When he had made an end of these verses, the Lady Miriam fetched inkcase and paper and wrote therein: "After honour due to the Basmalah, may the peace of Allah be upon thee and His mercy and blessings be! I would have thee know that thy slavegirl Miriam saluteth thee, who longeth sore for thee; and this is her message to thee. As soon as this letter shall fall into thy hands, do thou arise without stay and delay and apply thyself to that we would have of thee with all diligence and beware with all wariness of transgressing her commandment and of sleeping. When the first third of the night is past, (for that hour is of the most favourable of times) apply thee only to saddling the two stallions and fare forth with them both to the Sultan's Gate. If any ask thee whither thou wend, answer, 'I am going to exercise the steeds,' and none will hinder thee; for the folk of this city trust to the locking of the gates." Then she folded the letter in a silken kerchief and threw it out of the latticed window to Nur al-Din, who took it and reading it, knew it for the handwriting of the Lady Miriam and comprehended all its contents. So he kissed the letter and laid it between his eyes; then, calling to mind that which had betided him with her of the sweets of love-liesse, he poured forth his tears whilst he recited these couplets,

"Came your writ to me in the dead of the night * And desire for you stirred heart and sprite;  
And, remembered joys we in union joyed, * Praised the Lord who placed us in parting plight."

As soon as it was dark Nur al-Din busied himself with making ready the stallions and patiented till the first watch of the night was past; when, without a moment delay, Nur al-Din the lover full of teen, saddled them with saddles of the goodliest, and leading them forth of the stable, locked the door after him and repaired with them to the city-gate, where he sat down to await the coming of the Princess. Meanwhile, Miriam returned forthright to her private apartment, where she found the one-eyed Wazir seated, elbow-propt upon a cushion stuffed with ostrich-down; but he was ashamed to put forth his hand to her or to bespeak her. When she saw him, she appealed to her Lord in heart, saying, "Allahumma-O my God-bring him not to his will of me nor to me defilement decree after purity!" Then she went up to him and made a show of fondness for him and sat down by his side and coaxed him, saying, "O my lord, what is this aversion thou displayest to me? Is it pride or coquetry on thy part? But the current byword saith, 'An the salam-salutation be little in demand, the sitters salute those who stand.' So if, O my lord, thou come not to me neither accost me, I will go to thee and accost thee." Said he, "To thee belong favour and kindness, O Queen of the earth in its length and breadth; and what am I but one of thy slaves and the least of thy servants. Indeed, I was ashamed to intrude upon thine illustrious presence, O unique pearl, and my face is on the earth at thy feet." She rejoined, "Leave this talk and bring us to eat and drink." Accordingly he shouted to his eunuchs and women an order to serve food, and they set before them a tray containing birds of every kind that walk and fly and in nests increase and multiply, such as sand-grouse and quails and pigeon-poults and lambs and fatted geese and
fried poultry and other dishes of all sorts and colours. The Princess put out her hand to the tray and began to eat and feed the Wazir with her fair finger-tips and kiss him on the mouth. They ate till they had enough and washed their hands, after which the handmaidens removed the table of food and set on the service of wine. So Princess Miriam filled the cup and drank and gave the Wazir to drink and served him with assiduous service, so that he was like to fly for joy and his breast broadened and he was of the gladdest. When she saw that the wine had gotten the better of his senses, she thrust her hand into her bosom and brought out a pastil of virgin Cretan-Bhang, which she had provided against such an hour, whereof if an elephant smelt a dirham's weight, he would sleep from year to year. She distracted his attention and crumbled the drug into the cup: then, filling it up, handed it to the Wazir, who could hardly credit his senses for delight. So he took it and kissing her hand, drank it off, but hardly had it settled in his stomach when he fell head foremost to the ground. Then she rose and filling two great pairs of saddle-bags with what was light of weight and weighty of worth of jewels and jacinths and precious stones, together with somewhat of meat and drink, donned harness of war and armed herself for fight. She also took with her for Nur al-Din what should rejoice him of rich and royal apparel and splendid arms and armour, and shouldering the bags (for indeed her strength equalled her valiancy), hastened forth from the new palace to join her lover. On this wise fared it with the Lady Miriam; but as regards Nur al-Din,--And Shahrazad perceived the dawn of day and ceased to say her permitted say.

