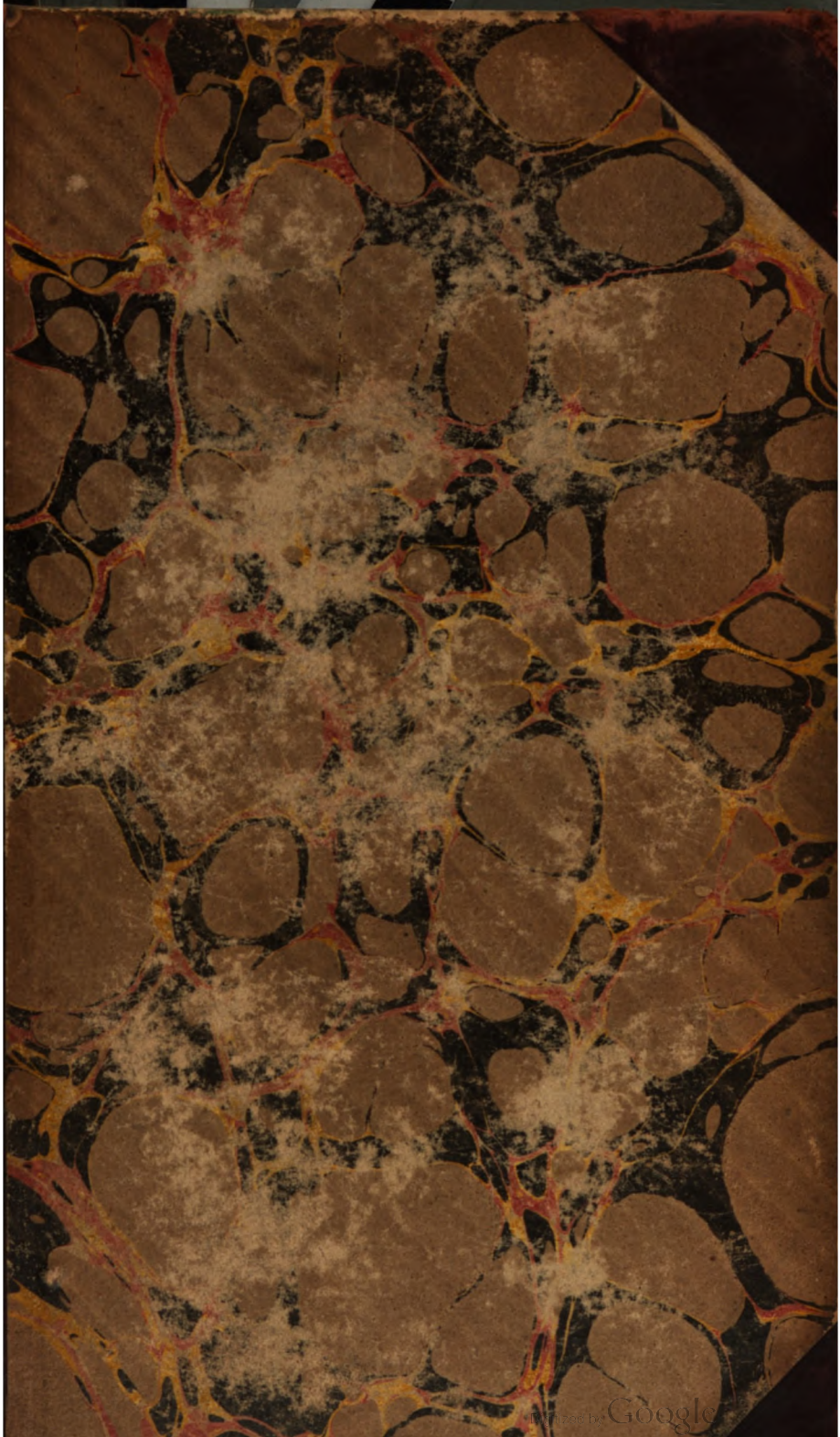

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STORY OF THE CADI AND THE ROBBER.

FROM THE ARABIC. BY A. H. BLEECK, ESQ.

It is related that there was in the time of Haroun ar-Raschid, a *cadi* named Mohammed bin Mokatil, who was celebrated for his learning and good breeding, and well skilled in divinity and jurisprudence.

