

N O U R M A H A L,

An Oriental Romance.

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"A VOYAGE TO SPAIN," &C.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,

15, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1838.



LONDON :
PRINTED BY STEWART AND MURRAY,
OLD-BAILY.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE reader is to suppose that the following romance is related by a story-teller of Cashmere. Itinerant reciters of prose and poetical fictions are still, as well known to travellers, as common in the East as they were in the days of Homer.

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N O U R M A H A L.



CHAPTER I.

Too much wisdom is folly : for time will produce events of which thou canst have no idea ; and he to whom thou gavest no commission, will bring thee unexpected news.

TARAF.

IN no part of our oriental world are there to be found bolder or more picturesque mountain ranges, or a greater variety of climate fruits, flowers, and animals, than in the tract of country which lies beyond the grand chain of the Himmálás. Although the snow and the cloud seldom disappear, which prevent their stupendous peaks from being seen in all their naked majesty, nevertheless the wanderer looks with delight upon their numerous declivities and valleys, clothed in green

herbage, interspersed with villages, and animated by herds and flocks, which abundantly reward the cares of their pastoral population. Sometimes standing upon an abrupt ridge, after having ascended through a wild accumulation of rocks, he beholds, spreading at his feet, a dell irrigated by streams that fall from the surrounding heights with a pleasing murmur, and occupied by cottages near which the amaranth, the convolvulus, the primrose and the hyacinth, blend their charms in gay luxuriance. Passing through the hospitable valley, he clambers higher up the mountain, and treads through copses, the haunt of the wild goat, red and white deer, and a peculiar species of fox remarkable for its fleetness. The copse leads to the forest, tenanted by that elegant bird the bee-eater, whose brown back and yellow neck form so striking a contrast with the bright emerald of his breast and wings; by the flamingo, that sometimes lightens in the firmament like a meteor; the ring-dove, the starling, the nightingale, and above all the ouzell, whose body has stolen the blush of the rose, while its proud head seems to have been just dipped in the azure of the skies.

More than a thousand years have passed since the volcano and the earthquake filled that region with terror; but the traces of their fearful visitation appear to be of yesterday. Enormous bulks of rocks, rent asunder, present abysses through which the torrent rolls unseen, but not unheard, as innumerable caverns multiply its voice of thunder, while it contends against the fallen masses that momentarily resist its course. And yet it is delicious to contemplate the borders of those unfathomable channels, overhung by thickets of barberries and jasmines, and myriads of flowering shrubs, which send forth a spicy fragrance, and decorate the gloomy horror beneath with festoons of the most exquisite beauty.

On the edge of one of those dangerous ravines, in the district of Arjun, Kazim Ayas found himself expecting the return of his falcon, that had plunged into it after a quail. He had brought out the bird rather as a companion than for the purpose of sport, to which he was not much addicted. He had but recently returned to his native village among the mountains of Arjun, from the city of Samarcand, where he had obtained his education,

at the celebrated college founded by the munificence of Ulug Beg. The poems of Nizami were much more delightful to his ear, than the sound of the hunter's horn, especially those which paint in such fascinating colours the loves of Leili and Mejnun. For him, also, the moral compositions of Jami possessed peculiar charms. The elegance of language and versification, the sublimity of thought, the strain of religious and philosophical mysticism which characterise the effusions of that bard, often held the soul of Kazim bound in the spell of enchantment. Nor did he fail to render himself familiar with almost every branch of science, and with the historians who have related the fortunes of all the great empires.

As the sun was fast descending beneath a canopy of gold and purple clouds, Kazim expected anxiously the re-appearance of the hawk, which he would not have lost for a hundred-fold its weight in diamonds; it was the first gift he had received from Mangeli, the idol of his soul from infancy, to whom he had been already for three happy years united. Holding by the branch of a willow which hung down low into the ravine, he ventured to descend over broken rocks,

whence, by the aid of gigantic ferns depending from the sides of the fissure, he lowered himself safely to a considerable distance from the summit. Through the dim twilight, he perceived the hawk struggling with its prey, among some fragments in the midst of the raging flood below. He called it repeatedly by its well-known name; but the noble bird, bent on victory, would not surrender the advantage it had already gained. In the contest, both the combatants fell into the torrent, which bore them away in an instant from his sight.

Kazim resolved to dare every danger rather than lose the falcon. Guided by the sound of the torrent, he trod his way through the fissure, until it closed above his head, excluding altogether the light of day. Though exposed every moment to the risk of falling over precipices, made slippery by the perpetual dropping of water from the masses overhead, nevertheless he penetrated through the dark hollows of the mountain, until his steps were checked by what he afterwards discovered to be a lake, in whose ample bosom the roar of the waters, which had almost stunned his ear, was subdued to silence.

Again and again he called to the falcon,

shouting as loudly as his voice would permit, but he was only replied to by a thousand vibrations, which bore the name along the waters, until at length it died away in the distant labyrinths of the cavern. While pausing in wonder at the effect his exertions produced, he descried afar in the heart of the mountain, several sparkles of fire, followed by a flame, that, after flickering for a moment, disappeared. His first impulse was to retrace his steps without delay; but, before he could withdraw his gaze from the spot where the mystic light was kindled, it again came like a star, dimly seen through a cloud, and shooting forth rays all round it. Gradually it grew larger and more brilliant, until Kazim felt that it was approaching rapidly towards the place where he stood. Presently, the outline of a boat was visible, and then dark forms cast their shadows on the water, slight undulations, shining at quick and regular intervals at each side of the vessel, betrayed the speed with which the oars were plied, and created so much alarm in the mind of Kazim, that he sought concealment behind a projecting rock; whence, however, he could watch the progress of the bark.

As the vessel came nearer, Kazim perceived that one of the group, who wore a Mogul cap embroidered with gold thread, appeared to be treated by his companions with some degree of distinction. To him they looked for directions as to the course which they were now to pursue, having already arrived in the middle of the lake. Without uttering a word, the chieftain took a torch in his hand, and pointing towards the rock behind which Kazim had sought refuge, desired the boat to be steered in that direction.

"Whom have we here?" exclaimed the leader, as he stepped out of the boat, flashing the light of the torch full in Kazim's face. "A friend, or a foe?"

"How, when, why came you here?" asked five or six angry voices at once, rendered fiercer by as many sabres, which threatened the stranger with instant destruction.

Kazim explained, as soon as they would permit him to speak, though in a voice agitated by the feelings which this strange scene awakened, that he had undesignedly entered the cavern in search of his falcon.

"A falcon!" they shouted in a tone of derision;—"a spy—off with his head—he comes

from the foes of Süleiman—away with him into the lake!”

While the chieftain was scrutinising the countenance of Kazim by the light of the torch, the falcon descended on his hand; its beautiful eyes sparkling with joy for having once more found its favourite resting-place.

“His words are true,” said the chieftain, “for here is the hawk; and a noble bird it is: whence came you? to what tribe do you belong?”

“The Uzbecks.”

“We are friends; we have partaken of their salt; they have raised the war-cry with us; our arrows have flown together over the battle-field.”

While saying these words, the chieftain, without further ceremony, led the way by the road which had conducted Kazim to the lake, when suddenly turning into a dark passage, he entered a spacious cave, on the floor of which several coats of mail, spears, bows and quivers were thrown in confusion. Taking up a saddle-drum which lay amongst them, he struck it thrice with the back of his hand: the floor of the cave immediately awoke to life; numbers of men who had been sleeping, wrapped in their

cloaks, rose upon their feet at the signal, and crowding round their chieftain, anxiously inquired, "What news?"

"Good news, my friends: the rebels will soon be in our power. The day after to-morrow we shall proceed on the march, and in the meantime, look to the boat for an abundant supply of provisions."

A hundred torches of pine-wood were forthwith lighted, and planted at intervals all round the cavern: some of the men kindled fires, while others proceeded to the boat, and returned laden with deer, hares, partridges, pheasants, sheep, loaves of wheaten bread, and a considerable quantity of wine, and of humiz, the spirit distilled from mares' milk, in leathern bags and bottles. The latter were reserved for the march, and the expected encounter; but the bags were placed on a shelving rock, and being formed of the skins of lambs prepared for the purpose, the liquid was drawn out through the tail, which was tied up, or let down, as occasion required. Most of those who had been sleeping in the cave, paid preliminary visits to the bags, by way of recompence for the privations which they had for some time endured. Meanwhile,

expert hands were occupied in, dissecting, with sabres and knives, the venison and mutton, of which large slices were suspended on spikes of wood. These being stuck in the ground, round the fires, were turned repeatedly, until the meat was roasted. Some hares, pheasants, and partridges were cooked in a similar manner; and while the cavern was thus filled with savory odours, which would have given edge to the appetite even of the epicure, various groups sat down on the floor in circles: salt was served to each man in the hollow of one hand, and in the other was placed bread, and a portion of the fragrant viands smoking from the fire. Bags of wine and humiz went round from circle to circle in due succession.

Kazim, whom the chieftain had directed to sit down near himself, felt not at all disinclined to imitate the example of his new friends. The venison of the red-deer he found as delicious as if it had been prepared by the hand of Mangeli. The wine, which was from Kabul, cheered his soul. By and by, as the hunger of the different groups was sated, and their hearts opened by the generous nectar, conversation became loud and general. Here a Tartar was seen on

his legs with a spear in his hand, boasting to those who were near him of the skill he had exercised in shaping the bone with which it was pointed, and in carving that part of it, which he grasped in his hand, when rushing on the foe. There a circle of listeners gathered round a veteran, who related incidents of the battles in which he had been engaged, not forgetting to exhibit scars on his breast and forehead, in verification of his story; while others were more sedately engaged in conjecturing the plans of their chieftain, whom they called Suleiman, and to whose fortunes they appeared to be enthusiastically attached.

From all that he could observe and hear, Kazim collected that the whole party had come from some distance, with a view to surprise three formidable princes, who were now, or were very soon expected to be, in that part of Arjun. While he was anxiously watching the movements of the various groups around him, he found that he had himself become an object of much attention to a noble looking person who was seated on the other side of Suleiman, and frequently conversed with the chief in an under tone. But Kazim felt no uneasiness for his

own fate. He had now taken salt with the strangers, whoever they were; they owed him protection, so long as he remained faithful to them; and there was a dignity in the manner of the commander, which appeared to entitle him at once to confidence and submission.

"My friend, Baba Seirami, thinks that he must have seen you somewhere before," said Suleiman.

"Possibly, at Samarcand."

"It must have been at Samarcand," said Seirami. "If I mistake not, I was present at one of the public disputations held in the college of Ulug Beg, at which you took away the principal prize."

Kazim modestly replied, that it was a great addition to the honours he had obtained on that occasion, to find that they were remembered by a personage, to whom he would have been otherwise unknown.

"Your name, I think, is Ayas?"

"Kazim Ayas."

"It is a good name; you inherit it from one of the most ancient families at this side of the Himalas. I presume you reside in this neighbourhood?" added Seirami.

“Not far hence, in a small hut on the borders of the Ilamish.”

“What!” exclaimed Suleiman, “a scholar, and content to die without a name on the banks of the Ilamish? Be of us, henceforth. I shall open to you the paths of glory.”

“I fear that you would find me but an incumbrance, I have never learned even to bend the bow.”

The entrance of a Tartar courier with letters, which he placed in the hands of Seirami, here interrupted the conversation. The latter, rising from the floor, proceeded with Suleiman to a recess in the cavern, where they glanced hastily over the letters. The chieftain immediately called around him his principal officers; and while they remained in consultation, Seirami, returning to Kazim, inquired at much length into the usual habits of his life, and the circumstances in which he was placed since he had quitted Samarcand.

“My biography since that period,” replied Kazim, “may be briefly told. Before I left home, all my dreams and hopes of happiness hovered around one dear image. A shepherdess, whom I used to meet in my daily rambles

among the hills, Mangeli, the daughter of Gulbeg, was the star of my existence. Upon my return from the university, I found her still the same. My heart, equally unchanged, knew no peace but in her presence."

"An Ayas, and married to a shepherd's daughter!"

"You would not express so much surprise, if you had known her gentleness, her purity of soul, her tenderness for me, her beauty," said Kazim, deeply blushing; for he felt that the rank of his family was too well-known to Soirami.

"You must keep secret, even from her, all that you have seen or heard in this ~~eye~~ ^{case}. Your life, your fortunes, depend upon your strict observance of this injunction. You may render us important services, if we can depend upon your firmness on this occasion."

"The kindness which I have already experienced at your hands, commands my gratitude. Be assured of my fidelity."

"These letters inform us, that to-morrow a troop of Mogul horsemen, commanded by the Khan Mirtas, will cross the Ilamish. His object is to effect a junction with our force;

and as we must move to-night to the place where the greater number of our soldiers are encamped, it will be your business to meet the Khan, and conduct him thither."

Kazim received his commission with a degree of pride, which he had not known for some time. Seirami, then producing a map, described to him the spot where it was of the utmost importance that the Khan should join Suleiman. Kazim said, that he was perfectly familiar with the country, and he should feel no difficulty in accomplishing the service required of him. He was then, by Seirami's direction, conducted to the boat, and rapidly rowed across the lake, to a passage by which its superfluous waters were discharged. In a short time the light of the stars, glowing in the firmament, enabled him to assure the rowers that they need give themselves no farther trouble, as he knew that he was upon one of the tributaries of the Hamish.

CHAPTER II.

Contentment's realms no ills invade,
 No cares annoy, no sorrows shade ;
 There placed secure, in peace we rest,
 Nor aught demand to make us blest.
 While pleasure's gay fantastic power,
 The splendid pageant of an hour,
 Like yonder meteor in the skies,
 Flits with a breath, no more to rise.

LAMIAH ALAJEM.

THE moon being on the wane, was just ascending on the horizon, indicating the near approach of midnight, when Kazim arrived within view of his cottage. Through the small aperture, that served as a back window, he perceived a light, which told him that Mangoli was still watching for his return. For the first time, he felt a shade of uneasiness gathering, to qualify the delight he always experienced in

meeting her after a short absence. He now held a secret in his breast, calculated to influence, perhaps, the whole of his future destinies; and he had pledged himself not to reveal it even to her. In giving an account of the circumstances that detained him so unusually long from home — circumstances into which she would inquire with all the solicitude of affection — he was sensible that he must be guilty of a departure from that degree of unlimited confidence, which had hitherto subsisted between them. Treading gently by the path that led behind the cottage, he lingered involuntarily outside the window, as if to see how Mangeli was employed; but really hoping that he might be able to compose his thoughts, and to assume, before he entered, a calmness which he did not feel.

A small bright charcoal fire was burning in the hearth, on which an earthen pan of rice was stewing. On a low table, spread with a snow-white cloth, was a jar of spring water, a loaf of bread made from the grain of purslane, a quarter of a large melon, and a basket of figs, all evidently untouched, as if Mangeli could have no enjoyment which was not shared by her husband.

Her father, Gulbeg^o, who, although he had already counted more than seventy winters, always rose at the dawn to drive the goats to pasture, was sleeping on his dry grass bed, at some distance from the fire; behind him lay his small herd of goats, also in profound repose. Two or three kids were skipping about, in vain soliciting the notice of Mangoli, who was looking out anxiously from the door.

"No—nowhere can I discern the least appearance of his shadow; what can detain him? Kazim, dear, dear Kazim!" she exclaimed, as turning from the door she closed it almost in despair. "This rice will be quite spoiled," she said, as approaching the hearth she stirred the pottage with a wooden spoon. The falcon, awake by that well-known voice, fluttered a moment in Kazim's bosom, where it had hitherto lain asleep. Suddenly Mangoli stood up in the attitude of listening. A smile of joy rising from her tremulous lips, flashed rapidly over her countenance.

"It must be his step: hush!" she cried impatiently to the kids, that were jumping to touch her hand.

The light of the lamp, which was suspended

from the roof, fell full upon her countenance, then in the very bloom of beauty. The clear air of the mountains, if it had not wholly prevented her cheek from being tinged with the brunette, so common to the Tartar tribes, gave it a transparency, through which the blush, that now inflamed it, appeared like the lightning behind a summer cloud. The usually mild lustre of her dark eye changed into a bright living glow, that sparkled with delight. Her black glossy hair, simply braided in front, was gathered in a graceful knot on the top of her head, prepared for the usual hour of repose. A plain cotton robe, descending a little below the knee, and tightened by a girdle of the same material at her waist, revealed the graces of her delicately formed figure, which would have been deemed sylph-like, had not a slight undulation, commencing beneath her bosom, just like the wave when first rising from the surface of the tranquil deep, betrayed the approach, though yet distant, of a period that was to kindle in her breast feelings of rapture it had never known before.

• The hawk, which struggled incessantly for freedom, at length escaped through the window,

and lighting on the table, began to peck at the bread. "Ah, now I know he is come, indeed!" said Mangeli, hastening to the door, where she met and folded her husband in her arms. She pressed him to her bosom, as if she would never part with him again; until a shower of tears—tears of joy, came to her relief. "What has happened?" she at length asked:—"where, in the name of Allah, have you been?" He then related to her, circumstantially, the dangers he had encountered in pursuit of the falcon, by this time sleeping once more on its own perch. Mangeli gazed upon her husband with alarm, while he told her of the caverns into which he had descended.

"But you have not yet mentioned how you escaped."

"Did I not say there was a boat on the lake?"

"A boat?—thanks to Allah, who must have sent it for your safety. I never heard of the places you speak of, though I know that the mountains about us are full of dangerous precipices. You must promise me, dearest Kazim, never to go there any more;" and accepting the promise as if it had been already



given, she kissed him again and again, and placed the pan of rice on the table.

But Kazim, although he affected to be very busy in dispatching his supper, had no appetite.

“ I am afraid that the rice is quite spoiled, it has been so long on the fire : put it by, love, and let me give you some of this melon, which, you know, my father says is one of the best he ever tasted.” To Kazim, who had, in fact, already supped well, the melon was as little tempting as the rice, and he endeavoured to excuse himself on the score of fatigue, and being much heated with his journey.

Mangeli looked anxiously at his burning forehead, where the wine, of which he had so recently partaken, kindled an unwonted fire.

“ You are not well, Kazim. Oh ! if any thing had happened—if any thing should happen to you—what is to become of Mangeli ?”

“ Fear not ! He who sees the sparrow fall, and the rose-bud blow, will take care of you, whatever may be my fate. Let us pray to him that he may stretch over us the shield of his merciful protection !”

The young pair[†] having hastily finished their humble meal, knelt down side by side, and prostrating themselves on the floor, uttered a short but fervent supplication to Allah, full of gratitude for their escape from the perils of the day, and entreating his assistance, that by leading a just and innocent life, they might still, in some degree, merit his continued favour. They then retired to an inner chamber, where, upon a bed of dry leaves, fragrant of herbs, they gave themselves up to sleep, from which they waked not until the sun had already dispersed the mists from the valley and the mountain.

"I wish you very much, Kazim," said Mangeli, after their morning repast was over, "to look at those yellow rose trees in front of our cottage. The flower has been by no means so large or so beautiful this year as usual. Perhaps it would be well to transplant them to a spot where they may have freer air."

Kazim went out as she desired; but as he looked at the trees, on which a solitary fading rose still remained, he felt a prophetic inspiration that he should never see them bloom again. His mind during the night had been harassed by a multitude of dreams, in which horses flying

over fields of battle, palaces, prisons, robbers, and a thousand different objects were mixed together in painful confusion. Mangeli, after putting her little household into order, joined him in the garden, and suggested some other alterations, which might improve its appearance. The lilac trees were growing well; they would be beautiful in spring, when their flowers would hang in tassels again, preceding all the other delights of the season. The Indian pinks, too, were prosperous; the sun-flower looked a blaze of gold; the hollyhock reared its stem aloft, laden with buds, of which there were still many to open their treasures to the bee; the white jasmine wanted training; the vine, on which the grapes were just beginning to grow purple, would also require to be pruned. Thus she went on through the space in front of her cottage, picking up here and there the newly fallen leaves, and reminding Kazim of a variety of improvements he had promised to make in their little residence before the approach of winter. But Kazim's reflections were engrossed with subjects, of which Mangeli could have then formed no notion. She saw plainly enough that he attended negligently to what she

said ; but she was not unaccustomed to the fits of abstraction which occasionally came upon him, and she had the good sense to wait in patience until they passed over, finding for herself, in the meantime, some employment not likely to break in upon his mood.

Kazim, however, was very far from being indifferent to the appearance of the garden, which he had cultivated with his own hand ; and perhaps he never looked upon the fruits or flowers, whose progress he had watched from their earliest stages, with a deeper interest than at this moment. Offers were made to him, which, if accepted, would of necessity change the whole plan of his life. Was he to accept them ? Was he to quit for ever his own cottage, the shade of his own fig-tree, the little world of happiness and peace he found with Mangeli among his flowers, and the volumes of history, science, poetry, and popular fiction, he had copied while at Samarcand ?

Back upon his memory came crowding the long winter nights, during which he cheered his beloved wife and her affectionate parent, by reading to them tales of Arabian writers, in which marvels of the most enchanting descrip-

tion were made to appear as matters of ordinary life. The tempest roared through the gorges of the mountain, the rain rushed from the skies, and swept against the walls of their cottage with the fury of a torrent; but the door was well secured, the window closed tightly by a board that admitted not a breath of air; the fire burned bright in the hearth; Mangeli's eyes drank fresh light from the animated looks of Kazim; Gulbeg reclined at his ease upon the woolly side of a sheep-skin; the goats and their young were carefully housed; and while the wonders of the magic lamp, or the powers of the magnetic mountain, or the beauties of the city of Bagdad, kept the souls of the reader and his small audience enthralled, they took little note of time, the rain, or the storm.

With the seasons changes came, and every change was delightful. The snow-drop and the crocus told that the winter was passed, and the primrose confirmed their tale. With what pleasure did Kazim collect for Mangeli the earliest violets and daisies! How he loved to gather for her hair the lillies of the valley, with which she decorated herself on the holidays! There was no flower, were it ever so humble, which he

had been accustomed to see near his cottage, or in the declivities or valleys in its neighbourhood, that had not now for him a peculiar interest. They seemed to reprove the seductive ambition so suddenly kindled in his breast, and to remind him of the folly of exchanging the peace of mind he now, or at least very lately, enjoyed, for a state of splendour which, however brilliant on the outside, would be sure to have misery at its core.

While these reflections pursued each other through his mind, he found himself walking with unusual rapidity along the banks of the Flamish. He felt glad that he was alone, as he wished to allow free scope to the visions to which the occurrences of the previous day had given birth. Who was Suleiman? Who was Seirami? That they were both of a superior order of men he entertained no doubt. The sentences he had heard of their conversation were marked by a polished, yet natural eloquence of expression, which had not met his ear since he quitted Samarcand. This was of itself a fascination to a youth, brought up as he was in the company of the most sage and accomplished men of the East. But was he fit to be a soldier?

That he could follow through any dangers a chieftain to whom he had pledged his faith, he felt confident ; but wholly unskilled as he was in the use of the spear, the sabre, or the bow, he feared that in a hot engagement, his arm would be found of very little use. And then, if he should fall thus early in his youth, when he had seen little more than his twentieth summer, whither would have sped all the day-dreams of celebrity in which his fancy had so often indulged ? But above all, what would be the fate of Mangeli and their child ? Her father, already bending under infirmity, could not live much longer ; and who would then remain to tend the goats, to cultivate their rice-field ; to take care of their garden, which supplied so great a part of their subsistence ; to gather the wild strawberries and other fruits, which grew on the distant hills ?

Kazim, stretching himself at full-length on the bank of the clear and rapid river, fixed his eyes upon the water, and envied the peace apparently enjoyed by its numerous tenants, now leaping to the surface of the stream, and leaving behind them a dimple, that circled wider and wider until it broke against the reeds on

either side—now hiding in the shade of a water-lily,—now shining in the light like scales of silver. Sometimes a solitary bee passed by, murmuring, and searching the wild flowers that grew around him. He thought of the summer-days, when the soft music of the insect would have soothed him to sleep; but now it was a song of rural industry and contentment, which he was, perhaps, to hear no more. The bee had its secret home hard by, to which it would soon return, laden with the treasures it had collected, and thus it would pursue its pleasing occupations while the season permitted. He had also his home, remote from the world, where, for three years, he had found happiness, unalloyed by care; what would he gain by exchanging it for the turmoil, in which he was now invited to partake?

From these meditations Kazim was at length disturbed by the shrill call of Mangeli, which, uttered at her cottage-door, floated through the air, reaching the hill-sides where her father was stationed with the goats. It was the signal that their mid-day meal was nearly prepared, and that their immediate return was expected. Kazim rose abruptly, feeling as if

he had been engaged in thoughts that would afford no pleasure to Mangeli; but as he bent his steps homeward, he half resolved on giving up all the ambitious prospects disclosed to his view, rather than abandon the solitude in which he enjoyed so much real felicity.

“The life of man is at best but a moment,” he said to himself, “as compared with the ages that have passed, and are to come. What is distinction, fame, splendour, station? If I be happy here, it is sufficient. I will stay with my vines and rose-trees, and will immediately set about the alterations of which Mangeli has reminded me.” •

As Gulbeg sat down on the floor, to partake of the humble meal which Mangeli had provided, he said that something of importance must be going on in Arjun, for he had seen several couriers riding over the distant ridges of the mountains, as if their horses had wings, and they had no fear of the precipices over which they galloped with the speed of arrows. He had also heard from the hollows of the earth those extraordinary sounds of drum and trumpet, which seem to accompany

the marching of innumerable troops, and always precede the approach of a battle.

Kazim looked conscious, while Mangeli listened to the intelligence with breathless attention ; but he made no remark, fearful of trusting himself on a subject which he now hoped he might soon altogether forget. While they were still at their meal, the quick ear of Mangeli caught the sound of a Mogul horn, which she said must have been borne from some distance along the current of the Ilamish. Gulbeg rose upon his feet, and going out, placed his ear close to the ground, when he confirmed what his daughter said ; and added, that it was a party of cavalry, as he heard the paces of their horses distinctly, and that they would be immediately in sight.

He had scarcely said the word, when a small blackness, like a patch of thunder-cloud, was seen on the summit of one of the mountains through which the Ilamish ran. By degrees the cloud became larger and less dense, and then approaching nearer and nearer, it seemed to open out, breaking into small masses, which moved together with great rapidity. Presently horse-tail standards became distinctly visible,

and then horses and their riders galloping in close array, their spears in rest, and their naked sabres glistening in the sun.

On they came at full speed, the trumpet now and then flinging its wild blast through the mountains and forest around, which was echoed along the river. The cottage of Gulbeg was evidently the object towards which they directed their progress, and in a few moments a thousand warriors were in front of it, their saddles and stirrups all covered with foam, and their arms clattering as they came to a halt. Gulbeg and Kazim went forth to offer them such hospitality as their hut afforded. Mangeli instinctively fled to her chamber.

The leader of the troop, a Mogul chieftain, throwing off his cloak, alighted, and saluting Gulbeg and Kazim, proceeded with them into the cottage. He was dressed in a long frock of China satin, ornamented with flowered needle-work, loose trowsers of the same material over which his boots were drawn, a cuirass of steel, near which hung a whetstone and a purse-pocket, the latter being ornamented with trinkets that dangled from it, not unlike a lady's necklace. His cap was embroidered

with flowers; his bow was slung upon his back, and his quiver of green shagreen, well stored with arrows, sounded, as he moved along in all the pride of a commander.

“ I wish to know,” said he, as stooping down he entered through the low door of the cottage, “ whether you can give us any information of Acbar, who calls himself the emperor of Hindostan, and whose steps we have traced with certainty to this neighbourhood.”

Gulbeg answered at once that he had not received the slightest intimation that such a person ever visited those parts. He was constantly out in the mountains, and in the habit of meeting several goat-herds and peasants passing to and from different quarters of the country, but he had heard none of them pronounce the name of Acbar; nor had he seen any troops for some years, until the appearance of those who were now before the cottage. Kazim added, that he had, indeed, heard of Acbar, while he was a student at Samarcand; but that since then he had no tidings whatever of the exploits of that great warrior. The stranger, he thought, could not be Mirtas.

“ Justly said—a great warrior he is indeed

—a commander of infinite resources and bravery; but whose ambition knows no bounds. He tramples upon our relatives and friends, as if they were no better than the dirt beneath his feet. He takes from them their provinces and their wealth, which he adds to his own, and not contented with the conquests he has made in Cashmere and Lahore, and other parts of Hindostan, he now seeks to extend his empire beyond the Himalas, and to make us all tributaries to his lawless power. But, I swear, it shall not be! No; sooner than our standards should be planted around him, I would tear them asunder, and scatter them on the winds, and become, myself and all my brave followers, the food of the vulture.”

The countenance of the young chieftain flashed with fire; while, with an angry gesticulation, he gave expression to the feelings of fierce hostility which he entertained towards Acbar.

“Aye,” continued the stranger, “the sultan’s military renown has already reached every quarter of Asia, and filled the rulers of the provinces on this side of the Himalas with just alarm. His plan of tactics is all his own. He

sometimes enters the camp of his enemy at night, with a handful of men, at a moment when he is supposed to be at a considerable distance. Surprise effects in an hour, what he might not have been able to accomplish for months with a regular army at his command. His personal bravery is indeed equal to any enterprize which a fearless mind can conceive, and his followers make up by their amazing activity and practised discipline for their want of numbers. But Allah be with you! then we must go on," said the khan, quitting the hut and returning to his troops, accompanied by Kazim; who, forgetting his half-formed resolutions in the midst of the martial pomp by which the stranger was surrounded, asked him whether he was acquainted with the noble warrior Mirtas.

" I am Mirtas," replied the Khan.

" Doubtless, then, you must know Suleiman."

" Suleiman is my cousin. Oh! that he were now with me, accompanied by a few of his mountaineers! I should then have no fears of Acbar."

" Suleiman expects your highness, and has charged me to conduct you to his camp."

" Welcome intelligence! Is it far hence?"

“About five or six hours’ journey in that direction,” answered Kazim, pointing to the east.

A beautiful Arabian steed was immediately placed at Kazim’s disposal, who, after taking a hasty leave of Gulbeg and Mangeli, and promising that he would speedily return, rode into the circle, where the Khan was communicating to his followers the tidings he had received. The standards being then placed beside the chieftain, all the men dismounted; and having taken from their saddles leathern bottles of humiz, sprinkled some first towards the standards, and then drank off a portion. The trumpets and drums struck up together, the humiz was again and again sprinkled as before, after which the soldiers thrice rent the air with the war-shout. They then leaped into their saddles, drawing their sabres, which they brandished over their heads, and putting their horses to full speed, pursued their way towards the mountains.

CHAPTER III.

Thou chastening fiend, Adversity ! 'tis thine
The mental ore to temper and refine,
'To cast in virtue's mould the yielding heart,
And honour's polish to the mind impart.
Without thy wakening touch, thy plastic aid,
I'd lain the shapeless mass that nature made ;
But formed, great artist, by thy magic hand,
I gleam a sword to conquer and command.