When it was the Eight Hundred and Ninetieth Night,

She resumed, It hath reached me, O auspicious King, that when the Lady Miriam left the new palace, she went straightways to meet her lover for indeed she was as valiant as she was strong; but Nur al-Din the distracted, the full of teen, sat at the city-gate hending the horses' halters in hand, till Allah (to whom belong Majesty and Might) sent a sleep upon him and he slept—glory be to Him who sleepeth not! Now at that time the Kings of the Islands had spent much treasure in bribing folk to steal the two steeds or one of them; and in those days there was a black slave, who had been reared in the islands skilled in horse-lifting; wherefore the Kings of the Franks seduced him with wealth galore to steal one of the stallions and promised him, if he could avail to lift the two, that they would give him a whole island and endue him with a splendid robe of honour. He had long gone about the city of France in disguise, but succeeded not in taking the horses, whilst they were with the King; but, when he gave them in free gift to the Wazir and the monocular one carried them to his own stable, the blackamoor thief rejoiced with joy exceeding and made sure of success, saying in himself, "By the virtue of the Messiah and the Faith which is no liar, I will certainly steal the twain of them!" Now he had gone out that very night, intending for the stable, to lift them; but, as he walked along, behold, he caught sight of Nur al-Din lying asleep, with the halters in his hands. So he went up to the horses and loosing the halters from their heads, was about to mount one of them and drive the other before him, when suddenly up came the Princess Miriam, carrying on her shoulders the couple of saddle-bags. She mistook the black for Nur al-Din and handed him one pair of bags, which he laid on one of the stallions: after which she gave him the other and he set it on the second steed, without word said to discover that it was not her lover. Then they mounted and rode out of the gate in silence till presently she asked, "O my lord Nur al-Din, what aileth thee to be silent?" Whereupon the black turned to her and cried angrily, "What sayst thou, O damsel?" When she heard the slave's barbarous accents, she knew that the speech was not of Nur al-Din; so raising her eyes she looked at him and saw
that he was a black chattel, snub-nosed and wide-mouthed, with nostrils like ewers; whereupon
the light in her eyes became night and she asked him, "Who art thou, O Shaykh of the sons of
Ham and what among men is thy name?" He answered, "O daughter of the base, my name is
Mas'úd, the lifter of horses, when folk slumber and sleep." She made him no reply, but
straightway baring her blade, smote him on the nape and the blade came out gleaming from his
throat-tendons, whereupon he fell earthwards, weltering in his blood, and Allah hurried his soul
to the Fire and abiding-place dire. Then she took the other horse by the bridle and retraced her
steps in search of Nur al-Din, whom she found lying, asleep and snoring, in the place where she
had appointed him to meet her, hending the halters in hand, yet knowing not his fingers from his
feet. So she dismounted and gave him a cuff, whereupon he awoke in affright and said to her, "O
m lady, praised be Allah for thy safe coming!" Said she "Rise and back this steed and hold thy
tongue!" So he rose and mounted one of the stallions, whilst she bestrode the other, and they
went forth the city and rode on awhile in silence. Then said she to him, "Did I not bid thee
beware of sleeping? Verily, he prospereth not who sleeppeth." He rejoined, "O my lady, I slept not
but because of the cooling of my heart by reason of thy promise. But what hath happened, O my
lady?" So she told him her adventure with the black, first and last, and he said, "Praised be Allah
for safety!" Then they fared on at full speed, committing their affair to the Subtle, the All-wise
and conversing as they went, till they came to the place where the black lay prostrate in the dust,
as he were an Ifrít, and Miriam said to Nur al-Din, "Dismount; strip him of his clothes and take
his arms." He answered, "By Allah, O my lady, I dare not dismount nor approach him." And
indeed he marvelled at the blackamoor's stature and praised the Princess for her deed, wondering
the while at her valour and stout-heartedness. They fared on lustily and ceased not so doing all
that night and halted not till the day broke with its shine and sheen and the sun shone bright upon
plain and height when they came to a wide riverino lea wherein the gazelles were frisking
gracefully. Its surface was clothed with green and on all sides fruit trees of every kind were seen:
its slopes for flowers like serpents' bellies showed, and birds sang on boughs aloud and its rills
in manifold runnels flowed. And indeed it was as saith the poet and saith well and accomplisheth
the hearer's desire,

"Rosy red Wady hot with summer-glow, * Where twofold tale of common growth was piled.
In copse we halted wherein bent to us * Branches, as bendeth nurse o'er weanling-child.
And pure cold water quenching thirst we sipped: * To cup-mate sweeter than old wine and
mild:
From every side it shut out sheen of sun * Screen-like, but wooed the breeze to cool the wild:
And pebbles, sweet as maidens deckt and dight * And soft as threaded pearls, the touch
beguiled."

