

THE
ROMANCE OF HISTORY

INDIA

BY
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P R E F A C E.

THE Romance of the History of India is one of a series of historical tales founded on the histories of England, France, Spain, Italy, and India, which obtained great popularity when first published.

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P R E F A C E T O T H E O R I G I N A L E D I T I O N.

THE success of the several series of “Romance of History” already published has induced the Publishers of that work to extend it in order to embrace a portion of history generally considered extremely exuberant in romantic features. The present series will be confined to the Mahomedan conquests in India, in the records of which are to be found numerous events of signal and stirring interest, which, while they develop the character of a distant people in a remote age, serve also to confirm many fine axioms of moral truth by exhibiting how, under all the variations of clime and fluctuations of circumstance, the great result of human actions is everywhere the same.

This being a portion of history with which the general reader is less familiar than with that embraced in the preceding series of this work, the choice has been made under the impression that it may lead to a more extended reading of those annals which contain some of the most interesting facts to be found in the records of ages.

But while I feel that the subject is an important one, I have not been insensible to the difficulties with which it is encompassed.

and in proportion to the success of those volumes already before the public has my consciousness of these difficulties been raised, for, feeling that I have had greater impediments to success to overcome, I cannot but be less sanguine in the expectation that I have realized what has been so well done by my predecessors in a similar field.

Romantic as are many of the events which the Mahomedan annals supply, they are nevertheless all of one tone and colouring. They want the delightful blendings and tintings of social circumstances. Their princes were despots, their nobles warriors, their governments tyrannies, and their people slaves. The lives of their most eminent men, who were distinguished chiefly for their deeds in arms, present little else than a series of battles. Their principal amusement was the chase, in which similar perils to those presented in war were courted for the stern glory which followed desperate achievements.

If, therefore, in the following tales the variety should appear less than in those found in the volumes of the same work which have preceded these, the cause, and consequently the excuse, must lie in the materials. Besides this, those beautiful features of domestic life so frequently witnessed in our western world have little or no existence in the land to which the present volumes are devoted. Women confined in harems, and not admitted to the tender and endearing enjoyments of family intercourse, degraded below the dignity of their nature and of their reason, treated as secondary beings, as mere instruments of pleasure, and as created for no better purpose than to perpetuate the human race, are no longer objects either for the rich colouring of romance or the graver delineations of moral narrative.

Great variety of character is not to be found among those isolated beings who are so well calculated to cast a glory upon the human pilgrimage,—not that variety of character does not exist, but it is not developed. All the pictures of life, therefore, among such a community will necessarily possess a certain sameness inseparable from their very nature. I have, however, endeavoured to vary the materials as much as was consistent with the régime of the history, though I sometimes found them very intractable. I can scarcely hope that I have succeeded in a labour of no common difficulty, but trust, nevertheless, that this last series of “*Romantic Tales of History*” may not be found undeserving of public patronage.

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HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

Heg. 351. (A.D. 962.)—Aluptugeen, governor of Khorassan, broke out into open rebellion and marched to Ghizny, which he subdued, and there established an independent power. Munsoor, King of Bokhara, hearing of this defection, conferred the government of Khorassan upon Abool-Hussun Mahomed, son of Ibrahim Sunjur Toorkoman, and thrice sent armies to attack Aluptugeen, which were on both occasions defeated. Aluptugeen retained his independence fifteen years, during which his general Subooktugeen frequently defeated the Indians.

Heg. 365. (975.)—Aluptugeen died, and was succeeded by his son Aboo Isaac, who survived his accession but two years.

Heg. 367. (977.)—Subooktugeen was unanimously proclaimed king of Ghizny by the nobles and chiefs. He had married the daughter of Aluptugeen, and became as celebrated for his justice in the administration of his government as for the extraordinary popularity he acquired among his subjects of all conditions. During the first year of his accession, Subooktugeen conquered the province of Candahar. Resolving on a war with India, he marched in that direction, and having taken certain forts, caused mosques to be built, and then returned with considerable spoil to Ghizny.

Jeipal, a powerful prince of India, of the Brahmin caste, raised a numerous body of troops to oppose the Mahomedans, and brought together a great number of elephants, with a design to attack them in their own country; but the King of Ghizny, sending an army to oppose the Indian chief, the hostile forces came in sight of each other on the confines of Lumghan. Here some smart skirmishing ensued, and Mahmood, the son of Subooktugeen, afterwards celebrated as the conqueror of India, though then but a boy, gave proofs of that valour and conduct which so eminently distinguished his future life.

Jeipal's troops having suffered from a dreadful storm of hail which killed the cattle of the army and several thousand soldiers, their general made proposals for peace, which, contrary to the advice of Mahmood, were accepted by the King of Ghizny.

Jeipal, on reaching his capital, refused to fulfil the conditions, and Subooktugeen again marched his forces towards Lahore. The Indian general advanced to meet and give him battle. The Hindoos were everywhere defeated, and

pursued with prodigious slaughter to the banks of the Neelab. By this victory the conqueror acquired immense wealth, and a considerable accession of territory, causing himself to be acknowledged king over the conquered country, and appointing one of his officers with ten thousand horse to the government of Pishawur.

About this time died Munsoor, King of Bokhara ; he was succeeded by his son Nooh, against whom a formidable rebellion was raised by a chief named Faik. Nooh having formed an alliance with the King of Ghizny, the rebel was attacked and defeated by the latter, for which signal service the sovereign of Bokhara conferred upon Subooktugeen the title of Nasir-ood-Deen, Hero of the Faith ; and upon his son Mahmood that of Syf-ood-Dowla, Sword of the State.

The rebel Faik having again collected his forces, attacked Mahmood unexpectedly and defeated him, taking his baggage. The father hearing of his son's disaster, marched to his relief, routed the insurgents a second time, and thus completely quashed the rebellion.

Heg. 387. (997.)—Subooktugeen fell into a lingering disorder. Being at this time at Bulkh, he determined to try change of air, and accordingly commenced a journey to Ghizny. He had travelled only a few miles when he was obliged to stop at Toormooz, a town not far from Bulkh, where he expired, his remains being carried to Ghizny for interment.



The Traveller's Dream.

CHAPTER I.

IN the forests of Candahar, a solitary traveller was pursuing his way. Overcome by the heat of noon he sat down on the margin of a small stream that gurgled through the thick under-wood, allowing his horse to crop the fresh herbage upon its banks. The scene around him was gloomy but imposing. So thick was the growth of the jungle that the sun's rays could not penetrate, except here and there, where patches had been cleared by the charcoal-burners or for purposes of fuel ; and these were comparatively few. Some of the trees were of a growth so stupendous as to impart a character of sublimity to the whole aspect of the forest. Many of them reached the prodigious height of a hundred and thirty feet, presenting a straight branchless stem, which rose like a colossal pillar from the ground to the altitude of twenty yards without a single branch or even a sprout upon its surface. Under the vast leafy canopy which spread out above it, the wild elephant frequently reposed, and seemed, by comparison with the stately growth beside which it rested, but as some ordinary animal.

It is far from the haunts of men, amid the deep recesses of the forest, or on the summit of the distant mountain, that nature is seen to develop the noblest features of her beauty. The stillness that reigns around, the solemn repose of the scene, not broken in upon by human associations, nor interrupted by the voice of human intercourse, enhance the impression of grandeur produced by the sight of objects which cannot fail to elevate the soul to pious adoration of the great and illimitable God of the universe.

The stranger was impressed by the somewhat painful novelty of

his situation, and solemn thoughts were awakened in his heart. He sat calmly gazing upon the brook as it bubbled before him, when his attention was suddenly roused by a crashing of the bushes, immediately accompanied by a loud roar, and in another moment his horse was prostrated by the paw of a huge lion. The traveller started from his seat, drew his sword, and coming behind the ferocious visitor, cut the sinews of its hind leg, and before the animal could turn, repeated the stroke on the other, and thus completely disabled it. The savage instantly relinquished its prey, but so tremendous had been the stroke of its paw and the succeeding laceration so extensive, that the poor horse rolled upon the streamlet's bank in the agonies of death. The lion roared with appalling fury—its eyes glared—its mane bristled—but it was unable to resent the injury it had received. It dragged itself forward upon its fore-legs with a vain endeavour to retaliate. Its vanquisher approached fearlessly, struck it across the skull with his sword, and, repeating the stroke, laid it dead at his feet.

The loss of his steed was an untoward event, and as he would now have to make his way through the forest on foot,—as, moreover, the sun had long passed its meridian, he determined to pursue his journey without further delay.

Strapping to his shoulders a kind of wallet which had been fastened to his saddle, he commenced threading the thicket. His journey was long and arduous, but on emerging into an open space, he saw a doe grazing with her fawn. The latter had just been born, and the traveller coming suddenly upon them, secured the little one, while the affrighted dam fled in terror. Pleased with his capture, he bound the fawn's legs, and placing it under his arm, proceeded on his way.

He now quitted the cleared space, and plunged again into the jungle, satisfied at having procured something to relieve his hunger, should he be obliged to pass the night in the forest. When he had at length reached a convenient spot where he might prepare a meal, he placed the fawn beside the trunk of a blasted tree, and having kindled a fire by the friction of two dry pieces of wood, he was about to sacrifice the little animal, but perceiving

the mother at a short distance gazing upon him with an expression of the deepest distress, he paused. The tears rolled down her cheeks—her head was raised, and her eyes intently fixed upon the stranger's countenance. They next turned upon her innocent offspring that lay bound at the root of the tree, unconscious of its danger, but still yearning for its parent. She gradually advanced within a few yards of the spot on which the traveller stood. He retired several paces ; the anxious dam immediately sprang towards its young, lay down by it, and caressed it with an intelligible joy. On the traveller's approach she quitted her fawn with a bound of terror, but still retreated only a few yards, manifesting the strongest symptoms of maternal suffering.

It was an affecting sight—an irresistible appeal to human sympathy. The heart of the stranger was moved to pity, his bosom heaved with generous emotion, and under the impulse of a fervid and holy exultation he released the fawn from his captivity. The tender creature instantly ran to its mother, which, with a cry of joy, passed forward towards the thicket ; but before she was secluded from the sight of him who had delivered her young from death, she turned round as if with a look of grateful acknowledgment, and plunged with her delicate offspring into the close cover of the forest.

This was an act to gladden the heart of a good man. Life is the blessed boon of Heaven, and the greatest of its gifts : to the mere animal, the loss of it is the loss of all ; and yet how wantonly does man trifle with the life of animals, to which it is an object of such high enjoyment ; for dumb creatures, having no apprehension of pain, possess the highest sense of mere corporeal fruition, so long as they are not actually suffering.

The release of the fawn had softened the stranger's sympathies and impressed his feelings. Taking from his wallet a small quantity of rice, which had been already boiled, he made a homely but grateful meal, and determined to pass that night on the spot, endeared to him by the consciousness, which it kept alive, of having performed a benevolent action.

It was a heavenly night. The light of a clear moon peeped

through the trees, and seemed to dance in ten thousand phosphoric coruscations, as the slender branches, agitated by a gentle evening breeze, diverted its course for the moment, or trembled in its gentle beams. The forest gloom contrasted solemnly with the silvery light of the deep azure expanse above, and the general repose of nature, at that still hour when man retires to rest from the stir and bustle of day, added an additional tone of solemnity to the scene. The beast of prey was abroad, and, as it prowled, its occasional roar was a sort of diapason to nature's imposing harmony.

The traveller having collected some dried leaves strewed them under the broad foliage of a tree, the branches of which formed a thick canopy within six feet of the ground, and casting himself upon this easy woodland couch, courted that slumber which his fatigue had rendered welcome. His reflections were peaceful. He reverted to the occurrences of the day, and though the loss of his steed was a subject of uneasy recollection, yet it was more than countervailed by the happy remembrance of that little episode in the brief chronicle of his life, which he never afterwards reverted to without satisfaction—the restoration of the fawn to its bereaved dam.

He lay for some time pursuing the quiet tenour of his contemplations, occasionally lapsing into a state of half-consciousness and then reverting, by a sudden impulse of the mind, to perfect, self-possession. At length, overcome by the active process of his thoughts and fatigue of body, he fell into a profound sleep, in which some of the most striking events of the past day were presented to his imagination, combined with new associations, and invested with new hues and a more varied colouring. He dreamed that he was visited by the Prophet, who approached him in shining garments, from which a glory was emitted so dazzling that he could not gaze upon it, and said—"The generosity which you have this day shown to a distressed animal has been appreciated by that God who is the God of dumb as well as of rational creatures, and the kingdom of Ghizny is assigned to you in this world as your reward. Let not your power, however, undermine your

virtue, but continue through life to exercise that benevolence towards man which you have done this day towards the brute." Having uttered these words, the celestial messenger disappeared, and the stranger awoke.

The moon was still bright in the heavens, but he could not again close his eyes in sleep. The vision was too strongly impressed upon his waking senses to allow them to yield to the gentle solicitations of slumber. He arose, and watched the clear "pale planet," through the trees, as it slowly marched towards the horizon to make way for the brighter dawn.

The dews fell heavily, and a thin silvery mist began to rise and invest every object with an ashy tint, as the moon gradually faded in its far descent behind the distant hills. The grey dawn at length broke slowly over the plain, but was not perceptible to the traveller's eye until the valleys were flooded with the young dewy light. The mist had thickened. The leaves of the trees dripped with their liquid burthen, and every spot that was not protected by a mantle of thick foliage, presented a bloom of moisture from the atmosphere, that seemed tinted with hues from fairy-land. Each blade of grass curved under its watery load, bending its delicate neck as if proud to bear the pure deposit of the skies. Everything was clothed in the same soft drapery, which was shaken off by the morning breeze, when each object resumed its natural variety of hue, and harmonious conformity of light and shadow.

The traveller gathered together the leaves on which he had slept, kindled them, and taking a small cocoanut hookah from his wallet, smoked his chillam; then, making a scanty meal from the cold rice, refreshed himself with a draught of the dews which he had allowed to drip during the night into a plantain leaf doubled up in the form of a cup.

Although his repast was a spare one, it was taken with a pure relish, and having once more strapped his few articles of baggage upon his shoulders, he prepared to resume his journey; but first turning his face towards the holy city, he offered up his devotions with pious fervour, and supplicated the protection of Heaven through his wanderings.

As he pursued his solitary way through paths to which he was a perfect stranger, he could not help recalling the vision which had haunted his sleep. It had come so vividly before him that he more than half persuaded himself it must have been intended to be a direct revelation from Heaven, and yet, that a man without a name, without a home, a stranger in the land, should become the monarch of a powerful empire, seemed one of those impossibilities only to be dreamed of, but never realised.

To his calmer reflections, the night-vision appeared nothing more than the lively operation of a fancy excited by sleep, and which had been rendered the more keenly alive to impressions from certain peculiar coincidences of events that had deeply interested him, and from those reflex images presented in slumber in consequence of the strong feelings which those coincidences had awakened within him. Nevertheless, in spite of the apparent unreasonableness of the thing promised, the utter improbability of such an event taking place, and the force of his arguments upon the folly of harbouring such a thought, he could not expel from his mind the singular revelation of that night.

CHAPTER II.

THE traveller now pursued his way through the intricacies of the jungle, with much difficulty and equal patience. He had not long quitted the spot of his last night's repose, when, entering a small glade where the wood had been cleared, he perceived a group of eight men, seated round the glowing embers of a fire, some smoking, and others apparently devouring the last of their morning's meal. Knowing that retreat would be of no avail to secure him from their hostile intentions, if they were enemies, he boldly approached, and inquired his way to the nearest hamlet. One of the men rose, and meeting him, said with a significant laugh,

“Perhaps you wouldn't mind ending your journey here?”

"Indeed but I should. If you can direct me on my way, well; if not, I have no time for parleying."

"Good! but travellers that pass through these woods are in the habit of paying for safe-conduct."

"I require no guide, and therefore must decline the tribute."

"Hark'ye! Do you think your single arm a match for eight pair? Be advised, and lower your tone. We live here by our good wits, levying contributions when the opportunity invites, and living on what the forest provides, when such opportunities fail us. We must have what you carry upon your shoulders, your money, and your provender, if you have any. When we make our demands, remember we take no denial."

"Then I am in the presence of robbers?"

"Ay! and what then?"

"This, that I shall not submit to your exactions, though you had a hundred, instead of seven, to back you!"

The robber laughed; and, turning to his comrades, said, "Here's a fellow that wont be plucked without fluttering; we must try blows to bring down the game, if he chooses to be deaf to persuasion. Come," said he, turning to the traveller, "get rid of that unsightly hump upon your shoulders, and show how straight a man you are when you stand upright, without an incumbrance."

"Life," replied the traveller, "is only to be valued at its worth; and I am ready to relinquish mine, if it be Allah's will, in defence of my property. 'Tis no great matter for a man to die, who has known little else than crosses in this world, and has nothing better to look forward to. Take heed then, though you be robbers, and such are seldom merciful, how you impede the progress of a desperate man."

Saying this, he retreated towards a tree, against which he placed himself, and drawing his sword, declared his determination to resist to the death.

The robbers paused, surprised at the determination to oppose himself against such palpable odds; but, in order to prove how the hero had miscalculated his chances, one of the men discharged an arrow, and transfixing his sword-arm, pinning it to the tree.

The traveller immediately snapped off the shaft, and raised his arm to strike, but it fell powerless beside him. He was instantly overpowered and disarmed; but upon examining the contents of his load, great was the disappointment of the bandits. They scattered its contents upon the ground, deriding the stranger's risk of his life for property so valueless.

"Well," said the robber who had already spoken, "as he keeps no purse, we must make one out of him. His limbs are of the right mould, and your purchasers of slaves will give something for a sturdy labourer. We'll bid you good-bye when we can provide you a master who knows how to pay for being furnished with a brawny pair of shoulders, that he may lay his own load upon, without carrying them under his own head. Come along; you shall rest quietly till that awkward puncture in your arm is healed, and then you shall be shown the way to the next hamlet."

The stranger's arms were bound with his turban, and he was forced to proceed between two of the bandits. They entered the thicket, and after a walk of about five minutes, stood before several rude huts, formed in one of the closest recesses of the forest. These hovels were constructed from various growths of the jungle, a small square spot having been cleared in front, where the outlaws smoked, cooked their curries, and held their councils. Each hut accommodated a family, for all the men were married.

As there was no spare dwelling for the stranger, one was immediately constructed by a couple of the robbers, and completed in about two hours. It consisted of a few slight bamboos, driven into the ground at intervals of a foot, under the foilage of a low tree, which formed the roof. These bamboos were crossed with smaller canes, and the interstices filled with broad leaves and dried grass: the turf being cleared from within, the habitation was complete.

On the third day after his capture, the traveller was commanded to prepare for a change of condition. His wound was doing well, but the arm continued useless. His hands had not been released from the bandage by which they were confined when he was made captive. He was brought out into the area before the huts.

"Now," said the principal bandit, addressing him, "what say you to a change of life, in the mode at least? We are robbers; our business requires quick heads and stout hearts. You are a brave son of a good mother: what say you to a union of interests with those who, as you see, know how to live, and when provisions get scarce, are not over nice in appropriating them without purchase?"

"I fear," replied the prisoner, "that I have too quick a conscience for a robber. You had better not trust me: I should betray you."

"We'll run the risk; a brave man never can discredit his courage, and to skulk in the track of treachery is the choice only of cowards. We'll trust you."

"You would act then with a fool's discretion; for brave men should be honourable, and 'tis an honourable act to proclaim rogues, who are the bane of society:—not to proclaim them would be an act of treachery against honest men."

"In truth, I did not take thee for an honest man, though I did for a brave one; but I suspect thee to be neither, and only fit to rub a horse's crupper, and perform the slave's drudgery. So be it, thou shalt soon know thy vocation."

"These bonds are thy security," said the traveller, raising his hands, which were still tied with the turban. "Cowards are always brave, when they are beyond the reach of danger. Does it become thy manhood to insult a maimed and unarmed man?"

This appeal, though it galled the pride, roused the better spirit of the robber, and he said:—"Well! our notions of valour may be like our notions of honesty; therefore, let both be a divided question; but, since you decline joining your fortune with ours, you must settle our demand for home and nourishment, and as you seem to have no gold of your own, we must turn you into a disposable commodity, and get something for our trouble and care of you."

The stranger now proceeded with his captors, and, after a march of some hours, they reached a village bordering upon the forest. It consisted of a few miserable huts, and its inhabitants were of the

lowest class. Shortly after their arrival, a merchant made his appearance, who purchased the prisoner from the robbers ; and he was left with a stranger in the new and unenviable character of a slave. This was anything but a realization of his dream ; it however satisfied him, if he harboured a different conviction before, that dreams are the mere fantastic creations of an excited brain, and he felt ashamed of having allowed so flimsy an illusion to obtain one moment's influence over his mind.

There was nothing to be gained by despondency, and he resolved to submit to his destiny, with a secret trust in God, and a determination to direct the tenour of his life according to the pure suggestions of a rigid and inflexible conscience. So soon as he had become the merchant's property, the latter examined his wound, and, having carefully dressed it, as carefully felt his chest and limbs, in order to form some idea of the texture of his muscles. This preliminary settled, he expressed himself well satisfied with his purchase. The merchant was a little shrivelled man, with a light brown complexion, exhibiting a dull ochreous tinge, as if in him the whole biliary structure were placed in his head. He had a thin straggling beard, so scattered over the corrugated surface of his sharp-pointed chin, as to give him the appearance of a senile hag, rather than that of a venerable slave-dealer. He was accompanied by several athletic attendants, who amply made up in bone and sinew for the deficiency of their master in both particulars.

Having asked his new slave a few questions respecting his former habits of life, and thus ascertained that he had been accustomed to those hardy exploits likely to have inured his body to endurance, calculating that he should make a handsome profit by his bargain, the thrifty chafferer ordered him to be carefully attended to. After a day's rest at the village, the merchant directed his route towards Khorassan, whither they arrived, after a laborious journey. The slave was lodged at the house of his purchaser, who fed him well, and used him with sufficient kindness, in order to bring him into the best possible condition for sale. He took care to have it rumoured that he had a stout handsome fellow to dispose of, such as could not be matched in all Persia ;

in consequence, many persons, willing to purchase, came to see the marvel; but, finding that the description was not exactly borne out by the reality, and the sum demanded being more than they could afford, or were willing to pay, they declined entering upon a bargain.

The merchant began to grow impatient; and, as he was daily incurring an expense without profit, he thought it would be better to abate something of his demand and conclude an immediate sale, than to throw away more money upon the doubtful chance of obtaining a better price. An expedient, however, struck him. Conceiving that bondage could be desirable to no man, it occurred to him that the object of his anxiety and late disappointment might have the means of purchasing his own freedom. When this bright conclusion came across his mind, delighted with the excessive novelty of the thought, he argued that a man ought to pay more for his own liberty than another for the privilege of withholding it from him, because it was a far greater benefit to the one than to the other; and he consequently determined to raise his demand in proportion. With a portentous smile quivering upon his features, he approached the object of his anticipated gain, and said—

“Would you not be glad to enjoy your freedom?”

“You may as well ask a starving man if he loves rice.”

“Are you willing to pay for it?”

“How?”

“In money.”

“No. I am not disposed to buy what is the blessed boon of Heaven, and of this you have no more right to deprive me than I have to cut your throat, which you well deserve, for being the encourager of knaves and the supporter of brigands.”

The old man's countenance collapsed like a death's head, and, without uttering a word, he tottered from the presence of his incensed captive, as if stung by a scorpion.

From this time he treated his prisoner with much more rigour than he had hitherto done, and at length came to the resolution of putting a collar round his neck, and forcing him to perform offices of drudgery for a daily compensation. It however fortunately

happened that Aluptugeen, Governor of Khorassan, hearing a favourable account of the slave, desired to see him. He accordingly made his appearance, and was immediately purchased by the governor, to the no small gratification of the slave-merchant.

CHAPTER III.

THE purchase being completed, the slave was removed to the Governor's palace. Here he was placed among the household servants; but Aluptugeen, soon perceiving in him the promise of better things, had him about his person, and he shortly became an obvious favourite with his master. This flattering impression continued to increase, and he was at last advanced to a post of some distinction in the state. Seeing in his slave such superior endowments, Aluptugeen one day inquired of him concerning his birth. The slave replied:—

“My history is brief. Though in bondage, I have done nothing to disgrace my parentage. I was born free, though in poverty; I am lineally descended from Yezdijerd, the last of the Persian monarchs, who, as you no doubt well know, when flying from his enemies, during the Caliphate of Othman, was murdered at a water-mill near the town of Murv. His family, being left in Toorkistan, formed connexions among the people, and his descendants have become Toorks. I am now a Toork.

“I was brought into the world amid poverty and destitution; but the very wants to which my youth was subjected forced me to exert the energies with which the Omnipotent had endowed me, and I became at an early age skilled in the sports of the field, of a hardy frame and daring temperament, with the determination of seeking and securing my own fortune. My father, a man of information and letters, in spite of the pressure of penury, did not neglect to instil into my mind the obligations of virtue, and store it with the seeds of wisdom; I may therefore be said to have been better educated than many who figure in the courts of princes.

“From my earliest days, I had entertained a presentiment that the poor Toorkoman’s son was born for something better than to pass his life in indigence and obscurity. Under this impression, false as it has hitherto proved, I quitted my father’s house in my nineteenth year, and was on my way to join the armies of Ghizny, when I fell into the hands of robbers, and have in consequence become the slave of a most generous master.”

Aluptugeen was pleased with the history of his dependent, whom he soon raised to still higher honours under his government. The favourite did not disgrace his freedom, but rose rapidly into favour, until at length was conferred upon him the distinguished title of Ameer-ool-Omrah, chief of the nobles. He became now the first man in Khorassan, and was finally placed at the head of Aluptugeen’s armies. He brought them to a state of the highest order and discipline, led them on to conquest, and was the idol of the troops. The enemies of his master were awed into submission by the superior genius of his general, and peace and prosperity prevailed throughout the empire. His rise to distinction was as signal as it was rapid, and he could not help frequently reverting to his dream in the forest, which appeared gradually advancing towards its accomplishment. His father lived not to see the exaltation of his son, but that son had his mother conveyed to Khorassan, where she enjoyed the happiness of seeing him hailed by the public voice as a great and good man.

What a singular change had come over the destiny of the stranger within the lapse of a few years! The bondsman, who had bent the knee to his superiors, was now bowed to as a great and glorious being. He was the favourite of the Governor of Khorassan; he directed his master’s councils, commanded his armies, and was the oracle of his cabinet. He was constantly with the Governor, and nothing of moment was undertaken without his advice. He was now the happiest of the happy. Beloved by his ruler, the idol of all subjected to his control, the terror of those neighbouring potentates who were hostile to the government of his kind patron—he had scarcely a wish to gratify, and he felt that the clouds which had hung upon the dawn of his

career had rendered the succeeding brightness only more vivid and joyous.

Aluptugeen had a beautiful daughter, whose affections were courted by the most powerful nobles of Khorassan; but she continued deaf to their advances. She was a woman of rare endowments, and therefore an object naturally coveted by such a thought themselves in a condition to woo her. She was not to be won. Many, with whom her father would have gladly sought an alliance, were rejected, and the beautiful Zahira remained unwedded. Her coldness was the universal topic of expressed surprise; still she listened not to the voice of the wooer. She was her father's only child; and he felt naturally anxious, through her, to perpetuate his race: the disappointment therefore saddened him. But there appeared no remedy, as he did not choose to interfere with the antipathies or predilections of a beloved daughter.

As the Ameer-ool-Omrah resided in her father's palace, Zahira had continual opportunities of seeing him. They frequently met—they frequently conversed—and such meetings and such conversations begat mutual good-will. The quondam slave soon perceived that he was not despised; his admiration for the daughter of his patron grew at length into a warmer feeling, and he became conscious that he loved her. He was aware of the splendid offers that had been made to her, which she had refused. He knew the extreme fastidiousness of her approbation, yet was he disposed to think, or at least to hope, that she might be won to return the ardour which glowed in his bosom towards her.

It was impossible they should frequently meet, without that optical revelation which is invariably made where two hearts throb in unison; and when he was satisfied, by the eloquent exchange of a certain tenderness not to be mistaken, which the eye so legibly communicates when it is really and evidently felt, that his passion for the lovely daughter of Aluptugeen was returned in full force, he no longer hesitated to declare his passion, which declaration was received with an approbation that excited him to a perfect delirium of joy.

"Lady," said the Ameer-ool-Omrah, in avowing his passion, "though once a slave, I am lineally descended from a long race of kings; your purity of blood will not therefore be tainted by an alliance with one who, from the lowest degradation of bondage has attained to the highest condition of freedom."

"Noble," replied the lovely Zahira, "in the choice we make of those who are to guide our destinies, we should look rather to the moral qualities of the man we select, than to those adventitious circumstances which may either make him a sovereign or a beggar. To choose a wealthy man is easy; to choose a man of birth and distinction in the courts of princes is not more difficult. I have had the choice of both; but to select a virtuous man, is one of the few auspicious occurrences of our lives."

"Lady, I pretend to no virtue, beyond those of the nobles who compose the brilliant assemblage of your father's court. There is, that I know of, but one main difference between us; they have inherited rank and opulence—it came to them without effort; mine, though descended from a line of kings, has been obtained with the point of my sword."

"I am content to share with you," said Zahira earnestly, "the happiness or misery of a united lot, provided my father withhold not his consent; for I have no will, whatever wish I may entertain, apart from his. Duty to a parent is only exceeded in intensity of obligation by duty to a husband, and she who would fail to perform the one, would not be very likely to perform the other."

"I will immediately seek the Governor, and make known to him our mutual desires. He esteems me highly, as I have reason to believe; but how far his pride may struggle against his friendship, is a circumstance to be ascertained."

On that very day, the Ameer-ool-Omrah sought an audience with Aluptgeen, and declared his passion for the daughter of that prince. The Governor expressed no surprise, but said, "You know Zahira is my only child—a sweet blossom, that now for sixteen summers has blown round my heart with a purity and a fragrance that has rendered life to me a scene of enviable enjoy-

ment. It is my duty, therefore, no less than my wish, to render that girl happy. She has already been solicited in marriage by four different princes, who possess each an extensive dominion and wide political influence ; but she has rejected them. Several nobles of my court have made advances to her with like success. In such a solemn matter I shall neither bias nor direct her. You must, therefore, win her consent before you can obtain mine."

"I have avowed my passion, and your daughter has condescended to accept my vows. She waits but your decision. If you are averse to our union, my doom is sealed ; if you approve of it, my happiness is secured."

"If you have her consent I shall not withhold mine, and may the blessing of that great and good Being under whose sanction marriages are ratified, attend your union ! She has at least fixed her heart upon a worthy man, and I am satisfied."

The marriage was almost immediately solemnized with great pomp and splendour ; and though some of the rejected nobles looked with envy upon the happy bridegroom, it was nevertheless an event that diffused joy throughout the whole district of Khorassan. Shortly after this union, on the death of Abdool Mullik Samany, who reigned over Transoxania, the nobles sent a deputation to consult Aluptugeen regarding a successor. The dynasty of Samany was very powerful. Its power extended over Khwaruzm Marvur-ool-Nehr, Jourjan, Khorassan, Seewustan, and Ghizny. The Kings held their court at Bokhara. When the deputation arrived from Bokhara, Aluptugeen hesitated not to express his opposition to the accession of Prince Munsoor on the plea of his being too young, recommending that his uncle should for the present assume the reins of government.

Before this answer reached the capital, a party had placed Munsoor upon the throne ; consequently, when the young King sent a summons for Aluptugeen to show himself at court, the latter, apprehensive that mischief was intended, made excuses, and did not appear. In the year of the Hegira, 351, and 962 of our era, Aluptugeen raised the standard of rebellion and marched

to Ghizny, which was subdued by the bravery and conduct of his son-in-law, and there established an independent power.

Munsoor, hearing of this defection, conferred the government of Khorassan on a noble of his own court, and sent armies to attack Aluptugeen, which were successively defeated by the husband of his daughter. This raised the latter still higher in the love and confidence of the troops. His arms were everywhere victorious. The power of Munsoor was abridged, and he began to tremble for the security of his kingdom.

During fifteen years, Aluptugeen retained his independence. He was frequently engaged in war with the Indians, in which his troops were invariably successful. He lived to a good old age, and died A.H. 365, A.D. 975, regretted by his subjects. He was succeeded by his son Aboo-Isaac, who immediately upon his accession proceeded to Bokhara, accompanied by his brother-in-law the Ameer-ool-Omrah. Aboo-Isaac was well received by Munsoor, who granted him a formal commission as governor of Ghizny. His general was likewise appointed by the King as his brother-in-law's deputy and provisional successor.

Aboo-Isaac survived this event but a short period, when the husband of Zahira was unanimously acknowledged King of Ghizny by the chiefs and nobles. Thus was the dream fulfilled—the quondam slave became a powerful sovereign, and was no less a man than the celebrated Subooktugeen, father of the still more celebrated Mahmood Ghiznevy, who may be termed the first Mahomedan conqueror of India



HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

Heg. 387 (A.D. 997).—On the death of Subooktugeen, his second son Ismaeel, who had prevailed on his father in the latter's last moments to appoint him his successor, ascended the throne of Ghizny. Mahmood, though an illegitimate son, disputed his brother's right of succession; and a battle ensuing between their respective armies, Mahmood prevailed. Ismaeel was immediately confined in a fort in Joorjan; where he remained until his death, and his victorious brother ascended the throne.

Heg. 390 (1000).—Mahmood defeated Khuluf, governor of Seestan. He also marched into India and made himself master of several provinces.

Heg. 391 (1001).—The king of Ghizny obtained a victory over the army of Jeipal, who, together with fifteen sons and near relations, was taken prisoner, five thousand of his troops being slain on the field of battle. Among the spoils were sixteen necklaces inlaid with jewels, one of which, belonging to Jeipal, was valued at a hundred and eighty thousand dinars, the dinar being about the value of nine shillings sterling. Jeipal, having resigned his crown to his son, in compliance with the customs of his race, ordered a funeral pile to be prepared, and setting fire to it with his own hands, perished in the flames.

Heg. 392 (1003).—Mahmood again marched into Seestan and brought Khuluf, the governor, prisoner to Ghizny.

Heg. 395 (1004).—Rajah Beejy Ray, governor of Bhateea, having refused to pay tribute to Anundpal, the son of Jeipal, on whom he was dependent, Mahmood took Bhateea by assault; two hundred and eighty elephants, numerous slaves and other valuable spoils were obtained in the town, which the conqueror annexed, with all its dependencies, to his own dominions.

Heg. 396 (1005).—Elik Khan, king of Kashgar, and father-in-law of Mahmood, invaded the latter's territory. Mahmood was returning from the siege of Moultan when the news reached him. He immediately hastened to meet the invader, and a desperate battle was fought near Bulkh, in which the king of Kashgar was entirely defeated. This year the king of Ghizny likewise defeated Sewukpal, who had thrown off his allegiance, and made him prisoner. The rebel was compelled to pay four hundred thousand dirhems, about eight thousand three hundred pounds sterling.

Heg. 399 (1008).—Mahmood made himself master of the fort of Bheem.

There, on account of its vast strength, the Hindoos had deposited the treasure consecrated to their idols, so that the booty obtained by the conqueror was prodigious; the specie alone, independent of plate, bullion, and jewels, is said to have amounted to upwards of three hundred and thirteen thousand pounds sterling.

Heg. 401 (1010).—Mahmood defeated the prince of Ghoor, and annexed his country to the dominions of Ghizny.

Heg. 402 (1011).—Mahmood reduced Tahnesur, a holy city of the Hindoos, about thirty miles west of Delhi, which he plundered, broke the idols, and sent the principal idol Jugsoma, to Ghizny, to be trodden under foot. A ruby is said to have been found in one of the temples weighing four hundred and fifty miskals; a size altogether incredible.

Heg. 404 (1013).—The fort of Nindoona, situated in the mountains of Bulnat, was reduced by the king of Ghizny.

Heg. 406 (1014).—Abool Abass Mamoor, king of Khwaruzm, obtained Mahmood's sister in marriage.

Heg. 407 (1015).—Abool Abass Mansoor fell by the hands of conspirators, but his death was revenged by his brother-in-law, who put the murderer to death.

Heg. 409 (1017).—The king of Ghizny took the fort of Mutra, in which he found immense treasures. He next invested the fort of Rajah Chundpal, which surrendered almost immediately. Having likewise defeated Chundur Ray, he returned to Ghizny loaded with spoil, with which he built a magnificent mosque, known by the name of the Celestial Bride. In its neighbourhood the king founded a university, which was supplied with a vast collection of curious books in various languages. It contained also a museum of natural curiosities. For the support of this establishment he appropriated a large sum of money, besides a sufficient fund for the maintenance of students and proper persons to instruct them in the arts and sciences.

Heg. 410 (1019).—The king of Ghizny caused an account of his exploits to be written and sent to the Caliph, who ordered it to be read to the people of Bagdad, making a great festival upon the occasion, expressive of his joy at the propagation of the faith of Islam.

Heg. 412 (1021).—Mahmood defeated Nunda Ray, who had slain his ally the Rajah of Canowj, securing considerable treasure, besides four hundred and eighty elephants. His general also reduced Nardein, in which was a famous temple containing a stone with curious inscriptions, and, according to the Hindoo traditions, forty thousand years old.

Heg. 415 (1024).—Mahmood marched to Somnat, which he finally took, and destroyed the celebrated Idol, in the belly of which was discovered a quantity of diamonds, rubies, and pearls of immense value. Among the spoils of the temple was a chain of gold weighing two hundred mauns, or about four hundred pounds weight. It hung from the top of the building by a ring and supported a great bell, which called the people to worship.

Heg. 417 (1026).—Mahmood returned to Ghizny after an absence of two years and six months. This year he marched against the Juts, destroyed four thousand, and according to some eight thousand, boats. Few of the Juts escaped destruction : those who did, fell into the hands of the conqueror.

Heg. 418 (1027).—Mahmood died at Ghizny in the sixty-third year of his age. He reigned thirty-five years, and was buried by torch-light with great pomp and solemnity in the Kesr Firozy at Ghizny. This celebrated monarch was in person about the middle size, but well made, and strongly marked with the small-pox. His son Mahomed succeeded to the throne.



The Idol of Somnat.

CHAPTER I.

SHORTLY after the sun had risen, a beautiful Hindoo was washing her graceful limbs in the crisp waters of the sea, which gently curled over a smooth pebbly beach, a short distance from the fortifications of Somnat. This town was situated on the neck of a peninsula washed on three sides by the ocean, and fortified with great strength. There was only one approach to it. It was reported that the Ghiznivites, under Mahmood their sovereign, were on their march towards the town in large force, at which the infatuated Hindoos affected to rejoice, proclaiming in the frantic wildness of their enthusiasm, that their great idol, to whom all things upon earth were obedient, had drawn thither the Mahomedans to blast them in a moment and to avenge the destruction of the various gods of India. Upon this vain-glorious boast they appeared to rely.

The town was crowded with inhabitants who seemed determined to resist to the last gasp of life the threatened assault of their foes. Nevertheless, they trusted more to the imagined supremacy of their idol, than to their own efforts of resistance. Though the fortifications were strong for the period, when cannon were not employed in sieges, and even the battering-ram was but seldom resorted to, yet, being only of mud, they were not impregnable to the assaults of a brave and resolute foe. They were defended, moreover, by a host of fanatics, thousands of pilgrims, and crazy visionaries who crowded to worship the celebrated idols contained

within their walls, forming the uncertain instruments of defence, against which the hardy and resolute troops of Ghizny, inured to warfare and accustomed to conquest, had to contend.

The inhabitants of Somnat were confident in their numbers, and this being increased by their expectation of divine interposition through the influence of their stone divinity, they hailed with derision the approach of their foes, observed their festivals with increased acclamations, as if the menaced hostility promised rather to be scenes of pastime than of devastation.

The threatened siege did not in the slightest degree interrupt the daily observances of the Hindoos. The women went to the sea-shore to bathe as usual, perfectly unapprehensive of danger from the advancing army of Mahmood.

The beach on one side of the town was very retired, and, beyond the battlements landward, flanked by a thick wood. Hither the women repaired to perform their matutinal ablutions, and being considered a spot sacred to this purpose, it was seldom or never intruded upon, except on chance occasions by the stranger.

Here, as I have already said, according to her invariable practice, about the period of sunrise, a beautiful young Hindoo mother was performing those lustrations imposed by her religion, and which, apart from any spiritual consideration, are indispensable in a tropical region. The beach sloped gradually into the sea, in which she stood up to the shoulders, her long black hair streaming like a silken fringe upon the rippling waters. Her eyes were frequently bent downward, as if in reverential abstraction, after which she would raise them to the clear blue sky, rich with the pure tints of heaven, and brightened by the fresh genial radiance of the morning sun. She was only dawning into womanhood though a mother, her age not being yet sixteen. Her child was lying on the beach wrapped in a small coverlet, and basking in the young sunlight. The babe was but a few weeks old, and the youthful mother felt for it all the yearning of a parent for her first child. She looked at it occasionally from the place where she stood, draining the water from her streaming tresses, and cleaning them with a care

that showed a consciousness of their beauty, and her eye glistened with a parent's pride as she gazed upon the earliest fruit of her wedded love.

The infant was laid upon the dry soft sand, a few yards above where the water reached at high tide. Several other women were at this moment bathing at some short distance from the young mother, who now quitted the water, having first carefully arrayed her hair, and in a short time was wrapped in that loose becoming drapery which sets off to such advantage the slender, but round and graceful forms of the Hindoo women. Her bust was enclosed in a vest of bright crimson silk, fitted closely to the shape, and covering the arm midway from the shoulder to the elbow. A long piece of fine muslin encircled her head, falling over her neck and shoulders behind, and passing the lower parts of the body in a variety of elegant undulating folds peculiar to the taste of oriental beauties. Standing a few yards from her babe, she arranged her dress with a neatness and precision which sufficiently indicated a consciousness of the becoming. She had just completed this necessary arrangement of her toilet, and was about to turn towards her tender offspring to proceed homeward, when a wolf darted from the neighbouring thicket, seized the unconscious infant, and was retiring with all speed towards the wood. The distracted mother gazed for an instant in speechless agony, but quickly recovering herself, she sprang after the beast with the swiftness of an antelope, screaming the while with an energy that made the forest re-echo her cries.

The wolf was encumbered by the weight of its burden, and the cloth in which it was wrapped trailing upon the ground, as the animal ran, greatly impeded its progress. Her companions gazed after the anxious mother, as she followed wildly in pursuit of her infant; without making the slightest effort to assist her. They stood with open mouths, but neither a sigh of sympathy escaped their bosoms, nor did even an aspiration for the bereavement of the young mother rise to their lips.

The wolf had nearly reached the thicket with its prey, and the wretched parent was about to yield herself up to the wild impulse

of despair, when a horseman emerged from a path in the wood, and seeing the distress of a young and beautiful woman, the cause of which became instantly evident, he urged his steed forward, and reaching the wolf before it had time to enter the jungle, struck it on the back with his sword. The blow was given from so sinewy an arm as almost to sever the brute in twain. It immediately dropped its prey, writhed for a few moments, and died. The eager mother threw herself frantically on the body of her first-born, and began to bewail its untimely fate with piercing shrieks of loud and bitter agony. Supposing that it was dead, she clasped it to her bosom and called upon her idol to restore the joy of her life ; but the stone divinity, dumb and insensible as the earth on which she had prostrated herself, heard not her lamentable cry. The huge image of Somnat, adored by millions of enthusiasts, and enriched by the perpetual offerings of wealthy devotees, standing within the walls of a gorgeous temple, which might have vied with the proudest palaces of Egypt's kings in the brightest days of their renown, heard not the tender supplications of one of its devoted adorers, but stood in its grim majesty inaccessible to the appeal which might have melted any stone that had not been employed to fashion a divinity.

The child, feeling the pantings of its mother's bosom, uttered a cry that in a moment subdued the mental anguish of its parent. Her lamentations ceased—she gazed upon it—unfastened the cloth in which it had been tied—examined it with an expression of excited anxiety, and finding that it was uninjured, gave a scream of joy, and clasped it with fervency to her breast.

The wolf had seized only the wrapper in which the infant had been secured, so that when released from the monster's jaws, the babe was without a scratch. The youthful mother was wild with transport. She fixed her beaming eyes upon her preserver with a look between amazement and exultation, but without uttering a word.

By this time the stranger, beneath whose sword the wolf had died, stood near, apparently enjoying the rapture of the young

Hindoo. For a few moments, he left her to the feelings in which her ardent heart was evidently revelling, forbearing to interrupt an enjoyment second only to the fruition of paradise. He beheld her beauty with fervent admiration, a beauty seldom paralleled, and heightened by the tender excitement under which she was at that moment labouring. Having recovered from the shock of agony produced by the apprehension of her child's peril, her thoughts were now sufficiently collected to acknowledge her obligations to its deliverer. She again turned upon him her large dark liquid eyes with an expression of melting gratitude which could not be mistaken.

The stranger approached. She shrank from him, in spite of the obligation which he had placed her under, because he was of another creed. The tie of his jumma or tunic proclaimed him a Mahomedan, and she almost shuddered as he came near and bent over her. She could not smother her deeply-rooted prejudices against the enemies of her race, and the blasphemers of her gods.

"I am happy," said the stranger, "in having been the instrument of preserving your infant from the ravening wolf. Though our creeds differ they ought at least to concur in the natural law of reciprocal benefaction. I rejoice to have saved the child of one who has been taught to look upon me, and those who profess a similar faith, as fit to hold intercourse only with the scum and off-scouring of human society, and trust that while such an act offers an appeal to your gratitude, it will convey a lesson of wisdom. I would that you should not only look upon me as the saviour of your babe, but put me on the footing in social dignity with those of your own belief in matters concerning the life which is to succeed the present, and think not that all virtue expires when not fostered by the warm atmosphere of Hindoo superstition."

"Stranger," replied the mother, looking tenderly upon her child, now drawing from her the maternal nutriment, "I cannot gaze upon this dear object without being sensible that, apart from all

prejudices raised by those conventional laws which different creeds impose, I am your debtor for the greatest enjoyment which this world can realise. You have restored the infant to its longing mother, and whatever the restraint by which I may be repelled from welcoming the saviour of my child with those outward expressions of acknowledgment which I might be permitted to show to a member of my own faith, believe me I shall never forget that the greatest debt of my life is due to one who is considered the enemy of my country's gods, but whom I have found to be the most signal and magnanimous of friends."

"Perhaps the enthusiasm of your gratitude will subside when you know to whom you have been indebted for the salvation of your offspring."

"No!—such knowledge cannot alter the fact of my obligation. I may indeed regret the spiritual and social bar which lies between us, but I never can forget the act which has restored to me a life that I value far more dearly than my own. But may I ask to whom I am indebted for such a signal act of magnanimity?"

"To Mahmood of Ghizny, the most inveterate foe of your race, who despises your gods, and is at this moment preparing to hurl your gigantic divinity, installed in yonder gorgeous temple, from its proud pedestal, and make its worshippers ashamed of having so long prostrated themselves before a block of stone."

The lovely Hindoo shrank from her interlocutor when he declared himself to be the greatest enemy of her nation's gods. She trembled for the moment, but her high sense of moral obligation bore down the weak fences of prejudice, and she assured him that the preserver of her child could never merge in the enemy of her race.

"Prepare," said Mahmood, "to behold me shortly enter those walls in triumph; but be assured of your own safety, and you may yet live to know that the sovereign of Ghizny never professed a kindness which he did not rigidly perform."

CHAPTER II.

THE Hindoo mother, having made her acknowledgments to the deliverer of her child, entered the walls of Somnat, and sought her home. She related the adventure of the morning to her husband, at this time lying ill of fever. He was a man of high caste, and entertained all the prejudices of his national superstitions in an eminent degree. This tendency was aggravated to a morbid excess by his present illness. The relation greatly distressed him. The idea that his infant had been snatched from death by a worshipper of gods which his nation did not recognise, agitated him to a paroxysm of excitement. He raved, and cursed the chances that had exposed his offspring to such pollution. He would rather the wolf had devoured it, than that it should have owed its preservation to the arm of a Mussulman, and he the greatest enemy of the Hindoos and their religion.

The Hindoo father was a young man of about thirty, handsome and amiable, but a rigid observer of the national superstitions. He was affectionate to his wife, in a degree seldom equalled by Hindoo husbands, and she returned his tenderness with a pure and ardent attachment. In spite, however, of his fondness, like all husbands of his tribe he was not only a master but a tyrant. The wife was subservient to an extent that rendered her domestic life a slavery; but being impressed with a conviction that such subserviency was the proper sphere, because it was the destined lot of woman, she submitted without a murmur. Still she was relatively happy; for, by comparison with the generality of Hindoo wives, her social comforts were considerable. She felt conscious of possessing her husband's attachment; and, though his general conduct towards her was authoritative, it was seldom harsh. Had it been otherwise than authoritative, she would have despised him as descending from the dignity of his manhood, and foregoing the especial immunities of his privileged sex.

Upon the present occasion, harassed by suffering of body and anxiety of mind, the sick man treated his young and lovely consort with a severity which he had never before exercised.

“The vengeance of Siva will be directed against this house for the folly of a woman. The god of Somnat has seen the pollution offered to the offspring of one of his worshippers. Take heed that the fiery gleam of his eye does not blast thee, when thou next offerest thy oblations at his holy shrine.” The youthful mother raised her head ; the long lashes that fringed her soft but intensely bright eyes were moistened with the dew of sadness. It gathered gradually, until the weight of the liquid gem was too great a burden for the trembling lashes to support, and then trickled slowly down her clear brown cheek. She uttered not a word, but clasped her babe with greater fervour to her bosom. The husband saw her emotion, and was moved ; nevertheless, he bade her quit the apartment and leave him to his repose, which, alas ! came not, for the excitement had only aggravated his malady. He was scorched with fever ; and, in the course of that night, his peril was imminent. The tender partner of his home and of his love did not quit his side for a moment. She saw his danger ; and the gloomy thought of her own death came with the chill of a night-blast upon her soul. The awful customs of her tribe forbade that she should outlive him ; and the horrible manner in which her death would be consummated seemed to freeze the very fountain of life as she thought upon it. To be cut off by the appalling process of cremation, ere the sweet fragrant blossom of existence had fairly opened into womanhood, was a sad and bitter thought. Still, the sufferings of the man she loved recalled her from these sad reflections, and she gazed upon him with an interest in which, for the moment, all her prospective sufferings were absorbed. He spoke not, but the thought of that contamination, which he supposed to have passed upon his child by the contact of one of another creed, evidently remained the paramount impression on his mind ; for when the mother presented him her infant for a paternal caress, he turned from it with a shudder, and refused to allow it to be brought into his presence.

Hour after hour the tender consort watched by his side, submitting without a murmur, or even a look of dissatisfaction, to the petulance induced by his disease. She watched him as he

lay upon his rug—anticipated his wishes—soothed his sufferings—prepared whatever he took with her own hand—but all her attentions seemed likely to be bestowed in vain. The full, rapidly throbbing pulse, the burning brow, the dry palm, and the brown furred tongue, upon which the cool liquid was evaporated the moment it came in contact with it, all proclaimed the jeopardy in which the invalid lay.

The native physician by whom he was attended ordered him decoctions, prepared from some lenitive herbs ; these had not the slightest effect upon his disorder. When this arrived at a certain height, and the medical visitor saw that all material remedies were useless, he impressed upon the wife the necessity of immediately repairing to the temple of Somnat, and supplicating the divine intercession of its idol, promising her that her husband's health would certainly be re-established, if she could only prevail upon the stone divinity to listen to her supplications.

“All that art can do,” said he, “I have done to restore this unhappy man, who must soon yield up his spirit to be the inhabitant of another body, unless the deity of our temple raise him up at the intercession of a pious heart. Go, and may your prayer be heard !”

This was no very encouraging expectation. The unhappy young creature now felt assured that her husband could not live, unless restored by superhuman means. The creed in which she had been reared taught her to trust in the efficacy of such means, and to believe that they would be accorded to a pious solicitation ; she was therefore determined to offer her supplications in the temple, in the hope of averting her husband's death, which, in fact, would involve her own. At this moment a Brahmin, and one of the officiating priests of the sanctuary, entered the sick man's apartment. He was a sanctified man, with a gross, misshapen body, gross from indolence and indulgence, and bearing about him the unequivocal marks of the coarse bloated Sybarite. His shorn scalp bore not indeed the frost of age, but the deep corrugations by which the forehead was crossed showed, in characters too legible to need interpretation, that time had already prepared

the furrows for the seeds of death. The old man's countenance was haggard, though placid ; but it was placid rather from insensibility, than from the access of elevated feeling. The eye was sunk beneath a projecting brow, that hid much of its expression, and its faded lustre spoke not that mute language of passion which his heart frequently prompted, but which the eye was too lustreless to betray. His legs were shrunk to the bones, and seemed scarcely able to bear the burthen of obesity which laziness and indulgence had imposed upon them. He hobbled to the couch of the dying man, looked at him for a moment, doubled his legs under him as he seated himself upon the floor, desired the cocoa-nut hookah to be brought, and, having inhaled the sedative luxury for a few moments, said, with an air of the utmost unconcern, "Thy soul is about to assume a new body ; what are thy hopes?"

The invalid said faintly—"I have not lived an unholy life, and therefore hope that I shall be advanced one step towards absorption* into Bhrim, when my spirit throws off the vile crust by which it has been encumbered here."

"Then you are prepared for the change—you are tired of this world?"

"No," said the dying man with energy, "I would fain live, because there is a dark uncertainty in the future that clogs my spirit and weighs it down. It is an awful thing to die, and I would if possible escape death until age should no longer encourage a desire of life."

"Dost thou think old men wish to die?"

"If their lives have been virtuous, why should they desire to live, when their capabilities of earthly enjoyments are past?"

"Because to them there is the same uncertainty in the future as to thee. In life there is positive enjoyment to the last ; with the end of life what guarantee have we for the joys of a future existence?—they may be visionary."

* The belief of the Hindoos generally is that, after a course of progressive changes, through each of which the soul advances to a higher state of purification, it is finally absorbed into the Deity, which is, as they conceive, the perfect consummation of bliss.

“But the blessed Vedas teach us otherwise?”

“Ay, the blessed Vedas! they cannot be gainsaid; they are the voice of the divinity: Krishna speaketh through them, but then they are the sealed oracles, which only we of the sanctuary can expound; and they promise that reliance upon the ministers of our temple will be rewarded in the metempsychosis. There is still hope of thy release from this perilous malady. Let thy wife visit the temple, and bow before the image—the deity of our race, and thou shalt have thy health return to thee.”

He continued smoking for a few moments, during which not a voice interrupted the silence. Having swallowed a large pill of opium, he rose, and taking the invalid's wife on one side, said to her, in a low, husky whisper—“The hand of death is upon thy husband; nothing short of divine interposition can save him. If he dies, you know that his widow must accompany him to the swerga.”

“I am prepared for the sacrifice. Fear not that I shall degrade my lineage by shrinking from performing that solemn obligation which the most perfect of all religions imposes upon the bereaved widow. It is her blessed privilege; I shall not forego it.”

“But would you not willingly evade the consummation of so dreadful a sacrifice?”

“No; I would, under no consideration, evade the performance of an obligation as sacred as it is awful, and obligatory in proportion as it is sacred.”

“Nay, these are not your real sentiments; you need use no disguise with me. I can save you from the necessity of dying upon the pile, if you'll make it worth a priest's while to risk the peace of his own soul in that strange land of darkness or of light—who shall say which?—whither thy husband is rapidly hastening!”

“Save me! Why would you save me from a sacrifice which I deem an immunity from mortal cares? In this life, a woman's condition is one of endurance, of slavery, of pain; I would be glad to enter upon an existence where each and all are unknown.”

“You speak indeed like a feeble woman. Do you not know that, if your body is consumed with your husband's on the funeral

pile, your soul will follow his to whatever destiny it may be appointed? This is a sad hazard, for he dies in the prime of manhood, when the blood is warm and the senses are all full of the glowing warmth of young and vigorous life. He has had no time to expiate, by penance the miscarriages of youthful years. The mellowing hand of age has not yet taught him experience, nor the penalties of indulgence wisdom. Thou art too lovely to follow him to a future doom that befits thee not."

By this time the opium was beginning to act upon the aged debauchee, and his eyes emitted the fire, and his limbs the elasticity of youth—so potential is that debasing drug. The lovely Hindoo was shocked; but it was dangerous to offend a Brahmin. Advancing, he laid his shriveled hand upon her shoulder, and said—"Daughter, come to the temple this night, and bring thy offerings to the idol; be assured thou shalt not want an intercessor. Think no more of burning. When thy husband dies, thou mayst yet be happy. The multitude must think that the sacrifice is performed, but trust to me, and feeble as this arm may seem, it will prove an arm of might in thy protection—it shall snatch thee from the flames."

"Leave me," said the unhappy wife; "one who knows her duty, and how to perform it, needs no adviser but her conscience. I shall endeavour to propitiate the divinity, by presenting my oblations before the presiding deity of our holy temple, and there lay my hopes."

"This evening we shall meet," said the Brahmin, as he retired with an alacrity peculiar alike to robust youth and opium.

The faithful, though unhappy wife, crept softly to her husband's side, and gazed upon him with a glance of anxious inquiry, but spoke not, fearing to disturb him. Overcome by his exertion of talking with the Brahmin, he had fallen into a deep but disturbed sleep.

CHAPTER III.

THE sun went down in glory, and smiled upon its own land when it withdrew behind the ocean, as if unwilling longer to look upon the griefs with which the world that had so lately glowed with its pure vivid light was encumbered. Evening suddenly flung her shadows over the city of Somnat, but the stars sparkled in the purple concave of heaven like children of joy, imparting a beautiful relief to the grave solemnity of night.

