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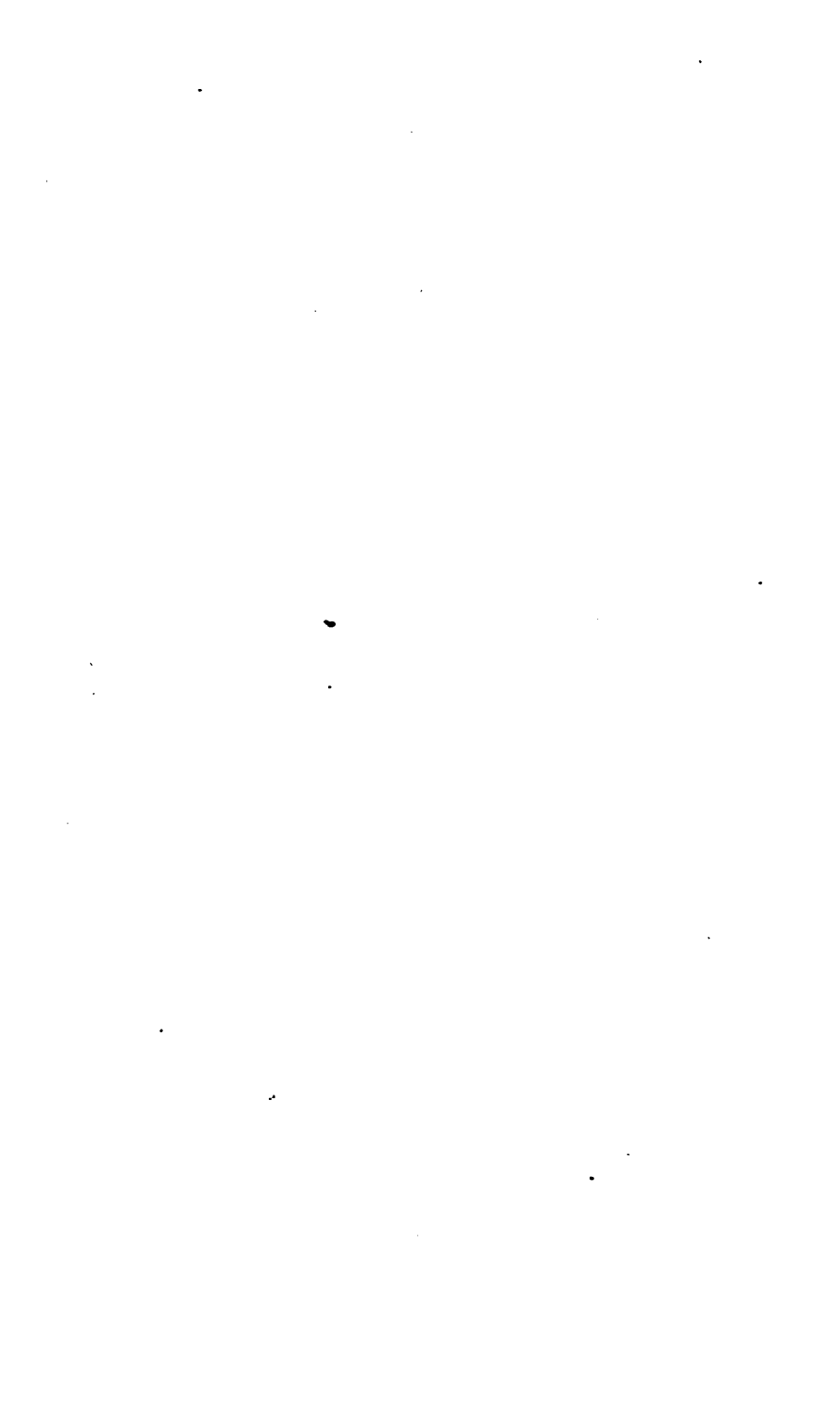
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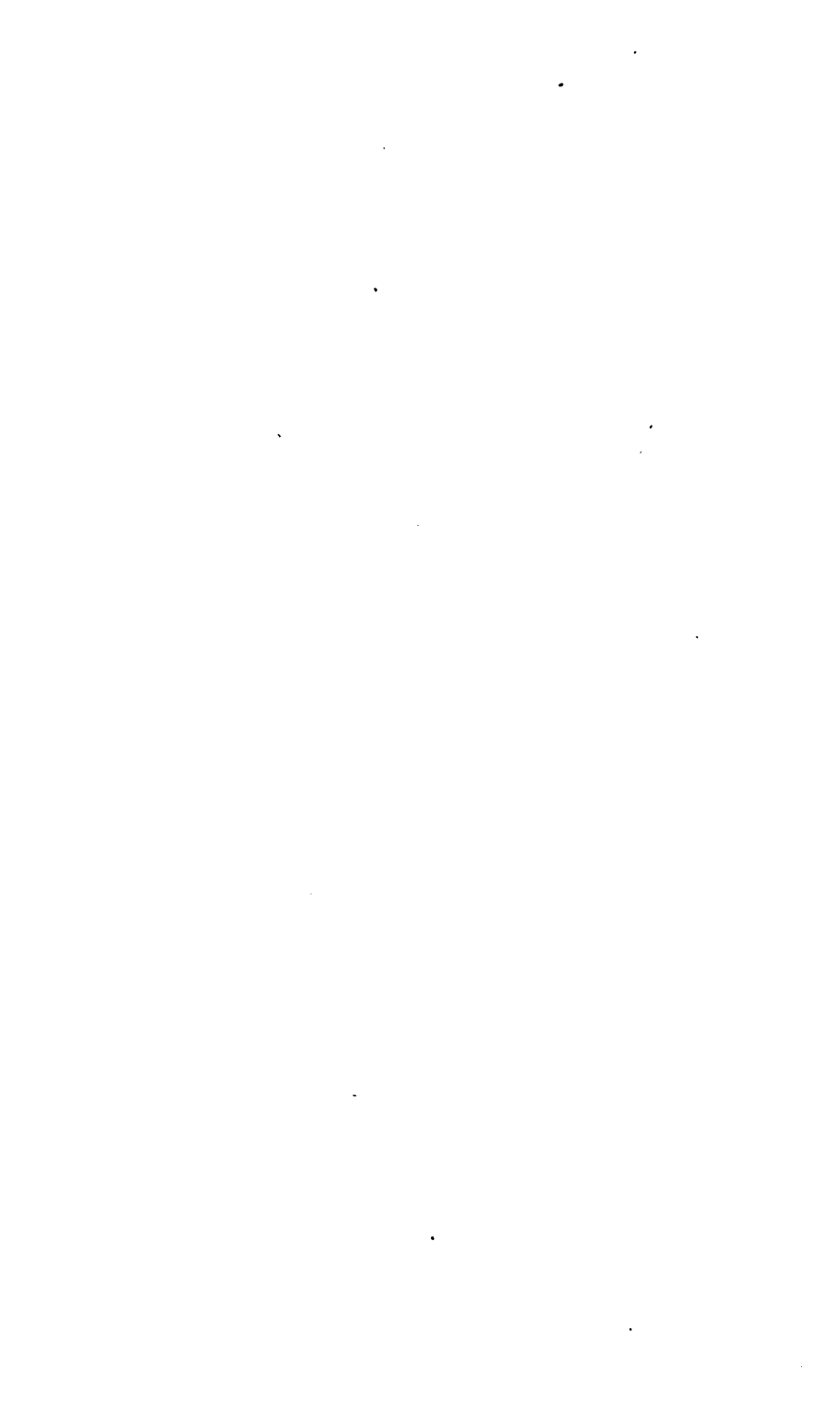
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THE
CASHMERE SHAWL.

AN EASTERN FICTION.

BY CHARLES WHITE,

AUTHOR OF "ALMACK'S REVISITED," "THE KING'S PAGE," &c, &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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DEDICATION

TO

MISS ADELINE E. KENNEDY.

SHOULD the following fiction meet with public approbation, its success must chiefly be attributed to your advice and corrections. Permit me, therefore, to inscribe these volumes to you, not only as a grateful acknowledgment, but as a mark of deference to the brilliant qualities of your heart and mind—qualities equalled in few, and excelled in none, even amongst the most gifted of that gentle sex to which you are both an ornament and an example.

Alas! The ink had scarcely dried upon the foregoing lines, ere the young, the talented and excellent being to whom they were addressed, was removed beyond the reach of earthly praise. Stricken in the very bloom of

life—blighted, as the most beautiful flowers are often blighted, in the bright sunshine of goodness and promise, she was suddenly torn from the affections of her family, and the admiration of her friends, at a moment when the expanding treasures of her mind predicted the attainment of every distinction that can be awarded to female genius and pre-eminence.

The preceding dedication was offered to Miss Kennedy, at a time when the glad prospect of life and happiness beamed smilingly before her. I record it, now that she is no more, as a feeble tribute of respect to her lamented memory.*

CHARLES WHITE.

* This singularly gifted and interesting young lady was the eldest daughter of John Kennedy Esq. of Culthra and Dunbrody. She died recently at Frankfort.—N. of E.

INTRODUCTION.

Being seated one evening at my writing table, about to open a packet of newly arrived stationary, a noise resembling a stifled sigh startled me. I looked up and listened, but all was again silent. Thinking that what I had seemed to hear might be the mere effect of imagination, I resumed my occupation, but had scarcely cut the strings that bound the package before mentioned, ere the same sounds were repeated still more audibly. Upon this I rose and examined every corner; not I confess without the same sort of sensation which school boys are said to feel, when they whistle

by night in a church yard. My search was, however, fruitless.

Remembering the adventure that befel Don Cléofas Leandro Perez Zambulo, with the famous Asmodeus, in the astrologer's garret, I fancied that something of the same kind might perhaps await me. But with the exception of an ink bottle, there was no glass substance into which the most subtle demon could insinuate himself; and methought that none but *printers'* devils were likely to ensconce themselves in that.

Scarcely had I resumed my seat, however, ere a third sigh, long and deep drawn, again struck my ear, and my eye chancing to fall upon the bundle of stationary before mentioned, I saw it agitated in a very peculiar manner.

My astonishment was profound, for the package was heavy, and there was no natural cause to produce this movement. My surprise increased, and well it might, when in a few seconds a low tremulous voice exclaimed in Persian, "Allah help me! O destiny—destiny!"



“Even so,” answered the little sheets, striving to open their gilded edges.

“Well then,” retorted I, calling to mind the prudent example of the afore-mentioned Spanish student, “as you may be some demon or evil spirit, thus confined for your sins, I must insist, ere I relieve you, that you swear to behave discreetly.”

“I swear by the beard of Ali, on whom be the peace and benediction of Allah, that I will obey you in everything.”

Seeing me hesitate, it continued, “If you are not satisfied with that oath, I will swear by the day break and ten nights—* by that which is double; and that which is single; — in short I swear by the whole Koran.”

“One more condition is necessary,” responded I. “You must first tell me by what miracle you thus became endowed with the powers of speech. In the mean time I shall further secure you with this heavy press-paper.”

* See adjuration commencing eighty-ninth chapter of the Koran.

"*Aman ! Aman !* (pity ! pity !)" ejaculated my strange interlocutor.

"You have heard my conditions, so proceed," rejoined I.

"*Allah Kerim !* (God is merciful) exclaimed the paper. I will do your bidding—listen."

"I am all attention."

"Well then ! I was once a splendid Cashmere shawl," answered my marvellous guest.

"A shawl !" re-echoed I. "What nonsense—not to say what lies—you would have me believe."

"*Wullah !* I have told you nothing but truth," rejoined the voice. "Yes ! I was formerly one of the most costly shawls that ever issued from the looms of Islamabad. I have witnessed many singular adventures, both in the east and west. I have been the envied inhabitant of harems, palaces and bagnios. I have shaded the brows of Sultans, Pachas, Omrahs and Khans. I have girded the waists of Sultanas, Princesses, Khanums and Bayaderes. I have passed through many hands ; enjoyed great glories, and alas—devoured in-

finite dirt.* Until at length—O destiny! when worn out, soiled, tattered and thread bare as a half naked dervish, I was sold to a rag merchant. From his impure clutches, I found my way into the boiler of a paper manufacturer, and thence *Ey vah!* behold what I am now! But Allah is great and merciful. His power knows no limits. He has loosened the knot of my tongue, and I still retain some remnant of my former beauty, with the sense and memory of an animate and rational being. Now! In the name of Allah fulfil your promise ”

“Softly! softly!” replied I. ‘You have

* The frequent occurrence of the expression “eating dirt,” in the conversation of Moslems, is evidently derived from the tradition, that when the Almighty cast out the serpent from heaven, he condemned it to grovel henceforth, upon the earth, and to feed upon the filth of our first parents, and all their posterity. “Yo quiero,” said the Lord to Satan, “que toda inmundicia suya, y de todos sus hijos, en saliendo de sus cuerpos entre per tu boca.” Such at least is the language attributed to the Almighty, by a Spanish Commentator.

excited my curiosity, and surprised me not a little. Narrate your adventures. I am what you Easterns call a *sahib calem*,* and if the Shaitans of Editors have a grain of spirit, or the public a particle of taste, I will translate your story, and immortalize you—always provided your tale is worth the trouble.”

“I am your sacrifice—on my head be it,” rejoined the voice.

Then imploring me to place my sandal-wood book opener between it and the superjacent heavy quires of foolscap, in order to allow it space for breathing, it commenced its narrative. This I have rendered to the best of my power, into English, and divested of much of its oriental idioms, and flowery phraseology; — a task rendered the more difficult since, as the learned reader will easily perceive, the story was narrated in a mixture of Persian, Turkish, Arabic, and other eastern dialects.

If the critical reader should consider that too much of this phraseology still remains in

* *Sahib Caem* literally means a man of the pen or quill driver, but is employed figuratively for an author.

my version, he must attribute it to my desire that the narrative should strictly retain its oriental character, and be answerable to its title of "a Romance of the East."

THE
CASHMERE SHAWL.

CHAPTER I.

IT was upon the southern slope of one of the saffron tinged eminences, at the foot of the stupendous mountains, which separate the kingdom of Caubul from Thibet and Turkistan, that the rich material of which my costly form was woven, first saw the light. Allah is great, and has blessed me with a retentive memory; I have need of it, in order to recount such various adventures as mine. I recollect that the earliest sounds, which greeted my juvenile senses, were the affectionate bleatings of my

mother ; a beautiful milk white goat of the celebrated Rodauk breed, whose pedigree was as pure and strictly registered, as that of the horses of Kochlani, whose sires fed in the stalls of David.* The first caresses also, which I met with, were those of my kind parent, who stood over me and my two little sisters in an attitude of mingled defiance and tenderness as she performed those services to our frail limbs and reeking coats, which nurses are accustomed to administer to new born infants.

Independent of my mother never failing to produce two and sometimes three kids at a birth, as was the case in the present instance, she was the envy of all the surrounding shepherds from the singular fineness of the silky down which formed her proprietor's principal wealth, and which being perpetuated in her family, brought him into high repute with the wool dealers and shawl manufacturers of Cashmere.

Of my father I can say little ; like most ori-

* Horses of Kochlani.— See notes to *Lallah Rhook*.

entals he was not over communicative to his children, and seemed to feel jealousy, rather than solicitude for their progress.

I only remember of him further that his beard was long, silvery and waving, as the wings of the snowy birds that hovered over Solomon's tents; that his eye was dark and expressive as that of Ali, that his spiral horns sprung tapering from his brow, and that, with the exception of his pendant ears, a tuft on his forehead and the forepart of his face and neck, which were of pure white, the rest of his long silken robe was black as the naptha of Kerkhook. He was, upon the whole, a stately and noble animal, and had all the majestic air of a Sultan with the gravity of a Mollah; when reclining upon one of the rocky projections that overhung the flower-clad valleys of Caubul, he tranquilly chewed the cud of contentment, and sniffed the breezes that arose fragrant and balmy as the richest perfumes from the rose gardens of Irém. He also possessed a quality peculiar to his race in the fairy land of my birth; that

is, he was free from the slightest symptom of that taint, which is the characteristic of his species, in all the infidel countries to which my destinies have since carried me. But Allah is great and merciful! this is a feeble portion of the impurities which are the heritage of unbelievers.

My coming into the world was not only a subject of rejoicing to my mother, but to the family of her master, Abdoul Ali, and was the more important since, by the recent inroad of a hoard of Kybeerees, he had lost a portion of his flocks, a fine Turcoman horse and one of his daughters.* The latter, whom he could neither shear or dispose of legitimately or illegitimately, she being extremely ill favoured, was less regretted than three of my aunts, about forty of my brothers, sisters and cousins, besides an equal number of flap-eared, arch-nosed *doombas*, (broad tailed sheep,) which though they were as ugly as Shaitan himself, he valued

* The Kybeerees are a predatory Afghân tribe inhabiting the range of 34°, from the White mountains to the Indus.—*Elphinstone's Caubul*.

highly from the enormous weight of their ponderous tails.*

To compensate Abdoul Ali for the above loss, his remaining ewes and she goats had produced a more than ordinary number of lambs and kids during the present season and his black-tented *anderún* still retained two or three daughters; of whom one named Gulabi (Rose water,) promised to be as beautiful, as the elder sister, whom the marauders had probably carried off by mistake, was the reverse.

Thanks to Allah! there is always a black and a white side to all things in this world; and as an Eastern sage has said, "He who spreads his carpet amongst the tombs at night, cannot tell whether the next sunset may not see him reclining upon the cushions of a palace." It is folly therefore to weep, when the beams that may dry up our tears are but concealed by a cloud. Abdoul was of this opinion, consequently being as expert a shep-

* The tails of these doombas sometimes weigh 15lb.; the fat is esteemed a great delicacy.

herd as ever combed wool for the Cashmerian markets,* and as tender a parent, as ever speculated upon the ripening charms of a daughter, he joyfully gazed upon the cypress formed, fawn-eyed beauties of Gulabi, and contented himself by listening to the sounds of our infantine voices, which were re-echoed ten fold by the crags and caverns that surrounded his camp. Being a philosopher by creed and a calculator from necessity, he amused himself firstly, by spitting and snapping his fingers in derision at the robbers, who, in carrying off his ugly daughter had met with the same bitter disappointment as befalls those who pluck the apples of the Dead Sea, and secondly by computing the value of the *mauns* of wool and fat that would in due time be derived from the coats and tails of my young contemporaries.† He also pushed his paternal speculation so far as

* The fine wool used in the manufacture of shawls is not shorn, but combed off the animals. The outer hair is left intact.

† A *maan* is nearly equivalent to an English stone, Smithfield carcase weight.

to meditate upon his chances of bartering Gulabi with some one of the dealers from Persia or Lahore, who are not particular whether they purchase shawls, camels or women, providing the latter are likely to fetch a remunerating price.

It must not be supposed however that Abdoul was so heartless a parent, as to desire to part with his children for the mere sake of the few sequins or tomaums, which might be the produce of their sale. No, heaven forbid! he had a nobler ambition, he was a Persian, a native of Asterabad and of the royal tribe; he had served in the *Gholaums* (royal guards) and attained the rank of *On-Bashi* (Sergeant or chief of ten). There he might have remained happy, idle and certain of obtaining advancement, had not the king of kings thought proper to send an expedition against the Sultan of Caubul, in order to receive from the latter the tribute due from the western provinces of Afghânistan. For this purpose an army was assembled upon the frontier, under the command of the Shah's son, Hossein Ali, who having at length reached the refractory

country, marched gallantly forward, and selecting a propitious day and hour fell upon the enemy, under the Vizir Futí'eh Khân, at no great distance from Herat.

At the sight of the Roustams of Persia, the Afghâns trembled, their faces were darkened, and they felt as if the angel of death sat upon their saddle bows. Victory already unveiled her radiant features; the Vizir was wounded, his terrified troops were as dust, they quailed before the breath of the Shah's representative, and fled.

It is easy to overcome an army of Afghâns, but who can conquer destiny? by some fatality the Persian lions, instead of pursuing the vanquished, suddenly wheeled round in the direction of Meched, and thus lost the fruits of that triumph, which if they were not justly entitled to, they did not fail to boast of, by issuing a pompous proclamation, wherein the army of Futí'eh Khân was stated to have been dispersed, like the infidels before the arch-angel Gabriel at the battle of Bêdr,* and that

* At the battle of Bêdr, Mahomed is said to have been

all who escaped the sword were drowned in the Ochus.

This latter was unfortunately somewhat incorrect, for Abdoul, accompanied by five or six horsemen having cast himself into the thickest of the fight, intending to seize the old Kaffir of a Vizir in order to convey his head as a present to the Shah's son, and his jewels into the pockets of his own immense loose trowsers, was suddenly attacked by a body of Doorau-nees horse.

May heaven pour misfortunes on them, and infidels defile their mother's graves! the dog's sons killed his comrades and carried him into slavery. After being sold and resold several times, he contrived to make his escape into the Thibetian territory, where he found favour in the eyes of a rich shepherd, married his daughter and thence emigrated into Caubul. Here he had resided several years and had succeeded in naturalizing the shawl goats which assisted by the archangel Gabriel, mounted on his horse *Hairám* at the head of 3,000 angels.—See *Notes to Sale's Korán*.

it was supposed could not prosper to the south of Hindou Kosh.*

Abdoul had not resided at Shiraz, Tehran, and other cities, or profited so little by experience, as not to be aware that beautiful slaves often enveloped their masters in their own chains, and that female favourites were frequently enabled to provide for their relatives and to raise them to posts of honour and wealth ; without which latter the former is not more substantial than the deceptive *sirraab* (smoke of the desert.)† Pressing with his right hand the top of his black lamb skin cap, the only portion of the Persian costume which he still retained, and dropping upon the ground the butt end of the long Cashmerian gun, which he constantly carried in the other, Abdoul, who stood near my birth place, broke into the following soliloquy :

“ What are the boasted roses, violets and

* *Hindou Kosh*, or *Caucasus*, the name given by the natives to the westernmost portion of the Himalaya mountains.

† The *mirage* is so called in the East.

*rhaouash** of Afghanistan in comparison with the fragrant flowers and fruits of my native land? what are the bleatings of these kids to the proud neighing of a Turcoman steed? what is the intoxicating *bang*,† to the melted rubies (wines) of Shiraz? Nothing—I was a lion, but here I am worse than a dog horse. My heart pants to return to Persia. I will no longer rust away the iron of my soul in watching sheep and goats like a slave. I whose face has been whitened by the smiles of the Shah, when hurling the jerid or springing my charger before the glory of his throne, will no longer swallow the filth of these dogs. *Yok!* (no) I spit on their beards. The wool which grows upon the backs of my goats is converted into shawls destined perhaps, to encircle the waist of the light of the universe, or some of the princes, his sons. What reason is there why,

* The violet is here called the prophet's rose (*gul i peighamber.*) The *Rhaouash* or white rhubarb root is eaten as a delicate sweetmeat.

† *Bang*, a beverage made from ewes' or camels' milk and the seeds of hemp or opium.

in due time, Gulabi's arms may not attain a similar honour? I have seen moon faced women, but none fairer than her. Praise be to Allah, the world is open to all. The pillars of the empire, the vizirs themselves would be barren as the desert sand had not Allah irrigated them with the waters of abundance, and destiny fanned them with the breezes of prosperity. I have sons, they may become something, Youzbashis, Begs, Khâns, Sirdars, who knows? I will sell my flocks and join the caravan proceeding to Teheran; I will not dispose of Gulabi, but carry her with me, and having taught her to dance and sing, I will knock at the gate of life and present her to the shadow of God. It is a long and perilous journey, but what of that? *Tchock, Kiarim oladjak*, (I shall make a good thing of it,) as the Osmânlis say. 'He that gallops out of the way does not arrive so quickly, as he who walks slowly forward.' "

Abdoul then filled his short earthenware *Kaleean* (water pipe) with Candahar tobacco, lighted it from the tinder of his matchlock and throwing back the folds of his ample sheep-

skin cloak, seated himself near the tent, around which the women had collected the flocks and were occupied in milking, or making butter and curds.

Inigorated by the sun's rays and the balmy breath of spring, I was busily wagging my tail and butting my head against my mother's shaggy flanks, for the purpose of more easily extracting the rich nourishment that flowed from her swelling udders, when the fair object of Abdoul's ambitious speculation approached my flowery cradle. My mother was her favourite and had been reared by her own hand. The meeting between them was therefore extremely affectionate. After the first congratulations and after Gulabi had fed her with blades of young clover and tender leaves from the delicious *sabebi* vine, calling her "my soul, my eyes, my heart," and other innocent and endearing expressions, to which my mother replied by gentle bleatings and by rubbing her head against her mistress' hand, the latter placed me and my two sisters in the folds of her *camees*,*

* The *Camees* is the shift or loose linen inward gar-

as in an apron and thus conveyed us to the tents.

Franks have often expatiated in my presence upon the beauties of Italian and Swiss scenery and extolled the charms of their women, I longed to be enabled to tell them, that they ate dirt, that no prospect under heaven could be more sublime or picturesque than that which stretched for miles around our camp, and that the brightest houris of Frangistan were as mere *jins* (goblins) when compared with Gulabi. I could give an account of the one as long and glorious as the chapter of Poets in the Korân,* and speak of the other in terms as brilliant and never ending as the list of the Shah's virtues and titles, spouted forth by the mollahs and astrologers upon the festival of the *Nawroz* (new year.)† I shall content my-

ment worn by the peasantry. From this word is evidently derived *Camisa* and *Chemise*.

* The chapter of Poets is the longest in the Korân, it contains 227 verses.

† The eastern new year commences at the period of the vernal equinox, the 21st. of March.

self, however, by saying of Gulabi that although she had never been sheltered from the summer's sun or winter's cold by other roof than that of a tent, her complexion was clear and white as the pearls of Karrak, tinged with the rosy dye, extracted from the vine roots of Bokhara. Her eye was dark as Saadi's well,* yet sparkling as the sea of light diamond in the Shah's armet; she was tall, graceful and slender as a young plane tree, yet rounded in rich proportions like the swelling tulip. Her lips were as red as the glossy blossom of the pomegranate, her breath fragrant as Tartar musk and her teeth white as the summit of Demavend.† Her hands were small, and the pressure of her foot so light, that it scarcely disturbed the fire flies which spangled beneath her path.

The Afghān dress, though ill adapted to display the symmetry of her figure, was not without grace. Her death black hair, fell on either

* The celebrated well on the *Koh Saadi* near Shiraz.
—*Porter's Travels*.

† A lofty snow-topped peak near Teheran.

side her temples in glossy ringlets, after the fashion of unmarried women ; amidst these were suspended several gold coins to which, on Fridays and other holidays, were added crimson and yellow blossoms plucked from the mountain shrubs.* Upon her head she wore a short hood of black tissue, woven from the wool of her father's flocks and fringed with a coloured border ; a figured, full sleeved shirt of Masulapatam chintz reached from her throat to her ancles and was confined at the waist by a long and narrow coloured shawl. Under this was a pair of trowsers of striped cotton, with boots of red brown leather, pointed and curved at the toes ; over all flowed a large blue cotton mantle, which generally fell upon her shoulders, but upon the appearance of a stranger it was drawn over the head, so as to veil her face and person.

The site selected by Abdoul for his summer

* Friday is the Mahomedan sabbath, it is called *Yaum al jumah* (the day of congregation) ; one of the reasons assigned for selecting this day is because Mahomed entered Mecca upon it.

encampment, was the south western side of one of those shelving ridges which branch from the base of the mountains, whose gigantic parents, the snow capped Indian Caucasus, were seen majestically towering to the skies, at a distance of more than a hundred miles to the north; rocks rugged and abrupt, as if they had been riven and hurled to and fro by the demons of the waste, rose immediately behind; their summits crowned with forests of dark pines and their sheltered fissures chequered with vines, tamarisks, pomegranates, myrtles, odoriferous palms and other fragrant shrubs, which sprouted forth wherever the winds had conveyed sufficient earth to furnish nourishment to their roots. At an immense distance, to the south east, the eye now and then caught a glimpse of the fleecy vapour that hovers over the bed of the Indus, or fell upon the summits of the great Salt range, through whose crystal flanks the noble stream has cleaved a passage.*

* This occurs at Calla-baugh.—See *introduction to Elphinstone's Caubul*, p. 58.

In front, lay a wide spreading, undulating expanse of table-land, bounded by the Caubul river, and watered by a thousand glittering streams; here dotted with populous villages, there spangled with the castles of wealthy Khâns, and the whole mantled with rich pastures, groves, and gardens.

The haze and hot glare that rose towards the west and south, screened from view the bleak hills and rich valleys of Candahar, which extend to the confines of the Seweestân desert, but left entirely unveiled the sombre Sauliman mountains, whose lofty embranchments intersect central Afghânistan from north to south.

The ground immediately contiguous to the encampment, was extremely well adapted for men liable to inroads from some of those predatory tribes; which, though nominally united under the sovereignty of Caubul, are at constant variance amongst themselves, and carry on a system of plunder, and often of bloodshed, as cruel as that waged by the Turcomans of Bucharia, against the border

Persians, upon the northern frontier of Kho-rassan. In the first place, the rear was protected, not only from man, but from the bleak north winds, by an amphitheatre of precipitous crags, inaccessible to all but the feet of Abdoul's goats, or those of the wolves, hyænas, lynxes, and other savage animals, abounding in the neighbouring woods. The right was separated from an extensive forest of oak, cedars, palms, and a variety of trees peculiar to the soil, by a deep ravine, at the bottom of which rolled a rapid torrent, fed by a mountain stream that came bounding and roaring over the rocks, first plunging into a foaming basin, and then rushing into the valley, where it was divided into a thousand artificial channels, serving for the purpose of irrigation, or for turning water-mills, whose horizontal wheels gaily sparkled in the sunbeams.*

On the left and front, the green sward, redolent of violets, saffron, and wild thyme, sloped away abruptly, for nearly a mile. This

* The water wheels are horizontal, not vertical, as in Europe.

was fringed with orchards planted with apricots, peaches, almonds, plums, and Samarcand pears in full blossom, intermingled with vines, which flung their tendrils in wild festoons amidst the orange trees, or girded the mulberry stems in a net-work of fibres. Gardens and fields of lucerne, cauliflower, beet-root, madder, maize, rice, and every species of grain and vegetable, except potatoes, were chequered with tufts of sugar-cane, roses, jessamines and pomegranates, interspersed with a profusion of melons of immense size and delicious flavour. Ponds and fountains of chrystal clearness, enamelled with blue-lotus and pink nymphaea, were shaded by drooping branches of scented willow, or the dark green leaves of the celebrated white rhubarb.

Flocks of sheep and goats browsed upon the hill sides; herds of camels and buffaloes grazed in the valleys, and groups of husbandmen were seen occupied with the hoe and plough, whilst from each bush and brake pealed forth a merry chorus of birds, amongst which the notes of "the bird of a thousand

tales," rose quivering, like the swelling tones of the Persian khitar*. The balmy fragrance of the air, the splendid beauties of the scenery, and the variety and richness of nature's productions, seemed to justify the tradition, that this was the original garden, cultivated by the father of man, who flew from Serendib every day for that purpose.†

Abdoul's small camp consisted of two spacious black camlet tents, pitched beneath the shelter of some gigantic cypresses. One of these tents, divided into two parts, was the abode of himself and family. The floor and sides of the innermost portion, reserved as the women's apartment, were covered with *gulleens* (striped woollen carpets) and hangings of felt, and were furnished with coarse cushions, some baskets for apparel, and a few kitchen utensils. The outer end, in which his sons slept upon sheepskins or camel's hair rugs, had no other carpeting than the ground

* A kind of lute, of Arabic origin.

† Serendib or Ceylon, where Adam is said to have sinned, after his fall.—*Notes to Sale's Koran.*

and no other furniture than their matchlocks, shields, spears, sabres, and the saddles of their horses and camels.

A second tent, coarser and larger than the first, was also divided into two. Part served as a fold for the flock at night; when they were guarded by the servants and several large *Kofla* dogs.* The other half formed the dairy, and contained a row of sunburnt earthen bowls, filled with cream; several strong camel-hair bags, used as churns, a portable oven, and other simple domestic implements.

The members of the family, biped and quadruped, consisted of Abdoul, his Afghân wife, four sons, as many daughters, an equal number of female slaves, four or five men-servants, upwards of two hundred goats and sheep, some camels and horses, three fierce watch dogs, a couple of those beautiful, woolly Thibet cats, so much prized in the East, with a few fowls and tame pigeons.

* The *Kofla* dogs are so called from *Caufla*, or *Kofla* (a caravan) this species being used as guards by travellers.

The dress of the women was nearly similar to that of Gulabi; but from being less ornamented and of coarser materials, it was evident that she was the favourite of her father, and consequently an object of jealousy to all the rest of the family, especially as her own mother had died shortly after their migration from Thibet.

The costume of the men, with the exception of the chiefs' black lambskin cap, was that common to almost all the Afghân pastoral tribes. It consisted of a white linen shirt, changed upon Fridays; blue cotton trowsers, rush sandals, or brown leather boots, heavy mantles of sheepskin, with the wool inside, and low quadrangular caps of black cloth with yellow crowns.

Abdoul and his sons were distinguished from the servants by red shawls twisted round their waists, in which were stuck broad, horn-handled, two-edged, Persian knives. A powder horn and leathern pouch, containing Candahar tobacco, flint and tinder, hung over one shoulder, and a second pouch filled with car-

tridges, was suspended in front. The garb of the labourers was nearly similar, but they wore neither shawls, sandals, or arms."

"Such, Effendi!" said the once brilliant Cashmere shawl, addressing me more particularly, "such is a faithful portrait of my birth and origin. *Y Allah!*" it then exclaimed, "be pleased to remove me from beneath these quires of coarse foolscap; I am defiled; they were made from the polluted linen of a gibbeted infidel. Render me this service, and, with the prophet's aid, I will proceed with my story."

CHAPTER II.

PRESUMING that there could be no danger in granting the request, I complied, and the little quire having cleared its voice, continued as follows :—

To dwellers in cities, corrupted probably by satiety and a thirst for excitement, a narrative of the simple life led by Abdoul's family will be as insipid as candied sugar to an opium eater. I shall risk your displeasure, nevertheless, O Aga ! by pausing a few moments to describe it ; especially as this description will serve for that of all the moslem shepherds and migratory tribes of Afghânistan, who in summer ascend to the verdant pastures and shady recesses of the hilly regions, oftentimes many days distant from those scorching val-

leys, where, at leaf-fall, they again seek shelter from the snows and chilling blasts of winter.

Ere the first purple tints of the rising sun had gleamed upon the summits of the distant mountains, the sonorous voice of Abdoul was heard exclaiming, "*Allah akbar! Allah akbar!*"* (God is great!) The men descended to the torrent's side, and having performed their ablutions, said their morning prayer with their faces turned towards Mecca; a duty fulfilled by the women within the tents.†

This being accomplished, the ewes and she goats were milked by the latter, some of whom prepared the early meal, consisting of curds,

* The call to prayer, uttered by the Muezzins from the Minarets, and by the leaders of caravans, or chiefs of families, where there are no mosques.

† It is enjoined by the Koran, chap. V., that all true believers, when they prepare for prayer, shall wash their faces, their hands to the elbows, and rub their heads and feet to the ancles. If water is not to be had, sand may be substituted. The principal hours of prayer are at the "extremities of the day;" that is, before sunrise, and at twilight; but all rigid mussulmen pray at noon, and at two other intervening periods; in all, five times.

fresh milk, and unleavened cakes, whilst the rest busied themselves in spinning, churning, baking, or other domestic concerns. The flocks were then led forth by the labourers; the oldest animals being driven to a distance, whilst the mothers and new-born were allowed to browse upon the adjacent banks. 'Abdoul's small native horses, covered with red and blue striped rugs, to protect them from the gadflies and musquitoes, stood saddled and piqueted near the tents; whilst half a dozen shaggy Bactrian camels roamed about in search of the prickly *karaghan*, which is the favourite nourishment of these hardy animals.

The master superintended, but took little share in the labours of his family. Perching like an eagle upon his eyrie, he seated himself, cross-legged, upon one of the adjacent rocky ledges, his matchlock in one hand and his pipe in the other. Here he passed his time in smoking and watching the surrounding country, ready to give signals of alarm, should his flocks or camp be menaced. A buffalo horn, slung beneath his cloak, served him as

a trumpet. With this rude instrument, he sounded several loud and lingering blasts, as a summons for the flocks to be collected during the mid-day heat, and for the men to repair to dinner.

This meal consisted of vegetable soup, flavoured with strips of mutton, some slices of leavened bread, a pillau of rice thickened with sheep's-tail fat, a few dates, raisins, or other fruit, especially melons when in season, and every now and then a kabob of kid or lamb, roasted whole. The latter was frequently cooked by placing it, enveloped in its skin, in a hole heated with hot stones, a process that gave it a rich and juicy flavour.*

Water from the mountain stream, or sour milk, was the ordinary beverage, with now and then a draught of *bang*, or some other fermented liquor. Abdoul being a Shiite, his interpretation of the Koran did not prevent

* This mode of roasting meat resembles that sometimes used by the South Americans, which, when thus roasted, is called *carne con cuero*, (Flesh with the skin or leather on.)

his now and then indulging in the "good nourishment" forbidden to more orthodox moslems.*

Coffee, roasted in a flat iron pan and bruised in a rude kind of mortar, followed, and the flocks were once more led forth to pasture, until the horn again recalled them, a short time before sunset. They were then milked, counted, and folded, *namaz* (vesper prayer) was said, a frugal supper of cheese, milk, and barleycake, was disposed of, and ere many minutes, the hangings of the tents were closed, and nothing was heard to disturb the hilly solitude but the distant howling of wild animals, the roaring of the torrent, or the soft

* The Persians, in general, are of the sect of Shiites. The Turks are, with few exceptions, Sonnites. The former look upon Ali as equal to his father-in-law, Mahomed. Greater antipathy exists between the two sects, than between catholics and protestants.—See Malcolm, and preliminary discourse to Koran. According to the 16th chapter of the latter, wine is called "good nourishment;" thence, latitudinarians indulge in it, but the more rigid regard all intoxicating liquors as strictly forbidden

notes of the nightingales, nestled in the adjacent tamarisks.

To diversify the monotony of this life, Abdoul and his sons sometimes joined the neighbouring khans and shepherds in their hunting excursions. Upon these occasions they exchanged their heavy cloaks for light quilted vests reaching to the middle of their thighs; their boots for sandals, and their waist-shawls for girdles woven from palm fibres. Then, slinging their matchlocks across their shoulders, grasping their spears in their right hands, and springing upon their horses, they proceeded to the place of rendezvous, followed by greyhounds, as swift as wild asses, and by two or three of their fiercest dogs which, protected with strong spiked *halkas* (collars) and back-plates of mail, neither quailed at the aspect of leopards or hyænas, or feared to encounter the bears that often descended from the mountain fastnesses, in search of the sugar canes and bee-hives, abounding in the lower regions.

“*Wullah!* (by Allah) sister,” exclaimed Abdoul’s eldest son, Hossein, as he was describ-

ing one of these scenes to Gulabi, "the flavour of the luscious Shiraz wine, of which our father sometimes speaks, cannot have a more exhilarating effect upon the soul than the sight of the hunters assembled beneath the wide spreading branches of the forest; some exchanging salams, welcomes and compliments, others making their horses curvet and career; some discussing the merits of their greyhounds and falcons, and others exhibiting their Lahore flint guns and pistols to the anxious examination of those armed with matchlocks."

"I wish I were a man, that I might join in the sport," replied Gulabi, "instead of eking out my time in weaving, churning, and purifying these cameeses in the cold mountain water. You men lead a brave life of it, whilst we poor women are tethered like the camels of a caravan."

"Praise be to Allah!" answered Hossein, stroking down the hair of his glossy beard, "we are not without our advantages. You women are but as smoke—nothing—when compared with us. We are ten degrees above

you;* you are our tillage, so it is written. Our place is the battle, the chace, the council or race-course. Yours the *anderun*, the bath. It is ours to show our faces to the sun; yours to conceal your cheeks, even from the moon. We are lions, heroes, blood-drinkers. You are gazelles, doves, milk-squeezers.

“What is the use of being fawn-eyed, and moon-faced, as our father says I am?” answered the young coquette, “if I must hide me from all, except his sheep and goats, nor dare lift my eyes upon anything but camels and horses. *Allah kerim!* I wish I were a Cashmerian.”

“Why so?” demanded the brother.

“Because,” responded Gulabi, her dark eyes sparkling like brilliants, “because I have heard my father say, that whilst he was captive in Lahore, he saw a troop of Cashmerian women dressed as soldiers, and armed with sabres, quivers, and firelocks. We are but as dirt to them.”

* Hossein rather stretched a point, for the Koran only says *one* degree.

“The daughters of burned fathers were *lutis* (mountebanks) or dancers,” retorted Hossein contemptuously.

“No, no,” rejoined the maiden, “they form part of the Sultan’s guard, and follow him to the fight or chace, mounted on horses and elephants.* Their faces are whitened with presents and smiles. They enjoy as much liberty as the men. They may look at the world uncovered, and they brighten their eyelids with the gold dust that is found in the Indus.”

“They are polluted; giaours, Kaffirs. They will descend to *jehanum* (hell), as sure as I hope to rise to the gardens of the seventh heaven. But what put such strange, infidel, thoughts into your head?”

“Nature, and the looking-glass you brought me from Caubul,” replied Gulabi.

“*Mashallah!*” exclaimed Hossein, “Eblis or the Fakeer asses have filled your brains with chaff; shame, shame! upon thee!”

* She probably alluded to the company of Amazons, in the suite of Runjeet-Sing, the Maharajah of Lahore.— See *Burne’s Travels*.

“ Surely, Hossein,” answered the sister, smiling archly, “ there is no shame in wishing for a husband ; and when am I likely to meet with one, unless the Kybeerees carry me off, as they did my sister *Kara Nour* (black-light).”

“ May the *háremzadehs*’ (ill-gotten) bodies be crusted with leprosy,” retorted Hossein ; “ I would sooner hurl you into yonder torrent than see you married to a Kybeeree. By the prophet’s hand, we will pay them off on our return to the winter camp. Curses on their fathers and mothers ! *Inshallah* ! we will have their skins for sole-leather. As for Kara-Nour, she was always as crabbed as a caged panther, and as ugly as one of the Jew-infidels, whom Allah turned into apes, for catching fish upon the sabbath.*”

“ God is great !” exclaimed Gulabi. “ It was her destiny to be ugly. She could not help it ; but ugly as she is, she has got a husband. Eh, that’s something.”

* Ablulfeda mentions this tradition. It was supposed to have taken place at Eilath, on the Red Sea, and at the demand of David.

“ She might have married Shaitan himself, for all I care,” answered Hossein; “ and they would be matched like two wolves’ eyes. But my Turcoman horse, that once belonged to the *Cafila Bashi* (caravan-leader) from Bokhara; *Oof!* my liver has been darkened ever since the Kybeerees took that.”

“ Caravans and Turcoman horses often traverse the neighbourhood of our winter camp, and you may easily replace it,” answered the sister; “ but,” added she, petulantly thumping the linen she was washing, against the stones, “ I am not likely to become a *khanúm* (mistress of a harem), so long as we remain in these mountains; unless I get a husband as the Jew Moses procured milk, by sucking his thumb.”*

“ You have certainly got a horse fly in your brain,” replied Hossein, smiling. “ But leave off pummelling that old camees of mine, as if it

* *Iallalódden* says, that when Pharoah’s wife discovered Moses, he was found sucking his thumb, which performed for him the most essential duties of a wet nurse.

were made of granite from the white mountains.* *Gel* (come here); take a whiff from this pipe, and if it is your destiny to be married, *Inshallah!* husbands will pour in like the quails of Yaman. You say you wish you were a Cashmerian; perhaps you would rather be a cannibal *Vezeeree*.†

“*Astaferallah*, Heaven forbid!” ejaculated Gulabi. Then after a pause, she added; “and why should I?”

“Because,” replied Hossein, “the daughters of dogs are privileged to do no work; they go barefaced like the dare-devils, their brothers, and may choose their own husbands. This is the reason perhaps,” added Hossein shewing his white teeth as he grinned at his own wit, “that they are called, *Adam khors*, men-eaters.”

Wonderful, by my eyes!” exclaimed the

* *Suffeed-Koh* (white mountains) the loftiest northernmost point of the Sauliman range.

† The *Vezeerees* are a wild tribe of central Afghánistan, celebrated for their ruthless and predatory habits. They have the reputation of eating their prisoners.

sister, "I should like to know whose dogs they are, that Allah should grant them a privilege upon earth, only reserved for houris in paradise."

"Allah only knows," responded the brother; "but sit down by me and I will give you an account of what I saw when I joined the caravan guard traversing their country."

Nothing can afford greater pleasure to an Asiatic than a tale, no matter what its purport, and as the labour of washing was not the occupation most agreeable, or perhaps best suited to the delicate form of the young shepherdess, Gulabi gladly left her work to be completed by a female slave and seating herself cross-legged beneath the shade of one of the noble palms, which were dotted here and there over the slope, prepared to listen to her brother's story.

In the meantime, I frisked by her side, and having already commenced to nibble the tender grass shoots, affected to imitate the position and rumination of my father, whom I saw gravely reclining upon one of the slabby projections of the impending rocks.

CHAPTER III.

“THE Vezeerees, my soul,” said Hossein, as soon as his sister had seated herself by his side, “are a tribe of *gholee beabuns* (demons of the waste) inhabiting the eastern side of those cloudy mountains, whose summits you see kissing the sun, far away towards the southern deserts. Some live in caves or mud hovels, like foxes in their holes; but the greater part dwell under black tents. They have flocks, many horses and ride as firmly as the never melting snow upon the white hills. The women are sheep-faced, earth coloured, and as melon waisted as the tops of those dwarf palms. Our lost sister would be a Peri amongst them, although they do wear red shifts, blue girdles, and ornament their matted

locks with gold coins and trinkets, robbed from the caravans."

"*Allah kerim!*" exclaimed Gulabi, "they must look like our horses with their fly-rugs on. Are they infidels or true believers?"

"Half milk, half curds, that is, neither one thing or t'other," rejoined Hossein. "They swear by the book*, but do not follow its precepts. They rarely perform ablutions, or say their *fatiha*, (prayer.) They drink forbidden liquors, until their souls are darkened, and devour flesh which hath died of itself†. The men wear no other clothing but blanket shirts, as black and coarse as the stuff of our tents, girded round with dark woollen girdles. They have cow-skin sandals on their feet, and black felt caps on their heads, which they do not shave, like true believers, but let their hair and beards hang down as foul and matted as the shaggy humps

* *Al dhikr*, the book, one of the denominations for the *Koran*, which is also called *Al Moshaf*, the volume.

† It is forbidden by Mahommed "to eat that which dieth of itself."

of our camels. Their limbs are bare and covered with hair like brutes. They have voices as loud, and countenances as grim as those of hungry lions. In short, *hawan der*, they are animals, and resemble bears upon two legs, more than the descendants of Adam. They carry shields, iron spears, long knives, and matchlocks. They give no quarter to men, and kill male children; but they speak truth, and never injure women."

"The unclean infidels are not so bad after all," ejaculated Gulabi, who thought that the Vezeerees' treatment of women was a set off against a multitude of sins.

"All their virtues are for their own tribe; their vices for others. They are at war with all mankind," replied the brother. "They live amongst their fastnesses, like the vultures upon yonder crags, ready to pounce upon their prey, and may Allah have pity upon the caravan, or traveller, that falls into their hands. The simoom is more merciful."

"Then how did you escape from their knives?" demanded Gulabi; "they were not

likely to treat men slayers like you, as they would milk-squeezers, as you call us."

"May their fathers be burned," answered the other. "Trust to the son of a Kizil-Bash for using his wits in due season."

"It seems, brother, that you had better have used your sword," replied Gulabi, smiling maliciously.

"Thanks be to Allah! and so I did," rejoined Hossein; "but what is the best tempered Khorassan blade against the sickle of destiny? I fought like twenty lions—oof!"

"And they probably like forty—a thousand;" retorted Gulabi, "or they would not have smothered you with ashes."

"True, true!" said Hossein. "The rascals were as the sands of the desert, and we only a handful. Do you recollect when the caravan from Bokhara halted in our neighbourhood, and the *Cafila Bashi*, whose horse I gained,* came to engage an escort to protect him through the *Vezeeree* territory?"

* Gained, is a common saying amongst Orientals for designating any thing they may have stolen.

“Certainly,” replied Gulabi; “for our father ordered all the flocks to be shut up and us women with them, that neither the sheeps’ fat tails, nor our faces, might tempt the merchants to run away with us.”

“*Afferin!* it was well done,” retorted Hussein. “Such mad caps as you ought to be tethered like wild colts. I believe you would gallop off with the first man that offered himself; you are bewitched. Well!” added he, “what with presents and promises, a safeguard of three hundred horse was procured from the neighbouring camps and villages. The astrologers having killed a sheep and counted favourable omens in the blade-bones, and the chief of the caravan having shaken out a quiver of arrows and found them propitious,* we started upon our journey, at the

* Divination by examining the spots on sheep’s blade-bones, by the position in which arrows, shaken from a quiver, fall to the ground, and by counting odd or even upon their rosaries, although declared “an abomination” by Mahommed, is much practised in Afghanistan.—See *Elphinstone’s Cabul*.

hour when men's shadows and themselves are nearly equal.* Half of us rode in front of the camels and mules, which were laden with gold, fruits, furs, cloth, and other rich merchandize for the Indian market, the other half formed a rear-guard, whilst a few well-mounted videttes were thrown out to watch the flanks. So, unless the dog's sons started up from the earth, or fell from the clouds like locusts, we were secure on all sides. Alexander the Great, who spat on the world's beard, could not have done more."

"Never mind Sicander the Great, but tell me about the Vezeeree women choosing husbands. When will you come to that, brother?" exclaimed Gulabi, as Hossein paused to refill his pipe.

"Softly, my eyes!" rejoined Hossein, "we must get there first; you have no patience;" then having relighted his tobacco he resumed: "the country through which we had to pass was as forbidding, as its inhabitants. Upon

* About mid-time, between noon and sunset—a propitious hour.

quitting the valleys, bordering upon the rascal's territory, there was no sign of cultivation; the herbage was scanty, the water was bitter, the trees stunted, and had it not been for a few goats, guarded by hell black shepherds, upon the distant hills, one might have thought that this was the threshold of Eblis' garden, where the roses are brambles, the nightingales vultures, and the waters liquid bitumen. As we advanced, the face of nature became still wilder; barren and distorted crags rose towering one above the other; here rent into fathomless and fantastic abysses, now stretching away in wild and sublime confusion, without a shrub to satisfy the camels' hunger, and here starting up abruptly above our heads, to the height of many hundred feet: leaving us no other road than precipitous defiles, or broken beds of torrents; our beasts and ourselves were obliged to thread these passages, one by one, and yet they were frequently so narrow that the animals stuck between them with their burdens."

"*Bishmillah!*" ejaculated Gulabi, "the

needle's eye could not be more impassable.*

"Well said!" answered Hossein; "None but lion hearts would advance through such a devil's-track. A score of old women might have attacked us in front and rear, and devoured us one by one, or a few fragments of rock hurled from the overhanging precipices might have crushed us to atoms. But Allah is great and the Vezeerees are asses; so, at length, we emerged safely from these dangerous defiles and our souls expanded. Hitherto we had seen no enemies and scarcely any living creatures, save now and then a wild ass, some wolves and jackalls. As the road became broader the camels were led by fours, sixes, tens in front, and we rode as at first, singing, laughing and cursing the Vezeerees. We marched by night and slept by day; a fourth remaining constantly mounted to patrol and watch. But what avails the wisdom of Lockman, or the valour of Roustam, when

* The scripture phrase relating to the camel and needle's eye is common to Mahommedans.

“though I see no cause for merriment. But what can one expect? Is she not a woman? Like all the rest of her sex, she demands water before she comes to a well.” Then stretching out one leg, and puffing forth several whiffs of smoke, he proceeded, “Wullah, exclaimed I, looking around, as the headmost riders and camels, began to emerge from the glen, I never placed much trust in divination by *fâl*, (lots) or arrows, but Allah is great, and there is, perhaps, less filth in such omens than I thought. In two hours’ time, we shall be safe in the plain. Then all the Vezeeree mongrels united dare not bark at our heels. Inshallah! We will mow them down like green pulse. By the beard of Ali, added I, unsheathing my sabre and brandishing it over my head, what are they? Cowards! asses! brutes, exceeding asses, or they would not allow us to slip through these passes, where a lame dog might defile our beards. Let them come! We’ll make mince meat of them! At this moment the waning moon, began to sink behind the mountains, shrouding the valley in

a cloak of darkness, whilst heavy gusts of wind, like moanings from the cities of the silent, came rustling from the hill tops, mingling their sighs with the heavy breathing of our panting camels.

“As I reined back my horse, to allow the headmost group to pass, methought I heard noises, like the stifled groans of gholes, or savage beasts, amongst the brushwood. My comrades' livers were turned to water. They quaked and said their *fâteha*, (prayer.) But I drew forth my pistol, and crying out; Who is there? If you be men, in the name of Allah, stand forth. If devils—begone, and then I fired.

“The echo bounding from crag to crag, until it died away in the distance, was the only answer. *Pekayi*, (good,) said I. It is nothing and were it a legion of evil genii, they should know, that I am a lion eater. I had scarcely reloaded my pistol, however, ere a yell, loud and terrible as that of Sakr,* re-

* Sakr, one of the most terrible and wicked of the Ifrits, or evil genii.

sounded from the heights above, and of a sudden I saw——”

“What? in Allah’s name!” demanded Gulabi; as her brother, perceiving that the sun had attained its highest altitude, raised himself upon his knees and dipping his hands into the streamlet, that gurgled close at his elbow, prepared to say his prayer. He had not time to reply, however, before Abdoul’s horn sounded the mid-day retreat, and they proceeded to the tents, where the flocks, accustomed to the well known signal, came scampering and bleating homewards, followed by the dogs and shepherds.

CHAPTER IV.

When the noon tide sleep was ended,* Gulabi requested her brother to resume his story. Seating themselves in the same spot, and the giddy maiden having promised not to be guilty of interruptions, Hossein proceeded :

“As I gazed upon the glen, now veiled in darkness by the shadows of the waning moon, dim-lights like the faint corruscations, of a thousand glow-worms, or spanglings of fire-eyed lynxes suddenly twinkled on either side the road. The thrilling yell was heard once more, and at the sound, the goblin lights burned brighter, and multiplied by hundreds. Above, below, up and down the narrow pass,

* The practice of the *Siesta*, is common to Asiatics.

each shrub and stone, seemed tipped with flame."

"*Aliah ! il allah !*" exclaimed Gulabi. "Did not the marrow of your eyes ooze forth ?

"In truth," replied Hossein, "my heart did smite against my breast plate, and I felt a clammy chillness creeping through my flesh. But as no time was to be lost, I called to those nearest, saying, *Bak !* (look.) By the prophet's head, those lights issue from the eyes of demons, or from the *Vezeeree's* matches. They have caught us in their snares. Curses on their fathers and mothers. We are sacrificed. Flight is impossible. See ! they are as the stars. Draw brothers. *Y Allah*, let us sell our lives dearly. What else can we do ? Are we not heroes ?" Then bending over my saddle bow, I spurred to the crest of the pass.

"T'was well done ; for in a moment more the echoes of ten thousand thunders, rolled and clattered along the mountains. Those who had stood by me, were swept away. From right to left, from front to rear, all was

a sheet of fire. Flash followed flash. Volley succeeded volley, whilst the shot hurtled amongst the caravan, like the stones of baked clay, that rained upon Gomorrha. Then arose yells and screeches as of countless demons roaring out, "Kill! slay! down with the curs! Let the earth drink their blood!" mingled with cries for pity, shouts of *Allah! Allah!* dying groans and roars of wounded camels.

The din, the confusion, the horror of that scene were awful. The foremost horsemen and camel drivers fell back, trampling those behind, beneath their hoofs. The hindmost pushed forward, and in their maddening fear, impelled the weaker down the precipices. Some sprung from their beasts and crawled for safety amongst the clefts; others darted upon their foes, bravely anticipating death; whilst the Vezerees, dropping their guns, rushed upon the victims with their long knives, and slaughtered all who had escaped their fire.

"Did none but you outlive the night?" demanded Gulabi, taking me into her lap and covering me with the folds of her mantle.

“Allah is great and merciful!” rejoined Hossein. “None save myself. Seeing that to remain was death, and fancying that I had perceived the signs of habitations at some distance in the plain, I cast away my spear, put spurs to my horse, and rode as if Monker and Nakfr were shouting by my sepulchre.”*

“On—on—o’er rock and fell; with goading heels and loosened rein, I urged the foaming brute, until the infernal hubbub no longer smote my ear. Checking the bit, I then paused to breathe his flanks, when of a sudden, he snorted, his eyes rolled wildly, his mane stood erect, his nostrils expanded, his limbs quivered, and he bounded forward with redoubled speed.

“*Mashallah!* he was no ass. A troop of hungry wolves had marked us for their prey; close at our heels, dams, cubs and sires, a devilish pack, came howling, panting, and near-

* *Monker* and *Nakfr*, are the two angels appointed to examine the dead, and who either permit the just to repose in peace, or condemn the wicked to be gnawed by ninety-nine dragons, with seven heads each.

ing us at every stride. One brute, more active than the rest, sprung at my thigh; I levelled my pistol and fired. Allah be praised! it growled and fell; but that availed me nothing; the rest increased their speed, whilst at each step my horse's strength relaxed. Already he flagged and reeled.

“But, Allah be praised! at the moment when two monstrous beasts hung on my flanks, prepared to spring, I found safety when I might have expected death. A band of armed Vezerees, seated by a watch fire, started up; taking me for one of their own people they leaped into the track; some shouted and waved flaming fire-brands; others discharged their guns at my pursuers. What became of them or the wolves I knew not, for, pressing the last energies of my horse, I left them far behind, until, by the prophet's blessing, I saw a village near at hand. It was time, for my horse staggered and groaned; his heart burst and he fell dead beneath me.

“Knowing it to be a law with the sons of Shaitan to spare those who once pass their

thresholds, I approached the buildings, and creeping beneath the shadow of the walls looked for an open door. Ere long I perceived a white bearded elder, standing with two red-shifted women, as ugly as she-devils, before a portal. Crawling closer—still closer, I paused to draw breath; then bounding forward like a mountain cat, I sprung within and prostrating myself embraced their knees, crying ‘pity, pity! I am your sacrifice; I am less than dirt.’ Then announcing the destruction of the caravan and declaring what I was, I claimed the rights of hospitality.

“Thanks to Allah, my appeal was heard. The white beard’s heart was moved; he was a khan and he looked kindly on me, exclaiming, *kosh geldin*, (be welcome.) Whilst one of the women took bread, broke it, and gave me a piece. After kissing the hem of her filthy garment and hoping their shadows might never be less, I raised the bread to my forehead, ate, and was saved.”

“*Deh!*” exclaimed Gulabi, “did I not say they were not so bad; was I not right? They

are merciful to those who touch their hearths, and allow their women to go loose like *Saibas*.* Now, brother, since you have got safe among the *Vezeerees* I suppose we shall soon come to the wedding."

"Sooner than I wish, pearl mouth!" answered Hossein; "it may be fine sport for the *she-jins* to choose their own mates, but it is enough to quench the spirit of a wild ass, or monkey, to be chosen as I was."

"How fell a choice upon you, a captive?" demanded the maiden.

"Allah is great, and has not made me of unbaked clay," replied Hossein, pointing conceitedly to his face and figure, which were certainly of no ordinary beauty. "I was a noble plane tree, amidst thorn bushes; a tulip between bundles of dried sticks, when compared to their men. But you shall hear how it came to pass, if you have patience.

* The name given by the Arabs to the camels, which are allowed to range at liberty, either in consequence of their master's vows after a pilgrimage, or from their having borne ten foals.

News of the victory having quickly spread through the village and adjacent camps, elders, women and children, fell to capering and rejoicing as if they were possessed, and as day approached rushed forth to meet the victors. Soon after sunrise these were seen returning laden with spoil, like the black legions from the valley of ants.* Some ran dancing, singing and brandishing their bloody knives! others came beating drums, blowing trumpets and firing off guns. Some carried men's heads, dripping with gore, upon their spears; whilst others drove asses laden with the reeking flesh of slaughtered camels, intended for the evening feast.

“The captured animals and booty being collected in the public square, a mollah prostrated himself and prayed; at which the curs all pretended to smite their breasts and offer thanks to Allah. The packages and bales were then opened, the animals were

* A valley of Syria, so called from the multitude of these insects encountered by Solomon.—*Mahomedan Tradition.*

numbered and the whole divided by the chief khán, amongst the heads of the tribes, who, in their turn, assembled their followers; these, after shouting and dancing, with wild gesticulations, seated themselves in circles and the distribution took place. This passed, to my surprise, without dispute. Some, it is true, were accused of secreting plunder, but they stroked their beards, saying 'no!' and were believed.*

"As the day closed, the feast commenced. Sheep were killed and their flesh made into soups. Piles of rice stiffened with grease, were placed upon palm leaves and devoured in a twinkling; then came stews of camels' flesh, with roast mutton, eaten half raw, and sweetmeats, which the brutes washed down with *bang* and other intoxicating drinks. Having gorged themselves to the throats, some danced, some played at marbles, others at quoits, until they rolled and tumbled sense-

* Such is the acknowledged veracity of these uncivilized plunderers that this simple assurance is considered equivalent to an oath.

less and the women came, each to claim her filthy lump. Then they rolled home to sleep, as they had eaten, like swine."

"And what did you the while, Hossein?" demanded Gulabi.

"May their places hereafter be under Shaitan's jaw," answered he.* "Most prodigious filth, did I swallow; for, I saw one rascal strutting about in my new red trowsers, and another trying to force his cloven feet into my best cloth riding boots."†

"But how did they treat you, I mean?" said the maiden.

"Not so badly, sister," replied Hossein. "They gave me food, milk, and lodging, and seeing that I alone had escaped, looked

* This is considered as the place under the seventh earth, reserved for the worst of sinners.

† Hossein's wrath at this indignity, resembles that of a British nobleman when attacked and plundered by banditti, between Rome and Naples. "I did not care for the loss of my money," said his Lordship, "but to see the brigands putting on my best doe-skin breeches, and walking off with them to the mountains, *Cospetto!* that was too much."

upon me as especially favoured by the prophet and thought I possessed a talisman, or charmed life. I found favour, moreover, in the old white beard's eyes, by reading the Koran, and telling him that it contained 77,639 words and 325,015 letters, and as no one but the mollah, could boast of so much science, they looked upon me as a learned man, possessing the five keys of knowledge.

“ I gained the good will of the Khan's son, by showing him how to wrestle, after the mode taught to our father, by the Shah's chief wrestler, and by curing his sick horse with a drench of spiced wine. As to the red-shifts, I won their hearts by playing on the *Kamounsheh*,* and singing verses from Hafiz and Ferdausi, which I picked up from a minstrel at Candahar.

“ In short, wherever I went, men's faces were cleared, and my mouth was stuffed with candy. I was poor, but I had wits and a face, so the women's hearts melted like sheep's tail fat before the fire.”

* A kind of viol.

“Allah be praised!” ejaculated Gulabi, “we are at last come to the wedding.”

“After six or eight months, during which I often joined the tribe in their predatory excursions, and came in for my share of plunder, I perceived,” continued Hossein, “that Zilmee (open heart,) the Khan’s daughter, cast languishing eyes upon me, making me tell stories all day like a regular tale-teller, or sing all night like a bulbul. However much this might suit my interest, it no way flattered my vanity. She was hideous. One eye looked towards paradise, whilst the other always turned down, as if she sought for fallen pearls. Her mouth was large enough to swallow a kabob at one gulp; her teeth were black as the stone of the Caaba; her breath had the odour of *Hing*, (*assafœtida*) and her feet were splayed like those of a camel.*

“But what could I do? Who can oppose fate? It was mine to captivate this she-ghole. It was no more possible, for me to resist her

* The *assafœtida* also goes by the significant name of *Shaitan bokou*, (Devil’s filth.)

passion, than to oppose the Shaitans, her countrymen, in the hilly pass. After all," said I to myself, one day as she filled my mouth with sweetmeat, after a song, "after all, good may come of it. So I will return her cloven ogleings, (squint) with a straightforward look of affected tenderness. *Oof!* much dirt will befoul me; but Allah is great and she is rich. That is much."

"Not long after, as I was sitting under the shade of a lofty tree reading the Koran, surrounded by a number of black shirts and red shifts, I heard a noise. Upon lifting up my eyes, I saw the chief drummer and *chaoush*, (herald) of the tribe, followed by several women in their Sabbath dresses.

"*Allah Kerim!* I began to tremble, and wished myself under the seventh earth, when all my auditors stood up and clapped their hands, crying out, *Wada! Wada!* (a wedding.) Who is the chosen? May his shadow increase! May he be a fit man! It is the Khan's daughter, who is going to select a husband! Look, look! they come this way. Stand

back! make room, make room! There is honor on the wing for some one: much good may it do him!

“ I rose with the rest, when the drummer came opposite, beating the skin as if he were mad, the chaoush advanced and called out, ‘ Praise be to Allah! Hossein! son of Abdoul Ali, the Kizilbash, you are a fortunate man. Your face shall be whitened. You carry luck under your girdle. Destiny is your footstool. You are the prophet’s favourite. Zilmee, the khan’s daughter, looks on you with a soft eye.’

“ It was well he did not say eyes,” exclaimed Gulabi smiling.

“ By my father’s beard was it,” answered Hossein, “ or he would have uttered lies. The chaoush then advanced still closer, and taking forth a handkerchief and an ivory needle, such as the red-shifts use to fasten up their hair, he held it forth and exclaimed, ‘ See, O Hossein! see by these tokens, you are chosen. The star of happiness shines upon you. Rejoice! our khan’s daughter summons you to kiss the

hem of her garment. The honey of her heart has fallen upon you. By the prophet's head, you are grown a lion amongst lion eaters. These are the emblems of love and fruitfulness. Your shadow will increase until it be as long as that of Adam. You have understanding and courage. You are a Lockman, an Isfandyar.* You will become as firmly rooted as a mountain. What is your answer?'

'You are welcome, O chaoush, as the lapwing, to Solomon,† replied I, your words are soft as water, gushing from the twelve fountains of Elim.‡ By my eyes, I am the slave of Zilmee. I am nothing. She may snap her fingers in my face, *poof* and bid

* Isfandyar, one of the heroes of Persian romance. Lockman, a wise and learned man cotemporary of David. He is the model of wit and talent in the East.

† When Solomon went on his pilgrimage to Mecca, the lapwing attended him, and when he wanted water, she marked the place where it might be found with her bill, upon which the genii, under his orders, dug wells and drew it for him.

‡ Confounded by the Mahommedans with the rock of Horeb, where Moses performed the miracle.

me die. I am her sacrifice, her stepping stone. May her life be eternal! She has made roast meat of my heart. What else can I say?"

" ' *Aferin! Aferin!* (well done, excellent). You are a prince!' burst forth, from the bystanders, who added, ' Hossein, the affranchised, is worthy of our khan's daughter. Who shall say no? He is our brother. Our friend. May he prosper.'

" ' Gently, gently brothers,' said the chaoush. ' To reap we must sow. Hossein cannot carry off the fruit of our khan's loins, unless he prove himself a man. Where, O Hossein, are your gifts, your wedding presents? Can I go back empty handed? Must I say to the khan—Hossein takes the corn and returns husks. He is like the earth, which, in gratitude for the showers of heaven, sends up dust. He has neither gold, silver, nor stuffs to offer. His hand is tied up. He would not throw a bone to the sleeper's dog, or a scrap to Abu Horiera's cat. He has not even *bakshish* (vails) for the messenger of joy. Speak!'

" God is great, answered I; I am as I

am. Your people took my all and left me nothing, but my skin. I have not the *seng i fars* (philosopher's stone) but I have an arm and a soul.

“ ‘ That is not much. A liberal hand is preferable to a strong arm,’ said the chaoush.

“ ‘ That is *bosh!* (nothing),’ exclaimed the rest. ‘ What dirt does he cast upon us? Whose dog is he, that he should receive the apple of our khan's eye, and not return its value?’

“ True, replied I, slipping one or two golden sequins into the chaoush's hand, which he quickly conveyed into his girdle. True! but what can I do? The treasures of the cave of Jemsheed* are not open to all. But a brave man is a mine, a treasure in himself. Tell Zilmee that she has devoured my heart. Let her withdraw the light of her countenance, and

* A cave near Candahar, the entrance to which is said to be defended by a torrent and revolving wheels, armed with swords. At the end of this passage are delicious gardens and treasures of immense value.—*Afghán tradition.*

I wither like grass, cut down before its time.
I shall be as offal cast in a corner. I covet the
glory of her hand—nothing more. And before
the new year, I will offer the khan presents
worthy of a sultan. Let another caravan pass,
and although the leader be my own brother.
I will eat his liver. On my head be it.

“ ‘That is something,’ replied the chaoush
somewhat softened by my sequins. ‘ We
shall see.—Follow.’

“ Hereupon he took Zilmee’s handkerchief
and needle, and stuck it in my cap, saying, I
was her elect. On this the people roared out
‘ Good! *Y Allah*. Be it so.’

“ We then proceeded to the khan’s house,
followed by a great concourse. There we found
the chief with his daughter, relations and the
mollah and cazy, seated upon carpets before
the door. The chaoush having made his
salaam, and reported the result of his mission,
the khan and the others began to shake their
heads and stroke their beards, so that I hoped
to get out of the scrape. But Zilmee lifted up
her voice, and cried out, ‘ Hossein is my

choice. May it be auspicious! He is a man. A lion. I want no more.'

"Thereupon her father and brother, who seemed nothing loth to part with her, called out, 'Be it so! He shall be yours. May his shadow never be less.'

"Then inviting me to sit down near them, they offered me a pipe, called me son! brother! and wished me joy. Upon which the drums beat, and the people shouted, and rent the air with exclamations.

"Silence being re-established, I first waved round my bride's head, and then placed upon her left hand the only jewel I possessed, a ring of Bokhara turquoise, and all having said their *fâteha*,* the mollah declared we were affianced. Sweetmeats, pipes and coffee, were then distributed, and in a few minutes, I was permitted to retire, to prepare lodging for the reception of my ponderous helpmate.

* The *fâteha* is the first chapter of the Koran, and is as often repeated by the Mahommedans as the Ave Maria or Lord's prayer by Christians. It is nearly equal in beauty and simplicity to the latter.

“ But *Alhemdullilah* ! (thanks to Allah) destiny saved me from the clutches of this she-bear, as it had from the wolves’ fangs.”

“ What, was there no wedding after all ?” exclaimed Gulabi.

“ Truly was there,” answered Hossein, “ but our sugar cane moon was as smoke. Listen : the marriage day being fixed, and my wife’s dowry of furniture, carpets, and kitchen utensils having arrived, I stained my fingers with henna, dressed myself after the fashion of the country, smoothed down my beard, and mounting my horse at nightfall, rode to my bride’s father’s house, attended by drums and music, with men on foot and horseback, waving torches of resinous pine wood, and firing off guns.

“ Upon our arrival we found Zilmee prepared in her bridal garments. *Allah kerim* ! she was as hideous as the works of an infidel when he rises from the grave. The only thing I coveted about her were the strings of sequins and tomaums, that were interwoven in her

hair and the gold armlets and anklets that adorned her limbs.

“ All I observed about her dress was, that she wore a new red under garment, a shawl girdle, sandals worked with gold thread, and a scarf of blue brocade and silver, which floated loosely over her luxuriant charms.

“ What few presents I could contrive to scrape together, I offered to my father-in-law, and my bride having been helped upon a camel, we returned in the same order to my house, followed by her hand-maids, carrying her wardrobe and preceded by dancers and singers.

“ Upon reaching my door, I saluted my *khanum*, with all manner of fine speeches and compliments, calling her my soul ! my eyes ! my rose ! my mountain of light ! Upon which she gave me a kiss—*oof* ! the odour of the poison plant was less fetid.

“ The marriage feast being prepared and the mollah having blessed it, saying, ‘ In the name of God, the best provider of food ! ’ we sat down, and I quickly perceived that my charmer had an appetite in proportion to her size. She

cleared the plates, as clean and quickly as locusts strip the shrubs of their leaves. First the broth glided down her throat by kettlesful, then came the dumplings of stewed meat, which she cast into her mouth so hot, that the water trickled from her eyes. These were no sooner devoured than she worked away at a fricassee made of chickens, eggs, boiled pulse and spices. This she hammered down with a dish of rice balls, filled with stewed plums and onions floating in treacle. Then a pile of rice, in which were some strips of half roasted camel's flesh, shared the same fate.

“ *Bishmillah!* I thought she would now pause; but her busy fingers then tore to pieces two quails, and she even looked as if she were not satisfied, after adding to these a quantity of roasted kid and a mountain of sweetmeats, not to mention some thick pancakes, a bowl of sherbet and a due proportion of palm wine and camel's milk fermented with opium.

“ The feast being ended and the fragments distributed amongst the attendants, the guests departed. I then raised my wife from the

ground, and supported her into her private chamber, which I had fitted up to the best of my power. Then I left her, whilst I retired to pray that Allah might diminish her famine-breeding appetite, and give me courage to meet the sequel.

“What happened in the interval God knows; but when I approached the curtain that separated the nuptial chamber from the outer room, I heard her snorting and grunting loud enough to wake the seven companions and their dog.* Thinking her to be sleeping, and being little disposed to disturb her repose, I glided softly in, saying to myself, it is not enough that my wife should feed like a hog, but she must snore like a whole herd! What filth am I doomed to!

“Scarcely, however, had I passed the threshold ere my feet striking against something, which seemed to be a bale of woollen, I stooped down to see what it was. Judge of my consternation!

* Seven youths, who, to escape the persecution of the Emperor Dacius, retired to a cave, and slept for 300 years.—*Mahomedan Tradition.*

There lay Zilmee—her cheeks blue—her features distorted, the last agonizing rattle of departing life gurgling in her throat, and her eyes fixed,—one upon heaven and the other upon *jehanum*—as if she were watching both ways for the examining angels.

“ *Wullah ! billah !*” exclaimed Galabi.
“ Poor creature ! What killed her ?”

“ The rice dumplings and *kabob,*” replied Hossein. “ She had overstuffed herself. As I had not strength enough to raise her up, I rolled her towards the wall, propped her up with cushions, puffed smoke into her nose, shook her shoulders, pricked her soles and palms with the point of my dagger, poured honey into her mouth, and did all man could do to recover her. At first I thought her stomach told lies.”

“ Lies, brother !” exclaimed my mistress.
“ *Allah kerim !* How could that be if she was breathless ?”

“ O child,” retorted Hossein contemptuously, “ you have no more wisdom than that kid. Do you not know that when the friend

of a sick man came to the prophet to ask relief, the latter replied, 'Give him honey, for it is revealed by Allah that honey is medicine for men.' Whereupon the fellow went away and did as he was bid. But the first dose having no effect he returned and begged further aid saying, 'honey is all *bosh* (humbug).' Whereupon the prophet waxed wrath and answered, 'Go, and give him more, and if that will not do, give him more still; for God speaketh truth and your friend's stomach lies.' The man obeyed, and sure enough the sick man recovered. But this was not the case with Zilmee, I might as well have tried to extract fire from a green pumpkin. All the bees in Gulistan and all the doctors in the world, could not have restored her. She was stone dead, and resembled an inflated water skin, much more than one of those rose cheeked, feather covered ostrich eggs, to which the prophet (on whom be God's blessing) compared the virgins of paradise."*

* "And near them (the just), shall lie the virgins of paradise, refraining their looks from beholding any be-

“ And what became of the corpse ?” inquired Gulabi. “ Did you tie the toes, bind up the jaw, rend your garments, according to custom, and call the appointed to wash and streak out the body ?”

“ Was I an ass, the son of an ass, that I should stop to be devoured by the unclean brutes her relatives ?” answered Hossein. “ No, I had more sense ! I knew that if I remained, the tribe would say, I killed her and require the *dirjat*, (price of blood) and as I could not pay in pocket, I should be condemned to suffer in person.* So I determined, if possible, to make my escape, and leave her to settle her account with Monker and Nakir as well as she could. As her money and trinkets could be of no use in the way of presents to them and were

sides their spouses, having large black eyes, and resembling the eggs of an ostrich, covered with feathers from the dust.”—*Al Koran*, Cap. 37.

* The law of retaliation requires blood for blood. but murder may be redeemed by pecuniary satisfaction. The relatives of the deceased having the power to fix the amount of a (reasonable) fine.—*Mahommedan Law*.

moreover my lawful property, I tore the coins from her hair, the rings, bracelets, and anklets from her person, secured all the valuables I could stuff into my trowsers, loaded my arms, provided myself with a few barley cakes, and a skin of water, crept into the stables, mounted my horse, and being favoured by the darkness of the night, stole out of the village, and rode without pulling bit, until I had left my dear defunct spouse, at least forty miles behind. Having made myself familiar with the nearest tracks, leading to the passes which separate Vezcereestan from the neighbouring tribes, I was fortunate enough, neither to encounter four or two legged brutes, save a few straggling lynxes and half a dozen armed scouts. The former ran away from me, and, God be praised, I escaped from the latter, by saying that I was a *chupper* (messenger), sent by the border chiefs to announce the passage of a caravan from Lahore. At length I cleared the mountains, and in a few days reached my father's camp."

"Thus Hossein recounted his adventure

and his wedding," said my new acquaintance, adding, "Allow me a few moments' repose, and I will then proceed with my own tale." This it soon did, in the manner narrated in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V.

STRENGTHENED by the glowing warmth of advancing summer, and the abundant nutriment supplied by my mother, I not only grew rapidly, but my coat gave early promise that its texture would no way degenerate from the purity of my celebrated progenitors. I was soon weaned, and enabled either to pick up my own sustenance amidst the rich herbage sprouting from the mountain flanks, or to feast upon the vine-tendrils and flower-buds, culled for me by the hand of my gentle mistress. Not having anything human to love, and not being able to summon a husband by beat of drum, or by the irresistible mandate of her hair-needle, like the Vezere women, Gulabi's whole affections were centred in me. Nor was I ungrateful; I followed her like a dog

now reposing at her feet, as she spun or wove near the tents—now scampering and frisking around her, as she strolled across the more distant eminences; but ever and anon flying for shelter to her side, when the dark shadow of some soaring eagle flitted over the rocks, or the roar of some savage beast reverberated like lowering thunder amidst the surrounding caverns.

Attracted by the multitude of flocks that had arrived from the plains, unusual numbers of the latter haunted the jungles and under-wood of the adjacent ravines, where they rarely descended, unless impelled to quit the upper regions by the rigours of winter. Here they made their lair during the day, and at sunset crept forth, causing much havoc amongst the sheep and goats, which, as was often the custom during the great heats, were led to pasture between the night and morning prayer.

Huge tigers, lions of a small but ferocious breed, hyænas, wolves, and black bears, had been seen near our camp, making me and my

fellow-kind tremble with instinctive terror, and creating no small disquietude to Abdoul Ali, when they came prowling and roaring within bowshot of the watch-fires. Even his vigilance, and that of his dogs did not always secure the fold from their rapacity. A tiger, of immense size had sprung upon one of the tethered horses, and carried it off with as much ease as the khanum's cat would have walked away with a dead sparrow. A most audacious bear with her family of cubs, had also entered the dairy tent, devoured all its contents, and nearly strangled one of the sleeping servants. It was consequently determined by the neighbouring khans and shepherds, that a general chace should take place upon the first propitious occasion, and that surrounding tribes and camps should be summoned to assist.

It was thus that my mistress and I had an opportunity of witnessing one of those scenes, of which Hossein had spoken with so much enthusiasm, and wherein he and his father generally bore a conspicuous share. The time selected for this was the bright sunrise of an

On one side, a party of horsemen was seen gravely advancing with hooded falcons upon their wrists; quivers of red leather, stamped with gold flowers and phrases from the Koran, pendant upon their backs, silver chased pistols in their girdles and jewel hilted sabres by their sides. Others darted forward poisoning their light spears, or hurling them for practice at the trees, their carbines slung to their curved saddle bows and their long daggers sparkling at their waists.

Some were accompanied by black slaves and *chitars* (running footmen) carrying the gilded bowls of their *kaleeans*, or by *jeloodars* (pad grooms) holding in leashes wing-footed greyhounds. Others were attended by bands of clans-men, these bearing the weapons of their lords, those leading mail coated dogs as faithful and ferocious as the watchful *Katmír*.*

Here and there a few grey bearded chiefs,

* The dog that guarded the seven sleepers, the name of this animal worn on a ring is in common use as a talisman; it has a place also in paradise.—*D'Herbelot, Bibl. Oriental.*

clad in tunics of embroidered silk or figured chintz, their heads and bodies enveloped in rich shawls came mounted upon their dromedaries and armed with muskets of heavy calibre, poised upon iron rests. At their sides walked retainers waving swallow-tailed pennons; their weapons, short javelins, matchlocks, swords and shields of rhinoceros' hide, studded with brass bosses; their dress, black and yellow Afghân caps, wolf skin mantles, sandals, linen vests and scarfs, dyed grey with the bark of the pomegranate. The sinewy arms and legs of these were bare and rubbed with liquid butter, to give them greater suppleness; their beards also were divided and hung in one waving tress on either side their cheeks, shewing them to belong to that devoted class of warriors, who swear to perish rather than turn from man or beast.

On one side, knots of armed shepherds, perched upon Uzbek saddles,* with sheep-

* The general name for a portion of the inhabitants of Balk and Bokhara, their horse furniture is principally used in Cabul.

skin shabraques and crimson tasselled snaffle bridles approached at full gallop; their small horses carrying them over the broken ground with the rapidity and safety of racers upon the smoothest course. On another side parties of men on foot, equally prepared for sport or combat, descended the mountain tracks, in files as long and sinuous as the twinings of the monstrous forty ell serpent.* Whilst others traversed the more open space by tens and twelves in front, stamping with their right feet and clanging their spear-heads against their shields, in cadence to the wild and exciting tones of a native war song.

On arriving within bow shot of the place of rendez-vous, the principal chiefs sprung forward at full speed, until their chargers' foaming nostrils almost brushed the fluttering folds of the head khan's banner, which marked the appointed spot. Here they stopped suddenly, with their horses' haunches pressing the ground, or darted round with their inclining flanks

* A species of constrictor so named from its prodigious length.

nearly sweeping the grass, in circles little larger than their clansmen's bucklers. Then springing from their saddles and saluting each other with the usual compliments of "You are welcome! Peace be with you! and with you be peace!" they seated themselves upon carpets spread by their attendants.

Having inhaled a few whiffs from the *kalacans* placed before them and interchanged the courtesies of snuff, which they did not take between their fingers and thumb, after the manner of Frangistan, but by pouring a few grains upon the back of the hand, they proceeded to hold council.

In the meantime their followers ranged themselves in groups, each behind their chiefs, forming a glittering, jingling forest of spears, bayonets and banners intermingled with the gaudy trappings of fiery chargers and the embroidered housings of more patient camels. It was plain to see, however, both by the distrustful looks of the chiefs and the sullen manner in which the clansmen regarded each other, that although assembled for the purpose

of assailing a common enemy, the whole were equally ready to turn their arms upon each other. It required in fact, but a word, a jest, or the most trifling dispute to re-illumine those smouldering feuds, which in despite of friendly appearances, existed amongst many of them, and thus to convert a sportive meeting into a bloody fray.*

The most experienced hunters having been consulted and all preliminaries settled, the whole body, amounting to several hundreds, were marshalled and directed to extend themselves in a semi-circle embracing the jungles where the prey lay sheltered. Upon a signal given by the chief khan's trumpeters, the horsemen sprung upon their steeds, the old men were lifted upon their camels; the drums, cymbals and horns pealed forth a deafening flourish; arms were loaded, matches lighted, javelins poised, shields braced and dogs unmuzzled. Then with loud exclamations of

* The feuds existing between the khans have great similarity to those which in former times prevailed between the Scottish chieftains.

Allah kerim der ! Allah Akbar ! as ordained by the Koran,*the different groups filed off through the woods, leaving one body of the most resolute to guard the torrent's bank, towards which it was intended to drive the chace, whilst another party of expert matchlock-men were posted amidst the superjacent crags.

What occurred at a distance was concealed by the dense canopy of foliage, but ere long curling eddies of smoke were seen flitting above the lofty cedars and peepuls, whilst the reverberating echoes of shot and shout fell fastly upon the ear. The savage inmates of the woods seemed panic smitten, and well they might; for men and dogs exciting each other to the onset, rushed forward wounding and slaughtering all they encountered, heedless themselves of wounds or death. *Mashallah !* the game seemed as abundant and varied as that which tempted the prophet's followers at Al Hodeibya on their road to Mecca.†

* It is enjoined to "commemorate the name of God," when commencing the chace.

† This temptation happened when Mahommed was on

Eagles and vultures, scared from their eyries soared screaming to the clouds; wild peacocks, startled from their cypress shaded haunts, skimmed through the air like golden meteors; spangled pheasants, quails, partridges and nightingales, winged their hasty way to more secluded shelter; affrighted monkeys, with their young ones clinging to their backs, clambered jabbering and screeching to the topmost boughs.

Wolves, foxes, lynxes, hyænas and wild dogs quitted their dens and slunk towards the higher regions; elks and snake-devouring pauzeens* burst through the crackling reeds, their stately antlers towering above the young bamboos, as they bounded unharmed from their pursuers, or their dappled flanks tinging the wild vines with dyes more purple than their forbidden juice, as they staggered bleeding and faint towards the deeper covert. Grisly bears, leopards,

his pilgrimage to the Caaba. Hunting and fowling upon these occasions are forbidden.

* A species of deer supposed to feed upon serpents.—
Elphinstone's Caubul.

bears, jaguars, tigers and even valiant lions did not disdain to seek security in flight ; some heedless of the ambushed marksmen, sprung unscathed but not unrevenged away. Others with drooping tails and panting jaws slowly trailed their shattered limbs along, and after exhausting their utmost strength in vain attempts to climb the rocks, either fell beneath the javelin's stroke, or with a yell of rage and agony rolled dead upon the crags beneath.

As the chace advanced the circle diminished, but not the ardour of the hunters, each step brought them nearer in contact until they presented a bristling hedge of steel, a wall of fire which few beasts had courage to affront. Save here and there when some wounded animal, maddened with pain, sprung upon the assailants and either perished amidst the grove of spears and sabres, or felling its victim to the earth darted with appalling roars into the distant thickets.

"*Aferin ! aferin !*" (bravo) suddenly exclaimed my mistress, who appeared as much elated with the sight as the Spanish giaour

women are with that of bleeding bulls and wounded horses, upon a sabbath festival. "God has given hearts to all things," continued she. "Look! look! if it were a true believer, it could not be more tender of its young. *Wullah, wullah!* the brave brute deserves mercy for its goodness. Allah forgive me! I question if Baba would do as much for me. I wish I were that eagle-eyed young Khan upon the white *Tauzee* horse,* and I would give orders to spare the creature. Ah! he has no compassion; see! he takes aim with his carbine. Good! good! he has missed—no! the young one bleeds—bleeds in its mother's mouth. Poor thing! see how she disposes her precious burthen and licks its wounds. God is great! he has implanted more feeling in the breast of the forest beast, than in the souls of the devilish Arabs and Rajpoots, who slay their own offspring."†

* The breed of horses of Domaun, and the vicinity of the Indus, are so called.

† Infanticide is still prevalent amongst some Arab

The sight that elicited these exclamations from Gulabi, was that of an immense tigress, which had emerged from the thickest depths of the opposite jungle, followed by two newborn cubs, whilst she carried a third between her jaws. Slowly and majestically the noble animal moved along, disdaining to accelerate her pace in despite of the surrounding peril. With bristles erect, and head half turned, she held her way, lashing her streaked flanks with her tapering tail, contracting her barbed paws, and pausing now and then to gaze at her pursuers. Upon reaching the torrent's brink, she stopped, and measuring its foaming breadth with her glaring orbits, crouched as if about to leap; but she suddenly renounced the project, withheld by the remembrance of her cubs, which, apparently aware of her intention and their own helplessness, moaned piteously.

tribes, though strictly forbidden by the Koran. All the efforts of the English government have also failed to prevent it in Rajpootan. According to Bishop Heber, not above sixty females of that nation, existed at the period of his visiting the provinces.

At this moment, the band of hunters, posted amongst the reeds, rose from their concealment, and striking their spears and sabres against their shields, prepared to fall upon their victim.

The foremost was a young khan, no less remarkable for the beauty of his person, than for the richness of his dress and trappings. Grasping his carbine with one hand, and beckoning with the other to his followers, to pause, that the glory of the encounter might alone be his, he urged his docile steed to the side of a lofty palm. Then, bending sideways across his saddle, until his projecting right leg and body nearly formed a horizontal line, he rested his left arm against the tree, levelled, and fired.

The result proved that he was no unskilful marksman. The leaden messenger of death missed the mother's head, but struck the cub between her teeth. For an instant, the noble brute seemed unconscious of its effects. Startled, but not terrified, she did but raise her stiffened tail, elevate her head, and glower

fiercely, in the direction of her antagonist, who, casting aside his gun, and unsheathing his scymitar, calmly waited the issue. It was not long coming. Ere many seconds, the tigress not only felt the quivering agonies of her dying young one, but tasted its warm blood trickling through her jaws. Gently dropping it on the ground, she turned it with her nose, sniffed, moaned, licked its wounds, and gazed on it with a look of mortal anguish. Then, as if roused to a sudden consciousness of its fate and her own powers, she uttered a few short but furious roars, and collecting all her strength, bounded with lightning speed to seek revenge.

CHAPTER VI.

“ *Allah esmarledeck !*” (God preserve him !) exclaimed my mistress, forgetting her sympathy for the wild animal, in her natural solicitude for the safety of so handsome a youth. “ See ! the raging brute darts upon its foe, like the twisted fires of the tempest upon the devoted cedar ; but he quails not. He provokes her. *Mashallah !* he is a hero, a Roustham. Allah send him heart and strength !”

As she uttered these hasty words, she threw up her arms towards heaven, so that her wrapper fell off, and left her head and face exposed. There she stood, like a beautiful daughter of heaven, an angel sent down to avert destiny.

I quivered in every limb, expecting to see the young khan’s mangled body writhing in

the dust. But if the tigress was fierce and unerring as Mordád's dart,* the youth was dauntless and powerful as the wing of Reván Bakhsh.† Watching her with a cold and steadfast gaze, he leaped from his saddle, ere yet she made her first spring; then, striking his horse with the flat of his sword, so that it bounded away, he cast himself behind a tree, and as the enraged tigress hurled herself upon the vacant spot, brushing his very garments with her jaws, he turned, and with eagle speed and iron force, severed the tendons of her hinder limb.

Carried forward by the impetus of her own weight, the wounded animal rolled to some distance; and as she rose, with diminished powers, but augmented rage, the clansmen levelled their matchlocks, and would have fired; but the khan, who had perceived Gulabi, first made a salaam to her, by pressing his hand to his bended forehead,

* One of the old Persian names for the angel (giver) of death.

† The giver of souls, Gabriel.

and then calling to his followers to desist, prepared for combat. One, more full of peril, could not be imagined. The tigress, yelling with mingled rage and pain, and trembling for her cubs, first turned her eyes on them, and then glared upon the author of her misfortune. For a moment she appeared irresolute, and half inclined to fly; but her adversary, excited by the fair apparition he had seen upon the rock, quitted the shelter of the tree, and, with a shout of defiance, proudly stood before her.

“He is mad!” ejaculated my mistress; who, being aware, however, of the impropriety of uncovering herself even at that distance, in the presence of strangers, replaced the veil, and withdrew behind the crag. “None but a madman would think of encountering such danger,” continued she. “Y Allah! why do the slaves not fire? What is one man against so huge and fierce a brute? By my father’s soul, he is as beautiful as the cheek of day. If he were in Vezzeristan, there would not be a head-needle left in its place. He would be bristled with them like a porcupine.”

Whilst my mistress, whose thoughts, even at this moment, ran upon matrimony, thus soliloquised, the struggle between the youth and jungle-queen was drawing to a close. The former, swinging his silver-studded shield over his left arm, seized his javelin, and cautiously approached his foe, until her steaming breath almost fanned his beard.

There is a talisman in man's eye, which the fiercest animals dread to encounter. The light from that of the khan was piercing and brilliant as the glory of the angel Gabriel, on whom even the prophet dared not look when arrayed in all his splendour; its shafts shot into the heart of the tigress. She shrunk beneath them; she knew her hour was come, and roared with agony.

It was, in truth, a noble sight to watch the combatants as they faced each other, a shawl's breadth distant. On one side stood the youth; his curved left arm, and back-inclining body, covered with his bossy shield—his upraised right hand poising his glittering spear—one leg firmly planted forwards, the other

bending to the rear—his head erect, his gaze bright and fixed as Ildize (the north star), his lips compressed, and every muscle braced for action.

On the other side was the tigress, her foam-dyed jaws, quivering with fury—her brindled eye flashing fire—her long fangs protruding from beneath her up-wrinkled nostrils—her bristling head and neck thrown back, displaying her deep chest and sinewy fore limbs, whilst panting, gasping, roaring like the blast of a furnace, she recoiled awhile upon her maimed haunches, and then leaped forward.

The avalanche bursting from the Himalaya's flanks was less terrible than she; the rocks beneath less steadfast than the khan. As she sprung, his whizzing javelin cleaved the air, and meeting her half way, lodged ell-deep within her breast. Nimble as a deer, he then darted on one side and grasped his sword. A moment later, and his life had paid the forfeit; as it was, he did not escape unharmed. Her giant paw glanced on his shield, and whirling it from him like a quoit, felled him to the ground.

A cry of "*Wullah! Billah!*" burst from my mistress; whilst a groan, that shook the forests to their centre, followed by shouts of "*Ai Shawash! Aferin and Mashallah!*" from the delighted clansmen announced the monster's death and their lord's triumph. Springing lightly on his legs, the latter plunged his scymitar into the heart of the dying tigress; then, heedless of his own contusions, he hacked off one of her paws, and waved it, bowing in the direction of my mistress.

Gulabi was so elated at this compliment, that, in defiance of all decorum, she stripped a branch from an overhanging tamarisk, and waved it in return. The dart that deprived the fallen beast of life, had also penetrated her heart. The khan's courage and beauty had raised an indescribable tumult in her bosom. She had never seen anything so enchanting. Uniting extreme valour to exceeding comeliness, the two greatest recommendations in the eyes of a damsel, he appeared to her not only as a hero, but as a ravisher of souls; as

brilliant as the moon of Canaan,* crowned with the diadem of Jemshed.

What the youth thought of her will be shewn hereafter. But, at that moment, the rose seemed less intoxicating to the nightingale, or the pearl reposing in its shell less beautiful to the merchant, than this fair mountain flower to his delighted senses. Thus, the effect was mutual.

Alas ! when fate or the king of love descend, caution is vain. Without the one, it is useless for the fisherman to spread his nets in the Indus ; without the other, the lover does but lose time when he tunes his lute beneath the terrace of his beloved.

In the meantime, the clansmen who had destroyed the orphan cubs, fell upon the slaughtered mother with their long knives, and ripping the noble animal's skin from her quivering body, cast her carcase to the dogs, and affixed her huge head to their chieftain's banner.

* One of the appellations given by Orientals to Joseph.

Fearful and exciting was the uproar that ensued, as the fiery circle neared the torrent's bank. Hurrying forward with clash and hurrah, here bursting through the twining creepers, there bounding from crag to crag, men and dogs pressed wildly onwards, jealous of first arriving at the spot, where deer, lions, bears and leopards, hemmed in on every side, huddled together, forgetting their common antipathies in their common peril.

The angel of destruction hovered over them with uplifted sickle. Extermination amidst the hissing waters lay before; death from lead or steel behind. Some essayed the fearful leap, and alighting upon the opposing rocks, clung to the hanging branches. With desperate energy they clutched and scrambled, until the dangling, spray-washed, boughs slid through their claws, and dropped them whirling into the foaming gulf. Others, blinded by rage or terror, rushed headlong in, or turning, bounded with reckless fury upon the closing ring.

At length, not a single living beast remained. Then, amidst deafening shouts of *Bishmillah!*

and *Ai shawash!* mingled with wild echoes from trumpets, drums, and baying hounds, the different groups deposed their trophies at their respective chieftains' feet. Some, resting on their blackened guns, or wiping their blood-smeared falchions, complimented each other in friendly terms. Others, mocking the less fortunate, taunted them with gibes and sneers. Others, again, with oaths and fierce gesticulations, laid claim to prey they had not killed.

“ I am noways surprised at that,” said I, interrupting the narrator, “ for it is a practice common with us more civilized Franks. If your destiny had led you to witness the sports of the field as often as those of the harem, you would have heard as much vaunting and jealous altercation over a maimed pheasant in England, as amidst the jungles of Caubul, over a stricken lion. There are many sportsmen amongst us, who are not only wont to fatigue their hearers with tedious stories of their own skill, their dogs and guns, but who carry their egotism so far as to boast of slaying game they never feathered, and even to appropriate that

which has been killed by others. But," added I, "your account of the chase begins to weary me; I beg you will be as brief as possible."

"*Ay Allah!* have you been brought up in the shade, that you forget the courtesies of the world?" rejoined the paper, giving a violent flutter. "Remember this aphorism of the immortal Saadi, 'Whoever interrupts the conversation of others, to make a display of his own wisdom, certainly betrays ignorance.' However, as you have no taste for such matters, wherein you differ mightily from the generality of English unbelievers, who are said to be great hunters, and to take especial delight in talking of dogs, horses, and beasts, I will attend to your wishes. I must remind you, nevertheless, that to terminate a tale abruptly, is like cutting off a branch of Samarcand pears before the fruit is ripe."

I smiled at this pedantic rebuke, as well as at the sarcasm upon my countrymen, but made no reply; so my Eastern guest thus continued.

The disputed possession of one of the slaughtered animals soon led to a fatal strife between Hossein and one of the khans. Both had fired at the same leopard, which fell, heart-pierced only by one ball. Both claimed the prize, and sprung to seize it. One grasped the fore, the other the hinder part, and pulled in opposite directions, like two caravan dogs tugging for the same bone; both growled, swore, stamped, and regaled each other with hound! rascal! filth-eater! and a torrent of other invectives, which fell like hail.

Wearied, at length, with their fruitless exertions, they dropped the animal, drew their swords, and gazing at each other for a moment with looks of deadly fury, rushed forward, and commenced a fight more fierce than that between the khân and tigress. Feint succeeded feint, and blow followed blow, as they advanced, receded, curved, bounded and twisted round each other, warding off death with their shields, or receiving the deadly strokes upon the fire-sparkling edges of their scimitars; both bled, panted, staggered—but

nothing daunted, continued fighting foot to foot.

At length Hossein's sword arm was disabled, but as his adversary was about to inflict a blow that would probably have cut off his head like a cloven melon, the latter slipped in the gore of the bleeding leopard, lost his balance, and ere he could recover his guard, Gulabi's brother sprung upon him, and drawing his dagger with the left hand sheathed it in his heart.

Shouts of applause burst from Abdoul Ali and his friends on one side, whilst yells and maledictions arose from the other. In an instant a hundred scimitars leaped from their scabbards; a hundred spears and matchlocks were levelled at the victor, who, with one foot resting on the body of his fallen adversary and the other bestriding his mottled prize, defied their rage. In an instant more his father and a valiant band of partizans closed around, shielding him with their bodies.

But this did not avert the contest or calm their opponent's fury. With wild execration

and anathemas both parties raised the *silaa*, (war cry,) and then rushing upon each other fought with the desperation of devils. In vain some of the more prudent khans bravely threw themselves between the combatants; in vain the trumpets blew the note of peace; in vain the old chiefs guided their camels into the thickest of the fray and calling, each to their retainers, urged them, in Allah's name, not to shed brother's blood. They were deaf to the voice of wisdom. The demon of blinded passion animated their hearts. Ere long the ground was strewed with cloven turbans, broken spears and battered shields. A holocaust of human blood was offered up to the manes of the first victim. How long the mortal strife might have lasted, or what might have been the result, who can tell? But the angel who guides the tempests looked down and calling, to his side, the genii that ride upon the blasts of heaven, bade them interpose.

The day, which had hitherto been beautifully serene, became suddenly clouded. The amber breathing breeze, whose refreshing balm had

invigorated the sportsmen, lulled away, leaving a sepulchral calmness in the air. The tremulous aspen, whose leaves the light fanmings of the fitting butterfly had sufficed to agitate, stood still and motionless. The sun's face was shrouded by a red and murky veil. Dim and sombre clouds gradually crept forward from the fiery west, casting a yellow, sickly shade around.

An odour, as from a tomb, rose with the thick and labouring mist; the air became inflamed and choaking as the burning pile at *Cútha*, whereon the tyrant Nimrod cast the prophet Abraham. A low and hollow murmuring, as of distant thunder, rolled and grumbled through the surrounding mountains. Nature seemed yawning on the eve of some dire convulsion.

But the combatants heeded it not; they removed not the cotton from their ears, though the wrath of Allah floated over them. Reckless and desperate, as Eblis and the angels who refused to adore Adam, their hearts were only bent on blood and vengeance.

At length the chief khân rose in his stirrups and pointing to the lowering skies, cried out aloud, "O brothers, are you mad? Are you infidels and unclean brutes? Do you not dread the hand of God? Look up, see! Death rides upon the tainted mist. Does its warning odour not strike your nostrils? Have you cast away the key of your senses? Desist, turn, fly! It is the hell born son of pestilence—the simoom!"

Thereupon some looked up and seeing the fell enemy of life hovering in the lurid air, wiped their sweltering brows, sheathed their reeking swords and fled. Others wearied and wounded, staggered aside and hid their heads beneath their shields. Some picked up their gasping clansmen and hastened to seek shelter in the jungles' depths, or turning their steeds homewards, sought refuge in their cool *tek-haunehs*, (cellars).

Ere long the space which had been filled with noise and tumult was deserted—deserted by all but a small knot of desperate men, on whom destiny had set her seal. Had Israfil

sounded the last trumpet,* had the heavens been rent asunder or poured down molten ointment, they would have braved its terrors. Tooth to tooth, hand to hand, like raging lions they fought on, defying man, defying heaven.

Of a sudden a slight fluttering on the topmost branches announced the approaching scourge. Then there was a drowsy stillness, unbroken save by the torrent's roar and falchion's clash. Then, as if lashed by the hands of twenty thousand gholes, the booming wind chaced on, bending the trees with their scorching wings, withering the face of nature, and blighting all living things. Smiting the gasping bravoos it felled them, as if struck by the sudden crush of fallen mountains.

Down they sunk bloated, breathless, and then resigned their souls.

For a while a gloomy, fetid darkness reigned around; then arose a fearful noise like that of rushing waters! then, as the cloudy furnace

* It will be the province of Israfil to call every one to judgment upon the last day with his trumpet.

slowly rolled away, in its dread progress eastward, light reappeared, and all was silent.

Panting between anxiety for her father and brother, and solicitude for the young khân, who had been one of the last to renounce the fight, Gulabi remained for some time upon the crag, regardless of the peril. At length, moved by the instinct of self-preservation, she drew her hood close around her face and flying with me to the tent had scarcely reached its shelter and rubbed her lips with garlic, as a preservative, ere the burning blast swept across the camp, filling our very lungs with fire.

CHAPTER VII.

THE Almighty is great and merciful. He holds the balance of justice over all lands. He dispenses his gifts to the sons of man in equal portions of good and evil. He smites and spares. He raises and prostrates. Upon the trail of the scorching simoom he sends the quickening dew. He replaces the blighted offspring of the garden queen with new blossoms, and renovates the withered herbage with nascent verdure. The wide spreading banyan bows down before his majesty. The stately talipot shoots up to worship him. It is He that has filled the regions of grievous punishment with quenchless flames, and carpetted the *Gardens of blissful reward with eternal fountains.* Woe unto him that shall deny his power.

“ Had you been a holy dervish you could not have spoken more devoutly,” exclaimed I, as the little speaker, resuming its narrative, broke into the foregoing exordium. Though little disposed to listen to a homily I took care not to interrupt it further, lest I should draw upon myself a second and similar rebuke ; so it proceeded thus :

As the lengthening shadows announced the approaching hour of vesper prayer, soft and balmy zephyrs came rippling from the mountains’ tops, their freshness heightened by their passage o’er the Himalaya’s snows. The flowers, that had escaped the simoom’s taint, again shot forth their fragrance ; the rustling leaves quivered once more, rejoicing in the cooling breeze ; the purple butterfly fluttered its rainbow glories in the declining sunbeams, and the industrious honey-bird sipped nectar from the sweet *shebbu*, whose rising perfumes bespoke the close of day.* Dew carousing

* *Shebbu* is a plant which only puts forth its odours during the night.

fireflies spangled in the dingle's shade; nightingales returning to their haunts, poured forth their tender strains in homage to the rose, and bleating flocks, frisking from bank to bank, filled those glens with peaceful echoes, which anon had rung with howls and groans.

Gulabi and the rest of the family issued from the tents, eagerly awaiting the return of Abdoul and his son. Some stood and watched the tracks leading from the plain towards the camp; others descended to the torrent's bed to slake their thirst, whilst my mistress and I clambered the rocks, and trembling gazed upon the field of strife. It was a sight fitted to draw forth the soul's dews from eyes more stern than those of the frail maiden who no sooner reached the craggy point than exclaiming, "Wallah! wallah!" she added, "come not up here, if you would not sicken for very horror. The hand of the destroyer has revelled unrestrained. Body and carcase, slayer and slain, lay prostrate in one ghastly heap."

"Wullah! billah!" was re-echoed by the other females; whilst Abdoul's wife replied,

“ *Ay dilam!* my heart, what do you see? does your father or brother sleep with the sleepers? Relieve my agony, speak!”

“ Praise be to Allah! no,” answered the maiden. “ We are spared that sorrow. I see my father’s cloven cap, but, thanks to the most high, he is not numbered. My brother’s horse lies likewise there, with upturned hoofs; the vultures feasting on its eyes. But Allah is merciful! Hossein is spared, and so mother is the valiant khân, who single handed slew the tigress. *Wahi! wahi!*” continued she, “ there will be wailings and weepings, in tents and *anderuns* this night. Maidens and widows will sorely rue this fiendish sport. It is a soul-subduing spectacle.”

And so it was. Banner and buckler, scimitar and shield, turban and tunic—torn, battered, rent and soiled bestrewed the blood-stained ground. Hunter and hunted, man and beast reposed together, their oozing wounds yawning at the sun, their stiffened limbs ploughing the earth. Those who had fallen in the fight lay gashed and choked in

gore. Some on their backs, glaring in mock defiance; some on their faces clutching the sand, as they had grasped and struggled in their dying agony. Those whom fate had smitten with the scorching pestilence pressed on each other, black and distorted with open bleeding jaws, as if their swollen tongues still thirsted for the cooling draught. Scenting the rich repast from their far distant eyeries, eagles and vultures came swooping down, and pouncing with outspread wings upon the prostrate prey, ripped out their tongues and eyes, making death hideous.

Awed by the searing blast the quick had left the dead to find a sepulchre in the wild bird's maw. One faithful friend alone still clung to his departed master; this was a huge, dark-brindled hound, which merited a place in paradise beside the anointed guardian of the sleepers; despite of shot and thrust the generous beast had fought with him, whose eyes had kindly beamed on it, since it was a sightless whelp, until those friendly eyes themselves were glazed. Instinctively the grateful

animal then seized his master's girdle, dragged him from the trampling throng and lodged him in a shaded spot, where water gurgled from a moss clad fissure. Then, as the fierce simoom came sweeping by, he crept upon the corpse, shielding it with fond devotion. There he still lay and watched; now moaning o'er the blackened wounds, now grimly bounding forwards, when the carrion brutes menaced his sacred charge.

“And yet,” said I, “notwithstanding that you Moslems accord a place in paradise to the dog Katmfr, as well as to Ezra's ass,* and wear his name engraved upon your rings as a talisman, and in despite also of the many instances of sagacity, courage and fidelity recorded of these faithful creatures, you couple every thing that is vile and abominable with the word dog, as if there were not fifty other

* Ezra, or Ozair, chancing to ride by the ruins of Jerusalem mentally questioned the possibility of the resurrection. Whereupon he fell dead, but at the end of a hundred years was raised to life together with his ass, which forthwith began to bray.—*D'Herbelot*.

brutes more appropriate for your purpose. This is the more paradoxical," added I, "since the Eastern sages have agreed, that a grateful dog is far more worthy than an ungrateful man. The Parsees also, whom you affect to despise, nourish, protect, and even hold dogs sacred."

"*Yavash*, gently!" retorted the paper. "It is not for you christians to throw dirt upon our beards for that. Do not the German, Spanish, Portuguese, and other infidels constantly make use of similar revilings? Do not they eternally bespatter each other with 'dog,' served up after forty filthy fashions? Are not the silly brained *kashengi*, (dandies) in England called puppies? and did not one of your madcap horse-trainers defile the swiftest racer of his stud with the foul name of, 'son of a she dog?'"*

"True, true!" rejoined I laughing, "there was a horse so called; but a racing stable is not a school for elocution, nor a jockey a mo-

* We suppose this alludes to the celebrated Filho da Puta.—N. of E.

del of vernacular purity. Whereas, from the Shah down to the lowest mule driver, these gross epithets are in the mouth of every moslem. Dog is almost as necessary to your tongues, as tobacco to your nostrils."

"It is better to employ 'dog' as a vehicle for abuse, than to join the holy name of God with blasphemies as you Ingliz do," was the answer. "Besides, is it meet for you to boast of your decent language and mercy to dogs, when your princes, lords, and soldiers swear from day-break to night-fall, and your beastly *kabobchis*, (cookshop men,) flay dogs alive and not only mince up their unclean flesh for linked meat, sausages, but cram it into swine's offal? what brutal (*nejjis*;) abominations are those!"

"Well! well!" said I, "let us not dispute. Proceed rather, and tell me what became of Abdoul and our friend Hossein."

"Be patient, O Aga!" retorted the miraculous instance of transmigration. "Remember that Lockman made choice of patience in retirement; whoever possesseth it not is no phi-

osopher; and without philosophy infinite easiness must be the portion of the class of penmen, to which you belong; albeit your works were spangled with rubies, like the gem distilling rhymes of Hafiz, or fragrant with moral perfumes, like the rose garden of Saadi."

"Alas!" rejoined I with a sigh, "success is not always to the diligent, or reward to the laborious. The fox's cunning often avails more than the lion's strength; there is fully as much art in catering for the intellectual taste of a capricious public, as in providing for its physical appetites. Fortunate are those whom providence, or hazard, endows with this faculty. But what of Hossein?"

After giving two or three hems, my garrulous companion thus continued, At the moment my mistress and I were anxiously watching the faithful dog as he sprung to defend his master's body from the talons of an eagle, a scream of joy burst from the other women. Upon turning our eyes towards the valley we saw Hossein riding homewards, supported by his father. *Destiny was propitious; their*

names were not inscribed upon the preserved tables.*"

On discovering them, Gulabi jumped from the rock, bounded across the shelving sward, threw herself into her parent's arms and embraced her brother's knee.

Though bruised and overwhelmed with fatigue, Abdoul had escaped with the loss of a tooth and a few trifling scratches. Hossein less fortunate had received a dangerous gash in his right arm, besides many severe wounds on his head and shoulders; but though faint and exhausted, his eye still sparkled with triumphant pride, as he pointed to the dripping leopard's head, suspended to the mane of Abdoul's horse.

