

MUMAL AND MENDRA.

A LEGEND OF SCINDE.¹

'Read it again, and tell me, who was she ?
 ' Well, wines are best to drink where they are grown,
 And tales to tell where they are old and known ;
 But Mumal was a fair false sorceress,
 Whose wiles brought half the East to nakedness,
 Whom Mendra and the king set out to see.
 Before her house what seemed a river ran,
 And here they met a crazy beggar man
 Who said " Ye soon shall be forlorn like me."
 The king turned back, the river ran too high :
 Mendra went forward, and he found it dry.
 He passed the roaring lions, made of stone,
 The seven couches, where her shadows lie,
 Who stretched to clasp him as he hurried by,
 And found the couch where Mumal sat alone,
 Too idle to do anything but love.
 So he went back and made his boast thereof,
 Nor showed her to the envious king, save he
 Would serve them at their feast on bended knee :
 Who paid the scorn with bonds, yet nightly freed
 In the dear prison of her arms he slept
 Till once he found not whom her sister kept.'
 'And lost his faith, but not his love ; now read :

In the seven-gated hold
 Mendra sits, bound sevenfold
 With the meshes of fine gold ;
 There they cast him to grow old.
 And the hold hath seven eyes,
 Where the king hath set his spies,
 Set to spin the captive's sighs
 To a deadlier web of lies.
 There when night is at the noon
 Mendra wails beneath the moon.

¹ Cf. 'Tuhfatu-l Kiram' in Sir H. Elliott's *History of India*, vol. i., pp. 345—347, and Captain Burton's *Sindh*, pp. 114—125.

' Where did she go when I could not follow ?
 Where is she gone whom I held so dear ?
 She is false and fair, and her heart is hollow ;
 I called her name and she did not hear.
 If she had loved me she would have heard,
 Though my voice were only the voice of a bird,
 Singing far away as the flight of a swallow,
 She would have heard me, called me to follow ;
 If she had loved me she would have heard.
 Faster than any swallow can fly,
 I came to her under the cloudy sky,
 With neither moon nor stars above,
 And never a guiding light but Love,
 And the fleetest steed that would follow my track
 Panting after me under the spur,
 Should journey three days ere he turned back,
 But I journeyed in three hours to her ;
 And all my magic was only Love.
 She taught me Love's magic, I know it yet,
 She taught me, and how could she forget ?
 She could have heard me, I know, far away,
 If she could not hear she had only to stay,
 To stay for her love where the roses blow,
 If she loved me, what ailed her to go ?'

In the garden at Mayapûr,
 Where the magic lions of Mumal roar,
 Sitting alone on the magic bed,
 Mumal also made moan, and said :

' Seven weeks, and day by day,
 I make the fountain of gladness play ;
 Seven weeks, and night by night,
 I burn in my bower the lovers' light ;
 Seven weeks, and I always wear
 The lovers' flower in my scented hair ;
 Seven weeks, and I watch and pray,
 Saying, " Surely he comes to-day ;"
 Seven weeks and he is away.
 Is Mendra dead that he comes no more
 To the garden of love at Mayapûr ?
 If he lives, he can come if he will,
 Yet I know while he lives he loves me still.'

Over against the prison tower,
 Mumal hath spoken the word of power.
 In heaven the Lord of lovers heard,
 Before she spake it the mighty word,
 And none of the seventy-seven spies
 Beheld her palace of love arise :
 But Mendra saw it with hungry eyes,
 And he marvelled what Mumal came to do,
 And he said, 'The false is seeking the true ;'
 And he waited a space while the palace grew
 'Twixt the prison bars and the boundless blue.

When the palace builders went away,
 Mumal stood at the window the livelong day.
 Mendra looks forth every morn
 To greet his love with a smile of scorn.
 Mendra looks forth every eve
 To see if his love still waits to grieve ;
 From morning to eve his curtains fall,
 Lest his beloved, who loves him well,
 Should see but his shadow upon the wall,
 And all day the loveless laugh in hell,
 To think that one night's fickleness
 Should have put her delight so far away,
 That she might not find it in many years ;
 Though she never had loved her love the less
 For the night that her sister made her stay.
 But every morn and every even
 Tears are shed in the lovers' heaven,
 And the tears of heaven are healing tears.

Over against the tower again
 Mumal hath builded a palace of pain ;
 She watches there as she watched before
 To lure Mendra home unto Mayapûr ;
 And Mendra also will never miss
 The exquisite pain, the shuddering bliss,
 To sit in his chains and to know that a queen
 Is pining to see him, and he unseen.

