

Blue Beard



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THE STORY
OF
BLUE BEARD.



A NOBLEMAN lived in the long ago times,
Much famed for his riches, and more for his crimes.
He was served by a faithful, but villainous crew,
His heart was a flint, and his beard a sky-blue!
He lived in a palace, so splendid and high,
That its turrets and towers seemed brushing the sky;
All gorgeous with hangings of silver and gold,
And pictures and statues, and wonders untold;
While the fountains that flowed in the gardens so fine,
Ran sweet-scented waters and rosy-red wine!
He had married at least twenty wives, it was said,
But all of these twenty poor creatures were dead,
And now, to the neighboring gossips 'twas plain
That wicked old Blue-Beard would marry again!

The Story of Blue-Beard.

And though his reputation now,
To say the least was bad;
There scarcely was a maid around,
The wretch might not have had.

And of them all, the pretty ones
Old Blue-Beard loved the best;
And Fatima, and sister Anne,
In this surpassed the rest.

The daughters of a gentleman
Of good repute, were they,
And when old Blue-Beard saw the maids
Said he, "I'll not delay."

For Fatima, at seventeen,
Had more than was her share,
Of beauty, with her hazel eyes
And softly flowing hair.

And when Old Blue-Beard asked of her
If she his love would bless?
With modest looks, and blushes warm,
The maiden simpered "Yes."

The Story of Blue-Beard.

So they married, and Blue-Beard (that excellent man!)
Allowed her to send for her young sister Anne.
And gaily the hours slipped by, till one day
Old Blue-Beard said, "Darling, I'm going away;
To you, as the mistress, I leave all the keys,
You'll look to the house, and lock up if you please,
But don't be too prying, you've plenty to do,
And the *blue* chamber, ma'am, is forbidden to you."

So Blue-Beard on his elephant
Rode royally at ease,
As Fatima and sister Anne
Eyed longingly the keys.

Obedied his orders for a time,
A week perhaps or more;
But ah! the key was tempting,
As they tried it in the door!

Each day, the longing stronger grew,
Each night disturbed their sleep;
"What *can* be in that room," they said,
"That we can't even peep?"

The Story of Blue-Beard.

They looked, and they longed, and they fidgeted round,
And whispered, "We're not to obedience bound;
If a husband has secrets, it can't be a sin
For a good wife to know them"—and then they went in.
And there such a sight met their terrified gaze,
That they almost dropped down in their fright and amaze!
And what did they see, which astonished them so?
Behind a blue curtain, hung all in a row,
The late Mrs. Blue-Beards, the short and the tall,
With heads, and without them, were hung on the wall!
They stood for a moment, like two frightened deer,
Then flew from the chamber, all shaking with fear.

When safe within their parlor locked,
In peace they breathed again;
But the key, they both were shocked,
To see a bloody stain.

With soap, and sand they scoured it well,
They rubbed, and rubbed again;
But still the dreadful spot was there,
Their labor all was vain.

The Story of Blue-Beard.

Then Sister Anne, who heard a noise,
Cried out in sad despair ;
"I know his horrid footstep dear,
Your husband's on the stairs !"

