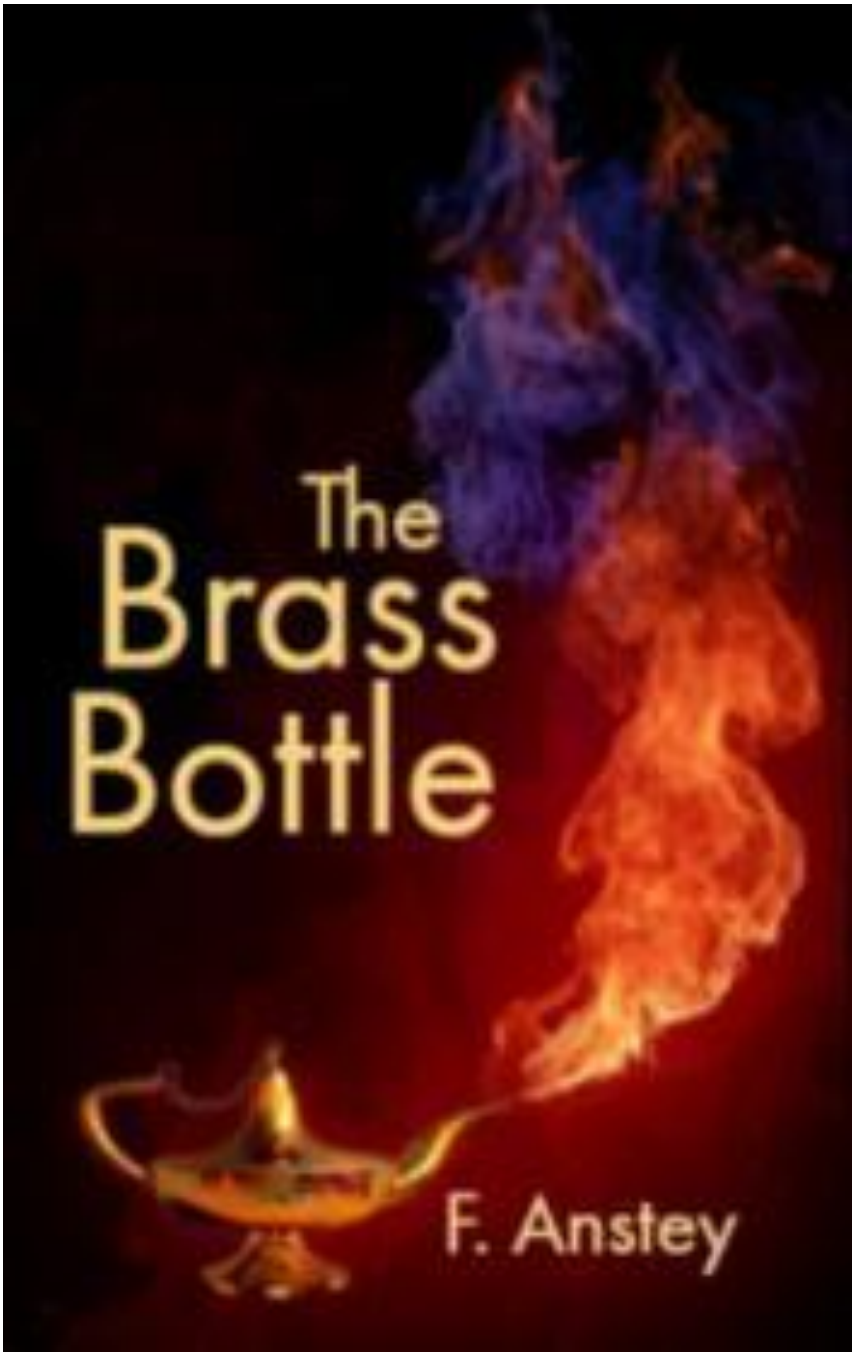
The
Brass
Bottle
F. Anstey

Sommario

Chapter One
Horace Ventimore Receives a Commission

One autumn afternoon Horace Ventimore, a young architect, sat at the window of his office in London. His thoughts were sad, for he had neither money nor work. He was a young man of twenty-eight, clever, energetic and very eager to work, but he could find nothing. Nobody had as yet asked him to build a house - and just then he was badly in need of money, for without it he could not marry Sylvia.

The girl was young and beautiful, and Horace Ventimore loved her with all his heart. They had met in summer in the country and had cycled together and had had many interesting talks. But now he had not seen her for many weeks - her father and mother did not invite him to their house. Evidently they had no wish to let their daughter marry a man without a penny. Poor Horace was very unhappy.

Just then there was a knock at the door. His friend, William Beevor, came in. He was an elegant young man, always gay and pleased with himself. Beevor had a lot of work, one order followed another, although he was much less clever than his friend Ventimore.

"I am leaving London tonight," he said gaily. "I am building at three different places in the country now. People really like my work very much. You will stay here of course, old chap, you have no work, as usual, I am sure."

"No, I haven't," Horace answered sadly.

"Then you can help me a little - just have a look at my plans. You will tell me later what you think of them. I know you are a good friend. Good-bye!" And he hurried away, leaving Horace to his sad thoughts.

After a few minutes there was another knock at the door, and when Horace opened it, he saw Sylvia's father, Professor Futvoye.

The young man was very glad to see him. He hoped that the Professor had come to invite him to dinner. Horace was so happy that he forgot all about the dull hours that he had spent with the old man in summer. Professor Futvoye had often made him listen to his long and detailed descriptions of ancient Egyptian art when Horace wanted so much to go out with Sylvia.

"How kind you are, sir, that you come to see me," Horace said when his guest had taken the only armchair in his office.

"Not at all," answered the Professor. "I wanted to ask you to do something for me, but you seem so busy that I -" Here the Professor hesitated.

"The old man wants to build a house and has decided to give the work to me," thought Horace. "Perhaps Sylvia has asked her father to do so."

"I shall be very glad to do anything for you, sir," he answered aloud.

"It is very kind of you," said the Professor. "I wanted to ask you to go to the Auction Rooms and try to buy a few Oriental things for me there."

Horace Ventimore was terribly disappointed, but he did not show what he felt. "Of course, I shall go with pleasure," he said.

"You are very kind, young man," the Professor said again. "I remember how polite you were when you accompanied my wife and daughter on all sorts of excursions even in the hottest weather - although I was sure that you wanted to stay with me and discuss ancient art."

"I shall be very happy to do anything for you, sir," repeated Horace, "but I know very little about Oriental art and I may easily buy the wrong things."

"Oh no," replied the Professor, "here is a catalogue of all the things on sale. I have marked those that I want to get - and also the highest price that I am ready to pay for them."

"Very well," said Horace, "I shall go there at once."

The Professor thanked the young man and asked him to call later in the evening and bring the things which he had bought at the sale.

Chapter Two
The Auction

The Auction Rooms were already full of people when Horace Ventimore came in. The auctioneer announced every new lot in a loud voice. In Horace's opinion the whole collection was quite uninteresting. However, many people were trying to buy the things that were on sale and especially those that the Professor had chosen. Ventimore tried to get them, but every time somebody else offered more money than the Professor had allowed him to pay. The young man felt very tired and hungry, but he decided to wait for the last lot marked by the Professor. It was an old Persian copper bowl. The Professor had allowed Horace to pay two pounds for it, but Ventimore made up his mind to pay more and say nothing about it. To his disappointment, however, somebody offered five pounds for the bowl, and of course Ventimore could not pay so much. He had done his best and failed. And yet he did not go away, but sat on and watched the other buyers.

"Now we come to Lot 254," he heard the auctioneer's voice. "By some mistake it is not on the catalogue, but it is a very curious ancient brass bottle."

It was an old vase about two feet high, with a long thick neck. It was closed by a metal lid. On the lid there was some kind of inscription that it was now difficult to make out. The bottle looked so strange and ugly that the crowd of buyers began to joke about it.

"It looks heavy," said one. "What's inside, sir - sardines?"

"I don't think there is anything inside," said the auctioneer. "If you want to know my opinion, I think that there's money in it."

"How much?"

"Don't misunderstand me, gentlemen. When I say I think that there is money in it I mean that - the thing is worth more than it looks. So don't waste time, gentlemen. Tell me what you can offer for it."

"Two pence," cried somebody.

"Please, be serious, gentlemen. Five shillings? Six? Look at it well."

At this moment Horace's neighbour whispered in his ear: "In your place I'd buy this brass bottle."

"Seven shillings - eight - nine," cried the auctioneer.

"If you think that it is so good, why don't you buy it yourself?" Horace asked his neighbour.

"It's not in my line, you know, and then I have spent all my money on other things. But I can tell you that it is really old and very curious. I've never seen a brass vase of such a shape."

Horace rose and examined the lid with the strange marks on it. "Perhaps they really mean something," he thought. "The Professor may be interested in this old bottle. Then he will not be so angry that I have not bought anything for him."

Horace could not spend the Professor's money on the bottle since it was not on the catalogue, but he had a few shillings of his own. "Why not try and buy the strange old thing?" he said to himself.

He offered fourteen shillings, but a short, gay little man offered fifteen. "Sixteen." - "Seventeen." - "Eighteen." - "Nineteen." - "One pound."

"A guinea," Horace cried in despair, for he had no more money.

At this the gay little man shook his head. "I know where to stop," he said. And so the brass bottle became Ventimore's property. He told the auctioneer to send it to his address and then left the Auction Rooms.

Chapter Three
Sylvia

Horace went to Sylvia's house. He was very happy at the thought that he was going to see her, but at the same time he could not forget that Sylvia and her mother had been very cold to him when he had come to see them after the summer holidays. And they had not invited him again after that first time. He felt that it was foolish of him to go there; Sylvia did not love him.

"No," he said to himself, "I will not come in. I will only leave the catalogue and the Professor can see himself at what prices the things that interested him have been sold. Then he will understand why I couldn't buy anything."

When Horace came to the door of the Futvoyes' house he learned that the Professor was out, but Mrs Futvoye and Sylvia were expecting him in the drawing-room. The young man decided that he would come in and leave the catalogue with the ladies, but he would stay only a few moments. "They do not want my company," he said to himself sadly.

Mrs Futvoye was writing letters at one end of the drawing-room, and Sylvia was reading a book at the other end. "How pretty she is!" thought Horace as he entered the room.

"I am sorry," the young man began, "that I come without invitation, but the Professor -"

"I know all about it," interrupted Mrs Futvoye. "Really it was too bad of my husband to ask a busy man like you to go and spend a whole day at that auction."

"Unfortunately," Horace answered, "I am not a busy man."

"You say so because you are very polite," she said coldly. "But please sit down. My husband will soon be back."

"I don't think that I can stay," Horace said. "The catalogue will tell him everything. The things that he wanted to have were much more expensive than he thought and I could buy nothing."

"I am very glad," exclaimed Mrs Futvoye, "for the house is simply full of ancient things as it is. Do you know that my husband wanted to put a mummy in the drawing-room?"

Horace was feeling as shy as a schoolboy. "I really must go," he said.

"Well, I cannot keep you then. But will you please post this letter for me? It will not take me more than five minutes to finish it."

It was impossible to refuse. Mrs Futvoye went back to her writing-table, while Sylvia and Horace stayed at the other end of the room. She talked to him very politely for a few minutes and then said, "Mother is keeping you too long with her letter. I must hurry her up."

"Do you want to get rid of me?"

"I thought that it was you who wanted very much to go away," she answered coldly. "Our family has taken too much of your time today."

"You didn't speak to me like that in summer," he replied sadly.

"In summer we always like people better than in autumn," Sylvia said. "I see very well that you wish to leave our house as soon as possible."

"It is partly true," answered Horace, "but can't you guess why?"

"Of course I can," she said. "When you came here after the summer I saw at once that it was out of politeness. You were so cold that I became cold too."

"And I," replied Horace, "thought that it was you who had changed and did not want to see me anymore, and that hurt me very much."

"Really?" asked Sylvia softly. "You see how wise it is to have things out. Do you still want to go away?"

"I think I ought to," Horace answered.

"Why?" she asked.

"Because I love you but I have no right to tell you of my love."

"You have already told me," Sylvia said laughing.

"I couldn't help it," he exclaimed. "But I know that it is quite hopeless."

"Of course, if you are so sure, you are quite right not to try."

"Sylvia! Do you mean to say that you love me too?"

"Don't you see?" she said with a happy laugh. "How nice you are, and how foolish!"

He took her hand and kissed it, but then exclaimed: "Oh, Sylvia, your father and mother will never let us marry. I cannot find work and I am so poor."

"We shall see," she answered.

Chapter Four
An Eventful Day

Mrs Futvoye was not surprised when her daughter told her that she wanted to marry Horace. But she said that no formal engagement could take place before Horace found work and earned money. She allowed the young man to come and see them from time to time. That was all. Horace gladly agreed, for he understood that she was quite right.

It is not difficult to imagine how happy the young people were. Mrs Futvoye went back to her letter and left Sylvia and Horace alone. Of course the young man was not in a hurry to go home now. They sat on the sofa close to each other and spoke of the future.

"Father will be angry at first," Sylvia said, "when he learns that you have no work and no money. What a pity that you couldn't buy anything at the auction!"

Then Horace told her about the brass bottle.

"That is very good," cried Sylvia. "If it is really old and dirty, father will certainly be pleased, for he loves all those old things. But here he is himself."

The Professor came home in a very bad mood. And the mood did not get better when Horace told him that he had bought nothing at the auction. The old man took the catalogue and looked angrily at the prices at which the things that interested him had been sold.

"Such wonderful 16th century Persian work for five guineas! And you did not buy it!" he grumbled.

"If you remember, sir, you marked the prices that you were ready to pay."

"Nothing of the sort," said the Professor. "You could have bought one of those rare things at any price."

"But, father," Sylvia said, "Mr Ventimore did get something for his own money: it's a brass bottle; it is not on the catalogue, but perhaps it will interest you. He is very eager to hear your opinion about it."

"Pooh," said the Professor. "Some worthless modern work, I'm sure."

Horace described the bottle and even made a sketch of it.