On reaching the tents, the wounded youth

* According to the Mahomedan doctrine of predestination, all things are irrevocably recorded in the *preserved table*, in which are registered all events, past, present, and to come. These decrees not only embrace the life and death, but the minutest actions of men. A copy of these decrees are said to be preserved in the lowest heaven.

was lifted from the saddle, and placed upon a couch of fresh culled moss and maize leaves, covered with carpets of Candahar felt. Whilst some of the women washed his wounds with camel's milk and anointed them with oil extracted from sheeps' dung, others prepared pulpy fomentations of roots and herbs.

After receiving the embraces of his family, Abdoul entered the inner apartment, whence he shortly returned with a small casket, enveloped in red leather, on which was embroidered the following words, from the last chapter of the Koran, "*I fly for refuge to the Lord of the day-break, that he may deliver me from the mischief of the things which he has created.*"

Having unfolded the cover and opened the casket, Abdoul dipped his hands into a jar of water, made his ablution, said his prayer, and then drew forth a diminutive horn box, containing a small portion of the precious *Mum i Ayi*, (gum of *Ayi*,) which he had contrived to secrete, when he was one of the guardians of the cavern.

“What is that,” demanded I?

I rejoice, replied the paper, that you follow the precept of the sage, who, on being asked how he acquired knowledge, responded, ‘Whatever I did not know, I was not ashamed to inquire about!’ The *Mum i Ayi* is the celebrated gum from the bituminous cavern of *Ayi*, in the province of Darabgerd. It is a medicine more valuable than gold; an antidote more potent than all the remedies of Galen; a specific against wounds, bruises, fevers and half the thousand and one diseases wherewith Allah afflicts the dwellers upon earth.

This beneficent production of nature, which only oozes sparingly from the rocky crevices, where it is enclosed by doors of iron and guarded by armed men, is reserved for the king of kings. When the sun is about to enter the sign of Aries, the gates are unlocked, and the gum being collected in golden galkipots sealed with the signet of the Prince Governor is sent to Teherân. Upon the joyful festival of New Year it is offered amongst other gifts, to the light of the Universe, who

receives it, seated in all the resplendent glory of the *takt-i-taous*, (throne of the peacock.) Then it is carried to, and deposited in the royal treasury and doled out to the chief physician, or given as exceeding favours, but in minute quantities, to princes and great men, who come to kiss the dust and bring tribute to the shadow of the Almighty.*

“What were the effects of this wonderful catholicon upon Hossein?” said I, “Did it sustain its reputation of infallibility?”

Allah is great! answered the paper. What is all the *Mum* in the Shah’s treasury when fate is enrolled against one? That which is predestined cannot be averted.

Were this otherwise, Hossein would have risen completely healed; for Abdoul, who in his youth, had been a mixer of drugs to an apothecary at Shiraz, and was consequently more expert at the healing art than the most learned doctor in all Caubul, unsheathed his dagger, warmed the point in the fire, spread

* A small quantity of this gum was presented to Queen Charlotte by the Persian Ambassador in 1809.

some of the precious unguent on linen strips and laid them upon the wounds. Then melting a piece of bezoar stone, about the size of an orange pip, he infused it in a basin of sheep's milk and administered it inwardly. After this, he bade the women knead half a maun of pulse flour into dough, with which he thickly encrusted all the affected parts

This was not the only proof of Abdoul's skill. Selecting a yearling lamb from the fold, he bound its legs, laid it upon a stone and ejaculating the word *Bismillah!* as enjoined to all believers when they kill animals, in order that the food may be lawful, he slaughtered it. Then peeling off the skin, he carefully cleansed it of all its impurities, again made his ablutions and prayer, and gave the flesh to be cooked. Thereupon he returned to the patient, bound up his wounds with the still smoking fleece, and turning the foot of his couch towards the Kebhla, left him to repose.

Galen, or Pocrat, (Hippocrates,) who held the key of science between their fingers and thumbs could not have done more, nor could

the Musteshed, chief priest, have more strictly adhered to the injunctions of the Revealed Work. But Allah is almighty. Notwithstanding these excellent precautions, poor Hossein fell into a terrible fever. For all the good the mum, dough and lamb's skin did him, he might as well have been rubbed with sheep's fat, and plaistered with brick clay. His entrails burned as if the Sahra's sands had lodged therein; his skin was so scorching hot, that it baked the paste and singed the curling fleece.

Then the fire mounted upwards and disturbed his reason, so that his head became like a boiling cauldron. Strange and fearful fancies beset his distempered brain. At one moment he thought he was pursued by legions of Vezerees, at the next he fancied himself torn to pieces by tigers; then, he fell to raving and groaning, saying that the ponderous spirit of the departed Zilemee squatted on his chest, pouring boiling broth into his mouth, and battering at his temples with a red hot iron ladle. *Ack!* he already suffered half the

torments of Jehanum. At length he became so furious, that it was as much as his father and brothers could do to prevent his rising and slaying all around.

“By my beard!” exclaimed Abdoul, after binding the unfortunate patient’s arms and legs with camel tethers, “this abomination comes not by a visible agency; if the gum of Ayi and Bezoar prove ineffectual, Allah can alone save him.”

“*Allah! il Allah!*” ejaculated Gulabi. “What can we do? he is possessed.”

“Well said, sister!” observed one of the brothers, who like the great majority of the natives of Caubul, believed in sorcery. “It is my opinion that the misbegotten rascals have induced some dealer in devilries to lay a spell upon him. Although they be many and we few, they dare not boldly demand the price of blood; they are cowards and seek vengeance in witchcraft.”

“*Tchók der*, there’s much, perhaps, in what you say,” answered Abdoul. “But may I depart an infidel out of this world if I do not

spit on their beards, although they be as numerous as the stars in the milky way. Please Allah! I will be a match for them; I will seek Hadgi Abdallah, al-Masomeh, the immaculate, the holy calender who dwells in a cavern at the foot of the eastern hills. He has cast aside all the filth of the world and abandoned himself to heavenly meditations; he is not only a devotee,* but is acquainted with magic and alchymy. They say that he rules the genii of the earth and air, that he can make gold leaf from onion peel and convert nail parings into ingots of silver. Pearls drop from his mouth, and his eyes shed amber. He is a fountain of wisdom, a lord of the learned, a *seyed*, (descendant of the prophet); he goes nearly unclothed winter and summer; he would not even swallow his own spittle during the *Ramadan*, for fear of breaking his fast, and he

* These kind of devotees are called *Tepassa*, or men who have utterly renounced the world and pass their days in acts of devotion and self-mortification.

macerates his flesh by all manner of austerities.*”

“Wonderful! wonderful!” exclaimed Abdoul’s wife, Amima. “If any mortal can help our Hossein, it is Hadji Abdallah. Go, in God’s name, lose no time.”

“Gently, my soul!” replied Abdoul, seating himself upon his carpet and lighting his pipe. “There are times for all things. Propitious days and days of continued ill luck.

* The month of the *Ramadân* is the Mahomedan Lent. It lasts from the new moon, of that month, until the first appearance of the next. The fast is so rigid that it is neither lawful to eat, drink, smoke, or even smell perfumes, from sunrise to sunset. After sunset to sunrise it is permitted to eat and drink and therefore almost all the wealthy sleep all day and carouse at night. The twelve Mahomedan months are lunar and consequently follow the moon’s phases. Thus when the month of *Ramadân* chances to fall in midsummer, which will be the case once in thirty-three years, the sufferings of the poorer classes, for want of water, is severely felt during the long and hot days. The month of *Ramadân* was fixed upon by Mahomed for his fast because, it is said to have been that during which the Koran was communicated.

Do you forget that to-morrow is Wednesday, the most inauspicious of the seven? Whosoever undertakes any thing on that day does but tempt fate; he is as sure to fail, as a man is of being discovered if he commits evil upon a Friday. I will wait until Thursday."

"In the mean time my brother may die," ejaculated Gulabi; "he has already lost his head."

"*Bakabim!* we shall see!" rejoined her father with the becoming resignation of a true believer. "If it be written, so be it. Who can oppose the decrees of Heaven? Is not every man's fate bound about his neck? But hark! what sounds are those that rise from the woods? Gulabi, my heart, look!"

"It is, perhaps, the clansmen coming to demand the price of blood," exclaimed Hossein's mother.

"Then I will pay them with the same coin they received this morning," retorted Abdoul. "Do the curs take me for one of their own breed, that they expect to catch me sleeping with my tail curled round my ears? Wullah! they shall feel the lion's claws before they lay

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hands on his skin." And so saying he threw down his pipe, sprung to his arms, and bade his servants, and even the women prepare for defence.

CHAPTER VII.

THE warlike precautions of the shepherd's family were fortunately uncalled for. Ere Abdoul had loaded his match-lock and grasped his shield, Gulabi and one of her younger brothers returned saying, "Thanks to Allah! we have no cause for alarm; they are the relatives and friends of the fallen, who are coming to bear off the corpses for sepulture. Their torches flare in the darkness; their cries startle the half gorged jackals. Hearken to their wailings! come! you may see them."

"Allah forbid!" answered Abdoul resuming his seat. "I would not move half a ghez to see the Sultan of Caubul entombed. I care not the crevice of a date stone whether they bury the dead, or leave them to fatten the jackals. Though, in truth, the mishapen

thieves do well to bear them away, since they might serve to lure back the wild beasts to their former haunts, and from the issue of this day's chase it will be long before the tribes will meet again to scour the woods. Their next gathering will be to settle the question of blood money, and this cannot pass without further slaughter. The Afghâns are a revengeful race; they are brutes, wolves; they bear malice, as the accursed tree of Satan bears bitter fruit.*"

Thereupon he twisted his legs under him and fell to work upon his supper, the principal dishes of which were broth and pillau, made from the slaughtered lamb.

In the meantime my fair mistress, impelled by the curiosity common to her sex, and perhaps also by some desire to see if the young

* The accursed tree, Al zakkûm, grows at the bottom of hell and bears bitter fruit, resembling the heads of devils. The infidels disputed its existence, not being able to comprehend how trees could thrive in a place where the very stones, and even men, served as fuel to burn the damned.

khân was amongst the crowd of mourners, crept from beneath the hanging of the inner tent, and favoured by the darkness, ascended the crag, where she was stationed during the forenoon.

The sight might have furnished a subject for one of those painters whose trade it is to supply night scenery to the theatres in Frangistan. From divers paths, darkened by overhanging canopies of foliage and huge stems of towering cedars, black files of villagers streamed forth with slow and noiseless step. Some were carrying hand biers; others bearing torches of twisted palm fibres, steeped in mountain pitch, whose ruddy flame lit up their gloomy visages and shew their garments rent, in token of distress; other bands chaunting in solemn harmony a Pushtoo dirge, traversed the sloping plain, on which the queen of night and her ten thousand starry odalisks poured down their silvery rays, with daylight clearness.

The mountain tracks, which at early dawn had glittered with the points of burnished

arms and rung with joyous shouts, now caught the falling torch-sparks, and echoed back the doleful wail of those who sought their slaughtered brethren. Unearthly seemed their mournings, as winding through the downward clefts their voices sunk in deep and stifled murmurs, or burst upon the ear in wild and fearful cadence, as again they climbed the upper paths.

As the various groups approached the field of death, they paused and rearing high their flaming brands gazed on each other, uncertain whether the morning strife might not again commence. Few, it is true, of those who shared the battle had again returned, but their places were filled by tribes-folks burning with the same unholy rage. Mingled with these were several mollahs, and even women; the former distinguished by their flowing robes and large turbans; the latter closely muffled in their long wrappers; the one reciting prayers, or passages from the Korán, the other reading the air with piercing shrieks.

For awhile no one seemed disposed to touch

the pile of dead, until an aged priest stepped forward and raising his shrivelled hands towards the glittering firmament, thus addressed the lowering crowd: "In the name of Him who is the first and last, the manifest, the hidden. In the name of the most merciful, who knoweth all things and seeth all things."

At this appeal the murmurs ceased; the notes of woe were hushed, and all were still as Azrael's empire.

"*Ullah Moobarek !*" continued the holy man, "are we not all brethren, and of one creed? Is it not written, that true believers shall not lay hands one upon another under grievous penalties; or slay the soul which God hath forbidden them to slay, unless for a righteous cause? Are you infidels, that you turn your bosoms aside from that which ought to be? If any one be slain unjustly, his heir has power to demand satisfaction. But weigh with a just balance."

"*Inshallah!* we will have the price of blood!" exclaimed several of the clan of him

who was killed by Hossein. "By our souls we will."

"Be you of stone or iron, that you shut your hearts against the word?" retorted the mollah. "What kind of men are you, that you would fain add blood to blood? Do you not know that a bitter fate awaits those who exceed the bounds of moderation, either by putting to death murderers in a cruel manner, or by avenging a friend's blood on any other than he who slew him? This is the law—the revealed law. It was your own tribesman who struck the first blow. Had not destiny ordained otherwise, his adversary, and not he, would now have grovelled amongst that slaughtered heap. Let not Satan sow further discord amongst you; in the name of him who rewards and chastises, let your faces be cleared towards each other; tie not up the hand of forbearance, lest the vengeance of God be turned upon you; have you forgotten the signs sent amongst you this forenoon? Look at those bloated corpses overtaken in the rank heat of passion; take heed of the day of judg-

ment! of the day of rejoicing to the companions of the right, the day of mourning to those of the left hand.* Give full measure therefore when you ought, and do not prove yourselves akin to devils; if you take vengeance, let it be proportionate to the wrong you have suffered; but if you endure injury patiently, verily this will be the better for your souls hereafter."

"Hossein, the shepherd, and his friends slew our brethren," again exclaimed several voices. "On their heads be it. By the prophet's soul we will have revenge."

"Well spoken!" replied the mollah, "that is law. But take not justice into your own hands; lest, on the day when hell shall be pulled towards God's tribunal by seventy thousand halters, each hauled by seventy thousand angels, ye shall be found amongst the sojourners of the doomed abode; who will be seen dragging their chains and toiling

* The just, it is said, will stand on the right, the wicked on the left hand of God's throne, upon the last day, and there receive their doom.

through the scalding sludge, as wearied camels labour through the desert's sand. Be not perverse, but listen to the voice of reason. Drink from the fountain of truth, as thirsty pilgrims drink from that of *Al Zemzen*.* First bury the dead—then cast up your account of death; on whichever side the scale shall turn let there be justice. You are valiant men—heroes. This morning you were of one spirit, one breath. Eblis, on whom be eternal curses, entered between the serpent's teeth to tempt Eve, a new Satan entered the skin of the leopard to tempt your brother. Anathemas on him who would renew the strife; if any of you have a grievance, let him appear to-morrow in the *Maidán*, (public square,) at the hour of morning prayer. I swear by the heaven, and him who built it, that I and the other servants of the prophet, on whom be everlasting peace, will lend you our ears and tongues. You shall have justice to a hair."

* The sacred well in the temple at Mecca, which was opened, by the angel, for Agar.—*Ali Bey's Travels*, vol. 2, page 82.

“*Allah, akbar!*” exclaimed several other mollahs, “his words are as the waters of Çafûr;* they are as the healing sources of the valley of eternal pleasures. Hearken to him. *Y Allah!* be appeased!”

“Verily!” continued the old priest, “we are assembled here to perform a grievous duty; let us not add fuel to flame, nor mix burning ashes in the scalding cup. God can perform miracles; he can return ten fold, for that which he has taken; but he will not aid you unless you obey his mandates. I adjure you then as true believers. Yea; I swear to you by the day of resurrection, by the repentant soul which accuseth itself at the last hour, that as you behave peaceably and gather these bodies together for sepulture without further battle, so will God gather together your bones. Yea! I say that he will be unto you, as you be one to another; he will either scatter your dust and send it down into the

* The fountain of *Çafûr*, in Paradise. So named from its being supposed to flow with cool and delicious wine, perfumed with camphor.

lowest hell, as manure for the roots of *Al Zakkûm*, or put together the smallest bones of your fingers and clothe them with the immaculate flesh of paradise."

As he paused to draw breath, a few of the most implacable Afghans placed their hands upon their swords and looked scowling at a group of shepherds, amongst whom were some who had first rallied round Hossein; but their head men stepped forward, and one of them, a venerable khân, drew close to the dead, and then turning round to his followers exclaimed,

"The Mollah Bashi, whose wisdom is not to be excelled, has spoken truths. Are we dogs that we growl when the voice of warning sounds at our gates? We are not blind; we have ears also. *Mashallah!* Let each in their turn perform the appointed task; let us not subject our souls to further abomination. The heirs of those that are slain shall have satisfaction, each in proportion to his loss. I am a khân, a hadji; I am somebody; my word is not like the wild flowers' down, which the

wind scatters. I swear by the holy Caaba—it shall be as he has said.”

“Bravo! bravo!” exclaimed his followers. “Our khân is a true man; his word is a rock.”

“Our sons and brethren,” continued the chief, “have died like heroes, valiantly fighting. What could either side do more? Their souls are in paradise, seated by rivers of eternal water and perpetual food. Who can say what has befallen the others? the blow came from the self-directed hand of the all powerful. Take heed lest you bring on a second punishment. Let not the many suffer for the few.”

At this instant, broad and bulging clouds rolled in outswelling majesty across the moon and screened the twinkling stars. All was impenetrable darkness, save where the livid torch-light flared upon the ghastly, prostrate forms and grim by-standers. Suddenly a flash of twisted fire furrowed the vaulted canopy of heaven, followed by a peal of hollow thunder, whose bellowing murmurs shook the hills.

It came as an echo to the chieftain’s words—

a warning to his auditors ; and it did not pass unheeded. Some fell prostrate, others prayed aloud and others shrieked, thinking the Monsoon had come before its time.

Seeing this the Mollah Bashi exclaimed, " In the name of Allah, listen ! It is the voice of Him who rules the tempests and rends the heavens asunder with a breath. As you hope for paradise, lose no time ; tempt not the angel of retribution, the soul hunter ; his wing may lay you prostrate with the rest. We are on the verge of an unpropitious day ; hasten ! " Scarcely had he pronounced these words ere a second flash, brighter and broader than the first, shot through the blackened clouds and lighted up the rock on which Gulabi stood, shewing, for an instant, her unveiled beauties. Then all was dark as death.

" *Allah Kerim !* a miracle, a miracle ! " ejaculated many who saw and took the maiden for a vision ; whilst the priest, pointing to the spot, called out. " God is great and we are as dust. Your eyes have not told lies ; the

angel of the Lord has revealed himself. By the prophet's tomb and birth place—by Mecca and Medina, waste no more time lest he lash up the storm and smite you as he smote the Thamudites. I have spoken. It is an oath by the Koran !”

Thereupon he commenced reciting the *fateha* in a loud voice, whilst the other Mollahs and many besides kneeled down and prayed.

• The hand of the prophet was visible in this, for the different tribesmen now peaceably advanced with bare heads. Each sought his friend and kinsman, and placing them, some on biers, and some on litters, hacked from the surrounding branches, slowly withdrew towards their homes. Ere long the last glimmering torch-rays merged amongst the furthest foliage; the last shrill echo of their mournful chaunt was lost amidst the distant glens, and solitude once more resumed her empire. The rushing waters of the mountain stream alone held on their braying concert, mingling their roar with those of cubless beasts, who stood aloof howling for grief and hunger.

CHAPTER IX.

AFTER raging all night like an entrapped lion, Hossein, at length, dropped into a kind of lethargy, which was only interrupted by opening his mouth now and then to complain that fiery worms, as long as serpents, were gnawing at his brains, and that his entrails would be calcined, if they did not give him a slice of *kara koubak*, melon,* or a cup of cold water to cool the hot broth which Zilmee's spirit had poured down his throat.

This amendment was attributed by Abdoul

* Of the different kind of melons for which Persia, Afghanistan and Bokhara are famous, the most celebrated are the *Kokitcha*, green and yellow, the *Ack-nabath*, white candy, and the *Kara-koubak*, black rinded; some of these grow to the size of four feet span.—*Burne's Travels in Bokhara*.

to the virtues of the gum and bezoar, so he administered a second dose of the latter, and loosened the camel's tethers. Then in order to afford further relief, and help nature to get rid of the burning juices, by transpiration, he ordered the tent to be closed, so as to exclude all air, loaded the patient's couch with an additional number of skins, and drenched him with a portion of milk nearly scalding hot. Thus wisely intending to drive out one fire, by the aid of another.

But who can expect any good on a Wednesday? Ere long, poor Hossein began to writhe, roll his eyes, gnash his teeth, kick and blaspheme after a terrible manner, and as his strength seemed to increase with the decrease of reason, nothing but again tying him down and swaddling up his body, like a mummy, prevented him dashing himself to pieces.

Most potent nastiness did he swallow. All the unsainted madmen in the world could not have uttered more abominations. But every thing was done for him that art could devise, and as his body chose to be perverse, Abdoul

consoled himself with the reflection, that witchcraft alone could have counteracted the infallible antidotes he had employed; he therefore crossed his arms, stroked down his beard, and ejaculating, "*Lahnet be Shaitan!* curses on Satan, curses on their fathers, mothers, and all their kindred! may their wives be three times divorced, and their daughters never be married!" he quitted the sick couch, determining to lose no time in seeking the pious hermit, on whose powers he firmly trusted for a counter charm.

The dim, ruby light that precedes the dawn scarcely enabled one to distinguish a black from a white thread, ere the shepherd rose, said his prayer, and made ready for his visit to the glen, called the valley of waters, where the Hadji resided. His first care was to arm himself from head to foot, and his next to prepare a *paish kesh*, (propitiatory present); for however great his opinion of the anchorite's virtue and self-abnegation, he remembered that the surest mode of unloosening the hearts of Mollahs, Imâms, Sheiks, Cazys and all other

religious men, was by not tying up his own hand; it being a well known maxim with priests and lawyers, all over the world, that a grain of gold is better than a camel load of justice.

With this view he summoned Koshrou, his most trustworthy servant, gave him a camel hair bag into which he thrust a small, coloured, praying carpet, a soft cap, made of *kirpeck*, (young lamb skins), from the borders of the Ochus, a bladder of fresh butter, an equal quantity of curds and some of those delicious Turkistan raisins, which are called *Ab-djoch*, from their being steeped in hot water. He then selected a young sheep, whose tail already promised an abundant portion of delicate fat, and tying its legs, slung it over Koshrou's shoulders. To make his intended offering more complete he added some fine Sheeraz tobacco, a large calabash filled with fresh milk and a few reals in a silken purse.

He was on the point of putting up a skin of wine, but although many of the mollahs, with all their outward appearance of sanctity and

severity, are as great wine bibbers as the veriest drunkards in Frangistan, he dared not risk the offer with a man of such extraordinary austerity as Abdallah, the immaculate.

My mistress, who had aided her father the while, now entreated him to allow her to be of the party, saying, that as the saint performed all kinds of miracles and lifted up the skirts of futurity, he could probably tell when she would get a husband, and how many children she should have.

This request was granted, not from any desire on Abdoul's part to satisfy her curiosity, but because he thought it prudent that the beautiful maiden, on whom he relied for increasing his future fortunes, should not be thrown in the way of the rascally Afghans, in the event of their coming to demand the price of blood. Fearing also that they might take advantage of his absence and lay hands on his flocks, he had his younger sons and the remaining servants drive them, with the horses and camels, to a distant part of the mountains, and not return until the following morning.

These matters being settled, Gulabi threw her wrapper over her shoulders and followed her parent, who, as he started on his excursion, took care not to omit his *Tawakel be Khoda*, (profession of confidence in the Almighty), by repeating: "*Let us place our trust in God and the Prophet, and proceed.*"

In the meantime I skipped before them, bounding from rock to rock, in all the exuberance of youth.

After walking nearly two farsangs we came to a rugged path, which led through a narrow gorge down to the edge of the lake, where, upon a little verdant island, in its centre, the recluse had chosen his abode. Nor could he have selected a spot more secure from interruption, or more perfectly adapted for a life of tranquillity and heavenly contemplation. Girded on every side by abrupt basaltic clefts, or wood fringed heights, which rose in majestic amphitheatres until they disappeared in distant vapour, the deep blue waters of the lovely lake reflected the various beauties of the surrounding scenery as in a crystal mirror.

“*Mashallah!* it is a paradise!” exclaimed my mistress with the enthusiasm natural to all the pastoral tribes. “It is wonderful! look, father, at the white castles of those Khâns surrounded with vine-clad huts and black tents? See how they dance *zér ou zébir*, (upside down), upon the glassy stream! Look at those broken crags o’er whose disjointed flanks the bald-necked vultures hold their watch! See how the goats and sheep frisk, as it were upon the rippling wave, nibbling the buds and flowers, which fling their enamelled hues from branch and crag. Look at the islet, where you say the dervish dwells, does it not float upon the liquid surface, like the green turban of a hadji? See how the cloud-tinged lake spreads its wide flanks to kiss the sweeping boughs, and then contracts until its narrowing bed is overarched with flowers and foliage, midst which an hundred golden tinted birds swing to and fro! *Allah kerim der!* See, there bathes a tigress and her cubs, whilst further on a herd of deer toss up their antlers through the reeds. Look at the grace-

ful herons, watching their finny prey, and there a fleet of snow white birds teaching their callow young to breast the tide. Hark to the bulbul's song, and scent the rich perfumes that rise upon the balmy air. Was ever garden more heart expanding, more delicious than this? If that of Eden be like it, thrice happy are the virgins of Paradise! But there is no boat; how are we to gain access to the island?"

Abdoul made no reply, but approaching the water's edge, planted his lance in the ground, drew a pistol from his girdle, and fired it in the air. As the report rattled from crag to crag, breaking the tranquil silence of this lovely spot, an hundred startling sounds were heard. Scared by the unwonted echoes, falcons, and eagles, soared aloft with angry screams; egrets and cranes spreading their drowsy wings, towered flapping upwards. Long trains of milk white swans, and crested ducks sprung in whirring circles high above: bitterns and divers plunged beneath the wave, or skimming flew to neattle in the sedge! whilst deer and tigers rising from their baths, leaped dripping to the shore.

Scarcely had the echoes died away, ere the figure of a man appeared upon the islet's banks ; upon this, Abdoul waved his shawl girdle, signifying that he wished an audience. After a minute's delay, a light skiff, similar to those used upon the Cashmerian lakes, emerged from beneath the island's shade, and ere long the venerable recluse paddled within a few yards of the bank, where he paused to examine his visitors, and to demand their business.

" By the mercy of Allah, I am Abdoul Ali, the shepherd," answered my master, placing his right hand in token of respect upon his breast. " With God's aid," continued he, " this is my daughter, and that my servant. I and they are your sacrifice."

Then kneeling down, and letting fall the sleeves and skirts of his mantle, so as to conceal his hands and feet, whilst Gulabi shrouded herself in her wrapper, he said :

" By the inspiration of Allah, we come, O Seyed, to draw life from the sources of your wisdom. We are asses, and know nothing ; destiny has raised his hand against us, and

crammed our mouths with unspeakable dirt; we have no refuge but in God and you.* If you will cast the eyes of commiseration upon us, and unlock the treasures of your science, our faces will be whitened. My son lays grievously wounded at the threshold of death. He is possessed. Curses on Satan! who else can have blotted out his shadow? I have done all that man can do; but the curs have induced evil eyed old women to blow upon knots and afflict him with spells.† Neither Mum-i-Ayi or Peshar, can counter-work such devilries. The winds are your messengers, the waters your slaves, and the riches of strength and knowledge your handmaids. In all Afghanistan and perhaps in all the world, there is no one com-

* Many of these saints pretend to be descendants of the tribe of Koreiah, and thence akin to the prophet. They call themselves *Seyed* or *Seigird*, which literally means one who enjoys eternal beatitude.

† Witches in the east as well as in Europe, used to tie knots on cords, blow on them, and repeat certain magical words, whereby they laid spells on those they wished to afflict; those who sold winds to mariners did the

parable to you. In the name of our holy prophet, (on whom be eternal peace and blessings,) close not the ear of pity; of all those who ever rubbed their foreheads at the threshold of your wisdom, we are the most needing. Life and death hang on your breath—no one but you can point out the path to the gate of health; God be praised!" added he, "your servants do not come empty handed."

"Y Allah! peace be with you my son!" replied the holy man, paddling still closer, and casting a side-long glance over his long silvery beard, at the lamb and other gifts.

"And with you be everlasting peace!" meekly responded Abdoul, striking his beard with his right hand, whilst Gulabi ejaculated to herself, "may Allah lengthen his shadow and render us worthy to touch the hem of his sacred garment."

Which sacred garment, by the bye, from its being so torn, threadbare, and scanty, as scarcely to cover the old man's nakedness, my mistress probably supposed was the remnant of the dark seamless *Hiram*, (holy dress,) put on by the pilgrims when they enter the temple at Mecca,

or one of the old patched mantles worn by the Soffite preachers, and bequeathed as holy legacies to their disciples.

“*Inshallah!* you shall be welcome, O Abdoul Ali!” rejoined the anchorite, as his boat glided to the strand, “enter in God’s name! your merits are known to us. By the blessing of the Lord of the daybreak, when we reach my poor dwelling, you shall pour out the waters of your grief, and with the aid of the twelve sainted Imams, on whom be the grace of *Allah*, I will do my utmost to dry them up with the sun beams of consolation.”

Abdoul and the rest of us, now entered the skiff; a few vigorous strokes brought us within the shelter of a little cove, where we disembarked, and silently followed our holy guide to his habitation. This was nothing more than a rocky cave, partly excavated by the hand of nature, and partly by that of man, so that it formed a spacious apartment, divided into two parts by a hanging of coarse black blanket.

The furniture of this apartment was simple as that of the Seyed’s dress. The latter, with the exception of a faded green turban and white

beard, which spread like a silver cuirass across his chest, only boasted of a loose brown tunic held together by a girdle of deer skin, a pair of straw sandals, a large rosary and stout staff. The former consisted of one or two mats plaited from the island reeds, a small carpet worn thread bare by constant genuflections; a water jar, a sun baked pipkin for boiling rice, a drinking cup, made of buffalo's horn, one or two coarse rugs, and a large sack filled with moss, which served him for a bed and couch. Upon a ledge hewn in the rock, were one or two volumes; immediately above, some sentences from the Koran, marked the direction of the Caaba, a hole perforated through the roof admitted light, and gave egress to the winter's smoke, whilst a faggot of prickly mimosa and aloes, served to guard the entrance, near which reposed a large white cat, as closely allied to that of Abu-Horiera, as Abdallah was to the prophet. Outside was a small garden stocked with herbs and roots, in which browsed a male and female goat.

Whilst I amused myself by frisking upon my

hind legs, and coquettishly letting fall the budding points of my horns upon the head of the young he goat, for even at that age my heart was open to the soft affections, the recluse led his visitors towards a natural bower, shaded by honeysuckles, jessamines, roses, and wild vines, whose flowers and luscious fruit hung round in tempting clusters. Here Abdoul took the presents from Koshrou, who retired to a distance, as much awed by the presence of Abdallah, as if he had stood before the angel, whose province it is to select men's souls for judgment.

Thinking to propitiate the saint by a display of his devotion, Abdoul had his daughter withdraw, that her presence might not render his purpose impure;* then striding to the water's edge he rolled up his sleeves and trowsers,

* Women are not admitted to public prayer with men, lest they should distract the attention from heavenly to terrestrial thoughts, *quando hoc non fieret, saltem humana fragilitas, delectatur mutuo et reciproco aspectu, et ita non potest esse mens quieta attentata et devota*, says a learned Moorish pundit, who wrote a latin letter upon this subject,

uncovered his head, and taking off his boots, went through his ablution, after the most orthodox forms, both as regard faith and practice ; that is by commencing at the crown, elbows and knees, so as to let the impurities trickle off by the extremities. Then prostrating himself, he repeated the last chapter of the Koran ; which being especially directed against devils and genii, was not only most applicable to his case, but being extremely brief, it was not overburdensome to his memory.

Abdallah occupied himself in the meantime with fingering, one after another, the beads of his rosary, made of small round pebbles from the holy valley of Mina near Mecca ; each of which, as it fell, he accompanied with pious phrases ; carefully interlarding them with the name of *Allah* ! an observance which he constantly adhered to, even in ordinary discourse ; he being one of those devout men, who vow never to utter two sentences, without invoking

to Prince Maurice of Orange, a copy of which is in the Bodleian library.

one of the ninety-nine most excellent attributes of the Creator.

This being done, the shepherd rose, and lifting the offerings one after another to his forehead said, "Accept these, *O Seyed*, in the name of the most merciful, your servant is as dirt, he is a poor man : his whole substance is on the backs and in the udders of his flocks, but if you wish for his own skin, it is yours ; what more can he say ?"

The old man's eyes glistened with pleasure, and the waters of excitement moistened his lips as he replied, "Praise be to the giver of all good things ! you are a liberal man, Abdoul Ali ! thanks to the ruler of men's hearts, your hand is not tied up ; may the treasurer of the universe replenish your store, may the fountain of increase pour the waters of plenty into your bosom ; *Y Allah !* sit down, and you, oh maiden be welcome as the aspect of the innocent to the Lord of Paradise ; may your desires be accomplished on earth, and may Tuba, the tree of Eden, shed the blossoms of fruitfulness upon you.

“ *Ameen ! Ameen !* (amen !) whispered my mistress aside, “ that looks like promising me a husband.”

Abdoul, though invited to sit upon the sage’s mat, placed himself respectfully at a distance, with his daughter behind him, and the devotee continued as follows :

“ *Bishmillah !* O brother, I accept your offering, but, *Allah* preserve me, not for my own use ; the rich man’s repast is delicious, but sweeter far are the scraps obtained by one’s own sweat, through God the munificent. By the aid of Him who clothes the wild birds, and finds food for the meanest reptiles, I want nothing, my food is faith in the provider ; a sage has said, ‘ when thou art in need of sustenance, be confident in the king of kings and thou shall eat ;’ for with or without exertion, providence will bestow bread daily. He who bade fruits and herbs spring out of chaos, will fill my platter, as he did that of Fatema, the prophet’s perfect daughter ; who when she uncovered the dish in which she had only placed two small cakes and a thin slice of flesh,

found it filled to the brim with bread and savoury viands."

"*Allah* is great!" ejaculated Abdoul, "there is but one God, and Mahomet is his prophet. The lamb and all the other offerings are pure."

"I have sworn by the Koran, to forbear from animal food, and not to kill living things, as if my whole life were a pilgrimage," answered the devotee.* "Tobacco is an intoxicating drug forbidden by the revealer. It is an abomination only fit for unbelievers; thanks to the all wise, I am not like those hypocrites, who pretend one thing and practice another. *Astagheroolah*, I am not one of those who resort to Mecca to empty out one batch of sins, that they may have room for more; my hands and feet are pairs, and my beard is spotless."

"You are a prince, a ruler of princes,"

* Strict devotees not only abstain from hunting and hawking, but from killing permitted animals, whilst on the pilgrimage to Mecca.

exclaimed my master, "what are all the saints in the world compared to you?"

"*Shukur Allah!* I am as I am," replied the recluse.

"I have been in Thibet," continued Abdoul, "where they have physicians, who can cure the sick with rubbing their bodies with butter, and smoking them with burned fir-cones, they have their Lamas and priests, who drive out disease with songs and prayers. They have their diviners also, who foretell events by the aid of *chi*,* by tortoise flesh, tiger's blood, ox-hoofs, burned bones, and the flight of birds. But their shadows are as those of ants compared to yours, their knowledge is but smoke, they are like mules laden with books, they call their years after the names of beasts, of which the accursed swine is one."

"*Mashallah!* they are idolaters and ignorant brutes," said the recluse, "their Dalai Lama,

* *Chi* a herb used in Thibet for divination is said to grow upon the tomb of *Khoung-tsu*, (Confucius).—*Klaproth's Tibet*.

with his yellow petticoat, is worse than an ass."

"Truly," re-echoed Abdoul, "they are like bats that fly blind folded in the sun's rays. By my soul, a new born puppy might defile their beards. But, from the rising of the sun to its going down, there is no one like you. You are greater than Lockman! you are a very thief of science."

"The giver of reason has blown the breath of knowledge into my brain and filled my heart with the invaluable honey of contentment," rejoined the Seyed. "Thank God, I am not like those sons of Adam who, if they had two rivers of milk would covet a third, or if they had three, would cry out *Allah Kerim!* and ask for a fourth. No! *Astagferoolah!* But beware, my son, of the punisher of forbidden things. Cast away the unclean leaf. *Hasbeton-lillah* (for love of *Allah*) unbind the lamb also, so that it may bless the deliverer. Remember that the fragrance of a pure heart is more acceptable in the nostrils of the ruler of destiny than the fumes of a hundred meat offerings. Besides it is written, that irrational animals shall also

pass before the judgment seat, and that all according to their merits, shall have a place in paradise; except the impure swine through whose agency Satan crept into the Ark."

"Curses on the foul beast," ejaculated Abdoul, and upon all those who devour its flesh, they are infidels. May they all go to *Jehanum* together; but what shall I do with the other offerings?"

"God has said that they are wholesome nutriment," answered the devotee. "Deposit them in my cave, I will distribute them to the needy in the name of the poor man's father, tasting of them first to improve the gift. When the avenger sent a famine into Egypt, *Youssouf*, the Just, ate not his fill, in order that he might relieve the hungry. Yet he ate, for he knew that the liberal man who eats and bestows, is more worthy in the sight of the scale-holder than the religious man who fasts and hoards. A miser is worse than a dog. If he had the sun and moon in his coffer there would be darkness throughout the universe."

Abdoul having reluctantly scattered the choice tobacco in the wind and executed the hermit's

orders, the latter bade his visitor narrate the precise cause of his distress. This my master complied with, terminating by imploring the saint to give him some talisman that might drive the devils out of Hossein's body.

§ . "If it pleases the commander of spirits so will I," replied Abdallah. "Without his aid I can do nothing. Happy is he who remembers God, although, like Jonas, he were confined in the whale's belly."

"*Mashallah!* You know all things and can do all things," rejoined the supplicant. "The light of your wisdom casts forward its shade and foretells hidden events, as the mountain's shadow bespeaks the setting sun. I have told what I know. From one lock of wool you may judge of the whole fleece."

Praise be to Him who eclipses suns and moons, I am no ass," answered the other, "I have seen much and travelled with observation. I will do what I can. If contrary decrees be not inscribed by the divine hand, your son shall be cured. As to Satan, on whom be perpetual maledictions, although he and his followers be

as numerous as the sins of unbelievers, *Bish-millah!* I will bruise their heads. As to old women and their knots—*poof*, I spit on them. What I know through the Prophet's grace I will communicate. A learned man without works is like a tree without fruit, a plough without a share. 'Musk is fragrant in itself and not from its being so called by the druggist.'*

"In the Prophet's name," said Abdoul, who began to get somewhat impatient of the saint's long-winded preliminaries, "tell me what I shall I do to save my son? Lose no time, I beseech you, in expelling the demons. Whilst we tarry, the poor boy suffers all the pangs of the lowest hell."

"Place your trust in the source of existence, and follow me," replied Abdallah rising. "What I shall bid you do, execute. What you may see, tell no one. The secret of health is obedience. The security of life, secrecy. Deposit

* There is a curious affinity between this aphorism of Sady's and Shakespeare's.—"A Rose by any other name will smell as sweet."

your arms and *Allah itchoun* (as you love God) let your daughter remain where she is."

"I am your sacrifice," answered Abdoul, who, although he was as brave as forty lions, began to tremble from head to foot, expecting to encounter a legion of devils, dives and goblins. In the meantime I had clambered upon the rock above the cavern, where, accompanied by the liberated lamb and two goats, I feasted upon the juicy creepers that fringed the orifice at the top. Thence I had an opportunity of seeing what passed within.

CHAPTER X.

HAVING reached the cave, the Seyed closed the entrance with its prickly barrier, and bade Abdoul seat himself with his face towards the door and not look backwards, under the penalty that befell Kahila, the wife of Lot, whilst he retired within the inner recess to prepare himself for the ejection of the malign spirits. My eyes mechanically followed the old man as he passed behind the blanket, where he no sooner entered, than all my four limbs began to quake with awe.

First he rubbed his arms and neck with milk from a jar, then approaching a retired corner he stooped down and there glided forth three or four serpents which instantly encircled his

limbs and nestled beneath his beard. Then muttering a few strange words, clapping his hands, and rolling back a stone from the floor, two flame sparkling eyes glistened like emeralds below, and a brute with the horns of a goat, the body of an ape, and the tail of a lion, sprung out and capered at his side.

He spoke further, and from behind a screen of dried reeds out crept a diminutive creature with a huge head, having the form of a misshapen human being—but black as ebony and, with the exception of a sheepskin, round its loins, as naked as a new hatched raven.

Whether these were tamed beasts or spirits of the earth subservient to his will, Allah only knows. By my soul, O Agha! your face would have been darkened, had you seen the venomous reptiles coiling round the old man's arms. You would have quailed, as I did, at the sight of the ribbed checked, horned brute dallying with the tail of the fierce white cat. You would have invoked all the gods and saints of infidels had you watched the black demon, as it hopped to and fro, heaping aloes wood and mountain

cotton (asbestos) upon the floor, and seen it rub dry sticks together, and produce a clear red flame.

"Perhaps so," rejoined I, "had I not been convinced that the Seyed was an impostor, and that his mummeries were the mere tricks of a juggler, whose odour of sanctity and reputation of power, over spirits, depended upon his deceiving the ignorant and superstitious creatures who went to consult him. But proceed."

"The wise consider him to be little who speaketh ill of the great, retorted the narrator drily." Then, after muttering to itself, "O true believers, contract not intimate friendships with infidels, lest ye slip from the brink into the pit," it continued as follows,

As soon as the fire commenced to illumine the cave with its smokeless light, the hermit traced some mystic characters upon the sand, and casting aside his upper garment made signs to the black brute, which forthwith folded its lank arms over its chest, bowed and running to a remote corner, returned with a quiver of arrows, some sheep's bones, a jar of water, and

the half of a dried gourd, filled with divers strange articles. Having deposed these at the sage's feet, it squatted down beside him, and the latter raising his voice, exclaimed, "Arise, in the name of *Allah*, Abdoul Ali. Lift up the curtain and approach!"

My master did as he was commanded, and if his head had not been close shaved, the hair would have raised his lambskin cap, so great was his terror, when he passed within and discovered the frightful group, whose uncouth aspects were rendered still more awe-inspiring by the dim red glare. Fain would he have prayed aloud, but his tongue cleaved like a scorched pancake to his palate and his teeth chattered, as if he had been chained to the icy summit of Demavend.

"By the angels that are sent of heaven, fear not!" said Abdallah. "Let not your liver be converted into water. Through the grace of the comforter I am a dispenser of light, not a promoter of darkness. I stand to help, not to afflict. In the name of the deliverer approach, speak, and I will do my utmost."

The saint might as well have bidden my master spring over the partition, called *Al Araf*, which divides heaven and hell, or run across the bridge, *Al Sirat*, that leads to the other world. He stood half petrified, his knees knocking against each other and his eyes starting from their sockets; looking like one demented.

This so diverted the black imp, that he gave loose to his devilish merriment by placing his long hands upon his sides, spreading his huge pouting lips, protruding his tongue, and laughing with the howl of a vampire, until the Seyed silenced him, and again addressing the terrified shepherd said:—

“Allah has given you words, my son, you are no child. Speak! Is it your wish that I should eject the demons and unveil futurity? If so, come! stretch forth your hand.”

“I am dirt. I am less than an atom,” stammered out Abdoul. “*Allah Kerim!* how can I speak or move, when my body melts like wax?”

Whereupon, being totally overcome, he

dropped down and hid his face beneath the flap of his cloak. But this humiliation served but to augment his terror ; for the horrid creature sprung jabbering forward, leaped upon his back, tore off his cap and fell to digging and scratching his bare head, as if he intended to rake out its contents.

“ Mercy ! Mercy ! relieve me from Eblis ! In the prophet’s name, let the demons remain where they are ! By all the sacrifices in the valley of Mina, I did not bargain to save my son at the expense of my soul ! *Ahi ! Ahi !*” piteously exclaimed the unfortunate Ali, thinking his last hour was come and that the devils, transported from Hossein’s brains to his scalp, were dragging him into the other world.

“ *Lahnet-be-hāivan* (curses on the brute) Away ! away !” said the saint inflicting a severe blow upon my master’s persecutor. “ *Y Allah,*” added he. “ Be a man, O Abdoul ! What filth are you devouring ? Has dust fallen into your eyes, and stricken you with blindness ? See, these are not devils but

slaves to my will. Arise! Look! *Inshallah!*
As they came, so shall they depart."

Thereupon he selected a snake-like looking thing from the gourd and casting it into the flame, it shot forth a pale blue light, which imparted a ghastly livid colour, to all surrounding objects.

"Hearken then, oh son of Adam!" he then exclaimed, "over life destiny is sole ruler, over devils I am master; no witchcraft, no evil eye can withstand the will of the ordainer; he alone can draw the pen across inscribed events; your son's body may go down, but by the help of God it shall be cleansed. Listen to the last roar of the retiring spirits: I swear by him, who separated light from darkness, that 'ere the hour of night prayer arrives, your wish shall be fulfilled; curses on Satan! begone!" added he raising his shrivelled, snake entwined arms, and elevating his voice to a shrill scream. "Begone! in the name of the purifier, abandon the youth's body."

Upon this the strange thing which he had cast into the fire, began to emit a thousand

sparks, bounding and twisting round, as if endowed with life. In a moment more, a loud explosion shook the rock, and filled the cavern with sulphureous smoke, and then all was darkness.

This produced an immediate effect upon Abdoul, but not that anticipated by the hermit, for my master only recovered the use of his limbs to loose that of his wits ; up he sprung, shot as it were from one of the Shah's *zamboreeki*, (camel cannon,) then dashing aside the prickly door, he bounded into the open air, and casting himself up to his neck in the lake, as if he was performing the ceremony of complete ablution, he called upon the twelve Imana, two hundred and twenty-four thousand prophets, and three hundred Apostles to protect and forgive him for having held dealings with Satan.

It was in vain the recluse followed and sought to tranquillize him, telling him that no harm was done, and that his face ought to be whitened, for the devils were infallibly expelled from Hossein's body, and that he was now

ready to commence the act of divination, either by consulting the bones of sheep, casting arrows into the water, or taking the hazards of a passage from the Koran.*

Abdoul, without raising his body from out the water, replied, "For the love of God let me be gone. I ask no more. What are sons? what are daughters?—Dirt! I would rather a whole litter of sons should die, than I deal with one devil; how shall I get rid of the filth I have swallowed? *Ahi!* the sulphur of Jehanum still defiles my tongue and infects my entrails? I feel the ghole's paw still upon my head. *Allah Kerim!* as you would be saved, let me depart in peace, and all I have, flocks, herds, camels, tents, wives, horses, dogs, sons and daughters, every thing shall be yours. By the blessed Caaba, I want to know no more; your

* A kind of *sortes virgilianæ* used by the diviners, who open a book as by chance, turn back seven pages, and selecting a passage, predict according as the application is propitious or unfavorable.—*Elphinstone's Caubul.*

wisdom has confounded my soul and reduced my liver to foul water."

Vainly the holy man sought to tranquillize him; the more he argued, the more the other begged to be dismissed, saying that he would sooner attempt to swim to terra firma, than set foot again upon the enchanted island.

"By the breath of the most perfect, you are as void of wisdom as a child," exclaimed the hermit, "and must meet with the treatment of infants. If you will not take that which is good for you, *Inshallah!* the hand of compulsion shall be employed."

Not knowing what was coming, my master cast his eyes wistfully across the breadth of the lake, but fearing to sink with the weight of his clothes, he resigned himself to his fate, ejaculating, "I am your sacrifice! Allah, and his angels shield me with their wings! what can I do? I am lost."

Moved by the same impulse as my master, I no sooner heard the explosion, than bounding down the rock, I scampered to the side of

Gulabi, who had withdrawn with Koshrou to the edge of the lake.

There are ignorant men, even among believers, who affirm that women have no souls, and that they will be excluded from the blessings of beatification. But this is a manifest error, a lie ! Has not the prophet promised immaculate wives to all who shall enter the seventh heaven ? Is it not written that the black-eyed maidens of paradise shall repose upon lofty couches with their lawful spouses eating delicious viands, the last morsel of which shall be as grateful as the first ; washing them down with sweet wines, and listening to the rustling harmony of golden bodied trees, whose fruits are pearls and emeralds, surpassing human imagination in suavity and splendour ; nay ! when our holy prophet told an old woman that she could not ascend to paradise, seeing that no aged females would be permitted to enter therein, whereupon she wept bitterly, did he not comfort her by saying, that she and all women, no matter how old or

ugly they might be at their death, would be regenerated at the resurrection, and blessed with eternal youth and beauty, each according to his deserts? Be assured, O Effendi, women have not only an exalted place assigned to them in the next world, but that they are oftentimes preeminent for their superior excellence in this. Are they not more ready of wit, more virtuous in conduct, more steadfast of purpose, more patient under suffering, more noble in action, more generous in thought, and more devoted to those they love than men?

An instance of this was exemplified in my young mistress, who, though terrified at first by hearing the explosion and seeing Abdoul Ali cast himself into the water, quickly girded on the corslet of decision, seized the deposed weapons, jumped into the little skiff, and bidding Koshrou paddle round to the spot where stood the recluse, menaced him with death if he ventured to injure her father.

“What filth is this?” said the beautiful girl, who appeared inspired like Khadjah the

prophet's daughter in law. "Do you take my father for a brute beast, that you would defile his beard? How is this, O Seyed? Are not lots, divination by arrows and intercourse with Satan, forbidden of Allah? In his name, we came here to draw honey from the hive of your benevolence, not to suck gall from the bladder of your malice. We asked for succour through prayer and supplication. But you have confounded us with malign spirits. See!" said she, pointing towards the cave. "See there are the devils you have raised. In the prophet's name let us be gone! It is better that my brother should die, than that he should be relieved through such foul agency. Rise, father," said she, turning to Abdoul Ali who remained in the water. "I am but a weak maiden, and it is against all law that I should stand thus exposed to the gaze of man and demons. But my trust is in the most high. He will aid and absolve me. Rise then, enter the boat, and let us return, ere we are compelled to devour further abomination. Let us take the

skiff. He who can enslave the genii of the earth and air, needs not its aid to pass the waters. He can work miracles. Let him command the boat to return without hands from the opposite bank; then I will believe that he has a delegated power from heaven."

As my master was about to wade towards the shore, infinite was the astonishment of Gulabi, upon hearing the Hadgi exclaim: "Whose dogs are you that you dare put forth the offer of disbelief?"

Then clapping his hands and casting a heavy stone into the lake, he added: "You doubt my power: Be it so! You want a sign. Move then, O boat, without hands!"

Upon this the skiff suddenly darted many yards through the water, as if dragged by some submarine agency, and then, with a jerk, that had nigh tumbled Gulabi and Koshrou into the stream, it stood motionless.

Methought on looking down, that I saw a black object gliding far beneath. *Y Allah!* if so it must have been a spirit of the deep.

For nothing was heard or seen above the surface.

Koshrou gave himself up for lost and my blood ran cold ; for upon looking up I saw several winged ministers of the Seyed's will, under the form of huge eagles, swooping and soaring above, ready to pounce upon and lift us off in their talons.

But Gulabi seemed to imbibe fresh courage from increasing danger. Levelling her father's matchlock at the body of the recluse, she said in a firm voice, "Allah is great and merciful ! If I must perish, his will be done ! But hearken, *O Badcheshm* (sorcerer,) unless you command the boat to return to shore, and let us depart peaceably, I swear by my mother's grave, that I will lodge the contents of this weapon in your body. Nay, stir not !" added she, as the old man seemed disposed to withdraw. "Stir not ! or I fire. On your head be it."

Awed by the maiden's boldness, but with fury sparkling eyes, the hermit again clapped

his hands, and lifting up a small fragment of rock, hurled it into the lake. In a few seconds the boat again darted towards the shore, by the same invisible agency.

“Begone !” exclaimed he, in a voice half choked with passion. “Begone! In the name of the ruler of tempests, think yourselves fortunate, that I do not call down the forked lightning upon you. Be grateful that I do not leave you to perish enchained upon the waters, or summon the birds of prey, to peck out your unbelieving eyes. You doubt my power, do you? Take the skiff, cast it adrift when you reach the bank, and, by the hand of Allah, you will see it return at my bidding. *Moorukhus* (be off,) and never let me set eyes upon you again.”

Saying this he stalked indignantly away, and retreated to his cavern.

No sooner was he out of sight, than Abdoul Ali quitted his liquid covert, scrambled into the skiff, and with the aid of Koshrou rowed towards the narrow gorge, where we had embarked.

Ere reaching the shore, the wild laugh of the devils from the cave, was borne across the water; so that they were right glad to spring ashore, where all three threw themselves upon their knees, and returned thanks to Allah for their escape; vowing by the Koran never more to consult magicians, or to infringe the laws of the prophet by holding intercourse with dealers in sorcery.

Their astonishment and fear increased, however, when upon reaching a turn of the path, they saw a large bird float across the waters, approach the boat and tow it back to the island.*

Dripping with wet, and eager to escape as fast as possible, from the vicinity of the valley of waters, my master stepped forward with a rapid pace, so before we had walked a farsang, or reached the summit of the craggy eminence,

* It is a practice with the fowlers, in some parts of Afghânistan and Cashmere, to take the skins of aquatic birds, and form with them a kind of mask, into which they insert their heads, then getting into the water, they wade and swim amongst the flocks of birds, and drag-

overlooking the glen wherein our camp was situated, Gulabi, overcome with heat and emotion, found it necessary to repose. Upon which her father bade Koshrou remain behind to guard her, while he hastened home to see whether in truth the Seyed's incantation had proved effectual.

Having quenched her thirst at a sparkling rill, gushing from a fissure in the rock, my young mistress was shortly able to proceed; and as we soon entered one of the tracks frequented by our flocks, I scampered forward, rejoicing in the cool shade, of the wide spreading branches that arched above us.

All of a sudden, I know not why, my limbs became transfixed by instinctive terror. In vain I sought to move or bleat. Blood and sound were coagulated, and my eyes turning upwards, encountered the appalling gaze of a huge serpent, whose gigantic folds entwined girdling them one after another under water, twist their head and fasten them to their girdles. The gourd is also used for the same purpose.

the stem of a young plane tree, like a mighty cable twisted round a mast; terribly the monster glared at me with its fiery fascinating eyes; as with quivering tongue, wide extended jaws, and throat inflamed with hunger and excitement, it barred the passage.

It was not like one of those torpid, languid reptiles seen in captivity; loathsome and monstrous in size, but weak and lustreless, in force and colour. No! there it was, radiating in a thousand prismatic, undulating hues; glossy, swelling and powerful as an hundred capstans. Its sinuous contractions crushing forth the tree's sap, its weight bending the very stem, and its fierce vibrations, grating like hail upon the bark.

Allah il allah! So small a creature as I, would have been a mere pistachio nut, to a brute whose huge dilating gullet could make passage for an antlered stag.

Already it brandished its broad, flat head on high and exposed its tessellated, white belly, as gradually untwining its spiral coils,

it arched the broad circles of its back, writhed its tapering tail, and took its deadly aim.

Stricken with terror, the dastardly Koshrou rushed over the side-ward rocks and fled. A heart, less generous than that of my gentle mistress, would have followed his example. But seeing me doomed to destruction, she uttered aloud the name of Allah! darted forward and seized me in her arms at the very moment when the serpent, unclasping its last fold, prepared to spring.

“Poor maiden!” exclaimed I interrupting the narrator. “If you be fabricating a mere tale, you might as well contrive to rescue her. If you speak truth, I cannot but lament that one so young and generous should perish by a death so hideous.”

“Allah is indulgent and merciful!” retorted the quandom shawl. “He spreads the wing of protection over the meanest of his creatures. He has said that, whosoever intercedeth for others with a good intent, shall reap a portion thereof.”

“ Was she not crushed to atoms then ? ” demanded I.

“ Be patient and you shall hear the sequel, ” rejoined the paper. “ Remember that many fleet horses perish in the desert, whilst the lame ass often safely reaches the end of its journey. ”

It then resumed its story in the following terms.

One awful bound—one terrible embrace, and both of us had shared the same appalling fate. But at the instant the horrid reptile hurled itself forward like a hissing rocket, its sinuous tail remained nailed to the bending tree, its projected body fell to the ground and in lieu of sacrificing us to its rage, it writhed and struggled awhile in the dust and then recoiling back, again entwined the stem and furiously gnawed the bark.

The hand of fate is supreme ! Had Gulabi not ascended the rock during the recent chase ; had not the rays from her eyes penetrated the young khan’s heart, her cypress form had lain a bleeding, slime-slurred mass ; disfigured, suf-

focused, crushed amidst the gigantic wreaths of Satan's image.

Stricken by her beauty, as the deer is smitten by the hunter's arrow, Mir Zeeman, for that was the youthful chieftain's name, had no sooner seen the rights of sepulture performed over his fallen retainers, then he started, well armed, from his castle, and hoping to obtain a nearer view of the beautiful vision which had enthralled his soul, entered the woods that fringed our camp. The path he took was that leading to the vale of waters, and he had not proceeded far ere he perceived Abdoul and his daughter ascending the heights. Secreting himself in a cleft, overshadowed with fern and myrtles, he saw us pass and cautiously following to the edge of the lake, witnessed all that occurred, until we returned to shore. Concealed by the forest's shade, he then tracked us homewards and feasted his eyes, with exquisite delight, upon the unveiled beauties of Gulabi, as she reposed near the mountain rill and stooped to lave her snowy arms and limbs in the refreshing waters.

Full of admiration at the courage she had shewn in confronting Abdallah, whose magical powers were dreaded by the bravest Afghans, and inflamed to madness at the sight before him, Mir Zeeman, who saw that the dates were ripe and the watchman absent, was tempted to kill her attendant, as he sat with his back turned at some distance, and to carry off the maiden to his castle. But the ardour of his passion was tempered by the majesty of her purity. He who feared not to encounter tigers, lions or a host of enemies single-handed, quailed before the virgin innocence of this terrestrial houri. A sentiment of respect, which he had never felt for any other woman, enthralled him. His heart was singed up like burnt kabob. The feeble claws of a panther's cub might have torn him limb from limb, as he stood gasping, panting, spell-bound by the magic of her charms; he could have fallen down and worshipped her as the Pagan Hindoos adore Chrishna. The beauty he had admired at a distance was magnified tenfold upon a nearer view.

He longed to speak—but he knew that the presence of a stranger would compel her to screen herself from his gaze. Being inspired with extreme tenderness, he resolved to withdraw for the present and to endeavour to win, through the aid of love, the gem which his heart now told him would be worthless as a mountain pebble, if obtained by other means.

He had continued, however, to linger near us, and was about to return home, when Gulabi's exclamation warned him of her peril. Springing from the covert, he bounded forward, poised for an instant his glittering spear, and hurling it with unerring force, transfixed the monster to the tree.

As the furious reptile writhed and bit the quivering weapon, Mir Zeeman drew his falchion and with a blow that would have cloven a dozen folds of felt, severed the brute's head from its body. Leaving the dangling carcass to coil and twist in hideous agonies, the chieftain calmly wiped his reeking blade, resheathed it in its gem-studded scabbard, and then disap-

peared amongst the jungle, ere Gulabi, who had sunk bewildered to the earth, had time to recognize her deliverer, or even to know the cause of her rescue.

The beauty and courage of Mir Zeeman could in fact only be equalled by his delicacy and forbearance. Few true believers of his rank and power would have resisted so tempting an opportunity, or have remained satisfied with the gratitude of their own hearts. But the noble minded Hatim Tai has said, that the conscience of a generous man is a fountain of never dying abundance, which affords him rich banquets, where selfish mortals glean nothing but ashes. For the one, the green tree of promise droops down its branches loaded with luscious fruits; for the other, the luxury of present enjoyment is embittered with the wormwood of future sterility. The abstinence of the first, is more grateful than forty camels sacrificed by the second, for his own pleasure.

It is difficult to deceive the sympathies of

love. Its light, like the searching rays of the orb of day, penetrates into the blackest recesses. Its attractions are as mysterious as those of the loadstone, which whether exposed or concealed in daylight or darkness, equally affects the needle.

As a proof of this, Gulabi no sooner lifted up her eyes and discovered the dying reptile, suspended to the javelin, than she exclaimed: "Thanks be to Allah and the prophet, and oh! a thousand thanks to him whose valour rescued me from the jaws of death. By my father's head, there is but one hand that could have done this. My soul tells me that it was the young khan. Who can equal him in strength and courage? may his misfortunes be turned upon me! He has saved my days—mine are his, if he demand them? but why depart without a word? *Wullah, wullah!* he is great, rich, an overthrower of heroes. Perhaps he despises the humble tent-dweller, into whose bosom he has darted the intoxicating poison of his eye. But God is great! He has shown mercy in rescuing me from Abdallah's

witchcraft and from the serpent's fangs. He may have other gifts still in store."

Then placing me upon the ground and calling to Khosrou, who emerged from his concealment, trembling like the acacia before the breath of the north wind, she proceeded homewards.

CHAPTER XI.

ON reaching the crags leading down to the camp, Gulabi paused awhile to look and listen. Her heart misgave her, however, when wailings, such as women put forth at the loss of some departed person, rose upon the air. What could this be for, unless for her brother?

Alas! her forebodings were but too well-founded. The Seyed had not uttered lies. The devils had quitted the body of poor Hossein, but curses on them, they had carried his breath with them. Hastily rushing towards the tents, my mistress entered and heard that her father had arrived too late to witness Hossein's last struggle with the inexorable Azrael.

The unfortunate youth, whose skull, it appeared, was terribly fractured, had surrendered up his spirit, about the time that we fled from Abdallah's island. A manifest proof of the saint's supernatural power. There he lay, stiff and silent, his remains covered with a linen cloth, his arms stretched by his sides, and his face turned towards Mecca.

Whilst the servants and old women were employed in washing the body with cold water, and rubbing it with rock salt, after tearing open his shirt, from the neck to the waist, Abdoul was occupied in reading such parts of the 36th., 44th., and 45th., chapters of the Koran, as are appointed to be said over dying persons in their last agonies. His wife and daughters, assembled in the inner tent, accompanied him, the while, with shrieks and wailings, that might have been heard as far as Balk, the mother of cities.

Gulabi's grief at the loss of her brother was intense, but in lieu of rending the air with noisy lamentations, and calling upon the name of the

deceased, as is usual upon such occasions, she first kissed her brother's forehead and silently withdrew. Then unweaving the ornaments from her hair, she strewed ashes over her head and covering herself with her black hood, wept so bitterly, that the breath of prayer, as it issued from her mouth, was impeded by the waters of sorrow trickling from her eyes.

Whilst the preparations for interment were being carried on, as well as could be performed in this secluded spot, Khosrou was dispatched to the market town to summon a Mollah, and the men, whose unclean trade it is to bury the dead. Another messenger was likewise directed to gallop round the neighbouring friendly camps to announce Hossein's death.

It being Abdoul's intention that his son should not only be consigned to the earth with due form and honour, but that the accustomed entertainment should not be omitted, a third servant was commanded to kill a sheep and two lambs, and the women were directed to prepare rice for pillau, with such fruits, cakes, curds,

sweetmeats and drinks as their stores afforded.

A short time before night prayer, the Mollah, with three of his brethren, made their appearance, and soon after came the *Murdeshir*, (undertaker's men), who brought with them an open bier, painted black, which they fumigated with burned juniper berries, hyssop, scented willows, and other aromatics.

Finding that the attendants had omitted to purify the corpse with certain ingredients, indispensable for rendering it fit to appear before the examining angels, they produced a bunch of leaves from the service tree, to steep in the water employed for purification, together with a powder made of camphor, sifted lime, saffron, lemon peel and musk. After washing the corpse with the former, they carefully rubbed every part of it with the latter. Then they picked the deceased's teeth with olive twigs, put a roasted fig into his mouth, filled the ears with cotton steeped in dissolved wax, and rolling up the body in a *kefen*, (shroud,) deposited it in the bier.

The twenty-seven prescribed formalities of purification and preparation being completed, they performed their ablutions, said a short prayer, and covering their hands and feet, seated themselves on either side to await the daybreak. They had taken care however, not to omit fastening the two great toes together with a strip of linen, or binding up the jaws with a ligature, fastened over the temples; still less did they forget to place two lighted tapers at the feet, or a jar of *abseder* (service water,) at the head; the one being emblematical of eternal splendour, and the other, of the prophet's pond, which is supplied from *Al Caowhar*, one of the rivers of paradise, whose name signifies abundance, whose stream is whiter than milk, more odoriferous than musk, cooler than snow, sweeter than honey, and smoother than cream; whilst its pebbles are of rubies and emeralds, and its banks of sparkling chrysolites.

The Mollahs, who knew they should be well paid for their pains, relieved each other during

the night, in reading the Koran, and saying the appointed prayers.

Thus if poor Hossein went out of this world without assistance, everything was done to help him in an orthodox manner into the other, and to save him from *Al Hotoma*,—(one of the compartments of hell,) and to lift him over *Al Araf*,* which the creator in his mercy, has established as a purgatory, or place of purification, for those who are subsequently destined to taste of those heavenly waters, of which, whoever drinketh, will thirst no more.

Before dawn, all the family assembled round the bier, and the women, joined by some crones from the other camps, set up such violent

* *Al Araf*, according to some, means a partition; according to others, an elevation; there are various notions as to the exact use of this wall—but a generally received idea is, that it is a narrow spot, where those whose sins and virtues nearly balance each other, will proceed after death, and that after a short detention and purification, they will be permitted to pass on, and drink of Mahomed's pond.—*D'Herbelot*.

cries, that if each had been condemned to be buried alive, or sacrificed to the manes of the dead, after the abominable fashion of the Rajpoots, they could not have made more noise. So that if it be true, that great grief is always mute, as I have heard you Feringees say, their sorrow was so noisy that it might easily have been enclosed in a date shell.

Ere long they were joined by many of Abdoul's friends, who of course did not fail to attend his summons, when they heard there was to be an entertainment ; for if they had been ready to fight to save his son's life, they were infinitely more eager to feast in honour of his death.

All of them came as behoved them, with their lances reversed, sprigs of cypress stuck in their bridles, large rents in their clothes, from the breast down to the girdle, and other manifest symptoms of distress and sympathy ! When they had picketed their horses, and seated themselves awhile on the rugs and carpets spread for them outside, each in his turn en-

tered the tent of death, smiting his bare breast in token of grief. Then approaching the *tabout*, (bier) they dipped their fingers in the water jar, and sprinkled a few drops over the corpse, addressing it thus : “ *Verily the life to come shall be better than this life, the Lord of all creatures shall give thee a reward, wherewith thou shalt be well pleased ; there is but one God and Mahomed is his prophet.*”

Thereupon they withdrew, repeating their profession of faith, and reseating themselves silently outside, awaited the propitious moment for interment, which one of the priests, who enjoyed a reputation for great sanctity, and a profound knowledge of astrology, declared to be about mid-time, between the daybreak and noon prayer.

As soon as the sun had advanced half way towards the south, the first Mollah came to the entrance of the tent, and bending his head to the east, north, and south, exclaimed, “ *Allah Akbar ! God is one God, the eternal God ! he begetteth not, neither is he begotten. There is no one like unto him ; praise therefore*

be unto the giver and taker, in whose hands is the kingdom of all things, and to whom ye shall return at the last day. It is he that createth with a breath, and prostrates with a sign, *Allah akbar ! Allah ho akbar !*"

Thereupon the undertaker's men anointed with camphorated paste the seven prescribed parts of the corpse, during which operation, all the assistants prostrated themselves, and repeated the *fateha*.

The forehead, great toes, knees and palms of both hands, having been thus duly anointed, and the shroud reclosed, they arose, and the bearers took up the bier, and proceeded towards the cemetery of Gundab, which was distant about a farsang down the valley, Abdoul and his younger sons heading the party of mourners bare-footed, and the Mollahs walking on either side of the body, reading, chanting and praying as they went.

It being against the prescribed rules for women to attend the ceremony, they remained at home making up for the inactivity of their legs, by the agility of their lungs.

Whether it was from force of example

or excess of sorrow, Allah only knows, but my gentle mistress now caught the noisy contagion, and screamed if possible, still louder than the others ; a process in which she was joined by the whole of our dogs, who with their tails drooping between their legs, stood howling and baying around, as if they had learned music from the evil eyed old crones, whose business it is to screech at funerals.

It was a melancholy yet picturesque sight, to watch the mourning train winding down the sunny flower clad valley ; to hear the bulbul's tender voice mingling the song of love with that of death ; to see the black bier with its prostrate burden, followed by Abdoul Ali's friends, leading their horses and trailing their spears after them, in sign of sorrow. Their dark eyes only raised from the ground to watch if any of the hostile tribes dared to insult them, or seize this opportunity of wreaking that vengeance, which they themselves had determined to take for the loss of Hossein, who had received his death wound at the hands of Mir Zeeman.

Nothing occurred, however, to disturb the procession, and in due time, they reached the cypress shaded city of the silent. Here amongst a multitude of tombs, some ornamented with stone turbans, others with Afghan caps, carved in wood, others again merely distinguished by the garlands, flowers, or evergreens, planted by the pious hands of relatives, the bearers deposited the bier at eight paces distant from the edge of the grave which had been excavated by the chief priest's orders. The mourners now formed a circle around and stood, some with inverted palms, some striking their beards, and others balancing their bodies from right to left, as they recited their prayers.

Although Abdoul's heart was wracked with the utmost pangs of paternal grief, he bore himself manfully, and making a sign to some of the assistants, who were not related to his family, he bade them prepare to perform the last duties to the defunct.*

* It is not lawful for relatives to perform this ceremony to men's bodies ; the same is the case at the interment of women.

Having approached the bier, which had been moved at four intervals, to the very edge of the pit, and having laid hands upon the extremities of the shroud, Abdoul's friends lifted up the corpse, gently lowered it head foremost, and deposited it upon its right side, with the face turned towards Mecca, the Mollahs and by-standers being occupied the while in repeating the prescribed prayers. One of the priests during this time, went round with a piece of cotton, and applying it to the eyes of the weepers, collected their tears, and then placed a portion of it upon the mouth of the deceased, that it might serve to moisten his lips, until the last day, whilst he squeezed the remainder into a glass phial, in order to preserve it, as a remedy for sick persons in their last agony. This part of the ceremony being terminated, Abdoul took from his bosom a small packet of the sacred dust of Kerbalah, scraped from the tomb of Hossein, (on whom be God's peace and blessing), and handed it to the chief priest, who first raised it reverentially above his head, and then scattered

it over the corpse ; then all the by-standers, with the exception of the brothers, took earth, and, following Abdoul's example, gave the signal for filling up the grave.

When the hole was closed up, each person again dipped a sprig of *abseder* (service), in a water-jar, and sprinkled it over the surface, and having pressed down the earth, with the palms of their hands, they repeated the following words after the chief, Mollah : “ *The trumpet shall sound, and, behold he shall come forth from the grave, and hasten to his Lord. Peace, shall be the word, spoken to the righteous—Amen !*”

The officiating priests then fell to work, and read the 79th chapter of the Koran seven times ; which being done, Abdoul not only liberally rewarded them, and the bearers, but distributed alms among the poor, who stood near the entrance of the tombs, crying out in a mournful voice :—“ Y Allah ! alms—*Y Allah ! alms,—Huk ! Huk !* Charity in the name of God.”

Although these mendicants were, for the

most part tattered dervishes, and undeserving rogues, Abdoul called to mind the words of the caliph, Omar Ebn Abd Alaziz, who said, "Prayer carries us half way to God—fasting brings us to the door of his palace, and alms procure us admission therein."

After this the whole party withdrew, and discharged their fire-arms in the air, partly out of compliment to the defunct, and partly out of bravado to the Afghans. Then mounting their horses, they rode slowly back to the camp, where they forthwith seated themselves in a circle, and tucking up their sleeves, set to work upon the entertainment provided for them by the women.

CHAPTER XII.

THE sun had not yet disappeared behind the western deserts, e'er their carousings, were disturbed by the arrival of a horseman at full speed, who reined in his steed, at a short distance, and, raising himself in his broad stirrups, exclaimed, "Peace be with you."

Upon this Abdoul, as master of the feast, rose up, and, approaching the stranger, replied, "You are welcome! May your visit be repeated!" Then, grasping his hand between his own, he invited him to dismount, and partake of the mourning viands, apologizing all the while, for their not being better.

The horseman, whoever he was, thought them too good to be disdained, for he answer-

ed, "May you prosper! By the soul of Omar, you are a hospitable man."

Then, actively swinging his right leg over the saddle bow, he leaned upon his lance, jumped to the ground, told one of the shepherds' sons to mount and walk his horse about, and, seating himself on the right hand of Abdoul Ali, fell upon the remains of the *pillau* and *kabob*, with the appetite of a ghole.

Whilst he is satisfying the cravings of hunger, I will describe his dress and appearance. On his head he wore a kind of stiff, conical cap of red cloth, curving forward, like the abomination, which the French infidels call cap of liberty, fringed round the temples with black lamb's-skin, and decorated with an embroidery of narrow velvet, and a white horse-hair plume. His doubled breasted *kaftan* (tunic), of red masulipatam chintz, lined with yellow stuff and sprigged with white flowers, sat close to his body, and was ornamented in front, with two rows of silk

buttons and loops. The sleeves, open behind from the elbow to the wrist, were also ornamented with buttons and braidings, and disclosed his under garments, not over white. A striped, narrow shawl, of various hues, entwined his waist, and in this was stuck a long, brass-hilted Afghan poignard and pistol. His nether limbs were incased in a pair of blue cloth trowsers, stuffed into high boots, the heavy heels of which were pointed, and tipped with iron, to serve as spurs.

A kaba (surtout,) of bright brown stuff, striped with white, red and violet, was slung over his shoulders, like a hussar pelisse: under this, were suspended a quiver of arrows, and a curved sabre, in a black leather scabbard, with silver mountings. *A kamtchy* (whip,) of office, the handle surmounted with an enamelled knob, dangled from his right wrist, in which he also carried a light spear ornamented at the head, with long crimson tassels.

His light mouthed horse, was a red roan, of the Herhat breed, whose trappings consisted of a green leather snaffle, without a head

front; an Usbeck saddle, with a high silver pommel, and a breast girth, in the centre of which was a large mettle boss, shaped like the dome of a mosque. The hind quarters were nearly concealed by a housing of figured stuff, edged with a blue border, and a trimming of red, and white fringe.

The stranger was a short but handsome man, with eyes as black as if they had been steeped in the same *surmeh*, that served to dye his glossy beard; his shoulders were broad, his waist extremely small, and he had a sort of bold, off hand look and swaggering gait, which, together with his costume, showed him to be one of the messengers belonging to the department, of the *Hircarrah Bashi*, who perform the same duties for the Sovereign of Caubul, as do the Tartars for the *Babi Aly*, (Sublime Porte) whom may Allah defend from the grip of that crafty giaour, the Muscovite Czar, whose object it is to eat into Turkey, Persia, and Hindostan, as maggots worm themselves into the hearts of Bokarah plums.

As soon as the new comer had crammed

himself to the eye lids, so that he was obliged to loosen his tight riding belt, in order to give passage to the food, Abdoul thus addressed him, "May your shadow never be less, my Agha! May I ask what fortunate star has brought the light of your countenance to brighten the abode of mourning. Are you a bearer of good or evil news? What is your business? Speak!"

"May you perpetually prosper, and may your flocks multiply, until they are countless as locusts," replied the messenger, tossing off a bowl of *Kimmiz* (fomented mare's milk) "Oof!" added he, giving a terrible hiccup; "Though I am something, he who sent me is much more. He does not bid me gird up my loins, or strike my heels into my horse's flanks for nothing. *Mashallah!* tidings are good or bad, according to circumstances."

"Your words are as the night mist," rejoined Abdoul. "You are like the date. One must peel off the husk, and open the shell to get at the kernel."

"Certainly," retorted the messenger, "we

officers of the *Hircarrah*, on whom be the blessings of increase, do not expose the seeds of our purpose, like over ripe pomegranates. To worm anything out of us, a man's tongue must resemble a cork-screw."

"But you must have a purpose," rejoined Abdoul, "or you would not have joined a mourning entertainment, dressed as if you were bidden to a circumcision feast."

"*Allah moobarek !*" answered the other, draining the last drop of liquor. "Our dress is not to be spit upon. And as to purpose, none but a madman moves without intent. My business is soon told. I am the bearer of a summons, from the *Zept Beg's* deputy,* to you, and the other heads of camps, requiring you to assemble on Saturday, in the public square of Gundab, for the purpose of holding a council,† to settle the claims upon you for

* The *Zept Beg*, is an Afghan functionary, whose duty it is to see that all fines are paid, and all confiscated property duly sequestered and appropriated.—See *Elphinstone's Caubul*.

† These councils, or *Jeergas* are the meetings of

blood money. Here," said he, exhibiting his whip, "here is my symbol of office; and here," showing a large turquoise ring, engraved with gilt characters, "here is the deputy's signet. On your heads be it. I have spoken."

"May you always have strength to sit in your saddle, and may you never be the bearer of worse tidings," replied Abdoul. "But how is this? By my father's beard, you speak of claims. How can the lion have claims upon the lamb? We are poor men, tent dwellers; we have nothing but our flocks, our sons, and daughters. But God is merciful. If he has taken from us our children, and our brethren, if he has heaped ashes on our heads, by the blessings of Ali, he will recompense us."

"*Allah Kerim!*" rejoined the other. "Though you are Shiites, no doubt he will whiten your faces in due time. But, by the elders of tribes who are summoned by the Khans or chiefs, to settle local disputes. Their decisions are generally obeyed, and terminated by amicable adjustment or the submission of the aggressing party.—*Ephinstone's Caubul.*

Zept Beg's soul, you must first pay your debts."

"Debts say you!" exclaimed several of the other guests. "What debts? Have we not paid before hand for the pastures, on which our flocks feed, during the hot season? We owe nothing. What law is this?"

"We are no Cazies, Mollahs, Mufftis, or Mohtesibs," answered the messenger, "all we know of the law, is to carry its mandates. Swift horses, hard roads and tight waist-belts, are all we care about. Whether we take out a dress of honor, or bring in a dead head, it's all one. The law travels in our girdles, not in the recesses of our brain. Our tongues are the trumpets; the Naib is the trumpeter. What else can I say?"

Thereupon he rose up, and instantly mounted his horse, observing that he had to proceed some farsangs distant, either to fetch home the ears of two culprits, which were due to the Cazy, in virtue of certain crimes, committed by the delinquents, or to confiscate

the property of the head of the village, for not looking to their punishment.

Before he departed, some of the party gathered round him, and one of them again addressed him, exclaiming:—

“ Well spoken, brother ! *Mashallah* ! you are an active, and prudent man, as becomes your station. May caution always sit on your saddle bow. But before you go, you may as well untie your tongue, and tell us, what are the claims you speak of. We are ignorant as blind kittens. We know nothing.”

“ Blind !” retorted the messenger, gathering up his rein, “ you must not only be blind as moles, but forgetful as the monkeys, which the filth eating Brahmins of Benares, allow to commit whatever pranks they please. Is it not true that you, and yours have slain eighteen men of different tribes, amongst whom is the favorite son of the Sirdar, *Al Ashram* (slit nose,) Khan ?* Not to mention divers ears, and fingers cut off, eyes driven in,

* The Sirdars in general are military men, and governors of districts, appointed by the King.

and teeth knocked out. Did not Hossein, on whom be God's peace, strike the first blow? Do you call that nothing? Make your account. You shall have justice to a hair. All things have their price. *Inshallah!* You will find it amount to a tolerable sum."

Thereupon, he leaned over his saddle, and striking his heels into his courser's flanks, quickly disappeared amidst a cloud of dust.

As soon as they were reseated, and each had taken a whif or two from the large common pipe, which was handed from one to another, a grim looking old shepherd, named Shir Akram, exclaimed, "By the prophet's head! by the soul of Ali! whose dogs are these Soonites, that they should laugh at our beards, after such an unheard of fashion? Are we hogs, that these infidel followers of Omar should cut us up for luncheon. *Barrak allah!* There is law, or there is no law."

"May the unclean curs be tucked under Satan's arm-pits," said another. "They weigh blows by the stone, and justice by the drachm. Is it not an abomination?"

Certainly," responded a third, "a most foul abomination. Our blessed prophet has ordained that, when man cannot obtain redress from man by law, he must measure it out for himself, by sword or fire."

"Who is there amongst us, whose heart does not burn for his slaughtered kinsmen?" ejaculated a fourth.

"None! none!" was the general reply.

"Events, every one knows, are in the hands of Allah; but judgment, and deliberation are in those of his creatures," said a fifth shepherd. "We are men, and they are worse than dogs. Shall we eat their dirt, and say thank you?"

"*Astagferoolah* (God forbid,) May their fathers be burned," exclaimed several voices.

"Justice is on our side," observed the first speaker, "and if we cannot obtain it by fair means, we will seek other modes of retaliation. The old Mollah, and grey bearded Khan promised fair play. It was a registered oath. They must abide by it, unless they

would taste of eternal fire, like the two liars.* Yes! abide by it to a hair, or our gifted men shall eat out their livers.”†

“Our loss,” observed Abdoul Ali, “is greater than theirs. Eighteen only of the ill begotten curs, died by our hands, whilst twenty-one of ours have fallen. They who smote must pay the balance. We, it is, who are entitled to blood money.”

“Bravo! bravo!” shouted out the whole circle.

“May your ewes, and she goats produce two fold. O Abdoul Ali!” said a stalwart young shepherd named Zye Muldud, addressing Gulabi’s father. “You are a brave and prudent man, and have often attended

* Al Aswad and Moseilama, two competitors of Mahomed, who are generally called, “the two liars,” in order to show the falsehood of their doctrines.

† It is a common belief, among the Afghans that there are individuals, who by fixing their eyes on others, and making certain signs, have the power of destroying their livers. A process not much differing from the belief in animal magnetism.

the meeting of the elders. You carry the law under your cap. The breath of your knowledge has frequently blown the seeds of fortune, upon our tribes, and converted the channel of justice in our favor. You possess your wise teeth. But look!" added he opening his mouth, "look! I have lost one of mine in the battle. What is the price?"

"Three women," replied Abdoul. "One with, and two without dowries, or their value in cash or kind."

"*Mashallah!*" retorted the other, "let me have the cash. What should I do with two portionless women. I would rather the filthy dentist should draw me five teeth, than have to maintain one of their cursed women. Besides, they would doubtless fob me off with some buffaloe waisted, old Shaitan's mother, as ugly as a she camel. No! No! women are *bosh*. I'll have the money. How much is it?"

"You are a prudent youth, Zye Muldud," exclaimed Shir Akram. "You do well to prefer ready cash, to old women; the law says that each portioned woman is worth

ten tomaums, and the unportioned to a fourth of that sum. So that your tooth may bring you in fifteen; wherewith you may purchase a wife to your own taste.*

“ I know nothing of law,” said another youth, when the last speaker paused; “ but if it be true, that a tooth be worth the price of three women, how much is the blood money for a life ?”

“ *Inshallah !*” answered Shir Akram, “ we will soon cast up the reckoning. We are here under the shadow of the *Pushtoonwullee*,† whereby it is enacted, that a dead man is worth twelve living women, six with, and six without dowries. The value of each death may therefore be taken at seventy-five tomaums. The balance being in our favor by three, we have a claim to thirty-six women

* A tomaum is equal to eleven shillings English. It is the ordinary custom for men to purchase their wives according to the reciprocal wealth, and station of the parties.

† The Pushtoo or Afghan law, which is founded in a great measure upon the Shirra or Mahomedan code, and adapted to local usages.

or two hundred and twenty-five tomaums, to be equally divided amongst the families of the slain, according to the rules of the tribes. Then comes the account of the teeth, ears, noses, fingers and wounds, above and below the chin. All, as the *ademdjik* (little fellow) said, have their price."

"The compensation for a tooth is not so bad," ejaculated Zye Muldud; "but who is there, when he sits down to supper, that would not rather have his teeth in his mouth, than a virgin of paradise in his tent? By the beard of Hossein! Women are common productions, but teeth will not grow like cucumbers."

"True!" exclaimed Abdoul Ali, who, as before stated, had also lost one of his teeth. "True! A wound may heal or be concealed, but a toothless man is like an old dog. An ass may see down his throat. He is eternally dishonored. Vengeance on that account never sleeps. All the world knows the story of Mir Alem, who married the sister of Feth Khan, as a compensation for the tooth, which

he knocked out with his battle axe. But the latter, nevertheless slew his brother in law, upon the first propitious occasion."

"Bravo! Bravo!" exclaimed a dozen voices, "Feth Khan is a proper man."

"But what is the damage for the rest?" demanded Zye Muldud. "We must cast up our account, and be on our guard, so that the rogues may not outwit us. We are shepherds and they Khans, and to obtain justice in Caubul, a man must either possess a strong arm, or the *seng i fars*," (philosopher's stone.)"

"Let us see," rejoined Abdoul. "Then clapping his hands for Koshrou, he bade him fetch his *kullumdaun* (case with writing materials.) For it chanced that he was not only able to write, but, from dealing with the Cashmerian wool merchants, he had a tolerable knowledge of arithmetic. "Let us see," continued he, "placing his paper on his knee, twenty-one killed at seventy-five tomaums, that makes one thousand five hundred and seventy-five or thereabouts. Two teeth may

be reckoned at two hundred and twenty-five, three ears, one nose, and a hand, each worth six women, may be set down at one hundred and eighty-seven, besides thirty skull wounds, each worth one woman, so that the whole amounts to two thousand and seventeen, more or less."

"Quite correct," exclaimed Shir Akram, twisting his large moustaches. "We will attend the counsel, and with the blessings of Ali, will obtain redress. If we fail, we will appear before the *Sirdar* (governor,) with fire upon our heads, in token of extreme grief; and if that does not succeed, by the souls of all the blessed Imam Zadehs, we will carry fire and sword into their hearts and hearths."

This assurance was received with loud applause, and the shades of twilight having given way to darkness, the signal was given for night prayer. The whole party therefore kneeled down, some on carpets, and some upon their outspread girdles. When this duty was accomplished, they rose, and with the usual exclamations of *Vadah!* (God

be with you,) *Allah esmarladek!* (God preserve you,) *akcham Khair* (may your night be refreshing!) they mounted their horses, and departed to their divers camps.

CHAPTER XIII.

“ THERE is a period allotted for all things ; a period for fasting, and another for feasting ; the austerities of the Ramadan are succeeded by the festivities of the Bairam.* There is an

* The Bairam is called *Id al fetr*, or the feast of breaking the fast ; it commences upon the first day of the month of *Shawal*, that is upon the rising of the first new moon after that of *Ramadan*. This feast, like the Christian Easter, is observed with great rejoicings, and lasts from three to five days. The word *Bairam*, literally means a fête or holy day in Turkish, thence a common saying is ; *her güne bairam deguil*, “ Every day is not a holy day.” The lesser *Bairam*, called *id al Kourban* or feast of sacrifice, commences upon the 10th of *Duh' Chajja*, and lasts two days. It is so called, from its

appointed time for bewailing the departed, and another for rejoicing with the living.

“In young hearts, the shafts of affliction are like the Monsoon’s storms. Terrible and desolating, but quickly sped and followed by increased fertility; the traces of the lightning’s furrow upon the dark vault of heaven are not more transient than the stings of sorrow in the mind of youth. Allah is bountiful and just, he has ordained that the early blight shall not spread its canker over the ripening fruit, and thus prematurely convert green youth into decrepid old age. He has visited us with afflictions to temper our pride; he has rewarded us with gladness to solace our insignificance; he has crossed our path with precipices, that they may serve like sunken rocks, which render mariners more circumspect.

“The dispensations of Allah are all just, all being the period when the pilgrims at Mecca slay the victims in the valley of Mina.

wise; each created object springs from the fountain of his exhaustible beneficence. The breath of his purity it felt from the rising to the going down of the sun. All matter partakes of his essence, and is susceptible of good; if the sons of Adam convert it to evil purposes, the penalty must rest with them; for although it be written, that God has created mischievous things, it is manifest that they were formed for good purposes; either as beacons to the righteous, or as chastisements for the wicked. For who can deny that the evil thing which turns to a good issue, is not in itself beneficent; even as the good thing, propelled to impure ends becomes unclean, through man's perverseness.

“Far be it from me, however, to fall into the heretical doctrines of the Suffites, who look upon the universe as *alem Khaaial*, (a world of delusion,) who think that pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, sour and sweet, light and darkness, and all other worldly circumstances, moral and physical, are but the conventional results of delusion; who pretend that evil can-

not exist, since all things emanate from God, and consequently, that God being the quintessence of all perfection, and utterly incapable of generating evil, his creatures must inevitably partake of divine infallibility. Founding their doctrine upon predestination, the first great point of the true faith; they assert that Allah, being all merciful, and omnipresent, cannot have foredoomed his own creatures to eternal fire, for errors entailed upon them by his own hand; as that would be a palpable act of cruelty and injustice, in direct opposition to his glorious attributes. Consequently they assert, that as men's actions are inscribed in the preserved tables, immutable and unavoidable, there can be no sin, no evil, and that the doctrines of our creed relating to chastisement, and the record of evil deeds in *Seggin*,* are in manifest contradiction to God's wisdom and ineffable bounty.

* *Seggin*, literally a dungeon, is the book in which the misdeeds of the wicked are said to be registered. It is so called, because *Seggin* is the supposed abode of Satan and his host.

“This is a grievous error, for although men’s actions are registered in the book, and although the fore-knowledge of Allah extends to their minutest circumstances, He has left them to the influences of their own will. He has said, ‘I know what you will do, but I do not command you to do it; there is good and evil in the world; there is honey and poison for the soul; if you drink of the latter, on your heads be it. I have given you eyes to see, ears to hear, and minds to reason withal; my behest is, that you always do good; if however ye go astray, and fulfil my predictions, ye prove the justness of my fore-knowledge, but not the contradiction and harshness of my fore judgment.’

“When Israfil shall sound the last trumpet, when the blast of examination shall rouse the quick and dead with its terrible echoes, these heretics will see their error; when they are sunken below Satan’s jaw, and are eating of the fruit of *Al Zackum*, they will open their eyes, and repent them of their delusion.”

“The public, for whom I am now endeavour-

ing to translate your story," said I, somewhat impatiently, "will not care a date shell, whether you believe in the epicurean doctrines of the Suffites ; whether you are as rigid an observer of the Sonna, as the most orthodox Mufti of Stamboul ; or whether you are as strict a Shiite as the Mollah Bashi of Ispahan. In future, therefore, I will beg of you not to fall into these controversial digressions, but confine yourself to your tale."

I heard my new acquaintance contemptuously utter to itself, "infidel!" and then in a loud voice it continued its narration.

Some time had elapsed without Gulabi seeing any thing more of her soul's idol. As the lilly of the valley, or tuberosc languishes for the refreshing dews of night, so her bosom panted for the presence of her adored. She had loved her brother tenderly whilst living, and had mourned him sincerely when departed. But a new sentiment, to which her heart had hitherto been a stranger, now engrossed her whole thoughts, and weaned them from the cities of the silent, to the abodes of the living."

Her father having proceeded to hold council with his friends, she went forth, upon the eve of the day appointed for the meeting, and seating herself upon a rock at some distance from the camp, mournfully watched the rays of the setting sun, as its golden tints lit up the rich landscape, or flickered upon the minarets and terraces of Gundab, near which arose the turrets of Mir Zeeman's castle.

The five prescribed days of mourning being ended, and it being also the Sabbath, she had attired herself with more than wonted care. She had put on her richest apparel, and adorned her raven hair with strings of coins, intermingled with crimson blossoms from the pomegranate, and clusters from the yellow jessamine. There being no one to observe her, except Al Sejil, the angel who registers the accounts of men's actions, unless perhaps it was one of the Ryots, who being a slave, of course, counted as nothing, she laid aside her hood, and showed her head, which could only be likened to the dark night, spangled with a thousand glittering stars. So beautiful did she

appear, that the envious roses drooped their blossoms, jealous of the nightingales, who deserting the gardens, perched around my mistress, and poured forth their strains in homage to her budding charms.

But notes more sweet than those of the bulbul now fell upon her ears. From the bosom of a neighbouring thicket, the tones of a Persian lute, accompanied by a voice, gentle and harmonious as that of Israfil to the blessed, was borne upon the breeze. It sung of hope, joy, and the bliss of lovers. Gulabi felt a thrilling, delicious fever circulating through her veins, she listened with beating heart and thought herself in paradise.

Of a sudden, she was aroused by the approach of footsteps, and ere she had time to veil herself and retire, a stranger stood at her side. For a moment, she flattered herself it might be Mir Zeeman, but although she scarcely dared to lift her eye upon the intruder, a single glance sufficed to show, that the person before her, was the very reverse of the young Khan in looks, though by the costliness of

his dress, he was apparently equal to him in rank.

Allah has shown the wonderful extent of his power in the shape and contrast of the things he has created. He has placed the hideous rhinoceros in the same forest with the graceful antelope; he has bidden the lovely rose to shed its fragrance by the side of the nauseous hemlock; he has commanded the gentle dove to skim the same element with the ravenous vulture, and the hideous crocodile to cleave the same wave with the gold scaled carp. He has made man after various images, some white, some black, some red, some resembling eagles, some rams, and some snouted like unclean swine; but Mahomed Al Ashram Khan, for it was he who stood by Gulabi, resembled neither bird, beast, fish or reptile. His nose, as his name indicated, was split up the middle, or rather the spot where a nose ought to have been grafted, was occupied by two dingy orifices, whence a filthy cut ran down to his mouth, and divided his upper lip, which was as thick as that of an Æthiop.

The latter defect might have been concealed by his beard, but his chin was nearly as barren as a garden stripped of its foliage by caterpillars, being only sprigged here and there with a few straggling, grizzly hairs, resembling packing needles ; his eyes were not larger than the berries of the mountain ash, and much of the same flaming colour, whilst three or four dead white spots on his cheek showed that his blood was tainted with the hideous *ala*, (leprosy).*

As some compensation for the defects of his visage, his stunted figure was athletic as that of a Stamboul porter, his strength was prodigious, and his shoulders broad enough to carry a pair of camel panniers.

His dress was also extremely rich : on his head he wore a black, gold crowned Afghan

* This was probably not the leprosy, but the disease of the beard, called *mentagro*, (*varus montagra*), so named because it attacks the chin and cheeks, *quoniam a mento ferè oritur*. It was known to the Romans, and is mentioned by Pliny, as a new and frightful malady, which disfigured the face.

skull cap, encircled by a costly shawl; his shirt of white Persian linen was concealed by a tunic of crimson silk, embroidered with gold flowers, and ornamented down the front and sleeves with rows of sugar loaf buttons, and loops of gold cord. His ample trowsers were of violet coloured silk, embroidered in silver, and his boots of shagreen leather, tasselled in front, and worked over in various flowery patterns. Round his waist, a long narrow shawl of rich cashemerial stuff, wrought in the most brilliant designs, held his jewel hilted poignard; his shoulders were protected from the sun's rays by a loose mantle, decorated with filagree buttons and tassels; a cord of crimson silk with gold bosses and knots, held his curved sabre, the purple velvet scabbard and mountings of which were ornamented with a profusion of precious stones.

Beneath the shade of the forest, stood several of his mounted retainers, one of whom, seated on his Lord's superb Curdish horse, kept its blood in circulation by riding it in circles, ac-

according to the custom of the Afghan grooms ; a second led his greyhounds ; two others carried upon their wrist a couple of *Shah Bazi*, (royal falcons,) hooded and furnished with leather leggins to protect them from being torn by the brambles ; a fifth held his double barrelled European fowling piece, which he had received as a present from an English ambassador, on his way to knock his head at the threshold of the Balla Hissaur at Peishwer.* The Khan had in fact gone forth to enjoy the pleasure of hawking partridges, when his own eyes, sharp as those of his falcons, discovered game of a more inviting kind.

“ *Mashallah !*” exclaimed Al Ashram, rudely laying his hand upon Gulabi’s shoulder, and tearing the veil from her face, “ the beauty of Zoleikha might have been transcendant ; but

* The *Balla Hissaur*, is the castle at Peishwer where the Kings of Caubul occasionally resided. It was in this fortress, afterwards destroyed by the Seiks, that Mr. Elphinstone’s mission was received in 1809.

had Joseph set eyes on you, Kitfer the Egyptian would have swallowed most astonishing filth, even though old Jacob had devoured his son's hands, instead of merely nibbling his fingers ends.* *Poof!* who was Zoleikha; she was not fit to be your slave?"

Thereupon he attempted to sully her cheek with his horrid lips, and even to rend open the upper part of her garment.

"Let your servant depart in peace!" replied Gulabi, trembling from hand to foot, and vainly struggling to escape from his grasp; "are you an unbeliever, that you thus transgress the law? Allah has given you power to protect, not to oppress."

"Well said, child!" rejoined the Khan, "that is my intention; come with me: you shall be the rose of my harem: my other women

* Kitfir, a corruption of Potiphar; according to the Mahomedan tradition, Joseph being sorely tempted by the blandishments of his mistress, the spirit of his father Jacob appeared to him, and bit his fingers, which brought him to his senses, and preserved him from seduction.

shall be your footstools, you shall be as the *koh-i-nour*, (mountain of light,) diamond, amidst pebbles.* *Inshallah!* you shall command them, me, all ; it is an oath !”

“ By your mother’s soul, my Lord ! let me be gone,” answered the maiden, “ have pity ! if my father were to see me thus unveiled, he would curse his child.”

“ May your father be burned,” retorted the Khan. “ What are all the fathers in the world to Al Ashram ? By the Padisah’s beard, my dogs shall defile their graves.”

“ *Allah Kerim !*” exclaimed Gulahi, looking at him with mingled disgust, and filial pride, “ if my father were here, you would not dare utter such words. Your people have already felt the strength of his arm.”

“ And who is this mountain Roustam ?” replied Al Ashram smiling contemptuously,

* *Koh-i-nour*, this beautiful brilliant, as large as a pigeon’s egg, belonged, until his death, to Runjeet Sing, Maharajah of Lahore. It was extorted from Shah Soudja, ex-King of Caubul. Runjeet Sing bequeathed it, at his death, to one of the religious temples of his dominions.

and clapping his hands at the same time, as a signal for his retainers to approach. "Who is this lion eater?"

"Who?" ejaculated the maiden—"why Abdoul Ali the father of Hossein."

"What, he who slew my son?" roared out the Khan, his small red eyes sparkling with fury, and his long yellow teeth, protruding through the slit in his hare lip. "By the prophet's beard, my stars are propitious. They have thrown a twelfth of the blood price in my way. But what is the Afghan law to me? Possession is more than law. Once within my harem, we will see whether these shepherd curs will dare yelp at my gate."

"Allah protect me!" exclaimed Gulabi, in a paroxysm of terror.

"Hola! hola! come hither," continued the Khan, addressing his followers and casting his sinewy arms round the struggling maiden's waist. "Be quick! tether this young *doomba*. Lift her upon a saddle, and let two of you deliver her in safety, to Ib'n Ergedji,

the chief of my eunuchs. Begone. Let the rest follow me to the chace."

Upon this, two of the attendants jumped from their horses, untwined their girdles, cast them round Gulabi, pinioned her arms, covered her head, and in despite of her tears and outcries, dragged her towards a third who stood ready to receive her on his saddle.

But ere they could accomplish their purpose, a youth in the dress of a shepherd, with no other arms than a stout staff, and a kind of guitar slung over his shoulders, sprung like a ray of light amongst them. Felling the two ravishers to the ground, he seized Al Ashram's gun from the man who held it, and cast himself before my mistress, who, in an instant discovered her beloved Mir Zeeman. Then levelling the weapon at the Sirdar, he swore by the waters of paradise, that he would send a bullet through his heart if he offered further violence.

The Khan's followers now drew their scimitars, and prepared their matchlocks, but Mir Zeeman coolly exclaimed: "Sheath your

swords, and down with your fire-arms, or by the soul of Omar, I will pull the trigger. Your chief's blood be upon you."

"*Bismillah!* Am I less than a dog? Am I smaller than an ant, that you dare thus spit on my beard?" roared out Al Ashram. "Is the Sirdar nothing in the land? Slaves! Are you all cowards? Fire! slay! kill! I say. On your heads be it."

Notwithstanding this command the attendants, who knew the courage and address of Mir Zeeman, and feared that he would not only execute his threats upon their master, but reek his vengeance upon themselves, remained motionless; whilst Al Ashram in a paroxysm of fury stamped, tore his splendid tunic with his two hands, and blasphemed in a manner that was sufficient to startle Eblis, and make him stop his ears with the mud of *Al Hawiyat*.*

"Calm your fury Al Ashram Khan," said Mir Zeeman. "I have sworn by the Caaba to

* The lowest dungeon of hell. Literally a deep pit.—
Notes to Sale's Koran.

protect this maiden even to death. Mount your horse then and depart. Let fly your hawks upon the wild birds, but leave this dove in peace. You are a Sirdar! A governor! Your duty is to enforce the law, not to infringe it. How can you expect the ruled to bend the knee to justice, if the rulers set it at defiance? *Barrak allah!* You are a great man. There are few more powerful. Do not turn your breast from the things that are right, and lessen your shadow by acts of violence."

"Seize! kill! kill them both!" roared out the infuriated governor. "What filth is he uttering? What *bosh* is this that he is cramming into our ears? Fire, I say, or I will impale your bodies on red hot spears."

Alarmed by this menace, two or three of the retainers brandished their scimitars, levelled their matchlocks, and seemed disposed to obey, which Gulabi perceiving, she cast herself before her defender, generously resolving to shield him with her body. But Mir Zeeman, softly putting her aside, and bidding her fear not, exclaimed,

“ Gently ! As you love your lives, move not a hand or foot. Are you all mad. Listen ! I am Mir Zeeman Khan ; I am something ; I am not born to swallow your nastiness. By the prophet’s grave, beware ! If you do not desist and retire in peace, I will shoot. *In-shallah* ! I can die but once, but I will not fall unrevenged.”

“ The girl is mine by the law of retaliation,” answered Al Ashram, somewhat staggered by the youthful Khan’s resolution. “ Whose dog are you that you should stand in my way ? My son fell by the hand of these Kaffirs. By my soul, I will have his price, and this is but a twelfth part of it.”

“ Let the Cazy decide that,” replied Mir Zeeman, “ and if she be yours lawfully, the will of Allah be done. But until that is settled, you shall not lay a finger upon her, although you were the Padishah himself. What ? Are the Afghan people mere chaff, that the king’s officers should bruise their heads ? Are they slaves or dirt, that you should close the book of justice upon them ?

By my eyes, your arrogance knows no bounds, you play the king with us. *Wullah!* You Kizzilbash Lords make Sultan Mahmud's name hateful."

"Hogs, sons of hogs, seize, kill the traitor," replied the infuriated Sirdar, as he drew his own sabre, and reckless of Mir Zeeman's threats advanced towards him.

What might have happened, Allah only knows, but at this instant, one of the grooms galloped up with his master's horse exclaiming, "I am your sacrifice. I am nothing. My Lord's word is law. But see! By the Sirdar's shadow, see! There is a troop of armed people descending the mountain track. They are of the girl's tribe. They are many, and we few. Our Khan's life is too precious to fall by such unclean hands. Mount, my Lord! The blind Kaffirs will fight like tigers for their cubs. See! They couch their spears, and bend over their saddles. In Allah's name be quick!"

It was as the fellow said. A party of about twenty mounted shepherds, well armed and

headed by Gulabi's father, were seen approaching at full speed, with the intent, as it turned out, of passing the night at Abdoul's camp, on their way to the council.

In despite of his passion and disappointment, Al Ashram thought it prudent to follow his attendant's advice; he therefore vaulted into his saddle, and muttering vengeance against Mir Zeeman, set spurs to his steed, and dashed into the shades of the forest.

Scarcely had he disappeared, ere Gulabi threw herself upon her knees, and kissing the hem of the youth's garment, enthusiastically thanked him, for saving her from a fate more terrible in her idea, than that from which she had been rescued a few days previous.

Mir Zeeman had scarcely time to raise her from the ground, and to utter a few expressions of tenderness, ere Abdoul and his companions reached the spot. They had seen the Sirdar's people ride away, and observed Gulabi upon her knees before the youthful Khan.

Perceiving that she trembled from head to

foot, and that her eyes were still filled with tears of emotion, they thought that Mir Zeeman, whom they instantly recognised, in despite of his disguise, had been guilty of violence. Without waiting, therefore, to ask any questions, Abdoul drew forth his pistol, and exclaimed. "Hound! dog! Son of a burned father! Are you not content with slaying my son? Must you seek to defile my daughter? What! Are we goats, that you come to insult our women, under our very beards? By the blood of the martyr Hossein, I will have vengeance."*

"*Kin! Kin!*" (vengeance,) re-echoed the other shepherds, and before Abdoul himself could execute his threat, Zye Muldud unslung his long gun, and discharged it at the heart of the defenceless youth.

* The Shiites and all Persians pay peculiar veneration to the memory of Hossein, who was murdered on the desert of Kerbelah, between Medina and Kufah. The anniversary of his death is celebrated with peculiar solemnity and mourning, during the month of Moharrem, with which the Moslem year commences.—*Morier*.

A piercing shriek from Gulabi rebounded from rock to rock, in response to the echo of the shot, as regardless of her father, and the presence of so many strangers, she sprung forward, and casting herself upon the body of the fallen Khən, encircled him in her arms, as closely as the vine tendrel clings to the drooping willow.

But Allah is merciful! The messenger of death had been foiled in its errand. It had encountered the hilt of Mir Zeeman's dagger. Although struck down by the concussion, he was but little injured. Disengaging himself, therefore, from the weeping maiden and regaining his legs, he raised his voice, saying,

“ Brothers! are you mad? are your eyeballs dissolved? Cannot you distinguish between black and white—between the saviour and the spoiler? Do not cast away the key of discrimination. It is true, I may have killed your son in open combat, but not until he had forestalled the price of blood, by slaying the friend of my heart. Besides, have I not balanced the deed by rescuing your daughter from the grasp

of Al Ashram? There is justice in all things. Had it not been for me, the maiden would have been torn from you, quicker than the news could have reached heaven."

"It is even so!" exclaimed Gulabi rising and folding her arms across her bosom. "By my mother's grave, by Ali and the twelve Imams, it was he who rescued me, the other day, from the serpent's jaws, and but a moment past risked his life to tear me from the clutches of the blood-drinking Sirdar. By my soul, it is so. Let your wrath fall upon me, therefore, and not upon him!"

"Good," replied her father, returning his pistols into his holster. "I do not rush forward biting and snapping without sense, like a dog driven mad by the simoom.* No one ever said that I was like one of the Pagan Hindoos, who put on their yellow garments and devote themselves, by terrible oaths, to kill and destroy all whom they encounter. I have not discarded reason from my breast.

* Hydrophobia is supposed to be produced by this pestilential wind.

The law does not declare that a life saved shall be the balance for a life taken. But no matter! I am no brute. Mir Zeeman Khan you rescued my daughter from death and dishonour. *In-shallah!* I will not be ungrateful. Come to our camp. I am a poor man; I have no *Meh-man Khaneh*, set apart for strangers;* but you shall taste of my salt and eat of my bread. Your life shall be as mine. Fear not! come! it is an oath by the Koran."

"Allah be praised," answered Mir Zeeman. "You are a sensible and generous man; you shall not sow your seed on barren soil; you have studied the words of the sage, who said, that the patience of the poor is preferable to the liberality

* The laws of hospitality are so strictly observed in Afghanistan, that every village, castle, and even camp has its *khaneh*, (lodgings,) for guests, where they are entertained either at the expence of the community or proprietor. In the town of Rochester there exists an establishment of a somewhat similar kind, which the founder endowed for the reception of poor wayfarers, with this proviso, as the inscription bears, that they be neither rogues, lawyers, or other evil disposed persons.

of the wealthy. If it please God I will recompense, though I cannot accept your hospitality. I must return home; I know the Sirdar's revengeful spirit. His son and I were bosom friends, we were of one breath; but now there will exist a feud to the death between us. I must put my followers upon their guard."

Then casting a look of mournful tenderness at Gulabi, he took his departure, greeting Abdoul and his companions with the accustomed *Khodah Hafiz i shumah*, (God preserve you.)

My master now led his guests to the tents, where they picketed their horses in two parallel lines outside, rubbed them over with coarse hair gloves, tethered and padlocked their fore feet, fed them with barley mixed with strips of sugar cane, and covered them with rugs to keep off the night dews. After this they sat down to a frugal supper of curds, cakes, dried fruits and milk, and having smoked for a short time, each man said his prayer, placed his saddle for a pillow, rolled himself up in his cloak and betook himself to rest.

CHAPTER XIV.

Al Tarek, had not yet ceased to illumine the regions of air with its piercing brightness,* ere Abdoul and his friends shook sleep from their eyelids, mounted their horses and set out for Gundab. Each being careful not to omit saying the *fatehat*, as well as to invoke the blessing of Allah upon their future deliberations, by repeating their profession of faith.

* *Al Turuk*, the morning star.

† The *Fateha*, or *al Fatehat*, as before observed, is the first chapter of the Koran, of which it is looked upon as the quintessence. It is designated by various titles, such as the prayer, the chapter of praise, of treasure, of infallibility, etc. It may not be uninteresting to give it at full length. "Praise be to God, the Lord of all creatures, the most merciful, the King of the day of Judgment.

Galabi, who was now more deeply enamoured than ever of her deliverer, abandoned herself the while to those delicious hopes, whose Elysian dreams open a blissful prospect of never fading happiness, to such whose hearts are entranced by the impressions of first love.

Previous to the day of the chace, before her eyes had encountered the soul subduing glances of Mir Zeeman, her breast had been ignorant of any other affections than those which the force of nature attracted towards her father and brother. Before that, it is true, she felt that there was an indefinable craving, a void in her bosom. But gay, fluttering, heedless as the spangled butterfly, she laughed, frolicked and talked of becoming the inmate of a stranger's harem with as much indifference, as if she were regardless how she were disposed of. Until then her sorrows and her wants were those of an infant raised by a passing cloud,

Thee do we worship and of thee do we beg assistance.
Direct us in the right way, in the way of those to whom
thou hast been gracious: not of those against whom
thou art incensed, nor of those who have gone astray”

solaced by a transient sun beam. A new shawl girdle, a fresh blown rose, a cluster of the swelling blossoms of the anemony, sufficed to captivate her affections, and assuage her wishes. Her ears required no other music than the bulbul's notes, and her eyes no other charms than the mountain scenery. She who, like the modest sensitive plant, formerly recoiled at the approach of strangers, or shrunk with terror from the uplifted scimitar, now rivalled Asia, the wife of Pharoah in heroism.* She now felt inspired not only by new sentiments, but by new courage. The enslaver of hearts had instilled his powerful excitements into the recesses of her soul. Thus she had dauntlessly encountered Abdallah's spells. She had no

* Asia, the daughter of Mozâhem; her royal husband, according to Ialla' dollin, and other Arabian writers, put her to the fiercest tortures for believing in Moses, all of which she supported with rare fortitude, until the angels taking pity upon her, carried her up alive to heaven. She is looked upon by Mahomedans as one of the only four perfect women. The others are the Virgin Mary, Kadijah, the prophet's second wife, and his daughter, Fatema.

less devotedly offered herself, as a sacrifice, to the devouring reptile that had menaced my life, and regardless of her own safety, had made a rampart of her body, that she might avert the danger which menaced her beloved.