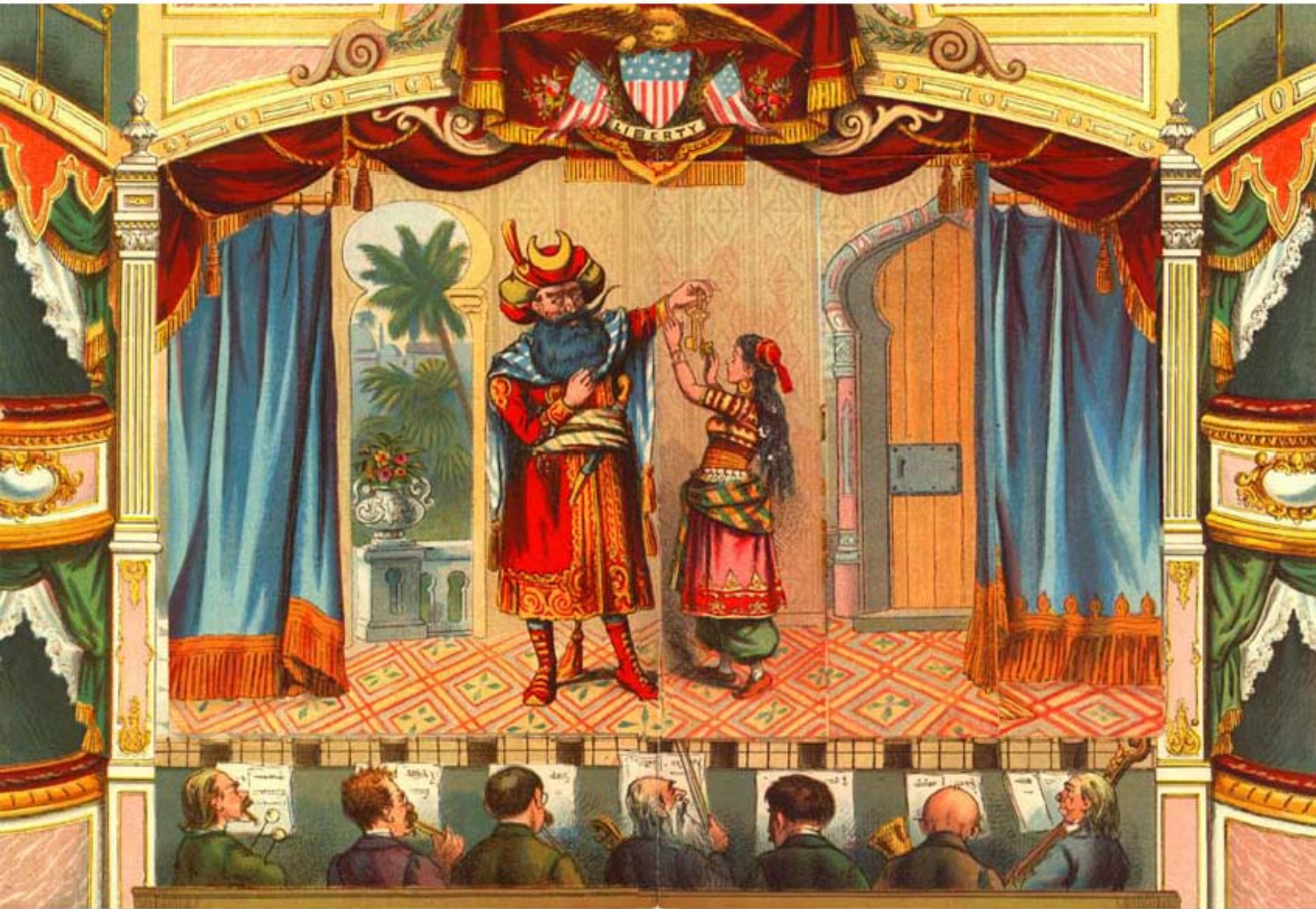
And so he was, and soon enough
Upon the creaking floor,
They heard the waddling monsters step
As he drew nigh the door.

Then, with a mocking laugh he cried,
"Come, open now my dear ;
You would not lock the door to keep
Your loving husband here."