At rather a late hour the melancholy wife quitted the side of her husband, whose malady had not abated, and repaired to the magnificent temple of Somnat, at that time the most celebrated in Hindostan. It stood upon an elevated part of the town, and covered a vast space of ground. It was a ponderous edifice, exhibiting that elaborate detail of ornament combined with massive grandeur peculiar to the early Hindoo temples. Within, it consisted of one vast aisle several hundred feet long, the roof supported on either side by magnificent columns, ornamented even to superfluity with sculpture, each column detailing an episode from the Mahabarat. Every pillar was cut from a single block of granite, elaborated with an accuracy of touch, and a justness of proportion, not exceeded by any monuments of ancient art, save those of Greece. The light was admitted through a vast dome in the centre, beneath which the huge idol stood like a Colossus, casting one unvarying expression of grim insensibility upon its prostrate but humble adorers. The figure was of stone, clumsily wrought into a monstrous form. The head was ornamented with gems of prodigious value, similar gems being likewise fixed in every pillar of the temple. Its eyes were formed of two rubies of such transcendent lustre as to inspire the worshippers with a holy awe when they prostrated themselves before this hideous image.

There were no lights used in the temple at night except one pendent lamp, the light of which being reflected from the jewels in the idol's head, and from those fixed in the various columns that adorned the sacred edifice, spotted the whole area with

a dazzling gleam which appeared the effect of superhuman agency.*

The most costly offerings were daily made to this factitious divinity, but the depository of its immense wealth was a secret, as the Brahmins pretended, known only to the deity to whom it had been dedicated. On two sides of the temple were various apartments occupied by the functionaries of the sanctuary, which no persons were permitted to enter, save those to whose habitation they had been especially appropriated. Strange and mysterious events were said frequently to take place within those secret and forbidden retreats, supposed to be hallowed by the holy lives of their spiritual occupants.

The Brahmin who had recently visited the invalid had an apartment near the shrine, and was one of the officiating priests in this fane of superstition, where, under the mask of religion, the most revolting abominations were nightly practised. Like the Eleusinian mysteries, they were hidden from the public eye, as only fit to be witnessed by those whom it would seem to have been thought that vice had sanctified.

With a resolved but throbbing heart the beautiful Hindoo wife entered within the black narrow portal of this gorgeous but gloomy structure. The lower part of the edifice was involved in a shadowy light which imparted a cavernous solemnity to this house of a most unholy worship. The huge idol rose amid the distance surrounded by a blaze of light that filled the dome in which the colossal image stood, but did not extend far enough to pierce the distant gloom.

As she stalked forward with a measured pace, the monstrous figures surrounding the columns seemed to glare upon her from their granite pedestals like so many petrified ogres. Her heart throbbed with emotion. The object of her visit at this dark hour of night rose to her memory with an impetuous impulse, whilst the associations of the gloom of the grave, and that of the consecrated edifice which she had now entered for the purpose of propitiating a deaf and dumb idol for the benefit of a departing soul, and to arrest

* This is stated in the Zein-ool-Maasir.

the summons of death, sent a chill through the whole mass of her blood which seemed to reach and congeal the very fountain of life. When she reached the dome there was not a person but herself that she could perceive in the sanctuary. The light of the solitary lamp hanging from the centre of the dome was reflected from thousands of brilliant gems which cast a radiance around the figure of intense and dazzling brilliancy. She prostrated herself before the image, and poured the full tide of her heart's emotions in a prayer for the restoration of her husband.

A general belief prevailed among the Hindoos of that part of the country that souls after death were summoned before the Idol of Somnat, which transported them into other bodies according to their merits in this life, where he became a sort of Hindoo Rhadamanthus, resembling that infernal justiciary, however, in nothing less than in the rigid impartiality of his justice. It was also declared by the Brahmins belonging to this celebrated temple, that the ebb and flow of the tides represented the reverence paid by the ocean to this shrine.

Having paid her devotions, the supplicant approached the base of the idol, and laid a handful of gold upon it; for her husband was wealthy, and the god of Somnat never heard a vow that was not accompanied by an offering. She prayed that her husband might be spared to her; or, if the slender thread of his destiny was already spun, that his soul might be transferred into a nobler body, and be thus advanced one step nearer to that final and beatific state of absorption so anxiously desired by all faithful Hindoos. As she concluded, there was a strange unearthly sound heard from within the image; the eyes seemed to glow with more intense brightness, and when she rose from her posture of prostration, to her surprise the aged Brahmin who had lately visited her husband stood before her. She looked upon him, however, without apprehension, feeling herself in the presence of an omnipotent agent, and not entertaining a thought, in the innocence of her pure heart, that the altar of deity could be polluted by the most licentious impurities.

“The divinity is propitiated,” said the sanctified impostor,

“Your prayers have been heard, and you are favoured with the especial notice of one, in whose term of life the Maha Yug* is no more than a single instant, by comparison with this earth’s duration. Prepare to meet the god at midnight.”

“You mock me. Does the deity condescend to become incarnate, and reveal himself in a mortal body to his worshippers?”

“Yes: where it is his will to favour those whose homage he approves, he reveals himself to them in the likeness of his creatures, generally assuming the form of some devout priest, whose ministrations he especially approves, and thus signifies his approval. You will see him this night, under the similitude of a favourite Brahmin. He has determined to grant your supplications.”

She was astonished at this communication. The reverence in which she had been accustomed to hold the character of the priesthood—the wild solemnity of the scene around her—the dazzling light that seemed supernaturally to float over the ponderous image—the excitement under which she laboured, from her anxiety for her husband’s welfare and the issue of her appeal—the promise that her supplications had been favourably heard—all tended to throw her into such a tumult of agitation, that she became bewildered; and, under the impulse of superstitious enthusiasm, consented to meet the god at midnight.

Guileless as the mother dove, she did not dream that danger could accrue from her meeting a spiritual being who merely condescended to assume the garb of mortal flesh, in order to render himself intelligible to mortal faculties; and as, according to the impure creed in which she had been reared, gods had occasionally united themselves to mortals in an alliance of love, her heart’s purity was not shocked at the idea which the Brahmin broadly hinted, of the divinity of Somnat favouring her by such especial predilection. She was aware also that her husband, as well as herself, would look upon it as a signal mark of distinction, and

* The Maha Yug, or great Divine Age, is the longest of the Hindoo astronomical periods, containing a cycle of four million three hundred and twenty thousand years.

feel himself honoured at his wife's exaltation by so eminent a token of divine preference.

The wily Brahmin, however, knew his victim too well to suppose that, notwithstanding her visionary impressions, she would fall an easy prey; and it was only whilst he could keep up the delusion under which she then laboured, that he would find her a submissive votary at the shrine of the most odious superstition which has ever degraded the sacred name of religion. In order to maintain the excitement by which she was at that moment actuated, and strengthen the impressions to which she was expected to become a prey, some of those abominable mummeries were performed, so commonly practised at the altars of Hindoo gods. A number of dancing girls were introduced, who went through various obscene antics before the idol, in which several Brahmins joined, with all the apparent enthusiasm of an absorbing devotion.

The beautiful Hindoo looked on without a blush, under the persuasion that these were sacred ministrations peculiar to the divinity of Somnat, and she came to the conclusion that such were the pleasures in which that divinity delighted to revel. After these orgies had been gone through, and the temple of religion made a scene of revolting indecency, the lamp was suddenly extinguished, and the immense edifice involved in profound darkness. The young wife was confounded. She heard the laughter of those who, like the Greek bacchantes, had been performing the grossest scenes in the very presence of their deity, and shouts of joy seemed to issue from a thousand throats. She stood mute, between astonishment and apprehension. Her awe had given way to momentary terror. She was preparing to retreat toward the portal through which she had entered, when a soft but repulsive voice caught her ear :

“Come to the embrace of the god; he awaits thee; 'tis midnight, and he is impatient to meet thee.”

Her heart palpitated; she was struck with a sudden suspicion. The voice was evidently disguised, but, to her quick ear, could not be mistaken: it was that of the Brahmin. Her brain flashed with instant conviction, as if the deity had lighted up her soul

with a positive revelation. The impulse was irresistible. The illusions of superstition vanished, and she felt herself in the meshes of the betrayer. She gasped for breath; she spoke not; she groped for a resting-place, and her arm fell upon the pedestal of the idol.

"Come," said the voice, in a gentle whisper; "why this delay? The god is impatient, and he is not used to be slighted: where he honours, he expects obedience. Come!"

"Avaunt! deceiver," she cried. "You have marked me for your victim. I am betrayed. Why should the divinity of Somnat assume the form of an aged and deformed Brahmin, when he might clothe himself in the fairest garb of mortal flesh? My dream is past. I am your dupe. Away, and leave me. Never will I submit to pollution by one who makes religion a pander to his odious passions. A light has broken upon me. The deity has indeed heard my supplication, and saved me from the machinations of one who will swell the ranks of the Asuras, amid the darkness of *Lóhángáráká*."*

The Brahmin, finding himself foiled, quitted his expected victim in a fury of disappointment.

She stood alone, leaning on the image, rapt in a trance of painful abstraction. Suddenly she felt the idol totter; a noise was heard from within, like the hissing of ten thousand serpents, immediately after which fire issued from the nose and mouth of the image, and fell in thick showers around. The whole temple was illuminated, and the door instantly became visible to the worshipper. She darted forward in spite of every impediment, and at length succeeded in gaining the entrance. She felt the pure breath of heaven upon her burning brow, and rejoiced in her escape. Reaching her home at length, in a tumult of hope and anxiety, she found that her husband had gone to that land where "there is time no longer."

* The last of the thrice seven hells of the Hindoos. *Lóhángáráká* signifies hot iron coals.

CHAPTER IV.

IMMEDIATE communication was made to the relations of the defunct, that the deity of Somnat had heard the prayers of his relict, and he that was transported to a higher region, to be subjected to a change in the course of his transmigration that would bring him nearer to the final bliss of absorption into the universal Bhrim. The various connexions of the deceased were all summoned, and the neighbourhood immediately resounded with cries of lamentation, and those frantic ululations invariably heard at Hindoo funerals. The women stood screaming over the body with dishevelled hair, beating their breasts and rolling themselves upon the floor like so many wild beasts, whilst the disconsolate widow sat apart, abstracted by the thoughts of her own approaching sacrifice. She moved not; her eye was fixed on the ground, but the fountains of her grief were dry. Not a tear came to her relief—not a sigh escaped her bosom. The one awful image of death, in its most appalling form, absorbed her whole mind.

The Brahmin, before spoken of, appeared to officiate upon this melancholy occasion. He whispered in the widow's ear words of consolation and hope, but she heard him not. He talked of her rescue from the fiery death about to be prepared for her; she disregarded him, and turned from the aged sensualist with an expression of disgust. His eyes gleamed in their hollow sockets with a deep leaden glare, and the blood rushed a moment to his flaccid cheek. He turned from his anticipated victim to proceed with the obsequies. When everything had been provided, the spiritual functionary, having previously bathed, took a narrow slip of a certain herb, and binding it round one of the fingers of the deceased, sprinkled upon the floor a quantity of lustral water, obtained from the sacred river,* a libation to the gods, whom he

* The Ganges.

invoked with numerous prostrations, and a variety of wild gestures. The people assembled joined in a prayer for the future repose of their relative's soul.

When this part of the ceremony had been performed, in the strictest manner prescribed by their formularies, fire was brought from the temple, where it had been purposely kindled, and certain herbs, consecrated to this solemn purpose, were disposed near the body in four different places. Some relatives of the deceased cast into the fire a quantity of dried cow-dung pulverized. During this portion of the preparatory rites, the officiating Brahmin was occupied in prayer, but paused in the midst of his orison, to perform an essential part of the funeral solemnities. A cow, adorned with flowers, was introduced at this auspicious juncture, and presented to the minister to prevent the defunct from being unhappy in his mutation, which the venerable hierophant promised, without any reservation, that he should not be, in consequence of the Brahmin's prayers. Several offerings of a different kind, but no less valuable, were made to this disinterested priest before the obsequies were completed.

The ceremony of the Prayatchitam, or expiation of sins, was next performed. It consisted of prayers, after which the soul of the deceased was evoked, and certain astrological calculations made respecting the constellation under which he expired.

The body was now washed. On the forehead was marked the sign of the caste, with a compost of ochre, fine clay, and oil; it was then arrayed in the funeral robe, and a piece of areka-nut forced into its mouth. A small fillet of linen was next torn into strips over the face; with those strips the two thumbs were tied, and the corpse being rubbed with a piece of sandal-wood, which emits a very strong and fragrant odour, was laid upon a palankeen covered with red cloth, the Hindoo pall, and ornamented with flowers.

A large aperture was now made in the wall of the house, which had no second story, and through this the body was conveyed in a sitting posture to the pile, the aperture being closed up the moment the corpse had been carried through.

When the procession had reached the gate of the court fronting the house, it was preceded by two men nearly naked, bearing each a long trumpet, the mournful sound of which, as dissonant as it was loud, blended with the noise of tomtoms, finger-drums, cymbals, and various other noisy instruments, produced a din sufficient to scare the living into the condition of the dead. To this portentous clamour the numerous relatives of the deceased united their wild wailings, more like the baying of dogs than the lamentations of rational beings. Some cried, others screamed and tore their hair, whilst several sang the praises of the defunct in a hoarse monotonous chant. The dress of these energetic mourners consisted simply of a single piece of cloth wrapped round their bodies, hanging from the head to the knees.

When the procession reached its destination, the palanquin was placed upon the ground, four furrows were traced towards the four cardinal points and oblations of gengeli and rice were offered to those aerial spirits supposed to inhabit the mansions of the dead, in order to propitiate their goodwill.

The nose of the defunct was now pinched, to ascertain if there remained any signs of life; for the Hindoos suppose that the dead may be resuscitated, though no such fact is recorded by their fabricators of marvels. Water was next poured upon the head of the corpse, and the noise of tomtoms and trumpets was redoubled, to awaken the dead man should he happen to be in a trance. It being at length ascertained that the spirit had quitted, and not returned to the insensate clay, the body was again placed on the palanquin and carried close to the spot intended for the funeral pile, the immediate vicinity having been first purified with Gangetic water, and cleared of every particle of dirt supposed to convey defilement. This portion of the ceremony was accompanied with numerous prayers and prostrations.

All these forms having been scrupulously observed, the corpse was placed upon a stone always erected near the Chodelet, which is the place appointed for cremation of the deceased. This stone represents Aritchandren, a virtuous king, who, becoming slave to the chief of the Pariahs, was employed by his master to take care

THE IDOL OF SOMNAT.

of the Chodelet, and receive the taxes to be paid on burning the dead. After various fantastic mummeries and vociferous supplications, some pieces of copper money were buried before Aritchandren, together with a small bit of new cloth and a handful of rice, by way of a burial fee. One of the Pariahs, whose office it was to look after the fire, then approached the stone, and informed Aritchandren,* that, having received the regular tribute, he must permit the body to pass. The palankeen was now sent back, the hair and nails of the defunct were carefully cut, and the funeral pile was prepared. Branches of the sandal tree were made use of for this purpose, it being imagined by all pious Hindoos that this tree has more virtue than any other, save the mango, in promoting the happiness of the deceased, both being trees consecrated to their gods. Branches of the ficus religiosa and of the banian tree are occasionally used, but only by those who cannot afford to purchase the more costly wood of the rarer trees.

The pile being at length prepared, the corpse was placed upon it. The nearest relation performed this melancholy office, and prepared the last repast for the dead. In order that the departed might go into the other world with sufficient food for his journey, butter, rice, and curds were put into the hands, mouth, and ears of the corpse.

Thus ended this part of the ceremony.† It was a long and tiresome process, but nothing could divert those engaged in it from performing the minutest thing prescribed in their formulary. On the morning of the Hindoo's death, alarm had been spread through the town of the approach of Mahmood's army, which report was shortly after confirmed by his investing the fort with thirty thousand men. This did not in the slightest degree interrupt the obsequies. Not a creature present seemed to bestow a thought upon the danger of being threatened by a large besieging army, headed by a great prince and a successful warrior. They relied

* The Greek Charon and this Hindoo toll-taker would appear to be identical; but the Greeks have been indebted to Hindoo superstition for many other notions, the parallels of which are too strong to be mistaken.

† See Sonnerat, vol. ii., on Hindoo funerals.

upon the protection of their idol, which they imagined could blast the enemy with the lightning of its wrath, and rescue them from the threatened peril. They heard the din of battle while engaged in performing the funeral rites, but it diverted them not from their solemn purpose. The name of Mahmood the victorious was shouted without the walls, and re-echoed within them with a general acclamation of defiance. Thousands of unarmed fanatics crowded the ramparts, confident of divine interposition, and loaded the air with curses upon the followers of a new faith.

During the performance of the funeral rites, the beautiful widow had remained apart, absorbed in the solemn intensity of her own thoughts. The death of a husband whom she tenderly loved shook her heart with a severe pang, and the thought of the awful sacrifice which his death imposed upon her dilated her bosom with a deep and palpable terror; still she resolved to die. With her the high sense of duty was paramount over every selfish consideration, and she braced her resolution to undergo one of the most fearful sacrifices which the madness of bigotry has imposed upon the credulity of devout but imbecile minds.

The body of her husband was already upon the fatal pyre, and all things were ready for her to consummate that act of devotion, which, as she had been taught to believe, should secure her an eternal communion with her consort in paradise. The Brahmin approached her to announce that she was waited for. He advanced towards her alone, and bade her be of good cheer.

"Thou shalt not perish," he cried; "trust to me and I will save thee, to reap the harvest of joy in an earthly paradise, before you ascend to one of brighter promise indeed, but of more remote certainty."

"What mean you? My doom is fixed. I must join my husband upon the funeral pile, that our souls may ascend together to that sphere which his spirit is destined to enter."

"But would you not rather evade this fiery death?"

"Why should I? Is it not imposed upon us by a wise and immutable will?—how then can I evade it?"

"Would you rather live?"

“Not if it be my duty to die.”

“You are not bound to perish unless you desire it. The deity will absolve you from the obligation upon certain conditions.”

“What are they?”

“That you will reward with your love his vicegerent here, whose ministrations he has approved, and to whom he has imparted superhuman power, as the reward of a life of faithful homage. I will bear you to a retreat where no sorrow shall visit you, and where every moment of your life shall be gilded with a blessing.”

“Mocker!—this is no time for delusion: bear me to the pyre, and you shall see how a Hindoo widow can die.”

“But why would you court death, when happiness is within your grasp!”

“Because death with a beloved husband were a blessed boon compared with life with an aged and sensual Brahmin. Priest, I despise thee:—lead me to the pyre.”

The Brahmin was silent. He folded his arms, and fixed upon her a look of deep and implacable malice.

“I fear thee not,” she cried, rising; “conduct me to my doom; the gods will applaud what their priest may scorn; but I reverence the one and despise the other.” She beckoned to her women, who approached, and declared to them that she was ready to ascend the pyre, upon which her husband’s body had been already some time laid. The ministering priest did not utter a word, and made ready to commence the initiatory ceremonies.

CHAPTER V.

THE unhappy widow now prepared herself to perform the dreadful sacrifice which was to free her from the cares of this world and exalt her to the Swerga bowers, or Hindoo paradise. She was stationed before the door of the house of mourning in a kind of rostrum, which was profusely and extravagantly ornamented; tomtoms, trumpets, and cymbals continuing their deafening clangour

as before. She placed a small piece of areka-nut between her almost motionless lips and softly aspirated the name of Somnat's idol. She next adorned her head, neck, and arms with all her jewels, arraying herself in sumptuous apparel, as if about to appear at the marriage ceremony, instead of a funeral solemnity.

The array of her person being concluded, she proceeded toward the place of sacrifice, accompanied by numerous friends, to the sound of those instruments which had already preceded the procession of her husband's body. Several Brahmins, including the hierophant, walked by her side encouraging her with assurances that she was going to enjoy eternal felicity in regions where there is no misery known, and where she would become the sita* of some god who would espouse her as a reward for her constancy and virtue. They further promised her that her name should be celebrated throughout the earth, and sung in all their future sacrifices. This proves a strong stimulus to some women, who go to the pile voluntarily, and with an enthusiasm truly astonishing ; for there is no legal obligation to perform the suttee.

A cup was now handed to the unhappy victim of the most barbarous superstition that has ever stained the black annals of fanaticism. She drank of it without the slightest emotion. In a few minutes the effects of this draught were visible. Her eyes glistened ; she erected her frame to the full height of her stature, and looked around her with a flushed cheek and stern severity of purpose which sufficiently showed that the fever of enthusiasm was beginning to circulate rapidly through her veins. As the aged Brahmin approached her, she looked at him with a glance of defiant scorn, and pointing to the pile on which the corpse of her husband had been laid, said, with a raised brow and flashing eye—

“Dost thou think I would escape that fiery passage to everlasting repose ? Thou wouldst withhold me from my glory. My soul shall ascend on wings of flame to the abodes of those who never die. I see the beckoning spirit in yonder cloud waiting to

* Bride.

bear mine to its eternal home. Thou wouldst tear me from my bliss. Away, away!"

She immediately grew calm and began to prepare for the sacrifice with a truly sublime solemnity. Her relations came to her, with an alacrity that showed how gratified they felt at the oblation she was about to offer. The place was surrounded by an immense concourse, upon whom the victim occasionally cast a glance of pity mixed with triumph at the approaching consummation of her her destiny. The music, if such it might be termed, had ceased while the preliminaries of the sacrifice were taking place, and an intense and awful silence reigned among the assembled multitude.

The beautiful widow now advanced to the foot of the pyre, prepared to consume that exquisite frame in the early freshness of its blossoming youth. The Brahmins crowded round her, endeavouring to sustain her fortitude to endure the coming trial by songs in which they artfully introduced the most fulsome eulogies of her heroism. This appeared to elevate her courage amid the awful array of death. It was now announced to her that the fatal moment had arrived when the flames were to embrace one of the most perfect bodies that Nature had ever moulded. She did not quail at the summons. Her eye dilated, her nostrils expanded, her lips parted, and her whole countenance was lighted up with a sublime energy of expression that recorded, with the mute but soul-stirring voice of an oracle, the deep and solemn purpose which engrossed her soul. She stood a few moments as if in prayer. Her babe was brought and placed within the arms of a once yearning mother. The feelings of nature revived. She spoke not, but pressed it tenderly to her bosom. Tears streamed down her cheeks in a flood, still not a feature quivered. The palpitations of her heart were perceptible under the slight muslin drapery that covered her bosom. It heaved beneath the suppressed throes of her emotion, but the countenance betrayed not the internal struggle. Her tears gradually ceased to flow. Her eye cleared and resumed its former expression of solemn determination, and she waved her hand as a signal that she was ready.

Two Brahmins now advanced with lighted torches. Having

ferently kissed her infant, she placed it in the arms of an attendant, and it was instantly removed from her sight. At this moment her nearest relations approached ; to these she bade a tender adieu. Having distributed her jewels among them, she embraced them severally, when they retired and left her alone with the ministers of death.

Not a breath stirred among the multitude as she prepared to ascend the pile. Hundreds stood agape with awe at witnessing the solemn spectacle. Having performed certain preliminary rites, a signal was given by the chief Brahmin, when she raised her dark but bloodless brow towards heaven, sprang upon the pile, embraced her husband's corpse, and in a few moments was enveloped in flames and smoke, which hid her from the sight of those who had assembled to behold this dreadful sacrifice.

No sooner was the fire kindled than the notes of innumerable instruments were heard, shouts and acclamations rent the air, in order to prevent the sufferer's screams of agony being heard. Ghee was poured upon the burning pyre to accelerate the horrible process of destruction, and the flames raged with such fury that in a short time not a vestige remained but the ashes of the dead. The crowd then quietly dispersed, rejoicing at having witnessed so acceptable a holocaust.

While this dreadful act of superstition was performing, the town of Somnat was in a state of siege ; still the turbid stream of fanaticism was not diverted from its course. When the Mahomedans invested Somnat, the citizens had flocked from all parts and crowded the ramparts to repel the enemy ; but so soon as they saw their formidable array, the discipline of their troops, and the fearless manner in which they rushed to the assault, the astonished Hindoos, alarmed for their own safety, thronged to the temple by hundreds, prostrating themselves before their favourite idol, and supplicating deliverance from their foes. Many, drowned in tears, vowed to perform sundry dreadful penances in case the Mahomedans were repelled from their walls ; but the idol returned no answer to their petitions.

Mahmood, perceiving the ramparts almost deserted, ordered

his troops to advance to the walls and apply the scaling-ladders, which was instantly done; and they commenced to mount the ramparts, shouting aloud "Allah Akbar!" God is great! Those Hindoos who remained upon the battlements, offered a spirited resistance. With the wild energy of despair they rushed upon the Mahomedan soldiers as they ascended, and threw them headlong from the ladders. Hearing the noise of the assault, and the enemy's war-cry, those citizens who had quitted the walls in order to propitiate their divinity by prayer, returned to the ramparts in vast numbers, and opposed themselves to the besiegers. These latter, no longer able to retain their footing, wearied with their exertions, and dispirited by such unexpected opposition, fell back on all sides, and were at length obliged to retire.

Next morning the action was renewed with no better success, for as fast as the besiegers scaled the walls they were cast down backward by the besieged, who now gaining confidence from the advantage obtained on the preceding day, resolved to defend their city to the last. They imagined that the divinity who presided over Somnat had heard their prayers, and would not permit their foes to triumph over them; and under this impression they fought with a resolution that bore down all opposition. They poured into the temple after the repulse of their enemies with offerings to their idol, which were of course accepted, to their great joy and that of the divinity's ministers, who undertook to dispose of those offerings in a manner worthy of the liberality of the devotees who presented them.

Mahmood was perplexed beyond measure at the disastrous issue of the siege. He saw his army daily diminishing in an undertaking upon which he had set his heart. He determined however to accomplish his object, or perish before the walls of Somnat.

For some days he made no attempt against the town, but remained quiet, in order to restore the confidence of his troops, which had been greatly shaken by the unsuccessful issue of the late assault.

Their success against the besiegers had greatly elated the citi-

zens, and they began to despise the foe which they had so much dreaded. In order to show his contempt for the Mahomedans, a devotee let himself down by a rope from the rampart, and advancing towards the enemy's camp, stood before the king's tent, braving Mahmood with his late failure, and prophesying that every Mahomedan would be blasted by the breath of Somnat's idol before the rising of another sun. He was at first looked upon as a madman, but some of Mahmood's soldiers being at length incensed at his audacity, seized him, and brought him before their sovereign. Upon being asked why he had quitted the town, he replied he came to warn them that they would be all swept from the face of the earth by the vengeance of a god who would not spare them for their attempt to profane his holy shrine.

"I come to defy you,—to show how impotent you are to impose injury upon anyone claiming especial protection of the divinity worshipped by all pious Hindoos. You are all under the ban of our idol. You are doomed to destruction. I go to prepare the scourge that shall sweep you from the face of this globe."

"You will never return," said Mahmood, "to accomplish your contemplated plan of retribution; but I will show yonder fanatics how little reliance is to be placed upon the god of an idolator. What say you to hanging in the sight of your city's battlements?"

"You dare not provoke the vengeance of an enemy which has already convinced you of its might. I despise your threats—I fear not hanging—death has no terrors for me—violence towards one whose penances have purified his spirit for a higher gradation of existence in another life, will only bring the curse of retribution upon you, while to me it secures blessings which you will never have an opportunity of enjoying."

"Soldiers," said Mahmood to some of his military attendants. "hang that madman upon the nearest tree."

The Hindoo smiled as he heard the order given.

"My death will be avenged," said he, "though you send me to Paradise. You may deprive me of life, but you cannot withhold from me the power of defying and scorning the race of Islam."

At a signal from their sovereign, several soldiers seized the

fanatic, and hung him upon a tree within sight of the ramparts. The man died uttering expressions of triumph at his martyrdom. He was seen from the walls by his countrymen, who imprecated curses upon the heads of his murderers. The body was cut down as soon as life was extinguished, the head severed from the trunk, and flung over the battlements of Somnat. The citizens bore it to their temple in triumph.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN the Hindoo widow ascended the pile, the straw by which it was surrounded was immediately ignited, and having been previously wetted in a slight degree, a smoke was raised which enveloped the whole fabric, and completely concealed the victim from view. She was wrapped in a holy trance, and it was some moments therefore before she became sensible that the fire had not reached her. To her surprise she felt herself gradually sinking amid a gloom so cavernous that the first idea which flashed upon her mind was that death had done its work upon her body, and that she was descending into those regions of everlasting darkness where the wicked expiate their crimes in this world by unmitigated and eternal penalties. She, however, perceived that the dead body of her husband was still beside her, and this restored her to consciousness. In a few moments the descent of the platform was arrested ; she was suddenly seized and lifted from it ; the frame instantly rising with the corpse, which was consumed without the horrible sacrifice of a living body.

The widow was confounded at her situation. The effects of that stimulating potion which she had taken to sustain her through the awful rite about to be consummated, had subsided, and she trembled at the apprehended terrors in store for her. She was encompassed by a gloom so profound that she could not distinguish a single object. She heard not a sound, save a breathing almost close to her ear, which satisfied her of the juxtaposition of

some living being. She did not stir, but endeavoured to collect her scattered thoughts. Her natural energy of character overcame the more violent impulse of alarm, and in a calm, collected tone, she said, "Why am I thus torn from the embrace of my dead husband, with whom I was about to proceed to the bowers of Paradise?"

No answer was returned to her inquiry. She heard only the shouts of the multitude above, who were exulting at her imagined immolation, with the frantic transports of demons loosed from their eternal prisons, to wander awhile in the freedom of crime beyond the confines of their own dreary habitations.

After some time, hearing no sound near her, not even of a respiration, save her own, she began to grope around. The intensity of the darkness had somewhat subsided, and her eye had become sufficiently familiar with it to be enabled to obtain a dim perception of objects. She proceeded cautiously forward until her progress was arrested by a wall. Following the course of the masonry she perceived that she was in a small circular chamber, from which there was a passage through a low, narrow portal. The floor of the apartment consisted of earth, covered with dried cow-dung, which was perceptible to her as she trod the chamber with naked feet, having cast off her sandals before she ascended the funeral pile. She had already strung her mind to the necessary climax of determination which had enabled her to brave death in its most horrid form, and was consequently not terrified at the idea of dying under circumstances less appalling.

She was on the floor, her mind filled with images of death, when suddenly a light was seen approaching through the dark passage opposite to which she happened to be lying, and a bright figure, enveloped in light, appeared to enter the portal. Every part of the figure was illumined; and yet the light did not appear to radiate from it, for all around was darkness. It was about the size of a man, and exactly resembled the huge idol of Somnat. The widow started to her feet as the singular object approached. It advanced to the centre of the apartment, and remained stationary.

The phosphorescent figure, instead of illuminating the apart-

ment, seemed to attract to itself every particle of light, rendering the gloom around it so intense that nothing else was visible. It glared upon the astonished widow from eyes fixed in their sockets, like diamonds riveted into the living rock, with a lustre so unearthly that she was obliged to seek relief in the darkness from a sight of the hideous phantom. She drooped her head and remained in a state of agonizing suspense as to the issue of this terrifying visitation. She began to question her vitality. And yet the strong perception of her senses—the tangible evidence of life in her own movements—the hearing of her own breath—the feeling of her heart's pulsation—all convinced her that she was alive. Could this be a visit from the idol as promised by the Brahmin? She would judge by the issue. And yet could the deity have rescued her from the performance of an oblation universally held by all devout Hindoos to be so welcome to him? Can he abrogate his own laws. The thing appeared impossible. By whom then had she been rescued from death?

In spite of the natural tendency of her mind to superstition, a secret misgiving occasionally invaded it that she was about to become the dupe of some spiritual juggle. The overtures of the Brahmin recurred to her mind, and the anxiety he had expressed to save her from performing the suttee. She began to dread that she was in his power; and yet the strange supernatural shape at this moment before her seemed strong evidence that she was in the presence of something unearthly.

Several female figures, all of the same lustrous description, as if radiant with their own inherent glories, next appeared to enter the vault, and surround the representative of Somnat's Idol. They prostrated themselves before it, and then such an exhibition of indecency was represented as caused the widow to turn with a feeling of sickening disgust towards the wall in order to exclude from her sight the revolting objects. The blood mantled to her very temples: it was now manifest to her reason that she could not be in the presence of her god, but that she had been made a dupe of the basest artifices. She had no difficulty in suspecting the author of her present imprisonment.

Whilst these thoughts were passing rapidly through her mind, her ear caught a voice which, though feigned to imitate something superhuman, she instantly recognised as that of the Brahmin, towards whom she entertained sentiments of unqualified disgust.

“The deity of Somnat visits thee with his especial predilection. Thou most favoured of thy sex, hail the coming of the god with joy, and receive him to thy embrace.” A hand was laid upon her arm; she shrank from the touch as if it had been the contact of a torpedo.

“Man of infamy,” she said calmly, “I am not to be deceived either by your wiles or by your sorceries. Scenes to which you would invite me but ill become the purity of heaven, where they alone abide who are free from carnal defilements. When the ministers of religion convert her sacred temple into a place of revelry and unchaste joys, the words of spiritual blessing can no longer proceed from such polluted lips. A light seems to have broken upon my soul, and to have imparted to it a new sense of perception. I know not how, or why the revelation has come upon me, but I feel that I have been a dupe—that your religion is a scandal—that by you the deity is vilified, his altars defiled, and his temple desecrated—that I am betrayed, and that you are a villain.”

No answer was returned. She heard footsteps slowly retreating, and fancied she could distinguish the dim outline of a figure through the gloom. The silence and mysterious conduct of her persecutor surprised her. She feared to quit the cell, knowing not whither the passage might lead, and determined to perish in her present solitary prison rather than consent to anything which her heart did not sanction.

Beginning to feel drowsy from the effects of the draught which she had taken before ascending the pile, and fearful lest, if she allowed herself to be overcome by sleep, some base advantage might be taken of her, she paced the vault rapidly in order to dissipate the effects of the narcotic, the influence of which had not entirely subsided. In a short time some one again entered the apartment, and the same voice informed her that a curry had been

prepared, and a jar of Gangetic water provided for her; neither of which she felt any inclination to touch. It occurred to her that the food might contain some treacherous drug; she therefore determined not to taste it.

Her heart now reverted to her infant with all a mother's longing. When she thought of its being in the hands of comparative strangers, who could not feel towards it a parent's tenderness, her anxiety became vehement. It was her only tie upon earth, and the big tear filled her eye as she reflected that she had probably beheld it for the last time. Having at length walked off the effects of the potion, the excitement of her mind dispelled all desire to sleep, and she seated herself upon the floor of her gloomy apartment, determined to wait with patience the issue of her odious captivity.

She was not long allowed to enjoy the solitary quiet of her own thoughts. This was soon interrupted by a strange sound like the roaring of flames within a narrow flue, and shortly after the vault was filled with a pale dusky light which gave a horrible aspect to everything around. It illumined the chamber, which she now perceived was a small circular cavern, with a domed roof, in the centre of which was a square aperture that passed upward beyond the reach of the eye, emitting no light, and through this it was clear that she had been lowered immediately after she ascended the pyre.

The sudden glare which had succeeded to the intense darkness, produced such an oppression upon the sight that she was obliged to close her eyes for several moments. When she opened them, a scene was presented to her view, which, though it excited her terrors, could not subdue her constancy. The chamber appeared filled with shapes of the most horrible description; these approached her, and standing by her side, seemed to deride her with demoniacal ferocity. She heard no sound, but the objects presented to her view were appalling. She saw women in every conceivable state of mutilation, writhing under the infliction of demons, who grinned with ferocious delight at the agonized contortions of their victims. Creatures of monstrous form and lineament with hideous

countenances rushed towards her, threatening torments too horrible to describe.

One figure, representing a sort of hippogriff, armed with a weapon of torture, from which branched a great number of barbs, was seen standing over a prostrate female, into whose bare bosom he continually thrust the instrument, while she appeared to be convulsed with agony beneath the frightful infliction. Upon the head of this monster was a square tablet of Palmyra leaf, on which was traced in fiery characters, "Such is the doom of those who despise the favours of Somnat's god."

The sight of this object recalled the widow's terrors. The conviction instantly came that she beheld a mere juggle, and her alarm at once subsided. What she saw might be the effect of sorcery, but it was clear to her that the farce was got up in order to terrify her into a participation of guilt, at which her pure soul revolted. The voice of the odious Brahmin recurred to her recollection, and the illusion at once vanished.

She determined to perish rather than become the willing dupe of a being, the thought of whom inspired her with ineffable abhorrence. Gazing calmly at the mummery, which after a while subsided, she was again left in darkness and to the welcome solitude of her own reflections. It was indeed a relief, for the continual excitement to which she had been exposed rendered quiet a luxury, even amid the impenetrable gloom of a dungeon.

CHAPTER VII.

ALTHOUGH Mahmood had been so severely foiled in his attempts upon the city of Somnat, still he resolved not to abandon the enterprise. Their success in repelling the besiegers had elevated the courage of the Hindoos to the highest pitch of enthusiasm. They persuaded themselves that the power of their idol had been exerted in favour of his worshippers, and that their enemies would perish to a man. Several fanatics singly quitted

the fort, to cast defiance in the enemy's teeth, and brave death, which the Mahomedan sovereign inflicted upon them, with undaunted resolution worthy of a better cause. They appeared to glory in their martyrdom, as scarcely an hour had passed, since the first repulse of the besiegers, in which these executions had not taken place in sight of the ramparts.

The Hindoos, confiding in their numbers, and in the protection of their idol, determined upon a sally, which, with the blind fury of zealots, they made about noon, under the glare of an intensely ardent sun, reflected with augmented ardour from the high battlements of their city upon the adjacent plain, on which the Moslems were encamped. On a sudden the gates were opened, and out poured a multitude of ill-armed and undisciplined troops bent upon slaughter. They rushed forward, shouting like maniacs, but were embarrassed by their numbers. They did not appear to have calculated upon the regular and steady discipline of their enemies, who had been inured to warfare, and accustomed to conquer, under the conduct of their warlike monarch, but expected to overwhelm them by the mere force of numbers, backed by the potent aid of their stone god.

Mahmood drew up his troops behind the tents, which broke the furious onset of his foes, and enabled him to attack them in separate bodies. The first rush of the Hindoos was checked by the steady valour of the besiegers, who scattered destruction among their ranks, and in a short time the plain was strewed with the dying and the dead. The Hindoos did not continue the struggle; they were quickly repulsed. A rout followed, which ended in a tumultuous flight. They were pursued to their very walls by the Moslems, but the gates were closed, both against the pursued and their pursuers.

The idolaters from the ramparts beheld the rout of their troops with dismay. They pressed again into the temple, prostrated themselves before their idol, made piaculatory offerings, and supplicated his aid to chastise the murderers of his true worshippers. The deity was deaf to their entreaties. Shouts of the victors and cries of the vanquished were wafted by the gentle breeze to the sanc-

tuary, but its stony idol was unmoved. They repaired again to the ramparts, expecting that the Ghiznivites, flushed with success, would storm the city. The frantic Hindoos, however, were determined to defend their walls to the death. They saw the enemy rushing forward; they heard their shouts of triumph; the scaling ladders were already applied, when unexpected succour was seen advancing along the distant plain. It was an army of their countrymen, marching to the relief of Somnat. Arriving before the Ghiznian camp, they presented themselves in order of battle. Mahmood, determined to frustrate this attempt to reinforce the garrison, recalled his troops from the pursuit, and, having left a portion of his army to keep the garrison in check, advanced with the remainder towards the Hindoo forces. These were fresh, having performed but a short and leisurely march, while the Mahomedans were fatigued with their late exertions, and flushed with the excitement of victory, which rendered them too confiding and careless. They, moreover, entertained a contemptible idea of their enemies, and thus gave them an advantage, of which the latter did not fail to avail themselves.

The Hindoo army was composed of troops very different from those fanatics who had hitherto defended the walls of Somnat, being chiefly formed of regularly-trained soldiers, who had frequently been opposed to the Moslem arms. Mahmood, heading his victorious Ghiznivites, pressed forward to the attack with an impetuosity that caused the enemy to recoil, but quickly rallying, they maintained their ground with a resolution that astonished the Mahomedans, and rendered the victory doubtful. The battle raged with great fury, yet neither party gave way. For a long time the balance of advantage did not appear to vibrate in favour of either. The idolaters, looking upon the struggle from the battlements of their city, cheered their countrymen with loud acclamations, at the same time invoking their idol to cast the foes of their country and of their religion into the sea. Women were seen upon the walls, holding up their infants to infuse new energy into those troops which had marched to raise the siege of their beloved city.

Among the Hindoo forces were some Rajpoots, who fought

with a desperation which nothing could resist; and if the whole army had been composed of these, it would more than probably have turned the scale of victory against the Moslems. They were, however, cut off to a man. The Hindoos at length began to waver, but fresh troops coming to their assistance, the struggle was still maintained on both sides with desperate determination. The shouts from the battlements seemed to inspire the Indian army with unwonted resolution, while it depressed the energies of their enemies. At length, however, by a vigorous onset, the Mahomedans caused the foe to vibrate. Mahmood, seeing his advantage, ordered his troops to advance and complete the rout, when his ardour was checked by the arrival of new enemies. Two Indian princes joined their countrymen, with considerable reinforcements, and the battle raged with renewed fury.

The Mahomedans began now to waver in their turn. The Hindoos being inspired with fresh courage advanced to the charge with an impetuosity which caused the Ghiznivites to recoil; Mahmood, at this moment perceiving his troops about to retreat, leaped from his horse, and prostrating himself raised his eyes to heaven, and in an attitude of the humblest supplication implored the divine aid. Then mounting his horse, he took his principal general by the hand, by way of encouraging him and the troops under his command, and advanced on the enemy. The solemnity of his manner and of the act which he had just performed filled the soldiers with holy fervour. They expected that the prayer of their sovereign, so piously offered, would be heard, and gazed upon him with the enthusiasm of men determined to conquer or perish. As he advanced he cheered them with such energy that, ashamed to abandon their king, with whom they had so often fought and bled, and who had always led them on to conquest, they with one accord gave a loud shout and rushed forward. In this charge, made with an impetuosity which nothing could resist, the Moslems broke through the enemy's line, and fighting with that confidence which this advantage inspired, soon left five thousand of their foes dead upon the field. The rout became general, and the vanquished Hindoos fled on all sides.

The garrison of Somnat beholding the defeat of their companions gave themselves up to despair, abandoned the defence of the city, and issuing from the gate to the number of several thousand embarked in boats, intending to proceed to the island of Serindip, the modern Ceylon. This attempt, however, was frustrated by the vigilance of the king, who having secured several boats left in a neighbouring creek, manned them with rowers, together with a detachment of his best troops, and pursued the fugitives, on which occasion he took some and sank others of their flotilla, so that very few escaped.

Having now placed guards round the walls, and at the gates, Mahmood entered Somnat, accompanied by his sons, a few of his nobles and principal attendants. He found the city entirely deserted by the troops, but there remained within the walls an almost infinite number of pilgrims and devotees, who were in the daily habit of offering their devotions before the celebrated idol. Many of the inhabitants were persons of great wealth, upon whom the Mahomedan king did not hesitate to levy such contributions as the conquerors of earlier times never failed to impose upon the rich who happened to be among the vanquished.

Mahmood had not forgotten the beautiful Hindoo widow whose infant he had rescued from the wolf ; and one of his first objects upon entering the city was to ascertain the place of her abode. He soon learned that she had followed her husband to that unknown land which can only be reached through the dark valley of the shadow of death. He was deeply affected. Her beauty had excited his admiration. The scene in which he had become with her so principal an actor had left a deep impression on his mind, and a tear rose to his eye as he heard the sad tidings of her death. He demanded to see the child. It was brought before him. He took it in his arms, in spite of the horror with which its rigid guardians looked upon the profane act. The infant smiled in his face, as if it recognised the obligation which it was under to him. It put its little hand upon his cheek. He was moved. The stern but generous warrior felt his heart swell. Giving it to an attendant—

“This shall be the child of my adoption,” he said. “It is indebted to me for its life, and I shall take upon me the direction of its future destiny.”

The relatives were amazed. They expostulated; they imprecated the vengeance of their god upon the unsanctified mortal who should dare turn from his faith the son of a Hindoo. Mahmood smiled at their objurgations, and dismissed them, but retained the infant.

He commanded to be brought before him the Brahmins who had urged the widow to commit herself to the flames, and had been present at the odious sacrifice. All answered the summons except the chief who officiated upon that melancholy occasion. He was nowhere to be found. The conqueror sternly inquired why they had induced the widow to consummate such an act of infernal superstition.

“Because,” said the elder among them, “it was our duty to secure her soul a place in Paradise, rather than suffer it to be doomed to everlasting penalties, by failing to perform that solemn oblation which the god of the Hindoos requires of all pious widows.”

“Thou shalt follow her to Paradise, then,” said Mahmood, with a bitter smile, and he ordered the speaker to be instantly cast over the battlements. The rest were allowed to retire, with a caution never again to exercise any rite of their religion that should involve a human life.

The Hindoo child was sent into the king’s harem and placed under the charge of a nurse. Meanwhile the sovereign issued orders that the chief Brahmin who had officiated at the late suttee should be sought after, being determined to make a severe example of him, and then proceeded to the temple.

Having entered the gorgeous edifice, he approached the huge image and struck it with his mace by way of contempt; then ordered two pieces to be broken off and sent to Ghizny, that one might be thrown at the threshold of the public mosque, and the other at the principal entrance of his own palace. This was accordingly done.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE circumstances related in the last chapter took place during the occurrence of those which happened to the Hindoo widow, from the period of her husband's death. She still remained in the vault. After the exhibition of infernal agents had taken place, she was left a short time to the more agreeable solitude of her own reflections, but this was finally interrupted by her old tormentor. She heard his slow and stealthy tread ; she could just perceive the dim outline of his figure, as he entered the vault, and it was now rendered the more distinguishable by being covered with a plain wrapper of ashy-white linen. He advanced under the cover of darkness, still flattering himself that he should not be recognised. The widow was at this moment seated on the ground. Groping his way, the aged debauchee put his hand against her face, and having thus ascertained his propinquity, he said in the same counterfeit tone of voice which he had hitherto assumed—

“Is the condescension of the god of Somnat still slighted by the refractory widow? Know that he has power to annihilate thee, or—what is far worse—to doom thee, through all the changes of thy metempsychosis, to ineffable sufferings, which nothing can remit or modify : but he has likewise the power to exalt thee to a participation with himself to endless beatitude, in which thy obedience to his desires will inevitably terminate !”

“Blasphemer !” she exclaimed, in a tone of calm but intense bitterness, “I know thee ; thou art no god, but one of the vilest ministers of evil. Thou profanest the sanctuary of him thou servest with impure and unholy rites, such as no deity can approve. The spiritual nature of the great Being whom we adore, and whose image stands within the walls of that hallowed pile, which thou hast so basely polluted, cannot defile itself by any corporeal taint. The vices which gods condemn cannot be approved by them, and what they disapprove their pure and essential natures cannot practise.”

“You are uttering blasphemies,” replied the Brahmin, now assuming his natural voice, perceiving he was discovered. “The

gods delight to reward their pious ministers, and the divinity which you have all your life served, and to whom I have ministered during the longest period of mine, has yielded thee to the embraces of one who adores thee."

"If this be true, why hast thou assumed the character of that divinity, and in the pretended identity of his august person, presumed to address me with thy unholy love? Why have I been tormented with thy odious juggles or sorceries? Why am I confined in this cavernous prison? Is it under the sanction of that Being who is the perfection and concentration of all good—the hater and antagonist of all evil?"

"But what you call evil is good, and encouraged by the divinity. The enjoyment of holy men is desired by the Deity, because it is not evil. It is essentially good; it is the reward of faithful services and arduous labours; it leads to happiness. How then can it be evil? What you call my sorceries were representations, caused by the idol which you have despised, of what those may expect who presume to provoke his wrath. Know, too, that the god of Somnat has visited you, and in me you now behold him. He has assumed the form of his minister whom he honours, to bestow eternal dignities upon a woman he adores."

He threw his arms round her. She rose and flung him from her with a force that cast him upon his back.

"Wretch!" she cried, with the dignity of subdued emotion, "think not to lead me blindfold into guilt, by assuming the character of a Being who is unable to endure the stains of thy pollution. Quit me, I command thee, and leave me here to die; for know that I would rather perish by the slow process of starvation than submit to the moral defilements with which you would encrust my soul."

The old man rose with difficulty, muttering curses, and hobbled from the vault. Unappalled by the prospect of the vilest persecution, or, with perhaps more probability, of a horrible death, the lovely Hindoo calmly resigned herself to her destiny, resolved to perish, under whatever aspect death might approach her, rather than become the victim of her odious persecutor. Her mind was

agitated by a tumult of conflicting thoughts. She had been made sensible of having lived hitherto under the delusions of a false faith. Her conclusions upon the nature and quality of Deity became vague and undefined, and she knew not on what to repose her trust. Still her soul was impressed with the one vast idea of omnipotent agency, and she felt that she was under both its dominion and its power. The purity of her own conscience gave her confidence that she should not be deserted.

She had not been long balancing the issues of life and death, when two female devotees, in the habit of attending upon the idol, and familiarized with scenes of the grossest vice, entered the vault, one of them bearing a lamp. They were dressed in the meretricious attire peculiar to their vocation, and employed all their arts of persuasion to induce the youthful widow to dismiss her absurd prejudices, as they termed her virtuous resistance, and submit to the will of their god, who, they assured her, was a tender and indulgent divinity. She repelled their arguments with lofty scorn. Finding that persuasion was lost upon her, one of them said—

“Well, use your own pleasure; but since you refuse the offers of your spiritual guardian, you must no longer pollute with your presence the secret sanctuary, where he condescends to visit those whom he honours with his preference. Follow us.”

“Whither would you lead me?”

“You will shortly know.”

“I shall not stir from this spot in such company.”

The women set up a loud laugh, and one of them, approaching the widow, said with a gesticulation of vulgar ferocity, “Follow us quietly, or, by the chackra* of Vishnoo, you will be dragged like a refractory beast. Think a moment before you determine to resist.”

The widow replied not, but by a movement of her hand signified her consent to follow. One of the women went before with

* A sort of missile discus, with which the divinity Vishnoo is always represented armed.

the light, and the other behind. They passed through a long narrow passage, vaulted overhead, and evidently underground. There was no outlet on either side. It was terminated by a straight staircase, so narrow that only one person could ascend at a time. Upon reaching the top, there was a small square landing-place, with two doors at opposite sides.

"Here you will enter," said the foremost woman, pointing to one of the doors.

"Whither does it lead?"

"Into the bosom of the idol. There you will meet the god, there you will be advanced to endless honours, there one who adores you awaits your coming."

"I am not to be deluded by these profane pretensions. Here let our conference end. Open, if I am to enter, and let me know at once the worst that is to befall me."

A small silver bell was now rung by one of the women, when the door slid sideways through a groove and presented a narrow portal. The widow entered fearlessly and the door instantly closed behind her. She was at the bottom of a short flight of stone steps, at the top of which appeared a brilliant light. She ascended with desperate resolution, determined to ascertain at once the full extent of the mischief to which she was to become a victim. On gaining the top of the stairs, she entered a circular chamber, about six feet in diameter. The floor was covered with a beautiful Persian rug, and the light was so intense as for the moment to be extremely painful. It was reflected from an invisible source by means of reflectors composed of gems. The walls of the apartment were decorated with jewels of immense size and brilliancy, and gems were likewise strewed in heaps upon the floor. The treasure displayed was prodigious. It appeared like a scene of enchantment. The wealth of a universe seemed to be concentrated in that one spot.

The widow had not long gazed upon the vast wealth before her, when a small door which she had not hitherto perceived, slowly opened and the old Brahmin entered. There was an expression of triumphant malignity in his deep dull eye. He closed the door

carefully behind him. "Now," said he, approaching his victim, "for the consummation at once of my pleasure and of my vengeance. Here resistance will be vain. My ministers are at hand. Those women who conducted you from the vault are within call, therefore be advised. Consent to be the bride of Somnat's idol, in the bosom of which you now stand, and the wealth which you behold is at your disposal; refuse, and the idol's curse will follow you through the world to the place of everlasting retribution."

"You know not a woman's resolution," replied the young widow firmly; "I will never consent to the degradation you propose. Do your worst."

"Be it so, then," cried the Brahmin, and seizing a staff, he was about to strike a gong that hung from an iron bar which crossed the chamber about six feet from the floor, when a strange noise was heard without, and the image vibrated to its very foundation. The Brahmin trembled, and sank upon his knees. The beautiful Hindoo gazed on him in silence and without emotion. The noise increased, the walls of the chamber oscillated. With the calm confidence of speedy deliverance she looked forward to the result. Her companion was still upon his knees overcome by the stupefaction of terror.

Voices were now distinctly heard, and one smote on the widow's ear like familiar music. It was Mahmood's. He had entered the temple of Somnat just as the lovely widow had ascended into the hollow bosom of the image. Having seen his orders executed upon the colossal frame, a crowd of Brahmins, perceiving their god in jeopardy, rushed forward and besought the king's attendants to intercede with their sovereign to spare it, offering Mahmood a large sum of money, to be instantly paid down, if he would desist from further mutilation. His officers endeavoured to persuade the king to accept the money, urging that as the destruction of one idol would not put an end to idolatry, it could not serve the cause of true religion entirely to destroy the image; but that the sum offered might be distributed among the faithful, which would be a meritorious act.

The monarch acknowledged there might be much truth in what

they said, but, nevertheless, declared that he would not consent to a measure which would place him before posterity as Mahmood the "Idol-seller;" whereas it was the height of his ambition to be known as Mahmood "The Destroyer of Idols."

Having finally delivered his determination, he ordered his troops to proceed with the work of destruction. The gigantic image tottered beneath their strokes. It was at length split; the next blow laid open its hollow body, and to the surprise of the king and his officers its immense wealth was exposed to view; but their astonishment was infinitely increased when upon enlarging the opening, the Hindoo widow appeared standing in the centre of the cavity with the aged Brahmin kneeling beside her. The king instantly recognized her. She rushed towards him and exclaiming, "My deliverer!" fell into his arms.

"You have saved me," she cried hysterically, "from pollution and from death. Yonder is my persecutor. In another hour I should have been what I shudder to contemplate."

The Brahmin was dragged from his den of infamy. He shrank from the gaze of the scornful Mahomedan. His own companions slunk out of the temple and left him to his fate. He was instantly hanged from one of the pillars of the sanctuary which he had so frequently profaned. The beautiful widow became Mahmood's favourite queen, which event immediately followed upon her unexpected deliverance from the "Idol of Somnat."



HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

Heg. 421 (A.D. 1030).—A conspiracy was formed in favour of Prince Musaood, the king's brother. Mahomed was surrounded in his tent by the conspirators and his person seized. The refractory nobles immediately joined Musaood and swore allegiance to him. Mahomed was deprived of sight and cast into prison.

Heg. 422 (1031).—The king raised Altoon Tash, one of his own domestic sweepers, to the viceroyship of Rye in Persia.

Heg. 423 (1032).—Khwaja Ahmud, the vizier, died.

Heg. 424 (1033).—This year was remarkable for a great drought and famine in many parts of the world. The famine was succeeded by a pestilence, which, in less than a month, swept away forty thousand persons from Ispahan alone. In Hindostan whole countries were depopulated.

Heg. 425 (1034).—The Ghiznivite general Boghtudy was defeated by the Suljooks.

Heg. 427 (1036).—A new palace was finished at Ghizny. In it was a golden throne, studded with jewels, erected in a magnificent hall: over the throne was suspended by a golden chain a crown of gold, weighing seventy mauns or a hundred and thirty-five pounds, and emitting lustre from numerous precious stones. This formed a canopy for the king when he sat in state to give public audience.

Heg. 431 (1040).—Musaood, being defeated by the Suljooks, and deserted by his generals, his subjects restored his brother Mohamed, whom he had blinded, to the throne.

Heg. 433 (1042).—Musaood was assassinated in the fort of Kurry. Modood, his son, marched against his uncle, and defeating him, put him and all his sons to death. About this time the Toorkomans of Toghrul Beg made an incursion into the Ghiznivite territories by the way of Boost, against whom Modood sent an army which gave them a signal defeat.

Heg. 438 (1046).—Toghrul Beg began to entertain treasonable designs against his sovereign, but upon his treachery being discovered, his adherents deserted him, and he was obliged to fly from the king's dominions.

Heg. 440 (1048).—Modood conferred the royal dress, drums and robes upon his two eldest sons, Mahmood and Munsoor.

Heg. 441 (1049).—Modood died, having reigned upwards of nine years. He was succeeded by his brother Abool Hussun Ally, who married the late king's widow; but was deposed two years after by Sultan Abool Rusheed, according to the most authentic accounts, a son of the Emperor Mahmood. He was

assassinated a year after his accession by Toghrul Hajib, and Furokhzad, a son of Musaood, raised to the throne.

Heg. 450 (1058).—The king became afflicted with dysentery and died, after a reign of six years.

Heg. 450 (1058).—Furokhzad was succeeded by his brother Ibrahim, who sent an army into India and conquered many provinces in that country which had not yet been visited by the Mussulman arms. It was during this reign that Eiz-ood-Deen returned from India, where his father had been an exile, married a princess of the house of Ghizny, and was restored to the principality of Ghoor.

Heg. 472 (1079).—Ibrahim took the town of Dera by assault.

Heg. 492 (1098).—Sultan Ibrahim died, and was succeeded by his son Musaood, who after a reign of sixteen years, without domestic troubles or foreign wars, died in the latter end of the year of the Hegira 508.

Heg. 508 (1118).—Arslan, son of the late king, ascended the throne of Ghizny, and imprisoned all his brothers except one, who avoided by flight a similar fate. This latter prince having collected an army, defeated his brother, and ascended the throne. Arslan, after a short reign of three years, suffered a violent death.

Heg. 511 (1121).—Sultan Beiram became king of Ghizny.