By the bright eye of Ali, O Effendi, there is no sentiment more capable of rousing the mind to acts of self-abnegation and generous devotion, than that which now inflamed the heart of Gulabi. It softens man, and ennobles woman. It tempers the powerful, and strengthens the feeble. It encourages the timid, and curbs the bold. It blows aside the distinctions between the Khan and the peasant, and elevates the slave to a level with the sultan. Thus, although the modest tent-dweller was aware of the distance, that separated her from the rank of Mir Zeeman, and although he knew that Gulabi could neither bring a dowry of jewels, shawls and brocades, or boast of those genealogical glories,* so much prized

* The pride of ancestry, is carried to as great an extent in Afghanistan, as in Germany. Many instances are cited by Mr. Elphinstone, and other travellers.

in Afghanistan, she only thought of her adoration for him, of his beauty, valour and generosity; whilst he, setting aside all mercenary considerations, was resolved to place her in his harem, not as a slave, to be confounded with a herd of other women, but as his wife, the ruby of his treasure, the mistress of all.*

Not being able to lavish her tenderness upon him who had excited these new born sentiments, Gulabi gave ease to her overflowing soul, by expending a thousand affectionate expressions, and caresses upon me, as if I had been Mir Zeeman himself. She drew me to her side, cast her snowy arms around me, pressed me to her swelling, panting bosom, and imprinting a hundred kisses upon my forehead, addressed me by all manner of endearing names. She called me her angel of day,

* The romantic tendency of the people is also cited. This would appear singular, in a Mahomedan country, had we not examples, of the same romantic sentiments, in the Moors of Spain, of which their history, and poetry furnish a thousand traits.

her heart's light, her soul's king, her eyes, life, Sultan, and in short a multitude of other fond terms, equally descriptive of her unbounded attachment. Not satisfied with this, she wandered with me into the neighbouring shady ravines, and collecting a garland of roses, oleanders, myrtles, and other wild flowers, all allusive to her passion, she wove a chaplet, wherewith she decorated my neck. Not forgetting to bind it together with straws, in order to express how utterly her heart was enslaved.

The day was drawing to a close, when Abdoul returned from the council, and to judge by the state of his spirits, it was evident that matters, had either gone favorably for him and his friends, or that the meeting of elders, had terminated in the parties freely indulging in the forbidden juice. No sooner did he enter the tent, than summoning his wife and daughter before him, he exclaimed,

“*Mashallah!* did I not say that our faces would be whitened? What dogs are they, that they should hope to circumvent a Kiz-

zilibash ? By my soul they brought their beards to a wrong market. Ah ! Gulabi, my heart ! You are a fortunate girl. The star of good luck, glitters on your forehead. You have beauty and sense. With these two qualities, one does not require the philosopher's stone. Ah ! you giddy thing, there is not a maiden in all Afghanistan, more to be envied. You will soon repose upon a bed of tulips. Return thanks to Allah, and the prophet, that you have a father like me, and moon face like your own. *Tair* (destiny,) has filled our mouths with good things.*

“ Is the balance of blood money in our favor then ? ” demanded Abdoul's wife, Amima.

“ Balance ! ” retorted he, “ I spit upon balance. The khan's favor is better than all the law in the world. May he prosper ! ”

On hearing this, blushes deep, and ruby coloured, as if produced by dyes, pressed from the ruddy insect, which feeds upon the *atchik*,

* *Tair*. literally means “ *the bird*,” but it is used figuratively to signify fate, in allusion to the ancient custom of consulting the flight and entrails of birds to foretell events.

suffused my mistress's cheeks.* Her young and generous heart, which now was absorbed by Mir Zeeman, throbbed violently with love and hope. Already, she saw herself united to the Lord of her life, and had nigh fainted with excess of joy. In the exuberance of her delight, she took her father's hand, and after respectfully raising it to her forehead, affectionately pressed it to her lips. Amima, in the mean time, first stared at her husband, and then at Gulabi, being quite as much puzzled by his words, as by his daughter's manner. At length she exclaimed:—

“Eh! Eh! What has happened? By my head, what makes you, Gulabi, look as if the Padishah had selected you for his Sultana, and you Abdoul Ali, as if he had sent you a dress of honor, and a camel load of silver? What means this? I dare say after all,” added she, with a crabbed jealous expression, “that it is only some portionless woman whom you have got in exchange for your lost tooth.”

* *Atchik* is a plant of the indigo species, which produces an insect resembling the cochineal.

“ Perhaps so,” answered Abdoul calmly. “ What is written, is written. Teeth are no bad things, nor women either.”

“ Teeth !” ejaculated his wife. “ Teeth to be sure are all very well, but how shall we maintain more women. *Y Allah*, you talk of teeth and women as if the south wind bred curds and fruits, as plentiful as it did quails and manna for the Jew Moses. But of what use are teeth, and women, to us poor people ? It is preferable to be an ass, with a bundle of thistles before it, I say, than a Turcoman horse with no other food, than the desert sands. It would have been far better, if you had brought word that wool had risen in the Peshawar market. By my eyes.”

“ By your eyes ! why you are blind,” exclaimed Abdoul, interrupting her ; “ and as to eating, much filth, you seem to be swallowing. Wool !” added he. “ Curses on wool ! Silks, velvets, money, favor and exaltation are before me. The path of distinction is open. My star is on the ascendant. Who knows what I may become ? Destiny is ruler over all.”

"No doubt it is," answered Amima. "If that is all you have gained from going to the counsel, I see no great cause for boasting. Mud may be converted into a palace, if Allah pleases. But it will be long before you become a great man."

"By my beard, you are braying like an ass," retorted Abdoul.

"If I am an ass," answered she, "you had better lighten the burden of my ignorance. In the prophet's name! if your brains are not muddled, tell me what has happened. Why do you double the folds of your breast? Am I not your wife? Are we not like two almonds in one shell? Have I not a right to know?"

"All in good time, my soul!" rejoined Abdoul, with the same coolness. "To-morrow or next day you shall see. Until then suspend the current of your curiosity. Be contented, for the present, with hearing that a great man's eyes have fallen upon Gulabi, and that I am a partaker in his favor."

This ambiguous reply only served to aug-

ment Amima's curiosity, but her husband not being in a humour to satisfy her, answered :

“ *Mashallah !* The propitious hour will not be long coming. Is not that something to boast of ? ”

Then bidding his daughter fetch his water pipe, and reclining himself upon a camel hair cushion, he continued smoking, meditating and fingering the rosary, which hung to his right wrist, until it was time to sleep.

Amima no sooner heard him commence snoring, than she turned her attacks upon my mistress ; who, not without some reluctance, confessed her passion for Mir Zeeman, and accounted for her father's mysterious expressions, by saying that the young Khan had doubtless made overtures for her hand. Although Amima's vanity was well pleased, at her husband becoming father in law to so exalted a personage as the Khan, she could not help feeling a pang of jealousy. For Gulabi, not being her own daughter, she was exceeding envious of her good fortune. Indeed she did not take much trouble to conceal her feelings

as appeared by her exclaiming, "Wonderful ! wonderful ! By my soul, fortune has indeed crammed your mouth with abundance of split sugar canes. Eh ! what a miracle ! you have sown thorns, and gathered roses. No doubt, when you are a *Khanum*, with your slaves and eunuchs, you will scarcely condescend to notice your own shadow."

"*Ana Khanum*," (O mother and mistress) replied Gulabi, "do you take me for a *Yezedeh* ! a devil worshipper ?"

"Allah forbid," rejoined the other ; "but certainly, your head will be turned, you will become so proud at your good fortune, that you will not permit your step mother to rub her nose at the threshold of your apartment. Wonderful fine things you will no doubt receive from your bridegroom ; *Y Allah* ! it will be a rare sight to see the daughter of the Kaffir Thibetian decked out with silks, brocades and jewels, *ai doudu* ! who would have thought of your ever becoming the mother of Khans and Begg. I already see you riding in state to the mosques and baths, whilst all

the passers by, are ordered to turn their faces to the wall, lest they should pollute the great lady with their impure gaze. I and your sisters will be as dirt in your eyes, and yet you can neither dance, sing, or possess a single accomplishment to qualify you even for a dancing girl; astonishing filth your pearly mouthed Khan will be forced to submit to with such a wife. But there is such a thing as divorce in the land, so take care."

And so saying, the ill natured woman, who was as spiteful as a black scorpion, withdrew, before Gulabi had time to answer. She had scarcely turned her back however, ere sounds far different from her shrill accents attracted my mistress's ear. Soft, and melodious tones like those that had captivated her attention upon the previous day, again floated upon the night breeze. Her heart whispered that this could be no other than Mir Zeeman. Entranced, enchanted and thrilling in every vein, she listened with palpitating eagerness, and as her father appeared to sanction her passion, she thought there could be no harm

in approaching the spot whence the sounds proceeded. It was a serene and lovely night, well fitted to attune the soul to love. Balmy zephyrs fluttered in murmuring sighs through the perfumed foliage of the wild jessamine and scented willow. The torrent's surge, dwindled by the autumnal heat to a mere rill, now plashed in gentle cadence to the bulbul's song. The crescent lamp of God sailed bright and lustrous through a sea of fleecy, pearl tinged clouds. Myriads of sparkling orbs hung clustering in the liquid firmament, mantling terrestrial objects in a silvery veil; so light was it, that a purblind scribe might have decyphered the most crabbed handwriting by their light, save where the giant cedars and towering planes stretched forth their sombre shade across the vale.

Drawing her wrapper closely round her person, Gulabi cautiously crept from the tent, and proceeding some distance, paused to listen; but all was silent; either her senses had deceived her, or the notes had ceased. No other sounds were audible, than those of nature's

breath; with here and there the plaintive warblings of the bird of love. She lingered, however, in the hope that her ears had not spoken lies; but she was disappointed. Awed by the superstitious feelings common to the Afghans, she began to repent of her boldness, and fancied that the music was but the delusive artifice of the hideous demons of the waste, who were said to haunt the mountain solitudes.

“Allah is omnipotent! as a symbol of his power, he has created genii, devils and other malevolent beings. But of all mischievous creatures, the blood thirsty gholes are the most terrible; with fiendish malice they strive to allure travellers either by the deception of the desert smoke, (mirage,) which they fashion by day into the likeness of transparent rivers and tree sheltered lakes, or entice them into the wilderness at night, by filling the air with heavenly melodies. Thus they often succeed in ensnaring their victims, whom they tear limb from limb, and gorge upon their flesh.”

Although Gulabi had courage to affront the

“ Those lights, exclaimed they, have lured many travellers into eddies, where they continued to whirl round until they perished or were engulfed by the rapids. They are mere deceptions of the gholes, who flit every night above the dangerous rocks, or they are the spirits of the slaughtered Kaffirs, who thus seek to avenge themselves upon such true believers, as chance to approach their death place.”*

Fearing to advance, and equally dreading to turn her back, for it is supposed that the gholes have no power over those who boldly confront them, Gulabi stood riveted to the spot. At length having called upon God to protect her “ *from the mischief of the night,*” and having repeated the words “ *La Allah Illallah! Mahomed rassoul Allah,* (there is but

* The ignis fatuus alluded to by Abdoul, is mentioned by Burnes. That enterprising traveller witnessed the phenomenon of the lights upon the same spot where they were seen by Gulabi's father.

ment Amima's curiosity, but her husband not being in a humour to satisfy her, answered :

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one God, and Mahomed is his prophet),”* she summoned courage to return, and already reached a little thicket close to the tents, when a tall figure rose before her, and instantly incircling her waist with his sinewy arm, imprinted impassioned kisses upon her velvet cheek.

For a moment, she was so startled and confounded, that she did not know whether it was her lover, or one of the gholes. Her dread of its being the latter soon vanished, but this caused her little relief; for a voice, rough and harsh as that of a half grown buffalo bellowing for its dam, muttered in her ear :

“ Fear not ! my soul burns for you, you have reduced my heart to ashes. I have long adored you ; you are as beautiful as a young fawn, you are a carnation—a thousand carnations. I am your slave ; every hour of life is a new death to me.”

The moon’s rays now fell upon the speaker’s face, and instead of the stag-like beauties of

* This is the mussulman profession of faith already spoken of.

Mir Zeeman, they disclosed the wild and coarse features of Zye Muldud, the young shepherd, who had fired at the young Khan.

Upon discovering this, Gulabi replied not, but made every possible effort to escape from his grasp. It was in vain, however, that she struggled, he held her as a blacksmith's vice holds the heated iron. Finding herself nearly exhausted, my mistress at length exclaimed :

“ How is this Zye Muldud ? by my father's beard, you must be overcome with intoxicating drinks. O unfortunate man ! do you not dread Abdoul Ali's rage ? is his daughter like a mere shawl goat, that you could thus steal her for her fleece ? are you a plundering Kybeeree ; a vampire ? Unhand me, I say, or by the holy *Kehblah* I will shout for help.”

“ Do not kick up all this fuss, or look so angry,” answered the young shepherd without relaxing his hold. “ What filth is this ? Am I not a fit man for a husband ? Am I not an expert musician ? Who can draw sweeter notes from the lute ? Have I not flocks and tents ?

All I want is a beautiful wife—and that wife yourself. Come! my horse stands ready on the other side of the torrent; my friends are there to protect us. See how their match lights glimmer through the shade.”

“ I will sooner spring to the bottom of that gulf,” replied Gulabi.

“ That is easily done,” answered Zye Muldud. “ But you had much better cross quietly over with me. Before morning we can be safe in the territory of another tribe. Your father will not dare molest us. *Inshallah!* we shall be as secure as eggs under a hen.”

Gulabi was about to raise her voice for assistance, when he placed his brawny hand upon her mouth and added: “ Utter not a word, or by the souls of all the Imams, I will hurl thee headlong over the rock. I could cast my girdle round thee, and proclaim thee mine, according to the usage of the Dooranees; but as I have not the means of paying thy price, I shall carry thee off and laugh at their beards. Nay! by Allah, resist not. I will not be

thwarted, though thou wert the prophet's own daughter."

Then suddenly taking off his lamb skin cap and thrusting it over her head, eyes and mouth, so as to stifle her cries, he bound her arms with the strap of his powder horn, lifted her from the ground, and, in despite of her struggles, bore her towards the spot where he had left his horses.

In order to secure a direct passage across the chasm, which separated the two banks of the torrent, Abdoul Ali had recently felled one of the lofty cedars that overhung the stream, so that its two extremities rested upon the opposite rocks. By lopping off some of the branches and squaring the stem it formed a bridge, narrow almost as that of *Al Sirát*, but over which a person with firm step and steady head could nevertheless pass without difficulty.

On mounting the craggy point, serving as an abutment for this rustic arch, Zye Muldud measured the distance with his eye. Although his sandalled feet were as sure as those of a

mountain goat, he paused and gazed with fear and hesitation. To spring across, even as he had come, with the speed of a cat was nothing to him, when at liberty; but with both arms occupied by such a burden as he carried, the attempt was full of peril. The slightest false step, or uneven balance, would inevitably plunge him and the maiden into the abyss, which yawned black and forbidding at the distance of fifty ghez beneath.

Unwilling to lose time by descending the current, until he could reach the spot where the shelving banks and shallow waters admitted of an easy passage, he resolved to adopt another mode of securing his prize. He, therefore, placed her upon her feet, unbound her hands, lifted the cap from her eyes, and drawing his long knife bade her proceed silently, before him, under penalty of instant death.

It was an awful thing for one so deeply enamoured to be reduced to this sorrowful alternative, and to see all her paradise of bliss thus converted into a grave of sorrow. Her first impulse, therefore, upon recovering the use of

her voice was to shout aloud for aid. But Zye Muldud's weapon glittered at her heart, and paralyzed her tongue. Her next idea was to cast herself into the chasm, and to die faithful to Mir Zeeman. But her sturdy persecutor held her arms, and pushing her before him enforced compliance.

In vain she invoked Allah and the prophet. The night breeze and the deep mutterings of Zye Muldud alone responded to her sighs. Already she had nearly traversed half the distance, when the moon's rays, dancing upon the falling waters, joined to her fears and agitation, caused her head to turn giddy, and she would have fallen had not the shepherd supported her. It was a fearful sight to see them, as they stood upon the narrow path which stretched like a dark thread from crag to crag. The black outlines of Zye Muldud's giant frame, contrasting with the maiden's sylph like figure, gave him the appearance of Eblis driving the spirit of some unhappy, dishevelled sinner into the regions of eternal punishment.

Having somewhat recovered, Gulabi was

about to proceed, when upon a sudden a flash, like that of lightning, illuminated the torrent's edge, and the sharp, cracking explosion of fire arms, accompanied with yells of "dog! rascal! son of a burned father!" reverberated from rock to rock. A groan, loud, deep and agonizing instantly burst from Zye Muldud, who standing for a moment, with his hands to his breast, reeled—tottered and then pitched headlong into the gulf. In an instant more Abdoul Ali, followed by his sons and Ryots, bounded down to the spot, and with frightful execrations against their victim, and with menaces against Gulabi, rushed upon the prostrate tree.

Seizing my mistress, who had saved herself from destruction by clinging to a half cut branch, they brought her back, and would have put her to death, had she not cast herself upon her knees and sworn, in the most solemn manner, that Zye Muldud had used violence towards her, and that she had no other alternative but death or compliance.

The hand of Allah was visible in all this. He

often ordains that the most worthless creatures shall be instrumental to the most beneficial ends. Terrified at seeing my mistress thus torn from me, I scampered up and down bleating in a piteous manner. This had been heard by Koshrou. Dreading Abdoul's anger for permitting any of the flocks to stray from the fold, he had crept forth and witnessed what was passing. Hastily returning to the tents, he aroused his master, who seized his arms and flying to the spot, thus rescued his daughter.

When the morning's sun arose, the body of the shepherd was found at some distance, torn, mangled and nearly devoured by beasts of prey. May the pen of the most merciful efface his misdeeds from the register of the recording angel.

CHAPTER XV.

THE hour at which the first ruddy tints of dawn summon the faithful to early prayer, is a moment of rejoicing to all God's creatures. But this enjoyment was not the portion of Gulabi. Our blessed prophet, after defeating the tribe of Mostalek, in the sixth year of the Hejira, (about A. D. six hundred and fifteen), did not overwhelm his virtuous wife, Ayesha, with more unjust filth, for having imprudently returned to seek for the necklace of Onyxes, which she lost by the way side, on her return to Medina, than was lavished upon my mistress by Amima, and her daughters, for her conduct on the preceding night.* Every un-

* Poor Ayesha was accused of having gone back, not to look for her necklace, but to meet a certain person named *Safwan Ebn al Moattel*, the which not only caused a great deal of ill natured gossip, to the disparage-

clean term that jealousy, or ill nature could suggest, was cast upon her. If they had scoured the streets of Djelalabad, which has the reputation of being one of the foulest cities in the East, they could not have accumulated more abundant nastiness. One said she was polluted, so that no ablution would purify her. Another called her a she dog. A third compared her to a hen. A fourth upbraided her as a wanton, whilst a fifth named Mah Zyia, (moon light,) spat at her and rebuked her in bitter terms for causing the death of a youth who, next to the defunct Hossein, was admitted to be the lion eater of the surrounding camps.

The anger of the latter girl was in fact excusable. She was herself enamoured of Zye Muldud, who had once secretly squeezed her hand, and at the festival of new year, had presented her ment of her character, but also excited suspicions in the mind of her husband. However, as Mahommed thought it inconsistent with his dignity, to admit his wife's tendency to flirtation, he settled the matter by declaring, in the 24th chapter of the Koran, revealed shortly after, that the whole story was a falsehood. An admirable way of avoiding the embarrassments of Doctor's Commons.

with a garland of flowers; all of which she construed into the language of tenderness. So that when she came to hear of his death, she not only tore her own garments and hair, but flew like a panther at Gulabi's face, and being a powerful wench, would have ripped her beautiful features to shreds, had not her brothers interfered. It was high time that Mir Zeeman should arrive, and remove her, otherwise her life threatened to become so miserable, that she would have as much cause to deplore Zye Muldud's untimely fate as Mah Zyia herself.

Fortunately her patience was not long put to the test. As she was sitting in the inner tent mournfully assisting her sisters to weave a piece of woollen stuff, to the music of their revilings, her father entered and calling her, *ma' choika*, (my darling,) bade her attire herself in her best garments, the propitious hour, to which he had alluded upon the preceding evening, being nigh at hand.

Although Gulabi did not venture to ask any questions, Amima unloosened her tongue at a furious rate, and insisted upon the mystery

being cleared up. But the only reply she received was: "Patience, we shall see."

Although Gulabi's step mother, and sisters were ready to bite off their fingers with jealousy, they did not fail to gather round, and aid her toilet. In the first place, they combed out her long raven locks, which they divided from the forehead to the back, so that they fell down, like a shower of liquid jet over either ear. They then collected, and braided them together in two tresses, and having adorned them with gold coins and chains, intermingled with such wild flowers as were at hand, fastened them behind, with an ivory bodkin, after the fashion of affianced or married women.

Next, they tinged her eyes with antimony, and the palms of her hands with hena, and fixed upon her arm an amulet of cornelian, intended to insure a numerous progeny. After that, they put on her an under garment, of white Masanderan linen, embroidered round the chest, and wrists with coloured worsted;* trowsers of *culumcar* (figured cotton,) stockings of

* The peasantry in several parts of Spain use the

striped stuff, and yellow boots of Candahar leather.

A sprigged chintz tunic was then drawn over her person, and fastened across the chest, with worsted loops. A narrow shawl, of Bahawulpour manufacture, was wound round her waist; a black hood, trimmed with yellow fringe, was placed upon her head, and her blue veil or wrapper, being thrown over her shoulders, her toilet was completed.

The beautiful Zeinab, of whom our blessed prophet became so enamoured, that he caused her to divorce herself from his adopted son Zeid, and then took her to wife, could not have appeared more lovely, though decked out in all the splendour of paradise, than did my mistress in this simple attire.

Scarcely had she terminated these preparations, ere the neighing of horses, mingled with the tinklings of camels' bells, and the voices of strangers, were heard outside. Abdoul and his sons, who had likewise attired same ornaments, to their *casieas* (shifas.) A custom evidently to be traced to the same oriental origin.

themselves in their best raiment, then went forth, and were greeted by the new comers, with all manner of salutations, and complimentary inquiries, to which they answered by loud and repeated exclamations, of "*Allah Shukur!* (praise be to God.) You are welcome! Peace be with you! Are you strong? Do you digest well? May your faces be eternally cleared."

Thereupon the others replied, "We are your sacrifice. May it be auspicious! May they increase! May their dwellings be well peopled."

The chief of the messengers, who was now invited to sit down, then produced a bag of money, some stuffs, and other valuables, which had been sent as a present for Abdoul, or rather as the price for his daughter.

After coffee, and dried fruits had been eaten, and the usual pipes had been handed round, so that each took a whiff in his turn, my mistress was summoned to come forth, which she did veiled, so as to conceal all but her eyes. In vain did these eyes, wander in search of her

adored Mir Zeeman. She consoled herself, however for his absence, by recollecting that it was not the custom for bridegrooms to appear in person, upon these occasions.

The messengers being ready, and all preliminaries settled, Gulabi now bade adieu to her family, and with a palpitating heart prepared to step into one of the camel panniers, which had been sent to convey her to her new abode.

Abdoul, who in despite of his love of money and ambition, was a good kind of man at bottom, and extremely fond of his children, could not suppress his emotion, at the departure of his daughter. In the effusion of his heart, he swore by *Al Dorah* (the model of the Caaba, which is preserved in heaven,) that if she had anything to ask, it should be accorded, although it amounted to half his substance. But my innocent mistress, who considered herself richer in the possession of Mir Zeeman, than all the Sultanas in the world, richer even than Balkis, Queen of Saba,* who

* Balkis, according to Pocock, was twenty-second sovereign of Yeman. The presents alluded to were sent when

presented Solomon, with a thousand beautiful slaves of both sexes, five hundred bricks of gold, and a crown of precious stones, besides

she was summoned to an interview, by a letter, which Al Beidawi says, was carried to her by Solomon's messenger, the celebrated lapwing. In order not to be outdone in splendour, Solomon received the queen seated upon a throne entirely made of precious stones in an immense hall, built of gold and silver bricks; the pavement of which was transparent glass, laid over running water, filled with fish. The object of this latter singular flooring, was to make Balkis believe that she was about to step into real water, and thus to induce her to shew her legs. For Solomon, who was curious in these matters, had heard that Her Majesty's nether limbs were covered with hair, "like those of an ass." The stratagem succeeded. For Balkis no sooner approached the entrance, than she lifted up her robe, on purpose not to wet its costly texture, and thus exposed her shaggy ancles. Solomon, though mightily struck with the beauty of her face, was so disgusted at this sight, that he could not be brought to marry her, until some clever genii came to his assistance, and by means of a powerful depilatory, succeeded in ridding the Queen of this unrightly appendage.—So says the Arabic author, *Iallalo' dinn*.

an infinite quantity of pearls, musk and amber, replied that she had only one favor to ask. This was, that I might be permitted to accompany her as a play thing? I was therefore lifted into the same pannier, whilst four of our fattest tailed sheep were placed to balance us in the opposite hamper.

The latter animals were intended as a feast for the Khan's followers, who also received some other trifling presents. All things being settled, a sheet of crimson silk, fringed with gold, was thrown over the panniers, and we started off, amidst the firing of muskets, and shouts of *ba aman i khoda* (God preserve you.)

CHAPTER XVI.

THE shades of evening had already fallen upon the earth, ere we reached our destination, so that although an owl, during day, might have seen through the little grating made expressly in the panniers, an eagle could scarcely distinguish surrounding objects at that moment.

At length we reached a lofty wall, a high narrow door was thrown open, and admitted us into an outward court, which besides being embellished with gardens, fountains and kioshks, contained stables and sheds for horses and attendants. In this were many of the Khan's followers holding torches, among whom stood more than one in the dress worn by the

little messenger who had visited the camp, with others in coats of mail, well armed. It was evident, therefore, that Mir Zeeman was a man of great power and wealth; so that my mistress could not conceal her satisfaction at the idea of becoming the wife of so eminent a personage.

We then passed through a second gate, into another square, surrounded on three sides with buildings two stories high; here also were many of the chief's retainers; some smoking, some roasting pieces of flesh upon their ram-rods at a charcoal fire, some sleeping upon coarse carpets under the vaulted arcades that occupied one side, and others amusing themselves by playing at marbles, or fighting quails, by the light of paper lanterns.

Our escort having dismounted outside, delivered us over to the care of some men armed with sabres, shields and lances, who guarded a third door. Thence we passed into an inner court, overlooked on the north, by a long sculptured balcony, and upon the south by latticed windows, lighted within, and resound-

ing with sounds of music, and the echo of female voices; this was the harem, the end of our journey.

The camel having been conducted to the front of a low postern at the corner of one of the buildings, it was made to prostrate itself. The covering of the panniers was taken off, and a tall Abyssinian negro, with a most forbidding countenance, but dressed in a costly tunic of crimson silk, a broad turban of white and gold brocade, and a shawl girdle, in which glittered a jewel-hilted poignard, stepped forth and invited Gulabi to descend and follow him.

She complied, and as I sprung out at the same time, I heard shouts of laughter from above; even our grim attendant could not suppress his smiles, upon seeing his master's bride accompanied by so unusual a favorite.

“By the Khan's salt,” said the grumpy old rogue to himself as he passed the threshold, “our lord's favourite is evidently as great a glutton as a Vizeeree. She thinks she is

coming to a land of famine, and has brought wherewithal to make a kabob. This comes of falling in love with these wild Kaffirs.”

Gulabi did not feel offended at the last part of this observation, for she had always heard that the Kaffir women were the most beautiful of all the mountain tribes.

Our conductor, after shutting the door, led us up some marble steps into a spacious and lofty hall, the vaulted roof of which was supported by painted columns and adorned with arches of carved wood, finished with scrolls, inscribed with golden lettered sentences from the Koran. A crystal lustre, filled with coloured wax tapers, hung from the centre, and upon either side were several windows fenced with gilded lattices, and many doors sheltered by velvet and silken hangings. Along the walls, which glittered like stars, from being washed with *seemghil** (silver earth), were

* *Seemghil* is a kind of stucco or plaister, made of a white argillaceous earth, mixed with tin or silver filings, which give the walls a sparkling appearance. It

spread narrow strips of felt, serving as seats for attendants. The floor was of tessellated marble, and so slippery that I had much difficulty in keeping upon my legs.

Across the lower end of the apartment ran a partition of close lattice-work, painted and embellished with rosettes and knobs of gold, supporting silk draperies. We passed through an opening in this into a second hall, similar to the other, with this difference, that fifty sparkling streams sprung upward from a fountain in the centre, and then fell back in diamond showers to vivify a lapis lazuli basin, filled with golden fish; whilst the evening breeze, penetrating with the moon's rays through the lattices on one side, came ambered with the fragrance of a thousand flowers.* The intervals between the sashes were also fitted up with niches and shelves, upon which pyramids of china and crystal vases, containing pickles, sweetmeats and sugared almonds, were ar-

might be advantageously introduced in the vestibules of English private and public buildings.

ranged according to the fashion of houses in Khorassan, which are usually furnished with a *Zerf Khaneh*, (China Chamber.)

Gulabi had scarcely time to cast her eyes upon objects so novel and brilliant, at least, to one who had hitherto known no other abode than a black tent, and no other adornments than those with which the hands of the creator had embellished the mountains, ere the Negro drew aside a curtain, clapped his dingy hands, and threw off his slippers.

In a few seconds a door opened, and several females made their appearance. After a few compliments, the latter took my mistress under the arms, and led her through a passage into an apartment, the doors and windows of which were screened with costly hangings of Meshed velvet, whilst the walls, and ceilings were adorned with flowery frescos, and Persian oil paintings, representing various scenes from the Shahnamah of the immortal Firdausi. A rich woollen carpet, of Herat manufacture, tinged with the most glossy dyes, covered the floor. At the furthest end, were some silken

cushions, embroidered in gold, and ornamented with rich bullion tassels. Wax tapers, burning in mother of pearl sconces, illuminated every corner, their brilliancy being heightened by large mirrors, inserted in the panels.

As soon as Gulabi entered, the women conducted her to a small carpet of the richest Cashmerian shawl work, spread over the place of distinction, near the cushions, and respectfully bade her be seated.

The Negro then placed his right hand upon his breast, and addressing her, said, "Nightingale more melodious than the bird of a thousand tales; Rose more fragrant, than all the flowers in the garden of Timour Shah; you are mistress here. It is our Lord's pleasure, that you should be treated as though you were more precious than wood, upon the banks of the *Sourk Roud* (red river.)* We,

* This stream rises in the white mountains, and empties itself into the Caubul river, near Jellalabad. The country it traverses is so arid, and devoid of timber, that it is common to exclaim, If you burn the wood of Djagdolak, you melt gold.—*Burnes' Travels.*

and his other servants, are ready to do your bidding. These women are your slaves. They are less than nothing. If they offend you, clap your hands, say smite, and by the Khan's breath, I will cut off their ears."

"*Wailah ! tillah !*" exclaimed one of the females, who seemed to be the directress of the others. "By my heart, you would save them devouring an ass load of nastiness, if the operation would prevent their hearing the croakings of such an old raven as you."

"Silence ! Door Yanak," (pearl cheek,) retorted the Negro, with a voice and frown, that made Gulabi tremble. "Am I less than a dog, that I must swallow your filth ? Listen ! You are expert in the arts of the bath, and toilet, see that our master's selection be attired as becomes the favorite of so great a man. Let nothing be wanting. If she should ask for the pupil of your eye, obey !"

"I will answer for the Khan's being satisfied," answered Door Yanak. "He is a man ! *Mashallah !* he knows what beauty is. But you ! What can you know of such things ?

Allah Kerim! With such a form, and face as this, little art is required. O my soul! whoever saw such eyes—such cheeks—such lips?” Then taking off Gulabi’s hood, and wrapper she continued. “What are the Houri of paradise to this? Look at her cypress waist, her swelling, tulip form.”

“Enough! enough!” replied the grim superintendent of the harem. “Place a clog upon your tongue, and give the reins to your hands. You chatter faster than all the magpies in Zabolistan (Caul.) Our Khan will soon be here. If all is not prepared look to your mouths.”

“*Koorbanet i shumah* (we are your sacrifice) my Agha,” answered all the women, bustling as if they already felt the tingling of his slipper on their lips. Upon which the Negro muttered a few oaths, and left the chamber. As soon however as his back was turned, Door Yanak exclaimed. “Curses on the old devil—coloured infidel. His soul is twin brother to his face.”

“Why did Allah create such foul creatures?”

said a second. "His sting is as venomous, as that of a black scorpion," ejaculated a third. "Fifty such semi-demi brutes, would not make the twentieth of a man," added a fourth.

"May his father, and grandfather be burned," echoed a fifth. "*Oof!* I spit on his beardless chin. He is like a gun without a match."

Allah only knows how long they would have continued to exercise their powers of abuse had not Door Yanak made them a sign to desist; whereupon they pulled aside a curtain, and lifting up my mistress, conducted her to an inner chamber.

This, though smaller than the other, was equally well furnished, and contained a variety of costly dresses, and essentials for an eastern toilet, which were laid out upon cushions, or spread upon trays. These Door Yanak said, were intended for my mistress's use. She then fell to criticising Gulabi's attire, declaring that the materials were so coarse, and ill fashioned, as only to be fit for the tent of a mule-driver, or shepherd.

Whilst she was contemptuously employed in pulling off Gulabi's girdle and tunic, one of the other women approached with a salver strewed with sweetmeats, cakes, assafoetida gum, and preserved white rhubarb. A second offered her *salodeh*,* mixed with snow and quince sherbet, in a china bowl standing upon a saucer of silver filagree, studded with turquoise and opals, on which floated one of those exquisitely carved rosewood drinking ladles made at Astahbonat, in the province of Darabgerd. A third presented a tray of japan work, brought from Yarkend, on which were tastefully piled a profusion of Peshawer pears, Ghuzna plums, Candahar figs, and Caubul mulberries, garnished with gilded leaves, and intermingled with slices of Bokhara melon, and the celebrated seedless pomegranates of Bala Bagd, whose renown extends to the farthest parts of Hindostan. A fourth stood by with

* *Salodeh* is a kind of feculent jelly made of wheat pulp. It is mixed with sherbets and cooled with snow, and is not unlike the *gramolata* or *granita* of Italy. It is the favourite beverage of all classes in Afghanistan

a basin and ewer of rosewater, to pour over her hands; whilst a fifth held a fine linen napkin, on which was embroidered the following precept from the Koran: "*Eat of every kind of fruit, and walk in the beaten paths of the Lord.*"

Gulabi would, at that moment, rather have seen Mir Zeeman than all the costly garments and jewels which Shah Soudja al Moulk, king of Caubul, lost at the battle of Nimla, when he was defeated by the Vizir Feth Kan, who placed the Sultan Mahmoud upon the throne. She would rather have tasted of the delights of his company than of all the fruits and preserves from the southern deserts to the foot of the snow covered *Koh i Baba*.^{*} She would have preferred the fragrance of his breath to that of all the flowers in the hundred thousand gardens of Caubul. Nevertheless, she ate of these delicacies for fear of not doing justice to her lover's attentions, sighing the

^{*} The *Koh i Baba* (hill of the father) is one of the loftiest peaks of Hindou Cosh. Its absolute altitude, according to Burnes, is 18,000 feet above the sea level.

while, when she compared her own burning impatience with his delay.

“ But God is omnipotent !” said she to herself. “ I am an ignorant creature, and know nothing of the ways of the great. By my soul !” continued she, as her eye fell upon the jewels and dresses before her, “ these must be treasures from the cave of Jemshed, of which I have heard so much talk. The lord of my soul must have fished up the gold breeding stone, which the alchymist, Dost Mirdan Khan, cast into the Indus, after he had completed his famous gardens at Peshawer. None but magicians or genii could have produced such marvels. But, after all, what is the lustre of diamonds to the brilliancy of his eyes, or the whiteness of pearls to that of his teeth ?”

She had no further time, however, for reflection ; for her busy handmaids, having despoiled her person of all its vestments, so that she stood there like Eve, when Allah first formed her from the left side of the father of men, drew aside a curtain, and conducted her to a marble bath, erected in a large recess.

After unbraiding her ebon tresses, they immersed her in the water, and covering her with an ointment of that exquisitely perfumed clay, called *ghil i koshbui*, rubbed her for some time with coarse felt gloves. After that, they poured warm rosewater over her, and again rubbed her with a paste made of sweet almonds, musk, and powdered orange flowers. A second shower of rosewater was then gently thrown over her shoulders, and having reposed awhile, they lifted her up and placed her upon a couch covered with purple velvet. One then took an arm, another a leg, and enveloped her in soft linen towels, heated over a wicker basket, underneath which burned a charcoal fire made of aloes, cedar-wood, and odoriferous cistus. Being quite dry, they then kneaded her limbs, and cracked her joints, until they became as supple as the pliant branches of the sweet scented willow, and vied in whiteness and polish with the purest ivory from Mysore.

Door Yanak who, it appears, was equally well versed in the art of complimenting as in

that of preparing the toilet, now started back, and cried out, " Charming, most charming! did I not say that our Khan was a judge of perfection? can all the world produce any thing comparable to this? my soul! my heart! Who is there can look upon such charms and not faint with rapture? what are the heart ravishing images of Hafiz and Ferdausi? what are the ideal beauties of Sady to these realities? By the souls of the four perfect women, it is unfortunate that you did not live in the days of the prophet; if he had cast eyes upon you, he would have sent Ayesha, Khadija, Zeinab, and all his wives to the right about and married you. It was of you no doubt whom the poet thought when he exclaimed, '*The maidens with angel faces hide their diminished heads at the sight of her cheek. The damsels fragrant of jessamine burn with envy when they look at her curls.*' "

The only reply my blushing mistress made to this flattery, was to beg Door Yanak would hasten to finish her toilet. To which the other replied :

“ Softly, my Sultana, leave me alone for knowing how to render you fit to be transported to the couches of Paradise. Come, be quick! Kara Foutchy,”* added she addressing a fat Nubian slave, “ you are as drowsy as an over-fed Mollah. *Poh! Poh!* I understand how things should be done; *Mashallah!* there is not a woman in all Afghanistan, who comprehends her business better than Door Yanak; nothing shall be omitted.”

She then took a small pair of *tchetza*,* with which she did all that was requisite according to custom. Having finished, she replaced the amulet upon my mistress's arm and presented her a long sleeved, white *peerahun shahee*, (under garment), made of that beautiful transparent Aleppo linen which, from its fineness, is called royal shirting, and which was ornamented all over the chest and wrists with gold embroidery. Then she produced a pair of loose *zeer jamus*, or trowsers of amaranth velvet, worked on every side with black, purple, yellow and golden

* Black tub.

* Depilatory tweezers.

sprigs, studded with small pearls and precious stones; next came short stockings of the finest shawl, and over these a pair of slippers, the colour of which was not discernible from the quantity of embroidery and pearls.

After tinging her hands with henna and her eye-lids with surmeh, applied on the tip of a silver needle, they anointed her hair with sandal oil, and braided it into two plaits, interlacing them with strings of pearls and Trinchinopoli chains, the ends of which were collected so as to hang in festoons over her right ear, whilst a few crimson carnations and pomegranate flowers were stuck upon the opposite side.

Door Yanak now clapped her hands with delight, declaring that the head gear could not have been more perfect, had it been arranged by the sultan's celebrated slave Lallah Khaneh, whose reputation for dressing the hair of the Padishah's women had extended beyond the walls of the royal harem, and was the subject of more than one Pushtoo poem.

Nothing now remained but to put on the

outer garment worn by the women in doors, according to the Persian fashion; this consisted of a short jacket, not unlike those of the Hungarian hussars. It was of cypress green velvet, lined with crimson silk, of the beautiful texture called *lab-i-ab*.* The back, fronts, and sleeves were embroidered with various devices in gold, and ornamented with four rows of small filagree buttons, tipped with emeralds and fastened at the bottom with a clasp of precious stones, the cuffs were turned back to show the lining of brocade.

A shawl, which from its delicate quality must have been woven from the wool of some of my relations, was wound round her waist; a string of pearls, fastened by a beautiful Badakshan ruby, set in diamonds, was twined several times round her neck; two long pendants of emeralds and opals were attached to her ears, and a small lapis lazuli rosary

* The worms that produce this silk are reared and fed upon the white mulberry trees, which grow upon the banks of the Ochus near the city of Bokhara; thence its name *lab-i-ab* (border of the water.)

having been placed in her hand, her toilet was complete.

Although unaccustomed to such heavy and costly accoutrements, my mistress appeared as much at ease as if she had been educated all her life in the royal *anderun* at Tehran. Nor could she avoid feeling a certain degree of complacent satisfaction when, upon resuming her seat upon a *nummud* in the first chamber, she beheld her beautiful image reflected in one of the opposite mirrors. With a beating heart she now awaited the moment that was to announce the arrival of him, without whom, silks, jewels, and even life would be worthless and insupportable.

Door Yanak, who seemed to comprehend her impatience and was a very obliging personage, now made a signal to the other women to beguile the time with music. Thereupon one slave took up a tambourine; and another, whose beauty was enough to have made Gulabi thrill with jealousy, had she not placed the utmost confidence in Mir Zeeman's tenderness, seized her guitar, and accompanying it with

voice and action, sung some melodious verses, expressive of the alternate joys and languors of lovers, and the varying delights and anxieties that assail women's hearts, when their visions of felicity are about to be realized.

The last stanza was scarcely terminated, however, ere a noise was heard outside, and the ugly black entered. After examining my mistress, and expressing his admiration of her beauty, he announced the immediate approach of his master.

The roses of excitement now vied with the lilies of trepidation upon the damask cheeks of the maiden, and a thrilling tremour shot through her veins, when the echo of footsteps resounded in the passage. Door Yanak and the other women now exclaimed:—"Mashallah! may it be auspicious! may your shadow increase!" and disappeared, whilst the negro placing his hands upon his chest, bent his head and followed them.

Liberated from the presence of strangers, the impatient and trembling Gulabi now rose, and with a scream of joy flew to throw herself

into the arms of her beloved. But judge, my Agha! of the maiden's horror, when upon lifting up her eyes, she found herself clasped in the embrace of the hideous slit-nosed Khan.

"Enough!" exclaimed I, interrupting the narrator; "we have sufficient, methinks, for the present. We will, therefore, reserve whatever roses or other fragrant flowers still remain unfolded, for the subsequent portions of that bower of enjoyment which, in imitation of the three privileged heavens, whence evil spirits were first excluded,* I shall divide into as many portions."

"My head is on your threshold," replied the paper; "Allah is great. It is not for your slave to extend the tongue of opposition."

"Thereupon, I liberated the little quires from beneath the package of stationary, and

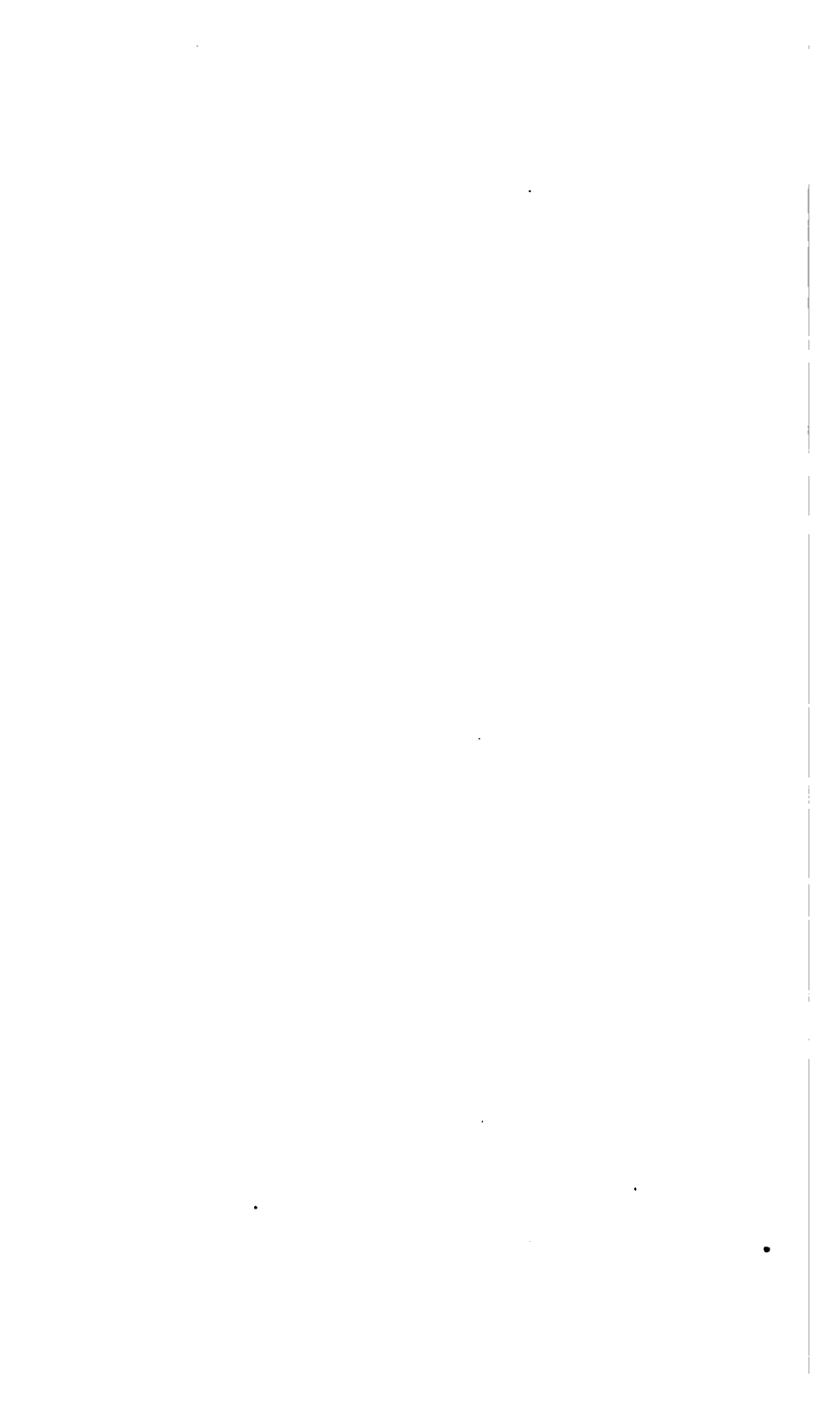
* Mahomedans believe that the devils, in order to spy and tempt the blessed, were permitted access to all but three of the seven heavens, until the birth of the Prophet, when they were excluded from the whole.

having placed them under lock and key, postponed to another night listening to the description of those adventures, an account of which will be found in the following volumes.

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THE
CASHMERE SHAWL.

AN EASTERN FICTION.

BY CHARLES WHITE,

AUTHOR OF "ALMACE'S REVISITED," THE "KING'S PAGE," &c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE

CASHMERE SHAWL.

CHAPTER I.

BEING eager to ascertain the fate of the beautiful maiden, whom we left in the clutches of the slit-nosed Khan, I seized the earliest propitious moment to liberate the marvellous tale-teller. Desirous to offer it encouragement, and to restrain it within those limits of veracity, so essential to a narrative of this important and delectable character, I placed it upon my table close to a copy of the Koran, the sanctity of which had been materially enhanced, not only by its having twice performed the wearisome pilgrimage from Istamboul to Mecca,

in the bosom of a Turkish Hadji, but by its leaves being stained with moisture from the sacred *Bir el Zemzem* (well of Zemzem); a fortunate ablution which had befallen it, through its devout owner's eagerness to drink from one of the cylindrical pitchers employed by the water carriers of the temple.

Gratified with this attention, my new acquaintance lifted up its voice and ejaculating a prefatory *Bismillah!* thus resumed its story :

“ Fortune sooner or later is sure to turn the balance in one's favour,” exclaimed Abdoul Ali, rising from his prostrations, after dawn prayer, upon the morning subsequent to his daughter's departure.

“ I beg pardon,” said I, interrupting the narrator at this moment. “ But how could you know what was passing at a distance, when you were shut up with your fair mistress within Al Ashram's harem? It is sufficiently marvellous that you should have been gifted with the powers of reason and memory without adding that of ubiquity.”

“ Unless you permit me to tell my story in my own way,” retorted the paper, “ I had better remain silent. If you dam up the spring at its source, how can you expect the mills of the valley to grind your corn? Can the racer reach the end of the course, if you stop the rider to ask in what pastures it was reared?”

“ As you please!” replied I, smiling at this logic, “ pray throw the reins upon your courser’s neck and proceed.” It complied as follows :

“ By the prophet’s sepulchre,” continued Abdoul Ali, “ this comes of spreading one’s carpet in a dry place. Was I not right, when I said that written events cannot be blotted out, and that my daughter was perhaps fated to become the partner of some great personage? A wonderful thing, by my soul, is this destiny. It carries a man forward, whether he will or not, like a pumpkin cast into the mountain torrent. So here I am, father-in-law to the wealthiest Khan in all Afghanistan. But why not? Does not royal blood flow in my veins? Am I not of the same tribe as the

world's centre, the Shah?* Is there a single Kajar, from the shadow of Allah himself, down to the lowest peasant, who is not more noble than the noblest Afghan? Although the ill-begotten ones do affect to trace up their genealogy to Afghana, son of King Saul. Poof! I spit on their ancestors. No one can tell whom they descend from, unless it be from the unclean tribe of Jews that was lost, Allah knows where.† But why should I trouble myself with the beginning? The end is all I have to look to. Allah be praised! the Sirdar is himself a descendant of the Kizzilbash and a Shiite. He has promised to advance my fortunes, and procure me the place of deputy to the Zebt-Beg. My duty will then be to finger all the money arising from fines and confiscations. May they multiply! *Mashallah!* water never flows over a meadow without leav-

* One of the titles of the King of Persia.

† Some writers, and many Afghans themselves, attribute their origin to this source. The Kajars or natives of Asterabad are of the same tribe as the present royal family of Persia.

ing some sediment behind. With a little attention, I shall soon fatten my soil. Does not the heap in the barn consist of single grains?"

Abdoul now issued from the small circle of stones near the tents, which, according to the custom of the pastoral tribes, were placed there to represent a mosque. Bidding Koshrou bring him a mat and a pipe, he seated himself upon a rock, whence he could look down upon the distant buildings that contained the lovely instrument of his projected fortune. Having lighted his pipe, he thus proceeded in his soliloquy :

“ Twig by twig birds build their nests. Inundations also are formed drop by drop. So, from one step to another, who knows how high I may ascend? I shall first dispose of my flocks for ready cash. They will fetch a round sum, and as for Zye Muldud's blood price, that can easily be arranged. The law ordains, that he who seeks to defile the harem of another may be killed like a dog, without any claim or penalty for blood money. It is justifiable homicide all over the world.

Well! with the sale of my flocks, I will purchase a fine house in Peshawer, and procure furniture upon credit from the merchants in the bazaar. With the profits of my place, I will buy slaves, horses and shawls. When I have become Zebt-Beg and exceeding rich, jewels and dresses of honour will pour in upon me. If fortune once digs a channel through a man's garden, the current of her favour is sure to flow like a mill-stream. So, for all I can tell, I may be made grand-vizir, the key stone of the kingdom—more perhaps. The fame of my wealth and power will extend to the remotest corners.”

Here Abdoul extended his legs and chuckled with inward complacency; then pouring forth two long columns of smoke from his dilated nostrils, he resumed :

“The *Shah in Shah*, the commander of the faithful,* the Sublime Porte, the Maharaja of Lahore, and twenty other sultans and potentates will demand my daughters in mar-

* The latter title is assumed by the King of Bokhara, the former by the King of Persia.

riage, whilst my sons will become rulers and Sirdars and espouse princesses. I shall be brother, father, uncle and grandfather to half the royal personages from east to west. Future generations will trace up their pedigree to me, as the Koreish do to Fehr, the son of Malec.* I shall not mix much in affairs myself, but pass my life in enjoyments that will make the blessed in Paradise lick their lips with envy. I will, however, construct gardens, palaces, caravansaries, and reservoirs for water, which shall exceed the magnificent wonders of the Emperors Akbar and Aurungzebe. I will, moreover, immortalize myself by building a mosque, more beautiful than the wonderful new mosque at Shiraz, and place upon it the following inscription in golden letters,

“In the name of the almighty builder ! Abdoul Ali Khan, whose shadow was longer than that of Adam, culled the choicest flowers of

* Mahomed was of the tribe of Koreish, which is considered the noblest in Arabia, and descending directly from Ismael.

the world, and offered them in homage to the Lord of day. Let this be a lasting record of his greatness upon earth. If any one should ask where he now is—Say—The angels sing his praises, beneath the throne of glory, to the right side of which he was transported upon the——' May that day come slowly!" added he interrupting his pompous self-paenegyric. "My beard is yet of one colour, and destiny will doubtless accord me time to accomplish these undertakings."

He had scarcely uttered these words, ere he perceived several armed horsemen advancing up the track, which led from Gundab: At the head of these was Mir Zeeman, bravely attired, and no less beautifully mounted upon a Turcoman horse, named Kousedjee (bird-catcher,) of the far famed Chibbergan breed, which is said to descend from Raksh, the celebrated mare of Roustam.

"*Allah Kerim!*" exclaimed Abdoul, as he saw the youthful Khan emerging from amidst the gloomy cedars, and pine trees, like the gorgeous sun bursting from behind the moun-

tains. "By the beards of all the Kajars, this is the consequence of being something. See! Khans—Beks, and who knows who else, come to offer their congratulations, and rub their noses against my threshold. By the edge of the black stone (Caaba), thou art a clever fellow, O Abdoul Ali, and have taken thy beard to the right market. Mightily fond has this Mir Zeeman suddenly become of thee. No doubt he has heard of thy good fortune, and comes to ask thy assistance. But thou must not lift up the skirts of familiarity. *Yok* (no)! Keep him at a respectful distance. Remember the appropriate story, once narrated to thee by a Derwish at Ispahan.

"'Abu Horiera,' said the holy man, 'used to visit Mahomed (upon whom be Allah's blessing) so often, that at last the prophet exclaimed, Come not every day, O Abu Horiera! that our affection may augment.'

"'How so?' retorted the other. 'Why, replied the envoy of Allah, do you not know that no one speaks well of the sun during summer, seeing that he shines all day. But

in winter when he is often veiled, then he is exceedingly beloved.’”*

By this time Mir Zeeman arrived within a few paces, curbed in his foaming horse, sprung to the ground, and saluted the shepherd, who, as if he was already inflated with the insolence of office, in lieu of advancing to meet his guest, merely rose upon his knees, and invited the Khan to seat himself upon the mat, on which he was reclining.

Without noticing this want of respect, or without other preface, Mir Zeeman spoke thus, “I am come to fulfil my promise. I said that you would not find me ungrateful. I am rich, and have some power.”

“May it increase,” rejoined Abdoul. “Thanks be to Ali! I also am no beggar. Fortune has whitened a part of my face, and will doubtless soon clear the remainder. Speak. I am your sacrifice.”

“The object of my visit,” replied the Khan looking towards the tents, “is to demand the

* The Derwish took his story from the Gulistan of Sady.

hand of your daughter in marriage. It is usual to employ friends or relatives upon such negotiations, but I prefer guarding the keys of my own designs."

Abdoul's eyes opened as wide as the sandal wood gates, which were captured from the infidel Seiks, and placed in the tomb of Timour Shah, near Caubul. Flashes of pride and contentment suffused his cheeks, as if they had been rubbed with Damaun madder. But he affected a grave deportment, and stroking his beard answered, "You are a man of discernment, O Khan. All I have is yours. I do not send forth my daughters naked."

"By my beard! I want nothing but the maiden's hand," responded the generous Mir Zeeman; "she is a treasure in herself."

"Allah has not been niggardly to her," replied Abdoul. "A signet ring might encircle her waist, and a hoop could not pass over her shoulders. Although you had three other wives she would become your favorite."

"Thanks be to the ruler of men's hearts," rejoined the chieftain, "I am not one of those

young men who, like nightingales, sing every night upon a different rose-bush. No! though I am wealthy, I do not intend to take other wives. My eyes and heart are centered in Gulabi."

"Gulabi!" exclaimed Abdoul, shaking his head and clenching his beard. "Gulabi! O, unfortunate! By the graves of all the prophets, you are come at a most unpropitious hour!"

"Unpropitious!" re-echoed Mir Zeeman. "What words are these? Do you take me for a blind ass, that I cannot distinguish white from black? Am I not aware what hours are good and what bad? *Mashallah!* I have consulted the astrologers. They pronounced the moment to be auspicious, and promised abundance and increase."

"*Alee mudud!* (Ali help me!) They laughed at your beard," replied Abdoul.

"Then I will pluck out theirs by the roots," answered the Khan. "But what do you mean? Explain."

"Allah is great!" rejoined the other. "Say! How can two racers win the same prize? Is

it not useless to throw stones at the tree when the dates are gathered?"

"What mystery is this?" demanded Mir Zeeman, his noble features darkening with anger, like the summits of the Sauliman hills, when the lowering monsoon gathers around them. "By my soul!" added he, "your words are beyond my wits. You speak like one who is besotted with forbidden liquors."

"In what dark corner have you been sitting, O Khan?" replied Abdoul. "Have you not heard that I am deputy to the Zebt Beg, through whose hands may Allah send fines and confiscations without end. Do you not also know that Gulabi is wife to the Sirdar? Whom may Allah—"

"Drag through the seventh hell," retorted Mir Zeeman, springing upon his legs, and angrily twisting up his moustaches.

"Softly! softly!" answered Abdoul. "What is ordained, must be fulfilled. There is no cause for passion. If you desire to become my son-in-law, praise be to Ali! I have still

wherewithal to accommodate you. There is my third daughter, Mah-Zyia."

"Do you liken me to a beggar's dog that I should eat the leavings of others? Am I an old leopard that you would cram me with cheese?" rejoined the Khan, his dark eyes glistening with disappointment and indignation.

"By the Sirdar's salt!" exclaimed Abdoul. "You are not reasonable. If Al Ashram Khan does not consider himself too great to marry one daughter, I see no cause why you should turn away the cheek of pride from the other."

"Married, say you?" replied Mir Zeeman. "The Sirdar married to your daughter? What offal are you devouring? He has already four wives — the utmost that the law allows. I come from the Cazy and Mollah Bashi; they know nothing of a divorce. By my soul, he has deceived you. He and the other Persian lords laugh at all faith. They are favourites with the king. They grow up, like the venemous

zahr-bouta,* under the shadow of the throne. By the breath of Omar, these Shiite rascals treat the world as if they were *Djihan Ghir al Gazi* himself.† But let them and the sultan look to their eyes.”

“ Ali help me !” again exclaimed Abdoul, who was inwardly wrath at hearing this abuse of his faith and countrymen. “ Do you forget who and what I am ? Is one of the fingers of government no more than a rotten twig in your sight ? By the king’s beard, these are reasonable words !”

“ I spit upon his beard !” retorted the choleric Khan.

Abdoul struck his breast three or four times in token of wonder ; but with a cautious regard to his own interests, answered : “ You have uttered unutterable things, O Khan ! But all matter has its price. If, therefore, you will

* The *zahr-bouta* is a noxious plant of the Arum species, alike deadly to man and beast.

† Conqueror of the world, the victorious ; one of the titles assumed by the Mogul emperors.

open your hand, I will shut my mouth. If not, I must unlock the gates of information to the Hircarrah Bashi, whose business is to collect and convey all news to the king's ears."

"Maledictions be upon him and upon all who serve him!" replied Mir Zeeman passionately. "May Soonite dogs defile their mother's graves! let the usurper look to his eye-balls;—he who is sharp sighted as an eagle to-day, may be blind as a new born whelp to-morrow."

So saying he beckoned to his attendants, sprung upon his horse, and galloped back to his own castle, which was situated upon the outskirts of Gundab about a farsang distant from that of the Sirdar.

No sooner did he arrive than he retired to the inmost recesses of the cool, under-ground chambers which he had carefully prepared for his intended bride.* Abandoning himself to

* Almost all houses in Persia and Khorassan are provided with these subterraneous suites of apartments

the violence of his passion he cast himself upon a carpet, and with all the emotion of despair ejaculated the following well known distich, from the poetical fountain of that immortal hero and sultan, Togrul Ben Erslan. “ *Yesterday the presence of my beloved delighted my soul ; to-day her absence fills me with bitterness ; alas ! that the hand of fate should write joy and grief alternately in the book of my life.*”

It was not, in fact, until the maiden was torn from him, that he discovered the full extent of his love for her and his hatred for the powerful rival, who he felt convinced had obtained possession of Gulabi, more from motives of revenge towards himself than from any affection he bore towards her. It was the first time Mir Zeeman had ever loved, it was the first time also that his desires had ever been thwarted ; his anger and jealousy redoubled also from Al Ashram’s being not only a Shiite to which the family retires during the great heats ; they are fitted up so as to correspond in comfort with the chambers above.

and a declared enemy of the Soonite faith, but one of the most undisguised persecutors of the Doo-raunees Khans, attached to the fallen fortunes of Soudja al Moulk, the deposed king. His brain bubbled, therefore, like a boiling kettle. Prince Selim, son of the Emperor Akbar, could not have been more furious when Noor Jehan, the beautiful Tartar shepherdess, the idol of his soul became the wife of the brave and noble Hindoo lord, Shir Afghan. Like Selim, his heart thirsted for his rival's blood, and nothing could satisfy him unless, like Selim, he immolated his abhorred enemy to his rage.*

An hundred different projects for recovering

* Selim, the second son of the Mogul Emperor who succeeded to the throne, under the title of Noor-ud-deen Mahomed Djihan Ghir (upon the death of his brother Prince Daniel in 1603,) was so desperately enamoured of this Tartar beauty, who was the daughter of Aiaas, a poor shepherd, that as soon as he had obtained the crown, he murdered her husband, and carried her off to his harem. She became Queen, and raised her relations to the highest posts of wealth and honour in the Mogul Empire.—*Brewster's Encyclopedia.*

his lost treasure flitted through his mind. At one moment he proposed disguising himself as a Derwish, and thus to obtain access to the Sirdar's castle; at the next he thought of waylaying and murdering him upon the high road; then again he determined to join Mookthar Oodulah, Meer Waez, and other disaffected chieftains, who were secretly plotting to overthrow Shah Mahmoud and his favourites, the Persian Sirdars, who commanded the troops and governed the provinces, to the exclusion of the hereditary and native Khans. But the former plans were not suited to his chivalrous character, and the latter was too tedious for his impatient temper; he resolved therefore to reek his vengeance in an open and summary manner upon the branch, and to leave the other conspirators to deal with the stem.

Clapping his hands to one of his attendants who sat outside, he bade him summon two of his most confidential followers.

"Listen, Eyoub," (Job) said he, when the first of these made his appearance. "Affix the wings of dispatch with the wax of secrecy,

take this signet ring, upon which is engraved the watch cry of our Soonite faith, *Dumi-char yaur*, (the lives of the Four Friends;)* mount one of my fleetest horses, and hasten to my brother Dost Ahmed Khan, and to such other chieftains as shall be revealed to you in succession; repeat to them the following words, 'The flower of the garden languishes for the refreshing dew; let the fountains pour forth their treasures. It is an oath by the souls of the four caliphs.' Let that be a token of him who sent you, *hookm-e-alee*, (it is a command.) Begone!"

Eyoub having respectfully raised the ring to his forehead, deposited it in the folds of his turban, and replying, "Upon my eyes be it," withdrew. Mir Zeeman then addressed himself to the second tribesman:—

"Habib! thou art a man of wit and intelligence. Few can extract sweeter tones from

* The Four Friends. A name given to Mahomed and the three first caliphs his immediate successors, who are venerated by the Soonites, but rejected as usurpers by the Shiites.

the lute or viol. The nightingales are envious of thy melodies, and true believers forget their prayers when thou singest. None can excel thee also in reciting poetry or telling tales. *Mashallah!* thou eclipsest Hafiz. When the current of thy words flows forth, the ears of listeners incline towards thee, as the sunflower turns towards the orb of day. They become mute and motionless, like the petrified bodies which are found in the enchanted city of *Barsa Ghilmis* (never come back), on the borders of lake Aral.”*

Habib modestly cast down his eyes and respectfully let fall the sleeves of his tunic over his hands, as his master thus complimented him. Being aware, however, by this preface that some important service was required of him, he answered: “The Khan’s praises are as grateful to my soul as the stag’s

* The name of this petrified city, whose existence is generally believed in Bokhara, is derived from the fate which is supposed to await all those who chance to enter its walls.

cup to the thirsty deer.* Let my lord command, and, by his salt, I would obey, although he were to order me to seek the snow-worm, which only lives amidst the regions of eternal ice, upon Hindou Cosh, or to cast myself headlong from the summit of the crags which overhang the *Daras i Zandan* (valley of the dungeon).”†

“ *Mashullah* ” answered Mir Zeeman, cramming a handful of coin into his favourite’s mouth, “ I know thy devotion and address. Hearken, then ;—thou hast skill in mimicry, and canst speak the dialects of these false Persian curs, as though thou hadst studied

* The leaves of this plant twist round the stem, so as to form a sort of cup, which retains the water, and is said to be sought after by the wild deer, who thus quench their thirst. It is called *ghik tchenak*.

† Amongst the natural phenomena of the snowy regions upon the summit of the Indian Caucasus, is found an insect resembling a full-grown silkworm, which dies upon its being removed from the snow. The valley of the Dungeon is one of the defiles of the same range, between Caubul and Balk. The rocks are so lofty that the sun never penetrates ; thence its name.—*Burnes*.

in that hot-bed of science, the Khan's college, at Shiraz. Disguise thyself, therefore, as a Shiite minstrel, and proceed, in Allah's name, to the castle of Al Ashram; whilst thy tongue runs, let not thine ears and eyes slumber; seize all the news, ascertain the easiest point of access to the gardens and harem, learn the number of the rascal's followers and guards, see if they be vigilant on the watch, or whether they be disposed to pass the eve of to-morrow's festival, which is that of the feast of Abraham,* in rioting and debauchery. Enough! a whisper to the wise is better than a whole discourse to fools. *Ba aman i Khoda* (God preserve you). You are dismissed."

Habib bent his head, and kissing the tips of the Khan's fingers, retired; not, however, without swearing that his master should soon be as well acquainted with all that was pass-

* This festival is celebrated by the Mahommedans in commemoration of Abraham's intention to sacrifice his son. It is kept with great solemnity and rejoicing, as the Mahomedans attribute to Abraham the first possession and preservation of the Caaba.

ing within the Sirdar's castle as if he were one of the genii, from whom no secrets are hidden.

Ere Habib was prepared for his mission, Eyoub was already upon his road to the abodes of the different chieftains, with whom Mir Zeeman had formed a compact to assist each other at a moment's notice, no matter what the cause or consequence.

These preliminaries being settled, the young Khan ordered his retainers to make ready their defensive and offensive arms, and not to quit the castle. It being his intention to regale his friends with a splendid repast, his cooks and servants were directed to roast kabobs after the epicurean fashion of Caubul, and to prepare pilaws and chilaws with the celebrated *bara* rice of Peishawer, besides an abundance of stews, fricassees, and ragouts of game and venison.

CHAPTER II.

THE sun had scarcely accomplished two thirds of its downward course, ere the watchmen posted in one of the lofty *baudgeers* (turrets)* overlooking the surrounding country, announced the approach not only of Mir Zee-man's brother, whom they recognized by his swallow-tailed banner of crimson and yellow silk, but of several other chiefs and their armed followers, who were equally known by their different coloured pennons.

* *Baudgeers*, literally "wind-catchers," are square towers having openings on each side, that admit and conduct air into the apartments beneath.—See *Fraser's Travels in Persia*.

Upon reaching the castle gate, the strangers were received in the outer court by two porters, who were attired in tunics of yellow chintz and red conical caps, with long staves of office surmounted with brass knobs. Thence they were conducted between two lines of armed clansmen to the second entrance, where four door-keepers, holding ivory headed wands, inlaid with silver, ushered them into the inner court, where they were welcomed by the official introducer of strangers.

Having dismounted, they were led to the reception hall, where the latter, who was intimately versed in the art of *nishet-oo-birkhdst* (sitting and rising), not only announced their titles and qualities, in flowing terms, to his master; but in order to obviate any mistake or breach of etiquette, respectfully pointed out the carpets and felts upon which each was to take his seat.

Mir Zeeman, who prided himself upon the purity of his Dooraanee's blood, and his adherence to the old Afghan customs, instead of merely extending his hands to his friends after

the formal manner of Persia and Turkey, not only tenderly embraced his brother, calling him "his soul and his breath," but grasping the other Khans by the shoulders, he pressed them to his bosom, and loaded them with compliments.

When each was seated, the servants presented trays of sweetmeats and sherbets, and the pipe bearer offered them kaleeans, the mouth pieces of which were of milky amber enamelled with flowers, the bowls of rock crystal filled with rose water, and studded with turquoises and opals, and the long tubes of the choicest cherry-wood from the groves of Samarcand. After each had taken a few whiffs—for the Afghans are not addicted to smoking like those buffaloes of Osmanlis, whose throats and noses are as impenetrable to fire as the chimneys of Frank steam-engines, the pipes were removed. Mir Zeeman then made a sign to the servants, who withdrew, closing the silken hangings of the doors.

When they were gone, Dost Ahmed, thus addressed his brother, "*Alhumdooktah!* my

soul! we have received thy token, and have hastened to thy summons. We are bound to aid each other in the hour of need. It is an oath not to be broken. Thy countenance is darkened! what has befallen thee? Do we meet for counsel or for action? Speak!"

"For both," replied Mir Zeeman; "by the shadow of Omar, I ask you first to unlock the tongue of advice, and then to clench the hand of assistance."

"Our brains and swords are yours," rejoined several voices, "unfold your purpose."

"I am aggrieved and insulted," answered Mir Zeeman; "the Sirdar, our common enemy, has spat upon my beard. He would fain have taken my life two days past, and now he has thrust his hand into my bosom and robbed me of my soul. Nothing is sacred to him. He would defile the Caaba."

"*Lahnet be Shir be pir* (maledictions on the saintless lion). The unorthodox beast is accursed," ejaculated Dost Ahmed. "What new pollution has he been guilty of? If the

lying red-head (Persian) has injured a hair of your beard, he must die."

"That is my intention," answered Mir Zeeman; "with your aid, brothers, and that of Allah, this night's supper shall be his last."

"You are a valiant man, O Mir Zeeman," exclaimed a middle aged Khan of grave aspect, named Jem' Akil (Shem the discreet), who sat tranquilly fingering the string of agates, which served him, both as rosary and poignard knot. "Allah has given you valour without compare. You are a devourer of men. But what can the courage of forty lions do against the hunter's toils? Prudence is a cardinal virtue. He who moves without discretion is like a mad elephant rushing upon spikes. Before we fire the gun, let us calculate whether the prey be within its range. A wise man has said, that when you shoot at your enemy, take care that you sit beyond his aim. Let us know the extent of the injury inflicted! we must have justice as well as valour on our side."

"Justice!" retorted another chieftain, "why

should we rub our noses at the threshold of justice, when the Sirdar makes mince-meat of it? Do not he and the other heretic oppressors of the land trample upon justice and law, as the husbandmen tread out grain with their horses' hoofs? Do not the foul Persians tell one lie that they may have the pleasure of adding a second, in order to rub out the fifth of the first? Have not their iniquities ripened the seeds of irritation and revolt to rottenness? Shall we present our eyes, that they may thrust them out with lancets? *Mashallah!* we have hands and swords. Let us carve out justice for ourselves."

"Well spoken, my heart!" answered Mir Zeeman. "Yes, I swear that if the turnspit dog were concealed under Satan's arm-pit, and defended by all the devils, I would drag him forth and trample upon his noseless face."

Then turning to Jem' Akil, he added: "By your mother's soul, you are a prudent man, O Khan!—a philosopher;—Lockman was not wiser. But of what avail is wisdom, when robbers attack the caravan? *Barrak allah!*

A single sharp sword is more useful in the hour of need than forty pointed tongues. A grain of powder in battle is better than all the axioms of the sages."

"True, true!" exclaimed Dost Ahmed. "What have we to do with wisdom? It is sufficient that our brother should require aid. None but cowards would shrink from his side. Let him lead, and I swear by the day of judgment that I will follow, although it be across *Al Sirat*."

"Bravo! bravo!" now burst from the other chiefs, who twirled up their moustaches, and turned their eyes scornfully upon the prudent Khan. But he, nothing daunted, replied:—

"*Allah shukur!* I commend your courage, and know how to respect my own oaths. But, brothers! is not success the first object of all enterprise?"

"He who says no! must be a most saintless ass," answered Dost Ahmed.

"*Y Allah!* then do not stop your ears with quicksilver, lest it glide down your throats, and choke your respiration," rejoined Jem'

Akil. "Let reason remain under the controul of sense. Remember the words of the bird of Shiraz: '*Purpose without power,*' says he, '*is mere deceit, and power without design is ignorance and madness.*'"

"A learned man without works is a bee without honey. A sword in the scabbard is no better than a woman's distaff," retorted Mir Zeeman, sneeringly.

"Praise be to Allah!" calmly rejoined the prudent Khan, "I am not one of those who show my face to the sun, and turn my back to the storm. But the Sirdar is powerful. He has troops and treasures at his command. His breath is a host, and he basks in the rays of the Shah's countenance."

"Which blinds him to his destiny," exclaimed Dost Ahmed.

"Take heed that in falling he doth not crush us beneath the ruins, like those whom the sightless lion eater, Sampson, destroyed in the temple," replied Jem' Akil. "Let us not knock our heads against the wall, like blind bats. Let us take examples of caution from

others, that others may not reap warning from our imprudence. Let us unite our forces to those of the other chiefs, who are preparing for a general revolt. The hour is not yet ripe. In the mean time, let us double the folds of secrecy, and cautiously watch the propitious moment. Vengeance need not sleep."

"Nor shall I until I have satisfied mine," responded Mir Zeeman. "No, I swear by the prophet's soul, by his beard, by his grave, and by those of all the Caliphs, that I will not close an eye until my sword has drunk his blood. He or I must cease to live before the Muezzin summons the faithful to morning prayer."

This assertion was received with loud acclamations by the other Khans, to whom he rapidly explained his grievance and detailed the steps he purposed taking upon the return of Habib. Adding, that, if the chieftains were disinclined to participate in the peril, he alone was resolved to attack Al Ashram's castle, although the sun on one side and the moon on the other were to rise against him.

“ Let this be the signal for a general rising,” continued he, “ and since it is determined to hurl the tyrant Mahmoud from the throne, let no time be lost! celerity is twin brother of success.”

The Khans, with the exception of Jem' Akil, loudly applauded this proposal, and it was determined that messengers should instantly be dispatched to apprize the confederates, and that the rebellion against Shah Mahmoud should commence that night with the destruction and plunder of the Sirdar's castle.

This being arranged, the signal was given for supper, which consisted of a countless variety of well-seasoned dainties, tinged with saffron and other coloured powders, and served in china dishes, ornamented with gold and silver foil. An abundance of the high flavoured wine, made by the Armenians of Caubul, was also handed round. For Mir Zeeman thought that a cup of the forbidden juice would be more efficacious in stimulating his friends to action, than a whole river of the waters of *Al Zemzem*, such as those with which the pious

Hadgi Meer Waez, besprinkled his followers, in order to excite them to fight for Shah Shoudja, and the true faith at the battle of Caubul.*

The dishes had been removed, tooth picks of olive wood presented, and ablutions performed; kalecans had again been brought in, and the wine cup had commenced to circulate freely, when the falling darkness announced the hour of *Khooftoon* (night prayer). Each chieftain rose, therefore, and dipping his hands into the fountain, which rippled at the end of the spacious banquetting hall, retired on one side and made his devotions.

Lofty tapers, in coloured glass or enamelled candelabras, ornamented with wreaths of artificial

* This took place, according to Mr. Elphinstone (app. p. 391) in 1802. Seyed Ahmed, commonly called Meer Waez, was a Dooraanee chief, of great sanctity. He was one of the most formidable, and active enemies of Mahmoud, and one of the most zealous of the Soonite faith. The water from the holy well, in the temple at Mecca, was brought by him, and employed in the manner stated in the text, and this with good effect, as the Dooraanees were victorious.

flowers, were then brought in and placed upon the floor, interspersed with dwarf fruit trees, in china pots; their varied productions being beautifully imitated in wax, and illuminated with small lights suspended from the branches, in gold paper sockets.*

The guests had scarcely resumed their places, when Habib entered. No sooner did he make his appearance, than his master welcomed him back, bade him be seated, and recount the issue of his mission.

Squatting himself upon his heels, in the submissive attitude of an inferior, Habib obeyed, and to the satisfaction of Mir Zeeman, spoke thus :

“The hour is propitious! The Sirdars’ followers are few. They execute their duty with the vigilance of blind men, and are so unsuspecting of danger, that a dog might defile their beards. Some also are gone down to fight their quails, against the retainers of another unorthodox Lord, whilst the rest are amusing

* The *Christ-baum*, or Christmas-day trees of Germany, are also illuminated in this manner.

themselves in honor of the coming feast. Ibn' Ergedji, the chief of the eunuchs, was so pleased with my singing, that he not only pressed me to stay and see the fire-works, which are to be let off this night, but led me into the *Khehout* (private gardens), to divert the women who sat behind the lattice of a pavilion. Thank God, I am no ass. I profitted by this occasion, to ascertain the easiest point of access to the harem, and by the help of the prophet, on whom may Allah shed interminable blessings, am ready to guide you to the Sirdar's pillow. I have spoken."

Mir Zeeman was so delighted with the skill and activity of his faithful servant, that he rose up, and not only filled Habib's mouth with preserved rhubarb, until the water streamed from his eyes, but calling to his purse bearer, he took a handful of coin, and added them to the sweetmeat. He then swore, that if ever Shah Shoudja was restored to the throne, his favorite should be rewarded with a dress of honor, and the place of deputy to the Hir-

carrah Bashi, that is to say, chief of the intelligence department.

Dost Ahmed, who seemed to be no less impatient than his brother, now rose, and striking his ivory heeled boots upon the pavement, said that it was time to prepare for action. An example followed by all the rest, excepting Jem' Akil, who, although he expressed his intention to join the others, earnestly adjured them not to endanger the common cause, by undertaking this premature adventure.

“Beware!” said he, taking from his bosom a small copy of the Koran, opening the leaves at random, and then turning back seven pages, as is customary when men resort to divination, by the book—“Beware, in the name of Allah, how you tempt destiny. See! This is the first passage upon which my finger rests. Listen! *‘The works of those are vain, therefore shall they perish.’* It is an evident sign—a warning.”*

* It has been stated in a former note, that great faith is attached by the Afghans, to this and other modes of

But Mir Zeeman, who was an acute man, and afraid lest this omen might produce an unfavorable effect upon the Khans, replied :

“ How is this O Jem' Akil? Are you not an orthodox believer? Who is more strict in the observance of faith and practice? *Wullah*, we are infidels in comparison with you. Do you not abstain from wine even in private, and do you not pray twice for our once? The north star is less true to the pole than you to the Sonna, (Mahomedan Code). How come you then to forget that divinations by arrows and lots are declared to be an ‘abomination of Satan.’ Has not our blessed prophet anathematized them? Poof! I spit on such forbidden things.”

The other chiefs, who were all more or less under the influence of wine and passion, applauded this taunt, to which the discreet Khan merely answered, “The sages have said that divination, which are appealed to, upon almost all important occasions, although in direct violation of the second and fifth chapter of the Koran, wherein fortune telling, and lots (gambling) are prohibited.

the ringlets of fair maidens are chains for the feet of reason, and snares for the bird of wisdom. Whoever yields to their blandishments, will find himself enthralled, like a fly with his feet in honey. Alas!" added he, "it too often occurs, that the imprudent are listened to, and the provident despised."

But these words were uttered to the winds; for his companions had already descended to the court, when their retainers were enjoying a copious feast of broth, and roast sheep, plentifully sprinkled with *bang*, and other fomented liquors.

It was a soul stirring spectacle to see these bold and reckless warriors, alertly springing to arms, and grouping round their Khans. The glare of the torches, and lanterns floating upon the ponds, adding to the brilliancy of their equipment, and the wildness of their aspect, as they eagerly bent their heads to catch their chieftain's words.

Though all were accoutered nearly after a similar fashion, the band of Dost Ahmed was most conspicuous both from his attire, and

their own appearance ; they being, for the most part, of the sect called *Ghazi* (invincibles) ; who devote themselves as champions for the true faith.

The Khan, who was little inferior to his brother Mir Zeeman, in beauty and prowess, wore upon his head, a small black and yellow Afghan cap, quilted and fenced inside with steel wire, and earguards of chain link, girded round with a rich shawl, on one side of which was a plume of those costly egret's feathers, that are only to be found on the flower breathing lakes of Cashmere. His jet black moustache was shaved in the middle, according to the Soonite custom, and his beard was combed, and separated on either side his chin, to show that he also belonged to the invincibles.

A short tunic of gold brocade, embroidered with various coloured flowers, and fastened across the chest, with cord and loops of gold, concealed a ball proof *sineh gir* (breast cover), of padded silk. A narrow rich shawl, hung gracefully over his right shoulder, and was then twisted round his waist. His wide trow-

sers of crimson silk, sprigged with gold, were inserted in boots of green shagreen leather, the piqued fronts being tasselled with gold bullion, and the heels shod with ivory.

His arms were a light oval shield, studded with silver bosses. Upon a rim of the same metal were engraved the following words from the book, '*As to those who fight in defence of God's true religion, their works shall not perish.*' A gem-studded, curved sabre, of the finest Syrian manufacture, lettered in gold, was suspended over his shoulder, by a crimson cord, whilst an iron headed battle-mace hung at his wrist. A pair of Georgian pistols, inlaid with silver, and mother of pearl, was stuck in his girdle, and a long, single edged Afghan dagger, of which the hilt was no less costly, than that of the sabre, kept them company. The whole were sheltered by a cloak of fine cloth, ornamented with filagree buttons, as large as Ghuzna plums.

The garb of Dost Ahmed's warriors consisted of hauberks of chain mail, over dark coloured camel hair tunics, tartar boots of

brown leather, blue shawl girdles, deer skin trousers, steel skull caps encircled with coarse shawls, and leopard skin cloaks. In addition to pistols, swords, and poignards, more or less ornamented, according to the wealth of each individual, they carried battle axes at their saddle bows, shields of buffalo hide embossed in brass, matchlocks, and light lances, tipped with red and yellow pennons, or long worsted tassels. Their necks, like that of their chief, were bare, and their moustaches and beards, trimmed in a similar fashion. Fire was in their eyes, strength in their limbs, and courage in their hearts. Many Ghazi had been known to perish, none to submit.

The chiefs, including Jem' Akil, having communicated their purport to the retainers, it was received with shouts of approbation by the whole; who not only considered it a sacred duty, to peril their lives for the Soonite faith, but promised themselves ample latitude, for indulging their predatory habits, in the pillage of the Sirdar's castle. They consequently set to work with eagerness to load their arms, to

examine the points and edges of their sabres, and to twine their head shawls securely round their caps, and under their chins.

Every preparation being completed, and the plan of attack arranged, the band consisting of about two hundred warriors, set out upon their expedition, favoured by a night of unusual obscurity. Although the strictest silence was enforced, no one omitted to repeat the *fateha*, or to proclaim his confidence in God, in the name of the four caliphs. In the meanwhile, if you have no objection, we will return to Gulabi.

CHAPTER III.

IF all the rice stalks of Mazanderan were pens, and the waters of the Caspian sea ink, they would be insufficient to describe the agonizing sensations of my lovely mistress, when, upon the morning subsequent to her arrival, she descended with Ibn' Ergedji, to breathe the air of Al Ashram's perfumed gardens. Her head seemed converted into a reservoir of water, her eyes into fountains, as seating herself by my side, her tears bedewed the violets, and her sighs shook fragrance from the adjoining roses. Alas! she was torn from the blissful regions of love, and immolated to the demon of ambition. Destiny had closed the gates of hope, and condemned her heart to an eternal dungeon.

But this was not all. In lieu of enjoying

the miserable consolation of being the Sirdar's lawful wife, she found that she was to be confounded with a multitude of other slaves, who, like summer flowers, were merely wrenched from their stems, to adorn the transitory feast.

Grateful would she have been to Allah had the Sirdar cast her aside like them, and permitted her to languish, unnoticed, in the remotest corner of his harem. But so great was the effect of her beauty, so captivating the influence of her charms, embellished in his eyes by her despair, and inflamed by the novelty of her bashfulness, that, he issued the unwonted orders, that the new play-thing should retain her apartments, and again prepare to receive him after night prayer. Ibn' Engedji was commanded at the same time to keep a watchful eye upon her, since his master had discovered that, although he possessed the rind, the kernel was with his hated foe.

Like most personages in his situation, who rejoice at, rather than compassionate the misery

of the hyacinth curled beauties confided to their guardianship; and who never suffer greater torment than when the moon eclipsing smiles of the latter fall, like the sun's beams, upon the hideous darkness of their own features, Ibn' Ergedji stood by, regardless of her agony; now mechanically knocking off the surrounding roses, and carnations with his ivory wand, and now casting looks of malice upon her, such as those with which Eblis regards the condemned souls, who compose his unhappy flocks, in the cinder strewed valleys of never dying torture.

Door Yanak, however, sought to dissipate her grief, by calling her attention to the delights of the gardens and to the splendour of her dress; the beauty of which was enhanced by a short black hood, fringed with pearls, a costly shawl tunic and a blue gauze veil, sprigged with silver flowers. Those who never have suffered from the scorpion's sting laugh at its anguish.

Door Yanak had never loved, therefore she could not comprehend the sufferings of Gulabi,

still less did she understand her aversion for the Sirdar, or imagine her not being elated at becoming the favourite of a man who, she said, was the most generous and liberal person in the world; although Allah had, in truth, been somewhat sparing to him of external embellishments.

But poor Gulabi remained inconsolable; and as the meridian sun gaily danced upon the gilded lattices and rippling fountains around her, she only thought of the hour when its lengthening shadows would again proclaim the visit of her hideous master.

Luncheon-time, after which it is customary to take a nap of one or two hours, having at length arrived, Ibn' Ergedji directed Door Yanak to conduct my mistress to her apartment, where she was regaled with fruits, sweet bread, hard eggs in painted shells, cold game garnished with gold leaf, *Keimek chah*, a sort of tea with butter in it, after the Uzbek fashion, and sherbets cooled with snow.*

* The Uzbek Tartars consume an immense quantity of tea, in which they infuse salt, and frequently grease

During this time I was left in the garden and amused myself by lunching upon the rich clover and young grass, growing upon the borders of the small pond, near which I was tethered.

It being the custom of the Sirdar's lawful wives to walk after they had slept and performed their afternoon devotions, none but their personal slaves and attendants were allowed to accompany them, so that Gulabi did not return with these ladies, who, with the exception of the Sirdar's eldest wife, the mother of his slaughtered son, made their appearance in due time.

The three wives, who were still beautiful, seemed to live upon very friendly terms and almost dazzled me with the splendour of their dress, which I had an opportunity of examining, as their slaves spread their carpets in an open kiosk, close to the spot where I ruminated. Here they seated themselves and partook of refreshments, consisting of fruits, sweetmeats and *salodeh*, presented to them in or butter. The use of sugar or milk is little known.—
Burnes.

trays covered with embroidered napkins ; whilst half a dozen little black pages, in rich vests of red and gold tissue, and sky blue silk trowsers, stood behind them, sprinkling rose water, and cooling the air with large fans, made of peacocks' feathers. A small water pipe, of the most costly Shiraz manufacture, was then placed before them and whilst each, in their turn, applied the amber headed mouth piece to her coral lips, some of the female slaves sung, played and danced for their amusement, and were rewarded with sugar-plums, and morsels of the favourite white rhubarb. The little black boys were then directed to try their skill at the game of *khossye*,* which so exceedingly diverted their mistresses, that they almost rolled on the ground with laughter.

Having enjoyed these sports for some time,

* This game, which is a favourite amusement with persons of all ages, consists in taking up one foot in both hands and hopping against each other. It is played by individuals, or parties, with bounds. The points are counted by the number of falls, and it is not permitted to use the hands in rising.—*Elphinstone*.

and recompensed the performers by making them scramble for fruit and sweetmeats, the ladies rose, and amused themselves by throwing cake to the gold fish, or in pelting each other with rose-buds. Now pausing to cull the lovely flowers that fringed the fountains, and now breaking forth in praise of the beautiful gardens. In truth, the latter well merited the encomiums bestowed upon them, and were not to be rivalled by the *chalamar* (pleasure house) of Rundjit Sing, or the "abode of delight" of Shah Mahmoud.

The kioshk, erected in the form of a Frank's hat, was ornamented with paintings, arabesques and gilded lattices, around which a profusion of convolvulus, cobæa, clematis, passion flower and other creepers intertwined their tendrils. It was situated also in the centre of the gardens, upon a pond overshadowed with sweet willows, planes and cedars. Eight long avenues, allusive to the eight gates of Paradise, floored with coloured sands in fanciful devices and bordered with every possible variety of fruit trees, connected by festoons of vines, divided

the ground into as many compartments; and at the end of each alley, all of which diverged from the centre, was a kiosk and fountain.

The eight compartments, intersected with small paths fringed with thyme, violets, lavender and aromatic herbs, were planted with beds of roses, poppies, anemonies, *toolsee*, (marvel of Perou) tuberose, bright blooming salvias, odoriferous beans and sweet peas, intermingled with myrtles, geraniums, oleanders, jessamines and pomegranites, amidst whose foliage a host of nightingales, and other melodious birds pealed forth a joy diffusing concert.

A multitude of gold and silver pheasants, variegated peacocks, doves and tame pigeons perched on the branches, or came to display their brilliant plumage and feed from the hands of the ladies. A small mausoleum of white marble, raised by Al Ashram's father over the remains of a favorite wife, reared its dome covered head adorned with laquered tiles and various devices in gold, from amidst a group of cypresses opposite the harem, the front of which was embellished with a red marble

colonnade, approached by a broad flight of steps.

The floor of this colonnade was of turquoise coloured tiles, the walls were painted in imitation of flowers, birds, and fountains, and the long gilded balustrade was adorned with a profusion of choice plants in china vases.

In short, nothing was wanting but such a man as Mir Zeeman, to render this charming spot an abode of eternal pleasure to its lovely inmates; who remained diverting themselves until about sun set prayer, when Ibn' Ergedji made his appearance and begged permission to introduce a minstrel of whose voice and talents, as a tale teller, he spoke rapturously.

The ladies having consented, they retired with their attendants behind the lattices of one of the kioshks and in a few minutes Habib appeared with his guitar. Having seated himself upon a mat, he struck the cords of his instrument and warbled in such a delightful manner that his fair auditors clapped their hands with extacy.

They would have listened all night, I believe,

had not Ibn' Ergedji warned them, that the slaves were about to commence preparations for the fire works and that it behoved them to withdraw to their apartments. Habib was then dismissed, and the ladies retired from the gardens, at the extremity of which a scaffold was erected for the night's exhibition, whilst the different ponds were strewed with floating frames, also intended to support fire balls and variegated lamps.

At length the shades of night mantled the face of nature. For some time all was dark and silent, save where the voices of the clansmen and retainers, admitted into the outer gardens, rose in low and expectant murmurs beneath the windows, or where the laughing tones of the women were heard behind the lattices above. At length the Sirdar's band struck up an enlivening flourish, and immediately after, a single rocket soaring and hissing to the heavens, burst suddenly into a thousand brilliant fragments high aloft. This was succeeded by streams of blue, red, purple, green and yellow fire, issuing from the mouths of

dragons and monsters affixed to lofty poles, whilst flame-breathing serpents coiled vertically round, or spun in circling maizes after their own burning tails.

Then came tigers and wild beasts pursued by dogs and hunters, composed of star-sparkling atoms. These had scarcely disappeared in smoke, ere an immense nosegay of roses, pomegranates, tulips and carnations sprung as it were by enchantment into sight, and after shedding their flaming petals, vanished in a roar of thunder, as loud as a general salute from the broadsides of the Capidan Pacha's fleet, in the waters of Stamboul.

But I will not weary you, O Agha, with the further details of these marvels, which were the work of a Tartar slave, who had learned his trade from those jealous infidels, the tea-breeding descendants of Khoung Tsu.* Suffice it to say, that nothing could be more gorgeous or admirable. Indeed, Al Ashram was so well pleased, that he swore he would

* Confucius.

not take double the ransom he had formerly required for the artificer's liberty.

The last sparkling of the falling rockets had already faded among the dark clouds, like a shower of molten emeralds and rubies, sprinkled by the hands of genii; the last shouts of *Ai Shawash!* and *Aferin!* from the applauding spectators had died away; the gentle inmates of the harem had retired to the inward recess of the apartments, and the Sirdar had withdrawn to enjoy his supper and revel in his wonted libations of wine, preparatory to his visit to Gulabi, when Ibn' Ergedji, who was superintendent of the gardens, as well as the harem approached my resting-place, followed by two slaves, carrying lanterns and the keys of the doors.

Not well pleased at my being tethered so near his choicest flower beds, the ugly Negro directed me to be removed to one of the outer courts, where the grooms guarded the horses and cattle. But ere this could be effected, a rustling was heard amidst the adjoining foliage, and in an instant, he and his attendants, were

felled to the ground by Mir Zeeman, Dost Ahmed, Jem' Akil Khan, and three other warriors, who placing their feet upon the necks of the prostrate victims, bent over them with uplifted daggers.

“When there is a stone in the hand, and a snake's head beneath the stone, the prudent man delayeth not execution,” exclaimed Jem' Akil, in a low voice.

Whereupon he, and Dost Ahmed plunged their daggers into the hearts of the two slaves, and would have despatched Ibn' Ergedji to keep them company, had not Mir Zeeman interfered, saying:

“By your souls, strike not! Fortune is propitious. This dog's life is worth an ass load of jewels. Return, Jem' Akil, to our friends. Bid them curb their impatience, and conceal themselves amidst the foliage, until my pistol, from the harem window, gives the signal for attack.”

Jem' Akil having complied, Mir Zeeman thus addressed Dost Ahmed, “Brother of my breath! This *Yezideh* (devil worshipper,)

shall conduct me to the lying Persian's pillow.
My fingers burn to pluck his beardless chin.
Let the peril be mine alone."

"Allah forbid!" replied Dost Ahmed.
"What! dost thou take me for a water-livered,
half mussulman? No, by the soul of Omar,
where thou goest, I follow."

"And I, and I," re-echoed the others.

"*Allah chukur!* Be it so!" answered Mir Zeeman. Then pricking the trembling eunuch with the point of his scimitar, he said, "Arise, thou black son of a burned father! Conduct us to the chamber where the Persian hog wallows with his new victim. Breathe not—falter not—and beware of treachery, or I will tear out your eyes with fiery pincers."

"I am your sacrifice—your slave. I am less than the smallest atom!" answered the trembling wretch. "I will obey," added he. "On my head be it!"

Then rising, he led the way to the secret portal of the harem. Casting aside their heavy heeled boots, to insure greater silence, and firmly grasping their arms, the five Khans as-

cended the steps, leading to the private apartments, inaccessible to all but the Sirdar, and his chief eunuch.

After opening two massy doors, and threading a long corridor, dimly lighted with painted glass lanterns, they reached the outward hangings of a chamber, to which Ibn' Ergedji pointed, saying, "That is it. May I die an infidel if I lie."

Mir Zeeman's heart beat audibly with emotion, when he found that nothing but a thin cedar wood panel, separated him from the object of his abhorrence, and the idol of his adoration. The fevered blood of excitement purpled his cheek, whilst his falcon eye flashed with revengeful lightnings. Already his imagination feasted upon his enemy's blood, and pictured to him his beloved released from bondage, as drawing forth their pistols, and clenching their sabres, he and his companions pushed aside the panel, and sprung within.

CHAPTER IV.

IBN' ERGEDJI had spoken half truth, half falsehood. There sat Gulabi, but not Al Ashram. A scream of mingled joy, shame and surprise burst from her lips, when, upon raising her tear-moistened eyes, she saw before her, not him she loathed, but the angel of her idolatry. The nightingale, at the approach of spring, does not fly more eagerly to woo the expanding rose than she would have bounded towards Mir Zeeman, had not doubt, fear, and heart-rending recollections, manacled her feet.

Alas! there is no rose without thorns, nor a single summer's breeze that is not the forerunner of autumnal blasts.

“Curses on Satan! curses on our evil

stars!" exclaimed Dost Ahmed, after examining every corner of the adjoining chamber. "By the beards of the four friends, here is the lair, but the wolf is missing."

"Speak! in the prophet's name," said Mir Zeeman addressing Gulabi. "Speak, my soul. Where is the Sirdar?"

"Praise be to God! I have not set eyes on him this day," replied my mistress trembling from head to foot. Then turning paler than the blighted lilly, she added, "I was told that he would renew his visit after night prayer. But, thanks to Allah, he came not. More I cannot say."

"Be tranquil!" answered Mir Zeeman. "The hour of delivery is at hand." Then lifting up the agitated girl, he pressed her to his bosom, and turning to Dost Ahmed, said, "Brother, as thou cherishest my love—by the grave of our common mother! return—Place her under the care of Habib, and then lead on our friends to the assault. But where is the Negro? He has deceived us—Seize him. Let him die the death!"

“By my soul, the beast has fled,” answered Dost Ahmed, who, now for the first time perceived the absence of Ibn’ Ergedji. “*Poh! Poh!*” continued he, “hadst thou not bidden us put our hands under our arm-pits, in lieu of employing them for safe purposes—this had not happened.”

“God is great, and we must submit to his decrees,” replied Mir Zeeman; “but let us lose no time.”

Thereupon he darted to the latticed window, and tore it open, in order to fire the appointed signal. But who can counteract fate? To his utter disappointment, he found that instead of looking towards the gardens, the casement opened upon the inner court where the Sirdar’s retainers were hastily flying to arms, whilst a numerous body of Gholams were blowing upon their matches, and preparing for combat.

“By the holy Caaba!” said he starting back. “We are betrayed. See! the dog’s sons swarm like locusts beneath.”

“Let us not be entrapped, like foxes in their

holes, but die at least in warm blood," exclaimed another Khan. "We must instantly descend, and join our followers."

"Hark to their accursed trumpets," ejaculated Dost Ahmed, "the hornets are aroused."

"No matter!" calmly answered Mir Zeeman. "The greater the peril, the more glorious the attempt. Thanks to Allah! Although we may fall into the lion's jaw, he cannot devour us unless upon the day of our destiny. In the mean time we will kindle a flame, that may serve to roast all the kabobs in Khorassan."

Then seizing a lighted taper he set fire to the costly hangings, and taking Gulabi by the hand, flew towards the door, whence they had ascended from the garden.

Roused by the braying trumpets, the clang of arms and crackling of the fire, the affrighted tenants of the harem peeped from their dormitories, or ran to and fro, encumbering the corridor; but the Khans, heedless of their screams, rushed towards the entrance. There the fatal truth burst upon them. The wily

Negro had seized the moment, when they entered Gulabi's chamber, to escape. Hastening to the outer doors, he closed the secret springs, and then flying to his master, whom he found still carousing with a party of friends, he cast himself upon his knees, and disclosed what had happened.

Although half intoxicated, the Sirdar sprung upon his feet, and foaming with wrath, exclaimed. "Dogs! Sons of dogs! *Harem Zadehs!* Infidel beasts! What! do they dare beard the lion in his den? Do they dare pollute my anderun! By the soul of Ali, I will impale them alive. To arms, brothers! To arms! Lose not an instant! Collect my followers. Muster the blood-drinking guards. *Inshallah!* Ere an hour is past, we will affix the traitors' heads above our gates—Begone."

Then issuing his directions to the Naibs and Youz Bashis, who partook of his hospitality, they flew to repel the aggressors; a task rendered the more easy of accomplishment, since a body of six hundred of the best disciplined

troops had unexpectedly reached the castle after sunset, on their way to join Shah Mahmoud's forces, near Caubul.

Finding themselves thus entrapped, Mir Zee-man and the Khans forced their way into a side chamber where, regardless of the half dressed women's outcries, they threw open the casement, and fired their pistols. But this was useless. The battle already raged beneath with deadly fury. Shouts, groans, and yells of mutual fury, responded to the clash of arms, and matchlock's echoes. The Sirdar's soldiers, pouring into the gardens, had already fallen upon the assailants.

Surprised, bewildered and unnerved, by their principal leader's absence, the latter stood like wolves at bay. The hissing flames, bursting from the harem's windows, showed Jem' Akil valiantly struggling at the head of his own clansmen, and Dost Ahmed's Ghazi. They fought with the rage of goaded lions, but were mown down like ripened corn. The war shouts of the Soonites were stifled by the battle cry of their adversaries. The name of Omar was

drowned in that of Ali, as the carnage spreading guards, pressed murderously on.

In the mean time the five Khans, seeing that all prospect of escape was cut off, sprung back towards the passage, where they no sooner returned than their eyes, which shot forth fire more scorching than the stars hurled upon the devils, by the angels who guard the constellations, encountered those of Al Ashram, at the head of his bravest retainers. To cleave their way through these, or to die the death of heroes, was their only alternative. With one simultaneous bound the five Roustams rushed upon their foes. But ere their weapons crossed, a discharge of matchlocks laid Dost Ahmed and two others prostrate.

A curse, a yell of triumph was their dying benison. Nothing daunted, Mir Zeeman, and the surviving chieftain, held on their course. Excited by despair, they exhibited the strength of forty giants, and made such desperate havoc with their swords, that Al Ashram and his followers wavered and stood aghast. Darting onwards, Mir Zeeman and his friend sprung

over the blood stained floor, and drove the cravens towards the burning chamber. *Mashallah!* The gate of liberty stood unbarred. A step more and they were free.

But alas ! What can the fisher's boat against the foaming whirlpool, or the antlered stag against the teeth of wolves. *Azrael* already flapped his ebon wings above, and the iron finger of fate pointed to the book of destiny.* Death menaced them on every side. A party of guards led by Ibn' Ergedji, suddenly closed upon them from a hindward passage. No choice remained but to surrender or, fighting back to back, thus to receive their doom.

Mir Zeeman's valiant friend soon bit the dust ; soon also did his own blood, gushing from many wounds, bedim his sight and paralyze his strength. Nor did Gulabi escape. Clinging with despairing tenderness to her soul's divinity, and encircling him with her arms, as the drooping ivy clasps the crumbling ruin, a ball had grazed her side, and stained

* The prescribed table or register mentioned in a preceding note.

with crimson dyes that lilly tinted form, whose snowy charms eclipsed the promised beauties of paradise.

Panting with rage, the Sirdar's people rushed upon their prey, but Al Ashram striking back their uplifted weapons, roared with a voice of thunder.

“Slay him not! Seize him, alive! By the blood of Hossein smite not. Bind up his wounds! Let the foul *hareem zadeh* live to die the death of hounds. Seize him I say. Seize the polluted Kaffir wench also, and drag them hence.”

In vain Mir Zeeman summoned his last energies; in vain he made one desperate effort, and clove in twain the head of the first wretch who sprung towards him; in vain he sought for death upon their outstretched points. His strength failed, his glazing eyes were closed, and reeling like a feeble child, he sunk exhausted.

As famished jackals press upon the stricken charger's carcase, so Al Ashram's soldiers bounded upon the prostrate hero. Some with hideous

mercy staunched his wounds. Others secured his stiffening limbs, and wrenched away his jewelled arms ; whilst Ibn' Ergedji, grinning with fiend-like vengeance, seized the inanimate form of Gulabi who, fainting, fell by her beloved's side.

Scorched by the flames, which now rolled forth their fiery volumes in lurid grandeur ; one band dragged off the victims ; a second flew to arrest the conflagration, and a third, severing the slaughtered chieftains' heads from their still palpitating bodies, affixed them on their spears, and rushed to join the combatants.

The sight of these doleful trophies served but to inspire the Ghazi with redoubled rage. Each man performed the valiant duty of a host. Alas ! they only stood to perish. Hemmed in on every side, and deserted by the surviving tribesmen—not one escaped.

Amongst the last who fought and fell, were Habib and Jem' Akil. The one, gentle as the nightingale, during the day of peace, outdid the eagle in the hour of strife. The other, prudent in council and resigned in peril, ex-

pired uttering these words: "Thou whom death hath demanded, flee not; for thou canst not preserve thy existence."

Ere the vesper star had ceased to shine, a hundred headless trunks, each gashed with twice as many wounds, were cast upon the public path to gorge the carrion beasts, and when the morning's sun first beamed upon the castle's walls, a pile of reeking heads towered hideously above the Sirdar's gates.

CHAPTER V.

HAD the infidel barbarians Gog and Magog issued from beyond the waters and ravaged the land, the scene of desolation that met the eye, upon the following day break, could not have been more heart rending.* Where roses, lilies, and carnations had blended their bright hues with the rich purple of the luscious grape ; where kioshk and minaret shot up their glittering points to kiss the setting sun ; where marble fountains and pellucid basins, reflected the light tracery of the fleeting clouds ; all was now rent and prostrate. The gardens, hitherto re-

* According to Mahommedan belief, the eruption of Gog and Magog at the head of a terrible army, will be one of the great signs of the last day.—*Pocock, Specimen Hist. Arab.*

served for the beautiful creatures who resorted there to wile away the evening hours, were defaced and blighted, as if the tempest ruling genii had overwhelmed them with their fiercest thunders. Shrubs, flowers and plants were crushed or drowned in human gore. The verdant banks and sanded walks were ploughed and stained. The gilded lattices and snow white fonts were smeared and tarnished, and where amorous doves had wooed their tender mates, ravens and carnage scenting vultures screeched and struggled for the foul repast, plucked from the half scorched victims' heads.

Of the harem, hitherto unrivalled throughout Afghanistan for its splendor, nothing remained but the calcined and roofless skeleton, whose black and crumbling flanks poured forth a cloud of scorching smoke. Through the exertions of the clansmen, the conflagration had, however, been confined to the inner court. Of this or its costly furniture, little was saved. Some lives were also lost, but these were greedy soldiers seeking for plunder; with half a dozen wretches, whom the Sirdar accused of

treachery and bade his myrmidons hurl into the flames.

Amidst the confusion that reigned around, no notice was taken of me ; so, after wandering through the ravaged gardens, I entered the outward court, where I perceived Abdoul Ali ; who, with his head enveloped in the folds of his mantle, was sitting beneath the postern, having been attracted to the Sirdar's castle, by the glare of the flames.

Rejoiced at seeing one upon whose protection I could rely, I bounded towards my old master and rubbed my nose against his side. He heeded me not, however, but remained with his eyes gloomily fixed upon the ground, his lips compressed, and his right hand grasping his beard. His visions of favor and exaltation had all vanished. Gulabi's misfortune had reached his ear, and in lieu of honors and wealth, he now trembled lest he and his family should be enveloped in the same proscription.

Overwhelmed with anxiety for himself, not unmingled with some sparks of tenderness for

the innocent girl, who had been sacrificed to his own avarice and the Sirdar's passion, Abdoul was tempted to strike his tents and to fly into the territory of the Cohistaunees, where, from their hatred to Shah Mahmoud and the Persians, he knew he should be safe from Al Ashram's persecution.* But parental affection overcame personal fear, and he resolved to ascertain his child's fate before he departed. His suspense was of short duration.

Of a sudden, two trumpeters, attired in yellow vests and red caps of a conical form, striped with black velvet, issued from a neighbouring guard chamber, and blew a few shrill notes. Upon this the Gholams and retainers, who were sleeping beneath the arcades or listlessly reclining against the walls, rose and stood to their arms. In a short time the trumpets again sounded and a party of twenty men, headed by the Sirdar's chief executioner and

* The Cohistaunees are a tribe of rigid Soonites, inhabiting a district of Caubul to the S. and W. of Hindoo Cosh and the Parapamisan range of mountains.

several furoshes, proceeded to a narrow portal, which conducted to the lowest vaults of the building.

Ere many minutes had elapsed they again reappeared dragging forth Mir Zeeman ; who, though rendered powerless by wounds and loss of blood, was pinioned and manacled, as if he still possessed the strength of forty furious elephants. Alas ! he resembled the free and stately cypress felled by the hurricane. An infant might have plucked his beard. It neither required chains to bind him, nor the aid of the brutal furoshes ; who, nevertheless, pushed him forward, striking him with their sticks and glowering upon him, as if their souls thirsted to commence the work of mutilation.

Abdoul Ali now raised his chin from the bosom of reflection and mingled with the crowd, who followed the vanquished chieftain to the portico of the *Dewan-Khaneh*, or audience-hall, where Al Ashram awaited his defenceless foe, surrounded by his principal officers, and seated upon a musnud, elevated a

couple of feet above the lower part of the chamber.

“ By the Padishah’s head ! by my beard ! ” exclaimed the Sirdar as soon as Mir Zeeman’s escort entered, “ You are all heroes ! Each of you deserves a dress of honor. *Inshallah* ! your services shall not go unrewarded. His head is the Shah’s, his property yours. Stand back,” continued he, addressing the executioner’s men. “ Place him there—opposite—that my eyes may eat into his soul. Speak, unhappy wretch ! ” added he, his countenance gleaming with revenge and his frightful hare lip, oozing forth the foam of malevolence. “ Speak ! what evil genius prompted thee to this madness ! By the life of my father, thy brains must have been dried up. Thou must be a most saintless lion, to run thy breast against our invincible swords.”

“ I am here by the dispensation of Allah to answer with my body, not to bandy words with my tongue,” retorted Mir Zeeman.

“ Look up, thou Soonite heretic ! ” replied

the Sirdar, pointing through the open portico to the smoking ruins, and to the gate over which were affixed the reeking heads. "See what misfortunes thy iniquity has produced. There are thy brother and his accomplices. See, wretch! see how they grin in their triumphant posture. They are exalted—are they not? Eh! eh! Thou hast not only kindled the fire, but furnished the kabobs."

"Cease thy beastly taunts," answered the captive, making an effort to speak with a firm voice. "By the souls of Omar and the blessed Caliphs, those mangled victims are more glorious in defeat than thou in all thy unclean victory. Poof! I spit upon thee and all thy race."

As he uttered these words, one of the furoshes struck him so violently upon the mouth, that he would have fallen, had not the others upheld him. This cowardly act was rewarded by the Sirdar with a shout of "Bravo! well done my son! By the breath of Ali, let the dog eat his own filth. Listen, madman," continued he to Mir Zeeman. "We have a duty to per-

form to the Shah, as well as to ourselves. Thy life is in our hands. We can smite or spare. If thou wouldst have us unlock the gate of mercy, thou must apply the key of information. Thou hast other accomplices."

"It is false!" retorted Mir Zeeman. "Thou eatest dirt! What! dost thou imagine that I am a mean wretch like thyself? Dost thou think that I would injure the finger of another to screen my own body? That may be the fashion with the lying Persians, whose souls people the lowest hell. Thanks be to God! we Dooraunees are not traitors. Thou mayest grind our tongues between mill-stones, but they will still defy thee."

"We will soon see that," exclaimed the Sirdar, "Wullah! we have a medicine for curing such obdurate hearts."

