

have you prescribed for each?" And they thereupon, one by one, answered all the king's questions. Then one among the physicians, when his turn came to be questioned, said this, "The merchant Mátṛidatta has been out of sorts, O king, and this is the second day, that I have prescribed for him *nágabalá*." When the king heard that, he sent for the merchant, and said to him, "Tell me, who fetched you the *nágabalá*?" The merchant said, "My servant, your highness." When the king got this answer from the merchant, he quickly summoned the servant and said to him, "Give up that treasure belonging to a Bráhmaṇ, consisting of a store of *dínárs*, which you found when you were digging at the foot of a tree for *nágabalá*." When the king said this to him, the servant was frightened and confessed immediately, and bringing those *dínárs* left them there. So the king for his part summoned the Bráhmaṇ and gave him, who had been fasting in the meanwhile, his *dínárs*, lost and found again, like a second soul external to his body.

### *The Duel of the Two Sharpers*

*From the Arabic*

THERE was once, in the city of Baghdad, a man hight Al-Marwazi who was a sharper and ruined the folk with his rogueries and he was renowned in all quarters for knavery. He went out one day, carrying a load of small pebbles, and swore to himself that he would not return to his lodging till he had sold it at the price of raisins. Now there was in another city a second sharper, hight Al-Razi one of its worst, who went out the same day, bearing a load of round stones, anent which he too had sworn to himself that he would not sell it but at the price of sun-dried figs. So the twain fared on with that which was by them and ceased not going till they met in one of the khans, and one complained to other of what he had suffered

on travel in quest of gain and of the little demand for his wares. Now each of them had it in mind to cheat his fellow; so the man of Marw said to the man of Rayy, "Wilt thou sell me that?" He said, "Yes," and the other continued, "And wilt thou buy that which is with me?" The man of Rayy consented; so they agreed upon this and each of them sold to his mate that which was with him in exchange for the other's; after which they bade farewell and both fared forth. As soon as the twain were out of sight, they examined their loads, to see what was therein, and one of them found that he had a load of small pebbles and the other that he had a load of round stones; whereupon each of them turned back in quest of his fellow. They met again in the khan and laughing at each other canceled their bargain; then they agreed to enter into partnership and that all they had of money and other good should be in common, share and share alike. Then quoth Al-Razi to Al-Marwazi, "Come with me to my city, for that 'tis nearer than thine." So he went with him, and when he arrived at his quarters, he said to his wife and household and neighbors, "This is my brother, who hath been absent in the land of Khorasan and is come back." And he abode with him in all honor for a space of three days. On the fourth day, Al-Razi said to him, "Know, O my brother, that I purpose to do something." The other asked, "What is it?" and the first answered, "I mean to feign myself dead and do thou go to the bazar and hire two porters and a bier. Then take me up and go about the streets and markets with my body and collect alms on my account.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly the Marw man repaired to the market and, fetching that which he sought, returned to the Rayy man's house, where he found his fellow cast down in the entrance-passage, with his beard tied and his eyes shut, and his complexion was paled and his limbs were loose. So he deemed him really dead and shook him but he spoke not; then he took a knife

<sup>1</sup> Moslems are bound to see True Believers decently buried, and the poor often beg alms for the funeral.

and pricked his feet, but he budged not. Presently said Al-Razi, "What is this, O fool?" and said Al-Marwazi, "I deemed thou wast dead in very deed." Al-Razi cried, "Get thee to business, and leave funning." So he took him up and went with him to the market and collected alms for him that day till eventide, when he bore him back to his abode and waited till the morrow. Next morning, he again took up the bier and walked round with it as before, in quest of charity. Presently, the Chief of Police, who was of those who had given him alms on the previous day, met him; so he was angered and fell on the porters and beat them and took the dead body, saying, "I will bury him and win reward in Heaven." So his followers took him up and carrying him to the Police-officer, fetched grave-diggers, who dug him a grave. Then they brought him a shroud and perfumes and fetched an old man of the quarter, to wash him; so the Shaykh recited over him the appointed prayers and laying him on the bench, washed him and shrouded him. When the dead man found himself alone, he sprang up, as he were a Satan; and, donning the corpse-washer's dress, took the cups and water-can and wrapped them up in the napkins; then he clapped his shroud under his armpit and went out. The doorkeepers thought that he was the washer and asked him, "Hast thou made an end of the washing, so we may acquaint the Emir?" The sharper answered, "Yes," and made off to his abode, where he found the Marw man a-wooing his wife and saying to her, "By thy life, thou wilt never again look upon his face for the best reason that by this time he is buried: I myself escaped not from them but after toil and trouble, and if he speak, they will do him to death." Quoth she, "And what wouldst thou have of me?" and quoth he, "Be mine, for I am better than thy husband." Now when the Rayy man heard this, he rushed in upon them, and when Al-Marwazi saw him, he wondered at him and said to him, "How didst thou make thine escape?" Accordingly he told him the trick he had played and they abode talking of that which they had collected from the folk, and indeed they had