CARAWASH.

GULBEG, who anxiously observed every thing that passed, concluded that Kazim had been taken into the ranks of the Khan as a guide through the difficult passes towards which their course was now directed. He endeavoured to console Mangeli with the hope that her husband would return again at night ; but she, clasping her hands together, like one overwhelmed with sudden despair, appeared to give him up as lost

to her for ever. She watched the troopers, as, ascending the mountain side, they followed each other in narrow files, winding in and out through the dark ravines which now concealed them from her view, now permitted them to be dimly seen, their standard tops occasionally reflecting a sunbeam, and marking their course. Long after the last horseman had been out of sight, she listened for the sound of the trumpet, persuading her father that she could still hear its faint echoes ;—but he saw that it was a delusion of her senses, and was filled with apprehension, lest the shock which she had received might be productive of fatal consequences. With difficulty he drew her from the door, and resting her head upon his bosom, he appealed to her by every tender feeling—by the thought of what she owed to Kazim, and to the delicate fruit which depended upon her for existence—to dissipate her alarm and to confide in the providence of Allah, who would never fail to protect the virtuous. But she could only call upon the name of Kazim, pressing her temples with her hands, as if she felt that her reason was about to abandon its throne.

“Who can that be ?” asked the Khan, point-

ing to a horseman whom he descried at some distance in a valley which they had now entered. "If he were a friend, he would have waited for us ; but I observed that the moment the first standards appeared in sight, he gave the rein to his steed. See, he flies as if for his life !"

The officers thus questioned, could offer no conjecture on the subject. After proceeding through the valley, they entered one of the passes described in the chart which Seirami had shown to Kazim ; but it was so narrow and precipitous, that they were frequently obliged to dismount, in order to lead their horses over rugged rocks, and by the edges of tremendous gulphs, which every moment threatened them with destruction. One of the soldiers, who affected to excel his companions in travelling over such dreadful steeps, as those that now lay before them, refused to alight, and dashed forward against a precipice which seemed almost inaccessible. The animal climbed the rock with unflinching spirit, but just as he placed his hoof on the top of the ledge, the mass loosened from the crumbling ruin to which it belonged, and horse and

rider rolled backward into a dark abyss, where they instantly disappeared. "Curse upon these defiles," exclaimed the chieftain, his brow blackening with anger; "one of my bravest followers already lost! I cannot but think," he added, addressing Kazim in a pointed manner, "that Suleiman might have pointed out a less difficult pass than this, by which we might arrive at his camp. See, we are now quite overhung by precipices, which seem ready to crush us to atoms!"

Kazim assured the Khan that he knew of no other entrance to the valley, where he expected to find Suleiman's camp. After treading their way slowly through the intricate defile, they at length emerged on a kind of path that conducted them along the side of a river, to the opening of a wild glen, strongly illuminated by the fierce red light of the sun, as it was just descending behind the tops of the mountains, whose snowy peaks were mantled in a purple haze. The glen opened out gradually into an extensive valley, through which the river rolled its deep and rapid current. As the Khan and his followers entered the valley, they were surprised to see the pass they had just left,

occupied by a dark mass of troops, who came rapidly after them without any sound of drum or trumpet. He collected his men as quickly as possible, but before they could form into regular array, a shower of arrows fell upon them from the sides of the mountain above.

The division in the pass below rushed forward in a small but compact column, shouting the name of Suleiman. Mirtas called out in a loud voice, that he was the friend of Suleiman and not his foe, and that he came to assist him in the war against Achar. Upon this, the advancing party halted, and demanded hostages for the truth of his representation. Kazim was summoned, and sent forward to clear up the mystery. He was forthwith arrested by Suleiman himself, and ordered to the rear, while the chieftain and his foremost companions fell on the troops of Mirtas with a wild shout, which called down the men stationed on the declivities. Mirtas and his Moguls, though altogether unprepared for so rude a reception, sustained the shock with great firmness, and the two armies were, in an instant, committed in general battle. The clash of sabre against sabre, and on cuirass and helmet,—the neighing of horses running

here and there, deprived of their riders—the groans of the wounded and dying—the uproar of the combatants, reproaching each other with treachery, and calling upon the names of their respective leaders, filled the whole valley with a wild tumult, which shook the stupendous mountains around them.

The horse-tail standards, which had been at first cut down one after another with irresistible rapidity, were thickening in the fight again, and were waving among the lifted sabres, with a triumph that predicted the defeat of Suleiman. That commander, together with the mass of his soldiers, was driven back to the edge of the glen; but like a wave, impelled against the rocky shore, they rebounded on their foes, sending after them, as they retired, a shower of arrows, which, however, broke in most instances upon the cuirasses of the riders, or the mail with which the horses were caparisoned. Suleiman felt that if the enemy had time to form themselves into line, and to press upon him with their spears, in the use of which his followers were less skilful than the Moguls, the battle was lost. Singling out Mirtas, who was somewhat advanced before his troops, as they were

returning to the charge, he drew from his quiver a green-tipped barbed arrow; and throwing the rein upon the neck of his horse, he placed the arrow on the notch, with as much coolness as if he had been sporting in the jungle. Then drawing the string right up to his ear, he sent the arrow against the foe, which, penetrating his cap, passed through without doing any injury. The assault was returned by a javelin, hurled with gigantic force, and a fatal aim, from the ranks behind Mirtas. One of Suleiman's captains, seeing the blood gushing in a stream upon the ground, took hold of the rein of his chieftain's horse, and leading it toward the river, rushed with it headlong into the water. Mirtas, directing one division of his troops to follow the mass of the enemy, who now endeavoured to find their way back through the glen, led the other in pursuit of Suleiman.

Before Suleiman and his companion could reach the opposite bank, Mirtas and his followers were already plunged in the stream. The horses of both parties soon sank beyond their depth, and several of the men were drowned, who had not taken the precaution to

disencumber their steeds of their heavy trappings. Suleiman had already gained upon the enemy by more than the distance of a bow-shot, and reached the bank, which his steed gallantly ascended, when one of the troopers of Mirtas discovered a little farther down the stream a ford, by which they at once crossed the river. Suleiman's companion, taking off the accoutrements from his own horse, placed the bridle in the hand of his chieftain, who made for the hills, pursued by Mirtas. The steed of the latter, oppressed by the armour it still wore, fell among the crags, which he now began to clamber. Suleiman's horse also began to falter ; but notwithstanding the pain he felt from his wound, he threw himself on the uncaparisoned animal, and gained in safety the nearest ridges of the mountain.

It was now night, the air piercingly cold, when the solitary fugitive, not knowing whither to turn, took shelter from the blast behind an immense rock, which he perceived by the fading light at some distance. The enemy still kept tracking him ; and though now reduced to three in number, they were resolved, if possible, to capture him. The pursuers and the

pursued spent the night, without knowing that they were within a very short distance of each other. As soon as the first light of morning appeared, one of the Moguls climbed the rock, with the view of making a survey of the country around, when, to his surprise, he found Suleiman already mounted, and tranquilly proceeding towards a pile of loose stones, which had been collected on the top of a steep ridge. The scout informed his comrades of what he had seen, and thinking that they had the warrior already in their grasp, they hastily followed him.

They were at the foot of the steep, when Suleiman, who had reached the summit with great difficulty, deliberately lifting up a ponderous mass of rock, threatened to annihilate the first man who attempted to follow him a single step farther. At the same he assured them, that if they would become his friends, swearing to him the great and awful oath as a pledge for their fidelity, he would raise them to high stations in his empire, besides bestowing upon them other magnificent rewards. The Moguls alarmed on the one hand, by the prospect of destruction which impended over them,

and tempted on the other by the splendid offers of Suleiman, after consulting among themselves, replied, that they accepted his terms, and then swore the sacred oath which he demanded.

The difficulty now was how Suleiman should descend the mountain, without coming in contact with any of the followers of Mirtas. Perceiving already a number of men passing at some distance on the plains below, he fled to the hillock, where he had concealed himself the night before, and waited there until the party reached a turn in the road, where they were no longer visible. Being without provisions, he suggested that one of his new comrades should proceed to buy some at the cottages, which were at a distance in a forest, where several wreaths of smoke were seen curling upward above the trees. One of the men went, and returned in about three hours, laden with a few cakes of barley bread, which he purchased for a sabre.

While they were on the brow of the mountain, and lying prostrate, lest they might be discerned from below, they descried something shining at a considerable distance. It approached

gradually, until it resolved itself into a man on horseback, clothed in complete armour. Having passed into a ravine, he was lost for a while to their gaze; soon after he emerged again, when Suleiman recognised upon the man his own suit of splendid armour, which he very seldom wore, although it usually formed a part of his camp-baggage. In the man also he discovered one of his own followers, Mirza Kuli, who had been with him in several of his battles, and had hitherto conducted himself with unquestionable fidelity. Suleiman called out to him by name, not doubting that he would be glad to join his commander again. But to his infinite surprise, the traveller, without looking up, answered in a gruff husky voice, altogether unlike that of Kuli, saying that he knew them not, and had no time for compliments. Suleiman, lamenting that his arrow could produce no effect against the recreant, nevertheless sent one after him, which struck the horse, and only spurred the animal to a greater degree of expedition. Suleiman had sometimes been unfortunate in battle before, but he never experienced so gross an instance of ingratitude as this. It convinced him, however, that his cause,

of which he had not yet despaired, must have been considered by his followers as totally lost, since Kuli thought proper not only to abandon him, but even to be ashamed of his acquaintance.

CHAPTER IV.

In the hour of adversity be not without hope;
For crystal rain falls from black clouds.

NIZAMI.

As the day advanced, Suleiman learned from some peasants, who were crossing the mountain sides on their way home from Karaman, that they had met several groups of armed men proceeding towards the town, some walking, some on horseback, some badly wounded, preceded by two persons unarmed, who were mounted on Arabian steeds. It struck Suleiman, from the description given of the two latter individuals, that they could be no other than Baba Seirami and Kazim, as these were the only unarmed persons present at the late battle. He concluded also, with his usual sanguine hastiness of thought,

that the stragglers must have been the remains of his own party, intending to seek refuge in Karaman, and perhaps to wait there until they should learn some tidings of their commander. Although his wound still gave him some pain, yet he resolved on directing his course towards the town, but not to enter it until he satisfied himself as to the means of safety which it might afford him. His sworn friends the more readily agreed to accompany him, as they entertained the hope that the troops to whom the peasants alluded were of their own party.

As soon as evening approached, Suleiman and his companions led their horses down the mountain, to the road which the peasants pointed out; and after journeying for four hours, they perceived by the twinkling of lights in the distance, that they were within a short distance of Karaman. Instead, however, of riding directly to the gate, Suleiman expressed his determination to take up his residence for the night in one of the retired gardens, by which the town is nearly surrounded. There finding a hut, which seemed to have been used only during the summer, and was now abandoned, they at once fixed upon it for their temporary abode.

While one of the men proceeded under cover of the night to make enquiries in Kaiaman, another foraged about among the cottages in the suburbs, and soon returned with a dish of pottage of boiled millet flour, which Suleiman declared to be the most delicious meal he had ever enjoyed. The purveyor picked up also on his expedition an old cloak of coarse woven cloth, lined with lamb's-skin, with the wool on the inside, in which Suleiman wrapped himself, and went to sleep, his two companions alternately watching during the night.

The Mogul, who had been dispatched to Kaiaman, returned to the hut early in the morning, with intelligence, that Baba Seirami and Kazim were in the town, together with about fifty of Suleiman's troops, who had escaped from the field of battle; but from the manner in which he had heard the chieftain spoken of in the town, in consequence of his flight from the combat, he expressed great apprehension for Suleiman's safety; should his defeated followers discover his abode. He, therefore, advised the chieftain to remain in the hut, until an opportunity should offer for learning the result of an inquiry, which he had set on foot

through one Kadi-Bardi, a bridle-maker in the town, with a view to sound the feelings of the soldiers. Bardi had promised to make all possible haste to the garden, as soon as he should have obtained the requisite intelligence.

Suleiman, much afflicted by the information thus laid before him, desired writing materials to be procured—an order which was executed not without considerable difficulty and delay. Having written a letter, fully describing his deplorable situation, he addressed it to Baba Serrami, in whose fidelity he reposed unshaken confidence, and he anxiously expected the appearance of the Karamanian, to whom he intended to commit the epistle. But noon passed away, the shades of evening were already beginning to rise, and still no messenger found his way to the hut. One of the Moguls, he observed, was frequently absent during the day, under pretext of seeking for provisions, which it was not his good fortune to find. The conduct of this man looked rather suspicious; it seemed as if he was in communication with some party, who had designs of a sinister nature.

pending over his faithful friend and adviser Seirami, and Kazim, in whose fortunes the dervish took a lively interest, called forth expressions of his fiercest anger. He resolved, be the consequences what they might, to go to Karman in his new disguise, to find out his two friends, and, if possible, to rescue them from the ignominious and dreadful death, to which they had been doomed by Mirtas.

Suleiman, arrayed in the garb of the dervish, with a staff in his hand, a weather-worn pointed cap on his head, which came down to his eyebrows, and an old shawl in shreds fastened round his neck, in which his chin was deeply buried, had the satisfaction to find himself jeered at as an impudent old fool, while he limped by one of his late Mogul companions, who was returning to the hut. Being desirous of avoiding the troops of Mirtas, on their way to the garden, where they expected to find their prey, he hastened to Karman, by a road that led to the gate which was at the opposite side of the town.

After wandering for some time through the streets, already darkened by the night, and quite deserted by the inhabitants, who had re-

tired to repose, he despaired of finding any roof beneath which he might expect to obtain shelter; when, turning the corner of a filthy narrow lane, he heard two or three persons conversing together near the gate of a caravanserai, at which they were standing. From what he could collect of their conversation, he thought at first that they were disputing about the division of some booty which they had stolen. On drawing nearer, however, he learned from their debate, that the plunder was not yet acquired, but that they were concerting measures for a robbery, which required a considerable degree of courage, and of cunning at the same time. The point in discussion was, which of the three was to ascend first to the floor where their destined victims lay.

“Of the three guards below,” said one of the robbers, “I have no fear—these I have made drunk already;—and I have mixed with their humiz a quantity of poppy, which will keep them asleep for some hours. But those soldiers of Suleiman have, they say, a hundred lives—they are demons; and although the girdle of Suleiman’s purse-bearer is a tempting prize, yet I will not be the first to ascend; I

have done my part already, by ascertaining for you, that his girdle is well stored with golden rupees."

"It is too great a prize to lose," observed another, "now that the way is clear; besides you know that they are to be drawn asunder by wild horses, in the market-place, by sunrise to-morrow,—then our chances will be gone for ever."

"Let me have another cup or two of humiz," said the third, "and then, perhaps, I may go first, provided you swear to follow me quietly, until we are all together on the floor, lest they should awake and offer resistance; for though they are tied hand and foot by chains of iron, they might break loose, and pitch us down head foremost into the stable."

"Agreed," exclaimed his confederates; and pulling the gate gently to, they adjourned to a low hut hard by, where they were admitted upon giving a peculiar tap, with which the inmates seemed to be well acquainted.

Suleiman congratulated himself on his good fortune, in overhearing this conversation. The robber was rightly informed that Seirami had about him a considerable quantity of gold.

[^] This circumstance alone, even if it had not been aided by the other facts to which the robbers alluded, would have been sufficient to fix the identity of the unfortunate prisoners, whom it was the determination of these villains to plunder. Promptly availing himself of the opportunity thus presented to him so unexpectedly, of contributing to the double deliverance of his friends, he entered the stable, where, by the light of an iron lamp affixed to the wall, he perceived several horses lying down, and near them three of the Moguls, who belonged to Mirtas, snoring in profound sleep. The head of one of these vigilant sentinels was resting on a notched pole, which was the only means of ascent to the loft above. Suleiman gently removed it, and lifting the pole, he mounted the loft, bringing with him several pieces of long grass ropes, which he found strewed about the stable.

His first care was, by the assistance of one of these ropes, to let the pole fall down as nearly as possible in the direction where it had already lain. He then drew up the rope, and having made a running knot at the end of it, slung it over one of the beams of the roof. Two other ropes he adjusted in a similar manner.

He had scarcely finished these arrangements, when he heard the door open below, and the robbers, who appeared to be all intoxicated, entered the stable. The foremost had in his hand a small lamp, which he lighted. They then fumbled about until they found the notched pole, which they raised up towards the edge of the loft. The man who had promised to ascend first made the attempt accordingly ; but he slipped down three or four times before he could raise himself by as many of the notches. At length, by the assistance of his associates, he rose half-way, when he lifted himself slowly until his head appeared above the floor. Here a large noose was waiting his presence, which fell imperceptibly upon his shoulders ; in a few moments he ascended with peculiar celerity, much to the delight of his friends below, who imputed it to the courage infused into him by the humiz. They followed his example, and at the same point of elevation they found the toil of climbing farther altogether unnecessary, for they were raised in a moment by an unseen power to the beam, whence they were launched into a world for which they were little prepared.

Suleiman having secured the lamp with which

the first robber was provided, now explored the loft in order to discover his friends, who were, however, nowhere to be seen. Anxious for securing their escape before the morning broke upon him, he held his breath and listened for a while, hoping to hear them if they were really near. Presently a low moan caught his ear; it was the dying gasp of one of the robbers; then a tremendous crash. The rope by which another was suspended had broken; he first fell upon the floor, and then to the stable below, with a noise that made the horses start upon their feet.

"There they come!" exclaimed a voice, which Suleiman well knew to be that of Seirami.

"Oh, Allah! what is to become of Mangeli!" exclaimed another, whom he easily guessed to be Kazim.

Suleiman, however, waited with some degree of alarm, fearing that the sentinels must have been awakened by the hubbub. One did get up, and looking wildly about, drew his sabre, and cut off the head of the robber who had fallen near him. The weapon then dropped from his hand, and he lay prostrate once more, overcome by slumber.

CHAPTER V.

Beneath that tattered robe you'll find
A woman's heart—a hero's mind.

NIZAM.

SULEIMAN, keenly marking the quarter whence the voices had come, now proceeded towards it with the greatest anxiety, holding the lamp before him so as to shew its light along the floor. Upon reaching the extreme end of that part of the caravanserai, he discovered his two friends sitting side by side against the wall, to which he perceived they were both fastened by strong cords passed through an iron ring. Commanding them in a low tone to preserve the strictest silence, he took off his cap and shawl, and raising the lamp to his face, bade them be of good cheer, for that Allah had sent him to their deliverance. They immediately recog-

raised the chieftain in his lowly garb, and uttered a fervent prayer of gratitude to Providence, while they both instinctively attempted to rise. But they could scarcely move. In addition to the ligatures by which they were made fast to the wall, iron chains were passed several times round their bodies, which kept them linked together, the ends of the chains being riveted to an iron plate, which defied even the muscular strength of Suleiman.

Of the fetters by which they were made fast to the wall he easily disencumbered them, by setting fire to the ropes; but to remove the captives from the caravanserai, without being able to separate them from each other, was a matter of more difficulty. Suleiman's ingenuity, however, had been long exercised in the school of war. Drawing his friends gently towards the edge of the floor, he showed them the two robbers still suspended, who had prepared to strip them of every thing they possessed. Seiamî could hardly suppress a smile of pleasure at beholding this instance of summary justice. Kazim gazed upon them with a feeling of terror, wondering that men could be found so lost to every sense of humanity as to meditate the

plunder of two unhappy prisoners, already doomed to the most excruciating species of death.

Suleiman, feeling the moments gliding rapidly towards day, lost none of them in meditation. He cut the two robbers down, and deposited them near the place where his friends had been confined. Then removing the ropes which had been the instruments of his prompt administration of the law, he twisted them together, and fastening one end of the double rope to that of the iron chain which bound Seirami and Kazim together, he pushed them downwards, and permitted them to descend until they were about the height of a steed from the ground below. Fastening the other end of the rope firmly to the top of the notched pole, he rapidly lowered himself to the ground, and leading one of the horses beneath his friends, he cut the rope with the sabre of the still sleeping sentinel. Seirami and Kazim thus found themselves, like a pair of panniers, on each side of the horse; and the only difficulty that now remained to be achieved, was the escape of the animal from the stable with its burthen.

But the preparations of Suleiman were not

yet concluded. His mind extended its precautions to every point, that was connected with an adventure hitherto so propitiously conducted. The dervish, who had risked his life for the preservation of a person on whom, so far as Suleiman remembered, no obligation of service was imposed by any former acts of kindness on his part, would most probably be compelled by torture to disclose the circumstance of lending his ragged garments to the foe of Mirtas. If they could be found on the decapitated robber, whose head might be removed to prevent any doubts as to identity; if the loft should be ignited, as he took good care it should be, by the burning cordage which he left on the boards; the cindered remains of the two thieves above would doubtless be considered those of the two condemned captives, while that of the third would be hewed into a thousand pieces, under the persuasion that it had once held the soul of Suleiman.

Stripping off his tattered robes, he clothed himself in the attire of the headless robber, to whom he quickly transferred his cast-off garments: he then put the culprit's head into a bag, which he slung over his shoulders. His

next objects were to place the robber outside the door, to open the gate of the stable, to lead out the horse upon which Seirami and Kazim were balanced, to appropriate another steed to his own use, and to effect his departure without disturbing the sentinels, whom, though his inveterate enemies, he disdained to slay in their sleep.

The grey of morning was just beginning to shew the domes and minarets of the town, defined against the still lingering darkness of the night, when Sulaiman moved forward, mounted on an excellent charger, and leading by the rein the other horse, with its double burthen, over which he had thrown one of the sentinel's large cloaks. After wandering through a labyrinth of narrow streets, not one of which he recognised as having passed through the evening before, he found himself in a large square, where preparations were already going on for the execution that was decreed to be consummated at sun-rise. Some wild looking figures were collected round a fire in the middle of the square, and near them were fixed strong posts, to which eight horses were tied, whose violent pawing of the earth, incessant neighing and

plunging, showed that they must have been recently brought in from the desert, and peculiarly adapted to be the ministers of the cruel punishment decreed by Mirtas. Groups of men were already gathering in from the different streets that led to the square, curious, no doubt, to behold the tragic scene which rumour had taught them to expect. Suleiman, without advancing farther, turned shortly into the nearest lane he could find, but proceeded at no unusual pace, lest he might give rise to suspicion.

The increasing freshness of the air soon inspired him with the hope, that he had already reached the suburbs. Passing over a wooden bridge, he looked backwards at the town, which still appeared a dense mass of gloom, although the skies were beginning to be dappled with streaks, that, becoming every moment of a brighter hue, announced the near approach of the sun. Suddenly he beheld the blush of morning surpassed by a column of flame, which rose high in the air from a distant part of the town. Now it sunk, and now it burst forth again with fresh fury, flinging fiery sparkles around, that threatened to involve the whole town in conflagration. Drums were heard

beating, and trumpets sounding, and shouts of innumerable voices blended together in frightful confusion. One immense burst of flame then shot up into the heavens, after which little more was seen than a pale reflection, that showed itself for a while fitfully, and then appeared no more.

While the attention of the people in the town was thus absorbed by one all-engrossing object, Suleiman pushed forward rapidly through the suburbs, until he reached a blacksmith's forge, where he found a man and a boy already hard at work, unconscious of the alarm that prevailed around them. Stopping at the door of the forge, he called out to the man, telling him that he had a small job, which he wished to be done immediately. The chains, he said, by which his merchandise, consisting of bars of silver and pieces of broad-cloth, was tied together on his second horse, seemed already to gall the back of the animal. He wished the rivets to be filed off at the heads, and driven through the plate, where they were fastened, in order that he might adjust the burthen in a manner by which his valuable horse might not be injured. The smith, much, envying the apparent magnitude of the rich merchandise, and expecting,

of course, to be munificently rewarded, professed his readiness to serve his kind employer, and ascending the horse by the tail, was preparing, with his implements, to execute the task assigned him, when Suleiman put both horses to their speed, telling the blacksmith to hold on by the mane as well as he could, for that the animals, frightened by the fire of the forge, were running away. Notwithstanding the additional burthen under which one of the steeds laboured, both flew over the open plains with the speed of lightning, the blacksmith thrown now on one side, now on another, as if he were the sport of the winds. Terror and the want of breath prevented him from crying out, fearing that every moment he would be flung over the merchandise and killed on the spot.

For a full hour Suleiman thus continued to scour the country; but at length perceiving a wood suitable to his purpose, he turned into it, allowing the panting animals to slacken their pace gradually, until they penetrated beneath the shade of some trees, which effectually excluded the light of morning. Here he compelled the trembling artizan to remove the rivets, when, the chain being loosened, the packages on

each side fell suddenly on the grass, with a ^{glide} which nearly frightened the blacksmith out of his senses. Finding his way to the earth as well as he could, the mechanic scampered off without waiting to receive his expected reward, convinced that he was a very fortunate man in having escaped with so little injury from the evil spirits, which were always sure to be present wherever gold or silver treasure required their protection. Suleiman, loosening the chain, set his friends at liberty; then depositing it in the bag which contained the robber's head, he committed both to the bosom of a pond of stagnant water which he found hard by.

Seirami and Kazim leaped with joy at being able once more to give full play to their limbs, fettered as they had been in one position during a period of more than thirty hours. Suleiman invited Kazim to ride behind himself, while Seirami mounted the other horse. They soon emerged from the wood, and as they had no longer any fear of pursuit, they rode onward at an equable pace, relating to each other the adventures that had occurred to them since they had last been separated.

Meanwhile Mirtas, who had fought Suleiman

hand to hand in the battle, could not have been deceived for a moment by the substitute whom he found in the garden hut. He charged his men, who had solemnly promised to deliver up his foe alive into his power, with a deliberate design to deceive him, and ordered them forthwith to be decapitated. But the dervish frankly confessed that he alone was the guilty person, that they were innocent of any participation in his crime, if such it was; that in his estimation, however, he had only performed an act of duty in preserving the life of a chieftain, to whom he had pledged his allegiance, and that he was now prepared to suffer any penalty which Mir-tas might think proper to inflict.

The Mogul, struck by the heroic conduct of the dervish, promised to pardon him if he would acknowledge the contrivance by which he enabled Suleiman to escape. To this he frankly answered, that they had only exchanged raiment, upon which the soldiers, who had recently seen the disguised chieftain limping through the gardens, led the pursuit after him in all directions, anxious to vindicate themselves by extraordinary zeal, in the good opinion of their master. By their active inquiries they succeeded

in tracing Suleiman to Karaman, where, however, they soon lost all further clue to his footsteps through the streets of the town.

The fire which broke out in the early part of the morning, drew Mirtas to the caravanserai, where, however, he did not arrive until the conflagration was over. The horses, which had been confined in the stable, were the first to give warning to the neighbourhood by their wild cries, urged by a sense of suffocation. The sentinels were with difficulty extricated from the danger to which they were exposed; and when the burning loft fell with a crash upon the interior of the stable, the remains of two half-burnt robbers convinced Mirtas that he was defrauded of the vengeance which he had meditated against the two captives, one of whom he suspected to be Suleiman's adviser in all measures, whether of peace or war, while he looked upon the other, as a willing instrument in the execution of the stratagem to which he and his followers had very nearly fallen victims. But the discovery of the third body found outside the door, compensated Mirtas for every disappointment. The tattered clothes in which it was arrayed were distinctly recognised by the

soldiers, as those which the dervish had exchanged with Suleiman; the dervish himself bore testimony to the truth of their evidence, lamenting with many genuine tears that he had not perished himself, rather than behold his chieftain slain in this ignominious manner. One of the sentinels claimed to himself the merit of having cut off the head of Suleiman; in proof of which he produced his naked sabre, which was found on the floor of the stable stained with blood. Of the head, indeed, he could give no account; it must have been burnt to a cinder; but he reported a violent altercation in which he was engaged with Suleiman, who came to offer him large sums of money if he would assist him in effecting the escape of the two prisoners who had been committed to his care, and to that of his companions. The altercation, as well as the temptation, were terminated in the manner now evident to every body, for there the alleged Suleiman lay without his head; upon which the sentinel claimed and received a suitable reward from Mitas, and the body itself was ordered to be torn limb from limb by the wild horses, already prepared for the purpose in the public square. Thus the multitud

assembled to see the execution, were not wholly deprived of the spectacle which they were so desirous to behold. The death of Sulaiman was publicly proclaimed; such of his soldiers as had been taken prisoners cheerfully transferred their allegiance to the conqueror, who was acknowledged sovereign of Karaman. For a whole week the town resounded with dance, dulcimer, drum and song, and with the clamour of the troops intoxicated by wine and humáz, who boasted every where of the great victory which they had achieved over the treacherous foe of Mirtas.

CHAPTER VI.

The humble tent and murmuring breeze,
 That whistles through its fluttering walls,
 My unaspiring fancy please,
 Better than towers and splendid halls.

MAYSUNA.

“THE best thing we can now do for a while,” said Seirami, “until this storm shall blow over, will be to go and live with Kazim in his cottage on the Ilamish. Perhaps, before the winter sets in, and the valleys and plains are filled with snow; you may succeed in collecting some of your scattered troops, and strike a decisive blow against Karaman.”

“Be it as you say,” replied Suleiman, “we shall turn goat-herds for a while, and wait for the return of those smiles of which fortune has been so sparing of late.”

"My hut, is in truth, a small one," observed Kazim; "but Mangeli will be delighted to give you up her chamber."

"That she shall not do, my good friend," rejoined Sulciman; "if your hut be not large enough to hold us all, we shall soon build an addition to it. It is not the first time that Seirami and I have turned architects, and if occasion should require it, we are ready to do so again. In the meanwhile, methinks that is the tomb of a saint, which I see beyond those pastures in the distance. We shall not fail to find a well somewhere near it, which will be refreshing both to ourselves and to our horses."

Cantering over the green turf, the travellers reached a hillock, planted with stately palm-trees, the silver larch, the mulberry, and some willows. In the middle of the shady circle, formed of the trees, was a marble tomb of a saint, surmounted by a small temple, with a portico, that ran all round the edifice. Seats for pilgrims were placed in the portico, and disposed among the willows; the former affording shelter from the rain or storm; the latter a cool retreat from the beams of the noontide sun, to

those who wished to enjoy the fragrant zephyrs, which sported through the surrounding grove. The grateful breath of the heathy blossoms and wild flowers, growing in the neighbouring hills and vallies, imparted to the breezes that swept over them a delicious odour, while the pure stream that flowed from the fountain, at the foot of the tomb, charmed the senses with a soft murmur—the music of solitude, awakening in the memory images of departed friends, and filling the soul with a tender melancholy much more congenial to its nature, than any happiness it can enjoy amongst crowds.

The horses rushed gladly to the stream, that sparkled like silver in the light, and drank, until they were sated, of its refreshing waters. Sulciman and his companions*plunged, into a small lake, where the pilgrims were accustomed to bathe, and in a few moments lost all sense of the fatigue which they had recently endured. New strength and health appeared to brace their manly limbs, as they rose from the transparent wave. Then, permitting their animals to browse at will, they ate a few dates, and mulberries, which they gathered in the sacred grove, and throwing themselves on the grass,

they slept until the shadows of the trees lengthened far over the valley.