Thereupon he beckoned to the furoshes, who instantly tripped up the prisoner's heels, and attaching his feet to a *felek*,* forthwith commenced beating his bare soles in a merciless manner. But the victim uttered neither groan

* Portable stocks.

or lament, and in reply to the Sirdar's repeated attempts to draw from him the names of the conspirators, against the Shah, merely answered :

“ Allah, be praised ! they are numerous as the trees of the forest. Thanks to the ruler of men's hearts ! they are not false to each other like the perfidious Shiites. They are not doomed to eternal fire like those who sell their brethren.”

Overcome at length by excess of pain, the sufferer uttered a stifled moan and fainted. Whereupon Al Ashram bade the furoshes desist and seek to revive him. The brutes therefore untied his legs, sprinkled his face with water, and raised him upon a mat. As soon as he had somewhat recovered, the Sirdar again addressed him :

“ Hearken, thou cruel to thyself. Thou hast tasted of my executioner's salt, unless thou desirest a second portion, cast aside the garb of stubbornness and obey. Remember ! thou hast eyes, ears, limbs and a tongue. By the graves of all the Imamzadehs, if thou dost

not confess, my slaves shall hack thee piece-meal."

"Thou canst not hurt a hair of my beard, unless fate so ordains," answered the dauntless Mir Zeeman. "Do thy worst!"

"Fool that thou art to tempt destiny," replied the Sirdar, fiercely twisting the few hairs of his grizzly moustaches. "Holla there, where is *Bir Gouzlou al tchirkin*?"*

Upon this a dwarfish, but brawny Turcoman, whose frightful aspect faithfully corresponded with his name, stood forward and folding his hands over his bosom, awaited the Sirdar's behest. He was in truth so ugly that the demons of the waste would have quailed at his sight, and Monkir and Nakir hesitated to pass judgment upon his body. His cheeks and forehead were ribbed and furrowed in a dreadful manner with the small pox. One eye was horribly bleared and blighted by the same malady, whilst the other, as if ashamed of its widowhood, sought to hide itself beneath a broad, flat nose, which spread like a weather-

* One eye the hideous.

worn fungus over half his scarred visage. His mouth, ill garnished with some jagged remnants of teeth, extended from ear to ear, and his lips, seared and discoloured by the enemy of beauty, resembled two livid gashes in a sheep's carcase. His shoulders, partly concealed by a short leopard's skin mantle, rose above his ears. His arms were so long that his fingers touched his knees, which, with his bare neck and nether limbs were clothed with hair, as red and shaggy as that upon a camel's hump. His tongue also had been cut out at Balkh for some misdemeanor, so that his inarticulate voice resembled that of a young rhinoceros. In short so revolting a being never was seen. Thus, when he walked abroad, pregnant women averted their heads; dogs drooped their tails, and horses snorted for very terror.

“*Hei! Bir gouzlou!*” exclaimed Al Ashram to the monster who belonged to the executioner's department. “Thou art in want of an eye. Return thanks to God, thou mayst now make up the deficiency.”

This cruel witticism was followed by a chuckling laugh, which was re-echoed by all the crowd, excepting Abdoul Ali, who ejaculated a fervent exclamation of:—" May Allah's curse light upon him !" The dwarf then strode across the hall, and drawing forth his long knife, placed his knee upon Mir Zeeman's breast, and then with a twist of his hand, scooped out one of his eyes, as dexterously as the *balykdji*,* of Bushire, pick muscles from their shells.

A loud and agonizing scream now burst from behind the lattices at the upper end of the chamber, where another victim awaited its doom. The sound struck deep and chilling into the soul of Abdoul Ali and forced from Mir Zeeman that tribute to mental suffering, which he had denied to bodily torture. It was the voice of Gulabi; who, guarded by Ibn' Er-gedji, and other slaves, had been placed there to witness her lover's martyrdom.

" Stop ! stop !" exclaimed the Sirdar as the foul dwarf, brandishing his reeking knife and seizing the prostrate Khan's beard, was about

* Fishmongers.

to deprive him of his other eye. "Stop! lift him up! Ere thou finish thy task, let the ill-begotten traitor see how mercifully we administer justice, and how richly we recompense merit. Come forth Ibn' Ergedji and bring out the polluted Kaffir wench."

Upon this the lattice flew open and the negro dragged Gulabi to the Sirdar's feet. Tears of parental agony trickled down Abdoul Ali's cheeks, his hand mechanically clutched his poignard, and his tongue silently cursed the ruthless tyrant. But to have moved or spoken would only have sealed his own destruction without averting his daughter's fate; so he drooped his head upon his bosom and muttering to himself: *Ya Allah! Ya Allah!* stood overwhelmed with anguish.

All eyes, in the mean time, were bent upon the trembling, half expiring girl, who, though disfigured by suffering and partly concealed by a coarse veil, displayed charms that dazzled the spectators, unaccustomed to so much beauty, and above all to the public exposure of a woman.

The demon Sakhr, the most relentless of all devils,—he whom Solomon bound with chains and cast into lake Tiberias,*—even he, would have been softened at the sight of the beautiful sufferer, as, with dishevelled hair, quivering lips, and eyes upturned to the throne of mercy, she stood before her judge. But her agony made no more impression upon Al Ashram, than the lamentations of the maidens of Jerusalem upon the fierce Nebuchadnezzar, when he sacked their city and destroyed the temple.

* According to tradition, the demon Sakhr, who was always on the look out for mischief, took advantage of Solomon's withdrawing to perform his ablutions and stole the magic ring which His Majesty had left in charge of his concubine, Amina; whereby the said devil contrived to obtain possession of the throne, and assuming the outward appearance of Solomon, ruled right merrily in his stead. Finding the cares of sovereignty, even despotic sovereignty, too irksome, Sakhr, at the end of forty days, flew off and dropped the ring into the sea, where it was swallowed by a fish. The latter was, however, soon caught, and the precious signet being thus restored to its lawful owner, Solomon instantly recovered his power, and having laid hands upon Sakhr, treated him as described in the text.—*Talmud and notes to Koran.*

“Come hither, thou ill-favoured son of Satan,” said Al Ashram to the one eyed Turcoman. “Come hither. Thy star is on the ascendant. See, what it is to rub thy nose against the threshold of our satisfaction. Approach! thou art a Samarcandi. Thou knowest how to pluck ripe pears. Here! I deliver this one into thy hands.”

The dwarf upon this quitted Mir Zeeman and approaching his master, drew from his bosom a silken cord. Then glaring with the look of a famished ghoul, he seized the ill-fated girl by the shoulder, as panthers fix upon defenceless lambs. Although inured to deeds of blood, and accustomed from faith and practice to show no mercy to transgressing woman, a shudder of commiseration vibrated through the crowd, as Bir Gouzlou cast the cord over the head of Gulabi, who, uttering a thrilling shriek, sank upon her knees and clasped her hands in supplication.

Overcome with mortal anguish Abdoul Ali closed his eyes. Cold drops of perspiration stood upon his brow and he staggered, groan-

ing, against the wall. The spectators gazed in breathless silence and their hearts melted. But no one dared to extend the tongue of intercession, as the dwarf, placing one of his swarthy hands upon the victim's swan-like neck and stretching the noose with the other, prepared to give the last fatal twist.

"Gently!" exclaimed the Sirdar as he calmly watched the horrible proceeding. "What! Art thou deaf as well as half blind? Did I not say that thy face should be cleared, and that my favor should shine upon thee? Prostrate thyself, thou prototype of Eblis, and return thanks to Allah, that the noble minded Hatim Tai was a miser, and blood sucking oppressor when compared to thy master.* Let the wench live."

* Hatim Tai, whose generosity and benevolence, is often alluded to by Eastern writers, died a little before the Hejira. His son Adi, who embraced Islam in the seventh year of the Hejira, appears to have inherited his father's noble qualities, as he was surnamed *Giaovad ben Giaovad* (the generous son of the generous.) Neither father or son, thought more of slaughtering forty camels

The dwarf upon this relaxed his hold, and threw himself upon the ground. A murmur of surprise, and satisfaction at Gulabi's escape, echoed through the hall, and cheered the miserable father's heart, who muttered to himself, "O Allah! Allah! turn my curses into blessings!"

"Rise, in the name of heaven!" exclaimed the Sirdar after a pause, during which his eyes gleamed with inconceivable malice, first upon the prostrate Mir Zeeman, and then upon the bewildered girl. "Arise, Bir Gouzlou, thou most fortunate of all furoshes—there is thy reward."

Then pointing to Gulabi, who continued upon her knees staring with vacant terror, as if her soul was suspended between heaven and earth, in the same manner as the stupid Franks describe the tomb of the prophet—he added, "There! Take her! I give her to thee as thy wife. Lead her home. She is thine. May thy abode be peopled!"

for a single repast, than would a modern gentleman of killing a single sheep.—*D'Herbelot, Bib. Orient.*

Shouts of "Bravo! bravo! it is a just award," were uttered by the retainers; whilst roars, like those of grizzly bears falling upon their prey, escaped from the dwarf, who rose, bounded forward, and casting his girdle over Gulabi, to signify that she was his property, seized her by the arm.

But Allah is infinite and merciful. The angel, who guards the register of events, passed his finger over the prescribed pages. So monstrous a profanation was not destined to be consummated. Quick as the subtle light of day, Gulabi disengaged her hand, and seizing the hideous furoshe's knife, plunged it into her own heart. Then stretching forth her hands to heaven, she exclaimed, "*God is my support! There is no God but he. On him do I trust. He is the Lord of the munificent throne!*" In an instant more her beautiful body fell lifeless at the feet of Al Ashram, and her spirit winged its way to the verdant couches of paradise.

"Beast! Son of a Turcoman hog!" roared out the Sirdar, enraged but not affected by this

awful catastrophe. "Who but a thrice dotted ass, would let the wine fall when the cup was at his lip? Bear hence the body, slaves, and cast it to the dogs. They who die by their own hands are forbidden burial."

Then, as not only the attendants, but even the dwarf hung their heads in mute commiseration, Al Ashram continued, "Be quick, slaves! Are your livers turned to water, that you stand aghast at a breathless corpse? As for the Bir Gouzlou, if thou wouldst not lose thine other eye, and ears to boot, return to that Soonite rebel. Let him be impaled alive——"

Upon this he rose and withdrew, followed by his guards, who made the hall ring with their heavy bone-shod boots, which they rattled upon the floor, as a mark of respect to their commander.

But the dispenser of Mercy again interposed. Mir Zeeman was spared further torture. The few remaining sparks of existence, which he had fanned with the breezes of resolution, were exhausted. Overwhelmed with bodily and mental torture, the fire of

resistance was extinguished. At the moment his beloved was consigned, as he thought, to renewed pollution, his heart burst, and his generous soul ascended to join that of Gulabi, near the fountains of eternal recompense.

Racked between grief, fear, and a thirst for vengeance, Abdoul Ali cast one tearful gaze upon the blood stained remains of his child, and then rushing outside the gates, mounted his horse and returned to his camp. I followed, and ere night prayer, found myself once more amongst those mountain solitudes, which my unfortunate mistress had rendered more beautiful than the bowers of Eden, when Allah first embellished them, by granting a partner to the father of men.

CHAPTER VI.

AFTER heaving a deep sigh at the recollection of poor Gulabi's fate, the little quire thus resumed its tale.

Mournful were the lamentations which reverberated through the adjacent rocks, and gloomy tamarisk groves, when the shepherd dismounted, and in brief words narrated the soul subduing events of the day, to the inmates of his tents. Amima, Mah Zya, and the other women had all been exceeding jealous of Gulabi's charms, and supposed good fortune; but they now seemed to deplore her miserable destiny, as sincerely as they trembled for their own safety. They therefore clamorously urged Abdoul Ali to collect his flocks, and

proceed, without a moment's delay, into the territory of some other tribe.

This was the project entertained by him at first, but whether from a spirit of opposition, or from a desire for vengeance, he assumed an air of sullen resignation, and replied :

“Destiny, says the sage, cannot be averted by lamentations ; nor does the angel, who rules the reservoir of winds, care the rustling of a leaf if an old man's lamp be extinguished.”

“Destiny is all very fine,” retorted Amima. “But who else than a brainless idiot would sit with folded arms at the mouth of the tiger's den ; or not remove his lamp when the hurricane assailed his tent ?”

Apparently absorbed in meditation, Abdoul made no other response than a deep-drawn sigh, accompanied with pious ejaculations of “Allah is great ! We shall see !”

“See !” exclaimed his wife in one of her shrillest tones. “See indeed ! If thou dost not rouse thyself, and gird on the wings of expedition, thou wilt see the furoshe's scourges at thy heels, and their lancets at thine eyes.”

“ What! Wouldst thou have me fly like a cowardly cur, with my tail between my legs Must I renounce vengeance? Are my bones marrowless? Is the Sirdar possessed of a charmed life?”

“ Art thou gifted with a talisman, that thou thinkest to defend thine own, against one who can slay with a breath?” rejoined Amima. “ Are our servants legions, or our tents impregnable, like the walls of Ghuzna, that thou talkest of vengeance? Woe unto us for having selected this summer camp.”

“ It is the richest pasture ground from the Indus to the frontiers of Iran. Whose flocks thrive like mine?” answered Abdoul.

“ Flocks!—thrive!” re-echoed Amima, indignantly. “ Yes! when all other things are smitten with the evil eye. Was not Kara Nour dragged hence by the Kyberees? Did not our beloved Hossein perish on this spot? Was it not from beneath this tent that thy favourite daughter was carried to the place of sacrifice?”

“ True! true!” answered Abdoul, clenching

both his hands, and pulling out a handful of his beard. "Therefore I would not depart until I had revenged her."

"Has grief for the dead blinded your soul to the safety of the living?" responded Amima. "Am I and thy remaining children less than nothing, that thou wouldst involve us in a similar destiny?"

"What can I do?" said the husband, sorrowfully.

"Do! why, not what thou hast done. Did I not tell thee, on thy return from the council, that it would have been better to have brought home news of a rise in the price of wool, than a whole camel load of such windy nonsense as then filled thy brain?"

"If we could all see clear, there would be no occasion for spectacles. Thou art a marvellous diviner of events when the hour is passed;" retorted Abdoul.

"Come, Abdoul, my soul!" rejoined the wife, softening her voice into a tone of supplication. "Lockman was less wise than thou wert wont to be in emergency. Let not the

slime of sorrow obstruct the water channels of prudence. If to-morrow's sun find us still here, it may be too late. I, thou, thy family and flocks will fall a sacrifice to the Sirdar's fury. Come! I adjure thee by thy children's graves."

"Curses on their murderers' heads! May infidels defile, and tie them to their dogs' tails!" exclaimed Abdoul. Then rising, as if suddenly awakened to a sense of his peril, he added: "After all, I believe thou art right. It is useless for the blade of grass to oppose the sickle. This is the feast of Abraham. Let me take warning from the averted sacrifice. Be quick! Pack up our goods. Let the camels be loaded. Call the servants, and let them drive the flocks towards the eastern mountains. By the blessing of Ali, it shall not be my fault if the messenger of destruction surprise us, like stupid ostriches, with our heads beneath our wings."

Amima and the other females now hastened to make their preparations for immediate flight. Some packed up the wardrobe, provisions and domestic utensils in the coffers and panniers

adapted for the purpose. Others rolled up the felts and bedding, or aided in saddling the horses and camels. The tents having been struck, and placed upon the sumpter beasts, the flocks, in lieu of taking the direction of Coheestan, were led forth upon the track, which conducted to the snow-crowned mountains, overshadowing the valley of Chumla, inhabited by the warlike and independent Eusofyzes.*

Abdoul having armed himself to the teeth, and his three sons, the eldest of whom had not attained his twelfth year, having followed his example, they mounted their horses, which, as well as their weapons, the boys managed with the address of veteran warriors. The

* These powerful tribes, consisting of nearly 800,000 souls, set the kings of Caubul at defiance, and living amongst a conquered people, like Spartans amongst Helots, enjoy entire independence. They may be considered as the Swiss of Afghanistan. The democratic and federative nature of their government renders the affinity still more striking. Their territory is bounded on the S.E. by the Indus, and on the three other sides by lofty mountains.—*Elphinstone's Caubul.*

women were then lifted into the panniers, or perched upon the baggage, and ere the gem-diffusing commandress of night shed her silvery beams upon the landscape, they uttered their fateha and bade adieu to the spot, which had been the scene of so many exciting adventures.

Having to guard, not only against the attacks of men, but those of wild animals, Abdoul regulated the march of his caravan in the manner best suited to repel both. His eldest son, a young dare-devil, whose eye was keen as that of Ali, and his ear sharper than that of the dog Katmir, rode somewhat in advance as a vidette. There he occasionally dismounted, and placed his head to the ground that he might more easily catch distant sounds, or more clearly distinguish shadowy objects interposing between him and the dimly-lighted horizon. The two younger children, who had learned to shoot and hurl the javelin from Hossein, were stationed with Koshrou and the other servants upon the flank nearest the woods, ready to discharge their fire-arms

should either two or four legged enemies spring from the jungle.

The march was headed by the women, who were not intended to remain idle in the hour of need. Each was armed with a light matchlock, which they handled with nearly as much dexterity as the men. Next came the baggage, and after that the flocks, guarded on either side by their fierce Koffa dogs.

I and the other animals were attracted forward by the bells suspended round the necks of my father and two or three patriarchal rams; who, being inured to Abdoul's migrations from the hills to the winter quarters in the central vallies, followed steadily at the heels of the horses, without turning to nibble the branches or tempting herbage, growing by the way-side.

The rear was protected by Abdoul, who paused for awhile upon every rising ground, where he remained listening and examining the hindward country; until, being assured that no danger menaced him from the rear, and that his precious charge had safely passed the

glen in front, he again urged his nimble horse to the summit of some succeeding elevation.

It was fortunate for the fugitives that their route quickly emerged from the jungle, which thus delivered them from the fear of tigers, wolves and hyenas, and that it soon traversed a rugged country, seldom frequented by caravans, and consequently offering little attraction to the bands of plunderers, which abound in almost every part of Khorassan. No less fortunate was it, that Al Ashram was too much occupied with preparations for revenging himself upon the castles of the slaughtered Khans, to cast a thought upon so insignificant a personage as the father of his deceased slave.

Nevertheless, as Abdoul had no means of uplifting the skirts of the Sirdar's intentions, he continued his progress all night, without halting, and without encountering any living creature, save here and there a solitary wild ass, or prowling jackal.

At length the camels, unaccustomed to the rocky and rugged mountain-paths, having

evinced symptoms of weariness, and the chilling breezes, which are the forerunners of early dawn, having announced the approach of day, a *manzil*, (resting-place,) was selected near a verdant spot, where a few large tamarisks stretched forth their drooping branches to imbibe the moisture of a neighbouring pool.

Whilst I and the other animals greedily rushed to slake our thirst, Abdoul collected his sons and servants, and uttered aloud the usual invocation to prayer. Whereupon they dismounted, prostrated themselves, and returned thanks to the Most Merciful, for vouchsafing to protect them from the night's perils.

The baggage having been unloaded and piled in a small circle, mats and felts were spread within, and covered with black blankets, extended over transverse poles so as to form a tent for the women ; underneath this, the latter prepared the morning meal, and then betook themselves to rest. The horses were then picketed and the flocks driven to pasture, whilst the camels wandered in

search of that nutritious plant, whose leafless branches, flourish in the most arid spots; as if the bountiful hand of the Creator had thus especially provided for those sober beasts.*

After smoking his pipe, Abdoul laid himself to sleep across the entrance of his temporary abode; his fire arms by his side, and his head closely enveloped in the folds of his mantle, in order to confine the inward moisture and exclude the outward heat, according to the healthful practise of the desert Arabs, when reposing beneath the scorching sun beams. The boys and servants followed his example, with the exception of those, who, in their turn, were posted as watchmen upon the adjoining eminences. Thus, alternately sleeping and watching, the hours were passed, until the lengthen-

* This plant called Phoke, is rarely met with beyond the deserts. Its branches are full of juicy sap and furnish a moist aliment and succedaneum for water to the camels. The prickly "*Karaghax*" and "*Stag's cup*" mentioned in a former chapter, have the same properties, and are equally demonstrative of the incomparable foresight and bounty of Providence.

ing shadows once more announced the decline of day, and warned them to renew their pilgrimage.

Desirous to avoid the roads, whereon he was likely to encounter detachments of the different warlike tribes, who were collecting round the banners of the contending chiefs, Abdoul turned towards the higher mountain passes, and trusted to the guidance of Russool Mozi-rib, one of his servants, who was a *fakcer* and native of the Eusofyze country.* This man had formerly possessed a beautiful wife, whom he unjustly suspected of infidelity with the chief, his master. Maddened by jealousy he had strangled her and then fled into Caubul, where he entered Abdoul's service, as a free labourer. In despite of the powers of life and death which the Eusofyze lords exercise over

† These *fakcers* or *serfs* of whom Mr. Elphinstone, vol. II, p. 33, gives an interesting account, must not be confounded with the *fakcers* or beggars of the East, being an industrious and hard working set of men, who perform nearly all the agricultural labour and let themselves out to hire as servants, masons, &c.

their serfs, Russool's love of home overcame his dread of punishment, and he swore, upon his head, to conduct Abdoul safely across the mountains over which he had himself escaped.

Soon, however, did Abdoul repent having entered the wild and unfrequented defiles, wherein we were involved and which compelled us to halt by night and march by day. We had already left behind us the mild region, where successive generations of noble forests had thrived in undisturbed luxuriance since the period when Noah's ark grounded upon the summit of Al Judi, and the angel, who holds the flood gates of heaven, bade the scalding waters return to their channels.*

* One tradition supposes the ark to have rested upon Mount *Al Judi*, which divides Armenia from Kurdestan on the south. A Nestorian convent, called *Monastery of the Ark*, existed there until the end of the eighth century, when it was destroyed by fire. It is now generally believed that the true resting place of the Ark was upon Mount *Masis* or *Aghir Dagh*, (the ponderous mountain), as it is called by the Turks, about 12 leagues S. E. of Erivan. Mr. Morier alludes to the latter tradition in his inimitable Hadji Baba. It is believed by Mahomedans

The transition from summer to winter was almost instantaneous. The gentle zephyrs of the temperate zone had yielded to piercing, ice chilled blasts. The verdant sward was replaced by distorted masses of rock, scattered around in desolate confusion. There was no fuel, no shelter and no vegetation, save here and there a few stunted plants of prickly Turk's cap.*

At one moment the path crested the tops of lofty crags, towering over a wide expanse of dark ravines and yawning glaciers, bounded by snow capped mountains, riding one above the other, until they blended with the giant Caucasus. At another it wound round their pre- that the waters of the deluge were boiling hot, and that they issued from the oven of an old woman at Cufa, or as others say, named Zula Cufa. D'Herbelot mentions a tradition of this oven being the identical one used by Eve, which had descended from patriarch to patriarch until it came into Noah's possession. The figurative term employed by Moslems to designate the deluge is, "The gushing forth of the waters from the oven of Cufa."

* A species of broom, bearing a bright yellow flower, shaped like a skull cap.

cipitous flanks upon ledges so narrow, that the outward camel panniers, hung over fathomless abysses, down which many poor beasts rolled and perished.

These dangers traversed, the only accessible road led through a profound and tortuous chasm the bottom of which was strewn with rocky fragments, or blocks of ice, whilst its vaulted sides rose to such a height, as almost to exclude the rays of day. The terrors of the route were further increased by our encountering whirlwinds of snow, and by our passing the blanched bones of former victims, with here and there a *toda*, (cairn,) heaped upon the spot, where some true believer had breathed his last.

This devilish route must have been riven by some terrible convulsion of nature, or carved by Eblis and his rebellious legions, when they fled from Paradise. Well did it merit the designation of "the gate of the darkened heart," given to it by the Afghans.

Suspecting that Russool had led us into these frozen regions, that we might all perish, Abdoul

and his sons loaded the fakeer with abuse; and even went so far as to beat him with their whips and lances. Moairib bore this treatment patiently; but, whilst he meekly proclaimed his innocence, it was evident that the blows fell heavily upon his soul, and that the leaven of revenge fermented in his heart. At length we had nearly reached the highest point, when Abdoul, who had taken his son's place in front, suddenly cast back his sheep's skin cloak, unstrung his matchlock, reared himself in his stirrups, and shouted to his sons saying, "Curses on Satan! away with the treacherous fakeer. We are betrayed."

In a moment more, he was joined by the three boys, one of whom in passing, smote Russool so severely over the face that he knocked out two of his teeth, and would have pierced him with his lance, had he not fallen upon the snow; whilst the other two scrambling forward levelled and fired.

The object that excited this alarm was a body of armed men, who, by their broad white turbans, steel corslets and grey mantles, ap-

peared to belong to the Eusofyze tribes. Two of them reclined across a fragment of rock, with their long guns directed down the narrow pass, whilst the lance and bayonet points of others were visible behind. They were evidently the advanced scouts of some predatory band, who lurked there to dispute the passage, and indulge their thirst or plunder. Confident, however, in their numbers, and probably disdainning the weakness of our benumbed party, they paid no attention to the shots, but remained as immovable, as if they had been hewn from the surrounding stones.

After chiding his sons, for provoking the wrath of men, whose position gave them such advantage over him, Abdoul dropped the muzzle of his gun, and raising his hand to his bosom in token of amity, advanced a short distance and exclaimed:—

“Peace be with you! In the name of Allah have pity on our condition. We come as supplicants. We are a persecuted people, flying from oppression. By your salt! do not avert the hand of assistance. Let us partake of the

liberty which is your birth-right. See! with the exception of myself and these servants, the rest are women and children. We are starving—frozen. *Wullah! Billah!* If you have hearts, lay aside your weapons, and pronounce a welcome.”

He then paused for a reply, but the Euso-fyze maintained the same silent, threatening attitude. The rattling echoes of the guns, and the heavy rustling of the snow, shaken down by the concussion, alone responded to his words.

After waiting a few moments, Abdoul blew upon his match, and again raised his voice saying. “Y Allah! are your ears filled with wax? What! neither wordor motion? Are we worse than nobody, that you laugh at our beards? By your souls, by your father’s heads, do not excite us to desperation. We have still strength and courage.”

Here he again paused, but the others neither spoke or moved.

“We cannot stay to perish here, father,” exclaimed the eldest son. “*Bishmillah!* It

were better to die quickly in hot blood, than be penned up until our marrow is congealed. Curses on the stone hearted curs! If they will not reply to fair words, *Inshallah!* we will try compulsion."

"We will burn their fathers and mothers!" re-echoed the two other boys, as urging on their jaded horses they boldly approached within lance-length of their opponents, and discharged their pistols. Scarcely had the smoke rolled away, ere a shout of mingled surprise, and terror burst from the three youths, the two youngest of whom exclaimed, "Allah is great! This is a miracle!"

To which the eldest added, "In the name of Ali, and the twelve Imams, O father! come! hasten! By your beard this is indeed marvellous! The hand of destruction has smoothed our path. See! they cannot injure us. They are either frozen, or this accursed pass is the avenue to the doomed city, whence no one returns.*

Abdoul now joined his sons, and his liver

* *Barsa-Ghilmi*, the petrified city alluded to in a former chapter.

was converted into water, when he saw before him a party of Eusofyze warriors frozen as stiff as Silsal and Shamama, the two gigantic idols, which guard the entrance to the famous caverns of Bamian.* Some enveloped in their mantles, were huddled together in the icy grasp of dissolution. Some stooped in stiffened attitudes of watchfulness; whilst others leaned against the rocks, with their hands still clenching their weapons, their eyes wide open, and their sunken, livid jaws grinning horribly.

It was a ghastly and pitiful spectacle, to see them standing there, apparently living, yet stone dead, like Solomon, who when Allah decreed that he should die, remained erect during a whole year, so that the very genii, employed in building the temple, did not discover his death, until the wood-worms gnawed his staff asunder, and his corpse fell to the ground.†

* For an account of these interesting caverns, see Burne's Travels in Bokhara. They are called *Ghoul ghoula* by the natives, and are situated in the mountains between Balk and Caubul.

† When Solomon felt death approaching, he chanced to be standing, in the act of superintending the building

Although trembling at the sight of frozen men, and uncertain whether they were not upon the threshold of Barsa Ghilmis, Abdoul and his sons dismounted, uttered a short prayer, and drawing their pistols, commanded Russool to ascertain whether their doubts were founded. Seeing that the fakeer not only retained the use of his limbs, but that his features expanded with joy, Abdoul exclaimed: "What news?"

"News!" retorted Russool, pointing to one of the bodies, "By the soul of Omar! my star is propitious. See! this man was my master, my persecutor. He it was that polluted my wife. My face is now whitened. I have nothing to fear."

of the temple. Fearing that the genii would abandon the work if they discovered his demise, he prayed God to allow him to die, and remain as he stood, leaning on his staff, until the work was accomplished. This request was granted, and it was not until the temple was finished that the worms gnawed his staff in twain, and the corpse, losing its support, fell to the ground.—*Arab and Rabin Trad.*

Thereupon, he spat upon the frozen beard, and kicked the prostrate carcase.

Abdoul and the others now took courage, and without further ceremony, fell to work to rid the dead of their shawls, arms and property. Having rifled them of every thing worth removing, and having made their ablutions with snow, in order to counteract the impurity of the unclean spoil, they remounted, and continued their journey.

At length, by the blessings of Allah, a sudden turn brought us to the mouth of the pass. The sun's rays again burst upon us, and showed the distant land of promise, far stretched beneath our feet. This lent us courage, and we pushed on with renovated vigour.

Rejoiced at the prospect of speedy delivery, and compensated in some measure for his lost cattle, by the plunder of the frozen Eusofyze, Abdoul selected a sheltered resting-place. Having made a fire with the captured lance poles, and killed a sheep, he regaled his family with a hot supper of broth and kabobs, roasted

on ramrods. To this, by the instigation of Satan, he added an abundance of *bang*, heated with spices ; so that the whole party, even the women, became exceeding merry.

At last, after drinking like the she-camel,* which Saleh, the son of Obeid, caused to come forth from the bowels of a rock, their senses whirled round, and they sunk to sleep, as completely stupified as if their brains were poisoned with the intoxicating smoke, which will be one of the manifest forerunners of the infallible day.†

* The Thamudites wanting a miracle, Saleh, the prophet, who lived a short time before Abraham, bade a she camel, large in foal, to issue from an isolated rock. Amongst other marvels, it is related of this animal, which is designated in the Koran as "*The Camel of God*," that if she stooped to quench her thirst at a well or river, she never raised her head until all the water was exhausted. This would have been a grievous calamity had she not been supplied with an inexhaustible stock of milk as a compensation to the thirsty. Indeed, she is said to have been so complaisant as to go about calling out, "If any one wishes to drink, let them come and milk me."—*D'Herbelot*.

† This smoke, according to Mahomedan belief, will

One individual alone abstained from the dangerous and forbidden indulgence. This was Russool Mozirib. When he saw his master and companions casting loose the reins of imprudence, the effects of which were increased by the intense cold, his soul rejoiced, and dark projects of vengeance and rapine suddenly flashed across his mind. The crafty inventor of evil taught him, however, to avoid suspicion, and so perfectly to imitate the brutal stupidity of drunkenness, that even the boys laughed at his beard. Pretending at length to have lost his wits, he rolled himself upon the ground, and then staggering towards the camels, he cast himself down between two of them, and feigned to snore like a broken-winded horse. No sooner, however, did he see all the others overcome with stupefaction than

be the eighth great sign of the last day's approach. It will cover the whole earth, and intoxicate infidels without injuring true believers. This tradition is probably connected with, and founded upon the IXth Chap. Revelations, wherein the smoke issuing from the pit is commanded not to injure those "marked with the seal of God."

he lifted up his head—listened—raised himself still higher—listened again, and then sprang upon his legs.

Sadi, on whom the lustre of wisdom shone conspicuously, has somewhere declared that, 'it is impossible to convert dung into clean plaster,' and that 'mercy shown to the sharp-toothed tiger is destructive to the sheep.'

"I think," said I to the narrator at this moment, "that you had better abstain from these digressional quotations, which only serve to interrupt and obscure your tale. Besides, if we proceed at this rate, I shall be compelled to change the title of the work from 'the Cashmere Shawl' to that of 'The Afghan Goat;' a designation little suited to my purpose."

"You seem to forget that shade is as necessary to a garden as bread to a feast," retorted the paper, "and that sugar does not derive its value from the cane, but from its innate qualities. As to your title, surely none but those who resemble asses laden with books, would look to that."

“ You err,” answered I; “ the title of a work is often its principal passport to favour. If it does not promote success, it attracts notice.”

“ What incredible *bosh* do I hear ?” replied the tale-teller. “ Is it the fashion with you Feringhees to measure the contents of men’s brains by their family names, or to judge of a mine’s value by the flowers growing upon its surface ? Remember also, that if you compel the architect to build after your own plan, you must not complain if the edifice fall.” It then uttered a very contemptuous expression, and proceeded, as will be seen in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

ROUSED by Russool's movements, I followed him with my eyes, and thought at first that he had merely risen to procure warmer covering. But the silver lustre of the bright full moon, heightened by the reflection of the surrounding snow, suddenly glittered upon his naked poignard, and a grin of fiendish import gleamed upon his harsh features, as he crept to the prostrate shepherds' side. For a while, he paused and uttered some unhallowed words; then, rapid as a shooting star, the sparkling blade cleaved the air, and an instant more, a stifled groan announced the completion of the accursed deed.

My heart turned upside down, when the sanguinary monster drew back his blood-stained

hand, and strode towards the sleeping children. In vain I bleated, or rather screamed with agony. The camels, roused by my voice, shook their bells, the dogs growled, and many of the flock instinctively re-echoed my cries, but the doomed youths stirred not, and thus the two eldest were instantly hurried from the sleep of stupefaction into that of eternity.

Allah is omnipotent and wise! When I saw the murderer's hand tremble, and a tear glisten in his evil-omened grey eye, as he bent over the third and youngest; methought the protector of innocence had interposed. During a few seconds, Russool stood there gasping and panting like the villain, Cain, when he smote his brother. He stared wildly around. The terrors of remorse appeared to overcome him, and he shuddered as if he had slain all mankind. But what is the aspect of innocence in the sight of the evil-minded? The holy sentiment vanished like the down of the mountain flower before the whirlwind. The demon-preventer of good dashed the tear of compunction from the assassin's cheek, and

pressed down the reeking weapon so forcibly with his iron wings, that it traversed the child's frail body, and nailed it to the earth.

Allah only knows, whether it was Russool's voice, or whether gholes or dives were nigh; but, as the poor boy's dying sighs mingled with the night blast, a hellish laugh thrilled along the mountain's flanks, and an avalanche, shaken by the unhallowed sounds, slid thundering from the crags above.

But the sacrifice was incomplete. Russool's thirst for blood was not satiated. Fear now prompted him to complete what vengeance had commenced. Close to the spot chosen for our night-quarter, a dark abyss yawned frightfully beneath. Keshrou and two other senseless servants reposed within a stone's cast of the precipice. Seizing them one after another by the legs, he dragged them to the edge. A kick—a push—and they disappeared for ever.

Heavy, crashing sounds, like those of rumbling ice and stones, three times ascended from the gulf, and told their fate. The appall-

ing echoes seemed like music to the murderer's ears, and he thought himself secure from the vengeance of Allah, who allows sinners to prosper for awhile, until, when least expected, his wrath overtakes them. Returning, therefore, to his slaughtered victims, he stripped them of their money, girdles and arms, and then pulling them to the brink of the chasm, he plunged them downwards.

The recording angel clenched his iron pen, and a glare of retributive choler passed across his radiant features, as he noted down this catalogue of horrors in characters of fire.*

Having rid himself of these living and dead evidences of his crime, the monster turned towards the women's tent, whence he intended to bear off all the moveables, and to leave the sleeping inmates to their fate. Softly and

* Al Sijil's duty is to note down human actions in a scroll reserved for that purpose. When men die, this scroll is rolled up and deposited in Sejjin, which is the record chamber under the seventh earth. There it is kept in order to be produced upon the day of judgment.—*Al Beidawr*.

stealthily, as leopards creep towards slumbering antelopes, he crawled to execute his purpose. Armed with Abdoul's long Afghan knife, he paused to listen, and then placing his hand upon the blanket-curtain, stooped and entered.

But the Lord of all creatures, irritated at the extent of his crimes, was about to let loose his avenging thunder. Suddenly, the echo of a gun rung through the lofty solitudes, and the wretch, staggering back, fell cursing to the ground. In an instant more, Mah-Zya, with the instrument of vengeance in her hand, appeared at the tent opening, saying: "Allah is merciful! Awake, mother, awake! See, the beastly fakeer attempted to pollute our privacy, and has met justice."

Whilst Amima and the other females cast sleep from their drowsy eyelids, the brave maiden stepped forth and sought her parent. "Father! father, of my soul!" exclaimed she gazing around, "arise! where art thou? and thou, brothers! shake off the fatal fumes.

Shame! shame upon thee, to let a woman perform the watchman's duty. Had not Allah preserved me from temptation, who knows what filth we might have eaten?"

The groans of the accursed Russool, as with his thigh broken he writhed and clutched the ice-bound earth, alone responded to her cries. Advancing a few steps further and neither seeing nor hearing her parent, she turned to the wounded villain, and said, "Ill betide thee, wretch! where is Abdoul Ali? why are we thus alone? Speak, villain, where are my brothers?"

"Gone, doubly gone," replied Russool.

Ere she could utter another word a shudder of indescribable horror shot through her soul. The moon which, for awhile, had been obscured by a cloud, as if it had sought to screen the hideous spectacle, now shone forth with renovated brilliancy and illuminated the ensanguined snow. Staggering forward, the bewildered maid approached the spot, whence, to the edge of the precipice, four crimson furrows marked the track ploughed by the victim's bodies.

"*Wahi! wahi!*" ejaculated she wringing her

hands in frantic agony. "What do I see? By the holy Caaba! Can it be possible? is this my father's blood?"

"*Wullah ! billah !*" replied the lying Russool. "It is as it is. Koshrou and the other slaves slew them in their sleep, and I sought to avenge them."

Overcome by pain and loss of blood, his voice now failed him and he fainted. Amima, and the other females, came forth at this moment and filled the frozen wilderness with their lamentations. The sight of their misery might have drawn tears from the demons of the waste, and softened a heart more flinty than that of Nimrod.

Benumbed with cold and overwhelmed with the bitterness of grief, not knowing where to direct their steps or where to look for succour, the ill-fated widow and orphans retired into the tent, and burying their faces in the bosom of despair, awaited the day-break.

The sun had not yet replaced the moon in the star spangled firmament, ere their attention was attracted by the furious barking of the

dogs, which, from being long fed and caressed by Russool Mozirib, had hitherto, not only remained tranquil spectators of his misdeeds, but had even crept to his side, licking his wounds and shielding him with the warmth of their bodies.

Accustomed to the ways of the watchful animals Mah Zya knew that wild beasts or strangers must be at hand. Hope, which never entirely deserts the human heart, even in its last extremity, revived in hers.

“ Listen,” exclaimed she to her mother and sisters, “ if they be bears or wolves, it were better to be torn to pieces at once, than to die a lingering death of horror in these fastnesses. If they be men, Inshallah ! they will take pity upon us and we shall be saved.”

Thereupon they all listened in breathless anxiety ; but the dogs one after another ceased barking ; silence again reigned around, and hope once more yielded to despair.

In less time, however, than is necessary to repeat half the ninety-nine glorious attributes of the Lord of Paradise, the dogs again bounded

from Russool's side, and recommenced their note of warning, and ere long a numerous body of Eusofyze galloped at full speed towards us. With loud shouts and cries of defiance some sprung from their saddles, and seized the camels and horses; others ran to secure Russool, whilst the rest surrounding the tent, levelled their guns and lances and called out, "*Bismillah!* yield! yield! resistance is useless—whether few or many come forth. Be quick, or by the beard of Omar, we will burn your fathers!"

"Harm us not!" replied Amima from within.

"*Ya Allah!*" echoed Mah Zya. "Seal not up your hearts. We are defenceless women—nobody. The hand of destruction has swept away our men and filled our mouths with ashes." Hereupon they all set up the most doleful cries.

Suspecting treachery, the foremost stranger answered. "What invention is this? by the moon and stars! do you take us for idiots?"

"By the breath of Ali I speak truth," replied Mah Zya.

“Come forth then!” rejoined the other, “Lift up the hanging that our eyes may be satisfied. On your heads be it.”

The trembling women having covered themselves with their wrappers, now appeared before the Eusofyzes; who, after ascertaining that no men were concealed amongst them, joined in a chorus of “*Ajaib-ne-adjeb!* Wonderful, wonderful! Allah is great! You are welcome!”

The beams of the rising sun already shed their lustre over the surrounding scenery, and tinged the wide expanse of ridge, and peak with crimson dyes. Its rays lighted up the spot, and disclosed to the strangers the extent of their prize, as well as the assassin’s features.

“*Allah Kerim!* What have we here?” suddenly exclaimed one of the tribe, who happened to examine Russool’s face. “By our chief’s salt, these features are known to me.”

“Is it a deception of Satan, or do my eyes tell lies?” said another. “Who would have thought of such a discovery?”

“By the seven heavens,” said a third,

“this is fortunate! See! We came forth to seek the chief’s brother and companions, and *Wallah!* here is Russool Mozirib, his fugitive fakeer.”

Thereupon several others gathered round, and finding life not extinct, they raised him up, poured a dram down his throat, smoked into his nostrils, and busied themselves in binding up his wound, so that he soon revived and stared wildly around. But the wretch would rather have gazed upon the demon who guards the entrance to the fifth hell, than have encountered the eyes of him who stood over him. It was the brother of his murdered wife.

At this moment the chief, who had gathered from Mah Zya an account of their misfortune, and had instantly penetrated the truth, turned round and said. “Does the murderer live?”

“Yes! Yes!” replied the others.

“By the wrath of Allah, let the son of Satan meet the reward he merits,” answered the Mushir. “Bring ropes, bind his limbs—

Let four of you spring to your saddles, and away with him. I have spoken."

A groan of anguish burst from the prostrate monster, as he saw the tribesmen hasten to obey the chief's orders. In vain he swore that he was innocent. In vain he took heaven, earth, and the nineteen gates of the holy temple to witness, that he had only escaped being murdered by his fellow servants, by grappling with, and hurling them down the precipice, where they had cast their master and his sons. In vain he swore also, that it was his intention to have conducted the women and flocks to his native village, and delivered them over to his wife's family, as the price of blood.

The only reply vouchsafed to him was—"It is a lie! Whose dog art thou that thou shouldst laugh at our beards? Wouldst thou live to make us eat more dirt? Poof! thou double faced villain, there is no greater rascal under Satan's arm pit."

Much as the murderer merited condign punishment, Mah Zya's heart sickened, and she

hid her face between her hands, when Rus-sool's brother in law, and half a dozen other athletic men seized him by the beard, and then, fastening his hands and feet to the cruppers of four horses, awaited their chief's commands.

Heart rending were the screams of the victim for mercy. But the chief gazed upon him with a relentless eye, and after a moment's pause exclaimed, "Let it be." Then clapping his hands, he added, "*Var* (off!) In Allah's name—*Var*!"

Scarcely had he uttered the last monosyllable, ere the riders drove their heels into their horses' flanks, and bounded forward in the direction of the four winds. Shouts of derision drowned the culprit's dying shrieks, as limb after limb was torn from his body, and then cast to the hungry dogs.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE terrible act of retribution inflicted upon Russool Mozirib, was no sooner accomplished than the Mushir returned to the women, from whom he ascertained the fate that had befallen the frozen men, in the pass of the Darkened Heart. The description sufficed to show that these were his brother and companions, whom he had come forth to seek. Half the troop was therefore dispatched to inter the bodies, whilst the other half loaded the camels and horses, placed the women in the panniers, and proceeded to drive us towards the valley. This we reached about the hour of fourth prayer, on the following evening, and encamped upon one of those lovely eminences, which connect the genial valleys of Chumla and Punjcorra with the bases of the surrounding mountains.

The first village we traversed, on resuming our march, belonged to the tribe of the frozen warriors, where the whole population was thrown into fearful consternation, by the intelligence of their fate. Even the women, who are more rigidly secluded in the Eusofyze districts, than in any other part of Afghanistan, shrouded themselves in their *borkhas* (hooded mantles,) and sallied forth, tearing their garments, and uniting their lamentations with those of the elders and boys.

After restoring to the families of the defunct such arms and property as had been collected by Abdoul Ali, we continued our route, and, at the end of two farsangs, approached a small town, of which one quarter was inhabited by the clan under the sway of the Mushir, our chief captor.*

* The Eusofyze villages are commonly inhabited by two or more distinct clans, independent of each other and governed by their own *Mushir*; thus forming a multitude of democratic divisions under the sway of higher chiefs called *Mulicks*, to whom several clans owe alle-

After the miseries we had endured, the country appeared to us like a portion of Paradise. Beautifully situated at the head of a richly cultivated valley, it was sheltered from the northern blasts by a noble forest of cedars, walnuts, peepuls and wild olives, whilst a rivulet of transparent water, running through the central streets, tempered the parching heats of the mid-day sun. Orchards, bending beneath loads of luscious fruit, awakened the appetite. Gardens enamelled with a thousand autumnal flowers embalmed the air; a golden harvest of millet, wheat, and pulse courted the sickle; birds carolled in the pomegranate groves, and numerous flocks bleated in the surrounding pastures.

With the exception of four or five larger edifices, tenanted by the chiefs of each clan, to which were attached public meeting rooms, giance. They rarely combine, however, unless in case any general aggression should induce them to set aside those rancorous feuds which keep them in a state of warfare, one with the other, as deadly as that formerly existing between the Scottish clans, whom they resemble in their predatory and martial habits.

the houses were small, but vying in external whiteness with the distant snow-crowned hills. A mosque, common to the four tribes, which occupied the town and neighbouring lands, reared its lacquered-tiled domes upon an elevated spot, near which was the cypress sheltered cemetery.

A row of lofty plane trees surrounded an open square, where the market was held and where the clansmen met to fight their cocks and quails; pastimes which frequently terminate in one of those bloody feuds that so repeatedly take place between different clans, occupying separate portions of the same village. So constant, indeed, were these broils, and so great the rancorous enmity instilled by Satan into the bosoms of contiguous tribes, that the husbandmen performed their labours with spears and matchlocks in their hands, and even the children went abroad, equipped in plate, or chain mail and armed to the teeth.

Having taken a circuit in order to avoid the streets inhabited by the rival clans, we entered that conducting to the Mushir's abode.

Here we were met by the male population, who rushed forth waving green branches, discharging fire-arms, beating drums, and filling the air with shouts of welcome ; whilst the women peeped down from the terraces of houses, or from behind the covered trellisses that screened the windows.

Upon reaching the front of the public room, where the elders were assembled, gravely smoking the common kaleean, which they passed from one to another, the chief ordered the whole of the defunct Abdoul Ali's property to be collected. It was then counted and divided into lots, equal in number to his followers, but differing considerably in value. The females were not omitted, but they were first enveloped in *borkhas*, so as to conceal them from head to foot. The Cadi and Mollah-bashi were then summoned and whilst the former examined the lots, to see that justice might be done to all, the latter mounted the steps leading to the council room porch, and blessed the whole in the following terms.

“ Allah is infinite, and there is no other God

beside him! He is merciful to true believers and leads them from darkness to light. He prepares honorable recompenses for them, and allows them to possess the booty which their right hands have gained. Praise him! for there is none like him. He bids the date-bearing palm to flourish in the burning desert, and delivers flocks and treasures to the faithful, in the frozen mountains. The things prepared for you are his gifts. Be thankful!"

Here he paused, and the air resounded with shouts of "*Allah-ho-akbar!*" The Cadi whose son was amongst the sharers, now stepped forward and exclaimed:

"*Mashallah!* the moment is propitious. Let arrows be brought and we will proceed to business.

But the Mollah, who was either exceeding fond of hearing his own voice, or was desirous to prevent the tribesmen from quarrelling about the division of spoil, interrupted him, saying,

"Listen, oh brothers! in the name of him who created each thing after its own kind. There will doubtless be a just distribution;

for who can be more equitable than the Cadi? but, after all, we cannot control fate. Let none of your hearts burn, therefore, if his neighbour's lot be better than his own. Be not covetous of that which falls to another. Remember that a grievous place is assigned, hereafter, to such as are devoured by envy. Verily they will stand for a thousand days, each of which shall be equal to forty years, immersed to the chin in boiling sludge and will be compelled to present goblets of the delicious waters of Tasnim, (a fountain in Paradise,) to those who sit in the divine presence. Let none, therefore, repine because his brother's ewes bring forth two fold, or because destiny empties the horn of abundance into his friend's granary."

"*Ooh ! Ooh !* He brays like an ass!" murmured three or four of the most impatient and least meritorious claimants. "By our souls, we must promise him and the Cadi half, or we shall get nothing. There are no greater rogues and extortioners from the white mountains, to the sea of Oman, than these expounders of faith

and law. They would strip the olive of its bark and the fig of its leaves."

Their murmurs were drowned, however, by cries of: "Silence! silence; what kind of lions are you that you pretend to roar after this fashion? what devil's filth are you cramming into our ears? your tongues are always a mighty deal sharper than your swords."

Upon this, the murmurers shrunk back, and the Mollah having again cleared his pipes continued,

"Thanks to Allah! there are lies and truths in this world. Is it not admitted that He has strictly noted down each man's position in the prescribed tables? are there not rich and poor, great and small in every land? are not some exalted and others abased? can the lynx expect the lion's share, or the humble reed out-top the free cedar?"

"No, it is impossible!" exclaimed some; whilst others added: "By our beards! by the Kehbla, his speech is like oil, he strings his words like pearls on a thread."

A voice in the crowd was now heard to ex-

claim, "They are all rogues, and sons of rogues. Wullah! there is nothing more true than the old proverb, which bids us :—' Shun women's faces, mules' heels and Mollahs on every side.' "

This sally produced a laugh, but the priest heeded it not and resumed thus,

" Allah has said that the sun shall not overtake the moon in her course. Each luminary moves in its own orbit. Allah has created twenty-four constellations and surrounded them with tributary stars; these are intended as signs and warnings to true believers, that every one may know where to spread his carpet. Gird on the breast cover of contentment, therefore, and accept with grateful hearts whatever thing destiny may assign to you—not forgetting to reserve a tithe for alms. I have spoken."

A buzz of approbation, especially from the leading clansmen, who some how or another expected the richest lots, and from the beggars who reckoned upon charity, crowned the Mollah's long winded harangue, as withdrawing within the council room and seating himself

upon one of the low leather covered couches, peculiar to the Eusofyze districts, he received the kaleean from the mouth of another smoker, and having taken the prescribed three whiffs, handed it to the next.

A bundle of arrows, each marked with a number similar to that of one of the lots, was now produced and emptied into a leathern sack. The chief then called for a loonjee and blindfolded the Cadi, so that in appearance nothing could be fairer than the mode of distribution. The sack was then given to the Mollah, who having commanded silence, pulled forth one of the arrows, and exclaimed. "Speak! in the name of the prophet, on whom be the blessings of peace, to whom shall this lot fall?"

"To Hossein al Push!" answered the man of justice. "May his house be peopled!"

This was a small lot, and Hossein an inferior tribesman; but he seemed well satisfied, so after making his horse curvet, and crying out *ai Shawash!* he took his share and retired.

The Mollah then drew forth several arrows in succession, without changing a tittle in the

intonation of his voice or mode of expression. Various small lots were thus disposed of, until, as he held up an arrow and was about to speak, he was seized with such a violent fit of coughing, that he seemed likely to suffocate. When he had recovered, he raised his voice, saying,

“ Speak, O most just Cadi! to whom shall this lot fall?”

To Mahomed Abou Tooru,” answered the other, “ and much good may it do him.”

This was one of the best portions, consisting of a camel, several doombas and one of the women, and the receiver was the Mushir’s brother in law; who, affecting great humility and surprise at his good fortune, replied to his friend’s congratulations with: “ Wonderful! who am I that destiny should smile upon me? *Bismillah!* I am satisfied. Had it been less I should have been equally thankful.”

Having said this he withdrew.

The same ceremonies having been repeated several times and nearly all the lots distributed, the Mollah, as he took forth another arrow fell

to sneezing, as if his nose had been tickled with powdered pepper. This accident produced general exclamations of: "*Allahshouker!* in God's name, may your fortune increase!" After which he wiped his eye and said,

"Speak—O most wise Cadi! to whom shall this lot fall?"

"To the Mushir," answered the distributor. "Whether small or great, may abundance ensue."

It was now very plain to me, by the manner in which the Mollah changed the mode of his questions, and prefaced them by a cough or sneeze, that the two trumpets of religion and justice were cunning old foxes, in league with the rich to cheat the poor. For not only had all the best portions been adjudged to the former, but the Mushir's lot was the most valuable of all, as it comprised the whole of the shawl goats and a woman, whom I knew to be Mah Zya. But with the exception of half a dozen men who went away discontented, the rest seemed satisfied, and withdrew firing off their guns and shouting joyfully.

When the crowd had melted away, the Mushir invited the Cadi and Mollah to supper, in order no doubt that they might enjoy a bottle of Abdoul's Caubul wine, and laugh at those who were tricked. The dumb animals were then driven by the chief's fakeers into the court behind his abode, and Mah Zya was introduced into the back apartments, reserved for the harem.

I paid little attention to the fate of the other women. One of them, however, having fallen to the share of the Cadi's son, the young mad-cap, who bore the reputation of being very dissolute and quarrelsome, could not restrain his impatience, and he therefore determined to see what manner of person Allah had accorded him.

If all the ice from Hindoo Cosh, had been suddenly cast upon him, he could not have been more chilled, nor could he have made more wry faces, had his mouth been crammed with vulture's gall, than when, upon lifting up the hood, he discovered Fidda, the grandmother of Abdoul Ali's children, who was as

crooked, and wrinkled as the branch of a withered palm, and resembled a worn out, yellow camel in colour and smell.

“*Laahnet be Shaitan!*” exclaimed he, casting down the hood, and spitting upon the poor, trembling creature. “What beastly fate is mine? Whose dog is that swag-bellied coupler of a Mollah, that he should blacken my face after this most cursed fashion? I’ll teach him to cough out of season! Why! that hypocritical father of mine must be worse than blind, not to preserve me from the evil eye of this toothless old leopardess. Mischief be upon thee, thou great grandmother of ugliness,” added he, kicking his prize. “Thou art only fit to blow upon knots, and to wash Satan’s foul linen.”

“Courage, my boy!” whispered his father, who had approached, and witnessed his disappointment. “She is certainly, not moon faced, nor cypress waisted. Had that grandfather of asses sneezed instead of coughing, as agreed upon, I would have provided better for thee. But Allah is great! Of what use is it your

being Cadi's son, if you cannot make clean plaster out of black mud? Good will come of this, nevertheless; for you owe the price of an ear to Ib'rhim Ibn' Yousoof, who must be paid, although he be only an infidel Jew."

"Curses on his father, mother and all his unclean race," exclaimed the youth. "If the old breeder of mischief, again attempts to step between me and his daughter, I'll cut off his head, as well as his ear."

"Cutting off heads and ears is very pleasant," answered the judge, "but the price of blood must be paid. This incredible old she ghole, will serve our purpose. Although it be against our customs, to give women in compensation for wounds or blood, as is the fashion with other Afghans, what is the use of my being Cadi if I cannot interpret the law as I please; especially in the case of one of these accursed Yaoudie?"

This somewhat appeased his son, and the unfortunate Fidda was conducted, without further ceremony, to the Jew's abode.

In the mean time, Mah Zya seemed very

well contented with her fate. The Mushir had contrived to pour the honey of flattery into her ears, whilst upon the road, and to make her professions that tickled her vanity, and made her soon forget her grief. Besides, he was in every respect well calculated to excite favor in women's sight, being in the prime of life, tall, well proportioned, of a martial carriage, and having the auburn beard, fair complexion, light blue eyes and open countenance, peculiarly characteristic of his countrymen.

His dress, though little differing from that of the common tribesmen, was well adapted to his figure and warlike habits. It consisted of a broad white-linen turban, encircled with a narrow, figured shawl, the fringed ends of which hung down over either ear. His tight sleeved tunic, of pale blue silk, padded and lined with crimson, sat close to his body. The long, full skirts were gathered, and puckered round the hips, and ornamented both before and behind, with several rows of metal buttons. Underneath were a pair of striped cloth trowsers, and brown boots shod with deer horn. His

chest and back were protected by a corslet of burnished steel, bordered round the neck, arm-holes, and waist with strips of leopard skin. A blue loonjee, part of which encompassing his middle, served as a girdle for his poignard and pistols, passed over his right shoulder. A matchlock inlaid with mother of pearl and silver, and a bull's hide shield hung at his back. A curved Indian sabre rested on his thigh, and he held in his right hand, a long spear ornamented with silken tassels.

In short, in a country where women are often doomed to swallow incredible bitterness in the shape of husbands and masters, Mah Zyia had every reason to return thanks to the Prophet for having attracted the notice of so handsome a chieftain as Ullegh Abdallah Mushir. Whether he turned out as agreeable as he looked, Allah only knows : for from that day forth, I never set eyes upon Mah Zyia or any of Abdoul Ali's family.

In the meantime, I and my relatives were delivered over to the care of our new master's fakeers ; and as the wool dealer's caravan was

expected to arrive about the period of the harvest and autumnal sheering, we were separated from the common animals, and guarded with peculiar care.

I was now grown a noble animal, far exceeding any of my own family in the fineness of my coat; and the Mushir, who was a great tiller of the earth, and extremely proud of his flocks, destined me to replace my grey-bearded father in those domestic duties which he had so well fulfilled. But what avails the prudence of man when fate interposes? Whether from the effects of climate, change of food, or some other unknown cause, my venerable parent soon fell ill, and after lingering a few days, breathed his last. He was followed by my poor mother, and half-a-dozen others, until at last all our insides became affected, and the whole flock began to waste away in a pitiful manner. Our appetites failed, and our ruminations were as bitter as wormwood. The rich grasses of the valley palled upon our palates. The wild flowers and aromatic herbs of the uplands produced nausea. An irruption

broke out upon our skins. Our eyes became blood-shot, our ears cold, and our noses burning hot, so that it was evident we were all smitten with *Taoune*.*

In this predicament, the fakeers fastened talismans to our tails and ears, crammed us with pills made of assafœtida and oil of sheeps' dung, and applied other remedies. But in despite of their care, one after another died, and I alone remained.

How I recovered, Allah only knows, unless it was from my having nibbled the bark of a shrub, which chance threw in my way, in a spot where I had never strayed before. Be

* The murrain. This is a very weighty corroboration of the received idea, that the shawl goats will not prosper to the south of the Himalayas, and it is only a matter of surprise, how the defunct master of "our hero" was enabled to preserve and multiply his flocks in the temperate regions of Caubul. If the reader be curious in such subjects, I beg to refer him to the erudite work of Mr. Rey, one of the most enterprising shawl manufacturers of Paris, who has assembled a vast mass of interesting matter in his work, called *Etudes pour servir à l'histoire des Châles*.

this as it may, I was soon as well as ever. I was now allowed to roam about where I pleased, and found some consolation for the loss of my relations, firstly, in being my own master, and secondly, in making love to the numerous females of my own species, whose proprietors seemed to encourage our intimacy. At length I became nearly as much common property, as the large public kaleean at the meeting room.

But, alas ! I was not long destined to enjoy this foretaste of paradise. As I was reclining one day beneath the shade of a porch, where half-a-dozen rosy faced children were playing with my silky beard, and coaxing my appetite with white clover buds, a young she-goat, who had found favour in my sight, chanced to pass. Prompted by Satan, who so often employs the dark eyes of beautiful maidens to tempt the unwary to destruction, I jumped down and joined her. Being a wild and coquettish thing, she first skipped and frolicked about, and then rearing upon her hind legs, let fall her head upon mine ; but whilst I was

standing with my nose protruded, sniffing the fragrance of her balmy breath, away she bounded into the street of another tribe, to which she belonged.

Incredible ass that I was ! I followed—and had scarcely overtaken her, when some evil-disposed villains, who recognised me as Ulligh Mushir's property, set up a shout, and forthwith several large dogs rushed upon me. Away I flew, cursing my ill fate, and bleating in a piteous manner. Although one of the ferocious brutes fixed upon my fleece, I contrived to reach the limits of our clan ; but, alas ! before any one came to my assistance, the other dogs seized on my throat, and after a few painful struggles, I fell a lifeless corpse.

This last incident in my life was of such a nature, that you must allow me to pause until I recover from the painful effects which the reminiscence always produces.

CHAPTER IX.

ERE long, however, the narrator resumed its strange story in the following words :—

The last sounds that greeted my expiring senses, were the echoes of guns, the clashing of arms, and the malediction of our tribesmen, who rushed forth to avenge my fate. What occurred, I cannot however relate, as I forthwith fell into that intermediate state, between death and resurrection, called *al barzakh*,* from which I was ultimately awakened by a tremendous scratching and pulling at my skin.

“ Stop !” exclaimed I to the story-teller.
“ What exceeding nonsense are you uttering ?

* The literal sense of this word, according to Sale, is “ a bar, or separation,” meaning, that when people are dead, there is no return.

Did you not say that you expired beneath the dog's fangs?"

"Certainly, had I been slaughtered by the butcher, I could not have been more dead."

"How then," demanded I, "could you revive to a sense of what was passing?"

"Does not the whole creation and the empire thereof belong to Allah?" rejoined the paper. "Did he not collect the scattered bones of Ezra's ass and restore them to life, after they had lain rotting for one hundred years? Did he not show Abraham how birds, fish and other bodies, half devoured by wild beasts, could be reanimated and made whole? Is it not ordained that all the bones of the human body shall be eaten by the earth, except that called, *Al Ajb*, (os coxyges), which will remain uncorrupted until the approach of the last day, when, after forty days' rain, it will furnish matter for the recomposition of those that are mouldered away? They will all spring from it again like blades of corn from one seed."

* D'Herbelot, articles Abraham and Ozair, (Ezra.)

“Do you mean to insinuate that a similar miracle was operated in your favour?” rejoined I.

“Exactly so,” said the little quire. “This occurrence was a further link in that marvellous chain of mutations, during which I preserved my sense of seeing, hearing, and inward reasoning, until I came into your possession; for which latter, and other uncleanness may the Prophet pardon me !”

“How is this ?” replied I, “is it not against the precepts of Islam to believe the pagan doctrines of the metempsychosis, or to endow animals and inanimate objects with souls ?”

“In what dark corner have you passed your time, that you should be so ignorant of the revealed words ?” answered the paper. “Is it not said that all the beasts of the earth and birds of the air ‘are people like yourselves’ and that they shall all return to Allah to be judged for their conduct in this world ?* how then can this be effected unless they have immaterial as well as material bodies ?”

* Koran, chap. IV.

“What kind of doctrine must that be,” exclaimed I, “which thus renders irrational creatures responsible for their actions, whilst it beatifies idiots and exempts them from retribution for their acts?”

“What is written is written,” was the reply; “and woe be upon you unbelievers when the trumpet shall sound and your evil deeds, embodied in the shape of black and hideous monsters, shall mount upon your shoulders and ride you into the presence of Gabriel, the scale holder, one side of whose balance hangs over heaven and the other over hell, and is so large that it will contain the whole world.”

“I thank you for the compliment,” answered I, “but you are silent upon the subject of transmigration.”

“Orthodox believers, whether Soonites, or Shiites, abominate such errors,” retorted the paper; “although some sects of free thinkers, who are doomed to be most essentially broiled, maintain their existence. The speaking of inanimate things is, however, not only admitted, but declared to be a sign of immortality and

the coming of the last day.* Consequently that which Allah can do later he can accomplish sooner. He is the beginning as well as the end; besides, has he not created ministering angels, two of whom constantly attend upon living beings? Do not Neris and Perist, Dives, † Tacwins, ¶ and Gholes exist? did not Jins inhabit and govern the world for two thousand years, until the invincible Sha Tahmurath § made war upon and buried them ten thousand cubits beneath Mount Kaf? whence by divine

* The speaking of inanimate things will be the thirteenth 'great sign' of the resurrection. It is as well to mention here that Moslems believe that several animals are admitted into Paradise. Amongst these are Saleh's camel, the sheep sacrificed by Abraham, Moses' cow, Solomon's ant, Balki's (Queen of Saba) parrot, Ezra's ass, Jonas' whale, the dog (Katmir) of the seven sleepers and Mahomed's dromedary.

† Male and female fairies. ‡ Devils. ¶ Fates.

§ Tahmurath, Shah of Persia, who fought and conquered the Jins. His majesty holds the same rank in Eastern fable, as Jack the Giant Killer in our nursery legends, and as Siegfried, in the German Nibelungen; he is called Div' bend (giant binder.)

permission, they sometimes come forth to work miracles."

"They must evidently have availed themselves of this latitude in your case," said I.

Possibly, answered the paper. All I know is, that upon recovery, I found my sensitive faculties were transformed from my corrupt body to its less perishable envelope, which, with those of my deceased companions, had been carefully flayed, cured, and preserved. In order also, that my destiny might be more fully accomplished, the fakeers had no sooner clipped and combed off the fine and separated it from the coarser hair, than my senses abandoned my skin and identified themselves with the pure wool; which was cleaned and placed in a bag sprinkled with powdered camphor.

Great, however, was the disappointment of the Mushir and of the neighbouring clans who expected the arrival of the wool dealers' caravan from Turkestan on their way to Cashmere. Owing to the severity of the weather, to which we had nearly fallen victims in the mountains, the merchants had taken the road

from Caubul and Peishawer to the Indus near Attock. Consequently, we remained quietly in store during the whole winter. At length, a short time before new year, a numerous caravan made its appearance and was conducted to the strangers' lodging house of our clan."

When the merchants had rewarded their escort and secured their goods, they proceeded to the bath and mosque and thence to the council chamber, where a profusion of compliments passed between them and the Mushir, whom they propitiated with a present of flowered cotton velvet. After seating themselves upon carpets, in preference to the low couches, pipes, and coffee were served and they commenced business.

For this purpose samples of the wool, amongst which I figured, were brought in and passed from one to the other. After fingering the different parcels, weighing them in their hands, and whispering in their own barbarous dialect, the Cashmerians, who are not to be exceeded in cunning and duplicity by the most crafty and lying Ispahani, stroked their beards

and shook their heads in a negative manner. At last one of them, who held a lock of my fleece between his finger and thumb, exclaimed,

“*Mashallah!* we have seen worse merchandize; but there is good and bad, fine and coarse in all countries. Is this your best?”

“What would you have?” answered the Mushir. “By my soul! the world cannot produce better.”

“The world is wide,” replied the other, “and we have had dealings in all parts. We have purchased many thousand camel loads of the purest qualities of Korassan, Thibet and Tartary. We know firsts from seconds in the dark; we do not require spectacles.”

“By your salt, you are mistaken if you think this fine, said a second. “Oof! it is scarcely fit to make girdles for the Shah’s tent pitchers.”

“If we were to offer such goods at Cashmere,” observed a third, “the fifty thousand weavers of the valley would laugh at our beards*.”

* Foster, vol. ii, page 20, says that there were forty

“ You have brought yours to a wrong market,” retorted the Mushir, “ if you expect to circumvent me with such garbage. If the film of perverseness did not obscure your eyes, you would see that the wool cannot be surpassed. Had not the accursed *taoune* fallen upon them, I could have shown you a flock of shawl goats as pure as those of Rodauk and Manasarovar.

“ You are jesting,” answered the first merchant. “ Do you think that we are new born infants? Does not all the world know that no one ever saw a goat, or sheep bearing the fine *touz*, shawl down, any where but in Thibet ?”

“ Do you imagine that I came into the world since Namaz ?” retorted the Mushir, his eyes sparkling with choler. “ Am I blind, or an idiot ?”

thousand looms during the Mogul dominion, which, supposing each to employ two hands, would give eighty thousand weavers ; but in his (Forster's) time, the number of looms did not exceed 16,000, which would give 32,000 weavers. More recent travellers state the number to have been much increased ; therefore the dealers were perhaps right in their calculation.

“Allah forbid!” cried out one of the others making a low salaam. “Your head is like ripe fruit upon a green stem, and your eye as bright as that of Ali.”

“There is not a khan or omrah from Lahore to Teheran, whose senses are half so acute,” exclaimed another.

“Jacob, the son of Isaac, who bequeathed the true faith to posterity, was not more learned in flocks and tillage,” said a third. “By the prophet’s grave! the rocks would produce fine wool, and the desert corn, if you were Lord of the world. What more can we say?”

“That is something,” rejoined the chieftain. “But I want money, not fine words.”

“Certainly! certainly!” replied the principal merchant. “We are just men, honest dealers. The fame of our good faith and the excellence of our wares are as well known, from the walls of Delhi to the infidel fair at Nizny Novgorod, as the lustre of the *Koh i nour* diamond. But we cannot give away our substance; we cannot return camels for kids.”

“By the camel of Allah!” retorted the Mu-

shir, rolling about in his seat and exhibiting unequivocal symptoms of impatience. "We are losing time. Am I no better than a fakeer that you venture to disparage my produce? Listen! you must give me fifty reals the turruck, (about twelve pounds), or go about your business."

"Fifty reals!" exclaimed the other. "What do we hear? by your head and by ours, you might as well ask us for a handful of hair from the beard of the centre of the world's admiration—the Shah of Persia."

"Does the khan think that we carry the philosopher's stone under our girdles?" said a second. "Why! may my soul be eternally grilled, if the finest goat's wool of Kerman, or the still purer down of Ladak, will fetch more than half that sum in the Cashmerian market,* although it be cleaned, washed and white as the pearls of Ras el Keimar."

"I spit upon the Cashmere market and upon all the pearls of Arabia," answered the Mushir

* The ordinary price of the finest Thibet wool in Cashmere is about £2. 10s. the turruck (twelve pounds;) but the coarser qualities do not average half that sum.

growling. "By the souls of the four caliphs I will have my price; not a direm less; and that in ready cash."

"Ready cash!" ejaculated the head dealer. "*Allah kerim!* ready cash! does the khan suppose that the gold sands of the Indus and Oxus irrigate our breast covers. By your salt, my Agha! that is not our way of dealing. We carry the goods of India, and the Penjab, to Afghanistan, Persia and Bokhara, and barter them for the produce of those countries.*"

"We seldom see the sight of *naghd*, (ready cash)," said a second, "unless it be a few Venetian sequins, Persian tomauns, or Bombay rupees. But we have wares that vie in beauty with the splendor of the Shah in Shah's treasure house. I do not lie."

"True! true!" re-choed the first dealer. "Let me see! Do you want Penjab brocades, Dacca muslins, Masulipatam chintzes, Kar-

* The Penjab, or country of five waters, is that which forms the dominions of Rendjit Sing; it is so called from its being watered by the five great rivers which empty themselves into the Indus.

rack pearls, Bokhara turquoises, Badakshan rubies, Yezd silks, Russian nankeens, Mazanderan cottons, Mushed velvets, Herat carpets, Hamadan leather, or *peerahun shahees*, (royal shirting) for your harem ?”*

Whilst he paused to draw breath one of his companions took up the cue and continued, “ If you should stand in need of Shiraz tobacco, and kaleeans, Cashan opium, Kermani henna, Yarkend tea, Tartar musk, Serendib spices, Mysore ivory, Bagdad pipe sticks, Karakoul lamb skins, Samarcand fruits, raw silk from the borders of the Oxus, indigo, dates and kais, (silken scarfs), from Moulton, Amritsir satins, Candahar madder, Khorassan blades and Lahore fire arms, *Inshallah!* if you want any of these, we will serve you.”

Another now chimed in saying, “ We have also white sugar from the Penjab ; furs, cochi-

* These *Peerahun* (shifts), are made of calico and linen mixed, something resembling English long cloth. They have nearly superseded the shirts and shifts of silk made at Yezd, Ispahan, etc., which was formerly used almost exclusively by the rich.—*Frazer's Travels*.

neal, and paper from Orembourg and Astrakan, not to mention an infinite variety of cotton goods, broad cloth, watches, tea pots, needles, scissars, and pen knives brought over sea to India, by those encroaching beasts the infidel Inglez ; who, having no land of their own, neither abide in tents or houses, but always live in ships, laying their accursed eggs in other birds' nests, and cheating and bamboozling both old and young, wherever they chance to direct their swine eating, kettle covered heads."

"A wonderful hot place is reserved for the beastly magicians under Satan's jaw," ejaculated another merchant. "Why they work miracles like Jins. When I was at Bombay I was them move their ships by hot breath against wind and current. By the same damnable contrivance they weave cloths and do all manner of labour without hands ; so that, by the aid of Eblis, who provides them with the black and calcined bodies of their infidel brethren for fuel, they can undersell all other traders and fatten, like vultures, upon destruction."

"A Hindoo merchant, who had visited many

strange lands, told me," said a third dealer, "that they penetrate to the furthest corners of the world; sprouting up here, there, and everywhere, with their red *kabbas*, (coats), and beardless chins, like the coral worms in the Persian gulf."

"Oof! they are worse than devils, or magicians," said a fourth. "When one of their Elchees passed through Moultan, he caused a wooden ram to be brought in, and bidding one of his slaves whisper in its ear, lo and behold, the beast began to salaam, with its head, and ran round the tent, inspired with life. May I die an infidel if I lie.

"Wonderful! wonderful!" ejaculated the by-standers.

"God is great!" continued the first speaker. "That was nothing; the same giaour, Elchee, ordered some wooden idols, dressed after a hideous and fantastic fashion, to be taken from a box and delivered to a slave, who blew a trumpet and retired beneath a kind of curtained house. Presently the figures appeared above, and began to speak, dance, laugh, and quarrel.

After they had bruised each other with clubs and uttered all kinds of bosh, one of them slew his wife; but before the relatives could arrive to demand the price of blood, Eblis rose and carried them all off. This is truth, by my soul.”*

“ They are brutes, infidels, and only fit to serve as fuel to burn each others bodies in the lowest hell,” exclaimed the Mushir. “ But I should like, nevertheless, to see some of their accursed watches and tea pots, if the mollah Bashi says they are not unclean.”

The mollah, who was sitting close by, appeared somewhat puzzled at this question, but after musing awhile, he replied, “ Allah is merciful! clean ends may be obtained by unclean means. Prayer and ablution will purify the foulest contact. Allah has evidently directed these filthy Giaours to wear the livery of fire and to be eternally tossed upon the surface of the waters, as a punishment for their obduracy. He has ordered them to labour

* This must evidently have been an exhibition of Punch and the wooden ram; one of Merlin’s mechanical toys.

and produce useful things for the benefit of true believers. Providing the articles be not in themselves forbidden, I know of no reason for their rejection. Allah never would have permitted these dogs to employ devils and genii to labour for them, as they did for Solomon, unless it were for the especial benefit of the faithful. In the prophet's name, then, let the goods be fetched."

Upon this the head merchant dispatched some of his servants, to bring a trunk full of the foreign wares, and then recommenced talking of his merchandize in the following strain, "If the articles already enumerated do not please you, we have many others. Shawl stuffs, for instance, of all prices, from the cheap coarse-wrought qualities of Lahore and Delhi, to the *shal i shahee*, (royal shawls), made by the expertest weavers in the valley of Cashmere, each of which requires from twelve to eighteen months' labour on the loom. May I die a Jew, if I did not dispose of one, to the Prince Regent of Fars, for more than one thousand tomauns, whilst its fellow was purchased by the Russian

agents at Bokhara, at nearly thrice that sum.* *Alhumdoolilah!* it is our custom to make the Muscovites and other unbelievers pay double, that we may be able to serve the faithful at less than prime cost.

“*Aferin! afeerin!* that is just,” exclaimed the by-standers. “Of what use are infidels but to eat our dirt?”

Whilst the old merchant pulled out his snuff box, which was made of the finest tortoise-shell, carved and inlaid with mother of pearl, and offered a sniff to the surrounding group, another dealer took up the discourse in these words, “We have some of the finest double and single humped camels, ever reared in the deserts of Kaissack and Bokhara; each of which can transport fifty to sixty *maun shahees*, (of fourteen pounds each), two—three—four days, without rest and would go round the world without water. No one shall have the weakest for less than one hundred rupees. We have some

* Burnes mentions two shawls purchased for the Court of St. Petersburg, which cost thirty thousand silver roubles, at the factory.

Turcoman horses, also, of the purest Chibergan and Karabir breeds. There is not one that does not look the mid-day sun in the face, and exceed the wild ass in speed and endurance.* The worst of the whole is worth a thousand rupees. By my beard!" added he, "when the noble beasts have tasted of the grasses of the Penjab and been warmed with the forty-two spices which form the ingredients necessary to bring a horse into condition, according to the Seik and Hindoo custom, they will rival Haizum in strength and swiftness."†

The waters of covetousness trickled over the Mushir's lips, as he listened to this brilliant description of goods, of which not a single

* It is the custom of the Turcomans to affix their colts' heads to lofty posts, or branches of trees in order to accustom the animals to look up with a watchful and proud air. The forty-two spices alluded to, are given in balls mixed with treacle or manna, or mingled with barley. They are supposed to improve the wind and condition, and to give lustre to the coat.

† *Haizum* was the horse of the arch angel, Gabriel, the dust of whose hoofs blinded the infidels at the battle of Bedr'.

article would ever, most probably, have reached the Indus, had not four or five powerful khans sworn to protect the caravan to the limits of the Eusofyze territory.

Fair profit, with such crafty dealers, being impossible and open plunder nearly impracticable, the only thing left for Ulligh Abdallah was to make the best bargains he could for his wools and to rely upon the dexterity of two or three of his clansmen, who were so expert at robbing, that they boasted of being able to steal mounted horses from beneath their saddles, without their riders discovering the theft.

Whilst the Mushir, Mollah, Cadi and elders were awaiting the return of the dealer's packages, an exceeding uproar arose in the adjacent street, and in a few seconds a man and woman, surrounded by a vast crowd, approached the council chamber, all swearing and abusing each other in a most outrageous manner. The cause of this disturbance we will reserve for another chapter.

CHAPTER X.

“WHERE is the Cadi? where is the Cadi?” exclaimed the man who was the most conspicuous amongst the crowd. “By the black stone of the temple, I will have satisfaction.”

“Whose dog are you, Mahomed Kaussim?” said two or three others, “that you should accuse our sister unjustly?”

“There is law, or there is no law,” replied the first speaker. “I know what I know. I am ready to swear to the fact.”

“I also am willing to make oath that he is a liar,” said the woman stepping forward. “What else can I do?”

“That is enough!” cried out her relatives. “Who can gainsay an oath. Curses on the breeder of mischief. Is the face of a blameless

woman to be blackened by such an ill-begotten kaffir as he is ? may his father be burned. He wants to destroy her, that he may swallow up her dowry."

"Is my son an ass and a beast?" said an elderly man, who stood by the complainant's side. "Was he born to devour this woman's pollution and say, 'God be praised!' has he not eyes and ears? did he not see and hear?"

"Our sister is innocent as Ayesha!"

"She is guilty as Lot's wife!"

"You are perjurers!"

"Curses on all slanderers; let them be scourged.

"Let the woman be stoned, or cast into a well."

"Silence! in the name of Allah. Silence!"

"Apply the law and let death ensue!"

"Where are your proofs?"

"Anathemas on proofs! oaths are sufficient."

These and fifty other contradictory exclamations were uttered, at the same moment, by the supporters of the respective parties. So,

what with the clang of arms, barking of dogs, and screams of children, the hubbub and confusion almost prevented them hearing their own voices.

At last the Cadi, who thought it beneath his dignity to rise from his couch, bade his officers beat back the crowd with their bamboo sticks and bring the principal parties before him.

When silence was enforced, the judge ordered his scribe to draw forth his *kalem* (writing case,) and note down the proceedings which the latter proposed to do, holding the paper upon his knees. The former then addressed the litigants.

“ *Inshallah!* if it please Heaven, you shall have justice to the weight of a mite. May I be stricken with the blindness, to be inflicted upon corrupt judges in the next world, if I do not hold the scales with the nicest balance. Speak, Mahomed Kaussim, what complaint have you against this woman? the privilege of accusation is yours; if, however, you accuse her falsely it will be the worst for you. Proceed!”

“ May the penalty be upon me if I lie,” replied Kaussim. “ Know, therefore, O Cadi, that she has defiled my harem ; she is a wanton, a most unclean wanton. Oof ! she deserves no mercy. Let her be stoned according to law ; by the heads of the four friends, she has sinned—sinned with an unbelieving Jew.”

“ Do not slay your soul with false oaths,” retorted the female, “ this is a most foul slander. Listen, O Cadi ! be just, and let not this jealous man’s words pervert the law.”

“ I am ready to swear !” vociferated Mahomed Kaussim.

“ Let me also swear !” re-echoed the woman.

“ One at a time, one at a time,” exclaimed the Cadi putting his fingers to his ears. “ In the name of Allah ! one at a time. If you both speak, how am I to distinguish sense from nonsense ; you accuse this woman of heinous crimes. O Mahomed Kaussim ; where are your proofs ?”

“ There is but one God !” ejaculated the complainant. “ All I know is, that upon mounting last night from the men’s apartment of

my house, to the terrace above the women's rooms, I found the entrance closed, and heard a man's voice. Thereupon, I drew my sword, broke open the door, and found this woman in great confusion of dress and manner, with a skull-cap laying upon her carpet, which, by its form and colour, evidently belongs to a Jew. What more do you require?"

"That is much certainly," replied the Cadi. "But a Jew's skull-cap, upon the terrace of a woman's apartment, is not sufficient evidence to cause death. Did you see the infidel head that owned it?"

"No, no! by my soul! or I would have chopped it off like a melon from its stalk," answered Mahomed. "But how could the cap come without a head? or how could words be spoken without a tongue?"

"Allah is great and there is reason in that," rejoined the Cadi, who turned to the woman and apostrophized her with:—"What hast thou to say to this, O thou most merciless to thyself? Infinite nastiness hast thou crammed

down this worthy man's throat. What reason is there why judgment should not pass?"

Hearken, O Cadi! you are a most sensible man!" replied the woman. "In the name of God, do not condemn me unjustly; it is true the door was fastened, and no less true that this unclean cap belongs to Ibn Daoud, the miser, whose house adjoins ours."

"Listen, listen!" exclaimed Mahomed. "The wanton avows her shame!"

"Let her be delivered to us for lapidation," re-echoed his father and friends, "she is defiled—polluted."

"A bad woman in a good man's house," as Sadi hath said, "is a hell upon earth. Defend us, O Lord, from this fiery trial!" ejaculated the Mollah.

"By the soul of the prophet, on whom be God's blessing, I am innocent," replied the woman. "Let me speak; if you cut short my words, how can I clear myself?"

"True, true;" rejoined the Cadi. "Silence! let her proceed."

The accused upon this resumed her defense in these words: " Having heard the muezzin call the faithful to night prayer, I closed the door of the terrace in order not to be interrupted at my devotions, and having no other witness than God, I took off my outer garments a part of which, from being lined with fox-skin, was *nejaset*, (impure.) When lo, I was suddenly disturbed by noises upon the adjoining platform. Being curious to know what was passing, I rose, listened, and heard Ibn Daud's family playing at hunt the cap and other games.* Presently, as ill luck would have it, this filthy cap was thrown into the air and alighted upon our side of the wall. Whereupon Ibn Daoud's son approached and called out, ' In the name of Abraham and the prophets! if any one be there, let them pick up my cap and cast it back; for, by the rod of Moses, my father would rather part with his skin, than give me a direm to purchase another.' I was about to comply, when the door was forced open; my

Hunt the cap, a common game in Afghanistan, is played like hunt the slipper.

husband entered, and for this I am accused of a grievous crime."

"Are you Mahomed Kaussim's lawful wife or his hand maid?" demanded the Cadi.

"Wife or no wife, what matters it?" exclaimed the accuser. "If it please Allah, I am ready to take the four prescribed oaths that she is guilty."

"Is your understanding crooked, that you cannot return a straight answer?" responded the judge. "What matters it indeed? by my beard! by my head! it makes all the difference. Do you not know that if a wife be convicted, she may be punished with twelve months' banishment, one hundred stripes, divorce or lapidation, according to the gravity of her offences; whereas if a slave transgress, the penalty is only half, she being regarded as only half a woman. But as death cannot be inflicted by halves, the slave cannot be lapidated; and not being married, she cannot be divorced. That is the law. To which class then does this woman belong?"

"She is my wife and a free woman," an-

swered Mahomed. "Not all the purifications in the world can clear her face. Let her therefore die!" Here the Mollah interposed saying,

"In the name of the most merciful and just God, you are unreasonable; this cannot be. According to law, no woman can be convicted, or put to death without the testimony of four witnesses.

"The Mollah deserves to be a partaker of Paradise. He is a *peish Namaz*.* His wisdom and justice are conspicuous as the sun and moon," exclaimed the woman's relatives.

"Listen! and I will expound the law," said the Cadi. "The Mollah has nothing to do with it. Silence there,—by your souls, silence. He then resumed, in the following words, "If the husband has no evidence, and persist in

* Literally a first, or model, of preachers. Amongst the Mollahs there are many, who, either from their powers of oratory, or their intimate knowledge of religious ceremonies, are selected as clerical flugelmen. Eastern kings have always a Priest of this kind attached to their household, whose employment corresponds with our chaplains in ordinary to the sovereign.

his accusation, he must swear four times to the truth of his affirmation, and if the woman make no reply, she must die. On the other hand, if the woman has no proof of her innocence, she also, in order to avert punishment, must swear, four times, that her accuser lies. Are you prepared?"

"On our souls be it," replied both husband and wife.

"Be it so!" ejaculated the Cadi.

"Let not Satan tempt either of you to perjury!" exclaimed the Mollah, "or you will be accursed, and for ever incapable of giving testimony in this world; and, in the next, you will be chained to burning palm trees, and eternally condemned to gnaw your own tongues."

Silence being established, and the Koran being placed upon a cushion before the Cadi, the husband turned towards Mecca, stretched forth his right hand, and, raising the sacred volume above his head, cried out, "In the name of God. There is but one God! I, Mahomed Kaussim, the husband of Safyia, swear—by the resurrection and eternal judge,—

by the giver of life and death,—by the angels and the sender thereof,—by the heavens and their builder, that I speak truth. May the eternal malediction of Allah be on me if I lie!

“Amen!” ejaculated the Mollah and bystanders, as they turned to see whether the woman would venture to meet this solemn adjuration with a counter oath. She did not keep them long in suspense. After wrapping her *borkha* close round her, and dipping the points of her fingers into a jar of water, in order to purify them, she took the book, and having repeated her profession of faith, exclaimed,—

“Allah is great and merciful.—I, Safyia, the wife of Mahomed Kaussim, swear—by him who raises the innocent and confounds the guilty,—by the Creator and four most perfect women,—by him who blackens the face of detractors, and clears those who are falsely accused,—by the stars and the ruler of their motions,—by these four oaths do I swear, that my accuser is

an exceeding liar. May the eternal curse of Allah fall upon me if he speaks truth !”

As soon as she had terminated this adjuration, the husband drew back, muttering threats of vengeance ; whilst shouts of applause burst from her relatives, who demanded that her calumniator should be punished with fourscore stripes, ‘as ordained by the Sonna.’ But the Cadi again interposed, saying, —

“What know ye of the Sonna? By my salt, there is neither law nor justice in your demand. Is it not written,* that if a wife be cleared by her oaths, the husband is also discharged of slander by his. Let both, therefore, retire peaceably, and live after God’s ordinances.

* It must be observed that the Cadi must have alluded to what is “written” in the Koran, and not in the Sonna. For although many learned moslems have given the title of *Sonna* or *Sonaa*, to collections of laws and works of jurisprudence, the true *Sonna*, which serves as the Mahomedan civil and penal code, is oral, and consists of precepts and traditions consigned in, or grafted upon, the Koran.

“No, no!—By our mother’s grave, no!” roared out the woman’s brother. “Are we brainless fools, that we should re-deliver the lamb to the wolf’s teeth? We demand that the marriage should be annulled.—We are our sister’s trustees. Besides, she has other just complaints. She is ready to swear that he has treated her with ignominy and neglect. He has preferred others over her and not fulfilled his duties. He has deprived her of her privileges, as enjoined by the Koran.”*

“This is a just request,” observed the Molah. “When so great a scandal takes place, it were always better for man and wife to separate.”

“The law certainly ordains that divorce shall take place, in such cases, if demanded by the woman’s trustees,” said the Cadi.

* In order to maintain harmony between wives, when men have more than one, it is enjoined by the Koran that each, in her turn, shall partake of her husband’s society. The prophet was alone exempted from this law, as well as many others, relating to the marriage intercourse and the number of wives,—his being unlimited.

“It is our sister’s wish;—let it be so,” echoed the brothers.

“In the name of Allah and his prophet, on whom be perpetual peace,” replied the Cadi, I must comply. Therefore, I hereby loosen the marriage knot—undo what has been done, and declare that these people are two. Let them separate, forthwith, providing there be no impediments; such as unweaned infants, or others likely to come. I have spoken.”*

“But the marriage dowry?” exclaimed the brothers. “Our sister did not quit our abode empty handed.”

“True,” rejoined the Cadi, “I forgot that. Harken, Mahommed Kaussim.—When di-

* It is forbidden to divorce women who are in the latter condition, or, if not *apparently* so at the moment, until the end of three months, in order to see whether such may not be the case. Mothers, after being divorced, must nurse their infants “two full years,” the father maintaining and clothing them the while. A wife may be divorced twice, and taken back again, without previously marrying another person, but if she be divorced a third time she cannot be retaken, unless she first marry another husband, and is divorced from him.

voice takes place, the law declares that the husband shall return the wife's portion, and not deprive her of anything he hath given to her. It is enjoined to you, therefore, to part from this woman at the prescribed time, with kindness and equity, according to God's statutes. If you transgress, it will be exceeding bad for you. You are dismissed."

The parties, upon this, retired to settle the affair amongst themselves, and the council chamber being cleared, the goods were brought for inspection. After haggling a long time, the Mushir obtained several articles of English manufacture, in exchange for his fleeces, and ere night-fall, I, and the other parcels of fine wool, were carefully packed in bales, and conveyed to the merchant's abode. There we remained until the latter had completed their transactions, and the astrologers had fixed a propitious day for their departure, so that they might not encounter *Nehoosset* (misfortune), on their journey.

CHAPTER XI.

CLOSELY incarcerated in my bag, and corded upon a pack-saddle, I could see nothing of the country through which we passed on our way to the ford of the Indus, opposite Durbund. I was compelled, therefore, to content myself with listening to the laborious pantings of the camels, and the tinklings of their bells, until, at the end of six or seven days, a corner of my prison happened to burst open, and enabled me to look around.

Merry fellows were the most part of the dealers, and a joyous life did they lead, by the way ; eating, drinking, smoking, and carousing as if their whole journey was a wedding feast. Although professing Islâm, little did they bother themselves with its precepts. With the excep-

tion of a short mid-day prayer, devotions and ablutions were scarcely attended to, and, as to wine, I believe they would have emptied all the jars of Shiraz in a day. Their notions about the other sex were also equally relaxed, as may be judged by the following conversation, which took place amongst them, as they rode by the side of the *kittar*, (string, consisting of seven camels), on one of which I was perched.

“*Eh! Eh!*” exclaimed a Cashmerian, named Yar Ahmed, leaning back until his head nearly touched his horse’s crupper, in order that he might more easily drain a skin of Caubul wine. “Ah! ah! by my soul, what would life be worth, were it not for this?”

“Drink, brother, drink!” said another. “Has not Hafiz, that prince of poets, extolled the three joys of existence in these words? ‘Flowers in the bosom — wine in the hand — and a yielding mistress!’”

“Roses, wine, and women!” ejaculated a third. “What more can the blessed in Paradise wish for?”

“Thou art right,” rejoined a fourth. “But

what are the two first without the last? Curses upon these rigid intolerants of Bokhara, and these jealous lynxes of Eusofyzes! they shut up their women like pearls in their shells. One cannot get a sight of their contents without risking one's life in diving for them."

"Give me Hazareestan for that kind of fun," exclaimed a fifth.* "Although the unorthodox Shiites deal with Eblis, and can eat up men's livers by fixing their eyes upon them and muttering imprecations the while, they are mighty complaisant in other matters. By my beard, the women not only appear unveiled, but they think no more of their conjugal duties than if the harem walls were made of spiders' web."

"May I be called a hog," said one of the others, "if what he says be not true. I have

* Hazareestan is situated in the mountainous districts between Caubul and Herat. Burnes and Elphinstone both allude to the laxity of their morals, as well as the custom mentioned in the subsequent dialogue, which resembles that of the mountaineers of the Himlayas described by Captain Skinner in his Indian excursion, Vol. i., p. 269.

had dealings with these Hazanrehs and know their customs. If a stranger arrives amongst them, the first compliments paid to him, after a few whiffs of the pipe, are—‘Peace be with you! You are welcome! May your fatigues be forgotten! What goods have you?’ Hereupon you answer—‘*Allah shukur!* May your desires be accomplished. I am a merchant. I have teas, sugars, tobacco, and wares of all kind. All are yours at a fair price.’ To which he replies—‘Excellent! Excellent! O Agha! you are a perfect man. You may command me and mine. By the blood of Hossein. I have a wife,—may she find favour in your sight! She is wonderfully moon-faced. On my head be it.’ Upon this you exclaim—‘I am unworthy of the honour.’ Then, if it suits you, you add—‘*Zinda bashi*—(long life to you)’ and are forthwith introduced to the lady.”

“This formality is not necessary,” said another, “for in case a stranger enter the women’s apartments and does not wish to be interrupted, he need but leave his slippers at the door, and if the ass of a husband chance

to strike his hoof against them, by my soul, he will bray out his 'Allah be praised!' and pass on."

"May their fathers be burned to cinders," ejaculated a grave-looking Samarcand merchant, called Hadji Reza, who, like the generality of his countrymen, was a rigid Soonite. "This comes of swallowing the filth of that usurper, Ali. Most properly will they suffer for it hereafter."

All the others laughed at his scruples, and one of them said—"Oof! that is nothing. The Hazaurehs are incredible brutes certainly; but no place in all the world is to be compared, on that score, with Yarkend upon the confines of China.* Rare fellows are the half Musselmen who dwell there."

* Yarkend is the frontier town upon the S. W. side of China, distant about five month's journey by caravan, and about 25 days by courier from Pekin. It is garrisoned by Chinese troops, but the inhabitants and surrounding tribes are principally Soonee Mahomedans. Yarkend is the great mart for the merchants of the west, who are not permitted, however, to penetrate farther inland, nor may the Chinese pass outside the limits of the district.

“You have been amongst these tea-breeding worshippers of dragons and devils; what are their customs?” demanded the wine drinker.

“Convenient enough for strangers,” rejoined the other. “A merchant, above all if he swear by Omar, shave the space between his moustaches, avoid sleeping with his feet towards Mecca, and otherways prove himself a Soonite, may take advantage of the *Metaah*,* and lawfully marry a woman for ten, twenty, or more days, according to the time required to effect his bargains for tea, musk, porcelaine, and silver bars.”

“Who ever heard of such doings?” observed two or three other Turcoman merchants. “You laugh at our beards.”

* *Al Metaah*, or the law of temporary marriage, though considered as forbidden by orthodox Musselmen, is often practised, like the use of wine and cards. *Jahia ben Aktem*, who was chief Cadi to the Calif Al Mamoon, father to Caleph Vathek, persuaded his master to forbid these immoral marriages, and published an edict to that effect.

"He speaks truth," retorted a second Cashmerian. "I have seen it."

"Curses on Satan!" exclaimed the Samar-candi. "Such dealings may pass amongst Jins and Gholes, but it is an abomination for true believers."

"May I be spit upon as a lying infidel," answered the first speaker, "if it is not true. Allah has, doubtless, ordained that things should be so, in order to recompense merchants for the perils of the road."

"A more terrible journey cannot be imagined," said the second speaker, "especially that from Thibet to Yarkend by the mountain passes of Yenghi Debban. The caravan has to travel six days through frozen regions, where the breath congeals in the throat, the eyes weep blood, the head turns upside down, the fingers drop off from cold, and where horses and camels perish in such numbers, that merchants are often compelled to leave their wares behind them. These dangers surmounted, they have to traverse the naked desert, where no living

creatures are to be met with, save a few wild horses, or wandering Tartars, who live upon mares' milk, and would as soon part with their souls as give one a cup of water."

"Give water!" exclaimed the other merchant. "May I be confounded by the evil eye if they are not constantly compelled to bleed their horses and drink their blood, to slake their own thirst."

"Allah has certainly created all these difficulties," observed the devout Samarcandi, as he fingered his beads, "to prevent the faithful from polluting themselves amongst these barbarians."

"Let our brother speak, and do not trouble us with your cant," exclaimed the Cashmerian.

"If it please Heaven," resumed the first merchant, "as soon as the caravan reaches the Chinese frontier, a body of armed Calmucks surround and escort it to the camp of their chief, who receives strangers in his cap of office, surmounted with stags' antlers.

"Stags' antlers!" ejaculated Hadji Reza. "Why, in the name of the four blessed Caliphs,

do the dung mongers sit under the shadow of such inconceivable filth ?”

“ Where have you lived, O Hadji ?” replied the Cashmerian. “ Do you not know that the Tartar-khans wear stags’ horns, differing in size according to their rank, as the Persian Omrahs and Afghan chiefs wear shawls, *Jikas* (head jewels) and dresses of honour ?”

“ Allah ! Allah !” ejaculated the Hadji. “ They must be worse than beasts to bedeck themselves with the rejected offal of other brutes.”

“ At fifty farsangs customs change, and at one hundred, they completely differ,” as the sage has said. “ But what comes next ?” observed one of the auditors.

“ Why as soon as the Kâfila Bashi and merchants have exhibited their papers and acquitted the frontier tribute, the caravan is conducted to the gates of Yarkend, where a guard of pig-tailed Chinese, with yellow, dragon-painted vests, peacocks’ plumes in their black bonnets, and muskets, so heavy that it requires two men to carry them, accompany it to the Custom

House. There the duties are paid, and before the merchants have permission to withdraw, each must find two sureties to answer for his good behaviour, and to certify that he speaks truth, as to his country and purpose. Thereupon, his description is not only noted down to a hair, but his portrait is taken, and copies sent to the different military posts, so that he cannot turn without being recognized. His head would not be worth a grain of sand, if he attempted to exceed the prescribed limits."

"But how do they manage the *Metaah*?" demanded the other.

"There is no difficulty in that," replied the traveller. "The women attend the Bazaar, buy, sell, and do the honours of their own abodes, uncovered. So that a man may judge for himself. If he sees one that pleases him, he makes overtures to her through a *sha pao*, as they call the female go-betweens.* If both agree, they appear before the Cadi, who, after

* *Sha Pao*, literally a "sand goose." They are generally Calmuk women who act as servants to merchants. — *Klaproth's Thibet*.

each has exclaimed—‘I will marry,’ registers the conditions, ties the knot, and they are united.”

“By my head, and by yours, this is not a lie,” said the second merchant. “I have been twice at Yarkend, and each time availed myself of the *Metaah*, at the cost of four tillas, (about £2 10s.) per month, and a parting present. My wives and I lived like two almonds in one shell, and separated as peaceably as the ripe fruit drops from the tree.”

“What manner of looking commodities are these half savages?” demanded the toper, who, from intoxication, or some other cause, appeared to sit very uneasily upon his saddle.”

“Allah has not been niggardly to them,” rejoined the other. “They are tall, plump, and exceeding fair. Their teeth are as white as pearls, their lips red as cochineal, their waists scarcely a span wide, and their eyes, though small, are dark and sparkling as jet. Their holiday dress, also, is well suited to show off their persons.”

“All the world knows the old Persian pro-

verb," exclaimed the Hadji—" *Koorbet ba labas* (honour is in the dress)."

" *Wullah*, thou croakest like a raven; do not interrupt him," said several voices; upon which the other continued thus:—" On their heads they wear a lofty, circular tiara of red, green, or blue stuff, enriched with turquoises and jewels, underneath which their raven locks sprout forth in numerous small tresses, intertwined with coral, and perfumed with the scented blossoms of the gold-flowered *Lan*, (epidendron.)* Two larger plaits, hanging down behind, indicate their being married, and three, their being on the look out for a husband. Their short-skirted tunics of yellow or purple velvet, richly embroidered and trimmed with

* The dress of the Yarkend and Tartar women bears great resemblance to, and is the model of the Russian national costume. The tiara, open at the top, is nearly similar, with this difference that the coif worn by Russian married women, called *Povoinik*, is closed behind so as to conceal the hair, whilst that of unmarried women, called *Poviazka*, slopes away so as to let the tresses fall upon the shoulders."

fur, sit close to their bodies, and are fastened in front with a filagree clasp. Beneath is a long garment of red stuff, also trimmed with furs, and high-heeled boots of coloured leather, wrought with various devices. A narrow Moulton scarf protects their shoulders, and a striped silken apron fringed with gold and pearls, is suspended in front. They wear coloured gauze veils, but not for concealment; so that their charms work upon men's hearts, like the mid-day sun upon the mountain snows."

"It is well for them all that their country is not within the dominions of the commander of the faithful," said the Samarcandi, "or the unblushing wantons would be first tied upon asses' backs, and then married to slaves. As to the *pezevenks* of men, and the filthy sand geese, the one would be scourged to shreds, and the other cast into dry wells."

"The Commander of the faithful, and the whole race of men-stealing Turcomans are jealous bigots!" exclaimed one Cashmerian.

"Wallah! I spit upon their blue beards.

Fine fellows are these Yarkendis. May they prosper!" roared out another.

"By my father's grave," said Yar Ahmed the toper, who began to exhibit symptoms of extreme inebriety, "if ever I get rid of these cursed pains in my head and stomach, my next speculation shall be in that quarter. It must be a foretaste of Paradise—especially if wine be plentiful. Ooh! ooh!" added he, "what devilry has seized me; My limbs are ice-cold and my brains and entrails burn, as if the poisonous wind of the Himlayas had scorched them."

Scarcely had he uttered these words, ere he commenced making strange contortions and grimaces, and rolled about in great apparent suffering. Upon which Hadji Reza ejaculated—

"This comes of indulging in forbidden things. Allah is great! The hour of retribution is never far off. Oh, how admirable are the words of the Sage—'Three things,' says he, 'are worthless without three others. Food without appetite, beauty without sense, and wine without temperance.'"

The worthy Hadji's moralizing was here suddenly cut short by shouts of "My horses! my horses!—Curses on Satan!—Run! kill! slay! This is magic!—Anathemas on the villains! What filth have I swallowed? *Wullah! Wullah!* I am robbed—doubly robbed!"

"What, in Allah's name, aileth thee, Suleiman Djanbaz?" exclaimed the Hadji, addressing the horse dealer, who uttered these words. "Art thou possessed?"

"Hast thou, also, muddled thy brains?" said another.

"Hast thou been bitten by one of the poisonous bugs of Miana?" exclaimed a third.

"By my beard," added a fourth, "one would think that the tiger had carried him off, instead of the ill-fated camel driver."

"Curses on all camel drivers and tigers," retorted Suleiman. "Have I not cause for raving? See!—look at the raw-boned Yaboo, on which Satan has set me astride, and remark these three broken-down, mangy, dog-horses fastened to my pommel. They are not worth a real each, whilst the four I have lost

would have fetched at least twenty thousand rupees at Delhi or Hurdwar."

"Marvellous! marvellous!" ejaculated one. "How did it come about? None but Jins or Dives could have done this."

"The Hindoo thieves, who steal blankets from beneath sleeper's bodies, are less expert," exclaimed another.

Upon this they all fell to laughing, except Suleiman and his brother horse-dealers, who started off in different directions, shouting, swearing, and proclaiming their loss, which only served to increase the general mirth; for the jockeys were not only considered as always on the look out to cheat whomsoever they could, but, like most people who fall into the quagmires of misfortune, their ill fate excited more rejoicing than sympathy amongst their companions. Had I then been gifted with the power of utterance, I, also, should have laughed at the cause of this disturbance, which plainly proved that Ulligh Mushir had not over rated the predatory skill of his clansmen, as will be seen presently.

CHAPTER XII.

ON descending from the hills and approaching the banks of the Indus, the road had traversed a deep and swampy jungle, equally dangerous from its unwholesome exhalations, as from the multitude of wild beasts concealed within its covert.

The intricacy of the track, the denseness of the mist, and sombre shade of the lofty timber, whose over-arching foliage concealed the moon's rays, rendered it necessary for the caravan to use the utmost precaution in advancing, and often caused extreme confusion. At length the disorder became so great, that we scarcely moved two hundred ghez in an hour, and the whole string became so jostled that no one could recognize his own beasts. Here, horse-

men were swearing one at another for jamming their legs. There, drivers were bemoaning their beasts, which lay floundering in the morass. Here, gigantic oaks and peepuls, uprooted by age or tempests, entangled riders and their steeds in their prostrate branches; and there, camels and horses, snorting and stumbling with instinctive fear, at the vicinity of savage animals, obstinately refused to advance. In short, never was there such an uproar. The maledictions of men, the groans of frightened camels, and the howlings of hungry jackals, being mingled with the awful roar of tigers, the terror of whose thunder-breathing blasts was enhanced by the gloomy darkness.

One of these monsters had, in fact, crawled close to the edge of the jungle, near the camel on which I was packed. The poor brute, more sagacious than man, quivered, snorted, stamped, and became restive, but the driver paid no attention to the warning and continued to urge it onwards. Presently, two huge eyes glimmered, like carbuncles, amongst the lofty reeds. In an instant more there was a loud

crackling as of breaking foliage, then an appalling roar shook the very earth, and then, with the speed of thought, a dark, huge mass bounded through the air and alighted by my side. A scream—a yell—a stifled “Allah! Allah! Allah!” announced some human victim’s fate. It was the unfortunate camel-driver, whose mangled body was instantly borne off to the furthest depths of the jungle.

Scarcely had this occurred, ere the event that had given rise to Suleiman Djanbaz’s exclamation took place. In order to guard against accident or theft, the dealers, who owned the valuable Turcoman horses, destined for the great Indian fair of Hurdwar, either mounted the most precious animals, or led them in strings of three or four, secured with chains and locks to their saddle bows. We were just moving from the place where the tiger obtained his melancholy repast, and had reached a spot where the track widened, so as to admit of several animals abreast, when half-a-dozen Eusofyze rode up to the side of one of the finest sets of horses belonging to Suleiman

Djanbaz, and appeared zealously occupied in re-establishing order. Ere long, however, I saw them press closer and closer, until each man placed his own sorry jade on the flank of one of the high-bred Chibergânis. At a preconcerted signal they dismounted, and, in an instant bridles, saddles, and head-stalls changed bearers, and the cunning rogues, reining back their booty and allowing the dealer to advance with the yaboos, which they left in the place of his own horses, sprung into their saddles and disappeared amidst the crowd.

But this was not all.—The most valuable animal of the whole lot, an Arab colt which Ulligh Abdallah most coveted, was ridden by Suleiman Djanbaz himself, who sat with his reins loose upon its neck, his head muffled in his cloak, and his wits half stupified with his participation in Yar Ahmed's libations.

Soon after the other horses had disappeared, three or four Eusofyze, amongst whom I recognized the Mushir's principal groom, crept forward, and, taking advantage of the darkness, surrounded the dealer. Presently, one cut his

girths, breast-rein, and bridle, whilst the others gradually and imperceptibly pulled back his saddle to the verge of the crupper. The most difficult part of the operation still remained, but nothing could baffle the ingenuity of these rogues. Having forced the head of one of their own horses under the other's tail, they drew the saddle and rider over its ears and mane, until Suleiman was safely lodged on its back, utterly unconscious of what had passed. Ulligh Abdallah's groom then vaulted upon the stolen animal, and started off towards the hills, whilst his companions disappeared under the camel's bellies. So secretly and ingeniously were these thefts committed, that day had dawned, and we had emerged from the jungle, ere they were discovered.

The disturbance caused by this incident had scarcely subsided, ere Yar Ahmed began to moan, roll his eyes, clench his teeth, and writhe, like one possessed; until, at last, he exclaimed, "O Allah! what have I done that my heart should be turned upside down, like a Frank's hand-writing?" Here his speech was

cut short with violent sickness. At this many of his companions laughed, and one called out "Let him bear the penalty. *Barruck-ullah!* Who, but a down-right fool, would load his gun to bursting?"

"There's no harm done," said a second. "He is charged with smoke instead of powder!"

"'Life is a continued intoxication, — pleasure flies, but pain remains.' Such are the words of the sage," observed Hadji Reza.

But their mirth was quickly converted into alarm when they saw Yar Ahmed relinquish the reins, drop his head upon the pommel, and then fall to the ground, after a few convulsive attempts to clutch the mane.

Upon this some dismounted, and endeavoured to assist him; but their exertions were fruitless. His eyes rapidly sunk in their sockets—his limbs were twitched with cramps and spasms,—his lips became livid and his features distorted.

"Allah is great!" exclaimed Hadji Reza, as he hung over the sufferer. "There is more

in this than mere wine.—Yet it cannot be poison, for you have all partaken of the same forbidden liquor !”

“If it be wine,” answered an Usbeck merchant, “let him be drenched with *Keimek tcha*, (tea, mixed with grease). If that fail, cram him with burned figs; every living soul knows that they will remove all obstructions.”

“If it be poison,” said an Afghân, “there is nothing like a morsel of bezoar, dissolved in hot camel’s milk, or the entrails of a black scorpion, bruised between two stones and mixed with honey.”

“If it be neither wine nor poison, it must be *davdr* (vertigo),” observed a third. “Souse him, therefore, with water. I have seen such complaints cured, in Persia, by cold applications.”

“How long have you set up for a disciple of Pokrath (Hippocrates),” retorted the other. “Does not his inside burn, as if the fires of Jehanum raged there? You might certainly quench them with water, but you would suffocate him with the steam !”

“True, true!” exclaimed a Cashmerian. “If it be giddiness, there is an infallible remedy. First roll him to the right, and, if that will not do, then roll him to the left. That must unravel his brains. *Mashallah!* It is evident his head cannot turn two ways.”

“I do not pretend to be a *Huikem*, or chemist,” observed a Persian; “but I know white from black. Now, it is very manifest, that all this proceeds from that cursed Caubul wine, which is no more to be compared, in spirit and virtue to that of Shiraz, than a pig-headed Osmanli to a sharp-witted Ispahâni. Let lighted reeds be applied to his mouth and nostrils, say I; that will cause the spirit to evaporate, and cure him at once.”

In the mean time, the sufferer’s torments rapidly augmented. His body had already passed from the fleshy plumpness of life, to the wasted attenuation of death. The vigour of blooming manhood had suddenly yielded to the decrepitude of old age. His features were blue and wrinkled as the face of the wood satyr, whilst his voice croaked like that of a

Mazanderan bull-frog. His pulse failed—his heart scarcely beat, and his limbs were so contracted that a camel could not straighten them.

“In the Prophet’s name, something must be done, or my master will die!” exclaimed one of Yar Ahmed’s servants. “See how he struggles with the exterminating angel.”