Heg. 512 (1122).—Beiram having defeated and taken prisoner Mahomed Bhyleem, governor of Lahore, who had rebelled against his government, pardoned him, on his swearing allegiance, and returned to Ghizny. Mahomed Bhyleem again rebelled, was defeated and slain. Beiram having executed Kootb-ood-Deen Mahomed Ghoory Afghan, to whom he had given his daughter in marriage, was attacked and defeated by Alla-ood-Deen, brother of the murdered prince, and obliged to fly from his dominions.

Heg. 547 (1152).—Sultan Beiram died after a reign of thirty-five years. He was succeeded by his son Khoosrow, who reigned seven years and died at Lahore, and was succeeded by his son Khoosrow Mullik.

Heg. 576 (1180).—The kingdom of Ghizny was invaded by Shahab-ood-Deen Mahomed Ghoory, son of Eiz-ood-Deen. He finally evacuated the kingdom, carrying with him Mullik Shah, the king's son, a child only four years old, as a hostage.

Heg. 580 (1184).—Mahomed Ghoory made an attempt upon Lahore, whither the Emperor had removed his court, but being foiled, subjected the country to devastation by fire and sword.

Heg. 582 (1186).—The prince of Ghoor again returned to Lahore with a large army and took the city. The Emperor, seeing no means of escape, threw himself upon the mercy of his enemy. Mahomed Ghoory demanded instant possession of Lahore. The gates of the city were accordingly thrown open to receive him, and the empire passed from the house of Ghizny to that of Ghoor. Sultan Khoosrow Mullik reigned twenty-eight years.

The Royal Merchant.

CHAPTER I.

BOY," said Sam to his son Eiz-ood-Deen, "I'm sadly tired of this banishment. One's own country, after all, is the only paradise upon earth, and to be exiled from it is a sad penalty to a patriotic heart."

"But," replied the son, "you entered this land of strangers under poverty and bereavement; you have here raised yourself to distinction and wealth; your adopted country has been more favourable to you than your fatherland; why, therefore, should you seek to quit these hospitable shores for those from which you were once spurned a beggar and an outcast?"

"Because the yearnings of nature are too strong to be resisted. Besides, there I am known to belong to the blood of her kings; here I am looked upon as a mere trafficker in merchandise, upon which, indeed, I have grown rich, but in a manner that ill becomes the offspring of royalty."

"I have been too long accustomed to consider this as my native land to desire to seek another home; but the desires of the son ought to yield to those of the father: I am, therefore, content to quit it whenever you may deem it fitting."

The merchant Sam was, in truth, son of the king of Ghoor, a mountainous region, which finally became tributary to Ghizny, and had been obliged to fly from his country on the death of his father, who, while attacking a fort, was killed by an arrow, which entered his eye. The son fled into India, and finally settled at

Surat, a city of considerable commercial importance, about twelve coss from the sea. Being of an enterprising turn of mind, he assumed the business of a merchant, and, in the course of a few years of successful traffic, became a man of great wealth.

Although he found few Mahomedans at Surat, there were a number of old Parsee families, who had fixed their abode in a certain quarter of the city. With these he freely associated, as they were not so backward in holding social intercourse with strangers as the native inhabitants, among whom the exclusive prejudices of caste were maintained generally with extreme rigour. The Parsees being a mercantile people, the royal merchant found that they very much advanced the success of his ventures, and with them, therefore, he dwelt upon terms of mutual good-fellowship. Having, however, reaped the full harvest of his industry, he was anxious to return to that exaltation in his native land which he had forfeited by his flight, especially now that he possessed the means of maintaining a dignity which his ambition rendered him eager to enjoy. His son, though he yielded to the wishes of his father, had other views. When he had left his native mountains, he was too young to retain any endearing impressions of home or of country ; he, therefore, felt no desire to quit a spot which was endeared to him by other ties than those of a long residence.

Eiz-ood-Deen was in the habit of visiting the family of a Parsee who had an only daughter, a beautiful girl in her thirteenth year. She was the pride of her father, and he watched over her with a vigilance only equalled by his fondness, being anxious to keep her from the view of suitors, as he had betrothed her to the son of a wealthy Parsee merchant in Bombay, to whom she was shortly to be married. It happened that she felt an invincible repugnance to the young man to whom she was betrothed, but had never dared to express this repugnance to her father, knowing the extreme severity of his resentments when his purposes were crossed, and being well assured that even his parental affection would give way before the fierceness of his anger, if she should dare to rebel against his authority.

She had frequently observed Eiz-ood-Deen, when he called upon her parent, through the venetians of her window that overlooked

the street, but which she had never ventured to raise. She was much struck with the easy elegance of his person, and the lively intelligence of his countenance, which had a sprightliness and characteristic amenity of expression far more attractive than mere exclusive beauty. He was in his nineteenth year, vigorous and well formed, and altogether an interesting rather than a handsome person. She could not help contrasting him with the object of her father's choice, who was a short fat youth, with an ungainly countenance, and pitted with the small-pox.

The sight of the Mahomedan rendered her more than ever averse to the Parsee, and she soon became silent and desponding. Her father perceived the change, but could not draw from her the cause of her depression. He never, for a moment, imagined that it could arise from any antipathy to the object of his choice for her, because he was firmly persuaded that she had no choice in the matter, his fiat being the rule of her will. He was uneasy, however, at the change, as his affection for her was surpassed only by his desire to see her the wife of a wealthy husband, which she would have in the son of his friend, the Bombay merchant.

Eiz-ood-Deen had heard much of the beauty of the Parsee's daughter, but had been in the habit of visiting at his house for the best part of a year without having once seen her. She, however, had indulged herself, by seeing him enter and quit the house almost daily for several months, and the first favourable impression which his person made upon her in no degree subsided; so far from it, that she felt for the first time the two extreme passions of love and hate glowing in her bosom at the same moment—love towards the Mahomedan, and hatred towards the Parsee. She frequently pondered upon the misery of her lot, in being doomed to wed a man whom she loathed, and debarred, by the difference of creeds, from marrying one with whom she fancied she could realize her fairest dreams of happiness. She became at length so excited by anxiety, that she determined to brave all hazards, and, in defiance of her father's anger, reveal her passion to the object of her love. It was some time before a safe opportunity occurred.

One morning her parent was suddenly called from home, and, to her joy, Eiz-ood-Deen appeared in the court. She raised the

venetians as he approached the door, and exposing her young glowing countenance, upon which the blush mantled like the opening tint of the vernal rose, told him her father was not within. He stopped a moment to gaze upon her, but overcome with the novelty of the act she had committed, she withdrew her head, and dropped the venetian frame. The Mahomedan was riveted to the spot. He was so overcome by astonishment at the unexpected sight of so much beauty, that he had not the presence of mind to utter a word. At length the sudden impulse of surprise subsided, and he recovered his self-possession. As her apartment faced the court which was seen from the street, he knew it would expose the lovely girl to the worst suspicions if he remained under the window ; he therefore entered the house, as if ignorant that the Parsee was from home. He here encountered an old woman who, as he soon ascertained, was an attendant upon the young mistress of the mansion. She was a low-caste Hindoo, and, knowing the sordidness of the class to which she belonged, he had no difficulty in bribing her to bring him into the presence of her young mistress. They met on that very morning. Vows of perpetual love were interchanged, and the beautiful girl agreed to fly with him to his native country, in order to avoid a union against which her heart revolted.

Interviews were from this time almost daily contrived between the lovers by the old woman who watched for them, who would have hazarded her soul for gold ; it was this only that kept her faithful, but her fidelity was known by those who purchased it to be held by so slippery a tenure that they were both anxious to be beyond the influence of treachery.

“My father,” said Eiz-ood-Deen one evening, “when are we to quit this land of the stranger?”

“Why, my son, I thought thou didst not seem inclined to quit it ; therefore, on thy account, I dismissed it from my thoughts.”

“Nay, my sire, a parent’s wish is law to a dutiful son, and I trust you have never found me so wanting in filial obligation as to oppose, even by a thought, the desire of one to whom I owe not only my being, but the blessings of a happy life.

“Well, my son, I have long been prepared to visit the land of

my fathers, and, if you concur, we'll take ship at the full of the present moon, when we shall enjoy the blessing of heaven's light by night as well as by day."

Everything was immediately prepared for their departure, and Eiz-ood-Deen congratulated himself that the lovely Parsee would be the happy companion of his voyage. That night his thoughts were so full of joy that he could not sleep. He lay pondering upon the bliss which appeared to be in store for him. He was the only child of a parent, no less indulgent than wealthy, and beloved by a beautiful girl, with whom he anticipated that he should pass a life of unmixed enjoyment: but alas! how seldom are the soberest expectations realized! Disappointment almost invariably follows the glowing dreams of enthusiasm.

The next day he repaired to the Parsee's house; the door was closed upon him. He saw no one but a menial, who told him that his master was desirous he should never more project his shadow over his threshold.

"What is the meaning of all this?" inquired Eiz-ood-Deen, with a beating heart and quivering lip.

"Think a moment," replied the man, "and you will be at no loss to guess."

This was an unexpected shock. He sickened as he thought upon the melancholy consequences that might arise to the object of his fondest affections, and quitted the house with a sad presentiment of mischief. It was clear they had been betrayed. The old woman no doubt, in the hope of reaping a richer harvest, had revealed their visits to the inexorable parent, and the consequences of his anger would no doubt be extreme.

During the whole of that day he could obtain no tidings of the Parsee's daughter. Many dark hints were thrown out by some of his tribe, whom Eiz-ood-Deen knew, which led him to apprehend some fearful consequence, but he could ascertain nothing positive. He returned to his father's house. The worthy merchant was surprised to see the gloom with which his son's countenance was overcast, and inquired the cause; but an evasive reply silenced his questions, though it did not hush his suspicions.

The following morning Eiz-ood-Deen was walking beyond the

suburbs of Surat, and bent his steps towards the cemetery of the Parsees. It was a circular inclosure, protected by a wall about four feet high. Within was a deep vault, covered by an iron grating, upon the top of which the bodies of the dead were placed, and there left to corrupt, the bones finally falling into the receptacle below, whence they were removed at certain periods, and cast into the sea. Reaching the wall, he sat on it, in order to rest himself or to give free scope to the sadness of his thoughts in the immediate vicinity of so solemn a spot. Looking towards the grating, he saw a body which had been that morning placed upon it. Urged by an irresistible impulse, he leaped into the inclosure, and approaching the vault, was horror-struck at beholding the disfigured corpse of the Parsee's daughter.

CHAPTER II.

EIZ-OOD-DEEN returned to his father's house stunned with the shock he had received at the Parsee cemetery. It struck his mind with the fiery quickness and impetuosity of the thunderbolt that the fond girl had been murdered—murdered because she loved him—murdered for his sake. This was a dreadful reflexion. There was no interfering with the domestic habits of the Guebres. They were governed by their own laws, with which the native authorities at Surat presumed not to interfere; he had, therefore, no means of instituting an inquiry into the death of his beloved. He was the most wretched of men. The blast of desolation had swept over his heart, and he looked upon himself as a seared and blighted thing, which the sun of joy could no longer warm into blossoming life. He was now as anxious to depart from Surat, as he had once been to remain.

The only thing that pained him at quitting the scene of his misery was the thought of leaving unrevenged the death of that tender girl whom he had so fondly loved. But how was he to prove that she had been sent out of the world by violence? Besides, had he not been guilty of an act of deep moral obliquity in

carrying on a clandestine intercourse with the daughter of a different tribe, corrupting her father's servants, and meditating her final abduction? He felt upon what tottering ground he trod, and therefore soon abandoned all thoughts of revenge. His father could not account for his agitation; attributing it, however, to those capricious sallies of youth which are frequently the mere sudden eruptions of passion arising from trifling disappointment, he did not take the trouble to inquire very minutely into the cause, but occupied himself about preparing for his voyage. As the transfer of property to any great distance was impracticable, he turned a large portion of his wealth into jewels, which were less difficult to be disposed of, could be easily secreted, and occupied little room. These preparations engaged him for some days, during the whole of which period Eiz-ood-Deen was a prey to the severest grief. He scarcely uttered a word. His father now imagined that his sorrow arose simply from the circumstance of his being about to quit a spot endeared to him by the strong and linking associations of youth, but felt no doubt that when the first ebullitions after departure should subside, new scenes and new objects would soon absorb his attention, and win him from his partialities to the scenes of his boyhood.

Having made the necessary preparations, the old man purchased a vessel, which he manned with Hindoo sailors, for the best of all possible reasons, because no other were to be had. The vessel was a large clumsy boat, carrying about sixty tons, with no deck, save a kind of poop, under which there was one small cabin. She was manned by fifteen native seaman. Everything being put on board, the merchant Sam, with his son Eiz-ood-Deen, set sail from Surat with a favourable breeze. The old man's heart bounded as he quitted those shores which had been the place of his exile for years, and although he had filled his coffers with money in this strange land, his predilection for that of his birth had never been once stifled; it was still glowing. He was anxious to lay his bones among those of his forefathers, and he tried to rouse the spirits of his son to the same level of gratification with his own; but the image of death was too vividly

impressed upon the mind of Eiz-ood-Deen to be so readily effaced. He could not banish it. It seemed as if a fiery hand had seared it upon his brain with an impress so deep and glowing that the finger of death only could obliterate the tracing. His heart sickened when he reverted to the repelling reality.

“Nay, my son,” said the glad father, “you seem as if you grieved at a parent’s joy. Why this gloom? Is there no other country upon the globe’s wide surface which can yield us as glad a home as that which we have quitted. Why do you repine? What have you relinquished? Were we not living among communities which despised our religion, and held us unfit to be admitted to the privileges of social intercourse? Were we not rather tolerated than welcomed by those idolators whom our religion has taught us to despise?”

“Then why, my father, have you made their country your home for so many years? They admitted the exile among them, and surely those people are not to be depised who received him whom his own countrymen had abandoned. But you mistake the cause of my sorrow. I grieve not at quitting the land of my father’s exile; on the contrary, I rejoice at it: but there are griefs which weigh heavy on my heart, and never shall I remember the city which we have quitted but with a pang that must lacerate my bosom.”

The merchant was astonished. Absorbed in the pursuits of trade, he had allowed his son to have so much his own way, that he knew little or nothing of his pursuits, and had been altogether ignorant of his acquaintance with the beautiful Parsee; he was, therefore, not a little surprised when Eiz-ood-Deen related to him his attachment towards the Guebre’s daughter and the lamentable issue of it.

“Alas! my boy,” said the old man, “there is little doubt but your suspicions respecting the end of that poor girl are correct. The strictness of the Guebres in maintaining the purity of their women is so severe that even the slightest suspicion subjects them to certain death. The power of inflicting summary punishment upon offenders of this kind is in the hands of the parent, and pardon

seldom passes from the domestic tribunal for those sins to which death is awarded. The poisoned bowl has sent that innocent victim to the land of shadows, where our spirits shall everlastingly wail or rejoice."

The son concurred in the probability of this having been the fact, as he recollected the swollen and blackened state of the corpse. The conversation becoming painful, he relapsed into his former mood of silent abstraction.

It happened that among the property which the merchant had put on board the vessel was a large royal tiger, so fierce that it was placed in an iron cage, secured at the stern. The merchant had purchased it some short time before he quitted Surat, intending to present it to the King of Ghizny, who, as he had ascertained, possessed an extensive menagerie, and was particularly fond of collecting wild beasts. The tiger had been caught in a trap, and never, therefore, having been tamed, was excessively ferocious.

They had been but a few days on their voyage, when the weather began to assume a threatening aspect. The sun was overcast, and the heat became almost suffocating. Not a breath of air stirred. The water had a gentle swell, and was as smooth as a mirror; but there was a dull greenish tint on the surface, which looked like a skin in the human body tinged with the morbid hue of disease. Not a ripple agitated the lazy mass, which undulated with a slow sluggish movement as if its natural principle of motion were impeded. The vessel laboured through the glassy but ponderous waters with a lumbering uneasy roll, that rendered it difficult to maintain an easy position either within or without the cabin.

The haze thickened and lay upon the sea, which it shrouded with a thin vapoury veil, through which, when the clouds rolled from before his orb, the sun occasionally glared with a fiery and portentous glow. The Hindoo sailors were silent and looked grave, seating themselves by the ribs of the vessel and looking into the sky with a foreboding gloom that did not much tend to cheer the heart of the venerable merchant. They appeared, however, to take no precautions against the approach of a hurricane.

The boat had been under easy sail the whole day, and she was now left almost to take her own course. The navigators began to chew opium and to lie listlessly upon their rugs, as if anxious to put themselves in a state of enviable oblivion as fast as possible. The man at the helm fastened it in a certain position, and followed the example of his companions. Soon after noon the wind freshened; the sun more frequently looked from behind his curtain of dusky vapours, scattering through the mist a red ochreous glow upon the sluggish waters. Clouds, deepening in intensity as they gathered, rose rapidly from the horizon, and overspread the heavens with their rolling masses, which seemed to hang over the sea like a pall.

The sun at length went down in darkness. Some of the clouds upon the horizon, as he sank behind them, were tinged with a dull fiery tint, resembling the hue of hot iron immediately after the first red heat has subsided. The wind was now blowing a gale, and the wrack flew over the heavens as if the winged messengers of the skies were hurrying to collect the elements for the work of devastation. The vessel was old and leaky; her seams opened to the assaulting billows, which had now cast off their sluggishness, and hissed and foamed around her with a fierce activity of motion that darkened the countenances of the native seamen, and appalled the two passengers. The merchant looked upon the troubled heavens, and his heart sickened. The fearful presentiment of death passed over his excited mind with the fierce rush of the whirlwind. He dropped upon his knees: his prayer was incoherent; it was broken by the frightful images presented to his mind. The son was less agitated. His late sorrows had softened the terrors of the scene, and the memory of that hapless girl who had died—and perhaps a death of agony—for his sake, who now appeared about to follow her to the last home of the blessed, subdued his alarms. He soon grew calm. In proportion as the peril increased, he braced his mind to meet the coming shock, but the poor old merchant was fearfully excited. He had looked forward still to years of enjoyment in his native land, to which he was attached by a link as strong as human sympathy could forge. He

continued to pray, but his aspirations seemed not to rise beyond his lips; they were stifled in the terrors which gave them their first impulse, but crushed them in the soul as they struggled to get free.

With the darkness the hurricane rose to a climax. The booming waves, gleaming with that pale phosphorescent light which seems to make the gloom of a tempestuous night only more hideous, broke over the vessel's bow, heaving into her undecked hull a body of sparkling water that threatened every moment to swamp her. Still she rushed onward through the foaming ocean, leaping over the billows with a sort of convulsive energy that shook every timber in her frame, and opened her seams to the assailing element. The tiger roared, dashing from one side to the other of his cage, which he threatened every instant to shake in pieces. His howlings were continued with scarcely any intermission, and added another feature of terror to the storm.

The Hindoo sailors were perfectly passive. The vast quantities of opium they had swallowed stupefied them so completely that they appeared utterly unconscious of the surrounding peril. The vessel was allowed to take her own course, and she was urged towards the shore. The rudder was torn from her stern, and she lay like a huge log upon the convulsed bosom of the ocean. Not a hope of escape remained. She was nearly filled and on her beam ends. She rocked and heaved under the lashings of the storm, like a creature in the throes of death. Her sails were rent, and fluttered in the gale in thin strips, clattering amid the roar of the tempest to the answering groans of the masts, that bent and quivered like the tall thin stalk of the young bamboo.

Midnight passed, but the storm did not abate. The air was loaded with pitchy masses of rolling vapour, which hung so low that the vessel's masts almost seemed to pierce them as she rose upon the circling crests of the billows; they spread like a pall over the Heavens. There was no light but what arose from the sea, and the intense darkness rendered the aspect of the tempest still more terrific. During the whole night it continued without intermission. The dawn revealed a wide expanse of waters agitated into frightful commotion; the wind howling through the air

with a vehemence that seemed at once to shake the earth and convulse the sea ; the Heavens overspread with an interminable tract of deep blue vapour which the eye could not penetrate. The vessel now began to reel and stagger under the weight of water which she had frequently shipped from the heavy seas that had dashed over her. She laboured with difficulty through the rolling surges.

It was evident that she could not wear out the storm. Every moment she rose less buoyantly. Her rudder gone, she was tossed at the mercy of the billows. The merchant wrung his hands in agony ; tears streamed down his cheeks, and his eyes were fixed upon the convulsed ocean with an expression of horror. Eiz-ood-Deen, on the contrary, gazed with a sullen calmness on the terrifying scene. He spoke not ; he put up no prayer to Heaven ; no silent aspiration rose from his heart to his lips, but he looked with a stern apathy at the death which he every moment expected.

A sudden reel of the vessel now brought her up against a wave which dashed with a terrific shock over her bow, that made her whole frame vibrate. The shock was so great that it forced up the lid of the tiger's cage, and left the terrified animal to its freedom. Alarmed at the tremendous concussion, it leaped from its prison, and, bounding forward, seated itself upon the roof of the cabin ; but the vessel taking a sudden lurch, and at the same moment another huge billow dashing over its bows, with a loud roar of terror the affrighted beast sprang into the deep. The crisis had now come. Another wave struck the vessel on her quarter, a lengthened crash followed, her seams divided, and, after one heavy roll, she went down with a hiss and a gurgle, as the yawning vortex opened before her, that mingled fearfully with the shrieks of her despairing crew while they were drawn into the abyss which closed over them, the clamorous elements singing their requiem as they sank into one common grave.

A spar had separated from the vessel as she went down, and floated free upon the waters. The merchant and his son had both leaped into the sea, and after a few desperate struggles each grasped the spar, but the old man's exhaustion prevented him from holding it securely. The water bore him from his hold, and

the agonized son saw him struggle in vain to reach it. Quitting the spar, he swam towards his father. The merchant threw out his arms with desperate energy to keep himself above the surface, but every wave covered him. He shrieked, the water filled his mouth; again he shrieked, again the fierce waters stopped his cry, another and another struggle—there was a stifled moan. At length his arms fell, his senses faded, he became still.

At this moment the son reached him, but too late. He had begun to sink. There was no object on the surface. The spar rolled again near Eiz-ood-Deen, and he grasped it with the clutch of desperation. He was nearly exhausted, but with an instinctive desire of life, which they only can apprehend who have beheld death before them in an array of horror, he lashed himself to the spar with his turban, hoping that, should the storm abate, he might be rescued from his peril by some vessel, or cast on shore; for though the density of the mist prevented the eye seeing objects beyond a few yards, yet he felt satisfied that he could not be far from the coast. Perilous as his situation was, hope did not desert him; and he who had looked at the approach of death with indifference while there appeared a reasonable chance of escape, now shunned it with a fierce instinct of preservation, when its triumph seemed almost reduced to a certainty. He had not been long lashed to the spar when, through the uproar of the tempest, he heard a strange noise behind him, and turning his head, to his consternation beheld the tiger making its way towards him through the raging waters. It snorted and panted with its exertions; still it raised its noble head amid the waves, rising above them with a buoyancy beautiful to behold, in spite of the painful apprehensions with which it was accompanied. In a few moments the tiger reached the spar, and placed its fore paws upon it, close by the side of the merchant's son. It offered him no violence, but, looking wildly in his face, seemed to eye him with an expression of sympathy, as if acknowledging a fellowship of suffering. Emboldened by the forbearance of the noble animal, Eiz-ood-Deen laid his hand gently upon its head. The tiger depressed its ears, gave a loud kind of purr, and crept closer to the side of its companion.

Though frequently covered by the billows, Eiz-ood-Deen had lashed himself to the spar too securely to be shaken off, and the strong claws of the tiger kept it from a similar contingency. After being tossed about for upwards of three hours, at the imminent peril of his life, the merchant's son and his feline associate were dashed on shore near the mouth of the Indus.

CHAPTER III.

EIZ-OOD-DEEN was so exhausted on being cast upon the strand, that when he had disengaged himself from the spar and crawled up the beach beyond the reach of the surf, he fell into a profound sleep. When he awoke, the tempest had almost entirely subsided; and to his astonishment he found the tiger at his side with one of its paws upon his breast and looking steadfastly in his face. The recollection that they had been companions in peril, and the favourable manner in which the ferocious creature had received his caress upon the spar amidst the turbulence of the excited ocean, abated his apprehensions of the animal's hostility, which seemed to have forsaken its natural instincts, and he laid his hand fearlessly upon its head. The tiger instantly purred, rolled upon its back, and exhibited marked symptoms of delight, rubbing its broad forehead against Eiz-ood-Deen's face, and spreading out its capacious tongue as if to show him the tenderness of a tiger's caress. This was an exceedingly welcome indication of good fellowship to the merchant's son; nevertheless he could not help fearing that when hunger should remind the voracious beast of the necessity of appeasing its natural longing, it might take a fancy to him for its first meal.

He was so bruised by the spar to which he had been attached when cast upon the beach, and moreover his strength was so reduced by his long and arduous struggles, that he could not proceed in search of some friendly habitation; he therefore bent his way towards the nearest jungle, to which the tiger leisurely followed, being determined there to pass the night and seek out an asylum the following day. As evening advanced, he crept into a

thicket, and heaping some dry jungle-grass under a tree, threw himself upon it. The tiger quitted him ; and he concluded that having found a congenial retreat, it had gone in search of a supper, which he hoped would prevent him from being distinguished by so flattering a preference as he had apprehended.

He had now time to reflect upon his bereaved condition. All his father's property had been put on board the vessel, and all had therefore gone to the bottom, save a few jewels which the wary merchant had caused him to secrete about his person for the sake of security, in case the crew should turn pilferers and practically illustrate the doctrine of appropriation. The old man had stowed his most valuable gems within the folds of his own turban, which went to the bottom with him ; so that of all his immense wealth a trifling wreck only was preserved by the son, who was now a comparative beggar in a strange country, with the habits of which he was not familiar, and towards the inhabitants of which he felt no sympathy. His future prospects were none of the brightest. Although he had escaped death under its most fearful aspect, he possessed nothing in his own estimation to render life desirable. He had been cut off from all that was dear to him in the world, and there remained nothing to enhance the world to him. He thought upon his parent's lamentable end, and wept. The dreadful fate of the Parsee girl rushed like the simoon blast across his heart and wrung it with intense agony. He wondered why he had not courted death amid the howling storm, and could scarcely account for his having used such endeavours to preserve a worthless and miserable existence : but he felt that he was called upon to struggle through the difficulties by which he was beset ; and the pride of resistance at length rousing his spirit, he resolved to rise superior to his destiny, and exert all his energies to lift himself from the depression into which a course of concurrent but hostile circumstances had plunged him.

He arose as soon as the broad light had made its way through the thick growth of the forest, when to his surprise he found the tiger again at his side. Its jowls were streaked with blood ; and, from the roundness which its flanks exhibited, it was evident to

him that it had not gone without its evening meal. It fawned before him with a fondness that won his interest for the noble beast, which wagged its tail, advanced into the thicket, then stopped and looked back, as if inviting him to follow. There was an earnestness in the animal's motions which determined the merchant's son to see whither it would lead him. Perceiving him prepared to follow, the tiger bounded forward with a suppressed roar. After passing through a portion of the forest where the growth was unusually thick, his dumb guide suddenly stopped, and Eiz-ood-Deen advancing perceived the tiger standing over the mangled body of a buffalo recently slain. A portion of it had been eaten—the whole of the intestines: but the most fleshy parts remained entire. Eiz-ood-Deen drew a sharp double-bladed dagger, which he always carried in his cummerbund; and cutting off a slice from one of the haunches, returned to the spot where he had passed the night. Having kindled a fire, he broiled the meat; and climbing a cocoa-nut tree that grew near the beach at the edge of the jungle, he gathered several nuts, which afforded him a refreshing beverage, and was thus considerably refreshed by his morning's repast. The tiger lay at his feet and slept. Instead of feeling any terror in the presence of this powerful and ferocious creature, he was animated by a confidence that tended much to quiet the morbid anxieties of his mind. He felt a security against aggression, which gave a stimulus to his determination to grapple manfully with circumstances; and he began to think that he was still born to be a distinguished man.

As soon as he felt his body sufficiently recruited to proceed, Eiz-ood-Deen commenced his journey towards Ghizny. He had a long and dreary way before him, but was supported by the consciousness that, having been preserved from the tempest and from the natural ferocity of the tiger, he was destined to sustain a character in the world. There was an excitement imparted to his thoughts by the singular peculiarity of his condition, and the shadows of despondency began to dissipate before the active energies of his mind. A new field of speculation appeared to be suddenly open before him; and when the loss of those who were

dear to him, and of his father's treasure, passed like shadows over his brain, they were repelled as by a sunbeam by some elevating impulse of thought, and he pursued his way through the forest with a comparatively unburthened heart. The tiger continued to follow him, as if loth to relinquish the companionship of one who had been its associate in peril, and towards whom its natural instincts of ferocity seemed to subside into those milder ones which belong to the gentlest of the dumb creation. It frolicked before his path, and fawned at his feet when he rested, exhibiting the strongest symptoms of delight when he patted its sleek broad back, purring under the pressure of his hand, relaxing its large bright eyes into an expression of gentle satisfaction, protruding its huge tongue, and passing it over its formidable jaws, at once showing its power and its docility.

It was a strange thing to see a creature of such prodigious physical energies, and with a disposition to exercise them whenever opportunity might present itself, throwing off the habits of its nature, and, as if by some supernatural transformation, exhibiting the very opposite qualities to those which are innate with all its race. The circumstance appeared to the merchant's son a happy omen of his own future success, and in the strength of this expectation he proceeded on his way. As he was walking leisurely through a beaten path in the forest, he heard something strike a tree just before him, and raising his eyes perceived that an arrow was sticking into the bark. He turned his head, but there was no person visible, and he paused in some uneasiness. Whence the arrow had proceeded, or from whom, were alike a mystery. That he had been the object of the archer's aim he could not for a moment imagine, as the shaft had struck in the trunk of the tree at least three feet above his head, and he knew too well the dexterity of Indian bowmen, whether warriors or robbers, to suppose that so false an aim could have been taken by anyone accustomed to the use of this weapon. He was perplexed; he knew not what to think. At length he saw the eyes of the tiger fixed as if upon some object in the thicket. Drooping its ears and gently undulating its tail, it dropped a moment on its belly, then bounded

forward, and was in an instant lost in the thick undergrowth which nearly covered the whole face of the jungle.

After a few moments a cry of agony was heard, which was answered by a stifled roar not to be mistaken. Eiz-ood-Deen rushed forward in the direction of the sound. He heard a low mumbling as he neared the spot, and making his way into a patch of small wood and jungle-grass, he there saw the tiger standing over a man's body, which was dreadfully lacerated. Its paw was on the breast, into which the claws were fixed, the bone being in several places perfectly bare. The skull was crushed nearly flat, and the ferocious animal stood growling over its victim as Eiz-ood-Deen approached. A strung bow was lying by the side of the corpse, from which it was natural to conclude that this was the body of the man who had discharged the arrow into the tree.

The tiger began voraciously to devour its prey; and when Eiz-ood-Deen approached, and placed his hand upon it, the creature gave a quick short growl, raised its paw suddenly, and struck him down. He was stunned a moment with the force of the shock, but, rising instantly, he retreated a few yards, and found to his extreme gratification, that the tiger's claws had not been protruded when it struck, as there was no wound.

The merchant's son made no further attempt to interrupt the creature's meal, which it was proceeding to despatch with characteristic voracity, when, on a sudden, several arrows were fixed in its body. Raising its head, it tore the shafts from its flanks; then with glaring eyes and erected fur, darted forward in the direction whence the arrows had been discharged. Its career was almost immediately arrested. It staggered and fell dead. As it advanced, there had been a second discharge of arrows, three of which entered its brain.

Eiz-ood-Deen saw with regret the noble creature lying prostrate in death, remembering the peril they had shared in the late tempest, and the tiger's consequent gentleness towards himself. While he was gazing at the body of the prostrate beast, several men advanced from the thicket and surrounded him. "Who are

you," said one of them, "that the bridled savages of the forest seem thus to respect?"

"A poor traveller on his way to Ghizny, which he hopes, through your kind succour and direction, to reach."

"But how comes it that yonder grim brute, which so unceremoniously banqueted upon our companion, who lies yonder with his eyes to the broad heavens, whither his spirit will never enter, did not make a meal of thee? He seems to prefer flesh that has been forest-fed to the tough and dry product of the town."

"My history with reference to that beast is a strange one. We were hurled into the sea from the same ship, and clung to the same spar for preservation. The creature was near me in peril, and when we were cast on shore together, fawned before me instead of exercising upon me the savage propensities of its nature. Animal instincts are as inexplicable as they are wonderful."

"A likely story, in truth! but whether true or false, our companion has been killed and you must supply his place. A tall sinewy fellow of your growth and bulk is sure to make an apt as well as a comely robber."

"I am afraid you will find me but an awkward practitioner in a profession which I so little understand."

"Ay, I suppose you are what those fools who affect to be good and wise among us, call an honest man—whose whole life is only one broad varnished lie. Honesty is a mere term for a purpose. Where are there greater rogues than they who would be teachers of their fellows, and under the veil of religion commit the vilest abominations, and dub them with the name of honesty? We'll soon teach you a different lesson. We pretend not to be honest, for thieving is our craft, and we glory in making the pampered pay for our civility when they happen to cross our path. You'll quickly learn to get rid of your qualms, for with us hunger is a frequent visitor, and you've no notion how eloquently it persuades men to become rogues. But you must go with us, whatever may be your antipathies."

There was clearly no use in contending with a set of despera-

does, who had evidently made up their minds to have their own way; the merchant's son, therefore, followed them, without attempting the slightest expostulation.

The robbers conducted him into a deep recess of the jungle, where there was the ruin of what appeared to be an ancient temple. It was low, not more than a few feet above the common level of the forest, and was entered by a narrow portal which led into several small dark chambers, inhabited by the bandits, of whom there were upwards of thirty.

Eiz-ood-Deen was refractory, and did not choose to enrol himself among this marauding company. They treated him with considerable harshness; he nevertheless continued firm in his resolution to remain their captive, rather than unite with them in their practices of plunder.

It happened that the robbers had received intelligence of a party of troops being on their way, with supplies, towards the camp of Sultan Ibrahim, sovereign of Ghizny, who had invaded India with a numerous army. As their route lay through a part of the jungle, the robbers determined to attack the detachment in a narrow pass, where they would be unable to act effectively, and plunder the waggons. This was accordingly attempted, and with some success. They partially robbed one of the waggons, and bore off an officer who defended it. In the evening they brought their prisoner to their forest dwelling. Dissatisfied with the issue of their expedition, they determined to attack the waggons again on the following day; and in order to effect this with greater security, they put to their captive certain questions, which he refused to answer. Every temptation was offered to induce him to make disclosures, but he declined giving the slightest communication; this so incensed the robbers that they shot him to death with arrows. They were not, however, suffered long to triumph in their cruelty. On that night their haunt was assailed by the troops which they had so recently attacked, and the greatest part of the band were made prisoners.

CHAPTER IV.

ELIZ-OOD-DEEN was made prisoner with the rest of the robbers, who were severally put in irons, and finally marched to Ghizny, where they were cast into separate dungeons. The merchant's son now looked upon his doom as sealed. Taken up as a robber and murderer, he saw little chance of escape, and began to look forward with dreadful apprehensions to undergoing an ignominious death. How was he to prove his innocence when he had been taken in the very den of those criminals who had committed the murder, and was declared by them to be one of their party? He could bring forward no proof of his innocence to countervail such strong presumptive evidence of his guilt. His mere declaration would scarcely be listened to, it being well known that the guilty almost invariably declare themselves innocent. He paced his prison with a restless and impatient step. It seemed as if the doom of destiny were upon him. Since the death of that guiltless girl, whom he had hoped to make his wife, he had known nothing but misfortune. The conviction smote upon his heart that he had been saved from destruction, when the hurricane stirred the elements into frightful combination, and threatened every moment to engulf him amid the raging billows, only to meet a more dreadful doom upon land. He now regretted that he had not perished amid the turbulent waters which bore his father to the abode of spirits, or that the tiger had not struck him dead when it raised its paw against him in the jungle. What was to be done? There was no evading the doom which awaited him. He must die a degraded criminal, his body would be thrown to the vultures and to the jackals. It was a fearful thought! To have his bones whiten in the sun, and his flesh furnish a banquet for beasts of prey!

The robbers were severally tried, all found guilty, and executed. Their heads were placed upon the walls of Ghizny. His trial came last. The day preceding he endeavoured to prepare himself for the fate from which he concluded there could be no escape;

but he could not brace his spirit to that pitch of resolution which defies the terrors of death, and renders the condemned man capable of going through the awful details of a public execution, not only without dread, but with perfect tranquillity of spirit. Every one of the robbers—for he had been taken from his dungeon to witness their execution—had met death with that sullen resolution peculiar to fatalists, for such were they; but Eiz-ood-Deen, entertaining a different faith, felt that he was not likely to meet it with equal resolution. The night which preceded his trial was one of dreadful mental excitation. He had no rest; the fever of anxiety was on his brow, and the phantoms of terror flitted round him as he courted a transient oblivion of his woes.

The morning dawned upon his disturbed slumbers, and the dim light which reached his dungeon through a narrow aperture in the wall roused him from the damp earth upon which he had cast himself for the last time. He arose feverish and unrefreshed. His hands were cold as the stones by which he was surrounded, but his temples were painfully hot, and throbbed almost audibly. He tried to summon resolution to appear before the court with composure, but nature mastered all his energies, and he gave way at length to a violent burst of emotion. The remarkable manner of his escape from destruction during the storm and its accompanying circumstances had endeared life to him, and he felt unconquerably loth to relinquish it, although at one time he had really persuaded himself that death would be a boon.

The summons at length came, and he prepared to follow the messenger into the presence of a fallible judge, who, he was persuaded, would pronounce upon him, though innocent, the dreaded penalty of the law. He entered the court with a tottering step, a drooping eye, and a bloodless cheek. The trial was summary, and the sentence speedily passed. He was adjudged to have his head struck from his body and placed upon the city walls, the trunk to be cast to the vultures. The execution was ordered instantly to take place, and, as little sympathy is shown for criminals in countries where despotism renders public executions occurrences of mere daily routine, Eiz-ood-Deen was bound without the

slightest compassion being shown by those who had heard his trial and condemnation. His turban was rudely stripped from his head, and while the heartless official was binding it round his brow to cover his eyes, in order that he might not witness the descending stroke of death, he raised a piteous lamentation, calling upon the Deity to attest that he was innocent, and accompanying his cries with such strong appeals to the humanity of his judge, that even the executioner was at length moved, and paused for a moment in his work of preparation.

The prisoner was desired to state what he had to urge in his defence, and say how it happened that he had been found associated with robbers who had committed a murder upon one of the subjects of Sultan Ibrahim. Eiz-ood-Deen commenced his defence by stating the principal events of his life, which he did in a manner so simple and circumstantial, that the magistrate, who had condemned him unheard, at length believing him innocent, suspended his execution, and immediately petitioned the sovereign in his favour.

On being brought before the Sultan, the merchant's son acquitted himself with such modesty and eloquence that he was pardoned, and taken into the sovereign's service. This was, in truth, an unexpected issue to the dilemma in which he had so unwittingly fallen, and his prospects thus suddenly brightening, he felt more than ever impressed with the idea that he had been spared for a better destiny. He rose rapidly in the royal favour, and was finally advanced to one of the highest offices in the state.

One day as he was following the chase with several of the nobles, a boar charged the horse of a prince of the royal house of Ghizny, and having inflicted a frightful wound in its flank, the wounded beast fell, and the foot of its rider being under its body, he could not extricate himself. The enraged boar dashed towards him, and in a few seconds more would have placed him in the same condition as his horse, when Eiz-ood-Deen spurred forward, met the hog in its impetuous career, received it upon his spear, which entered the heart of the furious animal, and it fell dead beside its intended victim. The victor immediately dismounted, and going

to the prince's rescue, released him from his jeopardy. This little incident naturally produced an intimacy, and Eiz-ood-Deen soon became a welcome visitor at the prince's palace.

The latter had three daughters, one of whom was reputed to be a girl of great beauty and accomplishments ; nor did she belie the character which report had given her. Her father was justly proud of her. She was already betrothed to one of the wealthiest nobles in the Sultan Ibrahim's dominions. It had been an arrangement of interest, not of affection, and one in which the princess had acquiesced rather in obedience to the wishes of her father, whom she tenderly loved, than to the suggestions of her own choice. When she met the preserver of her parent's life immediately after the event just related, the natural impulses of her heart drew from her expressions of gratitude so ardent and earnest, that Eiz-ood-Deen was deeply moved at the eloquent declaration of her feelings. He listened to her with breathless delight. There was no resisting the earnestness which was so much enhanced by the corresponding influence of her beauty. But she was betrothed, and therefore to admire her was dangerous—to love her criminal ; and yet to see her, under such a provocative both to admiration and love, and not give way to those strong tendencies of our nature roused into vigorous action, when that pure passion is awakened by which alone the fruits of our earthly paradise are matured, was all but morally impossible. The merchant's son, now raised to the dignity of a noble, and whose ambition therefore led him to think that he might aspire to the highest alliance, could not behold the beauty of this high-horn maiden with insensibility. He soon felt that his heart had received an impression which had completely effaced the scar left upon it by the sad disappointment of a former love ; yet he dared not avow it.

The two elder sisters were neither handsome nor agreeable, and had passed that period of rich and vivid freshness which imparts to the beauty of woman its best charm. They were rapidly advancing to the staid season of existence when the buoyancy of youth begins to decline, and you are continually reminded that its beautiful bright star has culminated. It happened that they had

been both struck with the fine person of Eiz-ood-Deen, and manifested their partiality in a manner too obvious to be longer equivocal. The object of their mutual affection treated their advances with provoking disregard ; but they, imagining that he was withheld by their rank from declaring his passion, each resolved in secret to take the earliest opportunity of letting him know that he was beloved by a princess of the house of Ghizny. Before, however, they could put their determination into practice, Eiz-ood-Deen had declared his admiration for the younger sister, who had answered his declaration by avowing a reciprocal attachment. This almost immediately came to the ears of the two elder sisters, who were outrageous at the discovery of his entertaining what they deemed so degrading a preference.

This discovery, however, did not abate the passion of these two tender maidens, and each resolved personally to declare her sentiments to the object of her affections. One evening, Eiz-ood-Deen received a message, through one of the attendants of the palace, from the youngest of the three princesses, as was represented, to meet her in the palace gardens an hour after sunset, as she had some special communication to make. Delighted at the idea of encountering the object towards whom his heart bounded with unceasing emotion, he repaired to the place appointed, expecting to see one whose presence was rapture. He entered the gardens and sprang towards a female already there awaiting his arrival, when to his surprise and mortification he stood before the eldest daughter of the prince whom he had rescued from death. The interview, however, was short. She began by declaring her passion ; but he soon silenced her unwelcome avowal by telling her that his heart was fixed upon her youngest sister. Having made this declaration, he quitted the garden, and the princess sought her apartment, burning with rage and disappointment.

Both the elder princesses meditated revenge ; and in order to effect this, they took an opportunity of rousing the jealousy of the Omrah to whom their younger sister had been betrothed, by telling him that his affianced bride had bestowed her affections upon Eiz-ood-Deen, at the same time rousing his hostility by the

vilest insinuations. The fiercest passions of the noble were roused, and he determined to take speedy and signal revenge. Shortly after this disclosure, while they were enjoying the pleasures of the chase, the jealous lover resolved to avail himself of the opportunity to destroy his rival, at a moment when he was separated from the hunters. Eiz-ood-Deen had paused, to give his steed breath after a severe run. On one side of him was a precipice, and on the other the jungle from which the quarry had been roused. The enraged noble, armed with a strong spear, urged his steed forward; but the animal springing at the goad of its rider's spur, suddenly turned to the right, and bounded towards the precipice. There was no arresting its career. It reached the brink—snorted, reared, and plunged into the abyss. Both rider and horse were killed upon the spot.

The two elder daughters of the prince were grievously vexed at this mischance; and their jealousy of the younger sister was carried at length to such a height that Eiz-ood-Deen determined to declare himself without further delay. The object of his attachment had received and approved of his addresses; nothing therefore remained but to obtain the father's consent. The suit of the merchant's son, who had been raised by the Sultan to an appointment of high dignity in his court, was backed by his royal master. Knowing that he was of the blood royal, Ibrahim urged that the princess should be united to him. Eiz-ood-Deen was consequently married to this beautiful scion of the house of Ghizny, and shortly after put in possession of the principality of Ghoor, over which his ancestors had reigned until the flight of his father into India. By the princess of Ghizny Eiz-ood-Deen had seven sons. These, when the father died, separated into two divisions. They were, by way of distinction, called the seven stars. One of these divisions gave its origin to the dynasty of kings at Bamyan, called also Tokharistan and Mohatila; and the other to the Ghoozy dynasty at Ghizny. Of the latter race was Kootb-ood-Deen Mahomed, called King of the Mountains. He married the daughter of Sultan Beiram, king of Ghizny, and having founded

the city of Feroozkooh, made it his capital. In the vicinity of this place, having enclosed with a wall a spot of ground about two parasangs* in circumference as a hunting park, he assumed all the dignities of a sovereign. At length he was induced to attack Ghizny. Sultan Beiram, obtaining intimation of his intentions, contrived to get him into his power, and eventually poisoned him. This was the origin of the feuds between the houses of Ghoor and Ghizny.†

* The parasang varies from three to four miles.

† See Brigg's Translation of Ferishta, vol. i. p. 167.



HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

Heg. 582 (A. D. 1186).—The empire of Ghizny having passed from its native sovereign to the house of Ghoor, Gheias-ood-Deen became sovereign of all the Mahomedan conquests in India. His brother, Mahomed Ghoory, whom he had appointed general-in-chief of his armies, having settled the provinces of Lahore, retired to Ghizny.

Heg. 587 (1191).—Mahomed Ghoory marched into Hindostan and took the town of Bitunda, but was obliged to retreat to Ghizny, having been defeated by the combined armies under the command of Pithow-Ray, Rajah of Ajmeer and Chawund Ray, Rajah of Delhi. In a second battle, however, Mahomed completely routed the combined armies. Proceeding in person to Ajmeer, he took possession of it, put a thousand of the inhabitants, who opposed him, to the sword, and reserved the rest for slaves. Having returned to Ghizny, Mullik Kootb-ood-Deen Eibuk, took the fort of Merut and the city of Delhi from the family of Chawund Ray; and it is from this circumstance that the empire of Delhi has been said to be founded by a slave.

Heg. 589 (1193).—The general-in-chief marched to Benares, broke down the idols of above a thousand temples, which he purified and consecrated to the worship of the true God. He then returned to his brother's dominions.

Heg. 592 (1195).—Mahomed Ghoory returned to Hindostan, took Byana; and the strong fort of Gwalior fell into the hands of Buha-ood-Deen Toghrul, after a long siege. The king of Ghizny dying, Mahomed Ghoory succeeded to the throne without opposition. Having attempted the conquest of Khwaruzm, he was surrounded by the enemy, who advanced to the relief of its sovereign. Almost the whole of his army being destroyed, Mahomed cut his way through the enemy and arrived in safety at the fort of Andkhoo, a short distance from the field of battle. Here he was besieged; but upon engaging to pay a large ransom and to abandon the place, he was suffered to return to his own dominions. His entrance into Ghizny was opposed by Yeldooz, a slave; this opposition obliged him to continue his route to Mooltan, where he was opposed by Zeeruk, a powerful chief, who had rebelled against him. Being joined by many of his friends and some Indian allies, he quelled the insurrection and returned to his capital. This year the Ghoorkas were converted to the faith of Islam.

Heg. 602 (1206).—A band of twenty Ghoorkas conspired against the king's life. Mahomed Ghoory being encamped at a small village on the banks of the Indus, the assassins entered his tent and he fell under their hands pierced with twenty-two wounds. The treasure which this prince left behind him was

incredible ; he is said to have possessed in diamonds alone four hundred pounds' weight. He was succeeded by his general Kootb-ood-Deen Eibuk, who was crowned king of Ghizny.

Heg. 603 (1206).—After his accession, the new king abandoned himself to all kinds of sensual pleasures ; in consequence of which the citizens of Ghizny rebelled against him, and he was obliged to retire to Lahore. Becoming sensible of his folly he repented, and thenceforward governed his kingdom with remarkable justice, temperance, and morality.

Heg. 607 (1210).—Kootb-ood-Deen was killed by a fall from his horse, in a match at Chowgan,* and was succeeded by his son Aram, who the same year was deposed by Shums-ood-Deen Altmish, his brother-in-law.

Heg. 612 (1215).—Altmish defeated Taj-ood-Deen on the plains of Narain.

Heg. 622 (1225).—Shums-ood-Deen united under his dominions the provinces on the Indus, having routed the forces of Nasir-ood-Deen, by whom they were possessed, and who was drowned in attempting to cross the river.

Heg. 624 (1227).—Altmish reduced the fort of Ruutunbhore.

Heg. 626 (1229).—The king's eldest son, whom he had made prince of Bengal, dying, the father conferred the title upon his younger son, whom he invested with the government of that province.

Heg. 629 (1231).—Altmish reduced the strong fort of Gwalior, which surrendered after a year's siege. He also took the city of Oojein, in which he destroyed a magnificent temple, dedicated to Mahakaly, formed upon the same plan with that of Somnat. This temple is said to have occupied three hundred years in building.

Heg. 633 (1236).—Shums-ood-Deen Altmish falling sick on the road to Mooltan, was obliged to return to Delhi, where he died the same year and was succeeded by his son Rookn-ood-Deen Feroze, who dissipated the public money, and excited by his excesses the general disgust of his subjects.

Heg. 634 (1236).—Ruzeea Begum, the king's sister, advanced with an army against Delhi, which she entered in triumph, deposed her brother, who died in confinement, and ascended the throne.

Heg. 637 (1239).—The queen excited the indignation her nobles by raising to the post of Ameer-ool-Omrah a favourite slave named Yakoot. She married Mullik Altoonia of the Toorkey tribe of Chelgany, governor of Bituhnda, in consequence of which her subjects revolted. Altoonia raised an army and marched against them,—a battle ensued, in which the queen and Altoonia were slain.

* The game of Chowgan, like our football, consists in two opposite parties endeavouring to propel a ball beyond certain bounds. The parties in this game, however, are on horseback, and the players use bats, like our rackets, to strike the ball.—See *Brigg's translation of Ferishta*, vol. i. p. 199.

The Abyssinian Slave,

CHAPTER I.

IN consequence of the licentiousness and cruelty of Rookn-ood-Deen Feroze, King of Delhi, he was deposed, and his sister Ruzcea Begum raised to the throne. On her elevation great rejoicings prevailed throughout her dominions; and she gave splendid entertainments and public shows for several days, in order to impress the people with an idea of her munificence. She was a woman of masculine understanding, great energy of character, and much was expected from the administration of a sovereign, of whom her royal father had said, not long before his death, when asked by his officers why he appointed his daughter regent of the kingdom during his temporary absence, in preference to his sons,—“My sons give themselves up to wine and every other excess; I think, therefore, the government too weighty for their shoulders; but my daughter Ruzcea Begum, though a woman, has a man’s head and heart, and is better than twenty such sons.”

The last day of the public rejoicings on the Sultana’s accession to the throne of Delhi was distinguished by wild-beast fights and gymnastic sports, in which the most celebrated competitors in her dominions exhibited their skill.

During the games, a wild buffalo, which had been kept without food for two days, in order to render it more savage, was driven into the arena, and a large leopard, suffering under similar abstinence, opposed to it. The conflict was short but decisive. The leopard sprang upon its adversary, which received it upon its

horns, flung it into the air with fatal force, and then finished the work of destruction by goring it until it was dead, without receiving a wound beyond a few superficial scratches. The animal, proud of its victory, pawed the ground in triumph, and roared as if challenging another competitor. It galloped round the enclosure, raising the sand with its hoofs, scattering it in the air, and plunging with all the fury of frantic excitement.

The Queen sat in the balcony of a building erected for the purpose of enabling her to witness the sports without risk. She was surrounded by her women, who appeared to take no common pleasure in the sanguinary pastime. Among them was the daughter of an Omrah, an extremely pretty girl, to whom her mistress was much attached, and who, by way of distinction, sat at her feet on the present occasion. She waved her handkerchief with all the energy of girlish delight as the victorious buffalo was careering round the area, when a champion appeared before the spectators, causing a hush of breathless suspense as he advanced towards the enraged animal, and declared aloud his determination to encounter it. He was a man singularly handsome, with the frame of a Hercules cast in the perfect mould of graceful proportion. He was tall, but robust; broad, but compactly formed; every muscle, for he was naked from his waist upward and from the knees downward, swelling from the surface of his body with an undulation of symmetry that appeared the very perfection of manly beauty. The calm but intense gleam of his eye, which did not for a moment relax, was a legible record, not to be misinterpreted, of his steady drift of purpose and indomitable resolution. His lips were gently compressed, his head was slightly inclined upon the right shoulder, his step was deliberate but firm, and his whole bearing such as could not be mistaken for anything but that of a man of the highest physical endowments. He was armed with a short broad sabre, which he grasped in his right hand, and a heavy-bladed dagger was stuck in his belt.

The buffalo roared as its adversary advanced, pawed the ground, bent its head, and rushed furiously towards the stranger, who leaping on one side with great agility, the infuriated beast con-

tinued its career for several yards. It however soon returned to the charge, and with a celerity which required all the wary caution and cool activity, so eminently possessed by the champion, to avoid. It was again foiled, but it became only the more enraged, and pursued its enemy with such vigour that he had great difficulty to evade the intended mischief. At length, seeing that the danger was heightening as the animal was in full career towards him, he sprang out of its path, and striking forward with his sword, broke off one of its horns close to the head. The wounded beast bellowed with agony, and turned suddenly round upon its adversary, who, evading a contact with the same dexterity as before, struck his dumb antagonist so powerful a blow upon the neck as nearly severed the head, and the buffalo rolled at his feet in the pangs of death. He then coolly bowed to the Sultana, and retired.

“Who is that?” she inquired of an officer who had the direction of the sports.

“An Abyssinian slave, most potent Queen, celebrated alike for the beauty of his person and his prodigious strength of body.”

“His name?”

“Yakoot.”

“To whom does he belong?”

“To the mighty Sultana, whose empire is as extensive as the spiritual dominion of the Prophet.”

“Let him be summoned before me at the conclusion of the sports.”

“What a charming man !” said Bameea, the Queen’s favourite, to one of the ladies of her mistress’s court ; “and a slave too ! Those limbs of his were never formed for manacles, nor that back for a scourge : what think you ?”

“That fine limbs and a handsome frame are only outward tokens of beauty, and may conceal more deformity than the greatest monster exhibits to a mere superficial scrutiny. Fruits of the richest colour contain the deadliest poison ; and they tell us of some, exquisite to the eye, that yield only ashes.”

“Ah ! you are one of those cautious beauties, Zophra, that will

take nothing upon trust. You would look into a diamond to see what it is made of ; but I am content with its brilliancy, and seek not to know whether it is a mineral or vegetable, or a houri's tear. Look at that man again, and say if he is not beautiful in his bondage—if he is a fit object for slavery."

The Abyssinian had again come forward to exhibit his strength and skill in another encounter of quite a different character from the first. He was now about to wrestle with a gigantic man, dull in aspect and ungainly in his motions, though of colossal dimensions and prodigious muscularity of limb. They stood before each other, and immediately commenced the struggle. The larger competitor seized his adversary by the shoulder with such a vigorous grasp as left the impression of every finger. The Abyssinian soon, however, disengaged himself, and laying hold of his opponent by the waistband of his trousers, threw him forward with astounding force upon his face. The fallen champion rose actively to his feet, and with a flushed countenance again placed his hand upon the shoulder of his opponent, and, striking him at the same moment just below the knee, cast him to the earth ; but as he fell upon his side the victory was not obtained, it being necessary that the vanquished man should be thrown upon his back.

The slave rose deliberately, with a faint smile upon his lip, but a defiant expression in his eye, that told, more intelligibly than words could utter, a resolution to show what he could do under the apparent disadvantages of superior strength and stature. He advanced slowly towards his huge competitor, stood before him in an erect position, his left arm extended and his right close to his breast, watching with the eye of a lynx an opportunity for making his favourite movement. The colossal champion walked round him, every now and then striking his hands upon his own body, producing a sharp, loud smack, and adopting various evolutions to distract the attention of him to whom he was opposed. At length, with the swiftness of thought, the Abyssinian darted upon his adversary and hit him with his open hand upon the throat, at the same instant striking his feet from under him with a force which nothing could resist. The man fell upon his back with so terrific

a shock, that he was borne senseless from the enclosure. The victor, with modest gravity, again made his obeisance to the Sultana and retired.

The lovely Bameea was perfectly delighted with the slave Yakoot, and began to feel more than a woman's curiosity to know something of his history. She was anxious to persuade herself that he could not be an ordinary person; and although Abyssinians were at the best little better than barbarians, yet was it certain that there were always exceptions to every general rule, and Bameea felt quite satisfied that Yakoot was one of those exceptions. Besides, she had remarked the countenance of her royal mistress as the latter regarded the two last encounters, and she observed an expression of satisfaction which confirmed her in the conclusion she had come to in the slave's favour; for she could not a moment entertain the thought that Sultana Ruzeea Begum would condescend, even by the faintest expression of her illustrious features, to indicate a favourable impression of any man who was not worthy to be admired by all the ladies of her court.

The concluding feat of the day was a conflict with wooden swords between the Abyssinian slave and an Indian, a Catti Rajpoot, who had been taken prisoner in a late invasion of some of the provinces of Hindostan. The Catti, as all his race are, was considered pre-eminently skilled in the use of the sword. The wooden weapons with which the combatants stood armed were made of a heavy wood and were long and broad.

The onset was commenced by the Catti, who displayed a skill and activity which at first somewhat confounded the slave, the latter doing as much as he could in parrying the strokes of his adversary without attempting to make a return. The vigour, however, of the Catti, gradually abated; and finding that his blows were so successfully parried, and that he was wasting his energies to no purpose, he began to be more wary. The Abyssinian now occasionally became the assaulter, but his efforts to hit the Rajpoot were foiled with equal skill.