And here, perhaps, they might have continued to slumber until morning, had not the tinkling of many sheep and camel bells, the neighing of horses, the voices of shepherds, the loud laughter of children, mingled with the incessant barking of dogs, disturbed them from their repose. Suleiman, who, though a sound sleeper, was capable of being startled by the slightest noise, rose instantly on his feet, and hastening to the brow of the hillock, beheld, at a distance, an immense moving mass, evidently directing its course towards the tomb of the saint. Calling his companions to witness this spectacle, which Kazim, though he had often heard of it, had never seen before, they observed the crowd with intense interest, as the procession gradually developed the various objects of which it was composed.

In front, were seen groups of men, dressed in gay attire, armed with bows and spears, attended by minor groups of boys and girls, all mounted on spirited horses; the young folk occasionally riding races with each other over the plains, and shouting in bursts of merriment.

that rent the air. Here two juvenile troopers were seen fencing with each other, as they rode at full gallop; here a fox or a hare was started, and chased by dogs and horsemen; while others were capering about, as if to show off the mettle of their favourite steeds, which sometimes stood upon the hinder legs as straight as an arrow, the rider, nevertheless, holding his place as if he were a part of the steed itself.

Behind these groups, which formed only the van-guards of the horde, came their matrons, decked out in holiday finery, seated on beautiful coursers, worthy of the best blood of Arabia. A few of these women bore in one arm infants still at the breast, while in the other they held the bridles of the foremost camels in each train, which moved in single columns, laden with tents, household goods, merchandize, and packages of every description, covered with rich Turkey or Persia carpets, that reached the ground. The camels were ornamented with red ribbons, and added not a little to the gaiety of the scene. Then followed large flocks of sheep, and herds of mares, tended by shepherds who were armed with long staffs and crooks, clothed in the Calmuc costume. The march

seemed to be made the most of by every body, with a view to display the riches of each family, as well in the usual articles of dress and ornament, as in the agility and vigour of the young men, and the beauty of the maidens.

Sulciman, mounting his horse, rode forward to meet the procession, and to congratulate the foremost of the horde upon their arrival at the tomb of the saint. When he came back, with a few of the chieftains to the well, it would have seemed as if he had been one of their tribe himself, so perfectly cordial were their greetings with each other. With Seirami and Kazim they were all speedily upon equally friendly terms. The multitude, after having refreshed themselves and their different animals, in the running stream, set about erecting their tents. A frame-work of willow laths, formed in separate parts, and rising to nearly the height of a man, was, in the first instance fixed upright in the ground, the compartments being tied together by woollen bands, and disposed round the circumference of a circle, leaving an aperture for a wooden door-frame, which stood by itself, containing two small folding doors. From this foundation sprang a number of poles,

raised in a slanting direction, towards a common centre, where they were prevented from meeting by a wooden hoop, in which they were all inserted. The poles were also bound firmly together by woollen girths, and the whole skeleton of a hut, thus composed, was closely covered over with large pieces of felt. Over the circular aperture, formed by the central hoop at the top, was suspended a sheet of the same material, one end of which was always raised on the side least exposed to the wind, as well for the purpose of affording an outlet to the smoke, as for admitting sufficient light into the domicile below. The door-way being protected from the external cold by another piece of felt, which was hung over it, and lifted by those who passed in or out, and the whole of the covering of the hut being made fast by woollen thongs, the residence was in a very short time complete in every respect. The air was soon after filled with columns of smoke, ascending from the fires, on which pans well stored with mutton were placed. In some of the tents, cakes simply made, without any leaven, were laid on stones heated by embers, and baked with great rapidity; while, in others,

tea and coffee were seen in an active course of preparation.

Salciman and his companions were invited by the chieftains to live with them as long as they pleased—a hospitable proposal, which he accepted as frankly as it was made. He found the interior of the principal huts roomy, and well furnished, especially that of the prince of the horde, an intelligent looking, elderly person, dressed in a short Calmuc coat of blue cloth, white trousers, a mottled silk waistcoat, and a thick velvet cap trimmed with sable, decorated by a red tassel and a gold loop. Seated on the same cushion with the prince was his consort, a young and agreeable woman, whose blue frock dress, over a silk petticoat, ornamented with gold flowers, high square Calmuc cap of Persian gold muslin, (trimmed also with sable and tassels), gold ear-rings with pendants of large pearls, and red morocco boots, betrayed her desire to appear before the strangers in a garb not altogether unworthy of her station. On a chest, near her, was an open trinket-box, a beautiful rosary, made of smooth black kernels, with coral and round onyx-stones interposed between them at re-

gular intervals, and also a guitar elegantly inlaid with a variety of precious stones.

The tent was abundantly furnished with rich carpets, for the accommodation of visitors. Images of gods were suspended here and there, together with those celebrated astrological circles, which afford a protection against evil. Chests, covered with Persian cloth, containing the riches of the family, were piled in one part of the tent one above another; in the centre was the hearth, where a clear fire of ambrosial wood was burning; and near the door stood a few cans, ornamented with polished brass hoops, filled with mares' milk.

The guests no sooner entered the tent, than they were followed by numerous attendants, bearing on silver dishes roast game, mutton stewed in every form, with and without rice, and cakes hot from the fire. After this plentiful and well-cooked meal, an exquisite wine was brought, in small bags, which was poured out into gold cups by the attendants, and placed before the prince and his guests. The princess only drank mares' milk.

After the banquet was over, the tent was crowded with a number of young men and girls,

the handsomest the horde could furnish, who, dressed out in their graceful costume, danced before the prince, the princess, and their guests, to the sound of the pipe, guitar, dulcimer, and tambourine. Sometimes the dance was rapid and lively, indicating great joy: sometimes it assumed the solemnity of a religious ceremony, when hymns were sung by the whole party in chorus. They then performed a dramatic entertainment—a favourite amusement of the princess—in which the chieftains of other hordes were satirised and ridiculed, in a vein of drolery that shook the tent with laughter, echoed by the crowds, who, not being able to gain admission, were gathered outside, listening to the actors within.

The guests upon taking leave, when these sports were over, were prevailed upon to enter several of the other huts in succession. In some, parties were engaged playing at chess; in some, at dice or cards; while story-tellers were occupied in others, amusing the family, and their more intimate friends, with tales of genii, and spirits of the land and deep, warlike adventures, and all sorts of narratives of the wild and wondrous world of enchantment.

Seirami, from all he had hitherto observed of the hordes, by whom he and his companions were so hospitably received, imagined that their habits were entirely pastoral, and that, with the exception of a few men, armed for their protection, while moving about from place to place, there were scarcely any warriors amongst them.

But in one of the tents which he last visited, he found a group of finely formed, active, and robust youths, girt with sabres, their bows and quivers suspended round the walls of the hut, listening to some martial songs, which appeared to agitate them to a violent degree. In those songs, the vicissitudes of a battle were boldly depicted; and as the hero in whose fate they felt an interest was borne onward, or repelled, on the tide of war, they half drew their sabres from their sides, burning with a desire to share in the fortunes of the field.

With these young warriors Seirami remained for some time; and being called up in his turn to contribute to the general amusement, he gave them an animated description of the contest with Mirtas, in which Suleiman had been recently defeated—suppressing, of course,

every incident that might warrant the charge of treachery, made by that prince against his chieftain. When to this narrative, which, told in the fluent and graceful style of one of the most accomplished masters of language in his day, easily captivated the passions of those to whom it was addressed, he added the history of Suleiman's escape from the garden, and of the heroic constancy and courage he had shown in rescuing his friends from the cruel and ignominious death to which they had been doomed, the warriors rose by unanimous impulse, and touching their sabres together, swore that they would follow Suleiman, if he would lead them to attack the town of Karaman, and destroy the monster, whose deeds promised that he would rule it with a mace of iron.

Suleiman, upon being made acquainted with the offers of these men, accepted them for his allies, with the consent of their prince; but said that, as their numbers were not sufficient for an assault upon such a town as Karaman, he must wait until he could collect a larger force for the purpose. In the mean time they would be eminently useful to him as emissaries, to collect those of his scattered army, who had

not been captured, and he had no doubt that with such brave auxiliaries he would soon be enabled to avenge the insult he had sustained from Mirtas.

The song, the dance, the laugh, the voice of the story-tellers, the sound of drum and mandolin gradually ceased throughout the tents as the night advanced. The signs of animation died away one after another; and when Kazim looked out from the door of the huf, occupied by himself and his companions, to gaze once more on the well-known star, which he and Mangeli had often remarked shining over their own dear cottage, he wondered at the profound repose into which the whole tribe was hushed, together with their camels, horses, sheep, and other animals.

With the exception of the occasional bark of a dog, heard at the confines of the encampment, all was as still as the blue heavens above; the sweet murmur of the sacred fountain seeming only to soothe into a deeper silence, the solemn tranquillity that reigned every where around.

CHAPTER VII.

Alternate hope and fear my days divide :
 I courted grief, and anguish was my bride.
 Flow on, sad stream of life ! I smile secure :
Thou livest ; *thou*, the purest of the pure.
THE MASSAVI.

While Kazim was engaged, shortly after sunrise, the following morning, writing, from the dictation of Seirami, letters addressed to the chieftains of Arjun, and the other hill-districts in its neighbourhood, soliciting their aid on behalf of Suleiman, in the war against Mirtas, two persons were seen at a distance on the plain, following the tracks which the horde had left the day before. The wanderers were driving before them a small herd of goats, and as they approached nearer to the tents, they appeared

quite overcome with fatigue. Three or four horsemen galloped out towards them from the encampment, offering them every assistance which the huts afforded. But the strangers, an old man and his daughter, seemed unwilling to make any delay on their road, exhausted as they were. They stated that they were proceeding to Karaman, whither one of their near relatives, as they had learned from some straggling followers of Suleiman, had been sent as a captive; and that they would gladly exchange their little herd for a horse, which might enable them to perform their journey with greater certainty and expedition.

They were then informed, that Suleiman himself was in the camp, and as he possibly might have it in his power to give them further information, they were recommended to pay him a visit in the first instance. To this suggestion they acceded, with considerable reluctance, as they feared that every moment might be of consequence which contributed to detain them on their journey. They added, that they had been travelling the whole of the previous night, guided only by the stars, until they found the traces of what they supposed to be a large

army, and they thanked Providence for their good fortune, not doubting but that, at all events, they might learn some intelligence of the troops who had been engaged in the late disastrous battle.

The old man, tottering with weariness and grief, was conducted into one of the poorer huts at the outskirts, where he was placed on a mat near the fire, trembling with the night-cold, which seemed to have chilled his heart. As his daughter bent over him, rubbing his temples, entreating him to take a little broth, which was readily made for the invalid, she bitterly reproached herself for allowing him to leave his home at such a period of life. But he motioned to her to dry the big tears that rolled down her cheek, and to seek Suleiman without delay, in order that they might pursue their journey. The affectionate girl, recommending her father to the care of the kind people by whom he was surrounded, went forth, accompanied by the matron of the hut, having first thrown a veil over her head, from a feeling bordering on fear, as she had never before appeared in the presence of a chieftain.

The matron, raising the cover of the doorway,

tapped gently before she entered the hut of Suleiman, when, receiving no prohibition against her further progress, she pushed open the folding doors, and, with her companion, stood before him. He was sitting near the fire, describing, with the point of an arrow, various lines in the ashes, in which he was shadowing out the plan of a battle in an open plain. So deeply was he absorbed in the subject of his meditation, that he took no notice whatever of the strangers. Behind him were seated, on the floor, Soirami reading over the letters which Kazim had written, while the latter was engaged in folding and directing them as they were handed back to him. "I have never seen before such hand-writing as yours," said Seirami, "it ought to be of itself sufficient to persuade those mountain chiefs that we are no ordinary supplicants for assistance." Both were turned from the door, looking intently on the papers, which they were obliged to hold close to their eyes, on account of the dim light that fell into the hut from the narrow aperture in the roof.

"Your highness will, I hope, pardon me," said the matron, "for presenting to you this

unhappy young female, who understands that she can receive from you some intelligence of her husband."

"If there should be only one thousand of them," pursued the warrior, still drawing his lines, "and they should be tempted from the town into the plain, a few pit-falls here--there an ambush--yes, with quarter the number we shall beat them."

"Some of your men, she has heard, were taken prisoners and sent to Karaman."

"Defeat abroad--at home, conspiracy after conspiracy--I have had to fight for my throne since the very moment I mounted it. Though a mere youth then, I am already grown grey in troubles. Fate!--fate! what art thou that thus sportest with men, making them thy playthings--casting them from the palace to the hut--from the hut to the palace--as if they were no better than the stubble of the field blown about in the storm!"

The matron and her companion shuddered at the fierce look of the chieftain, while, throwing down the arrow he clasped his hands together, and seemed writhing with indignation.

"No--I shall never quit these mountains

until I make those Mogul satraps tremble at my name. After breaking asunder the base confederation, in which envy of my glory, more than the sense of their own interests, has bound them against a prince who feels their own best blood in his veins,—I can return with renovated fame, the victor of a hundred battles. But should I fail——Seirami!”

“I am here.”

“Are those letters yet despatched?”

“They are nearly ready for the couriers.”

“What! not yet gone?”

“The couriers are not yet come.”

“Go forth and find them. This is not a time for delay, when the loss of an empire may be the consequence.”

“Empires may be lost by precipitance—seldom by deliberation. It required time to frame letters calculated to awaken in the hearts of these chieftains an interest in your behalf. The season of disaster is not the time to issue commands. It was necessary to show that their own fortunes were at hazard.”

“True—you have done wisely;—would that I had always conformed to your admonitions,—

had I done so, we should now have been crossing the Himalas on our way home."

"We may be soon, if these missions be successful. There are only two now to be finished, —I shall go to summon the couriers. Is it not time also that you should see the prince?"

"Aye!—I had forgotten his imperial majesty," said Suleiman, sneeringly, as he led the way from the hut, followed by his able and faithful minister, neither of them taking any particular notice of their female visitors, who, they supposed, had come in through mere curiosity.

The matron, seeing one person still employed in a remote part of the hut, went to him, and touching his shoulder, requested that he would inform her whether he knew any thing of the followers of Suleiman, who were now captives at Karaman.

"Not much," answered Kazim, raising his head and turning towards the matron; "I saw very little of them, and not one of them do I know." *

While he was yet speaking, the matron was surprised to see her timid trembling companion advance suddenly across the floor, and fall on

the neck of Kazim, whom she almost suffocated with kisses.

“Mangeli!” he exclaimed, “my own Mangeli!” folding her to his breast.

“Kazim!” she rejoined, breathless with astonishment and joy, that she should thus have found her husband. “But, my poor father,” she added, bursting into tears.

“Is he here also?”

“Alas! he lies upon the bed of death, in this good matron’s hut. Oh! let us go to him. The sight of you will restore him to life.”

“So—so—Kazim! flirting with your new friends already,” exclaimed Seirami, as he re-entered; “what would your beautiful Mangeli say to all this?”

“You may put that question to herself,” answered Kazim, “for here she is!” proudly presenting her to him all radiant with blushes.

“I must say that you have not at all exaggerated her charms. I hope we shall know each other much better by and by, Mangeli,” said Seirami; as he collected the epistles which were now all prepared. “You may consider yourself free for the day,” he added, kindly looking back at Kazim as he went out with the

letters in his hand, "unless you be disposed to assist at the banquet, which the prince has ordered in honour of Suleiman."

Gulbeg had already asked several times for his daughter, wondering why she had left him to die on the hearth of a stranger. The people of the hut attended to him with as much anxiety as if he had been a member of their tribe. Skilful in the use of herbs, they administered to him a potion which appeared to revive him for a while. But again his pulse beat slowly, his breath was scarcely heard, and the spark of life seemed to be nearly extinct, when Kazim entered.

His voice brought a slight flush into the emaciated cheek of Gulbeg, who looked wildly around him.

"You know me, father, do you not?" asked Kazim, deeply affected by the helpless situation in which he beheld the venerable old man. Gulbeg made no answer; but stretching out his hand, he passed it over Kazim's face several times, and seemed occasionally to feel a dim return of consciousness. He still breathed, however, with difficulty, and at length sunk into a stupor, in which he remained for some

hours. The hospitable owners of the hut had the good feeling to leave it entirely in possession of the distressed family.

“ I foresaw it all,” observed Mangeli, frequently, in the course of the day—“ I foresaw that some dreadful misfortune was impending over us ; for the morning after you left home, I found our beautiful falcon lifeless on the floor !”

This incident, slight as it was, struck Kāzim to the heart. He affected, indeed, to ascribe the death of the bird to some injury which it must have received in its late conflict with the quail ; but while he thus endeavoured to support the spirits of Mangeli, the state of his own was too perceptible to her, from the frequency with which he referred to the habits of their favourite, its brilliant eyes and elegant plumage.

Towards evening the old man, once more recognizing the unhappy pair, who never left his side, gave thanks to Allah that he beheld his son again. Sitting up between them, he took their hands and spoke, with regret, of their cottage on the Ilamish. “ I built it,” he said, “ entirely myself—you were born in it, Mangeli—your sainted mother loved her home, though far away from the world, and I had the hope that

it would still be to you both, and to your children, an undisturbed retreat from the folly and misery of the crowds who collect in tribes and cities. But I foresee that you will return to it no more: nor, indeed, perhaps, would it be safe at present, while war is going on so near. These friendly people will afford you both protection, until the danger is over, and then, oh! my children," he added, in accents becoming each moment more and more feeble—"clouds—desert—famine—alas! I see before you a long train of adversity, ending, perhaps, in great dignities; but as to happiness—ah! that you have left on the flowery banks of the Hamish!"

Kazim and Mangeli wept aloud, and the aged man's heart bled within him, while these words were forced from his lips by some irresistible impulse. They looked at each other, as if to renew, under the seal of misfortune, the bonds by which they were united, resolved that no event short of death itself should ever separate them again. They moved not from the side of the invalid, from whom they expected some further communications. But his spirit had already taken its departure, before Kazim or Mangeli was sensible that the hands in which

theirs were held had become icy cold. Kazim at length rose to administer to him the medicated drink, which was kept warm for him near the fire; when he discovered the change that had taken place. The grief of Mangeli rendered her frantic; she could not believe that her parent had ceased to live. She called upon him by every tender name that affection could inspire, to look at her—to answer her—if it were even only once, to convince Kazim of his error. She summoned all the beautiful smiles with which her lovely countenance was endowed, in order to win some token of recognition from her father. Then she chided him for his indifference—spoke of his little herd—reminded him that it was the time for milking them—wondered he did not remember it himself—desired Kazim to speak to him—parted the silver locks on his forehead—and contended that he was only asleep!—Poor Mangeli!—the season of her joys was already passed—that of her sorrows had begun.

The intelligence of the death of the stranger was speedily circulated throughout the encampment, and produced universal sympathy on behalf of his now orphan children. The prince of

the tribe sent them a most friendly message, stating that he should adopt them for his own, and that he had directed the funeral of Chulbeg to be conducted with all due honour, according to the customs of his people. Suleiman and Seirami also hastened to assure Kazim of their participation in his grief, and to render him every assistance which the occasion required.

Upon both these individuals the cultivated mind, the clear intelligence, the modest discourse, and agreeable manners of Kazim, had already produced a highly favourable impression. Though unskilled in the use of arms, yet he displayed no want of personal firmness on the field of battle. Before he was captured, he defended himself with much bravery, wresting from the hand of the enemy a sabre, which he wielded with effect, until he was overpowered by numbers. In prison he had given himself up to no unmanly apprehensions; and when asked his opinion on any point of policy, he expressed himself in terms which indicated deep reflection and a sound judgment. Seirami hinted to him, more than once, that the proper sphere for talents such as his, could only be found in Hindostan — then the most brilliant

empire in the world, though much disturbed by civil wars, that were raging in almost every one of its provinces. It would be surprising if such flattering encouragement had not rekindled in Kazim's breast the sparks of ambition, which he had endeavoured to extinguish when first he felt them on the banks of the Ilamish. But the dying words of Gulbeg, his death, and the grief of Mangeli, now threw a deep gloom over his prospects; though at times he found himself again unconsciously painting them in all the colours of the rainbow.

CHAPTER VIII.

Where is the land of smiles and light,
 Where darkness ne'er one shadow throws,
 Where, from each beam of skies so bright,
 The spirit of its Maker flows?
 'This land is not of earth!

Where is the clime where joy with woe
 Disdains to hold alternate sway;
 Where tears of sorrow never flow,
 Nor faintest flowers of hope decay?
 'This clime is far from earth!

Where the whole heavens with radiance glow,
 Nor e'er their smiles in drowdrops stoop,
 'That tears may never *seem* to flow,
 And figure what it is to weep!
 Oh! 'tis not found on earth!

Where every soul will truly find
 A bliss that's felt but there alone,
 Where every tie is closely twined
 Around the Great Eternal One!
 Oh! this is surely heaven!

MORRIS.

The remains of Clulbeg, which had been carefully covered with herbs during eight days, in order to preserve them from decomposition until

the usual period of mourning had elapsed, were placed, at the dawn of the ninth day, on a bier of green boughs, covered with a new mantle, which no person had ever worn before. A retired green spot, among the adjacent hills, having been previously fixed upon by Kazim for the performance of the funeral obsequies, the procession moved forward, chanting a solemn lament, without the accompaniment of any musical instruments. Kazim and Mangeli walked, hand in hand, immediately behind the bier, their heads covered by their mantles. The prince, with Suleiman and Seirami, were next in order; and then followed the chieftains and elders of the tribe, a person bearing a lighted torch, and a long line of matrons, young men and maidens. Two voices, usually selected on such occasions for their peculiar sweetness, sung, alternately, portions of a canticle, which was responded to by the multitude in notes, that were echoed by the hills, as the train wound along their declivities.

The bearers having reached a considerable eminence, laid down the bier upon it, when Kazim and Mangeli taking up a little earth, sprinkled it over the body, which they were now permitted to behold for the last time.

Several chanters, in the meanwhile, seated themselves near it, and addressed it in a wild and impassioned manner. One of them enumerated the years and the virtues of the departed, describing the pastoral and innocent life which he had led, and pointing him out as an example to the young men of the tribe. A second, taking Mangoli by the hand, wiped away the tears which coursed each other down her grief-worn cheek, and endeavoured to soothe her anguish, by depicting the happy region to which the spirit of her father had fled; while a third renewed the song of woe, which was answered as before, by the crowd now gathered in a circle round the bier. When this ceremony was concluded, Kazim cut from the old man's temples the locks of silvery hair by which they were covered, and gave them to Mangoli, who, after bathing them in her tears, deposited them in her bosom.

The bier having been once more raised, the procession again moved forward until they arrived at the recess, where a funeral pile had been already prepared. The body, still wrapped in the mantle, was placed upon the pile, the feet to the east, and the face turned downwards. Other logs of wood having been then added to

the pile, it was ignited by Kazim. The wood rapidly blazed up in the midst of a howl, which burst suddenly from the multitude who collected around it, and which was kept up with unceasing energy, until the whole heap became a mass of embers. From the ashes were then collected the few relics of the deceased, which could be distinguished from the remains of the wood; and being wrapped in a new Persian shawl, they were given to Kazim. The spot where the pile had been raised was then dug up, and the ashes having been buried beneath the earth, the surface was covered over with green turfs, bearing clusters of wild flowers, which still outlived the rigour of the season. A cypress-tree was finally planted at the head of the grave, to inform the wanderer, who might pass that way, that he was treading on sacred ground.

As soon as the funeral ceremonies were over, Kazim and Mangeli returned to their hut, where they remained secluded during the remainder of the day. They were followed by the females and elders of the tribe, who went down the hill in groups; while the young men, dispersing themselves among the higher ranges of the mountains, entertained themselves with a va-

riety of pastimes. With these Suleiman remained, as much from disposition to partake in their games, as to render himself popular among those whom he hoped he might soon lead to battle. Some had brought their bows and quivers, and ranged among the copses in pursuit of game. Others, who had armed themselves with clubs, engaged in a war-dance to the sound of a pipe and tabor; and, as they changed places in the figures, they kept time to the music with their clubs, which they struck sometimes on the ground, sometimes against those held up by their antagonists.

Suleiman was much amused by the feats of a tumbler, who, in another quarter, gathered a circle to witness his evolutions. The performer exhibited wonderful agility. He rolled himself up, as it were, in a mass, exhibiting to the spectator an apparently lifeless trunk, and permitted himself to fall down the side of an eminence, interspersed with knolls, which sent him bounding like a ball, from one side to another, until he reached the bottom of the hill, amidst general shouts of laughter. But, in the next moment, he was seen as if nothing had happened,

turning himself round like a wheel, or walking on his hands, or leaping backward on his feet, with all the agility of an antelope. In a different quarter a group was engaged in wrestling, while others were displaying their speed in the foot-race, or in heaving a ponderous stone, or in discharging arrows at a mark, from bows which it required almost the strength of a giant to bend.

The attention of the stragglers was at noon called to the hunters on the higher range of the mountain, who shouted with all their might to their companions below, to be on their guard. Before the signal was perfectly understood, a tiger rushed by them with an arrow fixed in his side, towards a jungle which lay at some distance in the valley. The hunters pursued the animal until they were out of breath, and then seeing the direction which he took, they determined on surrounding him, with the assistance of their friends, in order to destroy an enemy so dangerous to the encampment. The incident seemed to give new life to the whole party, and especially to Suleiman, who had been well accustomed to this kind of chase.

Proceeding in small divisions to the heights which commanded the jungle, they extended

their ranks as widely as possible, until they established the outline of a circle. Then descending at a given signal in a measured pace, they closed up their ranks more and more, until they were within bow-shot of the borders of the jungle, when the javelin-men held their weapons ready for the cast, and the bowmen fixing their arrows on the notch, stood prepared to discharge them the moment the tiger came within sight. Those who had clubs, held them lifted in the air for the same purpose, while the rest armed themselves with stones or branches of trees. They then set up a tremendous clamour simultaneously, which they repeated several times without effect.

Suleiman, who had obtained possession of a heavy mace, penetrated the jungle, and after exploring it as far as he could, reported that there was no chance of compelling the beast to abandon his lair, unless they set fire to the tangled brushwood. A fire was produced in a moment, by rubbing together with great force and rapidity, two pieces of a club, which was broken for the purpose, and in a few minutes after the whole jungle was in a blaze. The cloud that rose from the smoking trees, spread

in the atmosphere, where it hung like a canopy, darkening all the valley, except that portion of it occupied by the hunters, which was illuminated by the conflagration. Not being able, however, to see each other distinctly, on account of the volumes of smoke that issued from the burning wood, they were obliged to keep up a communication, by calling to each other every moment. Suleiman saw, with the joy of the warrior, the courage exhibited by these young men, as the flames, bursting forth here and there, displayed their countenances eager for the combat, and showed the figures of the bowmen kneeling with their arrows ready to fly, while javelins, and clubs, and ponderous stones, were prepared to assist in the common cause.

A rustle in the jungle, then a rush of sparks into the air, shewed, at length, the path taken in his rage by the tiger. The perpetual shouts deterred him from quitting the jungle, until the fire approached the spot where he was couched; he was almost suffocated by the smoke, when he sprung boldly through the blaze, which scorched him to the bone. Seeing by the light the fierce line of enemies

drawn up against him, he attempted to return to his former shelter ; but a shower of stones, hurled into the fire, raised such a mass of flame, that he again galloped back, and stood at the edge of the vast furnace, apparently bewildered.

Arrow after arrow, javelin after javelin, glanced by the beast, while he ran up and down to find some means of escape, lashing his back with his tail, his open mouth covered with foam, his roar resounding high above the shouts of the hunters. As if blinded by the smoke, he advanced unconsciously towards the circle, whence he was driven again back to the jungle by stones and clubs, which fell upon him from all sides. Still undismayed, he dashed forward once more, resolved to defy their hostility, when a barbed arrow, directed by Suleiman, entered his throat, and, by the pain it gave, augmented his fury a hundred-fold. The circle closed rapidly nearer and nearer to the centre, the fire still raging, and sending upwards huge volumes of smoke. The brave animal, collecting all his remaining strength for a final effort, couched on the earth, his eyes lightening with an unnatural redness, that was

quite terrific.. He waited until Suleiman had another arrow on the notch, when, springing towards him with an enormous bound, he threw the chieftain prostrate. A hundred clubs instantly descended on the head and flanks of the infuriated creature, from whose grasp Suleiman was extricated with some difficulty. A stream of blood, that bathed the earth all round, at length proclaimed the contest at an end. The tiger was immediately stripped of his hide, which was presented to Suleiman, in token of the pre-eminent share he had in the victory; and the carcase was left as the lawful prey of some vultures, already seen hovering on the heights above, and flapping their dark wings with joy over the feast thus provided for their hunger.

The young men, who had assembled together on this occasion, appeared to be as much transported with the frenzy of victory, as if they had conquered a host of foes in the field of battle. Inviting Suleiman to march at their head, they formed into regular array, and moved forward on their return to the encampment, singing a war-hymn, which they interrupted frequently by loud cries of exultation

or vengeance, as suggested by the alternations in the song.

As they were ascending the sides of the hill, which overlooked the jungle, their attention was attracted by several horsemen, who appeared to be crossing the ridges of the distant hills in various quarters, but all proceeding towards the same point. When they came near, they were joyfully recognised as the emissaries who had been dispatched by Suleiman to the neighbouring chieftains, for assistance in the war against Mirtas. They seemed to be the bearers of no welcome tidings, for disappointment was strongly marked on their countenances as they successively delivered to the chieftain the letters with which they were respectively charged, in answer to his applications.

“Pshaw!” exclaimed the indignant warrior, glancing over the epistles, which he threw one by one on the ground; “they have all heard of my defeat in that unfortunate battle. Here is one who excuses himself, on the ground that he had disbanded his troops, and that he could not collect them again before the spring. Another wants arms, and asks me to send him

some to defend his own territory from the formidable Mirtas. A third enters into an argument to show, that before I could hope to attack the town of Karaman, I must have at least five thousand men, and that he had only fifty at his command. A fourth is engaged in repressing the robbers in his neighbourhood, who have lately carried away all the cattle belonging to his people. While a fifth is nearly dead of ague, and unable to stir from home ! Thus I have always found it—in prosperity I never wanted friends in abundance—men eagerly pressing upon me their services, when I wanted them not ; but now, when they would be truly valuable, I am left alone in the desert ! Alone ! did I say ? No, no, my comrades ; with you I would conquer or die. What say you ?”

“ Lead us where and when you will,” they unanimously replied.

“ To-night ?” • • •

“ To-night,” they replied.

“ To-night then be it—we shall be the masters of Karaman, before the sun shall shine again upon its domes, or we shall be with Gulbeg.”

