

So Haman went to Ilderim Ben Jelcho the Wise, and they spoke with one another on the matter, and Ilderim said "My son, I will undertake that thy case shall be made known to the judge and the people, and that the true meaning of thy words shall be interpreted, and as Allah reigns, so shall the wiles of Abdullah recoil upon him, and he shall be caught in his own net." Now the interpretation which they knew and which was of a truth the one which was meant, was the same as that which follows.

Timour, the King, had a fair daughter, the Princess Badrouladour, whose loveliness, even in a land where beauty was as the stars of the sky, or the sands of the sea, was beyond description. The poets of Persia had said that "the soft magic of her eyes would arrest the bones of a corpse on its entrance to the tomb." Badrouladour was to the King as the pulse of his heart, and to the people the light of their existence. She was wise and good, as well as beautiful, and both by King and people had been placed above all other women, in that she was allowed an opinion in the counsels of the state, and a word for or against such as sought a higher eminence. Abdullah Tinkel had earnestly sought her support before his elevation, for she—and she alone—could, by her aid, give him that which his soul desired. It was not that his cold heart warmed with love for her, but that her power was a means to the end he sought, and for this purpose he wooed her.

On the day when the people and the nobles were to give their voices for him whom they desired to honour above other men, Abdullah sought the Princess far and wide throughout the day, for his heart was troubled as to what she would do, but he found her not until the shades of night were falling and the die had been cast. Then she came forth with her attendants to enjoy the cool of the evening, and called Abdullah to her side, and said, "I have done what I could for thee Abdullah, and thou art the elect of the people, there is my hand, which has done this thing for thee;" and Abdullah became puffed up with pride, and replied, "Thou has done the thing which was right, and could not, without defiling thy reason and wisdom, have done another thing." And he lifted his voice and cried aloud to the Princess and the people, "Right pleased am I that ye have brushed aside the unworthy froth and scum, and have chosen me, for I am he that is above all men, and should rule and make your laws," and with no further word of thanks to the Princess or the people, he strode away and regained his fellows, with whom he made merry till a late hour, and revelled in the achieving that for which he had longed.

Now, Haman, the scribe, was present when these things occurred, and he beheld the look of pain in the lovely eyes of the Princess, and heard the murmurs of dissatisfaction from the people, and he thought in his heart, "Surely the Grand Vizier is drunk with the favour of the Princess, whom yet no man hath won, or he would not have said such words," and he wrote down on his tablets, and they were read before the King and the people. Then it was that Abdullah saw how he had erred, and repented of his lack of wisdom, and he caused those scribes of whom we spoke afore to write that he had spoken differently, for he knew that that which had been given him could be taken away. But malice was in his heart against Haman, and through the power which he had, he caused the scribe to be cited, and putting a wrong interpretation upon what had been written, prayed that he might be punished for speaking falsely of the King's Minister. As he had prayed, so it

came to pass, and a day was set when the matter was to be decided between the two.

Abdullah and his friends crowded the place of judgment, and few there were who were willing to lift up their voice for Haman; for men in all ages have followed after him who is crowned with success and possessed of much wealth, and have turned from him who would suffer for the truth. And when all was silent, and the judge was seated on his seat, Abdullah rose up and said, "Mine honour hath been touched, in that I, one of the faithful, have been accused of the habits of the Giaour, and in that it has been set forth that I did act as do the Nazarenes, by partaking of that which is forbidden, and, further, that while in a state of unhallowed exhilaration I did make use of words that were offensive to the people and to Her Highness; therefore I pray that Haman, the scribe, be deprived of his goods and his chattels, and punished before all, that the honour of the King's Minister may be healed."

Then the people who were the friends of Abdullah spoke among themselves, and said, "It is just, so should it be;" and the judge, when he turned to Ilderim Ben Jelcho the Wise, said, "What hast thou to say that this thing should not be done." Then Ilderim arose, and he placed the matter in its truth before the people and the judge; he showed what a wicked distortion had been placed upon the words that had been written; he called many who had been present when Abdullah had spoken, and they spoke as to their belief of the words and of the action. He told how no man had before won the favour of the Princess, and asked the people to gaze upon her and say if her smile and the music of her voice were not enough to intoxicate a follower of Mahomet. And the Princess approved of the words of Ilderim Ben Jelcho, and the people said amongst themselves, "Surely Abdullah has erred, and done a foolish thing." When Ilderim saw how the matter was he ceased to defend, and commenced to show how Abdullah had been guided by malice in his action, and how that in defending himself from a charge which had never been made against him, he had been his own accuser. As the silver speech fell from the lips of the wise man, the people murmured and cried that Abdullah should say if he had broken the law of the faithful, and partaken of that which was forbidden.

Then the judge spake, and said, "Abdullah, this thing must thou answer."

The people strained forward to listen as Ilderim stood forth and said, "Abdullah Tinkel, one of the leaders of the faithful and the right hand of the King, do my lips speak falsely when I say that thou hast at times partaken of the drink of the Nazarenes?"

And Abdullah made answer, "It is so, but of a verity, it was when I was aweary in the King's service, and did but take it to aid me to renewed effort for my lord and the people."

"It is enough," said Ilderim, "surely your honour cannot have been touched by what has been written, and it is for the reverend judge and the people to say if Haman, the scribe, hath offended."

Then with one voice the people cried, "He is innocent and hath done Abdullah no harm;" and the judge declared it was so, while the people marvelled at the wisdom of Ilderim Ben Jelcho, who could make what seemed a complex thing so plain.