"Ha! The form is indeed ancient. Perhaps it contains something," the Professor said with more interest.

"Maybe there is a Jinnee inside, like the Jinnee in the Arabian Nights," cried Sylvia, laughing.

"No, I don't think it is probable," said her father in a serious tone. "But perhaps it contains some important documents. You must tell me if you find anything there when you open the bottle," he added, turning to the young man.

Horace promised to do so. Then he said good-bye to the family and went home, feeling quite happy.

It was nearly twelve o'clock when he reached his house. His landlady, Mrs Rapkin, and her husband had already gone to bed. The first thing Horace saw in his room was the bottle.

"How ugly it is," the young man thought. "The Professor thinks there are documents in it - well, I'll find that out before I go to bed."

He tried to take the lid off, but couldn't. So he took a hammer and broke the heavy seal on the lid. For some time he pulled hard at it. Then quite suddenly it came off and he was thrown back with such force that his head struck against the wall and he fainted. Meanwhile a lot of black smoke rose from the bottle and a very strange smell filled the room.

When Horace opened his eyes again the room was still full of smoke and in the middle of it stood an old man with a long grey beard. The stranger was dressed in Oriental clothes and wore a green turban on his head. He was standing there with raised hands and saying something in a loud voice in a language that Horace did not understand.

The young man was not very much surprised, for he thought that perhaps his landlady had let her second floor to an Oriental gentleman. Probably the new lodger had noticed the smoke and had run in to offer his help.

"It's very good of you to come in, sir," he said. "I don't know exactly what happened, but I'm all right now. By the way, can you speak English?"

"Of course I can," answered the stranger. "Do you not understand my speech?"

"Now I understand you quite well," said Horace, "but at first, when I had just opened that bottle -"

"So it was your kind hand that did it, oh wonderful young man?"

"It was," answered Horace, "I wanted to know what was inside that bottle."

"I was inside it," said the stranger calmly. "I spent long, long centuries in this brass bottle."

"I am sorry to hear it, sir," replied Horace who now began to fear that the poor old man was mad.

"I am a great Jinnee," the stranger continued. "My name is Fakrash-el-Aamash. Hear my sad story! There was a time when I lived in peace in my palace in the clouds. I had a beautiful niece, and her name was Bedeea-el-Jemal. I offered the great Sultan Suleyman to marry her. But my enemy the Jinnee Jarjarees - a curse upon him! - was in love with my niece and wanted to marry her himself. So he told Suleyman many lies about me and the Sultan believed him. He ordered his men to put me into this brass bottle and throw me into the sea."

"Too bad, really too bad," said Horace, trying to speak in a sympathetic tone.

"But now, oh wonderful young man," continued the stranger, "you have freed me and even in a thousand years of service I cannot pay you for your kindness. Tell me your wishes."

"Poor old chap!" thought Horace, "he is quite mad. He wants to give me a present, and of course I can't take any."

"My dear Mr Fakrash," he added aloud, "I have done nothing and I want nothing."

"What is your name and what is your calling?" the strange old man asked.

"Here is my card," said Ventimore. "I'm an architect - that means a man who builds houses."

"That is a useful calling," said Fakrash, taking the card and putting it in his turban. "Probably you get much gold."

"I don't, I am sorry to say. I have no client yet."

"And what is this client of whom you speak?" asked the stranger.

"Well, a rich merchant who wants to have a new house."

"Then I shall certainly find a client for you," said the stranger. "But first I must make my peace with Suleyman the Sultan, and revenge myself on my enemy Jarjarees."

Horace did not pay attention to the words of the old man. He was just going to advise him to go and have a good sleep when Fakrash suddenly disappeared through the wall.

Chapter Five
The First Client

When Ventimore woke next morning his first thoughts were about the happy events of the preceding day. Sylvia loved him and had promised to be his wife someday. Wasn't that wonderful! Of course the Professor... and here Horace remembered the brass bottle. "What a funny dream I had about the Jinnee who came out of that bottle," he thought. "And all because Sylvia joked about it. Probably they have not even brought it from the Auction Rooms."

As Horace entered the dining-room he saw that the brass bottle was not there. That was a proof that the appearance of the Jinnee was only a dream. Mrs Rapkin, his landlady, came in to give him his breakfast.

"They will probably bring a brass bottle here, Mrs Rapkin," he told her. "I bought it at a sale yesterday. Please be careful with it - it's rather old."

"A vase was brought here last night, sir. It seems to be very old indeed."

"Then will you bring it up at once, please? I want to see it."

A minute later the bottle was brought. "I thought you had seen it last night, sir," explained Mrs Rapkin, "for I had put it in the corner and when I came in this morning it was in the middle of the room. It looked so dirty that I took it down to the kitchen to clean."

Now Horace understood that one part of his dream was true - the bottle had been in the room.

"I hope you are not displeased, sir," said Mrs Rapkin, seeing the expression of his face. "I haven't spoiled it."

"It's all right, so long as you didn't try to get the lid off," said Horace.

"Why, the lid was off, sir," exclaimed the landlady. "I thought you had done it with the hammer, when you came home."

Horace started. So that part of the dream was true too!

"Oh," he cried, "I had forgotten about it! Of course I did it. By the way, Mrs Rapkin, haven't you let your room to an Oriental gentleman in a green turban?"

"Certainly not, sir. Why do you ask me that?"

"Oh, I thought I saw somebody - that's all."

As soon as the landlady had gone, Horace examined the bottle: it was empty.

"I must have imagined that there was a Jinnee inside," he said to himself. "I suppose it was the effect of the smoke, for I am quite sure there was smoke coming out of the bottle."

After breakfast Horace went to his office and was soon so busy with the work his friend Beevor had asked him to do that he did not notice a large body passing before his window. When he looked up, he saw that his only armchair was occupied by a very stout gentleman with rosy cheeks and a double chin.

"I beg your pardon, sir," exclaimed Ventimore, "I did not notice that you were here. When did you come in?"

The gentleman was so much out of breath that he could not speak for some time.

"My dear sir," he said at last, "I am sorry I came in so unexpectedly, but, I think, you are an architect, Mr - ah - Mr - um -?"

"Ventimore is my name," said Horace, "and I am an architect."

"Yes, certainly," the gentleman said. He put his hand in his pocket and took out a card. "Yes, I see the name here. I know you are a wonderful architect, sir."

"Oh, you are very kind," Horace said modestly. "Did anybody recommend me to you?"

"I need no recommendations," the gentleman answered. "I am a business man, and I can choose for myself. I know you are the only man who can build a house for me."

"Have you seen any of my plans, sir?" asked Horace.

"Never mind that," replied the gentleman. "My name is Wackerbath and I want to build a little house in the country. It must be modest and elegant. I know you can do it in fine style."

Here was a client at last! "I shall be happy to do my best," said Horace with wonderful calmness, though his heart was beating fast. "Can you tell me how much you are prepared to spend?"

"Well, I think I ought not to spend more than sixty thousand pounds."

Sixty thousand pounds! That was much more than Horace had expected. Mr Wackerbath explained that besides the house he wanted a garden and some cottages. So the sum would, perhaps, reach a hundred thousand. He asked Horace to come and see the site next day, then shook hands with him and left the office.

Chapter Six

Horace and Sylvia Become Engaged

Horace was more happy than words can tell. Now he had work which would give him at least six thousand pounds. He would make a name for himself, he was sure of it. Then he would speak to Sylvia's father and in a year they could marry. How wonderful it all was!

Horace quickly finished the work he had promised to do for Beevor. Then he locked his office and went out into the street. "I shall now go to Sylvia and if she is at home I shall tell her my good news," he said to himself.

He was lucky to find Sylvia alone. She was as happy to hear his story as he was to tell it.

Mrs Futvoye, who returned just then, was very much displeased to see Horace.

"I have come so soon," the young man hurried to explain, "because there is a change in my position." And in a few words he told her about the visit of his client.

"Well," said Mrs Futvoye, "you had better speak to my husband about it."

Some minutes later the professor came and Horace followed him to his study that was full of Oriental curiosities.

"Well," began Professor Futvoye as soon as they were seated, "so I was not mistaken - there was something in the brass bottle after all. Let me see it."

But Horace had almost forgotten the brass bottle. "Oh," he said, "I - I opened it, but there was nothing inside."

"Just as I expected," said the Professor. "I told you that there couldn't be anything in such a bottle; you simply threw your money away when you bought it."

"You are probably right, sir. But I wished to speak to you about a much more important matter." And Horace told the Professor that he wanted to marry Sylvia.

"Dear me!" said the Professor, "dear me! I had no idea of this! When you accompanied my wife and daughter so often last summer I thought it was because you wanted to help me, as I don't like to go out in hot weather."

"You see, sir, I fell in love with your daughter, as soon as I saw her. Only I felt then that, being poor, I had no right to speak to her or to you about my love. But now -"

And Ventimore told the story of his first client for the third time.

"In a year," he added, "I shall be earning several thousands and I -"

"When you have earned those thousands," the Professor interrupted dryly, "we shall talk of marriage. Meanwhile you and Sylvia may consider yourselves engaged if you like. But you must promise not to marry my daughter without my consent."

Horace gladly agreed to this, and they returned to the drawing-room. Mrs Futvoye invited the young man to stay to dinner.

"There is one more thing, my dear - er - er - Horace," said the Professor, "that you must promise us, if you want to marry Sylvia: you must not be extravagant."

"Father!" cried Sylvia, "why do you think that Horace is extravagant?"

"Only an extravagant man," the Professor explained, "can throw away his money on a worthless brass bottle, when it is quite clear that it contains nothing."

"To tell you the truth," said Horace, "I bought it because I thought that it might interest you."

"Then you were mistaken, sir. It does not interest me at all. It is probably a bazaar thing made in England."

"But there is an inscription of some sort on the lid," Horace insisted.

"You said nothing about an inscription yesterday," remarked the Professor with more interest. "I should certainly like to examine the bottle someday."

"Whenever you please, Professor. When can you come?"

"Well, I'm so busy all day that I can't say for certain. And your office is very far."

"I hope that now I shall be very busy too," replied Horace. "Besides the bottle is not at my office, but in my rooms. Perhaps you could all come and dine with me next week, and then, Professor, you could examine the inscription and find out what it really means."

The Professor was going to refuse, but Sylvia cried:

"Please, don't say no, father, I should so much like to see Horace's rooms!"

"All right, all right," said Professor Futvoye, "but I make one condition: Horace must give us a very simple dinner and not throw away his money on luxury. A young man who is going to marry must learn to be economical."

"I understand, sir," said Horace, "I shall do just as you wish."

The day of the dinner was fixed, and Horace left Sylvia's house feeling very happy.

Chapter Seven

The Jinnee Appears Again

The next day he went down to the country to see his client Wackerbath's family and choose the site for the house. The Wackerbaths were very kind to the young architect. They agreed to all his plans and Horace returned to town in very high spirits.

He had not been long in his room when suddenly the wall before him parted and through it stepped Fakrash-el- Aamash, the Jinnee, with a kind smile on his old face.

Ventimore had been so sure that the Jinnee was only a dream that he rubbed his eyes several times.

"Oh noble young man," said the new-comer, "it is really I, Fakrash-el-Aamash."

"I am very glad to see you," murmured Horace. "What can I do for you?"

"Nothing more - you have set me free. Now I want to do something for you."

"My dear sir, don't think any more about it," Horace hurried to say. "Were you not going to travel until you found the Sultan Suleyman?"

"I have not yet found him," the Jinnee answered, "our old books say: if you want to find something you must open every door."

"Quite right!" exclaimed Horace greatly pleased, "go and open all the doors of all the cities of the East; try again and again till you succeed!"

"You are very wise, my son," said Fakrash, "but wherever I go I shall always think of you because I must thank you for my freedom."

"Believe me, dear sir," cried Horace, "if you offer me any presents I shall refuse. I want nothing."

"But you said you wanted a client," the Jinnee exclaimed.

"I did say so last night, but now I have found a very good client."

"I am happy to hear it," said Fakrash, "for this is my first service to you."

"You - you sent him to me!" exclaimed Horace.

"I, and no other," said the Jinnee. "I was flying above a bridge when I overheard the words of a rich-looking man. He was talking to his friend and telling him that he wanted to build a palace, but did not know where to find a good architect. So I raised him in the air and carried him to your office."

"But he knew my name - he had my card in his pocket," said Horace.

"I gave it to him," answered the Jinnee proudly.

Now Horace remembered that he had given Fakrash his card the night before.

"Please, never do such a thing again," he said to the old man. "It was very kind of you, but now that I have work and can earn money I want nothing more."

"And why, my son, do you want to be rich?"

"Because," replied Horace, "I want to marry."

Fakrash smiled. "I understand," he said. "Of course, you are young and handsome. I shall find a beautiful wife for you."

"Please don't trouble," cried Horace hurriedly, for he had now begun to fear that the kind old Jinnee would do him more harm than good. "I have already found a wife for myself."

"Who is she?" asked Fakrash. "I can bring her to you!"

But Ventimore was afraid to mention Sylvia's name. "No, no," he said, "I spoke generally. Dear Mr Fakrash, you have already helped me. Don't do anything more. You must go and live in the East in order to find Suleyman."

"You are right, oh wise young man!" cried the Jinnee. "I shall go at once, but I will never, never forget you and my debt to you!" With these words he sank through the floor and was gone.

"Thank God," thought Horace, "he has taken my advice. Shall I tell my client, Mr Wackerbath, who brought him to me? Even if I do, he will not believe me. I know I shall do the work well. No, I shall tell nobody about the Jinnee. Perhaps he will never come back."

Chapter Eight
A Caravan from the East

Some days passed. Horace spent most of his time at his office. He was full of energy and enthusiasm and was very happy: he had waited for work so many years, and at last it had come!

The day of his little dinner-party was quite near and Horace decided to consult his landlady about the menu. "It must not be too grand, Mrs Rapkin," he said, "just a simple dinner, well cooked, and nicely served - you know so well how to do it."

Just as they were discussing the fish and the sauce Horace looked out of the window and suddenly exclaimed, "Camels!"