Hastening, as fast as their manly limbs could bear them, to the encampment, the young men lost no time in proclaiming their determination to the prince, who, though he might have had the desire, possessed no power to repress their impetuosity. Collecting their horses from the pastures, they proceeded to trim the animals with much care, and to examine their fitness for action, by galloping them over the plain with their full accoutrements on. The camp was full of excitement on the occasion; and though the elders and matrons did not much approve of the abrupt manner in which the expedition had been resolved upon, nevertheless, they could not help feeling proud of their tribe, when they saw about three hundred young men, of sinewy frames, and the most gallant bearing, flying about in every direction, full of ardour in the cause to which they were pledged, their steeds prancing in the air, and animated by the sound of the war-trumpet, which had not for some time summoned them from the flowery fields to the tumult of action.

Seirami, upon hearing of Saleiman's sudden determination, felt that it would be in vain for him to offer any remonstrance against it. This

was one of those occasions on which his master would listen to no admonitions, and he did not offer them. Lending himself with the best grace he could, to proceedings adopted without his advice, he prepared to join the expedition, which, it was arranged, should leave the camp at sun-set.

CHAPTER IX.

Now the battle's fought with the iron-spiked club, and
as they close, with the clenched fist, and the din of war
ascendeth to the heavens! They cry, " Pursue! strike!
fell to the ground!" so that a horrid and tumultuous noise
is heard on all sides.

MAHABARAT.

As evening approached, the warriors, already
accoutred for the journey, might be seen here
and there in the retired glens near the encamp-
ment, engaged in soothing the alarm of the
maidens, to whom many of them had been be-
trothed from infancy. But this scene of affec-
tion, and of renewed vows of constancy, the
shrill trumpet speedily disturbed, and as the
shades began to rise in the east, the troop was
assembled before the hut of the prince. He
gave them the banner of the tribe, whose glory
in war he bade them to remember; they an-

answered his command by a hurra! and then, with Suleiman, who was accompanied by Seirami, at their head, they set out for Karaman. For a few moments the paces of the horses, as they bounded over the green turf, and the clatter of the arms of the riders were heard; but the sounds grew fainter and fainter in the distance, and the moving mass soon ceased altogether to be discernible through the misty night.

The grief of Kazim, which had been respected by the especial desire of Suleiman, and which had kept him confined to his hut with Mangeli, prevented both from becoming acquainted with the event which had just taken place. Nor was it until the next morning, when Kazim went to return thanks to the prince for the honourable attentions that had been paid to the remains of his father, that he learned the intelligence. He was in some degree hurt, that he had not received from Seirami, at least, some intimation of the plan which had been adopted, but as he entertained no doubt that Mirtas would be taken by surprise, and that the affair would be terminated within a few days, he turned all his thoughts again to Mangeli, who stood in need of his best care.

Day after day passed on, and still no tidings came from Karaman. The nations of the tribe began to feel apprehensive of the results of the expedition, but they still hesitated to give way to any general sense of alarm, hoping that news would momentarily arrive which might show it to be without foundation. A vague rumour on the sixth day found its way through the encampment, that a most sanguinary engagement had taken place in the streets of Karaman between the hostile forces, and that not only Sulaiman, but every one of his followers had been slaughtered, without the exception of even a solitary trooper to bring away the melancholy tale. The report spread from hut to hut with a thousand aggravations, but none of those who were questioned about it, not even of those who related it with the most minute particulars, could say how or whence it had originated, as no stranger had been seen at the encampment since the departure of the expedition.

Calamity sometimes casts its shadow before, which, like a supernatural messenger, carries to the mind unerring intelligence of events that have either happened at a distance, or are already on the march towards their fatal accom-

plishment. The seventh sun had scarcely risen on the horizon, after the funeral day of Gulbeg, when a horse, fully accoutred as for the field of battle, without a rider, and with broken rein, entered the precincts of the camp, running here and there, snorting and pawing the ground, as if he had some dreadful tale to tell. He easily permitted himself to be caught, when it was discovered that the animal had been much gashed on the shoulders by sabre-cuts, that the saddle was stained with blood, with which his mane was also clotted, and that, moreover, it was the steed on which Suleiman had been mounted. The ominous forebodings of the elders thus received a degree of confirmation that filled the whole tribe with terror. Some were for sending messengers instantly, in order to ascertain the results, however dreadful they might be.

The proposition was no sooner made than it was acted upon by three spirited youths, who had not yet been permitted to try their strength in battle. Kazim offered to be their guide to Karaman, and horses being prepared in a few moments, they were already mounting, in the midst of the crowds that had assembled

round them, when an old man, to whom the wounded steed belonged, rushed into the circle holding up a letter, which he found under the pommel of the saddle, on removing it from the heated back of the animal. It was immediately opened by Kazim, but from being worn away in many places by the friction of the saddle, he could read it aloud only in fragments. It was in the hand-writing of Sehami :-

“ If this brave steed find his way back to the encampment, he will indeed be the messenger of woe.

* * * * *

never were such days of strife known before
 * * * they were a host, for the three chieftains had joined their forces, and believing that Suleiman was no more, they were marching to seize his dominions, when we met them near the gates of Karaman

* * * * *

in the streets, which ran with torrents of blood

* * * * *

we * * * The re-appearance of Suleiman threw the enemy at the onset into affright * * * evil spirits they said, flying back to the town, were come

to attack them, * * * * every
 where the houses were closed : as we hastened
 after the fugitives it looked like a city of the
 dead * * * Mirtas slain at his
 feet * * * recovering from
 their terror the second day, burst forth * *
 * * * from street to street the
 battle raged for three days * * *
 * * those valiant youths of the tribe,
 their deeds are beyond all praise * *
 * * * not one remains to"—

Kazim's faltering voice was here interrupted by a general burst of anguish, which not even the breathless desire of the listening crowd to hear every particular, could repress. "Oh, my son! my son!" were the only words to which the matrons could give utterance, as, tearing their hair, they threw themselves prostrate on the earth, overwhelmed with grief. Kazim, looking still at the fragments of the letter, could not resume, though he perceived that it was of the utmost importance that they should hear the remainder of the communication. Again and again he motioned to the multitude that he would go on, but the agony that swelled his

heart, when he beheld the mothers of the slaughtered warriors demanding their surviving children to be brought before them, that they might count them, and ascertain whether he, the bravest of them all, had indeed gone to the battle, never, never to return,--appalled his senses, and stifled the language to which he in vain endeavoured to give articulate sound.

The voice of mourning having at length in some degree subsided, Kazim was directed to proceed.

"There can be no doubt that in the first instance the enemy will direct their march towards the encampment."

"Let them come," answered the veterans; "we may yet revenge the butchery of our children!"

"And that from their numbers, all being well armed, flushed with conquest, and in need of provisions, they will contend with too many advantages against a pastoral tribe. Fly, therefore, while yet you can." * * *

* * * * *

The remainder of the letter was worn quite away, except a very small fragment, on which

the words "Kazim" and "Hindostan" were legible.

The prince who mixed with the crowd without any emblems of his rank, to hear the tidings of calamity, which for a moment reduced all the members of the tribe to the same level, retiring to his tent, called a council, by which it was resolved, that the encampment should be broken up, and that they should proceed across the desert.

Kazim, who feared at first that he might have been sacrificed to the grief or indignation of the tribe, inasmuch as he was the friend of Suleiman, to whose rashness they justly imputed the calamity which had befallen so many of their bravest warriors, asked permission from the prince to return to his home on the Ilamish. But that excellent person, who was an epitome of all the virtues of the tribe, taking him by the hand, assured him that he need have no apprehension for his safety. Nobody thought of blaming the husband of Mangeli, who was a favourite in every quarter; and as to returning to his defenceless cottage, at a period when the exasperated troops of Mirtas would probably leave no part of the country unexplored, and

would visit no cultivated spot without laying it waste, such an idea would be the extreme of imprudence. "No," said the good prince; "we have adopted you and yours for our own; with us you shall remain; of our wealth you shall freely partake; and our home, wherever we may find it from season to season,⁶ shall be your home too. Put up your hut, my son, like the rest; you will find a camel of burthen at your door, and a horse of my own for yourself and Mangeli. Your goats form part already of the common stock."

The huts having been all speedily taken down, the materials of them were carefully packed up, together with all the utensils and furniture which they contained; and in three hours after the command was given, the tribe was on the march towards the vast desert, which spreads many days' journey to the west as well as to the south of Aijun. The enemy, it was thought, would hardly venture in pursuit of them into the waste, if in want of provisions; and at all events, in those immense solitudes upon whose arid surface the hoof of the horse or the camel made no impression, it would be difficult to trace the footsteps of the fugitives.

Very different was now the appearance of the cavalcade from what it was when the pastoral nation first met the eyes of Kazim. They moved on necessarily at a slow pace, as their herds of sheep and other animals, which brought up the rear, were of essential importance for the supply of food. But the brave warriors, lately the pride of the people to whom they belonged, were missed from a scene usually remarkable for splendour and gaiety. The tones of mirth were changed into lamentation, and the procession seemed like a funeral train, engaged in performing the last obsequies of some departed chieftain.

After journeying over the desert for three weeks, without perceiving any token of pursuit on the part of the enemy, the fugitives had at length the consolation to observe the weather setting in with more than ordinary severity. The snow began to fall by the time they crossed the mountains on the borders of Astracan, when finding an extensive and well-watered valley, completely sheltered from the cold winds of the north, they resolved on sojourning there at least until the winter was over.

For several days the snow continued to do-

scend so thickly, that it darkened the air, wrapping the mountains and the plains in one general mantle, and investing the trunks and branches of the trees that were scattered here and there, with its fleecy covering. In the early part of the morning the huts were not to be distinguished from the hillocks, which the snow, drifted by the winds, had raised in different parts of the valley. But after the fires were kindled, and the smoke had curled from the tops of the huts to mingle with the clouds on the mountains, the black roofs and sides of those pastoral habitations became quickly discernible. The weather necessarily prevented their inmates for some time from all out-door amusements; but their days, nevertheless, seldom appeared to hang heavily upon their hands. When the usual meals were over, chess and cards and dice, the song and the dance were resumed. When the mountain torrents were at length suspended in their course by the frost, and the trees were ornamented as if by genii, in the beautiful filagree icicles, which afforded an assurance that the red deer might be followed over the ridges of the mountains without any danger of sinking in the snow, the hunters were

out with their poles bounding from height to height, with an agility that rivalled the fleetness of the animal of which they were in pursuit.

For Kazim, however, none of these amusements possessed any great attraction. Though he could not well avoid joining the many social circles formed in the camp throughout the long winter nights, nevertheless his thoughts were far away from those scenes, communing with higher spirits. The game of chess, which he now learned for the first time, had more charms for his mind than any other pastime; it engrossed his attention, and set the intellect at work. But when the excitement of the hour was over, he reverted to his recollections of the books he had read, and even sometimes prevailed upon his associates to listen to the verses of Asefi, which he recited with the most engaging gracefulness.

From poetry Kazim sometimes changed the theme to history, especially to that of the empires of Persia and Hindostan, of which he appeared to have made himself complete master. He related how Timur, setting out from Samarcand with a million of troops, advanced along the vast plains of Bactria, and climbed the Hima-

las, though opposed by the native tribes of those rugged and lofty mountains at every step. The difficulties of the ascent were often less than those that opposed his downward progress, for the steep precipices, or rather mural ramparts, which lay in the line of his march, offered no means of descent. Under those circumstances, that brave commander ordered himself to be let down by ropes; and in this manner he and his followers, together with their horses, were enabled, after incredible toils, to behold at length, stretching at their feet, the fertile fields of Hindostan. Kazim shuddered while he described the sanguinary battles, by means of which Timur established his throne at Delhi, with a degree of imperial splendour unknown before his time. The adventures of his grandson, Baber, the knight-errant of the East, had peculiar charms for the youths of the tribe. One day, in the possession of absolute power, and clothed in all the sumptuousness of unbounded luxury, the next he was rendered an outcast and a mendicant by the changing fortunes of war. After tasting for a season of adversity in all its most painful forms, he was again raised to sovereign power, which he graced by his intellectual ac-

complishments. The feeble reign of Humaioun that followed, was, in a great measure, redeemed from oblivion by the patronage which that prince, though somewhat fantastic in his taste, bestowed on letters and the sciences, especially the science of astronomy. But his son Acbar, who had ascended the throne of India at the age of thirteen,* and who was now the reigning prince, seemed, from all that Kazim had heard of him at Samarcand, to have already acquired a fame, both in the field and the council, which promised to outshine all his predecessors. From the exploits he had already performed, having reduced nearly the whole of India under his power, it was conjectured that he would soon add even Persia to his already magnificent empire. Rumour had spoken much of his wise minister Abul Fazeel, to whose councils, it was said, he was indebted for the retention of the conquests he had made. It was the province of that distinguished person, to heal the wounds inflicted on the mass of the people by war. Wherever the arms of Acbar had carried terror and devastation, Fazeel followed

* In the year 1556.

in the bloody footsteps of his imperial master, like a benevolent genius, redressing, as far as it was possible, the complaints of the injured, and substituting for disorder and contention the blessings of organization and peace.

Sometimes, if the night were favourable for his purpose, Kazim induced the young men, who often crowded to his hut, to ascend the nearest height, whence he bade them watch the countless orbs of fire which glowed in the azure firmament. They expected that he would read in that splendid page the destinies of their nation, and importuned him to impart to them that species of knowledge which the stars can teach. He told them of the difference that existed between the planets, which, like the earth, moved round the sun, and the spheres which apparently had no motion. So far they understood his explanations. But they began to look upon him as a magician, when he added, that the congregation of lights which they beheld crowded together in the sky, were absolutely as nothing compared with the multitudes hidden from their gaze in the remoter oceans of space, and that, nevertheless, each of these orbs was a sun in itself, attended by worlds of its own peopled

by every order of created being ; and that the whole, instead of being stationary, as they seemed, were moving, together with our sun and its system, round the centre of the universe, where the Great Spirit reigned in a region of glory, that knew not beginning or end, day or night, winter or summer.

CHAPTER X.

Ye Heavens, for this in showers of sweetness shed
Your mildest influence o'er her favoured head !
Long may her name, which distant climes shall praise,
Live in our notes, and blossom in our lays.

SOLIMA.

ALTHOUGH Kazim was generally respected throughout the tribe, of which he now formed a member, for his personal character and his great acquirements, yet he could not conceal from himself, during the solitary rambles in which he frequently indulged among the mountains, that this was not precisely the kind of existence he had prefigured for himself at Samarcand. Of the ordinary necessities and conveniences of life he enjoyed a sufficiency, and there were even those among the tribe whom he might look upon in the light of

friends. But their intellect did not commune with his. There was no person near him with whom he could converse, upon equal terms, on any subject derived from history, science, or even popular poetry or fable. The habits of a wandering nation, whether warlike or pastoral, were such as he felt could never be congenial to his tastes. He had no pleasure in assisting to water the herds, or in preparing the materials of the huts, or in going through the domestic occupations which every new day brought with it. The sports afforded to others by the mountain, the plain, or the jungle, were to him so many occasions for toil, from which he derived no gratification.

Mangeli was, indeed, in herself, a little world, to which his busy thoughts and stirring aspirations frequently fled for repose. When he beheld her engaged in the duties of her simple household, and read in her lighted smiles the pleasure which she felt in rendering their humble home orderly, because it was shared with him, he yielded to the rush of delightful sensations that thrilled his whole frame. But when he remembered that he would soon have to provide for more than Mangeli, and that his

present means or prospects afforded no hope that their offspring would ever be raised above the grade of mere shepherds, he blushed with shame at the degradation which he had, however innocently, brought upon the once noble and distinguished race of Ayns. His thoughts upon this delicate point were by no means hidden from the partner of his life and fate, who, without any other instruction than that which he himself and affection had given her, was enabled to read upon his brow the sentiments that were passing through his mind, even where they did not break out into expression. No commentary, however, that could wound his feelings ever escaped her lips on those occasions. She was contented with her lot, such as it was; but, at the same time, she never failed to assure Kazim that wherever he was, she should be equally happy. She could live with him in their hut, wherever it might be raised from time to time; or she could wander with him over the desert or the mountain, should it be his wish to try his fortunes in those distant countries, of which he had so often made mention.

One day, when Kazim happened to extend his mountain rambles beyond their ordinary

distance, he was surprised, on looking towards the south, to behold an enormous ridge of snow shining in the sun, above the clouds, in which, at that season of the year, the Himalas were usually concealed from view. While he was gazing upon the sublime spectacle, his attention was suddenly attracted by the sound of a voice quite near him; when, turning round, he beheld a dervish resting on a long staff, which he held with both his hands.

“ I have been anxiously in search of you, Kazim Ayas,” said the stranger, “ since your fortunate escape from Karaman. You won my admiration at Samarcand. There you were the master of the whole circle of knowledge, and what are you here? I followed you to Arjun—I followed you to the obscure cottage in which you buried yourself on the banks of the Hamish—I followed you to Karaman; and where do I at length find you? Among a tribe no better than the sheep, from which they derive their subsistence! For shame, Ayas! one of your Tatar race—you, who might restore your house to more than its former splendour by your talents—to waste away the most precious years of your existence among these inglorious hills!

To Hindostan, I say, the moment the snows are gone. Behold the Himalas, which lift their heads above the clouds. Be their ambition yours; and, like them, the sun of glory shall yet shine upon your brow! To Hindostan, I say, when the snows are gone!"

Kazim, overcome with surprise, in consequence not less of the words addressed to him, than of the manner of the stranger, whom he remembered to have seen somewhere before, stood petrified before the dervish, doubting whether the vision was not supernatural. Nor was this feeling at all diminished, when, on removing his hand from his eyes, on which he had pressed it for a moment, as if to recall his wandering thoughts, he saw nobody near him, nor even the trace of a footstep on the spot where the dervish had stood. He called out in an agitated voice, repeatedly, but he received no answer, except the faint echo of his own exclamation. The incident astonished him, the more he thought of it. He ran here and there among the snow-crowned crags, and looked down the precipices, and at each side of the ridges, but nowhere could he discover the least symptom of the stranger. He remained on the

mountain, still expecting the return of the dervish, until the approach of night warned him that it was time to terminate his excursion.

When Kazim informed Mangeli of his adventure, she playfully looked into his eyes, and in her simple and bewitching way asked him, if he had not fallen asleep on the hills, and dreamt what he had told her? When he endeavoured to assure her of the contrary, and described his interview with the stranger, as well as the very tone of voice in which the mysterious words were uttered, she still declared herself incredulous. At the same time she added, that she well knew he could never be contented to pursue the kind of life in which he was now detained; and that, if at the breaking up of the winter, he resolved to abandon the tribe, she would be prepared to go with him even to Hindostan, through every difficulty and danger. Kazim was almost angry that he could not induce Mangeli to believe the story which he had related, extraordinary though it was; but the more he reflected on it, the more he was induced to waver about the certainty which he had felt at first; and eventually, he was inclined with her to suspect that the dervish was the creation

of his own fancy, heated by much meditation on the circumstances in which he was placed. Whether it was a reality or a vision, however, such was the impression it made upon his mind, that the pastoral manners and occupations of the friendly tribe appeared to him, after that day, more monotonous than ever, and he resolved, at all events, to effect a change in the present obscure routine of his existence.

The long winter of those regions at length approached its term. Suddenly the zephyrs of the spring came from the groves where they had hitherto been sleeping. The icicles that depended from the precipices, over which the torrents had formerly dashed in their course, as well as the snowy mantle so long spread over the hills and plains, disappeared at once, as if by the command of a magician. A rich carpet of green herbage every where met the eye, interspersed with the snow-drop, the gay crocus, the modest primrose, the cowslip, and a thousand wild flowers, which seemed to rejoice in the cheering rays of the sun. The mares and their young galloped over the soft turf, wild with renovated joy. The lambs that were newly born, frisked about, calling oc-

asionally to their dams in a tumult of merry sounds, and running races with each other down the declivities of the hills on which they were at pasture. Nature dressed herself out as for a holiday ; the trees were filled with birds that made the air resound with their music, and even the floods that rushed from the heights, subdued their usual uproar into an enchanting murmur.

Kazim hoped that the tribe would now think of changing their abode, and that he might, during the general movement, easily separate himself from them, without informing the kind prince of his intentions. He could give no cause to that worthy ruler of an innocent people for the resolution which he had adopted ; he felt that even the mention of such an idea would be received with surprise and regret, if not even with anger, by every one of his new friends ; and as he really had no excuse to offer for his conduct, which could appear to them in the least degree reasonable, considering the unambitious habits in which they had all been brought up ; he convinced himself that his best plan would be not to consult them on the subject. But the spring came without suggest-

ing any desire on their part to change their temporary residence. The pasturage around them was excellent, as well as abundant; and until it was exhausted, it seemed that they would be disinclined to further emigration. Kazim therefore determined to make immediate preparations for his expedition, but with as much secrecy as possible.

Selecting an intensely dark night for his purpose, he put together the few articles of value which had been presented to him from time to time, by the prince and other members of the tribe, and placing the package on his camel, he led the animal cautiously beyond the precincts of the camp, Mangeli walking with him hand in hand. His horse he left behind, justly apprehending that it would be rather an incumbrance than an auxiliary to them in crossing the vast solitudes which lay between Astracan and the frontiers of India. Then lifting Mangeli to her seat on the back of the camel, he walked by her side, assisting her to retain her position until she was in some measure accustomed to it. Pursuing their way through the outskirts of the camp without any clue to guide them, they had the satisfaction to find

themselves soon ascending the mountains by which it was surrounded ; and as the day dawned, they faintly descried the huts of their late friends through the mists which still floated over the valley. They looked back more than once upon those habitations with feelings of regret, remembering the hospitality and affection with which they had been uniformly treated by every individual of the tribe. A ridge of the mountain at length shut out the camp from their view, and the sun rising gloriously in a cloudless sky, enabled Kazim to shape his course towards the town of Arcan, where he hoped to exchange for money the few Persian shawls and trinkets of which he was possessed.

Mangeli, though less fatigued by her first day's journey than she expected she should be, saw with pleasure towards evening the domes of Arcan shining in the distance. Here they took up their abode for the night in the public caravanserai, where Kazim had great difficulty in selling his small merchandize to some Armenians, whom he met there on their return from Bokhara to Astracan. When he looked at the fund with which he was thus furnished, and compared it with the long route which they

still had to traverse before they could reach Lahore, he felt as if he had been already thrown on the wide ocean of the world, without a single friendly star to light his way. He had not the courage to communicate to Mangeli, the inadequacy of the store with which they had already commenced their expedition. * Recommending himself and his beloved wife to Providence, he led forth his camel with its precious burthen from Arcan the following morning.

The adventurous pair continued thus to travel constantly from day to day, stopping during the night at such towns or villages as they met with in their line of journey, until at length Mangeli was attacked by a violent fever, which for a while threatened to put an end to their enterprize altogether. This unfortunate event, besides delaying them far beyond the time when they had calculated on reaching India, exhausted the slender means with which they had been provided. They had now parted with every thing they possessed, except the camel and the shawl in which the sacred relics of their father had been wrapped. The former Kazim was at length obliged to exchange for a wretched horse, in order to discharge the debts which he

had contracted during the illness of Mangeli ; and had it not been for the charity of some good villagers who dwelt on the borders of the great desert, they would have perished of hunger before they entered on that perilous portion of their journey.

CHAPTER XI.

We ought to love the griefs that come,
 For they're like clouds from heaven to throw
 More radiance round the setting sun,
 More splendour o'er his dying glow.

MUSULKA.

KAZIM could scarcely avoid reproaching himself with extreme imprudence, when, towards the close of his first day's progress in the desert, he took down Mangeli in his arms from the back of the half-starved and jaded animal, on which she had been unavoidably riding for many hours without intermission. He produced a store of sour milk, which he had obtained from the good villagers; but when he offered it to Mangeli, he thought in vain of the gushing and transparent streams which they had left behind them, amidst the mountains of Astracan. She drank the beverage with a cheerfulness

which, notwithstanding her late illness, and the many mortifications they had already endured, still remained undiminished. But when Kazim looked upon the sun descending into the bosom of the boundless waste around them, and beheld, as far as the eye could reach, not the slightest trace of a human habitation of any sort, he almost wished that the earth would open, and receiving them into its most gloomy cavern, close upon them for ever.

With the night came the cold wind of the desert, often fatal even to those who are best prepared to resist it. Kazim and Mangoli lay down beside the poor animal that was destined to participate in all their privations. His body protected them, in some degree, from the piercing wind which blew over the plains with a wailing sound. The firmament was crowded with its wonted fires, but Kazim no longer looked at them with the interest which they had never before failed to kindle in his breast. Mangeli and her approaching fears now absorbed his every thought, and as she lay trembling beside him on the bare ground, he called out, in the agony of his heart, to Allah, to protect her through the trials she had still to encounter. But

the freezing gale swept along the desert, in howling blasts, like the voice of some enormous beast of prey tracking them for destruction; nor did it cease to renew its loud and lengthened roar, until the sun re-appeared on the horizon. Warmed by its welcome rays, Kazim and Mangeli enjoyed some hours of feverish slumber, while their less unhappy companion browsed upon some tufts of half-parched herbage, which he found scattered on the surface of the steppe.

When they awoke, Kazim spoke of returning to the village which they had last left, on the borders of the desert; but Mangeli said, that she felt much better, and as their provisions were still sufficient for at least three or four days, by which time they were informed that they should certainly meet with several caravans from Thibet and Turkestan, she thought it better that they should go on, as they had already advanced so far on their journey. Kazim reluctantly yielded to this kind of reasoning, and they resumed their slow and melancholy march over the plains, without meeting a single traveller, or even an animated creature of any description, for several days in succession. The unbounded appearance

of the desert was in itself appalling ; but Kazim had no expression for the despair that brooded upon his heart, while he was thus penetrating through a region of silence, interrupted only by the night-winds, whose dismal tones he preferred, with all their terrors, to the unearthly stillness of the long day in those endless solitudes.

* They had now seen the tenth sun go down upon the still expanded waste, and no caravan had yet appeared. Their provisions were already exhausted, when the poor animal, which still continued to bear Mangeli, being also without food, sank upon the earth, unable to proceed any farther. The shock brought on her pains somewhat prematurely ; and in this condition, on the naked barren sand, without shelter, without sustenance, without even a cup of water to moisten her parched lips, did the hapless wife of Kazim become the mother of a female infant. Kazim wrung his hands with anguish, when he beheld his first-born thus come into the world, without his possessing any thing to wrap it in, save the ragged turban which he tore off his head. The babe uttered no cry. It seemed too attenuated and feeble to live ; indeed it seemed already dead, for its

tiny breathing was scarcely perceptible to its distracted parent.

Mangeli lay insensible for several hours, while Kazim, fearful of quitting her side for a moment, sat near her, waiting for the approach of that death from which he now saw no expectation of release. When, at length, she opened her once benighted eyes, she rose up and asked Kazim for her infant, with an energy that quite surprised him. It was the strength of delirium; for when he placed her babe in her arms, she seemed still unconscious of its presence, and demanded, in a voice of lamentation that almost broke his heart, why he took away from her the only solace that she now had in the world? Suddenly, as the child, nestled closely to her breast, where it sought in vain for its natural nutriment, the senses of the mother returned, and betrayed to her the whole extent of her misery.

Here it was impossible, at all events, that they could remain any longer. No change of place could bring destruction with more certainty, than the scene to which they were now confined. Summoning, therefore, whatever strength he could still command, Kazim urged

the prostrate animal to rise; and the creature, as if he felt that some effort upon his part was necessary, even to his own safety, submitted quietly, while Mangeli once more placed upon his back, moved forward with some appearance of renovated ability. Mangeli was too weak to bear the infant in her arms, but Kazim, though scarcely stronger than his wife, assured her that he could carry it while he walked by her side.

The unhappy family had been little more than an hour from their last memorable resting-place, when Kazim, who was eagerly looking all round the horizon, cried out that he saw a horseman in the distance, who must, no doubt, be the precursor of one of the long expected caravans. Laying the babe upon the earth, he ran towards the object which was moving rapidly across the desert; he shouted with all his might, and waved his hand over his head, still running, until he fell, utterly overcome by the exertion which he had made. But the horseman, if such it was, passed out of sight; and instead of that friendly spectacle, Kazim, when he returned to himself, beheld perched near him on the ground, an immense

vulture, which, glaring upon him with its piercing eyes, already seemed to claim him for its prey.

Had the vulture attacked him, he could not, at that moment, have resisted it. He looked at the ill-omened bird, as it hopped around him, with the feeling of a person oppressed in sleep by the night-mare. There was a load upon his senses that kept him fixed to the earth, and prevented him from throwing at the foul creature the sand which he instinctively grasped in his hand for the purpose. Still it hopped round and round, the slaver falling from its beak, as it feasted by anticipation on a new victim. The approach of Mangeli, however, who impelled her wearied steed to its last effort, put the vulture to flight, but not to any great distance; for he now directed his course towards the infant, which he perceived hard by. The vigour wanted by Kazim for his own protection he found at once, when he beheld the danger to which his offspring was exposed. Running towards the spot, with the fleetness of an arrow, he snatched up the child with one hand, while with the other he hurled against the ravenous intruder some dried bones of man or beast,

which he picked up on the way. From one of these the vulture received such a blow on the head that he fled screaming over the desert.

The horror occasioned by this incident, soon yielded to a sense of overwhelming joy; when, after advancing for another hour* or two, they beheld, at a considerable distance, an extensive lake, upon which vessels laden with dates and melons, grapes, oranges, and every kind of delicious fruit, were seen in great numbers crossing and re-crossing the surface of the waters in all directions. Islands, whose verdure was peculiarly grateful to eyes so long dazzled by the glare of the sun on the sand of the desert, were scattered over the lake in picturesque groups, intersected by streams which shone* like veins of silver, and abounding with trees whose spreading branches promised a refreshing shade. A boat, rowed by two men, put off from the principal island as soon as the travellers were in sight, and approached the margin of the waters for their especial accommodation.

There was already a freshness in the atmosphere, which gave new life even to the animal that had hitherto borne Mangeli with faltering steps, and urged him to hasten towards the

lake with a rapidity which Kazim in vain endeavoured to rival. But the greater the expedition they used, the farther the islands, as well as the surrounding element, receded from the view of the wearied pilgrims. During the whole day they pursued the fleeting vision, until at length it faded, on the approach of evening, altogether from their sight, leaving them in a state of helplessness for which they now gave up all hope of finding any remedy. Kazim, unable to bear the little burthen in his arms any longer, resigned the task to Mangeli, who, sitting on the ground, received her child with that vacant smile which denotes the return of delirium. Her hands trembled violently, while she endeavoured to clasp the infant to her bosom; but they fell powerless by her side, as she swooned away in the effort, overcome by fatigue, and reduced to the last stage of famine.

