sad. And he rose up from the assembly with that lemon, and the dependent went to the market with the pair of garments he had got. And by selling one garment he procured meat and drink, and tearing the other in half he made two of it. Then on the third day also the king held a general assembly, and all the subjects entered, as before, and when the dependent entered, the king gave him the same lemon again, after calling him and making him recite the Áryá verse. Then all were astonished, and the dependent went out, and gave that lemon to the king's favorite. And she, like a moving creeper of the tree of the king's regard, gave him gold, which was, so to speak, the flower, the harbinger of the fruit. The dependent sold it, and enjoyed himself that day, and the king's mistress went into his presence. And she gave him that lemon, which was large and fine, and he, recognizing it, asked her whence she procured it. Then she said, "The dependent gave it me." Hearing that, the

king thought, "Fortune has not yet looked favorably upon him; his merit in a former life must have been slight, since he does not know that my favor is never barren of results." Thus verily the king reflected, and he took that lemon, and put it away safely, and rose up and performed the duties of the day. And on the fourth day the king held an assembly in the same way, and it was filled with all his subjects, feudatories, ministers and all. And the dependent came there again, and again the king made him sit in front of him, and when he bowed before him, the king made him recite the Áryá verse; and gave him the lemon, and when the dependent had half got hold of it, he suddenly let it go, and the lemon fell on the ground and broke in half. And as the joining of the lemon, which kept it together, was broken, there rolled out of it many valuable jewels, illuminating that place of assembly. All the people, when they saw it, said, "Ah! we were deluded and mistaken, as we did not know the real state of the case, but such is the nature of the king's favor." When the king heard that, he said, "By this artifice I endeavored to ascertain, whether Fortune would now look on him or not. But for three days his guilt was not effaced; now it is effaced, and for that reason Fortune has now granted him a sight of herself." After the king had said this, he gave the dependent those jewels, and also villages, elephants, horses and gold, and made him a feudal chief. And he rose up from that assembly, in which the people applauded, and went to bathe; and that dependent too, having obtained his ends, went to his own dwelling.

*The Cunning Crone*

*From the Arabic*

THERE came one day an old woman to the stuff-bazar, with a casket of mighty fine workmanship, containing trinkets, and she was accompanied by a young baggage.