

The Favorite, the Beggar, and the King

BY ARTHUR COLTON

THERE was a man whom a king loved, and heard
With smiles his swift step and impetuous word
Among the slow-paced councillors: to the young
Belong the careless hand, the daring tongue:
Pleasure and pride are the large flowers that spring
Within the fertile shadow of the king.

There sat a beggar in the market-place,
Of sullen manner and a surly face,
Who caught him by the cloak; that with a stone
He smote the beggar's head, and so passed on,
Cassim Ben Ali, up the palace hill,
Leaving the beggar, fallen, grim, and still.

Sudden as the king's favor is his wrath;
Who for the morrow knows what joy he hath?
Or can he pile it in his vaults to stay
The crowding penury of another day?
So to Ben Ali came the harsh disgrace,
That he was led beyond the market-place
Of noisy traders chattering at the stalls,
And in a pit thrown, near the city walls;
Whither the beggar came, and at the pit
Held in his hand a stone, and raising it:
"I in my time am wise, and hitherto
It had been foolish to do what I do;"
Cast on his head, saying in sullen tone,
"I am that beggar, and behold that stone."

Ben Ali on the morrow was restored
To the benignant favor of his lord,

And sending for the beggar, softly said:
"This is that stone." The beggar bowed his head:
"And this my head which is among the lowly,
As thine is high, and God is just holy,"
And threw himself lamenting on the floor.

Ben Ali pondered then a moment more.
"Thou sayest truly, God is just, and lo,
Both of our heads have ached beneath a blow.
I in my time grow wiser, and divine
The beating of thy head will not heal mine,
And have considered and have found it wise,
To exchange with thee some other merchandise.
Take this gold dinar, and remember then
That God is just, if so I come again
Into a pit and ask return of thee."

Once more Ben Ali was brought low, to see
The king's clenched hand, fixed look and rigid frown,
Thrust from the palace gate to wander down,
Stripped of his silks, in poverty and shame,
Into the market, where the traders came
With files of sag-necked camels o'er the sands,
Bringing the corded wares of hidden lands.
And walking there with eyes now wet and dim
He sought the beggar, found and said to him,
"Remember thy exchange of merchandise,
Who sayest, God is just and thou art wise."

"Who sayeth, God is just, speaks not of me;
Who calleth thee a fool, means none but thee,"
He answered. "Being wise I understood
To pay the evil back and keep the good
Is increase of the good in merchandise.
Therefore I keep the dinar and am wise."

Which thing was brought to the king's ear, and he
Summoned the two to stand before his knee;
And took the dinar from the beggar's hand,
And giving to Ben Ali, gave command
To those who waited for his word: "Bring stones

That he may beat with them this beggar's bones,
Who mocks at justice, saying, God is just,
And boasting wisdom, fouls her in the dust."

Ben Ali through his meditation heard
The councillors approving the king's word,
And spoke above their even murmuring:
"Let justice be with God and with the king,
Who are not subject to a moment's chance,
Made and unmade by shifting circumstance.
This is the wisdom of the poor and weak,
The smitten cheek shall warn its brother cheek,
And each man to his nook of comfort run,
His little portion of the morning sun,
His little portion of the noonday shade,
His wrongs forgotten as his debts unpaid.
God holds the scales on high, whose centre stands
Within the secret hollows of his hands,
Whose lines he knows if they be levelled even
With the still plain and jasper floors of heaven.
Let not the evil and the good we do
Be ghosts to haunt us, phantoms to pursue.
I have the dinar and would fain be clear
Of further trading with this beggar here,
For he nor I have caused this world to be,
Nor govern kingdoms with our equity."

"Art thou so poor, then, and the beggar wise,
God's justice hidden and the king's astray?"
Answered the king, slow-voiced, with brooding eyes.

"Art thou so weak, and strong to drive away
Far from to-day the ghost of yesterday?
Free is thy lifted head, while on mine own
The gathered past lies heavier than the crown?
So be it as thou sayest, with him and thee,
Thou who forgivest evil bitterly."

So spoke the king. Ben Ali's steps once more
Were swift and silken on the palace floor.
The beggar went with grim, unchanging face
Back to his begging in the market-place.

The Tragedy of a Map

BY COLLINS SHACKELFORD

DURING the last five years a great many people have heard the name of Bering, in connection with the Alaskan seal-fisheries, the Klondike gold-fields, and the boundary dispute between Canada and the United States. But few who read or hear the name know who the man was or what he had accomplished. His work as a discoverer and his tragic death have been, it is safe to say, forgotten. Nevertheless, his name will be imperishable so long as the maps and charts of the world show Bering Sea, Bering Strait, and Bering Island.

Bering was a Dane, born at Horsen, in Jutland, in 1680. He entered the Russian navy, fought against the Swedes, and served Peter the Great as a lieutenant in 1707, and as a captain-lieutenant in 1710. The "rough-and-ready" Czar knew of him as an adventurous man and a well-seasoned navigator. He was just the sort of person wanted in developing a great plan the Czar had been turning in his head for many years. Peter the Great wished that an expedition of his should discover the north-west passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, which the maritime nations of Europe had been trying to find for centuries.

Bering came conspicuously to the front in 1725, when, by order of the government, he, with officers, men, and ship-carpenters, went overland to Kamchatka. At a place called Avatchka were built two vessels, in which, in 1725, Bering began an exploration of the coast of Asia, which lasted five years, the results of which were for the exclusive benefit of his government.

Anna was Empress in 1740. She had not forgotten the wishes and death-bed instructions of Peter as to continuing explorations for a northwest passage, and selected Bering, now a commander, to take charge of an expedition of two vessels. One, the *St. Peter*, conveyed

Bering; the other, the *St. Paul*, was entrusted to Captain Tchirikov, who had been with him on his previous voyage. The ships left the port of Avatchka, June 4, 1741. By order of the government the two vessels were directed to keep together for mutual aid.

After leaving Avatchka, Bering headed his ships south, steering by the De Fonte chart, which was proved, by later exploration, to have been very faulty, and largely imaginary. No land was sighted up to latitude 46. Eight days later, in latitude 50, both ships being headed to the east, and, unknowingly, for the American coast, they parted company in the midst of storms and fogs. Bering, according to his reckoning, came in sight of land July 18, in latitude 58 28, longitude 50, with an immense mountain confronting him,—presumably what is now known as Mount St. Elias, with its 17,000 feet of height; but his companion, Tchirikov, was ahead of him, having made the same discovery on the 15th inst., in latitude 56, longitude 50. Both had found the land now known as Alaska.

At this point Tchirikov had the misfortune to lose not only his small boats, but a number of men who had gone ashore. This so discouraged him that he set sail for his return to Kamchatka.

Bering was, at this point, according to his own reckoning, five hundred leagues south of Avatchka. On the shore where he landed were found huts made of smooth boards, on some of which were carvings; a small box made of poplar; a hollow ball of earth, inside of which was a loose stone; a whetstone on which copper knives had been sharpened; a cellar stocked with salmon, ropes, and pieces of household furniture and wares; and fireplaces in which were fresh ashes and the remains of smoked fish. The inhabitants kept out of sight so long as the white men remained.