Each of the champions had received slight blows, and appeared to be so equally matched, that it was difficult to decide which had

the advantage. The Catti at length grew impatient and lost his caution. His attack was more impetuous and reckless. In proportion as he became heated the slave was cool; and taking advantage of his opponent's precipitation, just as the latter had raised his arm to strike, Yakoot hit him suddenly above the elbow with such force that the bone of his arm instantly snapped, the fractured member dropped powerless by his side, and the wooden sword fell from his relaxed grasp.

This concluded the sports. The Rajpoot walked from the arena in sullen disappointment, whilst the victor was borne in triumph upon the shoulders of four men in a car, decorated with flowers. The Queen quitted the balcony, and the gentle Bameea thought more ardently than ever that the slave was in every respect a marvellous man.

CHAPTER II.

EARLY the next morning Yakoot was at work in the palace garden, which was watered by a thousand fountains, and seemed to be the abode of all the beautiful genii which preside over the operations of vegetation. Flowers of all hues and fragrance decked the slopes and parterres; shrubs of every description to which horticulturists have attached value for their beauties or rare qualities, were here displayed in lavish profusion; trees of every kind, celebrated for their fruits or for some singular intrinsic production, were bountifully scattered over this earthly paradise. Fish sported in the marble fountains which terminated the walks; birds of various feather and accomplishment warbled their gentle notes of love from the embowering foliage; doves cooed from the arbours, and rabbits grazed upon small enclosed plats especially dedicated to their enjoyments, but beyond which they could not trespass, in consequence of a wire wall which debarred them from passing the circles appropriated to them.

Amidst this scene of earthly beauty Yakoot was sad. He remembered with emotions of stern regret the savannas and forests

of his native home, where the wild beast prowled and the hand of man was frequently lifted against his fellow with the deadliest purpose. He eyed with solemn composure the gorgeous blending of nature and art, by which he was at this moment surrounded ; but it conveyed no gratification to his heart. His predilections were of a different temperament. He sought delight in the rugged and the severe, and therefore laboured with a smile of cold contempt amid the luxuries brought from almost every quarter of the world by the munificence of eastern regality. He had heard the applause of men, won by his prowess in the sports of the preceding day, but they moved him not. The approbation of the Sultana, which had been conveyed to him with a mandate that he was to appear before her on the following morrow, administered no joy ; but amid the gloom of his condition, a light broke in upon his soul when he remembered the smile dancing upon the full pulpy lip of the beautiful Bameea as she applauded his feats of prowess in the arena. He had gazed upon her with an earnestness which called the blood into her cheek ; and for the first moment during his captivity, which had only been one of a few short weeks, he felt his bosom glow towards an object with that mysterious sympathy which binds the heart, although in a silken fetter, yet with a security more lasting than links of iron. There was no accounting for the sudden impulse that almost instantly seemed to overmaster the rugged severity of his nature, and draw his kindly affections forth in bland and assauging emotions. But who was he that entertained thoughts of so pure and holy an intercourse as that which Heaven sanctions, when hearts are united and wishes harmonize ? Was he not a slave ? Could the high-born and refined look upon a bondman but with feelings of repugnance ? And yet, while his lips muttered these querulous doubts, there was an antagonist presentiment within which repudiated them.

He was at one end of the garden, his eye wandering over the fairy scene around him, when it caught the shadow of a female figure advancing along one of the walks. His breast throbbed : the shadow so truly represented the outline of a form which of all

others he desired to behold, that he could not be mistaken. He kept his eyes fixed upon the spot that was in a moment to reveal an object upon which it would be rapture to gaze; and, ere he could finish the expiration which mingled surprise and delight had suspended, the interesting Bameea stood before him. He bent his head as she approached, and touching the ground with his fingers, placed them upon his brows.

“Ha! Yakoot,” said the timid girl, returning his salutation, “I bring you joyful intelligence. You will not long have to toil in these gardens under the scorching sun to rear flowers and trim shrubs. The prowess which you exhibited yesterday has won the admiration of your royal mistress, and she has declared her intention of having you numbered among her household.”

“I desire not, lady, so near a contact with sovereigns. Slaves are foils to those poor worms of night, and I seek not to illustrate one of the extremes of high and low.”

“But you will find her an indulgent mistress, if you do your duty.”

“That is, if I do not thwart her royal will. The tawny lion will purr under your touch if you cram his ravenous maw, and leave him the fierce liberty of his instincts. Sovereigns are never kind, lady, either from humanity or compassion, but merely to gratify their own selfishness; I therefore despise royal favours, and would rather labour in this garden under the fierce glow of a meridian sun, with such an object near me, to inspirit the dull hours of toil, as my eyes are now permitted to gaze upon, than be the fantastic puppet of a queen’s bounty.”

“Well, but you will be summoned shortly before the presence,” said Bameea, reddening; “and—and—I trust you will throw no impediments in the way of being near the Sultana, because——”

“Why that pause?”

“Oh! because——”

“Nay, my decision will depend upon your answer, lady.”

“Because, I think you would be pleasant company sometimes, when our royal mistress lacks amusement, and our wits are dull, and cannot furnish it. Believe me, you’ll find agreeable com

panions." Saying this, she tripped lightly off, as if she feared something from his reply that she would rather avoid hearing. The Abyssinian watched her receding figure as she glided down the path, until she was lost amidst its sinuosities, the walk being bounded on either side by tall shrubs.

Yakoot mused upon the past event. Bameea had not been sent to summon him. Why then did she come to apprise him of the Sultana's intention. No such intimation was necessary. It was evidently given at the suggestion of her own wishes. The slave was a man of ready penetration, and with instinctive sagacity peculiar to eastern nations in all matters concerning a reciprocation of the senses, he began to think that he was not an object of indifference to the interesting girl who had just quitted him. This was a sunlight to the darkness that had lately clouded his soul, and the fountain of life seemed again to gush fresh and sparkling within him, as if animated with new energy. Slavery might be a boon instead of a bane, and his soul was comforted.

Not long after Bameea's departure, Yakoot was summoned to attend the Sultana. He instantly followed the messengers, and passed into the royal presence. Ruzeea Begum was seated upon a fine cashmere shawl spread over a thick rug woven from the same wool, and worked in the richest devices. Behind her stood Bameea, waving over her mistress's head a beautiful bird of Paradise. Beside the latter was a gold ewer containing perfumes which produced around her an atmosphere of delicious fragrance. Her hookha, sparkling with gems, stood on her left hand, the highly decorated tube resting on a brocaded cushion. Her slippers, formed of the finest Bagdat tissue, worked in gold and embroidered with pearls, were placed beyond the rug upon a costly japan tray. A small circular mirror of burnished steel in a silver frame, and having a handle of the same metal, lay upon her lap. This she occasionally raised in order that she might ascertain if the henna had been properly applied to her eyelids, or if the various cosmetics employed in her toilet had produced their proper effects.

The Sultana's dress consisted of fine white muslin worked in gold, disposed round her body in loose flowing drapery, and

covering trousers of the palest sky-blue silk, fastened at the ankles by bands of woven gold. On her head she wore a plain turban, loosely twisted round her high broad forehead, and composed of white cashmere. When the Abyssinian entered, she beckoned him to approach, without raising her eyes from the mirror upon which she had at that moment fixed them. He advanced with manly reverence, but not in the smallest degree awed by the presence of the sovereign, whose voice was a fiat, and her will an ordinance.

Ruzeea Begum was a woman of commanding person, handsome but repelling, and exhibiting in her countenance the somewhat stern and decisive tone of her mind.

"Slave," said the sovereign, still keeping her eye upon the mirror, "you have won the approbation of your royal mistress, who intends to advance you to the dignity of an appointment in her household."

The slave was silent.

"Do you prefer the drudgery of bondage to the lighter labours of attendance upon your Queen?"

"I am a bondsman, at the will of a mistress which must be to me a law; I have therefore no choice; wherever I may be placed I shall know how to do my duty."

"Does the approbation of your sovereign give you no satisfaction?"

"Much, because it assures me that I deserve it, for the approbation of sovereigns is seldom bestowed unless it be fairly won."

"To show you that mine has been won, from this moment you are free; and may your future conduct show that I have not disgraced my confidence!"

"My conduct will never be influenced by obligations, however nobly conferred. I have a conscience upon which is recorded, in characters stamped by the hand of Heaven, my rule of life—that I shall obey."

Bameea hung down her head. She feared that this bold bearing might rouse the excitable temper of the haughty Queen;

but Ruzeea Begum did not appear in the slightest degree disturbed, and answered with unusual mildness :

“I shall calculate upon an honest servant ; for surely he upon whom a queen has conferred her favour cannot fail to be faithful. Your feats of yesterday satisfied me that you are one among the few upon whom princes may lean for security in the hour of peril. Such men are rare, and should be cherished when they come before us. I have no more to say. You are free, and will shortly receive your appointment from the minister. See that you do not belie my judgment.”

Yakoot retired ; apartments were prepared for him in the palace ; and for some days he continued about the sovereign's person, receiving from her very distinguished marks of favour.

Rumours soon began to spread of the Sultana's criminal partiality for the Abyssinian slave. Some of the nobles expressed their disgust, and others retired from court. Within a month after he had obtained his freedom, Yakoot was advanced to the dignity of master of the horse. In consequence of this exaltation several of the nobles rebelled ; the favourite was sent against them with a well-appointed army, and soon reduced them to obedience. The Queen's partialities were now becoming offensive to the Abyssinian. There was no mistaking her wishes ; nevertheless, he treated his royal mistress with a frigid respect, which, though it mortified her deeply, only increased her determination to render him the slave of her passion ; but his heart had a different bias. He had already declared his love to Bameea, who returned his affection, and they exchanged vows of mutual fidelity. Of this the Sultana knew nothing ; but, resolved to win the heart of the Abyssinian, she raised him to the dignity of Ameer-ool-Omrah, the highest station in the state next to princes of the blood royal.

CHAPTER III.

THE Sultana was not long in discovering the mutual attachment which subsisted between the Ameer-ool-Omrah and Bameea. Her anger knew no bounds. She summoned the Abyssinian. He appeared before the presence of his sovereign, not without some suspicion of what was about to take place. Bameea stood behind the Queen. She saw by the scowl upon the royal brow that no good was intended towards the object of her love. The eye of Ruzeea Begum was restless, and her fingers trembled as she dipped them into the ewer of perfume that stood beside her. Her full expressive mouth was closed with a compression that indicated suppressed emotion, and the full undulating lip occasionally quivered. Her head was raised haughtily as the Ameer-ool-Omrah entered, and she fixed upon him her large penetrating eye with so searching a scrutiny that it seemed as if it would have reached the very core of his heart. He met her gaze with calm reverence; and having made his obeisance, stood before her with the unbending dignity of a man who has secured the approbation of his own conscience. For several moments the Sultana did not speak, and in her presence no one of course ventured to break the silence. Bameea trembled as she perceived the rising agitation of her sovereign, which was evidently increased by the unperturbed demeanour of the person whom she had summoned. Ruzeea Begum at length finding the ebullition rising to her throat, by a sudden effort suppressed it, and passing her hand gently across her brow, as if to dispel the cloud which for a moment overshadowed it, she said, in a tolerably calm tone,

“Yakoot”—but her voice slightly trembled, and she eagerly swallowed a copious draught of sherbet.

“Yakoot,”—she had now regained her self-possession—“say, what does that man deserve who, having been raised by his sovereign from the lowest to the highest station, slights that sovereign’s favour?”

“Death, if he slight a favour which it becomes his sovereign to

grant and him to receive ; the praise of all good men, if he slight a favour that would degrade his sovereign, and dishonour him."

"You have treated your Queen with the basest ingratitude."

"I have done my duty, and if that is not consistent with the station to which a criminal partiality has advanced me, I am ready again to become the slave of the Sultana, instead of her Ameer-ool-Omrah. I courted not the distinction, and will never maintain it at the price of my virtue."

The eye of Ruzeea Begum flashed fire.

"Slave !" she cried, "thy virtue is but the mask of hypocrisy. There is the cause of all thy disloyalty ;" and she pointed with a quivering lip towards Bameea,—“there is the rebel who has seduced thee from thy allegiance ; but there shall come a day of retribution—a day of vengeance—and remember that the revenge of monarchs is not the sudden irruption of the whirlwind, but the wide-spreading devastation of the hurricane."

Bameea shrieked as she heard this fearful denouncement, and buried her brows in her small delicate hands.

"Bear her from my sight," said the angry Queen : "henceforward I dispense with her services. But you," turning to the Abyssinian, who stood before her in the same attitude of unruffled self-possession—"you may look for punishment when you least expect it. You have many enemies, and yet fancy yourself secure in the supremacy of your own valour ; nevertheless, though you possessed the bravery of our holy prophet, and were endowed with a supernatural power of locomotion, there is no spot upon earth or in heaven where the vengeance of an insulted queen would not reach you."

"Hear me, before I quit your presence for the last time," said Yakoot, solemnly. "I am threatened with your vengeance ; it is right I should tell you that I shall do my best to anticipate and to repel it, whenever and wherever it may appear, From this moment I revoke my vows of fealty to the daughter of Shums-ood-Deen. When monarchs become tyrants, from that instant they cease to be accredited sovereigns, and lose all right to the allegiance of good men. Had I forfeited my claim to your

respect by an act dishonourable to my name or title, I were content to suffer the heaviest penalty which human laws award to human offences ; but, as my integrity has remained untarnished in your service, I feel that you have now heaped upon me a wrong of which I am not deserving, and from this moment I quit your presence as a foe."

The Sultana was silent ; she dared not speak lest the current of her rage should burst forth into a torrent, and the Abyssinian retired from her presence with an unruffled brow.

That night he was passing towards his home, without a guard and unarmed. The street was dark and narrow. Towards the end there was a ruin used for the purposes of stalling cattle, where all the homeless and vagrant of the city congregated. He passed the ruin, but saw not a human soul, nor heard a sound. Musing upon the unpleasant occurrences of the morning, he walked leisurely onward. His heart was stirred to a quicker pulsation as he reflected upon what his beloved Bameea might undergo from the criminal jealousy of her royal mistress. On passing a house supported by a projecting buttress, the drapery of his loose dress caught in a fractured stone, and his progress was thus for the instant impeded. As he stopped, he fancied he heard the stealthy sound of footsteps, and, turning round, soon perceived three figures at a short distance cautiously approaching. They paused when they saw that he no longer advanced. The recollection of the Sultana's threat immediately struck upon his memory like a flash of light. There was something so sinister in the movements of the three men that determined him to be upon his guard. He placed his back against the wall, having his left side protected by the projecting buttress. The men advanced, and upon reaching the place where the Ameer-ool-Omrah was stationed, sprang upon him simultaneously, and attempted to pierce him with their daggers. With a sweep of his muscular arm he levelled two of them to the earth, and raising his foot, impelled it with such quickness and force against the body of the third that he fell senseless. One of the assailants who had been struck down was almost instantly on his legs, and rushed forward with his dagger raised to strike ; but,

stumbling over his prostrate companion, the Abyssinian caught him in his arms, lifted him like a cushion in the air, and dashing him on the ground, left him there stunned. Releasing the weapon from the grasp of his fallen foe, he approached the other man who had been first prostrated by the sweep of his arm ; buried in his heart the instrument with which he had just armed himself ; and taking their turbans from the heads of the other two assassins, bound their hands and feet together, and in this painful situation left them to the charities of the casual passenger.

Next morning, the report of a man having been murdered spread through the city, and the two individuals, who were found tied by the wrists and ankles, having been examined, feared to fix the charge upon their intended victim, lest it should lead to a discovery of their criminal assault ; but, whilst they were under examination, to their astonishment the Abyssinian appeared before their judge, and detailed all the circumstances of the attack made upon him by the prisoners, and how he baffled them in their murderous design. They were immediately led forth to execution, lest they should betray who had employed them. Suspicion fixed upon the Sultana ; but, as she did not interpose her authority to rescue the assassins from death, the suspicions of the many were silenced, though they were still harboured by the few, as it is too common a practice for tyrants to abandon their instruments when failure has laid them open to the chance of discovery.

The Queen affected great concern at what had occurred, and sent a messenger to Yakoot to congratulate him upon his escape from the murderous assault of his foes. He received her deputy with cold formality, but did not even return a message. She was outrageous at her condescension, being so openly slighted by a slave, as she still called the man whom her own voice had declared free, and whom she had raised to the dignity of Ameer-ool-Omrah. The smothered flame did not immediately burst forth, but, while it smouldered, gathered strength for a fiercer conflagration.

Yakoot, however, took no measures of precaution, although it was evident that the elements of mischief were at work and rising into active combination. He resolved to counteract the perfidious

designs of the Queen. The spirit of disaffection against her government had already begun to show itself. Her brother Beiram had won the affections of the troops, indignant at being under the dominion of a woman, and disgusted at the impure life which the sovereign was reputed to lead. Many of the nobles, too, were strongly disaffected against her; at the head of these was Mullik Altoonia, of the Toorky tribe of Chelgany, governor of Bituhnda, and tributary to the Queen. Yakoot, disgusted at Ruzeea Begum's rancour towards him, fomented the disaffection of that powerful noble by pointing out the flagrant enormities of the Sultana's government; and, as a measure of precaution, secretly joined the councils of the rebels. The hostility of Ruzeea Begum knew no bounds, and she determined that he should expiate with his life the crime of having slighted her favour.

A few days after the late attack upon the Ameer-ool-Omrah, he was hunting the wild boar in a forest not far from the city. Many nobles of the Queen's court were likewise enjoying this animating sport. A vast concourse of people had assembled, as in Eastern countries they always do upon similar occasions. Carried by the ardour of the chase beyond his companions, Yakoot passed a cover, from which a huge boar darted, directing its course across the plain. The Abyssinian instantly dashed his heels into the flanks of his steed, and it bounded off after the game; but scarcely had it cleared the thicket, when an arrow, discharged by an unseen hand, struck its rider in the fleshy part of the upper arm, and remained crossed in the wound. Snapping the shaft, and drawing out the reed, he continued his career, and, in spite of his wound, succeeded in slaying the boar.

It was too evident now that his life was aimed at by secret enemies; and, without expressing his suspicions, but affecting to look upon the murderous attempt of the morning as a mere accident, he resolved immediately to quit the city and retire to Bituhnda. The Sultana's government was becoming more and more odious every day, and it was clear to him that she had employed assassins in two several instances to take away secretly the life which she dared not openly attack. On that night he

quitted the capital, and joined Mullik Altoonia, with several of the disaffected nobles. The moment Ruzeea Begum heard of their flight, she placed herself at the head of a considerable army, and, meeting the rebels half-way between Delhi and Bituhnda, a battle ensued, in which the royal forces were defeated by the conduct of Yakoot, who commanded the disaffected, and the Queen was made prisoner. She was sent to the fort of Bituhnda to Mullik Altoonia, who, being seduced by her beauty and affected distress, shortly after married her. Upon this, the Abyssinian retired in disgust to Delhi, and engaged in the service of Prince Beiram, who had been elevated to the throne.

CHAPTER IV.

IN consequence of the marriage of Ruzeea Begum with Mullik Altoonia, her brother Beiram, who had been elevated to the empire of Delhi, was securely seated upon the musnud. The disgust excited by the conduct of their queen had weaned from her the hearts of those among her subjects who had hitherto maintained her cause, and she had become an object of universal odium. Bold and enterprising, however, she determined not to submit patiently to the loss of a throne, and assembling an army under the command of her husband, prepared to vindicate her rights. Beiram, meanwhile, collected forces to oppose the threatened invasion, and placed them under the command of the quondam Abyssinian slave, whose injuries were likely to urge him to employ his best energies to foil the efforts of a resolute and accomplished foe.

The recollection of the fierce determination with which Ruzeea Begum had sought his life, was incentive sufficiently strong to urge the general to devote his talents and energies to a cause which impelled him by a double motive—retribution, and a desire to rid the people among whom he had been naturalized from the dominion of a tyrant. A still stronger motive remained behind. Upon his return to the capital, Yakoot discovered that the late favourite had

been removed from the palace, and knowing the Sultana's implacable passions, he had everything to fear for Bameeca's safety. He had been able to ascertain nothing satisfactory respecting her, and his apprehensions were roused in proportion to the suspense which he was forced to endure. It was a sad thing to be divided from the object of his affections through the criminal passions of a woman whose power enabled her to be cruel, and whose malice urged her to exercise that power.

Although the Sultana was at a distance from Delhi, it soon became evident that neither had her vengeance slumbered, nor was she without tools to execute her will. The secret assassin once more attempted the life of the detested Abyssinian, who again frustrated the sanguinary intention. Finding that she was still so active in putting measures into operation for his destruction, he determined to march without a moment's delay, and by a decisive battle settle the question of her enmity for ever.

The evening before he marched, Yakoot retired to rest at an early hour. He had not been long upon his couch, when placing his hand beside his head, it came in contact with something cold and slippery. Starting from the bed, he saw a large venomous snake which had raised itself and spread out its hood, and was in act to strike when he retreated beyond the reach of mischief. Upon examining the apartment, he discovered two of these monsters concealed under the palampore. Taking them by the tails, he summoned his attendants, who were all ignorant how the reptiles could have invaded the sanctuary of their master's apartment. It was however recollected that a snake-charmer had been employed to get rid of those noxious reptiles on the preceding day. He was immediately summoned, but denied all knowledge of the intruders; however, upon the torture being applied, the confession was extorted from him, and he was immediately punished by being flung over the battlements of the city; after which the forces under the Ameer-ool-Omrah marched from the capital.

When Ruzeea Begum quitted Delhi on her journey towards Bituhnda, she took with her the unhappy Bameeca, whom she

treated with extreme rigour upon discovering the attachment which existed between her and the Abyssinian. She had confined her a prisoner in an apartment of the palace, and allowed her only the most homely food, debarring her even from the indulgence of an attendant, and exposing her to every mortification which her inveterate malice could suggest.

On the day after Yakoot's last audience with the Sultana, Bameea was summoned to the royal presence; and all the attendants being commanded to withdraw, the former said, "Woman, when menials interpose between sovereigns and their pleasures, it is the habit of princes to prevent them from countervailing their wishes either by imprisonment or death. Thou art too poor a thing to die; but nevertheless, when we forbear to tread upon the worm, we take care to remove it from our path. How didst thou become acquainted with the Abyssinian slave?"

"We met in the garden of the palace. The same brilliant achievement in the arena which won the Queen's admiration, won also mine. We met, our vows were interchanged, and he has remained faithful to his love."

"And despised his sovereign for a toy which she could crush with the blast of her nostrils. Now, hear me—I love that foreigner. Never would he have been raised from the debasing condition of a slave to the dignity of Ameer-ool-Omrah, if he had not made a deep impression upon his mistress's heart. Monarchs do not advance menials to the highest office in the state, unless they entertain towards them more than a common feeling of approbation. His queen was entitled to his gratitude when she stripped from him the badge of slavery and raised him to a level with the nobles of her court. His ingratitude has been as signal as her favours: but he shall live to experience that a sovereign's hatred can debase him as greatly as her love has raised him. You, who have been the cause of the mortification of your royal mistress, can expect no further favour at her hands, and you may congratulate yourself with the loss of liberty, when your offence might have been visited with the loss of life. We shall meet again. Go!"

The Sultana struck her hands together, and several attendants entered, who were ordered to conduct the trembling Bameea to prison. She entered it with a painful apprehension of what the jealousy of the Begum might prompt her to put in operation against the Abyssinian, towards whom it was evident that the gall of her malice was overflowing.

When Ruzeea Begum quitted Delhi, she took with her the unhappy Bameea, who, on their arrival at Bituhnda, was subjected to a still more rigid captivity than before. The poor girl's situation was deplorable. She was now apprehensive of never again beholding the object of her heart's affection, and began to yield to the saddest apprehensions. The hatred of her royal mistress was of too fierce a nature ever to give way to compunction, and she saw nothing but misery before her. Her days were long intervals of bitterness, and her nights seasons of disturbed and unrefreshing sleep. She grew thin, and wasted to a shadow;—hope was banished from her bosom;—she looked forward to death as a release from miseries which now seemed to crush her with the weight of a mountain;—she felt that death would be a relief, but this was a mercy which suited not the purpose of her tyrant, who took delight in seeing her victim suffer.

Bameea thought of escape, but this appeared impracticable. As an almost forlorn hope, she tried the integrity of an occasional attendant, who was admitted to clean her apartment. The woman seemed to listen willingly to the tempting promises of reward made by the captive, if she would facilitate her flight. A bribe was placed upon her "itching palm." She clutched the gold with a miser's eagerness; the doors of Bameea's prison were opened, but she was discovered before she had quitted the palace, and borne back again to her captivity. She had been betrayed. The bribe had been received, and the prisoner denounced. Her confinement was now more than ever rigid. She was removed to a small apartment in which there was no outlet save the door, and this was so massive as to stifle all expectations of escape.

The poor girl now abandoned herself to the strong impulse of despair. To her surprise she was visited by the Begum, who up-

braided her with having attempted to corrupt the woman admitted to her apartment. "There is no guilt," said Bameea, with earnestness, "in using any means to escape the inflictions of tyranny. All things are lawful to evade the oppression of those who make their passions the medium of their actions. Your cruelty has rendered my life a bane, and I am prepared to relinquish it whenever your malice shall suggest the sacrifice."

The Sultana smiled bitterly. "I would not take your life; that would not satisfy my vengeance. If you were dead, you could no longer suffer the punishment which my ill-requited affections—and of these you are the cause—demand as a just expiation. I intend to punish the wretch who has injured me through you, and he shall yet live to curse the day that he treated with indifference the affections of Ruzeea Begum."

"But why should you longer feel his disregard when you have now one to whom those affections are sacred, and to whom you have relinquished the sole right to possess them?"

"Political alliances have little to do with the warm emotions of the heart. It is enough that I loved the slave who has despised me, and he shall feel my vengeance. But you may obtain your liberty upon one condition. Relinquish the affections of the Abyssinian by entering into a conjugal alliance with a noble whom I have selected for you, and who entertains towards you a warm attachment. Consent to become his wife, and the doors of your prison shall be instantly unbarred."

"Never!" cried the agitated girl with energy. "You may keep me lingering through a life of wretchedness within a dungeon, but you cannot rob me of my soul's freedom. My love will only expire with my death, and I will never purchase my liberty at the sacrifice you demand."

The Sultana's eyes flashed fire, and she quitted her victim without uttering a word; but there was a volume in her glance. That very evening Bameea's food was changed. A curry was placed before her which had been prepared, as it appeared, with more than usual care. She eyed it apprehensively. Suspicions of the darkest description instantly took possession of her mind. She

could not forget the Begum's glance of fury as she quitted her prison: the curry, therefore, remained untouched; for though death would have been a welcome visitant, yet she resolved to avoid any but that which nature brings, so long as the choice was left her. A small quantity of the homely food upon which she had been accustomed to feed since her captivity remained, and upon this she relieved the demands of nature.

That night was passed in sleepless agony. She looked forward to the dawn with a presentiment of terror. Phantoms passed before her mind which almost convulsed her frame to madness. She arose and looked at the refection which she suspected to be poisoned: she laid her hands upon the dish, and had all but resolved to brave the penalty of tasting it, when her better feelings prevailed, her excitement subsided, and she sank into a state of transient insensibility. It was short. She was roused by a stranger. He brought her tidings of great joy. On the afternoon of the preceding day, a battle had been fought betwixt the forces of Mullik Altoonia, headed by himself and his consort, and those of the Sultan Beiram, commanded by Yakoot. The former had been routed, and the Sultana and her husband slain. The shouts of victory soon reached the ears of Bameea, and these were shortly followed by a sight of her lover.

The happy pair were immediately after united; the Abyssinian was confirmed by Beiram in his office of Ameer-ool-Omrah—the nation prospered under his sage councils, and the loves of Yakoot and Bameea became the subject of many an Eastern legend.



HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

Heg. 637 (A. D. 1240).—Moiz-ood-Deen Beiram ascended the throne of Delhi, but was deposed by his vizier and cast into prison, where he almost immediately suffered death, after a reign of two years, one month, and fifteen days.

Heg. 639 (1241).—Alla-ood-Deen Musaood, son of Rookn-ood-Deen Feroze, was raised to the musnud, which, after a reign of four years, one month, and a day, he was obliged to relinquish. His excesses and cruelties having disgusted his ministers and friends, he was cast into prison, where he passed the rest of his life.

Heg. 644 (1247).—Nasir-ood-Deen Mahmood, the youngest son of Shums-ood-Deen Altmish, succeeded the late king, who had been deposed by his nobles. This was a prosperous reign of twenty years and upwards, the king dying a natural death. He was succeeded by his brother-in-law and vizier, Gheias-ood-Deen Bulbun.

Heg. 685 (1286).—The king's son Mahomed, a prince of great promise, was sent against the Moguls who had invaded Moultan. Having defeated them in a pitched battle, and being too eager in the pursuit of them, as they fled before his victorious arms, he was beset by a party which lay in ambush, and slain. The old king, now in his eightieth year, never recovered this shock, which threw him into a melancholy, and he died shortly after in the twenty-second year of his reign. His grandson Keikobad, immediately ascended the throne without opposition.

Heg. 687 (1288).—The king, having excited the disgust of his subjects, was cut off by assassins as he lay sick at Kelookery. The ruffians found him lying on his bed in a dying state, deserted by his attendants. Having beat out his brains with bludgeons, they rolled him up in the bedclothes, and flung him out of the window into the river. Julal-ood-Deen Feroze Khiljy, one of his ministers, who had been the cause of the late king's assassination, ascended the musnud, and was cut off by the treachery of his own nephew, Alla-ood-Deen, after a reign of seven years and some months.

Heg. 696 (1297).—Alla-ood-Deen Khiljy was raised to the musnud after some opposition. His first care was to secure the favour of the troops; and after having defeated the queen-dowager, and the Prince Kudder Chan, he ascended the throne in the ruby palace.

Heg. 697 (1297).—Kowla Devy, wife of the Prince of Guzerat, fell into the hands of the king's brother. She was a woman of remarkable wit, beauty, and accomplishments, by which Alla-ood-Deen was so much captivated, that he took her into his harem. This year was rendered memorable by the death of Zuffur Chan, the greatest general of his time. His bravery became so proverbial among the Moguls, who had so frequently felt the force of his arm, that when their horses started it was usual among them to ask if they saw the ghost of Zuffur Chan. His death was a severe loss to Alla-ood-Deen, who, however, feared him, and therefore expressed no regret at his death.

Heg. 699 (1299).—Rookn Khan, Alla-ood-Deen's nephew and brother-in-law, having aspired to the throne, attempted to assassinate the king while he was enjoying the pleasures of the chase. Alla-ood-Deen was pierced by two arrows, and he lay on the ground insensible. The Prince Rookn Chan drew his sword, and ran to cut off the king's head; but being told that he was quite dead, he deemed it unnecessary to sever the head from the body. Proceeding immediately to the camp, he was proclaimed king; but Alla-ood-Deen, recovering his senses, appeared in his capital, was welcomed by the citizens, and the usurper immediately deposed and executed.

Heg. 703 (1303).—After a siege of six months, Chittore was reduced, and the rajah made prisoner. The government was conferred upon the king's eldest son, the Prince Khizr Chan, after whom it was called Khizrabad. At the same time Alla-ood-Deen bestowed regal dignities upon the prince, who was publicly proclaimed successor to the throne.

Heg. 704 (1304).—Ray Ruttun Sein, Rajah of Chittore, escaped from Delhi. Alla-ood-Deen, having received an extravagant account of one of the rajah's daughters, agreed to grant the father his release, upon condition of his giving up this daughter for the king's harem. The rajah, tired of a very rigorous captivity, reluctantly consented to this odious proposal; but when his family heard of it they concerted measures for poisoning the princess, in order to save the reputation of their house. But the rajah's daughter adopted a stratagem, by which she obtained her father's release, and preserved her own honour. Having selected a number of faithful adherents, she concealed them in litters, used by women only when they travel in the East, and proceeded to Delhi with her ordinary retinue. Arriving at night, by the king's especial permission the litters were allowed to be carried into the prison, supposing they contained the female attendants of the princess. No sooner, however, were they within the walls, than the armed men, leaping from the litters, put the king's guard to the sword, and carried off the rajah.

Heg. 706 (1306).—Dewul Devy, daughter of the beautiful Kowla Devy, fell into the hands of one of the king's generals, and was brought to Delhi. In a few days after her arrival, the beauty of Dewul Devy inflamed the heart of the Prince Khizr Chan, to whom she was eventually given in marriage.

Heg. 709 (1309).—Mullik Kafoor defeated the allied rajahs, who had com-

bined to make him raise the siege of Wurungole, which he carried by assault after a vigorous siege of several months, and returned with his army and immense treasure to Delhi. On his approach to the city, the king himself came out to receive him near the Budaoon gate, where the conqueror laid all the spoils at his royal master's feet.

Heg. 710 (1310).—Mullik Kafoor defeated and took prisoner Bilal Dew, Rajah of the Carnatic.

Heg. 711 (1311).—This year was rendered memorable by the massacre of the newly-converted Mahomedan Moguls. Fifteen thousand lay dead in the streets of Delhi in one day, and all their wives and children were enslaved.

Heg. 712 (1312).—The Rajah of Dewgur was inhumanly put to death by Mullik Kafoor, with the consent of Alla-ood-Deen.

Heg. 716 (1316).—Alla-ood-Deen died, after a reign of twenty years and some months, not without suspicion of having been poisoned by Mullik Kafoor, who aimed at getting the reins of government into his own hands.



The Rajpoot Marriage.

CHAPTER I.

THE beautiful Jaya was on her way to join the relatives of her father, who had lately been made prisoner by the sovereign of Delhi. She was in a close hackery, accompanied by a numerous guard and several female attendants, being the daughter of Ray Ruttun Sein, Rajah of Chittore. The captivity of her father rendered her silent and thoughtful. The tear stood in her eye, and filled the cavity in which it had gathered, but fell not over the fringed boundary that confined it. She was a Rajpoot, and would not for the world have allowed the gush of sorrow to stream over her cheek in the sight of her women. It was repelled therefore at the source, but her heart was big with grief, and struck with a dull heavy throb against the walls of its beautiful prison.

Jaya was a young Rajpootni now only in her fifteenth year; but, though so young, she had attained the perfect maturity of womanhood. Her form was slight, her every muscle had its due and exquisite proportion, and the whole compact was harmonized to the perfect roundness and undulations of beauty. Her limbs were small, but exquisitely moulded; and whenever she spoke, every member appeared to exhibit a sympathetic energy, which made the gazer admire with how many modes of expression, both silent and vocal, nature had gifted this rare Hindoo. Her eyes were of the deepest black, but so soft amid their radiance, that it seemed as if they had looked upon the things of paradise, and borrowed the celestial blandness which everywhere reigns in that

region of supernal repose. Her skin had the rich blooming brown of the ripe hazel-nut, and under it the sanguine streams circulated with a healthy freedom, that carried life in its free young impulses through ten thousand channels, over every part of her exquisite frame. The mouth appeared as if it had been kissed by the lips of a cherub, and had stolen its gentle delicate bloom, over which her breath came like an exhalation. She was beautiful and tender as the mother dove, yet inheriting all the firmness of her race, which could both endure and act when the energies requisite for endurance and action were demanded.

All with whom she came in contact loved her for her gentleness as much as they admired her for her beauty, and she was the idol of her father's heart. Her mother died in giving her birth, and he reared her with a care proportioned to the fondness which she inspired. She had been for some time affianced to a youth of her own tribe, son of the Rajah of Moultan; between him and Jaya there existed a strong and abiding affection. Her prospects had been all blighted, for the moment at least, by the captivity of her father, who had been removed by the conqueror to Delhi. Under the impressions which her reflections upon these unhappy events caused, she was silent and absorbed. Two of her women rode in the hackery with her, but they did not presume to interrupt the sacred silence of her sorrow, which she could not conceal, though she forebore to express it. It was deep and bitter.

As the cavalcade proceeded, a violent storm came on, and there was no village or hamlet near. The covering of the hackery was very slight, and therefore afforded but an imperfect protection against such a mischance. The rain began to fall heavily, and the distant lightning to gleam, followed by the low muttering thunder which rapidly approached. A ponderous mass of vapour, of a dull slate colour, rolled heavily onward, and very soon excluded the sun, producing a gloom as deep as twilight, and investing every object with the same dusky tint. The rain at length fell in torrents, and the cloud above poured from its dark womb a stream of fire, which burst through the shower, and was reflected by the large falling drops in ten thousand vivid scintillations. At every flash

the whole region round was flooded with a blaze of ghastly light.

By this time the tremendous crashings of the thunder were awful in the extreme ; and these blending with the loud hissing of the rain, produced a din which, though it was the music of the spheres, proved anything but " a concord of sweet sounds " to the ears of our travellers.

The beautiful Jaya heeded not the storm ; but her women crowded more closely towards their mistress, hid their heads in their hands, and gave expression to fearful lamentations. The tempest heeded not their terrors, but raged with redoubled fury. The frail covering of the vehicle in which they rode was soon soaked through, and the rain was begining to drip upon the heads of those within. Palampores were spread over it, which seemed for a time to keep out the intruding water ; but they soon became saturated, and the rain at length forced its way so copiously into the hackery, that it was found expedient to stop and seek shelter somewhere from its pitiless fury.

It fortunately happened that not far from the spot, at the foot of a small hill, there was a cavern known to one of the escort, who conducted the party thither with some reluctance, as the place was reported to be infested by noxious reptiles of all kinds, and the resort of wild beasts and desperate bands of robbers. The party however taking courage from their numbers, proceeded to the cavern, thinking that any change of situation must be for the better, as the conflict of elements was still maintained with unabated fury.

The entrance to the cave was lofty and rugged, the sides having been broken away, and the angles splintered, as if great manual violence had been employed to disfigure what the severe labour of man had originally executed with no little attention to nicety of proportion and simplicity of effect. Dilapidated as it was, the portal was not devoid of beauty ; but without staying to enjoy the pleasure of admiration, the whole party passed anxiously into the cavern. Fires were immediately kindled, and many noxious reptiles and large bats ejected, before the place was considered

safe, even as a temporary refuge from the storm, which continued to rage with undiminished violence.

Towards evening the rain ceased, but it was then considered by the travellers too late to renew their journey, and Jaya was content to pass the night within the gloomy cave where she and her attendants had found sanctuary. The hackery was wheeled in, the bullocks unyoked, and the lovely Rajpootni entered the vehicle, round which the drapery was closely drawn, where she resigned herself to repose, her attendants lying upon rugs round a large fire which had been kindled in the centre of the cavern. The apartment was of considerable magnitude, hollowed out of the mountain, exhibiting a square area of about sixty feet on all sides, and five yards high. No light was admitted but through the door. The original purpose of the excavation was mere matter of conjecture, but it had evidently not been lately the resort of human beings. The ceiling was crowded with large bats, measuring nearly four feet from the extremities of the wings, having heads like small foxes, and bodies larger than rats. They clung to the roof of the chamber; but, scared by the flames which had been kindled underneath, frequently dropped into them, scattering the fire in every direction in their fierce struggles to escape, to the great peril of the travellers. When seized, they bit the venturesome hand to the bone, and thus greatly disturbed the repose of the Rajpootni's followers. These creatures, however, were not the most formidable disturbers of their rest.

Before they had composed themselves to sleep, a stranger entered the cave, and looking round him for a moment, suddenly made his retreat. He was a Mahomedan. His appearance gave considerable uneasiness to the Hindoos. They began to fear the proximity of a foe, and were neither in sufficient force nor properly armed to repel aggression from a superior or even from an equal number. Jaya was not aware of what had passed, but it was remarked that the stranger's attention had been particularly directed towards the hackery. The King of Delhi's troops were known to be in the neighbouring province, which he had lately subdued, and a surprise was seriously apprehended.

A man was sent forth as a scout, to bring word if strangers were approaching the cavern, in order that the Hindoo travellers might have timely notice, and thus secure their retreat. The man had not been absent above a few minutes when he ran breathlessly back with the alarming intelligence that a detachment of Mahomedan troops was within a hundred yards of the cave. The information was instantly given to the unhappy Rajpootni, who calmly ordered the oxen to be yoked to the vehicle into which she had retired for the night, and declared her intention of immediately resuming her journey. "Mahomedans are men," she said, "and will not molest a woman. Let us proceed; they no doubt seek a place of refuge after the storm. We will resign this chamber to their convenience, since the Hindoos and the despisers of their gods cannot lie down together on the same floor."

"But they are troops of the enemy, lady," said the leader of the escort, "and will probably force us to make our beds beneath the same shelter with the profaners of our altars."

"We are under the protection of One," said Jaya solemnly, "to whom mortal might is as the spider's web against the fierce rush of the tempest. If they use violence, let us trust to Pollear, the Hindoo traveller's god, who will interpose on our behalf, and baffle their wicked designs towards those who seek his protection and pay him homage."

The lovely Hindoo had yet to learn that there was just as much divinity in her venerated Pollear, as there was truth in the factitious oracles of the prophet of Mecca, venerated by her enemies: but with a calm affiance in the protection of a very unsightly stone image, daubed with red ochre, and often stuck up by the roadside to court the homage of half-crazy devotees, she awaited the entrance of the expected enemy. She was not kept long in suspense; for scarcely had she closed her lips after expressing her confidence in the protection of one of the ugliest gods of her tribe, than a numerous detachment of Alla-ood-Deen's troops entered the cavern.

The officer who commanded ordered them to halt just within the entrance, seeing that the place was occupied. The fire had been

nearly extinguished the moment the approach of an enemy was announced, so that there was only a very imperfect light emitted by the rapidly expiring embers of the fire which had been kindled in the centre of the cave. The officer stepped forward, and raking the still glowing ashes together, excited them into a gentle flame with his breath, lit a torch, and looking inquisitively round the gloomy chamber, said to the chief of Jaya's escort, "Whom have we here?" pointing to the hackery in which the lovely Hindoo still sat, secluded from the profane gaze of her Mahomedan foe.

The Hindoo was silent.

"Tell me," said the Mussulman, "whom you have here, or I shall tear down these trappings and take the liberty of looking. Are you willing to say what is your companion?"

"A woman."

"I guessed as much, for men don't go cooped up behind cotton or silk walls. You are so communicative that I shall trouble you with no more questions, but judge for myself."

Saying this, he laid his hands rudely upon the curtains of the hackery, and attempted to draw them aside, when the Hindoo, angry at this violation of a woman's sanctuary, seized him by the arm, and attempted to drag him from the spot. The enraged Mussulman instantly drew a short sword and cut him down. Jaya, hearing the stroke and the groan which succeeded it, sprang from her place of refuge, and stood before her enemy in the peerless eminence of her beauty.

"I am Jaya," she cried, "the daughter of Ray Ruttun Sein, Rajah of Chittore, whom your sovereign holds in bondage." The astonished Mahomedan dropped his sword.

CHAPTER II.

THE Mahomedan officer had been quite struck with amazement at the sight of the beautiful Rajpootni, and he bent the knee with gallant homage. He was, however, delighted to find that the very object whom his sovereign was desirous of obtaining

had fallen into his hands. The charms of Jaya had been heard of at Delhi, and the king was anxious to behold the celebrated daughter of his prisoner, but she had hitherto eluded his emissaries. Her having now so opportunely crossed the path of one of his officers, was a subject of congratulation to the latter, as he had reason to expect that he should not only receive his sovereign's approbation, but be advanced to some more lucrative post than that which he now enjoyed. These reflections passed rapidly through his mind, as he gazed upon the transcendent beauty of his captive.

"Lady," he said, "this is a fortunate meeting. We have been looking for you daily. Your presence at Delhi will be welcome to the king, and no doubt to your father, who will be restored to liberty so soon as you are placed in the harem of our munificent sovereign."

"I am affianced," said Jaya, with mild dignity, "to one of my own tribe, and if your monarch have the befitting attributes of a king, he will never violate the generous feelings of the man. I have been taught to look with horror on the creed which you profess, and confess to you that I never could ally myself, by a sacred union of the heart, with one who is an enemy, not only to my country, but to that country's gods. Why then should Allaood-Deen seek an alliance with one who cannot respect him? Be you generous, and permit me to proceed on my way."

"A man's duty is paramount over his inclinations. I have no discretion, lady. If I were to permit you to depart, I should be a traitor to my king, an enemy to you, and unjust to myself. These are weighty motives why I should not listen to your request."

"A man's first duty, is justice. You can have no right to deprive a free woman of her liberty. The laws of tyrants are not binding upon honest natures, and where it is a sin to obey, it must be a virtue to refuse obedience."

"We will discuss this question further on the morrow," said the Mussulman, with sinister courtesy. "Meanwhile you must make up your mind to pass the night in good, if disagreeable company."

"Then I am to consider myself your prisoner?"

“As you will, lady.”

The Rajpootni entered her hackery without farther urging her departure; and the Mahomedan having ordered his men to kindle a fire, and take up their station for the night apart from the Hindoos, prepared for his repose, taking the previous precaution of placing four sentinels at the door-way of the cavern. The Hindoo whom he had cut down, was tended by his countrymen, who bound up his wound, which, though severe, was not mortal; and the two parties, contrary to their respective prejudices, lay down upon the same floor in undisturbed slumber together.

The unhappy Jaya was the only one among them whose eyelids sleep did not visit. She had now a melancholy prospect before her. She should probably see her father indeed, but under what circumstances?—he in captivity, and she in the harem of a Mahomedan prince! The thought was agony. Not only the prejudices in which she had been reared taught her gentle soul to revolt from an alliance with a man by whom the idols which she had been instructed to adore were considered mere senseless wood and stone; but she had a tenderer motive for shrinking from a union which would render her life a burden, and her thoughts a torture. She could not bear to think that fine link of association should be snapped which had combined two hearts in the willing fetters of a most holy love, and the dews of terror moistened her clear brow as she thought upon the probable issue of this melancholy day. She could not rest. The night stole on sullenly and slow, and when the first grey tint of morning pierced through the darkness in which the cavern was wrapped, Jaya was still awake. She looked under the curtains of her prison-house, and saw all around her sunk into profound repose, save the stern sentinels at the portal who kept reluctant watch and stalked to and fro like the ghosts of departed warriors.

The light now advanced rapidly, and before the apartment was filled with the bright dewy hues of day, the soldiers of the enemy were awake, and seated upon the floor, passing the luxurious tube to each other, and inhaling the narcotic fumes of that weed which has now become an enjoyment in every country ip

the world. Having kindled a fire, they began to prepare their morning repast, which consisted chiefly of curries; while that of the Hindoos, who were by this time busy with their early meal, was composed simply of boiled rice, mixed with a few split peas, the whole saturated with ghee, which is a butter, called clarified, but commonly so rancid as to smell almost as bad as train-oil. The Hindoos ate their rice in silence, looking on with the utmost apathy at what was passing around them, and seeming not to feel the slightest interest in the fate of their companion who had been cut down the preceding evening, and lay among them, suffering grievously from the torment of his wound. This apathy was the subject of jest among the Mahomedans, who devoured their messes with a greediness worthy of the old Roman gluttons, and chatted upon the subject of their last night's adventure with merry and facetious vivacity.

The Hindoos heard their jokes without the movement of a single muscle; but no doubt the thought passed in their minds, that, should the harvest of revenge come, they would not fail to reap it with a delight as characteristic as their apathy.

While these necessary preliminaries to their journey were in progress, Jaya was not disturbed. She refused to taste of the rice and kabobs which had been prepared for her, but merely took a few inspirations through the richly-studded mouth-piece of her hookha, and awaited in silent resignation the will of her captor. She had made up her mind, with that high spirit of resolve peculiar to her tribe, to perish rather than become the wife of a man of an opposite creed to her own. Death, however, was a final resource, and she determined to see the issue of events, hoping that some auspicious diversion of their current might restore her to her friends and to happiness.

The order was given to march. The bullocks were immediately harnessed to the hackery, and the party quitted the cavern. The Hindoos marched in couples, having been previously disarmed, a Mahomedan being placed on either side of every couple as a guard. The Rajpootni's vehicle was so strongly guarded as to remove all chance of escape. Before it marched a detachment of

six men armed, and behind it a similar number. The bullocks, uneasy at the clattering of arms and the unusual restraint imposed upon them,—for the Hindoo driver had been replaced by a Musulman, who applied the lash with considerable severity,—became restive, and at length refused altogether to proceed. The more they were urged by the application of the whip, the more they kicked and plunged, and they were at length obliged to be unyoked and led forward. In this dilemma the leader of the Mahomedans approached the hackery, and without removing the curtains addressed himself to his beautiful captive and said—

“Lady, there remains no alternative but walking until the oxen have recovered their good humour, and will consent to bear the loveliest burthen in Hindoostan. They will be of better courtesy, no doubt, by-and-by, when you can resume the conveniency of the carriage. Rough roads, I know, are not very congenial to delicate feet; but war, lady, is a sad leveller of distinctions, and there is such a thing as necessity for the Brahmin as well as for the Pariah. You must dismount for awhile.”

“Perhaps,” said Jaya composedly, “you are not aware that we Rajpoots never hesitate at dying when urged to do that against which our hearts recoil and our principles revolt. I am willing to bear the shocks of destiny so long as they do not urge me beyond the boundary line of my own conscience; but no earthly power shall force me to an act which that conscience forbids. I am a woman, it is true, and a weak one; but know that the weakest Rajpoot that ever breathed would not shrink from death to escape degradation. I tell you now solemnly, in the ears of Him who knows all secrets, that should you force me from the vehicle, you shall not bear me alive from this spot. I have the means of destruction which you know not of,* and will employ them the instant you attempt to force me to an act that, to me, would be an act of pollution.”

The Mussulman was too well aware of the fierce determination

* Poison, of so subtle a nature as to produce almost instant death, has been frequently concealed in rings, or other trinkets, in order that it might be resorted to upon any sudden emergency.

of her race, when urged to desperation, not to fear that she would do as she had threatened if compulsion were used to enforce obedience ; he therefore replied with mild civility,

“ But, lady, we have no alternative, save of tarrying here, or of walking forward for a short distance, until the bullocks shall have been rendered tractable.”

“ Then I embrace the first alternative ; here shall I remain until you are in a condition to proceed. Do as you will, my resolution is taken, and you may as well attempt to give rotation to those stars which are fixed in the everlasting firmament, as strive to divert me from my unalterable purpose. You have heard my resolve, and I now claim from your courtesies no further parley. I would be left to the best consolations I can derive from my own thoughts.”

The Mahomedan, seeing that it would not be a wise stroke of policy to push matters to extremity, gave orders that the bullocks should be again yoked to the hackery, hoping, as they had been released from the harness for some time, that they would proceed quietly. He was, however, disappointed. The moment the refractory animals were urged forward, they showed their determination not to proceed, and commenced snorting and kicking with great fury. No coaxing could induce them to advance, and the application of the whip only seemed to exasperate their obstinacy. They were sleek and well fed, having been accustomed to gentle treatment ; the rough driving, therefore, of the stranger by no means suited their wayward tempers. The man, becoming angry at this determined opposition of the rebellious cattle, began to whip them with great severity, under the notion of illustrating practically the dominancy of man over the brute ; but in this instance his illustration was the reverse of beneficial, for it recoiled upon himself, to his extreme annoyance and mortification. The more ardently he applied the whip, the more vehemently the oxen plunged ; and their violence at length became so great that they overturned the hackery, from which the mortified Jaya and her two women were precipitated with considerable force. The calm but indignant Rajpootni instantly rose, dropped a veil

over her mantling face, and, reproaching the officer with having purposely ejected her from the vehicle, expressed her determination not to advance another step with the Mahomedans.

“If I proceed it shall be with my own followers only ; and if you use compulsion, I will defy your power by instantly releasing myself from your tyranny.”

“Nay, this is making a mock at contingencies with a vengeance. If I could control yonder refractory cattle, I should have the greatest satisfaction in doing so ; but since they choose to have their own way, you must blame them that you will be obliged to walk—not me. We must proceed, lady ; we have already delayed too long.”

Anticipating the Rajpootni's purpose, who was in the act of raising her hand to her mouth, the Mahomedan officer suddenly grasped her by the wrists, and, having secured her arms, said somewhat sternly—

“You force me to this. I have one immediate purpose to fulfil, which is to bear you safely to Delhi, and that I must do in spite of your opposition. You have despised my courtesy ; you must now, therefore, consent to march in bonds. When the oxen cease to be refractory, you shall again be restored to the comforts of your hackery ; in the mean time you must walk.”

The indignant girl did not utter a word. Her dark eye gleamed with a brightness that expressed unusual excitement, but she did not condescend to expostulate. She marched hurriedly forward, guarded on either side by a soldier, her women following guarded in a similar manner.

CHAPTER III.

JUST as the party with their lovely captive had turned from a narrow path into an extensive plain, they perceived a large body of horsemen in full career towards them. The Mahomedan instantly halted his men, and forming a hollow square, in the centre of which he placed his prisoners, calmly waited the onset.

It soon became evident that the strangers were a squadron of Rajpoot cavalry. They swept across the plain like a tempest, headed by a youthful warrior, who rode a beautiful white Arab, every vein of which might be traced through its skin as it pawed the ground, when its rider halted to array his troop for the onset of death. When his order of battle was made, he sent a trooper to summon the Mahomedans to surrender themselves prisoners or abide the issue of an encounter in which they must look for extermination at the point of the sword. This summons was received by the adverse party with shouts of defiance, and the onslaught commenced with terrible energy on the part of the assailants, who were received with great firmness by their foes.

The Rajpoots were more numerous than the Mahomedans, and by their headlong valour and the desperate impetuosity of their charge, they broke through the enemy's line, reached the centre of the square, and scattered instant confusion through their ranks. The conflict was short but decisive. The Mahomedan commander was slain by the Rajpoot leader in a struggle hand to hand, the latter being mounted. This produced instant consternation among the enemy. The moment they saw that their chief had fallen they wavered, and the rout became general.

Brief as the conflict was, it had been extremely sanguinary; for the Rajpoots being mounted, soon overtook those who fled and instantly slew them. The Mussulman detachment was cut to pieces, and thus a signal vengeance was taken by the Hindoos upon the scoffers of their gods.

Jaya had stood in the midst of the carnage gazing with an anxious eye upon the scene of death; and although in the leader of her rescuers she traced the well-known features of one who was as dear to her as the first-born to its yearning mother, she uttered not a cry, but calculated the probable issue of the contest with a throbbing heart, whilst her outward demeanour appeared perfectly undisturbed by any inward emotion. Jeipal leaped from his horse, which he left to its own freedom, and sprang towards his beloved.

“My sita,” he cried, “you are recovered. What anxious

moments have I endured since I heard of your sudden departure ! I instantly followed with these soldiers to protect your flight. This morning I heard that a party of the enemy were close upon your track : but you are restored, my sita ; and I shall now, with these brave companions, bear you company to Jesselmere."

"Jeipal," cried the delighted Jaya, "your presence has been my salvation. I may now bless the insolence of yonder chief, who has gone to undergo the everlasting doom of the wicked ;—it has saved me from an awful separation. I attempted my own life to save myself from dishonour, but his violence frustrated the one, and your presence has prevented the other."

The Hindoo prisoners being now set at liberty repaired to a grove of trees, under which they squatted themselves, chewed their betel-nut and chunam, smoked, and flung little balls of rice down their throats until filled almost to the uvula ; then rising with the greatest apathy, as if nothing had happened to interrupt their composure, snapped their joints, adjusted their turbans, and declared themselves ready to proceed. The bullocks were once more yoked to the hackery, and, being driven by one with whose voice they were familiar and accustomed to obey, they went leisurely forward without the slightest reluctance. Jeipal rode beside the vehicle, the curtains of which, in accordance with Eastern usage, were still kept down ; but the lovers found no difficulty in carrying on their conversation through them. The Rajpootni had now less time to think of the sorrows arising from her father's captivity, her mind being occupied by one to whom she ever lent a willing ear ; her countenance therefore recovered its brightness and her voice its vivacity.

There were no more interruptions to their journey, and they reached Jesselmere without any further adventures. Jeipal having delivered his affianced bride to the charge of her relations, to her surprise, declared his determination to proceed to Delhi.

"To Delhi !" said Jaya, her countenance rather expressing alarm than pleasure : "why should you repair to the enemy's capital ?"

"Is not your father a prisoner there, and do you not desire his release ?"

“Yes, truly; but how can your single arm avail to break through the bars of his prison, surrounded as he is by guards, who are as vigilant as they are cruel?”

“Circumstances may arise which we cannot foresee, to render my single power available in effecting an object interesting to me, in proportion as its accomplishment is desired by you. Think that I am upon a mission of love, and be happy. You will at least hear of something before the horns of the young moon unite into a circle.”

“You go on an enterprise of danger.”

“And are not such enterprises dear to the soul of a Rajpoot? I should be unworthy of your love, if I hesitated to venture my life to secure your parent’s liberty.”

“There are perils which the brave may shun, because it is prudent to avoid them.”

“But when a man listens to the suggestions of prudence before the appeals of duty, his bravery is as questionable as his virtue.”

“Go, Jeipal, I would not withhold thee from such deeds as constitute man’s nobility. Bear my love with thee.”

“That will be a talisman which shall protect me in the hour of peril. Love is the root of all virtue; the love of good alone makes man happy. When this principle is dead within his bosom, he at once becomes a monster.” After the lapse of a few days Jeipal quitted Jesselmere for Delhi.

When Alla-ood-Deen was informed of the Rajpootni’s rescue from the detachment of his troops which had made her captive, his rage knew no bounds, and he resolved to carry a war of extermination into the fertile provinces of Rajpootana. His anger, however, at length cooled, when he considered that, having the father a prisoner in Delhi, he might still get the daughter into his power. He had heard so much of her beauty, that he determined to possess her, at whatever cost; and this determination had induced him greatly to abate the rigours of her parent’s imprisonment. He was treated with considerable lenity, and permitted such indulgences as were seldom known to be granted to the prisoners of despotic princes.