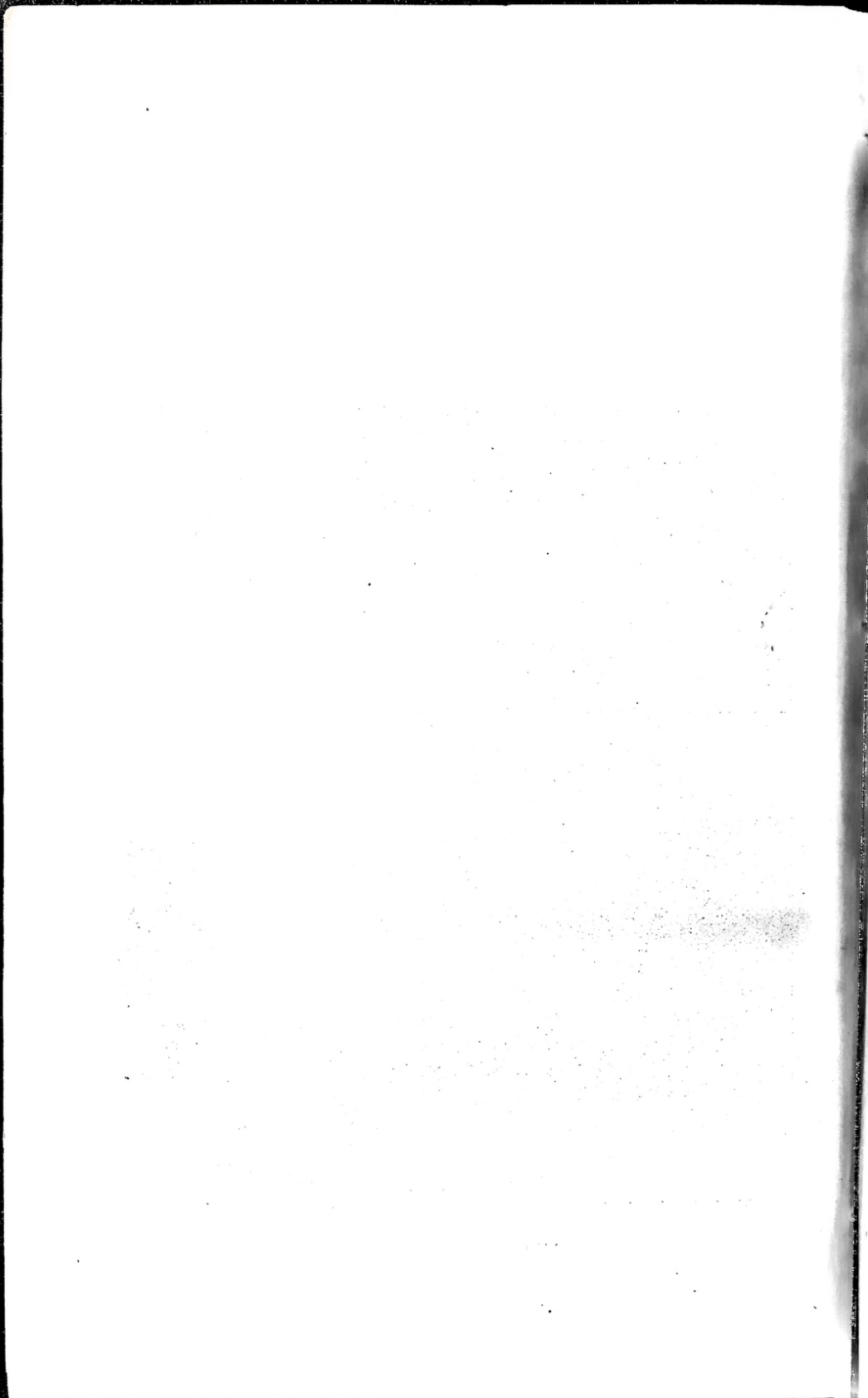
About the seven-gated hold
 She builded her palaces seven fold ;
 Seven moons she watched in each
 To see her love and to hear his speech ;



DRAWN BY E. F. CLARKE.

ENGRAVED BY C. M. JENKIN.

'MUMAL AND MENDRA.'



All her reward was, morn by morn,
 To know that he watched how she brooked his scorn ;
 All her rest was to know at eve
 He had known she was there to love and grieve ;
 While he did not forget, though he did not forgive,
 He loved her enough to help her to live.

But when six times seven moons were past,
 And she entered the fairest palace and last ;
 She panted greatly in hope and fear,
 Saying, ' I have done and the end is near ;
 Will Love accept of me even yet ?

I have been patient and sorely tried,
 There is only one night for Love to forget,
 Only one little stain for Love to hide,
 When he wraps me up into the light at his side.

O Love, accept of me even yet,
 For the tears wherein I am purified.'
 And the Lord of death who is Lord of love,
 Who is over and under the souls of all,
 Considered her voice when he heard her call :
 And he strengthened her out of his house above.
 And she walked to the window with steady pace,
 And she looked her last with a quiet face.
 She looked forth into the dewy dawn,
 And already the curtains of black were drawn ;
 She looked again through the noon-day skies,
 And the sable curtains did not rise ;
 She watched till she saw the golden moon,
 And the curtains were drawn as at morn and noon,
 ' O love, there is nothing to see,' she said,
 ' O love, you will have me cover my head ;
 If love hideth himself what is left to see,
 Though I hide myself love shall discover me,
 Love shall behold me, and only he,
 O love, there is nothing to do,' she said,
 And she bowed to her love, and she was dead.

And because of the love that had made them one,
 Binding their souls in a band for ever,
 That either might tangle, but never sever,
 He understood that her watch was done,

That she had forgotten that love was pain,
In the land of the Lord who makes all things plain,
And he said, 'She is gone where I must follow,
She will guide me now, for she holds me dear,
To the land beyond the flight of the swallow,
To the far-off land that is always near.'

Now the spies had said, 'O king, we see
No sin in Mendra concerning thee;'
So the king commanded to set him free.
But ere they came to his release,
He also had entered into peace.

Long ago, and long ago,
Mumal and Mendra ceased from woe,
In the land where seven rivers flow,
Yet they, whose hearts are molten in one,
By the fire that burns beyond the sun,
Thank the Lord of lovers unto this day
For Mumal's and Mendra's love, and pray
To the Lord, who healed the pain and strife,
They had while they sought to the Lord of life,
Crying out, with short ecstatic breath,
To the Lord of love, who is Lord of death,
Laughing at life which is hard and hollow,
Till out of the prison of hope and fear
The fluttering spirit is free to follow
To the far-off land that is always near.

G. A. SIMCOX.