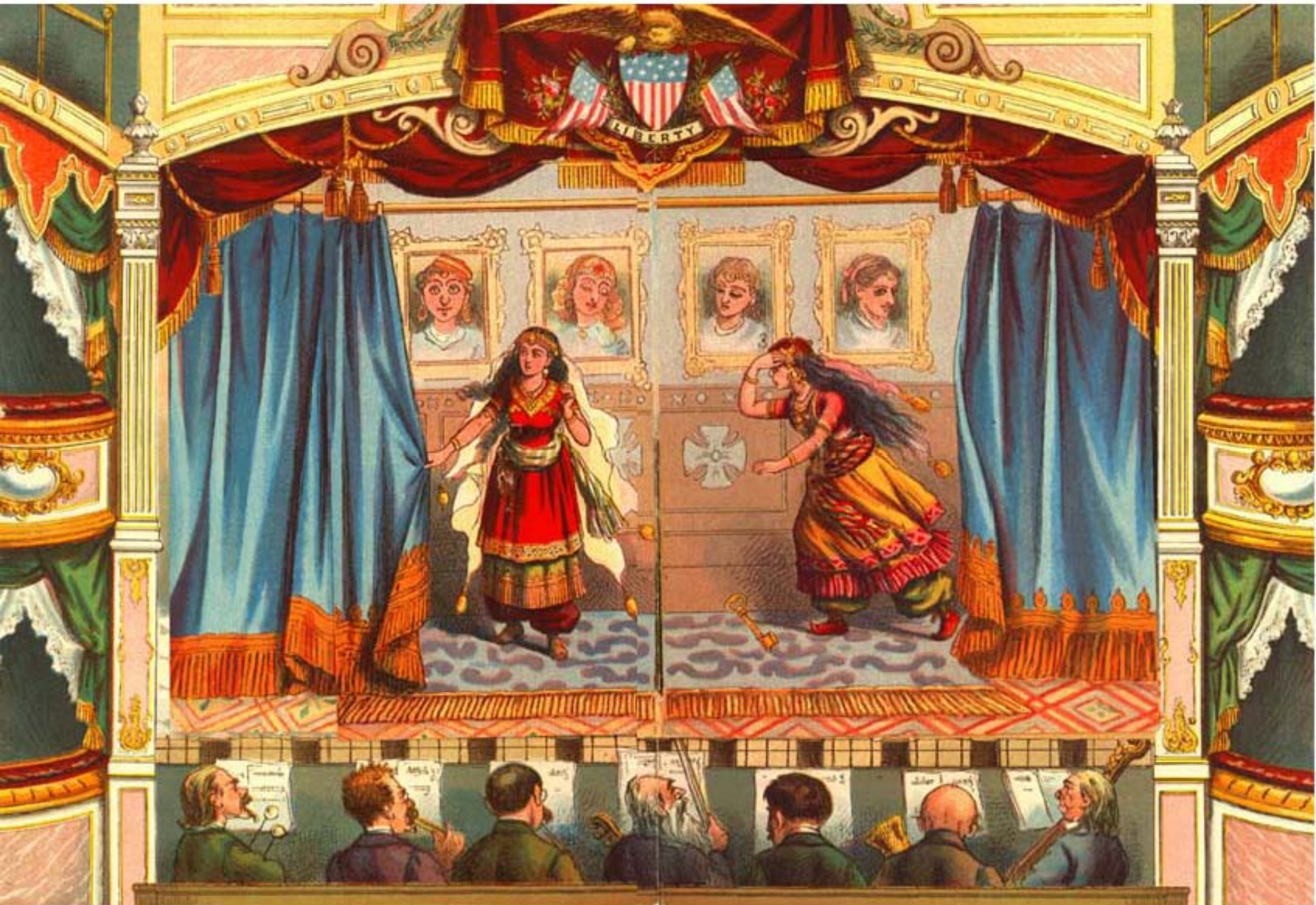
And then he gave a sounding rap,
And made a dreadful din,
As if he meant to frighten them
From out their very skins.

Poor Fatima let Blue-Beard in,
Said he, "Now if you please
Perhaps you'll have the goodness dear,
To let me have the keys !"



