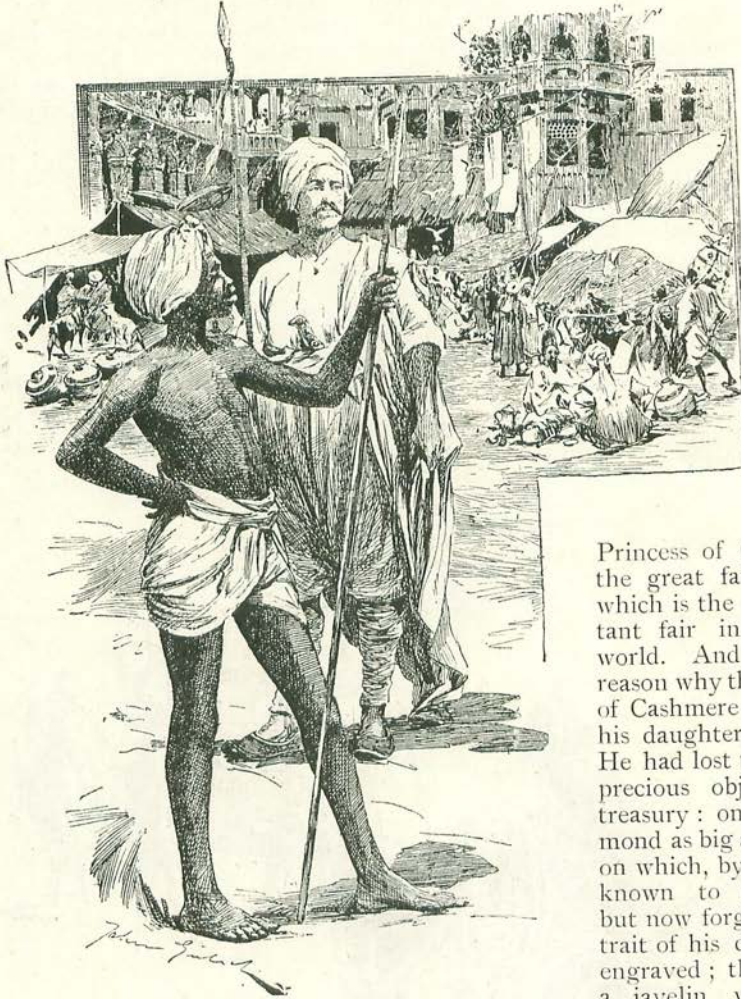


The Two Genies.

A STORY FOR CHILDREN; FROM THE FRENCH OF VOLTAIRE.



EBONY AND TOFAZ.

Princess of Cashmere at the great fair at Cabul, which is the most important fair in the whole world. And this was the reason why the old Prince of Cashmere had brought his daughter to the fair. He had lost the two most precious objects in his treasury: one was a diamond as big as my thumb, on which, by an art then known to the Indians, but now forgotten, a portrait of his daughter was engraved; the other was a javelin, which of its own accord would strike

whatever mark the owner wished.

A fakir in his Highness's train had stolen these treasures, and carried them to the Princess. "Take the greatest care of these two things," said he; "your fate depends upon them." Then he went away, and was seen no more.

The Prince of Cashmere, in great despair, determined to travel to the fair at Cabul, to see whether among all the merchants who collected there from the four quarters of the earth, there might not be one who had his diamond or his weapon. He took

EVERY one in the province of Candahar knows the adventures of young Rustem. He was the only son of a Mirza of that country—or, as we might say, a lord. His father, the Mirza, had a good estate. Rustem was to be married to the daughter of a Mirza of his own rank, as both families ardently desired. He was intended to be the comfort of his parents, to make his wife happy, and to be happy with her.

But, unfortunately, he had seen the

his daughter with him wherever he went, and she carried the diamond safe in her girdle; but as for the javelin, which she could not conveniently hide, she left it in Cashmere, safely locked up in a large Chinese chest.

At Cabul she and Rustem saw each other, and they fell in love with all the ardour of their nation. As a love-token the Princess gave him the diamond; and, at parting, Rustem promised to go to see her secretly in Cashmere.