Kazim had a dim recollection, that in their haste towards the imaginary lake they had passed a palm-tree. Returning some hundred paces, he perceived the companion of their journey busily engaged in browsing on the leaves and tender branches of some shrubs, near which the palm-tree grew bearing a few dates still

unipe. He plucked them in a moment, and bringing them to Mangeli, moistened her lips with the juice of the fruit, while he contented himself by chewing some leaves which he had torn from the shrubs. The liquid, such as it was, revived her for a moment, but she again relapsed into a state of insensibility resembling death. The poor infant lay upon her knees, exposed to all the dangers of the night. Kazim contrived to make a bed for it among branches of the palm, which he gathered for the purpose, and placing the babe at the foot of the tree, covered it, as well as he could, from the inclemency of the cold blast, which had already commenced its melancholy murmur.

When Kazim told Mangeli in the morning what he had done, he added, that as they had no hope of finding sustenance for the babe, it would be better to leave it in the desert than attempt to carry it any farther. His own strength was quite gone, and, above all, he felt apprehensions which he dared not reveal, that if another day or two passed over without their meeting with any food, temptations of the most dreadful description might be irresistible to both of them. Mangeli understood her husband at

once, and nodding her head in apparent acquiescence, desired to depart without a moment's delay. When she was seated on the horse, she expressed a wish, however, to be led towards the palm-tree, that she might at least once more behold the spot destined to be the grave of her infant. She looked at the tree with silent grief for a few minutes, and then permitting Kazim to turn the head of the animal round, she proceeded on her journey, still keeping her eyes reverted on the palm. When that beacon began to lessen by degrees, and at length to escape altogether from her sight, the voice of nature resumed its power over the heart of the agonized mother:—"My child! my child!" she exclaimed, "give me my child, or let me perish by her side!" Throwing herself from the horse, she attempted to run towards the palm-tree, but she fell upon the earth, unable to move a single pace. The prudent fears of Kazim gave way at once before the entreaties of Mangeli, as well as to his own paternal impulses, and telling her that he would in a moment gratify her wishes, let the consequences be what they might, he hastened towards the tree near which the infant was laid. But while he was

removing the palm-branches, in which he had enveloped it, he was struck with horror on perceiving a black snake, of enormous dimensions, coiled round the child, and hissing with all its fury, enraged at being disturbed in its preparations for devouring the banquet it had found.

Kazim, seeing the danger to which his child was exposed, grasped the neck of the snake in his hand with a convulsive effort, and placing it under his foot, pressed it to the earth, while the venom flowed from its fangs covered with foam. Then untwisting the loathsome bands in which the babe had been folded, he took it up in his arms, and leaving the snake to its fate, returned to Mangeli, who had witnessed the result of the contest with a feeling of joy that appeared to give her new life.

While the parents were examining their infant, in order to assure themselves that the snake had done it no injury, a group of horsemen galloped towards them, who saw, from their appearance, that they were in a condition of the most deplorable misery. The strangers, alighting from their steeds, produced from the wallets which were attached to their saddles, an abundance of delicious dates and figs, to-

gether with clusters of half-dried grapes of Ghazni, the best which are yielded by the vineyards of Asia. Their caravan, they said, which was coming from Ferghana, bound for Kabul, would soon be in sight, and the unhappy travellers might expect every assistance it could afford.

CHAPTER XII.

See yon fair groves that o'er Amana rise,
And with their spicy breath embalm the skies ;
Where every breeze sheds incense o'er the vales,
And every shrub the scent of musk exhales !
See through yon opening glade a glittering scene,
Lawns over gay, and meadows ever green.

SOLIMA.

KAZIM had the inexpressible pleasure to see Mangeli look once more like herself, when, refreshed by the food she had taken, she busied herself about her infant, whom she was feeding with some mare's milk, which the kind strangers had given her. Towards noon, the great body of the caravan appeared in sight, followed by an immense number of horses, destined to be exchanged at Kabul for the cloths the sugars, the drugs and spices of Hindostan.

As soon as the principal members of the caravan learned the sad intelligence which the horsemen told concerning the wanderers, who had nearly fallen victims to famine in the desert, a tent, was pitched, in which rich carpets were spread, and assigned immediately to the use of Mangeli. A skilful female slave was also appointed to attend her, who administered to her such medicinal care as her situation required. The great body of the caravan moved forward, after having rested during the heat of the day; but a small party was ordered to remain behind, until Mangeli was in a condition to travel without pain or inconvenience.

In the course of a few days the young mother, invigorated by the hospitable care with which she was treated, found herself in a situation to afford her child an abundance of the nutriment most suitable to its tender age. The opening smiles of the infant began already to recompense her for the dreadful sufferings she had undergone; and when she joined the caravan, seated on her own quiet palfrey, which had also profited not a little by the change that had taken place, with the babe asleep on her bosom, and her husband riding a beautiful steed

of Ferghana by her side, she felt as if their journey were already at an end ; at least, that its toils and dangers were now over.

The desert was already passed, and the mountains of Kabul at length appeared on the horizon, like a lofty mural boundary stretching across the country from east to west. It seemed at first, as if no access could be found which would enable the traveller to ascend those heights, whose summits were lost in the clouds. But as they approached nearer to the mountains, and began gradually to climb the rising grounds, they found the formidable barrier breaking up into green hills, affording pleasant paths that conducted them by easy winding courses, with perfect safety, from the lower to the higher regions. Waters falling from the rocks sparkled on the eye, and cheered the mind by their music. The spirit of freedom breathed in the air around, and filled the heart with extacy, while from numerous copses broke forth the song of a thousand birds, whose varied notes formed an enchanting contrast with the awful silence of the desert.

It was the season when the citron-trees were in bloom, and the orange had already begun to

look yellow through the green leaves by which it was sheltered from the scorching beams of the sun. The apple-trees had also put forth their ruddy and snow-white blossoms, which were mingled in beautiful profusion with those of the almond, the pomegranate and the peach. The declivities were every where decked with flowers, amongst which the tulip reared its graceful chalice, streaked with green and gold, while the purple convolvulus spread in elegant festoons from precipice to precipice. The Indian pink, the red and yellow rose, the sweet-briar, and the jasmine gave all their variety and fragrance to the scene, while the peacock displayed his azure neck, and unfolded his magnificent plumage, the flying squirrel went through his merry antics, the green parrot chattered, the turtle-dove cooed, and the nightingale poured forth her melodies among the groves which crowned the adjacent heights.

As the caravan wound up the sides of the mountain, a caution was given to the whole body to keep close together, they being now on the borders of Kaferistan, a savage tract of territory, inhabited by tribes who have for many ages existed principally by plunder. Sliding in

the recesses of their native rocks, they rush down suddenly on the defenceless traveller, from heights which he might deem only the abode of the eagle. Not content with robbing their victim of his merchandize, they deprive him even of his apparel, and afterwards tie him to the nearest tree, where they leave his bones to be bleached by the sun and the winds. Caravans they attack with more systematic preparation. They wait until the train involves itself among the most difficult passes of the mountains, or is obliged to halt during the night before the passes are entered. In the former case, they easily throw the whole line into confusion, by rolling immense rocks down upon the narrow defile: in the latter, they arm themselves with burning branches of the pine-tree, by which they are not only easily distinguishable from the party they assail, but which they use in addition to their double-edged axes, as weapons of the most formidable nature, setting fire to the tents, and affrighting the horses and other animals which fly for refuge to the heights, where confederates are stationed for the purpose of capturing all the prey they can find.

Upon the approach of night, therefore, orders

were given for pitching the tents of the caravan on a declivity of the mountain, as near to each other as the nature of the ground permitted. The horses were collected together near the tents, and sentinels were established at some distance round the encampment, whose duty it was to give the signal of alarm, should they discover any movement on the heights above. The horses of Ferghana, which always found a high price and a ready market at Kabul, were particularly coveted by the Kafirs; and a caravan from that district seldom crossed these mountains without sustaining great loss—never without molestation.

Kazim's recent experience in war, such as it was, gave his counsels some weight during the discussion of the different plans which were proposed for defending the caravan from the banditti. He suggested, that instead of waiting for their approach, measures should be adopted for attacking them before they could reach the camp, in case they should make their appearance; and under his superintendence arrangements were made, for the execution of which the nature of the country afforded peculiar facilities.

Towards midnight, a sentinel brought in word that he had just seen a light, which he had at first mistaken for a star, moving rapidly near the summit of the mountain. Kazim immediately divided his little troop into two parties, one of which he stationed in front of the camp, the other he led up to a group of plane-trees, where he directed his followers to procure the most shady branches they could find, and such as they could, at the same time, carry in one hand, without preventing the other from wielding the sabre. They had scarcely armed themselves with these rude shields, when the lights began to thicken on the mountain top, and all the sentinels returned from their posts, assured that the robbers were in motion.

By and by a stream of light descended the mountain, in a zig-zag course, now broken by intervening rocks, now hidden by the forests through which it partially gleamed, and now entering a ravine, where it seemed lost for a while in total darkness, save that a slight reflection in the sky still marked its course. At length, gathering together in a dense mass, like the torrent flood before it precipitates itself over the ledge of rock whence it falls in a sheet into

the foaming abyss below, the whole appeared as one body of flame, rushing directly from the heights right upon the encampment.

Kazim's party separated into small groups on either side of the path by which the outlaws descended, and holding the plane-branches before them, knelt down on one knee, prepared for action, should they be prematurely discovered. But the Kafirs passed through the columns, without suspecting that they left nought save shrubs behind them. As their torches already began to gleam before the tents, and to show the multitude of horses in the lower ground, they leaped forward with an exulting shout, which shewed that they were much intoxicated with wine. They were, however, instantly precipitated upon a steady line, bristling with spears, which proved fatal to their front ranks. Those who were behind, seeing the fate of their companions, turned backwards for flight, when, to their amazement, they found the woods closing upon them on all sides. They stood horror-struck at the spectacle, their torches singled them out as they fled here and there, from what they deemed a supernatural enemy; they fell almost before they were sabred,

for cruelty and fear, guilt and superstition, always lodge together in the same breast. When the morning dawned on that mountain-side, it displayed a scene of retribution, such as the borders of Kaferistan had never exhibited before. The dead, each of whom had a leathern bottle of wine tied round his neck, were deposited in a hollow space, over which a pile of stones was raised, in order to warn future travellers of the dangers which the caravan had encountered, and to exemplify the effect of meeting such perils with the courage of men, rather than evade them by a base and criminal compromise.

The honours of the achievement were principally attributed to Kazim, who, however, modestly declined ascribing them to any merit of his own. They were due only to Allah, under whose protection the valour of the Forghanese, and the justice of their cause, received their due reward. But his new friends, desirous of expressing their gratitude for his services, upon which they set a high value, assigned him as a recompense fifty of the best steeds which their herd afforded. These he might exchange at Kabul for money, or any other merchandize

more suitable to his purposes. As he was destined for Lahore, which was still at a considerable distance, they hoped that the little wealth he might thus obtain, would enable him to perform the remainder of his journey with greater ease both to himself and Mangeli.

The caravan arrived in a few days after, without any further interruption, at Kabul, with whose appearance and situation Kazim was delighted. Ascending its lofty citadel he beheld the town, surrounded on all sides with extensive gardens, watered by streams directed through aqueducts from the distant hills. To the south stretched the beautiful lake of Kheirabad, animated by numbers of small boats in which groups of persons were amusing themselves by fishing, while others sauntered through green fields, stretching as far as the eye could reach, decorated by clusters of trees, and by fountains, whose waters sparkled in the sun. This fair scene, the usual resort of the people of Kabul on all holidays, contrasted strongly with the rude aspect of the mountains to the north and the east, which looked like a dreary waste: realizing, in every respect, the description of the Persian poet, who said of

Kabul, that "it is at once a mountain and a sea, a town and a desert."

Kabul was remarkably gay at this time, as it happened that the caravans from Ferghana, Turkestan, Bokhara, Samarcand, and several parts of Hindostan, met together in the market-place, where bazaars were erected for the manufactures and produce of the different nations. Here were seen rows of white slaves from India, piles of cotton cloth, heaps of sugar-candy, common sugar, spices, and drugs; in another bazaar, gold and silver tinkets, beautifully wrought chains from Ceylon, diamonds, amethysts, emeralds, and precious stones of every description, were displayed for sale in their most tempting forms. Farther on, the carpets of Turkey, the sabres of Damascus, the coarse and fine cloths of Irak, and the rich shawls of Persia met the eye; while in all the open spaces in and near the town, men skilled in the art of displaying the excellences of the Ferghanian horse in all its points, were seen riding up before the dealers from all quarters of Persia, and Turkey, who bargained for animals they could find.

The market of native produce

magnificent display of the fruits of the cold and warm districts, which are within a few hours' march of each other, among the Kabul mountains. Those in the former region send thither their walnuts, cherries, damsons, quinces, grapes, peaches, apricots, and pomegranates; while the latter were represented by the sugar-cane, the orange, the citron, the ambek, and the honey-comb teeming with its fragrant liquid. The bazaars abounded also in Kabul wine of the most delicious flavour, which too often induced the Turkish and Persian merchants to forget the salutary precepts of the Koran.

CHAPTER XIII.

Now morning breathed : the scented air was mild,
Each meadow blossomed, and each valley smiled ,
On every shrub the pearly dew-drops hung,
On every branch a feathered warbler sung ,
The cheerful spring her flowery chaplets wove,
And incense-breathing gales perfumed the grove.

INDIAN TALE.

KAZIM remained no longer at Kabul than was absolutely necessary to repair the disasters of the journey over the desert, and to provide for that which he had still to perform across the mountains to Lahore. Having sold his stock of horses to considerable advantage, reserving a pair of the tamest for himself and Mangeli, he took an affectionate leave of his Ferghanese friends, and set out for India. Mangeli, by this time, had become an excellent traveller. Wrap-

ping her infant in a large shawl, which was passed over her right shoulder, and tied firmly round her waist, she either nursed the babe, or hushed it to sleep, without alighting from the beautiful animal on which she was mounted. The heat of noon-tide compelled them, indeed, frequently to shelter themselves beneath the spreading plane-trees, or in the recesses of such rocks as afforded at once the convenience of a friendly shade and a crystal spring. But the genial atmosphere of the mountains enabled them, in general, to make long journeys from day to day through the passes and roads, of which Kazim had received abundant information at Kabul.

Their first resting-place was at the village of Istalif, where Kazim thought that if he had not been already engaged in pursuit of a higher destiny, he should have been well contented to spend the remainder of his life. He was charmed by its situation on the brow of a hill overlooking a valley, rich in every fruit and flower of that genial climate. In the middle of the valley he drank of the fountain of the "Three Friends," so called from the different species of trees planted round the spring by three holy

men, who thus celebrated the friendship which they entertained for each other, and which they renewed by meeting at the fountain for many a year, though they had to travel from remote points of Thibet, Hindostan, and Persia. On one side, palm-trees formed an umbrageous grove, in which a thousand pilgrims might easily find coolness and repose. On another was a group of spreading oaks, the only specimens of the kind to be met with through a vast tract of that country; and on the third, the flowering Arghwan put forth its red and yellow blossoms, impregnating the air with a delicious odour. "Ah!" said one of the natives to Kazim, who was admiring the beauty of the landscape, "when the Arghwan is in full flower, there is not a spot in all the world to be compared to the valley of Istalif!" And when Kazim, after entwining in Mangeli's hair a rose-scented tulip, beheld her resting in the shade, answering by her rapturous smiles those by which her infant already began to recognise its mother, he was disposed to think that the villager scarcely exaggerated the attractions of that happy valley.

The toils of their journey were easily borne, so long as the travellers remained within

the district of Kabul, where the mountains are so many mounds, with rich vales and wide level plains expanding between them, on which hamlets are usually found dispersed in the most picturesque irregularity. If Kazim were at any time doubtful of the way which he was pursuing, he was seldom long without being able to make inquiry at a cottage, or from hunters who crossed his course in pursuit of the red deer and the wild ass, or from fowlers in quest of the game that abounds all along the banks of the river Baran, the principal pass up the Hindukush. On entering this grand defile, he was astonished at the size and number of the birds that rushed thither from all quarters. He observed that, during the night especially, the larger game kept constantly flying low over the running water, as its brightness afforded them a sense of security from the beasts of prey, which they would have encountered had they remained stationary on the banks. Here also he beheld vast flights of the begla heron, whose feathers supply the plumes which the Turkish and Persian warriors wear on their caps or in their turbans, on state occasions.

After quitting the Baran, Kazim and Mangeli

found themselves emerging on a new world, in which the grasses, the trees, the wild animals and birds, as well as the manners of the people, seemed to be altogether different from any thing of the kind they had ever observed before. They now rarely met with running streams, and had to make their way frequently over the dry channels of former rivers. But Kazim soon discovered, that whenever he was in want of water for himself and his horses, he had only to turn up a part of the bed, when the cavity was filled immediately with a limpid spring. After pursuing their way for some days among the higher ridges of the mountains, which were still covered partially with snow, the travellers arrived at the edge of an immense sheet of water, that seemed, at the extreme distance, to mingle with the sky. The remote mountains, at either side, appeared completely inverted in the water, while those nearer at hand looked in the majestic mirror as if they were suspended between earth and heaven. They afterwards learned that this was the celebrated lake of Abistadeh, in which are collected all the waters that descend from the neighbouring mountains, on the melting of the snows. As they gazed with wonder upon the vast expanse

before them, they beheld from time to time between the water and the azure canopy above, a ruddy blush, which, had it not been noon, might have been taken for the Aurora, stretching across the horizon, occasionally flashing and disappearing like the lightning playing over the mountaintops. As the cloud came nearer, it resolved itself into an innumerable flock of flamingoes whose red feathers sometimes glittered in the sun, and sometimes were hid again as they waved their wings, or soared in their flight towards Cashmere.

While Kazim and Mangoli were still admiring the scenery that was spread before them, a young man called out, from the mouth of a cave at which he stood, inquiring whether it was their intention to cross the lake. Kazim replied, that he had missed the road to Jellalabad, and asked if he could regain it by embarking on the lake? The ferryman replied in the affirmative; and unmooring his raft, composed of timber supported on reeds, which had been hitherto concealed behind a small promontory, he assured the travellers that they might expect, under his guidance, a perfectly

safe passage both for themselves and their horses.

The raft being directed into the current, which flowed through the middle of the lake, was speedily borne along to the opposite shore, when Kazim, having rewarded the ferryman for his trouble, proceeded to the town he had mentioned. Hence they floated in a similar manner down the river to Peshawar; and crossing the Indus at Attok, entered the kingdom of Lahore. A few days' journey conducted the travellers at length within view of the city of that name, whose lofty towers and domes, shining in the distance, and surrounded by buildings extending over an immense space, realised all the visions that had long haunted Kazim's fancy, when he attempted to picture in his mind the grandeur of the capital in which the renowned Acbar then held his imperial court.

But although he had now arrived at the very gates of the paradise, so long the object of his thoughts and his dreams, Kazim ventured not to express to Mangeli the feeling, bordering on despair, that succeeded the momentary exultation with which he viewed the accomplishment of his journey. His heart sunk within him,

as he beheld the numerous groups of peasantry, who were on their way to the capital with the varied produce of their fields, rice, indigo, opium, poultry, and a thousand other articles; or returning from the bazaars, with the money or the manufactures which they had received in exchange. "These people," he thought to himself, with a sense of deep sadness, as he heard them discoursing over their affairs, "have their friends at Lahore, to whom they repair when they go thither—they have their own cottages not far off; but we enter the vast capital, without knowing a single individual of the countless population which it contains—without possessing the means of judging where we are to find a home—without kindred—without the hope even of beholding a solitary countenance we had ever seen before!"

These reflections became still more painful, when, on entering the city, Kazim looked at the apparently endless rows of houses, shops and bazaars, all strange to his eye, containing not a creature who expected his arrival, or sympathised in his fortunes. Of the multitude of foreign faces that thronged the streets, in

all directions, to whom was he to look for that patronage, without which he might eventually perish? It was true that the liberality of his Ferghanese friends had supplied him with the present means of support; but when those means were exhausted, as they soon must be, in order to provide for the wants of an increasing family, whither could he fly for assistance? He had staked his fortunes upon a single cast of the dice; but whether he lost or won, was a question still undecided.

The travellers, happy to escape from the tumult of the streets, which frightened Mangeli excessively, rode into the yard of the first caravanserai that could afford them accommodation. Here they remained for some days, until Kazim discovered a small house in the suburbs, which he was enabled to hire at a moderate expence. With Mangeli's experience and assistance, their humble residence was speedily supplied with the few articles of furniture which their wants required. This done, Kazim had no further occupation for his time than wandering through the streets of Lahore, and exploring the temples and other public buildings, with which the capital abounded.

One day, as he was standing in the courtyard of the palace amongst a crowd of spectators, gazing at a troop of cavalry, which were going through some evolutions in presence of their commander, a group of officers, with heron plumes waving in their caps, and golden cuirasses on their breasts, rode rapidly into the square, and stopping before the entrance into the palace formed a circle, as if waiting to escort some person of distinction, whom they expected from the palace.

In a few minutes a noble-looking figure, descending the steps of the portico, entered the circle, and mounting a caparisoned steed, which an attendant held there by the rein, rode away, followed by the officers, in the direction of the gate of Agra. The individual thus splendidly escorted, was himself dressed in plain attire, an ordinary turban, and a frock of coarse cloth, as if he were bound on a long journey. He passed close to Kazim, who could hardly take his eyes off that pale but intelligent face, from the moment he beheld it.

“Who can that person be?” asked Kazim, addressing one of those who, like himself, were

lounging in the square. His question was answered by another:—

“What! live you in Lahore, and not know that he, of whom you speak, is the prime minister, Abul Fazeel?”

“Impossible!” said Kazim; “I have certainly seen him before, but when or where, I cannot at this moment recollect.”

“Whether you have seen him or not, that is Abul Fazeel, and no other,” added the loungee, turning upon his heel from a stranger who could be worth no further notice, seeing that he did not know even the face of the prime minister.

A company of drummers, who came from the interior of the palace, then taking their stations at the foot of the portico, gave the signal, by a treble peal, of the approach of the emperor; upon which the square was immediately ordered to be cleared. Kazim, whose curiosity was excited to the highest degree, to behold the hero of whom he had heard so much at Samarcand, lingered behind the crowd as long as he could. But the troopers forced them out through the gates, striking the people, who all seemed as curious as Kazim himself, with the

handles of their spears. Kazim received a severe blow on his head, which almost stunned him, as the gates were closed in his face.

This was no very favourable omen, he thought, as he walked disheartened homeward, for one who had come hither in pursuit of public employment. There were, however, other occupations to which he hoped he might apply himself with advantage. The schools of Lahore were probably not all supplied with masters of poetry or rhetoric. He might tender them his services as a lecturer in either of those branches of education, or in mathematics, in which he was equally skilful. But while he resolved these projects in his mind, he could not dismiss from his memory the countenance of the minister. It seemed to his thought sometimes, when he questioned himself upon this point, as if he must have lived in some former world, where Fazool had been of his most intimate and esteemed acquaintance. So perfectly familiar to him were the lines of that fine forehead, and the expression of those penetrating eyes, that he had no doubt whatever of having seen them before, and that, too, under circumstances which had left behind them feelings of the most favour-

able description. But he vexed his memory in vain to find out in it any traces of the prime minister of Acbar; for although he had often heard of the name of Abul Fazcel, it was certain that, so far as he knew, he had never had the good fortune of meeting elsewhere with an individual so superior to himself in every respect.

CHAPTER XIV.

What soft, yet awful, dignity !
What meek, yet manly, grace !
What sweetness dances in his eye,
And blossoms in his face.

CHINESE POEM.

KAZIM postponed from day to day his application for employment at any of the schools of the capital, until at length, seeing his store of wealth wearing gradually away, he found himself compelled to make a vigorous effort for the future maintenance of his family. He proceeded, therefore, in the first instance, to the principal college, where the sons of several of the omrahs, and other noblemen, were educated, and stated his object, as well as his pretensions, in the most modest manner. But every office to which he aspired was already full ; and even if

that had not been the case, he was told that his pronunciation of the Persian was provincial, and not sufficiently pure for the capital.

Undepressed by this disappointment, Kazim next presented himself to the governor of another college of the first rank, who looked upon him as a great deal too young for the functions of a master. When obliged to mention, in his own defence, that he had passed through the university of Samarcand, not without distinction, and that he had perused most of the works which treated of the sciences, history, philosophy, and poetry, he was asked what books on divinity he had read. He confessed that he had given but a small portion of his time to that study, as very few of the compositions that met his eye upon that subject, seemed to him to discuss it in a satisfactory manner. Unfortunately for Kazim, the person whom he addressed had been a most voluminous author in the theological line; his dismissal followed, of course, without being softened by the slightest appearance of ceremony.

It was not without much difficulty, and many pangs of wounded pride, that Kazim, after these rebuffs from the higher academical establish-

ments, made up his mind to offer himself to one of the inferior grades, as a lecturer in the very rudiments of learning. His only fear was, that he should be too readily accepted, and thus fixed for life in a subordinate rank, from which he might never be promoted. But these, too, he found crowded in every department. By some his applications were treated with a cold civility; by others he was sneered at as a Tartar,—one of the nation especially hated by the Hindoos. When in the extremity of the misery which he felt under such repeated failures, he talked of his family, and throw out an intimation of his apprehensions for their fate, if he could meet with no employment, he was looked upon as an intruder and an adventurer, without connexions or character, and was more than once advised to go back to the wilds whence he came, for that there were too many already of his class in Lahore!

When returning to Mangali on these occasions, after walking about the capital the whole day to no purpose, the agony of his mind was overwhelming. The morning generally kindled a faint ray of hope in his breast; he knew not but that before night he might at length suc-

ceed in obtaining the object of his now humbled wishes. But as the day advanced, and disappointment followed disappointment, that feeble light again vanished, leaving his mind in a state of utter despair. His power of thought seemed to have abandoned him sometimes altogether. He leant against the corner of a street, and pressing his hand to his forehead, gazed wildly around him, as if he were in a dream, and knew not where he was or whither he was going. Often, overcome with fatigue, he could hardly trail one foot after another, as night after night he sought his home, with the same tale of misfortune. The point of sight in the prospect of his existence, which he thought he had found with so much certainty, when first he bent his way towards the Himalas, he now seemed to have irrecoverably lost. All was a dreary waste before him : the only relief of which his soul was susceptible, sprung from the unaltered affection of Mangeli, and the smiles of delighted recognition with which he was always received by the cherub she held out to kiss him on his arrival.

As a last resort, Kazim procured a little inkstand, and a few reeds, and having hired a stall in one of the principal streets, he sat there

under an awning of coarse grass, and copied out some of the poems which he had committed to memory, and also a few of his own stanzas, the compositions of happier days. These he was enabled to sell for a few couries to students who passed by his stall to the colleges. But when he found that his poems were laughed at by the critics of Lahore, by whom they were designated, with an insulting ambiguity, as the "beggar ballads," he ceased to offer any more of his own compositions for sale, confining himself to those which he could collect from other sources. His hand-writing, which was of the most elegant description, gradually obtained for him, however, more profitable employment among the merchants who resorted to the neighbouring baznars, for whom he drew up accounts, and letters on matters of business. The emolument which he thus earned was not much on the whole, but it was something to a frugal household; it dissipated the dense gloom that had for some time shrouded his intellect, and opened once more a prospect, though a faint one, of a favourable change in his fortune.

Sometimes, persons of the lowest order came to the amanuensis, requesting that he would pre-

pare petitions for them to the nobility and the courts of justice; and it was remarked by a muslin weaver, near whose shop his stall was situated, that trifling as the pittance was which he received from these people, he always listened to their instructions with cheerfulness, and executed them with zeal. His own misfortunes had touched his heart with sympathy for the poor, whenever they solicited the aid of his penmanship. Nor were the many private histories of distress with which he had thus become acquainted, during the seven long years he was obliged to dedicate to his new profession, without their effect upon his feelings. He learned from them, that however short of the visions of youth his condition had fallen, it was by no means at the lowest degree on the scale of existence.

He was not rich, it was true; but then he was free from the anxiety which riches always bring, and especially from those imaginary sufferings, worse than real woes, that haunt the mind when it is disengaged from the pursuit of the actual necessities of life. He had not attained any portion of that celebrity, or a single step of that rank, amongst his fellow men, to

which some years ago he had looked forward with so much ardour. But celebrity created envy, and rank only augmented ambition. Better to remain in obscurity, than to be spoken of and pointed at in the circles of the great as a Tartar adventurer, on whom they would be delighted to impose every kind of mortification. He had few acquaintances and no friends; but he possessed a well stored mind, whose sphere he extended according to his means, from day to day, which rendered him independent of society. In Mangeli, the light of his home, and in his daughter, whom his neighbours familiarly called Mhor-ul-Nissa, "the sun of her sex," from her remarkably graceful form and brilliant countenance, shining already with more than the beauty even of her mother, he had a fund of happiness in itself more precious than the sceptre of an empire.

One morning as Kazim was seated in his stall, waiting for any customer who might wish to employ his pen, a dervish addressed him, at the same time producing an ancient manuscript, which he said he wished to have copied as speedily as possible, as he was to wait upon the prime-minister, Abul Fazeel, with both the copy

and the original, in a few days. The composition was of some length, and upon looking over it, Kazim found that it related to the geography of Bengal.

"You must be aware," said the dervish, "that Abul Fazeel has only just returned to Lahore, after an absence of several years, which he has spent in travelling through the provinces of the empire, with a view to ascertain and place on record the nature of the soil, the produce, the climate, the manufactures, and the population, by which they are individually distinguished. From the continuation of the civil war which prevails in Bengal, he has not been able to traverse that magnificent region. Here is a full and a very accurate survey of that country, made a century ago, by a learned Arabian; it is, however, much soiled, and I fear, in some parts, illegible. Copy it in the best manner you can, and here will be your reward," putting into Kazim's hand a gold rupee.

In a few days the copy was complete, and the dervish took it away, thanking Kazim for the elegance and accuracy with which the transcript was executed. On presenting the original roll to Fazeel, the dervish also unfolded the copy be-

fore the minister, which he looked over for some time, with the most intense interest.

"This is, indeed," said the minister, "a most valuable document—a master-piece in every respect. The details are clear, and sufficiently ample for my purpose. But this hand-writing I have seen before—it must be that of a young man in whose fortunes I once felt a lively interest, but of whom I have never heard since that fatal expedition to"—

Here Fazeel checked himself, as if he felt that he had already gone farther than he intended.

"To Arjun," added the dervish. "I was there too; you have heard Achar, doubtless, speak of a poor dervish, who resided in the garden hut near Karaman"—

"And saved his life!—and ours! Excellent man—we never can sufficiently thank you!—You must come with me to the emperor."

"No—my habit would ill besit the court of Achar. Protect Kazim Ayas—I seek no further reward."

"Ah! this is indeed his hand. Bring the young man to me instantly. The emperor will,

I am sure, be delighted to advance the fortunes of our former companion in adversity."

The dervish returned without delay to the stall, where he found Kazim, as usual, industriously employed.

"I bear good tidings, young man," said he, his features glistening with heartfelt pleasure;—"Shut up your stall, and come with me just as you are."