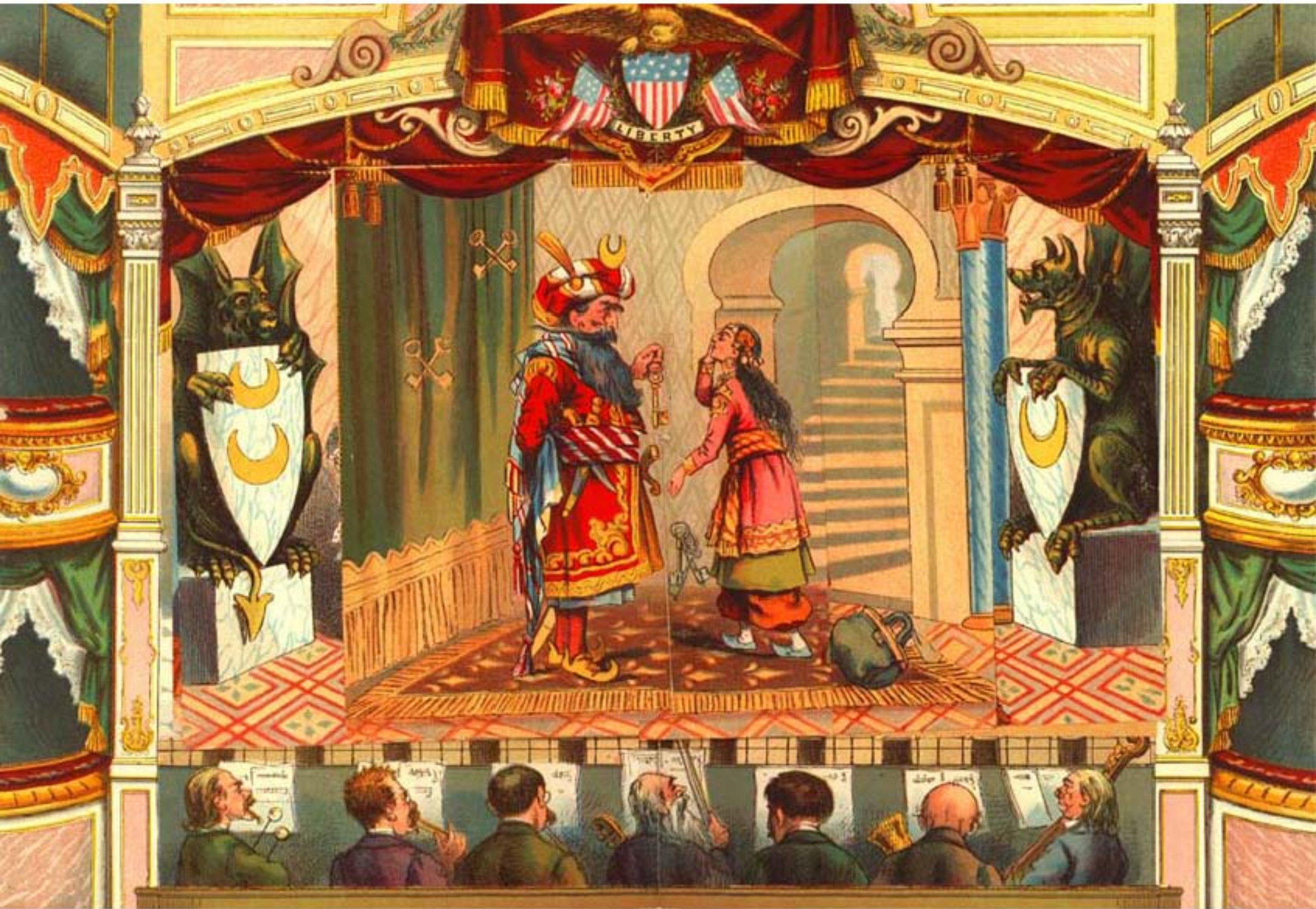


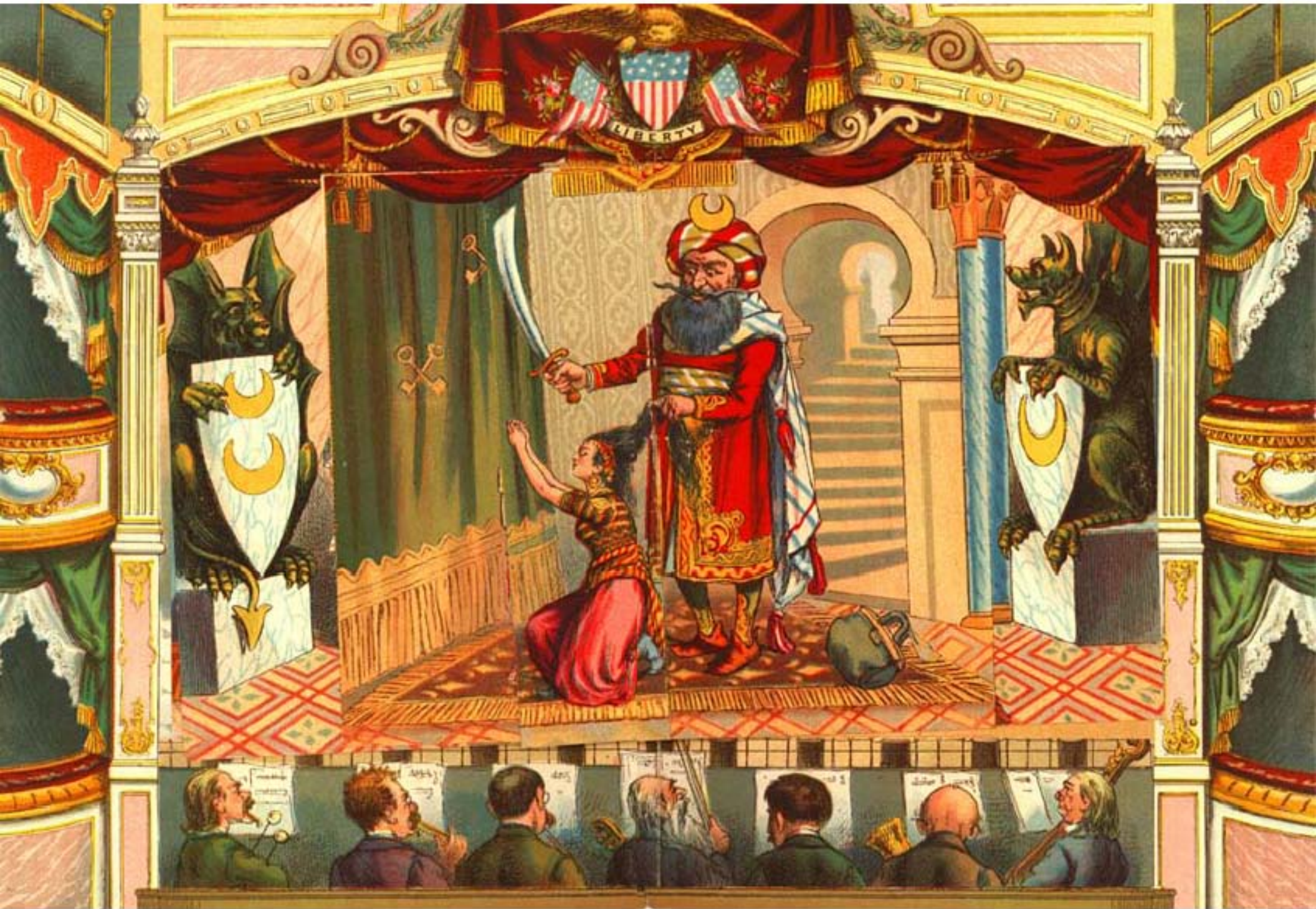






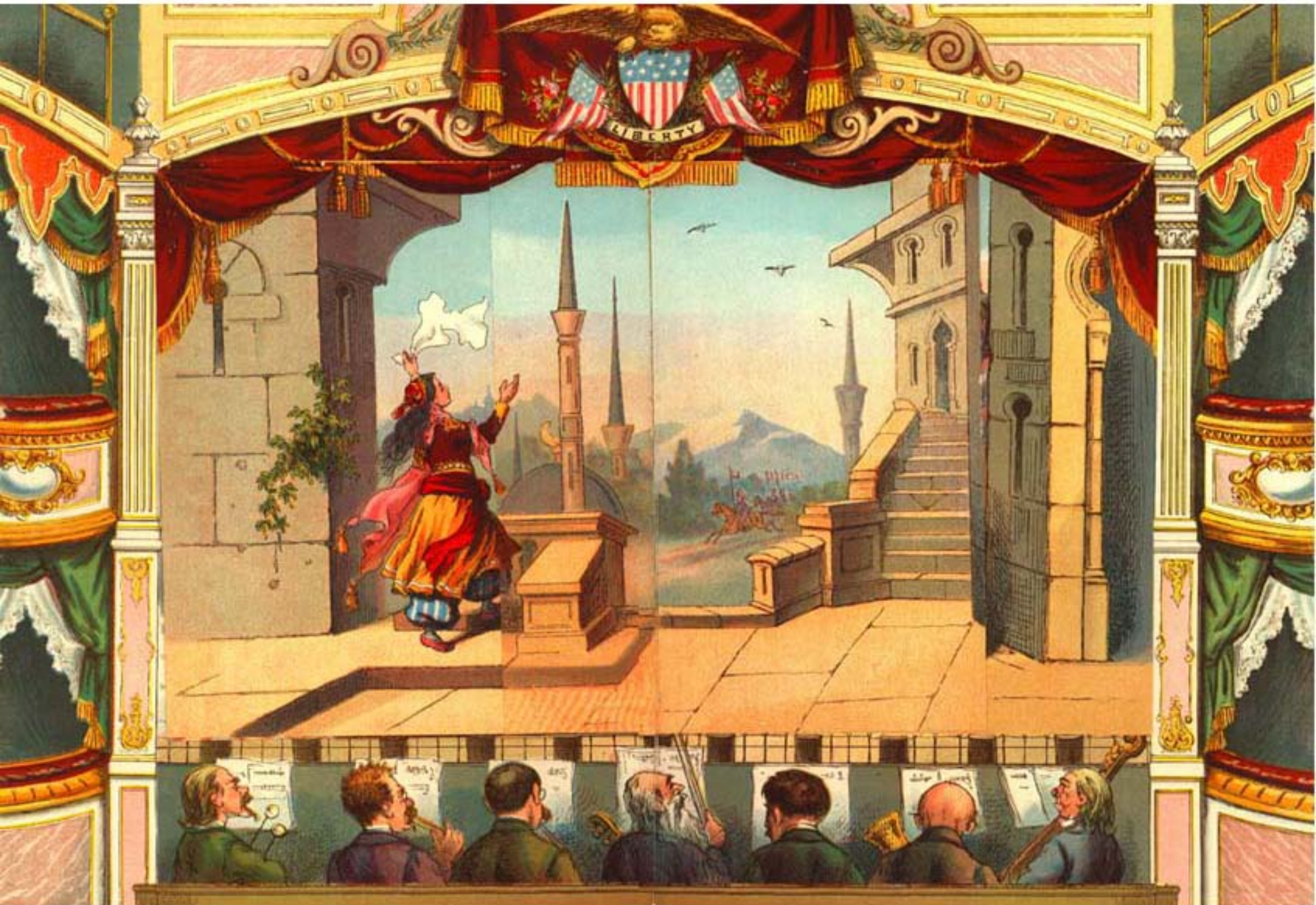
















The Story of Blue-Beard.

Alas! for poor Fatima, frightened to death,
She scarcely could murmur out under her breath;
“ My Lord, here they are !” when with horrible frown,
His mustaches went up, and his eyebrows went down;
And loudly he roared, “ Madame, please to explain
How this key came to have such a terrible stain !”
Poor Fatima’s silence confessed to her guilt,
So he felt for his sword, placed his hand on the hilt;
And seizing her hair, cried with scimeter drawn,
“ You shall die for this Madame, as sure as you’re born;
But you *may* say your prayers, and without any flurry,
I’ll give you ten minutes, I’m not in a hurry !”
