

Great Crown-Jewel of Russia.

AS three brothers named Schrafras were one day walking through the principal street of Bagdad, the eldest one stopped suddenly, and, pointing to a stranger on the other side of the way, cried: "See there is the Afghan we have looked for so long!"

"Don't let us lose sight of him," said the others, and all three went toward the stranger, who seemed astonished.

"God is God! fear not," began the eldest of the brothers. "I am Schrafras, of Bassora, to whom you once came to sell a large diamond, called the 'Moon of the Mountains,' and other precious stones.—These are my brothers, who like myself, are pleased that we have found you, as we hope now to be able to make a bargain."

"Oh! woe is me, good sirs, I am no longer the possessor of these treasures," replied the Afghan.

"What have you done with them?"

"Allah be praised! I have just sold them to the Jew Mardocho, of this city."

"For what price?"

"For 65,000 piasters and two handsome horses."

"You were a fool and Mardocho a thief!" cried Schrafras angrily. "I would have given you twice that sum for the stones."

"God is great! They were offered to you for half the sum; why were you such a fool as not to take them?"

"Because I thought you a thief, and my conscience would not allow me to buy stolen goods. But what can not be cured must be endured. Where does Mardocho the Jew live?"

"I will show you good sirs, that there may be no ill-feeling between us."

The Afghan led the way to the house of the Jew, which was on the bank of the river Tigris. The brothers then thanked him kindly, and the eldest went to see if he could make a bargain with Mardocho.

"Son of Israel," said he, "you have a diamond called the 'Moon of the Mountains,' a sapphire called the 'Eye of Allah,' and other precious stones, which you have lately bought of a wandering Afghan who did not come in possession of them honestly. I will give you a handsome sum for your bargain."

"How much?" asked the Israelite, with the air of a man who knows his business and the value of his goods.

"You gave 65,000 piasters, and a pair of horses for them. I will give you 75,000 piasters and take the risk."

"I should be sorry to see you a loser," replied the Jew, with an ironical smile.

"I will double the sum you gave for them," said Schrafras.

"Not for a million would I give them to you. Go your way; you know not the value of what you would purchase."

The Armenian took his leave, inwardly cursing the Jew.

"He knows too much for us—I could make no bargain with the Jewish dog!" said Schrafras to his brothers.

"Then we must take them without a bargain," said the youngest, in a significant tone. His companions assented.

They now withdrew in order to decide upon the plan they should pursue. That night the three villains murdered Mardocho, and threw his body out of his window into the Tigris. Then they took all his money and jewels and hurried away. The danger they ran of being detected was far less than it would have been in most other countries. Who in Bagdad troubles himself about a lonely Jew?

The next morning the three brothers accidentally met the Afghan.

"Well, sirs, what success?" he asked.

"God is God, and Mahomet is his Prophet," answered the eldest. "The jewels are ours, and to celebrate our good fortune, you must sup with us this evening in our tent beyond the city."

The unsuspecting Afghan went with them to their tent, which was pitched in an out-of-the-way place on the bank of the Tigris, and then he supped for the last time. Schrafras was always supplied with a fatal poison, some of which they mixed in the Afghan's food. When he was dead they threw his body into the Tigris, saying:

"Go hence, fool, and be company for the Jew. Thus we destroy all knowledge of the precious stones."

Then they struck their tent, mounted their camels, and hastened to a solitary spot in order to examine and divide their treasures. They had no trouble with the money. Not so, however, with the jewels, for the large diamond alone was of greater value than all the rest.—Each one wanted it for a share. Their dispute seemed likely to lead to a serious altercation, when the eldest brother, made the following proposal:

"By rights, the large diamond should be mine," said he, "for it was I who recognized the Afghan. But for me you would not have found him in Bagdad. In order, however, that there may be harmony among the sons of my mother, we will contend no longer, but leave the matter to the decision of the Prophet. To-morrow morning each one shall narrate the dream he has to-night, and he who can adduce the clearest proof of the favor of the Prophet shall have the 'Moon of the Mountains.' This we swear by the beards of our fathers."

