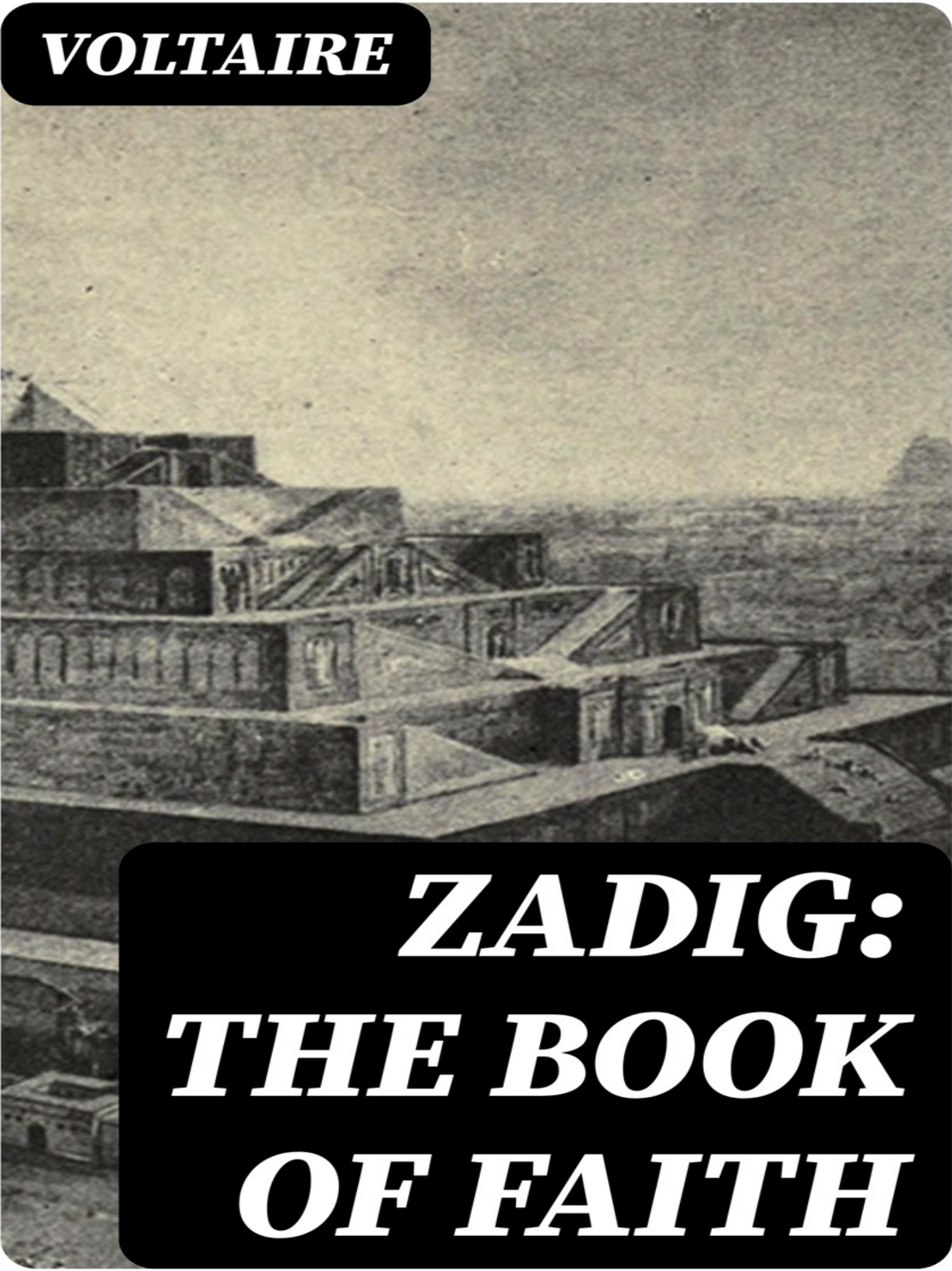


***VOLTAIRE***



***ZADIG:  
THE BOOK  
OF FAITH***

**Voltaire**

# Zadig: The Book of Faith

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# Table of Contents

[ZADIG](#)

[VOLTAIRE: HIS LIFE AND WORKS \(Biography\).](#)