Meanwhile Sister Anne watched above in the tower,
She’d sent for their brother, and this was the hour
When he should be coming—and under the hill
Some horsemen she sees, and they ride with a will.
The moments fly fast, ’tis a desperate case!
But Selim flies faster,—“ He’ll win in the race!
Oh! hasten! brave brother!” he guesses her need;
“ Spur Selim! spur boldly! and gallop, good steed !”
The drawbridge is up, but he springs o’er the moat,
And his scimeter runs through the murderer’s coat;
Old Blue-Beard falls dead, but with joy I declare,
Pretty Fatima’s saved, with two seconds to spare !

THE STORY OF BLUE-BEARD.

MANY years ago, there lived a nobleman who possessed great wealth, and had a fine castle surrounded by most beautiful gardens; but he had the misfortune to have a beard of such a curious color, that he was called Blue-Beard. He lived very secluded, and seldom had any company; for the neighbors had a dread of him, and it was reported that he had married several wives, but no one knew what had become of them.

Near to Blue-Beard's castle lived a gentleman and his two daughters, one of whom was very beautiful; and Blue-Beard sent a polite invitation to them to pay him a visit. Wishing to see the house and gardens, which they had heard were very magnificent, the ladies accepted the offer and proceeded in a carriage to the castle.

Blue-Beard received his visitors with great politeness, and offering an arm to each of the young ladies, conducted them through all the apartments; and splendid as the interior of the castle was, the gardens and grounds were still more charming.

