

**VATHEK; AN
ARABIAN TALE**

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Vathek; An Arabian Tale by William Beckford

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WILLIAM BECKFORD

**VATHEK; AN
ARABIAN TALE**

V A T H E K;

In Arabian Tale.

BY

WILLIAM BECKFORD, ESQ.



A NEW EDITION.

WITH NOTES, CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY.

Illustrated.

LONDON: WILLIAM TEGG.

1868.

PREFACE

TO THE EDITION OF 1815,

PUBLISHED BY CLARKE, NEW BOND STREET.

LES éditions de Paris et de Lausanne, étant devenu extrêmement rares, j'ai consenti enfin à ce que l'on republiât à Londres ce petit ouvrage tel que je l'ai composé.

La traduction, comme on sçait, a paru avant l'original ; il est fort aisé de croire que n'étoit pas mon intention—des circonstances, peu intéressantes pour le public, en ont été la cause.

J'ai préparé quelques episodes ; ils sont indiqués, à la page 200, comme faisant suite à Vathek, peut-être paroîtront-ils un jour.

W. BECKFORD.

1 Juin, 1815.

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PREFACE

TO THE FIRST EDITION IN ENGLISH, 1786.

THE original of the following story, with some others of a similar kind, collected in the East by a man of letters, was communicated to the Editor above three years ago. The pleasure he received from the perusal of it induced him at that time to transcribe, and since to translate it. How far the copy may be a just representation it becomes not him to determine. He presumes, however, to hope that if the difficulty of accommodating our English idioms to the Arabic, preserving the correspondent tones of a diversified narration, and discriminating the nicer touches of character through the shades of foreign manners, be duly considered, a failure in some points will not preclude him from all claim to indulgence, especially if those images, sentiments, and passions which, being independent of local peculiarities, may be expressed in every language, shall be found to retain their native energy in our own.

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MEMOIR OF WILLIAM BECKFORD.

WILLIAM BECKFORD, the author of "Vathek," and formerly proprietor of Fonthill, was born at that place September 29, 1759. This very extraordinary man was indebted for his ample fortune to the property which his ancestors had acquired in the West Indies. His great-grandfather, Peter Beckford, Esq., was Lieutenant-Governor and Commander-in-chief of the island of Jamaica, from the reign of Charles II. to that of Anne; and his grandfather (of the same name) was Speaker of the House of Assembly of the same island. His father was Alderman William Beckford, twice Lord Mayor of London, and represented the city in parliament from 1747 to the time of his death (the stormy time of Wilkes, Chatham, and the American discontents), and is celebrated for his extemporaneous reply to King George III.'s answer to an address. Alderman Beckford married, as his second wife, the daughter and co-heir of the Hon. G. Hamilton. He had been educated at West-

minster with Lords Mansfield and Kinnoul ; they were styled the "Triumvirate," being the three best verse-makers in the school. The Alderman purchased the estate of Fonthill in Wiltshire, and spent vast sums in building, furnishing, and planting it, and in collecting a splendid library and large galleries of the finest pictures. He was a man of great taste, an excellent judge of music and painting, and of cultivated mind. His City entertainments had not been equalled for splendour and extent of hospitality since the time of Henry VIII, and the costly magnificence he displayed astonished the public. He received on one occasion the Emperor of Germany, the King of Denmark, and the Dukes of York and Cambridge. In 1770, being a second time Lord Mayor, and wishing to unite the conflicting parties in the state, he invited the members of both houses of parliament to dine with him, and the dinner cost him on his private account 10,000*l*. He died June 21st, 1770, when the City voted a statue to his memory, and ordered that the speech he had delivered to the king should be engraved on the pedestal. The Lord Mayor enjoyed the friendship of most of the leading men of the time ; among others, of Mr. Pitt, the first Earl of Chatham, who became the sponsor of his only son.

The death of Alderman Beckford, when his son was only ten years old, was a great misfortune ; for the father, although, like all the family, of very hasty temperament, was yet a man of good sense, and would doubtless have directed carefully his son's education. The boy remained for nearly four years at home under the care of his mother, (he used afterwards to assert he was much "spoiled ;") and as she entertained a