“Malediction!” ejaculated another. “The moon is in scorpion. Is it not written that its malign aspect is fatal?”*

“There is but one chance of saving him,” replied Hadji Reza, who had been rubbing and chafing the sufferer’s hands and temples. “Bring grape verjuice mixed with salt and opium—drench him with that. Lose not a moment. We have no ice, nor is there any cool water left in the jar of my water-carrier; but the Indus is within gun-shot. Place him upon a swift camel, plunge him into its refreshing bosom, and leave the rest to Allah. This

* I remember, says Chardin, (*Voyage en Perse*) in 1666, that a maritime expedition against the Cossacks bordering the Caspian, was postponed a whole month because the moon was in Scorpion. Vol. v., p. 148.

is a most grievous visitation. Heaven have mercy on us! The demon of pestilence, more relentless than a thousand tigers, lurked in the accursed swamp. It is the insatiable, devil-born, *Wubá* (cholera).”*

Whereupon he began fingering his rosary, which consisted of ninety nine beads made from clay, procured at Mecca.

Had the whole of the *Shah in Shah's*, camel-artillery opened a discharge of grape-shot upon the surrounding group, they could not have been more startled, than they were at this appalling word *Wubá*. With the exception of the benevolent Samarcandi, all sprung back, and abandoned Yar Ahmed to his fate. Some jumped upon their saddles, and galloping towards the beasts laden with their own property, hastened to separate them from the rest. Others smote their breasts, and calling down anathemas upon all drunkards and jingles, tore off such upper garments as they thought might

* *Taoúne* is the general word, both in Persian and Turkish, for the plague, or any pestilence in general; but *Wubá* is particularly employed to designate cholera.

be infected by the sufferer's touch. Some urged their steeds towards the Indus, and rushed up to their necks in the stream. Some cursed, and some prayed. Some made for the higher, and others for the lower grounds, whilst a few, consoling themselves with the axiom that, 'although a man have a hundred feet like the *hazar pay* (centipede,) he cannot escape fate,' calmly repeated their profession of faith, and rode resignedly towards the halting-place.

"O, woman! woman! see what deplorable afflictions thy first transgression has entailed upon mankind. Hadst thou not been most merciless to thyself,—hadst thou not listened to the voice of deceit, the children of Adam might still have revelled in the eternal delights of Paradise, exempt from the pestilential tortures of this world, and secure from the racking torments of the next. Better, far better would it have been hadst thou continued blind to thy nakedness, than to have girded on the garments of shame and everlasting malediction."

Such were the ejaculations of Hadji Reeza, as he rode by the side of the camel on which

Yar Ahmed's servants had strapped the anguished body of their master, after forcing down his throat a quantity of verjuice and opium. For all the good these specifics did him, however, he might as well have been crammed with cheese, so that, when they reached the Indus, his limbs seemed to be as much agonized as if they were being torn to pieces by the ninety nine seven-headed dragons, who squat upon sinners' graves and gnaw their bodies.

In they soused him nevertheless. A trouble they might have spared themselves, for, at the first plunge, his passing spirit combatted with the gurgling waters, and then exhaled in frothy bubbles, which floated a moment upon the surface of the stream, and then—fit emblem of human nothingness—dissolved in air; while his body, either from the violence of his death agony, or the clumsiness of the servants, slipped from their hands, and was carried whirling and twisting into the middle of the current.

Marvellous was it to see the rapidity with which the carrion vultures discovered his fate.

It is manifest that Allah has accorded to these cloud-riding birds the faculty of descrying departing souls, as they rise towards the abodes of joy or torture. Scarcely had the bubbles exploded, ere multitudes, unseen before, came swooping, flopping downwards. Some perched upon the floating carcass, and tore from it the still palpitating flesh. Some hovered close above, screeching, and clacking their greedy beaks, whilst others darted with outstretched pennons to grasp the falling morsels, or jealous of the sad repast, skimmed round in angry circles, until the body, coming within the vortex of a whirlpool, spun round awhile, and then vanished.

CHAPTER XIII.

INFINITE and terrible are the modes by which Allah declareth his signs to the sons of man. The charnel house purveyor, the implacable king of mourning, whose origin no man can divine, whose coming no man can avert, and whose departure, no known medicine can hasten, was not disposed to content its insatiable maw with one victim.

Ere the fiery blasts of day had yielded to the cooling night breeze, the scourge had made rapid progress in the caravan. More than a hundred wretched beings successively shared the fate of Yar Ahmed, and nought was heard around, but lamentations, or the howls of starving jackals, as they tore the dead from their shallow sepulchres.

black stone of the holy temple seven had dispensed alms, and performed her duties and devotions of a pilgrim, in the holy city and at the valley of that he was everywhere designated as k Ameen (the little Hadji); to which er had added the name of Khodadâd, gift.)

ruth, had Ameen's father been a descen- of Roustam, and his mother a daughter of man, he could not have combined greater 'lence, being equal in courage to a young and not inferior in wit to a native of shân. The Hadji, who had amassed a e fortune, and was making his last journey the East, in order to terminate some com- ercial speculations, looked forward, therefore, his son becoming one of the greatest men in he dominions of the Commander of the faith-

provide him with water from the holy well, which is supposed to be the same that was miraculously opened n she was nearly perishing in the desert Ismael.—*Ali Bey's Travels.*

ful; and as charity and humanity are justly considered amongst the most eminent virtues, he gazed with mingled tenderness and admiration at the generous Ameen, whilst he fearlessly administered to the sufferers' wants.

These pious duties were at length interrupted by the arrival of the flat-bottomed boats, intended to transport the caravan over the Indus.

Eager to quit the marshy grounds, where the air seemed impregnated with pestilence, the surviving merchants stowed away their goods as fast as they could on board the boats, whilst the camels and horses were driven into the stream, and compelled to swim or ford across.

The point selected for the ferry was a turn of the river, where the dark blue waters, after forming a deep and tranquil basin, suddenly shallowed away, for some distance, and then poured themselves with resistless velocity over a line of foaming rapids, where they danced and boiled like the agitated waves of the Caspian. The ford was between the two.

Although scarcely girth-deep, the current was so swift, and so filled with quicksands and whirlpools, as to render the slightest deviation from the passage exceedingly perilous. Thus, more than one beast had been carried off its legs, and borne down the falls, and even some of the elephants, who went with their trunks elevated, roaring and crying through the waters, seemed to be in dread of sharing a similar fate.

Ameen, who possessed a couple of high-bred Arab mares, had resolved to trust one of them to the care of a favourite groom, his foster brother, and to ride over the other himself; therefore he had no sooner seen his father and his rich stock of pearls, turquoises, rubies, and Kirpeck lamb-skins safely embarked, than he rode into the stream, and, cautiously breasting the current, soon arrived within half bow-shot of the opposite bank. He was in the act of exchanging the customary salutations with a body of Runjeet Sing's light horse, who guarded the bank, in order to enforce the custom's duties, required upon entering the

Seik territory, when shouts of—"Allah! Y Allah! help or I am lost," struck upon his ear.*

Instantly turning round, he saw his groom struggling amidst the foaming eddies, whilst the horse, from which the youth had fallen, was hurrying with fatal velocity towards the rapids.

"Help in the name of Allah!" exclaimed Ameen to the Seiks. "Help, and I will fill your mouths with gold. Have you no hearts, no courage? He is as dear to me as my brother."

This appeal was answered by vacant stares, or negative shakes of the head from some, whilst one exclaimed:—

"Would you have us sacrifice ourselves for other men's brothers!"

"The Seiks are valiant, but they are not immortal," added another.

* The reader will see that the talc-teller here committed an anachronism, as the Seiks did not obtain possession of Cashmere until a later period than that at which this event is supposed to have occurred.

“Aid him yourself—you are nearest,” cried a third.

“If it please God so will I,” retorted Khodadad, “and if I perish, may the blessings of the prophet be upon my father.” Thereupon he turned round his mare, and uttering aloud Bishmillah ! attempted to force her into the current ; but the brute, as if conscious of the peril, reared, plunged and refused obedience. The youthful hero having at length conquered her stubbornness, she lent her breast to the water, and in a few seconds Ameen reached the object of his generous devotion.

Shouts of applause resounded from the shore, when the Seiks saw him unwind his head-shawl, cast it round the shoulders of his foster brother, and, after fixing it to the pommel of his saddle, wend to land.

Hadji Reza, who had already disembarked, no sooner heard what was passing than he hastened down the bank, and throwing himself upon his knees, invoked the protection of Allah upon his son’s head. Mortal were the agonies of the father, as he watched the gal-

fant boy's exertions to avoid the dangerous eddies. But still more mortal were these agonies, when he saw horse and rider suddenly stop, sink, and disappear as if engulfed by the genii of the waters.

"Aid! Help!" exclaimed the frantic Hadji as poor Khodadad's head reappeared above the current. "Are your hearts sealed up?" "By the fig! By the olive! By the holy Caaba! All I possess—jewels, gold, horses, camels, slaves, all, everything shall be yours, if you save him."

The horsemen looked at one another, stroked their beards and moustaches, but none moved. Raving with grief and desperation, Reza was going to cast himself into the current, but two of the Seiks seized him by the shoulders, saying, "Are you mad? Would you add death to death? See! See! he sinks again, By the infallible book of our faith. A carp might just as well strive to escape from the fisher's hook as he from the demon of the flood."*

* The infallible book called *Griñā* is the sacred

In the meantime the groom and horse succeeded in reaching the shore, but poor Khodadad, though a valiant swimmer, found himself entrapped in one of those terrible whirlpools, which abound in the Indus. By extraordinary exertion he continued, however, to burst from the whirling circle and made to land. Already he was within lance length of the bank, already the delighted Hadji rushed down to embrace him, whilst the Seiks, attributing his escape to the intercession of their false gods, filled the air with shouts of *Khalsadji ke fetih!* (May the Seiks' religion prosper)!"

But what are the fond hopes of parents? What are virtues, strength or talent in opposition to the decrees of fate? The storm which

volume, the testament, as it were, of the Seiks, who prostrate themselves before it, and show it a degree of respect bordering upon adoration. The priest (*gourou*) in attendance upon it, is constantly employed in fanning it with a cowtail, as if it were a crowned head. The *Palla* is a kind of carp peculiar to the Indus, and only to be met with at peculiar seasons.—*Burns's Travels.*

sparcs the worthless tamarisk, too often blasts the noble cedar. Neither youth, beauty, piety or innocence, nor even the inward girdle made from a strip of the *Tob' al Caaba* (shirt of Caaba)*, worn by Ameen as a talisman, could protect him from the shafts of destiny. At the instant the Hadji and his servants stretched forth their hands to receive him, a piercing shriek burst from his lips, and his blood tinged the blue waters. Two monstrous aligators, gliding from their slimy beds, had marked him for their prey. Seizing him in their frightful jaws, the horrid brutes shook him for a moment, as Koffla dogs shake carrion, and then dragging him down to their accursed abodes, disappeared for ever.

* This "shirt" as it is called, is made of black cloth embroidered in gold. It covers the whole of the outside of the Caaba, in the Temple of Mecca. A new one is presented by the Porte, and brought every year from Cairo. The old one is then cut up, and sold to pilgrims, who wear the morsels as talismans. It has been omitted to say that the Caaba derives its name from the cubical form of the building, the word, as Mr. Morier observes, signifying a die.

Had all the burned stones, which destroyed the foul city of Lot, fallen upon the unhappy Hadji, he could not have been more overwhelmed. Neither faith in Almighty dispensations, nor submission to the incontrovertible decrees of fate could support him against this doleful shock. For awhile he stood there mute, motionless, his eyes and mouth open, his hands clasped and his blood congealed. Then suddenly darting forward and exclaiming, "O Allah! Oh! my child! my child!" he sprang headlong from the bank.

What became of his body I know not, for the camels were now reloaded, and my purchaser hurried, as fast as possible, from the ill-omened spot.

By one of these caprices which mark the progress of the hideous cholera, we no sooner quitted the swampy borders of the Indus, than its persecutions ceased. So that we reached Mozufferabad without further accident or adventure, and thence, skirting the banks of the river Djalum, attained the pass of Bara-moolah, where joyous shouts of "Praise be to

Allah! This is Cashmere the unrivalled!" announced the near termination of our journey.

"There, there!" exclaimed a half-mussulman native of the valley looking up to the surrounding crags, through whose perpendicular flanks the flower-scented waters of the Behat bent their impetuous course.* "Talk to me of wonders indeed! What marvel can exceed this, except perhaps the fountain of *Send i Brara*, (waters of the moon) which ebbs and flows during the summer, like the ocean's tide † The prophet himself never performed a greater miracle than that wrought by Pir Kascheb, grandson of Bramah, when he bade the rocks that rise on either side of us open their entrails, and thus give issue to the floods, which until then concealed this earthly paradise."

"Curses upon the unclean son of Satan, and upon all the idolatrous Hindoos!" roared out

* The Behat, by which name the Djelum is called in Cashmere, is so designated from the number of aromatic plants growing upon its banks.—*Thevenot, Voyage des Indes. Vol 5.*

† *Bernier, Voyage en Cachemire, et Description de l'Inde par Bernouilli.*

an Afghan merchant. "You Cashmeerees are mighty cunning fellows; but we true believers were not born to swallow your dirt after this incredible fashion. The miracle was not the work of that grandfather of impostors, Bramah, or any of his cow-worshipping posterity. What power had such dogs over earth or water? Oof! you might as well say that they created the celestial paradise. The only truth you have uttered is, that the whole of this valley was once a lake."

"And would have been so still, had it not been for Solomon," said a second Afghan.

"True! true!" replied his countryman. "All the world knows how matters came to pass. Look!" added he showing the summit of a lofty hill, rising at some distance in the plain.

"That is *Hareeperbat* (the green mountain,) and a further proof of Kascheb's power," exclaimed the Cashmerian." He it was that separated it from the other hills, clothed it from top to bottom, with perpetual verdure, and built his dwelling and tomb thereon. The

gardens of eternal abode have nothing more refreshing. He it was, also, who gave the name of Kaschebmer, to the blessed land of my fathers.”*

“Take heed that you do not taste of the fires of eternal punishment for uttering such blasphemy,” retorted the other. “Poof! I spit on your green mountain. We have forty such in Zabulistan. (Caubul.)”

“Certainly, certainly!” exclaimed half a dozen other Afghans. “What are the delights of Cashmere to those of Caubul and Peishawer? But, speak, brother. Which hill do you mean? There are two in the midst of the plain.”

“Why that to the left, on which the sun’s rays glisten like the sparkling of ten thousand gems,” replied the other. That is the *takht i Sauliman* (Solomon’s throne.) There it was that the son of David bade the genii spread his green carpet, and deposit his throne, when he visited these parts with the queen of Saba, as he was wont to do, upon the shoulders of

* This is one of the traditions relating to the origin of the name of Cashmere.

the winds, his innumerable army of men and spirits being drawn up, the one on the right, and the other on the left hand ; whilst legions of birds hovered above his head, affording him shade, and fanning the air with their snow white wings."

" *Allah shukur !* He had no occasion for his water-finding lapwing, at all events," said the dissolute Cashmerian.

" How, in the prophet's name, did so vast a multitude find room to spread their carpets, sleep or perform their prostrations, if all around was water ?" demanded one of the auditors.

" There was no need for using sand for their ablutions. They could perform complete immersion to their heart's content," observed the Cashmerian with a very profane leer.

" Thanks to Allah ! they did *not* find room," answered the first speaker. " If they had, the valley would still have been a lake."

" *Shukur ! shukur !*" ejaculated the bystanders. " Exceeding fortunate was it that Solomon took it into his head to come this way."

“*Mashallah!* that is a manifest truth,” rejoined the other. “None but the hands that built the temple of Jerusalem could have worked so great a miracle. Seeing that there was not space for all his people to perform Namaz, Solomon summoned two of his most powerful genii, named Kaschaf and Mir, and whispered in their ears. Whereupon they extended their wings, and calling to their aid myriads of inferior jins, forthwith set to work upon these rocks, and clove a passage through them; so that before vespers, the whole of the waters were drained off, and the king’s followers were enabled to eat their supper, and say their night prayer upon dry land. Thereupon Solomon called the valley after the two aforesaid genii, in order to commemorate the miracle. This is truth.”*

At this moment we encountered a crowd of men and women, shouting, singing, and beating

* Such is another tradition respecting the origin of the name and draining of the valley, which geologists generally admit to have been a lake, until, through some convulsion of nature, the accumulated waters found an outlet through the pass of Baramoolah.

drums, near the entrance of one of the lovely villages which clustered upon our path. By their dress and appearance many of these evidently belonged to the foul class of Indian dervishes, called fakeers, accompanied by numerous other devotees, and persons appertaining to the different castes of idolatrous Hindoos, still abounding in these parts. Most incredible beasts were they to look at. Some, like corpses awakened from the grave, were smeared from head to foot with wood-ashes, and wore no other garment than a linen wrapper round their loins. Others, more decent, concealed their nakedness with tattered shirts, held together with an iron chain, whilst their hair and beards, uncombed and unshaved for years, hung down below their waists in foul and clotted masses, so that all the devils of the seven hells might have lodged therein. Some, who had sworn to keep their arms above their heads, in one posture, for the rest of their lives, walked backwards, with their long twisted nails curling out like rams' horns. Others, again, were rubbed all over with liquid butter, and

covered with myriads of flies, which must speedily have devoured them had their skins not been thicker than rhinoceros' hides. But, as the filthy idiots believe that departed souls pass into the bodies of animals and insects, they would not lay their hands even upon a fly, lest, perchance, they should bruise the head of one of their deceased mothers or grandfathers.

"Eh! eh!" exclaimed a native of Bokhara, who had never travelled eastward of the Indus. "Eh! eh!—what marvellous dung-mongers are these? Did any one ever set eyes upon such hogs. Look!—by my father's beard, there is one of them sprawling and kicking upon the ground like an old alligator!"

"Is the brute's brain turned upside down?" said another, "or is he showing his brother swine how Satan crawled out of Paradise, when Allah cut off his legs, and bade him henceforth grovel upon his belly?"

"It is a noted Indian saint performing a vow," replied our *Cafila Bashi*, who had learned the cause of the tumult from one of the bystanders, many of whom pressed around, bring-

ing alms, fruit, and milk to the devotees. "He, and the other unbelieving dogs," continued he, "are giving themselves a foretaste of the bitter penalties which they, and all infidels, are doomed to undergo in the next world."

"What kind of filth has the unclean devil-worshipper sworn to devour?" demanded a dealer from Balkh. "Why does he knock his head against the ground after this strange manner? and why do the other madmen measure his length with their staves?"

"May all their fathers be burned!" answered the Cafila Bashi. "If you wish to know his vow, listen!

"Curses on Satan!—who can hear a word amidst the uproar of their idolatrous invocations to Ram, and other false gods!" exclaimed another Usbeck. "It is an exceeding abomination."

"The noise of their devilish drums is enough to shake down a tempest from the surrounding mountains," added my purchaser. "Storms

from such causes are common in these hills. A whole army of men, horses, and elephants, were overwhelmed in this manner in the time of the Emperor Aurungzebe. *Wullah!* — I have told you nothing but truth. But, after all, what is the fellow at?”

“They tell me that he is a native of Delhi, where he lived in a tomb, practising all kinds of austerities,” answered the caravan leader. “At last he took it into his head to make a pilgrimage to the sources of the Ganges, whose waters these infidels hold in as much veneration as we true believers do those of the holy well at Mecca. Having accomplished this, he next swore to carry a skin of the liquid to a brother, who is as great a beast as himself, but passes for a saint, and lives in a cave near the celebrated fountain of Send i Brara, which is situated on the slope of that snow-covered range of hills. Look!” added he, pointing to a mountain, rising up in the shape of an ass’s back, and distant about five farsangs, “you can see the sun’s rays dancing upon the gilded

minarets of the pagoda, which the pagan forefathers of these brutes erected to their idol Brar, who gave his name to the fountain.”*

“Then why does not the idiot hasten onwards, and not stop making more than double the twenty prostrations necessary to be performed by orthodox believers at mid-day prayer?”

“Prostrations!” re-echoed the other. “By the shadow of Omar, if his entry into paradise depended upon them, he would not have to wait long upon Al Araf. Oof! before he can accomplish his vow, he must rub his nose against the ground more times than there are hairs in his unclean beard!”

“Why so? why so?” demanded the Usbeck.

Why!” retorted the Cafila Bashi. “Why! because the impostor has sworn to measure the whole road from Bember to Send i Brara, and back again, with his prostrate body, so that he cannot advance above two or three paces without sprawling at full length.”

* Bernier, and Bernoulli.

“*Allah Kerim!* so it appears,” exclaimed the Usbeck. “See!” added he, “See! how the brute falls upon his face, rises, walks the length of his body, and then prostrates himself again. If he continues at this rate he will not reach the end of his journey before the last day.”

“Anathemas on all such abominations!” grunted out our caravan leader, “I wish we had him in the holy city of Bokhara with his feet tied to a *felek*; we’d teach him to prostrate himself.”

The above discourse took place whilst we were winding through delicious glens perfumed with balmy flowers, shaded by overhanging foliage, and cooled by transparent streamlets. Suddenly, however, we reached the summit of an eminence, whence a view of the whole valley of Cashmere, far beyond Islamabad, opened before us, dazzling the eye with the varied splendour of its enchanting prospects.

CHAPTER XIV.

IT was the eve of *Nau-Rooz* (new-year.)* The season of love, hope and fruition. Nature was arrayed in all her budding glories. Our

* It must be observed that, although the Mahomedan months are all lunar, and consequently *moveable*, the new years' day is invariably *fixed*, by the sun's entry into Aries, at the period of the vernal equinox, or 21st of March. The commencement of the year does not however date from this day. It is the festival which is alone *immoveable*. As the Mahomedan year consists of three hundred and forty-five days, eight hours, and forty-five minutes, there is an annual difference of eleven days, eight hours, and forty-five minutes, between that and the Christian calender. Thence it occurs that all their fasts and feasts, except *Nau-Rooz*, pass through a variation of seasons, and do not complete the cycle under thirty-three years.

path lay between moss clad banks, and undulating meadows, amidst whose verdant plush lillies, anemonies, tuberoses, hyacinths and violets, reared their heads in wild profusion—embalming the air, and gladdening the sight with their enamelled hues. Here—sparkling rills, gushing in silvery coils from crag and fissure, bent their brawling course through groves of myrtles, oleanders, jessamines, rododendrons and pomegranates. There—foaming cascades, bounding from their rocky sources, buried themselves awhile amidst the dark foliage of the upland woods, and then reappearing in broader streams, gave nourishment to the numerous ponds, canals, and reservoirs, whose placid bosoms reflected the inverted buildings, and bridges of the capital, as in a thousand mirrors. Rose adoring nightingales, and other sylvan choristers enlivened each glen, and glade with their joyous notes; whilst birds of gaudier plumage fluttered around in amorous circles, or nestled in the wild vines and creepers, whose supple tendrils waved in rich festoons from branch to branch.

Orchards teeming with all the varied fruits cultivated by you unbelieving franks, mingled their odours with those of the heat-loving trees of India and Iran, here thickly incrusting the earth with their fallen blossoms, and there adding fragrance to the fragrant zephyrs with their new born buds.'

As we traversed the shaded copses, gold breasted pheasants, and stately peacocks winged their flight above us ; gazelles, light limbed as air, bounded across our path, and egrets, furnishing the costly plumes so much prized by the Persian Omrahs, rose flapping from the lotus-covered ponds. Beetles, bright as burnished gold, and painted butterflies, with wings resembling flakes of silver, studded with rubies and opals, buzzed and flaunted in the air, whilst myriads of those industrious bees, for which the valley is celebrated, sipped honey from the expanding flowers. Countless flocks of snow white sheep, whose fleeces are employed by the weavers for inferior shawls,*

* Mr. Legout de Flaix, *Essai sur l'Hindostan*, v. II, p. 315 asserts that the shawls are made of *toux* (sheeps'

roamed in the pastures, secure from the assaults of savage animals. For, Allah has ordained that no venomous reptiles or beasts of prey, shall infest these peaceful regions.

They are alike fatal to the ruthless tiger, and to the noisome serpent.*

wool,) and not of *bali* (goat's down.) He also declares that the finest shawls, called *Kashi*, are manufactured from the down taken from round the eyes, inside the ears, and upon the humps of dromedaries. Our goat, as will be seen, claims the honor entirely for his own species, and he is supported in this, by the authority of the great majority of travellers, who have touched upon this subject. Mr. Rey, one of the most eminent French shawl manufacturers, in his erudite and interesting work *Etudes pour servir à l'histoire des Châles*, says, nevertheless, that the question is still undecided, and the real nature of the raw article a mystery.

* Bernier and father Tieffenthaler both allude to this. More recent travellers state that wolves, panthers and black scorpions are sometimes found. But it is admitted that Cashmere does actually enjoy some of the privileges said to be accorded by St. Patrick to Ireland, which increases its title to the name of *Djannat naseyr* (image of Paradise) given to it by the natives.

The view was, indeed, beautiful beyond compare. Behind us rose the lofty portals of the western pass, its sun gilt cliffs beetling high above the foaming Behat, near whose perfumed banks stood the miracle working mosque of Baramoolah, where sickly pilgrims resort to worship the tomb of the saint, whose health-giving spirit hovers over the spot. Inaccessible mountains, their bases clothed with green forests, and their summits capped with refulgent snow, soared upwards on every side, like an elliptic coronet of emeralds surmounted with diamonds—there shading the lowlands from the scorching heats of the Penjab—there skreening them from the freeziug winds of the Thibet, and every where presenting barriers against the inroads of foreign enemies, who have no other access to Cashmere, save through the craggy jaws of Baramoolah, Bember and Jumboo, or through one of the four remaining passes leading to the north and south.*

* There are only seven passes into Cashmere, practicable for caravans. One on the west, by Baramoolah,

Before us extended the far famed valley, shaped like an ostrich egg, and irrigated with a thousand streams, their borders fringed with fields of those delicious roses which produce the invaluable *attar*, or carpetted with rich herbage and ripening corn. Innumerable villages, castles, tombs, pagodas, and mosques, spangled the plains, or peered above the woods. To our left lay the broad blue lake of Ooler; in front was that of Dall, dotted with melon-covered islands, and vivified with bright painted skiffs and gondolas—here, listlessly reposing upon the glassy stream, and there, swiftly cleaving its transparent bosom with their gilded prows. Around it stretched the wide-spreading city of Sireenagar.* The drooping branches of its

leading to Afghanistan. Two on the north, conducting to Thibet, and four on the south, one of which latter, is that from Sireenagar by Bember to Lahore, and a second further eastward from Islamabad, by Jumboo to Hellaspoor, and the Ganges.—*Elphinstone and Foster.*

* Sireenagar is the native name for the capital of Cashmere; the latter appellation being only applicable to the whole province.

blooming groves feathering the margin of the lake and its palaces, minarets and caravan-serais casting their image over its waters ; thus forming a double amphitheatre of foliage, blossoms, and buildings.

Struck with admiration, the foreigners, forming part of the caravan, pressed forward to enjoy the beauteous prospect ; whilst the Cashmerians broke out into the most rapturous exclamations. One of the latter, pointing to the flat roofs of the houses converted into luxuriant parterres, exclaimed, " Is it not true that our dust is of violets and our sky of roses ? If ever a country deserved to be likened to paradise, it is this !—If anything can exceed the wonders of the cave of Jemsched, it is our beloved Sireenagar !"

" See !" said a second, directing his finger towards a garden, whose stately plantations towered above the rest, " that is the Shalimar, the mansion of delight. What are all the boasted groves of Shiraz, Caubul, and Delhi, compared to that ?"

" Yes !" added a third. " Its crystal foun-

tains still sparkle in the sun's rays, and its shaded alleys and grottoes are still overarched with noble planes and poplars, as they were when Nourmahal, the pearl of beauty, the adored wife of the invincible Djhan Ghir, strolled there with her enamoured lord, or amused herself, during his absence, by feeding the golden carp which sported in its ponds."

"May I be called a perpetual liar," said a fourth, "if the royal fish were not adorned with jewel-studded rings, and fillets of pearls. They were so tame, also, that they came to the queen's voice, and, mistaking the reflection of her henna-tinged fingers for lilies tipped with roses, sought shelter in her hands."

We now reached an open space, where four roads meet. Upon that leading to the south was a numerous string of peasants, bending beneath the weight of heavy packages covered with cow's hides, and guarded by a body of matchlock-men.

"Though we cannot boast of rose-gardens, fountains, and gold fish in our deserts," exclaimed a Turcoman horse dealer, "we are not

reduced to a level with asses and beasts of burthen."

"Why, in the prophet's name, are these unfortunates treated after this fashion? Are they robbers? or are they infidels loaded with the weight of their own sins?" demanded a native of Candahar.

"They are porters, carrying *bidderees* (packs), containing costly shawls, which, by Allah's blessing, they will transport by the pass of Jumboo to the Indian markets," replied a Cashmerian merchant.

"You Afghans are heroes, lions, elephants, in strength and courage," said a dealer from Islamabad; "but you would sink under the fatigues and hardships supported by these men."

"True, they appear weak," added another, "but they are as strong as bridges, and more enduring than the waters that run beneath. See!" continued he; "a dark linen vest, girded round the loins with a coarse shawl, short trowsers, rush sandals, a low turban, a bag of rice, a handful of tobacco, a skin for water, and

a crooked stick, is all the raiment or food they require for their journey, during which they have not only to traverse defiles and precipices inaccessible to four-footed beasts, but must encounter the extremest vicissitudes of heat, cold, thirst, and hunger."

"Why are not the idolatrous dervishes employed for these purposes?" demanded one of the Afghans. "Filthy brutes, that delight to crawl upon all fours, are better fitted for such work than true believers."

Our progress was now impeded by the passage of a caravan, descending from the track leading from the northern mountains, and bringing with it a valuable cargo of musk, rhubarb, white cows' tails, tea, porcelain, goat's wool, and other commodities from Thibet and China.

"Marvellous! marvellous!" exclaimed a Persian from the neighbourhood of Mushed. "What do I see? Who ever dreamed of such animals being thus employed?"

"Mashallah! we Kizzilbash are clever fellows," echoed another native of the same place,

“but we must certainly knock under to these crafty shawl-breeders. By the Shah Zadeh’s beard, these double faced dogs not only use the wool of their sheep for weaving, and their flesh for kabobs, but employ them as we do mules and camels.”*

“Who would give a handful of curds for a country where horses and camels are of no use, and where one cannot see an hundred ghez before him for trees and buildings!” ejaculated a Turcoman horse-dealer.

“By the blessing of the four caliphs, your words are just!” observed another of the same nation. “Give me the land, say I, where one may either spring upon his free breathing courser, and chase the wild ass into the sun’s beard, or gallop two hundred farsangs to a *tchapao* (foray), without striking his hoofs against a pebble!”

‘Curses on your men stealing forays,’ re-

* It is curious to find the natives of two distant parts of the globe resorting to the same method of overcoming local difficulties. Providence has pointed out to the Cashmerians the use of sheep, as beasts of burthen, as it has that of Llamas (*carneiros de cargo*), to the South Americans.

torted the Persian. "It is a grievous malediction that Allah has not pent up you slave-dealing worshippers of Omar within your burning deserts, instead of permitting you to make inroads into Khorassan, and to carry off men, women, and children as you would lamb skins. If I were the Shah I would burn all your fathers."

"Your Shah may have all the fires of Jehanum at his disposal," retorted the other, "but he cannot singe a hair of our beards. We laugh at his thunder!"

"The centre of the universe, as you Persians call him," said a second Turcoman, "may be an incredible lion-eater. He may conquer all the world, but he cannot put his foot on our necks. Besides, of what use are you unorthodox followers of Ali, but to rub you noses against the threshold of us Soonees?"

"May my mother's grave be defiled by dogs!" exclaimed the first Turcoman, "if the poorest desert dweller in Turkistan is not more to be envied than the richest Omrah amongst you mongrel red-heads."

"*Barrakallah!*" ejaculated his comrade.

“You do not lie! We would not exchange our tents, our liberty, and the sands of our deserts for all the palaces in Tehran, or all the gardens of these dissolute Cashmerians.”

“The Cashmerians may be astonishing rogues,” said our *Cafila Bashi*, who seemed much pleased at the mode of transporting goods upon sheep’s backs; “but they are no fools. What these animals want in strength they make up in numbers.”

“Very true!” added his deputy. “Ants are small, but God is great, and has enabled them to perform stupendous labours.”

“*Belli!* (certainly),” resumed the other. “See! each sheep can carry about five mauns *tabreez* (forty pounds). They travel safely where no other four-footed beasts can stand, and require no better food than the scanty herbage growing upon the mountains. Besides, when they reach the end of their journey, their wool can be disposed of to the weavers, and their flesh to the butchers.”

“The Cashmerians are no asses, most undoubtedly!” echoed the deputy. “They make

the best of what Allah has given them. A sage has said, that 'if a traveller have not a stuffed pillow to put under his head, he must sleep with it on a stone.'

"Look! — Mashallah! — look!" exclaimed the Persian. "May I be spit upon for a heretic Soonee, if these are not a marvellous people. Look at the crowds issuing from the city, waving branches of fruit trees loaded with blossoms. I took them for walking gardens!"

"They must be a most unblushing, wanton, race," said the elder Turcoman. "There are unveiled women amongst them!"

"Wonders do not cease!" observed the other. "There is a troop of boys cantering towards us, mounted on rams, as we bestride horses. What are the young mad-caps bent upon?"

"They are sallying forth to celebrate the Nau-Rooz," rejoined a native of Sireenager. "The sheep and children are the emblems of fertility and hope."

"Allah be praised!" ejaculated another merchant. "Unless my eyes tell lies, my three

sons are amongst them. This is an auspicious omen. The astrologer promised me good luck ; —he is no liar !”

Thereupon he spurred on his horse, and, jumping to the ground, embraced the three rosy children, who cast themselves into their father’s arms, first uttering most affectionate welcomes and congratulations, and then presenting him with the usual new year’s gift of hard boiled eggs, the shells of which were gilded or painted with divers fanciful devices.* My purchaser then proceeded to his own abode, where I was deposited in his warehouse.

* This Eastern custom is similar to that in use amongst the Catholics and Greeks at Easter. Its origin is of remote date. Sir John Malcolm quotes an Arabic author, who affirms, that the invasion of Persia by Alexander arose from his refusing to pay to Darius the tribute of golden eggs, promised to the latter by Philip. The reply made by the Macedonian monarch to the Persian envoy, who complained of the omission, is characteristic. “How can I accomplish this stipulation,” said Alexander, “when the bird that laid the eggs has departed for the other world ?”

CHAPTER XV.

THE door of my prison was at length unbarred, and my proprietor entered with a shawl manufacturer from Islamabad, to whom he exhibited divers samples of wool.

Whilst doing this in came a second customer, who my owner embraced saying:—"You are welcome, Mir Fazl! What heaven do you drop from? Your place has been long empty."

"*Kosh bulduck*, (well said)," answered Mir Fazl. "May your misfortunes be turned upon me. What news have you? By my beard, I suppose you have not left a maun of wool on the other side of the mountains."

"My star has not been unpropitious," rejoined the stapler. "See, here are samples of all kinds. Examine—you are a perfect judge."

“We are not blind, thank God,” replied the other. “This—*Wullah!* this is white Arabian camels’ hair. You, no doubt, bartered it for Indigo and Penjab sugar with some of those blue-bearded Turcomans at Merve.”

“You must have had mighty little use for your sumpter beasts,” observed the Islamabadi, “if you loaded their backs with such inferior stuff.”

“It is only fit to be mixed with old sheep’s wool, and then woven into camlets and kersey-mere. *Astag feroolah!* we do not waste our time in fabricating such articles,” said Mir Fazl.

“Every bird knows what kind of moss and twigs are best fitted for building its own nest,” answered my owner, offering, at the same time to his customers, a richly carved ivory box, containing small balls of assafœtida gum, slightly tinged with opium.

The dealers, having thrust three or four pills into their mouths with great apparent satisfaction, one of them desired the wool-merchant to exhibit some more of his wares.

“Allah be praised, I can easily satisfy you,” replied he. “I have wherewithal to weave shawls or carpets fit to cover the holy Caaba. Look! here is some of the red-brown down, or short inward hair, combed from the ears, eyes, and foreheads of the two humped camels of Khorassan. It is twice as valuable as the white, and has already been washed and cleansed from the scurf and impurities which those cunning Persian heretics leave in it, on purpose to increase its weight.”

The first stranger, who had attentively examined this sample, now seized my owner's hand, and commenced haggling, by aid of those signs in common use amongst dealers, who, by stretching out their fingers, and pressing each other's thumbs, under cover of their long sleeves or cloaks, are thus enabled to bargain without bystanders discovering what is passing between them. Whilst they were thus silently carrying on their affairs, Mir Fazl exclaimed:—

“That sort may do very well for you, Lal Laga, as you weave *pasharee* (coloured shawls of inferior quality) for the Tartar markets, and

pass them off upon the blind pagans as *Kashee*, (superior kinds); but I require finer matter."

"Your desire can be gratified," answered the wool-stapler, without loosening Lal Laga's hand. "See, my Agha! there is some of the purest black camels' down, shed by the dromedaries of Bokhara and Keissak, during the molting season. May I be cast out as a most incorrigible liar, if it did not cost me nearly two golden tillas, (£1 6s.) the turruck at Balkh. To which must be added the expense of transport, duties and interest; so if I do but ask sixteen rupees I shall not gain the worth of a hair."

"A hair is not much certainly," replied Mir Fazl, with an incredulous wink of his eye; "but every one knows that the most luxuriant beards are composed of single hairs; so a man may easily amass great wealth by industry and small profits. That is my maxim."

"By my father's head, these are admirable words," exclaimed my owner. "Your liberality and fair dealing is proverbial. May they never diminish." Then turning round, under pretext

of examining some other bales, he muttered :—
“Curses on the miserly son of a burned father. He offers less and exacts more than any other merchant in the valley. Oof! I believe he would shear the camel of God, if he thought he could convert its down into shawls.”

Mir Fazl seemed quite a match for the stapler, both in abuse and dissimulation, for he first said in a low voice—“He is so great a rogue that he would not scruple to pass off hogs’ bristles for pure wool, if one did not keep his eyes open as wide as the pass of Baramoolah.” Then raising his voice, he added—“If I am accounted just in my dealings, you cannot be surpassed for the generosity and probity of yours. *Wullah!* a man deprived of sight and feeling might trust himself to your hands. But what have we here?”

“These bags contain wool from Kerman, of the purest kind,” replied my owner. “See, it is softer than the downy couches of Paradise, whereon, by Allah’s blessing, you will repose hereafter.”

“The wool of Kerman is not so bad,” re-

joined Mir Fazl. "I have seen good articles fabricated by their weavers. None, however, but second rate manufacturers, such for instance, as these of Lahore and Agra, make use of it, upon this side the Indus."

"Will this serve your purpose?" demanded the dealer. "It is lambs' wool, shorn at the moment when the summer heat causes a greater secretion of that unctuous matter, which nourishes their fleeces, and renders them superior to all the sheep in the world."

"Allah has been wonderfully bountiful to man and beast in our valley," replied the manufacturer. "The brains of the one and the backs of the other are incomparable. But all the world knows that my looms only produce *Chal i Shahee* (royal or superior shawls,) without any admixture of sheep's wool. This, however, appears more suitable to my purpose."

"Eh! eh! my Agha!" ejaculated the other. "You cannot be surpassed in knowledge. These are invaluable treasures. There is no stapler in all Cashmere that can furnish such

a commodity. These bags contain the purest goats' down from the cold regions of Thibet. I paid ready cash for them to the agents of that egregious monopolizer the Rajah of Ladak."

"Yes, yes," exclaimed Lal Laga, who, having accomplished his bargain for the white and red-brown camels' wool, pulled out a long leathern bag, counted down the money, and bade his servants bring camels to carry off the bales. "Yes, yes," said he, twisting up his purse-strings, "those infidel Ladaki are proper extortioners. *Wullah!* if they had possession of all the goats and sheep in the world, one could not procure an ant's weight of wool, without he possessed the treasures of Jemscheed's cave."

"Curses on the *harem zadehs,*" ejaculated Mir Fazl. "No one can pass into little Thibet, or into any part of the shawl goat country to purchase the real Oundez or Rodauk wool, without their eating into his substance."

"I wonder why our blessed Prophet per-

mitted such dogs to fasten upon the mountain passes, leading from Cashmere to the North East," said Lal Laga.

"*Allah* knows!" rejoined the other. "But, if it is so ordained, we must make the best of it. The brutes will cut a sorry figure for it in the next world,—that is some consolation."

Lal Laga having taken his leave, Mir Fazl carefully examined the Thibet wool, and appeared to be satisfied with its quality, for he seized the merchant's hand, and, after a vast deal of pinching, squeezing, and grinning, at length exclaimed:—

"In the name of Allah, be it so. But, by the beard of Omar, such another purchase will ruin me. I have paid double its value, merely out of love for you."

"What words are these? You laugh at your servant!" replied the other. "Ruined indeed! By my head and by yours, it is I that shall be ruined. What is twenty rupees for twelve pounds of such an article? I would have demanded forty from any other man. But

my affection for you is so great that I am contented with prime cost."

Having settled for the payment, which was to be made in manufactured articles, fit for the Persian market, Mir Fazl was about to utter his "Allah preserve you," and other departing salutations, when my proprietor exclaimed:—

"Stop! stop a moment. By my soul, I had forgotten the kehbla of my stock. I have something to show that will bring the water of covetousness into your mouth. You have certainly purchased a beautiful article. It will repay you forty fold. But look here. What think you of this? And, so saying he opened the small bale in which I, with the finest portions of the wool combed from my father's, mother's, and brother's fleeces, was immured. Whilst Mir Fazl drew forth one of the hanks, in which it is customary to twist the finer sort of wool, after they have gone through the first process of cleaning before sale, my owner continued:—

"You are a man of experience. You do not

require spectacles. Your eye is as sharp as that of a lynx. The superior excellence of your shawls is celebrated from the Ganges to the Caspian sea. There is not a Shah, Sultan, Rajah, or Sirdar, that would give the value of a date shell for goods from any other looms. You therefore know what this is."

"I have seen much worse undoubtedly," answered Mir Fazl.

"Worse!" exclaimed the other. "Worse! You are jesting. By your salt, say, did you ever see its equal? May I be eternally crammed with the flesh of the unclean beast, if it is not a parcel of the purest and most delicate *bali* (goat's down,) gathered from the choicest flocks of the Rajah of Ourna Desa in Thibet.*

* *Bernier* and others say, that the name for goats', as well as sheep's wool, is *touz*; but *Legoux de Flair* (*Essai sur l'Hindostan*) asserts that *touz* is sheep's, and *bali* goats' down. We have adopted the latter expression, especially as it is employed by our quondam goat, who ought to be a good judge. *Klaproth* in his description of Thibet, has a vocabulary of Thibetian words, but the only article of this kind mentioned by him, is *prouk*, a woollen stuff. As our object is to combine instruction

Eh ! eh ! the more minutely you examine it, the more beautiful it will appear. See ! it is whiter than pearls in their shell, and softer than the impalpable down upon the cheeks of a houri. By the Prophet's grave, I paid the Rajah nearly two rupees the pound, and was, moreover, compelled to propitiate him with a present of the finest lamb skins, from the district of Karakoul, near the banks of the Oxus. But I would sooner have given him double; than have lost such an opportunity of serving you."

"How the rogue lies !" said the manufacturer aside ; then in a loud voice he added, I esteem you, as I would shade in the desert. Your words are honey. I would rather give you more, than others less. All I have is yours. But the Rajah must be a most incredible old Shaitan, if he fobbed this off upon

with amusement, we have given all the names by which wool is designated in the various authors whom we have consulted, viz :—Chardin, Burnes, Bernier, Foster, Flachet, Oliver, Rey, Tavernier, Thevenot, &c. &c. ; for which may critics pardon, and the public reward.

you as pure Thibet. *Wallah Billah!* he must have turned your head upside down with inebriating drugs, and taken you sleeping."

"Not all the Shaitans in the seven hells could do that," answered the other. "Thank heaven, I am no ass. I do not sleep standing."

"It is certainly exceeding fine," rejoined the customer, "but those unbelieving Tartars are such inordinate rascals, that their right hands would rob the nails from their left, if they could gain anything by the theft."

"Allah forbid, that I should wish to deceive you," said my owner. "No! By my soul—By my eyes! It is as I have said. The Tartar Rajah may be a most incorrigible cheat and liar, but neither he, nor all of his beastly tribesmen, could smother my brains with their filth. I have handled more samples of wool, than there were hairs in the beards of the seven sleepers, and I can distinguish the produce of every country with closed eyes. May I die an unreclaimed infidel, if I did not see the animals combed, and then packed the wool with my own hands in that bale, on

which you will find the Rajah's seal. What more can you wish?"

Whilst Mir Fazl was examining the stamp, an impression of which the roguish merchant had removed from another bag, to that in which I was enclosed, the latter continued his string of lies. "The article is the more precious," said he, "because we are not likely to procure more of the same quality, God knows when.

"How so?" demanded Mir Fazl.

"Why—I had scarcely completed my bargain with the Tartars, ere a whole pack of English infidels, disguised as Hindoos, made their appearance, under pretence of paying their devotions at the holy lake of Manasrovar.* Their real object, however, was not only to purchase all the finest wools, which are destined by immemorial usage, and contract for our markets, but to carry off all the best bred

* The merchant probably alluded to the expeditions undertaken by Messrs. Moorcroft, Hearsey or Gerard in 1812 and 1818, for the purpose of purchasing wool, and shawl goats.—See *Asiatic Researches*.

shawl goats beyond the Ganges. Curses on Satan! These unclean Feringee, who have robbed, plundered, and usurped the whole of Hindostan, will not be satisfied until they have dried up the sources of the five rivers, and drained off the waters of plenty from our mouths, by endeavouring to excel us in manufacturing those precious shawls, to obtain which, the half naked women of those dogs would sell their unblushing souls."

"They must be most brainless idiots to attempt that," said the manufacturer. "They might as well think of saving themselves from the mire of Jehanum. Poof! We may spit upon their beardless chins."

"*Allah Kerim!*" ejaculated the wool stapler. "It is impossible to say what may happen. It is reported that they possess devilish contrivances for weaving muslins, cloths and stuffs, and can thus inundate the Penjab, Afghanistan and Persia, with their commodities at a cheaper rate than we can."

"That may be," replied Mir Fazl. "But, before they can fabricate superior shawls, they

must not only learn the art taught to our forefathers, by the genii who attended upon Solomon, but they must procure our brilliant dyes, fill their springs with our enchanted waters, and enliven their filthy sky with our temperate sun-beams.*

“*Barack Allah!*” exclaimed the other. “That is not only exceeding true, but their infidel brains must be dried up, if they imagine that the goats, which produce the precious shawl down, of which that is a sample, can thrive anywhere but in the cold, dry regions of Thibet.”

“It is as you say,” replied Mir Fazl. “The poor animals may live, and multiply elsewhere, but they cannot prosper. The inward coating of fine down, which Allah has accorded to them, as a protection against the mountain cold, soon becomes as coarse and wiry as the

* *Bernier*, and others, on his authority, attribute the beauty of the Cashmere Shawls to the peculiar “delicacy” of the waters; the same thing has been said of the small stream, which is employed in the manufacture of the Gobelins Tapestry.

outer hair, and in due time, they either perish or degenerate into stinking, useless brutes, whose fleeces are only fit to be twisted into camel tethers.*

At that period I was ignorant of these matters, said the little quire, interrupting its own narrative. But many years later it was my destiny to pass into the hands of a French Elchee, who purchased me from a rascally Jew at Stamboul, into whose possession I had come from the harem of a Pacha, whose whole family had died of the pest. The Elchee carried me to Paris, and presented me to his wife. Thus it chanced that I was present at a grand festival, given by a rich merchant at his country house, where, amongst other marvels he had collected, as he affirmed, a flock of the invaluable race from which I sprung. Allah only knows how my heart beat, at the thoughts of setting eyes

* Experience has fully proved the truth of this assertion. All attempts to naturalize the shawl goats either in India or Europe have failed, and although Abdoul Ali succeeded in rearing a stock in the north of Afghanistan, it has been shown that they all died, excepting our hero.

upon what I imagined, might be a party of my own kindred. But, you may imagine my surprise when, instead of the beautiful, spiral horned, fawn shaped creatures, whose long pendent outer hair, conceals the inestimable down, I saw a few sickly animals of the Koordistan race, which are reared by the beastly Kirghiz in the wilds near Astrakan. Poof! they no more resembled the true Thibetian breed, than a common Calmuck *yaboo* resembles one of the pure veined colts of Arabia.

My blood boiled with indignation at this libel upon my family, and had I not been pinned to the upper part of the She Elchee's body, (which by the bye was formed of cotton, and fish bone) I should have fallen to the ground with vexation, on hearing the stupid Vizirs, Pachas and Khans, extol the crafty merchant, for having imported these half bred animals into France.* Nay more, the old

* The so called Thibet, or shawl goat's, imported into France have completely degenerated. Besides, according to Mr. Rey, who cites Tessier's *Mémoire sur l'importation*,

gormandizing Shah, who then ruled over that country, was so deluded, that instead of ordering the merchant to be bastinadoed, he directed the Vizir to present him with a jewel of honor, which he fastened with a red ribbon on his bosom, instead of his head. This honor however, as it afterwards appeared, was not exceeding great, for I subsequently saw fiddlers, painters, scribes, mollahs, soldiers who had never seen battle, young beardless Elchiks—in short, all manner of inexperienced, and unworthy persons similarly decorated. But I am anticipating, I will therefore resume the thread of my tale.

Whether the shawl manufacturer was taken in, or whether my texture, and that of my relatives really retained all the original excellence of our race, is more than I know; but after a long discussion the price was agreed to,

these animals were not brought from Thibet, but were purchased from the Kirghiz, in the vicinity of Astrakan. Climate is likewise not alone wanting. Aromatic plants, and above all fresh rice straw, are essentially requisite for their food.

at the rate of a rupee and a half per pound, and I was soon removed to Mir Fazl's house, and there delivered into the hands of the persons, whose business it was to prepare me for the loom.

The first process I went through, in company with the purest portions of my family, was a short exposure to the steam of hot water, softened with plantain-wood ashes, mixed with a kind of white marl or clay. The hanks were then untwisted, and we were immersed by women, in a sort of wash made of bean flour, and warm water. After that we were conveyed on bamboo poles, to the side of one of the crystal rivulets that flow into the lake, where we were carefully rinsed in the pure element, and beaten between polished stones. Being perfectly purified we were dried, weighed, and made over to another set of women to comb, spin, and twist for the dyers.

The purity of my white texture, was such that I was destined to retain my natural colour, improved by a little bleaching with rice starch; but my companions were almost all

submitted to some chemical process. Some parts were tinged with the finest Damaun madder, or with a crimson juice compressed from Bokhara vine-roots, mixed with cinnabar. Others were coloured yellow with lemon juice, orpiment, and dried blossoms of the fragrant *esbarek*, or were tinted with brilliant scarlets, extracted from japan wood, and the ruddy insects which feed upon the *Atchik*. Some steeped in Scanderabad indigo, assumed a dark blue, rivalling that of Lake Ooler, whilst the light azure, or verdant green of others, produced by lapis lazuli and verdigris, caused the clouds of heaven, and the brilliant foliage of the Shalamar, to appear dull and lustreless. At length, after an exposure of three or four days to the air, under shaded buildings, we were twisted into skeins, weighed, marked, and delivered to the foreman, who conveyed us to the shed under which were the looms, frames, shuttles, wooden needles, ivory pins, and other instruments necessary for the operation of himself, and subordinate workmen.

The pattern for my body, and borders

having been produced by the draftsmen, whose business it is to invent new designs, the drawing was fixed in front of the loom, on which two workmen commenced weaving a part of my delicate body with boxwood shuttles, whilst three others were employed in embroidering the splendid palms upon a neighbouring frame, by the aid of thin wooden needles, each containing a separate thread, and colour. This was not performed after the usual manner of hand embroidery, but on the reverse side, the two principal workmen passing the stitches through the back, whilst a third, seated underneath, smoothed and corrected them, in case of error. Such however was the skill of these men, that they rarely made a false stitch, or required any other instruction, than the occasional superintendence of the foreman, whose duty it is to explain the design, and now and then to remove the small ivory pins, that serve as a guide to the pattern.

At their side was a jar of water into which they frequently immersed their hands, it being

essential for them to make repeated ablutions, in order to preserve the work from being defiled.

The most industrious workmen, not being able to complete above the fortieth part of an ell of such a shawl as I was destined to become in one day, two looms were employed in weaving my body, and double that number of frames were engaged with the palms and borders.

At length, after nearly six months' labour, the morsels were completed and returned to the foreman, who gave them to the *Eurodjee*, whose trade is to unite them together. This they did with such exceeding dexterity, by means of fine steel needles and threads, that, although my body was composed of two portions, and my costly borders of, at least, ten times that number, I was, in due time, restored to the merchant's hands so perfectly whole, that it would have baffled the eyes of Ali to discover the seams and joins.*

* Cashmere shawls, especially of the richer kinds, are composed of several fragments. Their great beauty not only consists in the fineness of their texture, but upon the skill with which the component parts are put together, or

Thus was I converted into one of the largest and most beautiful specimens of "Royal Shawls" that ever issued from a Cashmerian loom. My owner, who broke into loud exclamations of rapture at the downy softness of my texture, and the rich and varied beauty of my palms, soon conveyed me to the custom house, where he declared my value at 1500 rupees; about half my real worth on the spot. Having paid the duty, amounting to a fifth, and the royal stamp having been affixed upon me, he carried me back to his house, and placed me in a cedar-wood chest, saturated with camphor.

The little quire here heaved a deep sigh, as if mourning over its bygone splendour, when transformed into one of those costly articles, so eagerly coveted by all the ladies of Frangestan. After a short pause, however, it resumed its story, as will be seen presently.

"taken up." Silk stocking menders in England, called "repriseuses," in France, possess this talent in an imperfect degree; but their art may be taken as an inferior specimen of that of the Cashmerian *Eurodji*.

CHAPTER XVI.

NUMEROUS packages of shawls, girdles, carpets, stockings, and other articles were constantly expedited in various directions by my owner. Some, destined for Hindostan, were packed and sent off by the pass of Jumboo. Others were dispatched to Amritsir, there to be washed by men expert in the operation, which is rarely performed in Cashmere. Others, carefully folded in parcels of four or five, were placed in *koorjin* (leather saddle-bags), fastened upon the backs of sheep, and thus conveyed across the intricate passes leading to Thibet and Tartary. Others, and these of the most valuable kinds, were purchased by the dealers who traffic in shawl goods, intended for the markets of Bokhara, Persia, Turkey, and Muscovy.

But Mir Fazl reserved me, and other superfine articles, as particular objects of speculation, hoping to obtain a high price for us from that most irresistible lion-eater, Runjeet Sing, the Sovereign of Lahore, or from some of the Rajahs and Sirdars attached to his fortunes, which were then rapidly rising to the ascendant. I was, therefore, deposited in an inner chamber in his harem, where he also kept his cash, jewels, and other valuables; and I had thus an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the members of his family.

This consisted of half the number of wives allowed by the Koran, several female slaves, and an only daughter, named Dil Bar (heart-stealer), a maiden nearly fifteen years old, upon whom Allah had bestowed a more than ordinary share of those irresistible charms, for which the Cashmerian women are renowned all over the East; and this without any of the defects of the Afghan race from which she sprung, her father not only being of that nation, but of good Dooraanee blood—a circumstance of which he was extremely proud.

I will not weary you, however, with a description of Dil Bar's perfections, further than to say, that her beauty was no less celebrated throughout Cashmere, than that of the Shalamar, to whose roses and carnations the poets compared her cheeks and lips, whilst they likened her tapering form to its graceful planes and swelling tulips, her modesty to its violets, and the dark lustre of her large black eyes to the deep shade cast by its cypresses over the refreshing grottoes, where the adorable Nourmahal was wont to shelter herself during the scorching heats of mid-day.

So great indeed was the renown of Dil Bar's beauty, that the youth of Sireenagar employed every possible stratagem to obtain a sight of her as she went to the mosque, or as she stood upon the terrace that overlooked the canal, at the back of her father's abode. Some disguised themselves as Dervishes and Fakeers. Some, habited as boatmen, paddled beneath the walls, and sung the most exquisite couplets in her praise; whilst others went so far as to bribe old women to carry her nosegays, com-

posed of those sweet flowers, whose mute language suffices to convey the tenderest expressions of admiration, languor, hope, or despair. In short, she was the very Keblah of attraction and adoration, and was more coveted than the hope, entertained by all true believers, of arriving at that glorious mansion promised to the blessed in Paradise; where the meanest person will possess eighty thousand slaves, and seventy-two heavenly wives, in addition to those he had in this world:—where he will repose beneath a spacious tent, lined with diamonds, sapphires, and emeralds; wherein three hundred dishes of gold, filled with exquisite viands, and three hundred vessels, brimming with melted pearls and rubies,* will be set before him by six hundred servants, and where he will be endowed with a never failing appetite, perpetual youth and vigour, as well as the power of drinking a whole lake of heaven

* Wine is commonly called “melted rubies,” by Persian authors, and it is also a practice to cast some of these gems into the wine jars of princes and great men, in order to enhance the value of the beverage.

made wine, with the same ease that he would sip a cup of earthly water.*

This being the case, Mir Fazl, who was immensely rich, flattered himself that he might marry his daughter to some Rajah or Prince; a speculation which he was not only entitled to entertain on account of Dil Bar's beauty and his own wealth, but, because it is a common practice amongst the chieftains and princes of Lahore, Delhi, and other parts adjacent to Cashmere, to endeavour to procure wives from that country, in order to improve the beauty of their own race. He was, consequently, not only exceeding jealous of all male persons, but he was as vigilant in preventing his harem from being visited by any but the female agents of great men, as Zamyad, the angel who guards the black eyed nymphs of Paradise, is careful in watching over his sacred charge.

One sage has said, "If you wish to preserve your heart you must close your eyes, for that is the door through which the enslaver enters." Another has observed, "that walls erected

* Sale's Koran. Preliminary discourse.

round a field will not deter the birds of heaven from devouring your grain." The destiny of Dil Bar proves the truth of these axioms.

Amongst the most enamoured of these youths, whose hearts were reduced to ashes by the shawl merchant's lovely daughter, was a young stranger lately arrived at Sireenagar, the symmetry of whose manly figure and expressive countenance was only to be exceeded by the suavity of his manners, the grace of his deportment, and his skill in all martial exercises. The name he went by was Pir Lena Sing. His abode was at a caravanserai, near Mir Fazl's house, where he lived in the style of a man of substance, passing his time in walking in the bazaar, or in parties of pleasure with young persons of his own age, amongst whom he was distinguished for his liberality and wit.

It chanced one morning as Dil Bar was returning, with a female slave, from early prayer at the *Jumah Masdjid* (Friday Mosque), that she was suddenly startled by the shouts and screams of people running down the narrow

street, or flying into houses, crying out, "Fly! on your lives, fly!—In Allah's name fly from the accursed son of Satan, or you are lost!"

Her terror may well be imagined, when, upon raising up her eyes, she perceived immediately before her one of those brutal Hindoo fanatics, who, having devoted themselves as a sacrifice to their hideous gods, rush forth, wounding and slaying all whom they encounter, until they themselves are hunted down and slaughtered like mad dogs.

Terrible as the simoon, the beastly devotee rushed forward, brandishing a long curved poignard in one hand and a short javelin in the other; his eyes gleaming wildly, his matted hair hanging over his bare shoulders, and his half clothed body begrimed with wood-ashes.

To exclaim "Allah! Allah!"—to turn and fly upon the wings of terror, was the act of a moment for Dil Bar. And, truly, she had need of Allah's help, and of the gazelle's speed, for the hideous wretch instantly cast his eye upon her, and selecting her as a propitious victim, bounded forward with the swiftness of a wild

ass. So thrilling a race for life or death never was seen. The livers of the spectators were converted into water as they looked down from their windows and terraces. She resembled a dove flying from the talons of a vulture, and he a famished tiger chasing a fawn.

At first, her light form, darting through the air, as if borne upon the pennons of the north wind, left her pursuer far behind; but her strength gradually failed—her speed relaxed—the brute gained upon her—his step followed her step as close as the hind upon the fore foot of the racer—his foul breath already tainted the lillies of her neck, and, with a hideous shout of—“Ram! Ram!” he raised his javelin and prepared to strike.

But Allah, who is all-powerful, extended the shield of protection over her. At the moment the wretch was about to plunge his weapon into her side, a youth dressed in a short tunic of yellow embroidered silk, lined with crimson, and a small shawl turban, according to the Seik fashion, darted from beneath the portico of a caravanserai. Driving back the uplifted

weapon with his dagger, he dealt the monster so terrible a blow with his long curved scynitar, that his head, severed from his body, rolled bleeding upon the earth, like a melon cloven from its stalk.

Pir Lena Sing—for he it was who had watched over Dil Bar, like one of the guardian angels whom Allah has appointed to attend upon man in this world—now sheathed his reeking blade, raised up the prostrate maiden, and gazed for a moment with wonder and admiration at her unveiled features. He had scarcely time, however, to whisper a few impassioned words in her ear, calling her his sultana, his pearl, the ravisher of his soul, and the bird of his destiny, ere he was separated from her by the crowd who pressed around, heaping maledictions upon the dead carcase.

Who the beautiful girl was, Pir Lena Sing well knew, for he had often followed her to the Mosque, and watched her as she stood, a rose amongst roses, upon the terrace of Mir Fazl's house. But who he was, she was hitherto ignorant; for, although she had often remarked

his handsome features, and carried their image engraven on her memory, she had not ventured to make inquiries about him. But, if she had been predisposed to admire him before this event, she was now fascinated by the double attraction of sympathy and gratitude. She, therefore, no sooner returned home, than she threw herself into her father's arms, and related, in glowing terms, how her life had been saved by a young Roustam, surpassing that hero in valour, and rivalling the moon in beauty. In short, it was evident that the shafts of love had penetrated into her soul, and that, in rescuing her from the fanatic's knife, Pir Lena had inflicted a wound that would defy all remedies, save those administered by himself.

Mir Fazl, who was passionately fond of his daughter, pressed her to his heart, and not only expressed his joy at her escape, but intimated his intention of rewarding the youthful stranger in a suitable manner. He was by no means pleased, however, to hear Dil Bar speak of him in such rapturous language. He was aware that when a mine is loaded, it doth but

require a single spark to produce ignition, and it was no way consistent with his temper to allow his projects to be blown off in such kind of smoke.

Being a prudent man, he did not extend the tongue of rebuke or depreciation, which he knew would only have the effect of water sprinkled upon a blacksmith's fire; he, therefore, extolled the youth's good intentions, merely adding, as he dismissed his daughter:—

“*Mashallah!* This Pir Lena Sing may be a most preeminent lion-eater—an Isfendyar, but although he were equal to forty Roustams, he could not influence destiny. The hour of your fate was not yet come, my soul. Had he not interposed, Allah would have employed some other hand. It is as impossible for a man to obtain that which is not allotted to him by Providence, as it is for him to die before the appointed time.”

He resolved, notwithstanding, to double the breast cover of precaution, and to take care in future that Dil Bar should have no opportunity of seeing the young stranger. Consequently

he charged her mother and her servants to watch with especial vigilance and not to allow her to go, for some time at least, to the public Mosque or baths.

In the mean time, he directed two or three slaves to proceed to Pir Lena Sing's abode, and to carry to him a present, consisting of a handsome Japan tray, on which he placed a bag of rupees, a fine shawl, a richly mounted sabre, and a pair of inlaid pistols—a generous return, as he thought, for the youth merely executing the behests of fate. But Pir Lena appeared to think differently.

“What is this?” exclaimed the latter, when the slaves entered, and stated their mission. “We are not mercenary brutes. We do not sell our swords to redeem woman's life. By the book and house of our faith, this shawl-breeder most egregiously mistakes the length of our shadow. Hearken, slaves! tell Mir Fazl Sahib, that Pir Lena Sing is not like the fisher who contents himself with the oyster, whilst others bedeck themselves with the pearl. My head is beneath his daughter's feet, as hers

was beneath those of the mad Hindoo. She has trampled upon my head, as I trampled upon his. If the deed have a price, let the recompense be proportionate. The lion will not be satisfied with the dog's share. Pah! I spit upon his presence, though they be as numerous as the tombs of Moultan. Go—say that the land of Dil Bar can alone extract the poison instilled by her eyes. I have spoken.”

Then in order to show his contempt for money, he thrust a handful of coins into each of the slave's mouths, and dismissed them as much charmed with his generosity, as they were surprised at the freedom with which he ventured to confess his passion for their young mistress, who they understood was destined to become the wife of a powerful young Mahomedan Prince residing near Lahore. In fact, the Rajah's *Vakeels*, who were looking out for handsome women, had already made overtures for her hand, through the medium of two of that class of female gossips who are celebrated at Sireenagar for making matches, and bringing

people together, with as much nicety as the *Eurodji* unite different pieces of shawl.

The slaves having narrated what had passed to Mir Fazl, he expressed no great anger at the stranger refusing his presents. On the contrary, he pocketed the affront very philosophically, and merely said, as he ordered the articles to be replaced in his treasure-chamber :

“ *Barack Allah!* What sort of madman must this be to refuse such gifts? Does he possess the philosopher’s stone, or has he been bred in the shade, that he is ignorant of the world’s usages? By the shadow of Omar, the shawl was fit to gird the loins of the Padishah. Oof! by my beard!” added he, musing, and clutching that ornament of his visage in his right hand, “after all he must be somebody, or he would not act thus. Who knows! perhaps he is rich and suitable. *Inshallah!* we will display prudence, and dip our fingers in the water of good management. Those cursed Feringee have two barrels to their guns, so, if they miss with one, they may kill with the

other. I will adopt their plan, and in the event of matters not ending satisfactorily with the Rajah's agents, I will so construct my edifice as to leave a door open for the other. I will take the necessary steps, in the mean time, to ascertain the real rank and station of this stranger."

This part of his project, Mir Fazl put into execution forthwith. His first inquiries, as usual with prudent parents all over the world, were as to fortune and family: his next, which he considered as secondary importance, as to character, disposition, and faith. But he could learn little of either, save that Pir Lena was apparently well furnished with ready cash; that he had a good assortment of arms, dresses, and horses; that he was said to be a native of Lahore, in Runjeet Sing's service, and to profess the creed of those filth-eaters, the infidel Seiks, who devour swine's flesh, worship God knows whom or what, and hold the white Thibet cows' tails, where with the priests drive the flies from their temples, in as much veneration

as we do strips from the covering of the Caaba.

It was also reported that he shut himself up with other people of his own abominable faith, in order, no doubt, to drink wine, and rub their noses against Satan's heel ; whilst at other times he suddenly disappeared during many days, and then as suddenly returned, through the agency, most probably, of the foul fiend himself. But if any one attempted to ask questions, or to worm anything out of him, he forthwith shut the gates of information as closely as muscles compress the valves of their shells, when they encounter the sea-gull's beak.

In short, some persons affirmed that he belonged to the wild, irreclaimable sect of devil-worshippers, called *Tcheragh Sondceeran*, (light extinguishers,) who infest divers parts of Persia and Afghanistan. Others said he must be a Seik, as he abominated tobacco ; and others again suspected that he was a magician, an alchemist, or a spy.

This being far from satisfactory information, Mir Fazl abandoned all thoughts of his double

barrelled gun, as far at least as regarded Pir Lena Sing, and reiterated his injunctions that the youthful stranger should not be allowed to approach his threshold, even though he were to offer double their value for his shawl goods. Indeed, having one day detected an old Jewess, who, under pretence of selling sweetmeats to his harem, attempted to convey a nosegay from Pir Lena to his daughter, he ordered the go-between to be well beaten on the mouth with slippers, and then sent her off to the Cadi. As she was so poor that she did not even possess a cucumber wherewith to bribe the dispenser of justice, he would not listen to her defence, but, having first confiscated her small stock of preserved mangoes, he directed her to be placed upon an ass, with her head towards its tail, and thus ignominiously conducted to the abode of her employer, in order to shew him that he had sent his beard to a wrong market.

Overwhelmed with grief and anger at being thus precluded from obtaining a sight of the jewel of his wishes, Pir Lena Sing abandoned himself to despair. In vain was he seen con-

stantly standing near the gates of the Mosque and floating baths, at the usual hour of female prayer and ablution. In vain did he mount his most spirited horse, and clatter to and fro before Mir Fazl's abode. In vain did he linger upon the canal, singing amorous ditties, of which each stanza terminated with the well-known words of Hafiz :—"Weep, O bulbul ! if like me thou deplorest a lost friend, for we are two miserable lovers. Tears are our sole refuge."

The accents of his dear loved voice, now and then reached Dil Bar's ears, and filled her soul with thrilling emotions ; but alas ! he was as far from her reach, as the pearls of Ras al Keimar, which lay concealed in the deep recesses of the Arabian gulf. If, however, it be a consolation to the rose, to think that the nightingale deploras the dreary season of separation, Pir Lena Sing might have derived some solace, had he known the deplorable manner in which Dil Bar pined, and languished for him. Poor maiden ! Her sorrow was the more intense, since she dared not relieve her

feelings by avowing its cause, or solace herself by recounting her anguish even to the night breeze, which wafted her lovers' sighs to her pillow.

Her mother, nevertheless, soon remarked that she drooped like a lilly deprived of light; but, as she had never been subject to the empire of love, herself, she attributed her daughter's melancholy to witchcraft. She therefore persuaded her husband to consult an astrologer, of great sanctity and repute, who, after casting Dil Bar's horoscope, and having recourse to other modes of divination, declared her to be under the influence of malign spirits, and recommended that her mother should fasten an amulet on her arm, inscribed with the following sentence from the Koran, which he pronounced to be an infallible security against the machinations of demons and sorcerers.

“ Seek refuge with the Lord, and king of the universe, that he may deliver thee from the evil suggestions of the whisperer (Satan,) and from the snares of men and genii.”

But the talisman produced no more effect

than an armlet of common pebbles. In lieu of diminishing, poor Dil Bar's dejection hourly increased. Hitherto she had derived some solace by spreading her carpet upon the terrace, whose foundations were washed by the canal, and overshadowed by orange-trees and pomegranates. There she sat of an evening, and listened to the murmuring breeze, which occasionally conveyed her lover's lamentations to her ear, or gazed upon the countless stars, and lovely moon, which she considered far inferior to the radiant light of his eyes, and the exquisite tenderness of his expressive face.

But she was soon deprived of this satisfaction. Ere long—dense and lowering clouds, forerunners of the dreary monsoon—shrouded the summit of the green mountain, and throne of Solomon. Howling winds, bursting from the snow capped Himlayas, swept along the valley, bowing down the noble plane-trees of the Shalamar, and scattering its flowers and blossoms. The flood gates of heaven were rent asunder, and the waters gushed forth like a new deluge, swelling the mountain rills into

raging torrents, and converting the placid bosom of the lake into a foaming sea. In short, the face of nature and man was darkened. The terraces and gardens were deserted, and the gentle inmates of each habitation were compelled to seek refuge beneath the shelter of their zenanas.

But the Lord of the elements, who, has ordained alternative storms and calms for the benefit of man, and who has prescribed limits to the dominion of heat and cold, soon lifted up his voice, and uttered the appointed signal to the genii, who guard the reservoirs of air and water. So that the rain ceased, the winds were lulled; the gorgeous sun reappeared in all its majesty. The sky was rewarmed with balmy breezes, and perfumed with fresh expanding flowers. Songs, music, and the plashing of oars again resounded upon the lake. Joyous parties of revellers once more crowded the emerald green islands. Glittering fish sprung sparkling from their lotus covered haunts, to feast upon the painted butterflies, and the in-

spired bird of love again poured forth its plaintive notes.

Dil Bar soon profited by the change of weather, and resumed her seat upon the terrace. But day after day rolled by without her hearing the enchanting voice that excited such transports in her soul. At length, as she leaned one evening against the wall, she observed a skiff, containing two fishermen, silently and cautiously paddling down the canal. At last they stopped opposite, and commenced their avocations. The one having lighted a torch, grasped a barbed javelin, and leaned over the prow in order to attract, and spear the fish, according to the mode frequently practised upon the lakes, and rivers of Cashmere. The others, armed with a bow and arrow, appeared to be more intent upon watching the air than the water:—a singular employment, as she thought, at an hour when nothing but bats and owls were likely to be upon the wing. But her heart bounded to her very mouth, her whole frame trembled with

joy, when, by the light of the torch, she discovered Pir Lena Sing under the disguise of a fowler.

It is easier to prevent the rays of day from penetrating to the furthest recesses of the universe, than to secure two sympathising hearts from the stratagems of love. Dil Bar no sooner perceived who it was, than she tore a branch from an overhanging pomegranate, placed her foot upon one of the china jars that ornamented the terrace, and raising herself up, cast the flowers, expressive of her affection, towards the boat.

This was not lost upon the fowler. Instantly paddling beneath the wall he picked up the branch, and after raising it to his head, and pressing it to his lips, lodged it within the folds of his bosom. Then affixing an arrow in his bow, he took steady aim, and in an instant more the wizzing reed clove the air, and passing through the narrow grated loop-hole, close to Dil Bar, struck against the inner wall.

Quick as light the maiden sprung to pick it

up, and discovered a strip of paper wound round its shaft. With palpitating heart and trembling hand she unfolded and read the following words:—

“Alas! the rose of my life is torn from its stem, and nothing but thorns remain behind. Sun of my day! Light of my darkness, it is thou alone that canst restore the withered flower to animation. Thou hast robbed me of the blessings of peace and reason. Thy foot is upon my neck. Say—shall I perish.”

“Allah forbid!” exclaimed Dil Bar pressing the paper to her lips. “But! what can I do? I am as a bird in a cage. O that I had a bird’s wings, and I would take refuge in his bosom.”

She then again kissed the paper, and read the remainder which ran thus: “If thou wouldst save me from the dungeon of despondency, and rescue me from the jaws of despair, take warning from the following fable, ‘A spider cast down by the tempest from the myrtle, whereon it had woven its nest, sighed helpless on the ground. His faithful mate,

seeing his misfortune, extracted the means of rescue, from the treasures of her own bosom, and then confiding the fragile thread to the hands of the winds, they bore it within his reach. Thereupon the spider grasped at the ladder of enjoyment, and again ascended to the mansion of delight.' If this be not a sign to thee—I die."

"Allah help and advise me!" again ejaculated Dil Bar, who easily comprehended the meaning of this allegory. "I would sooner that my bosom should be pierced with the stings of forty scorpions, than that a hair of his beard should be injured. But alas how can I imitate the spider's mate? My head is not furnished with long ringlets, like those with which the beautiful Rodahver assisted Zal to ascend to her balcony. And if it were, *Wallah Billah!* how could I commit so grievous an abomination as to aid a stranger in violating the sanctity of our harem? It is true my father is absent, my mother sleeps, and the door is closed, but there are such

things as duty and conscience. Allah protect me!—it is impossible.”

But of what use are the efforts of the bird of prudence, when opposed to the arrows of passion. Suddenly starting forward as if roused from a dream, or inspired by some desperate phrensy, she unwound the long shawl girdle that encircled her waist, rent it into three or four lengths and having united the ends, cast it over the wall. Pir Lena Sing no sooner saw this than he extinguished his light, pulled forth a silken ladder from his bosom, fastened it to the strips of shawl, and exclaimed in a low voice—“Now—now—My soul is in your hands.”

It was very evident that Dil Bar's brain must have been dried up, or that the spells laid upon her by Pir Lena Sing had produced an intoxicating effect, for she no sooner heard these words, than she drew up the end of the ladder, and affixed it to the grating of the nearest loop hole. Scarcely had she done this ere her knees smote together with mingled

terror and excitement, her bosom heaved with inexpressible trepidation, and blushes, deeper than the dyes of a thousand carnations, overspread her cheeks.

Her suspense was of short duration, for in a few moments more her heart's idol sprung from the summit of the wall, and with expressions of rapturous ecstasy pressed her to his heart.

What passed between them, or what further incantations were employed by Pir Lena Sing to fascinate the maiden, Allah only knows. But at the end of a few minutes she yielded to his persuasion, as the feeble jessamine yields to the pressure of the night breeze, and casting aside all prudence and discretion, consented to become the partner of his flight and fate.

Having directed his companion to receive Dil Bar in the skiff beneath, Pir Lena encircled her waist with one arm, whilst he grasped the ladder with the other. But the talisman furnished by the astrologer now showed its efficacy. At the moment he

bestrode the top of the wall, and was about to lift his precious burden from the floor, the door of the Zenana burst open, and, as their evil star would have it, Mir Fazl rushed upon the terrace, accompanied by several armed servants, bearing lights.

To depict the fury of the father, when the red torch glare of his followers, showed to him his daughter clutched in the embrace of the young Seik, would be as impossible as to describe the shame, and terror of the wretched Dil Bar, when her parent bounded forward, raised his pistol, and discharged it at the bosom of her lover. An icy chillness spread through her veins, her eyes closed, her senses fled, and she sunk motionless to the ground, like a tuberosity blasted by the storm.

But Allah is great and merciful, her ears were thus spared the anguish of the death echo, as it rattled along the surface of the lake. She heard not the heavy plashing of the lifeless body, as it fell into the canal beneath; nor the imprecations of Mir Fazl, as he bade his servants abandon the ravisher's carcase to

the fish and vultures, and told them to convey his daughter's inanimate form, to the custody of her mother.

CHAPTER XVII.

ALLAH be praised, exclaimed the paper resuming its tale, true believers are not wont to let loose the strings of their tongues, and to expose events that occur within the interior of their families, as is the practise with you unblushing Franks. It is not only a prescribed duty to abstain from all subjects of this nature, in ordinary discourse, but to maintain the utmost reserve regarding women, even amongst intimate friends. Besides, they do not expose themselves as you do to the filth of publicity, by permitting Mollahs, Haikems, and other inquisitive scandal mongers to penetrate into the kernel of their habitations, and thus, under the mask of law, religion or medicine, to lift up the curtain of confidence, and

then bray forth what they have heard, or seen to the first listener. The inconceivable indiscretion of Dil Bar was consequently unknown to all the world, except to her mother, and the three slaves, who had assisted in despatching the unclean Seik, into those regions of eternal punishment, where he was no doubt doomed to expiate his crime.

The poor maiden's condition was in the mean time most alarming. She no sooner recovered from her stupor, than a violent fever assailed her. Her soul was darkened with insane vapours, and she uttered all manner of incoherencies. Now fondly calling upon the name of Pir Lena Sing—now shrieking, and raving as if she saw his body torn to atoms by the carrion birds, and then mistaking her father and mother for Monkir and Nakir, she implored them not to permit the dragons of retribution to gnaw his heart and forehead with their fiery fangs.

At length exhausted nature gave way, and she fell into a profound sleep, or rather lethargy, so much resembling death that Mir Fazl,

whose anger was soon converted into pity, beat his breast, tore his garments, and accused himself of being her murderer. Finding that neither his prayers or lamentations, nor the amulets placed upon her pillow by his wife, were of any use, he bethought himself of applying to the doctors and astrologers, and as these trumpets of health, and science knew they should be well paid, two of the former, and one of the latter soon made their appearance.

After some discussion, as to the propriety of admitting the doctors into the patient's chamber, Mir Fazl's scruples gave way, and he led the two tomb feeders to Dil Bar's bed side; not however until she was concealed by a thick gauze curtain, and so enveloped in shawls and coverlids, that it was impossible for a single particle of her person to be seen.

The astrologer in the mean time remained in the outer chamber, where he not only proceeded to consult the constellations, and to calculate whether the hour was propitious for bleeding, and administering such remedies, as

might be prescribed by the physicians, but where he had recourse to various modes of divination, in order to ascertain whether destiny was favourable to Dil Bar's recovery, without which all the drugs, cordials, and electuaries in the world would be of no more use than a morcel of brick earth.

As soon as the two disciples of Galen entered, they uttered the usual *Salaam Aleikoom* and *Bishmillah*, and seated themselves at the same moment upon the carpet. Then in lieu of proceeding to consider the patient's case, they fell to work complimenting each other upon their respective talents, and recounting the many marvellous cures, which, through the prophet's help, each had effected.

"By the beard of Pocrat!" said one, "your skill is unrivalled. I certainly am no ass, but you have distilled the virtues of a thousand sages, and stored up the uintescence in your own brain. Destiny, jealous of your art, turns pale when he encounters you near a sick couch. Oof! if it were not written otherwise, man's life would be eternal in your hands."

“Your penetration is only to be exceeded by your modesty,” rejoined the other. “*Maskallah!* I certainly have not passed through the world blind folded. But all my learning is but a mere atom, when compared with yours. Galen could not perform such cures as you have operated, unless he had obtained access to the life-giving waters of Amrat, which possess the power of imparting immortality.”

“Galen and Hypocrates, on whom be God’s peace, were fountains of wisdom and universal good,” responded the first doctor. “Through the prophet’s aid I have not shut my eyes to their precepts; but the brilliant light of your talent extinguishes the lamp of all other men’s intelligence, and leaves them to grope about like sightless puppies. If people die under your treatment, their bodies must be exceeding perverse.”

“If the star of my intellect puts forth some trifling light, it derives its rays from the lustre imparted to it by the reflection of your sun,” answered the second physician. “The fame of

your skill was re-echoed from the banks of the Indus to the waters of Stamboul. Had you not sacrificed your own interest to a desire to transport the blessings of health into remote regions, you might have spat upon the beards of all the fraternity of Afghanistan, and been appointed chief physician to the king himself."

"The fame of my cures, like the echo of the royal drums, did, certainly, rise to the Padisha's ears, and caused the royal favour to shine upon me," replied the other. "I might, certainly, have passed the rest of my days in the bosom of wealth, power, and luxury, had I not determined to follow the precept of the sage, who says, 'Selfish men save their blankets from the flames, but the benevolent endeavour to rescue those of others from burning.'"

"Through the blessing of Ali (on whom be the everlasting peace of heaven!) I have also done some good in my life," exclaimed his companion; but, after all, I am a mere miser and blockhead in your presence."

"Galen, Hypocrates, Hermes Trismigistus, and Aviceina possessed immense knowledge;

but they were drivellers in comparison to you," retorted the other. "Had not you preferred travelling, in order to demonstrate the immeasurable superiority of Persian science over that of all other countries, your head might have touched the moon. You might have been honoured above all the doctors of Irak, although they do abound like flies in the Penjab.

"You speak truth," rejoined the first. "I might, at this moment, have been occupied in feeling the pulse of the king of kings, the Shah himself, had I not done as you said."

"*Barak Allah!*" exclaimed the other. "Should any grievous malady assail him, which, may the Prophet avert, he will, doubtless, send an embassy with a dress of honour, and implore you to return, that you may restore health to himself and joy to his people."

Now, the truth was, that these wise men were nothing more nor less than a couple of charlatan rogues, as ignorant of the art they professed as two camel-drivers. The one had been a petty druggist at Ispahan, were he had carried on an execrable traffic with divers de-

leterious herbs and powders, by which the death of several pregnant women had been brought about. At length, his infamous practices were discovered, and, had he not fled to Afghanistan, he would have suffered the penalty of his crimes.

The other was a barber from Caboul, who had mistaken a customer's throat for the top of his head, and his clothes for a part of his own wardrobe. But, having fallen in with the police, as he was conveying the naked body to the door of a brother shaver, he dropped his victim, took to his heels, and escaped to Peishawer, where he had fallen in with the other rascal.

Villains, like carrion brutes, are instinctively attracted to each other; so they soon entered into a fellowship to rob and murder the human race. As the most efficacious mode of effecting their wicked projects, they resolved to practice medicine, and thus, after various adventures, had reached Cashmere. There they had set up as pillars of science, and, by dint of lies, effrontery, and playing into each other's hands,

had crept into considerable repute. They took care, also, according to custom, to ascribe the whole merit to their own act, if their patients recovered, whereas, if they died, as was commonly the case, they threw the whole blame upon the unskilful calculations of the astrologers, and attributed the misfortune to the irresistible finger of destiny.

Having at length exhausted their stock of lies and compliments, which had the effect however, of impressing Mir Fazl with a marvellous respect for their skill and consequence, the Persian rose from his seat, and exclaimed, "*Mashallah!* All these are undeniable truths. But our time, brother, is as precious as the gum of Ayi. We have other demands upon us. Our patients are numerous as the stars."

"Certainly! certainly!" ejaculated the Caubulee, as he rose upon his knees. The lives of hundreds are between our fingers and thumbs! Did we not entertain an inconceivable respect for you, O Agha," added he, addressing Mir Fazl, "we could not have spared an instant. May we be burned as ignorant Kaffirs, if our

door was not besieged by a multitude of afflicted persons, all imploring us to avert the arrow of the angel of death from their own heads, or from those of their friends and relatives."

"May the blessings of the Prophet enlighten your brains! May your wisdom increase and your shadows never diminish," replied my owner. "Thank Allah! my star has been propitious. If any one can save my child it is you."

"Allah is the fountain of health," rejoined the Persian. "Medicine is of no use without faith. Let us now consider the patient's case, and, by the aid of Ali, we will relieve her in a twinkling."

As it was not their business to inquire into the cause of the maiden's illness, but to apply remedies for the evil, they did not overleap the bounds of discretion by asking any preliminary questions, but proceeded, first, to examine the contents of certain vessels, which it is needless to mention, and, secondly, to feel the patient's pulse. This latter operation could only be effected through the folds of gauze with which

Dil Bar's wrists were enveloped. Having bent their heads to hear, as well as count, the pulsations, they reseated themselves, seized thier beards with their left hands, raised the right to their foreheads, gravely nodded their heads, pursed up their lips, and half closed their eyes—looking, for all the world, as wise and solemn as two old owls exposed to the sun's beams.

During this time Mir Fazl beat his breast with one hand as a token of humility, whilst he fingered his beads with the other, and watched their countenances with intense anxiety. At last, as neither of them seemed disposed to open their lips, he exclaimed, "Speak! by your fathers' souls, say! does the bird of hope hover near her couch? Save her, and all I have shall be yours."

"If any one can control fate, it is your servants," said the Caboulee, in reply. "Be of good cheer. *Inshallah!* (please God), we will cure her."

"Allah alone gives health," re-echoed the Persian. Then, bending forward, the two purveyors of pills and powders commenced whis-

pering and discussing, but in a low voice, and then in a much less tranquil manner. At last, when Mir Fazl thought they were about to draw forth the pen-case, and little slips of paper, usually carried by doctors, wherewith to indite their *noshka* (prescriptions), the Persian started back one way and the Caboulee the other, under evident symptoms of extreme anger. The former spat on the ground, as if he had swallowed some of his own bitter physic, and the other blew over his right, and then over his left shoulder, as if he intended to drive away malignant spirits. Then there was a pause, during which both regarded the other with looks of utter contempt, until the Afghan exclaimed,

“Inflammation of the brain! By my soul! By my father’s beard! that is against all apparent symptoms. Why, a stone blind child might see that her body burns like the fires of the lowest pit! Bleeding, with hot fomentations, and sudorifics, are the only antidotes.”

“Bleeding and hot applications!” retorted the other. “Surely you must be jesting with

your brother. Bleeding indeed! Is it not evident that her veins are already dried up, and that all the leeches from Mazanderan could not extract a drop from them? Is she not reduced to the threshold of extinction? Would you fain drain off what little vitality remains? It is obvious that her malady is in the brain and not in the body. Therefore, unless ice be applied to her temples, and cataplasms of poppy seed to her feet, so as to expel and draw off the humours, you will forestal destiny. Besides," added he, "how can she possibly recover unless her feet be turned towards the Kehbla?"

"Do you take me for a brainless Shiite, that you think I cannot distinguish between snow and fire?" exclaimed the Caboulee. "Would you heap fuel upon flame, and cause her heart to be burned up like a grilled mushroom, by driving down the burning vapours into her bosom? Hearken, O Agha," added he, turning to Mir Fazl, "if you would have your child live, let her swallow a *youchondee* (hot water potion,) infused with a decoction of cardamum,

or other pectoral seeds, in order to set the humours in motion ; then, if a vein be opened, the evil will flow off, and she will be relieved forthwith. Besides, if you would not cut her off from all hopes of Paradise, beware how you turn her feet, instead of her face, towards the Caaba. In Allah's name, let not this Shiite heretic cram his abominations down your throat."

"By your salt ! By your soul !" cried out the other, "do not listen to this ignorant pretender's rubbish. You may as well send for the undertaker's men at once, if you do not follow my advice, and then administer a cooling dose of nichapoor manna, or Ispahan sweet gum, which unites the virtues of honey, as ordained by the Koran, with those of the purest white sugar."*

"Has your belief in that arch usurper, Ali,

* On recueille aussi à Ispahan une espèce de manne que les droguistes appellent *Sekenjamin*, plus douce que le miel et le sucre, dont on se sert en médecine. Elle croît durant le printemps et l'été, où elle se congèle assez dure, et paraît comme un parchemin étendu.—*Chardin*.

addled your brain, or do you wish to renew your poisonous practices?" said the Soonite, apostrophizing his former friend. "Woe betide you, O Agha, if you do not guard your ears with wax against the nostrums of this charnel house provider."

"Curses on Omar, and upon all his blind followers! *Pidr socktah* (may their fathers be burned)," retorted the Persian, forgetting that Mir Fazl, and with few exceptions, all the Cashmerian moslems were worshippers of the four Caliphs. "Curses on your fathers, mothers, aunts, and sisters! You a haikem indeed! Poof! I would not let a Shiite dog receive a bolus at such unclean hands."

"Allah have mercy upon the unfortunate wretch for whom you prescribe," replied the other. "All the world knows that you have poisoned as many people as you have made pills."

"The recording angel has been compelled to open a new book, wherein to inscribe your iniquities, so numerous are your sins," answered the other. "Bleeding indeed! *Wullah*

for every drop that thou hast extracted, thou wilt have a river of the scalding sludge of Jehanum poured down thy throat."

"Beast, hog, son of a double hog" retorted the Caboulee. "Thy sins are blacker than all the crimes inscribed in the registers of the recording angel. Thou hast not only precipitated hundreds into the other world, but thou hast prevented an equal number from coming into it. Curses on Satan! Thou darest not pass by a cemetery at night without covering up thy face, lest the spirits of thy victims should recognize, and inflict vengeance upon thee."

"Wherever thou movest at night-fall," replied the Persian, "the jackals and vultures follow thy steps, knowing thee to be the messenger of inevitable death."

"The unclean washers of the defunct depend upon you for a livelihood," said his opponent. "You are an imposter, an unblushing imposter."

"You are an assassin, a double-faced murderer!" roared out the Isphanee.

“It is a lie, a Satan’s lie,” replied the barber.
“Off! I spit upon thy beard.”

Whereupon, he forthwith suited the action to the word, a compliment which the other retorted by seizing him by the chin, and tugging away thereat, until the tears rushed into the barber’s eyes. The latter, did not, however, remain idle, for, having contrived to get his opponent’s fingers between his teeth, he practised chirurgery upon them after such a fashion as made the Isphanee caper and roar like a Thibet bull.

How long the struggle might have lasted, heaven knows; but Mir Fazl, who had hitherto remained a patient spectator, now rose, and exclaimed:--

“By the beard of Omar! what kind of wrangling imposters are these! *Wullah!* we must put an end to this filth.”

Then, being a powerful man, he seized the two quacks by the collar, and, without respect either for Soonite or Shiite, applied his foot to that part of their persons which is the seat of *Al Ajb* (os coxyges,) and belaboured them in

a manner essentially calculated to destroy the reproductive powers of that bone, at the day of resurrection. Having sent them sprawling into the street, he dismissed the astrologer as courteously as his choler permitted, and having closed the door, he returned to the sick chamber.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHETHER it was from the effect of being delivered from the presence of the two filthy empirics, or from the force of nature, it is impossible to say, but the two former had not long been dismissed, ere Dil Bar heaved a deep sigh, and opened her eyes. Having gazed around her for a moment, and seeing her father telling his beads by her side, she extended her arms, and bursting into tears, prayed for his forgiveness.

Mir Fazl, who had abandoned all hope, was enchanted at her restoration to life and reason, that he not only tenderly embraced and assured her of his pardon, but swore by the Caaba, that she need only express a wish, and it should be granted, even to the extent of his consenting

to her union with Pir Lena Sing, could the youth be restored to existence.

But, like many other persons in this world, who no sooner recover from the scorpion's bite, than they forget its anguish, no sooner did Mir Fazl discover that his daughter was out of all danger, than he fell to work, first to invoke maledictions upon the soul of the departed Seik, and then to consider how he might best conclude his negotiation with the agents of Raz Andaz, the young Lahore Rajah, and thereby secure himself from fulfilling his oath, should Pir Lena again make his appearance in this world; an event which he thought not altogether impossible, through the agency of the devils with whom he was said to have been leagued.

His wish was speedily gratified, for, in the course of a few days, the Rajah's agents announced their intention of paying him a visit, under pretence of purchasing shawl goods, but in reality, to propose for Dil Bar.

The two strangers, who were a sort of half Musselmen from the Penjab, no sooner crossed

the threshold of Mir Fazl's reception-room, than he rose and received them with great courtesy. Having exchanged salutations in the Persian dialect, which, like that of the French infidels in Frangistan, is the general medium of intercourse between persons of different countries in these parts, he led them to the upper end of the room, and seated them on either side of him. Kaleeans and refreshments were then brought in, and they commenced operations, firstly by bartering for various articles of Cashmerian produce, and then by bringing forward the subject of Dil Bar. This they did not in plain terms, but in the allegorical language often employed upon such occasions.

“Some birds lay many eggs, some few, and some only one, like the gigantic rock,” said the first stranger, whose name was Lall Ood Dowlah.

“The common quarry produces stones by thousands, as the air of the Penjab engenders flies,” added the other, who was called Bahoual Mal. “But Badakshan rubies, and Golconda emeralds appear singly in the mine.”

“A grain of rice produces many stalks, but the cypress seed only sends forth one noble stem,” continued the other.

“These things are all prescribed by heaven,” exclaimed Mir Fazl, who instantly understood the allusion to his only child. “Allah is great, the powers of increase are in his hands. A grain of gold is more valuable, however, than a camel load of sand.”

“Gold imbedded in the earth, is no better than common mud,” replied Lall Ood Dowlah.

“Of what use are precious stones, unless they pass the jeweller’s hands?” said Bahoual Mal.

“You are wrong, *Y Allah*, you are wrong,” exclaimed Mir Fazl. “Gems derive their value from their intrinsic weight and lustre, and not from external aid.”

“That is incorrect. It is the sun’s light that imparts splendour to all gems. If buried in shade, they produce no more effect than burned bricks,” was the reply.

“That may be,” rejoined the merchant.

"You will admit, nevertheless, that the longer diamonds, and pearls remain in their native element, the greater must be their ultimate worth."

"True, true!" said Bahoual Mal, "but, being once extracted, none but a miser would condemn them to eternal darkness."

"If one merchant possess a treasure for sale, and a second desires to become its purchaser," observed Lall Ood Dowlah, "it behoves the former to state his terms."

"Certainly, certainly. That is just and reasonable," replied Mir Fazl.

"Listen then, O Sahib," said the first speaker, as he passed the tube of the kaleean to the shawl dealer. "According to universal report, you possess a jewel worthy of adorning the summit of Jemsheed's crown. We have received instructions to negotiate for its transfer to a place of preeminent distinction."

"He speaks truth," added the second Vakeel. "We are not common dealers who seek for jewels, and then dispose of them to the first bidder—regardless whether they be

afterwards confounded with impure pebbles, or set in base metal."

"We are undoubtedly something in the world," continued the other. "But when compared with him who sends us, we are mere atoms. Our employer is the Rajah, Raz Andaz, of Russoolpoor; a youth of extraordinary excellence, whose courage, wisdom, and wealth, are only to be exceeded by his generosity and beauty."

"May he prosper. I am his sacrifice," ejaculated Mir Fazl. Then, thinking it a propitious moment for coming to the point, he added. "Hearken, my Aghas! My ears are not stuffed with cotton, nor are my eye balls melted. I can see, hear and understand. *Wallah!* I am a plain man in my dealings. You allude to my daughter—the sole gem of my treasure. *Astagferoolah!* I do not part with my flesh and blood, as if it were common merchandize. I am not a breeder of dancing girls, and other similar impurities. If you are instructed to negotiate for my becoming father

in law to the Rajah, you are doubtless furnished with full powers to that effect."

"On our heads be it," replied one of the strangers.

"By our eyes. By your salt, which we have eaten, it is so," echoed the other. Then pulling from his bosom a letter folded in a silken envelope, he raised it to his head, in token of respect, and added, "Here are our proofs; here also are our instructions—read—and you will be satisfied."

Mir Fazl took the paper, and having likewise lifted it to his forehead, read as follows: "In the name of the true God, there is but one God!

"Let it be known to our faithful, and much esteemed Lall Ood Dowlah, and Bahoual Mal, that we hereby appoint them our representatives, in order that they may transact business of great import in our name. Let this paper, sealed with our signet be an authority to them, and a security to others.

"Now—it has come to our ears, that, amongst

the wonders of Cashmere there exists a marvel, exceeding all other miracles in beauty and perfection. The abode of this centre of admiration is the treasure house of a certain Mir Fazl Sahib, a merchant of high repute, essentially favoured by God. The tongue of fame declares, that she excels the most resplendent pearls in purity, that she surpasses the most exquisite musk in fragrance, and that she is unrivalled by the noblest planes in grace and majesty. The moon turns pale with envy, and the constellations, forgetting their prescribed evolutions, stand lost in admiration, when she unveils her lovely features. Rumour affirms that she combines the graces of Zeinab, with the wit of Fatmeh, and the wisdom of Ayesha, with the seductive charms of Mariam. Our soul is devoured by unutterable longings, to become lord of this inestimable jewel. Our heart languishes for it, as the desert traveller thirsts for pure water.

“Let Lall Ood Dowlah, and Bahoual Mal spare no pains therefore, to assuage our anguish,

and let no mercenary considerations stand in the way of accomplishment. We have intrusted the key of our designs to their hands; let them unlock the gates of promptitude, and discretion. Having confirmed the validity of report, by the touchstone of investigation, they must treat with the aforesaid Mir Fazl Sahib, as becomes men instructed to elevate his daughter to the place of highest distinction in our household. Let them cull the choicest flowers from the gardens of eloquence, to prove to our soul's ravisher that we are enthralled by love, like a fly with its feet in honey. Let them ransack earth, air and water, in order to procure such gifts as may be most acceptable to her, and worthy of our munificence. The negotiation being accomplished, and the contract lawfully sealed, let them look to the safe transport of the rose bud of our hope, to the mansion of delight prepared for her. In so doing they will guard their charge with as much respectful vigilance, as though they were conveying the sainted covering of the Caaba

to the holy temple. Let them execute these instructions with zeal and attention, and it will be the better for them."

Mir Fazl, being thus satisfied with the authenticity of the agents' mission, and the real intentions of their employer, first entered into a glowing description of his own high descent from the purest Afghan blood, and then proceeded to discuss the preliminaries of the marriage. These matters being settled, the Vakeels produced a list of goods and money, which they were instructed to offer as an earnest of their employer's liberality and affection, and having received from Mir Fazl an account of the divers articles he intended bestowing upon his daughter, by way of dowry, they took their leave. Then in order to avoid all mischance they betook themselves to an astrologer, bidding him determine the day, and hour that would be most propitious, not only for performing the ceremony of betrothal, but for commencing the journey to Lahore.

In consequence of the near approach of the moon's eclipse, and from other unfavourable

planetary prognostics, some time elapsed ere the astrologer thought proper to appoint a period for solemnizing the wedding. At length the aspect of the constellations being propitious a day and hour was appointed, and the Vakeels returned to Mir Fazl's house, preceded by a band of music, and followed by a train of slaves, and porters bearing the gifts intended for Dil Bar.

As soon as the bridegroom's representatives entered within the merchant's gate, they were conducted to the principal apartment adjoining the harem. Here the presents of both parties were exhibited, and registered in the presence of the Cadi, Mollah Bashi, and a numerous assemblage of male relatives, who had been invited to attend. Each having expressed his admiration at the liberality of the Rajah, and the good fortune of the bride, the whole party seated themselves, and partook of refreshments, whilst the presents were conveyed into the harem, for the inspection of the women.

At length the precise moment for commencing the ceremony having arrived, the door

leading to the women's apartment was thrown open, and the beautiful idol of the Rajah's adoration, amidst whose toilet and costly ornaments, I formed a conspicuous object, was raised from her seat by two female friends, and conducted by her mother close to the entrance, where she remained concealed, however, by the folds of a silk curtain. All things being ready, the Mollah now rose, and turning his face towards the Kehbla, uttered the following brief exordium,

“ God is high and great, and there is no one above him! He has ordained, that men shall provide wives for themselves, out of their substance, that they may multiply and increase, thereby doing that which is right, and eschewing that which is impure. God has said—‘Marry single women with the consent of their parents, trustees or masters—give dowries unto them according to justice, and converse with them kindly. Marriage is a firm covenant—not to be entered into lightly, nor set aside wantonly. Let men remember that their wives are their tillage, and let women not

forget that they must do that which is reasonable to their husbands, according to just measure. To those who lead a chaste life, wedlock is a source of exceeding happiness. To those who depart from their vows, it will prove a grievous pilgrimage.' Follow God's statutes, therefore in this matter; for he is the Lord of heaven and earth. The similitude of his light is as a niche in the wall, wherein a lamp is placed, and the lamp being enclosed in a glass case, the glass radiates like a shining star. Let those who are about to be united remember this, lest they fall into darkness, and perish."

It not being customary for fathers to give away their own daughters, Mir Fazl appointed a near relation to act as his proxy. Therefore the latter stepped forward, as soon as the priest had terminated, and, turning his back on the silken curtain, exclaimed,

"With the aid of God, the merciful, I, Nazib Abdallah, speaking in the name of Mir Fazl Sahib—my intimate, my best beloved, my brother—who is the son of Selim Douraunee,

the son of Mahomed Zeman, the son of Osman Khan, the son of Meer Oodullah, the son of Hadji Hossein Khan, the son of Azim ood Deen, who was a contemporary of the Emperor Aurungzebe*—hereby give unto you, Lall Ood Dowlah, the chosen proxy of the illustrious Lord and Rajah, Raz Andaz; that you may take, as a lawful and perpetual wife, the beautiful, the peerless, the immaculate Dil Bar. A treasure far exceeding all others in value. The dowry being fixed and determined according to contract, and a clause having been introduced in order to regulate the conditions of divorce, which may Allah avert, nothing remains but for you to extend the tongue of affirmation, and to set your seal to the covenant."

Upon this, one of the Vakeels stood forward, and, turning himself towards the inner chamber, took forth an engraved onyx ring, and having raised it above his head, and waved it three times, in the direction of Mecca, and then

* It must be remarked, that no people are more proud of their ancestry than the Cashmerians of Afghan descent.

three more times towards the bride, he exclaimed, in a distinct voice,

“ In the name of the most excellent, the Lord and Ruler of the Universe ! This is the signet of the most noble, the Rajah Raz Andaz, a chieftain terrible in battle, pre-eminent in council, and super-excellent in wit. A constellation amongst stars—a diamond amongst brilliants—a lion eater and devourer of heroes. Exceeding Sicander (Alexander), in valour, Solomon in prudence, — excelling Khosroes (Cyrus), in wealth, and Feridoon in ingenuity —surpassing Joseph in beauty, and Adam in length of shadow. It has pleased this favoured son of God—the admired of men, whose genealogy is lost in the confusion of creation, to appoint me, Lall Ood Dowlah, to be his proxy. In right, therefore, of this high authority, and in his name, I hereby espouse the pearl of pearls—the rose of roses—the stag-eyed—the cypress-formed—the moon-faced—the sea of light and perfection—the incomparable Dil Bar. I declare, that I take her as a lawful and perpetual wife, to be elevated above all

other women ; to be had and held for ever, if it please God, in virtue of a contract, sealed and attested, wherein the dowry is distinctly specified, and all other forms duly registered, according to God's statutes."

As soon as he had ended, the bystanders immediately said their *fateha*, and invoked blessings on the marriage. The priest then advanced one or two paces, and, addressing the bride, said, "In the name of the all-wise, the bountiful, the Lord of fruition and increase, speak! are you prepared to ratify the promise made, in your behalf, by the proxy thereunto appointed?"

A voice, soft and harmonious as the first quivering notes of the nightingale, wafted by the evening breeze, was now heard to exclaim, "*Khoob* (yes). Since God ordains it, yes! Allah help me! what else can I say?"

Had she wished to add more it was impossible for sobs choked her utterance, and she sunk, half fainting, into the arms of her female relatives, who attributed her agitation to exceeding

rapture at becoming the wife of the young Rajah.

Lal Ood Dowlah, hearing this reply, advanced to the curtain, and, averting his head, passed his hand through the opening, and delivered the ring to Dil Bar's mother, who offered to him, in exchange, a chaplet of white and red rose buds, as a symbol of purity and union. The whole of the women then clustered round the bride, and, having kissed her upon the forehead and two cheeks, placed the ring upon the first finger of the right hand, braided up her long tresses, according to the fashion of married women, and then replaced her virginal veil with one suited to a bride.

This being accomplished, shouts of "*Moobarek busheed!* (May it be propitious!)" "May your house be peopled!" and divers other compliments were uttered by the assistants. The door of the harem was then closed, and the men on one side and the women on the other, proceeded to pass the rest of the day in feasting and rejoicing, not forgetting the poor, to whom alms were freely distributed.

Dil Dar, whose consent to the marriage had not been asked, and who knew no more of the matter than that she was now the bride of a far distant Rajah, retired to a remote chamber of the harem, where she took forth from her bosom a withered rose, given to her by Pir Lena Sing upon the terrace. Then, bursting into an agony of grief, she moistened the precious relic with her tears, and sorrowfully awaited the hour of fourth prayer, which had been appointed, by the astrologer, as the proper time for quitting her father's abode.

CHAPTER XIX.

SCARCELY had the sun commenced its downward course, ere a string of camels were conducted, by order of the Rajah's agents, to Mir Fazl's house, where they were forthwith loaded with Dil Bar's dowry and wardrobe. In addition to these, several horses were in readiness for the Vakeels and superior attendants, whilst three or four palankeens were prepared to carry the bride and her women.

At length, the moment for departure having arrived, Dil Bar tore herself from her mother's arms, and was conveyed, more dead than alive, into the court, and placed with a favourite female slave in one of the palankeens.

Both mother and daughter had been too much occupied ;—the one with anguish at quit-

ting the cradle of her early affections, and the other with receiving the congratulations of her friends, to think of changing the dress of the bride; so, notwithstanding my extraordinary richness and value, I retained my place round the bride's waist, which, together with her arms and bosom, were protected with a profusion of amulets. Some of these talismans consisted of little silken bags, containing scraps of paper, inscribed with short passages from the Koran. Others were of turquoise and cornelian, on which similar phrases were engraved in golden letters. Some were intended as a protection against witchcraft, storms, sickness, or the treacherous Thugs, who are more to be dreaded than the relentless demons of the waste;* whilst others, which had been blessed at the tomb of the far-famed Muckdoom Sahib, were destined to insure the undivided love of

* The Thugs, or secret association of assassins, whose hideous ramifications extend almost all over India. See *Edinburgh Review*, No. cxxx.

her husband, and the no less important blessing of fecundity.*

All the world is aware of the baneful effects of the evil eye upon human undertakings, and that Eblis constantly selects ugly old women as the instruments of his abominations. Care had therefore been taken to drive away all females who had traversed the threshold of middle age, and whose looks were calculated to entail misfortune upon the bridal journey.

But, notwithstanding these precautions, the departure had like to have been interrupted. At the moment that Bahoual Mal's horse issued from Mir Fazl's house, the animal suddenly reared, plunged, rolled its eyes, snorted, and although hitherto remarkable for its docility, refused to advance. This was no sooner remarked by the grooms, who suspected the

* Muckdoom Sahib, whose tomb is erected upon "the green mountain," alluded to in a former chapter, was a Cashmerian Saint of great repute. Forster says, that both men and women have recourse to his shrine upon all momentous occasions.

cause, than they looked round, and one of them, pointing to the other side of the street, exclaimed—

Bedchesm! Bedchesm! (The Evil Eye! The Evil Eye!)”

“Curses on the grandmother of mischief! there stands the dealer in misfortunes,” said a second.

“Away with the hags, the blowers upon knots,” roared a third.

“Maledictions on their souls!” echoed a fourth. “Let us burn their fathers!”

“In Allah’s name! let us not proceed,” said Bahoual Mal, who had dismounted. “This is an evil omen. The astrologer must be a double-skinned ass to expose us to this filth.”

A stifled scream from Dil Bar accompanied these outcries; for, upon looking through the grating of the palankeen curtain, she perceived two decrepid old Hindoo women, standing close by the way side, and, apparently, mumbling curses between their shrivelled lips. Her heart was turned upside down with fear and emotion at the sight, for the eldest and most

hideous of the two bore a strong resemblance to the defunct Pir Lena; not as she had last seen him, blooming and beautiful, but aged, wrinkled, blear-eyed, hump-backed, and as black and withered as Khalee, the blood-drinking goddess of destruction.*

A volley of imprecations, and, what was more serious, a shower of mud and stones had in the mean time been hurled upon the two old mischief breeders; whilst Mir Fazl, enraged at this unpropitious event, spurred forward his horse, and would have trampled them beneath its hoofs, had not Dil Bar called to him, saying—

“Mercy! mercy! in Allah’s name, father! Do not perpetrate murder on the poor defenceless creatures. Let not a day of joy to you, be a day of mourning to me. By my mother’s head, and by yours, do not increase the anguish I feel at leaving all that is dear to me, by entailing the blood price upon my soul. Spare

* Khalee, commonly called Khon Khalee (the man eater), a deity to whom Indian Moslems offer up deprecatory gifts.—*Edinburgh Review* No. cxxx. p. 391

them! spare them! *Wullah Billah!* if you hurt a hair of their heads, the retribution of Heaven will infallibly fall upon us!"

Upon this, Mir Fazl reluctantly reined in his horse, and, although the hags did not escape insult and bruises, they got off without serious injury, but not without casting such a look of vengeance and malice at their tormentors, as thrilled through Dil Bar's heart.

Bahoual Mal's steed being now pacified, an evident proof of the efficacy of removing the evil eye, the caravan filed through the narrow streets, and traversed the bridge over the river Jalum, leading towards the southern mountains.

It was a joyous and animated sight to all but the principal performer. Absorbed in grief, she heeded not the din of gongs and drums, the braying of trumpets and clarions, the explosion of matchlocks, or the shouts of her relatives and friends, who accompanied the procession with lighted torches and painted lanterns, as far as the neighbourhood of Khanik-

poor, where the Vakeel's tent-pitchers selected a spot for the first night's halting place. Here it was that Mir Fazl took leave of his child, and returned to Sireenagar.

Scarcely had the morning star arisen in the eastern hemisphere, ere we recommenced our journey towards the lofty ridges of Pir Penjal, which divide Cashmere from the scorching wastes of the Penjab, and continued our progress in the direction of Bember, without meeting with any obstruction, save the vexatious interruption of the numerous custom-house officers, or without encountering any other travellers, except a couple of well-mounted government couriers, who overtook us on the third evening, on their route from Cashmere to the Seik army.

The elder of the two, whose grey beard and long flowing hair half concealed his weather-beaten features, not only exchanged salutations with the Vakeels, but, after asking and replying to a variety of questions, offered to convey any letters which the latter might desire to forward

to the Rajah, through whose territory they proposed traversing on their way to the royal camp.