"Camels?" repeated Mrs Rapkin in surprise. She thought Horace wanted to order some camels for dinner.

"I'll be shot if these are not camels," cried Horace. "Don't you see them, Mrs Rapkin?" And indeed, a procession of camels was moving along the street.

"Probably they are going to the circus!" said Mrs Rapkin. "But no, look, sir, they are coming to our house."

"Don't talk such nonsense, Mrs Rapkin," cried Ventimore angrily. "What business have they here?"

"I really don't know, sir, but they have stopped at our door."

It was true. The camels had all lain down at the door and their dark-skinned drivers were looking up at the window and making low bows to Horace.

"I suppose I'd better go down and see what they want," he said. "Perhaps they have lost their way."

"I hope it isn't Fakrash," he thought to himself, as he was going down. As soon as the young man appeared in the street all the drivers fell at his feet.

"Get up at once," cried Horace angrily, "or I shall call the police."

"Do not be angry with your slaves," said one of them in English. "We have brought you presents from our lord, Fakrash-el-Aamash." And indeed each camel was carrying a heavy load.

"Carry them to my room, then," Horace cried in despair, "but please be quick about it!"

The landlady who had also come out of the house was terribly frightened, and Horace tried to calm her.

"It's all right, Mrs Rapkin," he said. "It's only a few Oriental things, you know - presents from a - a friend."

"How strange that he has sent them on camels, sir," said Mrs Rapkin, shaking her head.

"Not at all strange," Horace answered dryly, for he did not know what to say.

One after another the camel drivers came in, carrying the heavy loads. In a short time the room was full of dusty bags and old chests. Ventimore wanted to give the head-driver a guinea, but the man refused, and all the slaves left the room with low bows. Horace followed them into the street.

At the door of the house there was a crowd of people. A policeman came up and told Horace that he would be fined for the disorder in the street. The young man hurriedly gave him the guinea that the driver had not accepted and said: "The camels will presently go. They have brought me a few presents from a friend."

"A nice friend, I am sure, sir," said the policeman.

"Very," replied Horace angrily and returned to his room.

When he opened some of the bags and chests he saw that they were filled with the most wonderful things - carpets, jewels and precious vases. Horace could see at once that they were worth several hundred millions. But, strange to say, he did not feel glad.

"Damn!" was all he said.

Chapter Nine
Horace is Ungrateful

Ventimore was terribly angry with the Jinnee. He had told him so many times that he wanted nothing. What could he do with all those riches? Of course he was now so rich that he could easily rule the world if he liked.

"But I do not want to rule the world," he thought, "and I don't want to make new kingdoms. I only want to make new houses. All the millionaires that I have ever heard of only made other people miserable. And besides what can I do with all those wonderful jewels? Suppose I take one of those huge rubies to some merchant. He will think that it is false. He is sure to ask me where I got it from and will never believe my story if I tell him the truth. What an ass I shall look! And then the story will certainly get into the papers. Sylvia will hear of it and she will not agree to marry a man who is the friend of a Jinnee. Everybody will think that I have sold my soul to the devil himself. What a fool that old Fakrash is!"

Just then Mrs Rapkin appeared. "I suppose you are going to send back all those things, sir," she said. "You can't even move in your room while they are all lying about."

"I am busy now, Mrs Rapkin," he answered, "and I am not sure that I shall be able to send all these things back."

"Well, sir, to my mind they all look very old and dirty. Shall I tell my husband to carry them upstairs?"

"Certainly not," said Horace sharply, for he was afraid to let Mrs Rapkin see his treasures. "Don't touch them. Leave them just as they are, do you understand?"

"As you like, Mr Ventimore; only I don't understand how and where you will dine with your friends tomorrow, if all those things are lying about."

And indeed, there was no room even for Horace himself - still less for others.

"It will be all right," he said, "we shall manage somehow - leave it to me."

Before he went to his office that morning Horace locked the door of his room and took the key with him, for he was afraid that the landlady would wish to see the presents in his absence. When he came to the office he was nervous and absent-minded. He could not work properly. "It's no good," he cried, "today I cannot even plan a dog-kennel." He had hardly uttered these words when he saw Fakrash sitting at his side and smiling kindly at him.

"Peace be upon you!" said the Jinnee. "Tell me your troubles, oh my son!"

"It's nothing," answered Horace, who was angry with himself because he could not feel grateful to the kind old Jinnee. "I have some difficulties in my work, that's all."

"And have you received the presents that I sent you?" asked Fakrash.

"I have," replied Horace, "and I don't know how to thank you for them. But you have given me too much; I cannot accept such treasures."

"Nothing is too much for what you have done for me," said the Jinnee. "Besides, you have already accepted them, since they are at your house."

"I know," said Horace, "but - but - couldn't you take all those presents back again?"

Fakrash frowned.

"Are they not good enough?" he asked coldly.

"They are too good," cried Horace.

"I cannot understand you, my son," said the Jinnee. "In my days all men wanted to be as rich as possible. Are you not like other men then?"

"I'm not used to riches," explained Horace. "You know yourself that they do not always make a man happy. Besides, my room is too small for so many things and I am expecting some friends to dinner tomorrow."

"Oh wise young man!" exclaimed Fakrash, "if you feel that riches cannot make you happy I shall certainly take them back again. I shall send the caravan for them at once."

Horace was happy to hear these words. "You are very good, sir," he cried. "Here is the key of my room, I have locked it and your presents are there."

"The servants of a Jinnee can enter a locked room," said Fakrash proudly.

"Thank you so much," exclaimed Horace. "I cannot tell you how grateful I am to you for the work that you gave me," he added.

"When I came in I heard your words. You said that you had many difficulties in your work," said Fakrash. "What are those difficulties?"

"Well, you know, the house of my client must be large and beautiful - there is a lot of work to be done."

"Don't worry," said the Jinnee, "all will be well. I must leave you now, for I have not found Suleyman yet. We have an old saying: the time that is spent on kindness is not wasted."

"That is very well said," replied Horace, "but we have a saying too: kindness can sometimes do more harm than unkindness."

"How wise was the man who said this!" cried Fakrash. "He was almost as wise as you, oh my son; and I shall reward you yet for your wisdom."

"How often must I tell you that you have already rewarded me?" cried Horace impatiently. "Find Suleyman, make peace with him, and you will make me truly happy. Farewell."

"Farewell, oh wise young man," replied Fakrash, and with these words he stepped back into the fireplace and disappeared in a moment.

Horace was happy to be alone at last. He returned to his work with new energy. However, it was soon interrupted by his friend Beevor who had just returned from the country. When Horace told him of the work he was doing for Mr Wackerbath, Beevor congratulated him.

"I am very glad to hear of your luck, old chap," he cried. "I suppose the gentleman came to you because I was away. Now you must do your best to please him, Ventimore; mind you don't build him an Oriental palace - he won't like that, I know."

"All right, I shan't," said Horace with a laugh.

"If you have any difficulties, come to me," Beevor went on, "I'll be glad to help you. You can show me your plans now if you like."

"Oh, no," answered Horace, "I'll show them to you when they are quite ready."

"As you like, of course," said Beevor in an offended tone. "Don't say I did not warn you in time, that's all."

Horace returned to his work and made so much progress that by the end of the day his plans were almost ready. A few details more - and he could show them to his client.

When he came home in the evening Mrs Rapkin told him that the camels had returned and the drivers had carried away all the bags and chests.

"I don't know how they got in," she added, "for your room was locked. But they have taken everything away."

"Very good," answered Horace. Now he was a little sorry he had not kept a jewel for Sylvia and some Oriental curiosity for the Professor. But then how would he explain to them where those things had come from? "No," he said to himself, "it's best as it is."

Chapter Ten

Great Changes in Ventimore's Rooms

The young architect was feeling very happy when he walked home from his office the next evening. He had finished the plans for Mr Wackerbath's house and sent them to his client. He knew that his work was really good. And now Sylvia and her parents were coming to dinner for the first time. Mrs Rapkin was a very good cook and he was sure that she would prepare a nice dinner - nothing extravagant of course, since the Professor was against it. On his way home Horace bought some flowers. He was glad there was still time enough to put them in Mrs Rapkin's pretty vases before the guests arrived.

"How well the yellow roses will look on the table," he thought. "And Sylvia will like them... Ah, she is prettier than all the roses in the world!"

But when he came to his house and opened the street door he stood still in amazement - he was in a strange house. No, it was not a house at all - it was a wonderful Oriental palace. The walls were blue, red and gold, and covered with rich hangings; the floor was marble and in the middle of it there was a lovely fountain.

"I have probably made a mistake," he thought, but just then Mrs Rapkin appeared. Her figure seemed so strange and funny in this grand palace and her face was so miserable that he could hardly help laughing.

"Oh, Mr, Ventimore," she cried, "what have you done! If you wanted to make changes in the house, why did you not consult me and my husband?"

Horace did not know what to say. "It is Fakrash again!" he thought. "Oh, why did I tell him that I had invited my friends to dinner! Why did I tell him that my rooms were small! Why can't the old man leave me alone!"

But as he could not explain the truth to Mrs Rapkin, he said calmly: "Did I not tell you that I wanted some changes in the house? I could not think that the workers would begin so early. Did it take them a long time?"

"I can't tell you, sir, I went out to get some things for dinner, and when I came back it was all done and the workmen had gone home. I can't understand how they managed to do it all so quickly. You know, sir, when we were having repairs in our kitchen it took us ten days."

"Well," said Horace, "never mind that. They have done their work very well, haven't they?"

"Perhaps they have, sir," said Mrs Rapkin, "but my husband and I, we do not like it."

Ventimore did not like it either, but he could not say so.

"I am sorry for that, Mrs Rapkin," he said, "but I must go upstairs to my bedroom to dress for dinner."

"I beg your pardon, sir, but that is quite impossible - they have taken away the staircase."

"Taken away the staircase? Nonsense!" cried Horace.

"I also think it's nonsense, Mr Ventimore, but they have done it, and if you don't believe me, see for yourself." She drew the hangings aside and Horace saw a large hall with a high roof, from which hung several lamps. Along the walls there were large sofas. On the marble floor there were rich carpets and beautiful cushions.

"Oh," said the unhappy Horace, scarcely knowing what he was saying, "it - it all looks very cosy, Mrs Rapkin."

"I can't say so, sir. Now please tell me, where are you going to dine?"

"Where?" said Horace. "Why, here, of course. There is room enough."

"Certainly," replied Mrs Rapkin. "Only there are no tables in the house. Shall I lay the cloth on the floor?"

"Oh, there must be a table somewhere," cried Horace impatiently. "Do what you like, Mrs Rapkin, I must now dress for dinner."

Ventimore walked through the hall straight into a smaller room, which looked wonderful too. Probably this was his bedroom. A rich Oriental robe, all covered with gold and jewels, was prepared for him. "Fakrash has thought of everything," Horace said to himself, "but I prefer my own clothes." He called the landlady's husband.

"There have been a few changes here, as you see, Mr Rapkin," he said carelessly; "do you happen to know where they have put my clothes?"

"Your clothes indeed! I don't know where they have put my room, my bathroom, my pantry! I must tell you, sir, that you have gone too far."

"My good man, don't talk nonsense," Horace began.

"I'm not talking nonsense," cried Mr Rapkin. "I tell you that nobody has the right to change anything in my house when I don't want it. This house looks like a Turkish bath. It's ridiculous. Who will agree to live here now? You have ruined me, sir, me and my wife, after all we have done for you during these five years that you have been living with us."

"Now, listen to me, Mr Rapkin," said Horace impatiently. "The people who have made these changes have done more than I wanted. Of course you will not suffer for it. I shall tell them to put everything in order. Don't worry!"

"Thank you, sir," said Mr Rapkin, getting up from the marble floor where he had been sitting during this conversation.

"And now, my good Mr Rapkin, put on your best clothes and promise you will serve at dinner when my guests arrive."

Mr Rapkin promised to do everything and left the bedroom. Horace looked everywhere for his clothes but they were nowhere to be found. As he could not receive his guests in his morning clothes he decided to put on the Oriental robe, only without the turban. Then he went to the fine hall again. To his horror he saw that there was still no table there. At that moment Mr Rapkin appeared in his overcoat.

"This is too bad!" Horace cried. "Why are you not ready to serve yet?"

"I will not serve at all, sir; I will follow my wife who has already left the house," Rapkin answered.

"How can you leave me like that?" Horace cried. "Perhaps you will tell me now that the dinner is not ready!"

"Your dinner is ready, sir, and a crowd of black fellows have come to serve it. My wife left the house because she could not bear to see strangers in her kitchen. I shall follow her. There must be a law that

can protect a man in his own house, Mr Ventimore. I shall find that out. Meanwhile good evening to you, sir."

With these words he walked out, leaving Horace in despair.

"What shall I do?" the poor young man asked himself. "Where is the dinner? Where are the servants? What shall I say to my guests?"

Just then the hangings were drawn, and Horace saw two rows of black slaves in rich clothes. Between the two rows stood Sylvia and her parents, paralysed with amazement.

Chapter Eleven
The Dinner Party

"I can't tell how glad I am to see you," cried Horace as he shook hands with his guests.

"And these," said Mrs Futvoye, who was looking very fine in black silk, "and these are your modest rooms? They must be very comfortable indeed."

"I'm afraid you have spent a lot of money on them," said the Professor, trying not to show his surprise.

"Oh, no!" cried Horace. "Very little indeed!"

"But your rooms are wonderful, Horace!" exclaimed Sylvia. "And where did you get that splendid dressing-gown?"

"I must beg your pardon for this costume," said Horace, "but the fact is I couldn't find my evening clothes anywhere, so I put on the first things I found."

"Your costume goes very well with the Oriental character of your rooms," said the Professor.

"But I am afraid," added Sylvia, "that there is nothing Oriental in my clothes." She wore a green dress and looked very pretty in it. "How clever you are, Horace!" she went on. "How did you manage to change an ordinary London house into this beautiful Oriental palace?"

"Well, it was not really my work -" began Horace.