Shortly after the rescue of the Chittore Rajah's daughter, as already detailed, the king ordered Ray Ruttun Sein, who had now been some weeks in confinement, to be brought before him. The Rajpoot entered the imperial presence with a lofty deportment, and stood before the Mahomedan sovereign, awaiting the royal communication.

"Rajah," said Alla-ood-Deen, mildly, "you would no doubt desire to obtain your liberty?"

"Every man," replied the Rajah, "being born free, looks upon captivity as the withholding of nature's highest immunity. The fortune of war has made me your prisoner, but generosity is the brightest jewel in the king's sceptre."

"The generosity of princes is only bestowed when merited. It is no longer a virtue when unworthily dispensed: generosity therefore without discretion is an evil."

"Sophistry, prince, is at all times a lame argument. Virtues never can become vices, employ them how we may. The mask is not the face, neither is the pretence to virtue anything more than just what the mask is to the countenance. I am too hackneyed in the world's juggles to become the ready dupe of fair words which only cover evil thoughts."

"Rajah, this is all beside the purpose for which you were summoned before the sovereign of Delhi. Are you willing to obtain your freedom?"

"I am."

"At what price?"

"At any that will not commit the honour of a Rajpoot."

"You have a daughter?"

"Well!"

"I would make her the partner of my throne."

"Proceed."

"Summon her to this city, and you shall be no longer a prisoner."

"If this is the generosity of princes, such can be no longer a virtue; it must therefore be a virtue to despise it. To be the

pander of kings is no honour ; but for a father to bring pollution upon his child is the most flagrant enormity."

"Then you refuse the offer of liberty?"

"Upon any other terms than those which a clean conscience may accept."

"Enough! Guards, bear him back to his prison. A less luxurious regimen than has been allowed him may give different colourings to vice and virtue, when surveyed through the medium of his future reflections. Away with him!"

The Rajah was conducted back to the strong apartment in which he had been confined since his captivity, but on the following day he was removed to one of the dungeons of the state prison.

His confinement now became extremely distressing. Every indulgence hitherto accorded to him was withdrawn, and he was subjected to the extremest rigours of privation. The soul of a Rajpoot generally scorns to shrink from endurance, however severe. With him a contempt of death, of danger, and of suffering, is the noblest exercise of human virtue ; but Rajah Ray Ruttun Sein possessed not these characteristics of his race in an eminent degree. He was fond to excess of those luxuries which his condition in life gave him the privilege and imparted to him the means of enjoying. He was an Eastern epicurean, and therefore the privations which he was now doomed to endure were to him a source of extreme distress. Everything that was not subsidiary to his love of indulgence had no firm resting-place in his heart. He had a high veneration for honour in the abstract, but he had a still higher for those animal enjoyments in which he especially delighted to indulge. He loved his own daughter well, but he loved his own pleasures better. He possessed the haughty independent spirit of his caste, but lacked their qualities of determined endurance and rigid self-restriction. He was brave when the impulse of the moment roused his energies ; but as soon as the impulse subsided, the strength of his passions overcame him, and he sank into the imbecility of the mere sensualist. His bearing had been bold and determined before the king, whose prisoner he

had become ; but no sooner was he cast amid the dungeon's gloom, than the strong bias of his nature prevailed, and he became irresolute, querulous, and despairing.

Every day he felt the rigours of confinement more and more irksome, and at length thought that he had been imprudent in so resolutely opposing the king's will. He began to persuade himself that a dutiful daughter should make any sacrifice for the advantage of her parent, and under this impression proceeded to argue that she ought, if called upon, to sacrifice her honour to his comfort. Besides, to be the object of a sovereign's affection was not a thing to be regarded lightly. The political influence of Alla-ood-Deen might, by such an alliance with him as that monarch proposed, place the petty Rajah of Chittore at the head of the princes of his country. Such an alliance might be the stepping-stone to distinctions that should raise his family to the highest elevation of temporal distinction. After indulging in similar reasonings at different times, he finally made up his mind that he had been too rash in so peremptorily rejecting the proposal of the Mahomedan sovereign, and determined to let him know, at the earliest opportunity, the change which had passed over his thoughts like a pestilential exhalation, and that he was disposed to concur in the king's wishes. Having come to this determination, he lay down upon his rug and slept.

CHAPTER IV.

JEIPAL reached Delhi not long after Alla-ood-Deen's proposal to the father of the beautiful Jaya, and his first object was to see the captive Rajah ; but this was a matter of no little difficulty, as Jeipal was obliged to assume the disguise of a Jew, in order to disarm suspicion. He soon ascertained that Ray Ruttun Sein had been removed to a less commodious prison, in consequence of having given offence to the sovereign ; but what that offence was did not appear to be known.

Having formed his plans, he obtained an interview with the

keeper of the Rajah's prison, and represented to him that he was anxious to be introduced to Ray Ruttun Sein, who had some jewels which he was anxious to dispose of, and which the fictitious Jew declared himself ready to purchase. In order to induce the keeper of the prison to accede to his proposal, the counterfeit Israelite offered to give him ten per cent. upon the value of the purchase, which he said would probably exceed a lac of rupees. The rapacious functionary agreed to admit the pretended dealer to the Rajah's prison, provided the door were not closed during the transaction. This was finally acceded to ; it was therefore arranged between the prison official and Jeipal, that the former should remain in sight, though not within hearing, while the latter agreed upon the terms of sale with the captive prince.

Early the following morning after this arrangement had been made, Jeipal was admitted into Ray Ruttun Sein's cell. It was a small square apartment, extremely low and ill-ventilated, having no aperture but the doorway, which was secured by strong bars crossing the entrance on either side of the wall, about four inches apart. These bars were inserted into iron sockets, so constructed that the bolts could only be removed from the outside when entrance or egress was to be obtained.

As Jeipal reached the Rajah, the latter cried suddenly, "Are you from the King?"

"Gently ! Jeipal stands before you."

"Jeipal ! how came you hither?"

"We have but a short time for parley. I have obtained admission in the disguise of a Jew, and under pretence of purchasing your jewels. My object in coming hither is to apprise you of my being near, and to ascertain the cause of the king's severity."

"He made me an offer of liberty if I would give him my daughter to grace his harem, but I rejected his proposal, perhaps too haughtily, and you behold the issue."

"We must be revenged "

"How?"

"I came not here to be an idle spectator of the Mahomedan's

tyranny. You may yet be free. His death would put an end to your captivity."

"But how can your single arm accomplish this, when he is surrounded by guards, and you are alone and unbefriended in this great city?"

"An arrow may reach a man's heart, although surrounded by ten thousand guards."

"Well I care not what you do, so long as you obtain my freedom. To me the means are indifferent. If all other means fail, the tyrant must have my daughter."

"Never!"

At this moment the keeper of the prison perceiving Jeipal's energy, and suspecting that something more than mere bargaining was passing between the captive and his visitor, came forward and reminded the latter that it was time to close their conference. Jeipal retired, but his soul was stung at what he had heard. The thought of his beloved Jaya being delivered up to a Mahomedan prince in order to become an inmate of his harem, almost maddened him. He rushed from the prison to the astonishment of the bewildered keeper, who now began, too late, to think that he had been imposed upon. Finding however that his prisoner was secure, he resolved to be more vigilant in future, and thus the chances of the Rajah's escape were considerably diminished. The Jew never again appeared before his dupe.

Jeipal saw that it was high time to adopt some measures to frustrate the king's determination of obtaining possession of Ray Ruttun Sein's daughter. It was evident that her father, already disgusted with his confinement, was prepared to yield to the sovereign's commands, and this the lover was resolved if possible to frustrate. He would willingly have sacrificed his own life to save her from pollution; for he considered that even by becoming the wife of a Mahomedan sovereign, he would receive a moral stain which nothing but the death of the polluted and the polluter could wash out.

The young Rajpoot lived apart from the bustle of the town, looking silently but vigilantly at passing events, and watching any

opportunity that seemed to promise success to the purpose which now engrossed his thoughts. The loss of Jaya would be worse than death; and he resolved, at all hazards, to make an effort to prevent the accruing of so melancholy an event. He had left her with the relatives of her father at Jesselmere, and promised, when he quitted her, that he would shortly return and make her the beloved partner of his future life. The idea that the fulfilment of his promise might be frustrated by the pusillanimous impatience of her father under the privations of captivity, was wormwood to the young Rajpoot's haughty spirit; and the thought of securing the lovely girl from the passions of Alla-ood-Deen, was never a moment from his mind. Even in his slumber, images to which this painful thought gave an impalpable but veritable form crowded upon his excited brain, and he had not a moment's repose. The opportunity which he had been so long seeking, at length came.

It was announced that the King, accompanied by all the nobles of his court, would on the following week, proceed on a hunting excursion to a forest within about eleven coss, or twenty-two English miles, of the capital. This was an announcement which made Jeipal's heart leap within him. His plan was instantly formed. Hope danced before him like a young fair cherub from the skies, and he hailed the phantom as the harbinger of his future bliss.

Upon the day mentioned in the royal proclamation, Delhi poured forth her multitudes to join their sovereign in the chase. A long line of elephants followed the King, and thousands of horsemen brought up the rear. The sight was one to excite enthusiasm in the breast of the most indifferent. The living sea flowed forward, undulating like the ocean when the breeze slumbers upon its bosom and it only gently swells with its own buoyancy, as if proud of its burden, rising to meet it with a gush of quiet transport. However joyous the scene, there was one sad heart at least among the delighted concourse; but he mingled with the merry throng, and the plant of bitterness which grew at that moment within his bosom was imperceptible beyond the secret sanctuary in which it was enshrined.

The chase began, and continued for three days, during which period hundreds of animals of all kinds were destroyed, from the fierce royal tiger to the timid hare. The King enjoyed the sport during the whole three days on horseback. Towards the close of the third, in his eagerness of pursuit after a leopard, he was separated from his nobles, and spurred his panting steed after the beautiful beast for some time alone. The animal at length escaped; and Alla-ood-Deen, being fatigued with his exertions, quitted his horse, and, fastening it to a tree, ascended a spot of rising ground which gave him a command of the surrounding plain. Here he seated himself alone, gazing at the distant sportsmen who were enjoying the pleasures of the chase below. The scene was animating, and his entire attention was absorbed by the various objects presented to his view.

Whilst the King was thus engaged, an arrow entered his body from behind; and this was followed by another, so rapidly discharged, that he fell forward upon his face before he could discover from what quarter the treachery proceeded. He lay for some time insensible, and, when he recovered, found that his wounds had been stanch'd by some Pariahs, who had their miserable abode in the jungle, and who discovered him insensible and weltering in his blood. With their assistance he crawled to one of the huts of these wretched outcasts, where he remained several days, until his wounds were sufficiently healed to enable him to move. He was afraid to make the Pariahs acquainted with his rank, lest the assassins who had aimed at his life should be still near the spot, and his wretched benefactors be induced to betray him. His horse having been removed, he could not stir until his wounds were in a state to enable him to walk.

When it was found that the King did not return to the capital, the citizens made lamentation for him as for one dead, and had already raised to the throne his nephew Rookn Chan. The customary prayers were read from the Koran; the Khootba was formally pronounced in the name of the Rookn Chan, and the public criers were ordered to proclaim his accession. The Prince, now descending from the throne, proceeded towards the harem;

but the chief eunuch with his guard stopped him at the door, protesting that until he showed him the head of Alla-ood-Deen, the Prince should not enter while he had life to oppose him.

Meanwhile Alla-ood-Deen, having quitted the abode of the hospitable Pariahs, walked to a neighbouring hamlet, where he procured a horse, and mounting it with great difficulty, raised a white canopy over his head, which he had caused to be made at the village. Declaring that he was the King, whose life had been attempted during the late sports, he was joined by straggling parties as he advanced, until his followers amounted to five hundred men. The army being encamped without the walls of Delhi, the King ascended an eminence where he could be seen by the whole force. Attracted by the white canopy, the soldiers immediately crowded by thousands to his person. Rookn Chan, now supposed to have been privy to the attack made upon his uncle's life, was almost immediately deserted. In this dilemma he mounted his horse, and fled towards Afghanpoor. Alla-ood-Deen proceeded to the royal pavilion, and, ascending the throne, gave public audience, sending at the same time a body of horse in pursuit of his nephew. This party shortly came up with him, severed his head from his body, and laid it at the King's feet.

When Alla-ood-Deen was perfectly recovered, he sent for the Rajah of Chittore, and again proposed to restore him to liberty upon the conditions which he had before offered.

"Your daughter," said he, "cannot be dishonoured by the affections of the most powerful monarch of the East."

"Our faith forbids such a union."

"But if I am not actuated by the difference of creeds, why should you? Can you think I revere religion less because I refuse to be bound by the manacles forged by superstition? One only alternative remains to you; within sixty days, if your daughter be not delivered up to me, you shall suffer by a public execution. Comply with my wishes, and you shall not merely be restored to your government, but be advanced to the highest dignities in my kingdom."

“What will those dignities avail me if I am despised by my nation?”

“Cast off the trammels, then, which priestcraft has woven to enthral you, and become a convert to the faith of Islam, and you will find that those dignities will avail you much. What say you?”

“That I will never relinquish my faith; but as my daughter is secondary in my estimation to that faith, I consent that she shall be yours upon condition that I receive my liberty. I shall immediately summon her to your capital. She will not refuse to obey the mandate of her father. Within forty days she shall be delivered to your protection. It is a parent’s severest sacrifice.”

He was conducted to his prison to prepare the parental summons. Meanwhile Jeipal had quitted Delhi and arrived at Jesselmere.

CHAPTER V.

WHEN Jeipal reached Jesselmere, he confided to Jaya the secret of having attacked the king’s life. He immediately quitted Delhi, after having shot Alla-ood-Deen, whom he concluded was dead. He had entirely escaped suspicion, and was congratulating Jaya and himself upon the fortunate issue of his enterprise, when a summons came from Ray Ruttun Sein, desiring his daughter immediately to proceed to Delhi, to become the wife of its sovereign. This was a severe shock to the hopes of the lovers; but Jeipal determined that his plighted bride should never enter the walls of Delhi for such a purpose, and they both agreed to embrace the sad alternative of dying by their own hands rather than obey the parental command. Jaya’s relatives were greatly alarmed lest pollution should fall upon their house, and they proposed that the young Rajpootni should offer herself up as a victim in one of their temples, in order to escape the miseries with which she was threatened.

“Nay,” said the beautiful girl, “it is time enough to die when no other means of escape remain; but why should I leave those

who are so dear to me, so long as I am enabled to continue with them,—and why should I seek death as a release from misery yet at a distance, while the means of enjoyment are so near? I promise you I will perish rather than submit to pollution; nevertheless, I will live so long as my beloved Jeipal can be by to protect me with a husband's arm, and to cheer me with a husband's blessing."

It was agreed that their marriage should instantly take place. This was assented to by the relatives, among whom was Jaya's mother; but they determined to poison both bride and bridegroom at the wedding feast, in order to prevent the possibility of the pollution which they apprehended, as they felt confident the marriage of the parties would not prevent the King of Delhi from still demanding the lovely Rajpootni. Preparations were accordingly made for the wedding.

On the day appointed, Brahmins poured in from all parts of the country, to the number of six thousand. These were maintained during the whole period of the marriage ceremonies, which lasted a week, at the expense of the young votaries of Pollear.* Each Brahmin received a pagne, which is a kind of dress bestowed upon these occasions.

Upon the day when the marriage was solemnized, the bride and bridegroom sat beside each other in an apartment of Jaya's mother's house. Before them were placed several earthen pots full of water, ranged in a circle. Among these were two large jars, disposed on either side of the young couple. In the middle of the circle formed by the water-pots, there was a raised platform of wood. The two large jars were covered with capitals of earth in the form of a column, to be removed immediately after the marriage ceremony. The apartment was lighted by a number of lamps, representing Agni, the god of fire, which cast a dull lurid light upon the various objects around.

The preliminary arrangements being made, the officiating Brahmin prayed that Vishnu and Lakshmi would descend into the two large vessels upon which the earth had been piled, and that

* The Hindoo Hymen.

they would force the Devatas, or inferior deities, to occupy the smaller pots, which had been ranged in a circle. The Homan or sacrifice was then made. A fire was lit upon the earth with those peculiar woods used at sacrifices, of which there are twelve kinds. While the flame was kindling, the hierophant, commenced reciting certain prayers in a dialect understood by none but the priesthood, and frequently not even by them. Whilst reciting these unintelligible supplications, he continued to keep up the sacrificial fire of the Homan, by pouring butter upon it, and supplying it with fuel. So soon as the prayers were ended, he approached one of Jaya's uncles, who, being nearest of kin, represented her father, upon this solemn occasion, placed him by the bride, and instructed him in several little particulars required to complete the ceremony.

After having received the necessary instructions, the paternal representative put upon his niece's palm a number of plantains, together with a small coin of gold. He next placed the right-hand of the bride within that of the bridegroom. The mother now advanced, and having poured water upon their hands, the young couple were finally united. The Brahmin then took the tali, or marriage symbol—equivalent to the ring in Christian marriages—presented it first to the gods, then to the bride and bridegroom, and finally to the guests, all of whom put their hands upon it. This being concluded, the tali was given to the husband, who tied it round the bride's neck; which completed the ceremony.

After the marriage rite had been solemnized, the matrimonial benediction was bestowed as follows: The husband swore before the fire, the officiating Brahmin being present, that he would take care of his wife so long as he lived. He then took her by the little finger of the right hand, and in this way they walked three times round the platform raised within the circle of jars. Near this was placed a flat stone, used for pounding ingredients with which the curries were to be prepared for the marriage feast. When they came near this stone, the bridegroom passed one of his wife's feet over it, as a token of the new obligation into which she had entered, of subserviency to her husband. The

platform having been encompassed three times, large basins of rice were brought and laid before the newly-married pair. The officiating Brahmin then took a small quantity of turmeric, and mixing it with the rice, repeated several prayers during the process. Now filling both his hands with rice from a large platter, he flung it first over the husband's shoulders, and next over those of the wife. All the company present immediately rose, and then the same ceremony was repeated. This, among Hindoos, is the universal matrimonial benediction.

About three hours after noon, the marriage feast was provided for an immense number of guests, who had assembled from all quarters upon this joyous occasion. Every luxury which the most fruitful of climates afforded was produced. The relatives of Jaya, however, amid this scene of general festivity seemed grave and dissatisfied. Not a countenance but theirs was saddened. Jeipal was at length blest. His wishes were consummated, and he felt no longer any apprehension of being torn from the partner of his earthly joys, now that she had become legally and morally his. The thought of her father's captivity was the only interruption of his and the bride's happiness, but he still resolved to leave nothing unattempted to restore Ray Ruttun Sein to his family. "Something must be devised," said he to the anxious Jaya, "to rescue your parent from that odious thralldom to which he is likely to fall a victim if not speedily released, and, whatever the hazard, it has now become my duty to risk my life in securing his freedom."

A short time before the parties assembled to partake of the marriage-feast, Jaya had gone into a small apartment to deck her beautiful brows with some gems, in order that she might appear with the greatest possible lustre before her guests. This room led into a larger chamber, being separated only by a thin plaster partition. She had not been long occupied in arranging her jewels, when her uncle and his wife entered the outer apartment, and cautiously closing the door, Jaya overheard the following conversation :

"Where is the newly-wedded?" inquired the uncle.

“In the veranda with her happy Jeipal.”

“Are you certain?”

“A very short time has elapsed since I saw them together, and they were too happy to separate.”

“What think you of this marriage?”

“It is an ominous union. She must not live. The Mahomedan will never relinquish his desire to obtain her while she is alive, and our house shall not be degraded whilst we have the means of obviating it.”

“Then both must perish, for Jeipal would visit the destroyer of his bride with terrible retribution.”

“Ay, he’s a true Rajpoot; death with him is as commonplace a matter as eating his curry—’tis no great sacrifice for such a man to die.”

“But how is their death to be accomplished?”

“Thus. I will prepare two dishes for them especially, which shall be placed before each at the feast. I know what is most grateful to both, and will take care that they shall be provided with a mess which will secure us from future apprehension. In order to escape all chance of suspicion, I propose that the same dish precisely shall be placed before you, only yours will contain no poison. Elated as they now are they will not apprehend danger, and thus we are secure.”

Jaya was so agitated at what she heard, that she could scarcely support herself, and fearing lest the base plotters against her life should enter her apartment, she got under a small charpoy* which stood in a corner, having first thrown upon it a palampore, that hung down over the side, and thus effectually concealed her. It was a fortunate thing that she took this precaution; for her uncle, in order to be sure that his conversation with his wife had not been overheard, looked into the room, but seeing nobody, and not suspecting that any one could be hidden under the charpoy, he quitted the apartment with his partner in iniquity.

* A bed-frame.

both being perfectly satisfied that their murderous plan was a secret which could transpire only in its consummation.

When all was clear, Jaya crept from her place of concealment, and stealing warily out of the chamber, joined her anxious husband, to whom she related what she had just overheard. His indignation was raised to such a pitch at discovering the horrible purpose of his wife's relatives, that he was about to denounce them, and inflict upon them summary chastisement. He was, however, withheld by his more cautious bride, who besought him to take no notice of what had passed, but make the guilt of her uncle and his equally cruel partner recoil upon their own heads. She had some difficulty in appeasing him ; at length the appeal of a beautiful woman, and that beautiful woman his virgin bride, subdued his ire, and he listened to her proposal of obviating the menaced destruction, which was as follows :—

She suggested that he should take the opportunity, when the guests were engaged before the feast commenced, of exchanging the dish prepared for him, placing it before her uncle, and taking his. "I," continued Jaya, "will not taste mine, and thus the poisoned mess will be eaten by the husband of her who prepared it. In case of his death she will be obliged to follow him to the funeral pile ; thus shall we be fully revenged."

Jeipal embraced his sita, and consented with ready satisfaction to her mode of punishing the atrocious designs of her relatives : they fancying their secret secure, and confident of the success of their scheme, mingled smilingly among the guests, and affected extreme kindness towards the young wedded pair, who received their caresses with repugnant formality at the hazard of raising their suspicion. Those entertainments which were precursors of the feast being introduced, tomtoms, viols, serindas, vinas, and various other instruments, struck up their singular melody, and "ravished the ears" of those who loved such music as would be little grateful to the fastidious refinement of European taste. Nautch girls were first ushered in ; they performed their graceful evolutions, tinkled their tiny silver ankle-bells, and did their best

for the amusement of the company. Jugglers with their snakes likewise appeared, showing their mastery over those venomous creatures, which they grasped by the neck, tied round their throats, even while their jaws were armed with those instruments of death with which nature had provided them. Their feats of legerdemain were next exhibited, to the general satisfaction of all present; but that which most excited the amazement of the company was the following:—The jugglers “produced a man, whom they divided limb from limb, actually severing his head from his body. They scattered these mutilated members along the ground, and in this state they lay for some time. They then extended a sheet or curtain over the spot, and one of the men putting himself under the sheet, in a few minutes came from below, followed by the individual supposed to have been cut into joints, in perfect health and condition, and one might safely swear that he had never received any wound or injury whatever.

“They next caused two tents to be set up at the distance of a bow-shot the one from the other, the doors or entrances being placed exactly opposite. They raised the tent walls all round, and desired that it might be particularly observed they were empty. Then fixing the tent walls in the ground, two men entered, one into each tent. Thus prepared, they said they would undertake to bring out of the tents any animal the company chose to mention, whether bird or beast, and set them in conflict with each other, Jeipal, with a smile of incredulity, required them to exhibit a battle between two ostriches. In a few minutes two ostriches of the largest size issued, one from either tent, and attacked each other with such fury that the blood was seen streaming from their heads. They were at the same time so equally matched, that neither could get the better of the other, and they were therefore separated by the men, and conveyed within the tents. Jaya’s uncle then called for the Neilahgão, and immediately were seen to issue from their tents two of these untameable animals, equally large, fat, and fierce, which likewise commenced a furious combat, seizing each other by the neck, and alternately forcing one another backwards and forwards for the space of nearly two guhries of time, after

which they were also separated and withdrawn into the tents. In short, they continued to produce from either tent whatever animal the company chose to name, and before their eyes set them to fight in the manner above described.”*

When the jugglers had withdrawn, the guests commenced the more substantial enjoyments of the table. Jeipal and Jaya marked where their respective dishes were placed, towards which they were finally conducted by a sort of master of the ceremonies. During the first bustle, Jeipal contrived to remove his own dish, and substitute that of Jaya’s uncle before the latter had taken his station. The confusion was so great, caused by the various movements of such a number of persons, that the change of dishes was a matter of no great difficulty.

Jeipal began to eat of the mess before him in order to give encouragement to his wife’s relation, who was placed by his side. The latter unsuspectingly ate of the poisoned food, and in a very short time had consumed the whole contents of the fatal dish. Jeipal, meanwhile, was not backward, but followed the example of Jaya’s uncle, and soon saw the bottom of his platter. Jaya had not tasted hers, which being remarked by her aunt, the latter pressed her with extreme urgency to eat, but her solicitations being firmly resisted, she expressed great anger. “Is it thus you serve your guests, to refuse partaking of your own wedding banquet, as if you were not willing that they should enjoy it, or begrudged what has been provided?”

“I don’t like the appearance of this dish,” said Jaya calmly; “it has an unnatural smell, too. In short, I shall not taste it.”

“It was prepared on purpose for you, and of those very ingredients of which you have always expressed yourself so fond.”

“I know it has been prepared for me, and therefore decline it; but to show you how little selfish I am in partaking of anything especially prepared for me, I resign it to you with the greatest

* See the Autobiographical Memoirs of the Emperor Jehangire, translated by Major David Price. From this singular memoir I have extracted the two passages marked with inverted commas, merely altering the names and a word or two, in order to make them harmonize with the narrative.

cheerfulness—pray eat it, and I shall be much better satisfied than taking the indulgence myself.”

The woman shrank back with a consciousness that she had been detected. In a short time the poison began to operate upon her husband. His cheeks became blanched, his lips closed with a convulsive compression, his whole body stiffened, and he fell upon the floor. The poison was of so potent a nature, that within a few minutes he was a corpse. Considerable confusion prevailed; the body was removed; but such is the characteristic apathy of the Hindoo, that the banquet was concluded without further interruption. No inquiry was made as to the cause of the man's death. It was looked upon as a sudden visitation for some secret crime. No pity was expressed for the sufferer, but for one it was an event to be deeply deplored. The wife had the awful prospect of expiring amid the flames upon the body of her deceased husband.

The guests separated, and this wretched woman was left to the dreadful companionship of her own fierce repinings. On the morrow her husband was to be consumed upon the pile amid the flames of which she would be doomed to expire. It was a fearful thought. She was not prepared to die, and the very idea of death was at once a dread and an agony.

The day of sacrifice dawned. The noisy tomtoms and harsh brazen trumpets warned her of the solemn obligation which she was called upon to fulfil. The shouts of thousands of mad enthusiasts rent the air; but she was reluctant to answer their acclamations by exhibiting herself as a willing oblation. The Brahmins, perceiving her fears, administered opium in such quantities that she soon became stupefied; still, nothing could remove her extreme horror of death.

The opium at length took such an effect upon her, that she scarcely knew what she did, and was finally induced to accompany the Brahmins to the pile. The sight of it renewed her terrors. After a while the effects of the opiate had somewhat subsided, and when within the area in which the fatal pyre had been reared, she positively refused to ascend it; but it was now too late—she had gone too far to retract. The Brahmins surrounded her—the tom-

toms began their din, the trumpets their clamour, and she was forced upon the fatal platform. Fire was instantly applied. She raised herself amid the flames, but was forced back by the officiating Brahmins with long bamboos. Her hair streamed upon the breeze—her arms were a moment raised with the violent action of agony—her eyes almost started from their sockets—but the flames rose higher and fiercer. Being struck in the temple with a bamboo, she fell backward into the devouring element, and was no more seen.

CHAPTER VI.

THE only thing that now remained to complete the happiness of Jaya was her father's liberty. It happened about this time that Ray Ruttun Sein was taken alarmingly ill. Fearing that his former summons might not be attended to, and more than ever anxious to obtain his freedom, he sent to his daughter to entreat her to visit him that he might see her before he died. Alla-ood-Deen had promised the Rajah, that the moment the beautiful Jaya appeared within the walls of his capital her father should be restored to liberty. The latter evidently preferred his own personal ease to his daughter's honour; nevertheless she determined to accede to his wishes, but at the same time resolved that her presence in Delhi should be the means of her parent's escape. In reply to his communication she wrote, that she should shortly appear at the Mahomedan capital, in obedience to his and the King's wishes, and when she had made the necessary preparations for her journey she would let him know the day on which he might look for her arrival. She had devised a plan for her father's escape, which, with the concurrence of her husband, she prepared to put into practice without further delay. Alla-ood-Deen was beyond measure elated when he heard that the lovely Jaya had at length consented to become the pride and glory of his harem. He immediately ordered the rigours of her father's captivity to be abated. He was removed to a commodious apartment where

everything he required was provided, and his disorder began gradually to subside. The King went to visit him in person, but Ray Ruttun Sein could not meet cordially the man who had treated him with such wanton indignity, and forced him to an act against which his conscience rebelled.

“Rajah,” said the King, “you have at length consented to make me happy. When the possession of your daughter is secured to me, you have only to name the price of her dowry, and it shall be paid into your hands. You may look to be raised to the highest office under my government.”

“I had rather be supreme in my own little principality than second even under so great a sovereign as he who sits on the throne of Delhi. All I desire is my freedom, and I only regret the nature of the ransom which your tyranny forces me to pay.”

“Alliances with Kings are cheaply purchased upon any terms ; and why should you grieve at your daughter becoming the wife of a powerful monarch ?”

“Because she has already a protector, and consequently can never occupy a place in your harem but as a degraded wife. However, I have commanded her presence here, and daily expect her ; but you may prepare to encounter the vengeance of an injured husband ; and I need not tell you that a Rajpoot foregoes his revenge but with his death.”

“I laugh at the vain efforts of a puny youth, who will have brought what you call his wrongs upon himself. He married your daughter when he knew that I had made overtures to possess her.”

“She had been pledged to him from infancy.”

“But the will of kings sets aside such idle pledges ; they, therefore, should not have been fulfilled.”

“Our destinies are not dependent upon the will of kings. It has been hers to marry Jeipal, and all the powers of your extensive regality cannot sunder the mystical link which unites them. You may separate them from each other, but that conjunction of soul in which they are mutually joined is beyond your control—you cannot annul it.”

“But I will tear them asunder in spite of it; and let me tell you that while I live no power I possess shall be spared to secure the one great object of my wishes, which is the possession of your daughter Jaya.”

“That I have promised you, and the word of a Rajpoot is a sacred bond, forfeited only with life.”

Alla-ood-Deen quitted his presence with some lurking apprehensions that it was the Rajpoot's intention still to evade his demands; he was therefore daily urgent to know the day which his daughter had fixed for her appearance at his capital. A week elapsed, but no communication had been made by the wife of Jeipal, and her father began to suspect that she had no intention of fulfilling her promise. On the following morning, however, he received a written communication from her, in which she stated that on the tenth day following she should be at Delhi; at the same time detailing to him a plan which she had devised, in concurrence with her husband, in order to effect his escape. He was delighted with the scheme, and prepared to advance its accomplishment to the best of his power. The idea of escape from the odious thralldom to which he had been subjected, gave such an impulse to his spirit that he soon shook off the lethargy of disease, and within a week was perfectly restored to his usual state of health.

The king, delighted at the near prospect of possessing the lovely Jaya, commanded that her entrance into Delhi should be distinguished by the strongest tokens of his affection. A guard was ordered to receive her at the gate, and pay her military honours as she passed through. She had requested her father to obtain the king's passport for herself and retinue to proceed by slow marches towards the capital without interruption. Alla-ood-Deen had immediately granted her request, and given orders at all the towns and villages that she and her attendants should be exonerated from the ordinary scrutiny to which all travellers were subjected.

Ray Ruttun Sein waited with impatience for the day when he should welcome his daughter's arrival at the Mahomedan capital. Allo-ood-Deen was no less impatient to behold the woman to

whom report had ascribed such singular personal endowments. His harem was fitted up for her reception with extraordinary splendour; and he lavished his treasure with a profuse liberality in preparing to welcome this Hindoo beauty in a manner worthy of his princely munificence.

On the morning named by Jaya for her entrance into Delhi, a numerous cavalcade was seen approaching the city gate. It consisted of a number of litters, in which women are accustomed to travel in Eastern countries, covered with cloth draperies that entirely concealed from view those within. The litters were accompanied by about a hundred unarmed followers on foot. Each litter was borne on the shoulders of four men, and they severally passed through the gate, that which headed the cavalcade being honoured with a military salute from the guard. As had been previously agreed, they were borne towards the prison in which Ray Ruttun Sein was confined. This was a large house surrounded by a court and enclosed by a high wall. Into this court the litters were carried, and, when all were set down, the gates were closed and fastened on the outside.

There was a strong guard within the court. No sooner were the litters deposited, that the curtains of the principal one were drawn aside, and Jaya stepped out. Giving a signal, an armed warrior started from every litter; then, putting arms into the hands of their bearers, they attacked the guard, whom in a few minutes they slew to a man. Jeipal, who headed the party, now rushed into the building, cutting down all who opposed his progress until he reached the apartment of Ray Ruttun Sein, the locality of which had been previously indicated to him by the Rajah, in reply to his daughter's last communication. Ray Ruttun Sein was already prepared for the rescue. Hearing the noise caused by his son-in-law's approach, he opened the door of his chamber, and met him at the threshold. Jaya followed close behind, and springing into her father's arms embraced him passionately.

"Come," said Jeipal, "we have not a moment to lose. The alarm will be given, and a detachment sent to reinforce the guard outside the gate. Horses await us at a village a coss from the

city. We must fly for our lives, for the pursuit will no doubt be hot."

"We have done our best, my father," said Jaya: "if we should be pursued and overtaken, we have the Rajpoot's courage and can die. I wear a dagger which will remove us both beyond the reach of pursuit, should we be likely to fall into the enemy's hands. Let us begone."

They moved hastily from the house into the court-yard. The sentinels who stood outside the prison wall, hearing the bustle within, had unbarred the portal to ascertain the cause. Jeipal and his followers immediately despatched them, and made good their exit. Getting again into their litters, they proceeded to the city gate, which they passed through without the slightest suspicion. The work of slaughter had been so speedily executed that no alarm was raised, the house in which it had taken place being a solitary building in the outskirts of the city.

As soon as they reached the village where their horses were waiting for them, they instantly mounted, and were off with the speed of the wind. Their flight was soon discovered, but not before they were some miles on their way. When Alla-ood-Deen was informed how he had been outwitted, his rage knew no bounds. He raved like a madman, bit his own flesh with fury, and swore an oath of deep and implacable revenge. His violence brought on a disorder which threw him on a sick bed. He raved perpetually, and such was the intensity of his excitement that he became perfectly frantic. He ordered several citizens to be put to death whom he chose to suspect, without the slightest ground, had been privy to the escape of the fugitives. There were no bounds to his rage, and his violence increased to such a degree that he was obliged to be tied down to his bed.

Meanwhile the Rajah and his followers pursued their flight, and halted only for a few minutes until they fancied themselves beyond the reach of pursuit. They had ridden forty coss by noon the following day. Their horses being somewhat lamed by the severity of their journey, they were obliged to rest for the day; but

fancying there was no longer anything to apprehend from pursuit, they fairly congratulated themselves upon their escape.

The village at which they halted was situated on the slope of a hill; and in order to guard against an enemy, Jeipal commanded his little band of twenty armed followers to keep alternate watch, half of them only sleeping at a time, in case of surprise.

There was a bright moonlight. About two hours before midnight one of Jeipal's scouts apprised him of the approach of pursuers;—he had calculated their number at about eighty men. These would no doubt be followed by speedy reinforcements. There was no time for hesitation. Jeipal placed six of his followers in ambush at the base of the hill, with orders to keep the enemy in check, while Jaya and her father pursued their flight with all speed. They again mounted their horses, somewhat recruited by their day's rest and good feeding, and were off towards Chittore with the swiftness of thought. Jeipal, having seen them safe on their journey, descended the hill with the rest of his little band, commanding them to follow within reach of a signal. As he arrived at the ambuscade where his six men, armed with bows and arrows, were concealed, he perceived the enemy in full career across the plain. The moon was in mid heaven, pouring her soft and tender light upon the advancing squadron. As it neared the bottom of the mountain, Jeipal discharged an arrow and shot the leader dead. Another and another followed; and before the party could imagine that they were assailed by a secret foe, ten of them were either killed or disabled. This checked their career; they halted, and retreated a couple of hundred yards beyond the ambush.

After a short pause they advanced at full gallop, and reached the base of the hill in a few minutes, with the loss of another ten men, killed or desperately wounded. Jeipal now gave the signal, and was joined by the rest of his followers, who, rushing down the steep, sent their arrows among the Mahomedans at the moment they were dismounting from their horses. They were thrown into confusion at this fatal discharge, and, before they had recovered from their consternation, were attacked sword in hand by the furious Rajpoots. The slaughter was terrible. Encumbered by

their horses they could not act in unison, and their leader being killed, they were dispirited. In a few minutes half of them were slain ; and the rest, remounting their steeds, galloped back across the plain, where they were soon joined by a second party from Delhi, which came to a halt beyond bowshot from the mountain.

Jeipal in this short but fierce conflict, had lost only four followers. He had received a severe sabre-cut upon the forehead, round which he bound his turban tightly to stanch the blood, and mounting his horse, he and his faithful Rajpoots followed the fugitives. He overtook them early on the following day. They had now ten hours' start of their pursuers, who had halted during the night on the plain.

The Rajah, with his daughter, her husband, and their companions, eventually reached the hilly country, where they for the present determined to remain concealed until the heat of pursuit should subside. Shortly after, they heard of the death of Alla-ood-Deen, who never recovered from the attack consequent upon Ray Ruttun Sein's flight. His death restored Jeipal and his lovely bride to their security : the Rajah returned to Chittore, where he was welcomed with rejoicings, and the rest of his life was passed among his children and grand-children in freedom and in joy.



HISTORICAL SUMMARY

Heg. 716 (A.D. 1316).—On the death of Alla-ood-Deen, his youngest son, Oonur Chan, was raised to the throne by Mullik Kafoor. This prince was deposed and imprisoned after a reign of three months and some days.

Heg. 717 (1317).—Moobarik Khilij ascended the throne on the seventh Mohurrum.

Heg. 721 (1321).—The king was cut off by a conspiracy, and Mullik Khoosrow, the chief conspirator, raised to the throne ; but he was put to death after a reign of only five months by Gheias-ood-Deen Toghluks ; and with his death terminated the second Tartar dynasty of the kings of Delhi.

Heg. 721 (1321).—Gheias-ood-Deen Toghluks was the first of the third Tartar dynasty of the kings of Delhi. When he ascended the throne he regulated the affairs of the government in a manner so satisfactory as to obtain general esteem. He declared his eldest son heir-apparent, with the title of Aluf Chan, and conferred upon him the ensign of royalty.

Heg. 722 (1322).—This year the new citadel at Delhi was completed, to which the king gave the name of Toghluksabad.

Heg. 724 (1323).—The king, after having appointed his son, Aluf Chan, governor of Delhi, marched in person towards Bengal to stop the oppressions committed by the Rajahs of Luknowty and Soonargam. On his return towards his capital the king was met at Afghanpoor by his son and the nobles of his court, who advanced to congratulate him upon his safe return. Here Aluf Chan had erected, in the short space of three days, a temporary wooden building for his father's reception. When the entertainment was over, the king ordered his equipage to proceed. Everybody hastened out and stood ready to accompany him, when the roof of the building suddenly fell, and the king and five of his attendants were crushed to death beneath the ruins.

Heg. 725 (1325).—Aluf Chan ascended the throne by the title of Mahomed Toghluks. He was the most eloquent and accomplished prince of his time ; and his letters, both in Arabic and Persian, display so much elegance, good taste, and good sense, that the most able secretaries of later times study them with admiration.

Heg. 727 (1327).—The king caused a copper coin to be struck, issued it at an imaginary value, and, by a royal decree, caused it to pass current throughout

HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

Hindustan. This was the cause of great distress, the bankers and m. alone benefiting at the expense of the sovereign and his people.

Heg. 738 (1337).—Mahomed ToghluK conceived the idea of conquering China, and sent an army of one hundred thousand horse into Nepal and the countries on either side of the Himalaya mountains. The expedition utterly failed, nearly the whole army having perished in those mountainous regions.

Heg. 741 (1340).—The king obtained possession of the strong fort of Kondhana, the modern Singur, near Poma, which he starved into a surrender. He removed his family to Dowlutabad, which he resolved to make his capital, leaving the noble metropolis of Delhi a resort for bats and a dwelling-place for the beasts of the desert.

Heg. 742 (1341).—Mahomed ToghluK laid heavy contributions upon Dowlutabad and the neighbouring provinces, which caused an insurrection; but his numerous and well-appointed army soon reduced the insurgents to their former state of slavery. This year the king nearly fell a victim to a pestilence which broke out in his camp with such violence that it swept off a great part of his army. Having lost one of his teeth, he ordered it to be buried with much ceremony at Beer, and caused a magnificent tomb to be raised over it, which still remains a monument of his vanity and folly.

Heg. 743 (1342).—Mullik Heidur, chief of the Ghoorkas, slew Tartar Chan, the viceroy of Lahore.

Heg. 744 (1344).—The confederate Hindoos seized the country occupied by the Mahomedans in the Deccan and expelled them, so that within a few months Mahomed had no possessions in that quarter except Dowlutabad.

Heg. 747 (1346).—The king promoted several persons in the meanest stations to the rank of nobles, which occasioned the hereditary Omrahs to revolt; but their leader Azeez, upon the king's troops advancing to attack him, becoming panic-stricken, fell from his horse, was made prisoner, and suffered a cruel death. His forces were totally routed.

Heg. 748 (1347).—Dowlutabad fell into the hands of the insurgents, who put the king's officers to death and divided the public treasure.

Heg. 752 (1351).—Mahomed ToghluK, having eaten to excess of fish, was seized with fever of which he died, after a tyrannical reign of twenty-seven years, and was succeeded by his cousin Feroze ToghluK.

Heg. 755 (1354).—The king built the city of Ferozabad, adjoining that of Delhi, and on the following year dug a canal forty-eight coss in length. He likewise constructed another canal between the hills of Mundvy and Surmore, from the Jumna, into which he conducted seven minor streams, which all uniting ran in one channel through Hansy, and from thence to Raiscen, where he built a strong fort, which he called Hissar Feroza.

Heg. 762 (1360).—The king sent the celebrated image of Nowshaba to Mecca, to be thrown upon the road, that it might be trodden under foot by the pilgrims.

Heg. 776 (1375).—The celebrated Mujahid Shah ascended the throne of the Deccan. In his fourteenth year, in a struggle with his father's spice-bearer, Moobarik, a man of great strength, he threw him and broke his neck.

Heg. 779 (1378).—He was assassinated after a reign of not quite three years. Hajy Mahomed Kandahary states that he received his death-wound from the son of Moobarik the spice-bearer.

Heg. 781 (1379).—Kurgoo, the Zemindar of Kutehr, invited to his house Syud Mahomed, governor of Budaoon, together with his two brothers, and basely murdered them. Enraged at this treachery, Feroze Toghluks instantly marched and took severe vengeance on the associates and kindred of the Zemindar, putting them to the sword, and levelling their houses with the ground. The murderer made his escape to the mountains of Camaoon, and was protected by the Rajahs of those parts. Feroze ordered a detachment of his army against them, and nearly twenty thousand of those mountaineers were made prisoners and condemned to slavery; but Kurgoo contrived to elude the vigilance of the king's general.

Heg. 790 (1388).—Feroze Toghluks died, after having reached the almost patriarchal age of ninety years.



The Mahomedan Nimrod.

CHAPTER I.

MUJAHID, the son of Mahomed Shah, sovereign of the Deccan, was remarkable for his courage and amazing strength of body. He was tall of stature, prodigiously muscular, yet, in dignity of demeanour and general majesty of aspect, surpassed all the princes of his race. In valour and fortitude he stood without a rival. Such was his strength of constitution, that he was affected by change neither of climate nor of atmosphere: whether the season were wet or dry, hot or cold, healthy or sickly, it was alike to him. He spoke the Toorky language fluently, which he acquired from his favourite companions, who were for the most part either Toorks or Persians. He was fond of archery from his infancy, and all his conversation tended to military subjects. His whole soul was absorbed by deeds of arms, or of hazard in some shape. When a boy, he was the terror of his youthful associates. Whoever offended him was sure to feel the weight of his resentment, and such was his known determination, that they were afraid to unite against him, lest his single arm should prove sufficient to break their confederacy and punish them all; for he was repelled by no sense of danger from resenting injury. Still he was a beneficent youth, and beloved by them generally. There was nothing he would not do for them, so long as they did not wantonly thwart his projects, which were sometimes of a nature to be discouraged; but even when he engaged in any mischievous adventure, it was more from exuberance of

animal spirits, and that love of enterprise which he could not suppress, than from depravity of heart.

One day calling his companions together, he proposed that they should go and hunt the tiger in some distant forest, where that animal was reported to abound. But a difficulty arose: many of them had no horses, and it was necessary that they should be supplied in order to accomplish the wishes of their young prince. What was to be done?

“We must go,” said he, “at any rate, and you shall be supplied with necessaries.”

“But how,” asked one, “are we to get them without money?”

“While there is a rupee in my father’s treasury, as I live you shall not go without horses. We will hunt the tiger at all hazards.”

None of his comrades could imagine how Mujahid intended to introduce himself into his father’s treasury, which was protected by a strong door, secured by three huge bolts. These appeared much more than sufficient to baffle the efforts of a youth of fourteen, for that was precisely the age of Mujahid at this period. But he laughed at the idea of impediments to any enterprise dear to his heart; and, calling together the youths by whom he was generally attended, he desired they would accompany him to the treasury. It was guarded by a sentinel; but the prince, pretending to send him upon a message of some importance, promised to take his place until he should return.

No sooner had the soldier quitted his post, than Mujahid, rushing against the door which contained his father’s treasure, shook it from the hinges, and opened a way to the means of procuring horses for his contemplated excursion. Taking several bags of gold, he divided the money among his youthful followers. They immediately repaired to a mart, and supplied themselves with steeds, and other necessaries for the chase.

When the sentinel returned he found his post abandoned, and that he had been duped by the young prince. Knowing the penalty of having quitted his charge, he immediately left the spot and fled beyond the reach of danger. The treasurer, discovering

the door broken down, and no sentinel on the spot was amazed ; but he had no difficulty in tracing the act to the king's son. The habits of Mujahid were too well known for suspicion to be diverted from him ; and, when taxed by the treasurer with the theft, he did not deny it.

The sovereign, enraged at the vicious propensity of his son, sent his spice-bearer, Moobarik, to summon the prince before him. Upon entering his father's presence, perceiving by the king's manner that he had been made acquainted with the robbery of his treasury, Mujahid, when asked if he knew why he had been summoned, remained silent. "What could induce you," said the sovereign, "to commit such a trespass against the laws, and such an act of violence against the authority of your father? What do you deserve?"

Mujahid still continued silent, feeling justification impossible.

"Boy," said the father, sternly, "it is necessary that such a violation of the common laws of honesty as you have so wantonly committed should be punished with due severity, in order that my people may see I do not palliate or overlook the delinquencies of my son. What expectations can you hope to excite of your honour and justice when raised to this throne, of which you are the rightful heir, if you indulge thus in the vulgarest of all vulgar crimes? Such tendencies are unbecoming a prince, and must be subdued."

The king now ordered Mujahid to be stripped, and taking a whip, scourged him severely with his own hand until the shoulders of the youthful offender were covered with blood. The prince was then ordered to be imprisoned in the palace.

This galled him much more severely than the stripes he had received ; they were only the infliction of a moment ; but the restraints of imprisonment were vexatious to his haughty spirit. He was mortified, too, that his projected expedition had been frustrated, attributing his punishment to the officiousness of Moobarik, against whom from this time he harboured a deep and implacable enmity.

His mother visited him in his confinement, and he complained to her with great bitterness of Moobarik.

“Nay, my son,” said the queen, “the servant was not in fault; he only did his duty. He did not acquaint your father with your act of youthful indiscretion, it was the treasurer.”

“But if the spice-bearer had informed me that the affair at the treasury had been discovered, I could have evaded my father’s wrath, made you my intercessor, and thus have escaped the visitation of his anger.”

“That will subside, my son. I can still be your intercessor.”

“But the punishment has been inflicted,—my back still bears the marks of stripes; and, though these may be effaced from my skin, they will never be obliterated from my memory. Those are wrongs, mother, which can neither be forgotten nor forgiven.”

“Would you harbour a spirit of revenge against your father?”

“No; but against the man who has caused that father to visit me with bodily chastisement my hatred will be inextinguishable.”

“Nay, this is the working of unsubdued passion,—the feeling will abate. Your cool judgment may convince you that Moobarik has not been in fault, and you will be pacified.”

Mujahid made no reply; but the lowering of his brow sufficiently indicated the deep-settled hostility that had already stirred the slumbering passions of his soul,—the fiercest and least tractable.

At the mother’s intercession, after a week’s confinement, the prince was set at liberty; and, at her especial request, he forebore to exhibit any marks of enmity against the spice-bearer; but he wore a mask upon his countenance that disguised the rage working at his heart. He summoned his youthful playfellows around him, and seemed occupied by the amusements common to his age; but, with the eye of a lynx, he only watched for an opportunity to signalize his revenge upon the man who had aroused his hatred. This he sought to accomplish without involving himself in an act of legal criminality. The son of Moobarik was one of his comrades, and to him he showed marks of unusual attention, in order to blind him to the one dark purpose with which his own young heart was teeming.

It happened that a discussion took place one day among the

boys with whom the prince associated, upon the respective merits of different wrestlers who had distinguished themselves in the arena upon occasions when public sports had been exhibited before the king. In the course of the conversation the son of Moobarik mentioned his father to be so strong and skilful in the manly exercise of wrestling, that he had several times thrown some celebrated players.

“Ay,” said Mujahid; “I should like to have a trial of skill with that sturdy father of yours. Do you think he would fear to encounter the strength of a boy of fourteen?”

“Nay,” said Musaood Chan, with a good-natured laugh, “the king’s spice-bearer could have no objection, I should fancy, in proving his strength to the king’s son.”

“It will be an unequal game—youth against manhood; yet I think I could make the spice-bearer turn his eyes to the sun without measuring my own length beside him.”

This freak of the prince excited the merriment of his juvenile friends; they expected to see their daring companion somewhat roughly handled in the grasp of Moobarik, who was generally reported a person of great strength; having been raised by the sovereign to his present dignity on account of his feats in arms.

Mujahid threw himself in the spice-bearer’s way, and after offering a courteous greeting, said, with a jocular air,

“Your son tells me you have so sinewy an arm that few champions in the wrestling-ground would be able to stand against you, if you were to condescend to encounter them in a trial of strength and skill.”

“My son says indeed true. I have on more than one occasion thrown the strongest men in the king’s army, and my arm has yet lost none of its vigour.”

“Are you willing to put it to the test?”

“I can find no worthy rival among my equals, and I should scarcely degrade my nobility by entering the arena against the hirelings of the king’s pleasures.”

“You need not fear to find a competitor of your own rank;

for I am willing to try my powers and skill against yours, if you do not doubt your chances of victory."

"I can have no objection to a friendly contest with my master's son; but he must not be vexed if he should happen to be somewhat roughly handled, for wrestling is no lady's game."

"I am prepared for what may ensue. Though but a boy, you must remember that I broke open the door of my father's treasury; you will not, therefore, have a mere boy's strength to try."

On the following day it was agreed that the prince and the spice-bearer should wrestle before the king. The preliminaries were settled, the spectators assembled, and the competitors entered the hall of the palace, which was strewed with sand in order to break the force of their falls. Both the champions appeared naked to the waist. The tall, muscular frame of Moobarik contrasted singularly with the round smooth limbs of his youthful adversary, who was exceedingly robust, and the size of his sinews hidden under a round surface of healthy flesh. At the first onset, Moobarik grasped his antagonist by the shoulders, raised him in the air, and was about to cast him on the floor, when the prince adroitly passed his leg behind the spice-bearer's knee, and threw him on his back in an instant, falling upon him with considerable force. The spectators were astonished; but there being a dispute as to the fairness of the fall, both parties consented to another struggle. This was not much longer than the last. After a little shifting to make good his intended grasp, Mujahid seized his opponent suddenly by the waistband of his short trousers, and, raising him in his arms, flung him on the ground with such force that he lay senseless. He had pitched upon his head; and, upon examination it was found that his neck was broken.

CHAPTER II.

THE death of Moobarik afforded a subject of conversation for several weeks at the court of Mujahid's father. It was a matter of extreme surprise that a mere boy should have so easily foiled a man of such great strength, and have so rapidly and fatally concluded the contest. He was from this time looked upon as a prodigy. Musaood Chan, however, from that moment entertained an implacable hatred against the destroyer of his father. He dared not openly manifest his hostility; nevertheless, it burned within him with a smothered, indeed, but still with an unextinguishable, flame. He heard the general applause bestowed upon the courage and prowess of the prince with silent yet fierce repugnance, which he was obliged to mask under the exterior of a suavity that seemed like self-mockery.

Mujahid treated him with kindness and with confidence; and being of an open unsuspecting temper he did not for a moment harbour a thought of Musaood's sinister feelings towards him; as the former neither expressed anger, nor evinced the slightest symptom of resentment at his father's death.

As Mujahid advanced towards manhood, he became the terror of the neighbouring potentates. He commanded his father's armies, and invariably led them to conquest. The son of Moobarik witnessed his success with envy, and the fires of vengeance still smouldered in his bosom. He had a beautiful sister, whose detestation of the prince was no less ardent than his own; she could not wipe from her memory the cause of her father's death; but she, as well as her brother, dissembled her resentment, and received Mujahid courteously when they happened to meet.

The prince had conceived a passion for her, which he shortly avowed, and she encouraged. Hoping that it would forward the opportunity of revenge so ardently desired by her brother and herself, she pretended a reciprocal attachment, and listened to his unholy declarations of love, at first without any expressions of shame, and finally, with apparent pleasure. His passions were

roused ; but under various pretences, the artful siren delayed gratifying those passions which her seeming acquiescence had provoked.

Musaood was pleased at seeing his intended victim gradually drawing towards the toil which he was preparing for him. The prince never for a moment imagined that the children of Moobarik attached to him the guilt of having purposely destroyed their father. Taking it for granted that they looked upon his death as a mere accident, he did not conceive that there could be cause for the slightest hostility towards him, and the daughter's apparent affection confirmed this impression. His love for the sister caused him to repose the greatest confidence in the brother. The latter became privy to all the prince's designs, encouraging Mujahid's favourable feelings towards him by affecting a fervent zeal for his welfare.

Mujahid's love for the wily daughter of his father's late spice-bearer at length knew no bounds, and she was obliged to adopt all the resources of her woman's art to keep him from proceeding to extremities. She tantalized him with promises, which she evaded fulfilling by the most ingenious artifices. It was found at length necessary to withdraw him for a while from the object of his passion, in order to rescue her from a dilemma which was daily becoming more difficult to elude.

Musaood, therefore, proposed a few days' excursion into the woods to enjoy the pleasures of the chase, of which he knew the prince to be so fond that even his love of woman yielded to his love of killing lions and tigers. It might, too, chance that in the forest an opportunity would arise so long and so ardently sought. The prince accordingly repaired to the jungles, accompanied by his young friends, and for several days with his single arm destroyed many of its fiercest inhabitants.

One morning he was informed that an enormous elephant was in the neighbourhood. The huge beast was said to have committed dreadful ravages, and to have killed so great a number of people who had ventured near its place of usual resort, that travellers had discontinued passing by that road for fear of encountering the

savage animal. Nothing could be more gratifying to Mujahid than the idea of encountering an enemy which every one else shunned ; and without loss of time he proceeded to the spot where the elephant was reported to have taken up its abode. It turned out to be a solitary male which had been expelled from the herd ; and when this happens, it always renders these animals extremely savage.

Mujahid found the colossal beast in a part of the wood where the growth was more than usually scanty, tearing down with eager voracity the tender branches of the young trees which were growing around him. At the sight of intruders it stopped, raised its trunk, gave a shrill cry, and approached them at a rapid pace. The prince deliberately placed an arrow on the string of his bow, pulled it to the head, and sent it on its way with the force of a shot from an arquebuse. The steel head struck the elephant on the breast, and the whole shaft was buried in the animal's body ; the very feather being dyed with its blood. The gigantic creature dropped instantly dead.

All were amazed at the force with which the arrow had been sped. Mujahid ordered the elephant to be opened, that he might see the direction which his arrow had taken. This was accordingly done, and it was found that the shaft had passed directly through the animal's heart. The murmurs of astonishment rose into a great burst of acclamation ; but in proportion to the triumph of the King's son the envy of Musaood increased.

Among the persons present upon the occasion was a Tartar. This man was deeply in love with the late spice-bearer's daughter, who returned his affection ; he therefore felt that hatred towards the King's son which ardent lovers generally entertain towards their rivals. The hot blood of this Tartar was roused at the thought of the object of his pure and fervent attachment being pursued with sentiments of unholy love ; and he was prepared to execute any desperate act by which he might rid the world of a wicked prince, and himself of a dangerous rival. Musaood was well aware of his feelings, and likewise of ~~the~~ reckless fierceness of his character ; and, thinking that now was a favourable time to

attack the prince's life when he was reposing in full security upon the fidelity of his friends, he persuaded Tuglook Beg to attempt the assassination of Mujahid during the chase on the day after the latter had destroyed the elephant.

