

CHAPTER IV

THE CALIPH HARUN

Here there is an absolute blank in my story. One of those walls of oblivion of which I have spoken seems to be built across its path. It is as though a stream had plunged suddenly from some bright valley into the bosom of a mountain side and there vanished from the ken of man. What happened in the tomb after Heliodore had ended her tale; whether we departed thence together or left her there a while; how we escaped from Kurna, and by what good fortune or artifice we came safely to Alexandria, I know not. As to all these matters my vision fails me utterly. So far as I am concerned, they are buried beneath the dust of time. I know as little of them as I know of where and how I slept between my life as Olaf and this present life of mine; that is, nothing at all. Yet in this way or in that the stream did win through the mountain, since beyond all grows clear again.

Once more I stood upon the deck of the Diana in the harbour of Alexandria. With me were Martina and Heliodore. Heliodore's face was stained and she was dressed as a boy, such a harlequin lad as singers and mountebanks often take in their company. The ship was ready to start and the wind served. Yet we could not sail because of the lack of some permission. A Moslem galley patrolled the harbour and threatened to sink us if we dared to weigh without this paper. The mate had gone ashore with a bribe. We waited and waited. At length the captain, Menas, who

stood by me, whispered into my ear,

"Be calm; he comes; all is well."

Then I heard the mate shout: "I have the writing under seal," and Menas gave the order to cast off the ropes that held the ship to the quay.

One of the sailors came up and reported to Menas that their companion, Cosmas, was missing. It seemed that he had slipped ashore without leave and had not returned.

"There let him bide," said Menas, with an oath. "Doubtless the hog lies drunk in some den. When he awakes he may tell what tale he pleases and find his own way back to Lesbos. Cast off, cast off! I say."

At this moment that same Cosmas appeared. I could not see him, but I could hear him plainly enough. Evidently he had become involved in some brawl, for an angry woman and others were demanding money of him and he was shouting back drunken threats. A man struck him and the woman got him by the beard. Then his reason left him altogether.

"Am I, a Christian, to be treated thus by you heathen dogs?" he screamed. "Oh, you think I am dirt beneath your feet. I have friends, I tell you I have friends. You know not whom I serve. I say that I am a soldier of Olaf the Northman, Olaf the Blind, Olaf Red-Sword, he who made you prophet-worshippers sing so small at Mitylene, as he will do again ere long."

"Indeed, friend," said a quiet voice. It was that of the Moslem captain, Yusuf, he who befriended us when we arrived at Alexandria, who had been watching all this scene. "Then you serve a great general, as some of us have cause to know. Tell me, where is he now, for I hear that he has left Lesbos?"

"Where is he? Why, aboard yonder ship, of course. Oh! he has fooled you finely. Another time you'll search beggar's rags more closely."

"Cast off! Cast off!" roared Menas.

"Nay," said the officer, "cast not off. Soldiers, drive away those men. I must have words with the captain of this ship. Come, bring that drunken fellow with you."

"Now all is finished," I said.

"Yes," answered Heliodore, "all is finished. After we have endured so much it is hard. Well, at least death remains to us."

"Hold your hand," exclaimed Martina. "God still lives and can save us yet."

Black bitterness took hold of me. In some few days I had hoped to reach Lesbos, and there be wed to Heliodore. And now! And now!

"Cut the ropes, Menas," I cried, "and out with the oars. We'll risk the galley. You, Martina, set me at the mouth of the gangway and tell me when to strike. Though I be blind I may yet hold them back till we clear the quay."

She obeyed, and I drew the red sword from beneath my rags. Then, amidst the confusion which followed, I heard the grave voice of Yusuf speaking to me.

"Sir," he said, "for your own sake I pray you put up that sword, which we think is one whereof tales have been told. To fight is useless, for I have bowmen who can shoot you down and spears that can outreach you. General Olaf, a brave man should know when to surrender, especially if he be blind."

"Aye, sir," I answered, "and a brave man should know when to die."