# ZADIG

[Table of Contents](#)

# Table of Contents

- [I. The Blind Of One Eye.](#)
- [II. The Nose.](#)
- [III. The Dog And The Horse.](#)
- [IV. The Envious Man.](#)
- [V. The Generous.](#)
- [VI. The Minister.](#)
- [VII. The Disputes And The Audiences.](#)
- [VIII. Jealousy.](#)
- [IX. The Woman Beater.](#)
- [X. Slavery.](#)
- [XI. The Funeral Pile.](#)
- [XII. The Supper.](#)
- [XIII. The Rendezvous.](#)
- [XIII.\(1\) The Dance.](#)
- [XIII.\(2\) Blue Eyes.](#)
- [XIV. The Robber.](#)
- [XV. The Fisherman.](#)
- [XVI. The Basilisk.](#)
- [XVII. The Combats.](#)
- [XVIII. The Hermit.](#)
- [XIX. The Enigmas.](#)

## **Approbation.**

I, the underwritten, who have obtained the character of a learned, and even of an ingenious man, have read this manuscript, which, in spite of myself, I have found to be curious, entertaining, moral, philosophical, and capable of affording pleasure even to those who hate romances. I have therefore decried it; and have assured the cadillesquier that it is an abominable performance.

## **Epistle Dedicatory To The Sultana Seraa.**

*The 18th of the month Schewal, in the 837th year of the Hegira.*

Delight of the eyes, torment of the heart, and light of the mind, I kiss not the dust of thy feet, because thou never walkest; or walkest only on the carpets of Iran, or in paths strewn with roses.

I offer thee the translation of a book, written by an ancient sage, who, having the happiness to have nothing to do, amused himself in composing the *History of Zadig*; a work which performs more than it promises.

I beseech thee to read and examine it; for, though thou art in the spring of life, and every pleasure courts thee to its embrace; though thou art beautiful, and thy beauty be embellished by thy admirable talents; though thou art praised from morning to evening, and, on all these accounts, hast a right to be devoid of common sense, yet thou hast a sound judgment and a fine taste; and I have heard thee reason with more accuracy than the old dervises, with their long beards and pointed bonnets.

Thou art discreet without being distrustful; gentle without weakness; and beneficent with discernment. Thou lovest thy friends, and makest thyself no enemies. Thy wit never borrows its charms from the shafts of detraction. Thou neither sayest nor doest any ill, notwithstanding that both are so much in thy power.

In a word, thy soul hath always appeared to me to be as pure and unsullied as thy beauty. Besides, thou hast some little knowledge in philosophy, which makes me believe that thou wilt take more pleasure than others of thy sex in perusing the work of this venerable sage.



It was originally written in the ancient Chaldee, a language which neither thou nor I understand. It was afterward translated into the Arabic, to amuse the famous sultan Oulougbeq, much about the time that the Arabians and the Persians began to write the *Thousand and One Nights*, the *Thousand and One Days*, etc.

Ouloug was fond of reading *Zadig*, but the sultanas were fonder of the *Thousand and One*. "How can you prefer," said the wise Ouloug to them, "those stories which have neither sense nor meaning?" "It is for that very reason," replied the sultanas, "that we prefer them."

I flatter myself that thou wilt not resemble these, thy predecessors; but that thou wilt be a true Ouloug. I even hope, that when thou art tired with those general conversations, which differ from the *Thousand and One* in nothing but in being less agreeable, I shall have the honor to entertain thee for a moment with a rational discourse.

Hadst thou been Thalestris in the time of Scander, the son of Philip; hadst thou been the Queen of Sheba in the time of Solomon; these are the very kings that would have paid thee a visit.

I pray the heavenly powers, that thy pleasures may be unmixed, thy beauty never fading, and thy happiness without end.

SADI.