"Whoever did it, must know Oriental art and architecture very well," said the Professor. "May I ask the name of the firm that made all the changes?"

"I really can't tell you, sir," answered Horace, feeling very miserable.

"You can't tell me!" exclaimed the Professor. "You don't know the name of the firm that sent you the workers! You don't know to whom you paid such a lot of money?"

"Of course I know the name of the - er - firm," said Horace, feeling more and more uncomfortable, "only I can't remember it at this moment. They have done it wonderfully cheap."

"I am glad to hear it," said the Professor in his most unpleasant tone. "Where is your dining-room?"

"I think this is the dining-room," answered Horace helplessly, for he saw that the slaves were already bringing the dinner.

"You don't seem quite sure," said the Professor dryly.

"They always choose the place themselves," explained Horace hurriedly, "sometimes it is one place, sometimes another. I find it very amusing never to know where I shall dine."

"Oh, certainly," said the Professor coldly.

By this time the slaves had put a low stool on the carpet, placed the food on it, bowed very low and disappeared.

"Your servants," remarked the Professor, "have decided that we shall dine here."

"But, my dear Horace," cried Mrs Futvoye, "they have forgotten the chairs."

"We shall have to sit on these cushions, my dear," explained the Professor. "They always do in the East, but I must say that I find it most unpleasant at my age. Go away, go away!" he cried to one of the slaves who had come with a jug of water and was now trying to pour the water over the hands of the Professor. "I always wash my hands at home before I go out to dinner."

"It's only an Oriental ceremony, Professor," said Horace.

"I know that perfectly well, but it is out of place in London," replied the Professor.

Horace did not answer, for he was too busy: he was looking at the food that had been served to them and did not know what to do with it, because the black servants had not brought any forks. Both Horace and his guests had to eat with their fingers. Sylvia did it very prettily and enjoyed it very much, but her father and mother were disgusted.

"It may be all right in the desert," remarked the Professor, "but in London it seems absurd."

"I'm very sorry," said Horace, "I can't ask these men to bring any knives and forks, because they don't know what those things are. I hope you will like the fish, Professor," he added, though he did not know what fish it was. Unfortunately the sauce was so piquant that the Professor hurriedly put the dish aside.

Horace hoped that the next dish would be better. It was meat with strange fruit and sugar.

"It's delicious!" cried Sylvia.

"It's very curious," said the Professor, "only I don't want any more. May I ask for something to drink?" he added.

One of the servants at once brought him a cup of something smelling of violets.

"I am very sorry," Professor Futvoye said when he had tasted the drink, "I am afraid I shall be ill tomorrow if I drink it. May I have a glass of simple wine?"

Another slave immediately gave him one. He drank a little and put the glass down with a grimace. The wine was very strong and smelt of goatskin.

"It's an old and, probably, very fine wine," remarked the Professor with cold politeness, "but I certainly prefer whisky and soda."

Horace knew it was useless to ask the slaves for these things, so he answered: "I am very sorry, but there is no whisky in the house."

"It does not matter," said the Professor, "I can wait till I get home."

Sylvia and her mother were so kind that they said they liked the wine and the rice and meat that were served next.

Then came a whole lamb stuffed with nuts, pepper and rose leaves. Horace alone was brave enough to taste it, but a few minutes later he began to feel unwell.

"It was a wonderful dinner", said the Professor at last, "I've never eaten anything like it."

"Where did your landlady learn to cook like that?" asked Mrs Futvoye. "Has she lived in the East?"

"You see," answered Horace, "the dinner was not cooked by her. The dinner was sent to me by a firm - they sent the servants too."

"I was thinking," said the Professor, "that for a young man who is going to marry my daughter you are not economical enough."

"Now, my dear," interrupted his wife, "don't criticize Horace. I am sure he has done it very well. And even if he has spent too much money, it does not matter now."

"If he hopes to earn money in the future it is not a reason to spend so much today," the Professor said coldly. "Do you think to live in this style when you are married?"

Before Horace could answer, the slaves brought some rose water in beautiful silver basins.

"Where did you get these things?" the Professor asked with interest; "they are not bad, not bad at all. Can you give me the address of the shop where you bought them?"

"I'm sorry," answered Horace, "these basins were given to me by an Oriental gentleman. You don't know him, Professor, he is very old and never leaves his house."

"I should very much like to see his collection," said the Professor.

"Oh, he never shows it to anybody," cried Horace in despair.

Now the slaves carried away the food and with low bows invited the guests to sit down on the sofa by the wall. The Professor said he would like to have some coffee and a cigar. Horace tried to explain to the slaves what he wanted, but they did not understand him - coffee and tobacco had not been used in the East in the jinnee's time. So again Horace had to tell his guest that there was no coffee in the house, and no cigars either.

"It does not matter," said the Professor in an offended tone. "May I have a look at the brass bottle you got at the sale?"

Horace had no idea where it was. The Professor spoke to the slaves in Arabic and explained to them that he wanted to see the bottle. Two slaves brought it at once and put it at his feet. The Professor was greatly interested.

"It is certainly very old and very curious," he said, putting on his spectacles. "There is something like an inscription on the top, but I can't see it well."

While he was trying to make it out, Mrs Futvoye had her after-dinner sleep, and Horace sat down by Sylvia's side, hoping that they could have a quiet talk.

Chapter Twelve

The Dinner Party Comes to an Unhappy End

Suddenly some strange sounds rather like the miaowing of a cat were heard behind the hangings. Sylvia started, her mother woke up and the Professor asked very angrily:

"What's this? What's this? A new surprise?"

Horace had no time to answer: several musicians came in and began to play.

"What an extraordinary noise!" said Mrs Futvoye. "Is this called music?"

"Well, you see," replied Horace, "it is really rather harmonious, if one gets used to it."

"Perhaps it is," said the lady. "And has the firm sent those musicians too?"

"Oh yes! They - they play for nothing. They want to become famous."

"Horace, dear," whispered Sylvia, "it is foolish to spend such a lot of money just to please us, but I love you still better for it." And she put her hand in his.

Ventimore felt quite happy again. If only he could stop that terrible music! He waved his hand, thinking that they would understand and stop. However, they began to play still louder and then suddenly a young girl appeared from behind the curtains and began to dance slowly and gracefully.

She was very beautiful. Her eyes were large and black, her lips were red and her teeth very white. Her long dark hair and her robe were covered with jewels. Her dancing was like the movements of a snake. "What will my guests think!" said poor Horace to himself.

"And where does this girl come from?" asked Mrs Futvoye, who was now quite awake.

"The firm has sent her with the musicians. She is a poor girl; she has to dance because she has an invalid aunt on her hands."

Horace was in despair. He did not know himself what he was saying.

"This is all very strange," remarked Mrs Futvoye. "What is this young lady's name?"

"Tinkler," said Horace without thinking, "Miss Clementine Tinkler."

"But isn't she a foreigner?"

"She is. I think her mother was an Arab," answered Horace hurriedly. He felt that Sylvia had moved away from him.

"I really must stop this terrible music and dancing," he thought. He raised his hand, and the girl stopped dancing, but fell at his feet, seized his hand and covered it with kisses, saying something in Arabic.

"Does she always behave like this?" asked Mrs Futvoye with great indignation.

"I really don't know," said the unhappy Horace. "I can't make out what she is saying."

"If I understand her right," replied the Professor, "she calls you the light of her eyes and the love of her heart."

"Professor," cried Horace, "please tell them to go away!"

The Professor told the girl and the musicians a few words in Arabic, and they disappeared.

"What does all this mean?" asked Mrs Futvoye. "Does the firm that sends those musicians and dancers know how badly this young lady behaves?"

"The fact is," said Horace, "the firm did not send her at all."

"Does this mean that you have not been telling us the truth?" asked the Professor in an angry tone.

Horace was almost crying now. "You will not believe me if I tell you the whole truth," he exclaimed.

"In this case," said the Professor, "your engagement is broken off. Please, call one of your servants and ask him to find a cab."

But the slaves had all disappeared.

"Don't trouble," said the Professor coldly, "we shall walk until we find a cab. Good night, Mr Ventimore; you must understand that you cannot come to our house anymore."

"I have done nothing to deserve it!" cried poor Horace.

"I cannot agree with you, sir," said Professor Futvoye. "I told you not to be extravagant, and you make a feast like a millionaire, with music and dancing that are quite out of place in the presence of English ladies. My only daughter cannot be happy with a young man who has such strange tastes."

"Oh, Horace!" exclaimed Sylvia, "if you love me, you will explain everything."

"So far your explanations have not been very good," the Professor said ironically, "so please don't begin any new ones."

Mrs Futvoye left the house without a word. It was clear that she agreed with her husband. Sylvia followed her.

Horace was in despair. He knew that it was the end. For a few moments he stood in the hall not knowing what to do. Then suddenly he ran after them.

"Professor," he cried, "please get a cab for the ladies and come back! I shall tell you my secret."

"The street is not the place for such a conversation," the Professor answered coldly. "Besides you forget your clothes, young man. Very soon there will be a crowd around us. I shall be at home tomorrow if you want to see me."

But Horace begged him so hard that the Professor could not refuse and a few moments later he returned to Ventimore's rooms.

"Now, young man," he said, "I can give you just ten minutes for your story. So don't make it too long."

Horace took his courage in both hands and told Professor Futvoye all that had happened since the day he had opened the brass bottle. The old gentleman listened very attentively and then said:

"This is a very sad business. You must leave London at once."

"That's impossible, sir, you forget my work!"

"Never mind your work, my boy, drop it, travel by sea, go round the world. Consult a doctor. He'll tell you the same thing."

"Consult a - Good God!" cried Horace, "you think that I am mad!"

"No, no, my dear boy, not mad, only you are tired and nervous and you need a change."

"So you think I had a hallucination, and there was no Jinnee in that bottle?"

"Of course there wasn't," answered the Professor.

"But the slaves, the palace, my robe - are they all hallucinations?"

"No, they are not. You have very possibly bought them yourself."

"But you know that the brass bottle has a lid with an inscription. Perhaps this inscription will tell you the story of the Jinnee, and then you will believe that I am neither a madman nor a liar. Here it is - read it, sir."

"It is too dark just now," replied the Professor, "but if you hope that I shall not be able to make out this inscription, you are mistaken."

"So much the better, sir," answered Horace. "Please take the lid home and give me your answer when you have read what is written on it."

The Professor took the lid, said good night and left Horace to his sad thoughts. He had lost Sylvia, perhaps, forever. He was quite helpless, he did not know what to do. "Oh, Fakrash, what have you done!" he cried aloud.

At that moment the wall parted and the old Jinnee appeared in the room with a smile on his face.

Chapter Thirteen
Fakrash is Angry with Horace

"May Allah bless you," said Fakrash. "I hope you are pleased with the house I have built for you?" And he looked round with pride.

Horace could only say that he had never seen such a fine house before.

"It is not yet good enough for you, my son," replied Fakrash. "Tell me, were your friends surprised at your feast?"

"They were so much surprised that they will never come here again," said Horace.

"Why so? Was not the meat fat and the wine sweet?"

"Oh yes! it was," the young man replied, "only not everybody likes Arabian cooking. And then they did not like the dancing girl."

"Was she not as lovely as the moon and as graceful as a gazelle?"

"She was," said Horace, "but one of my guests was the young lady to whom I am engaged and the others were her father and mother. So they were greatly displeased when your gazelle fell at my feet, kissed my hand and called me the light of her eyes. Perhaps all gazelles do that; but I had to explain everything to the father of the young lady and tell him that it was not my fault. He did not believe me, I am afraid. My only hope is that the inscription on the lid of your bottle will tell your story to him. Perhaps it is written there why Suleyman shut you up in that bottle. The Professor will read it and see that I told him the truth."

"How can he read something that was written so long ago?" the Jinnee asked.

"Oh, he is a learned man and can make out any inscription."

The effect of these words on Fakrash was quite unexpected. The expression of the Jinnee's face which was always so kind now became terrible and with a loud cry he grew twice taller than he usually was.

"How dared you give the brass bottle to the learned man!" he shouted.

"My dear sir," said Ventimore quietly. "I have given the Professor only the lid with the inscription. I don't think I have hurt you in any way."

"You are right, my son," said the Jinnee returning to his usual size. "I spoke in anger. But do you think the learned man has already read what was written on the lid?"

"No, he hasn't. He won't begin till tomorrow. And if he doesn't find anything about you there, he will not believe me."

"If it is so important for you," said Fakrash, "I shall go to this learned man myself and tell him that you have not lied to him!"

Horace was very glad to hear it and immediately gave the Jinnee the Professor's address. "But please don't go tonight," he begged, "you may frighten him. Go tomorrow after breakfast, he will be at home then."

"Tonight," said the Jinnee, "I am again going in search of Suleyman. I have not been able to find him yet. But before I go, is there anything that I can do for you?"

"There is something," answered Horace. "Please, change this house into what it was before. You see, it is not mine; the landlord and the landlady are terribly angry with me and have gone away. They will probably go to law and I shall have to pay a lot of money."

"This is the second time that you refuse my present," said the Jinnee angrily. "But I shall do as you wish, for I cannot refuse you anything. Good-bye."

With these words Fakrash raised his arms and disappeared through the ceiling. At the same moment Horace heard a great noise. He felt that the floor was slipping away from under his feet and he suddenly found himself in the dark. When everything was quiet again Horace saw that his rooms were exactly as they had been before. He went to bed in high spirits, hoping that Fakrash would explain everything to the old gentleman, and the Professor would allow him to marry Sylvia.

The next morning Horace found that his breakfast was ready and that Mrs Rapkin was waiting for him in the dining-room. To his surprise she said: "I am sorry, Mr Ventimore, that my husband and I went away last night, but you know, we could not recognize our own house. Everything seemed quite different."

"I was very much displeased, Mrs Rapkin," Horace answered, "and I cannot understand what changes you saw in the house. It is just the same."

"Now it is, sir, but yesterday there were arches and marble floors, and fountains and black servants. My husband and I both saw them."