As the two couriers intended to proceed rapidly, and as we journeyed by easy stages, their offer was accepted ; so Lal Ood Dowlah directed pipes and coffee to be set before them, whilst he indited a letter to Raz Andaz, announcing the result of his mission, and the exact day of his arrival at his Lord's frontier.

The dispatch being duly sealed and inclosed in a silken bag, it was delivered to the horsemen, who tightened their girdles, and having sworn by the Rajah's salt, which they had just eaten, that they would faithfully execute their commission, they uttered their *Khoda hafiz*, and quickly disappeared amidst the mountain tracks.

This trifling incident had not taken place without reviving Dil Bar's surprise and agitation. At the moment the elder courier approached her palankeen, he suddenly pulled up his horse,

until its haunches nearly touched the earth ; after gazing for a moment at the lattice by which she was concealed, he leaned over his high-peaked saddle, and bowed his head to the mane ; then, raising himself up, he cast another look at Dil Bar, that penetrated her soul, and striking his sharp heels into his steed's flanks, dashed forward on his route.

Her astonishment and trepidation may well be imagined, when beneath the flowing beard and bushy grey brows of the old man, she detected, or fancied that she detected, the traits of her departed lover,—noble and majestic, but blighted with the frosts of age, like the cypress, silvered by the winter's snow.

This, however, could only have been another delusion of Satan to perplex and agonize her mind. Alas, poor maiden ! In despite of amulets and talismans, her brain was evidently as much bewildered by the spells of some magician, as that of Seetah, the wife of Ram, the supreme Hindoo deity, when the beastly necromancer lured her from her husband, and

the guardianship of his brother Leichimun, by means of an enchanted bird, and other infamous devices.*

* A magician having become enamoured of the beautiful Hindoo goddess, Seetah, determined to disturb the conjugal felicity of her husband, Ram. Knowing the passion of the fair sex for finery, he thought the surest means of attacking her heart, was through the medium of her eyes; so he created a bird of most brilliant plumage, which he caused to hover before Seetah's face. The aspect of the dazzling creature so fascinated the lady, that in despite of her brother-in-law's advice, she eventually abandoned her home, and followed her seducer. In due time, however, the culprits got tired of each other, and Seetah returned to her husband, and swore to her innocence with as much pertinacity as did Ayesha after her adventure near Medina, alluded to in the first volume. Ram, however, was neither so politic or so easily persuaded as Mahomet, so he ordered her to prove the truth of her assertion by submitting to the ordeal by fire. But Heaven, as in the case of the Prophet, was resolved to save the honour of the Deity, for according to tradition, "the hot irons were converted into beds of roses and violets beneath the soles of her innocence." This allegory, at all events, affords a curious instance of the early antiquity of the ordeal by fire.

Thus, although the variety, movement, and even perils of the journey, were well calculated to temper her grief, her heart still clung with as much tenderness to the memory of her first love, as the remains of the lovely Afghan virgin, Doorkhaneh, did to those of her adored Adam, whose bodies, though buried far apart, were found united in the same grave, and sheltered by two majestic planes, which sprung from their ashes, and intertwined their stems and foliage over their tomb.

Neither the hopelessness or sin of cherishing a passion forbidden by the hand of destiny, nor the constant praises lavished upon the young Rajah, could divert her mind from the dead to the living. In lieu of rejoicing as each day's march diminished the distance between her and her husband, she looked forward with pain, and even loathing to the hour of union.

The scorched and sandy tracts that intervene between the pass of Bember and the banks of the Tchenab, were at length left behind, and we reached a well-watered, and woody region, where, upon emerging from the dried bed of a

torrent, we perceived a body of horse approaching at full speed.

This set all our people in commotion. Some were for fighting, but the greater part for running away. All, however, united in cursing, blaspheming, and swearing they would burn the rascals' fathers. However, Lal Ood Dowlah and a part of his followers unslung their matchlocks, and placed themselves in front, but Bahoual Mal and the remainder took refuge behind, under pretext of guarding the rear.

Fortunately the valour of the one, and the cowardice of the other were not put to further test, as Lal Ood Dowlah quickly discovered that the strangers were scouts sent forward to apprise him, that the principal officers of Raz Andaz's harem were encamped at a short distance, in readiness to receive their Lord's bride with all due honour.

Having advanced a short distance, the encampment appeared in sight, and presented a scene of extraordinary wildness and beauty. On one side was a deep ravine, at the bottom of which flowed a rapid stream, hissing and

boiling amongst slabs and fragments of granite, and overshadowed by a thousand aromatic shrubs and fragrant wild flowers. On the other side arose an amphitheatre of bananas, planes, pepuls, cedars, and other forest trees, whose immense stems, and wide spreading foliage formed a dense and shady canopy. In front was the low jungle we had traversed, behind which the snow-capped summits of the distant Himlayas still glittered in the sunbeams. In the centre was an open space, covered with a rich carpet of verdure, and dotted with the gaudy tents, banners, and glittering weapons of the young Rajah's followers. Some of these conducted huge elephants surmounted with gilded howdahs, others mounted camels covered with rich housings, and others bestrode fleet chargers, whose riders no sooner saw Dil Bar's palankeen approach, than they bounded forward, firing off their muskets, and rending the air with acclamations.

There were many of the young *Delikhans* (madcaps), who would gladly have obtained a

glimpse at their chief's bride, but an infidel might as well have wished for a taste of the waters of Zemzem; for the palankeen was forthwith conducted within the enclosure of red cloth, which served as a skreen to the beautiful shawl marquee, prepared for Dil Bar. There the lovely Cashmerian was received by several slaves of both sexes, who led her into the tent, the lining of which was of crimson silk, spangled and fringed with gold, the poles of ivory inlaid with ebony, the carpets of the richest Persian and Cashmere stuffs, and the cushions and nummuds, of amaranth velvet, embroidered with small pearls and turquoise. Sherbets, cooled with salt petre, sweetmeats and preserved mangoes were then presented to her, and when she had reposed a short time, she was regaled with music, dancing, and poetry, written in honour of her safe arrival.

The shades of night having shrouded the earth, Dil Bar was invited to approach the opening of the enclosure, whence, from behind a gilded lattice, she was diverted with a sight of unequalled brilliancy—the whole space sur-

rounding the camp being illuminated with garlands and festoons of coloured lamps and lanterns, intermingled with blue, red, and yellow Bengal lights, whilst ever and anon the air was rendered as light as day by discharges of rockets and fire-balls.

In short, nothing was omitted that could do honour to the young bride, who, after directing money to be distributed amongst the artificers, retired to her couch, there to meditate upon the near approach of the time when she was to meet her husband.

At length all was still and silent, save the feverish beatings of her own widowed heart. Nothing was heard to disturb the solitude, save the deep snorting of the camels, the tread and watch-cry of the sentinels, or here and there the roars of some prowling tiger. Nature and man were buried in repose; but Dil Bar vainly courted rest. Her repose was agitated and broken. Hideous dreams assailed her. Phantoms, wild and fearful as the mountain gholes, hovered round her pillow. At one moment, the old Hindoo hag gleamed upon

her with blighting eye. At the next, the spirit of her lover, dripping with gore, and mounted upon the courier's horse, beckoned her to follow him across the bridge of trial (Al Sirat.) At another, he appeared star-spangled, and beautiful as the arch-angel Gabriel, and was about to encircle her in his arms, and lift her into paradise, when her husband and his eunuchs rushed in, and enclosing her in a sack, cast her into a dark and fathomless well. At length, half suffocated with anguish, she rose, and wrapping me around her, stepped to the opening of the inner tent, where she stood alternately watching the fleecy clouds as they scudded upon the wings of the southern winds towards Cashmere, and gazing upon the north star, which hung above the dear land of her affections.

“Would that I could mount upon thy snowy pennons, and return to weep out the rest of my days near the spot where my beloved perished,” exclaimed she, as her eye followed the airy travellers sailing in silvery streaks across the bright full moon. “*Wullah Billah!* would

that I had ceased to live, when I first loved. Alas! adored of my soul, why didst thou rob the rose and leave the withered stem behind? O, Allah! why didst thou grant me beauty in order to efface it with lamentations?"

As she spoke these words, a nightingale, nestling beneath the fragrant branches of a neighbouring wild jessamine, commenced its plaintive, moonlight orizon. This reminded her of the melancholy distich so often chaunted by her lover, so she raised her voice, and in accents half stifled with sighs, exclaimed:—

“Weep, O bulbul! if like me thou deplorest a lost friend. Alas, we are two miserable lovers. Tears are our only refuge.”

She had scarcely uttered the last word, when the notes of an Indian kitar struck upon her ear, and gradually swelled into one of those romantic melodies, which she had often heard upon the bosom of her native lake. She listened with mingled delight and emotion, for they reminded her of the blessed days of her childhood. Presently a voice of exquisite sweetness rose upon the night breeze. At

first the burthen of the song was inaudible, but ere long she distinctly caught the following couplets :—

Not Azrael's self can break the tie,
That binds me like some magic spell,
Nor banish from my heart the sigh,
That fluttered o'er our last farewell.

A world there is of purer bliss,
In that bright realm beyond the skies,
Where joys abound, unknown to this,
Where happiness nor cloys nor dies.

Though curs'd by fate, the stars above
Still yield some secret joy to me,
Thy image in their light I love,
I gaze on heaven and worship thee.

As the singer proceeded Dil Bar trembled, and quivered in every joint. The thrilling accents appeared as soft, and melodious to her ears, as the song of Israfil to the blessed. They were clear, silvery and harmonious, as the chimes of the bells, that hang upon the golden bodied trees of Paradise, when set in motion by the balmy breezes of Eden. She bent her

head, and held her breath lest a note or word should escape; for, the tones of two viols tuned to the same sympathetic accord, could not bear more perfect resemblance to each other, than the voice of the minstrel to that of Pir Lena Sing.

At this critical moment of his story, the narrator thought fit to break off, under pretence of fatigue, but more probably to enhance the interest which his tale had excited in me. My readers must therefore permit me to treat them in a similar manner.

END OF VOL. II.

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THE
CASHMERE SHAWL.

AN EASTERN FICTION.

BY CHARLES WHITE,

AUTHOR OF "ALMACK'S REVISITED," "THE KING'S PAGE," &c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE
CASHMERE SHAWL.

CHAPTER I.

HAVING completed the task of revision, I called upon the wonderful tale-teller to inform me whether the melodious warblings which had so deeply affected the Rajah's lovely bride, were the mere artifices of malignant spirits, or whether the minstrel was some impassioned youth, who thus poured forth the overflowings of his soul, far away from the object of his adoration.

After repeating its profession of faith, in order to invoke the blessings of heaven upon the third portion of our undertaking, my story-teller recommenced in the following terms :

Often, when exhausted travellers seek relief in sleep from the torments of heat and thirst, their ears are deluded by the rippings of delicious fountains ; their parched lips are mocked with the refreshing moisture of exquisite fruits, and the arid sands of the desert appear to their dreaming senses like verdant plains shaded by lofty foliage. Thus it was with Dil-Bar. Sleeping or waking, the image of Pir Lena Sing constantly arose before her. All objects, animate or inanimate, assumed a likeness to his beloved voice and features. She traced his beauty in the moon and stars ; she heard his accents in the notes of each lute and of every nightingale ; whilst the western breeze, murmuring through the sweet-scented night flowers, recalled to her imagination the musky fragrance of his enamoured sighs.

Fondly cherishing an idea that this might be her lover restored to life, or, at all events, that it was his spirit which Allah had permitted to revisit earth, and serve as her protecting angel, she continued listening, long after the echo of the minstrel's voice had died away—mute, mo-

tionless, entranced,—like those resplendent birds of paradise, that hover for a while above the balmy spice groves of Ceylon, and then drop down, drunk and bewildered with their voluptuous odours.

But she was soon aroused from her reverie by the rattling of the small brass drums suspended round the necks of the watchmen whose cries announced the approaching dawn. She had barely time, therefore, to cast herself for a few minutes upon her couch, ere her female attendants entered, and informed her that the elephants destined for their further conveyance, stood ready outside.

After performing her ablutions in a crystal basin filled with the precious water of the Ganges, which her Hindoo slaves told her would not only have a powerful effect on her complexion, but also upon her conjugal happiness, she uttered a short prayer, and ere long the whole party were upon their road to the ruined tomb of *Bavan Mirdah* (Father is dead), near which the Rajah had announced his intention of meeting his bride.

The sinister appellation of the spot selected for this event did not pass unheeded by Dil Bar; therefore, no sooner did she hear it pronounced by Fatmeh, the old Persian duenna, who acted as chief of the women sent to attend her, than she addressed her thus :

“ In Allah’s name, mother ! say what manner of place is that ? Surely so unpropitious a designation cannot have been given to it without a cause.”

“ Certainly not,” replied the old gossip, who was as fond of hearing her own voice as the monkeys of Benares, which sit upon the acacia trees by the way side, and cry out “*Pou ! Pou !*” from morning to night. “ Certainly not ; and if the jewel of our Rajah’s treasure desires to know the reason—*Inshallah*, her slave will satisfy her.”

“ My ears are at the tip of your tongue,” answered Dil Bar, who was not sorry to be relieved from the melancholy of her own thoughts by hearing a tale. She, therefore, leaned back upon the pearl-embroidered cushions with which her travelling pavilion

was furnished, and having arranged her veil so as to protect her face from the myriads of mosquitoes that infest the jungles, listened attentively to the following narration.

“ My Saltana is not, perhaps, aware that there has existed, from time immemorial in Hindoostan, a mysterious sect of plunderers and blood-drinkers, called Thugs—wretches more treacherous and remorseless than Gholes, more rapacious and indefatigable than the men-stealing Turcomans of Khorassan, and more relentless and sanguinary than the followers of that arch prototype of Satan, Hussein Subah, whose nest was perched upon the summit of a rock near Kazvin, whose daggers neither Shah nor Shazadeh could escape, and whose nefarious deeds filled all Persia with bloodshed and dismay during many years.”*

“ *Khoda buzurg ust!* (Allah is great!) Why

* Fatmeh alluded to the famous Sheik al Jebel (Chief of the mountain) better known as “the old man of the mountain,” whose stronghold was at Allahamet, (the Eagles’ nest,) not far from Kasvin.

are such wretches permitted to live?" demanded Dil Bar.

"It would be as easy to extirpate the scorpions of Cashan or the serpents of Guzerat," answered Fatmeh. "Oof, they are here, there, everywhere, and no where at the same moment. They come, Allah knows whence, like the hideous cholera, and go—no one knows whither, like the simoom. Some say they are ministers of God's wrath, who are sent into the world to punish men for their crimes; others declare that they are demons, whom Eblis lets loose upon earth to feed upon human bodies, which they first strangle, and then carry down beneath the bowels of Mount Kaf, where the Jins were driven by Shah Tahmurat."

"What form do they assume?" demanded Dil Bar.

"That of men," rejoined the duenna; "often times not only marvellously well favoured, but professing Islam."

"True believers! that cannot be," exclaimed Dil Bar.

"They are of all creeds and castes," an-

swered the other; " Moslems, Hindoos, Seiks, and God knows what else. But whether true believers or idolaters, they all worship Dawee Khalee, the accursed goddess of destruction, and offer up human sacrifices at her blood-stained altars. Neither strength, numbers, age nor innocence can shield travellers from their machinations. They are said not only to possess the power of divining men's intentions by means of *fal* (omens,) which they can derive from the braying of asses, the howls of wolves, the cries of hares and the screechings of owls; but that of being able to scent their prey from afar off, in the manner that vultures discover dead bodies."

" Do they come in bands, or singly ?" demanded my young mistress.

" They appear sometimes under one shape, sometimes under another. At one moment they emerge from the jungles by threes and fours, like jackals; at another, they drop, as it were, from the clouds, in legions of hundreds and tens of hundreds, like locusts. Disguised according to circumstances, they follow their

victims day after day and night after night—winning their favour and eating into their confidence by a thousand lies and artifices—until, having reached a propitious spot for executing their execrable purpose, they rush upon their prey, and strangle them with their girdles, at the end of which a piece of consecrated money is affixed by their infamous leaders. Having effected their object, they melt away more quickly than the desert smoke, leaving no vestige of their infamy behind, save, perhaps, some mangled body, which they may have forgotten to carry off to their infernal larder.

“ In the name of the four blessed caliphs !” exclaimed Dil Bar, “ are these truths ?”

“ God forbid that the Khanum should imagine I told lies,” answered Fatmeh. “ Nō, all the world knows that these devils’ spawn exist under the especial guidance and protection of Eblis and the foul deity whom they worship. Indeed, the latter is said to furnish them with a particular kind of sugar, more delicious than the mangoes of Mazigong, and more inebriating than Cashan opium. This

devilish drug steels their hearts against remorse, and excites them to fresh abominations. Satan also provides them with a magical pick-axe, which resembles the marvellous needle presented by a Frank merchant to our lord the Rajah, in order that he might always ascertain the true direction of the kehbla. This diabolical tool not only guides them to their victims and warns them of danger, but it enables them to open the flanks of the hardest rocks, and thus to dig their way down to their accursed habitations.*

“One’s very liver is converted into water at the thought of such monsters!” ejaculated Dil Bar. “But tell me, Fatmeh, how do they increase in this world? Are there any females of this breed?”

“Allah has accorded mates to crocodiles,

* The author thinks it fair to himself to state, that the whole of this work, with the exception of a few pages, was written, and in the Publisher’s possession, long before the appearance of “the Adventures of a Thug.” This is necessary to be recorded, in order to secure himself from the accusation of plagiarism.

tigers, hyænas, and beasts of all kinds," replied Fatmeh: "so these wretches also find wherewithal to people their abodes. Besides, they do not put women to death, unless in case of necessity; and when any of these unfortunates fall into their hands, they force them to marry their sons and relatives, and a mighty broiling they will have for it in the other world—that is one consolation."

After shuddering with horror, and uttering many exclamations of pity at the fate of such miserable women as those alluded to by Fatmeh, my mistress demanded if the Thugs were ever caught and punished.

"*Alhumdookilah!* (yes, thank God!)" rejoined the Duenna. "But, unfortunately, for one that is deserted by Satan, thousands are enabled to escape. Indeed, such is the terror that they inspire, that although the old Feringee woman,* who governs three-fourths of Hindoostan, has commanded her soldiers to

* There is a general belief, amongst the natives of India, that "the Company" is an old woman. Mr. Morier alludes to this in the 3rd vol. of his "Haji Baba."

seize and exterminate them, the native rajahs stand in as much dread of them as did Sultan Sanjar of the Sheik al Jebel, when he renounced his enterprize against the Hoosoones, because he found a dagger sticking in the ground close to his pillow, and a scroll of paper attached thereto, menacing him with death, if he ventured to advance a single pace further on the road to Kazvin. It has also happened that one or two persons have escaped their murderous clutches, and have related what has passed. Such was the case in the Hundred Soul affair, whence *Bavan Mirdeh* took its name.

“Allah, help me!” ejaculated my mistress, “what mean you by the hundred soul affair?”

“Curses upon Satan!” answered Fatmeh, blowing over her left shoulder, as if Eblis himself, stood behind her. “It is the custom with these cannibals to designate their horrible butcheries, by the number of victims whom they sacrifice upon such occasions, and as one hundred persons were strangled upon the occasion in question, it was numbered accordingly.”

“Does the spot where I am to meet my husband, derive its name from an abomination of this kind?” exclaimed the young bride turning paler than the snow white blossoms of the *Ghul Daoud* (Flower of David, or snow drop.)
: “My dear mistress has said it,” rejoined Fatmeh, “and if she will listen for a few moments, she shall hear how it came to pass.”

: Dil Bar made an affirmative sign, and the old woman again gave loose to the reins of her tongue, as follows:—

“In the reign of the great Mogul Emperor, Aurungzebe, who attained possession of the throne of the world, after he had imprisoned his father, Shah Jehan and caused the death of his sister, Begum Sahib, as well as that of his three brothers, Dara Shah, Sultans Sujah, and Morad Baksh, there lived a wealthy Vizir at Delhi, whose harem was peopled with children as numerous and beautiful as the peacocks at Baratch. But, God is great! as the old man stood amongst them like a lordly cedar surrounded by young planes, the hand of Azrael smote them, and to his inexpressible

anguish, some were swept away by cholera, and others by small pox, so that not one remained.

Being, however, a true believer and devotee man, he made a pilgrimage to the famous Shah Alem, at Amedabad, where he distributed alms and did penance at the shrine of the saints, who are entombed at that celebrated sanctuary; consequently our holy prophet took compassion upon him, as he did upon Abraham *al Khalil Allah* (the friend of God), and when he least expected it, a favourite slave blessed his grey hairs with a daughter, whom he called Taje Nour (crown of light).

Although the maiden was the offspring of his old age, she grew up with wonderful vigour and quickness; so that she had not attained her eleventh year, ere the renown of her extraordinary beauty, grace and understanding, spread far and wide through Delhi, Agra, and Lahore.

This being the case, and the old Vizir being exceeding rich, numerous suitors presented themselves for her hand. But her father, who

doated upon her more than the pupils of his eyes, being loth to part with her, willingly swore, by the Caaba, not to dispose of her hand, even to the Padishah himself, without her consent. Consequently, although Rajahs, Omrahs, and other great personages rubbed their foreheads against her threshold, she rejected them all.

Thus matters stood, until it chanced that the trumpet of fame blew the report of her perfections to the ears of the Shahzadeh, Sultan Mahmoud, who forthwith conceived a most violent passion for her. He, therefore, commissioned his aunt, Raushenara Begum, to undertake the negotiation.

Raushenara Begum, who was devotedly attached to her brother's son, readily complied, and having announced her intention of honouring Taje Nour with a visit, proceeded in great state to the Vizir's abode, where she was received with all the respect due to her rank, as sister to the Padishah.

A carpet of gold cloth was spread from the street to the door of the women's apartments,

where she was met by Taje Nour, attended by several eunuchs and beautiful female slaves, some of whom scattered flowers upon the floor, whilst others waved golden cassolets filled with burning sandal wood and morsels of those fragrant Thibet rods, that are coated with a paste of cloves, musk, and ambergris. Thence she was conducted to a musnud covered with costly shawls, backed with beautiful mirrors, and canopied by artificial orange trees; the flowers of which were of pearls, and the fruits of topazes; whilst a garden, rivalling that of Irem, in beauty, extended its refreshing shade in front of the open verandah. Presents, consisting of bags of rupees, velvets, silks, brocades, sweetmeats and sugar plums, were then placed at her feet, and whilst she regaled herself with a luncheon of exquisite meats, preserves and fruits, a troop of Cashmerian girls danced and sung for her amusement.

Although accustomed to the gorgeous splendour of the imperial harem, and to the sight of the lovely women who inhabited that abode of delight, Raushenara Begum was as much

struck with the magnificence of the Vizir, as with the charms of his daughter, who, in order to show greater respect, sat behind her royal visitor, cooling her with a fan, the handle of which was studded with emeralds and rubies, and the body formed of argus feathers, spangled with small opals.

At length the signal having been given for the attendants to withdraw, the princess desired Taje Nour to sit by her side. She then opened the business on which she had come, and this with so much art and insinuating grace, that, had not her young hostess's heart been colder than the ice of Hindoo Kosh, it is impossible she could have resisted the protestations and homage of so great a Prince, as Sultan Mahmoud, especially as the old vizir united his entreaties to those of the Begum. But it was in vain that Raushenara employed all manner of blandishments and flattery, or that the father exerted his paternal influence; for Taje Nour threw herself into the arms of the latter, and shedding a rivulet of tears, reminded him of his oath.

Finding all efforts useless, the Begum at length rose to depart; but carefully concealing the thorn of vexation beneath the foliage of deceit, she embraced Taje Nour, and returned to the royal palace, where she forthwith communicated the ill success of her mission to the Sultan.

Upon hearing this, Mahmoud set no bounds to his rage and threats of vengeance; but the wars in which Aurungzebe was engaged with the kings of Golconda and Vizipoor, suddenly called him away, so that he was compelled to abandon his schemes of love and to revenge his aunt.

“*Mashallah!*” exclaimed Dil Bar, as she tenderly pressed to her bosom the withered rose, which she always carried concealed in a little silken bag, beneath her garments. “Hearts, after all, are hearts, and are not to be plucked like ripe figs.”

“Certainly, certainly,” answered Fatmeh, “Hearts are like doors closed with cunning locks. Unless the key fit the ward to the

from its scabbard, they trembled worse than those unfortunate creatures that fall beneath the knives of the men eaters of Debsa, in Cambaye, who as report says, sell human flesh in their bazaars.*

“It is needless, however, to attempt a detail of his perfections; suffice it to say, that, whether he joined in the sports of the race-course or the carnage of battle, he was equally irresistible. Whether grasping his javelin in the chase, or passing his fingers over the chords of the *vina*, he was equally triumphant, so that all hearts melted before the fire of his eyes, like silver bars cast into a red hot crucible.

“Taje Nour had not escaped the piercing shaft. She had seen him, upon several occasions, and he also had been blessed with a sight of her. Their passion was mutual and both soon ascertained the real condition of each others souls.

* The inhabitants of this town were formerly what is called “*Mardi Coure*,” (men eaters) and it is not long since human flesh was sold in their markets. *Thevenot*, vol. v. p. 19.

But, alas! they could only communicate by stolen glances or correspond by half stifled sighs.

“At length having somehow or another contrived to accost an old female slave, named, Lalzar (tulip bed), belonging to the vizir’s harem, Azim succeeded in winning her favour, and induced her to carry a nosegay to her mistress; to which, in due time, he received one in return.

“These first declarations of reciprocal affection were followed by a regular interchange of similar communications, until, at last, the waters of passion having overflown the channels of restraint, the ardent youth exclaimed to himself, ‘If the diver were to tremble for the crocodile’s jaw, he would never possess himself of a single pearl.’ Thereupon he boldly resolved to implore Taje Nour to permit him an interview within the sanctuary of her own chamber. Which, according to my opinion,” observed Fatmeh, “is a full corroboration of the words of the sage, who says, ‘although you can repeat the whole Koran by heart, before you

are in love, the moment you are distracted with that passion, you will forget your alphabet.' ”

“Look!” exclaimed Dil Bar rising and pointing to the road side at this moment. “Look! look, Fatmeh. What means that crowd of uncouth, half naked men, seated beneath the foliage of the jungle? See how they stretch about in different strange attitudes. Are they dervishes or lutis?”

“God knows!” answered Fatmeh, “but I dare say that the chief tent pitcher, who rides at our side, can inform us.”

Hereupon she addressed that functionary, saying, “You know all things, Hassan Penjal, and have visited all countries, can you inform us what is the meaning of that swarm of filth eaters, who sit by the way side, as grim and ugly as old apes?”

“They are worse than apes, worse than Hunimaun, the grandfather of all apes,”* replied

* Hunimaun is the divine ape that is supposed to have conquered Ceylon for Rama. Monkeys are consequently

Hassan, "Do you not see that they are Brahmins, Hindoos, Fakirs, and other unclean idolaters. They are on a pilgrimage to Benares, the splendid, the most holy city, the lotus of the world, as it is called, by these asses, who think they can wash out all their impurities and obtain salvation if they either bathe or die there."

"May their fathers be burned," exclaimed Fatmeh.

"The bankrupt thieves will doubtless join us, in order that they may profit by our charity and protection," continued Hassan. "If I were the Vakeel, I would tie them neck and crop on their rugged ponies, and leave them to feed the tigers."

"*Aferin!* you are right," echoed Fatmeh. "No good can ever come from herding with such swine."

"A grain of corn thrown to the starving sparrow, may return under the form of a loaf on

held sacred in some parts of India, especially at Benares, where they crowd the tops of the temples, and even enter the shops and houses.

the day of necessity. If they seek our protection, in God's name, let it be accorded." Said the kind hearted Dil Bar.

Then resuming her recumbent position, she desired Fatmeh to tell her what answer was received by Azim, from the Vizir's daughter.

CHAPTER II.

“AZIM had intreated,” said Fatmeh, returning to her tale, “that a rose bud might be the signal of acquiescence; a withered leaf, that of refusal; his exceeding joy may therefore be imagined, when, after many days’ suspense, Lalzar reappeared in the bazaar, and pulling forth a bunch of roses, from beneath her mantle, dropped it as she passed the spot where he stood.

“Hastily thrusting the happy token into his bosom, he returned home; where, upon pressing it to his lips, he found that it concealed a key, to which was attached a small scroll indicating that this would enable him to open a door of the garden, at the back of a ruined pagoda, and

that a tara palm, growing close to the harem, would serve him as a ladder, whereby he might ascend to the apartment of his mistress, where a lamp would be kept burning as a signal of security. The time selected for this was the following sunset, which chanced to be the last of the Ramazan.

“ While all other true believers in Delhi were anxiously awaiting the first appearance of the new moon of Shawal,* that was to put an end to the austerities of the Ramazan, and open the door to the pleasures and revellings of the Beiram, Azim was alone intent upon tasting the cup of love, promised to his lips. No sooner, therefore, did the shades of night mantle the earth than he made his way through the joyous crowd, who were shouting and rioting in the streets, and soon reached the ruined pagoda. Having opened the garden door, he crept beneath the spreading branches that cast their guardian shadows over the flower beds, and approaching the harem walls, quickly perceived

* The month of Shawal follows that of Ramazan.

the lofty tara and the reflection of the signal lamp. Here he drew forth his dagger, and with the aid of this and his girdle soon succeeded in climbing to one of the topmast branches, which overhung the chamber of his beloved.

The immortal Hafiz could scarcely have found words to describe the joy of the adventurous Azim, when, upon looking into the apartment, he discovered Taje Nour sitting in an attitude of mingled fear and expectation. He paused for a moment to gaze upon the beauties of her face; then, having uttered a low cry, like that of a night owl, in order to warn her of his presence, he placed his foot upon the edge of the window and was about to spring within, when Taje Nour suddenly rose, covered herself with her veil, beckoned to him to retire, and extinguished the light."

"*Allah Kerim!*" exclaimed my mistress. "What did she play the poor youth such a trick for? Although I must confess," added she, whilst conscious blushes tinged her cheeks, "it was a fearful violation of all rules, thus to

permit this heart stealer to approach her zenana."

"Rules are all very well," said Fatmeh ; "but every one knows, that when unorthodox persons swallow wine, they do not pause to remember the divine precepts, or to consider whether a Mollah is at their elbows. Besides, reason when opposed to love, is no more than an ant beneath the foot of an elephant." She then resumed her tale.

"Infinite reason had Taje Nour for her caution ; for scarcely had her lover time to spring back and conceal himself amidst the foliage, ere the chamber door opened, and the Vizir entered, followed by two slaves bearing lights.

"Azim was too far distant to hear what passed between the father and daughter, but he was able to observe, that the old man addressed her in language of mingled supplication and authority. At length he took from his bosom a paper, which he first raised above his head with every token of respect, and then read its con-

tents aloud. The perusal of this document seemed to overwhelm Taje Nour with grief; she sobbed and wept for some time in a piteous manner; at length, after conversing for an hour, which appeared, at least, forty years to Azim, Taje Nour threw herself at the Vizir's feet, and exclaimed in accents of despair, so loud that they even reached Azim's ears:

“‘My life is in the Shah's hands! Let him take it and spare yours! May Allah reward me for the sacrifice.’

“The Vizir's features cleared up at this; so after raising and tenderly embracing his daughter, he departed, leaving her bathed in tears. At length she lifted up her head, clapped her hands, and Lalzar made her appearance. A short conversation then ensued, during which, both pointed first to the tree, and then to the door; and the lamp having been relighted and placed on the floor, near the window, Lalzar withdrew, exclaiming as she went out—

“‘*Inshallah!* I will take good care that

neither he nor any other of the eunuchs approach the chamber. They shall sleep so soundly, that all the king's cannon shall not wake them.' In an instant more, Azim was at the feet of his beautiful mistress.

"Ah!" exclaimed Fatmeh, addressing Dil Bar, "when my Sultana is united to the lord of her heart, she will form some idea of the anguish that filled Azim Khan's soul, when Taje Nour, in reply to his ardent protestations of love, replied in a faltering voice,

" 'Alas! Azim, I am an unfortunate, predestined creature. Had I but known what fate had reserved for me, I would not have mocked thee, by yielding to thy intreaties.'

" 'Thy tears, thy words fill my heart with the bitterness of death;' exclaimed Azim. 'What means my soul's idol. By thy father's beard, say, what has thy slave done to offend thee?'

" 'Nothing—less than nothing.' answered Taje Nour, casting a look of despairing tenderness upon him. 'Thou hast not, canst not offend. But alas! the hand of destiny is raised between us.'

“ ‘Then I will chop it off, and spit in his beard’ exclaimed the impetuous soldier.

“ ‘Heaven help us ! we are mere reeds, when opposed to the king’s power. He carries the key of our fate beneath his girdle,’ rejoined Taje Nour.

“ ‘What has the Padishah to do with thee or me?’ demanded Azim. ‘Are we not free as the birds of heaven ! God be praised, I have a keen sword and strong arm. I have friends also. Fly with me—I will place thee upon a swift dromedary, and lead thee to a place of safety, where the joys of paradise shall surround thee. Thanks be to Allah ! the whole world is not the king’s footstool.’

“ ‘It cannot be, Azim,’ replied Taje Nour. ‘*Wahi ! Wahi !* The Shah demands my hand in marriage for his son, the Sultan Mahmoud.’

“ ‘Wouldst thou sacrifice thyself and me?’ retorted Azim. ‘Wouldst thou kill me ? Oh, no, thine eyes tell me to live.’

“ ‘The Emperor has sworn by his own head, that he will cut off that of my father, unless I

comply,' answered Taje Nour. 'What would you have me do? Shall I place the sword in his hand and say, strike?'

"*'Astagfeerullah!* (God forbid)' rejoined Azim. Then, after a moment's consideration, he added: 'No, I will not be the cause of so grievous an act. It shall not be said that I filled the house of my beloved with the maledictions of disobedience. I will tear myself from thee and from Delhi, and will seek refuge from the misfortunes of my race, upon the points of the enemy's spears.'

"He had scarcely finished this sentence, and was preparing to depart by the road he came, when Lalzar, in a state of extreme agitation, rushed into the apartment, saying:

"'Fly, Azim Khan! in God's name, fly! lose not a moment!—the Princess Raushenara is within hearing. Harken! she already approaches—not a breath must be thrown away.'

"Azim upon this hastily pressed the hand of the unhappy Taje Nour to his lips, and bounded towards the window; but, as their ill stars would have it, the Vizier's trumpeters and

drummers had assembled in the garden beneath, in order to do honour to the festival.

“ ‘Allah help us!’ exclaimed Taje Nour, ‘thou art lost! For myself I care not; but for thee, Azim——’

“Azim, who now heard the echo of rustling slippers, and the cries of the eunuchs as they ushered the Begum through the passages, drew his poignard, and was about to spring to the tree, and thence to the garden, when Lalzar, who was a woman of ready ingenuity in cases of emergency, pulled him back, saying,

“ ‘Art thou mad? wouldst thou slay thyself—us—all?’

“ ‘My life is not worth the husk of a date,’ answered he; ‘but Allah forbid that I should injure a hair on the head of another.’

“ ‘Then follow me,’ replied she. ‘Thanks to the Prophet! a chance of rescue still remains.’ Thereupon she seized his arm, led him to the farthest corner of the room, and drawing aside some silken hangings, pointed to a marble bath covered with a rich Persian carpet. Without waiting for further directions

Azim sprang inside, and lay there, with his head above the water, like one of those beautiful lotuses that float upon the bosom of the Cashmerian lakes. This was scarcely accomplished, and the carpet and curtains replaced, ere the Princess entered.

“ Having first cast her eyes around, and scrutinized Taje Nour with a look so penetrating, that it almost cut into her soul, Raushenara Begum embraced her with great apparent affection, and then congratulated her upon becoming the wife of the Sultan. To this Taje Nour only replied by sighs and broken exclamations of ‘ It is God’s will ! I am your sacrifice—my father gave me life—I have complied to save his.’

“ Her agitation and terror knew no bounds ; however, when after a short time the Princess rose, and expressing great admiration at the beauty of the chamber, proceeded to examine every part of it with minute attention, Taje Nour’s soul sickened, and she gave herself up for lost, when Raushenara not only approached the bath, but lifted up the edge of the carpet.

Whether the crafty Begum saw what it contained, God knows ; but, after a few seconds, she returned to her seat, and exclaimed :

“ ‘ *Aferin !* my soul ! my heart ! everything here seems to be the work of genii. Even to the bath—nothing is wanting.’

“ ‘ All we possess proceeds from the Emperor’s bounty,’ answered Taje Nour ; ‘ our lives and property are his and yours.’

“ ‘ May they increase,’ replied the Princess. ‘ It is the Vizir’s wisdom that sustains the King’s glory. It is just, therefore, that the sun should repay what it receives from the earth. But,’ continued she, ‘ in my hurry to compliment you on the good news, reported to me by the Vizir, I neglected my ablutions, and forgot to break my fast. The sports of the Beiram have commenced. I will, therefore, sup here, after having first performed complete purification in that bath.’

“ Taje Nour’s eye-balls almost started from their sockets at this terrible proposition. So, in lieu of displaying satisfaction at the honour

conferred upon her, she stared about in a bewildered manner, and merely replied,

“ ‘ Demand my life—it is yours.’ ”

“ ‘ Let fire be applied to the stoves ; let the water be heated, and let my own slaves bring the things necessary for my toilet, whilst others fetch the dishes preparing for supper in my kitchen. It is my turn to regale you,’ rejoined the Princess, either not observing, or pretending not to observe, Taje Nour’s agitation.

“ But Lalzar, who had not quite lost her wits, made a desperate effort to avert the evil. Folding her arms across her bosom, and letting fall her garments, so as to conceal her feet, she exclaimed : ‘ If the sister of God’s shadow on earth will listen to her slave, she will perhaps think better of this. The bath is not worthy of so great an honor.’ ”

“ ‘ How so ?’ demanded the Begum.

“ ‘ It is unclean,’ replied Lalzar. ‘ Not all the waters of Zemzem can purify it.’ ”

“ ‘ Eh, eh ! what means the slave ?’ demanded

Raushenara; 'have dogs or foxes defiled it?'

" 'Neither dogs or foxes,' answered Lalzar; 'but something much worse.'

" 'What can be worse, unless they be infidels?' ejaculated the other.

" 'The Princess has said it,' replied Lalzar.

" 'Infidels!' exclaimed the Begum, who was a very strict Moslem, and entertained an utter abhorrence of all unbelievers. 'Infidels in that bath! what do I hear? What filth have you been devouring?'

" 'I am dirt, less than the smallest grain of sand,' rejoined Lalzar. 'But the truth is, that my mistress, whose heart is more compassionate than that of Sasaa, the redeemer of life, is the innocent cause of this impurity.'*

"Taje Nour trembled at this unexpected assertion, and for a moment imagined that

* Sasaa, grandfather to the celebrated poet Farazdak, obtained his reputation for benevolence by redeeming the female children of the Arabs from being put to death by their parents, as was the custom with many tribes. He may be considered as the St. Vincent de Paul of the East.

Lalzar was going to betray her ; but the latter took no notice of her confusion, and proceeded thus :

“ ‘The cries of the Muezzins had scarcely announced the commencement of the festival, when Mariam, the old Nazarene slave, was ordered to prepare the bath. As ill luck would have it, however, she was seized with the cholera, or some other abomination ; and the bath being ready, my mistress took pity upon her, and ordered her to be plunged therein. But, God is great ! the pig-eating old Kaffir had scarcely been soused into the water, ere blood gushed from her ears and mouth, and she died. This was an evident sign from Allah for us not to meddle with these doomed infidels.’

“ ‘ *Gazoub Allah*, (by the wrath of heaven,) they are all brutes !’ ejaculated the Begum ; ‘ she ought to have been forced to embrace Islam, or to have been cast out to perish by the way side.’

“ ‘ Look !’ said Lalzar, approaching the bath and cautiously lifting up the end of the carpet,

‘ see what filth has been entailed upon us !’ Then slowly dipping a crystal vase into the water, she added : ‘ See, it is still tinged with the evidence of our misfortune. The eunuchs were about to empty and purify it, if purification had been possible, when the Gem of a thousand crowns entered.

“ *Allah Kerim !*” exclaimed Dil Bar, interrupting Fatmeh. “ Was it true that the miserable Kaffir woman died in the manner asserted by Lalzar ?”

“ No, no !” replied Fatmeh ; “ that was mere invention. The fact was, that the devoted Azim no sooner heard her utter these words, and was aware of her approach, than he drew forth his dagger, and opened one of his own veins, in order to render her story more probable.”

“ He was a hero—a prince of martyrs ; his spirit no doubt reposes in the crops of one of those green birds, which eat of the fruits and drink of the waters of paradise !” * exclaimed

* According to Mahomedan tradition, the spirits of martyrs rest in the crops of these heavenly birds, from

Dil Bar. "But say, Fatmeh, did this satisfy the Begum?"

"Yes," rejoined Fatmeh; "it not only satisfied her, but spoiled her appetite; so she forthwith rose and took her leave. Before she quitted the house, however, she summoned the Vizir, and whispered something in his ear, which threw the old man into a violent passion; for, she was no sooner gone, than he sent for the chief gardener, and having ordered him to receive a hundred stripes, directed his eunuchs and watchmen to search every corner of the garden, threatening to cut off all their ears, if they did not discover the wretch who had dared to violate the sanctity of its walls."

"Stop!" exclaimed Dil Bar; "this requires elucidation. Did Raushenara suspect Azim's presence in the harem?"

"My dear mistress has divined the truth," exclaimed Fatmeh. "Unfortunately the Princess, who was celebrated for her numerous

the moment of death to the day of judgment.—*Sale's Koran, Prel. Dis. IV Sect.*

amours, had also seen Azim, and had become desperately enamoured of him. Forgetting the modesty of her sex, and the dignity of her rank, the capricious crocodile dispatched a confidential slave to declare her passion, and lead him to her presence. But Azim, independent of his having no taste for such a faded flower, well knew the danger of lending himself to her wishes. Not less wicked than the wanton sorceress, who governed the City of Enchantments, where King Beder found whole legions of princes transformed into brutes, Rauschenara Begum was said to have inveigled many of the handsomest youths of Delhi into her palace; where, after regaling and intoxicating them with proofs of her tenderness, she caused them to be destroyed, that they might not betray her excesses. Azim, therefore, filled his ears with the cotton of prudence, and sent the Begum's messenger about her business.

“ Furious at being thus foiled in her desires, Raushenara set spies to watch him, and as his ill star would have it, one of these rascals saw

him enter the Vizir's garden. The wretch no sooner discovered this, than he flew to his employer, who, instantly suspecting that she had a rival in Taje Nour, hastened to the Vizir's abode, hoping to surprise Azim in the arms of his daughter. You have heard the sequel, so I will now resume my story," which she did as follows :

"The jealous Raushenara had no sooner quitted the chamber, than Lalzar hastened to assist Azim from the bath, and to bind up his still bleeding vein. Having seen the Vizir's slaves searching the garden, she readily divined the cause and exclaimed : 'Escape on that side is impossible. I must seek other means of safety,' and so saying, she hurried from the chamber.

"Taje Nour, in the meantime, stood as pale and motionless as the wife of Lot, when the vengeance of Allah overtook her. Her heart was so swollen with anguish that she could not weep, and her tongue was so palsied with fear, that she could not speak.

"Nor was Azim in a much better condition.

Faint and exhausted, he cast himself at her feet, like a feeble reed prostrate beneath the pendant branches of the drooping willow. Having, at length, raised himself up, he took Taje Nour's hand, and bathing it with tears, addressed her in the most impassioned accents. But he had scarcely time to assure her of his eternal devotion, and claim her pardon, ere Lalzar returned, bearing a packet of clothes and an ivory wand surmounted with a golden knob.

“ ‘ Our star is propitious,’ said she, unfolding the packet. ‘ Here is the turban, staff of office, and mantle of Baba Saleh, chief of the eunuchs ; here are also the keys of the private doors which lead from the old wolf's den into the street. Thanks to Satan, the filthy drunkard has made up for the privations of the Ramazan, by doubling his usual dose of wine. The narcotic drug which I slipped into his wine jar has also done its work. He sleeps as sound as the seven youths of the cave. Disguise thyself quickly, therefore ; proceed as I direct, and this staff will clear the way, even though thou wert to encounter the Vizir himself.’ ”

“ By the time she had done speaking, Azim had attired himself in Baba Saleh’s garments. Then casting himself once more at Taje Nour’s feet, he followed Lalzar, and, by the Prophet’s blessing, reached the street without encountering further obstacle.”

CHAPTER III.

FATMEH was about to terminate the history of the Vizir's daughter, when she was interrupted by the clang of trumpets and shouts of "Stop, stop—this is the spot."

Dil Bar's heart beat violently, and she started up with mingled trepidation and curiosity, thinking that her husband had suddenly arrived. But this was not the case. Upon looking round, she saw they had merely reached a shaded spot of verdure, refreshed by a stream of delicious water, gurgling from one of those marble reservoirs, which still record the munificence of the house of Timour.

The tent pitchers and cooks, who had been sent forward for the purpose, having here prepared the morning's repast, my mistress and her female attendants were invited to repose

beneath a richly ornamented travelling pavilion. The rest of the Rajah's people also dismounted, and refreshed themselves under the shelter of the trees, whilst the pilgrims, whose numbers had been increased by the junction of other parties of these idolaters, smoked their pipes and boiled their food on the opposite side of the road.

As soon as Dil Bar had seated herself, her slaves brought in several dishes of rice, some prepared with milk, fresh curds, or liquid butter; and others mixed with fennel, sugar, saffron and spices. Then force-meat balls, roast lamb, and baked pastry were presented; after which, appeared preserved mangoes, plums, apricots, dates, candied cherries, quince sherbet, lump sugar, fresh oranges from the groves of Delhi, grapes from the gardens of Lahore, and seedless pomegranates from Caboul. These delicacies were not served upon china or metal dishes, but upon palm leaves stitched with silver thread and ornamented with gold leaf.

The repast being ended, Fatmeh poured rose

water over my mistress's hands, and then wiped them with an embroidered napkin ; after which, the whole party took a short nap, and then remounted the elephant, upon which Dil Bar was no sooner seated, than she requested Fatmeh to relieve her mind from the suspense she felt concerning Taje Nour, whose adventure was the more interesting, since it bore a striking affinity to her own fate.

“ Day after day rolled by,” resumed Fatmeh, “ and nothing more was heard of young Azim. Lalzar visited the bazaars, mosques, and baths ; she strolled through the Maidan, where the soldiers exercised, and inquired at the barbers' and cook shops in the neighbourhood of the Khan's quarters ; but she could learn no tidings of him. At length, however, she was informed, by an old woman whose husband sold pipe-sticks, skull caps, opium pills, and betel leaves to the Padishah's guards, that Azim Khan had quitted Delhi upon the first night of the Beiram, carrying with him a beautiful Cashmerian courtesan, called *Yacoot* ; *Yoozuk*, (the ruby ring)—a name she had ac-

quired not only from wearing a rich jewel of this kind in her nose, but from her declaring that the value of that ornament was the standard price of her affections.*

“Taje Nour, upon hearing this, fell into a state of great despondency and refused all comfort. Lalzar, however, very wisely condemned her for throwing away unavailing regrets, and above all, for effacing the surmeh that tinged her beautiful eyes, by weeping for one who had rendered himself unworthy of her tenderness, by dealing with an impure dancing girl. Thus she gradually recovered her serenity, and listened with complacency to the congratulations of her father’s relatives, who complimented her upon her prospect of becoming one day empress of the world, and

* It is not uncommon in the East for ladies of this description to be nicknamed in some such manner. Chardin, vol. viii, p. 92, mentions a beautiful courtesan of Ispahan who went by the name of “the twelve tomaums,”—this sum being the price of an introduction to her house, where she lived in great splendour.

mother to God knows how many kings and sultanas.

“A most proper double-faced tyrant is this same king of love,” continued Fatmeh, digressing as usual from her story. “Ah! ah! it is all mighty fine for Saadi to say: ‘If you cannot obtain access to the object of your affections, friendship requires that you should die in the attempt.’ But I believe that lovers would rather witness the death of those for whom they profess to be ready to kill themselves, than hear of their finding happiness in the lap of another.”

“Allah is wise and infinite,” said Dil Bar. “He disposes of these matters as he thinks best. For my part, I should not have cared to have lived, had I been Taje Nour.”

“For my part,” retorted Fatmeh, “I should have troubled myself no more about the harem zadeh, than about an unripe mango. It is mighty easy to die, but it is not quite so easy to marry the Sultan of the Indies. Such, most probably, was Taje Nour’s opinion; for, although a tear did glisten upon her right

cheek, and a smile upon the left, like the snow which clings to one side of the Himalayas, whilst flowers bedeck the other, she soon began to wonder how a person of her rank and attractions could fall in love with a young dare-devil, whose only merit was a moon face and a strong arm, with which he devoured hearts and chopped off heads, as grass-cutters mow and gather green barley. She appeared, therefore, to forget Azim, and spoke with satisfaction of her father's being about to proceed to the royal camp, where her nuptials with the Sultan were to be celebrated.

“ A propitious day having been selected for their departure, the Vizir directed the jewels, money, and plate, forming part of his daughter's dowry, to be packed upon elephants ; and having placed Taje Nour in a palankeen, commenced his journey, escorted by a small band of horse. Nothing took place, of any moment, until the seventh night, when they overtook a body of three hundred cavalry, who as they affirmed, were deserters from the King of Golconda's army, on their way to seek service in that of Sultan Mahmoud.

“These adventurers were men of respectable appearance, well mounted, bravely equipped for combat, and exceeding modest and devout in their deportment. Having ascertained the Vizir’s rank and the object of his journey, the principal leader cast himself at the old man’s feet, and swore that he and his people were ready to serve the Emperor with fidelity. In short, he pleased the Vizir so much, and communicated such useful information respecting the enemy’s movements, that Taje Nour’s father extended the hand of protection, and permitted them to join his party.

“Whilst the chief ingratiated himself every hour more and more with the Vizir, the rest of the band made themselves equally agreeable to his men. Thus, ere four days had passed, they could not have been better friends, even if they had exchanged turbans, or eaten salt together all their lives.* At length, when they

* It is a custom amongst sworn friends to exchange turbans, as Christians exchange rings, or other tokens of regard.

had arrived within two days' march of their destination, they quitted the open country, and reached a thickly wooded track, where considerable impediments soon presented themselves to their hitherto rapid march. On one side was a marshy jungle, rendered impervious by the stems and fibres of trees, reeds, and creepers; on the other was a steep declivity, at the bottom of which one of the many tributaries of the Indus rolled in angry volumes. Between the two was a causeway, but so narrow that three horsemen could scarcely ride abreast.

“It was a wild and desolate spot, far from any human habitation, save a cluster of mud huts, tenanted by a few miserable peasants, who no sooner perceived the foremost horsemen, than they packed up what few valuables they possessed, and secreted themselves in the forest. Guides were unnecessary, however: the Golconda soldiers appeared to be well acquainted with the road and its difficulties; so one detachment took the lead, a second with their chief remained in the rear, by the

side of the Vizir, and the rest stationed themselves on either side of the Moguls, in readiness to aid them, in case of need. But, notwithstanding all these precautions, the leading elephant, loaded with Taje Nour's women and jewels, slipped into a pit, which the villagers had dug across the road, to catch wild beasts; and ere help could be afforded, the unfortunate Lalzar and her companions were crushed to death.

“Scarcely had this fearful calamity occurred, ere the foremost strangers uttered a shout resembling the howl of wolves, rather than the cries of human beings. Allah only knows what the import of this devilish noise might have been, but it no sooner reached the ears of their chief, than he raised himself in his stirrups, and exclaimed, in a deep and solemn voice: ‘Brothers! the omen is favourable. Let this be the signal.’

“These mysterious words were forthwith repeated by the next horseman, and so in succession; until rolling from mouth to mouth, like murmuring thunder, they reached the head-

most files. In an instant more, a scene ensued that would have moved the perverse heart of Pharaoh.

“Active as panthers, and more sanguinary than the hideous goddess whom they worship, the assassin Thugs”—

“Thugs!” exclaimed Dil Bar; “were the Golconda horsemen, of that accursed sect?”

“Such was the will of Allah,” replied Fatmeh. “Turning upon their saddles, as if moved by one impulse, the Thugs loosened their girdles, and suddenly twisting them round the necks of the unsuspecting Vizir and his hundred followers, commenced their deadly trade. Fearful were the struggles—terrible the maledictions, and heart-rending, the agonized shouts of the victims. The Vizir, with a few of his people, drew their swords, and sold their lives dearly, whilst others grappling their destroyers, rolled with them into the foaming current. But, the most part, surprised and panic-stricken, fell without resistance, so that ere they had time to repeat their *fateha* and recommend their souls

to God, the last sunk breathless to the ground."

"*Wullah! Billah!*" ejaculated Dil Bar.
"What became of Taje Nour?"

"Regardless of the peril or of her own weakness," replied Fatmeh, "the valiant maiden sprang from her palankeen, and unsheathing the jewel hilted poignard, sent to her by Sultan Mahmoud as a distinctive mark of royalty, she rushed amidst the brutes, who surrounded her dying father. Intent upon their fiendish work, the villains heeded her not, so that she darted unawares upon their chief, and plunged the weapon into his heart; then casting herself upon her parent's mangled body, she uttered the most piercing shrieks.

"Although the rules that bind the Thugs forbid the murder of women, they would have immolated her, in revenge for their leader's death; but the second chief, struck by her transcendant beauty and thinking to reserve her for his own abominable harem, interposed and threatened them with the vengeance of Dawee, if they transgressed the law. They drew back

therefore, and while some proceeded to plunder and strip the dead, others, whose duty it was to perform the office of sextons, hastened, according to their invariable custom, to mutilate and bury the naked bodies, or to cast them into the river, in order that no traces of their iniquity might be discovered."

"*Allah !*" ejaculated Dil Bar, as she fingered the beads of the lapis lazuli rosary, that hung to her wrist, "why did not the earth open and swallow them up, or why did not the waters rise and engulf them, as it did the obdurate persecutors of the prophet Moses?"

"*Allah bilir,*" (God knows best) echoed Fatmeh.

"Did not Taje Nour's eye balls dissolve? *Wailah !* she must have had a heart of stone to outlive so hideous a spectacle," said Dil Bar.

"Our blessed prophet, who by the will of Allah, ordains all things for the best, commanded her to live;" answered Fatmeh, "but he suddenly blotted out her reason, and dried up the marrow of her brain. Nerved with the strength of madness, she clung so firmly to her

father's remains, that it required the force of several Thugs to force them asunder. Then, when they unclasped her hands, she tore her hair, lacerated her bosom, and would have beaten her head to pieces on the ground, had they not enveloped her with their girdles and bound her to a neighbouring tree. This being done, they sat down and divided the booty, reserving a share as a propitiatory offering for the shrine of Dawee.

“They had not entirely terminated this operation, however, ere their advanced scouts galloped back, uttering a signal of alarm. As cowardly as they were ferocious, the wretches did not wait to ascertain the cause of this interruption, but instantly gathering up their spoil, sprung to their saddles. Then being intimately acquainted with the intricacies of the jungle, they put spurs to their horses, and without looking behind or attempting to carry off Taje Nour, they disappeared by different paths.”

“Did they leave the unhappy maid to die of

amine, or to be devoured by wild beasts?" demanded my mistress.

"It was all one to them," answered Fatmeh. "But scarcely had the hindermost villain vanished amidst the foliage, ere the echo of approaching voices, resounded through the jungle. Presently, the glitter of spearheads and burnished shields, glimmering amidst a cloud of dust like the moons' rays struggling with the night mist, appeared near the deserted village, and in an instant more, a horseman, mounted upon a milk white arab mare, advanced at full speed, followed by a band of armed men. Springing over the trench where the half buried elephant still writhed in the agonies of death, Azim and his comrades, for such they were, urged on their foaming steeds, and with shouts of '*Bismillah!* Let us burn their fathers,' pursued the fugitives."

"Azim!" exclaimed Dil Bar. "How came he there, and why did not Allah send him sooner to the rescue?"

"The perfidious spirits who lure on the

cannibal Thugs from one abomination to another, in order that they may fulfil the measure of their crimes, threw the shade of protection over them. That is the probable reason why they were not surprised by Azim Khan ; to account for whose presence I must return to the first night of the Beiram," replied Fatmeh, who accordingly retraced her narrative to that period.

"No sooner had Azim escaped from the Vizir's palace, than he cast aside Baba Saleh's staff and garments, and betook himself to the lodgings of the Emperor's guards, where he learned, that a detachment had been ordered to join the Sultan's army.

"Eager to escape from a spot where every object reminded him of the garden of bliss, whence he had been expelled, he demanded and obtained permission to accompany the departing warriors.

"Now, as it happened he had a foster brother in this corps, to whom he was warmly attached. This youth, who was nicknamed Mousrif Sing, (the extravagant lion), had become desperately

enamoured of the ruby ring. Like a moth that burns its wings in the candle, the thoughtless madcap had not only expended all his ready cash, but had sold his best arms, shawls and horses, in order to procure money wherewith to regale her.

“ Being as completely fascinated, as he was ruined by this syren, Mousrif had neither the courage to leave her behind, nor the means of taking her with him. As is usual with persons of her caste, she professed unrivalled affection for him, so long as he had the power of administering to her pleasures ; but she now evinced little inclination to reward his devotion, by sharing her fortunes with him, until his own should again rise to the ascendant.

“ In this dilemma, Mousrif Sing applied to Azim—nor did he appeal in vain ; for Azim, whose disposition was as generous as that of the immortal Nowshirvan, forthwith lent him money, dresses, arms, horses and camels, so that he was enabled to gratify his passion and carry off the Ruby Ring, who accompanied him in man’s attire, mounted upon one of

Azim's best horses. Thus it was that the latter obtained the reputation of faithlessness, whilst his heart was in reality, filled with the bitter ashes of unrequited constancy.

“He had not long reached the Sultan's camp, however, ere various occasions occurred for exhibiting his valour, so that he was soon promoted to the rank of *Min Bashi* (chief of a thousand) and distinguished by a dress of honour. Indeed, favours crowded upon him so rapidly, that he was selected by the Sultan himself, to proceed at the head of a body of horse, to meet and escort his expected bride. Thus was it that he and his followers had reached the vicinity of the deserted village and were reposing near the road side, when they descried the Thug scouts, whom they mistook for Golconda marauders. In an instant the Mogol war cry resounded through the woods, and Azim, bounding to his saddle, hastened in pursuit.

“They had not reached the end of the causeway, however, ere their attention was attracted by the remnants of tattered turbans, broken arms

and other vestiges of the massacre, which, notwithstanding their accustomed caution, the Thugs had not time to conceal. Azim, therefore, ordered a part of his people to continue the chase, whilst he and the remainder examined these miserable relics.

“ He was occupied in probing the fresh stirred earth of a grave, with his lance point, when the words ‘*Wullah! Wullah! Father is dead! Father is dead,*’ uttered in low and plaintive accents, struck upon his ear. Not seeing any signs of living beings, he thought that the sounds proceeded from one of those dark plumaged mocking birds of Sourat, whom Allah had endowed with the faculty of imitating the human speech. But the fearful truth soon burst upon his senses. In a moment more, a female voice, a voice that filled his soul with unutterable emotion, repeated the same piteous lament, and upon casting his eye into the jungle, he discovered Taje Nour, with rent garments, dishevelled hair, and distorted features, crouched beneath a banyan.

“ ‘*Allah y Allah!* Is this the work of Gholes

or do my eyes tell truth?' ejaculated Azim, as he flung himself from his saddle, and flew to the unhappy maiden's feet. 'Can it be possible?' continued he, as he unbound her limbs, and threw his head shawl over her, that she might not be exposed to the gaze of the soldiers. 'Can it be possible that this should be the Sultan's bride, the sun of admiration, whom we were sent to escort in triumph? In the name of Omar, on whom be eternal peace, speak—where are thy guards—thy women—thy father? Through what malediction art thou thus abandoned?' Then drawing still nearer, he added, 'my heart, my soul! see it is thy slave, Azim, who addresses thee.'

"The only reply Taje Nour made to this appeal, was a vacant, tearless stare, as she pointed to the spot where her father was buried, and again repeated the mournful words that first attracted Azim's attention.

"The soldiers who stood around, turned away their heads, out of respect to the Sultan's bride; but most of them being acquainted by report with the *Thugee* (the Thug trade) quickly

divined the cause of the calamity. Such, however, was their dread of these wretches, that in lieu of continuing the pursuit, they recalled their advanced comrades.

“ It was evident, in the meantime, to the wretched Azim, that Taje Nour’s intellect had fled, and that her father and attendants had suffered the fate of all those who fall into the hands of the assassin Thugs. Nothing remained, therefore, but to retrace their steps, and to convey the intelligence to the Sultan’s ear. But the mere thought of this perilous mission made all their heads feel loose upon their shoulders ; for they well knew that Mahmoud would attribute this misfortune to their negligence, instead of ascribing it to the hand of fate, who had evidently entered into a league with these monsters.

“ But Azim soon put an end to their fears. Having committed Taje Nour to the care of the Ruby Ring, who, with other women, fortunately accompanied the expedition, he declared that he would himself proceed, with all dispatch, to the royal camp, and offer himself up as a sacrifice to the Sultan’s wrath.

“ This being settled, the generous youth mounted his fleetest horse, and set off to fulfil his promise, attended by no one but Mousrif Sing.”

It being near the hour of neemrooz, (mid-day) prayer, Fatmeh now interrupted her tale, in order that Dil Bar might follow the example of all her Moslem attendants, who were preparing to perform their devotions: some dismounting for the purpose, and others, less orthodox, remaining on their saddles.

CHAPTER IV.

So soon as Dil Bar had said Namaz, Fatmeh recommenced her narrative as follows :

“ Shortly after sunrise, upon the second morning subsequent to the Vizir’s murder, Sultan Mahmoud issued from the high cloth screen that surrounded the royal tents. His appearance was most conspicuous, and worthy of so great a man. His dress consisted of a gold cloth tunic, resplendent with diamonds. A shawl of inestimable value, surmounted with an egret of jewels and white heron’s plumes, entwined his brows. Bracelets of rubies and emeralds encircled his arms. An embroidered quiver hung at his back, a jewel-hilted scimitar rested upon his lap, and he held a golden javelin in his hand. His velvet cushioned

chair, composed of ivory inlaid with ebony and mother-of-pearl, was placed beneath a gold-fringed, crimson canopy, upon the back of a gigantic Ceylon elephant, whose huge body was concealed by housings of red silk, whilst its ears were adorned with circles of coral, and its head and neck with silver bells and strings of agates, lapis lazuli, and amber. After receiving the accustomed morning salutation from the crowd of omrahs and great personages who prostrated themselves before him, Mahmoud directed his course to the quarter of his artillery, for the purpose of examining a new kind of gun, which had been presented to him by those unclean sons of Lot, the infidel Portuguese, whom Allah permitted to infest the Indies, until they were driven out by those other spawn of Nimrod, the red-backed English.

“It must be admitted, however,” added Fatmeh, “that the last mentioned Kaffirs manufacture most admirable scissors, and that their doctors are wonderfully expert in the art of healing, without having recourse either to

astrologers or divination of any kind. This is the more marvellous, since, by all accounts, they have only two remedies, which they cram down people's throats on all occasions, no matter what their age, sex, or complaint. A Rajpoot woman, who long resided amongst them, assured me, that if a sick person has occasion to consult one of their Haikims, the latter forthwith scratches some magical figures upon a scrap of paper—not by way of a talisman, but for the information of the druggist. Then, whether you have a pain in your head, stomach, or loins, he sends you a paper, and a little phial; the one containing a white dust, which, as it is said, is made of pulverized quicksilver, and the other filled with some egregious nastiness, called black drink; these you take in succession; and if you escape the first griping effects you are cured. You must be very careful, however, not to swallow the devil-coloured potion first; for such are the contradictory qualities of these Feringee specifics, that if you were to pour down the liquid before the powder, your inside would be turned

upside down, and you would inherit most excruciating pangs."

"What has all this gossip about Frank doctors to do with Azim and the Sultan?" exclaimed Dil Bar, impatiently. "The sun is already turning its course downwards; continue thy narrative, therefore, without further digression."

"Let my dear mistress remember that those who hurry through a tale, are like messengers who carry letters, but leave no trace of their passage, save the din and dust of their horses' hoofs," answered Fatmeh. Then obeying Dil Bar's commands, she again resumed her narrative.

"The Sultan's object in visiting his artillery was to witness the effect of a diabolical contrivance, in the form of a small round iron kettle, filled with all manner of combustibles, which the Portuguese projected from their new gun to a great distance, where it burst with a fearful explosion, scattering its fragments far and wide.*

* The first howitzers known in the Mogul armies were, I believe, purchased of the Portuguese.

“ Being in want of some living object whereby to judge of the murderous capacities of this destructive engine, the Shazadeh, who was in excellent spirits, bethought him of a parcel of Golconda prisoners, who had been taken in the act of burning a village. Nothing could be more appropriate for the Sultan’s purpose than these robbers, especially as they had refused to embrace Islam. Orders were, therefore issued for their being led forth, and placed at a proper shooting distance. But, at this moment, Azim Khan, covered with dust and perspiration, his garments rent in token of mourning, his skull-cap unadorned by a turban, and his whole appearance indicating extreme despondency, galloped within a few paces of the Sultan’s presence, dismounted, and fell upon his face.

“ ‘ *Barick Allah!* what do I see?’ exclaimed Mahmoud, as soon as he recognized Azim. ‘ How comes the Min Bashi under our feet in this pickle? What dirt has he been swallowing? *Wullah!* did we whiten his face, and load him with honours in order that he might drag them through the mire?—Speak!’ con-

tinued he, his dark eyes glaring with rising choler; 'what betoken these signs of mourning and disaster? How hast thou fulfilled our orders?'

" 'I am the Sultan's sacrifice! I am less than nothing! my head is beneath his feet!' replied Azim.

" '*Mashallak!* what answers are these? what is the ass braying in our ears?' answered the Sultan. 'Let him tell us why he returns in this disgraceful plight—where are my soldiers? Has he shut his ears and eyes, and led my people into the enemy's jaws? Have the dogs slaughtered them, and spared him, that he might return, like a ragged dervish, to proclaim his cowardice?'

" 'God be praised,' replied Azim, 'I am no coward; nor has a hair of the Sultan's soldiers' beards been injured.'

" 'Is the dog drunk or mad!' exclaimed Mahmoud, curling up his moustache.

" 'By the blessing of Allah, your slave is no wine-drinker, nor has he lost his senses—though enough has occurred to overturn his

brain. Alas !' added he, 'a grievous calamity has occurred. By the will of Allah, the Vizir——'

" 'What of the Vizir?' roared out the Sultan.

" *Wullah Billah!*' answered Azim. 'The hand of Azrael has smitten him and his—they have surrendered up their souls to God.'

" 'It is a lie!—it cannot be!' exclaimed Mahmoud, turning pale at this terrible intelligence. 'Say that it is not so, or, by my beard, I will have thy tongue torn out.'

" 'I am the Sultan's slave,' replied Azim; 'he can dispose of my life; but it is no more in his power to avert fate than it is in that of his servant to restore the past.'

" 'What two sided filth is he casting down our throats? Be quick—explain! Say what has happened!' bellowed forth the Sultan.

" Azim upon this lifted up his voice, and narrated all he knew of the affair, both as regarded the condition in which he had found and left Taje Nour.

" In the meantime, the doom that awaited him was legibly written upon the Prince's

forehead. He clenched his teeth, writhed his hands, and exhibited every mark of fury and disappointment. Having given vent to the first ebullitions of his rage by uttering a string of maledictions upon everything, animate or inanimate, in this world, he called out in a voice of thunder :

“ ‘ Dog ! son of a dog !—Thy father was a traitor. Thou art of the same double-faced breed. Let the Vizir’s blood be upon thee ! Hadst thou done but a tithe of thy duty, in lieu of keeping thy hands under thy arm-pits, thou mightest have averted this calamity.’ ”

“ ‘ The Sultan wrongs his slave,’ rejoined Azim. ‘ To have spared the Vizir’s daughter a single hair’s weight of sorrow, I would have plunged into the fire of the lowest pit ; for,’ added he, reckless of all consequences, ‘ I loved her more than my hopes of paradise, and was beloved in return.’ ”

“ ‘ It is a lie—a most accursed lie !’ again roared out the Sultan. ‘ Recal thy blasphemous words, or thou shalt suffer agonies that

will make thee wish for the fires of Jehanum as a relief.'

" ' I am ready to die ; but I cannot unsay what has been said,' answered Azim.

" ' Seize—bind the bankrupt traitor !' exclaimed the Sultan. ' Lead back the Golconda hogs, and let this son of a burned father receive two hundred stripes, and then serve as a mark for my gunners.'

" The executioner's men had already seized Azim, and were about to trip up his heels, when Mousrif Sing sprung to his side, and whispered in his ear : ' I cannot combat destiny, but thou shalt not die unrevenged.' He then slipped an arrow from his quiver, fixed it in his bow, and took aim at the Sultan's heart.

" At the sight of this the angel of death smiled with joy, and stretched forth his hands to snatch his royal prey ; for Mousrif Sing was so powerful and skilful a marksman, that he could split a sparrow's egg, or send his shaft through half a dozen folds of felt, at sixty paces distant. But the generous Azim, who had watched his foster brother's motions, burst from the grasp of

those who held him, and tearing the bow from Mousrif Sing's hands, cast it aside, saying—

“ ‘ Brother ! he that slays the Shah, slays his father, and he that smites the Shahzadeh, is like to the accursed Cain. It is better that I should die unjustly, than that thou shouldst suffer as a parricide in this and the next world.’ Then, having embraced Mousrif, he returned and resigned himself to his fate.

“ A murmur of admiration quickly conveyed the report of this noble act to the ears of the Sultan, who no sooner heard what had passed, than he bade the nasakshis conduct the two culprits before him. Then having directed the heralds to proclaim silence, he regarded Azim and Mousrif with a look so stern, that it prognosticated the most cruel tortures.

“ After a short pause, during which the beating of a fly's heart might have been heard throughout the camp, Mahmoud raised his voice, and exclaimed in a loud and thrilling tone, ‘ *Y Allah !* Let all those who have eyes and ears see and hear how the son of Alem Ghir (the world's conqueror) administers justice. Hark-

en Mousrif Sing! Thou must be an outcast from heaven—worse than a Thug, or thou wouldst not have attempted so heinous a crime—so thou wouldst have slain me to revenge thy friend. Is that true or false?

“‘*Be Chesm*, the Sultan has said it,’ answered Mousrif, with a firm voice.

“‘Art thou possessed of a charmed life? Dost thou not know that I can order thee to be torn to a thousand atoms?’ replied the Sultan.

“‘Next to the Padishah no one possesses more power upon earth,’ rejoined Mousrif Sing.

“‘Thou hast been guilty of an unpardonable crime,’ retorted Mahmoud. ‘Death is thy just desert.’

“‘No man can die before his time,’ answered the dauntless Mousrif. ‘Although the Sultan himself were to pronounce the sentence.’

“‘Thou hadst better cram thy hand down thy throat than utter more treason,’ rejoined the Sultan; then, having mused a short time, he continued. ‘The friend who devotes himself to death for a friend, deserves clemency as

much as the king who cannot forgive an injury, deserves condemnation. Thou wouldst have taken my life—I grant thee thine. Which of us two is most estimable in God's eye?

“Overcome by this noble generosity, Mousrif whom the fear of torture and death could not move, burst into tears and cast himself at the feet of the Shahzadeh, who terminated his judgment in these words—

“‘Thy face is whitened.—Henceforth reserve half thy affection for the Sultan, and all thy arrows for his foes. Begone!’

“The shouts that followed this unexpected act of royal clemency had scarcely subsided, ere the Sultan turned to the Min Bashi, and with accents which betrayed the contending emotions of his soul, said, ‘It has pleased Allah to tie up his hand and empty the quiver of affliction upon us. But we will not confound the innocent with the guilty. We are indebted to thee for our life. *Mashallah!* We are not like the snake which bites the breast that warms it.—Arise, thou art forgiven!’

“Then as the Rajahs and Omrahs, who stood

around, lifted up their voices in praise of this second act of clemency, Mahmoud again addressed Azim in these words:—

“ ‘Hearken, Azim Khan ! Didst thou not say anon, that thou hadst turned the eye of desire upon the Vizir’s daughter, upon thy lord’s, the Sultan’s property ?’

“ ‘Such, O refuge of the world, were my words,’ answered Azim.

“ ‘Thou art an audacious dog, and merit twenty deaths,’ rejoined Mahmoud.

“ ‘Azim folded his hands across his bosom and answered, ‘Let the centre of justice and wisdom, to whom the clouds are a footstool, deign to remember that our hearts are in the guidance of Allah.’

“ ‘But our tongues are in our own keeping, fool!’ retorted Mahmoud. ‘And he must be a most incorrigible ass, that chooses to bray, when by shutting his mouth he might avoid the lion’s jaws.’

“The courtiers all applauded this repartee, which perhaps, increased the Sultan’s generous humour, for he added, ‘Such a declaration,

under our very beard, is a proof that thou hast lost thy wits, as well as the unfortunate, whom Allah has rendered unfit for the glory that awaited her. Nevertheless, I appoint thee her guardian. Return whence thou camest. Reconduct her to Delhi, and if her reason be restored, I will give her to thee as a wife.—Thou art dismissed.”

“ ‘ And did our blessed prophet extend his mercy to the poor girl ? ’ demanded Dil Bar.

“ *Allumdoohilah* (God be praised),” replied Fatmeh. “ It happened at the period in question, that a renowned Frank doctor was residing under the shadow of the Emperor’s protection.* Now it appears that there are more madmen in Frangistan, than in all the rest of the world put together. Consequently their Haikims have great practice in such complaints. So Azim no sooner returned to Delhi, than he sought for this stranger, and having filled his mouth with gold, promised him twice as much if he would replace Taje Nour’s brains in their proper situation. Whether it

* Probably Dr. Bernier himself.

was through the white powders and black drink of this kaffir, or through the intercession of the prophet, without whose aid all medicines are useless, God knows! but it is recorded, that Taje Nour soon recovered, and espoused Azim; who, forthwith erected a tomb near the spot where the Vizir perished, and named it *Bavan Mirdeh*, in commemoration of the only words uttered by his beloved during her malady.

“Such my Sultana,” added Fatmeh, “was the beginning and the end of the Hundred Soul affair.”

CHAPTER V.

FATMEH had not long terminated her tale, ere we approached the ruined tomb of which a few vestiges still peered above the surrounding reeds and bamboos. My mistress, who had been looking around with no small degree of anxiety, now exclaimed—

“See Fatmeh! the smoke that curls above the summits of those lofty cypresses, no doubt proceeds from my husband’s tents? *Ya Allah*, how my heart throbs! They say the Rajah is wonderfully moonfaced and liberal.”

“He is a devourer of hearts—a lion of perfection,” answered Fatmeh.

“I also am not without some pretensions to

beauty," answered Dil Bar, as with the coquetry natural to her age and sex, she looked into the little pearl framed mirror, which she carried in her hand, and adjusted the gold coins and flowers that adorned her hair; whilst Fatmeh smoothed down her mistresses eyebrows and pencilled her long silken lashes with a small silver bodkin tinged with *surmeh*. "But," added Dil Bar, speaking to herself, and thinking of Pir' Lena Sing, "When the rose has turned its expanding blossoms to the nightingale, how can it present its petals to the owl?"

"One would imagine that all the idolaters in the world, were about to congregate," exclaimed Fatmeh, as she peeped through the lattice work of the pavilion. "*Laahnet be shaitan!* (anathemas on Satan)," continued she, pointing to a numerous body of fakeers, seated beneath the shade of some gigantic neems, to the left of the road; "the smoke that my Sultana sees, does not proceed from our Rajah's people, but from another herd of pilgrims, more foul, if possible, than their brethren."

“ *Wullah!*” exclaimed another moslem woman, who sat driving away the flies and fanning Dil Bar with a white Thibet cow’s tail, perfumed with musk and gul attar, “ *Wullah!* The Jews and Nazarenes, who are permitted to infect the world, are certainly most exceeding brutes; but they are an hundred fold less impure than these hideous worshippers of apes and bulls.”

“ Oof!” ejaculated Fatmeh, “ one’s heart changes place with one’s bowels when one looks upon their matted hair and half naked bodies, begrimed with cow dung, chalk and all manner of abominations, as if they intended to sow rice on their skins in lieu of boiling it in their brass kettles.”

She had scarcely uttered these words, ere two or three horsemen made their appearance on the road, and advanced at full speed to within a short distance of the leading elephants. After discharging their matchlocks in the air in token of rejoicing, they threw their bodies back, and suddenly checking their horses, exchanged the customary salutations with our two vakeels.

One of the strangers then led the latter aside, and conversed with them in an under tone.

The intelligence he communicated seemed to be of a pleasing nature, for Lal Ood Dowlah and Bhaoul Mal smiled, rubbed their hands, and answering, "On our heads and eyes be it!" called around them the principal men of the escort and spoke to them in a half whisper. Their speech appeared to produce the same effect upon the risible faculties of their hearers, as did the strangers' words upon themselves, for they all nodded in a cunning fashion, laughed, and exclaimed "*Mashallah!* excellent! excellent! we are his sacrifice and yours."

The whole party now resumed their places, and we proceeded about half a farsang further, when a turn of the road brought us in sight of the verdant spot, where Hassan Penjal and his tent pitchers had prepared the camp. Our elephant had not, however, reached the opening in the cloth screen enclosing the lofty pavilions, which by the fork tailed banners and golden pine apples surmounting their poles, seemed destined for the harem, ere the echo of a

general discharge of matchlocks resounded through the woods. Shouts of "You are welcome: May it be auspicious! It is the Rajah, on whom be the blessings of increase," then rent the air, whilst the rattle of drums, and the reverberating din of gongs shook the earth and startled the wild birds and beasts of the forest from their haunts. In an instant more, the Rajah, surrounded by a small band of horsemen, reached the spot, and having dismounted, placed himself in front of the tent, within the screen, where he awaited his bride.

Dil Bar's heart had well nigh jumped into her mouth, when she found that she was at last in the presence of her husband. At one moment a strange chilly sensation crept through her veins; at the next, blushes deep as the crimson blossoms of the ruby tinged pomegranate flushed her cheeks, and fevered the very tips of her ears.

Her agitation was, however, concealed from every one, as Fatmeh took care to arrange her mistress's two veils in such a manner as to envelope her person from head to foot. Great,

however, as was Dil Bar's trepidation, it did not completely extinguish her curiosity. Although her eyes were half closed, and fixed upon the ground, she contrived to cast a side glance at the lord of her destiny, at the moment when our elephant, having reached the entrance of the harem tent, knelt down for her to descend.

A shudder of mingled surprise and terror shook her frame at this instant, and well it might; for in lieu of seeing a youth, blooming and graceful as a young plane-tree, towering in the sun's rays, she beheld a pot-bellied creature, with a huge head, sunk between shoulders as prominent as those of a hunch-backed Ganges crane; a countenance resembling that of a broken-nosed camel, and a throat swollen and distended, as if he was afflicted with the disease that attacks those who constantly drink of the melted snows of the Himlayas.* In short, he was the very

* It is almost superfluous to observe, that the people inhabiting the snowy ranges of the Himlayas are afflicted with goitres.

reverse of that star of perfection which Dil Bar had expected to find in the Rajah.

At first she hoped that this unsightly personage was not her husband, but the chief officer of the harem. Her hopes soon vanished, however, when she saw Lal Ood Dowlah and the rest of the attendants prostrate themselves and do homage before him. But no time was accorded to her for further reflection. After looking around him with a half bashful, half silly air, the Rajah, who seemed formed for no other purpose than to carry bricks or mortar upon his misformed shoulders, stepped forward, and having first grinned forth a few compliments, ordered her and her women to be conducted within the tents. This he did in a voice more shrill and squeaking than that of the old red and blue cockatoos, which sit screaming and screeching upon the mosques and pagodas of Hindostan.

Digressing as usual from the thread of his tale, the little quire now addressed itself to me, saying : "What more convincing proofs, my Agha, could be given of the extent to which

the wind-worshippers (flatterers) of great men are wont to push their adulation."

"I see no proofs of flattery in their proceedings hitherto," replied I.

"Barick Ullah!" ejaculated my new friend; "have you not remarked that the vakeels and women spoke of Raz Andaz as though he combined the beauty of Joseph with the vigour of Roustam? Yet it turns out that he was the most ungainly and ill-favoured creature that was ever permitted to disfigure the earth with his misformed shadow."

"The kernel of the date is sweet," replied I, "although its shell be shrivelled and wrinkled. It is by the moral perfections, and not by the personal beauties, of princes that one ought to estimate their worth. Providing that monarchs be just, prudent, and wise, it matters little whether they be as beautiful as Gabriel, or as hideous as the monstrous Mokannah."*

"Wisdom and sagacity are extremely useful

* Immortalized by the genius of Moore, on whom, to adopt the language of the text, be the blessings of poetical increase.

things in the council chamber; but they are very superfluous in the harem," rejoined my story teller; and there can be little doubt that Dil Bar would rather a thousand times that her husband should have resembled one of those dazzling apples of Syria, the outsides of which are like unto pearls tinged with cinnabar, whilst the insides contain nothing but bitter powder, than that he should have possessed the seductive charms of Forhad,* concealed beneath features as ugly as those of a Cashmerrian *humdroo*."†

"I dare say," answered I, "that the Rajah contrived to render his deformities less remarkable by selecting all his courtiers and attendants from amongst the ugliest men in his dominions, and that he admitted no one near his person who was not as ill-favoured as himself."

* A Georgian, who was beloved by the beautiful Shireen, Queen of Koshrou Parviz.

† A goat remarkable for its ugliness and for its rank odour. Penant says that these animals were saddled, bridled, and ridden by the Portuguese.

“ You are entirely mistaken,” retorted the paper. “ It is, I know, a common practice amongst sycophants and parasites to curry favour with great men, by endeavouring to imitate their defects and deformities. Thus if a prince happen to have a cast in his eye, a hitch in his gait, or a knot in his tongue, these adroit courtiers will affect to squint like apes, limp like ham-strung buffaloes, or stutter like Caboul magpies, according to circumstances. But Raz Andaz appeared to disapprove of such unworthy flattery, and was no ways ashamed of his defects ; for he stood alone in his deformity, like a dried pumpkin in the midst of roses and hyacinths.”

“ It often happens,” rejoined I, “ that the most deformed are the least conscious of their defects. In proportion as nature is avaricious to such persons of personal advantages, she is generally lavish to them in philosophy.”

“ Or rather in vanity and self-love,” retorted the paper. “ But be that as it may, the Rajah’s favourites were all men of comely appearance. One indeed, though less bri-

liantly attired than the rest, surpassed the whole in beauty ; and if Dil Bar's heart had been susceptible of a new affection, she would have preferred him to every person she had ever seen since the death of Pir Lena Sing.

She was the more disposed to distinguish this youth, for, whilst the Rajah scarcely lifted up his eyes towards her, and appeared rather abashed than inflamed by her arrival, the other, in despite of his master's presence, gazed at her with a look in which curiosity and tenderness were strongly depicted.

But poor Dil Bar had no other resource left than to chew the bitter herb of endurance, and to rub the hands of disappointment one against the other. Alas ! if she had hitherto lamented her past and dreaded her future destiny, the first sight of her husband was in no ways calculated to turn the waters of forgetfulness over the one, or to embellish the other with the sunny garlands of hope.

She had no reason, however, to complain of Raz Andaz's gallantry. The tent into which she was conducted was furnished in the most

sumptuous manner with silks and velvets, and carpeted with shawls. When she had performed her ablutions, and rested from her fatigues, she was regaled with sweetmeats, fruits, and sherbets. The air was perfumed with rose water, and cooled with snow white fans waved to and fro by little slaves. The dresses, jewels, and ornaments prepared for her use were worthy of a queen of Persia; and she had the satisfaction of seeing her own and their beauties reflected in several costly mirrors. In short, nothing had been omitted that could serve to impress her with a favourable idea of her husband's splendour, or the intensity of his devotion.

Whether these attentions produced the desired effect on her heart, or whether she was under the influence of drugs or witchcraft, our blessed Prophet, on whom be the especial grace of Allah, can only tell. But, strange to say, as the sun gradually descended towards the horizon, she began to feel somewhat more resigned to her destiny, and even entertained a sort of morbid desire to obtain a nearer view

of the Rajah, who had not followed her into the inner compartment of the tent, but had contented himself with looking at her as she passed, so that he had seen no more of his bride than a merchant does of a diamond sealed up in a purse.

The mirrors that stood opposite told her, however, that she never appeared more lovely. Her dress consisted of a light peerahun of amber coloured silk, threaded with gold, over which was an open tunic of amaranth velvet fastened by a ruby studded clasp. Her slender waist was encircled by the rich volumes of my downy folds; her trowsers were of gold brocade worked with variegated flowers; her small feet were inclosed in pearl embroidered slippers, and her ankles were adorned with elastic golden anklets, set with precious stones.

As Dil Bar had no other observers than Fatmeh and her slaves, her veil was cast back, and displayed features that might have excited envy in the virgins of paradise. She was seated also upon a pearl studded carpet of black velvet, and supported by richly embroidered

cushions of the same materials ; so that their dark hues served to enhance the marble whiteness of her swan-like neck and shoulders, whilst a profusion of wax tapers, placed in coloured glass lanterns, suspended from the roof, shed a mild lustre around and tinged her complexion with the rosy hues of dawning day.

The shades of darkness had scarcely enveloped the earth when the slaves brought sundry trays loaded with pilaws and other savoury dishes, and informed Dil Bar that her husband would forthwith make his appearance to partake of supper in her company. Indeed she had barely time to envelop herself in her bridal veil, and to place herself in a becoming attitude to receive the Rajah, ere she heard the clapping of hands and rustling of slippers outside, and in a moment more, the little hunchback entered the apartment, followed by two or three slaves, amongst whom was the youth, whose beauty had previously attracted Dil Bar's attention, and whose presence within the inmost precincts of the harem, plainly indicated his duties and explain-

ed how he was entitled to this sorrowful privilege.

It is not possible to state what was passing in the Rajah's mind ; but, whether from natural timidity or excess of admiration, he was apparently so confounded, that in lieu of commanding Fatmeh and the other slaves to withdraw, in order that he might cast himself without restraint at the feet of the beautiful being who stood mute and trembling before him, like the dove when the vulture soars above its nest, Raz Andaz seemed as much perplexed as she was. Strange as it may appear, he evinced as little eagerness to explore the garden of enjoyment of which he held the key, as though he was upon the threshold of Jemsheed's cave, which is guarded by forty genii, waving flaming swords, and by ninety nine dragons, each with two heads.

Indeed, so great was his discretion, that he kept his eyes fixed upon the ground and refrained from ordering her to remove the veil that concealed those resplendent charms, the mere report of which, had so violently inflamed

his heart. Had he been one of the meanest weavers of Cashmere, instead of a powerful Rajah, the undisputed lord of her destiny, he could not have been more humble and bashful.

At length, however, he took courage, and casting a doubtful look at the slaves who stood behind him, he raised his shrill voice and exclaiming, "*Ya Allah!*" begged Dil Bar to be seated. Then in lieu of placing himself on the left hand, which is the place of honour with us Moslems,* he squatted himself upon the right, and then instead of stretching out his legs or crossing them under him, as great men are wont to do, he crouched at the edge of Dil Bar's carpet, with his body resting upon his heels in the attitude of an inferior.

All this appeared exceeding strange to my mistress, who felt some trifling consolation,

* Mahomed is supposed by Moslems, to sit upon the left side of the throne of the Almighty, thence the place of honour is upon the left, and not on the right as with us.

however, when she reflected that, although her husband might perhaps be the least well-favoured, he was at all events the most discreet prince in all the world. In truth, he might have competed in modesty with the prophet Moses, who, when he rolled away the prodigious stone which covered the well in the valley of Midian, in order that he might draw water for Shoaib's flocks, held down his head, and averting his face, begged Shoaib's daughter, Zephora, to walk behind him, lest the wind, by ruffling her garments, should expose her limbs, and thus render him guilty of indiscretely looking at her legs.*

Great as was Dil Bar's estrangement for her husband's person; she could not avoid wondering at his extreme embarrassment, and being

* Moses, after escaping into the valley of Midian, was hired, according to the Mahomedan traditions, by Shoaib on the recommendation of his daughter, Zephora, who narrated this trait of his discretion to her father. The Shoaib of the Mahomedans corresponds with Reuel and Zephora, with Zerfura, the wife of Moses.

astonished at the profound devotion he payed to the supper, into which he plunged his fingers, from the first dish to the last, with as much zest as if he possessed the never dying appetite of those who are admitted to feed upon the viands of paradise.

At length his timidity began to diminish; and after stuffing himself, until the waters of repletion gushed from his eyes, he found the use of his voice, not to compliment his bride, but to trumpet forth his own praises.

“*Allumdookilah!*” exclaimed he. “Our stars are in propitious conjunction. *Mashallah!* this is a most auspicious day! Eh! Eh! Who is more fortunate than the Rajah, on whom be God’s blessing. The bride of such a man is more to be envied, than all the Sultanas in this world, and all the Virgins in the next. By my beard! By my eyes! Let the astrologer have his mouth crammed with gold, for predicting truths. Poof! What are all the kings and princes in the universe, when compared with the Kabob of admiration Raz Andaz? If any one should dare to say, that

he is not more beautiful than a young stag, and more valiant than a grown up lion, *Wullah!* let him have two hundred stripes on the soles of his feet!"

Being probably excited by the echo of his self-panegyric, which was replied to by cries of "*Burik Ullah!* and *Aferin!*" from his attendants, the Rajah took one of the small golden salvers that were placed before him, and turning to his bride said, "Let the pearl of beauty, at whose sight the moon, and stars are ashamed to show their heads, honour her slave by tasting of these mangoes. They must exceed the fruits of Eden in flavour, for they are plucked by the Rajah's own hand. *Bishmillah*, eat!"

"I am my Lord's sacrifice," replied Dil Bar, who took the fruit, and raised it to her forehead out of respect. Whilst doing this, a corner of her veil fell down, and accidentally disclosed those lovely features, in which were concentrated all the fascinating perfections of the seven heavens. But strange to say, the Rajah seemed more alarmed than delighted at

this dazzling sight, for he started back, averted his head and exclaimed "*Allah! ya Allah!* I am dirt! nobody in comparison, with the mistress of my life. I am her footstool. If she says die, her slave must cease to exist. But, if the sun-eclipsing jewel of adoration, at whose birth the rose gardens of Cashmere ceased to bloom, does not wish the immediate destruction of the meanest of her servants, let her, in Allah's name, replace her veil."

Dil Bar was exceeding astonished at this, and not without reason, for she was certainly entitled to think, that if Allah had accorded her charms, they were not intended to be concealed, and that if she might not disclose them to her husband and his slaves, who counted as nothing, she might as well have been born as ugly as the humpback himself. She complied, however, and by so doing, appeared to relieve Raz Andaz from his fears; for, although he was already far involved in the whirlpool of inebriety, he filled up a cup with Lahore wine, and throwing a handful of pearls and rubies into it, in order to render

the liquor more precious, he rose upon his knees, and supporting himself on one hand, presented the goblet to Dil Bar with the other, saying :

“*Astagfeeroolah!* (Allah forbid) I am no Kaffir! Poof! I spit upon all Kaffirs. I am no wine bibber either, but on such a day as this our holy prophet, who is now tasting of the enchanted wines of paradise, will forgive me for overstepping his blessed ordinances.”

Hereupon he filled a second goblet to the brim, and after draining it to the last drop, fell back upon the cushions, so tipsy, that he rolled about like one of those rickety rafts, used in lieu of boats upon the Euphrates.

Dil Bar, seeing herself thus relieved from the necessity of tasting the forbidden juice, replaced the cup on the floor, sighing deeply at the thoughts of destiny having linked her to one who had all the appearance of a buffalo, with the manners of a swine.

Her disgust and alarm were increased when the handsome slave, who had hitherto remain-

ed seated at a respectful distance behind Dil Bar, rose and approaching his master, whispered in his ear some words which appeared to have the effect of restoring a portion of his senses, and then turning to Fatmeh, he bade her prepare the nuptial chamber. Two young black slaves, who had remained standing near the tent entrance, now stepped forward, seized the Rajah under his arms, and lifted him up. Upon which Raz Andaz made an awkward salaam to Dil Bar, and staggered out of her presence, exclaiming, "*Ya Allah! Ya Allah!* I am no wine bibber! *Khoda na Kunud!* I am no Jew or Nazarene! By my beard! By my soul! who is to be compared in beauty, wit and liberality with the Rajah? *Inshallah!*" added he, at the top of his shrill voice, "*Inshallah!* The nightingale will soon return to bless the rose."

He and his attendants had no sooner departed, than Fatmeh, and the other women slaves lifted up their mistress, and conducted her into an inner apartment, fitted up more splendidly, if possible, than the other. Here

they aided her, in exchanging her costly and heavy day garments, for a light night dress. This consisted of an embroidered muslin scarf, to wind round her raven hair, which when loosened from the fillets, that had previously entwined it, curled over her pure white shoulders, like streams of glittering Naptha, gushing over the eternal snows of Mount Ararat. Her tunic was of gold sprigged Cashmerian shawl, fastened in front by two or three filagree buttons, studded with turquoise. Her trowsers were of thin gauze, embroidered with silken flowers, and her under vest was of the finest transparent Aleppo linen, so that her attire served to exhibit, rather than to conceal the wonderful richness, and symmetry of her form.

“ Well! Well!” said Fatmeh, as she poured rose water over my mistress's hands, and having wiped them with an embroidered napkin, offered her an olive wood toothpick, in order to complete her preparations for repose. “ Well! Well! what thinks my Sultana of her dear Lord the Rajah ?

“ What shall I do or say ?” responded Dil

Bar. "Are we not bound, by God's ordinances, to prefer our husbands to all other things?"

"Certainly, certainly!" answered Fatmeh. "It is written that wives are the tillage of their husbands; but the bride of so great a man, is as free as the mountain cedar; she is more to be envied than all the Sultanas of the Indies."

"Are all other Shahs, and Sultans like to him in appearance?" demanded Dil Bar.

"*Yok!* by no means," rejoined Fatmeh. "On the contrary, they are all brutes in comparison."

"Unless my eyes told grievous falsehoods," replied my mistress in a half whisper, "the Rajah is more hideous than a toothless leopard. Therefore, if your words be true, the wives of all other princes must indeed be deserving of commiseration."

"Wonderful things have happened before now, through the agency of genii," answered Fatmeh; "so when next you see the Rajah, he may appear less objectionable in your sight, and may win your heart in a twinkling."

The idea of ever feeling any other sentiment than disgust, for such a monster of ugliness and inebriety, caused Dil Bar to shudder; but she made no other reply than the usual, "*Allah Kerim der,*" which is the never failing resource of all persons, who are any ways in want of words, to express their grief or admiration. She then seated herself upon the carpet spread near her couch, where she remained apparently absorbed in praying, as she counted the beads of her pearl rosary, although, in fact her lips, and fingers did but move mechanically, for her thoughts were far away, amidst the green valleys of that heaven favoured land, wherein reposed the ashes of her mysterious and unfortunate lover.

In the mean time, some of her slaves occupied themselves in trimming the golden lamps that stood upon the floor, and in replenishing them with sandal wood oil, whilst others arranged the silken quilts, destined for the nuptial couch, the foot of which was carefully turned towards the Kehblah. Fatmeh whose business it was to superintend these matters,

reserved for herself the task of placing a basin of rock crystal, filled with pure water, near the head of the couch, and further secured it from the effects of the evil eye, by adorning the pillow with the amulets provided for that purpose, by Dil Bar's mother.

Scarcely had she terminated this operation, ere the buzz of voices resounded in the adjoining portion of the harem tents. A brief silence then ensued, during which Dil Bar's heart beat so violently, that it had nearly burst the gem studded agraffes which confined her tunic. She had scarcely time, however, to wrap her veil closely around her, and to utter the word, "*Bismillah*," three times, ere a voice, which she instantly recognised as that of the humpback, exclaimed,

"Begone! you are dismissed," and forthwith the rustling of footsteps announced her husband's approach.

Fatmeh and the other women no sooner heard this, than they bade Dil Bar good night, and withdrew—so hastily indeed, that they omitted to extinguish the lights, as is the prescribed

usage, when a bride receives her husband in the nuptial chamber.* Had they not been forgetful of this duty, my mistress might, at all events, have been spared the pain of seeing the uncouth object, whom she awaited with mingled fear and loathing. But she was in a state of too great confusion, to take notice of this omission. Indeed, her whole frame was so agitated, and her head became so dizzy, that she could scarcely rise to receive the Rajah, who, entering at this moment, threw himself at her feet, and exclaimed, "My heart! my breath, Sultana of my life and hope, pardon thy slave."

* It is the invariable custom in the east, for the nuptial chamber to be left in complete darkness, by the matrons and slaves, who usually conduct the bride to her couch.

CHAPTER VI.

“*Effendi!*” said the little quire addressing me, ere it continued its narrative—“did you perchance ever dream that you were intombed, and struggling in the icy embrace of a skeleton, and then, suddenly awaking, find yourself reposing upon the verdant borders of some vine clad fountain, fanned by the balmy sighs, and pillowed by the snowy arm of your beloved? If so, you may form some idea of Dil Bar’s satisfaction, when a voice, soft and harmonious as that of the Shah Bul,* vibrated melodiously upon her ear, and, in lieu of the hideous hunch-

* The *Shah Bul*, or king of song, is a bird of the fly-catcher species. It is much esteemed in India for its harmonious notes, which are more admired by some than those of the *Bul Bul*.

back, she discovered the beautiful youth, who had previously attracted her notice.

Her first impulse was to have given way to the expressions of her gladness at this unexpected relief; but fearing lest this might be an artifice to try her discretion, and recollecting that the individual before her was but a slave, she twined her veil more closely around her head and shoulders, and drew back with the half timid, half curious gaze of the hind, when scared from its lair.

Seeing this, the youth took her hand, and fixing upon her a pair of eyes, that radiated with the searching vivacity of those of Ali, exclaimed, "Let my heart's mistress forgive her servant, for having trifled with her understanding."

Dil Bar's tongue clove to her mouth with doubt and apprehension, lest what she saw and heard should not be true, so that she could neither speak nor avert her eyes, when the supplicant again addressed her, with all the fervour of the tenderest passion.

"My soul! Shrine of my idolatry! Be

not wrath with me! My motive for commanding the vile eunuch Baba Kanboor, (father hunch-back), to assume my place, was that you might feel less repugnance, when you compared my features with those of that most ill-favoured of all the sons of Satan."

Dil Bar's amazement did but increase, as she gazed upon the lofty forehead, and listened to the silvery tones, that flowed from the Rajah's mouth. But her fears, lest this should be a further stratagem, to lure her to forget her duty, prevented her from making any other reply, than "I am the Rajah's slave—I am his sacrifice."

"It is he that is thy slave—thy footstool," answered Raz Andaz rising. "How shall I express my admiration for thy beauty?" continued he. "Speak—say that thou desirest a jar of the holy waters of Zemzem, wherewith to make thy ablutions—Nay, ask for my life—anything.—I swear, by the beards of the four Khalifs, that thy wish shall be gratified."

"Heaven forbid. I ask for nothing," replied Dil Bar, "but that the film may be re-

moved from my eyes, and that Allah may direct me in the right way;" and so saying she would have fallen with excess of emotion, had she not leant upon the Rajah's shoulder.

"Fame with her hundred trumpets has filled the world with the echo of thy perfections; but fame is but a dark and lying shadow, to the incomparable reality," answered Raz Andaz, as he lifted up her small hand to his forehead, and gently drew her towards him.

Dil Bar was so much overcome, and so fascinated by the ardour of the youthful and beautiful prince, that for a few seconds, her vows to Pir Lena Sing were forgotten, and she hung forward in such an attitude of bewilderment, that her fragrant breath absolutely perfumed the Rajah's eye brows. Heaven knows, if her lips might not have come into voluntary contact with his, had not the withered rose, which she always carried in her bosom, rubbed against her side, and caused her to start back, with a shudder of compunction. He, however, attributing this movement to timidity, and little

dreaming, that he could ever have had a rival in her affections, passed his arm round her waist, and gently pressed her to his heart, ejaculating, "*Mashallah!* Am I not the most fortunate of men?"

"In mercy to your slave," said Dil Bar taking courage. "In the name of the four perfect women, relieve my mind from doubt—say, which is white and which black. Is this a delusion, or do I in truth stand before the Lord of my destiny?"

"Wullah! It is I that am Raz Andaz—your lawful husband!" replied the Rajah. "By the holy prophet it is so. There is no delusion."

"*Allah Akbar!*" sighed forth Dil Bar, unable to control her joy at being assured, that she was not the wife of so brutal a husband as Baba Kanboor.

"The drunken half man," whom I permitted to represent me for a short time, in order that I might gaze in unrestrained freedom upon these unrivalled charms, is one of the meanest of thy slaves," continued the enamoured

Raz Andaz. "If my Sultana wish it, the brute's head shall forthwith be struck off. Let her say, be it so ! and he dies."

Notwithstanding the Rajah's assurances, Dil Bar still entertained some misgivings as to his identity; she therefore thought it prudent, to make such a reply, as could not affront Baba Kanboor, should he chance to be within hearing. She consequently thanked Raz Andaz for this proof of his affection, and added, "In the prophet's name, let the poor man's head remain where it is. He deserves recompense rather than punishment, for behaving with so much discretion."

Raz Andaz, who continued gazing with mingled rapture, and admiration upon the charms of his young bride, now withdrew his arm from her waist, and clapped his hands. At this Dil Bar started with apprehension. he trembled lest she should have been deceived, and feared that this was the signal for the entry of her real husband. But her alarm was groundless, for in a few seconds Fatmeh made her appearance, and without turning her eyes to

the right or left, quickly extinguished all the lamps save one, which being suspended from the roof in an alabaster vase, threw a pale mysterious light over the apartment.

As soon as Fatmeh had withdrawn, Raz Andaz took from his bosom a ring, ornamented with a single Badakshan ruby of immense value, on which was engraved, in golden letters, the talismanic name of the faithful Katmir.* This he placed upon the fourth finger of his bride's right hand, then straining her to his palpitating heart, he imprinted an hundred kisses upon her honey breathing lips.

But the finger of Allah seemed to interpose between the Rajah, and the beacon of his hopes. At this moment a blast of lightning so bright, so intense, so vivid, that it seemed to have ignited the whole world, flared through the tent, and made them imagine that the scorching fire, which is to be the forerunner

* As stated in a former note, the name of Katmir, the dog belonging to the seven sleepers, is frequently engraved on signet rings, and talismans as emblematic of fidelity

of the last day, had already broken forth in Yaman.* This was followed by a blast of thunder so long, so loud and appalling, that it shook the very foundations of the earth. In an instant more, the clouds opened their sluices, and poured down a deluge of rain—the winds howled, and there arose such a tempest as had not perhaps occurred, since Allah overthrew the building, which the impious Nimrod erected at Babel, in order that he might wage war against heaven.

Terrified beyond all utterance, Dil Bar clung to the arm of the Rajah, who stood there nearly as much bewildered as herself; for the horrors of the jarring elements were increased by the confusion, and uproar caused amongst his followers, and the numerous bands of pilgrims, by this awful storm in which the rushing winds, the roaring thunders, the rustling waters, and crash of falling trees and tents,

* This fire, according to Moslem belief, will be the fourteenth great sign, of the approach of the day of judgment, and will burst forth in the Province of Yaman,

mingled with the booming of gongs, the shouts of Moslems, the groans of Hindoos, the bellowing of elephants, and the snorting of camels and horses—many of which burst from their tethers, and galloped with maddening speed, through the camp.

Raz Andaz, was a man of approved valour. He would have sprung single handed into a tiger's den, and wrenched a cub from beneath its mother's jaws; he would have faced the deadly fire of a whole Feringee army without shrinking; but his heart sunk within him, at the occurrence of such an inauspicious omen, upon the first night of his nuptials, and he inwardly swore, that he would cut off the tongue of his confidential astrologer, for having fixed upon this unfortunate day, as the most propitious for solemnizing his marriage.

Fearing, however, lest he should increase Dil Bar's terror, by yielding to his own apprehensions, he pressed her tenderly to his bosom, and led her towards her couch. But ere they had moved a couple of steps, my mistress started on one side and stood, with her eyes

riveted upon the farther side of the tent, as mute and motionless as though she had been suddenly transfixed, by the irresistible fascination of the death serpent.*

Alas! the sight that caused this alarm, in the bosom of my lovely mistress, was more horrible than that of all the serpents of Hindostan. Through a rent in the silken draperies, she distinctly perceived several human eyes, keen and refulgent as those of ravenous lions, gleaming upon her and the Rajah. The brightest of these glared from a face, whose aspect shot the ice of death into her heart. She could not believe her senses. She strove to rouse herself, and to attribute what she saw to a delusion, resulting from the fevered agitation of her mind. But it was in vain, that she opened wide her eye lids, and shook her head as if to rouse her slumbering recollection. The

* The bite of this venomous reptile, called by the Portuguese, the *Cobra de Morte*, is followed by immediate death. It is said, to bear upon its head the impression of a skull and cross bones—whence its name.—See Pennant.

terrible reality was there. The grave had surrendered back its prey. The storm was evidently the work of the dark spirits of the other world. Foremost amidst the pyramid of scowling faces that frowned upon her, she distinctly recognised the features of Pir Lena Sing, not as she had last known them, mild, genial and serene as the glad summer's calm, but fierce, gloomy, and full of the devilish malice, that is said to animate the Gholes.

In consequence of the Rajah's standing with his back to these strange objects he was ignorant of the cause, though he instantly perceived the effects of Dil Bar's terror. Attributing them to the storm, which still raged with fearful fury around, he again encircled her quivering form with his arm, and tried to soothe her with the tenderest expressions of affection.

"Let the dear mistress of my soul fear not!" said he. "The tempest will soon subside. Our nuptial night shall not be further darkened—and were it otherwise—were the demons, that hold the keys of the elements,

to pour down their fiercest thunder upon us, *Wullah!* by the prophet's beard—I would shield thee with my body, and die a thousand deaths, ere one precious hair of thy head should be injured."

Dil Bar, in lieu of replying again disengaged herself, and with a look of indescribable agony stretched forth her hand, and pointed to the side of the tent. At this moment, a rush as of struggling footsteps was heard outside. This was followed by a yell so shrill, and piercing that it seemed to embody the agony of a thousand deaths.

There could be no mistaking that yell; it was the voice of the hunch-back. Dil Bar, whose eyes were almost starting from their sockets with affright, now broke forth into a half scream, half shout, saying "Turn! In Allah's name! By your soul—turn—see! the dead demand their own."

Raz Andaz did turn, and the first object that caught his eye, through a rent in the hangings, was the unfortunate Baba Kanboor

struggling, gasping for life beneath the deadly grip of four or five sturdy fakeers.

Astounded at this cruel sight, this most atrocious profanation of his harem, Raz Andaz stood for some seconds aghast; but quickly regaining his self-possession, he drew the light curved sabre that hung by his side, and determined to punish the aggressors with his own hand. But what is the vigour of the lordly cedar against the united force of the four winds? Ere the valiant Prince could reek his fury upon the foremost ruffian, Pir Lena Sing (for he it was) followed by a score of athletic pilgrims started forward, and fell upon him with irresistible fury.

What occurred after that, Dil Bar knew not, for the sudden apparition of him, whose death she had so long mourned, completely overcame her, so that she staggered and fell senseless, ere the latter could quit his intended victim, and hasten to her side.

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN the beautiful Cashmerian recovered the use of reason, the storm had abated, and the first ruby tints of dawning day already penetrated through the torn apertures of the tent. More bewildered than were the seven sleepers, when they first awoke from their long trance, she stretched forth her hands, rubbed her eyes, and uttered her profession of faith; but, as surrounding objects were as indistinct as her own recollections, she imagined that she was still dreaming.

She was soon, however, roused to a sense of the truth, by the sobs and lamentations of Fatmeh, and her other female slaves, who sat beside her, with dishevelled hair and torn garments, alternately beating their breasts in token of mourning, and endeavouring to restore

Dil Bar to her senses, by plunging her hands into water, blowing smoke into her nostrils, and pricking the soles of her feet with the points of the silver bodkins employed for tinging their eye-lids with surmeh.

“What is this? speak! I beseech thee,” exclaimed Dil Bar, as soon as she was able to distinguish the features of those around her. Then seizing Fatmeh’s hand, she added, “Say Fatmeh, did I dream or did my eyes tell truths?”

“*Allumdoolilah!* (Praise be to Allah!)” ejaculated Fatmeh. “My dear mistress has recovered—our faces will now be whitened.”

“Had it been otherwise, this would have been a day of malediction,” said a second woman.

“Most incredible filth would have been our portion,” added a third. “Our lives depended upon hers.”

“He told us he would dash our heads against the earth, unless we raised up that of his soul’s treasure,” said another. “*Barik Allah!* the shaft of love evidently penetrated his heart at first sight.”

These ambiguous answers left Dil Bar as much in doubt as ever, as to the issue of the terrible struggle, of which she had witnessed the commencement, and she demanded with a faltering voice, of whom they spoke.

"*Ya Allah,*" replied Fatmeh, "of whom else can it be, but of him who holds the thread of our lives between his finger and thumb."

Fearing to betray any knowledge or interest in Pir Lena Sing, Dil Bar answered, "Methought, before I lost the use of my senses, that I saw the tent filled with fakeers, and that Baba Kanboor fell by their hands?"

"It is as my Sultana has said," answered Fatmeh.

"And my husband—the Rajah—why does he not appear?" demanded Dil Bar.

"When fate ordains, who shall say no!" retorted Fatmeh.

"What ominous words are these?" said Dil Bar, not knowing how to interpret this reply. "By your eyes, Fatmeh, my soul! say, does the Rajah live or did they slay him also?"

"*Wahi! Wahi!* He is with Allah!" answered Fatmeh. At which all the other women immediately re-echoed her words and commenced beating their breasts with the usual mechanical tokens of mourning, but not with the customary screams, that women are wont to set up, when they wish to prove the extent of their grief.

The last agonizing yell of the poor hunchback, the last desperate maledictions of the

Rajah, as Pir Lena Sing rushed into the tent, now recurred in all their horror to Dil Bar's recollection, not unmingled with sentiments of intense anxiety, to discover something relative to the existence of that mysterious and terrible youth, who had first sipped the honey of love from the blooming petals of her lips. But she feared to ask any more questions, and flung herself upon Fatmeh's bosom, and sought relief in tears.

Fatmeh, who was no longer young, and had witnessed many strange adventures, and deeds of blood in the different harems, of which she had been an inmate, had thus imbibed so much indifference or submission to the will of destiny, that she was ready, upon all occasions, to look rather to the white than to the black side of events. She therefore endeavoured to soothe my mistress's emotion, by saying :

"Let not my Sultana abandon herself to despair. God is great! He may bring help to her, when she least expects it, as he did to the child of Abraham."

"I am my mistress's sacrifice. I am less than nothing," said another slave. "But if I might unlock my tongue, I would say that there is always a cause for consolation in every thing; *Wallah!* is it not so? For even now,

though destiny has deprived you of one husband, with his right hand, he presents you another with his left."