"Why should you die, General?" went on the voice. "I do not know that for a Christian to visit Egypt disguised as a beggar will be held a crime worthy of death, unless indeed you came hither to spy out the land."

"Can the blind spy?" asked Martina indignantly.

"Who can say, Lady? But certainly it seems that your eyes are bright

and quick enough. Also there is another matter. A while ago, when this ship came to Alexandria, I signed a paper giving leave to a certain eyeless musician and his niece to ply their trade in Egypt. Then there were two of you; now I behold a third. Who is that comely lad with a stained face that stands beside you?"

Heliodore began some story, saying that she was the orphan son of I forget whom, and while she told it certain of the Moslems slipped past me.

"Truly you should do well in the singing trade," interrupted the officer with a laugh, "seeing that for a boy your voice is wondrous sweet. Are you quite sure that you remember your sex aright? Well, it can easily be proved. Bare that lad's bosom, soldiers. Nay, 'tis needless; snatch off that head-dress."

A man obeyed, and Heliodore's beautiful black hair, which I would not suffer her to cut, fell tumbling to her knees.

"Let me be," she said. "I admit that I am a woman."

"That is generous of you, Lady," the officer answered in the midst of the laughter which followed. "Now will you add to your goodness by telling me your name? You refuse? Then shall I help you? In the late Coptic war it was my happy fortune twice to see a certain noble maiden, the daughter of Magas the Prince, whom the Emir Musa afterwards took for

himself, but who fled from him. Tell me, Lady, have you a twin sister?"

"Cease your mockings, sir," said Heliodore despairingly. "I am she you seek."

"'Tis Musa seeks you, not I, Lady."

"Then, sir, he seeks in vain, for know that ere he finds I die. Oh! sir, I know you have a noble heart; be pitiful and let us go. I'll tell you all the truth. Olaf Red-Sword yonder and I have long been affianced. Blind though he is, he sought me through great dangers, aye, and found me. Would you part us at the last? In the name of the God we both worship, and of your mother, I pray you let us go."

"By the Prophet, that I would do, Lady, only then I fear me that I should let my head go from its shoulders also. There are too many in this secret for it to bide there long if I did as you desire. Nay, you must to the Emir, all three of you--not Musa, but to his rival, Obaidallah, who loves him little, and by the decree of the Caliph once again rules Egypt. Be sure that in a matter between you and Musa you will meet with justice from Obaidallah. Come now, fearing nothing, to where we may find you all garments more befitting to your station than those mummer's robes."

So a guard was formed round us, and we went. As my feet touched the quay I heard a sound of angry voices, followed by groans and a splash in the

water.

"What is that?" I asked of Yusuf.

"I think, General, that your servants from the Diana have settled some account that they had with the drunken dog who was so good as to bark out your name to me. But, with your leave, I will not look to make sure."

"God pardon him! As yet I cannot," I muttered, and marched on.

We stood, whether on that day or another I do not know, in some hall of judgment. Martina whispered to me that a small, dark man was seated in the chair of state, and about him priests and others. This was the Emir Obaidallah. Musa, that had been Emir, who, she said, was fat and sullen, was there also, and whenever his glance fell upon Heliodore I felt her shiver at my side. So was the Patriarch Politian who pleaded our cause. The case was long, so long that, being courteous as ever, they gave us cushions to sit on, also, in an interval, food and sherbet.

Musa claimed Heliodore as his slave. An officer who prosecuted claimed that Allah having given me, their enemy and a well-known general who had done them much damage, into their hands, I should be put to death. Politian answered on behalf of all of us, saying that we had harmed no

man. He added that as there was a truce between the Christians and the Moslems, I could not be made to suffer the penalties of war in a time of peace, who had come to Egypt but to seek a maid to whom I was affianced. Moreover, that even if it were so, the murder of prisoners was not one of those penalties.

The Emir listened to all but said little. At length, however, he asked whether we were willing to become Moslems, since if so he thought that we might go free. We answered that we were not willing.