"Mr Rapkin was drunk; no wonder he saw strange things. And you, Mrs Rapkin, were probably excited after the camels came and brought all these things. So you had a hallucination."

"You are right, sir," said the good woman. "I am very sorry I left you like that, and dinner was only half ready too."

"It's all right, Mrs Rapkin, I managed somehow. Let us forget about it."

"I want to ask you about the brass bottle that you bought at the auction, sir," said Mrs Rapkin. "It is in the coal-cellar now. What shall I do with it? It is so ugly and dirty."

"Oh, do what you like with it," answered Horace, "I must be off to my office now."

Ventimore felt almost happy again: "That old Fakrash," he thought as he was going to his office, "understood that he had brought me into trouble and he was quite ready to help me. Besides I must not forget that he sent me my first client. By the way, I am almost sure that old Wackerbath is pleased with my plans."

Horace was at his table working at the decorations of his client's house, when his friend Beevor came in.

"I've got nothing to do just now," he said, "so I can have a look at your plans, if they are ready."

Ventimore told him that he had already sent them to his client.

"That is rather quick work!" his friend exclaimed. "Why didn't you show them to me? I always show you my work."

"I am sorry, old man, but Wackerbath was in a hurry, so I sent all the plans to him as soon as I could."

"Well, do you think he will like them?"

"I am sure he will. I know that they are really good," Horace said.

"Let us hope they are. But don't think you are a great architect just because you have got a sixty thousand pound order," Beevor answered and walked out of the office.

Chapter Fourteen
Fakrash Grows Mischievous

"I think I have offended poor Beevor," Horace said to himself as he was having his lunch a little later in the day. "I shall ask him to help me and he will no longer be angry." With these thoughts Ventimore returned to his office.

Just as he was going to open the door he heard voices in the room. "My dear sir," Beevor was saying to someone, "this is not my business and I cannot give you my opinion - but here is Mr Ventimore himself."

Horace entered and saw Mr Wackerbath. His face was purple with rage. "Sir," he began, "sir -"

"There seems to be a misunderstanding, my dear Ventimore," explained Beevor, trying not to show his triumph. "I shall leave you so that you can talk it over quietly."

"Quietly!" exclaimed Mr Wackerbath, "quietly!!!" He could not go on.

"I cannot understand anything, sir," exclaimed Horace. "Please, explain why you are so angry!"

"Angry! I am disgusted, sir," shouted Wackerbath.

"Am I really a fool?" thought the unhappy Horace. "No, I know my work is good!" Aloud he said, "I am sorry you are displeased, sir. I have really done my best."

"Oh, yes, you have done your best, indeed. How could you finish it all so quickly, I wonder?"

"I worked day and night, and this is all the thanks that I get for it!" exclaimed Horace.

"Thanks?" Mr Wackerbath shouted. "You - you charlatan! You expect thanks!"

"Now look here, Mr Wackerbath," said Horace, who was beginning to get very angry. "You have no right to talk like this. Tell me quietly what you dislike."

"I dislike the whole damned thing, sir! It is the work of a madman! A place in which no respectable Englishman can live even for an hour!"

"Oh," said Horace, "then it is useless to try to change anything."

"Absolutely useless", cried Mr Wackerbath.

"Well, there is nothing more to say then," said Horace sadly. "I think you have lost nothing - you can tear my plans and go to Mr Beevor."

"What do you mean?" shouted Mr Wackerbath. "What can I do when the damned house is already built!"

"Built!" Horace repeated in a weak voice.

"I tell you, sir, I saw it with my own eyes, and my wife saw it too!!"

Then Horace understood all. It was certainly the work of the Jinnee again. He had built the house in one night - in his usual way.

"I - I -" began Horace and stopped. To his horror he saw the Jinnee himself in his green robes, standing in the middle of the room and smiling at Mr Wackerbath.

"I greet you," said Fakrash. "I think you are the merchant for whom my son has built a house?"

"I am," answered Mr Wackerbath. "Are you his father?"

"No, no," exclaimed Horace, "he's a kind of partner."

"Don't you think that he is a wonderful architect?" asked Fakrash. "Is not the palace he has built for you a wonder of beauty?"

"No, sir," shouted Wackerbath who was now in a fury. "It's an idiotic Oriental house that has neither bedrooms nor bathrooms."

Now Horace felt almost happy. So it was not his plans that his client disliked but the palace built by the Jinnee.

"Mr Wackerbath," he said, "believe me, it was not I, but this gentleman who built this house for you. Since he does not ask you to pay for it, take it as a present and don't be angry."

"Not angry!" exclaimed Wackerbath. "Not angry at this idiotic building! Why, everybody will laugh at me! I shall go to law! To the House of Lords! I shall fight as long as I can stand."

"As long as you can stand," repeated Fakrash, "then you will not stand at all! On all fours, ungrateful dog, and move like that while you live. I, Fakrash-el-Aamash, command you!"

At the same moment the respectable merchant fell on his knees and hands. "How dare you, sir!" he shouted, "let me get up at once!"

"Go to your kennel, you dog," replied the Jinnee, opening the door.

"I can't," cried the unhappy man. "What will people say when they see me like this? Oh, please, let me get up!"

"Stop this at once, Mr Fakrash," cried Horace angrily.

"Never," answered Fakrash. "He dared to call my palace idiotic! Let him live in the dust forever."

"I didn't say I disliked your palace, sir," cried poor Mr Wackerbath. "It's a wonderful building. I like it. I shall live in it. Only let me rise to my feet."

"Do as he asks you," said Horace to the Jinnee, "or I will never speak to you again."

"I cannot refuse you," replied Fakrash. "Rise, then, and go," he added, turning to poor Mr Wackerbath.

At this moment Beevor came into the room. He was very curious to see what was going on.

"Oh Ventimore," he began, "did I leave my- I beg your pardon, I thought you were alone."

"Don't go, sir," cried Mr Wackerbath. "I want to tell you how wrong I was. The house is wonderful, I like it very much, especially the absence of bathrooms. Forget what I said. Good afternoon, gentlemen!" and Mr Wackerbath ran out of the room.

"Your new friend," whispered Beevor, "certainly knows how to talk to clients, but believe me, he looks dangerous." With these words he also hurried out.

Horace knew very well now that the Jinnee was dangerous. "What have you done, Mr Fakrash!" he cried when they were alone. "I

shall never get any clients again! Don't you understand that a beautiful Oriental palace is out of place in England? Nobody will give me any work now."

"What is your wish then?" asked the Jinnee, a little confused.

"Take away that palace," begged Horace.

"I cannot refuse you anything," replied the Jinnee coldly, "but remember, this is the last time that I fulfill your wish." He uttered a few words in a low voice and then added, "The palace is gone."

"I am very grateful to you, Mr Fakrash!" cried Horace. "But please tell me, have you spoken to Professor Futvoye?"

"I have," answered Fakrash.

"So now he knows that I told him the truth about that bottle?"

"Certainly," replied Fakrash.

"How good you are!" exclaimed Horace. "So if I go to see him now, he will be kind to me?"

"I don't think so," answered the Jinnee.

"But why," asked Horace, "if he knows all?"

"Because," replied the Jinnee with a mischievous smile, "because in order to make him believe your story I had to turn him into an ugly mule."

"What!" cried Horace. But the Jinnee had already disappeared.

Ventimore sat down with his head in his hands. His first thought was about Sylvia. "How terrible this is for her," he said to himself. "Perhaps she will think that it is all my fault. She will never forgive me and will never agree to marry me. At any rate I must go there at once."

Chapter Fifteen

The Professor Plays a New Role

With a heavy heart Ventimore rang the bell at the door of the Professor's house. Jessie, the pretty maid of the Futvoyes, opened the door and smiled.

"That's good," thought Horace, "a girl whose master has been turned into a mule cannot smile like that."

"Is the Professor in?" he said aloud.

"He is at home, sir, but he is working hard in his study and must not be disturbed."

"This is good too," thought Horace. "A mule cannot do any literary work. Perhaps Fakrash only laughed at me?"

"May I see Miss Futvoye then?" he added aloud.

"Miss Futvoye is with the Professor," said the maid, "Mrs Futvoye is in the drawing-room, I think."

As soon as Horace saw Sylvia's mother he understood that Fakrash had told him the truth. She seemed calm, but it was clear that she had some great trouble.

"I did not expect you today," she began. "Have you come to explain the strange things that happened at your dinner-party last night?"

"The fact is," said Horace, "I was rather anxious about the Professor."

"And why so?" asked the poor lady in a trembling voice. "He is quite well."

"I'm very glad to hear it," said Horace, beginning to hope again. "May I see him for a moment?"

"Oh no!" cried Mrs Futvoye. "After the scene that took place last night my husband cannot see you."

"But he was quite friendly to me when we parted," protested Horace.

"You will find a great change in him now," Mrs Futvoye said in a low voice. Horace knew that himself.

"But may I see Sylvia?" he asked.

"No," said Mrs Futvoye, "she is busy; she is helping her father. He has a lecture tomorrow night and he is dictating it to her."

At this moment Sylvia herself ran into the room. "Mother," she cried without seeing Horace, "come quick. Father has just begun to kick again. Oh, you are here, Horace! Father - father is unwell."

"Darling," said Horace, going to her and taking both her hands, "I know all - do you understand? - all!"

"Mother," cried Sylvia, "have you told him - already? How could you!"

"I have told him nothing, my dear," replied her mother. "And after all I don't know why this attack of gout that your poor father has must be such a secret. But I had better go and see if your father wants anything."

Sylvia sat down. "You don't know how terribly people kick when they have the gout," she remarked.

"Oh yes, I do," answered Horace.

"Especially when it's in both legs," continued Sylvia.

"Or in all four," said Horace.

"Then you do know!" cried Sylvia. "Why have you come then?"

"Dearest," said Horace, "this is the time when my place is near you - and him."

"Not near father," she said with tears in her eyes, "it is not safe. You don't know what he is."

"I know that he looks like a - er - a sort of quadruped."

"He's a mule," sobbed Sylvia, "an ugly mule!"

"But you must let me see him, my darling," said Horace, "because I believe I shall be able to help him."

"How can you help him?" she asked with sudden suspicion. "Then it was you who did it? No, I don't believe it. It would be too horrid!"

"What do you mean, Sylvia? What did I do? Were you not with your father when it happened?"

"No," she replied. "Mother heard angry voices in the study. She waited a little, then she went in and found father alone. He looked as usual, and then quite suddenly he turned into a mule before her eyes. Mother is wonderful. She did not lose her head and told nobody but me."

"That's very good!" said Horace. "I was afraid -"

"So you knew everything? Then it was really you who did it. Oh, Horace, you have been so cruel! That means you don't love me at all!"

"Sylvia, you say so because you don't know the whole story," cried Horace. "Listen to me, my darling!" And he told her all about the brass bottle and the old Jinnee.

"Oh, Horace," cried Sylvia when she had heard the whole story, "why did you let that horrid Jinnee out of the bottle?"

"I did not know that he was there until he came out," explained Horace, "and then he isn't so horrid."

"If he isn't, let him turn father into a man again!"

"He certainly will do that as soon as he comes," promised Horace.

"But when will he come?"

"Oh, that is more than I can say. He must be in China now."

"Horace! Then he won't be back for months and months!"

"He will. You don't know how quickly Jinn travel. And now I shall really go and see your father."

Mrs Futvoye who had entered the room again heard these words. "Oh no," she cried. "You must not. His illness has made him so nervous. He must see a doctor first."

"I am afraid he had better see a vet," thought Horace. But aloud he said: "I know everything, Mrs Futvoye. Please take me to him."

"Yes, mother, let Horace see father," begged Sylvia. "Perhaps he will be able to help him."

"Come then, Mr Ventimore," said Mrs Futvoye. "But I warn you that you must be very careful with him."

"Anthony, my love," she said, entering the study with Horace, "here is Mr Ventimore who wants to see you."

For answer the Professor only stamped and snorted.

"My dear," Mrs Futvoye continued, "please try to be calm. Think of the servants downstairs."

Ventimore was silent with horror. He had never seen a more ugly and angry mule. Most of the furniture in the room and the glass doors of the book-cases were broken to pieces, the Oriental collections were on the floor, and even the mummy had suffered from the Professor's hoofs. Horace felt that usual expressions of sympathy were out of place here.

"Believe me, sir," he began, "that I have come here - no, please, don't kick so hard before you have heard me."

But the mule had already turned its back on the visitor and was raising its hind legs.

"Listen to me, sir," Horace repeated, trying to keep out of the mule's way. "If you kill me, as you want to do, you will kill the only man who can save you."

The mule seemed to understand this and moved into a corner.

"If you can understand me, sir," continued Horace, "please raise your right ear."

The mule's right ear rose immediately.

"Very good, sir," said Horace. "First of all, I must tell you that this was the Jinnee's doing - oh, please, don't stamp like this, you will fall through the floor."

At this the angry mule rushed at Ventimore and Horace was obliged to hide behind a large armchair.

"I am quite sure, sir," he continued hurriedly, "that in a few hours you will laugh - no, please don't kick again - at this catastrophe. The Jinnee has really a kind heart and he will set you free, as soon as I explain to him what a terrible mistake he has made. Please, give me your - er - er - hoof to show me you are not angry with me."

But the mule was so furious that the young man had to leave the study. He went home, hoping that the old Jinnee would soon return. The evening passed, and night came, but Fakrash did not appear.

Chapter Sixteen
The Jinnee's Return

Horace lay awake almost all the night thinking of the terrible event in the Futvoye family. Morning came, but there was still no Jinnee. The poor young man was in despair. What could he do? How could he help the miserable father of his dear Sylvia?

"Oh, Fakrash," he cried as he stood at the window, "will you never come back?"

"I am at your service," said a voice that Horace knew very well. He turned and saw Fakrash standing behind him with his usual kind smile.

"Where on earth have you been all this time?" Horace cried impatiently.

"I haven't been on the earth, but in the air, working for your good," the old man answered proudly.

"If you have done me as much good there as here, I must thank you," said Horace ironically.

"I am glad you are so grateful, oh my son," answered Fakrash.

