

Ballad: Brave Alum Bey

"The Bab Ballads" presents "Ballad: Brave Alum Bey," a whimsical poem about the adventures and bravery of Alum Bey. Living on the banks of the river Stamboul, Alum Bey was noted for his immense courage and calm demeanor, even in the face of danger. Each morning, he collected flowers from his garden to present to Backsheesh, the daughter of Rahat Lakoum, marking their tender relationship. Despite her exquisite cooking skills, Alum Bey had to depart for Seringapatam, leaving behind a heartbroken Backsheesh who feared the worst for his journey.

Alum Bey, a ship's supercargo, assured Backsheesh of his safety by vowing to always wear cork jackets and trousers, humorously promising never to shed them even as he sailed through perilous seas. Their voyage took a turn for the worse as they encountered the feared Hareem, a storm that caused chaos and panic among the crew. Alum Bey, standing firm in his cork attire, remained unafraid and attempted to rally his despairing crew with courage and a touch of humor amid the disaster.

As the storm raged, Alum Bey's preparations proved wise, as his cork jacket ensured his buoyancy and survival, while his crew faced their doom with less fortunate fates. The poem humorously highlights Alum Bey's staunch adherence to his promise of never removing his protective gear, even as his shipmates faced their grim ends. In a twist of fate, after the storm quieted and the ship sank, Alum Bey alone remained afloat, a testament to his preparedness and bravado.

Rescued the following day by a man-o-war, Alum Bey's survival tale serves as a light-hearted lesson in preparedness and the virtues of sticking to one's word, however eccentric those vows might be. The poem concludes on a reflective note, prompting readers to consider their own reactions to the tale of Alum Bey's adventure and survival against the tempestuous sea and his unwavering commitment to his unique form of bravery.