

# BRAVE ALUM BEY

by W. S. Gilbert

Oh, big was the bosom of brave ALUM BEY,  
And also the region that under it lay,  
In safety and peril remarkably cool,  
And he dwelt on the banks of the river Stamboul.

Each morning he went to his garden, to cull  
A bunch of zenana or sprig of bul-bul,  
And offered the bouquet, in exquisite bloom,  
To BACKSHEESH, the daughter of RAHAT LAKOUM.

No maiden like BACKSHEESH could tastily cook  
A kettle of kismet or joint of tchibouk,  
As ALUM, brave fellow! sat pensively by,  
With a bright sympathetic ka-bob in his eye.

Stern duty compelled him to leave her one day--  
(A ship's supercargo was brave ALUM BEY)--  
To pretty young BACKSHEESH he made a salaam,  
And sailed to the isle of Seringapatam.

“O ALUM,” said she, “think again, ere you go--  
Hareems may arise and Moguls they may blow;  
You may strike on a fez, or be drowned, which is wuss!”  
But ALUM embraced her and spoke to her thus:

“Cease weeping, fair BACKSHEESH! I willingly swear  
Cork jackets and trousers I always will wear  
And I also throw in a large number of oaths  
That I never--no, never--will take off my clothes!”

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They left Madagascar away on their right,  
And made Clapham Common the following night,  
Then lay on their oars for a fortnight or two,  
Becalmed in the ocean of Honololu.

One day ALUM saw, with alarm in his breast,  
A cloud on the nor-sow-sow-nor-sow-nor-west;  
The wind it arose, and the crew gave a scream,  
For they knew it--they knew it!--the dreaded Hareem!!

The mast it went over, and so did the sails,  
Brave ALUM threw over his casks and his bales;  
The billows arose as the weather grew thick,  
And all except ALUM were terribly sick.

The crew were but three, but they holloa'd for nine,  
They howled and they blubbered with wail and with whine:  
The skipper he fainted away in the fore,  
For he hadn't the heart for to skip any more.



“Ho, coward!” said ALUM, “with heart of a child!  
Thou son of a party whose grave is defiled!  
Is ALUM in terror? is ALUM afeard?  
Ho! ho! If you had one I'd laugh at your beard.”

His eyeball it gleamed like a furnace of coke;  
He boldly inflated his clothes as he spoke;  
He daringly felt for the corks on his chest,  
And he recklessly tightened the belt at his breast.

For he knew, the brave ALUM, that, happen what might,  
With belts and cork-jacketing, he was all right;  
Though others might sink, he was certain to swim,--  
No Hareem whatever had terrors for him!

They begged him to spare from his personal store  
A single cork garment--they asked for no more;  
But he couldn't, because of the number of oaths  
That he never--no, never!--would take off his clothes.

The billows dash o'er them and topple around,  
They see they are pretty near sure to be drowned.  
A terrible wave o'er the quarter-deck breaks,  
And the vessel it sinks in a couple of shakes!

The dreadful Hareem, though it knows how to blow,  
Expend all its strength in a minute or so;  
When the vessel had foundered, as I have detailed,  
The tempest subsided, and quiet prevailed.

One seized on a cork with a yelling” Ha! ha!  
(Its bottle had 'prisoned a pint of Pacha)--  
Another a toothpick--another a tray--  
“Alas! it is useless!” said brave ALUM BEY.

“To holloa and kick is a very bad plan:  
Get it over, my tulips, as soon as you can;  
You'd better lay hold of a good lump of lead,  
And cling to it tightly until you are dead.

Just raise your hands over your pretty heads--so--  
Right down to the bottom you're certain to go.  
Ta! ta! I'm afraid we shall not meet again”--  
For the truly courageous are truly humane.

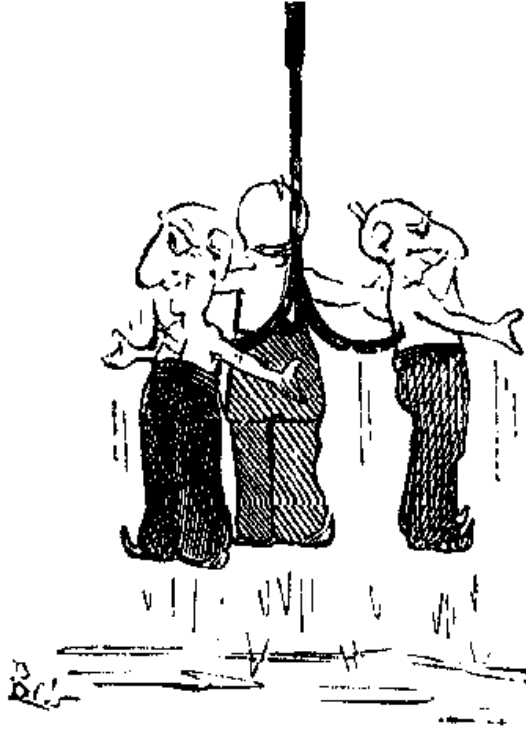


Brave ALUM was picked up the very next day--  
A man-o'-war sighted him smoking away;  
With hunger and cold he was ready to drop,  
So they sent him below and they gave him a chop.

O reader, or readress, whichever you be,  
You weep for the crew who have sunk in the sea?  
O reader, or readress, read farther, and dry  
The bright sympathetic ka-bob in your eye.

That ship had a grapple with three iron spikes,--  
It's lowered, and, ha! on a something it strikes!  
They haul it aboard with a British "heave-ho!"  
And what it has fished the drawing will show.

There was WILSON, and PARKER, and TOMLINSON, too--  
(The first was the captain, the others the crew)--  
As lively and spry as a Malabar ape,  
Quite pleased and surprised at their happy escape.



And ALUM, brave fellow, who stood in the fore,  
And never expected to look on them more,  
Was really delighted to see them again,  
For the truly courageous are truly humane.