"I'm not grateful, I am very angry," cried Horace. "How dared you turn a learned man into a mule? Can't you understand how unhappy you have made the Professor!"

"He only got what he deserved," the Jinnee answered coldly. "Besides, mules are very useful animals."

"Well, do you think you have helped me by this? Do you think the Professor will allow me to marry his daughter now?"

"You will not marry his daughter, oh my son, for I, Fakrash, do not wish it."

"But I want to marry her, even if you don't wish it," cried Horace angrily.

"She won't marry you while her father remains a mule."

"Of course not. But don't you understand that you are making me very unhappy?"

"I was not thinking of your happiness in this matter," replied Fakrash.

"Then please think of it now. I promised to help my friends, and I must do so. Change the Professor into a man again!"

"There are things that cannot be changed," said the Jinnee coldly. "I have forgotten the way."

"Nonsense!" cried Horace, "I don't believe it. You are such a clever old Jinnee - you can do anything if you like. Just think how quickly you changed this house. It was wonderful!"

"Well, perhaps I can do it, but I don't want to," answered the Jinnee.

"Why not?" cried Horace in despair.

"Because, my son, upon the lid of the bottle this learned man read some dirty lies about me, and he wanted to tell all the world about it."

"If they are lies, it does not matter who hears them," replied Horace.

"Not all of them are lies," said the Jinnee. "As I have now learned, Suleyman, who put me in that bottle, is dead, and I want to go back to my people, the Jinn, and live in peace. But this will be impossible if all the world hears what I have done."

"Look here," said Ventimore, "I am quite sure the Professor will agree not to tell the world about it. And then haven't you taken the lid back?"

"No, he has got it still," answered the Jinnee. "But as he is a mule it does not matter."

"It matters very much," said Horace. "He has several friends who can make out that inscription as easily as he could."

"Is this the truth?" asked the Jinnee, very much frightened.

"Of course," said Horace. "And then, as you have turned the Professor into a mule, all his things will be sold, and your lid among them. They will probably be bought by the British Museum, and there all the

Orientalists of Europe will read the inscription. Have you thought of all that?"

"Oh wise young man!" cried the Jinnee. "Indeed I had not thought of that, and you have opened my eyes. I must return to that man-mule and tell him to give me back the lid."

"He can't do that since he is a mule," said Ventimore. "And besides, even if you allow him to speak, he is terribly angry and won't tell you anything till you have turned him into a man again."

"That will depend on his daughter. I must see her first," said Fakrash.

"You can only see her in my presence. And give me your word, that you will behave yourself."

"I give you my word," said Fakrash.

"Very well then," replied Horace, "but you will frighten her if you appear in this turban and in your green robe. Can't you put on the usual clothes of an Englishman?"

"Will that be all right?" asked the Jinnee, suddenly appearing in modern clothes.

"That's better," said Horace, though in reality the Jinnee looked like a clown in his new clothes. "Come on quick, let's take a cab."

"We shall be there in less than twenty seconds," said Fakrash, seizing him by the arm and raising him into the air. The next moment they were standing at the door of the Futvoyes' house.

"Please, wait a little," whispered Horace as soon as he could speak. "Let me prepare them for your visit. When they are ready I shall come to the window and give you a signal. I hope that nobody has seen our flight," he added anxiously.

"Nobody can follow the flight of a Jinnee," Fakrash answered proudly. "Now go in. I shall wait here if it is your wish."

Horace rang the bell and when Jessie opened the door he went straight to the drawing-room where he found Sylvia very pale but calm.

"Father has had a good night," she said. "He even had a carrot for breakfast, but he is nervous, because he has a lecture tonight... Oh, Horace!" she cried suddenly, "I cannot bear it any more. The servants will

soon know there is a mule in the study, and what shall we do then? Why do you come if you can't do anything?"

"I am here because I have good news for you. The Jinnee has come with me. He has promised to save your father, but he wishes to speak to you first."

"To me? Oh no, Horace!" exclaimed Sylvia. "I am afraid of him! I don't know how to speak to gentlemen that come out of bottles!"

"You must, darling. Don't be afraid. He is an old fool, but he is kind."

"If I must," she replied trembling, "I - I'll try to be as nice to him as I can."

Chapter Seventeen
Sylvia Has to Choose

Horace went to the window and gave the signal. In a moment Fakrash appeared in the room with his tall hat on his head.

"In England," Horace told him, "men take off their hats in the presence of ladies." Fakrash took off his hat with both hands.

"This lady is pretty," he said, looking at Sylvia, "but there are many who are more beautiful."

"I don't ask for your criticism," cried Ventimore angrily. "I think that there is nobody like her in the world. And I ask you not to make her unhappy any longer."

"Please, dear Mr Jinnee," whispered Sylvia with tears in her eyes. "Help my father if you can."

"I have thought about that lid," Fakrash said to Ventimore, paying no attention to Sylvia. "You are right of course. What does it matter if all the world knows what was written on the lid? Nobody will be interested in my affairs. So it is not important in whose hands the lid is. Don't you agree with me?"

"Of course I do," answered Horace, "and this means that -"

"This means," interrupted the Jinnee, "that it is all one to me whether the father of this lady is a mule or a man. Therefore it is I, and not you, who can make conditions. I shall turn this mule into a man if you promise not to marry the young lady."

"I can't give her up!" cried Horace, "I love her!"

"Lady," said the Jinnee addressing Sylvia for the first time, "will you give up my son? He must not marry you."

"How can I give him up," cried Sylvia, "when I love him so much, and he loves me?"

"Don't think about him, for he will soon forget you," said the Jinnee calmly, "and remember, if you refuse, your father will remain a mule to the end of his days."

"Oh, I cannot do that!" cried Sylvia. "Poor father! Horace, what shall I say?"

"It is really very hard to decide," groaned Horace. "Fakrash, leave us for a moment, please."

"Certainly," answered the Jinnee and disappeared.

"Darling," said Horace, "I am afraid we can do nothing. We must agree to his conditions. We must think of your father first; besides, you don't know yet that I have lost my only client: my reputation is ruined. I have no home for you. No, I can't ask you to marry me."

"I never thought you could agree so easily to give me up," said Sylvia, crying bitterly, "If we part now, it will be forever."

"Well, have you decided?" asked the Jinnee, suddenly appearing before them.

"Yes," answered Horace, "we give each other up on condition that this young lady's father becomes a man again."

"Good," said Fakrash, "let us go to him at once."

As soon as they entered the study the Professor seemed to recognize his enemy and began to kick furiously.

"Oh learned man," said the Jinnee, "I command you to speak: where is the lid with the inscription?"

The Professor spoke and it was very strange to hear a mule speak: "I will not tell you; I am not afraid of you, you cannot do worse to me than you have done."

"As you like, but then you will always be a mule," said Fakrash.

"It is in the top right-hand drawer of my writing-table," said the mule after a pause. Fakrash found the lid at once and put it in his pocket.

"And now," he said, "raise your right hoof and swear that you will never tell anyone what you have read on that lid."

The mule showed all its teeth in anger but did as it was told.

"Good," said the Jinnee. "Now let the young woman bring me a cup of water."

As soon as Sylvia had brought the water Fakrash poured it over the mule, saying, "Return to your own form." A minute later the Professor stood once more before them.

Chapter Eighteen
Horace and Sylvia Part

Sylvia and her mother both kissed him again and again with tears of joy.

"Enough, enough," Professor Futvoye said angrily. "Don't make such a fuss about me. I'm very sorry that you, women, could not think of such a simple thing as to pour some water over me. Women always lose their heads. I alone remained calm." The Professor did not seem to remember that he had broken almost all the furniture in the room.

"As to you, Ventimore," he added, "I can guess what part you played in this business, and I must tell you never to come to our house again."

"Father," said Sylvia in a trembling voice, "Horace and I have just agreed to part."

"I ordered them to do so," explained Fakrash.

"A man who has been put into a bottle for his crimes -" began the Professor angrily.

"Do you want to become a mule again?" Fakrash interrupted him quietly. "It will not be difficult for me to -"

"You misunderstand me, sir," the Professor cried hurriedly. "I only wanted to congratulate you on your escape from this bottle."

"Thank you," replied Fakrash, "now I shall make my son happy - I shall marry him to the greatest beauty in the world."

"You never told me that, Horace," exclaimed Sylvia.

"This is the first time I hear about it," cried the unhappy young man. "Believe me, Sylvia dear, he cannot make me marry against my will."

"If you don't obey my orders," said Fakrash, "I promise you that your friends will suffer."

"You see, Sylvia," cried Horace, "I shall have to do what he orders."

"Why don't you tell me honestly that you are glad not to marry me, Horace?" cried Sylvia.

"This is too much!" he exclaimed. "Sylvia, what makes you think so? Mr Fakrash," he added, speaking through his teeth, "please leave us for a moment."

The Jinnee disappeared at once to the great surprise and joy of the Futvoyes.

"Sylvia, darling," Horace began, but she interrupted him.

"I see now," she said coldly, "that you always wanted to give me up. But I do not understand why you made the Jinnee torture poor father."

Horace was so miserable that he could not find words to answer her.

"You seem to be great friends with that Jinnee," the Professor added; "perhaps you will see that such things do not happen again. And now, Mr Ventimore, leave my house."

"Good-bye, Horace," said Mrs Futvoye more kindly. "I am sorry for you and I shall never forget that without your help my husband would still be kicking and breaking everything in the house."

What could poor Horace do? "Good-bye, Sylvia," he said sadly and turned to the door. Suddenly Sylvia ran after him.

"Forgive me, Horace," she cried, "I do believe you and I shall always love you."

"Don't cry so, Sylvia," Horace told her. "I shall try to speak to that old idiot Fakrash. Perhaps all will soon be well again."

They kissed for the last time and parted.

Chapter Nineteen

The Jinnee Finds a Wife for Horace

As soon as Horace had shut the door behind him, he felt that he was raised and carried through the air with terrible speed. A moment later the young man found himself in his own room again. The Jinnee was standing before him and smiling kindly.

"You seem to be very pleased with your work," Horace told him angrily. "To whom do you want to marry me?"

"To the beautiful Bedeea-el-Jemal, the daughter of the King of the Jinn," answered Fakrash. "Her cheeks are as red as wine, her nose is like a knife and her eyes are as large as the eyes of a wild cow."

"She must be very beautiful indeed," said poor Horace, "but when did you see her last?"

"Before I was put into the bottle, of course."

"Don't you think she is changed since then? I know she is a Jinnee, but so are you - and your hair and beard are quite grey."

"That is only because I was in the bottle for such a long time. But she is as young as she was three thousand years ago. Of course you will have to fight my enemy Jarjarees, who wants to marry her himself."

"I am not a coward," replied Ventimore, "but I do not want to fight a powerful Jinnee for the hand of a lady whom I have never seen."

"You must," said Fakrash. "Remember, first he will appear to you as a lion, then as a snake and then as some other wild beast. Don't be afraid, I shall help you, oh my son, and you will kill my enemy."

"Why don't you do it yourself?" asked Horace.

"Because it is written in the old books that a man, not a Jinnee, will kill Jarjarees and marry Bedeea."

Horace understood that he had to think of some other way out. "I'm afraid," he began, "you have been in the bottle so long that you have forgotten what women like."

"Nobody can forget such a thing," said Fakrash angrily.

"Yet you forget," Horace went on, "that all women and especially princesses like famous men. Your Bedeea will never agree to marry a poor architect whom nobody knows."

"I can make you the richest man in the world," cried Fakrash.

"Oh no, you can't," said Horace; "I refused your presents and you promised not to give me any new ones. Your princess will never agree to marry me."

"I cannot believe," said Fakrash, "that a wise man like you remains unknown to the world."

"I am absolutely unknown to anybody," Horace repeated. "Go to the streets of London. Speak to the people there. You will see that out of five hundred only two or three have ever heard my name. Believe me, your princess will agree to marry only a very famous man."

"Perhaps you are right," said Fakrash thoughtfully, "but what do you call a famous man?"

"Well, it is a man whom everybody knows and honours," answered Horace.

"And how do they honour a famous man?"

"In London," explained Horace, "the highest honour that a man can have is to receive the freedom of the City. This is done very rarely indeed."

To his surprise, the Jinnee seemed to believe him and suddenly disappeared. Horace remained alone. "I hope that Fakrash will get five hundred very rude answers to his questions if he goes into the street and asks about me," he thought.

Before he went to bed Horace took a volume of the Arabian Nights. "Perhaps I shall find here the story of Jarjarees," he said to himself. "Then I can see what I have to expect. The Arabian Nights may be as true as a book of history." And indeed he found the story of Jarjarees among the other stories of the Arabian Nights. Jarjarees had been a very cruel Jinnee. Sometimes he cut off the hands and feet of his enemies and often turned them into wild beasts. He himself could become a lion, a snake, a scorpion - anything he liked. But once Jarjarees turned into a flame and became a heap of ashes. "That's very good," thought Horace.

"Now I shall not have to kill him. Of course, Fakrash does not know that Jarjarees is dead, for he died when the old idiot was in his bottle."

He went on reading the Arabian Nights until in the third volume he found the story of the beautiful Princess Bedeea-el-Jemal. To his great joy he learned that she had married Seyf-el-Mulook, the son of the King of Egypt. "Even Fakrash cannot marry me to her if she has a husband already," he thought. "But what if she is a widow?" However, at the end of the story it was said that both Bedeea and Seyf had died. "I am so glad!" thought poor Horace. "Perhaps it will all end well yet!" He went to bed and was soon fast asleep.

Chapter Twenty
An Unexpected Honour

It was rather late the next morning when Ventimore opened his eyes. The Jinnee was standing by his bed. "I have got the information that I wanted," he said, "and now for the last time I ask you: will you marry the beautiful Bedeea-el-Jemal? Think before you answer."

"Listen," answered Horace, "if you bring this lady here and she agrees to marry me, I shall not refuse. But promise me one thing: if she does not marry me in a week, then you will let me marry whom I like."

