

1: Frances Sheridan - Wikipedia

Frances Sheridan published The History of Nourjahad in The story describes Nourjahad's life, who is tricked by the sultan Schemzeddin to believe that he has become immortal and that his period of sleep last for several years at a time.

Her one attempt in the genre of the Oriental tale, *The History of Nourjahad*, was published posthumously in and enjoyed considerable popularity in a succession of English editions as well as translations into French, Russian, and Polish. A musical version, *Illusion, or the Trances of Nourjahad*, staged at Drury Lane in November , was attributed to Byron whose *Giaour* was just then going into its seventh edition since initial publication in June. Young Schemzeddin, the new ruler of Persia, wishes to appoint his friend Nourjahad as First Minister but meets objections from his advisers, who consider Nourjahad too young, frivolous, and irreligious for the office. A series of experiences teaches Nourjahad the vanity of his desire, and he is humbled and restored to good standing with his ruler at the end. The paragraphs extracted here occur near the beginning of the story, when Nourjahad awakens to realize that he was foolish to tell Schemzeddin his desires but also that he does in fact crave the extravagances he described. The male "youth of more than mortal beauty," claiming to be his guardian genius, is in fact Mandana, his favorite woman among the harem, in disguise, and this encounter is the first of a long series of deceptions of Nourjahad and the reader by which he is taught his lesson. The lustre of his white robes dazzled his eyes; his long and shining hair was incircled with a wreath of flowers that breathed the odours of paradise. Nourjahad gazed at him, but had not power to open his mouth. I was present at thy conversation in the garden with Schemzeddin, I was a witness to thy unguarded declaration, but found thee afterwards awed by his frowns to retract what thou hadst said: I, though an immortal spirit, am not omniscient; to God only are the secrets of the heart revealed; speak boldly then, thou highly favoured of our prophet, and know that I have power from Mahomet to grant thy request, be it what it will. Wouldst thou be restored to the favour and confidence of thy master, and receive from his friendship and generosity the reward of thy long attachment to him, or dost thou really desire the accomplishment of that extravagant wish, which thou didst in the openness of thy heart avow to him last night? Know then, that your existence here shall equal the date of this sublunary globe; yet to enjoy life all that while, is not in my power to grant. The sleep thou must be subject to, at certain periods, will last for months, years, nay, for a whole revolution of Saturn at a time, or perhaps for a century. He seemed suspended, while the radiant youth proceeded; "It is worth considering, resolve not too hastily. If this be the case, I submit to the conditions; for what is thirty or fifty years out of eternity? He remained not long in this situation, for the subtle spirit quickly evaporating, the effects instantly ceased, and he opened his eyes; but the apparition was vanished, and his apartment in total darkness. Had not he still found the vial in his hands, which contained the precious liquor, he would have looked on all this as a dream; but so substantial a proof of the reality of what had happened, leaving no room for doubts, he returned thanks to his guardian genius, whom he concluded, though invisible, to be still within hearing, and putting the golden vessel under his pillow, filled as he was with the most delightful ideas, composed himself to sleep. His chamber was surrounded with several large urns of polished brass, some of which were filled with gold coin of different value and impressions; others with ingots of fine gold; and others with precious stones of prodigious size and lustre. Amazed, enraptured at the sight, he greedily examined his treasures, and looking into each of the urns one after the other, in one of them he found a scroll of paper, with these words written on it. Thy days are without number, thy riches inexhaustible, yet cannot I exempt thee from the evils to which all the sons of Adam are subject. I cannot screen thee from the machinations of envy, nor the rapaciousness of power: There is a subterraneous cave in thy garden where thou mayst conceal thy treasure: I have marked the place, and thou wilt easily find it. Farewel, my charge is at an end. In a remote corner, stood the ruins of a small temple, which in former days, before the true religion prevailed in Persia, had been dedicated to the worship of the Gentiles. The vestiges of this little building were so curious, that they were suffered to remain, as an ornament, where they stood. It was raised on a mount, and according to the custom of idolaters, surrounded with shady trees. On a branch of one of these, Nourjahad perceived hanging a scarf of fine white taffety, to which was suspended a large key of burnished steel. He

descended by a few steps into a pretty spacious cavern, and by groping about, for there was scarce any light, he judged it large enough to contain his treasures. Whether his guardian genius had contrived it purely for his use, or whether it had been originally made for some other purpose, he did not trouble himself to enquire; but glad to have found so safe a place, in which to deposite his wealth, he returned to his house; and having given orders that no visitors should approach him, he shut himself up in his chamber for the rest of the day, in order to contemplate his own happiness, and without interruption, to lay down plans of various pleasures and delights for ages to come.