"Then it would seem," he said, "that the lady Heliodore, having been taken in war, must be treated as a prisoner of war, the only question being to whom she belongs."

Now Musa interrupted angrily, shouting out that as to this there was no doubt, since she belonged to him, who had captured her during his tenure of office.

The Emir thought a while, and we waited trembling. At last he gave judgment, saying:

"The General Olaf the Blind, who in Byzantium was known as Olaf Red-Sword or as Michael, and who while in the service of the Empress Irene often made war against the followers of the Prophet, but who afterwards lost his eyes at the hands of this same evil woman, is a man of whom all the world has heard. Particularly have we Moslems heard of

him, seeing that as governor of Lesbos in recent days he inflicted a great defeat upon our navy, slaying many thousands and taking others prisoner. But as it chanced God, Who bides His time to work justice, set a bait for him in the shape of a fair woman. On this bait he has been hooked, notwithstanding all his skill and cunning, and delivered into our hands, having come into Egypt disguised as a beggar in order to seek out that woman. Still, as he is so famous a man, and as at present there is a truce between us and the Empire of the East, which truce raises certain doubtful points of high policy, I decree that his case be remitted to the Caliph Harun-al-Rashid, my master, and that he be conveyed to Baghdad there to await judgment. With him will go the woman whom he alleges to be his niece, but who, as we are informed, was one of the waiting-ladies of the Empress Irene. Against her there is nothing to be said save that she may be a Byzantine spy.

"Now I come to the matter of the lady Heliodore, who is reported to be the wife or the lover or the affianced of this General Olaf, a question of which God alone knows the truth. This lady Heliodore is a person of high descent and ancient race. She is the only child of the late Prince Magas, who claimed to have the blood of the old Pharaohs in his veins, and who within this year was defeated and slain by my predecessor in office, the Emir Musa. The said Emir, having captured the lady Heliodore, purposed to place her in his harem, as he had a right to do, seeing that she refused the blessings of the Faith. As it chanced, however, she escaped from him, as it is told by stabbing the eunuch in charge of her. At least it is certain that this eunuch was found dead,

though by whom he was killed is not certain. Now that she has been taken again, the lord Musa claims the woman as his spoil and demands that I should hand her over to him. Yet it seems to me that if she is the spoil of anyone, she belongs to the Emir governing Egypt at the date of her recapture. It was only by virtue of his office as Emir, and not by gift, purchase, or marriage contract, that the lord Musa came into possession of her, which possession was voided by her flight before she was added to his household and he acquired any natural rights over her in accordance with our law. Now for my part, I, as Emir, make no claim to this woman, holding it a hateful thing before God to force one into my household who has no wish to dwell there, especially when I know her to be married or affianced to another man. Still, as here also are involved high questions of law, I command that the lady Heliodore, daughter of the late Prince Magas, shall also be conveyed with all courtesy and honour to the Caliph Harun at Baghdad, there to abide his judgment of her case. The matter is finished. Let the officers concerned carry out my decree and answer for the safety of these prisoners with their lives."

"The matter is not finished," shouted the ex-Emir Musa. "You, Obaidallah, have uttered this false judgment because your heart is black towards me whom you have displaced."

"Then appeal against it," said Obaidallah, "but know that if you attempt to lay hands upon this lady, my orders are that you be cut down as an enemy to the law. Patriarch of the Christians, you sail for Baghdad to

visit the Caliph at his request in a ship that he has sent for you. Into your hands I give these prisoners under guard, knowing that you will deal well with them, who are of your false faith. To you also who have the Caliph's ear, Allah knows why, I will entrust letters making true report of all this matter. Let proper provision be made for the comfort of the General Olaf and of those with him. Musa, may your greetings at the Court of Baghdad be such as you deserve; meanwhile cease to trouble me."