Kazim, trembling with joy, did as he was desired, and as they proceeded to the palace the words, "To Hindostan, I say, when the snows are gone!" which he had for some time forgotten as a mere delusion of the fancy, now returned to his memory in a flood of light. Were they, then, the whisper of a vision, or was this the dervish who pronounced them?

On arriving at the palace, his companion, who in a decided, though friendly tone, stipulated that no enquiries should be made, as to himself, led Kazim into a spacious gallery that overlooked the royal gardens. As there was a crowd of courtiers waiting to see the minister, the dervish directed Kazim's attention, while they were waiting for their turn to be called, to the stately trees and fountains with which the

gardens were ornamented. Presently the sound of a musquet, and the smoke with which the explosion was accompanied, at the lower end of the gardens, excited Kazim's surprise. He had never seen arms of that description before. The dervish explained the nature of the instrument, while the sounds were again and again repeated, each explosion being followed by a shout of laughter from a group of young men, who appeared to be amusing themselves by firing at a target.

"It is a favourite sport of the prince Selim," said the dervish.—"See—here he comes, with his companions."

"What a very handsome person," observed Kazim; "I should at once have known him for a prince!"

"Handsome he undoubtedly is," rejoined the dervish; "rather too much so for the heir of such an extensive empire, which will demand more vigour, both of mind and limb, than I fear he will ever exhibit."

While the dervish was still speaking, the prince and his friends ascended from the gardens by the marble steps which led to the gallery.

"It is said," whispered the dervish to Kazim,

after they passed, "that the prince is already well acquainted with the fascinations of the wine-cup; nevertheless, although he is nearly thirty years of age, he does not, as you see, look five-and-twenty."

The crowds, in the ante-rooms, having at length sensibly diminished, the dervish and Kazim were directed to attend the minister. They found him in a splendidly decorated apartment, seated on a divan, with a large bundle of papers in his hand, from which he raised his eyes but for a moment, while he glanced at Kazim.

"Show that young man," said the minister to an attendant, "into my writing room, and give him these papers, which he must set about copying instantly."

Kazim was too much abashed by the novelty of his situation, to notice the features of the minister—though it struck him that the voice which he had just heard, was not altogether strange to his ear.* The dervish, pressing his hand warmly, resigned him to the care of the attendant, by whom he was conducted to an inner apartment, the floor of which was covered with papers, scattered about in all directions.

A spot having been cleared for his use, and writing implements having been placed before him, he was left alone to pursue the labours which had been assigned him.

The minister again addressed the good dervish, and entreated him to remain until the emperor, who was then at mid-day meal, should be disengaged. But, he said, that having at length succeeded in placing in the career of fame and fortune, one that would prove eminently worthy of both, he could not postpone his departure for Cashmere, whither he was bound on a pilgrimage. Fazeel could not even persuade him to accept an onyx ring, which he took off his finger, and receiving the blessing of the holy man, suffered him, with the greatest reluctance, to set out upon his journey.

Kazim scarcely knew how many hours he had been in his new office, when his attention was interrupted by the sound of steps. Immediately a door behind him, which he had not before perceived, opened, and Fazeel, with another person, clothed in a woven dress of silk and gold, bound at the waist by a zone of diamonds and rubies, stood before Kazim, smiling, as if they were amused by the attitude

of astonishment which he naturally assumed. He rose on his feet, looked first at one, then at the other, while the reed with which he had been writing fell from his hand, unnoticed on the floor, and his face was mantled in blushes.

"It must be Suleiman and Baba Seiram," at length exclaimed Kazim.

"Whom you now behold as Acbar and his minister Abul Fazeel," said the emperor, embracing the young man with tokens of the most lively pleasure. Kazim would have made his obeisance in the ordinary form, but this Acbar would not permit.

"No—no, no ceremony to-day. We are both extremely happy, to find that you have at last made your way to Hindostan, where you may count upon my invariable friendship."

"And Mangeli, too," said Fazeel; "has she also come with you? Doubtless as beautiful as ever!"

Kazim, overcome with emotion, knew scarcely how to reply to the numerous questions which the emperor and the minister then put to him rapidly one after another. He made no secret of any part of his story, disclosing the leading circumstances of his life, as they had occurred

since he had last seen them. Acbar kindly expressed his concern, that Kazim had not availed himself of the instructions, especially addressed to him in the letter which Fazeel had sent from Karaman. Kazim, in explanation, replied, that the letter duly reached the camp, but that as it had been unfortunately worn into fragments, he was prevented from becoming acquainted with the emperor's generous intentions in his behalf.

"Well ! well !" observed the sovereign, "we must now endeavour to repair the time you have lost. Fazeel will appoint you one of his principal secretaries, and I hope often, to see you, that we may talk over our adventures in Arjun."

"With respect to which, however," added Fazeel, as Acbar retired by the door at which he had entered, "it will be necessary for you to be silent to all other persons. That expedition was, as you know, a most unfortunate affair in every respect; one of those sudden and irresistible resolutions, which the emperor's extraordinary genius for war sometimes acts upon, without the requisite deliberation. He had nearly lost Hindostan, while endeavouring by rapid move-

ments and surprises, to break up a confederacy that had been preparing in the north, the object of which was to pour down troops into the then rebellious provinces of Cashmere and Lahore. The adoption of the name of Suleiman, who was actually one of the chieftains engaged in the conspiracy, was one of those stratagems which have sometimes served him successfully in lieu of an army, although upon that occasion we were indeed any thing but fortunate. It was well that we were enabled even to make good our escape to Lahore, where, however, order has since been in a great measure restored."

Kazim listened to Fazeel with the deepest interest, rejoicing inwardly in the delight which he should feel in imparting to Mangeli the sudden alteration that had taken place in their fortunes.

CHAPTER XV.

But soft!—what heavenly shape appears,
 Shedding pale lustre like the moon!
 Some angel's form the vision wants;
 Sweet maid! that angel form's thy own.

SADU.

THE papers which Razeel intrusted to Kazim, for the purpose of being duly arranged and copied, were necessarily of great extent, as they embraced copious reports upon the actual condition of almost every one of the twenty-two provinces, then composing the empire of India. It became the business of the new secretary, not only to transcribe the voluminous mass with his own hand, but to digest it in a methodical order, to divide it into sections, and render the whole easily accessible by a summary of his

own, which would enable the minister to refer at once to any passages it might be necessary for him to peruse in detail. The duty was one that employed Kazim very closely for three or four years; it enabled him to become perfectly acquainted with the whole resources of Acbar's dominions.

The accurate knowledge which Kazim thus acquired, with reference to the state of the provinces, he had great facility in making available, whenever he was consulted upon the numerous memorials and reports periodically sent up from those districts to Lahore. No decrees were issued, with respect to the grievances or difficulties of which they complained, without the co-operation of Kazim, who usually prepared the first draughts of the necessary ordinances for the minister. Thus he proceeded, step by step, to render his abilities and varied information eminently useful in the most important department of government. His suggestions were uniformly remarkable for their good sense, their humanity, and, above all, their tendency towards the establishment of the administration of justice upon a basis at once pure and economical.

Although the fortunes of Kazim were now so vastly improved, as compared with that portion of his life which he had spent in his stall, he never forgot those who employed him at that time. Many he advanced to offices, that enabled them to acquire a decent competency; to others he gave occupation upon estates, bestowed upon him by the emperor; while, for those who were of a military disposition, he obtained appointments in the armies, kept up by Acbar on a scale requisite to meet the numerous insurrections that almost continually broke out in one quarter or another of India.

When the emperor removed his court to Agra, which he named as the metropolis of his empire, he, at the same time, constituted Kazim his high treasurer, and assigned him a splendid residence at a short distance from the palace, on the banks of the Jumna. The appointment gave great satisfaction to the people, amongst whom the new minister was universally beloved for his inflexible impartiality; his entire freedom from that taint of corruption which had hitherto sullied many of the most important public stations; and espe-

cially for that modest and engaging demeanour, which he still preserved unchanged from what it was before his elevation. The power he thus, derived, from one of the first dignities the sovereign could bestow, afforded him opportunities of which he fully availed himself, in order to advance the interests of science, literature, and the fine arts. He invited to Agra those men who had most distinguished themselves throughout the country for their intellectual accomplishments, and their skill in architecture, sculpture, painting, and music. His house was the resort, not only of the chief officers attached to the court, but also of poets, historians, and eminent men of every class, to whom he felt it a sacred duty to show the most cordial marks of his attention.

It was wonderful with what eagerness the manuscripts, which Kazim had written in his stall, were now bought up on every side. The "Beggars Ballads," which had formerly drawn down the ridicule of the critics of Lahore, were henceforth looked upon as so many gems, for which precious stones of enormous price were gladly exchanged, by those who wished to pay their court to the minister. He, who well

knew the value of his own productions, and was conscious that whatever his faculties were for the cultivation of science and philosophy, they were never destined to shine in the temple of the muses, accepted all the incense of these panegyrists for just as much as it was worth. It did not prevent him from rewarding real merit, even where he found it accompanied by such fulsome adulation; but, on the other hand, he listened with silent indifference to the compliments of those who hoped that mere flattery would compensate for their want of worth. The incidents of his life were made themes of eulogy and emulation in the very schools which had shut their doors upon him at Lahore; and the origin of the "adventurer," as he was called some years ago, was now traced back to the same sources which had given the reigning dynasty to Hindostan!

Kazim would have been more or less than man, if his breast were wholly free from emotions of just pride, when he, who on his first arrival in that country, scarcely knew where he might rest his head, now beheld his halls thronged with guests of the most elevated rank, including, occasionally, the Emperor, often the Prince

Selim, the Omrahs, the governors of the provinces, the principal warriors, and the heads of every department of the government. Nevertheless, he confessed to Mangeli, and she knew his acknowledgment to be true, that his happiest moments were those which he spent in his private cabinet, assisting in the education of their beloved daughter, upon whose growing charms they gazed with new delight, from day to day.

The figure of Mher-Ul-Nissa, which, from its earliest development, seemed to have been chiselled by the hand of the statuary, assumed a more radiant loveliness, as she approached the years of maturity. Her hair, of a light golden hue, hung to the knee, when she untied the fillet that held it together. Her liquid blue eyes, if fired by no emotion, shone serenely, like the full orb of the moon, through the long dark lashes by which they were surrounded. But the lightest smile animated their lustre, diffusing over her finely pencilled brows a beguiling expression, in which, however, playfulness was always mingled with a peculiar dignity. An oval cheek, with a scarcely perceptible shade of brown, which became ruby with every

strong impulse of her mind, a mouth exquisitely formed, a bosom that seemed to contain two white rose-buds of Cashmere, just before they begin to blow, and delicately tapered limbs that awakened life and light around them wherever they moved, gave matchless splendour to her beauty.

Her varied accomplishments were in every way worthy of the external graces with which she was endowed. The arts of embroidery and painting, for which she evinced an early predilection, afforded an elegant occupation to the hours not absorbed in more intellectual pursuits. She inherited her father's taste for fine literature; and was intimately conversant with the best productions of Persia and Arabia. She was initiated in the science of music by the first masters, whose lessons she improved into inspirations, by the inventive powers which she exhibited, whenever she touched the mandolin or lute. Her voice was remarkable for its melody, but still more so for the enthusiastic tones which it sometimes poured forth, as if her soul, borne away by a sudden flood of feeling, emulated the strains of some world superior to her own. When she danced, she looked an

aerial being, as she moved over the floor, which she scarcely seemed to touch. To these accomplishments she added a point of character more endearing than them all, a passionate attachment to those excellent parents, to whose affection she was in a great measure indebted for the enviable blessings she enjoyed.

Kazim, with difficulty, restrained himself from giving expression to the pleasure which he experienced on every occasion, when Mher-ul-Nissa, preceded by Mangeli, and followed by her Circassian attendants, appeared before his guests. As the imperial court never adhered to the strict rules of the Koran, which prohibit women from mingling in the company of men, it was usual to introduce the ladies into the banqueting-room as soon as the wine, which also refused at Agra to acknowledge the law of the prophet, was succeeded by coffee. Upon such occasions, however, the ladies were uniformly veiled, unless the circle of visitors consisted exclusively of near relatives, or very intimate friends. It may be doubted whether that appendage to the dress did not tend rather to increase the curiosity and heighten the admiration of the guest, when he beheld through it the

blush of the cheek and the sparkle of the eye, little, if at all, dimmed by the gossamer cloud behind which they were supposed to be concealed. Certain it is, that Kazim seldom gave a banquet which was not followed the next day by boundless compliments upon the beauty of his daughter, and by earnest enquiries as to the name of the fortunate nobleman for whom she was destined. These questions, sometimes thrown out in an indirect manner, sometimes pointed in a way difficult to be encountered, he generally succeeded in evading on the ground of her youth, and her being his only child. But the time was already approaching when he found that it would become his duty, however reluctantly, to make up his mind on a matter so essentially connected with the happiness of her future life.

Amongst those of his guests whom Kazim, from the commencement of their acquaintance, admitted to his bosom friendship, was Shere Afkun, a Turcomanian chieftain, who was also held in great esteem by the emperor. His original name was Asta Jillo; but, having, by his great personal strength, in which he was altogether unrivalled, slain a lion, after a severe

contest with the animal, he was thenceforth designated Shere Afkun, or the overthrower of the lion, from that circumstance. He had already distinguished himself by the side of his imperial master, in many a hard-fought field. His fidelity had been tried more than once, by the most brilliant offers on the part of those discontented noblemen, who treated Acbar as an usurper, and did every thing in their power to foment insurrection throughout the empire. Not only wealth without limit, but the sceptre of Hindoستان was suggested as a temptation to the ambition of Afkun, if he would desert the standard to which he had sworn allegiance. His ancestors, however, had always been attached to the Mogul dynasty; he had pledged himself to it by the "great oath," and as he was a man of a truly upright mind and unblemished honour, who would sooner give up his life than violate a promise, he spurned all these seductions with a proud indignation, which created for him, in the rebellious provinces, numerous enemies.

But to their hostility Afkun paid little regard. Firm in his own purity of feeling, elevated by the noblest sentiments, far above the

sordid crowd, who were shaken in their allegiance by every rumour of civil war with which the capital was inundated, and marked out by the well-merited favour of Achar, as one of the principal officers of the empire, he pursued the path of his duty with a steadiness of determination, that proved the sincerity of his character. He was a remarkably fine looking young man, frank and engaging in his manners, and of considerable intelligence, considering that from the moment he was able to wield a sabre, his life had been chiefly spent in camps. During the few hours which Kazim had the opportunity of devoting to out-door recreation, Afkun was generally his companion. They rode together into the country, or walked in the gardens behind Kazim's residence, conversing, without reserve on either side, upon affairs of state, or upon subjects of a religious or philosophical kind, for which Afkun, unlike most of his countrymen, had a decided turn.

Sometimes it happened, that in the course of their walks in those charming retreats, they would observe Mangeli and Mhor-ul-Nissa watering a flower-bed, or gathering fruit, or working at embroidery, beneath the shade of a

favourite plane-tree. Kazim was always delighted to join the two dearest objects of his affection, and he felt no disposition to prevent Afkun from following his example. The presence of the young Turcomanian necessarily imposed some restraint upon the demeanour of Mherul-Nissa. Her eyes were then fixed with more than usual earnestness upon her tambour frame; her fingers seemed to be animated with more than their ordinary grace, while they were rapidly strewing roses wherever her fancy directed. If those eyes sometimes glanced at the chieftain when he addressed his conversation to her mother, it was an accidental circumstance—the result of natural curiosity, to ascertain what the stranger looked like. But when it happened that once or twice they directly flashed against his own, and the conflict heightened the blush of health upon her cheek, and unaccountably impeded the current of his speech, he began to think that he would prefer the shade in which he sat, even to the unearthly bowers promised by the founder of his religion.

Mangeli was the first to warn Kazim of the consequences of these visits, unless he had already determined on the line of conduct

which he should adopt, in case Afkan should demand the hand of his daughter. There was nothing in such a connexion to which either parent could discover any objection. On the contrary, should the matter turn out in that way, they were fully disposed to believe that it could only result in the happiness of both parties. The Turcomanian was a nobleman of distinguished birth, and ample possessions; he was deservedly esteemed by the emperor, who had signified his intention of appointing Afkan to the government of the first province which should become vacant. Mher-Ul-Nissa was in every respect suited to the exalted station to which such a union would raise her, and although there were those who whispered into her ear, that she might, if she were ambitious, look forward to a rank still higher—the first in the empire, when Selim should succeed to the throne; nevertheless the thoughtful parents perfectly agreed that that was a wild dream, which she ought not to entertain for a moment, and which, if it could be realized, would lead only to her unhappiness, perhaps her ruin.

When the maid was questioned playfully by her mother, as to the attentions of the prince

Selim, which rumour had already invented or exaggerated, she could really find nothing in them. They were no more than he had paid to a thousand others. When, after dining with Kazim, he was heated with wine, it appeared that he always waited to see the ladies, and fixed his eyes incessantly on Mher-UI-Nissa, to whom he had once presented a bouquet of variegated flowers, which, translated into language, imported that he was her slave, or something to that effect. But it was well known that his attachments were as transitory as they were violent, and that, although his station allowed him already to have several wives, he seemed to treat them all with equal indifference. It was scarcely to be expected, that the heir apparent of the empire of Hindostan could ever fix his affections upon a single object, and that was in itself an objection with Mher-UI-Nissa, as well as with Mangeli, of an irremovable character.

Perhaps if the secret wishes of the daughter were revealed to the mother, it might have been discovered that the former had been more flattered by the bouquet presented to her by Selim, than she chose to acknowledge even to herself.

It was the first gift of the kind she had ever received; it was the earliest token of homage from the lordly sex, that had been laid at her feet. If, in the visions that then began to interrupt the sweet sleep to which she had been previously accustomed, the image of the prince more than once appeared,—inviting her to sit beside him on the throne of the most splendid empire in the world,—it was still no more than a delusion of the night, though it left a feverish train of thought behind it, that too often recurred to her during the gentle occupations of the succeeding day.

CHAPTER XVI.

A viewless bow directs the dart;
 I feel, yet know not whence the smart.
No outward scar to sight reveals
 The wound my struggling bosom feels.
PERSIAN POEM.

THE death of the subah of Cashmere at length enabled Acbar to confer upon Afkun the command of that important province. The moment the chieftain received his nomination, he said that he had another favour to ask from his sovereign, which, if it were granted, would render his felicity indeed complete. He then mentioned the feelings which he entertained towards the daughter of his majesty's high treasurer, and entreated the exertion of Acbar's influence in that quarter, which could hardly fail to be successful. The emperor readily ac-

ceeded to the solicitations of Afkun, and sent for Kazim, to whom he opened the subject, as one deserving immediate consideration. It was not, of course, proposed, he said, that any extraordinary expedition should be adopted, with reference to the union of the parties; the more especially as the unquiet state of Cashmere demanded the presence of the new governor there without delay. But if no previous engagement or difficulty interposed, the preliminary ceremonies of betrothing might take place, before the departure of Afkun. Kazim frankly confessed that the proposition afforded him the highest gratification, as it was well known that he had long entertained towards that young nobleman the most unaffected esteem. But he hoped that, however unusual it was in Hindostan to consult the party who was, perhaps, the most interested on such an occasion, he might be permitted to refer Afkun to Mher-Ul-Nissa herself, for an answer. In the mean time, he proceeded to communicate to his family the results of his interview with the emperor.

The intelligence which her father brought fell upon the ear of Mher-Ul-Nissa like a thunderbolt. It had never occurred to her before

that at any time of her life she should be under the necessity of abandoning her paternal home. In the first emotions of her breast, she clasped her arms round her mother, and wept upon her bosom, as if the greatest calamity that could happen had befallen her, on that fatal morning. The thoughts of becoming the wife of Afkun, —of removing with him to the distant province of Cashmere, —of being exiled from her parents, —from Agra, whose splendour had powerful fascinations for her mind, habituated as she had been to the luxuries of that metropolis, —and (perhaps, above all) the extinction of that small ray of hope, which she cultivated with a fond devotion in secret, derived from the bouquet of the prince! —threw her into a state of depression and grief, little suited to an occasion that required from her feelings of a very different description.

Nothing could have been more remote from Kazim's intentions, than a pressure of the slightest possible degree upon the wishes of his daughter. He fancied that he had, more than once, observed an expression of no ordinary pleasure in her countenance, whenever he announced that Afkun was to share their private

family dinner. Neither could she deny, that the young Turcomanian had often walked with her alone in the garden; that she played on her lute, and sang for him; and that she listened with a lively attention to the description which he gave her of the peculiar customs of his country, and of the battles in which he had been engaged. But when she was reminded of all these indications of a favourable feeling, on her part, as well as of the many circumstances which, on his side, also gave proof of the decided preference he entertained for her society, she replied that there was nothing in all that of the kind of sacred feeling which ought to bind two hearts together,—that feeling, for instance, which she beheld exemplified in the daily intercourse of her beloved parents. She was told, indeed, that such a sentiment as that, identifying two persons so completely as to cause every thought and hope to flow in the same channel, could only be the result of years. But she could not be persuaded that there was not some ardent and overwhelming impulse of the heart, which made up for the want of time, and converted a moment of genuine emotion into an eternity of love. She had read of such a pas-

sion in the verses of Binai, who sang them to his own enchanting music. The poet Abili, also, though he could neither read nor write, had well expressed what she meant.

Kazim looked upon his daughter with deep anxiety, while she spoke in this style, of feelings which he supposed she had hardly as yet known from experience. But the emphasis of her expressions—the rapture that glowed in her countenance, while she opened her heart thus innocently to her parent, excited in his mind a strong apprehension that Mher-Ul-Nissa had already engaged her affections to another. She assured him, however, that such was by no means the case, and that she only repeated what she had read in the compositions he had himself placed before her. As a decisive proof of her sincerity upon this point, she said that she had no objection whatever to receive Afkun, whom she much esteemed; but whether or not she could ever know any higher feeling in his regard, would entirely depend on circumstances. Kazim kissed his daughter for her compliance with his desire, that, at all events, the advances of his young friend should be treated with the utmost delicacy and respect.

Afkun, rejoicing in the permission that was accorded to him, presented himself the next morning to Mangeli, who told him that he would find her daughter feeding a whole tribe of gazelles in the garden. The chieftain, to whom fear had never been known, trembled from head to foot, as he proceeded towards the spot where the animals were assembled. Mher-Ul-Nissa, who had not expected him so soon, was occupied in examining the foot of one of her favourites, which had been lamed for some time. The beautiful eyes of the gazelle were looking into hers, as if to express all the gratitude which it felt for her attentions, while she spoke to it in that soft tone of affection, which falls upon a lover's heart, like the gentle rain from heaven on the flowers, in the season of their opening.

"Go your way, Ililali; you will soon be well now. Your pretty foot is almost as strong as ever. But mind, you must not scramble up the trees, and then leap down again upon the earth, as you did when you nearly killed yourself the other day. Go your way, Ililali; and now, where is my gay Pezu?" asked Mher-Ul-Nissa, turning round, when the whole troop, to

her surprise, scampered away to the lower part of the garden.

"I fear I have disturbed your gazelles, Mher-Ul-Nissa," said Afkun, approaching her.

"They are very wild and shy of strangers."

"They are the most beautiful animals of the kind I have seen; they must be happy too, since they are the objects of your care."

"I hope they know what happiness is; grateful I am sure they are for the little attention I have been able to show them."

"They must have intelligence and affection, if we believe the eloquence of their eyes, and all that the poets have sung in their praise."

"At all events they cannot deceive; they know not how to flatter."

"Those are the acts of courtiers, Mher-Ul-Nissa; you will soon find that out, if you remain much longer in Agra."

"Those wild gazelles! they will trample down all my flowers. Hilali! Hilali! come hither; as usual, you are the leader in every kind of mischief!"

Mher-Ul-Nissa, while she thus called to

the animals, which were frisking about among her yellow roses like mad creatures, hastened along an avenue of palms, accompanied by Afkun, who assisted her to collect the gazelles together, until a slave approaching, relieved them from further anxiety, by calling the flock away.

"The emperor," resumed Afkun, leading his fair companion to a green bank, on which he entreated her to sit down; "has honoured me, as perhaps you may have already heard, by giving me the vice-royalty of Cashmere."

"An honourable appointment; I congratulate you sincerely."

"As new disturbances have broken out, which demand my presence there, I am ordered to quit Agra to-morrow."

"So soon!"

"Such are the emperor's commands; I shall leave the capital with regret; I did hope that my duties might have permitted me to enjoy the society of your family somewhat longer. The attentions which I have uniformly received, I may say from every member of it, shall ever hold a place in my heart."

“ My father will miss you in his rides, and in those evening walks which you used so often to take together in these groves.”

“ Ah ! that you would say as much, Mher-Ul-Nissa, for another, whose kind remembrance of me occasionally would be still more valuable in my eyes.”

“ Doubtless, we shall all think of one whom my father so much esteems.”

“ I thank you, from my soul, for these words ; I know not the man who is so much to be envied as Kazim Ayas ! What a happiness, above all price, for him, occupied as he is during the greater portion of his time, in matters of the highest importance, to be able to fly from the cares of state, as I have often seen him do, to these delightful shades ; certain of meeting in his family those genial affections which at once relax the mind, and attemper it for the renewal of its noblest efforts !”

“ He deserves every thing from us !” said Mher-Ul-Nissa, her affection melting as she spoke, into tears, which stood suspended on her cheeks like pearls of dew on the rose.

“ Would that I were enabled to look forward

to felicity such as his!" added Afkun, taking Mher-Ul-Nissa's hand, which she did not draw away. "You must forgive me, but I find it impossible to set out from Agra without confessing the spell that is on my heart. Could I have been so often seated by you, listening to your voice—your mandolin—and have observed the affectionate attentions which you shew, upon all occasions, to your admirable parents, without feeling a desire, that you were to me as Mangeli is to Kazim Aya?"

Mher-Ul-Nissa was silent. The tears, which she now endeavoured to hide, still coursed each other down her cheek, as if the source whence they flowed were never to be exhausted. Afkun, following her averted eyes, found her gazing on a lily-of-the-valley, which she had taken from her bosom. It was one of the symbols which composed the bouquet of Selim!

"May I wear it?" asked Afkun, endeavouring to snatch the flower. "May I wear it as a token of you?"

"Not that, not that—I love it too much—I mean I cannot part with it; it was the first gift I have ever received."

"Which would have made me value it the more! Oh! Mher-UI-Nissa, you know not how passionately I love you. I could not have refused you an empire, had it been at my command — and you refuse me a flower!"

"I have said it was a gift,—the first gift I ever received. If I presented it to you, would you part with it to another?"

"Not for worlds!"

"Then why blame me?"

"You then love another!"

"My father has taught me to respect—to esteem his friend."

"You cannot love me, Mher-UI-Nissa! —your hand is pledged to some more fortunate being?"

"Not so, Afkun—if that had been the case, I should have confessed it to you at once, with that frankness which I hope belongs to me."

"If I go to Cashmere, without some hope that I may expect a more favourable answer from you, I shall care little what becomes of me. With you, life, power, dignity, would

be precious to me ; but without you they can be nothing."

" You will, doubtless, often hear from my father, after you arrive in Cashmere."

" But shall he be permitted to speak of Mher-Ul-Nissa ?"

" Perhaps !"

" That is as much as I can press for at present. May Allah bless you, and direct you towards that which may be most for your own happiness !"

" Be assured, Afkun, that happen what may, you will be often remembered by us, while you are absent," added Mher-Ul-Nissa, much softened by the ardour of her lover, and at the same time looking at him with a degree of tenderness, which he had not experienced from her before.

Rising from the bank, she led the way to the house, where they found Kazim and Mangeli waiting, with no common anxiety, to learn the result of the interview. The experienced minister, well-accustomed to penetrate the feelings of men from the expression of the countenance, read at once in Afkun's quivering lip and

pallid cheek, the disappointment which he had met. He saw, however, from the manner of his daughter, before she retired with her mother, that some hope still remained of the accomplishment of the object, to which he himself looked forward with the deepest interest.

Afkun mentioned, in a despairing tone, every thing that passed; with the exception of his own fears, that Mher-Ul-Nissa had already given her affection to another. Those fears he could not prevail upon himself to disclose, as it was clear that, if they were well-founded, Kazim was ignorant of the existence of any such predilection; and it would scarcely be generous towards the maid, that he should be the first to discover her secret.

"Well! well!" observed Kazim, "after all, I do not see why you should despair. She is still young in years, though in intellect so mature. Go to your government. A battle or two will do wonders for you; and if you come back with a few gashes on your breast, after tranquillizing your province, be assured that you cannot have a better passport to the heart of a woman."

The chieftain soon took leave, without feeling much encouragement from the soothing language addressed to him by Kazim; and before dawn, on the following morning, he was on his way to Cashmere.

CHAPTER XVII.

The love of a being, composed, like thyself, of water and clay, destroy thy patience and peace of mind ; it excites thee, in thy waking hours, with minute beauties, and engages thee in thy sleep, with vain imaginations. With such zeal dost thou lay thy head on her foot, that the universe, in comparison of her, vanishes into nothing before thee. Not a breath dost thou utter to any one else ; for, with her, thou hast no room for any other. Thou declarest, that her abode is in thine eye ; or, when thou closest it, in thy heart. Thou hast no fear of censure from any man ; thou hast no power to be at rest for a moment. If she demand thy soul, it runs instantly to thy lip.

BURAN, Book 3.

ACBAR could not have selected an officer, in every respect, more competent to the duties which the state of Cashmere at that period demanded from its governor, than Shere Afshan

His pre-eminent personal prowess, his mild demeanour, his attention to the wants of his troops, his prudence in undertaking enterprises, and his valour in carrying them into execution, rendered him one of the most popular chieftains in the empire. When in the camp, there was no distinction observable between his diet and that of the meanest soldier in his army. There was a slight love of show evinced in his dress; but even that frailty endeared him the more to his men, as it tended to set off to advantage the fine figure by which he was distinguished.

None of the instructions of the prime minister, Fazeel, were more acceptable to him than those by which he was directed to provide the most energetic measures for the administration of justice, throughout every department of his government; and at the same time, for relieving the distresses of those families who had remained faithful to the emperor, but whose possessions had been laid waste by the insurgents. Afkun extended the new regulations to all those whom he found afflicted by the events of the civil war, to whatever party they belonged. He preferred conciliation to perse-

cution ; and while with one hand he held the sabre, and carried fire and destruction into the quarters of the obstinate^e foes of Acbar, in the other he bore the laws with which he was entrusted, offering pardon and protection to those who were disposed to return to the paths of submission and order.

The well-known character of the governor preceded him to Cashmere, where his arrival acted like a charm upon the different parties, who were engaged in contending for the supremacy. Most of the higher noblemen of the province speedily rallied round his standard, and enabled him to march with an imposing force against the rebels, who were still in arms. The reports that reached the emperor from other sources, detailed the difficulties against which Afkun had to make way, as much more serious than he admitted them to be in any of his despatches. Several engagements had taken place in the course of a few months, which were treated by the governor as mere skirmishes ; but it appeared, in point of fact, that not only had they required incessant vigilance, superior skill, and indefatigable activity on his part, but that to his single arm

alone, unquailing under the pressure of alarming vicissitudes in the field, and sometimes of defections, at critical moments, on the part of those who had promised assistance both in men and provisions, the complete re-conquest of the province was to be attributed.

