

NO. IX.

A STORY REGARDING A SINCERE DEVOTEE, AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES
OF HIS RETURNING, WHEN ON THE ROAD TO MECCA.

IT is said, that there was a devotee, who, in the world,
Was quite perfect and unequalled in doing worship to his Creator ;
In the path of God, he spent his days and nights,
And, in prayer and fasting, passed his time ;
Uneasy he remained, unless counting his beads,
And, from the carpet of prayer, he rose not for an instant ;
The eyes* of his disciples were filled with light,
When they applied to them, instead of antimony, the dust of his
two shoes.†

Without doubt his abode shall be in Paradise,
Who may have carried about his waterpot for him.
In short, what need I say, regarding his precious body,
For it never remained devoid of miraculous powers ;
Wherever he fixed his tooth stick,
On it appeared pears, apples, and grapes.
He resolved on a journey to Mecca,
In order that he might be continually praying at the threshold of
God.‡

One day, by chance, he met with Sauda,
And told him of his intention to visit Mecca,
Saying, " It is truly becoming to those who are Mussalmans,
That they should fix their intentions, to the best of their ability, on
going there ;

For if thou hast a care for future salvation,
Then, by this journey, thou wilt obtain forgiveness.
Therefore it is best that thou shouldst come with me,
For thou wilt be forgiven all thy sins there.
How long O madman ! wilt thou, under the sky,
Remain like the dust of the door of a tavern §
Till when wilt thou indulge in drinking and playing the tambourine
and lute,

And how long wilt thou associate with the tavern keeper's son ?
Have a delight in listening to the voice of the prayer caller,
For it is superior to the voice of David.

If thou agreeest to what I say,
Then thou wilt drink cups of sherbet from the hands of houris ;
And if thou dost not listen to what I say,
Then, one day, thou wilt remember (with regret) that some one thus
warned thee."

* Ainain is the dual of ain—an eye.

† That is to say, the dust where he trod.

‡ Referring to the temple of Mecca.

§ Meaning, how long will you remain visiting the public shop, and not proceed to
such a holy place as Mecca.

In short, how long shall I go on talking about it ?
 For he made Sauda his fellow-traveller by some means or other.
 This also is not wanting of the miraculous (on his part),
 That he should have said a few words, and got such a companion (as
 Sauda).

Then, afterwards, preparing the necessaries for the journey,
 The two together determined on the journey thither ;
 The saint said, " Put the saddle on the horse,
 For it is the time of dawn, therefore let us take our way on this
 holy road,

And, having prepared the necessaries for the journey,
 Put them on the back of the beast of burden."

He then said to Sauda, " I and you are friends,
 Let us ride, one in front, and one behind, on the horse."

He (Sauda) answered, " For the sake of my conveyance,
 Do not O Sir ! make any mention !

If I go on foot when doing pilgrimage, what matter ?
 For the going headlong* to Mecca is most propitious."

He asked him repeatedly (to get on behind),

But when he would not listen, then he became helpless.

And when he mounted his steed,

Then all his disciples came and collected round him,

And each, according to his rank, proceeded with him,

Some taking a stick, and some a morchāl,† in their hands ;

One with a spittoon, and another with a pocket handkerchief ;

Some proceeded in front of the holy man, and some behind ;

Some, at that time, put the carpet for prayer on their heads,

And some proceeded happily and joyfully reading the salāt.‡

But, in the crowd after his fashion,

Sauda went along barefooted and bareheaded as a kalandar.§

In short, three or four marches had been traversed,

When Satan threw some highwaymen on our way,

And when, of the fifth march, there remained but a few miles,

They arrived and kissed the feet of the holy man.

What further shall I relate of the misfortunes of our fate,

For they surrounded him and his disciples,

And thus in one instant robbed them,

That they left not, in the rosary of any of them, a single string,

And, of all that pomp and grandeur which they had,

Astounded he remained without one garment.

What more need I say of the plundering,

For there remained to them no beads, but the drops of their tears.

How could he, on foot, travel that road,

For the only staff he had (left) was his sighs.||

* " Sir se, or sir ke bal, chalnā" means " to walk very respectfully, with one's heart and soul fixed on a thing."

† A morchāl is a fan, made of peacock's feathers, and used for driving off the flies.

‡ The " salāt" or " darūd" is a prayer, in which blessings are invoked on Muhammad and his family.

§ A kind of mendicant, often mentioned in the Arabian Nights.

|| Sighs are compared by Asiatics to a stick, and also to the letter alif, in consequence of their being supposed to be very straight.

After the robbery, when he thought of the troubles of the road,
 He became perplexed* in mind,
 For he had neither provision for the road, nor means of conveyance.
 Therefore how now can you expect him to undertake the journey to
 Mecca;

Was it possible for him to proceed to Mecca, placing his reliance on
 God,

For his thoughts were absorbed in his goods.

Sometimes he talked of the loss of his turban;

At other times, his heart was afflicted with the thought of his gar-
 ments;

Now he thought of his rosary of onyx stones,

And, from grief for it, would be torn to pieces.

Then he would say, "My carpet for prayer was embroidered,

And that embroidery was worked in the Dakkan."

Sometimes he said, "What a nice stick was that, O friends!

It belonged to my holy spiritual guide.

What a lovely pillow too was that which I have lost, and on which
 I used to rest my back.

What journey was this I undertook?

And that snuff box too, which was set with cornelians,

If it had been sold, it would have fetched a long price."

Sometimes he said, being distressed beyond measure,

"I do not know what an unfortunate moment it was (when we
 started),

For I have lost all I had with me,

And, besides this, I have plunged my friends into trouble along with
 myself."

When all one's effects have thus been robbed,

Then could one have any power (to undertake) such a journey.

To his disciples, on hearing this, there remained nothing,

But to say, "Really and truly."†

In short, his griefs distressed him so,

That he said to Sauda, "O my faithful friend!

What is your advice now in this matter?

For fate has shown herself to me in a different form (to what I ex-
 pected);

My desire was to have gone there and died,

If God does not will it, then what can I do?"

Sauda, on hearing this, replied,

"What thou sayest will be best;

But how can'st thou now return to thy house in this state?

Surely how can'st thou go there, and show thy face to any one?

By what means can'st thou return to thy home?

It will be far better to determine on going there (to Mecca.)"

The saint, on hearing this, said, "Thou art ill-guided,

And knowest nothing of the questions of the law.

The pilgrimage to Mecca is incumbent on the rich,

* Lit, "He began counting six and five in his mind." The idiom means "to be per-
 plexed and thoughtful."

† Meaning, "Yes, what you say is indeed true."

But here I have lost my wealth, and if I proceed, there is danger to my life."

As his disciples were quite inclined to go home,
They all, with one consent, said to Sauda,
"The words of our Master are reasonable,
And at this very place, his pilgrimage will be accepted by God."
Sauda, on hearing this, said, "Ye are you own masters ;
Let not my words be a burden on your hearts."

In short, when they had determined on returning,
Then in the afternoon, having read the afternoon prayer,
To that place, from which they had gone in the morning,
To it, destitute, they returned in the evening.

When somewhat of the night had passed, he said, "O friends !
We have nothing to eat, or to sleep on,
Ask Sauda to tell a tale or story,
And let us listen to what his tongue gives utterance to."
On this, Sauda answered, "The saint has become eccentric ;
What have I to do with story-telling ?"