At the door of that hall I was separated from Heliodore and Martina and led to some house or prison, where I was given a large room with servants to wait upon me. Here I slept that night, and on the morrow asked when we sailed for Beirut on our way to Baghdad. The chief of the servants answered that he did not know. During that day I was visited by Yusuf, the officer who had captured us on board the Diana. He also told me that he did not know when we sailed, but certainly it would not be for some days. Further, he said that I need have no fear for the lady Heliodore and Martina, as they were well treated in some other place. Then he led me into a great garden, where he said I was at liberty to walk whenever I pleased.

Thus began perhaps the most dreadful time of waiting and suspense in all this life of mine, seeing that it was the longest. Every few days the officer Yusuf would visit me and talk of many matters, for we became friends. Only of Heliodore and Martina he could or would tell me nothing, nor of when we were to set out on our journey to Baghdad.

I asked to be allowed to speak with the Patriarch Politian, but he answered that this was impossible, as he had been called away from Alexandria for a little while. Nor could I have audience with the Emir Obaidallah, for he too had been called away.

Now my heart was filled with terrors, for I feared lest in this way or in that Heliodore had fallen into the hands of the accursed Musa. I prayed Yusuf to tell me the truth of the matter, whereon he swore by the Prophet that she was safe, but would say no more. Nor did this comfort me much, since for aught I knew he might mean she was safe in death. I was aware, further, that the Moslems held it no crime to deceive an infidel. Week was added to week, and still I languished in this rich prison. The best of garments and food were brought to me; I was even given wine. Kind hands tended me and led me from place to place. I lacked nothing except freedom and the truth. Doubt and fear preyed upon my heart till at length I fell ill and scarcely cared to walk in the garden. One day when Yusuf visited me I told him that he would not need to come many more times, since I felt that I was going to die.

"Do not die," he answered, "since then perchance you will find you have done so in vain," and he left me.

On the following evening he returned and told me that he had brought a physician to see me, a certain Mahommed, who was standing before me. Although I had no hope from any physician, I prayed this Mahommed to be seated, whereon Yusuf left us, closing the door behind him.

"Be pleased to set out your case, General Olaf," said Mahommed in a grave, quiet voice, "for know that I am sent by the Caliph himself to minister to you."

"How can that be, seeing that he is in Baghdad?" I answered. Still, I told him my ailments.

When I had finished he said:

"I perceive that you suffer more from your mind than from your body. Be so good, now, as to repeat to me the tale of your life, of which I have already heard something. Tell me especially of those parts of it which have to do with the lady Heliodore, daughter of Magas, of your blinding by Irene for her sake, and of your discovery of her in Egypt, where you sought her disguised as a beggar."

"Why should I tell you all my story, sir?"

"That I may know how to heal you of your sickness. Also, General Olaf, I will be frank with you. I am more than a mere physician; I have certain powers under the Caliph's seal, and it will be wise on your part to open all your heart to me."

Now I reflected that there could be little harm in repeating to this strange doctor what so many already knew. So I told him everything, and

the tale was long.

"Wondrous! Most wondrous!" said the grave-voiced physician when I had finished. "Yet to me the strangest part of your history is that played therein by the lady Martina. Had she been your lover, now, one might have understood--perhaps," and he paused.

"Sir Physician," I answered, "the lady Martina has been and is no more than my friend."

"Ah! Now I see new virtues in your religion, since we Moslems do not find such friends among those women who are neither our mothers nor our sisters. Evidently the Christian faith must have power to change the nature of women, which I thought to be impossible. Well, General Olaf, I will consider of your case, and I may tell you that I have good hopes of finding a medicine by which it can be cured, all save your sight, which in this world God Himself cannot give back to you. Now I have a favour to ask. I see that in this room of yours there is a curtain hiding the bed of the servant who sleeps with you. I desire to see another patient here, and that this patient should not see you. Of your goodness will you sit upon the bed behind that curtain, and will you swear to me on your honour as a soldier that whatever you may hear you will in no way reveal yourself?"

"Surely, that is if it is nothing which will bring disgrace upon my head or name."

"It will be nothing to bring disgrace on your head or name, General Olaf, though perhaps it may bring some sorrow to your heart. As yet I cannot say."