The emperor, though now somewhat advanced in years, attended with peculiar exultation to the triumphant progress of his arms in Cashmere. No person could have better appreciated than himself, the arrangements devised and executed by Afkun, for the security of the tranquil districts, and for the subjugation of those whose fidelity wavered, even for a moment. The name of the chieftain was never mentioned in his presence, without calling forth a high eulogy upon the mode in which he performed every part of the duties entrusted to his care. The deeds of the Turcoman were the perpetual theme of the courtiers, who, in this instance at least, were sincere in the praises which they bestowed. He was the hero of the day; his proceedings were the subject of many a tale and ballad, accompanied with rude portraits of the warrior, which bore, perhaps, as much resemblance to his features, as they did

to those of Baber, or Timur, or any other leader who had ever obtained renown in Hindostan.

The fame of Afkun,* of course, reached the ears of Mher-Ul-Nissa, whom the gossip of the palace, as well as the gratitude of the people of the capital, had already assigned to the Turcomanian, as the most acceptable reward he could receive, for the important services which he had rendered to the empire. Her beauty was scarcely less celebrated than his valour. Her charms could scarcely, indeed, have been exaggerated; but poetry had full scope for the exercise of its licence, as Mher-Ul-Nissa was seldom seen abroad, unless when with her mother she attended the principal mosque at the conclusion of the Ramazan, or the other great festivals of the year.

Among the attendants of Mher-Ul-Nissa, was a pale Circassian girl, named Kanun, descended from a family which had once held princely rank in her own country. There was a peculiar gentleness in the manners of this slave, which gained for her the sympathy and confidence of her young mistress. She was tall for her age; her features, though regular, were marked rather by an interesting expression, than by de-

cided beauty; she was a skilful embroiderer, played the tambourine and dulcimer to perfection, and had a memory abundantly stored with tales, with which she frequently amused her mistress, as well as the whole circle of her companions, while they sat at work in the chamber assigned them for that purpose. * * *

It was remarked by her fellow slaves, that for some time after the departure of Afkun from the capital, Kanun looked paler than ever, and that her memory, usually so perfect, had failed to supply her with the succession of stories which she had been previously accustomed to relate for their entertainment, especially of those that were relieved occasionally by scenes of drollery, with which she used often to make them laugh by the hour, until they would entreat her to desist. For some reason or other, she seemed lately to have forgotten every kind of narrative, that did not bear on the actions of brave warriors, and she felt the greatest delight in repeating the ballads which had been circulated through Agra, in praise of the governor of Cashmere.

Sometimes Kanun sat with Mher-Ul-Nisan, beneath her favourite plane-tree, in the garden;

and while both were engaged in embroidery, she would relate to her mistress, with a minuteness of detail that lost nothing in her hands, the most recent reports which had arrived from Cashmere. Whatever was authentic in those communications, Mher-Ul-Nissa had; of course, already heard from her father, who perceived, with unaffected pleasure, that she listened with more and more earnestness, every day, to the tidings which he brought of his young friend's glorious career. But nothing surprised or amazed the intelligent mind of the mistress, more than the marvellous additions, which the slave either invented herself, or related from the information of others, concerning almost every transaction, even the most trifling, in which the Turcomanian chief had any share. His very appearance in the field of battle filled the enemy with terror; he slew thousands with his own sabre, as he plunged into the midst of their ranks; arrows and javelins showered upon him by the foe, instead of injuring him, formed an iron canopy over his head, protecting him from every danger. There was a virtue in his touch, which cured the wounded; the genii bestowed upon him elephant-loads of gold, which

he distributed amongst the poor, and above all, he was the idol of the women, wherever he went. Kanun positively assured her mistress, that the governor had already a harem more numerous than either the emperor or the prince Selim, and that the most beautiful of the sex in the royal establishments, was deformity itself, when compared to the houis, whom Mahomet had already sent to reward the valour of Afkun.

“Why all this to me, Kanun?” exclaimed Mher-Ul-Nissa, displeased with the girl for touching so freely on this latter topic.

“Ah! it is too true! Alas! I fear he will never come to Agra again;—never more shall we see his fine manly form, and his waving plumes, among these groves!”

“So, so! you remember him then! I was not aware you had ever beheld him.”

“That tower, which you see peeping above the palace, commands almost every part of the garden.”

“And so, whenever Afkun came hither with my father, you watched all their movements.”

“That tower is a favourite place with us all. We have views from it over a great part of the

capital, and the surrounding country. Therefore, if Afkun happened to be here, you know we could not help seeing him." *

"Were your companions as great admirers of him as you seem to have been?"

"Ah! who that had once beheld that noble Turcomanian, could have done otherwise than adore him?"

"What a deep drawn sigh was there! Why surely, Kanun, you are not in love with the viceroy of Cashmere?"

"I know not—— but this I am sure of; had I been Mher-Ul-Nissa, I should certainly not have refused him that lily of the valley!"

"What do you mean?" asked the mistress, blushing deeply, on finding that there had been eyes in the tower, from which her last interview with the chieftain had not been concealed.

"Why, I mean that I should not only have given him the lily, but the whole bouquet of the prince into the bargain. Only compare them for a moment together.—Afkun young, handsome, brave, wise, with a heart entirely devoted to you. I do believe he would have kissed the very ground on which you walked. Then think of the prince,—the heir of the empire it is

true—but with a harem full of wives—not one of whom he loves—wandering about the streets, often in the disguise of a common beggar, with a set of low companions, whom he leads into all sorts of disgraceful practices, drinking with them wine by night and day. No, no! there is no comparison between two such persons! Afkun is indeed a man. Selim is nothing better than a ——.”

“Hush! for Allah’s sake! You must be mad, Kanun, to speak in this manner before me of the future emperor of Hindostan.”

Kanun, who observed the half smile with which this reproof was conveyed, was proceeding to relate one of the newest pieces of scandal which had been circulated about the prince, when she started suddenly on her feet, as if she had been bitten by a snake. “It is divine! What an exquisite lutanist! And there is a guitar, too, and a dulcimer! I thought I myself performed on that instrument moderately well; but after hearing that last shake, I shall never touch it again!”

“The music must be somewhere near us, Kanun!”

“It is here, among the cedars.”

"Ah! I see; it is a little stratagem of my father, to provide what he well knows is to me the most fascinating of all amusements!"

"Both the air and words are new."

While Mher-ul-Nissa and her attendant were listening with equally pleased attention, the musicians gradually, but respectfully, approached the plane-tree, still continuing a ballad descriptive of the feelings of a young warrior, who was obliged, by the dictates of duty, to separate himself from his mistress at the moment that she had plighted to him her faith. The soldier fought his way to glory; and the composition, apparently the production of no ordinary hand, concluded with the incidents of a combat, in which he fell beneath the superior power of his enemy. This was followed by another poem, set to music, of a most pathetic character, in which the unhappy maid, who had followed her hero to the wars, was portrayed wandering over the field of battle, until she found him of whom she was in search, but now cold upon the bare ground, with no covering save the canopy of heaven. The agonies of the lover were then told with such effect, both in the verse and the music,

that Mher-Ul-Nissa, moved even to tears, unable to restrain her apprehensions, desired Kanun to ask the minstrels whether this ballad were no more than the invention of a poet, or whether indeed it related in any manner to Afkun.

The Circassian girl heard not the command given her: all her attention was devoted to the lutanist, who, though he at first touched the instrument with inimitable grace, seemed for some time to have lost his powers of execution, and to employ all his faculties in observing the change that took place in the countenance of Mher-Ul-Nissa. There was something, too, in the appearance of the musician, which reminded Kanun so strongly of Afkun himself, that she watched his looks and movements with the same intense curiosity which he betrayed in following those of her mistress.

"Alas, Kanun!" exclaimed Mher-Ul-Nissa, resting her hand for support on the shoulder of her attendant, "should this be the true history of Afkun?"

"He would be the happiest of men, even in death," added the lutanist, falling on one knee before her; "for he would then be wept as he now is by Mher-Ul-Nissa." These tears repay

me for every danger,—for what was still more afflicting to me, the long season of fearful doubts which I have spent since my departure from Agra.”

Kannu was all rapture on account of the return of the chieftain. She ran off to her companions to be the first to communicate the joyful intelligence; leaving her mistress in the care of her lover, and altogether forgetting whether, at such a moment, her services might not have been much more necessary under the plane-tree than in the embroidery chamber. The clamour which they all set up, drew the attention of Mangeli, who was engaged in hearing her husband reading a letter from Askun, announcing his immediate return to Agra. Though not prepared for his appearance so speedily, and that too in the disguise of a lutanist, it need hardly be added, that on once more beholding their young friend, covered as he was now with fresh glories, and manifestly accepted as the future spouse of their beloved daughter, their delight was at least as sincere, though not quite so enthusiastically expressed, as that of the Circassian maid herself.

CHAPTER XVIII

The boatmen shout---" 'tis time to part
No longer we can stay !"

'Twas then Minnunn taught my heart,
How much a glance could say !

With trembling steps to me she came ,
" Farewell ! " she would have cried
But ere her lips the word could frame,
In half formed sounds it died . "

Then bending down, with looks of love,
Her arms she round me hung ;
And, as the gale hangs on the grove,
" Upon my breast she hung .

My willing arms embraced the maid ,
My heart with raptures beat ,
While she but wept the more, and said,
" Would we had never met ! "

MUSICIAN OF BEOBAR.

AMONGST the earliest companions of the Prince
Selim, there was one, named Fereid Bochari,
who long continued to possess over the mind of

his master an unrivalled influence. He was the son of Abdulhamid Messower, a portrait painter of Shiraz, who had been employed by Acbar for several years in painting the beauties of the harem. Bochari, while yet a boy, was frequently admitted with his father into the interior of the harem, where he became acquainted with the prince. The near equality of their ages, the lively spirits of Bochari, and the infinite resources which he had at his command for amusing the heir to the empire, soon prepared for him the way to fortune. His father, of course, gave every encouragement, and all the improvement in his power to talents, which had already won for his son the favour of so important a personage. At the earnest solicitation of Selim, Bochari was altogether domesticated in the palace. They were inseparable companions, both in the school-room and in the gardens assigned them for recreation. They grew up together from youth to manhood; and although the emperor frequently observed with solicitude, the strange power which the Persian exercised over the resolutions of the prince, whether they were connected with matters of business or pleasure, nevertheless, he made no

attempt to break the links by which they appeared to be bound together. a

The son of Messawer was, from nature, as well as from the circumstances under which he was brought up, a consummate hypocrite. In the presence of the emperor, or of the influential persons employed about him, Bochari exhibited a peculiar gravity of demeanor, supposed to be partly the result of the rigid principles of religion, which he affected to follow; partly of the profound veneration which he professed to feel for the ministers and other great officers engaged in the service of the empire. For the restraint, however, which he imposed upon himself on these occasions, he took ample compensation when he was alone with Selim. There was then scarcely any body invested with public office, whom he did not mimic with an extraordinary degree of perfection, in voice, language, and manner. Selim confessed that he would often have found it difficult to believe that Bochari was not himself the very character he represented, had not the latter generally taken care, when finishing the exhibition, to turn his originals into ridicule. When, after an evening's amusement of this

description, they found themselves near each other at any of the ceremonies of the court, in the presence of the very personages who had thus been caricatured, Selim frequently burst into laughter which he could not control; very much to the horror of the emirs, and sometimes even of the emperor, who noticed his indecorous merriment; while not a muscle was moved in the countenance of Bochari. On the contrary, he would often take it upon himself to reprove the prince for his levity, and to engage him in conversation, in order to prevent its renewal. Every body, who witnessed these scenes, looked upon it as a most fortunate circumstance, that a person of so much discretion was placed near the prince, who had sufficient influence to check these improprieties of conduct.

Bochari inherited from his father a most ungovernable passion for wine. He was rigidly cautious in never drinking before mid-day prayers, as the consequence would have been fatal had he been discovered drunk in the mosque; and, besides, the emperor seldom passed a morning without visiting the apartment of his son. But the afternoons, which were supposed to be spent by the prince, and his

companion, in riding in the country near Agra, were very generally devoted by both, even before they arrived at manhood, to a very different purpose. They left the palace mounted, as usual, for an excursion. They had in their pay a peasant, who owned a small shed in the neighbourhood of the capital, to whose care they confided their horses. Then putting on the dresses of common soldiers, which they had provided, they returned in disguise to Agra; and establishing themselves in one of their favourite wine-houses, they usually drank from fifteen to twenty cups each, sometimes alone, but more frequently in the midst of the lowest company by which those places were crowded. The prince became, in a short time, so much addicted to this beverage, that if he were deprived of it, at his accustomed hours, his hands began to shake, and he was unable to sit at rest until wine was brought before him.

When Selim was permitted, at the usual age, to establish a harem of his own, Bepchari lent all his assistance in collecting for it the most beautiful women of Hindostan. But the skill and perseverance with which he succeeded in rescuing his master from the predominant in-

fluence of any of his numerous wives, would have been admirable, had they been exercised in a more legitimate cause. Accustomed to dictate every fancy he suffered Selim to indulge, he would bear no rival in the absolute dominion over him, which he wielded with the sway of an enchanter. As soon as he learned, by questioning the prince, that the charms of a particular female were assuming a marked superiority in his esteem over those of her companions, he so concerted his measures, that to make him forget such dangerous attractions, a new rival was introduced, destined, in her turn, to be sacrificed the moment she aimed at securing the permanence of her ascendancy.

Bochari had, with all the world, heard much of the beauty of Mhor-Ul-Nissa. The few occasions on which he had seen her, enabled him to confirm, by his own observation, the reports which had reached his ear. He acknowledged to Selim, who often spoke to him about her, that the poets, in their most inspired moments, had never portrayed an earthly being, whose presence was more bewitching than the daughter of Kazim Ayas. There were, however, a steadiness and dignity in her mien, and a quick in-

telligence in her eye, which at once commanded Bochari's respect, and forbade him to think of any scheme for adding that lovely person to the harem of the prince. He feared that the moment of her marriage with Selim would, of necessity, be that of his own downfall. He could hope to find no rival in Hindostan; nay, not even in Persia, whom he might make use of, for the purpose of counteracting the influence which her fascinations of person and of mind would be sure to attain. The circumstance, therefore, of her being engaged to Askun, was the more agreeable, as it was by him unexpected. For he had not failed to discover that Selim's attentions to Mher-Ul-Nissa recently assumed a character very likely, if unresisted, to lead to the most important consequences.

The apprehensions of Bochari, on this subject, were excited to an extreme degree one evening, soon after it was publicly declared that Askun was to be united to the daughter of the high treasurer. The shieftain had scarcely obtained from Mher-Ul-Nissa, the promise of her hand, when he was again suddenly called to his government by the occurrence of

a series of the most awful calamities, which were caused by the overflowing of the lakes, in consequence of the melting of the snows in the mountains, as well as an unusual continuance of heavy rains. The waters overspread the country for many leagues, and as they poured along with irresistible fury, they swept away not only the harvests standing in the fields, but whole villages, and innumerable flocks and herds, which happened to be within the reach of the inundation.

During Afkun's absence, Kazim gave a splendid banquet in honour of the approaching nuptials. Selim and his companion, together with several of the most dignified personages of the empire, were present. The wines, all of the most exquisite kind, were very freely circulated; and after the crowd of less intimate guests, had withdrawn, the ladies, veiled as usual, made their appearance.

At the request of Selim, Mhor-Ul-Nissa sung to her lute several of her favourite airs. Bochari observed, that her melodies, whether from accident or design he could not conjecture, were, for the most part, of a grave and even plaintive turn, instead of being suited

to the joyousness of the occasion. There was one especially, which told, in the most touching tones, the grief of a Cingalese girl, who had been attached to a native of her own island; but who had an opportunity, after being sold as a slave, to improve, in some degree the severity of her fate, by marrying a foreign prince. The verses, in which she described the innocence and ardour of her first love, as contrasted with the reluctance she felt in bestowing her hand, where it never could be accompanied by her heart, were given by Mher-Ul-Nissa with a tenderness, which drew tears from every body present, with the exception of Ho-chari. While all other eyes, were fixed upon the ravishing minstrel, his were wholly employed in watching, with secret anguish, the powerful effect which her performance produced on the feelings of the prince.

Although Mangeli beheld this scene with the natural pride of a mother, yet feeling that if it were prolonged, under the circumstances, it might give rise to unjust interpretations, she desired her attendants, all of whom were robed in the most sumptuous attire, to form for the dance. But although these maidens, most of

whom were characterised by beauty and gracefulness, executed their appointed parts in the dance in a superior style; they attracted not the slightest notice from Salim. His wrapt attention still dwelt on the song which he had last heard, and he pressed for its repetition with so much earnestness, that it seemed almost inhospitable to refuse his request. Mher-Ul-Nissa resumed her instrument; but while she was still preludeing to the air which she intended to play, two of the principal strings snapped asunder with a loud, and, as some felt, an ominous sound, like the shriek of an evil genius.

In order to dissipate the sudden gloom which this incident created throughout the company, she rose, and ordering Kanun to take the flageolet, while another of her attendants struck the double-stringed harp, she stood in the midst of the circle like some wonderful statue fresh from the hand of the artist. The music of the two performers at first lamented the fate of a Hindu shepherdess, whom the god Vishnu transformed into marble, lest, during his temporary absence from earth, she might surrender her affections to an ordinary mortal.

A rapid transition was then made to the most charming pastoral strains, resembling those which the former companions of the metamorphosed maid poured forth from their simple reeds; when after seeking her for many a day over the fields, where she had been accustomed to tend her flocks, they at length discovered her near a fountain, as they thought asleep. They hoped that they might awake her from her lethargy, by addressing her in the tones which she most loved to hear—the songs of her youth; but she remained insensible to their appeals, renewed though they were from day to day. At length, a young unknown shepherd, who, with a lyre slung on his back, joined the group one morning, as they were proceeding to the fountain, mingled the brilliant notes of his instrument with those which had hitherto failed to produce any effect on the sleeping girl. Suddenly the marble trembled, and became relaxed—the glow of genial warmth overspread the whole figure—blushes kindled on the cheeks—the eyelids separated, and from beneath them shot forth a living fire—the arms moved—and while the rustics, gazing with rapture on the miraculous change that was going on, imparted to

their music the brightening joy by which they were inspired, the strange shophord, taking the maid by the hand, called all her limbs into the most exquisite action, descriptive of the happiness of those, who, after a long separation, are again joined in the sweet consciousness of mutual affection.

Mher-Ul-Nissa answered to each variation in the strain, with irresistible truth and power of expression. The statue, veiled in drapery, seemed for a while without vitality—breathless—cold—but still beautiful, even in apparent death. No feature or limb moved, while the airs of the shepherdesses emulated each other, in endeavouring to recal her to emotion; but when the well-known music of the god touched her ear, the effect was electric upon the whole assembly. Her figure appeared to warm by degrees, from utter insensibility to a divine rapture. The sentiment that actuated her entire being was shown in attitudes and movements, refined far above those exhibitions to which the grosser sense gives rise.

Selim followed her steps, with a degree of admiration which he knew not how to repress within the ordinary bounds of decorum. He

was beside himself with delight. And when, in gliding before him, her veil chanced to be waisted from her head, suddenly disclosing to his view all the charms of her unrivalled countenance, blushing, with confusion for such an untoward accident, his bended knee, his upward glowing looks, his hand pressed on her's, whilst he exclaimed, "NOURMAHAL!"* at once proclaimed feelings, which, though they found no words, announced, that from that hour they were, for good or for evil, to rule his subsequent existence.

* "Light of the harem!"

CHAPTER XIX.

At the end of the street, there advanced before me a damsel, with a fairy's cheeks, who, in the manner of a pagan, wore her tresses dishevelled over her shoulder, like the sacerdotal stole. I said, "O thou! to the arch of whose eye-brow the new moon is a slave, what quarter is this, and where is thy mansion?"

ISMAT.

SELIM, on returning to his apartments in the palace, sought his couch in vain, after the scene of that fatal night. Sleep was, indeed, unsolicited by him, for he preferred repeating to himself the songs which Nourmahal, as he thenceforth styled her, had sung, representing over and over again, to his heated fancy, the attitudes of the maid, and retracing in his memory the lines of her matchless and now deeply-beloved countenance. The report of her

having been betrothed to Sher Afkun rose occasionally upon his mind, like a dense stormy cloud, that seemed about to blight all the prospects of happiness which he had already entertained. But he flattered himself with the hope that the rumours, which had been circulated on this subject, were void of foundation. It was impossible, he thought, that she could love Afkun, since, while he was far away, she betrayed no depression of spirits. To judge by himself, now that he was no longer in Nourmahal's company, he felt that he was the most miserable being in the world. Would she not have mentioned him sometimes,—would she not have subdued the expression of her enchanting powers,—would she have sung or danced so divinely, if, indeed, she had been labouring under the grief that must have been caused by his absence, had he been truly present to her heart?

The day, as it dawned, into his chamber found Selim still feverishly busy in forming projects for his union with Nourmahal, let what would be the consequence. What! even if she had been pledged to Afkun, such a ceremony was not irrevocable. His father, the emperor of Hin-

dostan, whose voice gave law to more than a hundred millions of people, might surely dispense with the obligations, if any there were, imposed on either party by a proceeding of that nature. He would throw himself at Acbar's feet, and solicit from him, this boon, upon which his very life now depended. He would frankly reveal the state of his feelings with respect to Nourmahal; he would represent the disastrous effect which her union with another would probably produce with respect to all parties; he might throw a little exaggeration round the degrees of encouragement which he believed he had already received from her,—he would mention the bouquet,—the look with which that emblematic expression of affection had been received by her,—he would promise an entire reform in those habits of intoxication which had afforded so much displeasure to his father, and such scandal to the court; and he would, if it were required, even abdicate the reins of empire in favour of his son Chusero; provided only that he were permitted to spend the remainder of his days with her, who had now obtained entire possession of his soul.

Bochari waited at the usual hour on the

prince, whom he found still arrayed in the dress of purple satin, and gold turban, which he had worn the night before.

"I am glad you have come at last, my dear Bochari. I wish you would go to the apartments of the emperor, and learn whether I can see him immediately."

"Not in this dress, at all events; at such an hour of the morning, he will think you mad if you appear before him in this manner."

"What do you mean?"

"Look at your turban, your satin vest, your cincture with these massive tassels, your robe of silver tissue, and your silk stockings flowered with gold; nay, you have not even changed your slippers since we parted last night;—what can be the cause of all this?"

"I shall tell the emperor every thing."

"What! you will tell the emperor every thing? Am I, then, no longer worthy of your confidence? But I can easily understand it all. I see you have not slept much during the night. You seem scarcely to know what you say."

"Yes, Bochari, I well know what I say, and what I feel, too. If you, however, refuse me your assistance on the present occasion, I shall

not know what to do. You are my best of friends ; you will, I am sure, aid me with your inexhaustible resources on the present occasion, —perhaps the most important of my life.”

“ You surely cannot think of marrying Mher-Ul-Nissa !”

“ Why not ?”

“ I thought I was not deceived ; I knew all this last night, —when that faithless and artful woman threw off her veil so indecently in your presence, —in the presence of a crowd of guests.”

“ What words are these Bochari ? Faithless, did you say ? To whom ?”

“ To her betrothed husband, the subah of Cashmore ! Is it possible you did not feel, what every other person in the saloon must have felt, that Mher-Ul-Nissa, though her faith was solemnly plighted to Afkun, put forth all her powers last night, in order to involve you in her dangerous toils ?”

“ But how am I to know that she has been betrothed as you say ?”

“ I heard it from Kazim Ayas ; and in order to assure myself on that point, out of mere curiosity, for it never occurred to me that you would feel any interest in the question, I ascer-

tained the fact from the kadi, in whose presence the ceremony was solemnised."

"Base wretch! away from my presence for ever! No! you will never make me believe that Nourmahal has promised to be the consort of another!"

"I shall go hence as you desire, although this is not the treatment which I had expected, after so many years of faithful service!"

"No, no—stay Bochari—I am half mad—forgive me—stay—yes—we have been children together."

"But we are not to remain children for ever. You are now a man; though I can hardly call you such, if you thus suffer your feelings to be mastered by a woman, who, if she were married to you to-day, would probably elope with some other lover before the dawn to-morrow."

"Oh! Bochari, spare my feelings at this moment; do not thus speak of Nourmahal. She cannot be the wretch you would represent her."

"Judge for yourself. She is bound by ties of an indissoluble nature, to Afkun. During his absence, caused, as we all know, by circumstances which he could not control, she appears

before a crowd of her father's guests—she sings—she dances—and when she thinks she has excited the feelings of another person—of the Prince Selim—to the highest degree, she, as if by accident, lets her veil fall at his feet, and completes her conquest! What security can you have for the affections of such a woman as this? Think you she loves you for yourself? Not she—the throne is the sole object of her ambition; give up that, and you will soon find her turning from you with scorn.”

The prince, who was already pale from the sleepless night he had spent, trembled from head to foot, while Bochari uttered these unguarded phrases, foaming with undisguised mortification.

“Give way to such childish feelings as these!” resumed the stern monitor, in a tone to which his pupil was wholly unaccustomed, “and you will be the laughing stock of the whole empire. Every adventurer, who has a pretty daughter in his family, will come to Agra and place her in the way of Selim, as an instrument of fortune. Abandoning the faithful mothers of your children already in the harem, you will be tossed about and played with like a

shuttle-cock from hand to hand. • The cares of state will be forgotten; you will give yourself up entirely to the blandishments of women; you will surrender successively to their fathers or brothers the sceptre which you ought yourself to grasp with a firm hand; and ultimately, perhaps, you will be assassinated, in order to make room for some upstart, whom you have yourself raised to high station; and then Hindostan, now the most splendid empire in the world, will fall into a thousand petty provinces! For shame—let us hear no more of this base-born girl!”

“She is the daughter of Kazim Ayns, the high treasurer of the empire; a man universally respected, and I may even say, beloved. Be just, at all events, in your anger!”

“And who is this Kazim Ayns, I should like to know? Ha! ha! ha! true; high treasurer now; but what *was* he, when he first made his way from the wilds of Tartary to Lahore? It is notorious that he was obliged to beg for bread from door to door; and that he earned a miserable pittance, for many years, by writing in a stall for any person who chose to give him a cowrie! Kazim Ayns, indeed, beloved and re-

spected! By whom? Not by me, certainly; for, after the events of last night, seeing that he did not prevent his daughter from pursuing the indecent exhibition which she made, I can look upon him as no better than a common pandor!"

Selim was shocked, beyond expression, at the language which Bochari used, with regard to a family so much honoured by his father, and so highly esteemed by the Omrahs of the court, without exception. Bochari soon perceived, by the silence of the prince, who continued for some time to look at him with astonishment, that he had rather overshot the mark at which he aimed. He knew thoroughly the character of the person he had to deal with, and was especially aware of the obstinacy with which the prince adhered to any purpose, which he could not be wheedled or frightened out of in the first instance.

"I see then, Bochari," said Selim, after a long pause; "that I am not to expect any assistance from you in this business."

"Your highness will, I am sure, excuse any hastiness of expression into which I may have been betrayed, by my zeal for your welfare. Your happiness is, you must know, the only

object of my life. I have been by your side from boyhood upwards; it is not likely that I should abandon you now. Your command must ever be my law."

"That is spoken like yourself, Bochari; I own I hardly know, just now, who you were. You never before opposed any of my wishes after such a fashion as this."

"Nor shall I now, if you think I can render you the slightest assistance."

"I have, as you know, Bochari, seen and added to my harem some of the most perfect beauties of whom Asia can boast. I was no more than fifteen, when I first beheld the daughter of the Rajah Bharmul, whom I then looked upon as the rose of the world. She is the mother of Chusero, and still preserves my esteem. The lovely Samaul, the mother of my favourite boy, Parveiz, has also a peculiar place in my heart. Her moon-like beauty has fresh charms for me every time I visit her apartments. I am also affected with great tenderness whenever I take my son, Khorrour, from the arms of his mother Gasseine." Some things have been foretold me of this boy, which induce me to hope that he will be ever affectionate

and faithful to me, and that one day he will be the ornament of the empire. But neither the daughter of Bharnul, nor the gentle Jarnaul, nor Gosseine, nor even Beiby Karmitty, the youngest, and perhaps the most engaging of all my wives, has ever excited in my breast feelings similar to those which have been kindled there by Nourmahal."

"There is no contending against fate! It is a power capable of doing with us as it chooses."

"That is precisely what I think too, my dear Bocharj. I am convinced, that if I now endeavoured not to love Nourmahal, I should fail of success. Her image never left me all night. Sometimes she appeared stooping over me, her beautiful eyes dimmed with tears, lamenting the precipitation with which she received the addresses of Afkun, before she had become acquainted with the secret which I revealed to her last night—that I was her captive! Sometimes that voice, which you have heard, floated in the air around me, while her fingers played like beams of rosy light over the strings of her lute. But you have seen her in that Vishnu dance,—Can you wonder that when her veil fell

off; I should have been transported beyond all the common bounds of prudence?"

"But how are you to get over the contract so solemnly entered into?"

"It must be dissolved, Bockani. Mark me,—it must be put an end to, by some means or other."

"The emperor might perhaps consent—but then there is his prime minister, Fazcel,"—

"Name him not—you know that that man is my abhorrence."

"What with his outlandish notions about the principles of justice—and setting an example of rectitude to the people—and all that kind of nonsensical philosophy, if once he be consulted on the subject, you may look upon the matter as decided against you."

"And if it be,"—

"We must then think of other means for the attainment of your purpose—Askura is subah of Cashmere.—He will probably return soon to Agra, to have his nuptials completed—the road is long—a few Afghans, well stationed, disposed to vindicate your cause"—

"Let us spare *his* blood, if we can. As to Fazcel—he and I never can live long under the

same sky. His presence is to me the shade of the poison tree. I feel as if I begin to wither whenever I come within its range."

"Then you must smile upon him henceforth. There is nothing like a luminous smile for deceiving your enemy—or, at least the court, when they behold you together."

"Depend upon me—you must have heard of that insolent proposal of his, for excluding me from the succession to the throne, and of transferring my rights to Chusero!"

"Under the pretext of insanity! But, hark!—the trumpets already announce the breaking up of the Am-kas! Something has occurred to the emperor! It is but just now that the gates of the citadel were thrown open to admit the multitude, and already the assembly is broken up! What can this mean?"

Selim trembled, as he directed his companion to go instantly and inquire into the cause of this extraordinary occurrence, for, he knew that nothing but illness of a serious character, or affairs of the utmost importance, would prevent his father from taking his seat upon the throne, and discharging the duties of the audience which he gave every morning to all his vassals, with-

out distinction. Bochari hastened to the apartments of the emperor, but was met by an eunuch, as breathless as himself, who asked where the prince was to be found.