# I. The Blind Of One Eye.

## [Table of Contents](#)

There lived at Babylon, in the reign of King Moabdar, a young man, named Zadig, of a good natural disposition, strengthened and improved by education. Though rich and young, he had learned to moderate his passions. He had nothing stiff or affected in his behavior. He did not pretend to examine every action by the strict rules of reason, but was always ready to make proper allowances for the weakness of mankind. It was a matter of surprise, that, notwithstanding his sprightly wit, he never exposed by his raillery those vague, incoherent, and noisy discourses; those rash censures, ignorant decisions, coarse jests, and all that empty jingle of words which at Babylon went by the name of conversation. He had learned, in the first book of Zoroaster, that self-love is a foot-ball swelled with wind, from which, when pierced, the most terrible tempests issue forth. Above all, Zadig never boasted of his conquests among the women, nor affected to entertain a contemptible opinion of the fair sex. He was generous, and was never afraid of obliging the ungrateful; remembering the grand precept of Zoroaster, "When thou eatest, give to the dogs, should they even bite thee." He was as wise as it is possible for man to be, for he sought to live with the wise. Instructed in the sciences of the ancient Chaldeans, he understood the principles of natural philosophy, such as they were then supposed to be; and knew as much of metaphysics as hath ever been known in any age, that is, little or nothing at all. He was firmly persuaded, notwithstanding the new philosophy of the times, that the year consisted of three hundred and sixty-five days and six hours, and that the sun

was the centre of the solar system. When the principal magi told him, with a haughty and contemptuous air, that his sentiments were of a dangerous tendency, and that it was to be an enemy to the state to believe that the sun revolved round its own axis, and that the year had twelve months, he held his tongue with great modesty and meekness.

Possessed as he was of great riches, and consequently of many friends, blessed with a good constitution, a handsome figure, a mind just and moderate, and a heart noble and sincere, he fondly imagined that he might easily be happy. He was going to be married to Semira, who, in point of beauty, birth, and fortune, was the first match in Babylon. He had a real and virtuous affection for this lady, and she loved him with the most passionate fondness. The happy moment was almost arrived that was to unite them for ever in the bands of wedlock, when happening to take a walk together toward one of the gates of Babylon, under the palm-trees that adorn the banks of the Euphrates, they saw some men approaching, armed with sabres and arrows. These were the attendants of young Orcan, the minister's nephew, whom his uncle's creatures had flattered into an opinion that he might do everything with impunity. He had none of the graces nor virtues of Zadig; but thinking himself a much more accomplished man, he was enraged to find that the other was preferred before him. This jealousy, which was merely the effect of his vanity, made him imagine that he was desperately in love with Semira; and accordingly he resolved to carry her off. The ravishers seized her; in the violence of the outrage, they wounded her, and made the blood flow from a person, the sight of which would have softened the tigers of mount Imaus. She pierced the heavens with her complaints. She cried out: "My dear husband! they tear me from the man I adore!"

Regardless of her own danger, she was only concerned for the fate of her dear Zadig, who, in the meantime, defended himself with all the strength that courage and love

could inspire. Assisted only by two faithful slaves, he put the cowardly ravishers to flight, and carried home Semira, insensible and bloody as she was.

"O Zadig," said she, on opening her eyes, and beholding her deliverer, "I loved thee formerly as my intended husband, I now love thee as the preserver of my honor and my life!"

Never was heart more deeply affected than that of Semira. Never did a more charming mouth express more moving sentiments, in those glowing words inspired by a sense of the greatest of all favors, and by the most tender transports of a lawful passion. Her wound was slight, and was soon cured. Zadig was more dangerously wounded. An arrow had pierced him near his eye, and penetrated to a considerable depth, Semira wearied heaven with her prayers for the recovery of her lover. Her eyes were constantly bathed in tears; she anxiously waited the happy moment when those of Zadig should be able to meet hers; but an abscess growing on the wounded eye, gave everything to fear. A messenger was immediately dispatched to Memphis, for the great physician Hermes, who came with a numerous retinue. He visited the patient, and declared that he would lose his eye. He even foretold the day and hour when this fatal event would happen.

"Had it been the right eye," said he, "I could easily have cured it; but the wounds of the left eye are incurable."

All Babylon lamented the fate of Zadig, and admired the profound knowledge of Hermes. In two days the abscess broke of its own accord, and Zadig was perfectly cured. Hermes wrote a book, to prove that it ought not to have been cured. Zadig did not read it: but, as soon as he was able to go abroad, he went to pay a visit to her in whom all his hopes of happiness were centered, and for whose sake alone he wished to have eyes. Semira had been in the country for three days past. He learned on the road, that that fine lady, having openly declared that she had an

unconquerable aversion to one-eyed men, had the night before given her hand to Orcan. At this news he fell speechless to the ground. His sorrows brought him almost to the brink of the grave. He was long indisposed; but reason at last got the better of his affliction; and the severity of his fate served even to console him.