And as saith another,

"And when birdies o'er warble its lakelet, it gars * Longing lover to seek it where morning
glows;
For likest to Paradise lie its banks * With shade and fruitage and fount that flows."

Presently Princess Miriam and Nur al-Din alighted to rest in this Wady.--And Shahrazad
perceived the dawn of day and ceased saying her permitted say.
When it was the Eight Hundred and Ninety-first Night,

She said, It hath reached me, O auspicious King, that when Princess Miriam and Nur al-Din alighted in that valley, they ate of its fruits and drank of its streams, after turning the stallions loose to pasture; then they sat talking and recalling their past and all that had befallen them and complaining one to other of the pangs of parting and of the hardships suffered for estrangement and love-longing. As they were thus engaged, behold, there arose in the distance a dust-cloud which spread till it walled the world, and they heard the neighing of horses and clank of arms and armour. Now the reason of this was, that after the Princess had been bestowed in wedlock upon the Wazir who had gone in to her that night, the King went forth at daybreak, to give the couple good morrow, taking with him, after the custom of Kings with their daughters, a gift of silken stuffs and scattering gold and silver among the eunuchs and tire-women, that they might snatch at and scramble for it. And he fared on escorted by one of his pages; but when he came to the new palace, he found the Wazir prostrate on the carpet, knowing not his head from his heels; so he searched the place right and left for his daughter, but found her not; whereat he was troubled sore with concern galore and his wits forlore. Then he bade bring hot water and virgin vinegar and frankincense and mingling them together, blew the mixture into the Wazir's nostrils and shook him, whereupon he cast the Bhang forth of his stomach, as it were a bit of cheese. He repeated the process, whereupon the Minister came to himself and the King questioned him of his case and that of his daughter. He replied, "O mighty King, I have no knowledge of her save that she poured me out a cup of wine with her own hand; and from that tide to this I have no recollection of aught nor know I what is come of her." When the King heard this, the light in his eyes became night, and he drew his scymitar and smote the Wazir on the head, then the steel came out gleaming from between his grinder teeth. Then, without an instant delay, he called the groom sand syces and demanded of them the two stallions: but they said, "O King, the two steeds were lost in the night and together with them our chief, the Master of Horse; for, when we awoke in the morning, we found all the doors wide open." Cried the King, "By the faith of me and by all wherein my belief is stablished on certainty, none but my daughter hath taken the steeds, she and the Moslem captive which used to tend the Church and which took her aforetime! Indeed I knew him right well and none delivered him from my hand save this one-eyed Wazir; but now he is requited his deed." Then the King called his three sons, who were three doughty champions, each of whom could withstand a thousand horse in the field of strife and the stead where cut and thrust are rife; and bade them mount. So they took horse forthwith and the King and the flower of his knights and nobles and officers mounted with them and followed on the trail of the fugitives till Miriam saw them, when she mounted her charger and baldrick'd her blade and took her arms. Then she said to Nur al-Din, "How is it with thee and how is thy heart for fight and strife and fray?" Said he, "Verily, my steadfastness in battle-van is as the steadfastness of the stake in bran." And he improvised and said,

