

"Open," said Andrew. So they ripped off the canvas, which there were two men, revealing within a box of dark, foreign looking wood bound with iron bands, at which they stared long before they could break through. At once it was done, and there within was another box, beautifully made of polished ebony, and sealed at the front and ends with a strange device. This box had a lock of silver, to which was tied a silver key.

"The bearer of this letter and of my gifts is a certain cross-worshiper named Nicholas, to whom let your answer be handed as top delivery to me. This device he is under oath to perform and will perform it, for he knows that if he fails therein, then that he must die.

greatest men in all the world, but if you choose to ask for them, they are yours—no more. Of your dream we say that it was but an empty vision of the night which a wise man should forget. Your servant and your niece."

Damasus, Sir Knight, but of its contents I know nothing. At least, you will bear me witness that it has not been tampered with," answered Nicholas.

Also though he says his life hangs on it, I think that were he honest, he would stop. Since the first priest would absolve him from an oath given under stress to the infidel, he is dishonest who he not have stolen those jewels?" asked Godwin.

"Open, and be swift. Here, Godwin, take the key, for my hand shakes with cold."

"The wine merchant." Godwin laid down the letter, and all four of them stared at one another in amazement.

"Surely," said Wulf, "this is some fool's trick played off upon our uncle as an evil jest."

"Why should I sneak about else who have nothing to hide?" answered Nicholas. "I was captured by some Arabs pilgrimage, who, when they found that I had no goods to be robbed of, would have killed me. This, indeed, they were about to do, had not some of Saladin's soldiers come by and commanded them to hold their hands and give me over to them. They did so, and the soldiers took me to Damascus. There I was imprisoned, but not strictly, and then it was that I saw Zelozelle, at least, a Christian man who had some such name, and, as he seemed to be in favor with the Saracens, begged him to intercede for me. Afterward I was brought before the court of Saladin, and having questioned me, the Sultan himself told me that I must either worship the false prophet or die, to which you can guess my answer. So they led me away, as I thought to death, but none offered to do me hurt. Three days later Saladin sent for me again, and offered to spare my life if I would swear an oath by his name that I would never take a certain package and deliver it to you, or to your daughter named the Lady Rosamund, here at your hall in Essex, and bring back the answer to Damascus. Not wishing to die, I said that I would do this, if the Sultan passed his word, which he

answered in the humble voice affected by his class. "So, most noble knight, shelter for man and beast, for my mule is held without. Also a word with the lord, Sir Andrew D'Arcy, for whom I have messages to lay before him."

"I was wrong," said Wulf. "Even the Sultan of the East could not afford a jest so costly."

"That is the story, and you see that their oath has not been forgotten, though when in after days they learned of his wife's death, they let the matter lie. But since then Saladin, who in those days was but a noble youth, has become the greatest Sultan that the East has ever known, and having been told of you, Rosamund, by that traitor Zelozelle, he seeks to take you in your mother's place, and, girl, I tell you that I fear him."

"Where have you been?" Godwin asked. "To wake our guest, the palmer."

"Come back with the lantern," he called back with the lantern, "that palmer sleeps as though Saladin had already cut his throat." Then having lit it, he returned to the guest place.

"What?" he said. "Are you, a holy palmer, the messenger of—?" and he stopped suddenly.

"What of the attack on the quay?" asked Godwin, who had been thinking.

"You have brought me a letter from my father, Sir Palmer, who are named Nicholas," said Sir Andrew, who was found still eating as though his hunger would never be satisfied, was brought in by Wulf. He bowed low before the old knight and Rosamund, studying them the while with his sharp eyes, and the roof and the floor, and every other detail of the chamber, for those eyes of his seemed to miss nothing.

"You see to see a good deal, friend Nicholas," said Sir Andrew, who wishes to preserve his throat unsilt must keep his eyes open. Now I have eaten well, and I am weary. Is there any place where I may sleep, since you would be gone at daybreak, for those who do Saladin's business dare not tarry, and I have your letter."

"The net is about us, my nephews, and I think that Saladin draws its string."

ANNOUNCEMENT. Each Week for the Best SHORT STORY \$500. Submitted to the SUNDAY CALL. Rules: I. No story will be considered that is less than 2500 nor more than 3500 words in length. II. In the selection of stories names will not count. III. As one of the objects of the Sunday Call is to develop a new corps of Western writers no stories under noms de plume will be considered. IV. Stories not accepted will be returned at once. V. This fiction contest will be continued indefinitely. VI. An author may submit as many manuscripts as he desires, but no one writer will be permitted to win more than three prizes during the contest. VII. Always inclose return postage. VIII. Write on one side of paper only; put name and address legibly on last page, and address to the SUNDAY EDITOR OF THE CALL, SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.