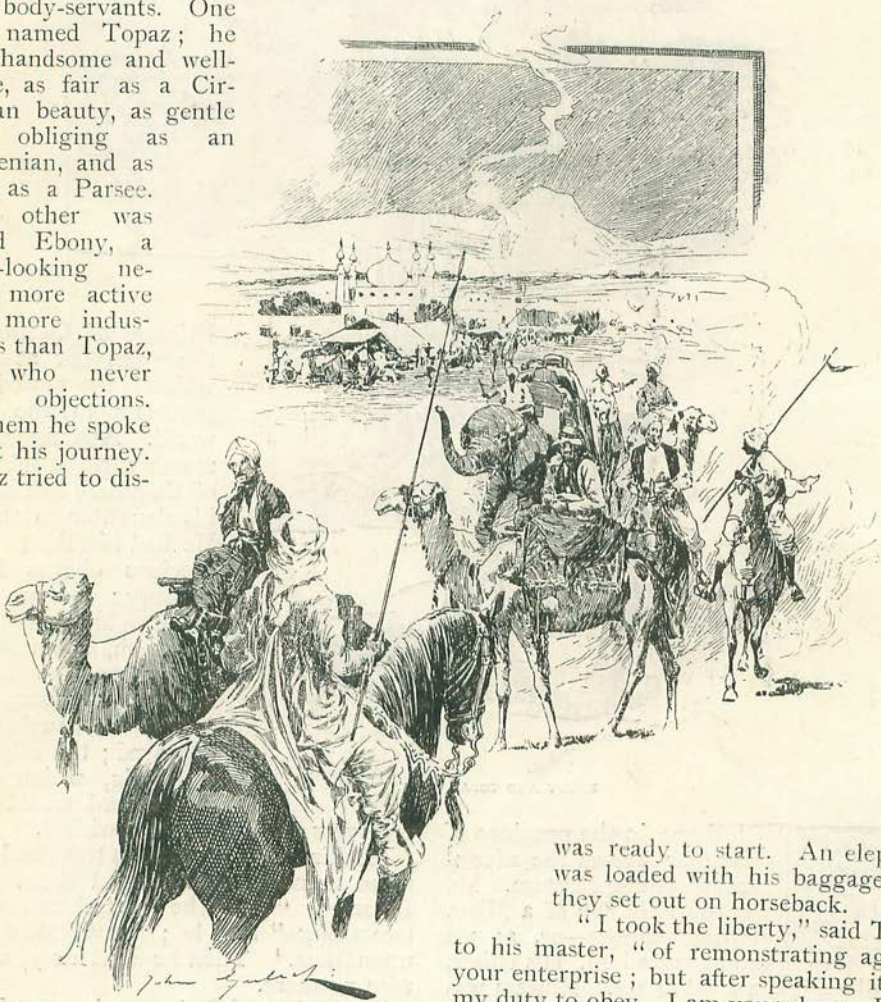
The young Mirza had two favourite attendants who served him as secretaries, stewards, and body-servants. One was named Topaz; he was handsome and well-made, as fair as a Circassian beauty, as gentle and obliging as an Armenian, and as wise as a Parsee. The other was called Ebony, a good-looking negro, more active and more industrious than Topaz, and who never made objections. To them he spoke about his journey. Topaz tried to dis-

suade him, with the cautious zeal of a servant who is anxious not to offend, and reminded him of all the risks. How could

he leave two families in despair, and cut his parents to the heart? He shook Rustem's purpose; but Ebony once more confirmed it, and removed his scruples.

The young man had not money enough for so long a journey. Wise Topaz would have refused to get it for him. Ebony provided it. He quietly stole his master's diamond, and had a false one made exactly like it, which he put in its place, pledging the real one to an Armenian for many thousands of rupees.

As soon as Rustem had the rupees he



"AN ELEPHANT WAS LOADED WITH HIS BAGGAGE."

was ready to start. An elephant was loaded with his baggage, and they set out on horseback.

"I took the liberty," said Topaz to his master, "of remonstrating against your enterprise; but after speaking it was my duty to obey. I am your slave. I love you, and will follow you to the end of the world. But let us consult the oracle which is on our way."

Rustem agreed. The answer of the oracle was this: "If you turn to the east you will

turn to the west." Rustem could not understand this. Topaz maintained that it boded no good; Ebony, always accommodating, persuaded him that it was very favourable.