"My heart is too full of sorrow to hold more," I answered.

Then he led me down to the guard's bed, on which I sat myself down, being strangely interested in this play. He drew the curtain in front of me, and I heard him return to the centre of the room and clap his hands. Someone entered, saying,

"High Lord, your will?"

"Silence!" he exclaimed, and began to whisper orders, while I wondered what kind of a physician this might be who was addressed as "High Lord."

The servant went, and, after a while of waiting that seemed long, once more the door was opened, and I heard the sweep of a woman's dress upon the carpet.

"Be seated, Lady," said the grave voice of the physician, "for I have words to say to you."

"Sir, I obey," answered another voice, at the sound of which my heart stood still. It was that of Heliodore.

"Lady," went on the physician, "as my robe will tell you, I am a doctor of medicine. Also, as it chanced, I am something more, namely, an envoy appointed by the Caliph Harun-al-Rashid, having full powers to deal with your case. Here are my credentials if you care to read them," and I heard a crackling as of parchment being unfolded.

"Sir," answered Heliodore, "I will read the letters later. For the present I accept your word. Only I would ask one question, if it pleases you to answer. Why have not I and the General Olaf been conveyed to the presence of the Caliph himself, as was commanded by the Emir Obaidallah?"

"Lady, because it was not convenient to the Caliph to receive you, since as it chanced at present he is moving from place to place upon the business of the State. Therefore, as you will find in the writing, he has appointed me to deal with your matter. Now, Lady, the Caliph and I his servant know all your story from lips which even you would trust. You are betrothed to a certain enemy of his, a Northman named Olaf Red-Sword or Michael, who was blinded by the Empress Irene for some offence against her, but was afterwards appointed by her son Constantine to be governor of the Isle of Lesbos. This Olaf, by the will of God, inflicted a heavy defeat upon the forces of the Caliph which he had sent to take Lesbos. Then, by the goodness of God, he wandered to Egypt in search of you, with the result that both of you were taken prisoner. Lady, it will be clear to you that, having this wild hawk Olaf in his

hands, the Caliph would scarcely let him go again to prey upon the Moslems, though whether he will kill him or make of him a slave as yet I do not know. Nay, hear me out before you speak. The Caliph has been told of your wondrous beauty, and as I see even less than the truth. Also he has heard of the high spirit which you showed in the Coptic rising, when your father, the Prince Magas, was slain, and of how you escaped out of the hand of the Emir Musa the Fat, and were not afraid to dwell for months alone in the tombs of the ancient dead. Now the Caliph, being moved in his heart by your sad plight and all that he has heard concerning you, commands me to make you an offer.

"The offer is that you should come to his Court, and there be instructed for a while by his learned men in the truths of religion. Then, if it pleases you to adopt Islam, he will take you as one of his wives, and if it does not please you, will add you to his harem, since it is not lawful for him to marry a woman who remains a Christian. In either case he will make on you a settlement of property to the value of that which belonged to your father, the Prince Magas. Reflect well before you answer. Your choice lies between the memory of a blind man, whom I think you will never see again, and the high place of one of the wives of the greatest sovereign of the earth."

"Sir, before I answer I would put a question to you. Why do you say 'the memory of a blind man'?"

"Because, Lady, a rumour has reached me which I desired to hold back

from you, but which now you force me to repeat. It is that this General Olaf has in truth already passed the gate of death."

"Then, sir," she answered, with a little sob, "it behoves me to follow him through that gate."

"That will happen when it pleases God. Meanwhile, what is your answer?"

"Sir, my answer is that I, a poor Christian prisoner, a victim of war and fate, thank the Caliph Harun-al-Rashid for the honours and the benefits he would shower on me, and with humility decline them."

"So be it, Lady. The Caliph is not a man who would wish to force your inclination. Still, this being so, I am charged to say he bids you remember that you were taken prisoner in war by the Emir Musa. He holds that, subject to his own prior right, which he waives, you are the property of the Emir Musa under a just interpretation of the law. Yet he would be merciful as God is merciful, and therefore he gives you the choice of three things. The first of these is that you adopt Islam with a faithful heart and go free."