"Since," said he, "I have suffered so much from the cruel caprice of a woman educated at court, I must now think of marrying the daughter of a citizen."

He pitched upon Azora, a lady of the greatest prudence, and of the best family in town. He married her, and lived with her for three months in all the delights of the most tender union. He only observed that she had a little levity; and was too apt to find that those young men who had the most handsome persons were likewise possessed of the most wit and virtue.

## II. The Nose.

### [Table of Contents](#)

One morning Azora returned from a walk in a terrible passion and uttering the most violent exclamations.

"What aileth thee," said he, "my dear spouse? What is it that can thus have disturbed thee?"

"Alas!" said she, "thou wouldst have been as much enraged as I am, hadst thou seen what I have just beheld. I have been to comfort the young widow Cosrou, who, within these two days, hath raised a tomb to her young husband, near the rivulet that washes the skirts of this meadow. She vowed to heaven, in the bitterness of her grief, to remain at this tomb whilst the water of the rivulet should continue to run near it."

"Well," said Zadig, "she is an excellent woman, and loved her husband with the most sincere affection."

"Ah!" replied Azora, "didst thou but know in what she was employed when I went to wait upon her!"

"In what, pray tell me, beautiful Azora? Was she turning the course of the rivulet?"

Azora broke out into such long invectives, and loaded the young widow with such bitter reproaches, that Zadig was far from being pleased with this ostentation of virtue.

Zadig had a friend named Cador; one of those young men in whom his wife discovered more probity and merit than in others. He made him his confidant, and secured his fidelity as much as possible by a considerable present. Azora, having passed two days with a friend in the country, returned home on the third. The servants told her, with tears in their eyes, that her husband died suddenly the night before; that they were afraid to send her an account of

this mournful event; and that they had just been depositing his corpse in the tomb of his ancestors, at the end of the garden. She wept, she tore her hair, and swore she would follow him to the grave. In the evening, Cador begged leave to wait upon her, and joined his tears with hers. Next day they wept less, and dined together. Cador told her, that his friend had left him the greater part of his estate; and that he should think himself extremely happy in sharing his fortune with her. The lady wept, fell into a passion, and at last became more mild and gentle. They sat longer at supper than at dinner. They now talked with greater confidence. Azora praised the deceased; but owned that he had many failings from which Cador was free.

During supper, Cador complained of a violent pain in his side. The lady, greatly concerned, and eager to serve him, caused all kinds of essences to be brought, with which she anointed him, to try if some of them might not possibly ease him of his pain. She lamented that the great Hermes was not still in Babylon. She even condescended to touch the side in which Cador felt such exquisite pain.

"Art thou subject to this cruel disorder?" said she to him, with a compassionate air.

"It sometimes brings me," replied Cador, "to the brink of the grave; and there is but one remedy that can give me relief—and that is, to apply to my side the nose of a man who is lately dead."

"A strange remedy, indeed!" said Azora.

"Not more strange," replied he, "than the satchels of Arnou, against the apoplexy."

This reason, added to the great merit of the young man, at last determined the lady.

"After all," says she, "when my husband shall cross the bridge Tchinavar in his journey to the other world, the angel Asrael will not refuse him a passage because his nose is a little shorter in the second life than it was in the first."



She then took a razor, went to her husband's tomb, bedewed it with her tears, and drew near to cut off the nose of Zadig, whom she found extended at full length in the tomb. Zadig arose, holding his nose with one hand, and putting back the razor with the other.

"Madam," said he, "don't exclaim so violently against the widow Cosrou. The project of cutting off my nose is equal to that of turning the course of a rivulet."

## III. The Dog And The Horse.

### [Table of Contents](#)

Zadig found by experience, that the first month of marriage, as it is written in the book of Zend, is the moon of honey, and that the second is the moon of wormwood. He was some time after obliged to repudiate Azora, who became too difficult to be pleased; and he then sought for happiness in the study of nature.