gotten great store of money. Then said the man of Marw, "In very sooth, mine absence hath been prolonged and lief would I return to my own land." Al-Razi said, "As thou wilt"; and the other rejoined, "Let us divide the moneys we have made and do thou go with me to my home, so I may show thee my tricks and my works." Replied the man of Rayy, "Come to-morrow, and we will divide the coin." So the Marw man went away and the other turned to his wife and said to her, "We have collected us great plenty of money, and the dog would fain take the half of it; but such thing shall never be, for my mind hath been changed against him, since I heard him making love to thee; now, therefore, I propose to play him a trick and enjoy all the money; and do thou not oppose me." She replied, "'Tis well;" and he said to her, "To-morrow, at peep o' day I will feign myself dead, and do thou cry aloud and tear thy hair, whereupon the folk will flock to me. Then lay me out and bury me; and, when the folk are gone away from the grave, dig down to me and take me; and fear not for me, as I can abide without harm two days in the tomb-niche." Whereto she made answer, "Do e'en whatso thou wilt." Accordingly, when it was the dawn-hour, she bound his beard and spreading a veil over him, shrieked aloud, whereupon the people of the quarter flocked to her, men and women. Presently, up came Al-Marwazi, for the division of the money, and hearing the keening asked, "What may be the news?" Quoth they, "Thy brother is dead"; and quoth he in himself, "The accursed fellow cozeneth me, so he may get all the coin for himself, but I will presently do with him what shall soon re-quicken him." Then he tore the bosom of his robe and bared his head, weeping and saying, "Alas, my brother, ah! Alas, my chief, ah! Alas, my lord, ah!" And he went in to the men, who rose and condoled with him. Then he accosted the Rayy man's wife and said to her, "How came his death to occur?" Said she, "I know nothing except that, when I arose in the morning, I found him dead." Moreover, he questioned her of the money which was with her, but she cried, "I have no knowledge

of this and no tidings." So he sat down at his fellow-sharper's head, and said to him, "Know, O Razi, that I will not leave thee till after ten days with their nights, wherein I will wake and sleep by thy grave. So rise and don't be a fool." But he answered him not, and the man of Marw drew his knife and fell to sticking it into the other's hands and feet, purposing to make him move; but he stirred not and he presently grew weary of this and determined that the sharper was really dead. However, he still had his suspicions and said to himself, "This fellow is falsing me, so he may enjoy all the money." Therewith he began to prepare the body for burial and bought for it perfumes and whatso was needed. Then they brought him to the washing-place and Al-Marwazi came to him; and, heating water till it boiled and bubbled and a third of it was evaporated, fell to pouring it on his skin, so that it turned bright red and lively blue and was blistered; but he abode still motionless. Presently they wrapped him in the shroud and set him on the bier, which they took up and bearing him to the burial-place, placed him in the grave-niche and filled in the earth; after which the folk dispersed. But the Marw man and the widow abode by the tomb, weeping, and ceased not sitting till sundown, when the woman said to him, "Come, let us hie us home, for this weeping will not profit us, nor will it restore the dead." He replied to her, "By Allah, I will not budge hence till I have slept and waked by this tomb ten days with their nights!" When she heard this his speech, she feared lest he should keep his word and his oath, and so her husband perish; but she said in her mind, "This one dissembleth: an I leave him and return to my house, he will tarry by him a little while and go away." And Al-Marwazi said to her, "Arise, thou, and hie thee home." So she arose and repaired to her house, while the man of Marw abode in his place till the night was half spent, when he said to himself, "How long? Yet how can I let this knavish dog die and lose the money? Better I open the tomb on him and bring him forth and take my due of him by dint of grievous beating and torment." Accordingly, he dug him

