

**ABDALLAH; OR, THE
FOUR-LEAVED
SHAMROCK, PP. 2-181**

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Abdallah; Or, the Four-Leaved Shamrock, pp. 2-181 by Edouard Rene Lefebvre-Laboulaye & Mary L. Booth

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J. A. Booth

ABDALLAH;

OR, THE FOUR-LEAVED SHAMROCK.

BY

ÉDOUARD RENÉ LEFEBVRE-LABOULAYE,
MEMBRE DE L'INSTITUT DE FRANCE.

TRANSLATED BY MARY L. BOOTH.



"Allāhu Akbar."

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shining innocence. Mansour had too lofty a soul to be dismayed by these political risks; and if he retired, when peace was made, to Djiddah, it was only because lawful commerce was thenceforth the only road that led to fortune.

In this new kind of life Mansour was neither less prudent nor less successful. It was a common report that his house was paved with gold and precious stones. Little love was bestowed on the Egyptian, who was a stranger in Arabia, and who passed for one of the harshest of creditors; but at Djiddah men dared not openly show contempt for a man who measured gold by the bushel, and as soon as Mansour appeared in the bazaar, all ran to vie for the honour of holding his stirrup and kissing his hand. The merchant received all this homage with the modesty of a man who knows the prerogatives of wealth: thirty years of avarice and cunning had brought all honest men to his feet.

One thing alone was lacking to this favourite of fortune, and disturbed his happiness: he had no children. When he passed before the shop of a poor tradesman, and saw the father surrounded by young sons, the hope and pride of the house, he sighed with regret and envy, and on his return he shut himself up in his warehouse, forgot his pipe, and, instead of telling his beads or reciting the verses of the Koran, slowly stroked his white beard, reflecting with terror in his heart that old age was approaching, and that he should leave none of his flesh and blood behind him to carry on the business after he was gone. His only heir was the pacha, who might grow tired of waiting, in which case what would hinder him from dispatching a solitary foreigner, and laying violent hands on these dearly-bought treasures?

These thoughts and fears poisoned the life of the

Egyptian. What was his joy, therefore, when one of his wives, an Abyssinian woman, announced to him that he would soon be a father! At this news the good man well-nigh lost his reason. Twice as avaricious and covetous since he had begun to amass treasures for his child, he shut himself up to weigh and count his gold, unfolded his rich stuffs, and dug up his diamonds, pearls, and rubies; then talked to these lifeless things as if they could understand him, and told them of the new master who would watch over and love them in turn. When he went into the city he insisted on talking to all he met of his son, for it was a son that God owed his faithful servant, and was greatly astonished to see every one attending to his business as usual, when all the inhabitants of Djiddah should have had but one thought, namely, that God, in his justice, was about to bless the house of the shrewd and fortunate Mansour.

The Egyptian was not disappointed in his expectations; and, that nothing might be wanting to his happiness, a son was born to him at the most favourable hour of the most auspicious month of the year. When, on the eighth day, he was permitted to see this long-wished-for child, he tremblingly approached the palm-tree cradle, lined with cotton, where the heir of the Mansours was sleeping on a silken handkerchief embroidered with gold, and, gently raising the veil that covered it, perceived a robust infant, almost as black as his mother, already gathering the cotton about him with his tiny hands. At this sight Mansour stood dumb with admiration; large tears trickled down his cheeks; then, controlling his feelings with an effort, he took the babe in his arms, and, approaching his lips to its ear, "God is great," he murmured; "there is no god but God, and Mohammed is his prophet." More tranquil after this

prayer, he gazed lovingly at his son. "Oh, gift of God," cried he, "thou art but a week old, but, to see thy strength and grace, one would take thee for a year at least. Thy face shines like the full moon! Say," said he, turning to the mother, "what have you named him?"

"If God had afflicted me with a daughter," answered the Ethiopian, "I should have chosen a name for her; but since I have had the glory of bringing a man-child into the world, to you belongs that honour. Beware, however, of too ambitious a name, which might arouse the jealousy of the evil eye."

Mansour was reflecting, when suddenly he heard a noise in the street. A Persian dervish was driving before him an ass laden with provisions, while a crowd of children was following the heretic, and showering him with abuse and blows. The dervish pressed forward like a man who neither feared nor sought martyrdom, stopping now and then to rail at his enemies. "Accursed be thou, oh Omar!"¹ cried he, striking the ass, "and accursed be all who resemble thee!" "Behold a new proof of my happiness!" cried Mansour. "My child shall be called Omar; such a name will ward off the evil eye, and preserve him from all witchcraft."

As he was replacing the babe in the cradle, a Bedouin woman entered the room with an infant in her arms. She was tall and well formed; her face was unveiled, as is the custom in the desert; and her mien was so graceful and dignified that, poorly clad as she was, she might have been taken for a sultana.

"Welcome, Halima," said Mansour. "I have not forgotten that Yusuf, your husband, fell in my service

¹ *Humar*, or *Omar*, in Arabic, signifies an ass.

while defending my last caravan. The moment has come to prove that I am not ungrateful. You know what I expect of you. If I cannot make my son a sherif or give him the green turban, I can at least cause him to be brought up like the son of a sherif, under a tent, among the noble Beni Amurs. Admitted into your family, and nurtured with your son, my beloved Omar will learn a purer speech than mine, and will find friends among your kindred who will protect him in after years. On my side, I shall fittingly recognize and reward your devotion. Let the friendship of our children begin from this day; from this day let them sleep in the same cradle. To-morrow you shall carry them away, that they may grow up together in your tribe. Omar shall be your son as Abdallah shall be mine; may Fortune smile on both!"

"May God be their refuge against Satan, the accursed!" answered Halima, bowing her head. "We are in God's hands; to him we must return."

Mansour looked at her, smiling. He was a free-thinker, and had little faith in God, although his name was constantly on his lips. He had lived too long, and mixed too much with men, to believe that God meddles much with the affairs of this world; on the other hand, he had a strong belief in the devil, of whom he stood in great fear. The only action in his whole life for which he reproached himself was that of having thrown seven stones at the great devil of Jamrat at the time of his pilgrimage to Mecca, and he still feared the rancor of Satan whom he had stoned. Doubtless he was proud of having cheaply earned the noble title of hadji,² which

² Hadji, or saint, is the name given to those who have made the pilgrimage to Mecca.

rendered him worthy of respect in the eyes of his customers; it was with the purest devotion that he spoke of the Caaba,² that gem of Paradise placed by Father Abraham in the holy city of Mecca, but at heart he was not easy respecting the consequences of his imprudence, and would even have surrendered the name of hadji to have been sure of the devil's forgiveness for his rashness.

² The holy house, or principal temple of Mecca.