"No man," said he, "can be happier than a philosopher, who reads in this great book, which God hath placed before our eyes. The truths he discovers are his own; he nourishes and exalts his soul; he lives in peace; he fears nothing from men; and his tender spouse will not come to cut off his nose."

Possessed of these ideas, he retired to a country house on the banks of the Euphrates. There he did not employ himself in calculating how many inches of water flow in a second of time under the arches of a bridge, or whether there fell a cube-line of rain in the month of the mouse more than in the month of the sheep. He never dreamed of making silk of cobwebs, or porcelain of broken bottles: but he chiefly studied the properties of plants and animals; and soon acquired a sagacity that made him discover a thousand differences where other men see nothing but uniformity.

One day, as he was walking near a little wood, he saw one of the queen's eunuchs running toward him, followed by several officers, who appeared to be in great perplexity, and who ran to and fro like men distracted, eagerly searching for something they had lost of great value.

"Young man," said the first eunuch, "hast thou seen the queen's dog?"

"It is a bitch," replied Zadig, with great modesty, "and not a dog."

"Thou art in the right," returned the first eunuch.

"It is a very small she-spaniel," added Zadig; "she has lately whelped; she limps on the left fore-foot, and has very long ears."

"Thou hast seen her," said the first eunuch, quite out of breath.

"No," replied Zadig, "I have not seen her, nor did I so much as know that the queen had a bitch."

Exactly at the same time, by one of the common freaks of fortune, the finest horse in the king's stable had escaped from the jockey in the plains of Babylon. The principal huntsman, and all the other officers, ran after him with as much eagerness and anxiety as the first eunuch had done after the bitch. The principal huntsman addressed himself to Zadig, and asked him if he had not seen the king's horse passing by.

"He is the fleetest horse in the king's stable," replied Zadig, "he is five feet high, with very small hoofs, and a tail three feet and an half in length; the studs on his bit are gold, of twenty-three carats, and his shoes are silver of eleven penny-weights."

"What way did he take? where is he?" demanded the chief huntsman.

"I have not seen him," replied Zadig, "and never heard talk of him before."

The principal huntsman and the first eunuch never doubted but that Zadig had stolen the king's horse and the queen's bitch. They therefore had him conducted before the assembly of the grand desterham, who condemned him to the knout, and to spend the rest of his days in Siberia. Hardly was the sentence passed, when the horse and the bitch were both found. The judges were reduced to the

disagreeable necessity of reversing their sentence; but they condemned Zadig to pay four hundred ounces of gold for having said that he had not seen what he had seen. This fine he was obliged to pay; after which, he was permitted to plead his cause before the counsel of the grand desterham, when he spoke to the following effect.

"Ye stars of justice, abyss of sciences, mirrors of truth, who have the weight of lead, the hardness of iron, the splendor of the diamond, and many of the properties of gold; since I am permitted to speak before this august assembly, I swear to you by Oromazes, that I have never seen the queen's respectable bitch, nor the sacred horse of the king of kings. The truth of the matter is as follows: I was walking toward the little wood, where I afterward met the venerable eunuch, and the most illustrious chief huntsman. I observed on the sand the traces of an animal, and could easily perceive them to be those of a little dog. The light and long furrows impressed on little eminences of sand between the marks of the paws, plainly discovered that it was a bitch, whose dugs were hanging down, and that therefore she must have whelped a few days before. Other traces of a different kind, that always appeared to have gently brushed the surface of the sand near the marks of the fore-feet, showed me that she had very long ears; and as I remarked that there was always a slighter impression made on the sand by one foot than by the other three, I found that the bitch of our august queen was a little lame, if I may be allowed the expression. With regard to the horse of the king of kings, you will be pleased to know, that walking in the lanes of this wood, I observed the marks of a horse's shoes, all at equal distances. This must be a horse, said I to myself, that gallops excellently. The dust on the trees in a narrow road that was but seven feet wide, was a little brushed off, at the distance of three feet and a half from the middle of the road. This horse, said I, has a tail three feet and a half long, which, being whisked to the right and left,

has swept away the dust. I observed under the trees that formed an arbor five feet in height, that the leaves of the branches were newly fallen, from whence I inferred that the horse had touched them, and that he must therefore be five feet high. As to his bit, it must be gold of twenty-three carats, for he had rubbed its bosses against a stone which I knew to be a touchstone, and which I have tried. In a word, from a mark made by his shoes on flints of another kind, I concluded that he was shod with silver eleven deniers fine."