2: The history of Nourjahad (edition) | Open Library

Frances Sheridan died at age 42 in Blois, France. Her oriental tale, The History of Nourjahad, and her sequel to The Memoirs of Miss Sidney Biddulph, were published posthumously. A book-length biography of Frances Sheridan was published in , written by her granddaughter, Alicia LeFanu.

Schemzeddin was in his two and twentieth year when he mounted the throne of Persia. His great wisdom and extraordinary endowments rendered him the delight of his people, and filled them with expectations of a glorious and happy reign. This young man was about the age of Schemzeddin, and had been bred up with him from his infancy. He would not, however, even in his own private thoughts, resolve on so important a step, without first consulting with some old lords of his court, who had been the constant friends and counsellors of the late sultan his father. Accordingly having called them into his closet one day, he proposed the matter to them, and desired their opinion. But before they delivered it, he could easily discover by the countenances of these grave and prudent men, that they disapproved his choice. What have you to object to Nourjahad, said the sultan, finding that they all continued silent, looking at each other? That objection, answered Schemzeddin, will grow lighter every day. His avarice, cried the second. Thou art not just, said the sultan, in charging him with that; he has no support but from my bounty, nor did he ever yet take advantage of that interest which he knows he has in me, to desire an increase of it. What I have charged him with, is in his nature not withstanding, replied the old lord. What hast thou to urge, cried the sultan, to his third adviser? His love of pleasure, answered he. That, cried Schemzeddin, is as groundless an accusation as the other; I have known him from his childhood, and think few men of his years are so temperate. Yet would he indulge to excess, if it were in his power, replied the old man. The sultan now addressed the fourth: His irreligion, answered the sage. Thou art even more severe, replied the sultan, than the rest of thy brethren, and I believe Nourjahad as good a Mussulman as thyself. He dismissed them coldly from his closet; and the four counsellors saw how impolitic a thing it was to oppose the will of their sovereign. Though Schemzeddin seemed displeased with the remonstrances of the old men, they nevertheless had some weight with him. It is the interest of Nourjahad, said he, to conceal his faults from me; the age and experience of these men doubtless has furnished them with more sagacity than my youth can boast of; and he may be in reality what they have represented him. Yet who knows, cried he, but it may be envy in these old men? I will find Nourjahad when he least suspects that I have any such design, and from his own mouth will I judge him. It was not long before the sultan had an opportunity of executing his purpose. Schemzeddin leaned on his shoulder as they rambled from one delicious scene to another; scenes rendered still more enchanting by the silence of the night, the mild lustre of the moon now at full, and the exhalations which arose from a thousand odoriferous shrubs. The spirits of Nourjahad were exhilarated by the mirth and festivity in which he had passed the day. Nourjahad remaining silent for some time, the sultan, smiling, repeated his question. My wishes, answered the favourite, are so boundless, that it is impossible for me to tell you directly; but in two words, I should desire to be possessed of inexhaustible riches, and to enable me to enjoy them to the utmost, to have my life prolonged to eternity. Wouldst thou then, said Schemzeddin, forego thy hopes of paradise? I would, answered the favourite, make a paradise of this earthly globe whilst it lasted, and take my chance for the other afterwards. I thought to have promoted thee to the highest honours, but such a wretch does not deserve to live. Ambition, though a vice, is yet the vice of great minds; but avarice, and an insatiable thirst for pleasure, degrades a man below the brutes. It is not, replied the sultan, with a mildness chastened with gravity, it is not for mortal eyes to penetrate into the close recesses of the human heart; thou hast attested thy innocence by an oath; it is all that can be required from man to man; but remember thou hast called our great prophet to witness; him thou canst not deceive, though me thou mayest. He passed the rest of the night in traversing his chamber, being unable to take any rest. He spent the day in gloomy reflections without suffering any one to come near him, or taking any repast: What had been the subject of his anxiety when awake, served now to embitter and distract his rest: Oh heaven, cried he aloud, that I could now inherit the secret wish I was fool enough to disclose to thee, how little should I regard thy threats! And thou shalt, Oh Nourjahad, replied a voice, possess the utmost wishes of thy soul! The