Now one of these young ladies was called Fatima, and the other one was named Anne. Fatima, as I have told you, was much the more beautiful of the two sisters, and was loved and admired by every one who knew her. The young cavaliers of the neighborhood were all in love with her, and she might have taken her choice of a husband from the best people of the country.

But Fatima, like many young women of the present day, was very fond of fine clothes and costly jewels, and had a great desire for luxury and magnificence. These things dazzled her mind, and when after a time Blue-Beard began to pay her marked attention, she turned a deaf ear to the dreadful stories which were in circulation about the mysterious fate of his former wives, and became quite overcome with visions of the wealth and enjoyment that would await her as the wife of the rich and powerful nobleman.

Blue-Beard seemed very much in love with her, and gave her the most elegant presents imaginable, so that when at last he declared his passion with

The Story of Blue-Beard.

many protestations of respect and love, accompanied with promises that he would never cross her wishes in the slightest respect, but be the devoted slave of her will ; she consented to marry him.

Poor foolish Fatima, you see, flattered herself that whatever might have been the trouble with his former wives, she would know how to manage him, and by means of his seemingly great affection for herself, would be able to retain her power over him forever. We shall see in the end, how miserably she was deceived in these notions, and the heavy price she was obliged to pay for her vanity and love of display.

Her father and all her relations and acquaintances, tried to dissuade her from this ill-assorted marriage, but all in vain ! The headstrong girl was not to be diverted from her purpose. Blue-Beard, of course, was all attention to his affianced wife. He could not do too much for her. He visited her every day, and seemed as if he could not get enough of her society.

The most elegant carriages and horses, were placed at her disposal, with servants in gorgeous liveries, while the harness blazed with ornaments of polished silver and gold. Nothing was too good for her, and as she rode in state through the surrounding country, attended by a train of Blue-Beard's retainers and servants, dressed in glittering costumes, you would have thought she was a Queen at least, making a tour of her dominions.

This was all very pleasant for the vain and giddy Fatima ; so much so indeed, that she was in no hurry to fix the day for the marriage. But Blue-Beard at last grew impatient at the delay, and fearing that she might after all slip through his eager fingers ; by dint of much persuasion he at last induced her to name the happy day. Nothing that was ever seen in that country could compare with the splendor of the marriage, and when the bride and bridegroom rode away upon their wedding tour, many a thoughtless maiden would have gladly taken the same chance for so rich a husband.

For some time after this joyful event, Blue-Beard behaved with the greatest kindness to his wife, who imagined that nothing was wanting to complete her happiness. One day, however, her husband said, " My dearest Fatima, business compels me to go on a short journey ; I shall not be absent long, but while I am away, do all you can to pass the time agreeably. Here are my keys, you may go all over the castle, but as you value my love do not enter the Blue Chamber. Farewell, remember what I have said."

Fatima promised obedience, and, accompanied by her sister Anne, who

The Story of Blue-Beard.

was with her on a visit, went through all the various apartments, admiring the elegant ornaments which decorated the rooms. But she was not satisfied, for she felt a strong desire to enter the Blue Chamber. At last her curiosity overcame her prudence, and she and her sister approached the forbidden place.

Here she paused for a moment—all was silent ; she unlocked the door of the Blue Chamber and peeped in. The room was gloomy, and the floor was stained with the blood of Blue-Beard's wives, whose dead bodies she beheld hanging side by side, while their portraits, decorated the walls! The sight was too horrible, and almost swooning she dropped the key from her hand, which fell into a pool of blood! She picked up the key, and locking the door, hastened to her apartment ; she tried to forget what she had seen, but, to her dismay, she perceived the key was stained with blood, which would not rub off! Horror-stricken at this strange thing she fainted. Shortly after, Blue-Beard returned and asked for the keys, but did not appear to notice Fatima's hesitation. At length she handed them to him, and after eyeing them attentively, he exclaimed, "Mighty well, madam ; I see by the blood-stain on this little key, that you have broken your promise, and entered the Blue Chamber! Prepare to take your place among those you saw there."

At these fearful words, Fatima and her sister uttered terrific shrieks ; poor Fatima thought her last moments had come, and falling on her knees, she cried, "Have mercy on me." "No!" exclaimed Blue-Beard drawing his sword, "you shall die this minute." Then grant me a short time to say my prayers!" cried the distracted lady. "Only ten minutes!" roared Blue-Beard, "not a moment more ; go and prepare for death."