And on a certain night he was reading on his couch, and he read till he alighted on the *surat** in which the Prophet† (The blessing and peace of Allah be upon him) saith, "Most acceptable is prayer in the green places and in the gardens." And the *cadi* said in his soul, "It will not be proper unless in this very night I mount my mule and ride to my garden, and pray in it." And the distance between him and the garden was a league.

And the *cadi* arose and put on his clothes, and mounted his mule, and set out. And as he was on the road, behold a robber shouted out to him and said, "Halt in thy place."

And the *cadi* stopped, and lo! a man who was a thief and a highway-man; and he called to the *cadi* with a loud voice to terrify him. And the *cadi* said, "Art thou not ashamed before me, and I a *cadi* of the Mussulmans?"

And the robber replied, "Are not you afraid of me, and I a robber of the Mussulmans? Oh, wonderful *cadi*! wherefore have you come forth alone, clothed in this rich apparel, and mounted on such a beautiful mule, and have set out on the road without a companion? This arises from your small sense and great ignorance."

And the *cadi* said, "Wullahy! I thought that certainly the dawn approached."

And the robber answered, "This is wonderful again; how can you be a *cadi* and not know the hours of the night-watches, nor the constellations, nor the planets, nor the position of the moon, and have no knowledge of the stars?"

And the *cadi* replied, "Have you not heard the saying of the Prophet, 'Whoso believeth in the stars is an infidel?'"

And the robber answered, "The Prophet hath spoken truly; but as for you, oh *cadi*, you have taken one saying of the Prophet, and have omitted the words of the most high Allah in his holy book, 'Verily we have placed the stars in the heavens, and adorned them before the eyes of the beholders.' And in another verse, 'And signs, and they have believed in the Pleiades.' And again, 'We have placed the stars for you to guide you in the darkness both by land and by sea.' In short, there are other well-known passages respecting the knowledge of this science, and you pretend to be a *cadi* of the Mussulmans, and do not know the hours of prayer! Cease to display your ignorance, nor with your small wit attempt to dispute with me, but dismount from your mule, strip off your garments, and cut short your discourse, for I am in a hurry."

* A verse of the Koran.

† The Mussulmans never mention their Prophet without immediately subjoining the above formula, which occurs so often in the text that I have for the most part omitted it, to avoid endless repetitions.

And the cadi was astonished at his words, and at the eloquence of his tongue, and said to him, "By Allah the most high, what hour of the night is this in which our meeting has taken place?"

And the robber answered, "It is the hour when the moon is in Scorpion, and the planet Jupiter in the cusp of Mars, and this hour is suitable only for theft; and if, oh worshipful cadi, you desired to rob, you could not have chosen a more favourable time than this; but if you wished to travel, you should not have started till the third hour of the day was past, and should not have set out to your garden till the sun had risen."

And the cadi laughed, and said, "Wullahy! I should not have set out in this hour but for the words of the Prophet, 'Most acceptable is prayer in the green places and in the gardens.'"

And the robber returned, "Alas for you! you have taken one text and left another."

And the cadi asked, "What text is that which I have left?"

And he replied, "Have you not heard His saying, 'Seek a companion before journeying?' If there had been a companion with you I should not have approached you or spoken to you; but, because of your forsaking this holy text, Allah has cast you into my net. But come, descend from your mule, strip off your clothes, and cut short your words, for day draws near, and I must be gone."

The cadi said to him, "Do you possess any learning?"*

The robber said "Yes."

The cadi continued, "Have you not heard the saying of the Prophet, upon whom be the blessing of Allah?"

"What saying?" returned the thief.

The cadi said, "'The true believer is he from whose hands and tongue all men are safe.'"

And the robber answered, "The Prophet has spoken truly, but as for you, you pretend, oh cadi, to be a doctor of theology, yet have no learning."†

The cadi said, "How is this?"

And the thief replied, "You imagined that prayer would be acceptable without alms, though Allah has said, 'Pray, and bestow alms.' And again the Prophet says, 'He who prays and bestows not alms is like a tree without fruit.' Now, you have wealth, and give no alms, wherefore I desire to take away your clothes and your mule for the sake of charity. You are an avaricious man, and some day you will die, and be raised again, and God will call you to account. Have you not heard the words of Allah, 'In that day we will seal their mouths, and their hands shall confess, and their feet shall bear witness of what they have amassed?' But come, strip, and descend from the back of thy mule, and cut short thy words, for I am in haste."

And the cadi said, "For the sake of Allah injure me not, since of a truth he who does harm to the Mussulmans is a devil."