During the morning the sport had been great; and Mujahid, stopping upon the bank of a small rivulet, quitted his horse in order to bathe his temples in the cool refreshing waters. He gave the reins into the hands of an Afghan, named Mahmood, who held them while his master alighted. At this moment the Tartar approached unperceived through the hollows and broken ground along the banks of the stream, and was in the act of charging the prince at full speed. The cry of some of his attendants exciting Mujahid's attention, he raised his head, and observed Tuglook Beg advancing towards him at a gallop, evidently with the design of cutting him down, his sword being bared and raised as in the act to strike. The prince immediately seized the reins of his horse, and making a sign to Mahmood Afghan to interpose himself betwixt his master and the assassin, sprang into his saddle. The faithful armour-bearer advanced to meet Tuglook Beg; but his steed rearing, owing to the inequality of the ground, it fell, and gave the adversary a momentary advantage. It was a critical moment; the Tartar came on with the speed of a whirlwind; but Mujahid, being now prepared to encounter him upon equal terms, spurred his horse forward. Tuglook Beg, however, made a stroke at the prince, before the latter had time to put himself fully upon his guard; the blow fell upon his turban, which, being folded very thick and hard, in order to protect his head from the ardent rays of the sun, the sword did not penetrate, though it struck the turban from his brow, and left it exposed to the chance of a more successful blow. Mujahid, however, having recovered his position, rose in his saddle, and bringing his heavy cimeter upon the Tartar's shoulder, clove him to the chine, and he instantly fell dead from his horse. Having replaced the faithful Mahmood Afghan upon his charger, the prince joined his friends amid shouts and acclamations, in which Musaood Chan was the foremost to join.

The fate of Tuglook Beg only embittered the hatred of his

friend towards his destroyer, and strengthened his determination of vengeance. His sister received the news of her lover's fate with that tearless grief which bespeaks intense suffering, or the counteraction of a purpose stronger than the sorrow to which it becomes subservient.

Fortunately at this time the prince was called to oppose Krishin Ray, Rajah of Bejanuggur, who laid claim to some forts belonging to Mujahid's father, which saved the object of his passion from coming to an open rupture with him, ere she and her brother found means to revenge their parent's death by accomplishing the destruction of him who had been the cause of it.

As the prince advanced, Krishin Ray retreated before him. Afraid to meet so formidable a foe in the field, but hoping to cut him off by stratagem, the Rajah fled from place to place, and was pursued by Mujahid for weeks without coming to an engagement. At length the good fortune of the latter prevailed. The health of Krishin Ray and his family became affected by the pestilential air of the woods, and they were warned by their physicians to quit them. But the Rajah, hoping that his enemy, unaccustomed to the deleterious atmosphere, would fall an easy prey, resolved to continue where he was, until he saw his expectations realized upon the foe. Mujahid's constitution, however, was proof against the pestilential air by which his enemy thought he would be destroyed; and Krishin Ray was himself the first to suffer; several of his family died, and he became himself so ill that he was obliged to retreat by secret paths towards Bejanuggur. Mujahid despatched an army in pursuit of him, while he laid waste the country. Having broken down many temples of the idolaters, and destroyed numerous idols, he returned flushed with victory to his father's capital.

It now appeared to Musaood and his sister that their hated enemy was destined to triumph in all his undertakings, and that they were doomed to suffer the utmost severity of disappointment.

It was nevertheless their policy still to dissemble; and the artful

siren received her detested lover with gracious smiles of welcome, that were like oil poured upon the flame of his passions, which hitherto had been only tantalized, and now raged with redoubled fury.

CHAPTER III.

IN order to avoid the importunities of Mujahid, the sister of Musaood was obliged to feign illness, that she might not give him umbrage by opposition. The chase was again her brother's resource to withdraw his royal friend's thoughts from the indulgence of more criminal passions.

In a mountain some few miles from the capital was a cave, reported to be the haunt of wild beasts. This information had been privately conveyed to Musaood, and he determined to take advantage of the prince's ignorance of this fact to accomplish the long-cherished purpose of his soul. Mujahid made no objection to another expedition into the forests in search of the lion and tiger, since that was a pastime perfectly congenial with his adventurous spirit. With him excitement was a vital principle. The announcement of peril was music to his ear. He was accompanied by his favourite, Mahmood Afghan, who always attended him in his excursions, whether of war or of pleasure. He went as usual armed with his bow, a well-filled quiver, and his cimeter, which had been tried in many a rough encounter with foes, in whose blood it had been frequently steeped.

Musaood had lost nothing of the prince's confidence: so admirably did he mask his feelings, that not a creature save his sister knew, and no one suspected his deadly hostility to the son of Mahomed Shah. Nothing could exceed his apparent zeal in seeking to administer to the enjoyments of the prince, who was a perfect slave to his pleasures; and Mujahid acknowledged the professed fidelity of the late spice-bearer's son with especial marks of favour.

Upon approaching the forest where the pleasures of the chase

were to be enjoyed, the skies began to lower, and to threaten one of those violent elemental conflicts occasionally witnessed within the tropics, and of which even the Alpine storms in Europe can afford but a faint conception. It soon became too evident that a hurricane was to be expected, and the only thing which now occupied the thoughts of the party was where they should find shelter.

The prince was at this time separated from his followers, being accompanied only by Mahmood, Musaood, and a menial attendant. This had been purposely contrived by his foe, to whom, however, not the slightest suspicion of any sinister design attached.

The sun soon became veiled by a succession of coppery clouds which rapidly overspread the sky, opening at intervals in different places, and emitting momentary flashes of lightning. The rain quickly began to fall upon the broad smooth leaves of the trees; the birds flew to the foliage, and chirped dolefully. Snakes and lizards crawled from beneath the bushes, where they had been basking in the genial sunshine, and crept into the tufts of high grass with which the jungle abounded. A gloom passed over the earth, like the sudden setting in of night, and the distant howlings of the forest community gave a strong feature of dreariness to the scene.

The storm was every moment increasing, and the party were by this time anxious to obtain a shelter. They had advanced considerably up the hill. Musaood had taken care to be informed of the exact locality of the cavern, to which he led the way, the prince and his companions following. The ascent was rather steep, and, from there being no regular pathway, not easy to climb. Their anxiety to escape from the pelting of the storm enabled them to overcome all impediments.

They had fastened their horses under trees in a small glen at the hill's base, as the ascent was too steep to render the attempt on horseback practicable. After about a quarter of an hour's toil they reached a natural recess in the mountain, within which was the entrance to a cave, no doubt the same that had been described to Musaood. The opening was low, and so narrow that not more

than one person could squeeze in at a time. It was about four feet high, and scarcely more than two wide. Within the darkness was so intense, that the eye could not penetrate to the extremity. Scarcely was the party safely sheltered, when the hurricane poured down with prodigious fury. The rain fell in a confluent stream, forming little cataracts, which gushed over the slope of the hill between the rocks, adding to the rush and roar of the tempest. The entire horizon appeared every moment illumined, and the lightning streamed like a fiery deluge upon the earth. There was the least imaginable pause between the flashes. A large tree in front of the cavern was struck, the trunk severed from the root, as if cleft with an axe by an omnipotent arm, and it fell with an awful crash down the side of the mountain. The thunder rolled with scarcely an interval between the peals, and occasionally burst with such deafening crashes, that the ear could not endure the sound without a positive sensation of pain. Snakes and other reptiles were washed from their coverts, and crawled for shelter into the cavern, as if awed by the fierce convulsion of the elements. They exhibited no signs of reluctance at the propinquity of human beings, of whom they have an instinctive fear, but appeared as if they had laid aside their natural instincts under the terrors by which they were assailed. The savage cobra closed its hood and slunk into a corner of the cavern, as if glad to hide itself from the terrors of the storm. After a while, the lightning flashed less continuously; there were longer intervals between the peals of thunder; it became gradually more remote, and at length the sun glimmered through the clouds, which, rapidly dissipating before its beams, left a beautiful expanse of clear blue sky above the hill.

The gloom of the cavern had now considerably abated, though nothing was distinctly perceptible at the extremity.

As soon as the deafening noise of the tempest had subsided, a singular sound was heard at the end of the cave, like the loud purring of a cat. Mahmood and the attendant groping their way towards it, shortly returned with something in their arms, which, when exposed to the light, proved to be the cubs of a lioness.

The ferocious parents were evidently abroad, but this discovery was not at all calculated to beget an assurance of safety.

"We had better," said the attendant, "immediately quit our retreat, or we shall be visited by the parents of these young savages before we have time to escape. They will, no doubt, return now the storm has abated, and we may look for their presence every moment."

"Well!" said the prince, "you don't fear to encounter a lion? This will be somewhat reversing the sport; instead of seeking the game, it will seek us; but, upon second thoughts, it will not do to let them come upon us before we are prepared; we shall be cramped in this cave; we must have room to ply our arms. If the lions make good their entrance before we have secured our retreat, we shall stand but a sorry chance for our lives."

"Suppose," said Musaood, "I go and climb yonder tree, which commands a view of the entire side of the hill. Should anything approach I can give you a signal; you will have plenty of time to mount the rock just beyond where we now stand, and from that elevation, with the prince's unerring aim, the lions will prove but contemptible foes."

"Nay," said Mahmood Afghan, "I like not this mode of getting hedged by dangers; let us quit the cavern at once, and encounter our enemies in an open field, if they come upon us. I need not tell you that these animals are always the more furious when disturbed near the lair in which they have deposited their cubs."

"That's just what I should desire," said Mujahid; "the more furious the quarry the greater the sport. You say, however, well, Mahmood; let us go and meet these tawny strangers."

During the raging of the tempest the prince and Mahmood had flung down their bows and quivers upon the floor of the cave; when the attendant took them up in obedience to the command of his master it was found that the cubs had been amusing themselves with the arrows, and had snapped every reed except two. This was a mortifying discovery. It was now held advisable that the party should not seek an encounter with the lions, as they were no longer in a condition to face them, but make the best of

their way down the hill, obtain a fresh supply of arrows, and return on the following day.

By this time Musaood had quitted the cavern, and climbed a lofty tree not far off, as he had proposed. The prince, with his armour-bearer Mahmood, and the menial attendant, were about to quit their place of refuge, when a huge lion appeared advancing stealthily towards its den, which they had occupied in its absence.

“Hah!” said Mujahid, “we have no chance now, I see, but to struggle at a disadvantage. The foe has taken us by surprise, and we must use the best means of defence which such an emergency has left us. He shall have a warning, however, that we are not to be intruded upon with impunity.”

The prince placed an arrow on the string of his bow, and discharged it as the lion advanced. It struck him in the shoulder, the steel head fixing in the bone. The wounded beast gave a savage howl, tore the shaft from its body, and bounded forward with a roar that made the mountains ring.

Meanwhile the party had rolled a huge fragment of rock, which lay within the cave, before the entrance, and thus excluded the ferocious visitor. Reaching the opening, the lion paused a moment, repeated its roar, and sprang against the stone. This vibrated with the animal's weight. It repeated its spring, but the prince placing his back against the piece of rock, managed by his immense strength to prevent the lion from forcing an entrance. The savage creature put its paws upon the stone, and thrust its nose into the aperture left between the top of the fragment and that of the entrance. Sensible that enemies had invaded the sanctuary of its home, its howls were terrific, its eyes glared with portentous rage, and it repeatedly rushed against the opposing barrier, in order to force a passage to its offspring. All its attempts, however, were foiled.

“Mahmood,” said the prince, as the enraged beast was standing with its paws upon the stone, licking its rapacious jaws, now covered with foam, “take thy bow, and discharge the arrow which remains into the lion's eye. You are so close that you may make

sure of your aim, and if well taken the steel will enter its brain, and give us a safe delivery."

Mahmood took the bow ; his hand trembled with anxiety, not with fear. He was visible to the lion, which glared upon him with an expression of terrific fury. Its eye was open to the utmost extension. Mahmood placed the barb of his arrow within a few inches from the rolling orb, and hurriedly drew the string. At the instant it escaped from his finger the lion raised its head, and received the shaft through its tongue. Maddened by the pain, it bounded a moment from the opposing rock, and rolled upon its back, snapping the reed with its teeth, and returning with renewed fury to its former position. The foam now dropping from its mouth was dyed with blood. It protruded the lacerated tongue, from which the gore copiously dripped, part of the reed still sticking in the wound.

CHAPTER IV.

THE situation of the prince, his friend, and attendant, was becoming every moment more critical. The lion seemed determined to remain stationary at the entrance of the cave, and to admit it was certain death. Mujahid, however, resolved to remove the stone from the cavern's mouth and take the chance of a conflict with the ferocious beast. He and Mahmood had their swords ; one of them therefore might escape, though, from the darkness and lowness of their place of refuge, the chances were doubtful.

Musood had at first secured his safety in the tree, from which he descended while the foe was eagerly engaged with those who had so unwittingly intruded into its den, and succeeded in making his escape. Having reached the bottom of the hill, he mounted his horse and galloped off in search of the prince's followers, hoping that the slayer of his father would now meet with deserved retribution.

As Mujahid was about to remove the fragment of rock from the cave's mouth, Mahmood proposed that they should try to

strangle the lion with a strong silken cord with which he had come provided ; a sort of lasso, which he was very skilful in throwing, and with which he was in the habit of securing smaller game.

“No,” said the prince, “that were an ignoble and cowardly mode of destroying the regal beast ; I have a kindred feeling which repels me from such a dog-like method of killing a lion. Besides, the thing is impracticable, you will never be able to get it over the creature’s head.”

“I will try, however,” said Mahmood, “since I have no kindred feeling about the matter, and would as soon strangle a lion as a cat.”

Mujahid, in spite of his prejudices against casting a stigma upon regality by attempting to inflict a degrading death upon the “monarch of the woods,” yielded at length to the expostulations of his armour-bearer, who attempted to cast the noose of the lasso over the lion’s head. The aperture above the stone was so small that he had not room to fix it ; and while he was making the attempt, with a fearful growl the enraged animal seized the rope between its teeth, sprang from the opening, drew it from Mahmood’s grasp, and left him without a resource in his peril.

“Well,” said the prince, “there is now no alternative between trying which will be the longest starving, ourselves or our brindled guard, or allowing it to enter and boldly trying our strength against it. We are three to one, and that is fearful odds.”

“But the darkness and disadvantage of this low cave reduces our chances and increases those of the enemy.”

“We must then bring him to battle on the outside of his den.”

“Alas ! before we can squeeze ourselves through this narrow entrance, the savage will have made good its spring, and the first stroke of its paw is certain death.”

The attendant now proposed as a last resource that they should strangle the cubs and throw them out to the lion. This was indeed a desperate experiment, but Mujahid consented that it should be tried. The attendant accordingly unwound the turban from his forehead and twisted it tightly in the form of a rope. The cubs were found asleep in a corner of the cave ; but though so young, their strength was such as to render the process of strau-

gulation a thing of some difficulty. A noose was made in the centre of the twisted turban, and being passed over the cub's head, was pulled at either end by Mahmood Afghan and the attendant, the prince meanwhile applying his vast strength to keep the lion from displacing the stone from the entrance.

Both the cubs being at length strangled, were forced through the aperture, and flung before the enraged parent. The moment it saw its offspring, the lion quitted the stone, stood over the cubs, and begun to purr, licking their heads for a few moments with the greatest tenderness. After a while, seeing they did not move, it turned then over gently with its paw, erected its ears, and looked at them intently for an instant; and then, as of a sudden becoming conscious that they were dead, erected its head, raised its nose in the air, and howled with a piteous expression of agony. The wounded tongue hung over its jaws, still suffused with gore, and tears filled the eyes of the noble beast as it again bent down its head to gaze upon the work of destruction.

Its emotion soon subsided, and was succeeded by the most frightful rage. It dashed against the barrier with increasing fury, and its roarings were continued without intermission. It now required the whole strength of the prince and his two companions to keep the stone from giving way under the furious assaults of the lion. After a while, as if exhausted with its energies, it retreated a few feet from the aperture, lay down upon its belly beside the dead cubs, raised its head towards the skies, as if invoking a silent curse upon the destroyers of its offspring, and sent its voice among the surrounding echoes, which multiplied it into one fearful and prolonged evocation of blended fury and distress. In a short time it started to its feet, waved its tail, and looking forward, ceased its horrible roar. Upon turning his eyes toward the spot, the prince perceived another lion advancing at a rapid trot in the direction of the cavern.

"This," cried Mahmood, "is no doubt the mother of the cubs, and we have, if possible, more to dread from her fury than from that of the male savage. We have now no chance of our lives but by continuing where we are until the lions shall retire. They

will probably drag the cubs away after the first burst of grief for the loss of their young shall have subsided."

"I like not this imprisonment," said the prince, "and shall only forbear forcing a retreat a short time longer. I am determined to try my chance of escape while my strength remains unabated."

Mahmood, however, prevailed upon his impatient and daring master to await the issue of the second beast's approach, before he rashly determined upon an encounter, which it was now apprehended must infallibly terminate in the death of each of them.

The lioness advanced eagerly, with her ears erected; and having reached her cubs, she turned them over for a moment with her paw, and, instantly perceiving they were dead, rushed towards a tree that grew near, sprang upon the trunk, and, stripping off the bark, began to tear it in pieces with the greatest violence. She now united her roars with those of her consort; then fixing her eyes upon the den in which she had deposited her young, bounded with foaming jaws towards the opening. Infuriated by opposition, she darted to and fro before the cave, springing at the trees, fixing her claws in the bark, and stripping their trunks bare to the root. Again she assaulted the stone which prevented entrance into her lair.

While she was exhibiting these paroxysms of exasperation, the male, probably exhausted by its previous exertions, lay down beside the cubs, placed its two fore-paws upon their bodies, and, resting its head upon the ground between them, kept up a low and continuous moan. The lioness, at length fatigued with her unavailing efforts to retaliate upon the destroyers of her young, walked deliberately up to the lion, and after again turning over the bodies of her cubs, she seized one of them in her mouth, and plunged with it into the thicket. The lion took up the body of the other in the same way, and immediately followed her. After a while the party in the cavern heard their roarings in the distance, and began now to think seriously of making good their retreat.

"Our danger," said the attendant, "is by no means at an end. Those animals are never-failing in their instincts; they know that

the destroyers of their offspring are in this cave, and they will not quit the neighbourhood until they have had their revenge. Their vigilance is not to be evaded."

"But," said Mahmood, "did you not hear their roarings in the distance?"

"Nevertheless they will return immediately upon their steps. I have seen much of the habits of these ferocious creatures. They have disposed of the bodies of their dead cubs under some shrub or tuft of grass, and covered them with dried leaves; they are now on the watch for us; it is utterly impossible we should escape."

"They shall feel the sharpness of this sword's point, however, if they do come upon us," said the prince, rising, and stretching his cramped limbs. "Our chance will be greater beneath the fair light of the sky, with plenty of fighting room, than cooped up in this dismal den, where we can't distinguish a lion from a shadow."

"It is clear," said Mahmood, "there is no safety for us here; we have, consequently, only a choice of evils, and it will therefore be the greater prudence to choose the least. The lions are now out of sight, and in spite of their cunning, we may be fortunate enough to baffle it."

"Then we had better descend the mountain," said the attendant, "in the opposite direction to that taken by our watchful enemies, else we must give up every chance of evading them."

"But there is no practicable path," said the prince; "and even if there were, our chances are much the same, whatever road we take, provided what thou sayest of the vigilance of these creatures be true."

The stone was now rolled from the cave's mouth, and the prince pushed his body through the narrow opening, followed by his armour-bearer and the attendant. No enemies were visible, and their roarings had by this time ceased to echo among the hills. Approaching the tree into which Musaood had climbed upon the first apprehension of danger, Mujahid looked up, and called upon his friend to descend; but perceiving that he was not among the branches, the prince said with a smile,

“Musaood has tried the speed of his heels. If the lions should have crossed his path and wreaked their vengeance upon him, they will probably be satisfied ; but if he has escaped, there is at least an equal chance for us. Grasp your swords and follow me.”

“I have no doubt,” said Mahmood, “he has made good his retreat ; I saw him descend the tree while the first lion was engaged in assaulting the rocky fragment which we had laid across the entrance of the cavern. He’s a wary youth that Musaood : I know of no one who likes so little to get into danger, or who knows so well how to extricate himself out of it.”

“That is not the lion’s instinct,” said the prince, smiling.

“Nay, but it is part of the wise man’s discretion.”

“Then, Mahmood, thy master is a fool ; for he never was yet remarkable for his prudence in getting out of a scrape.”

“But valour,” replied Mahmood, with a respectful salaam, “is not an attribute of wisdom ; that, therefore, would be prudent in the brave man, which would be folly in the wise.”

“Then we bold fools, Mahmood, may be justified in cutting the throats of lions for the preservation of our own lives ; while your sages, in conformity with their characters of wise men, would, as a matter of course, bow their heads under the lion’s paw, and die like philosophers.”

Mahmood smiled, made another salaam, and remained silent, as if assenting to the truth of his master’s observation.

The party proceeded slowly onward, on account of the narrowness and ruggedness of the path, which would not admit of two going abreast. In a short time, however, they had overcome the most difficult part of the descent without interruption from their dreaded foes. They were already congratulating themselves with having escaped, when a cry from the attendant, who was a few yards behind his master and Mahmood, caused the two latter to stop and turn. The cause of that cry of alarm was soon explained. The two lions were seen making their way down the side of the mountain at a very rapid rate, their ears depressed, the hair on their tails erected, and exhibiting other signs of fury not to be

mistaken. It was impossible to avoid them as the path was still narrow and rugged.

The prince, drawing his cimeter, placed himself in front of his two companions, and undauntedly awaited the threatened onset. The male lion was several paces in advance of the lioness, and, bounding forward, stopped suddenly within about thirty feet of its intended victim, and crouching a moment crawled a few yards upon its belly, then rising with a quick motion sprang with the rapidity of lightning towards Mujahid. He had been prepared for this ; and when he saw the body of the angry beast propelled towards him, as if urged by that Almighty force which wings the thunderbolt, he leaped actively on one side, raised his weapon, and urging it with all his force as the foe descended, struck it in the mouth with the full impulse of an arm that, by a similar stroke, had frequently severed the head of a buffalo. The sword crashed through the jaws, forced its way into the throat, opening so hideous a wound that the lion fell forward, writhed a few moments, and died.

The lioness, which had crouched several paces behind while her consort was making its spring, seeing the issue of the contest, leaped forward with a roar, and coming up to the prince before he had recovered his guard, placed its paws upon his breast, and attempted to gripe him by the throat. Mujahid grasped the savage by the windpipe, and keeping it at arm's length, prevented it from effecting its purpose ; but it still kept its claws fixed in his breast, which it lacerated in a frightful manner, and at length seizing one of his hands crushed it dreadfully. Still he managed to keep its head from his body.

Mahmood, seeing the peril of his master, struck the ferocious beast with all his might upon the back with his sword, which was very keen and heavy. This assault induced the lioness to relinquish her hold and turn upon Mahmood ; but her spine had been so injured from the stroke of the cimeter, that she was unable to spring. A second blow from Mahmood's ponderous weapon upon the skull, instantly seconded by another from that of the attendant, soon brought her to the ground, when she was easily dispatched,

though not before she had left terrible marks of her fury upon the prince's body, who, reeking with his blood, stood gazing at his vanquished foes. The effusion was great, and the lacerations so extensive as to exhibit a fearful aspect of fatality.

Mahmood, being well skilled in the virtues of herbs, gathered some from the hill-side, and bruising them formed a styptic which he applied to the wound, and arrested the hæmorrhage. The prince declared himself able to proceed, the application of the herbs having somewhat subdued the irritation of his wounds. He was obliged to bare his body to the waist; and in order to prevent the sun from incommoding him, Mahmood and the attendant skinned one of the lions, and fixing the hide upon four bamboos, formed a sort of canopy under which Mujahid managed to creep down the remainder of the descent.

When they reached the bottom of the hill, they found their horses securely tied to the trees, as they had left them. Mujahid felt himself unable to proceed: the attendant, therefore, rode off in pursuit of some of the followers, whom he happily found at no great distance pursuing the pleasures of the chase. Among these was Musaood, who had refrained from mentioning the state of peril in which he had left his companions on the hill. Upon hearing that the prince had been wounded in the breast by his tawny foe, he concluded that the consummation of his revenge was nigh. A calm smile passed over his features; but he warily suppressed the feelings which rose with the warmth of a kindly emotion in his bosom, and elated his heart. Affecting to commiserate the condition of Mujahid, he proceeded, accompanied by several of his followers, to the spot where the prince lay in a state of great suffering stretched upon the lion's skin; but, smiling as Musaood approached, he said—

“You had a better instinct than I, Musaood. Had I taken to the tree I might have escaped these scratches, which will keep me from the chase for some weeks, and, what is worse, from thy sister; but the cause of so long an absence will furnish my excuse.”

“There's no pleasure, -prince, without its pain, and in your sufferings all your friends participate.”

“Then they are great fools. It is enough that one should suffer in a matter of this kind, and you ought all to rejoice that you have had the good luck to escape. These are the little contingencies of lion-hunting, but I shall not be the worse for it when my scratches are healed.”

A litter was now made, in which the prince was laid, and carried slowly towards his father's capital. The faithful Mahmood walked by his side, anticipating all his wants, and attending upon him with affectionate earnestness. In spite of the styptic, his wounds bled so copiously that when he reached the end of his journey he was in a state of extreme exhaustion. For some weeks he was in considerable danger, which spread a general gloom through the city, but, after a severe struggle, his constitution triumphed, and he at length completely recovered.

CHAPTER V.

WHEN Mujahid had recovered from his wounds he renewed his addresses to the sister of Musood, who, finding that she could no longer delay the gratification of the prince's desires without a direct breach of promise, determined to bring the thing to an immediate issue. She had for some time encouraged his proposals of dishonourable love; she had done this for a sinister purpose, and was still loth to give up the hope of seeing the slayer of her father meet with that retribution in this world which she thought he deserved. She cared not how her own reputation was endangered so long as she could see the man punished by whom she had been deprived of a parent she tenderly loved. She did not forget, too, that his hand was stained with the blood of her lover, and although this was done in self-defence, it nevertheless did not abate in her judgment the odiousness of the deed.

Toghluk Beg had been long attached to her, and it was this attachment which urged him to risk his life against the valour and personal strength of a man notorious through his father's kingdom

for the invincible force of his arm. The daughter of Moobarik could not forgive the double injury which she had received at the hands of the king's son, and in order the more securely to effect the purpose so long entertained by herself and her brother she finally came to the resolution of admitting Mujahid to the enjoyment which he sought, indifferent to consequences, save the accomplishment of her revenge.

When next she saw her brother, "Musaood," she said, "the enemy seems to have a charmed life; no sword can reach him, and he is even proof against the claws of the lion."

"My sister, his time will come yet."

"So you have said for years, and yet he is abroad in his might, and the world appears to fall prostrate before him. How is this colossus to be upheaved?"

"By constant dripping water will wear down the mountain to a level with the valley."

"But we cannot wait so slow a process, brother. Can you suggest no means of a speedier vengeance?"

"He loves you, my sister."

"Well, that won't kill him."

"No; but you return his love with hatred, and that may."

"Hatred is of itself passive."

"Still it may instigate the hand to urge the dagger home."

"Then I must yield to his passions, an act against which my soul recoils."

"His death were worth any sacrifice. Had I a thousand reputations I would relinquish them all to see him dead before me."

"You sanction, then, my infamy?"

"It will be neutralised by the event. If it bring retribution upon the head of our father's destroyer it will be a filial obligation, and do you everlasting honour."

"The sacrifice shall be made, and may the desired issue be speedy! It is, however, a hard thing to dissemble in the presence of an object whom the heart loathes; how shall I endure the caresses of such a man?"

"As sick men take bitters, for the cure they bring. It will heal

thy hatred, sister, by removing the cause of it, and will not that be your sufficient reward?"

"It is like making one pass to paradise through a path of fire."

"Remember that when the paradise is gained you have all joy and no more suffering."

"What part do you intend to play in this sanguinary drama?"

"Do you but make the opportunity, and I am ready to drive the dagger home to his heart. I must, however, do it where even the winds cannot murmur an alarm."

"Agreed; I will sacrifice my fair fame to the retribution we owe to a father's spirit."

Thus was the foul conspiracy against the prince's life hatched by the brother and sister. They brought over to their purposes two disaffected nobles, who entertained an inveterate animosity against Mujahid because he had punished their cowardice with disgrace during his expedition against Krishin Ray.

The prince, unsuspecting of treachery, visited the siren who had won his affections with a full conviction that his passion was returned with equal warmth. He provided for her a splendid mansion and a numerous retinue, devoting most of his time to the society of his enchantress. She feigned affection so artfully that he imagined himself the idol of her heart; but Mahmood, who suspected her sincerity, though he had no suspicion of her treachery, frequently told him that he was deceived. This rather begot a coldness in the prince towards his faithful armour-bearer; the latter, however, did not abate an atom of his attachment towards his master, whom he looked upon as the dupe of an artful woman, and whose interests he watched with a vigilance which fully showed that they were no less dear to him than his own.

"Fair one!" said Mujahid one day, "am I deceived in thinking that you love me?"

"Why this question?"

"Nay, that is no answer."

"But surely I am justified in seeking to know why my affection

is suspected. Tell me candidly, have I ever given you just cause to suspect it?"

"No."

"Then you wrong me by your suspicions. Some enemy has attempted to poison your mind, and it is but fitting I should know who that enemy is."

"You can have no enemy, my sweet flower, except the blights; and they will not pass over thee yet."

"Sooner than you may dream of, if I am to be doubted by one for whom I have sacrificed so much. Remember that the flower is prostrated by the sun when his scorching rays fall on it, as well as by the tempest; so love may be as completely subverted by suspicion as by the fiercest hatred: it cannot exist but in an atmosphere of mutual confidence."

Convinced by her specious manner that he was beloved, whatever suspicions might have previously existed soon passed from his mind.

About this time his father dying, he succeeded to the sovereignty of the Deccan. His accession was solemnized with great rejoicings; but the secret conspiracy against his life was not quelled, only retarded, by this event. He lavished immense sums of money upon the favourite who was secretly plotting his destruction, nor would he listen to a suspicion breathed against the fervency of her attachment, of which the faithful armour-bearer still ventured occasionally to express his doubts.

Musaood's duplicity was now redoubled. His apparent zeal for the interests of the king blinded all but Mahmood, whose distrust became excited in proportion as the apparent earnestness of the other for his master's welfare was displayed. It happened that he one day overheard part of a conversation which passed between the brother and sister, that confirmed his suspicions of intended mischief; and he resolved to acquaint the king, in defiance of the royal interdiction not to introduce the subject again in his presence.

Appearing one morning before the sovereign, he said, "A good subject must not fear to incur the displeasure of a kind master, where danger is likely to accrue to the one, which the other, by a timely warning, may avert."

“What means this, Mahmood? Annoy me not with any of your silly suspicions; you know I have forbidden you to speak of them in my presence.”

“I know it; but my love for a good king and generous master will not allow me to be silent when I have reason to apprehend that danger is near him.”

“What grounds have you for so supposing?”

“Musaood and his sister are frequently closeted, and I overheard the former say to the latter, but a few days ago, ‘Our revenge has been long baffled, but the consummation draws near.’”

“Why should you apply this to me, when I have secured the affection of the one and the fidelity of the other?”

“Professedly you have, but kings are not always the best skilled in reading human hearts; they too frequently mistake the mask for the countenance.”

The king smiled. “Mahmood,” said he, “how long have you been a decipherer of the unwritten records of human character? Do you not think that you may chance to be mistaken as well as other men?”

“Beyond question: but no one can deny the policy of being upon one’s guard, even in a state of the greatest apparent security. The profoundest calms are frequently the precursors of violent tempests; and what is seen in the natural may likewise occur in the moral world.”

“But would you have me live in a state of perpetual suspicion, with that void in my heart arising from the absence of confidence, which is one of the most grievous penalties of our existence?”

“No; but I would not have you too rashly trust, and, indeed, never until you have well weighed the characters whom you admit to your friendship.”

“And have I not done so? Have you not won my confidence? and have I ever found reason to regret having bestowed it upon you?”

Mahmood was rather staggered; he felt the truth of the observation; but still determined not to allow the king to remain blind to his insecurity, without striving to put him upon his guard, he said, “Men must be judged by their actions.”

“Precisely so ; and Musaood has never given me cause to suspect his fidelity.”

“What has he ever done to render him an object of trust ?”

“Nothing, at all events, that should render him an object of suspicion.”

“My sovereign, I do not suspect upon slight grounds ; I have seen frequent and secret meetings ; I have heard ambiguous words uttered, and am willing to risk my head upon the truth of what I assert, that your royal safety is not secure from secret machinations. Having put my royal master upon his guard, my duty is performed.”

Mujahid Shah, though he had the strongest reliance on the integrity of his armour-bearer, and a sincere esteem for him, yet looked upon his suspicions as chimerical, and took no measures to counteract any plots that might at that moment be ripening against his life. His passion for the sister of Musaood was unabated, and he treated her with distinguished regard.

He one day declared to her his intention of passing the night in the house she occupied, at which she expressed herself extremely flattered, and immediately communicated the information to Musaood.

“My brother,” said she, “the king sleeps here to-night, and the opportunity so long sought after may be now embraced.”

“What do you propose ?”

“That Mujahid should die this night by your dagger.”

“If you will show me that his death can be safely accomplished, I am ready to become the instrument.”

“Go and seek your two confederates, and introduce them into the house ; I will let you into the king’s chamber at midnight ;—the work is then easy.”

“But does not his armour-bearer always sleep in an adjoining apartment ?”

“Yes : he, however, will be easily disposed of. I will prepare his evening meal : he shall be deaf to the cries of his master when they come.”

“Could you not contrive to remove his arms ?”

“What will signify arms to a man who has not the power of using them? Do you quail, Musaood? Don't be shamed by a woman! Such an opportunity does not occur every day. Embrace it, or let it pass, as you please: upon your choice depends whether we ever again meet as brother and sister. You need not be told that kindred foes are the most deadly.”

This peremptory insinuation immediately decided Musaood. It was arranged that he should repair to the house, with his two confederates, so soon as night closed in.

In the evening Mahmood's curry had been prepared for him; but labouring under an excited state of mind, and having a presentiment of evil which he could not repress, he did not taste it. Flinging himself upon his couch, he lay feverish and restless.

About two hours after he had retired to rest, hearing a noise in the adjoining room, he rose and listened. He could distinguish voices in a whisper, but not a word reached his ear. There was sufficient light to discern the dim outlines of three persons at the entrance to the royal chamber. He was not kept long in suspense, for after the lapse of a few moments a female figure opened the door, and the three men entered. Mahmood, drawing his sword, instantly followed. Upon reaching the door of his master's room, he saw Musaood and his two companions armed with daggers. The king was lying asleep upon his couch, and the treacherous confederate of the assassins standing, with a lamp in her hand, near his head.

Without an instant's pause Mahmood cried, in a loud voice, “Rise, Mujahid Shah! you are beset by murderers!” at the same time cutting down one of the assassins. The sovereign, awakened by the noise, started from his bed, just as Musaood was about to plunge a dagger into his body. The blow had already descended, but Mujahid caught it upon his arm, receiving a severe wound. He instantly laid hold of the assassin by the wrist, wrenched the dagger from his feeble grasp, and buried it in his heart.

The third confederate, seeing the fate of his two companions, rushed from the chamber. Mahmood, seized his lasso, which was

at hand, pursued the criminal, and casting the cord round his legs as he quitted the house, tripped him up, and brought him to the ground. He was immediately secured, and conducted before the king.

“At whose instigation did you attempt the life of your sovereign?”

“My own!” answered the noble firmly.

“What was your object?”

“To get rid of a tyrant!”

“Was that woman your accomplice?” asked Mujahid Shah, pointing to the siren who had placed his life in jeopardy.

“No; she is innocent.”

The wretched woman, who had stood pale and abashed before the royal presence, immediately recovered her composure, and affected to repel the suspicion with indignation.

The accomplice of her brother did not betray her. He would reveal nothing, but made up his mind to die with that sullen resolution so frequently witnessed at public executions. The king, summoning two attendants, ordered them to take the traitor into an adjoining apartment and strangle him. This was accordingly done, and his body thrown from the window. By the time Mujahid Shah quitted the house in the morning, nothing but a skeleton was seen upon the spot where the strangled corpse had been cast the preceding night.

The sovereign having so narrowly escaped, was reminded by the faithful Mahmood of the policy of withdrawing himself from the woman who had obtained so entire an ascendancy over his heart; but such was his infatuation that he could not believe her guilty. She had been pronounced innocent by the confederate of her brother; and so complete was her empire over him, that he would not allow himself to suppose her implicated in the conspiracy against him. She affected to curse her brother's memory, not only for the murderous act of lifting his arm against his sovereign's life, but likewise for involving her in the suspicion of having been an accomplice in so wicked a design.

“Make your mind easy,” said the king, in reply to her assevera-

tions of innocence ; “ my confidence in your affection is not to be shaken. A woman does not hate out of mere wantonness the man to whom she has relinquished all that is most prized by her sex. Great sacrifices are only made for those we love, and for me you have made the greatest.”

“ I fear I have an enemy in your armour-bearer,” said the artful siren ; “ and cannot but feel apprehensive that he will eventually tear me from your heart ; this fear is a perpetual sting in my bosom. I have never given him any cause of offence ; and yet he continually pours the poison of prejudice into the king’s ear.”

Mujahid Shah was silent. He could not but feel the force of this observation, and it struck him that Mahmood’s prejudice was altogether unjustifiable. In spite of his late gallantry in defending his master’s life, the king was angered at the hostility which his armour-bearer evidently entertained against the object of the royal affections, and he treated him with unusual coldness, sometimes even with asperity,

Within a few months after the late attack upon the life of Mujahid Shah, Musaood’s sister had completely steeped his heart in the infatuation of dotage. He felt perfectly secure of her affection ; and finding that all suspicion had subsided, she determined to perpetrate with her own hand the deed of blood which her late brother had failed to accomplish.

One night, when she retired to rest with the sovereign, concealing a dagger under the bedclothes, she awaited with tremulous impatience to see her victim lulled in slumber. His senses gradually faded into unconsciousness, and he slept heavily. She drew the weapon slowly from its concealment. Her hand trembled. She cautiously bared the king’s chest, and, compressing her lips, plunged into his heart the instrument of death. Mujahid started from his sleep ; he saw the night-dress of his murderess stained with blood, and her hand still upon the dagger. Feeling his senses fast failing, he grasped her by the throat, held her a few moments in his death-grip, flung her with his last effort of expiring strength upon the floor, strangled, and fell dead beside her.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

Heg. 790 (A.D. 1388).—Feroze ToghluK was succeeded on the throne of Delhi by his grandson, Gheias-ood-Deen ToghluK, who was murdered, after a reign of only five months and a few days.

Heg. 791 (1389).—The late king's murderers raised to the throne Aboo Bukr, another grandson of Feroze ToghluK ; he was deposed after a reign of eighteen months, and succeeded by his uncle, Nasir-ood-Deen Mahomed ToghluK.

Heg. 793 (1390).—Mahomed, after having silenced all opposition, entered Delhi in the month Rumzan, and ascending the throne, assumed the title of Nasir-ood-Deen Mahomed.

Heg. 794 (1391).—The Vizier Islam Chan was condemned to death for a projected revolt, on the evidence of his own nephew Hajoo, a Hindoo, who swore falsely against him, in consequence, as it is supposed, of his uncle having embraced the faith of Islam.

Heg. 795. (1392).—The king was taken ill of a fever, at Mahomedabad, and became delirious for some days.

Heg. 797 (1394).—Mahomed, having suffered a relapse of the fever, died, after a short reign of six years, and was succeeded by his son Humayoon, who took the name of Secunder, but was suddenly cut off, forty-five days after his accession to the throne, when Mahmood, a younger son of Nasir-ood-Deen Mahomed, succeeded him.

Heg. 799 (1396).—Gheias-ood-Deen ascended his father's throne in the Deccan, and, having given offence to one of the household slaves, was dethroned by him, and confined in the fort of Sagur.

Heg. 800 (1397).—Shums-ood-Deen, brother to the deposed king, was raised to the throne, but was dethroned after a reign of five months and seven days ; the slave being put to death by Gheias-ood-Deen, whom he had deposed and blinded.

Heg. 801 (1398).—Ameer Timoor, commonly called Tamerlane, arrived on the banks of the Indus, took the town of Bhutnere, ravaged the whole country, and having, in different encounters with the idolaters, made nearly a hundred thousand prisoners, ordered them all to be massacred. The conqueror made himself master of Delhi, where he caused himself to be proclaimed Emperor,

and the usual titles to be read in his name in all the mosques. The fine mosque, built by Feroze Toghluq, on the stones of which he had inscribed the history of his reign, was so much admired by Timoor, that he carried the same architects and masons from Delhi to Sarmakand to build one there upon a similar plan. Having given up the city to a general pillage, and committed a dreadful massacre of the inhabitants, the conqueror commenced his retreat to his own country. After a while, those who had quitted the city returned to their homes, and Delhi in a short time assumed its former appearance of populousness and splendour.

Heg. 811 (1408).—Mahmood Toghluq returned to Delhi.

Heg. 814 (1412).—The king, indulging too eagerly in the diversion of hunting, caught a fever, of which he died. With him fell the kingdom of Delhi from the race of Toorks, the adopted slaves of the Emperor Shahab-ood-Deen Ghoory, who were of the second dynasty of the Mahomedan princes of India. The disastrous and inglorious reign of Mahmood Toghluq continued, from first to last, twenty years and two months.

Heg. 815 (1412).—Dowlut Chan Lody, an Afghan by birth, was raised to the throne by general consent of the nobles, after the death of Mahomed Toghluq; but was deposed and put to death by Khizr Chan, after a nominal reign of one year and three months.

Heg. 817 (1414).—Khizr Chan ascended the throne of Delhi, and was the first of the fourth dynasty of her kings. In the first year of his government, he sent Mullik Tohfa with an army towards Kuttahr, which place he reduced. Nursing Ray was driven to the mountains, but upon paying a ransom, his territories were restored to him. This year a band of Toorks, the adherents of Beiram Chan, assassinated Mullik Ladhoo, governor of Surhind, and took possession of his country.

Heg. 821 (1418).—A conspiracy was formed against the king's life; but having detected the conspiracy, Khizr Chan commanded the household troops to fall upon them and put them to death.

Heg. 824 (1421).—The king died in the city of Delhi, and, as a token of respect for his memory, the citizens wore black for three days.* The nobles having assembled, elevated Moobarik, the son of Khizr Chan, to the vacant throne.

Heg. 825 (1422).—The king, having marched to Lahore, ordered the ruined palaces and fortifications to be repaired, and returned to Delhi.

Heg. 826 (1422).—The king deposed Mullik Secundur from the vizierat, and raised Suvuur-ool-Moolk to that office.

Heg. 830 (1426). Moobarik laid siege to Byana for sixteen days, but, on the desertion of part of the garrison, Mahomed Chan, the governor, surrendered at discretion, and with a rope about his neck was led into the royal presence.

* The Mahomedans as well as Christians wear black for mourning.

Heg. 832 (1428).—The king marched to Mewat, and entirely subdued that country, compelling the inhabitants to pay him tribute.

Heg. 833 (1430).—Ameer Sheikh Ally having made himself master of Toolumba in Moultan, plundered the place, and put to death all the men able to bear arms. He likewise burned the town, and carried the wives and children of the inhabitants into captivity.

Heg. 835 (1432). The king deprived his vizier of the government of Lahore.

Heg. 839 (1435).—Moobarik ordered a city to be founded upon the banks of the Jusuna, which he called Moobarikabad, and made an excursion towards Surhind, in order to take the diversion of the chase. On the way he received advices that Surhind was taken, and the head of the rebel Folad was presented to him, after which he returned to the new city.

According to custom, on the ninth of the month, Rujub Moobarik went to worship in a mosque lately built in the new city, with only a few attendants, and was put to death by a band of Hindoos clothed in armour, who entered the sacred edifice while the king was performing his devotions. The vizier immediately raised to the throne Mahomed, one of the grandsons of Khizr Chan. One Ranoo, a slave of the vizier, being nominated collector of the revenues of Bayana, endeavouring to obtain possession of the fort, was opposed and slain by Yusoof Chan Lodi.

Heg. 840 (1436).—The vizier, aided by several conspirators, broke into the royal apartments with drawn swords, in order to put the king to death. The latter, however, having intimation of their design, placed a guard in readiness to counteract it, which, on a certain signal, rushed out upon the conspirators, who fled. The vizier was killed as he was passing the door, and the other conspirators, being afterwards taken, were publicly executed.

Heg. 849 (1445).—The king's power decaying rapidly, the Zemindars of Bayana placed themselves under the government of Sultan Mahmood Khilji, of Malwa, and Syud Mahomed falling sick, he died a natural death, leaving behind him the character of a weak and dissolute prince. He reigned twelve years, and was succeeded by his son Alla-ood-Deen.

Heg. 854 (1450).—Alla-ood-Deen, having adopted Bheilole Lody as his son, formally abdicated the throne in his favour, on condition of being permitted to reside without molestation at Budaoon. Alla-ood-Deen dwelt at Budaoon until his death, which happened A.H. 883, A.D. 1478, his reign at Delhi being seven years, and his retirement at Budaoon nearly twenty-eight.



The Rival Brothers.

CHAPTER I.

GHEIAS-OOD-DEEN, a young and handsome youth in his eighteenth year, was attended by a slave who was scattering perfume round the spot upon which his master sat. This youth had just ascended the throne of his father, late king of the Deccan, and gave promise of being a popular sovereign. In conformity with the practice of his predecessor, he behaved very graciously to all the members of his court, remembering the zealous supporters of his family, and distinguishing them with especial marks of favour. He raised several of his most deserving nobles to places of distinction, and rewarded his late father's faithful domestics with offices of trust. This greatly excited the jealousy of Lallcheen, principal Toorky slave of the household, who not only aspired to obtain his freedom, but to be advanced to some post of honour. He was now in the presence of his young sovereign, towards whom he had frequently evinced his dissatisfaction by certain marks which, though they apparently expressed nothing, were nevertheless sufficiently intelligible.

“Lallcheen,” said the young king, “why do you appear thus dissatisfied? My conduct, since my accession to the throne of my father, seems to have diffused general content, and why should you be an exception?”

“Slaves have no great cause for satisfaction under any condition of bondage; but when faithful servants are not rewarded, they have just grounds for complaint.”

“ They can have none whatever, so long as the master is not unjust. Slaves cannot expect to be treated like princes.”

“ But they can expect to be treated like men who have minds to appreciate, and hearts to feel the difference between justice and tyranny.”

“ But I think it an act of injustice to place a slave upon a level with a free man. By the condition of his destiny, the fetters of slavery have been cast upon him, and he must wear them. I do not approve of elevating bondmen to posts of honour.”

“ Has the sovereign forgotten that the queen-mother was originally one of that degraded class which the king thinks it unjust to dignify ?”

“ No woman is degraded by her condition, because she is the mere instrument in the Deity’s hands for perpetuating the human race. The son derives neither rank nor degradation from the mother ;—it therefore matters not whether she be a slave or a princess.”

“ The king reasons like a profound casuist,” said Lallcheen, with an ill-disguised sneer ; “ and I feel how utterly impossible it is for a slave to beat down the lofty fences of royal logic.”

“ You do not, however, seem very heartily convinced by it ; but of this I would have you in future assured—that it will be one of the principles of my government not to place my bondmen upon a level with free men.”

Lallcheen had been a favourite with the late king, whose memory his son held in great reverence ; he therefore bore with the liberty of the servitor who during the last reign had received a sort of licence to express his thoughts without reserve, being a person of considerable intelligence and of an active inquisitive mind.

Lallcheen was exceedingly mortified at the sentiments expressed by the young king. They were scored upon his mind with literal fidelity, and he secretly meditated revenge, though he did not show it openly. He had sprung from a race of bold haughty barbarians, who held freedom to be the pole-star in the firmament of human glory ; and the friction from the fetters of bondage seemed to rub against the very core of his heart. He panted for liberty as a

drowning man does for the air which the waters exclude from his lips ; and the disappointment with which the sovereign's definitive resolution was charged came over his spirit with a crushing burden that for a moment seemed to weigh it down to the lowest level of degradation. His fierce passions, however, which had long slumbered under the assuasive kindness of his late master, rose to his relief, casting off the burden from his soul as with an arm of might, and lifting it where it could soar unincumbered from the trammels of its griefs, devise new motives of action, and nerve itself to high and important resolves.

The slave had a daughter, the fame of whose beauty had reached the ears of Gheias-ood-Deen. She was as celebrated for her wit as for her personal attractions, and her skill in music was so perfect that she eclipsed all the regular professors of the capital. There was not an accomplishment of which she was not mistress. Her celebrity had already gained her many admirers, and the king expressed a desire to see her.

Lallcheen was not sorry at the opportunity which this circumstance might afford him of mortifying the sovereign, or of punishing him more effectually, and therefore determined to throw the lovely Agha in his master's way in the palace gardens, to which the slave had free access.

The king was one morning walking in the gardens with his brother Shums-ood-Deen, a remarkably beautiful boy in his sixteenth year.

"Who is that yonder, brother," asked the latter, "by the marble tank?"

"I know not ; but, by the gait and figure, something to admire."

"She retires : I fear we shall lose the opportunity of ascertaining who she may be, for handsome strangers are not wont to visit the private gardens of the palace."

"Go quickly and bid her stop ;—say the king desires a word with her."

Shums-ood-Deen bounded forward, and overtook the stranger as she was retiring behind an arbour through a path which led to a back entrance into the gardens.

“Stay, damsel,” said the prince; “the king desires a word with you.”

The stranger turned, and exhibited to the wondering eyes of the royal youth features and a form of such extraordinary beauty that he gazed in speechless admiration. Agha, for it was she, stood before him with a demeanour of undisturbed modesty without uttering a word, awaiting the sovereign’s approach. Gheias-ood-Deen was no less amazed than his brother with the houri form upon which his eyes, as he approached, instantly became riveted.

“Do I,” said he, “behold the marvel of my capital, to whom report has ascribed such unrivalled perfections?”

“The king beholds the daughter of his slave,” said Agha, with her eye fixed somewhat proudly on the youthful monarch.

“He is henceforward free for the daughter’s sake,” said the sovereign, approaching and offering to take her hand.

She retired, and said gravely, “I am an intruder here; may I be permitted to withdraw? It shall be my care not to intrude again upon the king’s privacy.”

“Such intrusions are blessings for which the proudest monarchs of the earth would barter their sceptres. Talk not of intruding, Queen of the Graces!—not only these gardens are henceforth free to thee, but every part of the palace. The sunshine of thy smile will produce a harvest of delight wherever it glows.”

“The daughter of a slave is but an abject thing at best; but the king’s mockery tends to remind her how complete is her abjection.”

Saying this, she withdrew, leaving the two brothers in a state of blended admiration and amazement. Shums-ood-Deen, in the ardour of youthful enthusiasm, had he a throne to offer, felt that he would willingly make her the partner of it on the instant; but Gheias-ood-Deen was influenced by a less sanctified passion. He thought that the offspring of a slave could not for a moment object to be the concubine of a king; nor did he imagine that the slightest impediment would be raised to the proposal, which he contemplated the instant he saw the exquisite beauty of Lallcheen’s daughter.

“What think you, brother, of this girl?” asked Gheias-ood-Deen.

“That until now I had no idea of the beautiful inhabitants of Paradise. I feel my soul elated! Oh! with such a creature I could enjoy more than happiness in this lower world! Had I a throne, she should be my queen.”

“Silly boy!” said the brother, pettishly; “the daughters of slaves do not become thrones.”

“But, brother, the daughter of a slave is at this moment the mother of a king.”

“A bad precedent is not to be followed; therefore no more of this. You must discourage your raptures for the child of Lallcheen; she must become part of my household. I love her, but as monarchs love menials—for their pleasures, and my purpose must not be crossed, Shums-ood-Deen.”

This was said with a deliberate emphasis of tone that implied a threat, if obedience did not follow the injunction. It greatly mortified the prince. He was silent, but nevertheless resolved to contravene the designs of his brother, whose impure intentions towards Agha were to him like a profanation of the sanctuary. His youthful enthusiasm was on fire, and he determined, if possible, to counteract the king's purposes by immediately making honourable love to the slave's daughter; for he could not associate the idea of degradation with anything so perfect. It seemed to him as if the finger of Allah were especially to be traced in that fair work of his creation, and that therefore she ought to be elevated to the highest earthly dignities, instead of being allowed to wither in an atmosphere of social degradation. He lost no time in seeking Lallcheen, whom he found a ready listener to his sallies of enthusiastic admiration for the beautiful girl who had that morning captivated his youthful heart. The slave's hostility towards his master made him attend with greater readiness to the proposals of the prince, who at once declared his readiness to marry the lovely Agha.

“But, prince,” said Lallcheen, “what will the king say to such a connexion as you propose? He thinks that bondmen ought to

live in their fetters ; he will never, therefore, sanction your alliance with slaves."

"I am free," said Shums-ood-Deen, "to marry whom I will ; he has no right to control me in that which essentially regards my domestic happiness. I have resolved to choose for myself, and only await your consent to make me happy."

"Prince, it will not appear flattery to say that I honour your liberal sentiments—that is a matter of course. If you can secure my child's consent, you have mine upon one condition, that I obtain my freedom ; for it would ill become the dignity of Shums-ood-Deen to be the son-in-law of a slave."

"This I promise. Your freedom is a boon which the king will scarcely fail to grant to a brother's supplication. Your daughter would be cheaply purchased at the price of an empire."

The wily father saw that the greatest advantage was to be drawn from the boyish enthusiasm of Shums-ood-Deen ; and his hopes of casting back upon the king the odium which he had made to fall so heavily upon his bond-servant, rose rapidly to their meridian as he listened to the declarations of attachment towards his daughter from the lips of his master's brother. He sought his child, and prepared her for the visit of Shums-ood-Deen, at the same time relating to her his earnest professions of honourable attachment. She received the communication with undisguised pleasure, for she had beheld the prince with more than common satisfaction. His youthful beauty, untainted by the habitual exercise of gross passion, had made a favourable impression upon her ; and she felt gratified by the undisguised expression of delight which passed over his glowing countenance the moment he beheld her.

"Now, my child," said the father, "you have made a flattering conquest. It is no common thing to find a prince entertaining honourable intentions towards those looked upon by the world as excluded from all society but the lowest : appreciate this as it deserves."

"I shall, my father ; but withal, flattering as such approbation is, it may prove the mere effervescence of passion in a youthful bosom, that will pass away with the occasion. At all events, be assured

I shall never give my consent to a union with any man upon whom I have not first bestowed my heart."

With this understanding Lallcheen prepared to introduce the prince, who had declared his intention of visiting her father's house that evening.

The lovers met in Agha's apartments, and were mutually charmed with each other.

CHAPTER II.

ALTHOUGH a slave, Lallcheen was possessed of considerable wealth, and his house would not have disgraced the dignity of a nobleman. On the day Gheias-ood-Deen had seen his slave's daughter, he summoned the father to his presence.

"I have been considering thy services, Lallcheen, and shall reward them; from this moment thou art a free man."

"I accept the royal boon with a bondman's gratitude. But I marvel at this sudden change in the king's sentiments."

"Thou hast a daughter."

"True."

"For her sake, I recall my resolution of the morning, and give thee freedom; but thou must pay the price."

"Name it; I am wealthy."

"I only demand a single jewel."

"If I possess it, the sovereign has only to signify his wish. What jewel does the king demand?"

"Thy daughter."

"Ha! thy slave must feel the honour deeply; but will not the monarch of the Deccan be dishonoured by wedding a slave's daughter?"

"Ay, in truth, he would, Lallcheen, if he were weak enough to wed a slave's daughter; but of that he dreams not. If I give thee liberty, the lovely Agha must be mine upon my own terms."

"King, I am your bondman, but not your pander. I despise liberty upon the terms you offer it. My child would scorn an

impure alliance even with a mightier monarch than Gheias-ood-Deen. She has suitors of proud lineage, who woo her with honourable love."

"Then my offer is refused? 'Tis well! the power that governs an empire is not to be slighted with impunity. You will repent this rash decision,—retire."

Lallcheen did retire more than ever incensed against his royal master. He was stung deeply at the insult offered to his child, in the supposition that she would barter her purity for her father's freedom. He felt himself, moreover, grievously wronged by his royal master harbouring the thought that he could be base enough to sell his daughter's honour at any price. It was an injury neither to be forgiven nor forgotten. He quitted the royal presence with a throbbing heart and burning brow;—the blood had receded from his cheek and lips when he entered the apartment of his child. He found her singing an air in a voice that would have enchanted the nightingales of Cashmere, or drawn a tear of sympathy from the eye of a Peri. It was a strain of exquisite tenderness: the parent's emotions were calmed at the sound of her celestial voice; but the blood returned not to those channels from which the silent struggles of passion had banished it.

"My father," said Agha, as he entered; "why so pale?"

"I have been disturbed, my child, by the king."

"How?"

"He would give me freedom."

"Well, would not that be a blessed deliverance?"

"At the price of my child's honour?"

Agha's cheeks flushed,—they were overspread with an intense crimson. The blood seemed to ebb rapidly from her heart, which fluttered for a moment; but the reflux almost instantly came and poured in upon it a tide of womanly indignation. She continued silent, but the base proposals of one brother imparted by contrast in her thoughts a beautiful colouring to the honourable intentions of the other; and she was already half prepared to love Shums-ood-Deen, and detest his royal relative.

“Well, Agha, what answer shall I return to the master who honours his servant by loving that servant’s daughter?”

“Does my father require that I should frame an answer? Could not his own heart suggest it? My answer would be precisely such as I should return to a snake, were it to ask if I would permit it to sting me.”

“I have anticipated your feelings, my child, and given the sovereign no hopes. He threatens violence; his evil purposes, therefore, must be counteracted by artifice. You must feign acquiescence with his wishes. Having once hushed him into security, I will invite him to a banquet, under the promise of resigning you to his possession, and he shall then see that impunity is not the indefeasible right of kings.”

In obedience to this determination, Lallcheen affected to concur with his master’s views; but prevailed upon him on some plausible pretence to delay enforcing his claim to Agha for a few weeks, promising implicit obedience to his wishes at the end of a specified period.

