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AN INTERESTING ORIENTAL STORY.

THE MODERN HAROUN-AL-RASCHID.

In the district of Ferdj'Onah, Algeria, (which signifies FINE COUNTRY) lives a Scheik named Bou-Akas-ben-Achour. He is also distinguished by the surname of Bou-DJENONI, (the Man of the Knife) and may be regarded as a type of the eastern Arab.—His ancestors conquered Ferdj'Onah, but he has been forced to acknowledge the supremacy of France, by paying a yearly tribute of 80,000 francs. His dominion extends from Milah to Rabouah, and from the southern point of Rabouah to within two leagues of Gigelli. He is forty-nine years old, and wears the Rahyle costume; that is to say, a woollen GANDOURA, confined by a leathern belt. He carries a pair of pistols in his girdle, by his side the Rahyle FLISEA, and suspended from his neck a small black knife.

Before him walks a negro carrying his gun, and a huge greyhound bounds along by his side. He holds despotic sway over twelve tribes; and should any neighboring people venture to make an incursion on his territory, Bou-Akas seldom condescends to march against them in person, but sends his negro into the principal village. This envoy just displays the gun of Bou-Akas, and the injury is instantly repaired.

He keeps in pay two or three hundred Tolbas to read the Koran to his people; every pilgrim going to Mecca, and passing through Ferdj'Onah, receives three francs, and may remain as long as he pleases to enjoy the hospitality of Bou-Akas. But whenever the Scheik discovers that he has been deceived by a pretended pilgrim, he immediately despatches emissaries after the impostor; who, wherever he is, fine him, throw him down, and give him fifty blows on the soles of his feet.

Bou-Akas sometimes entertains three hundred persons at dinner; but instead of sharing their repast, he walks round the tables with a baton in his hand, seeing that the servants attend properly to his guests. Afterwards, if any thing is left, he eats; but not until the others have finished.

When the governor of Constantinople, the only man whose power he recognises, sends him a traveller; according to the rank of the latter, or the nature of the recommendation, Bou-Akas gives him his gun, his dog, or his knife. If the gun, the traveller takes it on his shoulder; if the dog, he leads it in a leash; or if the knife, he hangs it round his neck; and with any one of these potent talismans, of which each bears its own degree of honor, the stranger passes through the region of the twelve tribes, not only unscathed, but, as the guest of Bou-Akas, treated with the utmost hospitality. When the traveller is about to leave Ferdj'Onah, he consigns the knife, the dog, or the gun to the care of the first Arab he meets. If the Arab is hunting, he leaves the chase; if laboring in the field, he leaves the plough; and taking the precious deposit, hastens to restore it to Bou-Akas.

The black-handled knife is so well known, that it has given the surname of "Bou-Djenoni, the man of the knife," to its owner.—With this implement he is accustomed to cut off heads, whenever he takes a fancy to perform that agreeable office with his own hand.

When first Bou-Akas assumed the government, the country was infested with robbers, but he speedily found means to extirpate them. He disguised himself as a poor merchant; walked out, and dropped a douro (a gold coin) on the ground, taking care not to lose sight of it. If the person who happened to pick up the douro, put it into his pocket and passed on, Bou-Akas made a sign to his chiaux (who followed him, also in disguise, and knew the Scheik's will,) and he rushed forward immediately, and decapitated the offender.

In consequence of this summary method of administering justice, it is a saying among the Arabs, that a child might traverse the regions which own Bou-Akas' sway, wearing a golden crown on his head, without a single hand being stretched out to take it.

The Scheik has great respect for women, and has ordered that when the females of Ferdj'Onah go out to draw water, every man who meets them shall turn away his head.

Wishing one day to ascertain whether his commands were attended to, he went out in disguise; and, meeting a beautiful Arab maiden on her way to the well, approached and saluted her.

The girl looked at him with amazement, and said,

'Pass on, stranger; thou knowest not the risk thou hast run.'

And when Bou-Akas persisted in speaking to her, she added:—

'Foolish man, and reckless of thy life;—knowest thou not that we are in the country of Bou-Djenoni, who causes all women to be held in respect?'

Bou-Akas is very strict in his religious observances; he never omits his prayers and ablutions, and has four wives, the number permitted by the Koran. Having heard that the Cadi of one of his twelve tribes administered justice in an admirable manner, and pronounced decisions in a style worthy of King Solomon himself, Bou-Akas, like a second Haroun-Al-Raschid, determined to judge for himself as to the truth of the report.

Accordingly, dressed like a private individual, without arms or attendants, he set out for the Cadi's town, mounted on a docile Arabian steed.

He arrived there, and was just entering the gate, when a cripple seizing the border of his burnous, asked him for alms in the name of the prophet. Bou-Akas gave him money, but the cripple still maintained his hold.

'What dost thou want?' asked the Scheik; 'I have already given thee alms.'

'Yes,' replied the beggar, 'but the law says, not only—'Thou shalt give alms to thy brother,' but also, 'Thou shalt do for thy brother whatsoever thou canst.'"

'Well! and what can I do for thee?'

'Thou canst save me—poor crawling creature that I am!—from being trodden under the feet of men, horses, mules, and camels,

which would certainly happen to me in passing through the crowded square, in which a fair is now going on.'

'And how can I save thee?'

'By letting me ride behind you, and putting me down safely in the market-place, where I have business.'

'Be it so,' replied Bou-Akas; and stooping down he helped the cripple to get up behind him; a business which was not accomplished without much difficulty.

The strangely assorted riders attracted many eyes as they passed through the crowded streets; and at length they reached the market-place.

'Is this where you wish to stop?' asked Bou-Akas.

'Yes.'

'Then get down.'

'Get down yourself.'

'What for?'

'To leave me the horse.'

'To leave you my horse! What mean you by that?'

'I mean that he belongs to me. Know you not that we are now in the town of the just Cadi, and that if we bring the case before him, he will certainly decide in my favor?'

'Why should he do so, when the animal belongs to me?'

'Don't you think when he sees us two,—you with your strong straight limbs, which Allah has given you for the purpose of walking, and I with my weak legs and distorted feet,—he will decree that the horse shall belong to him who has most need of him?'

'Should he do so, he would not be the just Cadi,' said Bou-Akas.

'Oh! as to that,' replied the cripple, laughing, 'although he is just, he is not infallible.'

'So!' thought the Scheik to himself, 'this will be a capital opportunity of judging the judge.' He said aloud, 'I am content—we will go before the Cadi.'

Arrived at the tribunal, where the judge, according to the eastern custom, was publicly administering justice, they found that two trials were about to go on, and would of course take precedence of theirs.

The first was between a taleb, or learned man, and a peasant. The point in dispute was the taleb's wife, whom the peasant had carried off, and whom he asserted to be his own better half, in the face of the philosopher, who demanded her restoration.

The woman, strange circumstance! remained obstinately silent, and would not declare for either; a feature in the case which rendered its decision excessively difficult.—The judge heard both sides attentively, reflected for a moment, and then said, 'Leave the woman here, and return to-morrow.'

The savant and the laborer each bowed and retired; and the next cause was called.

This was a difference between a butcher and an oil-seller. The latter appeared covered with oil, and the former was sprinkled with blood.

The butcher spoke first:—

'I went to buy some oil from this man, and in order to pay him for it, I drew a handful of money from my purse. The sight of the money tempted him. He seized me by the