And the robber made answer, "If I am a devil, thou art an infidel."

And the cadi said, "Where is the proof of my infidelity?"

* By learning (علم) the cadi means especially *theological* knowledge.

† *V. supra.*

The robber answered, "Allah hath said, 'Verily we have sent devils against the infidels to torment them with torments.'"

And the cadi said, "Are you not ashamed before me, who am cadi of the Mussulmans?"

The robber answered, "Are not you, rather, ashamed before me, who am a thief of the Mussulmans?"

And the cadi said to him, "Woe to you! have you not heard the saying of the Prophet, 'Shame is a part of faith?'"

The robber replied, "Oh, marvel of marvels! Oh, cadi without knowledge and without learning! Do you not know that 'Shame is a hindrance to gaining a livelihood?' and are not you, a learned man, ashamed in the presence of one as learned as yourself? Truly the Prophet has declared, 'The learned are the heirs of the prophets, and the people of the Koran are the people of God;' and I am of the people of God, for I have read the Koran according to the seven readings and the seven editions."

The cadi said, "Tell me the seven editions."

And the thief replied to him, "I will; but I will by no means forbear to take thy clothes and thy mule. The seven editions are those of Nafa', Ibn Katheer, Abu 'Omr bin el-Ala, Abu 'Amir es-Shafi, Hamzah, and Al-Kasai."*

And the cadi was astonished at the robber when he found him to be the most learned of his age. Then the cadi said to him, "Dost thou know all this, and yet knowest not the fear of God? You wish to despoil me of my clothes and my mule unjustly; but God has said, 'The curse of Allah is on the unjust;' do thou take heed to thy soul, lest thou be of the accursed."

The robber answered, "Allah has spoken truth; but tell me which of us is unjust, you or I?"

And the cadi said to him, "Thou art unjust in thy soul;" and he continued, "Fear God, and put away covetousness, for Allah has said, 'Oh, man, reverence thy Lord;' and again, 'Fear Allah, for Allah is with them that fear him.'"

And the thief replied, "Allah hath said truly; but in another verse He saith, 'Say, oh my servants, who have incurred guilt upon your souls, do not despair of the mercy of Allah, for He pardons all sins, because He is merciful and forgiving;' and I will not let thee go till I have taken away thy clothes and thy mule; and after that I will turn to Allah, and He will accept my repentance. Have you not heard the saying, 'It is He who receives the repentance of his servants, and pardons their crimes?' And again the Prophet hath said, 'He who repents of his misdeeds is as one in whom is no sin;' so strip off your clothes, alight from your mule, and cut short idle words, otherwise I will kill thee, for day draws near."

And the cadi said to him, "Have you not read the saying of the Most High, 'Whosoever shall kill a Mussulman designedly, hell shall be his portion for ever, and the wrath and the curse of Allah shall be upon him, and I will punish him with a mighty punishment?'"

And the robber answered, "The words of Allah are true; but in another verse He saith, 'He who turns from his injustice and amends,

* The seventh name is omitted in the Arabic text.

behold Allah will turn to him, for He is merciful and compassionate.' And He saith, 'Verily, whoso repents and believes and does good works, God will change his (former) evil deeds into good ones, for He is merciful and gracious;' and I will not alter my purpose of taking away thy clothes and thy mule."

And the cadi said to him, "Have you not heard the words of the Prophet, 'Allah has forbidden to touch the property of Muslims even as He has forbidden to touch their lives?' and again He saith, 'It is not lawful to take the goods of a Moslem, save with his consent.'"

And the robber answered, "We two are brethren, and is it lawful for you to heap up wealth and costly garments while I am poor and naked, weary and hungry? But dismount and strip, and eat short your talk."

And the cadi replied, "Allah does not change the condition of men till they have changed their hearts."

The thief said, "Allah hath spoken truly, but you changed your heart when you were lying on your couch, and came out in the night, and Allah has been wrath with you, and has thrown you into my net, so alight and strip, and hold your tongue, and don't blame me, but blame yourself."

And the cadi said to him, "Fear God—have you not heard that the wrath of God is terrible?"

The robber answered, "He hath said true; but do not you fear Allah, who devour the property of orphans? Have you not heard respecting those who devour the substance of orphans, that the fire of hell shall consume their entrails, and they shall pray to their own hurt? And yes, oh cadi, devour the goods of orphans, wherefore Allah has cast thee into my net; but I will not slay thee, only I will take away thy clothes, and thy mule, and will not leave them to thee."