Meanwhile Shums-ood-Deen had been daily admitted to the presence of Agha, upon whose young heart his generous affection had made a deep impression. She could not help contrasting his disinterested and honourable attachment with the selfish and debasing passion of his brother; and in proportion as her respect for the one declined, her love of the other increased. The father was gratified at witnessing this growing fondness; it roused his parental ambition: he was proud of his daughter, and longed to see her elevated to that distinction which he considered her born to adorn. Shums-ood-Deen was heir apparent to the throne of the Deccan. He might reign, and the beautiful Agha become a queen. These thoughts roused her father’s soul and stirred his passions to fiercer hostility against his royal master, who, as he considered, had so deeply injured him. Though the king was popular among his nobles, yet by some he was much disliked, and those who were hostile to the claims of the elder brother would willingly encourage the elevation of the younger.

Lallcheen took every opportunity which offered of making himself acquainted with the feelings of the nobles. Those who had not been raised to posts of honour and emolument in the state, were dissatisfied and ripe for a change of government; but were kept in awe by the large majority of the well-affected. The sovereign fancying himself secure in the affection of his subjects, took no care to subdue the murmurings of such as he considered unworthy of the royal patronage; he had, therefore, a greater number of enemies than he was aware of.

Lallcheen's plot rapidly advanced towards maturity, and he at length invited the king to an entertainment, promising that he would resign his daughter to him. Gheias-ood-Deen received the invitation with a thrill of passionate satisfaction. Agha not being privy to her father's treachery, he had taken care on that day to remove her from the house on some plausible pretence, in order that she might not interfere with the execution of his scheme. It had been already arranged that she and the king's brother should be married at the beginning of the ensuing year.

With Gheias-ood-Deen were also invited his chief Omrahs, who were all much attached to his person. At an early hour the royal party arrived, and were welcomed by the slave with extravagant marks of loyalty. The nobles, astonished at the splendour of the entertainment, freely expressed their surprise that a bondman should possess so much wealth.

"Wealth," said Lallcheen, "will not purchase freedom, if it does not please the monarch to grant it."

"What can compensate for the sacrifice of honest services?" said Gheias-ood-Deen, with a condescending smile; "I value them more, Lallcheen, than your gold."

"But not more than my daughter, king," said the slave, significantly.

"No, no; all things have their price. I set your ransom high; you will, therefore, value your freedom according to the price paid for it."

The guests placed themselves at the banquet. Every luxury which the country produced was there in generous profusion.

The rarest wines sparkled in golden chalices, and freemen waited upon the guests of the slave. The wine went round, and the king anticipating the joy of being presented to the beautiful Agha, drank liberally of the enlivening beverage. He began to be exhilarated.

Nautch girls were introduced to heighten the pleasures of the entertainment: they swam through the mazes of the dance with a light, floating motion, tinkling the silver bells which hung from their delicately small wrists and ankles, waving their arms with a graceful undulation that gave exquisite elegance to the curving motions of their bodies; every now and then throwing their long veils over their faces, and peeping through them with eyes that might have kindled a ray of admiration even under the tub of Diogenes.

The guests began to express their delight by loud acclamations, and it had already become evident that the sovereign was considerably elated by the wine he had taken. Lallcheen had been cautious in keeping himself perfectly calm. He drank but sparingly, and was therefore in a condition to take the best advantage of the state of his guests. When he considered the favourable moment had arrived for the consummation of his vengeance, he commanded the nautch girls to retire, and then in a whisper requested the king would order his nobles to withdraw, that his obedient host might introduce his daughter.

Gheias-ood-Deen, elated at the thought of beholding the beautiful creature who had so inflamed his passions, commanded his Omrahs to quit the room, as he desired to have some private conversation with the host. Excited by wine, and unsuspecting of evil consequences, they obeyed with ready alacrity, singing as they reeled from the apartment, and laughing stupidly at the fatuity of their own thoughts. When the guests had retired, the traitor led his sovereign respectfully to an ottoman, seated him, and began to arrest his attention by extravagant encomiums upon the beauty of his daughter. Gheias-ood-Deen listened with evident delight, and at length expressed himself impatient to be introduced to the idol of his love. Lallcheen perceiving that he was raised

to the proper pitch, told him he would instantly go and bring the peerless Agha to his royal master and guest. Quitting the room, he shortly returned, armed with a naked dagger.

“Where is your daughter?” asked the king.

“Here,” replied the slave, raising the dagger, and advancing towards his sovereign with the gleaming instrument of death in his hand.

Gheias-ood-Deen, though much intoxicated, staggered towards the traitor, and attempted to wrest the weapon from his grasp; but being unable to walk steadily, he fell, and rolled down a flight of steps. A eunuch was in the room, who, seizing the king by his hair, threw him upon his back, and pierced out his eyes with the point of a crease.

Lallcheen, perceiving that he had now gone too far to retreat, removed the wounded monarch to another apartment, and immediately despatched a messenger to the nobles who had that night been his guests, desiring in the king's name that they would immediately return. The message was delivered to each noble separately, so that one by one they reached the slave's residence. As the first who arrived entered the chamber where he had so lately partaken of Lallcheen's hospitality, he was put to death by two eunuchs, who flung a noose over his head and strangled him. Thus the whole of them were destroyed to the number of twenty-four, and their bodies cast forth a prey to jackals.

On the morrow, when Agha returned to her home, she was shocked beyond expression at the sanguinary revenge which her father had taken. Her heart was chilled: she felt that she never could again look upon her parent with respect, and the fond yearnings of her bosom grew cold. She reproached him with his cruelty, but he silenced her with a stern rebuke. The disaffected Omrahs thronged to his house, prepared to assist him in his future views with respect to the government. The daring act of blinding the king and slaying his nobles, had produced a general panic. The people looked on in silent amazement; when Lallcheen, thinking it was high time to act definitively, placed Shums-ood-Deen, the deposed king's brother, upon the throne, and sent the latter in confinement to the fortress of Sagur.

CHAPTER III.

THE conduct of Lallcheen excited great indignation : but the king had so lately given way to intemperance and the indulgence of his grosser passions, that those hopes entertained of him at his accession to the throne had subsided. He had raised many enemies by his excesses. The traitor, moreover, was supported by the queen-mother, of whom her younger son, Shums-ood-Deen, had ever been the favourite. He was extremely popular, too, among many of the Omrahs ; for he was a generous youth, possessing many virtues, and no flagrant vices.

The moment his brother was deposed, Lallcheen, assisted by the influence of the queen-mother, placed Shums-ood-Deen upon the musnud. The young monarch was now eager to make Agha his queen ; but she, shocked at what had passed, could not be prevailed upon, for the moment, to consent. She would not see her father, and to the king's urgent entreaties to make him happy, she replied :—

“Alas ! the auspices under which you reign are evil. I fear that prosperity can never track the steps of a prince whose path to the throne has been stained with blood.”

“My noble Agha, we must bow to the crisis that has suddenly come upon us. I mourn the event which has elevated me to the highest of human dignities as much as you can do, and detest the agents who have placed me upon the musnud, with hands dyed in my brother's blood. But as he has been disabled, it was necessary that a sovereign should be found ; and I am the next of kin. You know it to be against the canons of our constitution that a blind prince should reign. Were I to refuse to hold the sceptre, I should be looked upon with suspicion, and my life would be in perpetual peril.”

“Prince, I shrink from becoming the wife of a man who has obtained his dignities by violence. I acquit you of all participation in the crime which has so suddenly made you a monarch, but will never consent to share your sullied honours. I foresee only misery from my parent's ambition. Though the deposed king

would have heaped upon me the heaviest wrongs which can weigh down the spirit of a virtuous woman, still I would have left him to the punishment which invariably awaits the wicked, administered by a higher arbiter of human dereliction than man."

"Agha!" cried the Prince, passionately, "have I deserved to forfeit your love?"

"Not my love, Prince; but my consent to be your bride. You must now form higher views; there is an insuperable bar between us."

"Nay, had we been united while I was only heir-apparent to the throne to which I have been just elevated, I might have soon come to that inheritance to which your father's violence has prematurely raised me."

"But then you would have ascended the musnud with honour; now, you have ascended it with disgrace."

"I am ready to relinquish all honours for you, Agha."

"That may not be; you have pushed the stone from the precipice, and, in spite of all mortal endeavours, it will roll to the bottom. Farewell, and may your reign be happy."

One day, a singular-looking devotee was seen to cast himself upon the ground without the walls of the capital, and to pronounce, in a tone of solemn vaticination, woe to the kingdom of the Deccan. In proof of his inspiration, the fanatic declared himself ready to fast forty days on the very spot where he then lay. He was old and withered to a mere skeleton; his age was said to exceed a hundred years; for the oldest inhabitants remembered him but as a very aged man. His hair still hung over his shoulders so copiously as to cover them like a mantle; but it was so impregnated with filth that its colour was not to be ascertained. He had no beard, save a few straggling hairs scattered over his chin like stunted bushes upon the desert rock. His ears were so long that they nearly reached his shoulders, which rose towards them with physical sympathy, as if to relieve the head from their weight. His gums were toothless, and so blackened by opium and the smoke of tobacco, that as his lips parted—and when they did, they seemed to shrink from a renewed contact, and to seek

severally protection from the nose and chin—the whole mouth presented a feature of sickening deformity. Every rib in the old man's body was as traceable as the lines which mark the latitude and longitude upon a chart. The very sinews had wasted into thin, rigid cords, without either flexibility or tension.

The approach of this sainted object to the city was a circumstance of much uneasiness to those who had acted so conspicuous a part in the recent change of government. The veneration in which he was held made them fear the effect of his crazy predictions upon the excited multitude.

Lallcheen hoped the old man would confirm his declarations by a fast of forty days; flattering himself that, by exposing to the people the delusions by which the object of their veneration evidently juggled them, he should be able to show that the fanatic was a worthless impostor. A tent was consequently ordered to be pitched over the prostrate devotee, and a number of men appointed to watch him day and night, in order to see that no human nourishment passed his lips. Two persons were constantly by his side.

Lallcheen visited him. As the traitor appeared before him, the seer raised his head; his eye instantly kindled as if with a divine afflatus, and he said, waving his arm solemnly:

“The blood of the murdered shall give life to the avenger! When slaves rebel, and grasp the thunderbolt of power, they eventually hurl it against their own heads. The web of fate is spun by different threads, but the woof of thine is black. Prepare, Lallcheen, for the explosion which thy own ambitious hand has kindled. The match is already at the train; thou wilt soon hear and feel the desolating concussion! Woe to the destroyer!”

The slave trembled, in spite of his conviction that the saint was crazed. He dreaded the influence of his wild sallies of prophecy. Day after day passed, and neither food nor water was seen to pass the diviner's lips. The guards were astonished, and beheld him with sacred awe. They vowed they never slept: they were constantly changed, but precisely the same result followed—the inspired man was seen to taste nothing. He sat upon the cold ground, without a rag to cover him, in an apparent state of devout

abstraction, never uttering a word ; except now and then, when he poured out terrible denunciations of wrath against those who had blinded the late king and murdered his nobles.

Fifteen days of the term of fasting had already expired, and no change appeared in the prophet. His eyes occasionally sparkled with fierce brightness, though he said nothing, and the watchers began to grow uneasy in his company. They feared a proximity to something unearthly ; and in proportion as they were impressed with this superstitious feeling, in their eyes their sacred charge grew more deformed and hideous. They placed themselves at the very extremity of the tent, and were so awed by his ghoul-like appearance, that they were obliged, for relief, to turn their faces to the broad sky, and remit their vigils until they had recovered their self-possession. They took it for granted, however, that he could not, like some less disgusting reptiles, feed upon the dust, and therefore hesitated not to report, at the end of their term of watching, that the saint had taken nothing but a chameleon diet, and yet was as lively as that celebrated lizard after a six months' fattening upon good wholesome air.

The people's astonishment was daily increased by the report of those persons appointed to watch the devotee. They already began to talk of dedicating a temple to him, and paying him divine honours.

On the twentieth morning of his voluntary abstinence, the venerable probationer desired that some of the authorities might be summoned to attest his having undergone half of his prescribed mortification, and to witness his performance of a holy rite. Lallchen accordingly visited the seer.

"Behold !" said the man, "I have subsisted twenty days without earthly food, sustained by a heavenly nutriment, which the eye does not see, but the body is sensible of. This night the Prophet has visited me, and here is the sign of his coming ;" saying this he held between his bony fingers a white pebble about the size of a plum. "Within this," he continued, "is the revelation which I shall make known to you at the termination of my penance."

Having once more exhibited the pebble, he jerked it from his fingers into his mouth, and swallowed it in an instant.

“For twenty days I need no further nourishment. A stone is neither meat nor drink, yet will it invigorate this withered body to tell you things to come. Leave me.”

He could not be prevailed upon to make any further communication; but relapsed into silence. The slave was abashed before the presence of a man whom he despised, and who, he felt satisfied was an impostor; nevertheless, he dared not commit an act of violence against one generally held to be in direct communication with Heaven. In spite of his incredulity, he could not conceive how the pretended diviner had evaded the scrutiny of his guards. He had used every precaution to detect the imposture, without success. Day after day passed on, but the same report was every morning received that the saint had not tasted food. Multitudes flocked round the tent to behold this extraordinary man. Persons who were diseased approached to touch him, imagining that their distempers would be removed by the sacred contact. He pronounced blessings upon the poor, which won him the homage of the needy crowd who thronged to receive his benedictions. The marvel of his supernatural fast rapidly spread over the country, and people came from every part of the vicinity to behold him.

The term of his abstinence at length expired: no one had seen him taste a morsel of food or a drop of water for forty days. On the morning of the forty-first day he rose, and, quitting his tent, was greeted with profound reverence by thousands who had assembled to behold him. Money was thrown at his feet, which he picked up and scattered among the religious mendicants who had come far and near to offer him their homage. He now partook of a small quantity of milk, and then turning his face towards the holy city, repeated a certain prayer. Having poured dust upon his head, he crossed his arms upon his breast, and invoked audibly the name of the Prophet; then came the solemn ob-
juration:

“Woe to the man of blood! he shall fall by the hand of him

from whose eyes he has shut out the sunbeam! The sceptre shall drop from the grasp of his minion, who shall find that happiness is not the inheritance of kings. But the innocent shall not be confounded with the guilty: the slave shall be requited as becomes a regicide! The voice of our holy Prophet has spoken, and it shall come to pass!"

He dropped his arms and hobbled slowly through the crowd, who made way before him, following him with acclamations. Lallcheen was disappointed at not having been able to detect the juggle of this patriarchal deceiver. How he had managed to elude the scrutiny of the watchers was a fact which baffled his comprehension; and he was fearful that the credulity of the multitude as to the fakeer's direct communication with Heaven might lead to dangerous consequences. No doubt was entertained of the man's prophetic endowments and supernatural sustentation. That he had fasted forty days and forty nights was a fact which few questioned; and the general expectation was that some fearful calamity was about to befall the king and his ministers. Groups of idle gossippers were seen at the corners of the streets, communicating their suspicions and whispering their fears.

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN Shums-ood-Deen was placed upon the musnud, intimidated by the fate of his unhappy brother, he was afraid to oppose the man who had raised him to the throne; he had therefore little more than the name of king. All the substantive power was in the hands of his late father's slave, who assumed the title of Mullik Naib, an office equivalent to regent; and the nobility who had escaped the sword, seeing no safety but in submission, bowed to his authority. The queen-mother, having been originally a slave, paid the utmost deference to the traitor who had blinded her elder son, in order that she might obviate any mischief against the younger, whom she advised to submit to the wiser

counsels of his minister, observing that he was indebted to him for his crown, and that the man who had so easily deposed one brother might with equal facility depose the other. "Besides," she said, "you owe him a debt of gratitude, and, depend upon it, he will expect it to be paid. You will find, my son, many malicious insinuations breathed into your ear against your benefactor; but let me conjure you to give them no heed, for the king who requites benefits with injury can have no security for his throne."

"Alas! mother," said the young monarch, "I have been exalted only to misery; I find the throne a seat of thorns instead of roses. My elevation has been the means of separating me for ever from the object of my soul's idolatry, and I am become a wretch whom the veriest outcast might pity."

"Nay, this is mere delusion: higher objects will engross your attention now. Alliances will be sought with you by princes; seek not, then, the attachment of slaves."

"Did you not recommend gratitude towards my benefactor?"

"True, I did; but this may be shown without marrying his daughter."

"To marry her is the one dear wish of my heart; not in order to signify my gratitude to the man who has placed me upon the pinnacle of human greatness, but to signalise my love for one who is at once an honour to her sex and to her country."

"These are youthful raptures, my son, which the cares of royalty will soon stifle."

"Never! the impress upon my heart is too deep to wear out: it will never be effaced but by the worm."

The queen-mother could not succeed in persuading her son to relinquish all thoughts of the lovely Agha, which she was anxious to do, in order that he might form an alliance that would secure him upon the throne, and render him independent of a man who might turn all his influence against him, should he be impelled by caprice or interest to serve some other object of his ambition.

Shums-ood-Deen's mother treated Lallcheen with great cordiality, and he, in return, behaved to her with much respect, sending her valuable presents, and using every method to secure

her confidence ; but this conduct on both sides was mere temporising, as no real cordiality subsisted between them.

It was now Lallcheen's grand aim to see his daughter united to the young king, and it mortified him extremely to find that the only impediment was her own scruples. His soul was stung at the chance of losing that reward which he had waded through blood to obtain. Disappointed ambition exasperated him against what he called the rebellion of his child, and he determined to compel her to embrace the dignity which he had steeped his soul in guilt to secure for her. Knowing the readiness of Shums-ood-Deen to make her his queen, he was the more enraged that any impediments should arise from her who was the party that would be especially benefited by such a union ; and he sought her with a determination to enforce obedience to an authority which he had never hitherto exercised in vain.

"Agha," said he, sternly, "can it be possible that you refuse to become the wife of a man whom you have confessed you love, and who is ready to make you the partner of his throne?"

"It is true, my father ; I never could sit upon a throne the ascent to which is stained with the blood of its legitimate inheritor. The present king shares in the crime of his brother's deponers so long as he partakes of the fruit of their guilt."

"Girl, this is not the language of a child towards her parent ; you know the first wish of my heart is that you should share his dignities with the son of my late master. If the man whom I propose you should wed were odious to you there might be some reason in your opposition, but as this is not the case, I expect you immediately to become the wife of Shums-ood-Deen."

"That will not be while he sits upon a blood-stained throne. You are my father, and I know your power. My life is at your disposal, but not my will ; you may take the one, but you shall never coerce the other !"

"No, Agha, I will not take your life, however you may rebel ; but your liberty is likewise at my disposal, and depend upon it, that if you persist in a stubborn opposition to my wishes, you shall suffer penalties under captivity which you little dream of."

“I have well weighed the consequences of resistance, and am prepared to pay the penalty. I feel that the man who would not hesitate to dethrone his king would have little scruple about imprisoning his daughter. But, to put you at once out of suspense as to my determination, I tell you, firmly and solemnly, that I never will comply with your wishes. Take me to the prison you have prepared for me !”

Lallcheen did not reply, but quitted her with a blanched cheek. He was deeply vexed at this unexpected bar to his ambition from his own child. The fruits of crime were already ripening, but he perceived that they had only a flavour of bitterness. He remembered the predictions of the devotee, and the sun of his glory grew dim—a shadow passed over it, but the disc again grew light, and he hoped that it would be no more obscured.

Difficulties now began to thicken around him. Feroze Chan and Ahmud Chan, uncles to the deposed king, had promised their brother-in-law, Mahmood Shah, father of Gheias-ood-Deen, when he was on his death-bed, that they would be faithful and loyal to his son ; they accordingly served him with submission and fidelity. Being from the capital at the time their royal relative was deposed by Lallcheen, they escaped the unhappy fate of the nobles who were assassinated. Finding, however, that the king had been dispossessed and blinded, their wives instigated their husbands to avenge the indignity to which their nephew had been subjected. Feroze and Ahmud Chan readily listened to these natural appeals in favour of their injured relative, but the traitor, discovering their intentions through his emissaries, complained to Shums-ood-Deen, and, accusing those nobles of treason, demanded their instant execution. Hoping to excite the young sovereign's fears, he represented to him that their object evidently was the restoration of Gheias-ood-Deen, which would involve the death of the reigning monarch, as, the moment the deposed king was restored, he would naturally wreak his vengeance upon all who had been instrumental in hurling him from his throne, among whom the man raised to that throne would be one of the first to suffer.

Shums-ood-Deen being emboldened by the known influence

and bravery of his uncles, resisted these importunities of the slave, whose imperious exercise of authority already began to be exceedingly vexatious. Seeing that the opposition was likely to become serious, Lallcheen sought the queen-mother, and artfully representing to her the perils by which her son was beset, obtained her promise to co-operate with him in counteracting the confederacy forming against the government of her younger son.

“If,” said he, “we do not get rid of these Omrahs, the worst consequences are to be apprehended. Their connexion with the blood-royal gives them an influence which must endanger the safety of your son ; and you being suspected of having participated in the late revolution, will be certainly singled out as one of the first victims. If they are not to be overcome by open force, the concealed dagger is a sure and speedy remedy against threatened hostility.”

These arguments rousing the queen’s fears, she hastened to her son, threw herself at his feet, and implored him to provide for his own and his mother’s safety by ordering the instant seizure of the two refractory nobles before they should be aware that their hostile designs had been made known.

Shums-ood-Deen, overcome by the earnest entreaties of his mother, was reluctantly induced to consent to the apprehension of the husbands of his aunts. They, however, having obtained intelligence of his design, quitted Koolburga, and shut themselves up in the fortress of Sagur, where they were for the present secure from the machinations of their enemy.

An officer of the name of Suddoo, formerly a servant of the royal family, commanded in Sagur. He was rich and powerful, and received the princes with the greatest hospitality, doing everything in his power to evince his attachment to them. He was entirely in the interests of the deposed monarch, and felt the strongest antipathy towards the traitor who had mutilated him and assassinated his nobles. He had been elevated by Gheias-ood-Deen to his present dignity as a reward for long and faithful services, and his gratitude did not sleep. Towards Lallcheen he always entertained a secret enmity, suspecting the

ntegrity of his purposes, and believing him to be nothing better than a hollow hypocrite.

The fortress under Suddoo's command was one of great strength, and in it for the present the princes felt themselves perfectly secure. Here they were determined to remain until they could assemble a sufficient body of forces to oppose the treacherous slave.

In pursuance of this determination, they addressed letters to Shums-ood-Deen and the principal nobility, declaring that they were making preparations to chastise the man who had committed such an act of outrage upon his sovereign, at the same time declaring that they had no intention of disturbing the existing government. They stated that, as near relatives of the deposed monarch, they conceived it their duty to use every effort to inflict justice upon him by whom he had been so irreparably injured, and called upon the nobility and the reigning sovereign to assist them in punishing so grievous an offender. If this were done they promised entire submission to Shums-ood-Deen's government, and concluded by a solemn asseveration that nothing should deter them from bringing retribution upon the head of Lallcheen.

The king was not disposed to look unfavourably at this communication. The trammels which his benefactor, as the sanguinary slave always called himself, had cast upon him, cramped his youthful and ardent spirit. Nothing but his affection for the daughter made him hesitate upon sacrificing the father. This caused him at first to waver; he thought upon her beauty, her accomplishments, and his passion began to blaze. How would she endure to see her father given up to certain death by the man who professed to love her as his own soul? Would she not spurn him, would she not shrink with loathing from the destroyer of her parent? He reflected upon that parent's baseness, his ambition, his tyranny; but his love for Agha bore down all opposition arising from the contemplation of her father's worthlessness, and he finally determined to protect the man whom by every principle of equity he was bound to sacrifice.

Lallcheen meanwhile was not insensible to what was going on

He was now more than ever anxious that his daughter should be united to the reigning monarch, as he imagined it would tend to confirm his own influence in the state, and put an end at once to those hostile measures which the family of Gheias-ood-Deen were taking to vindicate the wrongs of their royal relative: it would moreover enable him to command the whole energies of Shums-ood-Deen's kingdom, civil, political and military, which he would have the power of employing to counteract the hostile intentions of his foes. He felt himself, nevertheless, in a state of great embarrassment, and began to entertain such designs as are generally the resort of desperate men. Although conscious of his unpopularity, he had nevertheless secured the favour of the troops by paying up their arrears, and allowing them some privileges which they had never hitherto enjoyed. All the disaffected Omrahs too, of whom there were not a few, tendered him their services, and declared that they would maintain his cause to the last drop of their blood. He, however, was fully aware how little confidence is to be placed either upon the professions or promises of unprincipled men. His own heart was a faithful interpreter of what such promises and professions amounted to, and he therefore felt anything but in a state of security. This rendered him desperate. The opposition of his daughter had so exasperated him against her that he had treated her with a severity which, instead of subduing her resolution, had only the more firmly determined her to thwart his wishes with an indomitable resolution, which he did not imagine she possessed. To all his promises of tenderness towards her, if she would only relax from her stubborn opposition, she replied by a calm look of defiance, that moved him more than once to acts of violence. She shrank not from the arm that struck her to the earth, but rose without a murmur of complaint, and smiled upon the impotent malice that would stifle her conscience under the claims of parental authority.

The situation of the slave was now becoming critical. He sought the queen-mother, and represented to her the danger to which she must necessarily be exposed, should the avengers of her elder son's deposition succeed in gaining possession of the

capital. She had never been popular with the Omrahs, and therefore began to fear that her fate would be involved in that of Lallcheen, as it was generally believed that she had been more than privy to the late massacre of the nobles at the slave's house. Imagining her safety inseparable from his, she hastened to her son, and demanded his protection for Lallcheen. "It is evident," she said, "that the pretended avengers of your brother's wrongs seek but the gratification of their own ambition, either in your death or degradation. Our common interests require that we should oppose them."

"Are our means sufficient?"

"You have the confidence of the army and of the chief Omrahs, and the enemy can only hope to seduce under their banners the disaffected, who are as likely to become traitors to their present masters as they were to their former. We have no alternative but a resolute and fierce resistance; let me entreat you, therefore, to return an unqualified defiance to those haughty rebels, who seek to subvert your government."

Shums-ood-Deen being thus prevailed upon by his mother to act with instant decision, returned an answer to Feroze and Ahmud Chan which served only to inflame those princes without bettering his own cause. They, with the assistance of Suddoo, having collected three thousand horse and foot, proceeded towards the capital, calculating with much confidence that other troops would join them on their march. Disappointed, however, in this expectation, they halted for some time on the banks of the river Beema, without receiving any reinforcements. All the chiefs withheld their aid, as if they considered the good cause desperate. This, nevertheless, did not deter the princes from proceeding with their present means to put into immediate execution their design of vindicating the wrongs of a much-injured sovereign. It was accordingly agreed that they should advance without further delay, with the regal canopy carried over the head of Feroze Chan. Upon this occasion his brother Ahmud was raised to the rank of Ameer-ool-Omrah, Suddoo to that of Meer Nobut, and Meer Feiz Oolla Anjoo to that of Vakeel or minister.

On the arrival of the princes within four coss of the city, Lallcheen marched out to meet them, accompanied by the young king. He had distributed great sums of money among the officers and troops, which had secured their present fidelity. Knowing that the means of his enemies were insufficient to purchase the treachery of his army, he advanced against them with great confidence. His own numerical superiority caused him to look upon victory as certain; and when he considered the raw, undisciplined state of the hostile forces, his confidence grew into arrogance, which eventually did fatal mischief to his cause.

Notwithstanding the disadvantages under which the princes laboured, they did not decline an engagement. They trusted to their good intentions, and the general enthusiasm of their troops. A severe battle was consequently fought in the vicinity of the town of Merkole; and the brothers being defeated, after an obstinate resistance, fled with their adherents to the fort of Sagur.

The victors were beyond measure elated at the successful issue of this first battle. The power of Lallcheen increased his presumption and that of the queen-mother, which at length rose to such a height that many officers of the court privately offered their services to the defeated princes, whom they advised to lose no time in procuring pardon from Shums-ood-Deen, by offers of immediately returning to their allegiance, and repairing to the capital without loss of time, in order to concert future plans for punishing the traitor and re-establishing the lawful supremacy.

Lallcheen was too much engrossed by the views of his ambition, which rose with his success, to observe that a silent but secret disaffection was working among the nobles and some of the most influential officers of the army. Confidence rendered him haughty, and where he was in the habit of conciliating he began to command.

CHAPTER V.

THE disgust which the pampered minion daily excited by his arrogance rendered him shortly so unpopular, that the brothers Feroze and Ahmud Chan resolved to embrace the advice of those Omrahs who had promised to favour their cause. Relying upon their assurances, in the sincerity of which they were confirmed by the growing unpopularity of Lallcheen, they sent Meir Feiz Oolla Anjoo, Syud Kumal-ood-Deen, and other persons of distinction, to the slave and the queen-mother, representing that fear only had occasioned their rebellion, of which they now sincerely repented, and promising that, if the sovereign would send them written assurances of pardon, they would repair to court. The traitor, imagining that if they were once in the capital he should have the means of disposing of them at pleasure, was elated by these overtures; and repairing forthwith to the king, persuaded him to listen favourably to their supplications. Accordingly letters, containing flattering assurances of forgiveness, were immediately despatched to the refractory princes.

Since her last positive refusal to espouse the king, Agha had never been once permitted to leave her apartment; but having found means to corrupt the two women to whose custody she was consigned, she quitted her father's house unobserved, and left the city in a covered litter. Knowing that Feroze and Ahmud Chan were at the Fort of Sagur, she determined to proceed thither, and cast herself upon their protection. They received her with the greatest respect. Her story deeply interested them. Her generous forbearance in refusing to marry the reigning sovereign because his ascent to the musnud had been stained with blood exalted her highly in their estimation, and in their overtures to the king they stipulated in her favour for oblivion of the past and assurances of future kind treatment. The father, though exasperated at her escape, thought that the wisest policy would be to dissemble his anger, hoping yet to overcome her repugnance, and to see her queen of the Deccan. She, however, refused to return to the

capital unless she were guaranteed the protection of some influential person who could shield her from her father's violence. It was ultimately agreed that she should dwell with the queen, who offered her an asylum in her palace.

She had some difficulty in concurring with any arrangement that should put her again in the power of him who, though her natural protector, had treated her with savage severity. She feared that under the queen's roof she should not be secure from the oppression of that father towards whom she felt the natural instincts of affection giving way to those harsher feelings which tyranny, even though exercised under the questionable plea of paternal authority, can never fail to excite.

The brothers received Shums-ood-Deen's assurances of pardon with some misgivings, although these were couched in the strongest terms of affectionate welcome. They knew the treacherous heart of the man by whose sinister counsels the sovereign was swayed, and their minds were in a state of vibration between pacification and resistance. The day after the royal communication arrived, the two brothers were sitting upon a terrace consulting whether they should venture to the capital.

"I have no confidence in the king's promises," said Ahmud Chan, "because he is under the control of those to whom treachery is too familiar not to be resorted to, should their interests suggest such a course. The moment we are within the walls of the capital we shall be in the slave's power, and we have reason to know how little mercy he has for those who wear his fetters. Slaves are proverbially and practically the worst of tyrants."

"But," said Feroze, "we have our security in the dissatisfaction of the nobles, who already look upon him with an eye of jealousy. They can ill bear to see a menial, not only raised above their heads, but affecting to rule them. The troops have been won by his gold, but as his coffers get low their zeal will cool, and the moment the reaction comes he will be in jeopardy."

"But meanwhile we shall be in danger. It is a nice question to decide whether we should throw ourselves upon the sovereign's forgiveness or continue in arms, for there is danger in both."

“The least danger will be the best choice ; and I think we shall incur less risk in repairing to the capital than in keeping up our hostility with such insufficient means.”

“But we have promised protection to the slave’s daughter against her father’s violence.”

“That is guaranteed by the king.”

“The promises of monarchs are hollow. They are too often made for convenience, and broken at pleasure.”

While the brothers were debating whether they should disband their troops and accept Shums-ood-Deen’s offers of pardon, or remain his declared enemies, a Cashmerian madman passed by. His dress was covered with red paint. A chowry was stuck in his turban, and round his legs were bound wisps of grass. In his hand he flourished a long thin bamboo, at the head of which was fixed an orange. Approaching the princes, he said, “I am come from the Prophet with happy tidings, Feroze Chan. He has deputed me to conduct you to Koolburga, and place you upon the musnud, and I shall do his bidding. You may smile, Feroze Chan, but this will not be the first time a fool has set up a king.”

Regarding this as a happy omen, and remembering the prediction of the saint who had fasted forty days, the brothers, accompanied by Agha, proceeded immediately to Koolburga, where they were warmly welcomed by the young monarch. Lallcheen received them with a studied civility ; from the first moment they met he and the princes were visibly guarded in their conduct, and the slave, with all his subtlety, was unable to win the confidence of either brother.

No sooner had Feroze and Ahmud Chan entered the capital, than they endeavoured to render themselves popular with the citizens, who, it was sufficiently evident, were by no means contented under the existing government. In order to satisfy the incapacity of the troops, Lallcheen had been reduced to the necessity of drawing largely upon the people’s pockets, and as his exactions were grievous, their dislike of him was bitter in proportion. The troops, too, finding that his bounty had subsided, relaxed in their fidelity, and murmurs began to be everywhere

heard. The slave was roused to a sense of his danger ; but seeing he possessed the confidence of the monarch and his mother, he fancied that by sheltering himself behind their influence he should escape any mischief which might be threatened by the dissatisfied citizens. His daughter, according to the king's stipulation with the princes, had remained in the queen's house, so that she had not been molested by her father, who, in compliance with the royal wish, had forborne to see her. Thinking such forbearance would satisfy the brothers, he was disposed rigidly to adhere to the terms of his contract with them, when they consented to throw themselves upon the sovereign's mercy, and restore the beautiful Agha to the protection of her friends.

About a fortnight after the arrival of Feroze and Ahmud Chan the king had a public audience. Feroze entered the durbar, accompanied by twelve silehdars devoted to his interest. These silehdars answered to our knights, and followed the courts of their monarchs mounted on their own horses, and in their train rode one or more attendants. Feroze had previously stationed three hundred faithful followers without the audience-chamber. Not the slightest suspicion was awakened either in the breast of the king or his minister. Shortly after Feroze had arrived, his brother Ahmud entered the court, as had been previously concerted. Upon his arrival the princes told Lallcheen that some of their relatives were come from their estates in order to pay their respect to the sovereign, and requested that orders might therefore be given to the porters to admit whomsoever he should send for.

The minister, entertaining no idea of mischief, gave the order without hesitation, affecting great urbanity, as if willing to conciliate those whom he feared, and who, if not propitiated by at least an appearance of courtesy, might eventually prove dangerous enemies.

Shums-ood-Deen, meanwhile, being occupied with the ceremony of receiving his nobles, paid no attention to the number of strangers who accompanied his relatives. The court on this day was very numerously attended, and the shades of disaffection were

seen on many a brow which bent before the throne with the usual expression of homage.

At a signal from Feroze Chan, who took care to occupy Lallcheen's attention by exciting an animated discussion, his brother retired from the audience-chamber under pretence of introducing his relations. In a short time he returned, but, upon attempting to pass the guards with twelve followers, he was stopped, the soldiers refusing to allow him to proceed unless he could give a satisfactory account of himself, and of those by whom he was attended.

The moment was critical, and the danger imminent, but Ahmud resolved to put all to the hazard. Imagining that the plot was discovered, he commanded the guards to stand back, but they instantly interposed themselves between him and the door. Ordering his followers to draw their swords, and unsheathing his own at the same moment, he buried it in the body of the foremost man who had opposed his entrance. His companions, following so resolute an example, attacked the guards with such spirit that they were soon overpowered, and many slain. Ahmud rushed into the durbar with his sword drawn and his dress spotted with blood.

The utmost confusion prevailed. A few of the minister's creatures assembled round him, and endeavoured to protect their patron; but all the rest of the assembly fled: they were suffered to escape, as their flight only rendered the capture of the traitor more sure. Pale and trembling, the latter stood in the midst of his attendants imploring mercy; but when he found that it would be denied, he summoned his energies for a last struggle. His followers behaved with great gallantry, and while they were fighting in his defence, a body of soldiers stationed in the courts of the palace rushing in, saved the king and his minister from immediate destruction.

The three hundred adherents of Feroze Chan, hearing the din of battle, quitted their station, and repairing to the spot, attacked and put to flight the royal guards, together with the dependents of Lallcheen, and in a short time the palace was in possession of the two princes. They were soon joined by many disaffected nobles;

and when the issue was known to the citizens, acclamations were everywhere heard, and threats of extermination against the tyrant. It was now clear that Feroze and Ahmud Chan were masters of the capital. When the tumult had subsided, the king and Lallcheen were nowhere to be found ; but after a diligent search, being discovered in a subterraneous chamber, they were dragged before the conquerors.

“Traitor !” said Feroze Chan to the now humbled slave, “what punishment do you deserve for your enormities ?”

“Such a punishment as a generous conqueror would inflict.”

“You have pronounced your own doom.”

“Generous souls requite evil with good.”

“But there are degrees of guilt which to pardon would be unjust ; and where mercy is unjustly bestowed it is a crime. Your punishment shall rest with him who has received the greatest injury at your hands.”

Feroze Chan having put chains upon the king and Lallcheen, confined them in the apartment where they had sought shelter, while he, accompanied by the nobility, repaired to the hall of audience and ascended the throne amid the acclamations of his followers ; thus fulfilling the prediction of the Cashmerian madman. He assumed the title of Feroze Shah Roze Afzoon, and, by way of confirming his title, placed upon his thigh the sword of Alla-ood-Deen Hussun Gungoo. Having established his authority without the slightest opposition, he sent for Gheias-ood-Deen from the fort of Sagur. When the unhappy ex-king was brought into the presence of Feroze Chan, the latter said—

“Gheias-ood-Deen, I regret that the laws do not permit a blinded sovereign to reign, or I should have had more joy in placing the sceptre in your hands than in my own. What is there that you would desire to render your life happy ?”

“My requests are two—first, that I may be allowed to inflict punishment with my own hands upon the man who blinded me, and next to perform a pilgrimage to Mecca that expiation may be offered for my sins. There I should wish to pass the remainder of my life, which I purpose devoting to God.”

"Your wishes are granted," said Feroze, "and I shall order the treasurer to remit you annually the sum of five thousand golden ashruffies* for your maintainance, as becomes a prince."

Lallcheen was now brought in chains before his late victim. When he saw Gheias-ood-Deen standing with a drawn sword in the midst of the hall of audience, a clammy moisture oozed from every pore of his body, and he felt as if the dews of death had gathered upon his brow. Being brought close to Gheias-ood-Deen, the latter said, "Who stands before me?"

Lallcheen was silent.

"Let me hear thy voice, slave. What punishment does the man deserve who deposes a monarch and murders his nobles?"

The slave was still silent.

"Traitor, I am blind! it was through thee that these eyes were closed in everlasting darkness. The penalty of crime is now demanded. Art thou prepared to perish?"

There was no answer. The ex-king placed his hand upon Lallcheen's shoulder, and raising his sword, brought it with the full force of an arm of vengeance upon the head of the criminal, who fell dead at the avenger's feet.

On the following day Agha solicited an audience of the new monarch.

"King," she said, "I need not tell you that mercy is the brightest jewel in the regal sceptre. It is the axiom of every country where sovereigns reign and people are obedient."

"On whose account, lovely girl, do you seek to propitiate the royal clemency?"

"On that of the deposed monarch, Shums-ood-Deen. I know him to have been innocent of any participation in the late transactions which have cast such ignominy upon the memory of one whom I would willingly have remembered as a good man. Shums-ood-Deen sought not to reign. Had he rejected the throne, his only alternative was to die. We were plighted to each other. I refused to wed him as a king, when I did not consider his elevation just; but I am prepared to link my destiny with his now the bar is removed which disunited us."

* The ashruffy varied from thirty to forty shillings.

“Your wish, lady, shall be fulfilled. He will be released for your sake, with the government of Dowlatabad as a reward for his temperance upon the throne. You shall be the messenger of these tidings.”

Agha fell at the king's feet; he raised and dismissed her, with kind assurances of future favour. She sought the apartment in which Shums-ood-Deen was confined. He was seated on the ground at the extremity fronting the door, and remarked not her entrance. His hand was upon his brow. He seemed to press it, as if it ached from the severe infliction of his own thoughts. The sigh came heavily from his bosom, and he occasionally muttered indistinct sounds, which were evidently the groanings of a lacerated spirit. He did not raise his head as Agha advanced, but appeared unconscious of her presence.

“Shums-ood-Deen!” she said, in a tone of the gentlest tenderness. He started from the ground in a moment.

“Alla Akbur!” he cried, bowing his head; “It is Agha! Is this a visit of reconciliation before I die?”

“I come to release you from your chains. You have imagined that I did not love you. It was a mistake: I loved the man, but as I could not respect the king, I determined not to be the partner of an elevation which my conscience could not justify. Your pardon has been pronounced by the reigning monarch: I have his authority for announcing to you that you will be henceforward governor of Dowlatabad; and, if you still think the slave's daughter worthy of your choice, she is now prepared to fulfil her pledge.”

He threw his arms round her. They repaired to the royal presence, where Shums-ood-Deen's pardon was confirmed, and a proclamation to that effect immediately issued. He swore allegiance to Feroze Shah Bahmuny with much more joy than he had received the sceptre. The details of love and marriage are too ordinary events of life for the pages of history; it therefore only remains for the narrator of these adventures to say, that the beautiful Agha and the youthful Shums-ood-Deen were married forthwith, and repaired to Dowlatabad to a peaceful and happy home.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

Heg. 854 (A.D. 1450).—Bheilole Lody Afghan was the first prince of the fifth dynasty of the kings of Delhi. He succeeded Alla-ood-Deen, who resigned the kingdom to him, and retired to Budaoon, where he died.

Heg. 856 (1452).—The king having defeated several insurgent sheiks, the power of Bheilole Lody was firmly established.

Heg. 883 (1478).—Syud Alla-ood-Deen, who had abdicated the throne of Delhi, dying at Budaoon, Hoossein Shah Shurky proceeded thither, and after performing the funeral ceremonies, seized that district from the children of Alla-ood-Deen. From thence marching to Sumbhul, he imprisoned Moobarik Chan, governor of that province, and proceeding towards Delhi, crossed the river Jumna, near the Cutcha ghaut. Bheilole Lody was at Surhind when he received intelligence of this invasion, and returning with expedition to his capital, several slight actions ensued; but Hoossein Shah Shurky was finally defeated in a general engagement at Canouge, when his regalia, equipage, and the chief lady of his harem, Beeby Khonza, fell into the victor's hands. After this decisive victory, Bheilole retreated to his capital.

Heg. 894 (1488).—The king being now old, and infirmities increasing daily upon him, he divided his dominions among his sons, and died at Badowly, in the district of Sukeet, after a prosperous reign of thirty years, eight months, and seven days. He was succeeded by Secunder Chan, son of Zeina, the daughter of a goldsmith, introduced into the royal harem on account of her beauty.

Heg. 897 (1491).—The fort of Agra fell to the king's arms after a short but stubborn siege.

Heg. 900 (1494).—The king met Hoossein Shah Shurky in the field, and defeated him at a place about eighteen coss or thirty-six miles from Benares. The vanquished chief fled to Patna, and his army was nearly exterminated.

Heg. 904 (1498).—A conspiracy was formed against the life of Secunder Lody, which being detected, the conspirators, who were powerful Omrahs, were despatched upon different services, and cut off in detail.

Heg. 905 (1499).—Syud Chan Lody, Tartar Chan Firmully, and Mahomed Shah Lody, being suspected of disaffection, were banished to Guzerat.

Heg. 915 (1509).—The king being encamped at Dholpore, he ordered Suliman Chan to march to the aid of Hoossein Chan, of Hunwuntga.

Suliman Chan having excused himself by saying that he preferred being about the king's person, the latter became incensed, and forthwith dismissed him from his service, directing him to quit his camp by daybreak the following morning, at the same time conferring on him the revenue of Birun for his future maintenance.

Heg. 923 (1517).—Secunder being taken ill, died of quinsy, and was succeeded by his son Ibrahim. A conspiracy was formed by the Lody chiefs to raise his younger brother to the throne.

Heg. 923 (1518).—The king prepared to defeat the aims of the conspirators, whom he finally quelled, and giving full latitude to his vengeance, put many of the Omrahs to death.

Heg. 925 (1519).—Babur made his first campaign in India. On this occasion he marched his army as far as the Indus, to where it is called the Neelab: he overran with his troops all the countries in his route, and crossing the river, advanced to Berah in Punjab. In this province he levied contributions upon the inhabitants, instead of allowing his troops to plunder. From Berah he sent to Ibrahim, acquainting him that as the Punjab had been frequently in possession of the house of Timour, it was fit he should relinquish his pretension to it, and thus prevent the war from being carried further into India.

Heg. 926 (1520).—Babur made his third irruption into India, attacking the Afghans on his route.

Heg. 928 (1522).—Chandahar and the country of Gurmseer fell into Babur's hands.

Heg. 930 (1524).—Babur entered Lahore in triumph, having defeated the troops of Ibrahim Lody, and set fire to the Bazaar, a superstitious practice common among the Moguls. Babur remained only four days in Lahore, when he proceeded against Depalpore. The garrison having forced him to risk an assault, he put the whole to the sword.

Heg. 932 (1525).—Babur marched for the first time towards Hindostan, being joined by his son Hamayoon from Budukhshan, and Khwaja Kullan from Ghizny. This year, Babur, with an army of only twelve thousand men defeated Ibrahim Lody, who brought into the field a hundred thousand horse and a hundred elephants. This victory secured the empire of India to the House of Timour. Ibrahim Lody was found among the slain. This year the fort of Gualior was besieged by a numerous army of Hindoos. Tartar Chan, the governor, being reduced to great distress, applied to Babur, who marched to his relief, and obliged the enemy to raise the siege.

Heg. 933 (1525).—The mother of the late king of Delhi, Ibrahim Lody, formed a design to poison Babur, and seduced the taster of the royal kitchen to put some poison into a dish of hare soup. Babur, after tasting a few spoonful, nauseated the soup, and immediately vomited, which saved his life. The plot was discovered, the taster put to death, Ibrahim Lody's mother cast into prison, and her wealth confiscated.

Heg 933 (1526).—The king defeated an army collected by several confederated chieftains, in order to place a son of the late Ibrahim Lody upon the throne of Delhi.

Heg. 935 (1528).—Babur commenced a tour through his new kingdom. He first took the route to Gualior, and viewed there the fortifications, the stone elephant, and the celebrated palace of Rajah Man Singh. He then visited the gardens of Raheem Dad, and having admired some extremely fine scarlet oleander flowers, ordered a few of the plants to be conveyed to Agra. During his stay at Gualior he went in state to the great Mosque, built by the Emperor Altmish, for whose soul he ordered prayers to be read, and returned by another route to Agra.

Heg. 936 (1530).—In the month Rujab of this year, the king fell sick, and his disorder gaining ground, he sent for his son Prince Humayoon, and appointed him his successor.

Heg. 937 (1530).—On Monday the fifth of Jumad-ool-Awul, Babur Padshah died. According to his will his body was transported to Cabul, and interred in a sepulchre at that city. He died at the age of fifty, having reigned thirty-eight years.



The Siege of Gualior.¹

CHAPTER I.

THE fort of Gualior was in a state of siege. Tartar Chan was at this time governor of it; but being beleagured by the Rajah of that country, to whose family it had formerly belonged, and not in a condition to resist the numerous forces of the Hindoo, Tartar Chan solicited Babur's aid. The detachment of troops sent by the Mogul monarch defeated the Rajah, and obliged him to raise the siege. The governor being now released from his enemies, and repenting of his promise of submission, delayed, under plausible but frivolous pretences, to put the Moguls in possession of the fortress. Their general, therefore, retreated in disgust, with a threat of soon coming in larger force to compel this fulfilment of the conditions upon which his services had been expressly rendered.

The Moguls had no sooner retired than the Rajah returned with his forces and invested Gualior. Tartar Chan was again in a dilemma, but feared making another application to the Mogul Emperor, whom he had lately requited with such signal ingratitude.

Within the fort was one Sheik Mahomed Ghows, a very learned man, who had a great number of students under him, and was looked upon as an oracle throughout the province. He was consulted in all cases of emergency, being thought to possess the gift of inspiration. In his difficulty, Tartar Chan repaired to the sage, and asked him what was to be done under the present unpromising aspect of his affairs.

"We have not provisions," said he, "for more than a few weeks; and the garrison is already so much reduced that a sally cannot be prudently attempted. What is to be done?"

"You have but a choice of evils; you must propitiate the Mogul."

"But how?"

"Deliver the fortress into his hands."

"Then I may as well capitulate to the enemy."

"No; from the Hindoos you may look for extermination, from the worshippers of the Prophet you may hope to retain your government in fealty to the Emperor."

"No vassal is secure under the domination of despotism."

"What security have you within these walls, surrounded by an implacable enemy whom you acknowledge you are in no condition longer to resist, and who are prepared to exercise against you the severities which conquerors seldom fail to inflict upon the vanquished, whom they happen to hate? You have asked my advice under your present difficulties;—I give it. Make your peace with the Mogul Emperor, perform the conditions upon which he lately granted you assistance against the foe, by giving him possession of this fortress, only stipulating to retain the command of it as his vassal."

Though Tartar Chan did not much relish the advice of the sage, he nevertheless saw that he had no choice between complying and capitulating to the Hindoos. He therefore despatched a messenger, who succeeded in passing through the enemy's lines as a fakeer—for those visionaries pass everywhere unmolested—entreating the Emperor Babur to advance once more to his assistance, and offering him full security for the performance of the conditions upon which he solicited his aid.

About five weeks after the consultation just described, the garrison was reduced to extreme distress. Their provisions were diminished to such an incompetent supply that every person was put upon a stated allowance of four ounces of rice per day. Disease was already beginning the work of destruction, and there appeared no chance of escaping the horrors of famine except by a

speedy capitulation. The cries of lamentation were everywhere heard, but no relief came. The prospect of the besieged was anything but cheering; with starvation on the one hand, and an odious captivity on the other, they had only a choice of miseries, unless aid should be obtained before the expiration of another week.

Tartar Chan did his best to soften the privations of the garrison; but as he could not fabricate grain, he could do little towards hushing the doleful cries of suffering which everywhere met his ears. The besiegers were so vigilant that they cut off all supplies, and were determined to starve their enemies into a surrender.

One evening four horsemen were seen by the Rajah's scouts, advancing towards Gualior. They were Moguls, and appeared to be sturdy warriors, being well-armed and well mounted. They entered a thicket.

"Baba Shirzad," said the chief, "do you ride towards the fort at your best speed, and endeavour to ascertain the strength of the besieging force. We will await your return here, and act according to circumstances. I like an achievement: the greater danger, the more glory."

"I go," said the Mogul; "but to my thinking you are poking your nose into a wasp's nest, and you know how severely those insects sting."

"But we must pluck out their sting, Baba, and then they'll only be able to buzz."

"But in plucking out the sting we may chance to get a puncture."

"Ha! so much the better; 'twill be a spur to renown; so strike your heels into the flanks of your good Arab, and away."

Baba Shirzad did as he was commanded, and was lost in a few seconds amid the gloom of the forest.

"Mir Shah," said the chief to another of his companions, "we must prepare for blows. These idolators are grown savage at their late defeats and fight desperately. We must relieve the garrison in spite of Tartan Chan's late subterfuges. He'll be a cunning governor if he outwits his betters a second time."

"Had we not better get into the plain?" asked Mir Shah. "I

don't like these strange thickets; they are too favourable for surprises, and my topographical knowledge of this quarter is not considerable. Let us go where we can see our horses's ears, for here we can exercise only one sense, and that the least important of the five."

"Nay, do you mean to make four pass for a unit? You can exercise all your senses in the dark, save the faculty of seeing, and, my word for it, blindness is not always an evil. But let us get into the plain if you will, and there await the return of Baba Shirzad."

The Moguls had not long emerged from the wood, when, overcome by the fatigue of their journey, they began to nod on their saddles. They were, however, suddenly roused by a clattering of hoofs, as of a horse at full speed, and presently Baba Shirzad appeared coming towards them at a hard gallop.

"Fly!" said he; "we are pursued by a large detachment of the enemy; they are close at my heels, and we have not a moment for deliberation."

"Nay," said the chief, "the Mogul is not accustomed to fly we must stand our ground at all risks."

"But the enemy are at least a hundred and fifty men."

"The more the better; throw them into confusion and they'll cut one another's throats. 'Tis no easy matter to distinguish friends from foes in the dark, and after a death or two they'll magnify two brace of warriors into a host. Stand by me like brave men, and I'll show you some sport worth witnessing."

By this time a considerable detachment of the enemy had advanced to within a hundred yards of the spot where the four horsemen stood. The Moguls had separated, each taking up his position with his back towards the wood, and shouting simultaneously, in order to lead the enemy to suppose they formed a small squadron. The Hindoos reined up their horses, and immediately winged a flight of arrows, calling upon their foes to surrender; this was answered by a discharge of four shafts, which, being directed with better aim, and against a large mass, did some execution.

The Hindoo chief was mounted upon a white charger, which was a guide to the Moguls in what direction to shoot their arrows. The four horsemen now uniting galloped towards the enemy, and when within ten yards of them, discharged their barbed reeds, turned and retreated. This they repeated several times, until the enemy, galled by these attacks, spurred forward in pursuit. The Moguls again separated, and plunged into the neighbouring thicket. The Hindoos being thus disunited rode onward in disorder, and frequently mistook one another for foes. Arrows were occasionally shot from the wood, and not knowing whence the mischief came, their confusion increased. In several instances they rode each other down, the enemy meanwhile occasionally shouting to delude them, and then instantly galloping to another position.

This strange fight was continued for some time, until a number of the idolators being slain, their leader ordered those who were near him to halt, and after a while, with some difficulty he mustered the rest of his detachment, nineteen of whom were killed or missing. The night was too dark to allow of pursuing the Moguls with any reasonable chance of securing them; the Hindoos therefore retraced their way slowly back to their camp to prepare their comrades against surprise.

“Well,” said the Mogul leader, as the enemy slowly retired, “I told you we should multiply. Night is the best season in the world to enable the few to outdo the many. They’ll have a rare tale to tell when they get to their tents. They have left a few of their companions behind them, whom they’ll find cold enough and not over fragrant in the morning. But it will not do for four to stand against a hundred by daylight, we must therefore retire towards the advancing forces. Within a week these worshippers of dumb divinities shall quit yonder fortress or fight for it; and though the dogs are brave enough, yet they have no great skill at warfaring.”

“But what say you,” asked Dost Nasir, “to their Rajpoots—fellows that fight under a saffron robe till their throats are cut, not indeed so much to their own satisfaction as to that of their slayers?”

“Why, I say of their Rapoots, that they are brave just as a woman is when spirit has turned her brain. She’ll then rave and sputter in spite of stripes ; but when her fit of valour subsides, her spirit becomes as puny as a lizard’s. I never knew a really brave man wantonly throw away his life. Excite a coward beyond the boundary-line of his fears, and he foams and snaps like a mad dog ; but fury is not valour.”

“It may be,” replied Dost Nasir ; “but a Rajpoot’s fury is a nasty thing to come in contact with. And the rascals are so ready in the use of their cimetars that they chop off heads as dexterously as your cooks decollate ortolans for a dainty feeder. I never knew a fight tame where those yellow-robed warriors appeared among the enemy’s ranks.”

“Well, if there be any among those adorers of chiselled stones now before yonder town, you shall have an opportunity of seeing that such drunken valour will not prevent our forces from obliging them to slink back to their homes, or making a dunghill beneath the walls of Gualior with the flesh of idol-worshippers.”

While this conversation was going on, the four Moguls were getting into the heart of the jungle, in order to obviate the pursuit which they apprehended the enemy would commence on the morrow. Having deviated considerably from the regular travelling route, and being unacquainted with the locality, they got into a pathless forest. This was a dilemma from which they must use their wits to be delivered, and with this prudent resolution they cast themselves upon the protection of Him to whom the path of the wilderness is as familiar as that of the populous country.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN the Moguls had got into the heart of the forest, beyond the probable reach of pursuit, they halted, picketed their horses in a small grassy glen, and casting themselves beneath the shelter of a leafy tree, threw their saddle-cloths over their shoulders, and soon sank into profound repose. In the

morning they rose and pursued their way. The chief was a broad-shouldered man, above the middle height, exceedingly muscular, with a handsome good-humoured countenance, somewhat roughened by constant exposure to various changes of atmosphere. His limbs were so sinewy, that it appeared as if ropes were twisted round his bones, and covered with a skin as firm and flexible as was requisite to compact such bones and muscles. He had a large laughing eye, but so brilliant that, when the round animated features subsided from their wonted joyousness into sudden gravity, it seemed as if its quick intense scrutiny could reach the very depths of the soul. His mouth was small, and the lips generally a little protruded, giving an arch expression to his features, that made the beholder think they were ever the home of good-humour. His head was somewhat diminutive, or rather it appeared so in consequence of the prodigious size of his neck, which was perfectly Atlantean. It was bare to his shoulders, and showed a capacity of strength almost superhuman. He mounted his horse with a bound as light as that of the grasshopper; and his steed, a noble Persian charger, was evidently proud of its burthen. His companions were fine men, but utterly insignificant by the side of their chief.