"I agree," said the Jinnee, "for I know that she will be happy to marry you. And now, my son, it is late. Rise and put on the robes that I have brought for you." So saying he showed Horace the splendid Oriental clothes that the young architect had worn on the day of the fatal dinner-party. "Eat if you are hungry," he added, "and then prepare to follow me."

"Where do you want to take me?" asked Horace.

"Don't ask questions, for the time is short," commanded the Jinnee. "You know what will happen if you don't obey me." Horace knew that it was better not to make the Jinnee angry, so he sat down at a small table near the window and quickly swallowed a cold egg and a cup of coffee.

"Good heavens!" he suddenly cried, looking out of the window, "what does all this mean?"

A large crowd was standing in front of his house. At the door Horace saw a golden carriage with fine black horses; several dark-skinned servants were near it. When the people saw him they began to cheer. Horace turned to the Jinnee.

"Why are they all here?" he asked, "whose carriage is at my door? What are those black men doing here?"

"The carriage is yours," answered the Jinnee, "and the black men are your slaves. Go down and you will drive in it through the city."

"I won't," cried Horace, "I don't want to make a fool of myself, driving through the city in a golden carriage, and dressed in these robes too."

"If you don't," was the answer, "your friends will suffer."

"Oh, all right then," said Horace angrily. He went down into the street and got into carriage. The Jinnee followed him, and the horses started off at a quick trot.

"What does all this mean, Mr Fakrash?" Horace asked again. "I feel such an ass I sitting here in my fine robes."

"Never mind that. This will make you great enough for Bedeea," answered the Jinnee; and as the carriage was just approaching Westminster Abbey, Horace thought with horror that this was really his wedding day and that Fakrash was taking him to the Abbey to be married there. But the carriage passed it and rolled along the Embankment. The morning was fine, and a great crowd was running after them.

"How they cheer," said Horace. "I don't think they could make more noise for the Lord Mayor himself."

"What is this Lord Mayor of whom you speak?" asked Fakrash.

"Oh, he is the greatest man in the world: he is the friend of monarchs and princes, he has power over everything."

"Has he power over the earth and the air?" asked Fakrash in alarm.

"I think so," Horace answered carelessly.

Just then they were driving under a railway bridge and Fakrash started at the noise of the rolling train and the whistle of the engine.

"What's this?" he cried.

"Is it possible you don't know yet," said Horace, "that we have learned to command Nature? We control the Spirits of Earth, Air, Fire and Water. We make them work for us: they give us light and heat; they carry us where we wish, they fight for us."

"And can the Lord Mayor command these forces?" asked Fakrash.

Ventimore saw that his words had made a great impression on the Jinnee and he was very pleased, for he wanted to let Fakrash understand that a Jinnee is not so strong as the Lord Mayor.

"The Lord Mayor can certainly command all those forces when he wants them," he replied with a smile.

They were now approaching St. Paul's Cathedral, and Horace's first suspicion returned with double force.

"Mr Fakrash," cried Horace in alarm. "Where are you taking me? You must tell me!"

"Wait and you will see," answered the Jinnee.

The carriage passed the Cathedral and rolled towards the Mansion House. The crowd followed it.

"Those people probably take me for a Shah," said poor Horace.

"No," replied Fakrash, "they know your name and have come to honour you." Indeed, many of the people were shouting, "Well done, Ventimore!" And on the door of a shop Horace saw the inscription:

Would we had twenty more

Like Horace Ventimore!

"You must explain what all this means, Mr Fakrash," the young man cried in despair.

"You told me," the Jinnee answered, "that the man who received the freedom of the City would be worthy of the beautiful Bedeea. And now you are going to receive it."

"How can I receive such honours?" asked Horace, who was now very much alarmed. "You must tell me at least for what deeds they are honouring me."

"I really don't know," the Jinnee answered, a little confused.

At last the carriage stopped before the Mansion House and Horace got out. He was met by officers in brilliant uniforms and servants in rich liveries. The young architect was taken to the fine library of the Mansion House where the Lord Mayor in his gold-trimmed robes and black-feathered hat was waiting to receive him. Horace trembled when he approached the platform on which the Mayor was standing.

"Fakrash," he whispered, "you have got me into a nice scrape." But he received no answer.

Chapter Twenty-One
The Ceremony

Nobody noticed Ventimore's fright when he saw that the Jinnee was not there, for just then the Lord Mayor spoke. He was a handsome man with a fine beard.

"Mr Ventimore," he said, shaking hands with Horace, "allow me to tell you that it is a great honour for me to welcome you."

"My Lord Mayor," replied Horace, "I really don't know what I have done to deserve this honour."

"You are modest, my dear sir, like all truly great men," said the Lord Mayor. "It is a wonderful quality, especially for such a young man."

Everybody seemed pleased with Horace's modesty and the young man was obliged to shake hands with a lot of people.

"As you know," said the Lord Mayor, "the ceremony will take place in the Great Hall of the Mansion House. Before we move there I hope you will allow us to offer you some refreshments."

Horace accepted the invitation and took a glass of champagne and a sandwich.

"I hope you don't mind our old customs," said the Mayor, "I for one admire them greatly. I must tell you that part of the ceremony is rather curious: five officials will have to swear that you are 'a man of good name and fame' and that you will not use the freedom of the City against the Queen and the City. And now let us go."

"I am afraid," said Horace, "that I haven't got the right clothes for the ceremony -"

"Never mind," interrupted the Mayor. "Your clothes are very beautiful. But come, it is time to go to the Hall."

The band began to play and Horace marched towards the Great Hall, accompanied by the Mayor. Where they arrived, the Hall was full of people. They began to cheer when they saw Horace.

"If only I knew why they are cheering so," thought the young man. "Probably they have some reason, and I shall know something about my services before the ceremony is over."

The ceremony was long and solemn. Horace stood on a high platform that was all covered with flowers, feeling very foolish and miserable. First the Town Clerk read a resolution in which it was said that "the freedom of the City must be given to Horace Ventimore, citizen of London, for his great services - especially in..." Here Horace listened with all his ears, but at that moment the clerk began to cough and nobody could hear a word about Horace's services. The clerk stopped coughing only when he came to the words: "The citizens of London will always be grateful to Horace Ventimore."

Then five important-looking men stepped forward and swore that Horace Ventimore was really worthy of receiving the freedom of the City. "Poor men," thought Horace, "will they be punished for their false oath?"

Then a long address was read, praising Ventimore to the skies. Horace heard the words: "His name will be added to the London List of Fame," and felt very much ashamed. "Why must my name be on the list?" he said to himself. "What am I and what have I done for such an honour?" Just then the orator said:

"You probably know, sir, that according to the old custom we must tell you for what reason we honour you so."

"At last I shall learn about my services," thought poor Horace. But the orator went on: "However, Mr Ventimore, your services are so well known to everybody that it is unnecessary to speak of them."

Then it was Horace's turn to swear that he would be true to the Queen and to the City of London. He hoped that was the end of the ceremony. But here the Lord Mayor rose and made a long speech. Again he praised Horace to the skies.

"I am very sorry," he said, "that we had so little time for preparation - Mr Ventimore knows why. But in spite of this Mr Ventimore can see how the people of London love and honour him. And now I have the pleasure of giving you the golden casket with the Roll of Freedom."

Horace took it and then to his horror heard the cry: "Speech! Speech! He must tell us himself about his great services."

For some minutes poor Horace could not speak, so great were the noise and the cheering. During these minutes he had time to think. It was clear to him that the whole thing was the work of Fakrash. He must stop it at once.

"My Lord Mayor, my lords, ladies and gentlemen," he began in a loud voice. "I cannot tell you what I have done to deserve all these honours, for I have done nothing at all."

Here there were loud cries of protest: "No, no!"

"Don't say 'No, no'," Horace went on, "I repeat that I've really done nothing. You think, perhaps, that I'm too modest? No, I am not. My Lord Mayor, please tell me why we are all here."

"We are here to honour you," the Mayor answered, "we need not discuss the reasons."

"But we must discuss them," Horace insisted. "And I'll tell you why you cannot give me the reasons: it is just because there are none. I cannot accept the freedom of the City. I have no right to this honour. You must let me explain everything."

There was dead silence in the hall now. Everybody wanted to hear what Horace was going to say. The young architect addressed the Lord Mayor. "Before I go on," he said, "perhaps you will tell the reporters to leave the hall?"

"We have no reason to fear the press," said the Mayor, red with anger.

"Very well," said Horace, "but if I speak in the presence of the reporters, all the world will know what I have to say. Do you think, ladies and gentlemen, that I came here in these idiotic robes of my own free will? No! A terrible force that I am unable to control -"

At these words there was a terrible noise in the audience.

"Listen," Horace went on. "this is what happened to me: a short time ago I went to an auction and bought a large brass bottle -"

For some unknown reason these words made the audience furious. The people shouted and stamped, they did not want to hear of the bottle. When Horace tried to go on they didn't let him speak, and an old lady even threw a heavy bottle of scent at him. Fortunately, it did not hit him.

"Will you hear me?" Ventimore shouted. "I'm not joking. I have not told you yet what was inside the bottle. When I opened it, I found -" He could say nothing more, for he was suddenly seized by the collar of his robe and raised from the platform.

Up and up he went among shouts of horror that came from the crowd. Below he could see a lot of pale faces and hear the wild screams of several hysterical ladies. The next moment he was flying through the glass roof into the open air. Of course, it was the Jinnee's work again.

Chapter Twenty-Two
An Unpleasant Talk

Horace and the Jinnee were high in the air. The young man shut his eyes. It seemed to him that they had been flying for hours, although in reality their flight lasted only a few seconds. Horace could not understand where the Jinnee was taking him. At last he felt that he was standing on something hard. Horace opened his eyes, but when he saw where he was, his knees became so weak that he almost fell: he was standing on a narrow ledge at the top of St. Paul's Cathedral. From here he could see the whole city, but he could not enjoy the view at the moment. Why had the Jinnee brought him here? How could he get down since Fakrash had disappeared again? The old man was not far off, however, for presently he approached Horace, walking calmly along the narrow ledge.

"So you are there!" said Ventimore angrily. "I thought you had left me again. Why have you brought me up here?"

"Because I wanted to speak to you alone," answered the Jinnee.

"Nobody will interrupt us here of course," said Horace, "though if people see us that will make a sensation."

"I know a magic that will not let them raise their eyes," replied the Jinnee. "Sit down and hear my words."

It was not very pleasant for Horace to sit on this narrow ledge, but he did as he was told.

"What have you done, oh most unwise young man!" began the Jinnee. "How dared you drink wine! You all but told your secret and mine to the crowd after that."

"You left me," explained Horace. "I didn't know what to do and I had to tell the truth."

"That was very foolish," said the Jinnee.

"Why didn't you tell me for what service I was to receive the freedom of the City?" cried Horace. "You don't understand in what a terrible position I found myself!"

"It does not matter why they honoured you," replied the Jinnee angrily. "I wanted great honours for you: without them you could not marry the beautiful Bedeea."

"Bedeea will never hear about me," said Horace. "She married the son of the King of Egypt and then died."

"I don't believe it!" cried the Jinnee.

"If you take me back to my rooms I'll show you what your old books say about it," replied Horace, "and you will be glad to know that your old enemy, Mr Jarjarees, came to a terrible end."

"You had to kill him," said Fakrash solemnly. "Such was my wish. But tell me, how long have you known of these things?"

"Only since last night."

"Since last night? And you did not tell me?"

"I was very busy, you see," explained Horace, "I had no time."

"What a fool I was to take you to the Lord Mayor's presence!" exclaimed Fakrash. "It is a good thing that I flew away with you before you could pronounce my name!"

"But all the people saw you," replied Horace. "You were not flying too fast and they will recognize you again. Don't you understand how furious the Mayor and all his clerks are? You have made them look like idiots. Such a grand ceremony - and all because of a Jinnee!"

Fakrash frowned and was silent.

"And then you don't know what the Press is!" Horace went on. "In an hour it will be in all the newspapers. 'Extraordinary Scene at the Mansion House!' - 'Appearance of a Jinnee in the City!' - 'A Guest of the Lord Mayor Flies Away!' and so on. All the world will hear about it."

"I'm really very much afraid that I've made the Lord Mayor angry," said Fakrash in a troubled tone. "Does he not know a magic which gives him control over devils? Is he not stronger than Suleyman?"

"You know best," said Horace. "I advise you to make peace with him."

"I shall try," answered the Jinnee and, stretching his right hand to the East, he said some words in Arabic. Horace was full of fear.

"What will the Jinnee do next?" he thought.

Just then, as if in answer to his question, a heavy fog came over the city. In a few minutes it covered the streets so that nothing could be seen around.

"Look again!" cried Fakrash a moment later. The cloud of fog had disappeared and the streets could be clearly seen again. The crowd had gone. Everything was quiet. London was just as it had been before.

"With the cloud that you have seen," said Fakrash, "all memory of this affair is gone. Those who were at the Mansion House have forgotten about you."

This time Horace looked at Fakrash with admiration.

"Wait," said Fakrash, "presently you will see something better."

There was an unpleasant expression in his eyes which suddenly frightened the young man. "I really think you've done enough for one day," he said. "I should very much like to get down again. It's rather cold here."

"You will very soon get down, you lying wretch," replied the Jinnee, and he laid his long bony hand on Horace's shoulder.

"My dear sir," said Ventimore, "I don't understand your tone. What have I done?"

"Never mind that," answered the Jinnee. "I am going to throw you down from here with my own hands!"

Horace was terribly frightened, but he pulled himself together. "I do not believe it, Mr Fakrash," he said calmly. "You are too kind."

"All kindness has gone from my heart," replied Fakrash. "Prepare to die."

Ventimore trembled. He had never expected that Fakrash would become his enemy. "What shall I do?" he thought. "If I call for help nobody will hear me. And besides who can help me? I must do something myself. Shall I tell the Jinnee stories? In the Arabian Nights the heroes sometimes saved themselves in this way. But I don't know any stories. And the Jinnee will not listen to me. Perhaps I can try to make him talk to me."

"I think, Mr Fakrash," he said, "that I have a right to know why you are so angry with me that you want to kill me."