"That I refuse, as I have refused it before," said Heliodore.

"The second is," he continued, "that you enter the harem of the Emir Musa."

"That I refuse also."

"And the third and last is that, having thrust aside his mercy, you suffer the common fate of a captured Christian who persists in error, and die."

"That I accept," said Heliodore.

"You accept death. In the splendour of your youth and beauty, you accept death," he said, with a note of wonder in his voice. "Truly, you are great-hearted, and the Caliph will grieve when he learns his loss, as I do now. Yet I have my orders, for which my head must answer. Lady, if you die, it must be here and now. Do you still choose death?"

"Yes," she said in a low voice.

"Behold this cup," he went on, "and this draught which I pour into it," and I heard the sound of liquid flowing. "Presently I shall ask you to drink of it, and then, after a little while, say the half of an hour, you will fall asleep, to wake in whatever world God has appointed to the idol worshippers of the Cross. You will suffer no pain and no fear; indeed, maybe the draught will bring you joy."

"Then give it me," said Heliodore faintly. "I will drink at once and have done."

Then it was that I came out from behind my curtain and groped my way towards them.

"Sir Physician, or Sir Envoy of the Caliph Harun," I said; but for the moment went no further, since, with a low cry, Heliodore cast herself upon my breast and stopped my lips with hers.

"Hush till I have spoken," I whispered, placing my arm about her; then continued. "I swore to you just now that I would not reveal myself unless I heard aught which would bring disgrace on my head or name. To stand still behind yonder curtain while my betrothed is poisoned at your hands would bring disgrace upon my head and name so black that not all the seas of all the world could wash it away. Say, Physician, does yonder cup hold enough of death for both of us?"

"Yes, General Olaf, and if you choose to share it I think the Caliph will be glad, since he loves not the killing of brave men. Only it must be now and without more words. You can talk for a little afterwards before the sleep takes you."

"So be it," I said. "Since I must die, as I heard you decree but now, it is no crime to die thus, or at least I'll risk it who have one to guard upon that road. Drink, beloved, a little less than half since I am the stronger. Then give me the cup."

"Husband, I pledge you," she said, and drank, thrusting the cup into my

hand.

I, too, lifted it to my lips. Lo! it was empty.

"Oh! most cruel of thieves," I cried, "you have stolen all."

"Aye," she answered. "Shall I see you swallow poison before my eyes? I die, but perchance God may save you yet."

"Not so, Heliodore," I cried again, and, turning, began to grope my way to the window-place, which I knew was far from the ground, since I had no weapon that would serve my turn.

In an instant, as I thrust the lattice open, I felt two strong arms cast about me and heard the physician exclaim,

"Come, Lady, help me with this madman, lest he do himself a mischief."

She seized me also, and we struggled together all three of us. The doors burst open, and I was dragged back into the centre of the room.

"Olaf Red-Sword, the blind General of the Christians," said the physician in a new voice, one that was full of majesty and command, "I who speak to you am no doctor of medicine and no envoy. I am Harun-al-Rashid, Caliph of the Faithful. Is it not so, my servants?"

"It is so, Caliph," pealed the answer from many throats.

"Hearken, then, to the decree of Harun-al-Rashid. Learn both of you that all which has passed between us was but a play that I have played to test the love and faithfulness of you twain. Lady Heliodore, be at ease. You have drunk nothing save water distilled with roses, and no sleep shall fall on you save that which Nature brings to happiness. Lady, I tell you that, having seen what I have seen and heard what I have heard, rather would I stand in the place of that blind man to-night than be Sovereign of the East. Truly, I knew not that love such as yours was to be met with in the world. I say that when I saw you drain the cup in a last poor struggle to drive back the death that threatened this Olaf my own heart went out in love for you. Yet have no fear, since my love is of a kind that would not rob you of your love, but rather would bring it to a rich and glorious blossom in the sunshine of my favour. Wondrous is the tale of the wooing of you twain and happy shall be its end. General Olaf, you conquered me in war and dealt with those of my servants who fell into your hands according to the nobleness of your heart. Shall I, then, be outdone in generosity by one whom a while ago I should have named a Christian dog? Not so! Let the high priest of the Christians, Politian, be brought hither. He stands without, and with him the lady named Martina, who was the Empress Irene's waiting-woman."