lustre of his white robes dazzled his eyes; his long and shining hair was incircled with a wreath of flowers that breathed the odours of paradise. Nourjahad gazed at him, but had not power to open his mouth. Be not afraid, said the divine youth, with a voice of ineffable sweetness; I am thy guardian genius, who have carefully watched over thee from thy infancy, though never till this hour have I been permitted to make myself visible to thee. I, though an immortal spirit, am not omniscient; to God only are the secrets of the heart revealed; speak boldly then, thou highly favoured of our prophet, and know that I have power from Mahomet to grant thy request, be it what it will. Nourjahad, a little recovered from his amazement, and encouraged by the condescension of his celestial visitant, bowed his head low in token of adoration. Disguise to thee, Oh son of paradise, replied he, were vain and fruitless; if I dissembled to Schemzeddin it was in order to reinstate myself in his good opinion, the only means in my power to secure my future prospects: What have I to fear, answered Nourjahad, possessed of endless riches and of immortality? Your own passions, said the heavenly youth. I will submit to all the evils arising from them, replied Nourjahad, give me but the power of gratifying them in their full extent. Take thy wish then, cried the genius, with a look of discontent. Nourjahad stretched his hands out eagerly to receive a vessel of gold, enriched with precious stones, which the angel took from under his mantle. Know then; that your existence here shall equal the date of this sublunary globe; yet to enjoy life all that while, is not in my power to grant. Nourjahad was going to interrupt the celestial, to desire him to explain this, when he prevented him, by proceeding thus: Your life, said he, will be frequently interrupted by the temporary death of sleep. Doubtless, replied Nourjahad, nature would languish without that sovereign balm. Thou misunderstandest me, cried the genius; I do not mean that ordinary repose which nature requires: The sleep thou must be subject to, at certain periods, will last for months, years, nay, for a whole revolution of Saturn at a time, or perhaps for a century. He seemed suspended, while the radiant youth proceeded; It is worth considering, resolve not too hastily. If the frame of man, replied Nourjahad, in the usual course of things, requires for the support of that short span of life which is allotted to him, a constant and regular portion of sleep, which includes at least one third of his existence; my life, perhaps, stretched so much beyond its natural date, may require a still greater proportion of rest, to preserve my body in due health and vigour. If this be the case, I submit to the conditions; for what is thirty or fifty years out of eternity? Let me beseech you, said Nourjahad, to explain this. If thou walkest, said the genius, in the paths of virtue, thy days will be crowned with gladness, and the even tenor of thy life undisturbed by any evil; but if, on the contrary, thou pervertest the good which is in thy power, and settest thy heart on iniquity, thou wilt thus be occasionally punished by a total privation of thy faculties. If this be all, cried Nourjahad, then am I sure I shall never incur the penalty; for though I mean to enjoy all the pleasures that life can bestow, yet am I a stranger to my own heart, if it ever lead me to the wilful commission of a crime. Saying this, he again reached forth his hand for the golden vessel, which the genius no longer withheld from him. Hold thy nostrils over that viol, said he, and let the fumes of the liquor which it contains ascend to thy brain. Nourjahad opened the vessel, out of which a vapour issued of a most exquisite fragrance; it formed a thick atmosphere about his head, and sent out such volatile and sharp effluvia, as made his eyes smart exceedingly, and he was obliged to shut them whilst he snuffed up the essence. He remained not long in this situation, for the subtle spirit quickly evaporating, the effects instantly ceased, and he opened his eyes; but the apparition was vanished, and his apartment in total darkness. Amazed, enraptured at the sight, he greedily examined his treasures, and looking into each of the urns one after the other, in one of them he found a scroll of paper, with these words written on it. I have fulfilled my promise to thee, Oh Nourjahad. Thy days are without number, thy riches inexhaustible, yet cannot I exempt thee from the evils to which all the sons of Adam are subject. There is a subterraneous cave in thy garden where thou mayst conceal thy treasure: I have marked the place, and thou wilt easily find it. Farewel, my charge is at an end. And well hast thou acquitted thyself of this charge, most munificent and benevolent genius, cried Nourjahad; ten thousand thanks to thee for this last friendly warning; I should be a fool indeed if I had not sagacity enough to preserve myself against rapaciousness or envy; I will prevent the effects of the first, by concealing thee, my precious treasure, thou source of all felicity, where no mortal shall discover thee; and for the other, my bounty shall disarm it of its sting. He hastened down into his garden, in order to find the cave, of which he was not long in search. In a remote corner, stood the ruins of a small temple, which in