“What has happened?” eagerly enquired Bochari.

“The prince—the prince—where is he?” asked the eunuch—“The emperor, as he was ascending the musnud, fell back on the steps, before any of us could reach him—he still lives—we bore him to his cabinet—he has just spoken, and calls incessantly for the prince—lead me to him without delay.”

Bochari returned with the eunuch to Selim's apartment, who was deeply afflicted by the intelligence; for, through all the courses of dissipation to which he had been habituated, he still felt a strong sentiment of affection for his father. Forthwith changing his apparel, he went to the cabinet, where he found the emperor surrounded by his principal ministers, resting on cushions, suffering much from the debility of declining years, but more from the tidings which he had just received, of the death of his favourite son, Daniel.

“Take these despatches, Selim,” said Acbar,

in a feeble voice, frequently interrupted by the pangs of his heart, against which he had no longer sufficient fortitude to struggle. "Take these despatches, my son—read them with due attention. Daniel—my beloved Daniel—beloved, even though, with all my efforts I could not reclaim him from those terrible vices, to which he has thus prematurely fallen a victim—is no more. Oh! Selim, shall his example—his fate—warn you in time?"

The prince was on his knees, bathed in tears, holding the emperor's hand, which he pressed and kissed repeatedly, in token of his entire submission to his father's will.

CHAPTER XX.

The sword and the dagger are my fragrant flowers ,
 Contemptible, in my opinion, are the narcissus and the
 myrtle ;
 Our drink is the blood of our enemies ;
 Our cups their skulls.

ARABIC VERSES.

From the council-chamber, Achar was removed to his apartments in the harem, where his physicians succeeded in restoring the current of life that had almost ceased to flow, in consequence of the shock, he had experienced on receiving the letter which announced the death of the prince Daniel. That unfortunate youth had been commissioned to quell a formidable insurrection in the Deccan, and had marched thither at the head of a large army. In the course of his journey, surrounded by some of his favourite

companions, he gave himself up so entirely to the debaucheries which had already worn out his constitution, that the emperor was obliged to recall him, and entrust the command of the army to another officer. On reaching Burhanpore, Daniel was informed of the disgrace that awaited him; he proceeded, however, to the banquet, attended by the parasites who seldom left his presence, and ordered an extra quantity of wine to be served up. The carouse was continued, with little intermission, until the following morning, when the dancing women were sent for. On their entering, the prince rose, as it is said, flushed with wine, and attempted to join them, his companions having previously clothed him in female attire. But before he could perform this last act of ignominy, he fell prostrate on the floor; the ruby colour on his cheeks gave way to a livid paleness, which soon announced that the vital spark had fled. Messengers arrived at Agra with the fatal intelligence just as the emperor, after finishing his morning prayers, was proceeding to the Am-kas. He resolved, however, not to adjourn the assembly, and was ascending the throne when the parental grief, which for the moment he at-

tempted to suppress, overwhelmed him. Fortunately, the soft carpets spread over the steps leading to the musnud, protected his person from any serious injury; but his frame, enfeebled through the exertions of a reign exceeding fifty years, and the sufferings brought upon his mind by the discords prevailing in his family, seemed incapable of much longer holding out against the many misfortunes which clouded the evening of his glorious life.

Meanwhile Abul Fazeel proceeded to take measures for securing the succession to the throne. That experienced and upright minister had long narrowly watched the conduct and character of the Prince Selim, and had arrived at a conclusion, which further observation on his part seemed unlikely to alter, that, although he was the legitimate heir, Selim was decidedly unfit to preside over the destinies of a monarchy so extensive, and still so unsettled as Hindostan. There was a feminine softness in his disposition, utterly inconsistent with the energies, which were required in the chieftain of so vast an empire. He gave much more of his attention to his dresses, in which he should dazzle the eyes of the people whenever he appeared in public,

than to the acquisition of even the ordinary degree of information necessary to prepare him for the discharge of the imperial functions. He reposed implicit faith in the predictions of the most ignorant astrologers; courted the company of magicians, in whose feats he experienced a puerile delight; lavished money on dervishes, who persuaded him that, as chosen saints of heaven, they had the power of working miracles; and withal surrendered himself so repeatedly to the influence of wine, in violation of the most solemn commands of the Prophet, that no statesman, looking forward to the welfare of Hindostan, could contemplate the accession of such a prince to the throne, without apprehending consequences of the most disastrous description.

If Selim were set aside, all eyes would be naturally turned to Chusero, his eldest son, by the daughter of Rajah Bharmul. Her brother, Man-Singh, was at that period one of the most illustrious commanders in the empire, a circumstance of great importance should the succession be seriously disputed. Chusero was a prince of great promise, active in the field, energetic in the pursuit of knowledge, unas-

suming in his deportment, and free from the stain of any of those enormities by which his father, and his uncle, Daniel, had been so unfortunately distinguished. The expectation, that he might possibly be called upon to wield the sceptre before the period to which he might, in the ordinary course of nature, calculate upon so important a change in his position, was not unfamiliar to his mind, as Man-Singh had often spoken to him upon the subject. One stipulation he always mentioned, as so sacred in his eyes, that, unless it were promised and observed in the most inviolable manner, he declared he would never comply with the wishes of his friends—the blood of his father was under no circumstances to be shed—he never would sit upon a throne, reddened by a single drop from the veins to which he owed his own existence. If his father's character were so effeminate, as it had been described, it would not be difficult, Chusero thought, to persuade him that a splendid retirement in the valley of Cashmere, would be infinitely more conducive to his happiness than the throne of Hindostan.

The rumour of Selim's passion for the daughter of the high-treasurer, which had been borne

on a thousand tongues through the noble circles of Agra, had not failed to reach the ears of Fazeel. He was not surprised that the charms of such a woman had produced their natural effect upon the mind of Selim: and had she not been betrothed to Shere-Afkun, it was said that Fazeel would not have discouraged the feelings of the prince in her favour. For the minister fully appreciated the talents of Nourmahal, recognising in them all the resources fit for the exercise of unlimited power, and for holding under control the ill-regulated mind, of whose sway he felt such calamitous forebodings. But the law was not to be broken; she was the affianced bride of the Subah of Cashmere, and Fazeel's first care was to despatch a trusty messenger to that officer, informing him of the state of things at Agra, and directing him to return to the capital without delay.

Kazim-Ayas readily co-operated with Fazeel in all the steps necessary to accelerate their nuptials, which, upon Shere-Afkun's arrival, were celebrated in a private manner; and he returned forthwith to Cashmere, accompanied by her to whom he had so ardently looked, as the best reward of all the services which he

had had the good fortune to render to his sovereign. Those services were of the utmost importance in that remote part of the empire, where, if he had not been restrained by his sense of duty, and his strong personal attachment to Acbar, he might have easily founded an independent monarchy. But although persons were not wanted, who suggested to Afkun temptations of that kind, he steadily repudiated every thought of power which he did not derive from the confidence of his imperial master.

Fazeel communicated freely with Man Singh upon the dangers with which the empire was threatened. They met frequently at the house of the latter, which was on the bank of the Jumna, at some distance from the seraglio, beyond the gate leading to Delhi. Their conferences were, occasionally, attended by Chusero, and by some of the principal omrahs and rajahs, who partook of their sentiments. Borchari carefully watched all their proceedings. The performance of Nourmahal's nuptials with Afkun, and the suddenness of her departure for Cashmere, before he had even surmised that such measures were in contemplation, though coinciding with his secret wishes

in every respect, excited his jealousy, and wounded his pride; for he had been taught to believe, that no event of importance could possibly have occurred in the capital, without his being acquainted with it before-hand, so numerous and so active was the legion of emissaries retained in his employment. He rightly conjectured at once the object which the parties had in view, who assembled so frequently at the house of Man-Singh; and although, from the secrecy with which their councils were attended, he failed to discover any tangible ground upon which he could openly accuse them of a conspiracy to change the lawful succession to the throne, he took care to diffuse through the court, and to convey to the ear of the emperor, reports well calculated to create alarm.

The affairs of the Deccan having become more and more embarrassing, Akbar, to whom the supposition that Fazeel had any share in preparing the exclusion of Solim from the throne was peculiarly painful, resolved to send the prime minister to the peninsula, with a view, as well to make use of Fazeel's unrivalled talents in reducing to order the scattered elements of

authority in that district, as to spare himself the mortification of degrading, in the last hours of his life, a servant, in whom he had found incorruptible zeal and fidelity, during the vicissitudes of his chequered career. Acbar, though he clearly saw the defects of character, which promised, according to all human experience, to betray, before the lapse of many years, the unfitness of Selim for the duties of the throne, nevertheless, could not persuade himself that those defects were incurable. The fate of Daniel, he fondly hoped, could not be unproductive of salutary effects upon a mind, which, although devoid of energy, could scarcely be considered as altogether lost to every elevated and virtuous feeling. During his latter illness, Selim was constantly in his chamber, attending him with the most pious assiduity. His paternal heart was touched by the prince's attentions; his pride was interested in the promotion to the place, which he must soon leave vacant, of his eldest son, the natural preserver of his dynasty in the right line of descent; his first-born, whom he had cherished in infancy with so much delight, and who was even now endeared to him

by those very weaknesses, of which the sages of the empire complained.

Fazeel was too well acquainted with Acbar's character, not to understand the real motives upon which his appointment to the splendid office of viceroy of the Deccan was founded. They were manifested in the orders by which his commission was accompanied, to proceed to that district with the utmost expedition. It had been usual for the emperor to consult with him previously, whenever his services were required at any distance from the capital. The variation from this usage in the present instance, indicated the origin of the unexpected honours which were conferred upon him, and the necessity, at the same time, of proceeding with the utmost circumspection in the projects which he had meditated for regulating the succession to the throne. On receiving the commands of the emperor, he felt that obedience to them was an inevitable duty. The omrahs and rajahs joined with him in the confederacy against Selim were of the same opinion; and they further thought that in his capacity, as viceroy of the Deccan, he might even contribute essentially to the promotion of the object which they

were pledged to accomplish. Fazeel, therefore, lost no time in repairing to the peninsula, attended, as usual, by a small escort; his name alone constituting his best safeguard, even in the worst of times, and in the provinces most distracted by civil war; such was the veneration in which his wisdom and his inflexible administration of justice were universally held.

When Bochari first heard of Fazeel's mission to the Deccan, he looked upon it as a master-stroke of policy on the part of the emperor, imagining that it would have the effect of completely frustrating the designs which were entertained to the prejudice of Selim's right to the throne. A little reflection, however, added to the malignity with which his soul was inflamed, whenever new honours of any description were bestowed upon Fazeel, led him to form a very different conclusion. His first impulse was to persuade the prince to have Fazeel recalled and committed to the state prison at Gualior, upon suspicion of high treason. But as it was unlikely that the emperor would sanction this measure, he conceived that the most certain mode of effecting his purpose would be to take such steps as were within his own

power, for securing the accession of Selim against opposition of every kind. Through his influence, accordingly, all the omrahs and rajahs then residing at Agra were summoned to the presence of Aobar, who solemnly declared it to be his will, that at his death, Solim should be his successor." This object attained, Bochari's next step was to disguise himself in the dress of one of the astrologers who frequent the great royal square of Agra, and to take his place in that part of it usually resorted to by the most profligate of the adventurers, who flock to the capital from all parts of the empire.

Clothed in a swarthy grizzly beard, a pointed yellow hat, that came down low upon his forehead, a flowing garment of faded ruby silk, tied round his waist by a wide leathern cinchuro, on which the signs of the zodiac were figured, he sat down upon a piece of tattered dusty carpet under a sun-shade, holding open before him a large volume, containing charts of the sun, moon, and stars, and characters in a strange tongue, which astrologers alone have the power to interpret. To these, he added a compass and other mathematical instruments necessary for the elucidation of the mysteries of which

those men become possessed in their intercourse with the superior worlds.

The sun still burning fiercely in the sky when Bochari spread his carpet on the ground, there were few persons in the square, except the rajahs in the emperor's pay, whose weekly turn it was to mount guard before the tents, which they pitch for that purpose; those petty princes having an invincible objection to the performance of their duties within the walls of a fortress. As the day advanced, and the air became refreshed by the breezes from the Jumna, the royal horses bred in Turkestan and Tartary, were led forth from their neighbouring stables for exercise. The shops in the bazaars were again opened and crowded with customers and loungers from all parts of the city; and fakirs, mountebanks, and jugglers, story-tellers, ballad-singers, players on the dulcimer, tambourine, and cymbals, dancing women, charmers with serpents, venders of monkeys, parrots, and birds of every plumage, of Ganges water and lemonade, pomegranates and oranges, cooked meats, confectionery, and perfumes, filled the whole square with multitudinous sounds that wonderfully contrasted with the silence of the noon.

Several women, covered from head to foot with white cloth, attempted to solicit the attention of Bochari to the stories which they had to relate, hoping that he might be able to apply a remedy to their various misfortunes, and to promise them more happy destinies. But he bade them pass on, affecting to have his mind absorbed in calculations, from which he could not then be disturbed. His eye was, in fact, fixed upon a group of men, who had been for some time hovering around him. One of these strangers, at length, sat down beside him, and inquired whether he could read in the volume which he was studying the name of the country whence his interrogator and his companions had come, and the purpose for which they had repaired to Agra. Bochari turned over the leaves with becoming gravity, until he lighted upon a page at which he rested.

"You have," said he, "a military appearance, but you are not in the pay of Aohar."

"So far you speak the truth," observed the stranger.

"You come from the south."

"We do."

"If I read the stars correctly, your object in

Agra is to gain intelligence as to the journeys about to be made by rich merchants."

The stranger's countenance betrayed emotion, but he was silent.

"You must confide in me," resumed Bochari, "otherwise, I cannot disclose the knowledge you wish to attain. You have many other companions besides those whom I see speaking to that Tartar yonder."

"We muster a thousand horses, whenever occasion requires."

"What do I behold? The page glows all over with gold! Here are the rays of diamonds, emeralds, and rubies—here the full blaze of the opal! and your stars teem with prosperity—but all depends upon expedition!"

"We dwell in the forests of Narwar—too distant from Agra for any immediate operations."

"So I read it—Narwar—Orcha Rajaputs, are you not?"

"The true descendants, as you must know, of the princes, who, from the most ancient times, have ruled all that district of the Deccan as far as Golconda, until we were driven from our native castles by the troops of Aobar. We

have now no home, save the depths of the forests, whence we expel the panther and the leopard—the dens even of the wild beasts are deemed too good for us by Fazeel, who has issued, through the mouth of the emperor, orders for our extermination.”

“He is now on his way to your country.”

“Fazeel?”

“Fazeel—viceroy of the Deccan.”

“Better than gold—better than all the mines in Hindostan,” said the Rajaput, half drawing his scimitar.

“He is attended by camels laden with new gold coin for the pay of the troops—a glorious prize!”

“The hour of revenge has come at last!”

“Not of revenge only, Rajaput, but of wealth beyond your calculation—away to your forests—assemble your associates—watch for your prey—and if you miss him!”

“I possess only this silver rupee—it is all I can offer for your information.”

“Restore it to your purse—turn your back on Agra just as the moon is rising, and the fates will be with you. Rest here a moment

longer—and the next year's sun shall not behold a living member of your tribe."

The Rajāput rejoined his companions, with whom he immediately disappeared from the square; and the astrologer, gathering up his books and instruments in his carpet, folded up his sun-shade with that sort of satisfaction which an artificer feels in the evening, when he thinks that he has done a good day's work.

CHAPTER XXI.

O the bliss of that day, when I shall depart from this desolate mansion; shall seek rest for my soul, and shall follow the traces of my beloved!

HAFIZ.

THE indisposition of the emperor, and the reports of conspiracies with which the capital was for some days inundated, had the effect of diverting the attention of Solim from the violent determination which he seemed disposed to form, with a view to prevent the completion of Nourmahal's marriage with Shere-Afkun. The intelligence of her nuptials, and of her departure for Cashmere, came, however, upon him like a thunderbolt. His first impulse was to have them apprehended on their road, and brought back to Agra, let the consequences be what they

might. But from this course he was dissuaded by Bochari, who insisted that all his exertions should be directed to the defence of his title to the throne, which was exposed to no common danger; and that any violation, upon his part, of the laws, at such a moment, besides turning against him so powerful a chieftain as Askun, would be certain to render his cause extremely unpopular.

“Wait until you ascend the musnud: the sceptre fixed firmly in your hand, and order restored throughout your dominions, it will, indeed, be singular if means cannot be found for adding to your harem any woman whom you may select in Hindostan.”

Selim listened with impatience to the councils of Bochari, but their discourse was abruptly terminated by a messenger from the emperor, who directed the prince to preside in his place at a cabinet announced to deliberate upon affairs of great urgency. Acbar might, indeed, be said to have already resigned the government into the hands of his son. His strength never for an instant rallied after he received the tidings of Daniel's ignominious death, and although his intellect remained unobscured to the last

moment of his existence, he became every day more indifferent to all those objects of ambition, to the attainment of which the vigour of his youth and manhood, and even the wisdom of his advancing age, had been devoted. The grief that preyed upon his thoughts bade him look at the past as a dream already concluded, — a dream in which victory and defeat were incidents that seemed to be the sport of some power superior to his own. The splendour of the throne had for him no longer any charms; his days were numbered, and even if his health were to be restored, he felt that he could know no more happiness in this world, except as a hermit, retired within the limits of some mountain solitude, where he might unreservedly give up his hours to melancholy contemplation.

Not widely different from this state of apparently irremediable depression, were the feelings of Afkan's beauteous bride, as she journeyed towards her new home. Her separation from her mother, to whom she was most tenderly attached, — from her father, whom she resembled in mind, with whose every thought, sentiment, preference and antipathy, she so entirely sympathised that they might be said to

have had only one soul,—was a sacrifice on all sides, for which no adequate compensation could be expected. Fate, however, had issued her ordinances, and they were irrevocable. Nourmahal parted from each particular rose which she had cultivated, from the favourite plane-tree under which she had so often indulged in a vision,—now, she feared, for ever ended,—as if they were living members of her family. The capital, and its lofty citadel, within which the imperial seraglio and the residences of the royal family were situated,—the public squares filled with busy multitudes,—the mansions of the omrahs surrounded by groves and gardens in perpetual verdure,—the houses of the wealthy merchants, looking like warlike castles rising from the bosom of ancient forests,—and, above all, the Jumna, by whose murmuring waters she had so often pored over the fascinating verses of Oonsuri and Biāna, and the history of the queen Rizia, who reigned over Hindostan with so much glory, until she surrendered her heart to the Abyssinian slave, whom she loved too well,—never appeared to Kazim's daughter so full of attraction as on that painful morning when, for the first

time, she beheld them fading gradually from her sight.

Reclining in her covered litter, borne by swift-footed elephants, she would have been more or less than woman if she had not kept her curtain open in the direction of the citadel,—from its elevated situation necessarily the last memorial of Agra upon which her eye could linger. Kazim had often pointed out to her the golden dome, beneath which were the apartments dedicated to the use of prince Selim and his establishment. She doubted not the feelings with which he would receive the intelligence of her marriage, and of her sudden departure from Agra. A secret voice had told her too truly what those feelings would be; nor was she without the suspicion,—the fear,—perhaps the hope,—that before the sun went down that day, her journey might be interrupted in a manner for which her attendants were little prepared. Every group of horsemen that approached the cavalcade from the side of the capital, filled her mind with anxious forebodings, which she dared not communicate even to Kanun; and as each group successively passed away, in various directions, she was obliged to confess to herself

a sense of disappointment. When the domes of the citadel were no longer to be seen, and every trace of the great metropolis had vanished in the distance, it was still some consolation to her to gain now and then glimpses of the Jumna through the foliage of the fruit-trees, by which, in the reign of the renowned Shore-Khan, of the Patan race, the road was shaded on either side from the Indus to the Ganges. The ripples sparkling in the sun by day, and silvered at night by the moon-beams, seemed to whisper to her that they would soon pass under the citadel, and that, haply, they might not be unseen by him who now occupied more of her thoughts than her better reason could justify, especially when, during the pauses on the way, Afkun presented himself at her oustain, lavishing upon her all the attentions which a lover could bestow on a mistress whom he idolized.

Little remains now of the great forest of Narwar, in which the Orcha Rajaputs took up their abode in former days. Chased by the arms of Achar from the populous districts, which they had been long accustomed to plunder, under the pretext of merely exacting from the inhabitants a revenue to which they claimed to be lawfully

entitled, they collected in considerable force in those parts of the forest that were least accessible to an enemy. They erected a fortress of no mean strength, to which the whole body retired when threatened by any serious danger; but they dwelt for the most part in temporary huts, which they frequently changed, in order to elude the pursuit of the guards appointed to watch over the safety of travellers on the public roads. Disdaining the service of the emperor, which they had been often invited to enter, they preferred a species of wild independence, in which they could not long have sustained themselves, if they had not continued their system of plunder. Langued together by relationship, as well as by oaths, which it was death to violate, they carried on warfare against all the rest of mankind. They had their spies in all the great towns, especially in Agra and Delhi, whose office it was to acquire intelligence as to the movements of wealthy merchants and caravans, and to transmit it with the utmost rapidity to the rajah of the band, who took his dispositions accordingly for seizing the prey.

The fortress was always kept well garrisoned. When relief was required, faggots of pine-wood

were piled in a cauldron, on the summit of a lofty tower that surmounted the highest trees, and set fire to in the darkest hour of the night. No Orcha Rajaput dared to go to rest at the hour when that signal was usually made, or to hesitate in repaining to the fortress fully armed, before the beacon was extinguished. On other occasions of urgency, their forces were collected by sound of horn—a sound not distinguishable by the unpractised ear from the ordinary call of the shepherds, or swing-herds, to each other, when they wished to meet at night for mutual defence against beasts of prey—but well known by peculiar intonations to the banditti, whom it summoned to those deeds of horror, for which the forest of Narwar was renowned.

Some days after Fazeel's departure from Agra, a horseman, apparelled as a merchant, joined his escort, and prayed permission to accompany it, announcing that he was bound for Masulipatan, whither he was going to purchase fine muslins. His request being of course complied with, he fell into the ranks, and loudly congratulated himself upon his good fortune in journeying under such safe protection, in a country where so many robberies

and murders had been lately perpetrated. He boasted much of his riches, and of the fresh gains he would acquire by his adventure to Masulipatan, and as he was very anxious to avail himself of the escort as far as possible, he inquired carefully as to the route which they were directed to take, and the number of days which they were likely to occupy in the accomplishment of their journey. In the course of conversation he gave it to be understood, that in his earlier days he had dealt in matches, tipped with a peculiar chemical preparation, which was never known to fail of ignition,—unlike those recently introduced into the military service, which were often known to fail at the very moment when the assistance of the fire-arms and artillery became most essential.

The troopers shewed their new acquaintance the sort of matches with which they were furnished, but which, upon inspection, he declared, with an air of authority, to be totally unfit for use. In order to convince them of the infallibility of his judgment in such matters, he begged to be allowed to try a few; when applied to a torch, lighted for the purpose, each turned as black as charcoal, without yielding any sparks. The

soldiers thought it lucky that the discovery was made in time, the more particularly as they were now within a few hours of entering on the great forest of Narwar, which was well known to be the haunt of the Orcha Rajaputs.

The question was, how they could now remedy the evil? This the merchant cheerfully promised to do, saying that the efficacy of their matchlocks was as necessary to his own security as to that of the great minister upon whom they attended.

Accordingly, desiring all the matches to be brought to him, when the cavalcade stopped at night on the borders of the forest, he produced from his baggage a box, containing a red composition, a small portion of which he applied to the end of a piece of common wood. The moment he shook it in the air, the wood blazed of itself, to the astonishment even of Razeel, who witnessed the experiment, and to whom it was thought no improvement in the arts had been unknown. The merchant again attempted to inflame, in the ordinary way, one of the matches which he held in his hand, but, as before, it turned black without omitting any fire. He touched it with his magical prepara-

tion, and waved it round his head, when it burst forth in a gush of bright sparkles! He was occupied a great part of the night in furnishing all the matches, which had been served out to the escort, with the composition, of whose value he had exhibited such striking proofs. While he was still at his labour, soon after midnight, one of the officers on guard called his attention to a light that appeared at some distance in the sky, and which the sentinels believed to be the beacon of the banditti, who held possession of the interior of the forest. The officer was about to give the alarm and awaken the whole escort, in order to prepare for the attack, which might now be momentarily expected. But the merchant assured him that the light was nothing more than a meteor of the night, and that, at all events, it could not be the beacon of the Orcha Rajaputs, whose fortress he knew, from having frequently passed that way, to be situated at the opposite side of the forest. The light disappearing, after the lapse of a few minutes, no further notice was taken of the circumstance. The merchant, on returning the matches, directed that they should be carefully preserved

from the action of the air until they should be required for use. He then went to sleep on his baggage.

At sunrise the escort were again in motion, and matin prayers having been said, they resumed their journey, preceded by half-a-dozen scouts, who were charged to return forthwith; in case they should gain any intelligence of the approach of the banditti. The merchant was still asleep when the last trooper was already mounted; upon being called he rose suddenly, and proceeded to put his baggage together, but it seemed, by some means or other, to have got into so much confusion, that before he could arrange it on his palfrey, the escort were out of sight. "They had not advanced" far through the forest, when one of the scouts returned with tidings, that he had heard the sound of a horn, which did not strike him to be that either of a hunter or a shepherd. Fazeel directed the escort to be on the alert, and to have the flambeaus lighted. He inquired for the merchant, with whom he wished to have some conversation upon the subject of the matches, as well as upon the manufactures of Masulipatan; for that great man, whose "Ayse Aekberry" is an im-

perishable monument of knowledge, never neglected any opportunity of acquiring information which he could render useful to the empire. The merchant was nowhere to be found; "having remained up so long during the night," said one of the troopers, "he had over-slept himself, and had not yet overtaken the escort." Fazeel, apprehensive for his safety, ordered the escort to wait until he should come, and, in the meantime, sent two of the scouts to look out for him. They galloped to the place where the escort had halted the previous night, but no trace, either of the merchant or his horse could be discovered.

While the troop was thus waiting, a rustling was heard in the trees, on one side of the road, which was instantly followed by a murderous discharge of fire-arms. The party, attacked immediately attempted to return the fire, but upon applying their matches to the flambeau, they became as black as charcoal. In the mean time another volley was poured upon them from the forest, with such unerring aim, that more than half their number was already slain on the spot. The survivors, though astounded by the failure of their matches, pre-

vented from pushing on their foes by the impenetrable nature of the underwood and entangled trees from behind which the fatal guns were pointed at their hearts, and distracted by the slaughter of their comrades, the neighing of the wounded horses, the piercing cries of the baggage-elephants and camels, and the irreparable embarrassments in which they were involved, nevertheless, courageously dismounted, and pressing towards Fazeel, who was already twice wounded, tore away branches from the trees, which they used as matches, and heroically performed their duties to the last moment. But the volleys came thick upon them, soon followed by a numerous band of the Rajaputs who completed with their scymitars and spears the dreadful work which the musketeers had left undone. The body of Fazeel was easily distinguished from the lifeless crowd around it and barbarously hewn into a thousand pieces. The treasure with which the camels and elephants were laden, became, of course, the booty of the savage race, from whose name the infamy of this deed, and of the treacherous means by which it was effected, never can be erased.

The scouts, who had been sent to look for

the merchant, were, on their return to their companions, met by a fugitive from the scene of action, who told them that all was lost. They therefore made all possible haste back to Agra, and presenting themselves at the palace, related to the officers in waiting the lamentable issue of Fazeel's journey to the Deccan. The intelligence was conveyed at first to the prince; who, though he secretly rejoiced at the removal of an obstacle which stood between him and the throne, nevertheless felt that the intelligence ought to be made public in the mode most consistent with the respect that was due to the memory of so important a functionary. The history of the murder was broken by degrees to the emperor, who, already reduced to the last stages of decay, took to himself all the blame of this occurrence, persuaded, that by ordering Fazeel to the Deccan, at an age when that minister was well entitled to retire from public affairs, he had been chiefly instrumental to the catastrophe that had befallen him. The tidings spread a general gloom throughout the capital; and the eunuchs were strongly entertained, that Selim and his minion, Bochari, were not ignorant of the steps taken by the Qroha

Rajaputs, and that the merchant who joined the escort was engaged expressly by Bochari, for the purpose of rendering the matchlocks of the escort useless in their hands.

These surmises reached the ears of Acbar, who solemnly questioned Solim concerning them. The Prince indignantly repelled the accusation. Bochari was summoned to the emperor's presence, and upon being interrogated as to the suspicions so universally directed against him, declared them to be calumnious, and offered to go through any ordeal in order to establish his innocence. The emperor was observed suddenly to rise on his couch, while these inquiries were going on in his presence. Snatching a scymitar from the scabbard of one of the eunuchs at his side, he stood on his feet, and fixing his eyes on Bochari, attempted to move towards him, raising the weapon as if he meant to cleave him to the earth. But in the act his arm was paralyzed; some words which he endeavoured to utter died on his lips, and the soul of him, whom his subjects loved as a father, idolized as a hero, and feared as the inflexible administrator of justice, left this world for Paradise.

Bochari immediately falling on his knees saluted Solim as the reigning sovereign of Hindostan; and his example having been followed by the whole court, he mounted his horse, proceeded to the city gates, which he ordered to be shut, and brought back the keys, which he placed in the emperor's possession. The news soon reached Chysero, who, taking a small canoe, rowed down the river to the house of Man-Singh, where the confederate Omrahs happened to be assembled in council. Fully prepared for the intelligence which he brought, they silenced the apprehensions which he expressed as to the result of their project, and proceeded to discuss the measures which they deemed necessary to be taken forthwith, for securing the accomplishment of their object, before the death of Achar could become known throughout the capital. The assassination of Solim was proposed and supported by several of the Omrahs; but the prince, though fired with ambition of sovereign power, recoiled from the thought of parricide. "No!" he exclaimed, "my father may enjoy life without a throne; but I can never enjoy a throne stained with a father's blood. Let the fortune of open

war decide between us. Away with the daggers of assassins—to our swords alone let us look for victory!” These generous sentiments having been loudly applauded by an overwhelming majority of the council, they proceeded the same night towards Delhi, where they resolved to proclaim Chusero an emperor.

Selim, who took the name of Jehangire (subduer of the world), mounted the throne the following morning at sunrise. His first act was to give orders for the interment of his father at Secundra, a short distance from Agra, and for the erection there of a mausoleum, which remains to this hour a splendid monument of filial piety. He next commanded the imperial crown to be brought before him, and having placed it on his brow, the great state drums were struck, and the cannons, planted on the walls of the citadel, proclaimed, in their voices of thunder, the commencement of a new reign.

END OF VOLUME I.

PRINTED BY STEWART AND MURRAY, OLD 6