The messengers went and there followed a silence. There are times when the heart is too full for words; at least, Heliodore and I found nothing to say to each other. We only clasped each other's hand and waited.

At length the door opened, and I heard the eager, bustling step of Politian, also another gliding step, which I knew for that of Martina. She came to me, she kissed me on the brow, and whispered into my ear,

"So all is well at last, as I knew it would be; and now, Olaf--and now, Olaf, you are about to be married. Yes, at once, and--I wish you joy."

Her words were simple enough, yet they kindled in my heart a light by which it saw many things.

"Martina," I said, "if I have lived to reach this hour, under God it is through you. Martina, they say that each of us has a guardian angel in heaven, and if that be so, mine has come to earth. Yet in heaven alone shall I learn to thank her as I ought."

Then suddenly Martina was sobbing on my breast; after which I remember only that Heliodore helped me to wipe away her tears, while in the background I heard the Caliph say to himself in his deep voice,

"Wondrous! Wondrous! By Allah! these Christians are a strange folk. How far wiser is our law, for then he could have married both of them, and all three would have been happy. Truly he who decreed that it should be so knew the heart of man and woman and was a prophet sent by God. Nay, answer me not, friend Politian, since on matters of religion we have agreed that we will never argue. Do your office according to your unholy

rites, and I and my servants will watch, praying that the Evil One may be absent from the service. Oh! silence, silence! Have I not said that we will not argue on subjects of religion? To your business, man."

So Politian drew us together to the other end of the chamber, and there wed us as best he might, with Martina for witness and the solemn Moslems for congregation.

When it was over, Harun commanded my wife to lead me before him.

"Here is a marriage gift for you, General Olaf," he said; "one, I think, that you will value more than any other," and he handed me something sharp and heavy.

I felt it, hilt and blade, and knew it for the Wanderer's sword, yes, my own red sword from which I took my name, that the Commander of the Faithful now restored to me, and with it my place and freedom. I took it, and, saying no word, with that same sword gave to him the triple salute due to a sovereign.

Instantly I heard Harun's scimitar, the scimitar that was famous throughout the East, rattle as it left its scabbard, as did the scimitars of all those who attended on him, and knew that there was being returned to me the salute which a sovereign gives to a general in high command. Then the Caliph spoke again.

"A wedding gift to you, Lady Heliodore, child of an ancient and mighty race, and new-made wife of a gallant man. For the second time to-night take this cup of gold, but let that which lies within it adorn your breast in memory of Harun. Queens of old have worn those jewels, but never have they hung above a nobler heart."

Heliodore took the cup, and in her trembling hand I heard the priceless gems that filled it clink against its sides. Once more the Caliph spoke.

"A gift for you also, Lady Martina. Take this ring from my hand and place it on your own. It seems a small thing, does it not? Yet something lies within its circle. In this city I saw to-day a very beautiful house built by one of your Grecian folk, and behind it lands that a swift horse could scarcely circle twice within an hour, most fruitful lands fed by the waters. That house and those lands are yours, together with rule over all who dwell upon them. There you may live content with whomever you may please, even if he be a Christian, free of tax or tribute, provided only that neither you nor he shall plot against my power. Now, to all three of you farewell, perchance for ever, unless some of us should meet again in war. General Olaf, your ship lies in the harbour; use it when you will. I pray that you will think kindly of Harun-al-Rashid, as he does of you, Olaf Red-Sword. Come, let us leave these two. Lady Martina, I pray you to be my guest this night."

So they all went, leaving Heliodore and myself alone in the great room, yes, alone at last and safe.