"She speaks truth," exclaimed Fatmeh. "The chief of those disguised fakeers, by whose hands it has pleased Allah to smite the Rajah, hung over you in a most tender manner, until he was summoned away by his people; he pressed you to his heart, and bidding us recal you to life, under the penalty of losing our own, he spoke of you as the long loved idol of his soul—as one whom he had known, worshipped, watched and followed from the valleys of Cashmere to this spot."

"*Wahi! Wahi!*" ejaculated one of the other women, "when he thought that my dear mistress had followed her defunct Lord into the other world, his brain seemed to be turned upside down."

"He swore by the heavens and its Maker, that if she died, he would slay all mankind," added a third.

"Yes! Yes! the death of Raz Andaz, must be entirely attributed to the stranger's love for our Sultana," exclaimed a fourth.

"May I die with a lie in my mouth, if that be not true," re-echoed the other.

"There can be no shadow without light,"

said Fatmeh, fixing a penetrating look upon Dil Bar. "Now, let not my Sultana be offended, if her servant presume to ask, if the arrow of love had not pierced her heart, before she quitted Cashmere. Unless I am more blind than a bat," continued she. "This prince—for prince he must be, although disguised as a pilgrim—was the first object of my mistress's tenderness."

"I am less than dirt, and certainly have no right to ask questions," said the second slave, "but as the Rajah is now in the seventh heaven, and Baba Kanboor is gone down to Jehanum, where I hope he may be most egregiously broiled, there can be no harm in my mistress informing her slaves of the truth, so that they may know how to regulate their conduct."

After a pause, during which Dil Bar struggled with her own feelings, she answered, "Why should I deny it! A valiant stranger once saved my life at the risk of his own. This act of devotion won my affections, and I soon learned to look upon him with inexpressible fondness. Yes! I adored him living, and when I thought he had fallen the victim of his devotion for me, I cherished the remembrance of his love, as I cherish my faith in the beatitude of paradise. That stranger," added Dil Bar heaving a deep

sigh, "is the same who I saw enter this apartment at the head of a band of pilgrims."

"Wonderful! wonderful! it is as I thought," exclaimed Fatmeh.

"I loved him," continued Dil Bar taking courage as she spoke and finding a new pleasure in this confession of her early affections, "I loved him, because I deemed him worthy of the adoration that devotees offer to saints. I loved him, because I thought him as beautiful in spirit as he was in form; and I worshipped and clung to his memory, when I supposed he had been slain, because I fondly imagined that he had only preceded me to those regions of eternal beatitude, where I hoped to be united to him after death;—but my soul is now moved with compassion for the Rajah, and I abhor myself for having been the cause of his murder."

Saying this, she buried her face in her hands, and wept as bitterly as if she and the Rajah had joined hearts as well as hands.

"Tears cannot recal the dead," said one of the women, as she dried up those of Dil Bar, with an embroidered handkerchief.

"Eh! eh! are not the fruits of consolation within your reach?" added another.

"It is very useless to employ the waters of

a fountain in moistening dry sand," observed a third.

"The defunct Rajah, who by the Prophet's blessing is now partaking of the joys of paradise, was exceedingly handsome; but he was not comparable with my mistress's first love," observed Fatmeh who was always prepared to flatter.

"*Mashallah!*" ejaculated the eldest of the other slaves; "the latter is no less liberal than handsome. Did not he say that he would cram all our mouths with pearls, and did not he tell his followers that he abandoned all the defunct Rajah's treasure to them, as he was satisfied with having recovered that inestimable jewel, which was of more value in his sight than all the rubies and diamonds of Badakshan and Golconda."

Fatmeh, who little knew what was passing in Dil Bar's heart, where the love she had so long borne to Pir Lena Sing was combatting with the dread he had inspired by his mysterious reappearance and the murder of the Rajah, now addressed Dil Bar :

"For my part, if I were as beautiful as our Sultana, I would not waste my tears in weeping for one husband, when another charming lover springs up, like a spirit of light, from the

other world, and rubs his forehead at her feet."

"For my part," said the first woman, "I know that we cannot be worse off in the harem of this Rajah, although he be Eblis himself, than we were in that of Raz Andaz, under the charge of that ill natured, ill favoured brute Baba Kanboor."

"Certainly, certainly!" echoed one of her companions who was a very handsome Afghan girl. "He did not fill our mouths with sugar candy or *rahouash*, and one might as well have been as ugly as Baba Kanboor himself, for all the Rajah cared. He took no more notice of us than if he had been made of burnt clay. Oof! I cannot say that I lament what has happened."

"Wallah! nor I either," said another.

"Whoever this Rajah may be, he is doubtless exceeding powerful," said the old woman who had spoken before. "Poof! he overcame our late master and his people with as much ease as bird catchers take sparrows' nests."

"If our defunct Lord chose to put his head under his wing and allow himself to be seized like a sleeping ostrich," added a second slave, "Mashallah! it was his destiny, and not our fault."

Much as Dil Bar regretted having been the innocent cause of the catastrophe of which her women spoke, she felt some consolation at the idea of Pir Lena Sing's constancy and attachment, and she began to think that Fatmeh was a very sensible woman for advising her to forget the defunct Rajah, and to turn all her thoughts to him whom she had never ceased to love.

Woman's tears are like the morning dew drops which evaporate at the first rays of the rising sun. At all events, Dil Bar was not long ere she dried up hers, and dwelt with secret complacency upon this new change in her fate. Indeed, her soul now gleamed with a sensation of pleasure to which it had long been a stranger and she soon abandoned herself, without restraint, to all the intensity of her first and only love. In order to obliterate from her mind all the recollection of the tie that had bound her for a short time to the deceased Rajah, she took from her finger, the ring he had placed there and gave it to Fatmeh. Then putting her hand into her bosom, she pressed the little bag containing the withered rose leaves to her heart, and silently invoked a thousand blessings upon him, whose reappearance she now awaited with intense anxiety,

She was in the act of lifting her beloved talisman to her lips, when the echo of many footsteps, and the buzz, as it were, of a congregating multitude, was distinctly audible upon the other side of the draperies that separated the inner apartments from those nearer to the principal entrance. This noise was followed by a deep silence only interrupted by heavy breathings, until of a sudden, the sounds of many voices, amongst which she recognized that of Pir Lena, rose in all the solemn earnestness of prayer.

Dil Bar's heart almost leaped to her mouth, when the well known and dear loved accents fell upon her ear. She longed to feast her eyes upon those adored features, but her emotion was too great to admit of her moving. At length, however, curiosity overcame alarm. She therefore rose, and taking Fatmeh's hand, approached the side of the tent, where through a narrow crevice in the canvass, she contrived to see without being observed by those on the other side.

Incomprehensible and mysterious was the scene that met her view. A dense crowd of men and boys, disguised as pilgrims and fakcers, amongst whom Pir Lena Sing occupied the highest place, were seated upon, or thronged

around a carpet, on which were piled several heaps of jewels, plate, money, arms and costly goods of various kinds. After making many prostrations and uttering many sentences in a language unknown to Dil Bar, Pir Lena Sing, who had cast aside his pilgrim's garb, and appeared in the graceful attire of a Scindian soldier, rose and addressed a short speech to his followers. Then pointing to the heaps of treasure, he distributed them in different proportions to those around, reserving one lot of great value, which was set aside under shouts of "Glory and honour to Dawhee Khalee! Honour and glory to her who has favoured the enterprize of her faithful worshippers."

Fatmeh, who during the greater part of the time, had been trembling from head to foot, as if she had been buried in ice, no sooner heard these exclamations than she whispered to my mistress saying, "May Allah have mercy upon us! oh most unfortunate that we are! Wahi! Wahi! why were we born?" and thereupon she drew back wringing her hands.

"What ails thee, Fatmeh?" said Dil Bar, who was too intent in gazing upon Pir Lena Sing's features and too ignorant of the meaning of the awful words uttered by him and his people, to be aware of their import. "What

ails thee, my soul?" continued she. "See! the valiant youth has disposed of all that wealth without receiving any thing for himself. He is a Joseph in beauty, a Nourshirwan in generosity."

"*Wullah billah!* he is a Ghole, worse than forty Gholes! we are lost—lost—eternally lost—we are delivered into the hands of Satan," replied Fatmeh.

"What mean these words. Are your wits benighted?" said Dil Bar, who, however, commenced to imbibe some portion of the fear exhibited by Fatmeh. "Say, Fatmeh, what are these ceremonies? are these people followers of Ram or Dervishes?"

"Dervishes!" replied Fatmeh in a whisper. "Dervishes! alas! they are devils, insatiable devils. They are assassins who spare none. *Ya Allah! Ya Allah!* They are Thugs."

Dil Dar's blood curdled as she heard this announcement; but, although her limbs shook beneath her, and she could only support herself by clinging to the draperies, she seemed rivetted to the ground by some powerful spell, so that she could not follow Fatmeh and the other women, who, utterly regardless of their mistress, rushed to the furthest corner of the tent, and disappeared behind the hangings.

Dil Bar in the mean time continued gazing at her lover. He it was that occupied all her attention, as he had long occupied all her tenderness, and she could not believe that one so beautiful, so fair, so gentle could belong to a tribe of such merciless assassins as the Thugs had been depicted to her. Such, however, was the case, and he was now dividing the plunder and celebrating the mysterious rites of these monsters.

Having set aside the share usually reserved as a propitiatory present for the infernal Goddess, who patronizes the Thugs,* those who sat and those who stood, bowed their heads and lifted up their arms and eyes towards Heaven as if in prayer. Some of the assistants then placed before Pir Lena Sing, a heap of sugar, several pieces of silver coin, a jar of water and a pick axe, all of which were consecrated, in the name of Dawhee Khalee, the blood thirsty divinity, worshipped by the Thugs.

These things being prepared, the chief prostrated himself three times in the direction of the rising sun, and cast three pieces of sugar

* The Thugs always reserve a portion of their plunder to be offered up at the shrine of the Goddess of Destruction.

with three of the coins into a hole, excavated on his right side by one of the wretches, whose business it is, when murders are committed to perform the office of grave diggers. Then dipping his fingers three times in the water jar, he thrice sprinkled the hole, and having uttered a short invocation to the evil spirits of earth and air, in which he was joined by all his followers, the excavation was filled up with the consecrated pick-axe.

When this ceremony was accomplished Pir Lena Sing took the rest of the sugar and turning towards his companions addressed them, in a short speech, in which he thanked them in the name of the Goddess of Destruction, for the skill, constancy and courage they had shown during the expedition, which was more remarkable perhaps from the number of victims and the magnitude of the spoil, and the daring nature of the attack than any that had ever been executed by any of their brethren, or their ancestors, for, of the whole of the Rajah's followers, not a single man had escaped with life.

The eyes of these demons glistened with fiendish joy at their leader's words. When he terminated his address, their mouths were moistened with the dews of ecstasy and they

greedily stretched forth the palms of their hands. Upon this Pir Lena took the sugar, and divided it amongst them in different portions, according to their rank, that is, according to the number of murders each had committed; such being the highest recompense, and such also being the devilish hierarchy of these blood drinkers. Each monster then fell upon his knees and swallowed his share, and this amidst silence so profound, that it seemed as if the whole universe was petrified.

But Allah is infinite and wise! Although he permits the faces of idolaters and of those who commit grievous crimes to be whitened for a time, his sentence infallibly comes to be executed, when the proper moment shall have arrived. He then causes a miserable retribution to overtake transgressors, as it did the five Arabs of the tribe of Koreish, who rejected his word and sought the destruction of the Prophet.*

At the moment the foul assassins were about

* These were five chieftains of Mahomet's tribe who were the most inveterate enemies of him and his new faith. Tradition says, that they conspired to waylay and murder him, and that in consequence of this they all came to untimely and violent deaths, each different from, and more terrible than the other.

to terminate these impious rites, with which they celebrate the successful issue of their atrocities, a noise, louder than that of a whirlwind, shook the forest, and the rattling of many hoofs, and the rumbling of chariot wheels caused the ground to vibrate as with an earthquake. With the exception of Pir Lena Sing, who, being born in the image of Satan before his fall, seemed to defy the universe and its ruler, the whole legion of Thugs looked aghast and trembled, like the inhabitants of the city of Lot, when the angel of the Lord emptied the fiery quiver of destruction upon their filthy beards.

Nor did the wretches tremble without cause. Suddenly, as by a discharge from heaven, the whole camp was surrounded by bodies of cavalry, elephants and artillery belonging to that most fortunate infidel Runjeet Sing, the sovereign of Lahore. The Sirdar, who commanded the Seiks, had lost a son by the hands of the Thugs, and was their most bitter enemy. Having spies amongst them he had been apprized of their intent and had not only hastened to the assistance of Raz Andaz, but had sent off messengers on swift dromedaries to warn him of his peril; but the latter had unfortunately been waylaid and put to death by another

party of these miscreants, so that the unfortunate Rajah remained in ignorance of his peril. The tempest, under cover of which the wretches had executed their purpose, had impeded the progress of the yellow warriors,* so that they had come too late to avert the hand of destiny, but early enough to fall upon the destroyers with all the proofs of guilt upon them. Allah had evidently filled the ears of the Thugs with the cotton of neglect, and blinded their eyes with the smoke of confidence; thus they were surprized in the very ripeness of sin, and ere they could quit the spot on which they sat and stood, the tent screens and hangings were torn down, a forest of spears, scimitars, and glittering fire arms bristled around, and the air rung with shouts of "May the Seiks prosper! In the name of our God—the only God—strike—slay—let none be spared!"

Pir Lena Sing, whose valour was worthy of a less infamous cause, no sooner heard this sentence of extirmination, than he sprung to his feet, determining to cut his way through

* The national and military colour of the Seiks is yellow. Thence they are often called "the yellow backs," as the Persians were originally called "red heads" from their red caps.

the Seiks or to perish in the attempt. Seizing a sword and buckler he adjured the bravest of his people to follow his example ; but before one of these could obey, the rattle of a thousand matchlocks reverberated through the woods, and the lightning of a thousand sabres flashed through the murky air.

The doom of the assassins was sealed—their hour was come. The work of carnage commenced, volley succeeded volley, and did not terminate until the whole band of Thugs had either fallen beneath the shots and swords of the avengers, or were captured and reserved for more terrible punishment.

For some time the dauntless Pir Lena withstood the tempest, but seeing that Eblis had deserted him and his, he resolved to avail himself of the smoke and confusion, and if possible to make his escape through the inner apartments, which had remained almost intact. Tearing aside the draperies, that closed the entrance to the Rajah's nuptial chamber, he darted through the opening, and was about to escape on the other side, when his eye fell upon my unhappy mistress, who with dishevelled hair, disordered dress and brow more pallid than the drooping lilies of her native lakes, stood clinging to one of the furthest tent poles, in an attitude of agony and despair.

At the sight of the beautiful maiden, of whose recovery he had renounced all hope—at the sight of her, whom he loved with more tenderness than he had ever loved created thing—for whom he would have abandoned his hopes of life in this, and of immortality in the next world—nay, for whom he would have renounced the terrible Goddess, whom he had worshipped from his infancy;—at the sight of her, to obtain possession of whom, he had planned and executed this last abomination, Pir Lena stopped, and trembled, as if he stood before the judgment seat of Allah. But he quickly recovered himself, and casting aside all fear and remorse, only thought of present gratification and future vengeance. Reckless of the doom that hovered over him and his, reckless of the balls that hissed like flying serpents around him, the Thug chieftain, whose manly figure and exceeding beauty might have made him an object of admiration, even in the presence of the arch-angel Gabriel, flew to the side of Dil Bar, encircled her with his arms, pressed her to his bosom, and beseeched her, in accents of passionate tenderness, not to lose a moment in following him.

But, if Allah had filled the lovely Cashmorian's heart with the softest flowers of love, he had also embellished her mind with the purest

fruits of virtue. A sudden revolution, therefore, took place in her sentiments, and her soul now recoiled with repentance, at the thought of having devoted her affections to one, whose hideous trade was that of death and robbery. Regarding him with every symptom of loathing and terror, she disengaged herself from his embrace, exclaiming, "*Astagferoolah!* that I should be the partner of a Ghole;" and then adding, "may Allah take pity on me," she darted with the speed of lightning into the innermost chamber, wherein Fatmeh and the other slaves had taken refuge.

CHAPTER VIII.

“EXPLANATIONS and digressions always chill,” said I, addressing the little story teller; “I have therefore been unwilling to interrupt your narrative, by begging you to account more clearly for the resuscitation of the Thug chieftain. But I now request you to solve the mystery, and to explain how he was able to succeed in his murderous projects.”

“I have no will but yours,” replied the little quire; and so saying it thus continued: You must know, Effendi, that Pir Lena Sing, although grievously wounded by Dil Bar’s father, was picked up from the canal, by his companions, and conveyed to a place of safety. For a long time he remained in imminent danger, balancing between life and death; but at length he recovered and again attempted to gain access to Dil Bar. Her father, how-

ever, caused her to be watched with such extreme vigilance, that a fly could scarcely enter her chamber. Consequently it was impossible for her lover to communicate with her, or even to succeed in apprizing her of his safety, and constancy.

At length the news of Dil Bar's marriage with Raz Andaz, and her intended departure for the Penjab, reached Pir Lena's ear, and filled his heart with jealousy and a thirst for revenge. In order to prepare means for appeasing the one and satisfying the other, he dispatched messengers to his tribesmen and their confederates, who formed one of the most daring and numerous gangs of Thugs in all the East. Indeed, he was himself sprung from a family which had exercised Thugee during many generations. Although young, he was no less celebrated amongst the followers of Dahwee Khalee for his cunning and duplicity, than he was for his matchless valour and beauty. He consequently possessed great influence over them, and the more so, since he was supposed not only to be especially favoured by the Goddess of Destruction, but to be a lineal descendant from one of the very Thugs, whose accursed features and trade are depicted

by the hands of Genii, upon the walls of the caverns of Ellora.

Inspired and protected by the foul divinity, whom these ministers worship, Pir Lena Sing, or rather Jemmadar Khan, for that was his real name, had watched Dil Bar's departure from Sireenagar under the disguise of an old Hindoo hag, and had subsequently passed the caravan upon the road under the garb of a courier. He had thus ascertained all the particulars relative to her marriage, as well as the precise day and spot for her meeting with the Rajah.

Having arrived within a few days' journey of the place selected for the latter purpose, he summoned the various gangs of Thugs connected with his tribe, and bade them disguise themselves as pilgrims proceeding to Benares. His object in so doing was to inspire pity, and even contempt amongst the Rajah's people, who were mostly Moslems. He thus lulled all suspicion, and paved the way to the perpetration of one of the most daring enterprizes ever achieved by these treacherous demons.

The number of Thugs that were assembled on the morning of Dil Bar's arrival at Bavan Mirdah being triple that of their intended victims, a council of elders was held, and it was

decided, that the deed of death should take place on the very night of the Rajah's marriage, that is to say, if the omens, without which the Thugs rarely execute their nefarious plans, should prove favourable.

It was the will of Allah that all things should turn out as they desired. As Jemmadar Khan and a dozen of the most inveterate old Thugs sat by the way side, discussing the manner and the exact time for executing their purpose, an ass began braying, first to the right, and then, after a short interval, to the left of the spot where they sat. This omen being looked upon by the Thugs as a direct command from Dawhee Khalee for the immediate perpetration of any act of wickedness they may be engaged in, orders were issued for the whole band to prepare for action, and to await the signal.

Eblis still further favoured the machinations of the Thugs, by lashing up the tempest, under cover of which they were better enabled to execute their schemes, which they carried into effect so suddenly and promptly, that the unfortunate Raz Andaz, with the whole of his escort, exceeding four hundred souls, thus fell victims to the insatiable blood-thirstiness of these wretches.

Imagining, probably, that I might not give

credit to its story, the little quire now exclaimed—You may suppose, my Agha, that I am seeking to cram your ears with falsehoods ; but, by the beard and eyes of Ali, my words are true. For motives best known to himself, Allah not only permits such nefarious deeds to be accomplished, but no less frequently averts the hand of protection from the victims. Indeed, there are those who affirm that the Lord of the Universe selects the Thugs as instruments for reeking his vengeance upon those who deviate from the right path. This belief is, doubtless, one of the causes why they inspire so much dread into the hearts of the Sultans and Rajahs whose duty it is to take up the sword, and root them from the face of the earth.

Here the story teller paused ; but as I continued transcribing its observations without attempting to reply, it proceeded thus :

Maddened by Dil Bar's resistance and regardless of her expressions of terror and aversion, Jemmadar Khan pursued her into the inner compartment of the tent ; and, ere she could take refuge amongst her women, who sat huddled in a corner, tearing their garments and screaming with all their might, he darted upon the affrighted girl, seized her with one

hand, and lifted her up as easily as a royal falcon pounces upon and carries off a partridge. Then bounding towards the side nearest the jungle, he cut his way through the outer tent screens and disappeared amidst the almost impervious covert of reeds and bamboos that towered around.

It was fortunate for him that he did so, for scarcely had his shadow disappeared, ere a detachment of Seik warriors passed that way, dragging forward a score of wounded Thugs, whom they were conducting to the spot, where the Seik commander was preparing to sit in judgment upon some of their companions.

The justice of this chieftain was as swift and almost as silent as the arrow that flies from the bow. It was terrible also, but less so than the crimes he avenged. Gholam Sing, (for that was the Serdar's name) neither waited to ask questions, or paused to mete out retribution after ordinary forms. He cared not the rind of an orange for the leprosy, which it is believed will afflict all those who venture to molest the Thugs. He snapt the fingers of defiance at palsy, blindness, spilling of blood, perpetual sneezing and all other afflictions that are said to be the inevitable lot of all those

who do justice upon those assassins. His decision was prompt and his purpose unflinching.

No sooner had his officers informed him that the captives awaited his behest, than he dismounted from his war horse, and seated himself beneath a tree, where he proceeded to business in the most methodical and tranquil manner.

First he filled his mouth with opium pills, of which he was exceeding fond, in despite of the dislike evinced by the Seiks for the use of tobacco. Then he loosened his girdle, stretched forth his feet, and half shut his eyes, as if he was going to take a nap, which probably might have been the case, had not one of his slaves presented him with a cup of wine, which he quaffed off at a mouthful. This being done, he issued his orders in a voice as placid and serene, as if he were about to hold amical council with his prisoners, or to confer upon them, some of those richly ornamented bows of honour which it is the Seik custom to present to distinguished strangers.

What followed is soon told. The prisoners, who neither sued for mercy, or sought to avoid their fate by confession, were led forth

in couples, and were dealt with according as Gholam Sing nodded to the right, left, or front.

These signals seemed to be perfectly understood by his soldiers. For the shadows of the adjoining forest had not diminished a span's breadth, ere a portion of the wretches were either hung by the heels to the branches, and left to be devoured by wild beasts, or were buried alive in the graves of their victims; whilst the remainder were crushed beneath the feet of elephants, or blown to shreds from the mouths of cannon. In short, the opium pills in Gholam Sing's mouth had not half dissolved, ere the whole of Jemmadar Khan's followers, with the exception of one man, had paid the forfeit of their crimes."

Interrupting the narrator at this moment, I exclaimed, "The destroying angel seems to have followed your footsteps from the mountains of Caubul to the plains of the Penjab. You have given us nothing but descriptions of deaths, murders and executions, from first to last."

"You bade me narrate what I have witnessed, and I have done so," was the answer.

"Your destiny has indeed been sorrowful," replied I, "and the fate of those unfortunate

women, whose adventures you have recounted still more so. Zilmee, Gulabi, Taje Nour, and probably Dil Bar, all have perished."

"*Tchekunem*? (what can I do): it was so ordained," sighed forth the paper.

"In truth," rejoined I, "your virgins merit all the joys promised to the damsels of Paradise, as a compensation for the tribulations and sufferings they underwent in this world."

"They are, doubtless, partaking at this moment of the blessings assured to martyrs in that abode of delight," ejaculated the paper.

"Our readers would be much better pleased, had you contrived to allot to these poor women a small foretaste of heavenly joys, by rendering them a little less miserable on earth," said I.

"It is no proof of discrimination on your part to point the shaft of rebuke against me, for faithfully recounting what my eyes have seen and my ears have heard, in lieu of following, as you seem to desire, the example of the story tellers of Bagdad and Stamboul, who, regardless of facts, invent tales to flatter the various tastes of their different auditors."

"My object is likewise to amuse," rejoined I, "therefore I shall be none the worse pleased, if you follow the example of those versatile ear-charmers."

“ It has been the will of Allah that I should witness grievous scenes. If, therefore, it be your desire that I should seal my adventures with the wax of veracity, be it so! if not, let me repose in peace. You seem to be ignorant of the words of the sage, who says, ‘ if by speaking truth thou shouldst incur imprisonment, it is preferable to retaining liberty by uttering lies.’ ”

“ However marvellous and improbable your story may be, I have not hitherto impugned your veracity,” replied I; “ but, as our production must go forth to a mirth-loving public, who would rather laugh at fiction, than weep at truth, I am bound to consider the effect our words may produce upon them.’ ”

“ Methinks,” retorted the quondam Cashmere, “ that you English unbelievers are not all so dove-hearted as to be overwhelmed with affliction at a tale of sorrow, nor is your portion of Frangistan such a garden of probity and lenity, as to make the commission of crime, and the chastisement of malefactors either novel or repugnant.”

“ We certainly do not spoil the child by sparing the rod,” answered I.

“ No! by the beard of my father, that do you not,” answered my story teller. “ For

you, above all other Franks, are said to be wonderfully rigid in exacting the price of blood, even to the taking of life for an eye or an ear, according to your devil coloured law, instead of allowing the offender to appease the wrath of the offended by an equivalent in sheep, cattle, goods or monies."

"Our black act, to which I suppose you allude," said I, "is certainly very harsh; but the inevitable result of your system is to place the rich beyond the reach of punishment. But what has this to do with our tale?"

"The interruption came from you," answered the paper. "Y Allah! you are like unto the dam which, being placed across the mill stream, asked the waters why they ceased to flow? Let me observe also, that you reproved me for describing the fate of Gulabi, and my other female possessors. Now, by my soul, speak. Do not many of your unveiled women commit self-murder? Do not some die by the hands of their adorers, and have you not numerous *timar khaneh* (mad-houses), wherein languish many, whose brains have been turned topsy-turvy from the effects of love? Then again have not some of your great Omrahs and Pachas interchanged wives, as complacently as friends change turbans in

the East?—and, what is still more filthy, have not other Lords and Serdars unblushingly filled their purses with the price of their spouse's shame, paid to them by order of those hair-turbaned expounders of law and faith, your Cadis and Mollah Bashis."

"That is too true, I fear," rejoined I; "but the immorality of us Franks has no connection with your adventures, in which there is no relief. They are but a continual repetition of the same murderous descriptions, from beginning to end. Hearken, my friend!" added I, "our space, like the moon far advanced in its third quarter, wanes apace. Let us proceed, therefore, with all possible despatch, and above all, let us endeavour to avoid the example of that said moon, whose light decreases in proportion as its age augments. You said that one Thug had escaped. How came he to be thus fortunate? We have no time to lose—be quick."

"Gently! gently!" answered the paper, "a camel, if he be allowed to take his own time, will journey from the Indus to the Caspian, with undiminished vigour and alacrity. But if he be overdriven, or expected to curvet and gallop like a high bred Turcoman horse, he will become restive, cast himself on the ground, and abandon his load by the way side."

Having disburthened itself of this pithy observation, to which I deemed it prudent not to reply, the little quire resumed its tale as follows :

Scarcely had the Serdar's people surrounded the tents and commenced the work of retribution, ere one of the Thugs, named Nazir Sahib, fell upon his face, and abandoning his comrades to their fate, crawled into that part of the tent where Dil Bar had witnessed the inhuman rites. As much intent upon plunder as security, the brute no sooner saw my unhappy mistress, than he sprung towards her, tore away the jewels and gold coins that ornamented her head and person, and then seeing me reposing upon a velvet cushion, close to the nuptial couch, he hastily wound me round his waist. Then, cautiously uplifting the bottom of the tent on the side where the Rajah's horses were picketed, he crept under their bellies and darting forth with as much speed, as if he possessed as many legs as the *Chehel Sitoon* (forty columns) palace of Ispahan has pillars, succeeded in reaching the adjoining jungle where he clambered into a lofty tree, whence he and I witnessed all that passed.

I marvelled exceedingly at my new possessor not continuing his flight, in lieu of thus

exposing himself to imminent peril by remaining almost within hearing of such an eagle-eyed death-giver as Gholam Sing. But it appeared that Nazir Sahib, who was a man of immense strength and desperate resolution, had his motives for so doing. For, as soon as the shades of night fell upon the earth, he cautiously descended from his hiding place, and crawled upon all fours towards the camp, where the Seiks were either reposing after their fatigues, or carousing in honour of their victory.

So silently and stealthily did Nazir Sahib creep along the ground, that he might have been mistaken for an aligator, or for Eblis, when Allah cut off his limbs and commanded him to grovel henceforth upon his belly. Favoured by the extreme darkness and noise of the camp, he succeeded in approaching close to the defunct Rajah's tent, wherein the Seik commander, and several other chiefs, were enjoying their usual dose of strong drinks, in which, according to the fashion of these infidels, they were wont to indulge in no measured quantities.

A single sentinel guarded the entrance. Listlessly reclining upon his spear, this man was awaiting the moment when the cries of

“Be ready! be ready!” resounding from the neighbouring watch-tent, should announce the time for relieving him from his post.

The lamps placed upon the floors gleamed through the tent opening, and not only shone brightly upon his burnished corslet, but lighted up his countenance and bare nether limbs. He was a youth of mild and comely aspect; light made, but strong and sinewy. He was evidently a true born Seik also, for he was distinguished by those striking characteristics, which Allah has imprinted on the faces of those unbelievers in a manner more marked and peculiar, if possible, than he has upon the visages of those insatiable gain-hunters, the filthy Jews.

Pleasing thoughts seemed to flit across his mind, and animate his features. He smiled, nodded, and mumbling the betel leaf that swelled out one side of his face, he raised his black eyes to the few stars that glimmered in the dark firmament, and wafted a kiss with his hand to the clouds, as if he were imploring the night breeze to convey his salutations to the cheek of his beloved. His thoughts were probably far away with the damsel of his soul, whom he had left upon the banks of the Ravee, when he abandoned his native village in order to follow the ascending fortunes of Runjeet

Sing. Perhaps, also, he was calculating the distance that separated him from the object of his affections, and counting the months that must elapse ere he could return and embrace her as his wife. For you must know, my Agha, that the Seiks are wonderfully constant and faithful in their affections, in despite of their devouring the flesh of the unclean beast, and moistening it with forbidden drinks.

Whatever may have been the nature of the youthful warrior's meditations, they were suddenly interrupted by a low, purring noise, like that of a panther's cub. This startled, and caused him not only to clench his weapon more firmly, but to withdraw two or three paces into the shade, in order that he might better descry surrounding objects, without being exposed to the glare of the tent-lights.

No sooner had he done this, than my devilish possessor, from whose mouth the noise proceeded, sprung upon his legs and darting forward, seized him by the throat, with the iron hold of death.

The struggle was short. Nazir Sahib, whose skill and strength in the art of strangling had raised him to great eminence amongst the Thugs, grasped his victim as a lion would have grasped a lamb. After a few vain efforts

to shake off his assailant, the unfortunate youth dropped his weapon, and sunk lifeless to the ground. Then, as he laid quivering in the last agonies of life, his murderer dragged his body further into the shade, and robbed him of his yellow tunic, turban and arms.

Having quickly attired himself in these spoils, Nazir Sahib boldly placed himself at the door of the tent in which the Thugs had performed their infernal ceremonies. There he paused awhile in order to see what was passing inside; but many seconds had not elapsed ere he slung his shield over his back, grasped his javelin firmly, and passed within. His object in risking this daring deed was to recover, if possible, the consecrated pick-axe, which he had abandoned in the first moment of surprise, when he fled from the tent.

As Satan would have it, no one had meddled with this abominable tool; so that Nazir Sahib, whom the half besotted Seiks mistook for one of their own people, was not only enabled to pass freely amongst them, but succeeded in recovering the implement, to which he seemed to attach more value than to his life. Having accomplished this feat, he again sallied forth, and hastened to the spot where Gholam Sing's finest horse stood ready saddled. In a moment

more he loosened the tethers, slipped the bridle into its mouth, sprung upon its back, and striking both heels into its flanks, soon left its owner and his troopers far behind.

At length, after three days' journey, during which he merely rested to refresh himself and his steed at some villages inhabited by people of his own hideous trade, he reached the place of his abode, where he quickly assembled the remaining elders of his tribe, and narrated the issue of the expedition.

Although I was not present at this meeting, I heard say that the old grey beards invoked curses upon Jemmadar Khan, and accused him of being the cause of this misfortune, by neglecting the omens and signs, which these people are wont to consult ere they execute their schemes. They would have also immolated Nazir Sahib to their fury, had it not been against their creed to put each other to death, and above all if he had not given proofs of his devotion, by bringing back the consecrated pick axe; which they forthwith secreted in a deep well, in order to preserve it from mortal eye.

I likewise heard that the widows of several Thugs, who were Rajpoots, had resolved to burn themselves out of compliment to their

defunct husbands. But Nazir Sahib, being a sort of half Mussulman, gave himself no concern about this matter. Consequently after slaying and burying the Serdar's horse, that it might not lead to detection, he prepared himself for a journey to Lahore or Umritsir, where he hoped to find a good market for his jewels and other plunder.

CHAPTER IX.

ALTHOUGH my costly texture had lost little of its primitive lustre and brilliancy, Nazir Sahib determined to proceed to the latter of the two celebrated cities before mentioned, in order that I might be examined and cleansed by one of the shawl washers of that town, whose skill in this operation is notorious, not only throughout the Penjab, but all over the East. Besides Nazir, who was as clever in distinguishing the merits of a fine shawl, as he was expert in the use of the deadly noose, thought that he might perchance dispose of me, for a large sum, to one of the dealers from Caubul or Bokharah, or to one of the Frank Vakeels from beyond the Ganges. He built his hopes principally upon the latter, for he knew that these cunning go-betweens were accustomed not only to purchase second hand

stuffs, and foist them off as new upon their employers, but to buy the inferior shawls of Agra and Delhi, and swear by their souls that they were the produce of Cashmere; a deception which the shawl merchants of Frangistan have learned to imitate, with greater advantage to their own pockets than to the persons of their ignorant customers.

Having, therefore, carefully wrapped me up in a goat-skin package and secreted the jewels and pearls, taken from Dil Bar, in the folds of his turban, he resolved to avail himself of the first favourable moment to commence his journey.

It was not, however, until the expiration of several months that he was able to execute his plan. At length the omens showed themselves favourable, and he with four confederates, disguised as pedlars, mounted their horses and departed, determining not to let slip any opportunity that might occur by the way for executing their nefarious trade.

We were not long ere we encountered various travellers, but none of them were suited to the purpose of the Thugs. At last we overtook an old Moslem officer, named Rhoustam Soubadar, who had served in the Frank armies, and was returning with three servants to pass

the winter of his life at Lahore, after a pilgrimage to the celebrated shrine of Baoua Hak at Moultan.

Having soon discovered that the Soubadar was possessed of money and jewels of great value, and that he was also extremely devout, Nazir lost no time in endeavouring to scrape close acquaintance and to win his confidence. This was the more easily accomplished, since Nazir not only professed exceeding piety and pretended to be as devoted to Islam, as if he had been a Seyed, or descendant of the Prophet, but he took forth some of the stolen jewels and offered them for sale to the old man, saying, that he was a dealer in precious stones, but that he had no desire to receive their value until they should reach Lahore. This mark of liberality and confidence completely lulled all suspicion, and caused the Soubadar to lift up his hands and extol Nazir, as the most honest and well conditioned dealer in all the world.

But the more the rascally Nazir, and his confederates coaxed, and flattered the unsuspecting veteran, and the more they counted their beads, and repeated their profession of faith, the more determined were they to strangle their fellow traveller, as soon as circumstances should prove favourable. Wullah!

never were such five double-faced hypocrites ; for, as we halted a little before sun-rise upon the following Friday, in order that Rhoustam might make his ablutions and say his prayers with more than ordinary fervour upon that holy day, they also spread their carpets, went through all the required ablutions, even to complete immersion in a neighbouring stream, and then turning their faces towards the Kehlah, prostrated themselves, and appeared to perform their devotions with all their souls. But in lieu of praying, the sons of burned fathers took this opportunity to lay their heads together, and to settle that they should carry their nefarious project into effect, at the resting place, where they intended to pass the ensuing evening.

The spot selected for the *bail* (death-place,) was, in truth, well adapted for the purpose, being extremely secluded, and situated upon the borders of a rapid stream, whose foaming current, dashing over rocks and precipices, would save them the trouble of burying the bodies. It was in all other respects admirably suited for rest and enjoyment, being carpetted by sloping banks of verdure, enamelled with an hundred sweet scented flowers, and protected from the sun's rays by a lofty canopy of

foliage, from amidst which a host of nightingales, and Shah-bul peeled forth a soul-inspiring chorus.

Rhoustam was so much delighted with this spot, that it required no great effort to induce him to halt, and order his tent to be pitched, at a short distance from the stream. Being exceedingly pleased with Nazir's show of devotion, and constant attentions, the good old soldier invited him and his companions to partake of a pillau and a kabob of lamb, prepared by his servants for the evening's meal, which they washed down with water, sweetened with orange flowers, and lump sugar.

Having eaten their fill, Rhoustam offered them kaleeans and coffee, and carried his courtesy so far as to present Nazir with a cup from his own hand, and to exchange pipes with him, which, you must know, is looked upon as an exceeding mark of favour, from a superior to one beneath him in rank. All this caused them to be wondrous merry, and to scoff at the Seiks, for regarding smoking as an abomination, although they do not scruple to indulge in other forbidden things. In short, the single hearted old officer was in such spirits, and so well disposed to be loquacious, that he not only unfolded the state of his

affairs, and fortune, and disclosed where his money and valuables were concealed, but recounted his past adventures, which, since they merely related to events, that occurred whilst he was in the Frank service, I will not pause to relate.

Nazir and his villainous companions affected to be deeply interested in the Soubadar's tale. Clutching their beardless chins with one hand, and supporting their heads with the other, they pretended to listen with deep attention, although in fact their thoughts were intent, all the while, upon their deadly project, and this not with the fanatic hope of benefiting their souls, but for the mere sake of plunder.* Utterly regardless of that sacred law of hospitality, which forbids men to smite those of whose salt they have partaken, the rascals merely awaited the moment when

* The Thugs pretend, and some really believe, that those who fall by their hands will be sure of eternal beatitude, and that each murder committed by them is an additional passport to paradise. They affirm that plunder is the result, and not the primary object, of their crimes. With some, this monstrous belief is sincere, and they consequently commit murder as an act meritorious in the eyes of their Deity; and follow it by robbing as the next thing most likely to propitiate Dawee Khalee.

they might rise, and cast the fatal noose around their victim's neck. This they determined to do as soon as Rhoustam's servants should have devoured the remnants of the repast, and retired to sleep beside their horses.

The patience of the Thugs was not put to any protracted test, for ere long the Soubadar's followers scooped up the last grain of rice, picked the last bones of the lamb to the very marrow, licked their fingers, scoured their copper kettles, placed them to dry in the sun, and then rolling themselves up in their horse rugs soon fell to sleep, and snored as loud as a yoke of buffaloes.

No sooner was Nazir aware of this, than he coughed three times, as if his wind-pipe had been tickled with a Thibet cow's tail. He then snapped the joints of his thumbs, in a manner so loud and peculiar, that they cracked like the whips of those pig-tailed dung mongers, the French *soroodjee* (postillions), who strive to compensate for the stiffness of their horses' joints, by the pliability of their own wrists and elbows.

Upon this, two of his companions, who sat somewhat behind, crept stealthily forward, whilst a third loosening his sash, under pretence of giving greater ease to his body, rose,

and cautiously approached their unsuspecting fellow traveller.

Little did the liberal-minded Soubadar imagine, that such remorseless tigers crouched by his side, or that he stood with one foot upon the edge of the valley of death. Utterly unconscious of the doom that hung over him, he stretched forth his legs complacently, and exclaiming in the words of the poet, "Bring us glad tidings, O Bulbul, and leave all doleful news to the owl," he talked of days to come, as if he held destiny under his girdle, whilst Nazir amused him with protestations of respect, and eternal devotion. Indeed the cunning villain carried his hypocrisy so far as to remind Rhoustam, that the sun was half way on its downward course, and that it was consequently time for them to say their afternoon prayer. This he did, because he knew that the Soubadar would infallibly turn his face towards Mecca, and would be too much engrossed in his pious occupation, to pay any attention to those around him.

Rhoustam had not time to rise upon his knees, and commence his prostrations, ere the breath of the scoundrels almost fanned his turban. Already the hands of the two foremost were raised to seize his shoulders, whilst

those of the third twisted the deadly noose in his sash. Already Nazir clenched the thumb of his left hand, in the palm of his right, in order to give the death signal.* Already he, and the fifth son of Lot prepared to spring to the assistance of their confederates. Already their eyes ate into the good man's liver, and they counted his property as their own, when a hare suddenly crept from the adjoining thicket, on the right hand, and seated herself immediately before them.

Rhoustam was so passionately fond of the chase that in despite of his piety, he would not perhaps have scrupled to kill game, even had he been upon a pilgrimage to Mecca;† so he no sooner saw the animal tranquilly squatting

* There is a curious coincidence between this death signal of the Thugs, and that used by the Romans in their public games. With the Thugs, the signal consists in seizing the thumb of the left hand, and pressing it back until the nail touches the shoulder; with the Romans, the signal for the death of a captive, or conquered gladiator, consisted in merely jerking back the thumb over the shoulder. I leave it to others to decide whether both customs have not the same oriental origin.

† It is strictly forbidden to hunt or shoot, whilst on the pilgrimage.

before him, than he interrupted his prayer, and stretched forth his hand towards his carbine. Indeed, had he actually discharged his weapon, the hare could not have exhibited greater alarm, or distress. For, after raising itself for an instant upon its hinder legs, it suddenly uttered two or three piercing cries, and darted out of sight.

This singular occurrence elicited no other remark from Rhoustam, than that of "*Shooker! Shooker!* (Bravo!) Are my thoughts bullets, that they wound by intent?" But it produced a much more powerful, and fortunate effect upon the assassins. Had the goddess of destruction risen from the earth, the villains could not have been more astounded. It was evident that this apparition had either turned their hearts into water, or filled them with the milk of compassion. For in lieu of executing their purpose, they dropped their uplifted hands, readjusted their girdles, and resuming their seats, permitted Rhoustam to finish his prayers without molestation.

Do not, however, suppose that this change in their intentions was the result of pity or remorse, such sentiments never entered into the breast of any man or woman belonging to this race of Pharoah. No—it proceeded from

superstitious terror. For, it is affirmed that the Thugs consider the appearance of a hare, at the moment when they are about to consummate a murder, as a most important, and infallible omen. Thus, if it come from the left, and pass quietly onwards, the omen is regarded as extremely propitious. But if it appear upon the right side, pause and utter cries, such as these creatures never put forth, unless wounded or seized by the hand, its cries are considered as a warning from the goddess, that some grievous calamity will befall them, unless they abandon or postpone their project.*

Whether or not, Eblis is really permitted to warn these wretches in the above mentioned manner, Allah can alone tell, but certain is it that Nazir's assistants had scarcely reseated themselves, ere a cloud of dust arose in the

* Here again, is a curious coincidence between the superstitions of the Thugs, and those of the Romans, in regard to their belief, in fortunate or unfortunate omens, derived from the flights of birds, and the examination of the entrails of animals. The Afghan custom of examining the blade bones of sheep for this purpose, bears an equally striking analogy to the customs of the Roman and Greek Priests; and may be traced from Hindostan, through Egypt, to Greece and Rome.

north, and in a few moments, there appeared a body of about forty fierce looking men mounted upon shaggy horses, some brandishing naked swords, others poising lances, and others balancing the heavy iron quoits which are used by many of the Penjab tribes as offensive missiles.

Rhoustam no sooner saw them approach, than he sprung to his legs, aroused his servants, called for his arms, and exclaimed, "*Billah ool Azeem!* (By the omnipotent), If you have any regard for your life, Nazir Sahib—arise! Prepare your weapons! Let your companions arm themselves also, and show that they are men."

"What need have we for apprehension?" replied one of the latter. "They are only Seik soldiers. Harken to their cries."

"Truly, truly are they Seiks, pure blooded Seiks!" answered old Rhoustam, seizing his gun.

"We are therefore safe from all danger," observed Nazir. "We are now in Runjeet Sing's territory. May his shadow increase. We travel under the protection of his laws."

"Laws!" re-echoed Rhoustam. "What do these egregious Kaffirs care for laws! Oof!

are you blind? Do you not see that they are mad-brained Nihangs and Achalee,* who snap the fingers of defiance at all laws."

"How know you that they are of that unclean race?" demanded Nazir, who, however, no sooner heard these words, than he gladly armed himself with one of Rhoustam's fowling pieces, and bade his companions follow the Soubadar's directions.

"Know!" retorted the veteran. "Why a new born asses foal might know them by their small twisted linen turbans, entwined with black cord; by their bare limbs; by their long and grisly beards, and by the dirty yellow girdles which they fasten round their filthy garments."

"Let them be what they may! I spit on their beards," said Nazir. "I trust in the security of the Maharajah's power."

"Security!" retorted Rhoustam. "Secu-

* The Nihangs or Achalee, are a sect of fanatic Seiks, who look upon themselves as alone professing the true faith of these people. They not only regard the rest of their countrymen as heretics and schismatics, but think it lawful to rob and murder them, whenever they can do so with impunity. They are consequently out-lawed, and punished with merciless severity, whenever they fall into the hands of the king's officers.

rity indeed! Wullah! These perverse dogs turn security out of doors, wherever they shew their unwashed faces. Oof! the devilish sect of Nimrod care as little for the Maharajah, as they would for a one eyed ram.* They are at war with all mankind."

The valiant old soldier had, in the mean time, armed himself and companions, stationed them behind the baggage by way of a rampart, and prepared to repulse the fanatics, in case they should attack his party. Scarcely had he completed his defensive preparations, ere the Nihangs arrived within a short distance, and then checked their horses. After a few moments' consultation, three of their leaders, who were as wild and ill-favoured in appearance as the shaggy boars which abound in the woods of the Penjab, advanced a few paces and exclaimed, "Whose dogs are you that presume to obstruct our path, and dare to extend the arm of opposition before the children of the true faith?"

"You are welcome! The world is large! There is room for all in it. Peace be with you!" replied Rhoustam, wishing if possible to avoid coming to blows, by using civil language.

* Runjeet Sing, the king or Maharajah of Lahore, had only one eye.

"Curses on peace!" shouted out one of the madmen.

"Of what faith are ye?" bawled forth a second.

"Speak, or we strike," roared out the third poisoning his quoit.

"*Allumdooilah!* (Praise be to Allah.) We are Moslems," answered the Soubadar. "True believers—who have no desire to meddle with you or yours."

"May the Seik religion prosper! Curses on all others!" roared out the whole body of Nihangs.

"May their enemies be dispersed like rice chaff! War upon them and theirs," screeched forth the first chief, grinding the stumps of his black teeth.

"War! war! war!" re-echoed the rest of the gang brandishing their weapons, and urging forward their horses, within pistol shot of Rhoustam's barricade.

"Curses upon all degenerate seceders and heretics! Anathemas upon all who do not see as we see—think as we think, and believe as we believe," exclaimed their leader, reining back his horse, and thereby causing his followers to follow his example.

"May our blessed prophet, on whom be

eternal beatitude, cause these maledictions to recoil upon your own hearts and souls ;” retorted Rhoustam, whose blood boiled in his veins, at these imprecations.

“Anathemas on your false prophet! May all the flies of the Penjab torment his naked body,” replied the second fanatic.

“May the consecrated cows’ tails,* used by our priests to brush away the dust from the altars of our faith, be converted into burning scourges, wherewith to lash his impure soul into the lowest pit,” added a third.

“*Laahnet be Shaitan!* What hideous blasphemy is the unclean Kaffir uttering,” ejaculated Rhoustam. “By my father’s grave, I believe that he mistakes the hair of my beard, for mere *kat* (down.)” Deeming it prudent however, to conceal the lamp of wrath beneath the mantle of endurance, he raised his voice, and exclaimed, “If your words are addressed to us, brothers, you do but eat dirt to no purpose. For, by the breath of Omar, on whom be never failing peace, if you raise the

* The white cows’ tails of Thibet, which are remarkable for their bushy and soft hair, are used by the Seik priests, as fans for driving away insects, and dust from the altars, and shrines of their temples.

hand of violence to support the tongue of intolerance, you shall quickly see that we are men. Begone then I say! Begone, and leave us in repose—or it will be the worse for you.” So saying, he dropped upon one knee, cocked his gun, and levelled it at the Nihang’s body.

Being without fire-arms, and seeing the muzzles of several guns pointed towards them, the fanatics thought proper to lower their tone, so one replied, “Are your bodies crammed with combustibles, that you are afraid of exploding, by the contact of hot words, like those accursed iron balls, which the infidel Franks have cast for that one eyed old scorpion Runjeet Sing?”

“Avert the muzzles of your guns,” added his comrade. “We intend no harm.”

“We are wearied and hungry,” said the third. “We have ridden many miles.”

“Let food be given to us, and we will proceed on our course,” echoed the other. “Although your faith is an abomination, and your lives are in our hands, be liberal, and we will not injure a hair of your beards.”

“Is it the custom, for those who seek to fill their bellies with rice, from other men’s stores, to cram offal down their benefactors’

throats, by way of payment?" demanded Rhoustam in reply.

"We want full stomachs, not empty questions," retorted the first Nihang.

"Beware how you excite our choler, with insolent taunts," added the second.

"We are like fine gunpowder," exclaimed the third. A spark may ignite us, and then we distinguish neither friends nor foes."

"Mashallah! Your star is evidently upon the ascendant, since it has thrown you in the way of true believers, whose first duty is hospitality," calmly rejoined the soldier. "Dismount therefore, place yourselves at a respectful distance, and please God, we will do our best to whiten your faces, with such provisions as we can afford."

"Of what nature is your food—pure or impure?" demanded the eldest chief, as he rested the butt end of his lance upon the ground, and prepared to descend from the small blanket covered pad, which served him for a saddle.

"My servants shall furnish you with rice, salt and oil, which you may cook after your own fashion," answered Rhoustam.

"Give us wine also," exclaimed the second Nihang, "for our souls are faint, and require strengthening."

“Let us have meat likewise,” added his comrade. “Swines’ meat, if you have no other—for our bodies are weak from fasting.”

“*Khōda na Kunud* (Heaven forbid)!” ejaculated Rhoustam, scarcely able to control his anger—“What sort of *Bud Reish* (bad beards) do you take us for, that we should carry our own damnation about with us, in the form of forbidden liquors, and the flesh of the unclean beast? *Astagferoolah!*” continued he spitting as he spoke, “Do you take me for a Kaffir? Wullah! You may strengthen your souls with pure water, of which there is an abundance hard by, and you may quicken your bodies with a kabob of your own horse flesh, after the Tartar fashion; but may I die a Christian, if you get either wine or flesh from me. I will not offer you pipes either,” added he smiling maliciously, “since I know that you pure bred Seiks, look upon tobacco as an abomination.”

The fanatics who seemed to be sore pressed for food, and who looked as lean as old weazles, did not seem disposed to quarrel with Rhoustam’s offer of the rice and oil, or to lose more time in bandying words, with a man of such resolute character, so they dismounted, and having turned their half famished horses to graze amidst the rich herbage growing by the

river side, some collected dry sticks for fuel, whilst others unfastened the brass kettles,* that hung to their saddles, and prepared to cook the bag of rice, furnished to them by the liberal old Moslem.

* Moslems use copper kettles—Hindoos and Seiks, brass utensils for cooking. That which is considered clean by the one, is looked upon as impure by the other.

CHAPTER X.

WHILST the subordinate Nihangs were occupied in preparing their meal, the three chiefs seated themselves under the shade of the umbrageous tree, beneath which Rhoustam had spread his carpet. Here they stretched themselves at their ease, and having taken a few opium pills from the Soubadar's inlaid box, their countenances relaxed from the accustomed ferocity that distinguishes these insane people, and they seemed disposed to be more communicative than is ordinarily the case with those who profess their austere principles.

"It must be admitted," said one of them, as he twitched back the long grisly beard that hung in wild disorder down to his waist, "it must be admitted, that if Satan has darkened one side of the face of that fortunate old heretic Runjeet Sing, he has lighted up the other ten-

fold; so that he sees as clearly, as though he had as many eyes as there are spots in a panther's skin."

"Oof! he never sleeps," exclaimed the second, "and what is worse, he seems to inspire all his chiefs, with equal watchfulness."

"Had it not been for their vigilance," added the third, "we should not have left our work incomplete. We should have made mince meat of the whole nest of heretics."

"Truly! truly!" answered his companion, "not one would have escaped. Old and young—all would have perished with their habitations."

"May your shadows never be less!" ejaculated Rhoustam, "but your words are mysterious. What unfortunates are these, who have incurred your wrath, and merited so terrible a fate as that from which, through the grace of Allah, they seemed to have escaped?"

"We speak of those who deserved death as heretics," replied the chief Nihang, gnashing his teeth and glaring like a wild bull. "They and all other incorrigibles merit no mercy at our hands."

"*Shooker Allah* (thanks be to Heaven) I am no fool—nor am I blind or deaf, I have seen many countries and witnessed strange

events," answered Rhoustam, "but I am still as much in the dark as if my eyes and ears were filled with clay."

"How should unbelievers like him see, hear, or understand," said one of the Nihangs, in an under tone.

"Yes! yes!" echoed his companion. "He and all other infidels may live in darkness until the last day, but they will have sufficient light in the next world, when they are thrust into the fire, destined to consume the obscene souls of their false prophet and all his race."

"What incredible filth are the brutes mumbling between their jaws. *Barick Ullah!* I have a mind to slay the blasphemers, and send them head foremost into the flames, to which they would fain devote others!" ejaculated Rhoustam. Being desirous, however, to know what outrage the fanatics had been committing, as well as to learn more of their faith, and practices, he curbed his indignation, and said,—“You spoke of burning and slaying. Say! Are you appointed of your God, to enforce his precepts with fire and wood? Do you believe that you have a commission from heaven to burn and slay all who are not of your faith?”

“May our religion prosper! Such is our creed,” answered the chieftain.

“We are commanded, by the very letter of that creed, to wage eternal war against all who differ from us, and more especially against those apostate Seiks, who have degenerated from the rigid principles of their forefathers, and deviated from the pure observances enjoined by our prophet Nanock, the founder of our blessed faith.”

“Ya Allah !” exclaimed Rhoustam. “Why you are as merciless as the French and Portuguese Nazareens whom that invincible old woman, my late mistress, has driven from all their possessions in Hindostan.* Oof! had those fanatics remained masters in the land, their priests would have made roast meat of every man, woman, and child that refused to thump their breasts after their fashion, or to rub their noses at the threshold of their false gods and saints; which latter are of both sexes, and more numerous than the monkeys of Guzerat.”

“We know nothing of the idolators of whom you speak,” replied the Nihang, “though we have often heard of the other rapacious old

* Rhoustam, whether in joke or earnest, evidently alluded to the general belief, that the invisible, and to the natives, incomprehensible Potentates of Leadenhall Street are not many, but one old Begum or Lady, who is gifted with immortality, and the dominion of the Seas.

daughter of Satan, who partly by the aid of gold, and partly by treachery or force, has obtained possession of half the world, and converted the necks of the mightiest Sultans, and Rajahs of the east into stirrups to her throne."

"Mashallah! It is the only word of sense the swine has uttered," said Rhoustam to Nazir Sahib in a low voice, "and my heart smites me, for having been an instrument in the old infidel woman's hand, for the subversion and destruction of so many true believers, above all others of that great prop of Islam, the dauntless Tippoo Sultan. My conscience never would have allowed me a moment's peace, had I not devoted the fourth of the jewels, and plunder which I gained in the wars, to the blessed shrine of the prophet at Moultan. *In-shallah!* (please God) this act with penitence and humility, will wash out my transgression, and open the gates of paradise for me." Then turning to the Nihang, he exclaimed, "Proceed and say, who were the people that incurred your wrath?"

"They were of the doomed sect, who have deviated from the right path," answered the chief.

"They inhabited a village two days' journey northwards," said the second brute. "We

sought to convince them of their errors, and to lead them back to the true observances for the benefit of their souls. But they stopped their ears with mud and laughed at our beards. So we waxed wrath, set fire to their habitations, and should infallibly have put the whole to death, had not our scouts brought intelligence, that a numerous body of the Maharajah's horse was within sight. Thereupon we had only time to throw half a dozen children into the flames, mount our steeds and ride without resting until we reached this spot. I have spoken."

"May their mother's graves be defiled by Moslem dogs," ejaculated Rhoustam, "by the wrath of Allah, the villains are worse than Nebuchadnezzar. They are an hundred fold more impious and cruel than these accursed sons of Satan, the blood-drinking Thugs. Is it not so, Nazir Sahib?"

"If they be half so bad as Thugs, they deserve to be thrust under Satan's arm pits," answered Nazir in a low voice, but without moving a muscle of his treacherous countenance or evincing any emotion. "But no matter," added he. "They will doubtless reap the reward of their sins in a hot place."

Scarcely had he uttered these words ere a

couple of Nihangs, who had been stationed as vedettes upon an elevated spot, galloped at full speed towards the party, and roused their comrades with shouts of "To horse! mount! mount! In the name of our blessed faith, mount! Fly, brothers! lose not a moment! our enemies are at hand! See, their foremost lance points already glisten through the distant foliage."

Having said this they urged their drooping horses towards the banks of the river, and left their commanders and comrades to follow their example. The latter were not long in obeying their warning, for pale with fear, they forthwith jumped up, and uttering such a chorus of maledictions as must have made Satan thrust his fingers into his ears, they seized their horses, sprung to their saddles and hastened, hurry, scurry, towards the stream, which, in despite of its precipitous banks and dangerous eddies, they determined to cross and place between themselves and their pursuers.

It was well for their eyes and heads that they did so, for the headmost fugitives had not reached the margin of the river, ere a body of about two hundred, horsemen, fully armed and admirably mounted emerged with the speed of wild asses from the wood, brandishing their

sabres and filling the air with shouts of, "Down with the outlaws! down with the bankrupt madmen! Let them surrender or die."

Rhoustam's heart rejoiced at the sight of the strangers, whose small turbans, steel skull caps and yellow tunics, partly concealed by corselets of chain-mail, plainly showed that they belonged to Runjeet Sing's disciplined cavalry, and he, therefore, knew that they would deliver him from all further risk of being molested by the Nihangs.

Couching their spears and levelling their flint lock carbines, which were made after the light Feringee models, the Maharajah's soldiers sounded their trumpets, and immediately divided into three bodies. One of these galloped to the right and the other to the left, whilst the third acting as a reserve, advanced at a slower pace along the direct track, which led towards Rhoustam's tents. So it was evident that they purposed surrounding the fanatics and cutting them off from the river.

Such in fact was the issue of the manœuvre, for although some few of the Nihangs succeeded in making their escape by swimming across the stream, the rest were either drowned in the eddies, or were overtaken and compelled to surrender. These latter were first well beaten

and then disarmed. After which they were pinioned with their hands behind their backs, and placed in a circle, there to await until the Seik commander thought proper to return towards Lahore, where he intended to proceed forthwith, in order that the captives might be judged and punished by Runjeet Sing himself.

An inevitable fate awaited them at his hands, and the gates of hope were closed against them, for in despite of that sovereign's aversion to take away the life of criminals, he had sworn to exterminate all people of this fanatic sect, who might fall into the hands of his officers.

This encounter was extremely fortunate for Rhoustam, who lost no time in explaining to the Seik commander, who he was, and how he came into such unseemly company.

This matter being cleared up to the satisfaction of all parties, Rhoustam obtained permission to accompany the Seiks to Lahore; so, after taking leave of Nazir, he departed about an hour before sun set, and left the latter and his companions to curse their evil star, for having deprived them of such a rich prize, and then to pursue their route to Umritsir, where they arrived in a few days without encountering any new adventure.

Having performed the requisite formalities

at the town gates, and having paid the necessary head tax and customs' duties, Nazir proceeded to a retired caravanserai, where he secured a lodging. This being accomplished, he lost no time in changing his pedlar's dress for one of greater respectability, and then folding me in a linen wrapper, slightly perfumed with musk, he placed me, with sundry other articles of plundered merchandize, under the arm of one of his confederates, all of whom he attired as servants.

Thus he had assumed the air of a merchant, well to do in the world. He then proceeded to the bazaar and entered a cook's shop, where he regaled himself with a dish of fowl broth, and a kabob of mutton, after which he smoked a kaleean, and then directed his steps to the abode of one Daoud Khan, a celebrated shawl washer, who lived hard by.

The house of this man, like most others of his trade, was distinguished by several red and yellow poles, projecting from the roof, the ends of which were decorated with strips of cloth and shawl, of various colours and devices, whilst the stuffs intrusted to his care for re-dying and cleansing were suspended upon lines stretched across the terrace, that crowned the upper story.

Independent of the above indications of the

proprietor's profession, a variety of earthen pipkins were ranged on each side of the threshold, or were placed under the awning that shaded the entrance. Some of these were filled with the rice paste, necessary for refreshing the palms and rosettes of shawls, others contained the rheeta nut or mungoo powder employed in purifying the plain parts, and others again were filled with the brilliant red, blue, yellow and green dyes, that are used by the shawl washers in their delicate trade, which consists not only in renovating and mending old shawls, but in giving additional smoothness and lustre to those newly imported from Cashmere, where they are seldom washed, but are conveyed to the general depot at Umritsir, in the same state as that in which they quit the loom.

As soon as Nazir entered the shop, he exchanged the usual compliments with the owner, who was both a cleanser of, and dealer in shawl goods. Having seated himself upon one of the strips of felt placed round the apartment for the convenience of customers, and having explained the object of his visit, Nazir bade his attendant draw me forth. He then exhibited me in the most favourable light, and accompanied this operation by enthusiastic encomiums

upon the wonderful diversity of my pattern, and the exquisite softness of my texture; pretending at the same time, that he had no desire to dispose of me, unless he should receive a very tempting offer.

Nazir had no occasion, however, to expend his breath in extolling my perfections, for Daoud Khan no sooner cast eyes upon me, than he was fully alive to my merits, and consequently resolved to obtain possession of me as quickly, and of course, as cheaply as possible. But, being as cunning as an old jackal, he affected to turn the cheek of contempt upon Nazir, and to depreciate my worth. Indeed, he extended the tongue of artifice so far as to exclaim,

“Mighty fortunate is it, brother, that you do not fasten your hopes of thrusting the treasures of Jemsheed under your breast cover, through the agency of that shawl. I have seen inferior articles certainly; but may I be grilled eternally as a cheat and liar, if it be not so much soiled, and if it has not lost so much of its original freshness, as to be scarcely worth the labour of cleansing.”

To this Nazir replied, “Softly, softly Daoud Khan! You laugh at your brother. Wallah! I did not come into the world with

closed eyes like a puppy. My name is Nazir Sahib. Thanks be to God! I can distinguish a white from a black thread, as early in the morning as any man breathing."

"That is something undoubtedly!" answered Daoud Khan, "but I would nevertheless recommend you to put on spectacles, when you next make your purchases. You will avoid eating much dirt thereby."

"Well, well," retorted Nazir, "it is useless, at all events, to present spectacles to those who wilfully thrust their heads into sacks. So, if you be neither disposed to offer the full value for that king of shawls, or to bestow the necessary care in restoring it to its pristine lustre—the sooner I depart the better."

They were in the act of discussing this matter; the one as apparently indifferent about selling, as the other seemed careless about purchasing, when the jingling of bells and the sound of female voices, merrily talking and laughing, were heard outside. In a moment more a war elephant, richly caparazoned, and bearing upon its back several unveiled women, stopped opposite the door, and knelt down in order that its fair riders might descend. This they did with the nimbleness of squirrels, and whilst half remained outside, the rest en-

tered and saluted Daoud Khan, with as much freedom as though they had been a party of Jews or Nazarenes.

This appeared wondrous strange to me ; but no words can depict my utter astonishment, when, upon looking at the foremost of the new comers, I instantly recognized the love-breathing features of my former mistress, Dil Bar, attired in the uniform of Runjeet Sing's female body guard.

CHAPTER XI.

THE time that had elapsed since the death of Raz Andaz, seemed to have wrought a striking alteration in the appearance and demeanour of the once blushing and diffident Cashmerian. From a slender fawn she had grown into a stately hind, and from being more modest and retiring than the Prophet's rose (the violet),* she had become as reckless of observation as the day-courting sun-flower. Her eye, formerly so downcast that she scarcely ventured to contemplate the waning moon, was now more keen and piercing than the gaze of an eagle at mid day; and, as she advanced towards the carpet, placed for her use at the upper end of

* "The excellence of the violet," said Mahomed, according to tradition, "is as far superior to that of all other flowers, as the excellence of Islam is superior to that of all other creeds."

the apartment, her step was as firm and resolute as the tread of the invincible son of Zal, when he slew the King of the white Dives and added the province of Mazanderan to the Persian empire.*

Nazir rose as she entered, placed his back close against the wall, and let fall his sleeves over his hands in token of respect, being evidently no less astounded than I was at this singular apparition. Indeed, he was so intent upon admiring the costliness of Dil Bar's dress and the no less luxuriant richness of her person, that he forgot me, and could not avert his eyes from a spectacle, which more resembled one of those celestial creations, promised to the dwellers in Eden, than to the feeble daughter of Adam, whom he had plundered at Bavan Mirdeh.

The appearance and dress of my beautiful mistress was, in truth, well calculated to excite wonder and admiration in those who had never seen any of the remarkable band of

* Oulad, the *Deev il Suffeed* (white devil) King of the Dives held possession of Mazanderan. He was slain by the renowned Persian hero Rhoustam. A description of this exploit is given by Ferdousi. It forms one of the seven stages or labours of the celebrated Persian Hercules.

female warriors, of which she was the favoured chief. Her raven hair, with the exception of two glossy braids on either side her temples, was concealed by a golden skull-cap, encircled by a red shawl, embroidered with arabesques, and terminated by a fringe of small pearls, turquoise and coral. Her arching brows were tinged with surmeh, and the lustre of her almond-shaped eyes was rendered more brilliant by the lids being coated, above and below, with a paste of gold dust. Rings of curiously wrought filagree, set with rubies, sparkled in her ears, and several smaller rings of equal splendour ornamented her nose. Beneath a light corslet, formed of thin golden scales, which protected, without disfiguring, the exquisite symmetry of her cypress form, was a padded vest of yellow silk, lined with black satin, round her waist was entwined a black and orange shawl, within whose folds reposed a short, jewel-hilted poignard.

Her trowsers were of richly embroidered *kincah* (brocade). Her ankles were adorned with elastic golden anklets, and her feet were enclosed in slippers of spangled tissue. In her right hand she carried a bow of honour, inlaid with gold and mother of pearl. A dozen arrows were suspended from her back in a quiver

of perfumed leather from Yemen, stamped with golden foliage, and a light Lahore sabre hung at her side, from a baldric of black and gold cord. To complete this brilliant garb, she wore costly bracelets upon her wrists, whilst a necklace of wrought gold, imitating the pendant blossoms of the fragrant champa, encircled her neck and glittered upon her corset.

In short, such was my mistress' surprising loveliness and splendour in this equipment, that I question if the moon of Canaan (Joseph), could have secured himself from the honey of temptation had Zuleika, the wife of Potiphar the Egyptian, presented herself to him attired in a similar fashion.

Fearfully did the fires of covetousness inflame the heart of the robber Nazir, as he gluttoned his eyes upon the sight before him, and little did he imagine that this heroine was the same person, to dispose of whose property he had come to Umritsir. Far from being troubled with any such apprehensions, he chuckled within himself at this new chance of finding a customer for his ill gotten spoils, and he rubbed the hands of contentment one against the other, when he observed that Dil Bar had taken me up, and had commenced ex-

aming me with evident marks of satisfaction and surprise. His hopes increased, also, from hearing her women declare that they intended to proceed to the bazaar, for the purpose of striking a bargain with a goldsmith for some pearls and precious stones, as the Maharajah, in a fit of extraordinary good humour, had filled their mouths with gold, after his day-break audience.

Whilst Nazir was indulging in these dreams of profit, Dil Bar examined me very narrowly, and having lifted up one of my extremities, on which was embroidered the private mark of her father's manufactory, she exclaimed.

“Wonderful! How is this? Speak, Daoud Khan! Whence did this matchless shawl come into your possession?”

Before the shawl dealer could reply, Nazir stepped forward with a smirking face, and made a profound salutation, accompanied by all manner of wishes for the lovely Cashmerian's longevity and good fortune. But, if Eblis had suddenly emerged from one of Daoud Khan's pipkins, and stood before her in all his hideousness, she could not have been more startled, or have exhibited greater emotion than she did, when her eye fell upon Nazir's hypocritical face. She stared, and passed her hand across

her forehead—a sigh escaped from the treasury of her bosom, and a tear—like the dew-drop that glistens upon the expanding rose-bud at early dawn, moistened the gold-dust which encircled her dark lashes. However, she instantly suppressed her feelings, and merely said, in a subdued voice.

“Allah Kerim! Allah Ackbar! Never were two aligators more alike! Yet it cannot be! My eyes must deceive me! But we shall see.” Mistaking the exclamations for compliments to my beauty, Nazir proceeded thus: “That shawl is your servant’s. It is my property. Daoud Khan may assemble the produce of the world, in his chests, but he has nothing in them to be compared to that gem. You may well express admiration; for a more splendid article never was exported from Cashmere.—Examine the mark.”

“I see it, I see it,” replied Dil Bar.

“Look, also, at the rainbow diversity of its palms,” continued the other. “Observe the delicacy of its texture. By the souls of my father and grandfather, it is softer than the down upon the silken cheeks of the virgins of Paradise. May I be debarred from all chance of enjoying their company, if I did not obtain it direct from Sireenagar, and may

I die a Nazarene, if it did not cost me half its weight in pearls."

"We Cashmerians know something of these matters," said Dil Bar, interrupting him. "We do not require your tongue to enable us to distinguish the fine shawls of the blessed valley, from the coarse fabrics of Delhi and Agra."

"True, true!" rejoined the rogue. "You are wiser than Lockman, and more resplendant than Koom, the God of Love.* Such a shawl requires no puffing. Its value, like that of the inestimable *Deris Nour* (sea of light) diamond,† can neither increase or diminish by adulation. But, as I said to that prince of all shawl washers, Daoud Khan, I am not desirous to part with it, unless I can obtain its full value."

* Nazir seems to have been very indiscriminate in his comparisons, for whilst Lockman is the mirror of wisdom amongst the Moslems, Koom is the Cupid of the Hindoos. The latter divinity is generally represented with a bow made of sugar-cane, the string of which is composed of bees stings, he carries five arrows, intended to designate the five senses, all of which are vehicles for love. These arrows are tipped with rose thorns, steeped in one or other of the poisons ascribed to the intoxicating passion.

† "This diamond," says Sir J. Malcolm, "is the finest in the world, and weighs 186 carats. It belongs to the Shah of Persia."

Thereupon, the ill-born rascal advanced two or three steps, and stooped, as if he wished to pick me up.

"Gently! Gently!" retorted Dil Bar, drawing me upon her lap with one hand, whilst she grasped the haft of her poignard with the other. Then, after a pause, during which she gazed with searching intensity at Nazir's features, she added: "Who art thou that art enabled to barter strings of pearls for Cashmere shawls; Are the fisheries of Karack at thy disposal? Art thou an alchemist, or do the gold-spangled sands of the Indus filter through thy purse."

"I am as I am," replied Nazir boldly. My own is my own, and nobody else's."

"Who art thou, I repeat, and whence dost thou come?" replied Dil Bar sternly. "Speak, and do not swell thyself with the wind of *damoogh* (arrogance), or thou mayst repent it."

"I am your slave!—nobody," replied Nazir, suddenly humbling his tone, and blinking as if the flash from Dil Bar's eyes had shot thorns into his own. "My name is Nazir Sahib. I am a native of Delhi, and a dealer in shawl goods, precious stones, and other merchandize. All I have is yours. Allah has blest

me with industry, honesty, and perseverance. The sun is not more admired for its warmth, than I for my good faith and moderate prices."

"Mashallah!" exclaimed Dil Bar. "Thou, also, it seems, dost not require any puffer. But waste no more time in grunting forth thine own praises: answer my question. Whence dost thou come?"

"I traffick from Delhi to Caboul, from Cashmere to Benares; and I come last from Lahore, the abode of majesty, splendour, and good fortune. There it was, that I made the exchange which placed me in possession of this wonderful shawl."

Then turning to Dil Bar's attendants, and drawing from his bosom some of the stolen pearls, he held them up in the sun's rays, and continued:

"Look! You talk of proceeding to the bazaar to purchase precious stones, you may save yourself that trouble. I can serve you. Say! did you ever see such a string of pearls as this, or such rubies as those? I would ask a camel load of silver from any one else; but you may have them a bargain."

Whilst the merry Cashmerian women pressed forward, and began cackling round the jewels, like a brood of jungle fowl over a heap of juwa-

ree seed, Dil Bar narrowly watched Nazir's proceedings. No sooner, therefore, did she catch a glimpse of the pearl necklace, and ruby-studded ornaments, than she instantly recognized them to be those presented to her by the unfortunate Rajah's Vakeels, upon the day of her marriage. All doubts, therefore, of the villain's identity were removed, and her cheek flushed with mingled exultation and desire for vengeance. But, tempering the fever of excitement with the oil of caution, she beckoned to her attendants, and whispered a few words in their ears. Whereupon, they instantly withdrew, and joining their companions, stationed themselves at the entrance. Then assuming a milder tone, Dil Bar exclaimed,

"By the unrivalled land of my birth, those, indeed, are treasures. Thou art a most fortunate dealer. Good luck nestles under thy girdle. See what it is to spread thy carpet in a dry place. Thy star is propitious."

"Oof! what are stars? You are the full moon that eclipses all stars," answered Nazir, exceedingly pleased with these auspicious words.

"Hadst thou a beard thou wouldst have brought it to a right market," continued Dil Bar. "Inshallah! The shawl shall be mine.

and the jewels, also. Wullah! I will pay for them, all in the same coin. Thou shalt not lose the weight of an ant's eye by thy outlay. Approach, that I may admire those beautiful pearls with greater ease."

"You are a houri in the garb of a lion-eater," said Nazir in reply. "Your liberality equals that of Noursheevan. You are not like that brutal extortioner, Mohamed Azeem Khan, who sold all the wind in Cashmere, to that other devil's spawn, Abdoolah Khan."

"Sold the wind! Sold the wind! By my soul, by my eyes, brother! How could that be? You are puffing wind down our throats," exclaimed Daoud Khan, laughing.

"What I say is no lie," rejoined Nazir. "All the world knows that this Mohamed Azeem Khan, brother to the Vizir Fut'he' Khan, was Governor of Cashmere during a part of the time that those turnip-eating Afghans ruled the valley. Well, this said Azeem Khan, being in want of ready cash, bethought himself of obtaining his object by selling the wind to Abdoolah, who forthwith advanced him ten thousand rupees thereon. No sooner, therefore, was the bargain struck, than it became impossible for any man to cool himself in the evening breeze, to sift his grain, or to hang up

his linen to dry, without paying a tax for the privilege. So that in the end, the poor Cashmeris were compelled to collect a large sum, in order to bribe Abdoolah Khan, and thus, to repurchase their wind. Wullah, I have told you nothing but truth.* There," continued he, "there is the shawl, and here are the jewels."

"Come closer! Come closer!" replied Dil Bar. "Stretch forth thine hand and let us strike the bargain.† Ya Allah! Dost thou take me for a thief, or dost thou doubt my word?"

"Heaven forbid!" responded Nazir, stepping forward. Heaven forbid! "If the Maharajah's treasures were mine, I would barter them all for your word."

Then crouching upon his heels, and exhibit-

"This novel mode of raising the wind was actually carried into effect in Cashmere," says Lieut. Conolly, "by the rapacious brother of the celebrated Afghan Vizir, Fut'he' Khan. But after all, our window, or light tax, is a worthy pendant to Mohamed Azeem's wind tax."

† It is the custom amongst Eastern dealers to ratify their bargains by striking each other on the hand. The same practice is common in many parts of Europe, and is also usual in England, when bets are made amongst the lower orders. The first custom evidently gave rise to the trite expression of "striking a bargain."

ing the pearls on the palm of his hand, which he placed close to the floor, he added, "There! there! All the oysters of the Arabian seas, and all the mines of Badakshan cannot produce finer pearls or more resplendant rubies."

Scarcely had he uttered these words, ere a roar of pain and rage burst from his lips. And no wonder—for, as he spoke, Dil Bar sprung upon her knees, unsheathed her poignard, drove it through his extended hand, and transfixed it to the floor. Then beckoning to her attendants, they darted forward, with their arrows already fixed, and drawing them up to the very heads, presented the points at Nazir's eyes and ears.

"Ghole! son of a Ghole! beardless outcast of Satan!" now exclaimed Dil Bar. "Move not a hair's breadth, or by the wrath of heaven, thou shalt devour torments, to which the burning bites of the fiery serpents that infest the Red Sea shall be as the mere stings of gnats."

"Wullah Billah! what unheard of assassination is this?" yelled forth Nazir, grinding his teeth, but not venturing to move.

"I am nothing, I am the Maharajah's slave and that of his officers, male and female. All

mine is theirs," exclaimed Daoud Khan, lifting up his hands in great consternation at this unaccountable scene. "But this is a bad act. Astagferoolah! my house is not a den of thieves, or a butcher's shamble. There is law in the land."

"By your souls! by your mother's graves! release me!" roared out Nazir. "Is justice asleep? Where is the Cazy? I will have the price of blood to the last drop. Are you mad? Are you blind?"

"Blind!" re-echoed Dil Bar. "No! If a film hath fallen over thine eyes—mine are not like those of a bat at sunrise. I know thee."

"Knowledge of a man does not authorize bloodshed," said the shawl washer, who was exceedingly alarmed lest the King's officers should pass by, and accuse him of being a party to this act of violence. You are a great personage at court," continued he; "all others are your footstools—but, remember, we live under the shadow of the Maharajah's law. He punishes crime with a just hand. Rich and poor, strong and weak, are his children. *Aman!* *Aman!* (mercy) the victim will bleed to death."

"Keep thy observations to thyself," replied Dil Bar in a commanding tone. "Do not stand braying there, like an ass under a load of

faggots, or I will put a fiery bridle into thy stupid mouth. I know what I know. This wretch is no merchant. He is a robber—a murderer—an excommunicated Thug."

At the sound of this last word, Daoud Khan jumped back, trembling as if he had been bitten by forty scorpions, and exclaimed, "That alters the case, and he merits death. But, if you have any pity for yourself or me, let him depart in peace. These sons of Nebuchadnezzar are under the immediate protection of Satan. They have the power of casting spells, and of bringing all kinds of misfortunes upon those who molest them."

"I am no Thug! I spit upon all Thugs! Wullah Billah! I have spoken truth! I am an honest man! I can bring witnesses," said Nazir, turning a supplicating look towards Daoud Khan, who with his servants had retreated to the furthest corner of the room.

"Heap not fresh fuel upon thy impure soul in the next world, nor add to thy crimes in this by telling lies," retorted Dil Bar. "I know thee. I should know thee, wert thou burning, as thou must inevitably burn, amidst the fires of retribution. Yes, thou art the demon Thug who tore this shawl and these jewels from my person, upon the fatal night

when the Rajah Ras Andas, on whom be eternal rest, fell a victim to the treachery of thy confederates."

"A profitable market has the beardless wretch come to, and a mighty honest dealer is he," said Daoud Khan. "Allah forgive me for interposing between such an unheard of villain and his fate."

"Curses on fate! Maledictions upon thee and thine!" groaned forth Nazir.

"Allah preserve us from the effects of his filth!" ejaculated Daoud. "Listen to the perverse dog! Is not this a proof, that although God is ever near unto man, man is always far removed from God?"

"Anathema on thy owl's throat," retorted Nazir, writhing with pain. "Are honest men to be entrapped and slaughtered in cold blood like foxes? By the King's breath, you shall pay for this. I will have justice!"

"The unblushing son of a burned father calls for justice!" exclaimed Dil Bar.

"Much good may it do him," echoed Daoud Khan, spitting.

"He calls for justice," continued Dil Bar. "It shall be his. Hollah! bind this bankrupt thief hand and foot, and let him be delivered to the Maharajah's officers. Let my poignard

and the string of pearls remain affixed to his hand, as evidence of his guilt and of my vengeance. Seize his companion also. Be quick, I say;—on your heads be it.”

On hearing these words, Nazir twisted, turned, supplicated, and swore by all the Prophets and shrines of Islam, that he was innocent. But Dil Bar remained inexorable, and retained the same attitude, until her attendants, and half a dozen sturdy furoshes, seized the culprit and his companion, and pinioned them in the manner commanded. They then dragged them forth, bound them upon a couple of asses, with their faces to the tails, and led them to prison, amidst the hootings and revilings of the populace, who no sooner heard what had happened, than they crowded around, gazing with mingled awe and wonder at the sight of two of that mysterious confederacy, to which they ascribed supernatural powers.

As soon as they were departed, Daoud Khan, who appeared to be a great moralist, exclaimed—“Thank God, they are gone! If such wretches as these were to be admitted into heaven, the blessed would all prefer the fires of Eblis to the joys of Paradise, in such abominable company.”

Dil Bar now interrupted his further obser-

vations, by calling for water to cleanse herself from the impurity of Nazir's blood, several drops of which had spurted upon her hand, as well as upon her shawl girdle. So she threw aside the latter, and having ordered Daoud Khan to purify it, she performed her ablutions according to the most orthodox fashion of the Soonites.* This being accomplished, she wound me round her waist, resumed her seat upon her elephant, and followed the prisoners to the palace of the Maharajah, who had arrived on the previous day from Lahore.

The pretext set forth by Runjeet Sing for this journey was, to take personal cognizance of certain malversations attributed to the superintendant of the shawl depot; but his real motive was to give audience to a secret agent of that grandfather of corruption, the Rosseea Tchary (Russian Czar,) who had

* The Soonces wash their hands and feet upwards from the extremities to the elbows and ancles, whereas the Sheas perform their ablutions in a reverse manner, by commencing at the elbows, wrists, and ancles, and terminating at the extremities. This is a nice distinction, but it nevertheless forms one of the principal points to which both sects strictly adhere, and by which either one or the other may be recognized when performing their ablutions.

succeeded in ear-whigging his way from the Caspian to the holy city of Meshed, and thence, by Herat and Afghanistan, to Umritsir, where he appeared under the disguise of a Bokarah lapidary.

CHAPTER XII.

UPON reaching the flight of marble steps that conducted to the abode of delight and majesty, Dil Bar dismounted, and having given directions to secure Nazir in a neighbouring guard-chamber, she traversed divers corridors and galleries, thronged with courtiers, soldiers, and attendants, and at length elbowed her way to the threshold of the royal apartments.

Here she was stopped by the guards and door-keepers, but having exhibited a signet ring which gave her access to the Maharajah's presence, at all hours of the day, she was permitted to pass. Upon this she cast off her slippers, and drawing aside the silken draperies that masked the entrance, quickly arrived at the hall of privileges, in which the terror of Afghanistan, the ruler of the Penjab, was en-

joying his dinner near the edge of a fountain, whose sparkling waters gushed up to the height of many feet, from a bason of porphyry, incrustated with lapis lazuli and malachite.

I had expected to be dazzled with the lustre of this renowned conqueror's dress, which I supposed, from his having plundered the Afghan Sultans of all their treasures, would have outshone those of all the kings in the world. But this was not the case; for nothing could be more striking than the contrast between the gorgeous richness of the apartments, and the simplicity of the Maharajah's attire. All that Eastern luxury and splendour could devise, was employed to adorn the former, whilst the latter had nothing to distinguish it from the yellow vests, small turbans, and fine shawl-girdles of the attendant Serdars and ministers, save one or two bracelets of inestimable value, in one of which sparkled the wonderful ruby which originally belonged to Aurungzebe, whilst the other was ornamented with the still more celebrated *Koh i nour* (mountain of light) diamond, which Runjeet Sing had squeezed out of the pocket of the unfortunate Shah Souja, the dethroned and fugitive sovereign of Afghânistan.*

* Allusion has been made to these splendid jewels in a former note.

In fact, the appearance of the rapacious old lion-eater's features and figure, gave little indication of the indefatigable activity of his body, or the dauntless energy of his character. His person was as thin and emaciated as a dervish's cat. His limbs were like dried reeds. His face, deeply cicatrised with small pox, resembled a shrivelled date. His beard and moustache hung down on either side his jaws like shreds of flax from a distaff, and had it not been for the fire radiating from his remaining eye, one might have imagined that his head was nothing more than a dried pumpkin.

His repast, and the mode in which it was served, were equally unostentatious. The dishes consisted of a pillau of rice and fowl, seasoned with red pepper and spices—a stew of pulse, sweet herbs and mutton—some slices of smoke-dried swines' flesh, which he dipped in some of that scorching yellow paste, used by you Franks, and which more resembles *Bok i Shaitan*, than any human invention*—a couple of roasted quails—a few mangoes and preserved fruits, and some cakes of *pursood* (sacred bread,) which these devourers of the

* Probably French mustard, which certainly has a very equivocal appearance.—*Note of Ed.*

unclean beast are commanded to eat at all their meals.*

Neither vessels of gold, silver, or porcelain, glittered upon the trays set before him. The different meats were served upon palm leaves, artfully stitched together with silver or gold thread, and the only utensils of value were some chrysal goblets, vases, and bottles, of Shiraz or Frank manufacture. Some of these were filled with iced sherbets, but the most part reeked with the fumes of wine and other fomented liquors; the odour of which, together with that of the hog's flesh, was sufficient to have defiled the nostrils of a true believer, so as to defy even forty times the three prescribed purifications.†

* This bread or cake consists of a mixture of flour, butter, and various spices. It is in shape somewhat like the oaten-cake. It is the common aliment of the Seiks.—*Furster*.

† One of the modes of purification ordained to orthodox Moslems before prayer, is by drawing up water into their nostrils *three* times at each ablution. The cause for these, and all other ablutions, being repeated thrice, is thus explained by the Mahomedan casuists. They say that God only commanded them to wash their faces and heads, their hands, arms, and feet, to the ankles and elbows, *once* at each ablution; but Mahomed,

Partly from Dil Bar having entered upon the Maharajah's blind side, and partly from fearing that they might neglect this observance, not only ordered them to repeat the operation *three* times, but commanded them to pick their teeth and clean their ears and nostrils, each *three* times. He directed them also not to dawdle or expend more time in washing one part than another, but to use diligence, and above all, to express aloud their determination to be clean in spirit as well as in body, and to exclaim, whilst they washed their hands—" *Bismillah el azcem! Alhumdoolillah! Allah din Islam!* (In the name of God the most honoured. Praise be to God! The God of Islam faith!) It is forbidden to repeat any ablutions more than *three* times at each purification, and it is likewise forbidden to blow the nose with the right hand during the process. There is, however, no restriction against using the fingers of the left hand in case of necessity, a fortunate thing for those troubled with colds. The above *partial* ablutions are called *abdest*. The whole immersion of the body is termed *Gosl*. The former is required previous to all prayers, and the latter is enjoined on divers occasions, above all, on the Sabbath morning (Friday.) The custom of the Roman Catholics who dip their fingers into the holy water, on entering church, and on other occasions when a *bénitier* is within their reach, may be considered as a kind of *abdest*. From the few bathing establishments in London and other British cities, and the exorbitant price demanded for baths, one might imagine that *Gosl* was considered impure by the fathers, and eke the mothers, of the Protestant faith.

Runjeet Sing's whole attention being engrossed by his repast, he did not remark her arrival, nor would he have done so, perhaps, until his repast had terminated, had not a score of mosquitoes made a simultaneous attack upon his sightless eyelid. These pests, which the Seiks believe to be animated with the souls of usurers, rapacious lawyers and other extortioners, having fixed their stings into his flesh, caused him so much pain that, although one hand was filled with hot rice, and the other with spiced fowl, he dashed the contents of both into the said eye, which he would infallibly have darkened for ever, had not Allah already saved him that affliction.

As this was merely an exchange of one smart for another, the Maharajah waxed uncommonly wrath. Forgetting the dignity and wonted impassibility of his character, he rose and hurried towards the spot where Dil Bar chanced to be standing. Then snatching the bow of honour from her hand, he fell upon the slaves, whose duty it was to drive away the flies and mosquitoes with Thibet cows' tails, affixed to ivory wands, and belaboured their fingers, mouths and shins, until his choler had evaporated.

This consummation was not long in arriving,

for, whether from shame at having compromised his dignity, or whether from being brought to his senses, by seeing Dil Bar and her companions seeking to repress their smiles at the grimaces and antics of the beaten slaves, who capered about as if they were dancing the Attun,* he suddenly threw aside the bow, reseated himself, wiped the rice and fowl from his face, and tossing off a goblet of Shiraz wine, joined in the merriment of his favourite body guards.

Infinite relief was this to the Serdars and other courtiers, who well knew that, when a lion is let loose, no one can tell upon whom he may fix his claws. So they all shrunk against the walls, and bending their heads so as to shelter their faces in case of need, tremblingly awaited their share of the blows administered to the negligent fly flappers.

Their fears were soon dispelled, however; for, the Maharajah forthwith whitened their faces, by sending the remains of the dishes to some, and by offering cups of wine to others. Then, having performed his ablutions and wiped his hands with fine napkins, perfumed

* An Afghan dance not unlike the Welsh Morris dance, but which is performed by an indefinite number, who kick, shout and flounder about, as if possessed.

with essence of *bidmischk* (scented willow), he summoned Dil Bar and her companions to his side. Then bidding the latter stoop down, he filled their mouths with sweetmeats and lump sugar, and snatching off the string of pearls that ornamented his poignard he wound it round the bow of the former, saying :

“ Eh, eh ! the King’s star is decidedly upon the ascendant ! What brings the chief of his lionesses into his presence at this hour ? Say ! ” added he, good humoredly, “ to what stroke of good fortune is the Maharajah indebted for this honour ? ”

Dil Bar upon this retreated respectfully back, and having made her obeisance, according to the Seik custom, by placing the right hand on the bosom, and inclining the head, replied, “ May it please the conqueror of the world, the lion of victory, the magnanimous, the bountiful, his slave has a favour to request.”

“ So I thought ! so I thought ! ” rejoined Runjeet Sing. “ The sun never shines without extracting the dews of the earth. But ask what thou wilt—the King cannot say, no.”

“ The centre of the world’s admiration, is the sun, and his servants are but the vapours which are dispelled by his beams,” answered

my mistress. Then she added: "if it be the King's command, I will say that I come to implore that speedy justice may be done upon a most saintless thief and murderer."

"We are not slack in administering justice," rejoined the old grey beard, twisting up his silvery moustaches. "But we must hear both sides: the accused as well as the accuser. Our hands are equally balanced. Innocence or guilt can alone weigh down the scales."

"All the world knows that the Maharajah is the Keblah of justice and impartiality," replied the beautiful Amazon. "They who seek to poison his ears by crooked words, or false testimony do but seek their own defeat."

"Well spoken," rejoined the monarch, "exceeding well spoken, for it is known to the furthest corner of the universe that Seiks, Moslems, Hindoos, and even Jews and Nazarenes, providing they be just men, are all equal in our sight, great or small, the ant and the elephant have equal protection under our shadow, as they had under that of Nanock, the holy founder of our faith."*

* Nanock, the founder of the Seik faith and nation was born in 1469 of humble parents, at a village near Lahore. He is described as a man of inflexible justice, great elo-

“ The King’s equity eclipses that of Solomon, the Just, as much as his glory exceeds that of Sicander (Alexander the Great). Wisdom is his breast cover. Justice is a strong bow in his hand. He can exalt or abase with a breath. His shadow surpasses that of Nanock.”

“ She warbles like a nightingale! She has evidently sucked Peri’s milk,” ejaculated Runjeet Sing, well pleased at this flattery.* But,

quence and rare courage. The literal meaning of the word Seik, is a disciple; that being the designation given by him to all his proselytes. The principal tenets of the Seik faith are the worship of one God without the aid or intervention of any intermediary divinities or saints, and a belief in the immortality of the soul. The Seiks also believe in the metempsychosis and admit polygamy. The burning of widows is forbidden by Nanock, who in order to put a stop to this cruel practise ordered that the dead should be buried. But, notwithstanding this, suttee is practised. The Seik temples are very simple and unadorned. The representation of all animals or inanimated things therein, is forbidden. A book called *Grunth*, which contains all the institutes of Nanock, in the same manner as the Koran contains those of Mahomed, is the only typical object admitted into their places of worship. —*Forster, Burnes, &c.*

* It is believed that those who are endowed with any striking charms of voice or person, have been nursed by Peris; whilst others who are remarkable for their defects are said to have had shc Gholes as their wet nurses.

draw closer and inform us how it is, that thou hast occasion to require the chastisement of thieves and murderers. Hath any one of my Serdars attempted to steal thy heart, or sought to exact the blood price for the murders thou hast committed with thine eyes. Is it so?"

"The ruler of the world is pleased to sport with his servant," answered Dil Bar; "the wrong for which I seek reparation is a vile transgression."

"Methinks that thou and my other Amazons are not usually backward in taking vengeance upon offenders," replied the Maharajah. "Ye have eagle's eyes and leopard's claws."

"Alhumdoolilah! the King's bounty and countenance have made lionesses of us," rejoined my mistress.

"Ye are deputed by me to take the law into your own hands, in case of need, and by the sacred book of our faith," exclaimed Runjeet Sing, smiling and twinkling his eye, "law could not repose in more cunning keeping. Let what will happen, black or white, ye generally contrive to turn the balance in your own favour."

"We are chaff, nothing, but by the Maharajah's command. The law is his, and we are the laws," replied Dil Bar.

Runjeet Sing, who appeared more disposed

for a carouse than to hold a divan of justice, now made a signal to his chief cup-bearer, who proceeded to a large marble vase filled with ice water, whence he took forth a long necked bottle, the top of which was carefully fastened down with bitumen, wire and cord. After scraping off the bitumen, and untwisting the wire, the cup bearer unsheathed his poignard and holding the pointed edge to the neck of the bottle, stood waiting further orders, in the attitude of a gunner about to discharge a zam-booreek.

This seemed to be a very strange proceeding, and I was therefore curious to know what were the contents of the bottle, and what the cup bearer meant by using his dagger to cut off its neck, as if it were as soft as a cucumber. Whilst I was waiting the issue of this operation, the Maharajah clapped his hands—the cup-bearer severed the string—the cork bounded up to the ceiling with the report of a gun, and the bottle instantly vomitted forth a stream of frothy liquid, which the old Teriaki received into his glass, and as quickly conveyed into his throat, leaning back his head, and patting his stomach, until the last drop had vanished. Then, after giving a grunt of satisfaction, accompanied by two or three sup-

pressed hiccups, he turned to a grave looking old warrior, whose features differed considerably from those of the other Seik and Afghan Serdars, and said,

“ Bravo! bravo Shampanea! by my beard, the charmed waters of Amrut, which, according to Hindoo belief, confer immortality, cannot be more perfect than that divine fluid.”*

“ Amrut! Amrut!” answered the Serdar disdainfully. “ Amrut may be all very fine, but with the King’s leave, I spit upon its waters. There is no country in the world, except our beautiful Frantz, that can produce such nectar. That, however, is a mere trifle, when compared with the many other marvels of my incomparable native land.”

“ It must be admitted,” rejoined the Maharajah, making a sign for another glass of the frothy liquid; “ it must be acknowledged that you Frantzees are wonderful concocters of exhilarating liquors. Your Padishas must revel

* The Hindoos believe that the waters of this fountain, of which no mortal ever discovered the situation, possess the wonderful faculty attributed to them in the text, and that this divine beverage sustains the immortality of their numerous divinities, who drink it in the same manner that the deities of the Greek or Roman Pantheon quaffed nectar.

in the joys of Eden, that is, when their mouths are not stopped by having their heads chopped off, or when their libations are not interrupted by their being driven naked into the world, like Adam when he was expelled from Paradise. Let me see!" continued Runjeet Sing stretching forth his fingers. "They have their *Shampane*, their *Boordoo*, their *Odeewhee*, (Qy. eau de vie), their *Boorgoonea*, and God knows how many other kinds of melted rubies. Nay more, it has been said that the very rivers, which irrigate the city where these Padishahs are crowned and anointed, flow with such wines as are contained in that bottle. Is that true or false?"

"Hyperbolically true," replied the other.

"Wonderful! wonderful!" ejaculated the by-standers, who did not exactly comprehend the sense of the reply. "Wullah! that eclipses paradise."

"Wonderful!" re-echoed Runjeet Sing. "Wonderful indeed! In this respect the Ingliz Padishahs are nothing in comparison with yours. Eh! Eh! the unfortunates have nothing but salt water around them, unless it be their Satan devil-coloured, flavoured *Poortr!* Oof! One of their Elchies, who was in all other respects a discreet man, wanted to turn

my liver upside down with some of that nauseous stuff. But the very sight and smell were foretastes of Jehanum, so I reserved it all, to be used as a punishment for the refractory females of my body guard. And so much do they stand in dread of its effects, that there is not one who would not prefer forty stripes with a slipper outside her mouth, than admit a single drop of *Poortr* within. Is it not so? Is it not so?" added he, addressing Dil Bar's lieutenant—a handsome Cashmerian girl, named *Taje i Mah* (crown of the moon).

"The Lord of my life has said it," replied the she Naib, whom I remembered as one of the women, who had attended my mistress from Cashmere. "None but gholes or Nazarenes could invent such an abomination. Poof! it is anything but dissolved candy. The condemned, in the lowest pit, would refuse to quench their thirst with it."

The manner in which the King described this novel mode of punishing his body guard, and *Taje i Mah's* answer, caused a general titter, and no one seemed to enjoy the fun more than the old Sirdar, whom, to my great surprise, I discovered was not only a Frank, but a renowned French soldier, who had introduced *Nizam* (discipline) into the Maharajah's

armies, and was almost as great a favourite with Runjeet Sing as the royal barber.*

When the buzz of mirth had subsided, the old sovereign, who was in high spirits, directed several glasses of wine to be presented to his favourites, and then again addressing the Frank Sirdar, said,

“ Well ! Well ! After all, although these Ingliz are no breeders of wine, no one can deny that they can drink the produce of others like thirsty camels.”

“ They are notorious drunkards,” replied the other. “ They are never sober either in bed or battle. They would empty the ocean, were it filled with their execrable *poortr*. They can do nothing but drink !”

“ That is not true !” retorted Runjeet Sing abruptly. “ They are strange animals, certainly, and their Elchees and Sirdars wear

* This perhaps was meant for General Allard, but the virulence displayed in the subsequent remarks upon the English, are so much at variance, with the wonted impartiality, and good feeling of that distinguished officer, that I am inclined to think he did not utter the expression attributed to him, and consequently that the *quandom shawl*, has “ poked fun” at us. The barber alluded to in the text, was in high favour with Runjeet Sing, and was said to possess more influence over him than any of his ministers.

marvellous skull caps, shaped like inverted canoes ; but they are not such fools as to empty the sea, and thus deprive themselves of the power of floating their ships, in which, by all accounts, consist their strength and wealth. Then as to do nothing but drink—you have been misinformed. They are insatiable feeders also. Nothing comes amiss to their stomachs ; nothing is held sacred ; all living things, whether on the earth, in the water, or in the air, all are considered clean. I remember one of the Vakeels, who I conclude from their knowledge of cooking, must have been a Kabobshi (roaster of meat,) before his star rose to the ascendant, carried his abominations so far as to offer, that his slaves should make for me a dish, which he absolutely called a 'Shaitan.'

This declaration caused a murmur of disgust and surprise amongst the courtiers, some of whom spat, whilst others ejaculated, "Brutes ! Dung mongers ; and vampires !"

The voice of the King was soon heard again, saying, "Apropos of eating, have I been told lies, or is it a fact, that one of your Padishahs, named Looee the fat, exceeded Nadir Shah in voracity ?"

"The Maharajah's servant is ignorant of his meaning," rejoined the other.

“Why!” replied Runjeet Sing, “it is said that Nadir Shah was wont to eat a whole lamb stuffed with almonds for supper. But I have been told that this fat Looee bathed in mutton-soup, and then for his breakfast, swallowed a whole buffaloe’s calf reduced to jelly, together with a bird, nearly as large as an ostrich, crammed with certain cinder-shaped black roots, utterly unknown to us.*”

“Some bankrupt spy has sought to thrust dirt down the King’s throat,” answered the Sirdar. “Louis XVIII, to whom the Maharajah probably alludes, was an epicure, but no glutton. This story is evidently the invention of one of those raw meat devouring English. They do nothing but lie.”

“That is not true!” again retorted Runjeet Sing. “They can do many other things. They can breed horses nearly equal in strength to elephants. They can construct most beautiful portable houses, that move on wheels. They build wonderful vessels, that are impelled by hot water. They have invented burning air to light their abodes. They make incomparable razors and telescopes. Their

* The purport of this is not very clear, but Runjeet Sing probably meant calves’ foot jelly, and a turkey *amr truffes*.—*Note of Ed.*

women also are said to be unrivalled for their beauty. Though," added he archly, "the few that I have seen were anything but tulip formed. They were certainly more like tent poles than Houris or Peris. But nevertheless, whether drunk or sober, these Ingliz know what they are about, and exceed all other Franks in industry, endurance and enterprize."

"They can certainly make good razors, and breed fine horses," rejoined the Frank, "but every one knows that our citizens are as much superior to these knife-grinding islanders, in wit and civilisation, as the valour of our troops, and the glory of our arms—"

"Gently! Gently!" exclaimed Runjeet Sing, interrupting him. "The King does not require you to repeat the old story of Frantzees valour and glory. The Ingliz are no cowards. And as for valour and glory—God be praised! Your tribes have not tucked the whole of those commodities under your breast plates. A small portion has fallen to our share."

"The Maharajah is the Napoleon of the east," answered the other. "May heaven ordain, that the shadow of his glory may never diminish, and that these Ingliz, to whom he appears so well disposed, may never betray his

magnanimity and confidence, as they did that of the Emperor."

"They have always kept faith with us," replied the King. "And let what will be said of them, they are wonderful fellows to drink."

"They are selfish, mercenary and treacherous," rejoined the Frank. "Witness their conduct to Napoleon, whom they chained upon a scorching rock, and left him in charge of a cruel jailor, who tortured him to death. They are unworthy of the King's favour."

"I am a man and no ass," muttered Runjeet Sing, evidently displeased at the bitterness displayed by the Sirdar against the Ingliz, who were held in great esteem at that moment, by the sovereign of the Penjab, probably from their having recently entrapped him with a variety of splendid presents. "By the Seik faith! I am not utterly ignorant of what has past in Frangistan. I have ears and eyes. I have read books. Now, I know that this Napoleon, to whom the Sirdar compares me, was a most improvident world-grasper. Say! Was not all Frangistan, from the rising to the going down of the sun, overrun by his legions, except the island inhabited by the Ingliz? Were not all the Nazarene Padishahs and Sultans, great and small, his footstools? Did

he not kick out old Shaha, and make new ones, just as it pleased his fancy? Did he not fill his coffers with the treasures of other nations, and feed his hungry soldiers from the granaries of other kingdoms? Did he not convert his brothers into kings, and cram all manner of good things down the throats of his uncles, aunts, sisters, mother and cousins, until their eyes watered with satiety? And yet with all this he was not content!"

Whilst the Maharajah paused, to oil his throat with another glass of champaign, the Sirdar, whose eyes glistened with pride, at this enumeration of Napooleon's domination, exclaimed,

"The Emperor had his foot upon the neck of all Europe, Alexander, Cæsar, Aurungzebe and Timour Shah, were all as dirt to him. He could reckon a victory for each day, a conquered city for each week, and a subjected kingdom for every month in the year."

"Eh! Eh! victories, and conquests are all mighty fine," retorted the King, "but of what use is it to catch fish, if you let them slip through your fingers? Now, did it not come to pass that the Ingliz, who ruled the waters as he ruled the land, waxed wrath at his attempting to exclude their ships, their knives,

scissors and kettles, from the rest of Frangistan? Did not their old blind Padishah raise the war cry, and unfurl the banner of defiance? Did he not command his Vizirs to lay on excruciating taxes, which by the aid of Alchymists and Jews, produced such immense sums, that he was enabled to levy mighty armies, and to bribe divers vanquished tribes, to burst the bonds of servitude? Did not these Ingliz transport their armies some where or another, and did not a bloody battle ensue, wherein this Napooleon, his Sirdars, and even his body guards were all slaughtered, excepting such as made their escape in the dark, as did the Afghans, when with God's aid, I vanquished them at the battle of Huzzroo.* And was not this Napooleon compelled to

* The battle was fought near Peishawer in Afghanistan, between the armies of Dost Mahomed Khan and the Seiks, commanded by Runjeet Sing, in the spring of 1823. This Dost Mahomed is the same person, who drove Shah Shouja from the throne of Caubul, and who in his turn has been dethroned by the English army, who have restored Shah Shouja. Lieutenant Conolly, in his interesting overland journey to India, mentions the existence of a prophecy, which declared that the English would one day extend their Indian Empires to a certain tree in the vicinity of Caubul. This curious prophecy may be said to have been accomplished.

abdicate his empire, and restore your old fat Padishah to his throne, in obedience to the will of these said Ingliz? Does the King speak truths or falsehoods?"

"The Emperor fell a victim to treachery," said the other in reply. "Not all the English in the world, could have vanished him by other means."

"Eh! Eh!" ejaculated Runjeet Sing, with a malicious smile, "Eh! Eh! I have heard say that you Frantzees, from time immemorial, have always thrown the blame of your defeats upon treachery, in the same manner that those silly Moslems always attribute their misfortunes to *Kismet* (fate)!"—Then breaking off the conversation, and turning to Dil Bar, he said, "If the King did not know that these same benighted followers of Islam, eschewed all nourishing drinks, by his beard, he would regale thy mouth with some of this Shampanea, in order that thou mightest plead thy cause with greater fluency."

"Heaven be praised!" responded Dil Bar, who had been waiting with impatience for the termination of this tiresome conversation about the infidel Franks, "Heaven be praised! my tongue requires no such forbidden aid."

"Proceed then," answered the monarch, "we are all attention."

“ Let it be known to my Lord and master,” rejoined Dil Bar, “ that I have discovered and laid hands upon one of those relentless watch-dogs of Eblis, who aided in the murder of the Maharajah’s tributary, the Rajah Raz Andaz.”

“ By the King’s soul !” ejaculated Runjeet Sing, “ if this be true, all my police and custom guards are as cowards and owls when compared to thee.”

“ Who can account for Heaven’s ordinances ?” replied my mistress. “ It has pleased him to throw into my power the identical wretch who joined in the frightful slaughter, and then plundered my person of this very shawl and other valuables.”

“ The dark minded rascal shall be brought before us, and we will deal with him according to his deserts,” rejoined the King. Then waving his hand as a signal for all but two or three confidential persons to quit the chamber, he continued. “ Hitherto, we have only heard a small portion of your story ; sit you down, therefore, the moment is propitious, and recount thy adventures. But waste no time, for we have promised to give audience to a Rooss Vakeel, who comes, from Heaven knows where, to offer presents, and doubtless to seek our cooperation in some plot or intrigue.”

“ Report says that these Moscovites are as false and as crafty as their neighbours the lying Persians,” observed one of the Sirdars.

“ If they can circumvent the King, they must indeed have more wit than all the red heads, (Persians) in Iran, and more than all the red backs, (English) in Hindostan,” said the barber.

“ The Almighty has only left me one eye, but nevertheless, I shall be able to see through and through them,” added Runjeet Sing.

He then made a signal to Dil Bar, who obeyed his commands by succinctly narrating her adventures down to the moment, when Pir Lena Sing rushed into the harem tent, and bore her away in his arms: She then proceeded as will be shown presently, if my Agha has patience to transcribe my words.

CHAPTER XIII.

“My senses,” said Dil Bar continuing her narrative, “were so bewildered, that I was early unconscious of all that happened, as Pir Lena Sing, bounding through the forest with the speed and strength of a lion, bore me far away from the place of slaughter. At length we reached the borders of a deep and foaming torrent, where he deposited me beneath the shade of a tree, and hastened to procure water, wherewithal to cool my parched lips and burning brow. Being somewhat restored by this, I fell upon my knees and beseeched him to have pity upon me. Whereupon he lifted me up, and uttering the most impassioned expressions, called himself my slave, my footstool, and implored me not to avert the cheek of affection and forgiveness.”

“If love did not dictate assent, necessity

commanded obedience. Was it not so?" demanded Runjeet Sing.

"Nevertheless, Allah steeled my heart," replied my mistress. "The recollection of the horrors I had witnessed, and the indignities I had suffered, rose before me and embittered my soul. I therefore drew my veil more closely around me, and reckless of consequences, turned the hand of rejection upon him."

"Her brain must also have been turned, doubly turned," whispered the barber.

"She must have been mad to excite the fury of the wolf when his paw was on the game," said another Seik.

"Certainly! certainly! none but mad caps can forget that those who grasp sharp sword-blades, must gnaw the back of their hands through anguish," exclaimed the King, "but let her proceed."

"Upon finding that my ears were filled with the cotton of repulse," continued Dil Bar, "his soul was darkened, the lightnings of anger gleamed fearfully in his eye, and, springing forward, he strove to seize me in his arms. But, ere he could accomplish this, I drew forth the poignard presented to me by the Rajah, and held the point to my heart

with a determination to plunge it into my bosom, if he should attempt further outrage. This caused him to desist, so whilst he stood gazing at me with looks of mingled wonder and wrath, I exclaimed :

“By the breath and souls of the four friends,* move not a step nearer, or in an instant more, I shall be with God.

“These words produced the desired effect, for he immediately lifted up his hands to Heaven, and swore that he would abstain from all violence ; nay more—he advanced to the brink of the torrent, and placing one foot upon the ledge of rocks that overhung the abyss, declared that he would hurl himself into the raging current, if I persisted in rejecting his suit.”

“A crocodile—a most double faced crocodile,” ejaculated a third Serdar named Door-u-Deen (pearl of religion), who sat with his mouth full of opium pills, at the edge of the King’s carpet.

* Dil Bar was a Soonee, and she therefore swore by the four first Caliphs, Abou Bekr, Omar and Osman, including Mahomed. The title given by the Soonees to these Caliphs is, as we have stated in a former note, *char your*—the four friends.

“So so! thou thinkest that he only wanted to throw dust in her eyes,” said Runjeet Sing.

“The strength of our hearts is a mere cobweb before the bounding antelope,” replied Dil Bar.

“And so thou wert caught like a fly in the spider’s toils; do I guess right?” said Door-u-Deen Sing.

“The King’s slave is but a woman,” answered my mistress, meekly. “It cannot be expected that her resolution should be all of one colour, like that of a man.”