All the judges admired Zadig for his acute and profound discernment. The news of this speech was carried even to the king and queen. Nothing was talked of but Zadig in the anti-chambers, the chambers, and the cabinet; and though many of the magi were of opinion that he ought to be burnt as a sorcerer, the king ordered his officers to restore him the four hundred ounces of gold which he had been obliged to pay. The register, the attorneys, and bailiffs, went to his house with great formality to carry him back his four hundred ounces. They only retained three hundred and ninety-eight of them to defray the expenses of justice; and then their servants demanded their fees.

Zadig saw how extremely dangerous it sometimes is to appear too knowing, and therefore resolved, that on the next occasion of the like nature he would not tell what he had seen.

Such an opportunity soon offered. A prisoner of state made his escape and passed under the windows of Zadig's house. Zadig was examined and made no answer. But it was proved that he had looked at the prisoner from this window. For this crime he was condemned to pay five hundred ounces of gold; and, according to the polite custom of Babylon, he thanked his judges for their indulgence.

"Great God!" said he to himself, "what a misfortune it is to walk in a wood through which the queen's bitch or the king's horse have passed! how dangerous to look out at a window! and how difficult to be happy in this life!"

## IV. The Envious Man.

### [Table of Contents](#)

Zadig resolved to comfort himself by philosophy and friendship for the evils he had suffered from fortune. He had in the suburbs of Babylon a house elegantly furnished, in which he assembled all the arts and all the pleasures worthy the pursuit of a gentleman. In the morning his library was open to the learned. In the evening his table was surrounded by good company. But he soon found what very dangerous guests these men of letters are. A warm dispute arose on one of Zoroaster's laws, which forbids the eating of a griffin.

"Why," said some of them, "prohibit the eating of a griffin, if there is no such animal in nature?"

"There must necessarily be such an animal," said the others, "since Zoroaster forbids us to eat it."

Zadig would fain have reconciled them by saying:

"If there are no griffins, we cannot possibly eat them; and thus either way we shall obey Zoroaster."

A learned man, who had composed thirteen volumes on the properties of the griffin, and was besides the chief theurgite, hastened away to accuse Zadig before one of the principal magi, named Yebor, the greatest blockhead, and therefore the greatest fanatic among the Chaldeans. This man would have impaled Zadig to do honor to the sun, and would then have recited the breviary of Zoroaster with greater satisfaction. The friend Cador (a friend is better than a hundred priests) went to Yebor, and said to him:

"Long live the sun and the griffins; beware of punishing Zadig; he is a saint; he has griffins in his inner court, and does not eat them; and his accuser is an heretic, who dares

to maintain that rabbits have cloven feet, and are not unclean."

"Well," said Yebor, shaking his bald pate, "we must empale Zadig for having thought contemptuously of griffins, and the other party for having spoken disrespectfully of rabbits."

Cador hushed up the affair by appealing to a person who had great interest in the college of the magi. Nobody was empaled. This lenity occasioned a great murmuring among some of the doctors, who from thence predicted the fall of Babylon.

"Upon what does happiness depend?" said Zadig; "I am persecuted by everything in the world, even on account of beings that have no existence."

He cursed those men of learning, and resolved for the future to live with none but good company.

He assembled at his house the most worthy men, and the most beautiful ladies of Babylon. He gave them delicious suppers, often preceded by concerts of music, and always animated by polite conversation, from which he knew how to banish that affectation of wit, which is the surest method of preventing it entirely, and of spoiling the pleasure of the most agreeable society. Neither the choice of his friends, nor that of the dishes, was made by vanity; for in everything he preferred the substance to the shadow; and by these means he procured that real respect to which he did not aspire.

Opposite to his house lived one Arimazes, a man whose deformed countenance was but a faint picture of his still more deformed mind. His heart was a mixture of malice, pride, and envy. Having never been able to succeed in any of his undertakings, he revenged himself on all around him, by loading them with the blackest calumnies. Rich as he was, he found it difficult to procure a set of flatterers. The rattling of the chariots that entered Zadig's court in the evening, filled him with uneasiness; the sound of his praises