There was yet another oracle in Cabul, which they consulted also. The Cabul oracle replied as follows: "If you possess you will not possess; if you get the best of it, you will get the worst; if you are Rustem you will not be Rustem." This saying seemed still more incomprehensible than the other.

"Beware," said Topaz.

"Fear nothing," said Ebony. And he, as may be supposed, seemed to his master to be always in the right, since he encouraged his passion and his hopes.

On leaving Cabul they marched through a great forest. Here they sat down on the grass to eat, while the horses were turned loose to feed. They were about to unload the elephant, which carried the dinner and the service, when it was discovered that Topaz and Ebony were no longer with the party. They called them loudly; the forest echoed with the names of Topaz and Ebony; the men sought them in every direction and filled the woods with their shouts, but they came back having seen no one and heard no answer. "We saw nothing," they said to

Rustem, "but a vulture fighting with an eagle and plucking out all its feathers."

The history of this struggle excited Rustem's curiosity; he went to the spot on foot. He saw no vulture or eagle, but he found that his elephant, still loaded with baggage, had been attacked by a huge rhinoceros. One was fighting with his horn, the other with his trunk. On seeing Rustem the rhinoceros retreated, and the elephant was led back. But now the horses were gone. "Strange things happen to travellers in the forest!" exclaimed Rustem. The servants were dismayed, and their master was in despair at having lost

his horses, his favourite negro, and the sage Topaz, for whom he had always had a regard, though he did not always agree with his opinion.

He was comforting himself with the hope of soon finding himself at the feet of the beautiful Princess of Cashmere, when he met a fine striped ass, which a vigorous peasant was beating violently with a stick. There is nothing rarer, swifter, or more beautiful than an ass of this kind. This one retorted on the rustic for his thrashing by kicks which might have uprooted an oak. The young Mirza very naturally took the



THE ASS RETORTED BY KICKS.

ass's part, for it was a beautiful beast. The peasant ran off, crying out to the ass: "I will pay you out yet!" The ass thanked its liberator after its fashion, went up to him, fawned on him, and received his caresses.

Having dined, Rustem mounted him, and took the road to Cashmere with his servants, some on foot and some riding the elephant.

Hardly had he mounted his ass, when the animal turned towards Cabul, instead of proceeding on the way to Cashmere. In vain his rider tugged at the bridle, jerked at the bit, squeezed his ribs with his knees, drove the spurs into his flanks, gave him his head,

pulled him up, whipped him right and left. The obstinate beast still made direct for Cabul.

Rustem was growing desperate, when he met a camel-driver, who said to him—

"You have a very stubborn ass there, master, which insists on carrying you where you do not want to go. If you will let me have him, I will give you four of my camels, which you may choose for yourself.

Rustem thanked Providence for having sent so good a bargain in his way. "Topaz was all wrong," thought he, "to say that my journey would be unlucky." He mounted the finest of the camels, and the others followed. He soon rejoined his little caravan, and went on his way towards happiness.

He had not marched more than four miles, when he was stopped by a torrent, wide, deep, and impetuous, tumbling over rocks all white with foam. On each shore rose precipitous cliffs which bewildered the eye and chilled the heart of man. There was no way of getting across, of turning to the right hand or to the left.

"I am beginning to fear," said Rustem, "that Topaz may have been right to reprehend me for this journey, and I very wrong to undertake it. If he were but here he might give me some good advice, and if I had Ebony, he at any rate would comfort me, and suggest some expedient. As it is I have no one left to help me."

His dismay was increased by that of his followers. The night was very dark, and they spent it in lamentations. At last fatigue and dejection brought sleep to the love-sick traveller. He awoke, however, at daybreak, and saw a fine marble bridge built across the torrent from shore to shore.

Then what exclamations, what cries of astonishment and delight. "Is it possible? Is it a dream? What a marvel! It is magic! Dare we cross it?" All the Mirza's train fell on their knees, got up again, went to the bridge, kissed the ground, looked up to heaven, lifted their hands; then tremulously set foot on it, went over, and came back in perfect ecstasy. And Rustem said, "Heaven is on my side this time. Topaz did not know what he was saying. The oracles were in my favour. Ebony was right; but why is he not here?"