And the cadi said, "Wherefore wilt thou not be merciful towards me? The Prophet hath said, 'Be merciful and you shall obtain mercy;' and Allah inspired David (the blessing and peace of God be upon him) to say 'Be merciful to the dweller upon earth, and He who dwelleth in the heavens will be merciful to you;' wherefore, oh robber, have compassion on me, and Allah will have compassion on thee."

The thief replied, "Allah and his prophet have spoken truly, but I will not show mercy to thee, for no one has shown mercy to me, save Allah; and I, oh worshipful cadi, have need of your clothes and your mule, and you are rich."

And the cadi said, "What is there between me and between thee? I am a cadi and you are a robber, *notorious* for your thefts: but listen to the words of the Most High, 'Your riches are in heaven, and all that has been promised you.'"

And the robber answered, "Allah has spoken truly; but have you not read in another verse, 'We have divided the means of subsistence in the life of this world among them, and we have placed some in a higher rank than others?' and as for me, oh venerable cadi, God has given me no portion save theft, wherefore dismount and strip, and cut short your conversation."

And the cadi said, "Let me go, and incur not this blame and this reproach, for by Allah thou art near to perdition, and this arises solely from thy small reverence for Allah, and for me who am cadi of the Faithful, wherefore you desire to strip me unjustly of my clothes and mule."

And the robber made answer, "I have never met with a more foolish person than you; nor since I have been a thief have I seen any one travelling with such (fine) clothes, at such an hour of the night; but this arises from your small sense and great ignorance, so dismount and strip, and escape with your life in safety. Have you not heard the saying of the Prophet, 'Whoso explains the Koran without understanding it, truly his abode shall be in the fire of hell?' and know that theft is a means of subsistence, and if I abandon it, know that I shall be more foolish than you, for truly the blessed Prophet has said, 'He who does not turn his knowledge to account reaps loss from his ignorance.' And He saith, 'The sleep of the wise is a pious action;' and again, 'The sleep of the learned is better than the good works of the ignorant,' and if you, oh worshipful cadi, had slept in your bed and prayed on your *musjid*, or in your closet, it would have been better for you; but come, dismount and strip, and cease talking, for time presses."

And the cadi was unable to reply, so he said, "There is nothing good in theft."

And the robber laughed, and said, "Oh venerable magistrate, how can you pretend to be a cadi, who are so defective in wisdom as to know nothing? If you had said, 'The blessing of Allah is not with theft, you would have spoken truly;' but how, oh cadi, am I not to steal, when every year I need thirty-six yards of cloth? If I had any money to purchase it, I would never steal."

The cadi replied, "Allah does not bless the deeds of the wicked."

And the robber said, "It is you who are a sinner, and a great one, for coming out alone in the night and injuring your own self, and Allah has thrown you into my net, and were you to repeat to me a thousand sayings and a thousand verses, from the Koran, the Pentateuch, the Gospel, and the Psalms, I would not leave you your clothes or your mule."

And when the cadi saw his vehemence, he knew that he would infallibly take his clothes and his mule, so he said to him, "Well then, by the blessing of Allah, come with me."

And the robber said, "Where do you wish me to go?"

The cadi replied, "I wish you to come with me to the garden-gate, that I may give you my clothes and my mule."

And the robber said, "Cut short such language to me, oh reverend cadi, for you desire to make game of me by leading me to the garden-gate, since you would call out to your slaves and domestics to seize me and guard me till the morning, and then you would sit down on your seat of judgment, and would pronounce sentence against me, according to the words of Allah, 'And as for thieves, both male and female, thou shalt cut off their hands;' for I, oh cadi, have read the Koran, and have sat in the assemblies of the learned. Have you not heard the saying of the Most High, 'Do not go to meet your own destruction?'"

"I swear to you," said the cadi, "that I will give you a solemn pledge and make a faithful compact, and never break it."

The robber answered, "My father told me that my grandfather told him, on the authority of Abu Horairah (may Allah be pleased with him), that the Prophet said, 'Whoso changeth my commandments, my curse and the curse of Allah shall be upon him, and I will not answer for him

on the day of resurrection.' Now I, oh venerable cadi, do not desire to be of the company of the accursed."

"I swear to you," said the cadi, "an inviolable oath, that I will not act treacherously to you."