The younger brothers were content with this proposition, for each one thought

he could surpass the others in imagining a dream that would appear to come from the Prophet. But the eldest brother mixed some of the poison he always carried about his person in the evening meal of the other two, and saw them die with fiendish delight.

He now gathered together all his treasures, mounted his camel, and rode away. The other camels he left to their fate, and the bodies of his murdered brothers to the vultures. His plan was to leave the country as speedily as possible, and to make his way to some European court, where he could dispose of the "Moon of the Mountains" for a high price. On the road he sold his camel, dressed himself as a beggar, and so, after many adventures and great fatigue, he reached Constantinople, where he took passage in a Dutch ship for Amsterdam. Here, feeling himself safe, he no longer made any secret of his possessions, but giving himself out to be a jeweller, he offered his most valuable stones for sale to the ambassadors of the principal European courts.

The "Moon of the Mountains" and the "Eye of Allah" were not wholly unknown in Europe. They had been for many years in the possession of the royal family of Persia, and it was said that after the assassinations of Nadir Shah they, together with other precious stones, were stolen by common soldiers, who were ignorant of their value. It was, therefore, only necessary for Schrafras to state what he had, to excite the interest of the amateurs.

But for a long time there was no one who seemed inclined to enter into negotiations with him for the purchase of the large diamond and the wonderful sapphire. As, however, the Moslem was well supplied with money, and had beside a number of small stones that were easily available, he waited patiently, feeling certain that sooner or later a customer would present himself.

The first serious inquiry after the price of the "Moon of the Mountains" came from Catherine II. of Russia. In St. Petersburg, where they were always well informed with regard to what transpired at the Persian court, they were most competent to judge of the real value of the stone.

The robber and murderer demanded 500,000 rubles, a life annuity of 10,000 rubles, and a patent of nobility.

Catherine II. ordered one of her ministers to invite the pretended diamond merchant to St. Petersburg that the court jeweler might examine the diamond, and estimate its value.

The minister ordered the court jeweler to hold out to the Armenian the hope that the Empress would accept his proposal, and in the mean time lead him into all sorts of excesses and expenditures.

Schrafras went to St. Petersburg, and readily fell into the trap that had been set for him. Soon all his ready money was gone, and, as he had credit everywhere—it being known that he had business with the court—it was not long before he was "over head and ears" in debt. This was what the minister wanted. By the Russian law any foreigner may be prevented from leaving the country so long as he is in debt. The supposition was that the Armenian would be at last compelled to dispose of his diamond for whatever price he could get for it.

"Tell him that Her Majesty has decided not to accede to his exorbitant demands; and then if he must sell, pretend that you will buy it on your own account, and offer him one quarter of what the stone is worth." Such were the instructions of the minister to the court jeweler.

This message and the offer of the jeweler opened Schrafras's eyes. "God is good and Mahomet is his Prophet!" he murmured. "These Christian dogs want to cheat me out of that for which I have periled my soul. The fools have got me in debt, and think now I shall be compelled to take any price they choose to offer me; but they shall see that a follower of the Prophet is a match for this whole nation of rascals."

Schrafras now very adroitly encouraged the belief that he would soon be compelled to part with the diamond for the price offered him while he secretly disposed of a portion of his smaller jewels, paid his debts, and left the country on board of an English vessel.

When they came to look for the Moslem he was nowhere to be found, which was very embarrassing for the minister, as Catherine was greatly incensed at the loss of the stone, and demanded that it should be obtained, cost what it might.

For several years every effort of the Russian court to find Schrafras proved futile, but finally they succeeded in tracking him to Smyrna. They again invited him to St. Petersburg, and made him every promise to induce him to accept the invitation. "Ask Her Majesty if she expects to catch an old fox a second time in the same trap?" was the reply. "To save time and words listen to my ultimatum. I demand a patent of nobility and 800,000 rubbles, which must be paid immediately. I will wait here a month for your reply. If my conditions are not accepted, I swear by the beard of the Prophet that Catherine II. shall never be the possessor of the 'Moon of the Mountains.'"

The result was that the Empress finally acceded to these exorbitant demands,

and Schrafras, the robber and murderer, who was now a Russian nobleman, returned to his native city, Astrachan, where he married and had seven daughters.