"O Miriam thy chiding I pray, forego; * Nor drive me to death or injurious blow:
How e'er can I hope to bear fray and fight * Who quake at the croak of the corby-crow?
I who shiver for fear when I see the mouse * And for very funk I bepiss my clo'!
I love no foin but the poke in bed. * When coynt well knoweth my prickle's prow;
This is rightful rede, and none other shows * Righteous as this in my sight, I trow."
Now when Miriam heard his speech and the verse he made, she laughed and smilingly said, "O my lord Nur al-Din, abide in thy place and I will keep thee from their ill grace, though they be as the sea-sands in number. But mount and ride in rear of me, and if we be defeated and put to flight, beware of falling, for none can overtake thy steed." So saying, she turned her lance-head towards foe in plain and gave her horse the rein, whereupon he darted off under her, like the stormy gale or like waters that from straitness of pipes outrail. Now Miriam was the doughtiest of the folk of her time and the unique pearl of her age and tide; for her father had taught her, whilst she was yet little, on steeds to ride and dive deep during the darkness of the night in the battle tide. When the King saw her charging down upon them, he knew her but too well and turning to his eldest son, said, "O Bartaut, thou who art surnamed Ras al-Killaut this is assuredly thy sister Miriam who chargeth upon us, and she seeketh to wage war and fight fray with us. So go thou out to give her battle: and I enjoin thee by the Messiah and the Faith which is no liar, an thou get the better of her, kill her not till thou have propounded to her the Nazarene faith. An she return to her old creed, bring her to me prisoner; but an she refuse, do her die by the foulest death and make of her the vilest of examples, as well as the accursed which is with her." Quoth Bartaut, "Hearkening obedience"; and, rushing out forthright to meet his sister, said to her, "O Miriam, doth not what hath already befallen us on thine account suffice thee, but thou must leave the faith of thy fathers and forefathers and follow after the faith of the Vagrants in the lands, that is to say, the faith of Al-Islam? By the virtue of the Messiah and the Faith which is no liar, except thou return to the creed of the Kings thy Forebears and walk therein after the goodliest fashion, I will put thee to an ill death and make of thee the most shameful of examples!" But Miriam laughed at his speech and replied, "Well-away! Far be it that the past should present stay or that he who is dead should again see day! I will make thee drink the sourest of regrets! By Allah, I will not turn back upon the faith of Mohammed son of Abdullah, who made salvation general; for his is the True Faith; nor will I leave the right road though I drain the cup of ruin!"--

And Shahrazad perceived the dawn of day and ceased to say her permitted say.

When it was the Eight Hundred and Ninety-second Night,

She continued, It hath reached me, O auspicious King, that Miriam exclaimed to her brother, "Well-away! Heaven forfend that I turn back from the faith of Mohammed Abdullah-son who made salvation general; for his is the Right Road nor will I leave it although I drain the cup of ruin." When the accursed Bartaut heard this, the light in his eyes became night, the matter was great and grievous to him and between them there befel a sore fight. The twain swayed to and fro battling throughout the length and breadth of the valley and manfully enduring the stress of combat singular, whilst all eyes upon them were fixed in admiring surprise: after which they wheeled about and joined and feinted for a long bout and as often as Bartaut opened on his sister Miriam a gate of war, she closed it to and put it to naught, of the goodliness of her skill and her art in the use of arms and her cunning of cavalarice. Nor ceased they so doing till the dust overhung their heads vault-wise and they were hidden from men's eyes; and she ceased not to baffle Bartaut and stop the way upon him, till he was weary and his courage wavered and his resolution was worsted and his strength weakened; whereupon she smote him on the nape, that the sword came out gleaming from his throat tendons and Allah hurried his soul to the Fire and the abiding-place which is dire. Then Miriam wheeled about in the battleplain and the stead where cut and thrust are fain; and championed it and offered battle, crying out and saying, "Who is for fighting? Who is for jousting? Let come forth to me to-day no weakling or niderling; ay, let
none come forth to me but the champions who the enemies of The Faith represent, that I may
give them to drink the cup of ignominious punishment. O worshippers of idols, O miscreants, O
rebellious folk, this day verily shall the faces of the people of the True Faith be whitened and
theirs who deny the Compassionate be blackened!" Now when the King saw his eldest son slain,
he smote his face and rent his dress.