Hardly had the caravan crossed in safety, when the bridge fell into the torrent with an appalling crash.

"So much the better!" cried Rustem. "God be praised! He does not intend

me to return to my own country, where I should be only a private gentleman. He means me to marry the Princess. I shall be Prince of Cashmere. In that way, when I possess my Princess, I shall not possess my humble rank in Candahar; I shall be Rustem, and I shall not, since I shall be a great prince. There is a great deal of the oracle interpreted in my favour. The rest will be explained in the same way. I am too happy! But why is not Ebony at my side? I regret him a thousand times more than Topaz."

He rode a few miles further in great glee; but as evening fell, a chain of mountains, steeper than a rampart, and higher than the Tower of Babel would have been when finished, entirely closed the road against the travellers, who were filled with fears.

Everyone exclaimed: "It is the will of God that we should perish here! He has broken down the bridge that we may have no hope of returning; He has raised up this mountain to hinder our going forward. Oh, Rustem! Oh, hapless Mirza! We shall never see Cashmere, we shall never return to the land of Candahar!"

In Rustem's soul the keenest anguish and most complete dejection succeeded the immoderate joy and hopes which had intoxicated him. He was now very far from interpreting the oracles to his advantage: "Oh merciful Heaven!" he cried. "Have I really lost my friend Topaz?"

As he spoke the words, heaving deep sighs and shedding bitter tears in the sight of his despairing followers, behold, the base of the mountain opened, and a long vaulted gallery lighted by a hundred thousand torches was revealed to his dazzled eyes!

Rustem broke into exclamations of joy; his people fell on their knees or dropped down with amazement, crying out that it was a miracle, and that Rustem was destined to govern the world. Rustem himself believed it, and was uplifted beyond measure. "Ah! Ebony, my dear Ebony, where are you?" he cried. "Why are you not here to see all these wonders? How did I come to lose you? Fair Princess of Cashmere, when shall I again behold your charms?"

He marched forward with his servants, his elephant, and his camels into the tunnel under the mountain, and at the end of it came out upon a meadow enamelled with flowers and watered by brooks. Beyond this meadow, avenues of trees stretched into the far distance; at the end of them

was a river bordered by delightful houses in the loveliest gardens. On every side he heard concerts of voices and instruments, and saw dancing. He hurried across one of the bridges over the river, and asked the first man he met what was this beautiful country.

The man to whom he spoke replied: "You are in the province of Cashmere; the inhabitants, as you see, are holding great rejoicings. We are doing honour to the wedding of our beautiful Princess, who is about to marry a certain lord named Barbabou to whom her father has plighted

can see by his eyes that he is mad; leave him in my hands; I will take him back to his own country and cure him." The other physician declared that his only complaint was melancholy, and that he ought to be taken to the Princess's wedding and compelled to dance.

While they were discussing his case the sick man recovered his powers; the two physicians were sent away, and Rustem remained alone with his host.

"Sir," said he, "I ask your pardon for fainting in your presence; I know that it is not good manners, and I entreat you to accept my elephant in acknowledgment of all the kindness with which you have received me."

He then related his adventures, taking good care not to mention the object of his journey. "But, in the name of Brahma," said he, "tell me who is this happy Barbabou who is to be married to the Princess of Cashmere, and why her father has chosen him for his son-in-law, and why the Princess has accepted him for her husband."