The end of the villain was such as his life fully merited. One of his sons-in-law, for whose convenience he lived too long, poisoned him. Before his death he made a full confession of his crimes.—The major portion of his great wealth, amounting to several millions, was confiscated by the Russian Government. The remainder was soon squandered by his heirs, and several of his descendants are now living in extreme poverty.

And this is the history of the "Moon of the Mountains," one of the Russian crown diamonds.

How He Spelt Cat.

MR. M., an army surgeon, was very fond of a joke (unless perpetrated at his own expense,) and had, moreover, a great contempt for citizen officers, who were renowned more for their courage than their scholarship. One day, at mess, after the decanter had performed sundry perambulations of the table, Captain S., a brave and accomplished officer, and a great wag, remarked to the doctor, who had been somewhat severe in his remarks on the literary deficiencies of some of the new officers—

"Doctor M., you are acquainted with Captain G.?"

"Yes, I know him well," replied the doctor; "he is one of the new set. But what of him?"

"Nothing in particular. I have just received a letter from him, and I will wager you a dozen of old port you cannot guess in six guesses how he spells cat."

"Done! It's a wager."

"Well, commence guessing," said S.

"K, a, double t."

"No."

"K, a, double t, e."

"No."

"K, a, t, e."

"No, try again."

"C, a, double t, e."

"No, you have missed it again."

"Well, then returned the doctor, "C, a, double t."

"No, that's not the way; try again—'t's your last guess."

"C, a, g, h, t."

"No, that's not the way; you've lost your wager," said S.

"Well," said the doctor, with much petulance of manner, "how does he spell it?"

"Why, he spells it c, a, t," replied S., with the utmost gravity of manner, amid the roar of the mess, and almost choking with rage, the doctor sprang to his feet exclaiming:

"Captain S., I am too old to be trifled with in this manner!"

A Wonderful Bridge.

The bridge now in process of erection across the Mississippi at St. Louis is one of the wonders of the age. It is to be a tubular, cast steel, arch bridge, supported by the abutments and two piers; the latter are 515 ft. apart, and 497 ft. each from its nearest abutment, making three spans of about 500 ft. each. Its greatest span is the same as that of the Kullenberg Bridge over the Neck, an arm of the Rhine, in Holland. Telford's suspension bridge across the Menai Straits has a span of 570 ft. The Victoria tubular iron bridge of Montreal exceeds this greatly in length, being 6600 ft. (1¼ miles) but it rest upon twenty-four piers, and its spans are mainly only 275 ft. The suspension bridge at Niagara spans 821 ft., and is 245 ft. above the water. The East River Bridge will span 1600 ft., at a height midway of 130 ft.

The Latest Invention.

A cigar-making machine has been produced in Louisville, by a medical gentleman, Dr. M. V. McKinney, which, it is claimed, must revolutionize the cigar trade. The machine occupies about as much room as a sewing machine, and can be operated by a boy or girl with all ease. It makes two cigars at once, and turns out 1,500 a day. The cigar comes out perfect in form and formation, and is handsomer than the article made by hand.

An expert, industrious cigar maker will make by hand about 1,500 cigars a week; for the cheapest cigar manufactured he gets \$11 per thousand; for a better grade \$13 per thousand. This machine, is capable of doing the work of five men, and costing \$150, it is stated, can be run at an expense of \$6 per week, making the cost of manufacturing 9,000 cigars only \$6, where it is now paid \$99. The Louisville Commercial pronounces the machine a perfect success, a truly remarkable invention.

Chinese Dissipation.

A correspondent who recently visited the shoemakers, at North Adams Massachusetts, writes: "I learned one thing that I do not remember to have seen in print that they are strictly temperate except on the 1st day of January when they they have a grand drunk. Last January they were given four days for a spree of this sort and they went through with it with magnificent system and success. I omitted to inquire what their favorite beverage is, but somebody should find it out for after getting drunk and keeping so four days they came out refreshed and invigorated. There is no joke about this; for the proprietor said that on the day following their enormous 'bust' in January they did a larger day's work than before or since on a single day."

SUNDAY READING.

No Mistakes in Nature.