The Man of Upper Egypt and his Frankish Wife

We lay one night in the house of a man of the Sa'íd or Upper Egypt, and he entertained us and
entreated us hospitably. Now he was a very old man with exceeding swarthiness, and he had
little children, who were white, of a white dashed with red. So we said to him, "Hark ye, such an
one, how cometh it that these thy children are white, whilst thou thyself art passing swart?" and
he said, "Their mother was a Frankish woman, whom I took prisoner in the days of Al-Malik al-
Násir Saláh al-Dín, after the battle of Hattin, when I was a young man." We asked, "And how
gottest thou her?" and he answered, "I had a rare adventure with her." Quoth we, "Favour us with
it;" and quoth he, "With all my heart! You must know that I once sowed a crop of flax in these
parts and pulled it and scutched it and spent on it five hundred gold pieces; after which I would
have sold it, but could get no more than this therefor, and the folk said to me, 'Carry it to Acre:
for there thou wilt haply make good gain by it.' Now Acre was then in the hands of the Franks;
so I carried my flax thither and sold part of it at six months' credit. One day, as I was selling,
behold, there came up a Frankish woman (now 'tis the custom of the women of the Franks to go
about with market streets with unveiled faces), to buy flax of me, and I saw of her beauty what
dazed my wits. So I sold her somewhat of flax and was easy with her concerning the price; and
she took it and went away. Some days after, she returned and bought somewhat more flax of me
and I was yet easier with her about the price; and she repeated her visits to me, seeing that I was
in love with her. Now she was used to walk in company of an old woman to whom I said, "I am
sore enamoured of thy mistress. Canst thou contrive for me to enjoy her?" Quoth she, 'I will
contrive this for thee; but the secret must not go beyond us three, to wit me, thee and her; and there is
no help but thou be lavish with money, to boot.' And I answered, saying, 'Though my life
were the price of her favours twere no great matter.'" -- And Shahrazad perceived the dawn of
day and ceased saying her permitted say.

When it was the Eight Hundred and Ninety-Fifth Night,

She said, It hath reached me, O auspicious King, that the old woman said to the man, "However
the secret must not go beyond us three, to wit me, thee and her; and there is no help but thou be
lavish of thy money to boot." He replied, "Though my life were the price of her favours twere no
great matter." "So it was agreed" (continued the man of Upper Egypt), "that I should pay her fifty
dinars and that she should come to me; whereupon I procured the money and gave it to the old
woman. She took it and said, 'Make ready a place for her in thy house, and she will come to thee
this night.' Accordingly I went home and made ready what I could of meat and drink and wax
candles and sweetmeats. Now my house overlooked the sea and 'twas the season of summer; so I
spread the bed on the terrace roof. Presently, the Frank woman came and we ate and drank, and
the night fell dark. We lay down under the sky, with the moon shining on us, and fell to watching
the shimmering of the stars in the sea: and I said to myself, 'Art not ashamed before Allah (to
whom belong Might and Majesty!) and thou a stranger, under the heavens and in presence of the
deep waters, to disobey Him with a Nazarene woman and merit the torment of Fire?' Then said I, 'O my God, I call Thee to witness that I abstain from this Christian woman this night, of shamefastness before Thee and fear of Thy vengeance!' So I slept till the morning, and she arose at peep of day full of anger and went away. I walked to my shop and sat there; and behold, presently she passed, as she were the moon, accompanied by the old woman who was also angry; whereat my heart sank within me and I said to myself, 'Who art thou that thou shouldst refrain from yonder damsel? Art thou Sarí al-Sakatí or Bishr Barefoot or Junayd of Baghdad or Fuzayl bin 'Iyáz?' then ran after the old woman and coming up with her said to her, 'Bring her to me again;' and she said, 'By the virtue of the Messiah, she will not return to thee but for an hundred ducats!' Quoth I, 'I will give thee a hundred gold pieces.' So I paid her the money and the damsel came to me a second time; but no sooner was she with me than I returned to my whilome way of thinking and abstained from her and forbore her for the sake of Allah Almighty. Presently she went away and I walked to my shop, and shortly after the old woman came up, in a rage. Quoth I to her, 'Bring her to me again;' and quoth she, 'By the virtue of the Messiah, thou shalt never again enjoy her presence with thee, except for five hundred ducats, and thou shalt perish in thy pain!' At this I trembled and resolved to spend the whole price of my flax and therewith ransom my life. But, before I could think I heard the crier proclaiming and saying, 'Ho, all ye Moslems, the truce which was between us and you is expired, and we give all of you Mahometans who are here a week from this time to have done with your business and depart to your own country.' Thus her visits were cut off from me and I betook myself to getting in the price of the flax which men had bought upon credit, and to bartering what remained in my hands for other goods. Then I took with me fair merchandise and departed Acre with a soul full of affection and love-longing for the Frankish woman, who had taken my heart and my coin. So I journeyed until I made Damascus, where I sold the stock in trade I had brought from Acre, at the highest price, because of the cutting off of communication by reason of the term of truce having expired; and Allah (exalted and extolled be He!) vouchsafed me good gain. Then I fell to trading in captive slave-girls, thinking thus to ease my heart of its pining for the Frankish woman, and in this traffic engaged I abode three years, till there befell between Al-Malik al-Násir and the Franks what befell of the action of Hattin and other encounters and Allah gave him the victory over them, so that he took all their Kings prisoners and he opened the coast cities by His leave. Now it fortuned one day after this, that a man came to me and sought of me a slave-girl for Al-Malik al-Nasir. Having a handsome handmaid I showed her to him and he bought her of me for an hundred dinars and gave me ninety thereof, leaving ten still due me, for that there was no more found in the royal treasury that day, because he had expended all his monies in waging war against the Franks. Accordingly they took counsel with him and he said, 'Carry him to the treasury where are the captives' lodging and give him his choice among the damsels of the Franks, so he may take one of them for the ten dinars,'" -- And Shahrazad perceived the dawn of day and ceased to say her permitted say.