And the robber said to him, "I have heard from my father, who had it from my grandfather, who had it from Ali bin Abu Talib (may Allah be gracious to him), who had it from our blessed Prophet, that to break an improper (*i. e.* extorted) oath is no crime—but come, dismount and strip."

And the cadi was unable to find an answer, so he dismounted from the back of his mule, and stripped off his clothes, and delivered them to the robber, and there remained to him only his shirt.

And the robber asked him, "Have you another shirt at home?"

And he said, "Yes."

The robber said, "My father told me that my grandfather told him that Abu Horairah (may Allah reward him) related, that the blessed Prophet has said, 'The prayer of a naked man is good.'"

And the cadi said to him, "How? Must I strip, and pray naked?"

The robber answered, "This arises from your ignorance. What do you say of a man who has been shipwrecked, and who escapes from the sea naked?—is his prayer good or not?"

He replied, "It is good."

The thief rejoined, "Your condition is the same as his."

And the cadi took off his shirt, and gave it to the robber.

Then the robber saw on his hand a signet-ring worth five *mithkals*, and he said to him, "Oh reverend cadi, give me the signet-ring, that I may remember you gratefully, according to the saying of the Prophet, 'Verily let deeds be sealed.'"^{*}

And the cadi replied, "This is the ring of prayer."

The thief rejoined, "This is not correct—and how can a cadi dare to lie? The ring is on your right hand, whereas if it were the ring of prayer it would be on your left hand."

And the cadi was unable to make any reply; but after a moment's thought he said, "Can you play chess?"

The robber answered, "Yes."

And the cadi said, "Let us make a match, and if you beat me the ring is yours, but if I beat you it remains mine."

The thief replied, "I am content."

And they played, and the robber won; so the cadi took off his ring, and said to the thief, "Thou art the doctor of law, and I (only) a learned man; thou art the reader of the Koran and I the questioner, and it is you who are the (better) player." And he threw him the ring, and said, "May the blessing of Allah not go with it."

And the robber took it, and said, "May Allah not accept the sacrifice from thee."

Then the cadi went to his house, naked and vexed in mind, and he

* It is difficult to give the Arabic pun any force in English, but it will render it more intelligible to observe that, in the East, every man of property has his name engraved on a signet-ring; and no document can be authenticated by him unless he seal it with this: a signature in his own handwriting merely, not being valid.

entered his house, and slept till the day appeared. And he said to his wife, "Bring me some clothes," and she brought them. And he made the morning prayer, and when he had finished his prayer he sat down on his seat of judgment grieved at heart.

And his wife said to him, "Why art thou sorrowful, oh my lord?"

And he related unto her the story from the beginning to the end, and said to her, "If this robber had disputed with Malik, or Abu Hanyfeh, or Es-Shafai, or the Imam Ahmed bin Hambel, he would have overcome them; and taken away their clothes, with his arguments and traditions."

And while they were talking, behold a knock at the gate; and he said, "Oh, wife! see who is there."

And she said to him, "A man riding on a mule with some clothes."

And he said, "Shut the door, that the robber may not enter into us."

And he had not finished speaking when the robber entered, and sat down in the seat of honour without giving the salam.

And the cadi said, "Why have you not given the salam? Do you not know that the proof of a true believer is the salam?"

The robber answered, "The salam presents one of two aspects, either fear or covetousness; now I neither fear or covet."

And the cadi said, "Why have you come to me, and what do you want with me?"

"I am come, oh worshipful cadi," replied the thief, "on account of something which you have forgotten."

"What is that?" said the cadi.

And the robber answered, "When I parted from you and returned to my house I lit a lamp, and turned over some of my books, and I found, oh reverend sir, that a cadi is a slave." (A Mamluk.)

And the cadi said, "Refrain your tongue from these words, and tell me what you want of me, and what is your intention."

And the robber answered, "After I had left you last night I bought a house for fifty dinars, and your ring was only worth five dinars, so I am come to you that you may give me the remainder; and if you will give them to me I will write you a quittance with my own hand, that there shall be no lawsuit, and no demand between me and thee."

And the cadi said, "With all my heart."

And he gave him the money, and the robber went out and left him and departed.

And the cadi's wife came to him and said, "Was it not sufficient what he did to you yesterday, but he must come again to-day?"

And the cadi said, "Be silent, lest he hear your words and return, and claim you as his wife, and prove it by demonstrations and arguments from the traditions and the Koran."

And this is what has reached us of the story of the cadi and the robber.

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the universe!