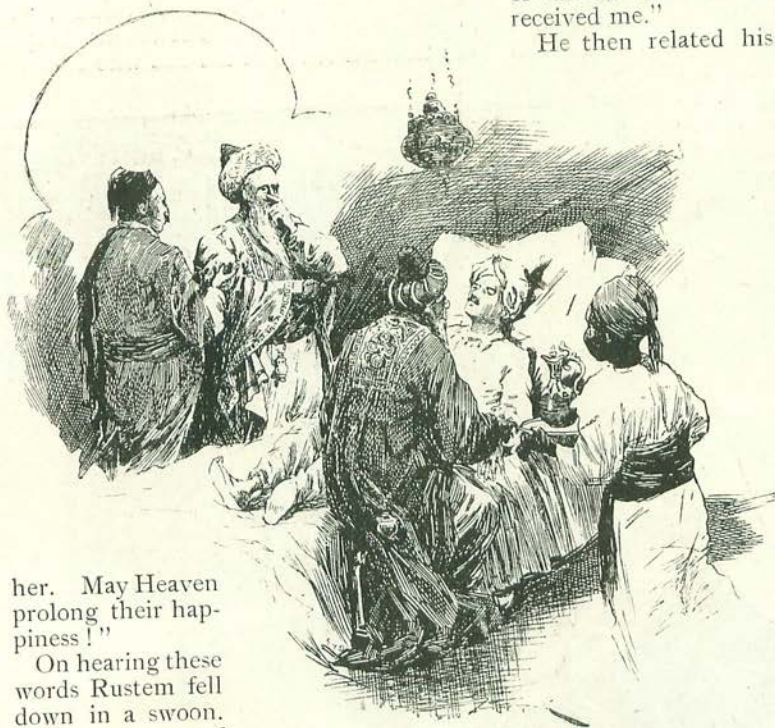
"My lord," replied the gentleman of Cashmere, "the Princess is far from having accepted him. On the contrary, she is drowned in tears, while the province rejoices over her marriage. She is

shut up in the Palace Tower, and refuses to see any of the festivities prepared in her honour."

Rustem, on hearing this, felt new life in his soul, and the colour which sorrow had faded came again into his cheeks.

"Then pray tell me," he continued, "why the Prince of Cashmere persists in marrying her to Barbabou against her will."

"The facts are these," replied his friend. "Do you know that our august Prince lost some time ago a diamond and a javelin, on which his heart was greatly set?"



"THE CLEVEREST PHYSICIANS WERE CALLED IN."

her. May Heaven prolong their happiness!"

On hearing these words Rustem fell down in a swoon. The gentleman of Cashmere, supposing that he was liable to fits, had him carried to his own house, where he lay some time unconscious. The two cleverest physicians of the district were called in; they felt their patient's pulse; and he having somewhat recovered, sobbed and sighed, and rolled his eyes, exclaiming, "Topaz, Topaz, you were right after all!"

One of the physicians said to the gentleman of Cashmere, "I perceive by his accent that this young man comes from Candahar; the air of this country does not agree with him, and he must be sent home again. I

"I know it well," said Rustem.

"Then, I must tell you," said his host, "that the Prince, in despair at hearing nothing of his two treasures, after searching for them all the world over, promised his daughter in marriage to anyone who would bring him either of them. Then Barbabou arrived and brought the diamond with him; and he is to marry the Princess to-morrow."

Rustem turned pale. He muttered his thanks, took leave of his host, and went off on his dromedary to the capital where the ceremony was to take place. He reached the palace of the sovereign, announced that he had matters of importance to communicate to him, and craved an audience. He was told that the Prince was engaged in preparing for the wedding. "That is the very reason," said he, "why I wish to speak to him." In short, he was so urgent that he was admitted.

"My lord," said he, "may Heaven crown your days with glory and magnificence! Your son-in-law is a rascal."

"A rascal! How dare you say so? Is that the way to speak to a Prince of Cashmere of the son-in-law he has chosen?"