When it was the Eight Hundred and Ninety-sixth Night,

She continued, It hath reached me, O auspicious King, that whenas Al-Malik al-Nasir said, "'Give him his choice to take one of the girls for the ten dinars that are due to him; they brought me to the captives' lodging and showed me all who were therein, and I saw amongst them the Frankish damsel with whom I had fallen in love at Acre and knew her right well. Now she was the wife of one of the cavaliers of the Franks. So I said, 'Give me this one,' and carrying her to
my tent, asked her, 'Dost thou know me?' She answered, 'No;' and I rejoined, 'I am thy friend, the sometime flax-merchant with whom thou hast to do at Acre and there befel between us what befel. Thou tookest money of me and saidest, 'Thou shalt never again see me but for five hundred dinars.' And now thou art become my property for ten ducats.' Quoth she, 'This is a mystery. Thy faith is the True Faith and I testify that there is no god but the God and that Mohammed is the Messenger of God!' And she made perfect profession of Al-Islam. Then said I to myself, 'By Allah, I will not go in unto her till I have set her free and acquainted the Kazi.' So I betook myself to Ibn Shaddád and told him what had passed and he married me to her. Then I lay with her that night and she conceived; after which the troops departed and we returned to Damascus. But within a few days there came an envoy from the King of the Franks, to seek the captives and the prisoners, according to the treaty between the Kings. So Al-Malik al-Nasir restored all the men and women captive, till there remained but the woman who was with me and the Franks said, 'The wife of such an one the Knight is not here.' Then they asked after her and making strict search for her, found that she was with me; whereupon they demanded her of me and I went in to her sore concerned and with colour changed; and she said to me, 'What aileth thee and what evil assaileth thee?' Quoth I, 'A messenger is come from the King to take all the captives, and they demand thee of me.' Quoth she, 'Have no fear, bring me to the King and I know what to say before and to him.' I carried her into the presence of the Sultan Al-Malik al-Nasir, who was seated, with the envoy of the King of the Franks on his right hand, and I said to him, 'This is the woman that is with me.' Then quoth the King and the envoy to her, 'Wilt thou go to thy country or to thy husband? For Allah hath loosed thy bonds and those of thy fellow captives.' Quoth she to the Sultan, 'I am become a Moslemah and am great with child, as by my middle ye may see, and the Franks shall have no more profit of me.' The envoy asked, 'Whether is dearer to thee, this Moslem or thy first husband and knight such an one?;' and she answered him even as she had answered the Sultan. Then said the envoy to the Franks with him, 'Heard ye her words?' They replied, 'Yes.' And he said to me, 'Take thy wife and depart with her.' So I took her and went away; but the envoy sent after me in haste and cried, 'Her mother gave me a charge for her, saying, 'My daughter is a captive and naked; and I would have thee carry her this chest.' Take it thou and deliver it to her.' Accordingly I carried the chest home and gave it to her. She opened it and found in it all her raiment as she had left it and therein I saw the two purses of fifty and an hundred dinars which I had given her, untouched and tied up with my own tying, wherefore I praised Almighty Allah. There are my children by her and she is alive to this day and 'twas she dressed you this food." We marvelled at his story and at that which had befallen him of good fortune, and Allah is All-knowing.