up and pulled him forth of the grave; after which he betook himself to a garden hard by the burial-ground and cut thence staves and palm-fronds. Then he tied the dead man's legs and laid on to him with the staff and beat him a grievous beating; but the body never budged. When the time grew longsome on him, his shoulders became a-weary and he feared lest some one of the watch passing on his round should surprise and seize him. So he took up Al-Razi and carrying him forth of the cemetery, stayed not till he came to the Magians' mortuary-place and casting him down in a Tower of Silence, rained heavy blows upon him till his shoulders failed him, but the other stirred not. Then he seated him by his side and rested; after which he rose and renewed the beating upon him; and thus he did till the end of the night, but without making him move. Now, as Destiny decreed, a band of robbers whose wont it was, when they had stolen anything, to resort to that place and there divide their loot, came thither in early-dawn, according to their custom; they numbered ten and they had with them much wealth which they were carrying. When they approached the Tower of Silence, they heard a noise of blows within it and their captain cried, "This is a Magian whom the Angels are tormenting." So they entered the cemetery and as soon as they arrived over against him, the man of Marw feared lest they should be the watchmen come upon him, therefore he fled and stood among the tombs. The robbers advanced to the place and finding the man of Rayy bound by the feet and by him some seventy sticks, wondered at this with exceeding wonder and said, "Allah confound thee! This was a miscreant, a man of many crimes; for earth hath rejected him from her womb, and by my life, he is yet fresh! This is his first night in the tomb and the Angels were tormenting him but now; so whoso of you hath a sin upon his soul, let him beat him, by way of offering to Almighty Allah." The robbers said, "We be sinners one and all"; so each of them went up to the corpse and dealt it about an hundred blows, one saying the while, "This is for my father!" and another laid on to him crying, "This is for my grandfather!" whilst a third

muttered, "This is for my brother!" and a fourth exclaimed, "This is for my mother!" And they gave not taking turns at him and beating him till they were weary, whilst Al-Marwazi stood laughing and saying in himself, "'Tis not I alone who have entered into default against him. There is no Majesty and there is no Might save in Allah, the Glorious, the Great!" Then the robbers applied themselves to sharing their loot wherein was a sword which caused them to fall out anent the man who should take it. Quoth the Captain, "'Tis my rede that we make proof of it; so, an it be a fine blade, we shall know its worth, and if it be worthless we shall know that"; whereto they said, "Try it on this corpse, for it is fresh." So the Captain took the sword and drawing it, brandished and made a false cut with it; but, when the man of Rayy saw this, he felt sure of death and said in his mind, "I have borne the washing-slab and the boiling water and the pricking with the knife-point and the grave-niche and its straitness and all this, trusting in Allah that I might be delivered from death, and indeed I have been delivered; but the sword I may not suffer, seeing that one stroke of it will make me a dead man." So saying, he sprang to his feet and seizing a thigh-bone of one departed, shouted at the top of his voice, "O ye dead ones, take them to yourselves!" And he smote one of them, whilst his mate of Marw smote another and they cried out at them and buffeted them on their neck-napes: whereupon the robbers left that which was with them of loot and ran away; and indeed their wits took flight for terror and they ceased not running till they came forth of the Magians' mortuary-ground and left it a parasang's length behind them, when they halted, trembling and affrighted for the muchness of that which had befallen them of fear and awe of the dead. As for Al-Razi and Al-Marwazi, they made peace each with other and sat down to share the spoil. Quoth the man of Marw, "I will not give thee a dirham of this money, till thou pay me my due of the moneys that be in thy house." And quoth the man of Rayy, "I will do naught of the kind, nor will I withdraw this from aught of my due." So they fell out there-

upon and disputed each with other and either of the twain went saying to his fellow, "I will not give thee a dirham!" Wherefore words ran high between them and the brawl was prolonged. Meanwhile, when the robbers halted, one of them said to the others, "Let us go back and see"; and the Captain said, "This thing is impossible of the dead; never heard we that they came to life in such way. Return we and take our moneys, for that the dead have no need of money." And they were divided in opinion as to returning: but presently one said, "Indeed, our weapons are gone and we may not prevail against them and will not draw near the place: only let one of us go look at it, and if he hear no sound of them, let him suggest to us what we shall do." At this they agreed that they should send a man of them and assigned him for such mission two parts of the plunder. Accordingly he returned to the burial-ground and gave not over going till he stood at the door of the Tower of Silence, when he heard the words of Al-Marwazi to his fellow, "I will not give thee a single dirham of the money!" The other said the same and they were occupied with brawling and abuse and talk. So the robber returned in haste to his mates, who said, "What is behind thee?" Quoth he, "Get you gone and run for your lives, O fools, and save yourselves: much people of the dead are come to life and between them are words and brawls." Hereat the robbers fled, whilst the two sharpers returned to the man of Rayy's house and made peace and added the robbers' spoil to the moneys they had gained and lived a length of time.