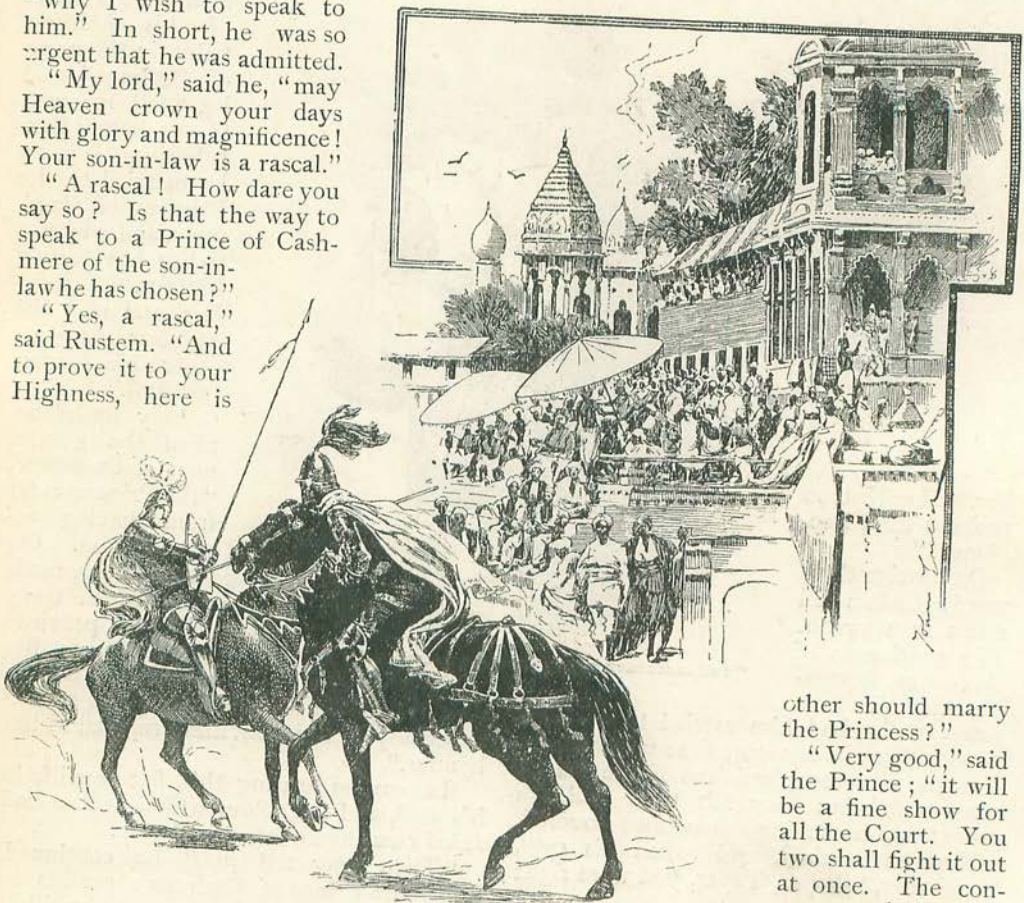
"Yes, a rascal," said Rustem. "And to prove it to your Highness, here is

pared the two diamonds, and, as he knew nothing about gems, he could not tell which was the true one.

"Here are two diamonds," said he, "but I have only one daughter. I am in a strange dilemma!"

Then he sent for Barbabou, and asked him whether he had not deceived him. Barbabou swore that he had bought the diamond of an Armenian. Rustem did not say from whom he had got his, but he proposed, as a solution, that his Highness should allow him and his rival to fight in single combat on the spot.

"It is not enough that your son-in-law should possess a diamond," said he, "he ought also to show proof of valour. Do you not think it fair that the one who kills the



"THE COMBAT BEGAN."

your diamond, which I have brought back to you."

The Prince, in much amazement, com-

the custom of Cashmere; and he shall marry the Princess."

The rivals immediately descended to the

other should marry the Princess?"

"Very good," said the Prince; "it will be a fine show for all the Court. You two shall fight it out at once. The conqueror shall have the armour of the conquered man, after

palace court. On the stairs they saw a magpie and a raven. The raven cried, "Fight it out, fight it out!" the magpie, "Do not fight!" This made the Prince laugh. The rivals scarcely noticed the two birds.

The combat began. All the courtiers stood round them in a circle. The Princess still shut herself up in her tower and would see nothing of it. She had no suspicion that her lover could be in Cashmere, and she had such a horror of Barbabou that she would not look on. The fight went off as well as possible. Barbabou was left stone dead, and the populace were delighted, for he was ugly and Rustem very handsome—a fact which almost always turns the scale of public favour.

The conqueror put on the dead man's coat of mail, his scarf and his helmet, and approached the window of his mistress to the sound of trumpets, followed by all the Court. Everyone was shouting: "Fair Princess, come and see your handsome bridegroom who has killed his hideous rival!" and the ladies repeated the words. The Princess unfortunately looked out of window, and seeing the armour of the man she abhorred she flew in despair to the Chinese trunk, and took out the fatal javelin, which darted, at her wish, to pierce her dear Rustem through a joint in his cuirass. He gave a bitter cry, and in that cry the Princess thought that she recognised the voice of her hapless lover.

She flew into the courtyard, her hair all dishevelled, death in her eyes and in her heart. Rustem was lying in her father's arms. She saw him! What a moment, what a sight! Who can express the anguish, the tenderness, the horror of that meeting? She threw herself upon him and embraced him.