As soon as this indulgence was obtained, the distracted wife begged her sister to ascend the stairs to the tower of the castle, and look if she could see their brothers coming, as she had invited them to visit her. Her sister hastened up, but said she could only see the sheep peacefully grazing on the hill sides. "Look again, dear sister ; do you see anything now?" said the afflicted wife. "Alas, no!" replied she, "only a small cloud of dust a long way off."

Just then, Blue-Beard called out that the time had expired, and that Fatima should die that moment. In despair, the terrified wife anxiously called again to her sister to look if any one yet appeared in view. And now

The Story of Blue-Beard.

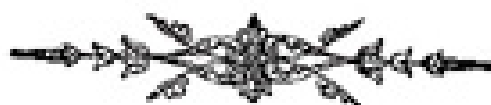
her sister said, "I see two horsemen galloping toward the castle." "Make signs to them to hasten," shrieked Fatima. "The time is fully up," cried Blue-Beard, as he ascended the stairs to slay his almost fainting wife. He seized her by her beautiful hair, and was about to give the fatal blow with his sabre, when a loud knocking at the castle gates so startled him, that he stood, for a moment, motionless. But in an instant, the gates flew open, and two soldiers entered, who proved to be Fatima's brothers. Astonished at beholding their sister's perilous situation, they quickly drew their sabres and attacked Blue-Beard, whom they soon laid mortally wounded at their feet.

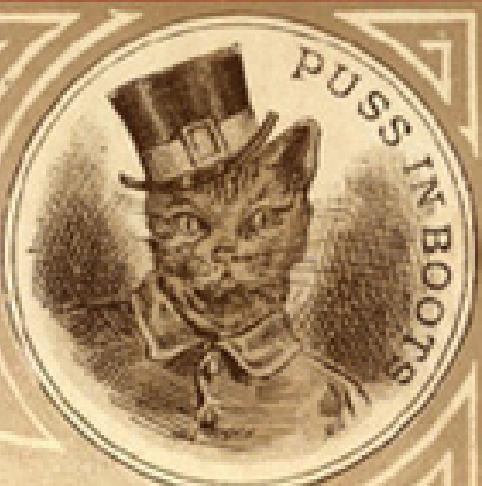
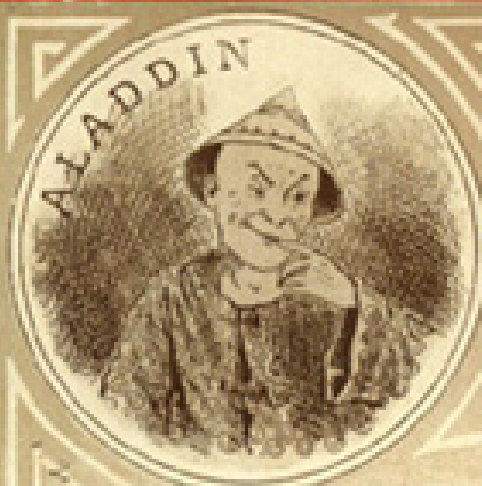
Sudden as the attack of these brave men was, it was not quicker than the awakened conscience of Blue-Beard. All his deeds of blood presented themselves to his mind, and the image of every unhappy being whom he had destroyed, appeared to his imagination. After a few convulsive struggles, he fell back and expired.

As soon as Fatima recovered from her fright, she embraced her brothers, and sincerely thanked them for her deliverance. Nor were they less thankful for the opportunity thus afforded them of saving their dear sister from the awful fate which, only a few minutes before, appeared to be inevitable.

Fatima's first care was to have the bodies of the unfortunate ladies whom she had seen in the Blue Chamber, decently buried; and after several months had been passed in the society of her friends, her health and spirits became established once more.

The sufferings and privations of the poor in her neighborhood also claimed her attention; she relieved all those who were in want, visited their dwellings, and added many comforts to which they had been strangers before. She also added a plot of ground to every cottage, and gave to each of the industrious families a cow and two or three sheep. By these means, she enabled them, by their own exertions, to secure a humble competence; and, in a short time, every person upon Blue-Beard's estate was rendered happy, and became her firm friends.





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The End.