“All of one colour!” re-echoed the Mahara-jah. “One colour! No, no, it was more chequered than the surface of a *sadrenge* (chess board).”*

* The origin and etymology of this game, says Chardin, has occasioned the most learned disquisitions amongst the Persians, who assert that it is the invention of their ancestors. It is called *Sadrenge* or *Shatrenge* by them: the former, meaning a “hundred pains,” because the game requires all one’s thoughts; and the other meaning, “the king’s sorrows,” in allusion to the extremity to which the king is often reduced during the game. Check mate is derived from the words *Shsik* (a chief) or *Shak* (king) and *mat* (peri!), meaning the king is in danger. The Persians hold this game in great estimation, and say that a good chess player is fit to govern the world. Orthodox Moslems, however, look upon chess as a game of hazard, and thence forbidden by the Koran—*Chardin*, vol. iv, p. 17.

“Our will is not our own,” rejoined Dil Bar
“Who can resist, when *nusseeb e kismet* (fortune and fate) are against them? We are the slaves of destiny.”

“Destiny!” again re-echoed the old infidel.
“By the Seik faith, had destiny the force of forty times forty elephants, it would not be able to bear the weight of filth which these silly Moslems thrust upon its back, whenever they are at a loss for an excuse. But say, how didst thou extricate thyself from thy *Shah-mât* (check-mate)?”

“What could I do?” replied Dil Bar. “My heart sickened at the thoughts of causing the death of him, who had once saved my life. And then, the remembrance of our early love, and his ceaseless constancy, united with the knowledge of my desolate situation—all conspired to shake my resolution and to induce—”

“Thee to whiten his face—was it not so?” demanded the Maharajah, interrupting her.

“The centre of wisdom and perspicuity has said it. He can see into futurity, as easily as other men read past events,” answered the Cashmieran.

“It would have been better, had she commenced where she ended, than to have swallowed so much dirt for nothing. But go on, go on,” observed the King.

Dil Bar complied, saying, “ after a moment’s reflection, during which I joyfully perceived that the gloom of his countenance, had given way to a more gentle expression, I raised my voice, and exclaimed,

“ Drive me not into the jaws of the angel of death, either by committing violence upon me, or upon yourself. Have mercy upon your own soul and mine. Listen ! if you will abjure the hideous goddess worshipped by your tribes—if you will sincerely embrace the faith and practice of our holy religion, and purify yourself by pilgrimage and penance—if you will do this, and convey me to a place of safety—I will live, or die for you. It is an oath, by the Koran.

“ For some time his evil and good genii seemed struggling for the ascendant. At length the latter prevailed. Being already a sort of half Mussulman, he turned his face towards Mecca, and swore that he would faithfully obey my orders. Then approaching my side, he took my hand, raised it to his forehead, and solemnly declared, that I should be to him as a sister, until he should return from his pilgrimage. This being done, I abandoned myself to his guidance, and he conveyed me by bye-paths to a secluded village, where he procured food and horses, and in due time conducted me to

Lahore—treating me the while, with all the repentant submission and respect, due from a slave to a Sultana.

“ Upon reaching Lahore, Pir Lena Sing forthwith made arrangements for my reception, at the abode of an old Moslem widow, named Tootee (the Parrot), whose house was situated in a beautiful, but very retired garden outside the city. There I was furnished with all things suitable to my sex. I had slaves, dresses, jewels, and full permission to frequent the bath and mosque. Each wish was anticipated, each desire gratified, and I should perhaps have been the most contented and most fortunate woman in all the East, had not the thoughts of Pir Lena Sing’s pilgrimage and consequent departure, intervened to cast a shade over my happiness.

“ His conduct in the mean time was so submissive and respectful, and he evinced his piety and affection in so many different ways, that all recollection of his misdeeds was obliterated, and my soul was filled with redoubled tenderness and gratitude. The impassioned Leila could not have been more entranced, when the plaintive accents of her adored Mujnoon thrilled upon her ear,* than was I, when I

* The loves of Mujnoon and Leila, the Romeo and

listened to the ravishing assurances of Pir Lena Sing's devotion, as we sat beneath the perfumed bowers of the widow's garden, with no other witnesses than the birds of love, that warbled forth their moonlight orisons around us.

“Indeed to such an extent was my heart consumed and intoxicated, that I deeply repented me of having insisted upon his undertaking a pilgrimage as the preliminary to our union. Gladly would I have proposed to release him of his oath, no less gladly would I have revoked my own. But I feared to hint the former, lest he should turn the face of contempt upon me, for swearing one day, what I abjured the other, and I dreaded to recal the latter, lest I should meet with the infallible chastisement awarded to perjurers in the next world.

“At length, as I was leaning one evening upon the window of my zenana, anxiously awaiting his return from the mosque, he entered with a most melancholy air, and in a voice quivering with emotion, said, that the fatal

Juliet of oriental romance, are sung and narrated in an hundred different ways all over the East. Their names are as typical of constancy and attachment as those of the Rose and the Nightingale.

hour of separation was fast approaching. Then taking my hand and raising it to his forehead, he added,

“‘ My soul ; my life ! the thoughts of again parting from thee are foretastes of death. But no time must be lost. I have consulted an astrologer, who has declared, that the first of the coming moon is a time eminently propitious for commencing my intended pilgrimage. Consequently, I shall join a caravan of merchants, who are about to proceed through Afghanistan to the holy city of Meshed, where I shall offer up my prayers at the tomb of the Saint, who is enshrined there ; and if it please God, shall obtain remission of my sins.’* ”

“ This intelligence so completely overwhelmed me, that I lost all command over my feelings, and sank trembling upon his shoulder. A miserable sensation of loneliness and despair crept chillingly through my veins. A thousand sinister forebodings arose before me. I already felt myself alone and deserted in the world,

* Meshed contains the celebrated tomb of the Iman Reza, one of the twelve canonized descendants of Ali, worshipped by the Persians. His shrine is, however, visited by moslems of all sects, although not by strictly orthodox Soonees, who regard the Imams as imposters.

for I had no other friend on earth but Allah and him. I essayed to speak, but grief choked my utterance. Tears were my only resource, and these I shed with such convulsive abundance, that Pir Lena Sing was himself quite unmanned and hung over me, as the bending willow droops over the gushing streamlet.

“At length, after pressing me to his heart, he exclaimed, ‘Kehblah of my soul! why hast thou exacted this bitter proof of my devotion? why hast thou darkened my face, by imposing this hideous sacrifice upon me? But, be it so; I have sworn to obey thee, and I will fulfil my vow—though death ensue. Yes—death! for who can uplift the skirts of futurity? Heaven alone knows whether my head be not destined to bleach the desert sands, in lieu of reposing upon the treasury of thy beauty! But no matter,’ added he, ‘if the angel of death should smite me, and thou shouldst visit my tomb, I would cry out with a loud voice—Welcome! Thrice welcome, O loved one! Then in a whisper I would add, See what thy lovely eyes have done! but I would not say this to reproach thee.’

“These tender words only caused me to weep the more bitterly; I longed to exclaim, Life of my life, stay! In the prophet’s name, stay!

If an oath be broken, let the penalty fall upon my head. But the words died upon my lips, and I could only express my anguish with sighs.

“At this juncture Tootee, who was sitting in a corner of the room, raised her voice, and accosted us thus :—‘If I might speak, I should say that you were both exceedingly to blame, for thus wantonly befouling each other with ashes. Oof! Who ever heard of two people turning their backs upon the gates of enjoyment, when the key hung at their girdle? None but fanatics or mad-persons would wilfully cast away the cup, and say, Let us die of thirst.’

“‘We have sworn by the Koran,’ replied Pir Lena Sing. ‘How can such an oath be retracted without the recording angel registering the sin against us?’

“‘Am I a she-ass, the daughter and sister of asses?’ retorted Tootee. ‘Was not my defunct husband a Moolah! Was not my father a Moolah, and is not my brother, Hadji Moosa, a Moolah? Am I not nearly as good as a Moolah myself? These are most nonsensical scruples? Are you ignorant that oaths are not binding if both parties are willing to retract? Besides, if any one persist in the accomplishment of an oath that leads to

the destruction of innocent life, then the fulfilment is an abomination, and the blood price will be upon his soul. And if this were not true, is there not another way of getting out of the scrape.'

"'Tell it to your daughter,' answered I raising my head, 'and she will reward you with all she possesses,'"

"'Nothing can be more easy,' replied the widow. 'Listen! Unless my ears have deceived me, the place of pilgrimage was not specified, when you took this foolish oath. What necessity therefore is there for Pir Lena Sing to go all the way to Meshed? Let him visit the shrine of one of the saints that are entombed on this side of the Indus. Let him say his prayers there, and give money to be distributed in charity, and although his sins were as numerous and black, as those of forty infidels, that would suffice to whiten his face. Besides he is not a Soonee, and is not Meshed the burying place of one of those usurping Shiite Imams, whom he is bound to regard as impostors? To worship the shrine of such a doomed heretic would be an increase, instead of a diminution of crime. In God's name then, dry up your tears, and if my words are not sufficient to overcome your exaggerated

scruples, consult my brother, the Moolah Hadji Moosa. He is the most learned and devout of all true believers, in this, or in any other part of the world. He will doubtless corroborate my words—'

“Every syllable uttered by Tootee was as a drop of the reviving waters of paradise upon my heart. Indeed they inspired me with so much confidence, that I answered, Let the good Hadji be sent for, and if he declares that I may retract my oath, I will not scruple to eat my words. On my head be it.”

“‘Lose no time mother,’ exclaimed Pir Lena Sing. ‘If it be as you say, there will be no occasion for retraction—for I will content myself with performing a pilgrimage to the nearest shrine, and there fulfil my vow, and prove my piety and attachment to my oath.’

“Tootee now clapped her hand for a slave, whom she bade hasten to the abode of her brother, to beg his attendance, for the purpose of settling a matter of conscience, and perhaps of registering a marriage. When the slave was departed, the widow turned to me, and said,

“‘In order to increase your respect for my brother, I will tell you by what wonderful

means he has secured to himself admission into the mansions of eternal joy, in the very highest portion of the right side of the seventh Heaven.' ”

“Insured his admission into Heaven !” exclaimed Runjeet Sing, interrupting Dil Bar. “How could he accomplish that ?”

My mistress upon this cleared her voice, and replied as follows.

CHAPTER XIV.

“ HAVING seated ourselves upon one of the soft Herat carpets spread near the window, Tootee thus recounted the manner in which the Hadji was said to have obtained the key of eternal beatitude.

“ ‘ My brother,’ said Tootee, ‘ after returning safely from a pilgrimage to the holy temple of Mecca, thought proper to complete his good works by retiring to a secluded hermitage, in order that he might the more strictly devote himself to acts of penitence and piety. There he past his time in prayer and contemplation, and in studying by what means he could best secure for himself the enjoyment of those delights which are promised to the blessed.

“ ‘ Now it came to pass one morning, as he was making his ablutions prior to first prayer,

that the silence of the surrounding forest was disturbed by the echoes of a voice exclaiming, Hadji Moolah Moosa! Hadji Moolah Moosa! art thou here?

“ ‘ It being still so dark that my brother could not distinguish the pale streak in the horizon, that divides the parting night from the approaching day, he made no reply, but interrupting his prayers, listened with breathless attention to the voice which appeared familiar to him. After a short pause, the latter again rose louder upon his ear, saying,

“ ‘ Hadji Moosa! Hadji Moolah Moosa! by thy beard! by thy hopes of future recompense! why dost thou not speak? thou canst not be dead, for I come direct from Heaven, and I did not see thee amongst the elect.’

“ ‘ Hadji Moosa, as you may suppose, was exceedingly staggered at this singular announcement, and no less curious compliment, especially as the voice strongly resembled that of one of his bosom friends, recently deceased. He, however, stood so much in awe of gholes and evil spirits, that in lieu of replying, he prostrated himself, and ejaculated his *fatehs* with redoubled fervour. So long as he prayed all was silent without, but when he came to the last word, the voice again exclaimed :

“ ‘ Eh ! Eh ! by the graves of my father and grandfather ! poor Hadji Moosa, whose tongue used to clack like that of a mill wheel—he must be dead—and not being in Heaven, it is evident that he has descended to a proper hot place under Satan’s chin.

“ ‘ Indignant at the idea of being supposed to have been cast down amongst the doomed companions of the left hand, Hadji Moosa first muttered to himself, that’s a lie ! and then raising his voice exclaimed— Heaven forbid ! Heaven forbid that I should be converted into fuel for the accursed fire ! Alhumdoolilah, I am not dead ! Inshallah, I shall never eat of the foul fruit. But say ! who art thou, who comest at this hour to interrupt my devotions and stuff dirt down my throat ?

“ ‘ Who am I !’ answered the voice, ‘ who am I ! by your breath, by your head and by mine, have you so soon forgotten your other self, your beloved friend Codja Hafiz the Devrish ?

“ ‘ Codja Hafiz !’ echoed the Hadji trembling from head to foot, ‘ Ya Allah, thou art attempting to spit upon my beard. Alas ! my poor friend Codja Hafiz, on whom be eternal rest, has departed this world, carrying with him an hundred tomaums together with a cloak

and shawl girdle which he borrowed from me. Notwithstanding that, I daily offer up prayers for the salvation of his soul.

“ ‘Thou mayest save thyself that trouble, my dear Hadji Moosa, replied the stranger.’ Yes! O most liberal and faithful friend, reserve thy prayers for thyself. Codja Hafiz has no occasion for thy intercession; he already reposes upon banks of never fading verdure, beneath the tree of perpetual enjoyment—as to thy tomaums—fear not, they shall be repaid with interest.

“ ‘In Allah’s name! by the soul of the prophet! by the stars and their ruler! by the immaculate breath of the four friends,’ exclaimed Hadji Moosa, as much alarmed as he was astounded at the voice and words of the speaker ‘say, who art thou, and how dost thou know anything respecting the fate of my departed friend? How canst thou pretend to penetrate mysteries which are screened from the knowledge of all mortals?’

“ ‘Know! answered the other, know! who should better know than I what has befallen Codja Hafiz in the other world? What, my dear Hadji, are thine ears filled with cotton? dost thou not recognize the voice of thy friend? let me in! I am his spirit, this is no lie!

“ ‘ These words made Moolah Moosa quake in every joint ; for in truth the voice perfectly resembled that of the defunct Dervish. He was, however, so excessively terrified at the thoughts of being visited by the spirit of Codja Hafiz, that he had no more power to lift up the latch of the door with his finger, than he had to move the *Tuckt i Sauliman*, (throne of Solomon) with a tooth pick.* All he could do was to ejaculate, *Alhumdoolilah*, nothing is impossible to God ; he can slay, he can revive. *Allah ackbar ! Allah ackbar !* may Heaven help and preserve me from evil spirits, magicians and devils.

“ ‘ After spitting, as if his mouth had been crammed with bitter ashes, the stranger called out, when thou hast finished this useless string of invocations, thou wilt perhaps open the door and admit thy friend’s spirit ; he descends from the genial abodes of paradise, and the damp jungle air chills him. Thou wouldst fain go whence I came—but thou seemest to forget that faith and hospitality are the lock and key to Heaven.’

“ ‘ Hadji Moosa would willingly have given the small fragment of the veil of the Caaba,

* The lofty peak of the Sauliman mountains alluded to in a former note.

which he had purchased at Mecca, and wore round his neck as a talisman, had his friend Codja Hafiz been warming himself by the side of the hottest furnace in Jehanum, in lieu of seeking shelter in his hut; but notwithstanding his repugnance, he dared no longer refuse the rights of hospitality; so he opened the door, and by the dim light of his lamp, which still flickered in its stone cup, he discovered the features of a stalwart and handsome youth, with a beard fringed and glossy, as the blackest lamb skins of Bokarah, and with a pair of dark and piercing eyes, that gleamed through the darkness, like the fires which the idolatrous Ghebers illumine upon the mountains of Yezd.

“ ‘Moolah Moosa’s fears did but increase at this sight, especially as the stranger stood glaring upon him, with anything but the benevolent and merry look of the deceased Codja Hafiz, and because he moreover carried a club in his hand, that was heavy enough to have battered out the brains of an elephant at one blow.

“ ‘As he stood there with his eyes fixed and his teeth chattering with fear, not knowing whether his visitor was a robber, a ghole or a spirit from Heaven, the stranger exclaimed:—

“ ‘ How is this ? hath death severed all ties between us ; hast thou not a single welcome for him with whom thou exchangedst turbans ? were we not of one breath ? was not thine mine, and mine thine ?

“ ‘ You are welcome ! doubly welcome ! peace be with you ! rejoined the Hadji, with a look so sour, that it seemed as if he had supped on verjuice.

“ ‘ Eh Eh !’ ejaculated the other, ‘ is this the reception thou accordedst to thy friend ? Is thy heart and hand tied up against him, whose sole object in visiting earth, is to impart to thee the miraculous secret, by which thou mayest attain that eternal bliss for which thy soul panteth. But what art thou muttering between thy toothless jaws ?

“ ‘ Ya Allah ! I am only invoking God’s blessing upon Codja Hafiz, my dear old friend with a new face !’ replied the Hadji shaking from head to foot with alarm.

“ ‘ A new face !’ echoed the stranger, ‘ what words are these ? Is it my youthful face that turns thy liver into water ? How is this ? Thou passest for the most learned man in all the world, and yet thou seemest to forget the revealed word. Say ! Is it not written that those who cross the threshold of heaven shall

be regenerated and blest with eternal youth? Do I lie ?

“ ‘These are truths certainly,’ answered Hadji Moosa, who now began to fancy that the stranger’s features, as well as his voice, bore a strong affinity to those of Codja Hafiz, as he recollected him in his youth. He therefore took courage, and spreading a mat near the embers of the fire, which he commenced fanning, and feeding with fresh fuel, he invited his friend’s spirit to be seated. He then began to consider whether he should treat his visitor as a mortal, by offering him a kaleean, or whether he should behave to him as to a heavenly messenger, by regaling him with a chapter from the Koran.

“ His doubts on this score were, however, immediately set at rest ; for the stranger, after smacking his lips, as if they were parched with the fires of Eblis, in lieu of being recently moistened with the delicious waters of Al Cawther, stretched forth his hand, and swallowed the contents of a large pitcher of soft curds, prepared for the Hadji’s morning meal. Upon seeing this, the latter had no scruples in presenting him a pipe, and indeed, he regained so much self-possession, that he was about to question him relative to the object of his visit,

and re-embodiment in human form, when his visitor said :

“ ‘ What need is there for so good a man as my dear friend, the Moolah Hadji Moosa, to seclude himself from the world, and to expend so much time in mortifications, self-denial, and prayer ?’

“ ‘ Of what use !’ re-echoed the Hadji ; ‘ why, in order that I may the more easily purify my spirit, and thereby obtain admission into that blessed abode whence my dear friend says he has just arrived. There is no martyrdom that I would not endure, to secure that boon.’

“ ‘ Prayer and penance are doubtless very useful,’ replied the other ; ‘ but thou knowest that I did not debar myself from the enjoyments of this world. Little pain and much pleasure—that was my axiom ; and yet I am a partaker of perpetual beatitude.’

“ ‘ If indeed you are the spirit of my good friend, Codja Hafiz, of which there can be no doubt,’ answered Moolah Moosa, ‘ then it must be acknowledged that you opened the gates of indulgence to their fullest extent. No man led such a dissolute life. There were those amongst your brethren who thought your brain was completely upset.’

“ ‘ He who is always wise, is a fool ; and he who perpetually mortifies his body with bitter ashes, in the hopes of sweetening his soul, is a still greater fool,’ rejoined the stranger. ‘ Listen ! my attachment and gratitude to thee are so intense, that I have descended expressly from Paradise, to enable thee to share those blessings, which all seek for, but few attain. For, let me tell thee, the celestial abodes are so thinly peopled, that one may ride forty ferzangs, beneath the umbrageous and balm-breathing foliage of Tuba, without meeting more than two or three souls with whom to exchange salutations ; and hitherto I have not encountered a single Moolah or Cazy in all Paradise.’

“ ‘ Heaven take me into its holy keeping !’ ejaculated the Moolah. ‘ Then indeed Jehannum must be a bad place !’

“ ‘ I can whiten thy cheek, however,’ continued the beatified Dervish. ‘ I possess a talisman which will insure happiness to thee hereafter, and which will enable thee to enjoy the rest of thy days in this world in all manner of indulgences, without fear of Monkir and Nakir knocking thee upon the head for thy backsliding.’

“ ‘ If thou art really come upon such a cha-

ritable errand,' answered the Hadji, 'then indeed thou must be the very quintessence of my worthy friend, and I most willingly make thee a present of the hundred tomaums, the cloak and girdle. But, brother of my soul!—say, how didst thou discover this marvellous talisman, and how canst thou unfold the secrets of heaven, without heaping fire on thine own head?'

" 'Have the sages not said,' replied the Moolah's friend, 'that he who guideth a traveller in the desert, doth but illumine another man's torch by his own lamp, which thereby loses nothing by the light thus imparted?'

" 'Excellent! excellent!' responded the good Hadji. 'These are divine truths. I recognize in this the disinterestedness of my dear Codja Hafiz, who spent the hundred tomaums I lent him in regaling his friends, and exchanged my cloak and girdle, with an Armenian, for two jars of Cabool wine. But, if I may give the reins to my tongue, is it not decreed that spirits are not permitted to reveal what passes in the other world, although they may be allowed to revisit this?'

" 'Dost thou doubt my word?' said the other, with a look so fierce that it made Moolah Hadji Moosa tremble. 'Beware how thou

triest my patience! If thou dost not thrust thy tongue into the scabbard of discretion, I will depart, and leave thee to get to heaven how thou canst.'

" 'Allah forbid that my dear Codja Hafiz should be angry with his brother!' rejoined the Hadji. 'Let him say what he will—my tongue shall be mine, my ears his.'

" 'Well, then! Is it not acknowledged that there are seven heavens?' demanded the stranger.

" 'To deny that would be blasphemy,' replied Moolah Moosa, holding out his opium box, and offering some pills to his guest, who crammed them into his mouth with as much apparent satisfaction, as if that drug was not amongst the exquisite luxuries furnished to the tenants of Eden.

" 'Dost thou know,' continued the defunct Dervish, 'that each of these seven heavens is furnished with a gate of molten brass, guarded by angels with four faces and eight hands, wielding flaming swords?'

" 'Does my brother take me for a child, that he doubts my knowledge?' said the Hadji fumbling the beads of his rosary, and devoutly ejaculating the name of Allah, as he dropped them in succession.

“ ‘I shall take thee for an ass—the grand-father of asses—if thou brayest while I speak,’ retorted the other, starting and grinning at each pious movement of the Hadji’s fingers, as if a block of granite had fallen upon his own skull. Listen!’ continued he; ‘thou sayest that all these things are known to thee. But thou canst not be aware, that above each of these gates is affixed a golden slab, on which a different verse of the koran is inscribed in letters of diamonds, opals, and sapphires, whose lustre is so refulgent, that those who look upon them are dazzled, and cannot read.’

“ ‘Then of what use is this refulgence, if it renders the verses illegible?’ demanded the Moolah.

“ ‘Of what use!’ echoed the spirit. ‘Where are thy wits? Of what use, indeed! Why, in order that the verses may not be read and communicated to mortals, by the devils and evil genii who flit round the adamantine walls of heaven, or by those who, having been once admitted, are again cast out, as was the case with the father of men and his khanum, that incredible devourer of fruit, Eve.’

“ ‘*Allah kerim der*, why should the verses not be read and imparted to mortals?’ exclaimed Hadji Moosa.

“ ‘ Because,’ replied the spirit, ‘ if the most dark-minded sinner that ever merited a place in al Hotema (a part of hell) were to learn and recite these seven verses, once each day, he would be sure of passing through all the seven gates of paradise, and of reaching the right hand of the throne of enjoyment, as easily as a bird hops from branch to branch. Now,’ added he, ‘ is the mist removed from thy brain ?’

“ ‘ It is ! it is !’ replied the Moolah, ‘ thanks be to the giver of light, my senses are as clear as the holy waters of Zemzem, of which I have preserved a few drops in this gourd, as a defence against witchcraft, demons, and gholes. But proceed, dear brother, what next ?’

“ ‘ Listen,’ rejoined the spirit. ‘ By the especial favour of the angels who guard the gates, and who shaded my eyes with their snowy wings, I was enabled to read the seven verses. By this means, I obtained a power denied to almost all other spirits ; for I can come and go when I please, between the hours of last and first prayer. I have consequently availed myself of this privilege, to place these seven keys of never ending joys in my friend’s hand.’

“ ‘ The waters of ecstasy now trickled over the lips of Hadji Moolah Moosa. His aged eyes

gleamed with anticipated enjoyment. The glow and vigour of youth seemed already to refresh his withered limbs. Already the dark-eyed maidens of Paradise sat by his side, fanning his beard with their fragrant sighs. Already the fumes of those delicious viands and wines which are said to promote appetite in lieu of producing satiety, curled around his nostrils, and his ears were already entranced with the thrilling melody of celestial music. So great was his delight and impatience to become possessor of the infallible talisman, that he seized his guest's hand, and having raised it to his forehead, said :

“ ‘By thy canonized soul, O brother, lose no time! The hour of first prayer is at hand!—The ruddy tints of dawning day already tinge the summits of the forest foliage. Be quick, or the prescribed time for thy departure will arrive ere thou canst accomplish thy mission. Speak, in Allah's name! What are the verses? Let me hear them, and then—die!’

“ ‘Gently! gently, my dear brother,’ answered the other. ‘Dying may be very pleasant; but no one can do that before the decreed hour. Thou seest that I love thee as the kernel of my heart, and that I am exceeding grateful for thy having remitted payment for the

tomaums, the cloak and shawl. Thou art a liberal man. Feridoon was less so. Thy admission into heaven would be hailed with joy, by the archangel Gabriel himself. But I am not permitted to disclose the secrets of Eden without some recompense, or without an oath on thy part.'

“ Ask what thou will'st! My life—my soul—all I have is yours,' replied Moolah Moosa; 'and as for oaths—by the birth and burial of the Prophet—by the veil of the Caaba, of which I wear a fragment at my heart, I am ready to swear anything! On my eyes be it.'

“ ‘ Well then,' rejoined the other, ‘ since that be the case, be it known to my brother that, whilst I sojourned upon earth, I became deeply enamoured of thy sister Tootee's daughter, the incomparable Jansouze, (soul-ravisher) whom I once saw when the wind blew aside her veil, as she came from the bath. Now, thou wilt, doubtless, admire thy friend's forbearance and constant tenderness ;—for, although I refrained from acknowledging my passion when alive, and although I am surrounded in heaven by perpetual virgins, whose beauty baffles all imagination, my soul alone pants for the pearl of Lahore—thy moon-cheeked niece!'

“Hadji Moosa was exceedingly startled at this singular confession; but as this was not the first time that he had heard of heavenly spirits falling in love with mortals, he concealed his surprise, and merely said:

“‘Thanks be to the giver of all good! my niece is certainly as beautiful as the cheek of day. All other women are as buffaloes to her.’

“‘My dear friend’s words do but inflame my passion for this matchless star of admiration,’ replied the other. ‘Poof! what are all the seven heavens without her! The delicious fruits of Paradise will be more nauseous than brimstone to my lips, unless she partakes of them with me. Hearken, O Hadji, to the truth,’ continued he. ‘It is my desire to remove Jansouze to those verdant couches, which are carpeted with ever blooming roses and violets. Fulfil my wishes, and swear to do so with an oath. Thou wilt thereby secure thine own salvation and thy friend’s happiness.’

“‘My revered brother has in part stated how the one can be effected,’ rejoined the Hadji; ‘but, may I forfeit the joys he assures to me, if I know how to accomplish the other. By your beard and by mine, say, how can a union

take place between an inhabitant of the mansions of ecstasy, and a sojourner upon earth, without their encountering the same miserable fate that befel the angels, Aroot and Maroot, and the woman whom they contrived to smuggle into heaven?*

* A curious tradition, relating to the adventures of Aroot and Maroot, and the lady in question, is current amongst Moslems. Chardin gives it somewhat in the following terms :

“ Among the angels admitted to converse with Allah, were two, named Aroot and Maroot, who one day marvelled with the Almighty at his inexhaustible indulgence, in so often pardoning the sins of mankind. To which Allah replied, that if they were aware of the temptations of the flesh, they would not wonder at man’s repeated transgressions. Thereupon, the two angels begged permission to assume mortal form, and to be put to the test. This request being granted, Aroot and Maroot descended to earth, where, being well stored with ready cash, they soon fell into all manner of excesses, and rendered themselves, above all things, conspicuous for their gallantry. Among divers ladies to whom they paid their addresses, was one named Hilbaz, (the crafty) who, it appears, thought herself more than a match in cunning for these two celestia Don Juans ; for she declared that nothing should induce her to listen to their declarations, unless they carried her up to that heaven, of which they affirmed themselves to be inhabitants. Aroot and Maroot, thinking that there could be no objection to this, and being moreover completely intoxicated with love, con-

“ ‘What do I care for Aroot and Maroot!— Oof! I spit upon their heels!’ replied the Hadji’s guest. ‘Say,’ continued he, ‘art thou not uncle and guardian to the lovely Jansouze? Hast thou not constant access to thy sister’s zenana?’

“ ‘My friend has said it,’ responded the Hadji, fingering his beads, and repeating the divine name with still greater rapidity and fervour than before—a ceremony which caused the defunct dervish to twitch his nose, and clench his jaws, for all the world as though he was racked with a most excruciating tooth-

sented, and forthwith transported the object of their adoration to one of the ‘lofty couches,’ beneath the tree of eternal enjoyment. It seems, however, that this proceeding was in no ways accordant with the Archangel Gabriel’s notions of propriety; for upon going his rounds at the head of the heavenly watchmen, and discovering Hilbaz, he called out, with a terrible voice, ‘What dirt is this? Who introduced this wanton into Paradise?’ Aroot and Maroot having pleaded guilty, Allah was greatly incensed at their insolence; so he commanded Gabriel to cast Hilbaz beneath Satan’s chin, and to throw the two profligate angels, head foremost, into a deep well near Babylon. There they are supposed to hang by the heels, at this hour, and to occupy themselves in teaching magic, sorcery, and other black arts, to magi, Jews, Infidels, and Idolaters. It was to the punishment of this trio that the Hadji alluded.

ache. The latter, nevertheless, put his hand into his bosom, took forth a small paper packet, and holding it towards Hadji Moolah Moosa, said :

“ This packet contains a miraculous powder. It is made from the down which clusters around the honied petals of the flowers that grow upon the enamelled banks of Al Cawthar, a single drop of whose waters would suffice to avert thirst, though one travelled from the Indus to the Arabian Gulf. Let my friend take this, and proceed to visit his niece about supper time. Let him watch his opportunity, and let him sprinkle the precious dust over her food.’

“ Ya Allah ! by my breath and yours, neither the strength of a lion nor the cunning of a fox is necessary to effect that,’ replied the Hadji, smiling. Then he added, with a more serious look, ‘ what next—what next ? My heart burns to know the consequences.’

“ ‘ Listen !’ exclaimed the other. ‘ In a short time after Jansouze shall have tasted of this thrice beneficent powder, the icy paleness of dissolution will supersede the roses that tinge her cheeks. She will first droop like the blighted hyacinth, and then fall into a lethargy as profound as that caused by the bites of the

poison-breeding bugs of Miana.* Her heart will cease to beat, and her pulse to throb. In fact, it will seem as if the hand of death were upon her. Upon this, let my friend pretend exceeding grief. Let him pluck his beard, and rend his garments. Let the usual ceremonies

* M. Texier, in his letters recently addressed from Persia to the French *Académie des Inscriptions*, corroborates the accounts, given by other travellers, of the venomous properties of these filthy insects. He describes them as having white legs and cinder-coloured bodies, somewhat more elongated than those of their European namesakes. By a singular provision of nature, it appears that although their bite is considered fatal to strangers, it has no effect upon the natives of Miana; whilst, on the other hand, if the insects are transported to any other place, they forthwith perish. The immediate result of their bite is drowsiness, then lethargy, and soon after, death; unless the sufferer adopts a peculiar regimen, that is, by avoiding animal food, and restricting himself to a diet of vegetables, honey, and other depuratives. Enveloping the patient in a recently flayed and still reeking ox or sheep's skin, is also considered an excellent specific; but this remedy, as well as honey, is looked upon as a cure for almost all maladies in Persia. Miana, or Meeanah, the stronghold of these dangerous insects, is situated to the S.E. of Tabreez, on the high road from that place to Teheran. It is said by the inhabitants that the Russians lost nearly 2000 men by the bites of these bugs, during their last expedition into Persia.

for the departed be performed, and then let the body be conveyed for interment to one of the tombs outside the city, and leave the rest to me. Swear to do this, and the gates of Eden shall be opened to thee and to her. On thy soul be it.'

"Now, if Hadji Moolah Moosa had acquired great additional confidence from long devotional practise, he had also gained much additional caution from previous experience, and as his worthy friend, Codja Hafiz, had cheated him out of his cash, cloak, and shawl, when living, he thought it not altogether impossible, that he might defraud him of his soul, when dead. Besides, a most terrible misgiving flashed across his mind. He had remarked that neither the name of Allah, or that of the prophet, (on whom be eternal glory) had once issued from the stranger's mouth—on the contrary, whenever these holy words had been uttered by himself, they seemed to have caused great perturbation to his guest. He also knew that Gholes, and other evil spirits, were endowed with the power of assuming the forms, voices, and manner, both of living and departed persons, and that they frequently availed themselves of this faculty, for the purpose of accomplishing their execrable projects.

“Fearing, therefore, that his visitor might be one of that accursed race, who had put on the appearance of Codja Hafiz, in order to destroy his soul, and devour his niece’s body,* the Hadji shut his eyes, clutched his beard in his left hand, and dropping his chin upon the bosom of meditation, inwardly invoked the aid and inspiration of our blessed prophet, to extricate him from his embarrassment.

“But he was quickly roused from his cogitations. For the stranger first stamped with his foot, so that the surrounding rocks vibrated with the shock, and then bellowed forth in a loud and thrilling voice—

“‘Hadji Moolah Moosa! Dost thou sleep? Are thy brains petrified! Eh! eh! Thou tremblest! What!—hast thou the form of a man, and the heart of a hare? O merciless to thyself, dost thou reject my offer? Speak! Lose not a breath. The prescribed time for my return to heaven is come. Willst thou foolishly condemn thyself to eternal destruction, by saying No—or by saying Yes, willst thou open for thyself those portals, over whose

* The Eastern gholes, like the Western Vampires, are supposed to have a peculiar predilection for the flesh of young maidens, especially if the victims are endowed with great personal charms.

golden thresholds, not one out of forty thousand Moolahs ever yet passed ?’

“‘Belli ! Belli ! (Yes, yes,)’ replied the Hadji, raising up his head, and looking steadfastly at his defunct friend. ‘Yes, but ere I take an irrevocable oath, let me speak.’”

“‘Give wings to thy tongue, or the appointed moment will pass,’ answered the other.

“‘I am your sacrifice. May your wishes be accomplished,’ rejoined the Hadji. ‘Listen !’ added he. ‘If thou art, indeed, a messenger from heaven, as doubtless thou art, this liquid will be as grateful to thy spirit, as that of the fountains of Elim to the fainting Israelites.’

“Then seizing the gourd containing some of the waters of Zemzem, which, all the world knows, have the power of exorcising evil spirits, and of putting demons and gholes to flight, he quickly poured a few drops into the palm of his hand, and exclaiming, “Faith in God is an invulnerable shield,” threw them into his guest’s face.

“‘Scarcely, however, had he time to accomplish this, ere the latter raised his club, and aimed a blow at his head, that would have crushed it, as easily as a stone smashes an egg, had not the weapon encountered the gourd, containing the infallible water. Nevertheless,

the shock was so violent, that poor Hadji Moolah Moosa fell senseless to the ground. The beastly ghole, for such in fact he was, then bounded from the hut, and disappeared amongst the forests' depths, with the speed of Al Ghazal, the matchless courser of the great Shah Abbas.*

* This celebrated Arab (named the Gazelle) which was buried in a splendid tomb near Ispahan, was stolen, by order of Shah Abbas, from the stables of the sublime Porte at Constantinople. The speed of this wonderful horse was said to be so great, that its legs could not be seen when it cantered, and when the Shah merely ambled round the royal gardens, the forty columns of the Chehel Sitoon Palace appeared as one pillar, so rapid was its pace. Its pedigree, on the dam's side, was traced to Rhoustam's famous mare Raksh, and the blood of its sires mounted up to the stud of David. Whilst upon the subject of swift-footed animals, it may be mentioned, that a certain rich and pious person, called Hossein Shah, chief of the family of the Hossenites and fortieth lineal descendant from Hossein, son of Ali (Mahomed's son-in-law,) possessed a donkey of such rare beauty and speed, that it was the admiration of all Persia. It could trot every day 75 miles, or about three times the distance of any ordinary camel-stage. Shah Abbas, who was a great amateur, and not over delicate in his means of getting well mounted, wished to obtain possession of this fine beast, so he sent his master of the horse to borrow it. But Hossein Shah, well knowing what would be the result of his donkey entering the royal stables,

declined the honour, saying—"By the soul of the immortal martyr of Kerbalah, the Shah seems to mistake me also for an ass." This bold speech would have cost him his head, had he not been so near akin to the venerated Ali.

CHAPTER XV.

WHEN the lovely Cashmerian paused to draw breath, the Maharajah, who had hitherto listened with great interest to her narrative, burst into a loud laugh, and exclaimed—"May the Seiks prosper. I have heard much, and seen more. But this is the first time that I ever knew of a thump on the head being a passport to Paradise. But proceed, Dil Bar, and let us hear what use the old fox of a Hadji made of the ghole's parting salutation."

My mistress, having cleared her voice, obeyed in the following terms—

"As soon as Tootee's brother had recovered the use of his wits, and satisfied himself that his brains were still in their proper places, he fervently offered up his thanksgivings to Heaven, for having rescued him from the fangs of Eblis. After prostrating himself, and repeat-

ing the two last chapters of the Koran, as the most applicable of all others to his situation,* he sat down and abandoned himself, for some time, to inward contemplation. Then, as if roused by some sudden inspiration, he rose, and placing the points of his fingers first upon his two shoulders, and then upon the pit of his stomach, as is customary when Sooneers pray, he indulged in the following soliloquy :

“ ‘ Barrick Ullah ! Whose dog did that devil's messenger take me for, that he should think to smother me with his beastliness ? Poof ! These rascally gholes are most incredi-

* The following are the versions of these two chapters. That called “ *The Separation* ” runs thus—“ *In name of the most merciful and just God ; Tell them (the infidels) that he, who has separated light from darkness, will guard me from the mischiefs of his creation, from the perils of darkness, from those who blow upon knots (witches), and from the snares of sorcerers and calumniators.* ” That entitled, “ *The people,* ” is thus worded—“ *In the name of the most merciful and just God ! Tell them that I will secure myself from the machinations of Satan, and from the malice of man, through his aid, who is Lord over all men, and king over all people.* ” I must avail myself of this opportunity to correct an error that has crept into the note, p. 14. vol. I, where instead of *the longest*, it should be *one of the longest*, as the second chap. (the Kor) contains 47 verses more than the 25th.

ble fools ! They are the stupidest brutes in all the world ! Curses upon Satan, he has outwitted himself. He sought to drag me down beneath his fiery arm-pits ; but Alhumdoolilah ! he has placed the key of salvation between my finger and thumb. Eh ! eh ! the son of a thrice burned father said that, by reciting certain portions of the undeniable book every day, I should indubitably pass through the seven portals. What can be more easy ? By the soul of Abou Bekr, the door of perfect enjoyment is open to me ; for, although I know not what the prescribed words may be, Inshallah ! I will daily repeat the whole Koran from beginning to end, and thereby make sure of including the necessary talismans. Bravo ! O Hadji Moolah Moosa !' added he, stroking his beard, and apostrophising himself with exceeding complacency. 'Thou art indeed somebody. Hadst thou sat at the elbow of the father of men, he would never have tasted the forbidden fruit, or been expelled from the Almighty presence. Well done, O Hadji !' continued he. 'Well done ! Our holy prophet, to whom be eternal praise and glory, has certainly thrown his leg over thy head.*'

* It is generally believed that saints or Seyeds can secure children from the snares of devils, and ensure

“Thereupon, he fell to work, and from that day forth, never failed to recite the whole Koran, between the rising of one sun and the going down of the following moon. Such, O, conqueror of the world,” added Dil Bar, “were the means by which Tootee’s brother insured his admission into the abodes of bliss.”

The withered visage of the old, wine-bibbing lion of Lahore, had nigh cracked with laughter, at the idea of Hadji Moosa thinking that he had cheated the devil, and thus unlocked the seven gates of Paradise. Indeed he was so much pleased, that he beckoned Dil Bar to his

their future fortune, by passing their legs over their heads. A similar gambado is commonly practised in Europe, and if its origin could be traced, it would, perhaps, be found to have been introduced by the Moors, who invaded France from Spain, or by the Crusaders on their return from Palestine. If by the latter, it was, of course, intended as a mockery of the Eastern superstition. There is also another nursery custom, which seems to be derived from a somewhat similar practise in the East. I allude to the trick of lifting up children by the nape of the neck, and saying—“I will show you Constantinople.” Moslems also indulge in this strange practical joke, especially upon the day, or rather night, on which Mahomed is supposed to have rode up to heaven; they then lift up children in the same manner that we do, and exclaim—“Inshallah! Look! Thou shalt see Paradise.”

side, and plunging his fingers into a filagree salver, strewed with gold coins, small pearls, and unset turquoise, he poked a quantity of them into her mouth, and then bade her inform him of all that occurred to her, after the arrival of the saint at Tootee's abode.

After conveying these costly proofs of the Maharajah's satisfaction from her mouth into the folds of her girdle, my fair possessor proceeded thus—"The venerable Hadji was not long in attending to his sister's summons. When he appeared before us, he was engaged, as usual, with his daily task, so that he took no notice of our salutations; but, with his eyes fixed upon the ground, walked up to the top of the room, where he seated himself, and continued his operations—alternately striking his long, silvery beard with one hand, and fingering his rosary with the other.

"At length, having terminated the chapter of judgment, which speaks of the exquisite delights of Eden, and promises their unlimited possession to all those who, upon the day of trial, are enabled to appear before the judgment seat, with the record of their good actions in their right hand,* he lifted up his head, and

* Sinners, according to the 54th. chapter of the Koran, will be compelled to appear at the last day with the

demanded in what way his aid or advice could be useful. But, before Tootee could open her lips, it was evident by the rapid movement of his, that he had resumed his divine occupation.

“However, when the widow had explained the nature of my case, he again interrupted his prayers, and addressing me, said—

“‘Mashallah! Daughter, thou art exceeding discreet. The four perfect women, on whom be God’s grace, could not be more so. The recording angel will, doubtless, note down

record of their evil deeds in their *left* hands, whilst the just will be distinguished by carrying the register of their good works in their *right* hands. Great stress is laid upon this distinction by Mahomed, who points it out as a signal by which the wicked and good will be immediately recognized. The punishments to be awarded to the former are tremendous—to wit—scorching winds, scalding waters, black and suffocating smoke, eternal thirst, and for nourishment the nauseous fruit of the tree Al Zakum. The latter, on the other hand, will revel in unspeakable joys, such, for instance, as reclining upon rose beds, by the side of murmuring streams, beneath the umbrageous foliage of thornless apple and musk trees, surrounded by lovely and amorous maidens, and supplied with the most exquisite fruits, wines, and viands, and furnished with the most costly raiments of green and scarlet, embroidered with rare gems, and trimmed with the richest furs.

thy pious scruples in the golden tablets of those that merit recompense. But my sister is a wise woman. She has spoken truths. Open thine ears, therefore, to the words of contentment; for I swear by him who guides the shooting stars, which is a great oath, that thou art released from all shackles of conscience, and free to marry when thou wilt.' Then turning to Pir Lena Sing, he added—'As for thee, my son, thou also art absolved. Thou mayst liberate thyself forthwith from all impediments, by visiting the tomb of the canonized saint, over whose relics I am guardian, and by there expending a portion of the gifts which Heaven has accorded to thee, in offerings at the shrine, and in alms to the poor. Let these words be a command! I have spoken.'

"Having said this, the worthy Hadji swallowed a cup of coffee presented to him by his sister, took one long whiff at the kaleean offered to him by Pir Lena Sing, and having uttered a benediction, withdrew in the same manner in which he had entered.

"The Maharajah may picture to himself how joyfully I listened to the foregoing injunctions, and how much I rejoiced to hear that, if the pious devotee had opened the gates of future blessedness for himself, he had also unbarred

those of present enjoyment for us. No sooner, therefore, had his shadow disappeared, than Pir Lena Sing, having expressed his determination to celebrate our union as speedily as possible, summoned a slave, and loaded him with divers gifts for the Hadji and his reverend companions. He then gave directions to Tootee to prepare the wedding-feast, and placing in his bosom a bag full of money to be distributed to the poor, he sallied forth, intending, as he said, to free himself from his vow before the hour of night prayer.

“The last golden beams of the setting sun already tinged the lofty minarets and glassed domes of the city with their ruby-coloured rays, when, having attired myself in my richest garments, I descended alone into the garden, there to await the return of my beloved. Tempted by the balmy fragrance of the air, and the refreshing coolness of the evening breeze, I seated myself beneath a secluded bower, overarched with roses and sweet-scented willows, and abandoned myself to the most enchanting reveries. Lulled by the melody of nightingales, and soothed by the rippling cadence of murmuring fountains, I soon became drowsy, and ere long I fell into a deep sleep, during which I was blessed with dreams of

ecstasy, even more vivid than those of my waking thoughts.

“How long I remained in that state I know not, but at length I was awoken, and in no small degree terrified, by hearing men’s voices proceeding from a latticed kiosk, from which I was merely separated by a screen of foliage. My fears were speedily removed, however, on distinguishing the accents of my betrothed husband, and I would gladly have hastened to throw myself into his arms, had I not been withheld by the knowledge of his being in the company of strangers, whom I concluded were guests invited to the nuptial supper.

“Resolving, therefore, to return to the zenana, without betraying my presence, I rose—but curiosity having induced me to creep close to the side of the kiosk, I peeped through the lattice, and, by the aid of the moon’s rays, saw Pir Lena Sing, surrounded by several men of most forbidding and sinister aspect, one of whom was a negro. All were fully armed, and in the dress of Seik police soldiers, except one miserable wretch, without either ears or nose, who stood somewhat behind the rest, glaring at Pir Lena Sing with an expression so diabolical, that a mere glance from his eye

would have caused the demon Sakr to turn his face to the wall.

“Fain would I have fled from the spot, but my terror was so great, that my feet clove, as it were to the ground, and thereby caused me to witness what followed.”

At this moment the drums and trumpets of the Maharajah's *nokharah khaneh* (household band,) which had assembled beneath the window to beat the retreat, suddenly struck up such a deafening peal, that my mistress was compelled to break off in the middle of a sentence, and to wait until Runjeet Sing having dismissed them, and given the pass word to the Sirdar who commanded the night-watch, commanded her to resume her story. This she did without hesitation, as will be seen in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XVI.

“THE first words that I heard distinctly,” said Dil Bar, “were those of Pir Lena Sing, who exclaimed,

“‘By the head of the Maharajah, whose slaves we all are, say by what authority you invade my abode?’

“‘We know nothing. It is a command,’ answered one of the strangers.

“‘What!’ retorted my betrothed husband. ‘Must I swallow insult and violence, and not know whence the oppression comes?’

“‘Our sticks, and swords are our only interpreters,’ rejoined the other.

“‘What is my crime, that the hand of law should be turned against me? and who are my accusers?’ responded Pir Lena Sing.

“‘I will depart from custom,’ observed another, who appeared to command the rest, ‘and so far unloosen my tongue, as to tell thee that outcasts of thine own doomed sect have turned approvers, and revealed the truth.

“‘Let them appear that I may confound, and force them to swallow their own lies,’ replied Pir Lena Sing.

“‘Hadst thou the cunning of a legion of oxes, or the strength of a herd of elephants, thou couldst not do that,’ retorted the second speaker.

“‘Yes! we know who thou art, whence thou comest, and what is thy inhuman trade,’ added his comrade. ‘Thou art the noted Thug Chief Jemmadar Khan, surnamed the blood drinker.’

“‘It is an error—a beastly error,’ responded Pir Lena Sing. ‘Your eyes and ears have deceived you.’

“‘Denial is mere wind,’ replied the Seiks. ‘We can confound thee in a twinkling.’

“Thereupon he summoned forward the noseless wretch, placed him immediately before Pir Lena Sing, and continued,

“‘Look! Here is one of thine own ill-begotten tribe. He escaped death at Bavan Mirdah, but his nose, ears and hands were cut off by Gholam Sing’s orders. His head would

also have followed, had he not redeemed life, by swearing to denounce all those of his execrable trade who might fall in his way.' Then addressing the informer, he added, 'Open thy mouth, and tell us who this impostor is!'

" 'Neither disguise nor lies can avail him.' answered the other, in a voice that resembled the grunting of the grandfather of all swine. 'He knows that he is Jemmadar Khan, son of Noor Khan, the most notorious and deceitful of all our clans. The fame of his exploits fills all men's ears, from the sources of the Indus, to the mouths of the Ganges. The English, who have sworn to extirpate our people, have set a price upon his head. They have offered a camel load of silver for his capture. Take him to their chiefs at Lodiana, and you will find that I speak truths. Let him deny this if he can.'

" These words seemed to produce the most overwhelming effect upon Pir Lena Sing, who instantly saw that the speaker was one of his former associates, and tribesmen, named Sauloo Raj, between whom and himself there had long existed a deadly feud. For some time, both stood gazing at each other with looks of mortal hatred, until at length Sauloo Raj

again broke silence, saying, 'See! his liver is converted into water! He was formerly a great man. No one dared to oppose him. His looks are those of an angel, but in heart he is worse than a ghole. We were once of one breath, brothers, but he repaid my confidence by polluting my zenana, and stealing from me a favourite slave, in order to keep her for his own use. I swore to be revenged, and have kept my word. What can he say in reply?'

"'That thou art a liar—a double tongued liar,' retorted Pir Lena Sing. Then addressing the Seiks, he exclaimed, 'By your mother's souls! Is this unclean, half man your only evidence?'

"'He is whole enough for our purpose, doubly sufficient for thine,' was the reply.

"'What!' responded Pir Lena Sing, 'do honest men, such as you are, place reliance upon the testimony of villains, who only live by the death of others? Do you not know that the company of those, who betray their brethren is an abomination? It is worse than that of dogs. Blood sellers will not be believed in hell. They are foredoomed.'

"'Hypocrites, impostors and wholesale assassins, such as he is, will be much worse treated. Anathemas on him! He would sell

his mother's soul for a dozen rupees,' retorted Sauloo Raj.

“‘What do we care for souls. Our duty is to look to your heads,’ exclaimed the Seik. ‘But come! We cannot waste more time. If thou wilt not follow tranquilly, force must be applied.’

“‘A moment in God's name,’ rejoined Pir Lena Sing. Is there no other means of arranging this affair, than by reddening the earth with blood? Listen! I am poor—but I have nevertheless wherewithal to reward friends.’

“‘We are honest men, and want nothing,’ replied the Seik, pretending great probity and disinterestedness. ‘Besides, what matters it, whether thou art rich or poor? All thou hast belongs to the Maharajah. He can make sole leather of thy skin. Come! Come!’ added he turning to his followers, ‘seize this man, and drag him hence.’

“The Seiks upon this stepped forward, and prepared to obey their chief's orders, but Pir Lena Sing again exclaimed,

“‘Stop! Are you deaf to your own good? Take the cotton out of your ears! My head can be of no use to you, whereas my money may make men of you all. Allow me to depart in peace, and I will fill your mouths with gold.

If you carry me before the Vizir, the King will reap all the benefit, and not a crumb will fall to your share.'

"The negro, who had hitherto remained silent, now interposed, and having whispered a few words in the chief Seiks ear, drew him and their prisoner close to the side of the kiosk where I stood, and in a low voice said, 'There is some sense in thy words certainly, but that is not enough.'

"'What more do you require? Name your price. I am ready to consent,' answered my affianced husband.

"'The price is not much,' replied the negro. 'Hearken!' continued he speaking in a still lower tone, so as not to be heard by the subordinate Seiks, or by Sauloo Raj, "Is it not true, that the walls of thy zenana enclose a most beautiful Cashmerian girl, the widow of the Rajah Raz Andaz?"

"'You have said it,' replied Pir Lena Sing. 'I will not lie. The world has not her equal. She is my affianced bride. She is spotless as a virgin of paradise.'

"'Well then,' rejoined the negro, 'upon her depends thy head.'

"'Your words are a mystery!' answered Pir Lena Sing.

“ ‘ I will quickly expound my meaning,’ replied the black. ‘ The Vizir, who holds the scales and sword of justice in his hands, and over whose harem I am guardian, has heard of this maiden’s history, and beauty from his friend Hadji Moosa. The Vizir’s bosom burns to possess her. He will take no denial. Thy crimes are known to him—they are numerous as the forest’s leaves. Thy life and property are beneath his feet. If he says strike, nothing can save thee. But he is just and merciful. He has therefore commanded me to say, that he will avert the eye of observation, and favour thy escape, if thou wilt surrender this girl without demur. On the other hand, if thou art perverse, all thou hast, women, cash and goods will be confiscated, and thy live body with those of other criminals, will serve to build a tower, in the same manner as the living bodies of revolters and peace-breakers are built up, when they rebel against that relentless half mussulman, the Governor of Ispahan.* Choose !’

* The negro probably alluded to the present Governor of Ispahan, whom Mr. Texier, in one of his recent letters from Persia, describes as a Georgian renegade and eunuch. This functionary, who, it appears, is at open war with the chiefs of the church, that is, with the Imam Djouma, and the Moushteid, has great difficulty in main-

“ During this horrible conversation, my teeth

taining the Shah's authority, and in repressing the revolts and murders that are constantly committed by the fanatic *Lootees*, and other ruffians of Ispahan; who are known to be excited and urged to sedition and bloodshed by the grand Imam. Mr. Texier says, that when any of these criminals fall into the Governor's hands, he confines them in a deep cellar, where they are kept until their numbers amount to a hundred or more. He then orders a pyramid to be built with their living bodies. This is done by placing alternate layers of men and stones, cemented with mortar, one upon the other. A hideous edifice of this composition was erected in December 1839. There is, or was a tower at Ispahan in Chardin's time, which he describes as being also built of bricks, bones and mortar, and which was called the bone tower. Its construction was of a less sanguinary nature, with one strange exception, than the human body edifice recently erected, since the bones were those of the wild animals destroyed in a celebrated chase, which took place in the time of Shah Thamas. The exception I have mentioned, was the head of the unfortunate builder. This man having erected the tower, came to the Shah and said, that the building was complete, but that the head of a wild ass, or some other great beast, was wanting to crown the whole. “ Eh! Eh! it is, is it?” exclaimed the Shah. “ By the eyes and beard of Ali, we will not be long making up the deficiency.” Then turning round to the chief executioner, he added, “ Where shall we find a greater ass or beast than him—off with his head.” This terrible mandate was forthwith obeyed, and ere many minutes, the poor architect's head served as a capital to his own edifice.

chattered, my knees smote each other, and I should have sunk to the earth, had I not clung to the trellice for support. But I feared less for myself, than for my affianced husband. Measuring his devotion by my own, I was convinced that he would sooner submit to the most excruciating tortures, than barter me for life or gold. Nay—in the agony of my terror—I already fancied that I saw his mangled limbs writhing beneath the Vizir's feet.

“Nerved with the sudden fever of despair, and being resolved not to survive him, I retreated a few paces to the brink of a deep well, concealed by shrubs and trees. There I fell upon my knees, ejaculated a short prayer, and was about to fling myself headlong downwards, when the negro and Pir Lena Sing, issued from the kiosk, approached the spot where I knelt, and stood there a while, speaking in an inaudible whisper. At length the following words uttered by him, for whom I was prepared to immolate both body and soul, reached my ears.

“‘Will you swear, in the Vizir's name, to fulfil your promise, if I comply?’

“‘I am a true believer like yourself. I was long a slave at Ispahan and at Meshed, in the harem of one of the Shah Zadehs,’ replied the

negro. 'I know the value of oaths. I will swear therefore by the souls of all the Imams, and if that will not do, by the death of Hussein. Deliver the girl into my hands, and thy head is saved. Here is the Vizir's signet. The pass word is Chalimar. With those thou mayest pass where thou wilt, providing thou quittest Lahore before day break. It is an oath. Thou must not forget, however, to seal the lips of those honest men with the golden wax of secrecy.'

"I imagined that this proposition would have been indignantly rejected, but let the Kehblah of the world's admiration judge of my feelings, when my betrothed husband answered,

"'Be it so! Let us strike hands! She is thine!' He then took from his bosom three purses, filled with ducats, and slipping them into the negro's hands, added, 'Return to the kiosk, and distribute this money amongst your companions; whilst I prepare for flight, and apprise the Vizir's new slave of the honour conferred upon her.'

"'On my head be it,—but waste no time,' responded the negro, who thrust two of the purses into his bosom, and returned to divide the third with his attendants.

"'Whilst these brief sentences were being ut-

tered, indignation, disgust and anger alternately swelled my heart to very bursting. I could not credit my ears. I could not believe that so much cowardice, hypocrisy and selfishness could be centered in one bosom. But Allah is great and omnipotent! I had yet to devour more heart rending proofs of my misplaced tenderness and his barbarity. For, the negro had no sooner turned his back, than the barbarian raised his hand, shook it with an air of triumph at the kiosk, and muttered in a low voice,

““Curses on the Vizir! Anathemas upon him and his. What! Is Jemmadar Khan a mere hog, that these beasts think to make him eat husks, whilst they feast upon corn? By the eternal breath of Dawee Khalee, I will turn their hearts upside down, and stifle them with ashes. I will hasten to the zenana. Dil Bar will fly to meet me. I will pretext great joy, and propose to pledge to our union, in a cup of wine. She cannot refuse me. I will infuse into her portion this deadly drug concocted by a Hindoo witch. Let the Vizir then take his new treasure. I wish him joy of his bargain. Ere day dawns, I shall be far away in security, and she a livid corpse. The ducats also are counterfeit; I got them from a Frank

at Delhi, who dealt in such things .Much good may their prize do them.'

" Having rapidly uttered these devilish words, he strode down the path, and disappeared in the shade.

" Infuriated at this atrocious mixture of cold blooded cruelty, and selfish avarice, the honey of my soul was forthwith converted into gall, and in an instant my mind was made up. I therefore sprung to my feet, darted to the garden gate, opened it, and flew towards the city.

" Upon reaching the barriers, the sentinels brought forth their lanterns, and seeing a richly-dressed woman, thus wandering alone at night, jeered me as a wanton ; but I pronounced the password, communicated to my intended murderer by the negro, and they allowed me to proceed unmolested. I then hurried forward to the quarters of the Maharajah's female guard, and reached them in safety.

" There I again uttered the talisman, and demanded to be conducted to the presence of the commander, a woman from Islamabad, whom I had often met and conversed with at the baths. I then threw myself upon her protection, and declared my intention of enrolling myself amongst her troop. My offer was

gladly accepted, and thus I found an inviolable sanctuary beneath his wing, who is the shield of the oppressed, and the terror of oppressors.

“Although I concealed my story from all but my commander and countrywoman, and remained many days without showing myself it appears that the rumour of my enlistment soon reached the steps of the throne, for I was shortly summoned to the Maharajah’s presence. From that hour the eye of favour and exaltation fell upon me, and, ere long, I became what I am. The Lord of my life knows the rest. He can, therefore, understand why I demand justice upon the outcast Nazir Sahib, and why my soul burns with hatred and vengeance, against the whole race of these perfidious assassins.”

“Wonderful! Wonderful!” exclaimed Runjeet Sing. “So great a hypocrite and villain as that Jemmadar Kahn never existed. Although it is against my rules to put criminals to death, I swear, by the only true God, if ever that wretch falls into my hands, he shall die.”

“Destiny,” replied Dil Bar, “has already spared the King this infraction of his rules.”

“How so?” demanded the Maharajah.

"It is soon told," answered my mistress. "The cunning negro, fearing lest the Thug chieftain should escape without fulfilling his bargain, instantly summoned his attendants, and followed him to the door of the zenana. Having waited some time in vain for my appearance, and having, at length, discovered that I was not forthcoming, they seized Jemmadar Khan and carried him before the Vizir. Furious at being thus baffled, the latter directed his prisoner to be cast into a deep dry well, without food or water. In a word, O King! Jemmadar Khan, the blood-drinker met with a fate worthy of his crimes."

The night having already set in, and the Maharajah having swallowed more than his usual dose of strong drinks, he now made signs for his attendants to lift him up. He then dismissed his courtiers and my mistress, and retired within his harem, not, however, without issuing orders that summary justice should forthwith be done upon the rascal Nasir Sahib.



CHAPTER XVII.

BEFORE daybreak upon the following morning, Dil Bar was aroused from her slumbers by the drums and trumpets sounding the réveil, after the Feringee fashion introduced amongst the Seiks by the French grey-beard already mentioned. Having summoned her slaves, they forthwith removed her couch, and substituted, in its place, a praying carpet and water jar, so that she might perform her ablutions and devotions. After that, they combed out and rebraided her glossy hair, renewed the gold paste on her eyelids, tinged her fingers with henna, arrayed her in her richest war garments, and presented to her a tray containing a breakfast of sweetened curds, milk, and warm bread.

She had scarcely finished this repast, and

extended her hands to receive the water poured over them by one of her slaves, ere a rustling was heard outside the door, and a gentle voice demanded admittance. This being accorded, in walked my mistress's first lieutenant, a girl somewhat inferior to Dil Bar in beauty, but far exceeding her in stature and martial carriage. This girl, whose name was Sumbol, (the hyacinth), was born of Nazarene parents, at a small town on the borders of Georgia, from which she had been kidnapped, when a child, by some Persians, who eventually conveyed her to a village on the frontiers of Khorassan, not far from Asterabad, where she was duly initiated in all the forms of Islam. Ere long, however, a body of marauding Turcomans fell like a whirlwind upon this village, slaughtered all those who resisted, and dragged her, and several other victims, far away into the desert.

From these sons of Lot, the maiden not only learned to perform the duties imposed upon the women of the Turcoman tribes, who are compelled to work like asses and yaboos, but ere she was ten years old, she could wield a sword, draw a bow, fire a gun, and manage a horse, with more skill and endurance than many of the male wolves' cubs double her own

age. Thus she found favour in the eyes of her master, who adopted her as his daughter, and proposed to marry her to his only son.

Ere long, however, a deadly feud arose between the tribe of her intended husband, and another sect of these savages, relative to the distribution of booty, plundered from a caravan of pilgrims on their route to the shrine of Imam Reza, in the holy city of Meshed. In consequence of this, the two parties came to blows, and, after a sanguinary struggle, Sumbol's original proprietors were vanquished. She thus fell into the hands of her opponents, who struck their tents, and removed to a great distance in the direction of Khiva.

These saintless traffickers in human flesh, not choosing to encumber themselves with so young a maiden, soon disposed of her to a Bokhara slave-dealer, for a few yards of English chintz, some tea, a small telescope, and a canister of gunpowder. This rascal, whose soul was blacker than a negro's face, and who derived great profits from his iniquitous dealings, shortly proceeded with his live merchandise into Caubul, where he sold Sumbol to a wealthy Afghan Khan. Being as prompt in adapting herself to the civilised customs of the gilded harem, as she had been apt in accom-

modating herself to the wild manners of a black tent, and being remarkable for her promise of future beauty, and the enthusiasm with which she professed the Moslem creed, the Khan directed her to be educated with great care, even to reading and writing, and, in time, became so much enchanted with her wit and beauty, that he announced his intention of divorcing his elder wife, and of marrying Sumbool.

But the angel who guards the tree of futurity, tore off the branch ere yet the fruit was ripe. In an unpropitious hour, the Kahn took up arms in defence of the usurping King of Caubul, and soon lost his life, together with his baggage and harem, which fell into the hands of the Seiks, upon the night subsequent to the memorable defeat of Dost Mohamed, and the Afghan army, by that of Runjeet Sing near Peishawr.*

Although Sumbool had not attained her

* This battle took place in March 1823. The Seiks were commanded by Runjeet Sing in person, the Afghans by Mohammed Azim Khan, brother to Dost Mohamed, who usurped the throne of Caubul during the exile of Shah Shoojah. The latter monarch has been recently restored to his dominions, through the skill and intrepidity of the valiant army of the Indus.

twelfth year, when destiny played her this trick, Allah had not only gifted her with precocity of form and intellect far beyond her age, but had endowed her with presence of mind and energy rarely to be met with in the inmates of a zenana. Therefore, in lieu of screaming, weeping, and rending her garments, with the rest of the defunct Khan's women, the resolute maiden determined to avail herself of the confusion and darkness of the night to make her escape, and to put into practice some of the lessons that she had learned from the Turcomans. She consequently crept forth among the pillagers, and quickly equipping herself in the turban, tunic, and arms of a slaughtered Seik, took her full share in the plunder. Then mounting a stray horse, she followed in the train of the victors, and uttering her *tawakeel ba Khoda* (confidence in the Lord), she left the rest to fate.

Protected by this disguise, Sumbol enrolled herself in one of the Seik regiments of irregular horse, and served valiantly during the rest of the war, under the name of Noorooz Beg, so that she not only obtained promotion, but a dress of honour from the hands of the Maharajah. At length, as the Seik army was on its homeward march, an event occurred

which wrought a sudden change in her mode of life.

Chancing one day to enter into a discussion upon the relative merits of the Moslem and Seik faiths, with the commander of her regiment, her idolatrous antagonist thought proper to befool her, and all true believers, in the most filthy and blasphemous terms. Her wrath being excited at this, she retorted, not only by cursing Nanock, his father, grandfather, and all his pig-eating race, but seizing the Seik's beard, she nearly wrenched it from his unclean jaws.

In lieu of seeking to revenge himself, as became a man, by drawing his sword, the coward no sooner twisted back his chin from her grasp, than he urged forward his horse,—then suddenly wheeling round, he discharged an arrow at Sumbool, and this, with such deadly aim and force, that it would doubtless have traversed her body, as easily as it would have passed through a sliced pumpkin, had it not been partly arrested by the folds of her breast cover. As it was, the point buried itself deeply in her right bosom.

Fearing lest this wound might lead to the immediate disclosure of her sex, and that she should be seized as a slave, and maltreated

by her treacherous commander, she plucked forth the arrow from her bosom, pressed her hand upon the wound, and galloped with all possible speed towards a green spot, where the encampment of the Maharajah's amazons was distinguished from all others, by its high cloth screens, and by the banners and gilded cones that crowned the tent poles. She had barely time, however, to declare her sex, and to demand refuge, ere she fainted from loss of blood, and the truth of her assertion became manifest.

Upon recovering her senses, she forthwith narrated her story to the commander, and offered to enrol herself in the troop. A permission readily accorded, for, although her beauty was disfigured by her hair being shaved, and by her being disguised in man's attire, her known valour and resolution rendered her a valuable acquisition to the body of she Rhoustams, whose ranks had been recently thinned by cholera.

Thus secured from all fear of her late commander's vengeance, she passed her time tranquilly, and was high in favour and esteem at court, where she was as much distinguished for her tulip form, and star-surpassing beauty, as she was remarkable for the spotless decorum

of her conduct. In truth, she had hitherto shown such aversion to the other sex, that her eyes sparkled with anger when a man dared to gaze upon her; and whenever her female companions sung or spoke of the thrilling ecstasies of love, or recounted some one of the affecting tales narrated of Leila or Mujnoon, she invariably turned up the nose of contempt, and declared that she spat upon all such milk and water froth. In fact, she carried this apparent aversion to man to such an extreme, that her companions thought her heart was petrified, and she was consequently better known among them by the name of Zantash (flint-soul), than by the soft designation of the Hyacinth.

Such was the new comer, who had no sooner entered and greeted Dil Bar, as became an inferior in rank, than the latter smilingly exclaimed: "What ails thee, Zantash? Thine eyes glisten more ardently than carbuncles! By the King's head, the mists of displeasure obscure thy brow, like lowering clouds upon the hills that overshadow the blessed valleys of Cashmere. Say! has a black scorpion bitten thee, or has some unbeliever dared to raise the eye of admiration upon thy rose-eclipsing cheeks?"

"*Nay oo nay boo, (neither one or t'other),*"

replied **Sumbool** somewhat pettishly, and blushing at the same time as deeply as if she had been painted with **Damaun madder**."

"Perhaps," continued **Dil Bar**, in the same bantering tone, "perhaps thou hast quarrelled with thy **Persian cat**, or thy tame **bulbul**, because they are not of our sex."

"The point of a **Khorassan blade** is generally less sharp than my commander's penetration," answered **Sumbool**; "but this time, her eyes are as close shut as those of a new born kitten."

"Then say what causes thy frowns, child?" exclaimed **Dil Bar**.

"I am your sacrifice," responded the other. "With your permission, I am come to demand a favour. I need assistance."

"It shall be granted," answered **Dil Bar**. "All mine is thine. Speak."

"**Nourshivan** was less generous than my dear **Dil Bar**," rejoined **Sumbool**. "Were the universe hers, she would divide it amongst the needy, and scarcely reserve for herself a spot large enough for a last resting place."

"What words are these?" exclaimed **Dil Bar**. "By the souls of the four perfect women, who are in **Paradise**, I should as soon expect truth from the mouth of that double-faced son

of deceit, the King's barber, as flattery from the lips of Jantash. I begin to think that some of these unbelievers have eaten into thy heart and changed thy nature. But hark! the trumpets sound. We must to our duty. Be quick!—Reveal thy wants."

"*Bak* (look)," replied Sumbool, pointing to her waist. "Look!" my dress is incomplete and I have neither time, or wherewithal to make up the deficiency."

"How is this?" demanded Dil Bar. "Where is thy waist shawl? What has become of that given to thee, yesterday by our Lord the Maharajah. Thy brain must indeed be dried up, if thou hast disposed of his gift. Thou hadst others also."

"True," answered Sumbool. "But I bartered away the latter, with one of the merchants that accompany the Russian Vakeel, for this string of Nichapoor turquoise; and as to the former—a fatal accident has befallen it. It cannot be worn."

"We cannot command events," ejaculated Dil Bar. "But say, what can have occurred to render the shawl unfit for use?"

"It has become impure, irretrievably impure," rejoined Sumbool. "Listen, and you shall hear how this came to pass. Having pro-

ceeded before daybreak to the neighbouring bath, I was hastening home through the narrow street behind our abode, when I saw two or three devourers of the unclean beast, about to slaughter a fat hog.

“Upon seeing this, I wished to retrace my steps, in order to avoid all risk of contact; but, as my ill star would have it, a body of horse obstructed the passage, so that I was compelled to proceed. My disgust and anger may, therefore, be easily imagined, when I say that, at the moment I passed, one of the foul Kaffirs plunged his knife into the screeching brute’s throat, and the blood gushing from the wound, drenched my shawl and trowsers. What greater degradation can there be than this? Oof, it is a pollution not to be effaced. I shal never be clean again! And now, unless you come to my aid, with the loan of one of your shawls, Allah only knows what further filth I may devour.”

Dil Bar, who held all impurities in greater abhorrence even than Sumbool, no sooner heard this than she exclaimed,

“That is, indeed, an abomination—an exceeding abomination—*ser shuma salami bashe*—(may your head be saved). The shawl is eternally polluted. Let it be burned, or sold to the Kaffir

Russian. These unblushing infidels hold nothing unclean. In the meantime, take this. It is thine."

And so saying, she presented me to her naib, and with her own hands wound me round the fair Georgian's cypress form.

Being resolved not to be outdone in generosity Sumbol unclasped the string of turquoise from her neck, attempted to place it upon that of Dil Bar, but the latter rejected the offer, saying,

"Allah forbid! Allah forbid! I am not one of those who offer shells in order to get back pearls. The shawl is thine, without payment or barter. Let us strike hands, it is a bargain."

After expressing her thanks in the warmest manner, Sumbol respectfully raised the hand of the generous Dil Bar to her forehead, and likewise performed the same ceremony with the fringed ends of my chequered body.

"Thus, Agha of my soul," added the little quire, "I once more changed owners, and became the property of the stone-hearted Sumbol."

CHAPTER XVIII.

My former mistress having replaced me by another shawl of great beauty, she and my new possessor descended into the inner court, where the lovely, but unruly troop of heroines, confided to their charge, were scattered around in divers clusters, more dazzling and variegated than the blooming parterres of the fragrant Chalemar.*

Prior to Dil Bar's arrival, the reckless lionesses had filled the arcades and porticoes of the building with the merry echoes of their voices, as they broke into exclamations of admiration, or fell into mirthful criticisms upon each others' looks and equipment. But when their commander appeared, the noise subsided,

* The royal gardens near Lahore, alluded to in a previous note.

and the different groups quickly formed into line. This was no sooner achieved, than they struck the heels of their ivory-shod boots upon the marble pavement, grasped their bows in their left hands, and placing the right upon their glittering corslets, simultaneously uttered the morning salutation of, "You are welcome! May your day be auspicious!"

To which Dil Bar, according to custom, replied, "Inshallah! May thy health thrive!"*

Then, at the word of command, the flanks moved forward, and the whole closed in a circle around her, so that they had the appearance of a coronet of rubies, emeralds, and sapphires, of which the matchless *koh-i-nour* formed the centre.

* A similar mode of salutation, probably of eastern origin, is still maintained in the Russian army. When the emperor or commanding general appears in front of the line, the troops simultaneously greet him in a loud voice, saying, "*Zdraviea gelaiem*" (we salute, or wish thee well). To which the commander, touching his hat, replies, "*Blagodariou vas riabata* (I thank thee, children), or words to that effect. This salutation oftentimes uttered by many thousand deep toned and manly voices, has a very solemn and imposing effect. The reply, also, conveys an idea of kindness and good understanding extremely touching and patriarchal.

After minutely examining their dress and arms—applauding some, and rebuking others, according as each deserved the candy of praise, or the wormword of reproof, Dil Bar ordered them to break their ranks and to repose, until the moment for departure should arrive. Whereupon, some fell to work chattering and laughing, as if they had been a flock of parrots hovering over a cherry-tree; whilst others, still encircling their beautiful commandress, resembled a bevy of spangled humming-birds, flitting round the expanding petals of the dew-distilling Gul Shah (Rose King)*

Ere long, however, the trumpets sounded the *Bootsel*,† upon which, several elephants were led into the outer court, and the whole butterfly troop mounted, and proceeded to assume their station in the train of their royal master, who had directed a strong body of his redoubted *nizam* (regular troops), to be drawn up in battle array, in order to impress the Muscovite Vakeel with due respect for his military grandeur.

* A rose so called, from its extreme beauty and exquisite fragrance.

† Probably a corruption of the French word *Boute-selle* (the trumpet call to saddle). Almost all the French military terms and words of command were introduced into Labore by Generals Allard and Ventura.

Seated upon a huge elephant, whose housings, ears and tusks, glittered with gold, silver, and precious stones and protected from the sun's rays by a canopy of crimson silk, fringed and festooned with pearls and gold bullion, surmounted with gem-studded golden pine apples, the old Lion of Lahore slowly advanced towards the place of assembly, dressed in a tunic of yellow Cashmerian stuff, resplendent with diamonds, rubies, pearls and emeralds, and bearing in his hand a golden bow.

But, *Alee Madud!* (Ali help me), had I the tongue of eloquence possessed by the divine Ferdausi, language would still be wanting to enable me to describe the gorgeous scene that presented itself, when the smoke of the saluting cannon drifted away, and the idolatrous Nizam received their invincible leader with deafening shouts of, "May the Seiks live! May the Seik faith prosper!"

Suffice it to say, that Solomon, when he advanced to meet the moon-faced queen of Saba, arrayed in his jewelled panoply, and escorted by the legions of genii that hovered around, and fanned him with their star-spangled wings, was not more refulgent than the dauntless monarch of the five rivers. Awe inspiring, also, were his devoted warriors, as the angels who aided our holy prophet to unfurl the

banner of victory in the valley of Bedr,* and caused the two divisions of infidel Koreish to flee before the faithful, like withered leaves before the resistless breath of the exterminating simoom.

The splendour of this gorgeous spectacle seemed, however, to be lost upon the Moscovite, who had been conducted to a fitting place to see the pageant. The spot selected for this purpose by his Memhendar, being close to our elephant, I quickly discovered that, although Sumbool's heart might be as cold as the never melting snows of the *Shah Dag* (King moun-

* This victory, from the small number of Mahomed's followers, was ascribed to divine interposition. It was gained in 625, consequently, in the third year of the Hegira, which, according to the best authorities, was instituted by Caliph Omar, in 634, but antedated to the 16th July 622. Amongst other means used by Mahomet to inspire his followers with courage and to excite them to disregard the loss of life or limb, was the following passage in the Koran: "The sword is the key of heaven and hell. A drop of blood shed in the cause of God, or a night passed under arms, is more meritorious in his sight than two months' prayer or fasting. The sins of those who fall in battle (for him) shall be more resplendant than vermillion, and sweeter than musk. The loss of their limbs shall be replaced by wings, like unto those of angels and cherubim."

tain),* his was as soft as Azerbaijan wax; for, instead of watching the manœuvres of the troops, he scarcely ever turned his eyes from my new owner's person, so that he was no more moved by the wheeling, charging, shouting, and thundering of the guns and squadrons, than he would have been at a circle of besotted Afghans dancing the Attun. †

Who can account for the wind-like mutations of women's minds, or say whether that which is clad with ice to-day, may not sprout forth flames to-morrow? Instead of turning aside her head, and exhibiting becoming symptoms of indignation at the stranger's audacity, Sumbool, to my utter surprise, not only presented the cheek of satisfaction to his amorous gaze,

* The highest portions of the Elborz mountains are so called by the natives of Lazistan, near the Black Sea.

† A kind of Morisca, or morris dance, of which the Afghan men are passionately fond. Conolly (vol ii, p. 177,) says that it is performed by an indefinite number, and that the dancers, who place themselves in a circle, join hands, advance, retreat, groan, stamp, jump, frown, roll their eyes, clench their teeth, and make all manner of grimaces and contortions, until they become half frantic with excitement, and hoop and shriek as if they were possessed. "If anything," adds he, "could give you an idea of the Bacchanalian orgies, it is this dance."

but frequently rose, and placed herself in such attitudes, as were best calculated to display the dazzling paradise of her form and face. It was evident, therefore, that he had learned the art of eating into people's souls from the Hazzaurehs, or that he was a magician, and had cast a spell upon her.

In fact, a secret intelligence seemed already to exist between them; for, at a moment when he thought himself most secure from observation, he pressed a bunch of flame-coloured anemonies to his forehead, eyes, and lips, as a symbol of the burning ardour that consumed his soul; upon which she hastily snatched a rose from behind her ear, and plucking off the petals, scattered them on the ground, meaning thereby, that he had made mince-meat of her heart. In short, her brain was as completely overset, as if she had been feasting upon the intoxicating *deli-bal* (mad honey), found in the woods near Trebizonde.*

* Such is the name given to this honey, which is produced by bees, which are said to feed upon the blossoms of the rhododendrons, growing on the hills near Trebizonde. Its effects, if freely indulged in, are extremely deleterious. Xenophon mentions this fact, somewhat in these words—"Hereabouts the soldiers found many bees' nests, but all those who ate of the honey were

With any other person than Sumbul, this would have excited as the Elchick—whose name Khan—was, in many respects, captivate a woman's eye. He proportioned, of middling age, and bestrode his horse as if he were of the same formation. His hair white as pearls, his eyes wonderful, and his beard long, bushy, and in the fashion of Bokhara, of which he wore the loose tunic, and large turban. He was, moreover, a half Musselman, the only son of a powerful Moslem Khan who had sold himself and tribe to the Russians, enemies to their faith and creed, for this accursed act of treachery, he was rewarded with rank and favour, and was selected by the Russian emperor, who had renounced the creed of his fathers, as his favourite, and acting secret agent, not only on ac-

count of his services, but also because he was seized with giddiness, vomiting, cholics, and was unable to stand, so that they could keep upon his legs. Those who had tasted it, resembled drunken men, whilst those who indulged more freely became like maniacs, and were on the point of death. In the end they all recovered, and felt as if they were just aroused from a violent inebriation."

being as cunning as the father's father of all foxes, but because he was intimately acquainted with Eastern customs and languages. Indeed, he was so perfectly initiated into the rules and practices of all creeds, that he might have passed for a Soonee in Bokhara, or for a Shah at Meshed.

He and Sumbul would perhaps have remained gazing at each other until night fall, had not a general discharge of guns and cannon announced that the Maharajah had dismissed his troops and that he was about to return to the city, where he had not long arrived ere he summoned the Russian emissary to an audience.

What passed at this interview I know not, but I subsequently heard that the principal object of this apostate's mission, was to induce Runjeet Sing to avert the hand of friendship from the English, and to persuade him that the latter intended to swallow up the Penjab, Cashmere and Afghanistan, in the same manner that they had already devoured the whole of Hindoostan, consequently that he might as well pluck out his remaining eye, and present it at the end of a spear to these same English, as not unite with the Emir of Scind, the King of Cabul, the Shah of Persia, and the Com-

mander of the Faithful
ther encroachments.

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Muscovite proposition in

dence, he held it much wiser to cultivate the garden of amity with his redoubted red-backed neighbour, the Koompny, who might, at a moment's notice, heap burning ashes upon his head, than to abet the crafty designs of a far distant world grasper, who could not move a thousand men towards the East, without the prospect of their being frozen to death amidst the snowy wilds of Khiva, or of their being grilled and suffocated amidst the burning deserts of the Usbecks.

Consequently, after much time passed in fruitless attempts to dry up the Maharajah's brains, the Vakeel proposed to take his departure for Bokhara, where he hoped to induce the Commander of the Faithful to quarrel with the Khan of Khiva, so as to occupy the attention of the latter on one side, whilst the Moscovites hatched the first egg of their grasping designs by attacking him upon the other.

The very eve of Adam Djibrelli's departure had arrived, ere I discovered how nearly my future destiny and his were united. It was a dark and tempestuous night. Clouds black as the crimes of infidels, obscured the moon's rays. Not a single star twinkled in the gloomy firmament. The pores of Heaven were opened and the rain gushed down, as it

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her face seemed cleared, and when the storm increased, she absolutely clapped her hands with joy, as if the forked lightnings were the harbingers of the joys of paradise. This appeared very strange; but my wonder was converted into indignation, when, after taking from her bosom a small ivory image, which I knew to be the symbol of the Nazarene creed, she pressed it to her lips, and fell upon her knees in the attitude of prayer. Then rising and twining me closely round her person, she lighted a small glass lantern and opened a door which conducted to the terrace of the building. Having ascended the stairs, she leant upon the parapet, and continued gazing with wide stretched eyes and extended neck in the attitude of one awaiting some coming event.

She was not, however, completely unmoved by the fury of the storm, for I felt her souple form quiver like a reed beneath my folds, and I almost heard the pulsations of her heart as the winds rushed upon her person, and caused her to grasp the parapet for support. Ever and anon also she started, covered her eyes with her hand and exclaimed, "Holy Mariam! may the God of my fathers protect me," as the lightning furrowed up the skies, and its attendant thunders burst upon her very head.

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CHAPTER XIX.

THE tempest riding demons, under whose wings Allah has placed the fires and cataracts of Heaven, stood for awhile aghast at the havoc wrought by their own hands. Scarcely had the crashing echoes rolled away, ere the winds lulled, and the moon shone forth in all her splendour. By her light I saw the same figure, which methought had fallen with the falling battlement, spring upon our terrace, where it cast itself on its knees by Sumbool's side, and supported her head with one hand, whilst it chafed her temples and applied some reviving essence to her lips with the other.

Had this liquid been extracted from the fountain of immortality, it could not have been more efficacious. In a few seconds my mistress sighed and stretched her limbs, as if waking from sleep. Then opening her eyes,

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he, uncoiling a silken

waist, "look! with this we can descend in safety. The genii of the air have befriended us. Their sentence has fallen upon the watchmen who guarded the foot of the turret. Both lay dead beneath. Hasten—darkness returns—the storm augments. Let us seize the propitious moment."

Sumbool, who now appeared to have regained her self-possession, replied to this, "King of my existence! Where thou goest I would follow, even to the very gates of death. But let us not cast away the veil of prudence. The ladder fastened to my terrace would betray us. Immediate search and pursuit would ensue. We should both perish."

"We have no alternative," retorted the half Moscovite, "what! dost thou hesitate. Have I not perilled my life for thee? Hast thou not sworn by the sacred symbol of thy regenerated faith, to share my good or evil fortune?"

"Keblah of my eyes!" exclaimed Sumbool clasping him more tenderly to her heart, "how canst thou doubt me? I am now a Nazarene—thy wife—thy only wife—for life and death. Listen! I am but a weak woman, but love and faith have nerved my soul with strength and caution. It is my turn, this night, to command the watch, and give the

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and I shall only be looked upon, as another victim to its fury."

Then, having satisfied herself that the flames were spreading rapidly, she opened her chamber door, sallied forth, locked it in the outside, and cautiously conducted her companion down the spiral stairs that connected the women's apartments with the lower guard chambers and streets.

After threading the passages with noiseless steps, but loud beating hearts, they soon approached the goal of deliverance, but here an unforeseen obstacle opposed their progress. By the dim light of an iron lamp suspended over the door, they discovered that it was guarded inside by two black eunuchs, who lay snoring and snorting across the threshold.

At this unexpected sight, the Vakeel uttered a stifled malediction, drew forth his poignard, and would doubtless have plunged it into the sleeper's hearts, had not Sumbool snatched the weapon from his hand. Then making a signal for him to be silent and to crouch down in the shade, she darted upon the prostrate watchmen and roused them with her feet.

Upon lifting up their heads and seeing Sumbool standing over them, the two negroes fell upon their knees, and swore that they were

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horses, on which the whole party mounted. Having cleared the city without interruption, they galloped until they reached a village, that afforded shelter to the caravan of merchants, with whom the Vakeel and his people had departed upon the previous evening, and which they had quitted and rejoined, without their absence or return being noticed.

They did not leave Amritsir, however, without looking back to ascertain if the incendiary stratagem had succeeded. Of this they had no cause to doubt, for the whole arch of heaven was lighted up by the red glare of the flames, and the winds brought to their ears the echoes of the alarm drums and trumpets, calling the King's Nizam to the scene of conflagration.

They were further tranquillized also on the following morning, by a passing courier, who stated that a portion of the palace, occupied by the Maharajah's female guard, had been set on fire by lightning, and that the far-famed Sumbool had perished.

What happened during some time after this, I know not. Upon joining the caravan, I was carefully dried, folded and deposited in a trunk, so that we reached Herat ere I found that my mistress had resumed her female attire, and that, instead of proceeding to Bokhara, Adam

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time in carousing with a party of drunken wine bibbers, or lavished his money in regaling a troop of dancing girls; who, with the old she good-for-nought their leader, were constantly prowling round the bazaar and caravanserais.

In fact, one of these girls, named Zemerode, (the emerald), had so completely entangled him in the net of fascination, that he had not only scarified his arms with hot irons, in token of his extreme devotion,* but having conducted her before the Moolah Bashi, he entered into an engagement to take her upon lease, as his temporary wife, and to provide for all contingencies, according to the laws regulating these ephemeral contracts.†

* Men deeply enamoured, often burn their arms and chests with hot irons, in order to show the extent of their passion for their mistresses. This Persian custom may have given rise to that in use with European sailors and others, who frequently tatoo anchors, hearts, and other amorous devices upon their arms, by way of love remembrances.

† These "leases" are termed *Sik* or *vessik i Koordeen* (contracts of enjoyment) according to the law on this matter, which, as stated in vol. II, is called *Metaah*, a man may hire a wife for any given period. This can only be done in a legal manner, and before a magistrate. The man stipulates in writing, the amount to be paid, and engages to provide, if requisite, for children. To

Then, having removed her to his abode, he not only gave her unlimited power over his household, but permitted her to misuse Sumbool, as if the latter had been the meanest slave. Well might my unfortunate mistress have exclaimed in the words of the immortal Shirazi,* “Worldly enjoyments are followed by mortal stings, and the lights of paradise are frequently intercepted by Satan. Hidden treasures have their dragons, and crocodiles lurk in the same bed with royal pearls.”

Adam Djibrelli's conduct was the more cruel since, it was evident from appearances, that Sumbool had no occasion to be led to the Mosque with a bridle over her veil, and with a new broom and earthen pot filled with walnuts, in her hands—as is frequently the custom with women at Ispahan, who are desirous to avert the blemish of sterility.†

these contracts may perhaps be traced, the left-handed or Morganatic marriages of Germany.

* Saady.

† Chardin thus quaintly describes this superstitious practise, of which examples still occur: “Les parents les mènent de leurs logis à la Mosquée par une bride de cheval, qu'on leur met par dessus leurs voiles. Elles portent entre leurs bras un balai neuf et un pot de terre neuf, plein de noix. On les fait monter ainsi en haut

Matters were in this state, when the Vakeel joined a body of pilgrims returning to Teheran, and carried with him Sumbool, and her spell-breathing rival.

With the exception of being now and then grievously frightened by the reported approach of marauding Turcomans, whose fathers they swore they would burn, as soon as all alarm subsided, the caravan met with no adventure by the way, so that it safely reached Teheran, as the astrologer had predicted. Here Adam Djibrelli lived as he had done at Meshed, drinking, feasting, and squandering away his money upon Zemerode and others of her caste.

Ere long, however, this mercenary sorceress discovered that, although her victim's infatuation increased, his cash visibly diminished; she therefore flatly declared that she would not

de la tour, et en montant elles cassent sur chaque degré une noix, la mettent dans le pot, et en jettent la coquille sur les montées. En redescendant elles balaient les degrés, et puis elles portent le pot et le balai au chœur de la Mosquée, et mettent les noix avec des petits raisins secs au coin de leurs voiles. Elles reprennent ensuite le chemin de leurs logis, et présentent aux hommes qu'elles rencontrent, ou qui leur plaisent, un peu de ces noix et raisins, les priant de les manger. Les Persans croient que cela guérit la stérilité

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ess,"—as is frequently practised, when Allah vouchsafes to bestow the blessings of male increase upon a Persian.

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SOME days elapsed, without Adam's receiving any more promised letters. Finding, however, that his situation was not improving, and that his friends with the white Eblis were not likely to send him any money, he determined to employ the purposes of his journey, and to be as lavishly employed there as he had been at the Moscovite Divan, he had been at Bagdai, and to lead a dissolute life with no bounds to her expenses.

In the mean time she endeavored to console herself for her situation, by devoting her time to her duties, and by frequenting the company of the and Greek women, and by being in the mire of those Nations. Eblis had induced her

Day after day rolled on, until at the moment when Adam Djibrelli was reduced to exceeding straits for cash, he was summoned to the abode of the resident Moscovite Vakeel, who placed in his hands a packet, sealed with the imperial signet, which being a two headed eagle, is essentially typical of the cloud-aspiring ambition, and egregious vanity of those would-be world-graspers.

The fumes of satisfaction mounted to Adam Djibrelli's brain, at the sight of this long expected communication, and he consequently took leave as soon as possible, being eager to assure himself that the sun of favour and exaltation was brightening his cheek, and that the golden waters of abundance were about to irrigate his beard.

But in lieu of jewels of honour and gold, most unexpected and unpalatable filth was he doomed to digest. No sooner had he opened the letters, than he found firstly, that his father and brother had fled to Circassia, after being detected in a conspiracy to overturn the usurping Russians at Erivan, and secondly that his own loose conduct and ill success, at Lahore, and other places, had been reported to the Muscovite Reis Effendi, whose cunning practice it is, to set one spy over another, in

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for having inveigled

and swearing that she would go before the Cadi, and accuse him of being a spy, impostor, and Nazarene.

Far different was the conduct of poor **Sumbool**. Having overheard his conversation, she divested herself of all her ornaments, and having collected her few remaining jewels, dresses and shawls, she threw them and herself at his feet, and said that she wished for nothing but the treasure of his love, and the delight of serving him as a slave. This proof of the faithful woman's devotion ought to have made some impression upon his heart, but the only use he made of her generous self-abnegation, was to reserve me for his own use, and to try and convert her other gifts into money wherewithal to gratify Zemerode's exigencies.

This happened about the period of the vernal equinox, when all true believers were about to celebrate the festival of *Nau Rooz*, whilst the Jews of Bagdad were also preparing to perform the rites and mysteries of their *passover*. It chanced one morning, immediately preceding this epoch, that *Adam Djibrelli* was sitting in his chamber, with his chin sunk in the collar of despondency, meditating how he might procure the means for

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money in
which she h
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and turning
reply.

This sile
Zemerode in
dress, stamp
ed,

"What kin
of Ali, I will h
the son of a
lowed him t
rags?"

Then finding
she tried another
as if she had been
Hossein, and t
violent hysterics.

This had the
moured half Kaffir
her, and said,

"Pearl of my
eyes and by thine, t
but in Heaven's name
little time."

Time! recchoed Zemerode, "I spit on
me and patience."

"I have not the philosopher's stone, nor am I
alchemist," ejaculated the other scornfully.
I could not get credit for an hundred sequins,
even if I were to sell my body to the Jews.
What can I do?"

"Do!" screamed out Zemerode, whose
beautiful features now assumed the malignant
rony of a she ghole, "do! why thou hast
said it; this is the month called Abib by the Jews.
It is affirmed that these idolators cannot per-
form the mysteries of their passover without
moistening their filthy *Khamoorz* (unleavened
bread) with Christian blood."

"What else is such blood good for?"
interrupted the double renegade.

"Thou art thyself a Nazarene," continued she
spitting scornfully, "and must know the value
of the impure stuff that fills thy veins. Go then
to Nathan Mordecai the usurer, let the barber
bleed thee to extinction—Mashallah! the
Hebrews will doubtless purchase thy blood for
their unclean purposes. Go! go to Nathan
Mordecai, and convert thy blood into
gold."

Adam Djibrelli listened to this ribaldry with-
out uttering a word, although he grasped his

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Iran.
Judging from th
visiter, that Adams

Pacha's officers, sent to announce some new extortion upon the Israelites, Nathan Mordecai received his visiter with obsequious, but formal welcomes, to which the other replied with,

“Thy name, O Nathan Mordecai, is a date tree in full bearing; thou art the flower of all Israel. Thy disinterestedness and fair dealings embalm the air with fragrance. The blessings of abundance are the result; by liberality tempered with prudence, thou hast amassed great wealth.”

“Wealth! wealth!” echoed the old Hebrew. “By the souls of the prophets, you are mistaken, my Agha. I am poorer than the desert sand. I and my brethren are a persecuted people. When by industry and self-mortification, we contrive to amass a few sequins, your Pacha wrings them from us through fines, contributions, and merciless exactions. Misery, torture, and injustice, are our lot in this world. Our breath is not our own—we must redeem the very air that feeds our lungs. Wealth—wealth, indeed! Alas! I am so poor, that I can scarcely afford to purchase the prescribed offering for the pascal feast. This is truth.”

“Do not burn your soul with lies,” replied Adam Djibrelli; “and, above all, fear not. I

am not an office merchant, and a goods to dispose to thee and thine

"If my Agha derate prices, the joined Nathan, w ed its wonted s invoice. Perchar and barter other monies are scarce save my limbs fr are exceeding scar every para as it pa souls were of silver gress from our mou are, indeed, a poc business. Time is sure. What are thy spices, slaves, or sh costly article," added my folds, "a most c

"Art thou alone?" cautiously casting his ber.

"I am," replied t you need not fear inter

"Listen, then," rej

Is not this the sacred month, the first month, called Abib by thy people? Do not ye Israelites stand upon the threshold of your passover? Are ye not nigh upon the feast of unleavened bread?"

"Through the mercy of the Lord of Hosts," responded Nathan, solemnly, "I and my oppressed brethren are looking forward with grateful hearts, to the holy convocation. Already the lamb and bitter herbs are prepared,* and the dough of purity, void of leaven, awaits the last kneading. Alas! alas! we are a most ill-used and calumniated race. But, in despite of persecutions, torments and revilings, the Lord has given us strength, from generation to generation, to commemorate and adhere to his holy statutes, even to the weight of a hair. But what have these matters to do with your merchandize? May I die unpardoned, my Agha, if I can understand you."

To this Adam Djibrelli answered, in a low voice: "The feast, thou sayest, is nigh, and the lamb and dough prepared. Is nothing wanting to the fulfilment of thy mysteries?"

"Nothing—nothing," rejoined the Hebrew. "Such houses, and there are many, as cannot purchase a whole lamb, have joined with their

* Exodus, c. xi, v. 8.

neighbours, so that all may partake thereof, as ordained by Almighty commandment."

"And for the feast of unleavened bread—is all prepared?" demanded Adam.

"All!" replied the Hebrew; "on the eve of the fifteenth day, and during seven days subsequent, that pure festival will be minutely observed, according to God's ordinances. But, in the name of Abraham and the fathers, Effendi, let us to business. I am at a loss to unravel the object of your questions."

Adam Djibrelli now placed his hand upon the Jew's arm, and looking him keenly in the face said in a still lower voice, "Thou sayest all is prepared."

"All—all—even as it is written," answered Nathan Mordecai impatiently.

"Are the victims secured?" demanded my possessor.

"I have said it," replied the Hebrew.

"I speak not of four footed victims," rejoined the other sternly.

"May the wisdom of Elijah and the prophet enlighten me!" ejaculated Nathan, "I am in utter darkness as to your meaning."

"Thou art wilfully so," retorted Adam. "Say!" continued he approaching his mouth still closer to Nathan's ear, "Say! I repeat,

how can the bread of commemoration be complete without blood?"

"Blood!" ejaculated the Hebrew with a look and movement of utter disgust.

"Aye—blood—human blood—Nazarene blood," repeated Adam.

"Human blood! Nazarene blood!" echoed Nathan Mordecai, starting back and fixing his dark eyes with mingled horror and alarm upon his visiter. "Blood say you? by the holy tabernacle—by the might and majesty of the King of Hosts, you utter most exceptionable words—you only seek to try your servant. Blood indeed! what profanation is this? know you not that blood, even the blood of beasts, is an abomination, an impurity, strictly forbidden to all the children of Israel, under grievous penalties? Is it not written and commanded that the life of flesh is in the blood—that it is given in an atonement for our souls, and that whosoever eateth any manner of blood is rejected and cut off from the people. "*No soul of you,*" said the Lord, "*shall eat blood.*"* Anathemas! Anathemas upon him that transgresseth."

"Do not attempt to throw dust, unless it be that of gold, into my eyes," replied Adam

* Leviticus, ch. xii, v. 14.

Djibrelli scoffingly
cunning as thou art
dry up my brain.
that amongst other
Israelites employ
to moisten your
may propitiate the
and avert evil from

Nathan Mordecai
his beard, and after
man is either a deceiver
"May the God of
he who brought this
bondage defend us
and calumniated people
have false men pour
barbarous credulity
not both Moslems
means of torturing
heaping the flaming
ble slander upon our
Jehovah be accomplish
bitter drop in the cup
worldly portion. Alas
pure and innocent of
escape detraction."

"If thy wealth did not
cence, O Nathan Mordecai

require a strong coffer," rejoined Adam Djibrelli, sneeringly. "Denial is, however, useless. Thy practices are no secret. But fear not : I come not to injure, but to assist. If thou art not already provided with a victim, I can supply thy wants without risk. Listen—"

"Heaven forbid that I or my brethren should listen to such hideous blasphemies," replied the Hebrew.

"Fear not, I repeat," rejoined Adam, in an earnest voice; "I am neither spy or extortioner. My name is Adam Djibrelli Khan."

"Lately a Vakeel in the service of the Muscovites," observed Nathan, narrowly scrutinizing him from under his bushy eye-brows.

"The same," rejoined the other. "Thou hast no cause for fear."

"You were yourself a convert to Christianity," said the Hebrew.

"Through the temptation of Satan, I was so," answered Adam; "but my eyes have been opened, and I have returned to the true faith. Let us understand each other," continued he. "Ye Jews require Nazarene blood, and I require ready cash. I have wherewithal to satisfy thy wants, and thou hast wherewith to relieve mine. At my abode is a young, beautiful, and most devout Nazarene slave.

Give me a
thine. Where
so cheap a rate,

After a long
Nathan Mordecai
som, and moving
prayer, he drew
solemn voice, sa-
vout Nazarene, :

"Even so—th
thy purpose. I
Djibrelli.

"It is," replie

"But how can I

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"I am ready to
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if thou hast doubts,
woman—dispose of
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hostage in thine hand
for me as for thyself.
thine, to stimulate the c
or infidel; but I have
ders, and that would s

place, were our bargain known to the Nazarenes. But waste no time. If thou acceptest my offer, let us strike hands ; if not, I will sell my property to the highest bidder in the slave-bazaar."

Had all the men-eating demons of the waste risen up before me, I could not have felt greater horror than I did when the Hebrew, after briefly communing with himself, seized my vile possessor's hand, and squeezing it, in token of assent, spoke thus :

" So fair an occasion must not be thrown away. Listen—I will purchase this woman and her child, upon condition that you remain here, until I have removed them to a place of security, and that you will consent to accept one-fourth of the price in coin, and the remainder in bonds. I cannot do more ; ready money is exceeding scarce."

Having agreed to this, and given to Nathan his signet ring, that he might obtain admittance to Sumbool, Adam Djibrelli signed a double contract of sale, one for himself and the other for the Hebrew, who put the paper into his bosom, and departed, locking the door outside.

CH

NIGHT already
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Adam Djibrelli,
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At length, foot
age, a key was
Hebrew entered, a
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follow him into an
receive the stipulat
announcement, a gl
shot across the brow
rose and followed his

apartment, so large that its extremities were veiled in darkness.

Having seated themselves upon a carpet, on which were placed writing materials, and two bags containing money, the Jew raised his voice, and spoke as follows :

“ Here, Effendi, is the counterpart of the deed of sale, by which you make over to me the christian slave, Sumbool, and her infant, to be disposed of as I may think fit. Authorized by this and your signet, I accomplished my object. Nothing remains, therefore, but for you to receive the money and bonds as agreed. You shall have payment, to the last para.”

“ Barik Allah ! ” exclaimed Adam—“ the sooner the better.”

“ You know the object for which you sought my abode, and the purpose for which you offered to sell this woman,” said the Hebrew.

“ Whatever thou mayest be,” replied the other, “ I am neither an owl nor an ass.”

“ Remember,” rejoined Nathan, “ remember that you pressed me to make this purchase, that you might handle the price of blood.”

“ The blood-price be on thy head, and not upon mine,” retorted Adam. “ I sold her—upon thee and thine be the consequences.”

“ Say not so ! ” exclaimed Nathan, “ say

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to aid others ; but, nevertheless, I will give you a small sum, for present wants, without bond or interest. By the mercy of him who placed the daughters of Judah, and rescued the first-born of Israel, do not renounce your own flesh and blood !”

“ Give me my money, and cease this hypocritical cant,” retorted Adam. “ Time flies. I have pressing business—I must begone.”

“ Is your heart of stone ?” demanded the Jew. “ Can you deliver these innocents to the mercy of those whom you stigmatize as murderous blood-feeders ? It cannot be—it is against nature ! Take back the contract.”

“ Fulfil thy bond, and let me return home,” replied Adam, impatiently. “ If thou detainest me a moment longer, it will be the worse for thee.”

“ On thy head be it, then !” answered Nathan. “ See,” added he, affixing his signature to some papers, “ here are the *politcha*, (bills) and there the coins : count them. I would not rob you of a single para. Two hundred ducats—pure gold—purer never was coined. Ring them—weigh them—here are scales. Monies,” continued he, as he fondly gazed upon the glittering metal, “ monies are wondrous rare in Bagdad. I am left without a

single ready pi
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much."

Whilst Ada
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Nazarenes, and
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Satan to his follow
"Welcome, Va
come! Ye are co
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s man's perversity. Regardless of God's laws and judgments—defying heaven—defying Satan—in despite of truth and reason—the dark-hearted defamer did not scruple to pollute my ears with a hideous proposition, and to impeach me and my brethren with a monstrous iniquity—an iniquity at which even the accursed of Gomorrah would have revolted !”

Low murmurs resounded through that part of the chamber occupied by the Hebrews, but no one spoke, so the venerable Nathan continued.

“Yea ! This wicked man did not hesitate to brand us with the foulest slander that the demon of malice ever suggested to human brain. A crime opposed to sense and nature. A crime that would be a most iniquitous infraction of the holiest of our most holy observances. An offence that would render murder doubly hideous, and that would cause our death, alive, and cut us off from life eternal, when dead. He did this because he seeks our liver, that he may take them away and share in the spoils of our inheritance—”

“Anathemas ! Anathemas ! He is more merciless than Nebuchadnezzar, and more im-

pious than
brews.

"Ye have
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"Maledictions
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the fate of Lot's
after."

"He is a traitor
served the Russian

that would betray his king, and desert his
ed for gold, would sell his own father. He
d his family are renegades and traitors."

Adam Djibrelli, who had several times vainly
sayed to obtain a hearing, now roared out :
Let me speak ! Let me speak ! What foul
onspiracy is this ? What monstrous league
f villainy have you formed against me ? Have
he Jews brought your connivance at their in-
famy. Does the smoke of bribery blind your
eyes !"

"The villainy is thine !" retorted Nathan.

"Praise be to him who averted the knife from
the bosom of Isaac,—the lamb has turned the
hoof of discomfiture upon the tiger. As-
tounded at thy impious accusation, and seeing
that denial would neither save me from thy
foul aspersions, nor shield the objects of thy
wantonness from abandonment, I feigned as-
sent to thy beastly offer. Yes ; I feigned
compliance that I might rescue thy projected
victims, and expose the foulness of thy charges
against us. Through God's aid I succeeded."

"Dost thou pretend to suffocate me with
thy filth ?" rejoined Adam fiercely. "Know
ye not that I am a Moslem ? By the Prophet's
birth and burial, ye shall all bitterly repent

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and this coin are my proofs. Ye have heard the grey-bearded hypocrite avow the purpose of his purchase. . He merits torture, death, and confiscation,—and, by Allah ! they shall be his ! Let me, therefore, to the Pacha. Had I not been detained, I should, long since, have opened the eyes of your elders, and redeemed my slave and child from the fangs of these monsters. What more would you have ?”

“ I doubt not,” said the Russian Vakeel in reply, “ that it was your plan to have destroyed these innocent men, that you might rise by their downfall ; but you have run your neck into the noose prepared for others.”

“ Yes !” exclaimed the Englishman, stepping forward. “ Nathan Mordecai and his brethren are innocent. This detestable accusation is but a shameful revival of the base prejudices of barbarous ages. The Jews are laborious and possess wealth—that is their crime. None but most ignorant and merciless fanatics can give ear to calumnies which are against the very essence of their laws, their creed, and daily practices—calumnies that are in direct opposition to those holy commandments, whose observance is adhered to with unflinching tenacity and scrupulous exactitude by all

Israelites, in every land, and under every extreme of torture and persecution."

"What! Do ye Nazarenes league with Jews? Can you gainsay evidence?" demanded Adam Djibrelli.

"Evidence!" echoed the English Vakeel, pressing down the strange, canoe-shaped skull-cap that perched, like a split coal, on the top of his head. "Evidence we have, that in reason and nature, in God's commandments, and in the immemorial records and practices of these slandered people,—and by none more slandered than by us Nazarenes; and yet," added he, turning and addressing the other Christians, "we widely depart from the example and precepts of our divine master. Yes! we are inflexible with those whom he has pardoned; we are merciless to those whom he has forgiven."

"May he that hateth those who imagine evil, be his shield and defence! The merciful spirit of the Lord of Hosts speaks in him," exclaimed one of the most venerable Hebrews, taking the English Vakeel's hand, and pressing it to his lips. "Let our sons bless, and our daughters praise him!"

"All these words signify nothing," inter-

sed Adam Djibreli. "Mashalla! There are other judges in Bagdad besides ye Nazarenes—they will listen to proofs."

"Proofs!" again echoed the English Vakeel. "If you want proofs, we have them at your service. Harken! No sooner had Nathan Mordecai quitted this cold blooded traducer, and would be destroyer of innocent men, than he hastened with other venerable Hebrews to my abode. Having detailed facts, he begged me to summon my colleagues and the elders of our churches, that they might bear witness to his innocence in case of need. He then produced the unfortunate victim of that renegade's baseness, and placed her and her child in our hands, where they are safe from all persecution. He did so without fee or ransom—contenting himself for the loss of his money, with the consciousness of a benevolent action. In so doing, he had not only merited the gratitude of all Christians, but, in my opinion, has given a convincing proof of the barbarous calumnies levelled against him and his, by designing and inhuman slanderers."

Another Frank Vakeel now took up the word, and said: "I and my colleagues have

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As for you, Adam
you hide the cheek

mouth of retreat the better. Take the money—the fruits of your abomination; and, unless you would have us spit on your beard—be gone!”

Upon this, the Haremzadeh attempted to speak, but his voice was drowned by the indignant murmurs of all present, so that he was constrained to slink away, and to conceal his rage and shame amidst the darkness of night. But this consolation was refused him, for scarcely had he reached the threshold of the house, ere half-a-dozen sturdy *Zabeti* (policemen) seized and dragged him before the Cadi.

The judgment of this trumpet of law was summary and speedy. After a few preliminary questions, he spoke thus :

“ A fine market has this Kaffir, violator of harems, brought his beard to. To answer his own unclean ends, he has not only converted a Moslem woman from the true faith, and sold her to the Hebrews, that she might perish by their hands ; but he has cheated another woman out of her rights, and abandoned her, as she has sworn, to die of hunger. These offences admit of no pardon. Let him, therefore, eat the dirt amassed by his own fingers.”

In vain Adam D
sion of faith, and s
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abuse the Nazarenes
Cadi made was :

“ He lies !—he ea
Zemerode, the Persian
the Pacha’s harem, h
This *peshevink* (rascal)
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creeds; he is a thorous
gler! Let the dog be de
aded he, turning to the F
perty is the laws !—his bo
Thereupon the execution
stripped his weapons and
his person, tripped up his l
strokes upon the soles of his
tening him upon an ass, led him
and menaced him with death.
Thus, for once, was justice
out in Bagdad,—a city infin
brated for pipe-sticks, than for
tion of human or divine law.

What became of Adam Djil
the objects of his projected ro
not. As to myself, I was worn

by the Cadi, who, of course, declared himself heir to the culprit's goods. I then became the property of his favourite wife, who bartered me for a string of pearls with an Egyptian merchant. He carried me to Smyrna, whence I travelled with sundry bags of figs and other wares to Moscow, where I was sold by a shawl dealer to a Muscovite general, and by him was given. . .

The quondam shawl was about to narrate its subsequent adventures in Europe, when I interposed, saying :

“ Stop, my friend ! The many flowery treasures which you have still in store, are doubtless more redolent of delectable perfumes than those that already embalm the three nosegays composing our present garland. But, let us take warning from the words of the sage,—who says : ‘ A wise man may not know where to commence, but a fool never knows where to stop.’ This being a truism, whose application I would fain avoid, let us rest from our labours ; promising, in the event of our hearts being gladdened by the sunbeams of favour and encouragement, that we will, ere long, regale the public with an account of your wanderings through those parts of Frangistan

where fate and fortune have conducted your steps.

In the meanwhile, let us invoke the indulgence of our readers, and trusting that in such a medley each may find something to his mind, thus bid them a temporary farewell.

THE END.

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