How many of all the people in the world sit down by themselves once in a lifetime and sincerely thank God that any one of the breaths they breathe doesn't kill them? And yet, but for the nice and unvarying proportions with which the poisonous and the wholesome gases mingle to form the atmosphere, one breath might do this. The plague that once came down on London, by which multitudes fell in a day, so that the living were not enough to bury the dead, was only the result of wrong mingling of gases, just as apothecaries' clerks sometimes give us oxalic acid for seidlitz powders.

Why shouldn't oxygen lose its vitalizing property just for one breath, and that be the end of us? Or, when we eject the carbon from our lungs, itself a deadly poison, why should it not remain close at hand to be inhaled at the next inspiration, especially when we repeat the operation something over thirty thousand times every day?

Dr. Holmes says that walking is continual falling, and that if the foot was not put forward at just the right moment to receive the weight of the body, we should just so often find ourselves prone in the dust. And so with every breath we breathe, if the provisions were not carefully applied, would be the occasion of our sinking into the valley and shadow of death.

It is thus that these safeguards are placed on every hand. How could the merchant trust his ship to the ocean, if water might at any time lose its density? With how much expectancy could the farmer sow his seed, if there were no provisions for it to grow up out of the ground instead of into it? If he might raise corn when he planted peas, or potatoes might yield onions, or if all the seed he sowed might yield nothing, with what courage could he sow, or with what confidence could we expect anything to eat?

What put strength in the timber that supports the roofs over our heads? And after it is put there, why should it remain there, and thus we sit comfortably, day after day, at our desk, and in our homes, without feeling a continual uneasiness, lest we find ourselves buried in rubbish? Why is it that we can open our eyes mechanically every morning, and then dress ourselves leisurely and thoughtlessly, without feeling amazed that everything is simply because these provisions in nature are God's laws. In them He is continually manifesting His goodness and His care. They are thus expressions of His Providence, and in them we witness miracles every day?

Fill Your Own Place.

It takes all sorts of characters, says the late Prof. Wilson, to complete this great world drama, and some body must act them. In other words, I believe that every man has his place in the world, and that he was made specially for that place. It is only by earnestly filling that place that he fills his destiny, and answers the end for which God created him.—Confusion and disappointment only arise from efforts to get into some other place than the one for which we are intended.—The change of our choice is limited by the character God has given to us, and the circumstances by which he hath surrounded us, and which have modified that character, and developed those faculties. Each man is created with certain possibilities which determined the direction he must go, and the height to which he may rise. We need not, therefore, remain in doubt. Our path is so plainly marked out for us, that we need not seek long for it, if we have willing hearts and willing hands to do it.

The beauty of a holy man's life, says Chalmers, constitutes the most eloquent and effective persuasion to religion which one human being can address to another. We have many ways of doing good to our fellow-creatures, but none so efficacious as leading a virtuous, upright and well-ordered life. There is an energy of moral suasion in a good man's life passing the highest efforts of the orator's genius. The seen but silent beauty of holiness speaks more eloquently of God and duty than the tongues of men and angels. Let parents remember this. The best inheritance a parent can bequeath to a child is a virtuous example, a legacy of hallowed remembrance and associations. The beauty of holiness beaming through the life of a loved relative or friend, is more effectually to strengthen such as do stand in virtue's way, and raise up those that are bowed down, than precept, command, entreaty or warning.

To Young Women.

Do not trust to uncertain riches, but prepare yourselves for every emergency in life. Learn to work, and be not dependent on servants to make your bed, sweep your floor, and mend your clothes. Above all, do not esteem too lightly those young men who sustain themselves by the work of their own hands, while you favor and receive into your company those lazy ne'er-do-wells, who never lift a finger to help themselves as long as they can keep body and soul together, and get funds sufficient to live in fashion.

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Should be taken if your Stomach is out of Order.

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Will prevent Malarious Fevers, and braces up the System.

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Possesses Vegetable Ingredients which make it the best Tonic in the market.

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Has proved itself in thousands of cases capable of curing all diseases of the

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Cures all Chronic Coughs, and Coughs and Colds, more effectually than any other remedy.

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Cures all Mercurial Diseases.

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