"These," she cried, "are the first and last kisses of your lover and destroyer." Then snatching the dart from his wound, she plunged it into her own heart, and died on the breast of the lover she adored.

Her father, horror-stricken and heart-broken, strove in vain to bring her back to life; she was no more. He broke the fatal weapon into fragments, and flung away the ill-starred diamonds; and while preparations were proceeding for his daughter's funeral instead of her wedding, he had the bleeding but still living Rustem carried into his palace.

Rustem was laid upon a couch. The first thing he saw, one on each side of his death-bed, were Topaz and Ebony. Surprise gave

him strength. "Cruel that you were," said he; "why did you desert me? The Princess might still perhaps be living if you had been at hand!"

"I have never left you for a moment," said Topaz.

"I have been always at your side," said Ebony.

"What do you mean? Why do you insult me in my last moments?" replied Rustem, in a weak voice.

"Believe me, it is true," said Topaz. "You know I never approved of this ill-advised journey, for I foresaw its disastrous end. I was the eagle which struggled with the vulture, and which the vulture plucked; I was the elephant which made off with your baggage to compel you to return home; I was the striped ass which would fain have carried you back to your father; it was I who led your horses astray, who produced the torrent which you could not cross, who raised the mountain which checked your unlucky advance; I was the physician who advised your return to your native air, and the magpie which urged you not to fight."

"I," said Ebony, "was the vulture who plucked the eagle, the rhinoceros which thrust its horn into the elephant, the peasant who beat the ass, the merchant who gave you the camels to hasten you to your ruin; I raised the bridge you crossed; I bored the mountains for you to pass; I was the physician who advised you to proceed, and the raven which encouraged you to fight."

"Alas! And remember the oracles," added Topaz; "'If you turn to the east you will turn to the west.'"

"Yes, here they bury the dead with their faces turned westward," said Ebony. "The oracle was plain; why did not you understand it? You possessed and you possessed not; for you had the diamond, but it was a false one, and you did not know it; you got the best of it in battle, but you also got the worst, for you must die; you are Rustem, but you will soon cease to be so. The oracle is fulfilled."

Even as he spoke two white wings appeared on the shoulders of Topaz, and two black wings on those of Ebony.

"What is this that I see?" cried Rustem. And Topaz and Ebony replied: "We are your two genies." "I," added Topaz, "am your good genie."

"And you, Ebony, with your black wings, are apparently my evil genie."

"As you say," replied Ebony.

Then suddenly everything vanished. Rustem found himself in his father's house which he had not quitted, and in his bed where he had been sleeping just an hour.

He awoke with a start, bathed in sweat and greatly scared. He shouted, he called, he rang. His servant Topaz hurried up in his night-cap, yawning.

"And what," cried Rustem, "has become of that cruel Ebony, with his two black wings? Is it his fault that I am dying so dreadful a death?"

"Sir, I left him upstairs snoring. Shall I call him down?"

"The villain! He has been tormenting me these six months. It was he who took me to that fatal fair at Cabul; it was he who stole the diamond the Princess gave me; he is the sole cause of my journey, of the death of my Princess and of the javelin-wound of which I am dying in the prime of youth."

"Make yourself easy," said Topaz. "You have never been to Cabul. There is no Princess of Cashmere; the Prince has but two sons, and they are now at school. You never had any diamond. The Princess cannot be dead since she never was born; and you are perfectly sound and well."

"What! Is it not true that you became in turn an eagle, an elephant, an ass, a doctor, and a magpie, to protect me from ill?"

"It is all a dream, sir. Our ideas are no more under our control when sleeping than when awake. The Almighty sent that string of ideas through your head, as it would seem, to give you some lesson which you may lay to heart."

"You are making game of me," said Rustem. "How long have I been sleeping?"

"Sir, you have only slept one hour."

"Well, I cannot understand it," said Rustem.

But perhaps he took the lesson to heart, and learnt to doubt whether all he wished for was right and good for him.



THE TWO GENIES.

"Am I dead or alive?" cried Rustem. "Will the beautiful Princess of Cashmere recover?"

"Is your Highness dreaming?" said Topaz, calmly.