former days, before the true religion prevailed in Persia, had been dedicated to the worship of the Gentiles. The vestiges of this little building were so curious, that they were suffered to remain, as an ornament, where they stood. It was raised on a mount, and according to the custom of idolaters, surrounded with shady trees. On a branch of one of these, Nourjahad perceived hanging a scarf of fine white taffety, to which was suspended a large key of burnished steel. He descended by a few steps into a pretty spacious cavern, and by groping about, for there was scarce any light, he judged it large enough to contain his treasures. Whilst Nourjahad was rich only in speculation, he really thought that he should be able to keep his word with the genius. That the employing his wealth to noble and generous purposes, would have constituted great part of his happiness; and that without plunging into guilt, he could have gratified the utmost of his wishes. He was immediately absorbed in selfishness, and thought of no thing but the indulgence of his own appetites. My temper, said he, as he lay stretched at length on a sofa, does not much incline me to take any trouble; I shall therefore never aspire at high employments, nor would I be the sultan of Persia, if I might; for what addition would that make to my happiness? None at all; it would only disturb my breast with cares, from which I am now exempt. And which of the real, substantial delights of life, could I then possess, that are not now within my power? I will have a magnificent house in town, and others in the country, with delicious parks and gardens. The latter will do my business as well, and be more subservient to my will. There are three particulars indeed, in which I will exceed my master. In the beauties of my seraglio; the delicacies of my table; and the excellence of my musicians. In the former of these especially, King Solomon himself shall be outdone. Then no fear of surfeits; I may riot to excess, and bid defiance to death. I shall not however be impaired by age, said he, and this too perhaps is included in his gift. But no matter; since I cannot die, a little temporary pain will make me the more relish my returning health. Then, added he, I will enjoy the charms of music in its utmost perfection. I will have the universe searched for performers of both sexes, whose exquisite skill both in instrumental and vocal harmony, shall ravish all hearts. I shall see the line of my posterity past numeration, and all the while enjoy a constant succession of new delights. But are there not, he proceeded, some things called intellectual pleasures? Such as Schemzeddin used to talk of to me, and for which, when I was poor, I fancied I had a sort of relish. They may have their charms, and we will not leave them quite out of our plan. I will certainly do abundance of good; besides, I will retain in my family half a score of wise and learned men, to entertain my leisure hours with their discourse.

3: Victorian English Opera Nourjahad Page

The History of Nourjahad has 13 ratings and 3 reviews. What have you to object to Nourjahad, said the sultan, finding that they all continued silent, loo.