"It is too long to tell you your crimes," was the cold answer.

"I don't mind that," said Horace. "I am not in a hurry."

"Well, I am in a hurry," replied the Jinnee. "Your death is quite near now."

"Before we part," cried Horace, "won't you answer one question?"

"Ask then," answered the Jinnee, "for time is short."

"Remember," Horace said, "that it is I who helped you to get out of the brass bottle."

"That," replied the Jinnee, "is just the reason why I want to kill you!"

This answer was so unexpected that for a moment Horace could say nothing.

"Ask your question quickly," said the Jinnee.

"Promise to answer me in the name of the great Lord Mayor!" exclaimed Horace.

This name made an impression on the Jinnee.

"I will answer you," he said, "but it will be your last question."

Horace understood that everything depended on that question.

Chapter Twenty-Three
The Duel

"I want to know why you want to kill me now for what you thanked me before," said Horace. "Was it so very nice in there?"

"In the bottle I was having a long rest, and nobody disturbed me. You knew that Suleyman was dead. You knew that in his place there was one who was still more powerful, one who could torture me more than Suleyman - and you never warned me of the danger."

"What on earth do you mean? Are you thinking of the Lord Mayor?"

"Of course," answered the Jinnee. "Didn't you say that he controlled all the Spirits of Earth and Air?"

Horace could not help laughing.

"I beg your pardon, Mr Fakrash," he said as soon as he could speak, "but the Lord Mayor is not dangerous at all"

"Don't tell me new lies," cried Fakrash furiously. "You yourself told me that the Mayor had control over the Spirits of Earth, Air, Water and Fire. And everywhere I see my brothers the Jinn working for him in those engines and machines. Do you see them there on the river where they carry ships? The Lord Mayor tortures them and makes them work."

"After all," thought Ventimore, "if he thinks that railway-engines and machines are driven by Jinn, it is even better for me. Perhaps that will save me." Aloud he said:

"If you are so much afraid of the Lord Mayor, you must not kill me. That will make him very angry."

"He will not be angry, for he has forgotten you. Besides, I now hate you so much that I must kill you."

"All right! You will kill me. And then, what will you do?"

"Then," replied the Jinnee, "I'll fly to Arabia, where I'll be safe."

"Don't be too sure of that," said Horace. "Do you see these wires below? They are called electric wires and the Lord Mayor sends messages along them to all the countries of the world. He will find you in Arabia too."

"So you think I'll not be safe anywhere?" asked the Jinnee. "Then I wish to return to my bottle again! Even the Lord Mayor cannot find me there."

"Of course not!" cried Horace joyfully. "This is a wonderful idea, Mr Fakrash."

"And in the bottle I shall not have to work," continued the Jinnee, "for I hate all work."

"You are quite right," said Horace. "Just think how hard it would be for you to drive a train or a ship. Better return to the bottle."

"I think I shall do so," replied the Jinnee, "but before that I'll throw you down."

Horace, who had thought that all danger was over, now began to lose hope again. But he decided to fight to the last.

"One moment," he said. "You can certainly get into the bottle - that's easy - but are you sure you can put the lid on - from the inside?"

Fakrash thought for a moment. "No, I can't do that," he answered in a troubled tone. "Even Jinn cannot do such things."

"I shall be very glad to do you this service," said Horace.

"How can you do it after I have killed you?" asked the Jinnee.

"That is certainly difficult," said Horace very politely.

The Jinnee hesitated for some minutes and at last said:

"I would spare you, if I could really trust you."

"As you like, Mr Fakrash," replied Horace, "I'm so tired of this talk that I think I had better jump down from here. You will be sorry then."

"Don't, don't!" cried the Jinnee. "If you seal me up, I shall forgive you and do everything you wish."

"Very well," replied Horace, "then take me home."

He was still very much afraid when the Jinnee raised him in the air, but a moment later he found himself safe and sound in his room again.

"And now be quick and seal me up," said Fakrash.

"I will, but on certain conditions," declared Horace.

"Conditions!" cried the Jinnee furiously. "You dare to speak of conditions! I have given you many presents, but I shall give you nothing more. I shall even take away my last present." With his fingers he touched Ventimore's robe; it disappeared, leaving the young man in his underclothes. Horace hurriedly put on his coat and trousers and then said:

"Listen to me, Mr Fakrash. Because of you I have lost my work, I have lost the girl that I loved, her father will never forgive me - I am so unhappy that I don't want to live."

"What is all this to me?" asked Fakrash.

"Only this - if you don't help me out of all this trouble I will not seal you up."

"How can I help you?" cried the Jinnee angrily.

"Make my friends forget about the brass bottle and all the events connected with it. If you do I shall swear to seal you up in the bottle and throw it into the deepest part of the Thames."

"Show me the bottle first," commanded the Jinnee, "I don't believe you."

"I shall ask my landlady to bring it at once," said Ventimore. "Make yourself invisible, or you will frighten her."

The Jinnee obeyed, and Ventimore rang the bell. When Mrs Rapkin came in, he asked her to bring the brass bottle.

"I can't do that, sir," she cried. "You said you didn't want it, and I sold it to a man who buys all kinds of old things. His name is Dilger, sir."

"Thank you, Mrs Rapkin. I want that bottle again. Tell me where he lives and I shall go there at once."

"No, I will not let you go," cried Fakrash, as soon as the landlady had left the room. "You liar! You want to deceive me again! Where is my bottle? I shall not allow you to leave the house."

"How can I get it if I stay here?" replied Horace.

"Go then," Fakrash said after a pause. "But remember, if you don't come back in half an hour I shall punish you and your friends in a terrible way."

Chapter Twenty-Four
Victory

Horace put on his hat and ran out into the street. He soon found the dirty little shop which Mr Dilger kept. There were many old and rusty things in it. Horace looked about but could not see the bottle anywhere.

"Do you keep old metal vases?" he asked a boy who was sitting in the shop, reading a book.

"No," the boy answered and went on with his reading.

With a beating heart Horace began to look for the bottle in all the corners of the room. The boy was so much interested in his book that he did not pay any attention to his visitor. At last, to his great joy Horace discovered the brass bottle in a dark corner.

"This is just the sort of thing I want," he said. "How much is it?"

"The master is out," answered the boy. "I don't know anything."

"I want this bottle at once," exclaimed Horace, "I'll give you three shillings for it."

"Wait till the master comes back, I don't know anything," repeated the boy.

"I am in a hurry!" cried Horace. "Take five shillings for it, you fool."

"I tell you, my master doesn't allow me to sell anything," said the boy angrily. "Wait till he comes back."

Horace was now very angry himself. He was just going to seize the bottle and run off with it when Mr Dilger walked into the shop.

"Here's a gentleman who wants to buy this brass bottle," cried the boy. "He offers five shillings for it, but I said I could not sell it without you."

"You are quite right, my boy," said his master. "My dear sir, this is very old brass, I paid a pound for it myself."

"Oh, no," cried Horace, "my landlord Mr Rapkin sold it to you for half a crown."

"If you say so I suppose you are right, sir," said Mr Dilger calmly. "But now I can't sell such a curiosity at a price less than thirty shillings."

"I can give you a pound and not a penny more," said Horace.

"Then I must say good evening, sir," said Mr Dilger.

"Good evening, then," said Horace, and walked out of the shop, for he had exactly one pound in his pocket. But Mr Dilger ran out after him.

"Don't go, sir," he cried, "business is business. You can have the vase for a pound!"

Horace paid the money at once and rushed home.

He found the Jinnee trembling with rage.

"You dog!" he cried. "Another minute - and -"

"Don't be so angry, Mr Fakrash," Horace interrupted him. "Here's your bottle, and you can get into it as soon as you like."

"And the lid?" shouted the Jinnee. "What have you done with the lid?"

"Why, you've got it yourself. The Professor gave it to you yesterday. It must be in your pocket."

"It isn't there," cried Fakrash. "Your friend the learned man has probably taken it back somehow. I shall go to him at once."

Horace now saw that it was easier to let a Jinnee out of a bottle than to get him in again.

"Wait a moment," he cried. "You were in modern clothes when you went to the Professor's house yesterday. Put them on at once. Perhaps the lid is in the pocket of your coat."

In less than a moment the Jinnee's Oriental robes were transformed into modern clothes. "Here is the lid," he cried joyfully, pulling it out of his pocket and looking rather confused as he did so.

"You are too ready to think the worst of everybody," Horace told him. "Men are better than you think."

"Damn them all!" cried Fakrash. "I hate them! I do not destroy them only because I am afraid of the all-powerful Lord Mayor. But there

is no time to lose now. Swear to me that you will seal the bottle as soon as I am in it."

"With great pleasure!" exclaimed Horace. "But you must first make everybody forget about you and your brass bottle."

The Jinnee immediately uttered a few words in a low voice. "But you must not forget anything," he added, turning to Horace.

"Oh, very well," replied Horace, "I will never forget you. But how about my client? I don't want to lose him, you know."

"He will return to you," cried the Jinnee, trembling with impatience. "Do your work quickly."

Now that Horace had won this long and dangerous duel, he felt sorry for the Jinnee. "The old man tried to do his best for me," he thought. "And how am I treating him? My lies have frightened him so that he wants to return to the bottle. Why can't he go to his palace in the clouds and live there among other Jinn?"

"Listen to me, Mr Fakrash," the young man cried, "you need not go back to your bottle. Just wait a little -"

But the Jinnee was already half-way in the bottle.

"Be silent, you wretch," he shouted furiously. "Keep your promise!"

"Look here," insisted Horace, "before I seal you up, I must- tell you -" But now the Jinnee was already in the bottle; only his head was left above it, and thick smoke was beginning to fill the room.

"I cannot wait till the Lord Mayor comes after me," the head shouted. "If you do not keep your promise at once I shall come out again and punish you, your friends and all those who live in this city."

With these words the head disappeared. Horace did not hesitate any longer. He rushed to the bottle, put the metal lid over it and beat it down with his poker. Now the thing was just as it had been when he got it at the Auction Rooms. Ventimore put the bottle into a bag, and hurried to the nearest steamboat pier, where he bought a ticket for a trip down the river.

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Next day the following paragraph appeared in one of the evening papers:

"STRANGE INCIDENT ON A STEAMBOAT".

"A young gentleman on board one of the Thames steam-boats met with an unpleasant incident last night through his own carelessness. He was standing near the rail of the steamboat, holding a large bag in his hand. Just as the boat was passing the Savoy Hotel, he placed the bag on the rail and raised his hand to his hat, evidently forgetting about the bag. It fell overboard and sank in the deepest part of the river. Though the owner declared that the bag contained nothing very valuable, he has probably learned a lesson that will make him more careful in the future."

Epilogue

On a fine evening in May Horace Ventimore was dining at the Savoy Hotel. He was one of the guests of Mr Wackerbath who had invited a few friends to celebrate the completion of the new country house which the young architect had built for him. Besides, the old man wanted to congratulate his architect on his coming marriage with Miss Sylvia Futvoye.

"Quite a small and friendly party," said Mr Wackerbath as he greeted Horace."My family, Miss Futvoye whom you know very well, her parents and then an old schoolfellow, Sir Laurence Pountney and his wife. They have not yet arrived. Last year, you know, Sir Laurence was Lord Mayor of London."

Horace was a little nervous when the ex-Lord Mayor arrived. What if Sir Laurence remembered him and his visit to the Mansion House? Had the old Jinnee really made everybody forget that unlucky event?

But when Sir Laurence came Horace saw at once that the ex-Lord Mayor did not remember him at all. He congratulated the young architect on the success of his house.

"I have heard that it is a real palace," he said.

"Do you remember, Sir Laurence," said Mr Wackerbath, "how we were crossing Westminster Bridge together and I told you of my wish to build a house? You advised me to go to a famous architect, but I chose Ventimore. I was quite right. I have never had reason to regret my choice, though he was quite unknown then. I have never had any trouble with him."

Horace could not help smiling. It was clear that Mr Wackerbath had quite forgotten how he had stood on all fours in Horace's office.

"I have always wondered," said the Professor, "that my future son-in-law was so little interested in Oriental architecture. In his place I should build an Oriental palace for myself."

"But Horace has a very nice house as it is," said Mrs Futvoye. "I shall never forget the first time we dined there, just after my daughter

and he got engaged. It was so simple, you know, but quite perfect. And his landlady is such a wonderful cook!"

"So now, Miss Sylvia," said Sir Laurence, "I suppose you and Mr Ventimore go to all furniture shops and auctions buying beautiful things for your future home?"

"We do go to many furniture shops, Sir Laurence," Sylvia answered, "but not to auctions. I don't know how to buy things there. Neither does Horace."

"Why do you think so, Sylvia?" Ventimore asked in surprise.

"Why, dear, have you forgotten how you went to the auction and didn't manage to get anything for father?"

It was clear that the Futvoyes had forgotten all about the brass bottle and that unlucky dinner party.

At that moment Sir Laurence addressed Ventimore. "I am so sorry I did not know you when I was Lord Mayor. It would have been such a pleasure to receive you as my guest at the Mansion House!"

"You are very kind," said Horace.

"I've often thought," continued Sir Laurence, "what a pity it is that in my time I never had the honour to present anybody with the freedom of the City. Once the day was fixed for the ceremony, but then somehow it was put off and did not take place."

"My husband," added Lady Pountney, "never made use of the great privileges of his position. I begged him many times, but he was as obstinate as a mule."

"I see, Lady Pountney," observed the Professor, "that you are unjust to mules like most people. It is a very gentle and obedient animal. Besides, it is wonderfully clever and patient. I see you don't agree with me, Ventimore?"

Horace almost laughed aloud. "Well, sir," he replied, "I came into contact with a mule only once in my life, and to tell you the truth, it was a very unpleasant animal."

He was quite sure now that all of them had forgotten their adventures connected with the brass bottle. The jinnee had kept his promise.

Horace alone remembered old Fakrash and knew that he was fast asleep in his bottle at the bottom of the river just opposite the Savoy Hotel where they were all dining.

- THE END -

Hope you have enjoyed the reading!