History When Samuel James Arnold reopened the English Opera House in after a fire, he advertised it as for "the presentation of English operas and the encouragement of indigenous talent"[1]. However, it ran for at least 29 performances before being advertised again on October 22, , with additional music Theatrical Observer, October 14, , p. This seems to have run for a further 3 performances and there was a further brief revival in June, Some excerpts were sung as part of the programme on November 11, but there do not appear to have been any further full performances. Plot According to the Morning Post July 23, the plot ran: Nourjahad is the friend and favourite of Schemzeddin, Sultan of Persia, and is destined to be his Prime Vizier on the retirement of Cosro whose daughter, Mandane, is united to Nourjahad. The latter is, however, restless and ambitious; he desires immortality, and the prospective delights of Paradise, as promised by Mahomet to the faithful. In a conversation with the Sultan Nourjahad avows his impious thoughts, and the former determines to reclaim the friend of his bosom from his infidelity by making use of a stratagem whereby the fancies of his favourite are apparently realised. The Sultan carries on the deception by placing at the command of his misguided friend unbounded riches. The first act ends by Nourjahad purchasing of Assan, a slave merchant, his whole cargo of female beauties, amongst whom is Zulima, a fascinating brunette, whose sparkling eyes quickly eclipse the remembrance of Mandane. Nourjahad is overcome by wine, falls asleep, and in the second act, on awaking, is informed by Hasem, his attendant, that he has been in a trance for four years. He is also told that his wife Mandane has died in giving birth to a son. The story does not reform him, and the Sultan, in a visit which he makes to his house, finds him still obdurate. The surfeit of luxury drives him into another sleep, and in the third act the design of the Sultan is further developed. Forty years are supposed to have elapsed. Everything seems in ruins, and a mute in expressive action conveys to him the intelligence of the death of all his friends and relatives. The Sultan disguised comes upon his solitude, tells the tale of his own death, and avows himself to be the son of Nourjahad. Remorse acts upon the victim of illusion, and when his wife Mundane is brought again on the scene as his granddaughter he is overcome with the wickedness of his purpose. The Sultan finds the cure effectual, undeceives his friend, and all ends sec. The Opera has been got up without any regard to expense; the dresses are gorgeous and appropriate, and the scenery is picturesque. There were many beauties and there are signs of great promise. If reminiscences of other masters from time to time intrude themselves, they were fully counterbalanced by the striking originality of the choice morceaux, and is entitled to every latitude in the way of indulgence. It was received throughout with immense approbation, which at the termination burst into reiterated plaudits. Arnold with music by Michael Kelly. He was at pains to point out that the play already had a licence and so only the handwritten vocal numbers required acceptance. The play can be downloaded at Google books. The full libretto and vocal score are in the British Library. There are no known recordings of the opera or parts of it. No specific articles or books on the opera known.

4: The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Romantic Age: Topic 4: Texts and Contexts

ebook version of The history of Nourjahad: By the editor of Sidney Bidulph. The history of Nourjahad: By the editor of Sidney Bidulph. (Sheridan, Frances Chamberlaine,) [4],p. ; 12â°.

His great wisdom and extraordinary endowments rendered him the delight of his people, and filled them with expectations of a glorious and happy reign. This young man was about the age of Schemzeddin, and had been bred up with him from his infancy. Schemzeddin indeed was desirous of promoting his favourite, yet notwithstanding his attachment to him, he was not blind to his faults; but they appeared to him only such as are almost inseparable from youth and inexperience; and he made no doubt but that Nourjahad, when time had a little more subdued his youthful passions, and matured his judgment, would be able to fill the place of his first minister, with abilities equal to any of his predecessors. He would not, however, even in his own private thoughts, resolve on so important a step, without first consulting with some old lords of his court, who had been the constant friends and counsellors of the late sultan his father. Accordingly having called them into his closet one day, he proposed the matter to them, and desired their opinion. But before they delivered it, he could easily discover by the countenances of these grave and prudent men, that they disapproved his choice. What have you to object to Nourjahad, said the sultan, finding that they all continued silent, looking at each other? His youth, replied the eldest of the counsellors. That objection, answered Schemzeddin, will grow lighter every day. His avarice, cried the second. Thou art not just, said the sultan, in charging him with that; he has no support but from my bounty, nor did he ever yet take advantage of that interest which he knows he has in me, to desire an encrease of it. What I have charged him with, is in his nature notwithstanding, replied the old lord. What hast thou to urge, cried the sultan, to his third adviser? His love of pleasure, answered he. That, cried Schemzeddin, is as groundless an accusation as the other; I have known him from his childhood, and think few men of his years are so temperate. Yet would he indulge to excess, if it were in his power, replied the old man. The sultan now addressed the fourth: What fault hast thou to object to him, cried he? His irreligion, answered the sage. Thou art even more severe, replied the sultan, than the rest of thy brethren, and I believe Nourjahad as good a Mussulman as thyself. He dismissed them coldly from his closet; and the four counsellors saw how impolitic a thing it was to oppose the will of their sovereign.

5: The history of Nourjahad: By the editor of Sidney Bidulph.

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6: The History of Nourjahad by Frances Sheridan

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