As they proceeded, the ground became swampy and anything but agreeable for travelling. They at length reached the banks of a considerable stream, upon which a number of fowlers were exercising the various artifices of their craft. It was an unusual, and therefore an interesting sight to the strangers. The country abounded with water-fowl which were very fat, and there was a good vent for them in the neighbouring villages and at a town some distance down the stream. A large kind of heron congregated here in immense flocks; but the choice bird was the khawasil, a fowl in great request, because it was extremely rare. The Moguls were interested by the manner of catching these birds, which was as follows:—"The fowler spun a thin sliding springe, about an arrow's flight long, and to the one end of this cord fixed a double-pointed arrow, while on the other end of it he fastened a cross handle of horn. He then took a stick of the thickness of the

wrist, and a span in length, and commencing at the arrow, wound up the cord until it was all wound on ; after which he made fast the horn handle, and pulled out the stick of the thickness of the wrist, on which the cord had been wound, the cord remaining wound up and hollow. Taking a firm hold of the horn handle, he threw the dart, having the cord attached to it, at any fowl that came near. If it fell on the neck or wings of the bird, it immediately twisted round it and brought it down.

All the people on the Baran catch birds in this manner, but it is extremely difficult and unpleasant, as it must be practised on dark and rainy nights ; for on such nights, for fear of the ravenous animals and beasts of prey, they fly about constantly all night long, never resting till the morning ; and at such times they fly low. In dark nights they keep flying over the running water, as it appears bright and white ; and it is at such times, when from fear they fly up and down above the streams all night long, that the fowlers cast their cords.* The chief of the Moguls, struck with the ingenious mode of taking these birds, attempted to cast the snare ; but with all his skill in the use of weapons of war, at which he was singularly expert, he could not manage to secure a single bird.

A little further down the river, a singular mode of taking fish excited the travellers' attention. "In a place where the water fell from a height, the fishermen had dug out pits about the size of a house, and laying them with stones in the form of the lower part of a cooking furnace, they had heaped on stones above the pits, leaving only one passage for the water to descend ; they had piled up the stones in such a manner that, except by this single passage, there was no other for the fish either to come or go. The water of the stream finding its way through these stones, this contrivance answered the purpose of a fishpool. In winter, whenever fish were required, they opened one of these pits and took out forty or fifty fish at a time. In some convenient place of the pit, an

* See Memoirs of Zehir-ed-Din, Mahommed Babur, Emperor of Hindostan, written by himself in the Jaghatai Turki, and translated partly by the late John Leyden, M.D., partly by William Erskine, Esq., pp. 153-4.

opening was formed, and excepting at that outlet, all the sides of it were secured with rice straw, over which stones were piled up. At the opening was fastened a kind of wicker-work like a net; the two extremities being contracted were brought near each other. In the middle of this first wicker-net was fixed another piece of wicker net-work, in such a way that the mouth of this last might correspond with that of the other, but its whole length be only about half of that of the one first mentioned. The mouth of this inner net-work was made very narrow. Whatever entered, passed of necessity into the larger wicker-net, the lower part of which was so constructed that no fish could escape back. The lower part of the mouth of the inner wicker-net was so formed, that when fish had once entered the upper part, they were forced to proceed one by one down to the lower part of its mouth. The sharpened sticks forming the lower part of the mouth were brought close together: whatever passed this mouth came into the larger wicker-net, the lower passage of which was strongly secured, so that the fish could not escape; for if it happened to turn and attempt to swim back, it could not get up in consequence of the sharpened prongs that formed the lower mouth of the small inner wicker-net. Every time the fishermen bring their nets, they fasten them on the water-course of the fishpool, and then take off the covering of the fishpool, leaving all its sides secured by the rice straw. Whatever they can lay hold of in the hollow pit they seize, while every fish that attempts to escape by the only issue left, necessarily comes into the wicker-net that has been mentioned, and is taken there.”*

The Mogul chief entered familiarly into conversation with the fishermen, who, being from among the lowest caste of Hindoos, had no great scruple at entering into conversation with Mahomedans.

“Have you plenty of game in these jungles?” asked the Mogul.

“Enough of that, but it is no easy matter to come at it; for

* Babur's Memoirs, p. 155.

there are numbers of animals to share it, which don't hesitate at laying their armed paws upon intruders."

"But a man ought at any time to be a match for a brute."

"Your brutes, master, are rough subjects to deal with. 'Tis well enough when you can snare and knock their brains out without hazard, but, to my mind, 'tis a madman's venture to stand against a wild beast, when, if you are killed, 'tis an ignoble death, and if you come off best, you get but a sorry reputation for your valour; for valour without discretion is a ragged sort of virtue, and we fishermen pride ourselves upon showing more of the latter than of the former; if one hadn't more discretion than valour, fishing would be but a beggarly craft, and as it is we can't manage to get rich."

"What animals most prevail in these woods?"

"Why there's a tolerable sprinkling of tigers, and hogs in abundance; but the greatest nuisance in these parts is a rhinoceros that often comes upon the banks of the river, and does us terrible damage. I wish some bold champion would make a feast of him for the vultures, and he would render us a very laudable service."

"But do you never make any effort to destroy such a clumsy enemy? Man ought not to allow a beast to get the better of him. Reason should be a more successful weapon than simple animal strength, and he who fails to use his own with advantage against mere instinctive ferocity, is hardly a gradation above the brute."

"This is all very well when you are out of sight of tigers and those clawed or horned foes, which make no more of dieting upon a horse or knocking down a buffalo, than I should do of setting my heel upon the head of a little fish; but it is quite a different thing when these inhabitants of the woods walk out of some thicket, and bid you an unexpected good morrow. It is a maxim with us fishermen to keep as much as possible out of the way of all surly quadrupeds; we leave the glory of vanquishing them to wiser heads and abler bodies. We seek no victory over the tenants of the forest, but are satisfied with a conquest over the more gentle occupants of the water."

“Can you say where the rhinoceros you spoke of was last seen?”

“He is said to be generally found near a dell not far from the entrance of the jungle.”

“There are two gold mohurs, if you will come and point out the spot.” Saying this, the Mogul flung down two golden pieces at the fisherman’s feet.

“I am ready,” said the man, “even to risk my life for such a boon as this; it is more than a month’s fishing would produce; I am your servant for as long a time as you may need my services to-day; to-morrow I must be again my own master, unless the forest savage should impale me alive, or trample me to death for my good-will in showing you his haunt.”

The horsemen proceeded towards the cover, accompanied by the Hindoo, who trotted along by the side of their chief’s charger. He was a small but amazingly active man, something past the middle age, and a shrewd, wary person. As they passed through a piece of ground in which the grass was up to their horses’ haunches, a hog started from a thick tuft, and scampered over the field with the speed of a stag. Baba Shirzad, who happened to be nearest, strung his bow in a moment, and winging an arrow at the poor beast, buried the shaft in its body. The hog rolled over upon its back, and died after a few violent struggles.

“A good hit, Baba,” cried the chief; “that arrow was pulled home, and although lodged under a pig’s hide, does no discredit to a soldier’s aim. I long to try my reed at a mark, or my arm against a foe. Let your shafts fly as truly against yonder besiegers when we next meet them, and they will have good cause to repent that they ever pitched their tents before Gualior.”

“I shall try my best,” said Baba Shirzad, with a smile, that showed he was not a little flattered at the observation of his comrade, who was known never to praise upon slight grounds: “I would fain draw blood from something better worth an arrow’s point than a filthy swine.”

“Nay, a chine is no bad thing in the jungle, where even berries are sometimes scarce, and when the appetite is at a climax; for

though the Koran inhibits pork, yet hunger is a most religious apology for violating the interdiction. The Prophet never intended that a starving man should lick his thumbs for a meal, when hog's flesh was to be had at the expense of a barbed reed. The hog is fat; come, Baba, take a slice or two from its haunches that we may break a too long fast."

Baba Shirzad dismounted; a few fine steaks were cut from the bear's body with the broad blade of his creese, a fire was kindled, and a dish of keibobs speedily prepared. Having despatched this summary meal, in which their guide declined participating, they remounted their steeds, and proceeding towards the thicket, prepared to attack the rhinoceros should he cross their path.

Upon gaining the skirts of a very close cover, a buffalo was seen bounding over the plain with amazing speed, its head almost between its knees, and its tail in the air, exhibiting tokens of furious animosity.

As the creature approached, the earth flew from its heels like fragments after an explosion. It snorted—its eyes glared, it plunged, and on reaching the horsemen, made a rush towards the foremost with its head nearly bent to the ground, and its back curved like a crescent. The Mogul chief moved his steed actively on one side, and the maddened buffalo passed him in the impetuosity of its career with the speed of a dart. He immediately wheeled round, so did the buffalo, and repeated its charge. The Mogul, raising himself in his stirrups, lifted his heavy Damascus cimetar, turned his horse again as the animal charged, and stooping suddenly, brought upon the horns of the furious beast his ponderous weapon, which cut sheer through them, and was deeply buried in its neck. The buffalo rolled dead upon the plain. The head was nearly severed from its body. The fisherman looked on with amazement.

"In truth, master," said he, "I think the hide of a rhinoceros would hardly stand against such a stroke. Yours must be a rare arm for hewing down foes. I'd rather be your friend than your enemy. If you could contrive to give the mailed forester such a

thump upon a spot where your sword might enter, I wouldn't give a fish's eye for its life."

"I shall see what is to be done if you can only show me the game. There's more in the will than in the stroke. A coward, had he the strength of your war god, and were armed with Vish-noo's chackra, would not be able to slay a cat that raised its paw against him."

"But what could the valour of Hanuman* avail with a puny arm? The mere will can never accomplish the deed. Courage should be cased in a strong frame, with firm bones and tough sinews, else 'tis like putting gems in tinsel—a precious commodity in a worthless outside."

The carcase of the buffalo was now left to welter on the plain, a feast for crows and vultures, and finally for pismires, which picked its bones as bare as a scraped radish long before sunset. The horsemen proceeded with all despatch into the thicket, where they hoped to meet with the sullen tyrant of the wood, to whose fierce strength the elephant has often yielded up its life in a clumsy but desperate conflict.

The growth of the forest, a short distance beyond the skirts, was very thin, having been cleared in some spots, and in others enclosing small savannas formed by the marshy nature of the soil, which was low and in places excessively swampy. They at length gradually ascended into drier ground, where the growth of the underwood was thicker, and the fisherman almost immediately pointed out the spot where the rhinoceros was said to be frequently seen.

"Upon turning yonder angle," said he, "you will enter a small defile, flanked on one side by a rocky barrier, and on the other by a grove of lofty trees. I shall take leave to wish you a happy deliverance should you come upon the brute, which is, to my thinking, likely to afford you grave pastime."

The horsemen rode forward, and on turning the angle pointed

* Hanuman was a huge ape, but a distinguished general in the wars of the Ramayana,

out by the fisherman, the rhinoceros appeared, feeding at the further extremity of the glen. Upon seeing the intruders he raised his head, bent back his ears, and stamped his foot violently against the ground, as if peremptorily prohibiting their advance. Their bows were already strung, and fixing each an arrow in the string, they discharged them simultaneously at the huge beast. Three of the shafts fell blunted from his side as if they had struck against a wall of granite, rebounding to a distance of several yards; but the arrow of the chief, directed with a more vigorous arm and a surer aim, struck the sturdy animal near the right ear and remained fixed.

Infuriated by the pain, the rhinoceros bounded forward with surprising agility, receiving another discharge from the horsemen, only one of which told, striking nearly in the same spot, and augmenting the creature's fury. Mir Shah happened to be nearest, and before he could turn his horse, the exasperated enemy struck it with its horn in the side, raised it in the air and flung it over its head. In his rapid transit, Mir Shah luckily caught the branch of a tree which hung over the spot, and disengaging his legs from the stirrups, escaped the fate of his favourite charger, which lay dead upon the ground with a hideous gash opened into its body.

The rhinoceros did not pause, but rushed towards the next horse; the terrified creature turned and made off with all speed, in spite of the efforts of its rider to restrain it. The steed of Baba Shirzad followed its example, and both dashed through the jungle, quickly unseating their riders, who were swept from their saddles by branches of trees which spread across the narrow and imperfect pathway. The Mogul leader, meanwhile, had dismounted from his charger, and casting the reins upon its neck, the animal dashed in terror through the jungle.

The bold warrior, now left alone in the defile, shot two arrows in quick succession at the fierce beast, which was in full pursuit of his comrades. This unlooked for assault caused it to turn and advance to the attack of its dismounted antagonist. The Mogul placed himself behind the trunk of a large tree, and the rhinoceros approaching in full career, in the wantonness of its

rage struck its horn into the trunk with such force that it remained fixed there for several seconds. The moment was critical. Its eye was gleaming with rage. The Mogul drew the feather of an arrow to his shoulder, and sent the shaft with prodigious strength into the socket of that glaring orb. It passed with irresistible force into the brain of the ponderous brute, which fell dead with a stifled grunt upon the earth. Having joined his companions, who were a good deal bruised, but not seriously injured by their falls, they soon recovered their horses, skinned the dead enemy, and continued merrily on their way.

CHAPTER III.

TARTAR CHAN was anxiously expecting a reply to his messenger from the Mogul Emperor. Famine was already raging within the walls of Gualior, and there was yet no prospect of relief. The lamentations of the sufferers were every moment becoming louder and more fearful. The Governor was taxed as the cause of all their misery in not having given up the fort to the Mogul general as originally stipulated. From reprehensions they proceeded to threats, and at length Tartar Chan began to fear for his personal safety. In his perplexity he sought Sheikh Mahomed, to ask his advice under circumstances of unusual difficulty.

“We had better die starving,” said the sage, “than capitulate to enemies who will visit us with an equally painful death. If we tamely submit to their yoke, we shall perish in ignominy; but if we die free within these walls, we shall at least expire with honour.”

“But disease and famine are raging in different quarters, and the enraged populace threaten my life.”

“I will go and appease them. There has been scarcely yet time for an answer to your embassy. I will persuade them to wait with patience another day or two, within which interval I have no doubt an answer will be returned. If favourable, we can have no

cause for apprehension ; if adverse, it will be then time enough to adopt desperate measures."

Sheikh Mahomed went into the bazaar and harangued the inhabitants. He was revered by them as a prophet, and they listened to his voice as to a revelation from Heaven. They yielded to his entreaties, they hushed their cries, and consented to abide the issue of their governor's message to the Mogul potentate.

That very night the watchword was heard at the gate ; the messenger was admitted, and with him a party bearing a supply of provisions. They had evaded the enemy's picket by a secret path unknown to the Hindoos. Twelve camels loaded with rice entered the fort amid the shouts of the starving garrison, and the welcome information came that an army was on its way to relieve them, and might be expected within twenty-four hours. This intelligence so gladdened the hearts of the despairing inhabitants, that instead of the wailings of despair, shouts of rejoicing were heard from every part of the fortress. The enemy knew not how to account for this sudden change. They had been made acquainted with the sufferings of the besieged, and were every moment expecting that the latter would capitulate without proposing terms, which the Hindoo general had determined to refuse. The conclusion they came to was, that it was a feint to throw them off their guard ; but they treated with contempt the idea of a few starving soldiers attempting anything against a numerous army, provided with everything necessary, and commanded by a leader of reputation. They derided therefore the rejoicings of the besieged, and slumbered that night in perfect security.

On that very night, however, at the suggestion of Sheikh Mahomed, Tartar Chan determined upon making a sortie at the head of a chosen body of his bravest soldiers, now elated to the highest pitch of enthusiasm at so near a prospect of relief. Their enemies never for an instant imagined that such a measure would be resorted to, knowing how greatly the garrison was reduced by famine, and supposing, therefore, that the soldiers could not be in a condition to hazard a personal encounter with a vigorous and numerous body of troops. The night was dark, the wind gusty,

which was rather favourable for such an enterprise as Tartar Chan contemplated, since the approach of his detachment to the hostile camp would be less likely to be detected before they should reach their destination. An hour past midnight was the period fixed, when it was imagined the Hindoo army would be the least apprehensive of an attack from a weakened and starving garrison.

The soldiers selected for the enterprise were assembled shortly after midnight, quitted the gates in silence, and marched stealthily towards the camp. As they approached they were hailed by the sentinel, who was instantly shot dead with an arrow. Proceeding noiselessly onward, the hail of a second sentinel was answered in a similar manner. No alarm was yet given. They were within a hundred yards of the enemy's lines, when their approach was observed, and a shout raised. The Hindoo soldiers, starting from their sleep, issued from their tents, many of them unarmed, and others with only a dagger or a short sabre. The besieged rushed forward to the tents of the besiegers, creating a dreadful panic. They had divided into small bodies, and were known to each other by a long white floating streamer which each wore attached to the left side of his turban, and which there was sufficient light to distinguish.

The Hindoos soon assembled in such numbers that they incommoded each other, and thus the greatest confusion prevailed. They could not perceive their foes, who made a dreadful slaughter among them during the panic by which they were overcome. Seeing not whence the stroke of death came, they frequently mistook one another for enemies, and inflicted mutual destruction. The groans of the dying mingled with the shouts of the assailants in every part of the camp. The carnage was appalling. Several elephants, picketed within the lines, were let loose by the garrison, who pricked them with their spears until they became infuriated, and plunged among the tents, adding to the general consternation. Hundreds of persons were trodden to death by these affrighted creatures, which rushed onward with an impetuosity that nothing could resist. Morning dawned before the work of carnage had ceased, when Tartar Chan and his bold followers, satisfied at their

success, returned to the fortress with the loss of only fifteen men.

On the following day shouts of triumph were heard from the walls of Gualior. A great number of oxen and sheep had been driven into the fort during the struggle of the preceding night, and a large quantity of rice secured. The inhabitants were now as much elated as they had before been depressed. The prospect of speedy relief from the Mogul army, and the present unlooked-for supply of provisions, stilled their murmurs; and the governor's success in his late enterprise reconciled them to his former breach of faith with a generous ally. Those houses in which famine had already begun to deposit her prey, were cleared of their dead, fumigated, and the enlivening hopes produced by such a sudden reverse of fortune, so neutralised the effects of disease, that many who were sick arose from their beds and were restored to comparative health within a few hours.

Tartar Chan already began to repent that he had sought the assistance of the Moguls. Seeing how easily he had made an impression upon the hostile forces, he was disposed to think that by judicious night attacks he might with his own forces oblige them to raise the siege; but he did not calculate the difference between an enemy prepared and an enemy off their guard. Another such an enterprise must have failed. Tartar Chan, though a brave, was a vain and stubborn man, full of ambition and without integrity. He could not bear to think of giving up the fortress to his allies, and holding it in fealty under a prince who was not in the habit of allowing his vassals or feudatories the privilege of independence. He had been relieved from present embarrassments, and his pretensions rose in proportion. It was a hard thing to relinquish authority which he had struggled so hard to maintain, or at least to have it abridged by the influence of greater.

There was one difficulty: he knew it to be the prevailing feeling of the garrison, that in case the enemy were obliged to raise the siege by the Mogul army, the fortress should be put into the immediate possession of their general. Babur's government was popular, and he was dreaded by all the neighbouring potentates.

His renown as a warrior filled the nations with awe. His alliance was a blessing—his hostility a bane. The governor of Gwalior sought Sheikh Mahomed, as usual, in his difficulties.

“Well, Sheikh,” said he, “I think we have been rash in so hastily soliciting aid when we might have accomplished with our own arms what we seek for from those of our allies.”

“Then why have you not done it? You grow presumptuous from temporary good fortune; but, rely upon it, if you do not take heed, the success of a moment will act as a spark upon gunpowder, and produce an explosion that shall spread ruin around you. An act of bad faith can find no excuse; it seldom remains unpunished sooner or later. Take my word for it, that without speedy aid from the Moguls you must fall under the domination of Hindoos, who towards Mahomedans, are the worst of tyrants.”

“But what is life worth if we are obliged to give up all that renders it desirable! I must relinquish my government, and I would rather die than do that.”

“You should have come to this conclusion before you despatched a messenger for assistance in your extremity. You are bound by solemn engagements, and it is too late to retract. Besides, your personal advantages should weigh but as a feather against the general interest. The lives of those you govern are dear to them, so are their liberties; and you can have no moral right to put these in jeopardy; for as sure as to-morrow’s sun shall rise, if you attempt to break your faith a second time with those who are coming to your relief, your ruin will be the consequence, and you will perhaps involve many innocent persons in your own destruction. I have spoken boldly. You know that I am not one to fix my opinions rashly; when once fixed, therefore, they are not readily diverted. Act the part of a just man, as you did last night that of a brave one, and you may look confidently for your reward; but, I repeat it, a second breach of faith will terminate in your doom.”

The governor was exceedingly mortified at the result of this interview. Sheikh Mahomed was too much respected by the garrison to render it safe to treat him with indignity; Tartar Chan

therefore quitted his presence with angry feelings which he did not think it prudent to express. He resolved, however, not to be guided by the counsel of the sage, notwithstanding the celebrity he had obtained for his gift of foreknowledge. No man, he argued, is infallible, and the Sheikh may happen to be wrong for once; at least the governor was determined to think so, and to act upon this rash assumption, in spite of consequences.

Having sounded several of his officers, he found two or three among them who readily concurred in his views, though the majority were decidedly opposed to them. Making therefore his determination known but to those on whose fidelity he thought he could rely, he awaited patiently the advance of the Mogul forces, whom he determined to render subservient to his purposes and then dismiss without reward. He had an idea that he could obviate any future molestation from the Hindoo arms by calling in the aid of some of his Afghan neighbours, who render their assistance with much humbler expectations than the Moguls. Under these impressions, and actuated by these sinister resolutions, he assembled his soldiers, and gave his orders how they were to act in concert with the Moguls, so soon as the latter should come to the relief of Gualior. He commanded a body of his bravest men to issue from the gate of the town, and, while the enemy were engaged with his allies, secure all the provisions they could find in the hostile camp. He gave the command of this detachment to a spirited officer, upon whom he could rely, and looked forward with confidence to success.

Sheikh Mahomed was not blind to what was passing in the governor's mind; he knew his craft and resolved to counteract it. Affecting perfect confidence in Tartar Chan's integrity, the latter was thrown off his guard, and his intentions made sufficiently evident to the sage to justify the plan he intended to pursue. Two days after the late nocturnal encounter with the enemy, the Mogul forces arrived to the relief of Gualior.

There was an evident bustle in the Hindoo camp. The advancing army was led by the chief who had so lately distinguished himself in the jungle by killing a rhinoceros. This feat of prowess

had reached the ears of the idolators, and they were prepared for a desperate conflict. Their forces outnumbered those of their enemies by several thousands, but they were greatly inferior in discipline; they had, however, among them a body of Rajpoots, which gave them confidence, as those troops have always been distinguished by their headlong and indomitable valour. The shouts of exultation from the town and fort were heard with feelings of deep vexation within the hostile lines; but there was no time for the encouragement of petty feelings with so formidable an enemy at their backs.

The Moguls pitched their camp almost in sight of the Hindoo army, and immediately advanced to the attack. Baba Shirzad, Mir Shah, and Dost Nasir, had severally commands under their brave chief, who took post in the centre.

Shortly after daybreak, the Mahomedans advanced in order of battle. The Hindoos were drawn out to receive them, their line extending to a great length, curving in the form of a crescent, as if to enclose their foes, whom they greatly outnumbered. The Rajpoots were placed in the centre, which was strengthened by the leader of the idolators with his best troops. The battle commenced with terrible impetuosity on the part of the Moguls, their charge being received by the foe with great steadiness. The Rajpoots bore the brunt of the shock, and the line did not waver. The Mogul leader fought with an energy that astonished his foes. He killed no less than six Rajpoots, to whom he had been opposed hand to hand. Still no sensible impression was made upon the Hindoo line.

The troops under command of Dost Nasir had been thrown into confusion by the severe charge of the enemy's horse, a large and well appointed body. At this moment the horns of the crescent were seen gradually closing to encompass the Mahomedan army. Their leader, perceiving that the crisis had arrived, dashed his turban from his brow, and shaking his thick black locks over his shoulders, called aloud upon the Prophet, and with the cry of Allah Akbur, charged the centre of the enemy's line with irresistible impetuosity. The shock immediately arrested the advance

of the wings. The line wavered, the Rajpoots could not stand against the impetuosity of the charge—they gave way—instant confusion followed. At this moment a body of Tartar Chan's troops issued from the town, and attacking the foe in their rear, completed the rout; they fled on all sides, and abandoned their camp to the victors. The battle had been short but decisive. Immense quantities of provisions were found in the Hindoo camp, which were removed to the town and fort amid the acclamations of the inhabitants and of the garrison.

Tartar Chan immediately sent a messenger to acknowledge the timely assistance of the Moguls, but said not a word of putting Gualior into their possession.

The morning after the Hindoo general had raised the siege, the Mogul chief sent to Tartar Chan to demand a fulfilment of the conditions upon which he had repaired to the relief of Gualior. For a day or two, he was amused with frivolous excuses, and then a peremptory refusal was given to resign the town and fort into his possession.

Meanwhile Sheikh Mahomed, disgusted at the governor's baseness, sent a private messenger to the Mogul general to say, that if he would trust himself singly within the fort, he would engage to find means of introducing his troops, and of shortly putting the town and fortress of Gualior into his hands. The Mogul accordingly affected to receive the refusal of Tartar Chan in a friendly manner, leading him to suppose that he was prepared to relinquish his claim; but represented to him that, as the enemy might muster in stronger force and return, it was desirable he should be allowed to bring his troops under the protection of the fortress. He further requested as an especial favour, that he might be permitted to visit the learned Sheikh Mahomed, of whose reputation he had heard so much, in order that he might tender him the homage of his admiration. Both these requests were acceded to without scruple; the governor having no suspicion that mischief could accrue from admitting a single warrior within the fort, so well guarded by the vigilance of a brave and active garrison.

During the Mogul's visit to the sage, who had provided a liberal

entertainment, to which several officers of the garrison were invited, he sent word to the governor from time to time, requesting permission for such and such officers to be admitted also, until at length Tartar Chan desired the commander of the guard to give his own discretion in admitting whom he chose, conceiving himself secure in his fidelity. That officer, being a disciple of the philosopher and privy to the plot, availed himself of this order to permit anybody the Mogul wished to pass in, till at length a considerable body of resolute warriors were within the wall before the entertainment was ended.* The fort thus fell easily into possession of the Moguls without bloodshed. The governor was summoned before their general.

"Traitor," said the latter, "know that you stand in the presence of Babur Padshah, Emperor of the Moguls. Follow me to the ramparts!"

Having reached the battlements, accompanied by several of his own officers, the Emperor said, "What does your faithlessness deserve?"

"The pity of a conqueror," replied Tartar Chan.

"Princes have a solemn duty to perform in ridding the world of those who deserve not to live. Your doom is sealed." Saying which, Babur seized the trembling governor by the cummerbund, raised him from the ground as if he had been an infant, and flung him over the battlements.†

* See Brigg's *Ferishta*, vol. ii. p. 52.

† Babur's strength is said to have been prodigious; as a proof of which it is related, that "he used to leap from one pinnacle to another of the pinnated ramparts used in the East, in his double-soled boots, and that he even frequently took a man under each arm and went leaping along the rampart from one of the pointed pinnacles to another."—See *Memoirs of Babur*, p. 430.



HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

Heg. 937 (1531).—Humayoon succeeded, on the death of his father, to the throne of Delhi.

Heg. 938 (1532).—He defeated the Afghans at Juanpore.

Heg. 940 (1533).—Humayoon caused a citadel to be built at Delhi, on the banks of the Jumna, to which he gave the name of Deen Puna, the asylum of the faithful, after which he marched towards Sarungpoor, in Malwa.

Heg. 941 (1534).—Banadur Shah threw himself into Mando, which was invested by the Moguls, who, after a few days, escaladed the walls, and, though the garrison consisted of several thousand men, it fell into their hands. The King also made himself master of the citadel of Champanerc. Having caused a number of steel spikes to be made, while the garrison was withdrawn from a part of the fortress deemed inaccessible, he caused the steel spikes to be fixed in the scarp of the rock, by which means himself and thirty-nine officers ascended. The whole garrison was put to the sword, but the governor, who had bravely defended the place, obtained honourable terms. The wealth found here was so great, that Humayoon gave to his officers and soldiers as much gold, silver, and jewels as could be heaped upon their respective shields, proportioning the value to their rank and merit.

Heg. 943 (1536).—The King laid siege to the fort of Chunar, which held out for six months, but was eventually taken by a device of Roomy Chan. He erected stages of a certain height, placed upon rafts, which, being built at some distance above the fort, were launched and floated down without resistance. The walls being low, they were easily surmounted, and the place was thus secured.

Heg. 946 (1539).—Humayoon being surprised by Sheer Chan on the banks of the Ganges, was obliged to make his escape across the river. On this occasion, it is said that eight thousand Moguls, exclusive of Hindoos, were drowned, among whom was the Prince Mahomed Zuman Mirza. The King owed his life to one Nizam, a water-carrier, who with great difficulty swam beside him across the river, and was among the few who survived the slaughter of that eventful day.

Heg. 947 (1540).—Humayoon was attacked by Sheer Chan, and sustained another signal defeat. The King was obliged to fly, and, after enduring unheard-of miseries, reached Amurkote with a few attendants only.

Heg. 949 (1542).—The Queen Banoo Begum gave birth to Prince Akbar. Humayoon, finally took refuge in the capital of Seestan, where he was hospitably received by the governor on the part of Shah Tamasp, King of Persia. Upon Humayoon's flight, Sheer Shah Soor ascended the throne.

Heg. 950 (1543).—Sheer Shah laid siege to the fort of Raisein. The siege was protracted for many months, but, upon the governor capitulating, the garrison were permitted to march out with their arms and property.

Heg. 951 (1544).—The King marched against the fort of Chittore, which surrendered by capitulation. He then marched towards Kalurjar, one of the strongest forts in Hindostan. During the siege, a shell, thrown against the fort, burst in a battery, close by the King, and igniting a powder magazine which had not been properly secured, Sheer Shah, and a number of gunners, were blown up, together with several chiefs, who were carried to their tents as dead. The King, though he breathed with great pain, gave orders for the attack to be continued, and, in the evening, news being brought to him that the place had been reduced by his troops, he cried out, "Thanks to the Almighty God!" and expired. He was succeeded by his younger son, Julal Chan, who assumed the title of Islam Shah, corrupted to Sulim Shah.

Heg. 953 (1546).—Sulim Shah narrowly escaped death from a daring attempt of Syced Chan.

Heg. 955 (1548).—The King slew an assassin who attempted his life in the mountain of Mankote.

Heg. 957 (1550).—Khowas Chan, a chief justly renowned for his great abilities in war, having revolted, was assassinated by Taj Chan, in order to recommend himself to the King.

Heg. 960 (1553).—Sulim Shah died after a reign of nine years. He was succeeded by his brother-in-law, who put the Prince Feroze to death, and usurped the throne.

Heg. 961 (1553).—Mahomed Shah was attacked by a young noble in the audience chamber, and narrowly escaped with his life. The daring youth who had assaulted him was cut to pieces by the guards.

Heg. 962 (1554).—The fortunes of Mahomed Shah began to decline. Khizr Chan, son of Mahomed Shah Poorby, of Bengal, in order to revenge the death of his father, slain in the battle of Kalpy, raised an army, and assuming the title of Bahadur Shah, wrested by force a great part of the eastern provinces out of the hands of Mahomed Shah, whom he eventually defeated and slew. Secunder Shah Soor was elected king. He was this year defeated with great slaughter by Humayoon, who had returned to his dominions with a numerous and well-appointed army. This victory decided the fate of the empire, and the kingdom of Delhi fell for ever from the hands of the Afghans. Humayoon re-entered Delhi in triumph, and became a second time King of Hindostan.

Heg. 963 (1556).—Shah Abool Maaly, on account of disputes with the generals of his army in the Panjab, had given time to Secunder Soor to rally

his forces. The King accordingly permitted his son Akbar, under the direction of Beiram Chan, to go against him. One evening as the King was walking on the library terrace at Delhi, in consequence of his staff slipping along the marble pavement, he fell headlong, and was taken up insensible. He was laid upon a bed, and although he recovered his speech, he died four days after, about sunset. He was buried in the new city on the banks of the river, and a splendid monument was erected some years after by his son Akbar. Humayoon died at the age of fifty-one, after a reign of twenty-five years, both in Cabul and India. He was a prince of great intrepidity, possessing the virtues of charity and munificence in an eminent degree,



The Pariah.

CHAPTER I.

ONE morning a poor Pariah was seated at the door of his miserable hovel in a solitary spot not far from the bank of a river. He was in a state of the saddest destitution. Famine had ravaged the district. Thousands of his countrymen had died around him, and he expected every moment a similar doom. His wife was lying with a baby at her breast in a corner of the hut, unable to rise from exhaustion. Food indeed was to be purchased at the neighbouring town, but he had no money, and no one in the bazaar would sell food to a Pariah. He made up his mind to die. For days he tasted nothing but the roots of a few shrubs which grew sparingly upon the river's bank. The whole of that morning he had followed a drove of oxen, and collected their dung in order to obtain the few grains of gram* which it might chance to contain. Having washed the ordure, after a hard morning's labour he obtained about a handful of grain, which he boiled and gave to his wife. He had himself fasted since the previous day. His wife was a young creature, not yet fifteen, though the mother of three children. He loved her with a fondness as ardent as it was merited, and this fondness was now greatly enhanced by the sad circumstances to which they and their children were likely to become victims.

The unhappy husband gazed upon the waters of the river as they flowed solemnly onward, his mind absorbed in his own intense distress. "What is there," he thought, "in this world to render life

* Gram is a sort of small bean, eaten by cattle in India.

desirable? Is it not one continued scene of privation to the despised Pariah? Is he not an outcast from every human community but that degraded race of which he is a member? May he not be struck dead if he but cross the path of a Brahmin? If the hand of tyranny is raised to strike, dare he lift up his to ward off the stroke? If his shadow pass over the ground upon which the feet of holy men are treading, is it not pronounced accursed, and he doomed to expiate the fearful penalty of having cast pollution upon the very earth which now denies him sustenance? And yet death is a terrible event. What becomes of the Pariah when the vultures have secured his body, and his bones are reduced to dust? He has no prospect beyond the grave, which shuts him out from all future hope. He has therefore no motive for preserving life, and yet he has a natural dread of losing it. The certainty, however sad, is preferable to the terrible uncertainty that may issue in something worse. The elements of happiness may be found in this world with all its miseries. If I could provide for those around me I should still be comparatively a happy man; I have a wife whom I love, children dear to my heart; could I but give them food, with all this bereavement, I would no longer deplore the condition of a poor Pariah."

These and similar thoughts passed through the mind of the starving Hindoo as he sat before the door of his hovel, gazing with a vacant expression upon the river. It was here of great breadth and considerable depth. He was at length aroused from his mental absorption by seeing on the other side a horseman riding at full speed towards the bank. He observed the man's impetuous career, every moment expecting to see him halt; but no—the stranger urged his steed madly onward and plunged into the river. The current, though not turbulent, was rapid, and he was borne down the stream. His horse encumbered with its load—for besides the rider, it had a large pack upon its back—soon began to sink under its burthen. The rider perceiving his peril quitted the saddle and began to swim towards the shore; but he was heavily clad, and the current proved too strong for him.

The horse, released from its encumbrance, rose gallantly above the waters, and succeeded in reaching the bank. The man was soon in extreme danger; he could scarcely keep his head above the surface; his struggles were desperate, but it was evident they could not last much longer. His stomach was already filled with water—his eyes were becoming dim—his senses fading fast; he gasped, turned upon his back, and drifted with the stream.

The Pariah, seeing the stranger's peril, started from the ground, and, weak as he was, ran to the bank opposite to the spot where the swimmer was struggling, and, plunging into the river, with much difficulty succeeded in bringing him to land. The stranger lay for some time insensible; but by rubbing and rolling him upon the ground, the Pariah finally restored him to consciousness. He looked at his benefactor and pronounced a blessing upon him.

"How is it," he cried, "that a Mahomedan beholds in his preserver one of a race who consider personal contact with any one not of their own caste a carnal defilement?"

"Pariahs do not think thus. You have been preserved by one whose touch would be pollution to a Hindoo, but which I rejoice to find has been the salvation of a Mahomedan. It is at least some consolation to know that there do exist human creatures who can look upon the outcast without shuddering."

"I see in you the saviour of my life, and that is to me paramount over all the poor considerations of rank. Civil distinctions, when they destroy social obligations, are a bane; I am willing, if he will permit me, to share the hut of the Pariah."

"Stranger, you can only have a starving man's welcome. I am fast going to a better or a worse destiny—a worse I am taught to believe, for death secures no favourable change to the contemned outcast. In yonder hut is my wife with three children dying. Would I could offer you a better asylum."

"Perhaps my salvation may involve yours. I hope to bring you relief. My horse has reached the shore in safety, and it bears a supply of provisions. Come, let us to your home."

The eyes of his preserver glistened, he touched the ground with his fingers, placed them against his emaciated forehead, and,

murmuring a blessing upon the stranger, led the way to his miserable hovel.

Upon entering, the first thing that struck the stranger was the wife of his deliverer stretched upon the ground apparently in the agonies of death ; by her side lay two children of the several ages of two and three years, and at her breast was a third attempting to draw that nutriment which the bosom no longer supplied. A tear started into the eye of the husband and father as he saw his guest's cheek wet with the ready tribute of sympathy.

The horse having reached the bank, had with the common instinct of its nature gone to the Pariah's hut, where it was standing when its master entered. Having taken off the pack, the provisions were produced, which consisted of cold meats, rice, and a few condiments, with some bottles of Persian wine. The rice was spread out in the sun and carefully dried ; meanwhile a small quantity of wine was poured down the throats of the youthful mother and her children, after which they were sparingly fed by the anxious husband, who likewise assuaged the pangs of his own hunger. He and his family rapidly revived after this seasonable administration of relief.

Some hours after the stranger's rescue from the river, several horsemen appeared on the other side ; but seeing that the stream was not fordable and too wide to cross with safety they retired. That very night the Pariah's guest complained of restlessness. His sleep was disturbed, his throat parched, his pulse unequal and his skin dry. He lay upon some withered grass in the corner of his preserver's hovel, covered with a shawl which he usually wore round his waist. By the morning he was in a high fever ; it augmented rapidly. For several days it increased until he was in a state of delirium ; in proportion as he grew worse the starving family got better.

Among the things in the pack, belonging to the stranger, was a small bag containing six thousand rupees in gold. When the provisions were exhausted the Pariah took from this store what was necessary to obtain the requisite nourishment for his family and his guest ; this he procured from the neighbouring town, but

did not appropriate a rupee beyond what their domestic exigencies demanded. He attended his guest with a tenderness and attention inspired by his natural kindness of heart and the obligations which he felt under to him for the salvation of his family from starvation. His wife united her attention to his : they feared for their benefactor's life. They watched by him night and day. His constitution at length overcame the fever, and he rapidly recovered. When his senses returned, he blessed his preservers for their attention. The Pariah placed his bag of money before him and accounted for every pice that had been bestowed. The invalid was several weeks under the humble roof of his preserver before he could proceed on his way.

During his recovery, he had a full opportunity of witnessing the character of his hosts. Both had recovered their natural health. The wife was a small delicate creature, gentle, pretty, with a light graceful figure, and an extremely placid countenance. The man was young and vigorous, short but well knit, and exhibiting a frame capable of great endurance. Their eldest child was a girl scarcely three years old, and beautiful as a cherub. Nothing could exceed the perfect symmetry of its little limbs, and both parents seemed to look with pride upon the budding beauty of their offspring.

"My worthy host," said the stranger one day to the Pariah, who was seated beside him smoking a small portion of tobacco rolled up in a plantain leaf, "I must shortly leave you. This humble dwelling has been my security, as no one would think of seeking the fugitive in the hovel of a Pariah. You have ministered to me during sickness with a kindness which I never can either forget or repay."

"Nay, our attentions have been more than repaid by preservation from a terrible death, and had not that been the case they would have been sufficiently requited in your high appreciation of them."

"You know not whom you have harboured."

"Nor do I seek to know : it is enough for me that I have saved the life of a fellow-creature. To me it is quite a matter of

indifference who or what you may be; you have proved my benefactor and I shall never forget that I am indebted to you, not only for my own life, but for those lives which are far dearer to me than my own."

"To-morrow I must quit you. It may perhaps be some consolation to you to know that you saved the life of the Emperor Humayoon. I have been driven from my throne by a rebel, and must cast myself under the protection of some foreign power until I can regain it."

The Pariah and his wife prostrated themselves before the Mogul the moment he had proclaimed his regality.

"Rise," said the Emperor, "and receive my benediction: take this ring and this gold, and may it in future keep you from the privations to which you have hitherto been exposed."

Saying this, he took from his finger a ring bearing a large ruby of considerable value, and put it into the hand of his host, together with a bag containing two thousand rupees in gold. This was a fortune to a needy family, a provision for life, which they acknowledged with tears of grateful joy. Being now sufficiently recovered to proceed on his journey, the following morning the Humayoon mounted his horse, and quitted the Pariah's dwelling with prophetic sadness.

CHAPTER II.

FROM this moment the Pariah's family prospered. With the Emperor's benefaction, he purchased a large quantity of cattle, which he fed with grass from the jungles. By selling these he soon increased his two thousand rupees, and in a few years, by a course of active industry, became a wealthy man. His daughter Yhahil realised, as she grew up, the promise of her babyhood. Her beauty was the theme of every tongue, yet no one sought alliance with the Pariah, and she remained unwedded, which to every Hindoo woman is the sum of human misery. All the members of her own tribe were poor destitute objects, from a

union with whom her soul sickened, and she in vain directed her thoughts to becoming the bride of a man of caste. She considered her case deplorable, and began to pine in secret at her unhappy lot.

Her father was grieved to observe her sadness, but could not alleviate it. He perceived that the web of life was a tangled tissue, which never could be perfectly unravelled. The very fortune which had elevated him above his compeers, had already put forth the buds of misery that seemed but too likely to blossom and ripen into fruit. It began to be clear to him that a man may be as wretched under the bright sun of prosperity, which may scorch and wither his peace, as under the cloud of bereavement, where oft amid the darkness a faint light glimmers that imparts a momentary joy, the more exquisite in proportion to the briefness of its duration. He had become wealthy, but his riches, elevating him above the society of his fellow outcasts, rendered him comparatively a solitary man. They had placed a bar betwixt his child and that blessed boon which is the inheritance of all God's creatures,—the union of hearts in a bond of reciprocal affection. She was excluded from the greatest of immunities to the Hindoo, the privilege of perpetuating her race, unless by an alliance which her proud but sensitive heart could not stoop to embrace.

Many a Pariah had sighed in vain to win the affections of the beautiful Yhahil, but she could not yield to solicitations coming from beings who were but too commonly little above the brute in understanding and familiar with habits which outraged humanity. Hers was no unnatural pride, but she saw in the members of her own tribe much to pity, and nothing to love. Fortune had raised her above them, and she could not stoop to an alliance with those who often fed upon the garbage cast to beasts of prey, and had no better home than the perilous retirement of the jungle, where, in common with creatures of rapine and of blood, they shared a precarious abode.

Though the Pariah could bestow upon his daughter a dowry that would have rendered her an eligible object of alliance had she been blessed with the proud distinction of caste, no one out of

her own tribe proposed for one of the loveliest specimens of nature's craft that could be exhibited to the admiration of man:—the gentle girl was doomed to pine in utter hopelessness.

A young Pariah had sighed in vain for the love of the beautiful Yhahil. He had sought her notice by every attention, but her averted eye and compressed lip showed that he had no place in the affections he sought to win. He was a well-looking youth, with an elevation of mind and a natural refinement of character much above the generality of his race; still he was not beloved. He, nevertheless, laboured with unwearied assiduity to thaw the frost that seemed to have incrustated the heart of her for whom he would have gladly died, had such a sacrifice been demanded of him. Whenever she quitted her home he was sure to be in the way with some humble offering of attachment, which she invariably refused with gentleness, though in a manner that showed her sincerity.

“Yhahil,” he one day said, “why am I despised?”

“You are not despised, Goutama; not to love a man is not to despise him, and you know that our affections are not in our own keeping.”

“But why can you not love me? You cannot desire to live unmarried; and where will you find a husband, if you do not wed a Pariah?”

“It is true, indeed, that I would be married; but I must find a husband whom I can love, otherwise I shall submit to the curse of maidenhood,—for I never could attach myself to a man who had not obtained an entire ascendancy over my heart.”

“But where do you think of seeking for such a man, if you reject the whole race to which you and your family belong?”

“If I find not a man of caste, I tell you honestly I shall never marry.”

“Alas! Yhahil, you would spurn from you one who venerates the earth you tread upon, for a phantom which you can never possess. Would you marry a Brahmin on'y because he is a Brahmin?”

“Not without he had won my affections; but, in truth, the

degradation attached to the Pariah excludes him from those affections."

"Would you refuse to wed a Pariah if you loved him?"

"Certainly not, if I loved him, but I never could love him. You, Goutama, would have secured my affection, if it had been possible that it should fix upon one of your tribe, but it is not; I feel my blood curdle at the very name. My repugnance is invincible. We are outcasts, and I would live united by that social bond which would make me a member of a respected community."

"Alas! you are preparing a load of misery for yourself, as well as for one who would gladly endure it, provided he could bear it in conjunction with you. I see nothing but a gloomy prospect before us both. Will you afford me no hope?"

"It were hypocrisy in me to encourage hope, as I never can become your bride; fate has placed an impassable bar betwixt us."

"Nay, not fate, Yhahil, but woman's pride."

"As you will. The bar is nevertheless fixed, and there is no removing it. Seek, Goutama, some worthier object, and leave me to my destiny."

Yhahil's parents were unhappy at not seeing their daughter married. She was in her fourteenth year, and still a maiden. She was their only girl, and tenderly beloved by both. The father would have gladly seen her united to a man who could have borne her into society which she could not be considered to contaminate; but, rather than she should not be married at all, he would willingly have consented to her becoming the wife of a Pariah. Among Hindoo women celibacy is the greatest stigma they can undergo; nevertheless the beautiful Yhahil was determined to bear the stigma, since she was precluded from becoming the wife of a husband who could lift up his head among his fellows without exhibiting the brand of pollution upon it.

Goutama, who had aspired to her affections, was an amiable youth, but poor in circumstances, and necessitated to labour in the most degrading vocations, in order to satisfy the demands of

nature. His general employment was that of scavenger in a neighbouring village, to collect cow-dung to plaster the floors of the poorer and lower caste of Hindoos, to prepare bodies for the funeral pile, and similar degrading avocations. The lovely girl whose heart he sought to win was repelled from him by the very necessities of his condition, and though she acknowledged him amiable, and occasionally admitted him to her presence, she could not look upon him without a sickening revulsion of heart. She felt ashamed of her feelings, but was unable to control them, and her coldness frequently wrung tears of deep distress from the rejected suitor.

Her mother pitied him, and would gladly have consented to her daughter's union with him, had she not perceived the girl's untractable repugnance. Observing this, she could not forbear offering some gentle expostulations.

"Yhahil," said she, one day, "why, my child, do you look so coldly upon poor Goutama? He loves you: is not that enough to endear a man to a woman's heart?"

"No, my mother. We cannot prepare the channel for the current of our own feelings; they will take what course they list. We may control them, nay, we may master, but cannot change them; they are independent of our will. I cannot love Goutama, and will never wed a Pariah. In this world if there be little happiness, there is, at least, a choice of miseries, and mine shall be those arising from unwedded life, rather than from a union which could never render me happy."

"But why should you seek to elevate yourself above the condition to which you were born?"

"Because it is one of acknowledged disgrace. No mortal was ever born degraded, and the stigmas imposed by conventional prejudices I am unwilling to sanction by perpetuating them. I would emerge from the atmosphere of social degradation by which I have been for years surrounded. I feel within me the elements of that nobility which is indigenious in every living soul, the nobility of mind, and have a strong presentiment that I shall

elevate myself above the present abasement to which destiny seems to have consigned me."

"Daughter, these are dangerous sentiments to encourage; they will plant thorns in your bosom which you will find it difficult to pluck out."

"If the thorns are there, the roses will grow upon them, and I am content."

"But is it not better to have the humblest flower blossom within your heart, than to find nothing but the bitter root growing there, which puts forth neither flower nor fruit?"

"Those joys, my mother, are the sweetest which have sparkled from a cup impregnated with the bitters of affliction. Enjoyment is enhanced by suffering, and I trust I am only passing through the ordeal of the one, to bring me into the enviable inheritance of the other.

The mother forbore to urge a measure to which she saw her child so decidedly opposed, but her disappointment was severe. She feared that her daughter would never perpetuate her race, and that she was destined to be the parent of a degraded offspring—degraded even among the outcasts of the Hindoo population. The father was no less unhappy, but he did not interfere with the prejudices of a beloved child. In truth, he felt the force of these prejudices, and forbore to divert them. He was a wealthy man, and there was no moral reason why she should not pursue the bent of her own conscience, when it did not lead her into practical dereliction. Yhahil was thus left uncontrolled to follow the impulses of her own feelings.

One morning she was bathing in the river with a female attendant. While standing in the water, draining it from her long flowing hair, a scream from the woman beside her directed her attention to an object which paralysed her with horror. A large alligator was rushing towards her with the velocity of a sunbeam. She shrieked and closed her eyes; in a moment a plunge near her caused her to look up, and she beheld the unhappy Goutama in the creature's jaws. "I have saved thee, Yhahil," he cried faintly, and the monster immediately plunged with its victim beneath the

deep dull waters. The surface was slightly tinged with blood ; a few bubbles rose, which were the only indications of what was passing below.

The lovely Pariah made the best of her way to the bank, upon which she fainted. Her woman had witnessed the magnanimity of Goutama. Happening to pass at the moment of the alligator's approach towards its intended victim, he had marked her peril, and, plunging into the stream, preserved her life at the expense of his own.

Yhahil returned to her home in tears. She thought that such a man should have been reserved for better things. She felt she could have loved him had he not been a Pariah, and his melancholy death cast over her spirit a gloom which did not readily subside. The intensity of his passion, proved by the sacrifice of his life, awoke in her bosom the tenderest sympathies. Still there was no disguising from her heart that she could not have married him, even had he escaped destruction, while that moral blight was upon him which rendered him an object of public scorn, and of silent, though undeserved, reproach.

Time sped on, but there was no change. The desolation of sorrow had passed over the outcast's dwelling. His wealth was no blessing. He bowed to his idols in vain ; they heard not his supplications, and his prayer returned to his own bosom. He still pursued his occupation, and money was daily added to his stores, but this did not render him happy. His daughter, the child of his tenderest attachment, was alone in the world, and with all his gold he could not purchase for her the boon she sought.

The death of poor Goutama, whom he respected for his worth, had cast a cloud over his peace. But for his noble sacrifice, the father would have been doomed to mourn the loss of a daughter, of whose virtues he was proud, and of her beauty vain. He presented the family of Goutama with a compensation sufficient to secure them from want for many a year, but this did not restore the son to the bosom of an anxious parent.

One night as Yhahil flung herself upon her couch, she laid her head upon a large snake which was curled upon her pillow. Feel-

ing the cold lubricous surface she suddenly raised herself, when the reptile rose, and, extending its hideous crest, wound itself gently round her neck. She was riveted to the spot; every muscle in her body became rigid, all vital action appeared suspended as she felt the venomous reptile spanning her neck within its horrible coil. She did not move; her breath was arrested, and her eyes fixed in mute horror, when the snake, gliding down her shoulder, passed round her arm, slid upon the palampore, and made its escape. She was uninjured. It was some time before she recovered her self-possession. Her women were summoned, and the apartment examined, but there was no snake seen.

She lay and mused upon the circumstance. Not being free from the superstition prevalent among her race, the circumstance affected her deeply. Her escape was one of those incidental chances of good fortune which occur once in an age. She had lately twice escaped death in its most terrible form. The gods of her country had surely heard her and her father's prayers, and reserved the degraded Pariah for some future destiny. Her pulse rose with the excitement of her feelings. She could not sleep, but visions, almost palpable to the senses, passed before her. Although awake, she seemed to behold objects with all the accuracy and definite precision of sensible perception.

Towards morning she slept. Her dreams embodied the objects of her waking thoughts. She fancied herself surrounded by the pageantries of a court, and that thousands of her fellow-creatures bowed the knee before her. She was no longer an outcast—no longer a disgraced mortal, but a distinguished and adored woman. She awoke from the excitement caused by her dream, rose from her unquiet couch, and went forth to hail the rising sun, which marched up to heaven in its splendour as if in mockery of human woe. She looked upon the glorious orb, her heart dilated, and she became a silent worshipper of its glory.

CHAPTER III.

ABOUT a coss from the Pariah's dwelling lived a jiggerkhar or liver-eater, who was looked upon as a pythoness throughout the neighbourhood, having the power of foretelling future events.

"One of this class," says Abul Fazil,* "can steal away the liver of another by looks and incantations. Other accounts say, that by looking at a person he deprives him of his senses, and then steals from him something resembling the seed of a pomegranate, which he hides in the calf of his leg. The jiggerkhar throws on the fire the grain, which thereupon spreads to the size of a dish, and he distributes it amongst his fellows to be eaten, which ceremony concludes the life of the fascinated person. A jiggerkhar is able to communicate his art to another, which he does by teaching him the incantations, and making him eat a bit of the liver-cake. If any one cut open the calf of the magician's leg, extract the grain, and give it to the afflicted person to eat, he immediately recovers. These jiggerkhars are mostly women. It is said, moreover, that they can bring intelligence from a great distance in a short space of time, and, if they are thrown into a river with a stone tied to them, they nevertheless will not sink. In order to deprive any one of this wicked power, they brand his temples and every joint in his body, cram his eyes with salt, suspend him for forty days in a subterraneous cavern, and repeat over him certain incantations. In this state he is called Datchereh. Although, after having undergone this discipline, he is not able to destroy the liver of any one, yet he retains the power of being able to discover another jiggerkhar, and is used for detecting those disturbers of mankind. They can also cure many diseases, by administering a potion, or by repeating an

* See Ayeen Ackberry.

incantation. Many other marvellous stories are told of these people."

Yhahil had heard many things related of the extraordinary woman already mentioned, though she had never seen her. Impelled by an unconquerable impulse, she determined to visit her. The woman was reputed to possess a singular faculty in tracing human destinies, and was said to have foretold events which had taken place after a considerable interval of time. It was likewise reported, that some of her practices were of a less innocent character. The death of more than one person had been attributed to her, and yet she was held in such awe that no one dared to molest her. When a violent hurricane ravaged the land, it was declared to be of her producing. When famine spread devastation over the country, it was attributed to the jiggerkhar, and not a serious casualty happened, but the blame was attached to her. She was, therefore, shunned and dreaded by the whole country around.

One day about noon Yhahil sought the abode of this prophetess. It was a deep cavern, near the base of a hill. No human habitation was near. Situated on the north side, the beams of the sun were excluded from it. At the entrance were scattered several large fragments of rock, as if casually flung there by some violent convulsion of nature. Not a shrub or particle of verdure was visible within at least fifty yards of the cavern. Lizards crawled about the stones, and snakes were occasionally seen to glide for a moment from their rocky retreats, and retire at the sound of human footsteps. The whole place had an aspect of desolation, perfectly concurring with the life and character of the unnatural being who inhabited the cave. For years the place had been trodden by no foot save her own. Yhahil, with a trembling step, approached the den of the prophetic hag. The old woman was seated on a fragment of rock which lay just in front of her dreary dwelling. On her lap was a Pariah dog, blind with age and disfigured with mange. As the lovely girl approached, the squalid brute raised its head, and commenced a shrill continuous howl, and, when it had finished, began licking its mistress's face with

disgusting familiarity. Having finished this canine caress, it resumed its howl in a still louder key.

Yhahil undauntedly approached, but, on a nearer scrutiny, was for an instant repelled at the sight of the object whom she had come to consult upon the events of the future. Never was anything akin to humanity so perfectly hideous. She might have been taken for any age above a hundred years. She seemed almost to have lived from eternity. Her whole aspect was so essentially old, that every mark which in age so frequently conveys an association with youth was entirely obliterated. She appeared the withered consort of old Time, with whom one might have imagined she had travelled through all the cycles of duration. Every feature of her face was frightful. Her hair, matted and grizzled, fell upon her shrivelled shoulders in long thin wisps, like the dull wiry grass which occasionally hangs from the crest of the sun-scorched rock. Her forehead appeared as if it had been crimped. The wrinkles were so near together, that a needle's point could scarcely have been inserted between them. The skin clung so close to her cheek-bones as to develop the grim anatomy of her visage with a minuteness almost appalling. Nose she had none, but the slight indication of it which remained showed that such a member had once a "local habitation" upon her now revolting countenance. Her eyes were so deeply sunk into her head, and the lids approximated so closely, that the dim lurid orbs were scarcely discernible.

When Yhahil reached the spot where the jiggerkhar was sitting, she flung a gold mohur* into her lap, saying, "I seek a boon, mother."

"Thou shalt have it, maiden," said the hag; "thou knowest how to solicit a boon. Silence Parvati," she said to the dog, which was again beginning to howl, "canst thou not distinguish the voice of a friend—peace, churl! What wouldst thou?"

"I would know of the future, mother, into which thy dim eye

* The gold mohur is worth about five and thirty shillings. It passes in India for twenty rupees.

can pierce with the clearness of a star. I stand upon this world as upon a pinnacle in the midst of a blasted wilderness, whence I can behold nothing but sterility beneath, and vague unfathomable distance above."

"Those who would know of the future, child, must buy the knowledge at a heavier cost than a meal of rice."

Yhahil threw another gold mohur in the sybil's lap.

"You are a liberal probationer, and deserve a good reckoning in this life, and a happy change in the better. Follow me, and you shall know more." Saying this she entered the cavern, and the dog limped after her. The entrance was so narrow as to admit only one person at a time. Yhahil followed the old woman undauntedly, but when she stood within the cave her heart sickened. It was so dark that, three yards beyond the entrance, all was involved in impenetrable gloom. The pythoness was no longer visible, but her hoarse cracked voice was audible through the intense darkness of the cell, the rugged sides of which reverberated it with so terrible an echo, that the terrified girl started, sickened, and would have fallen; but drawing a deep sigh she brushed the gathering dews from her forehead, and in another moment had braced her mind to the necessary pitch of high resolve that defied all future suggestions of terror.

"Now tell me," cried the crone, "what you especially seek to know."

"I am a Pariah, mother."

"That I need not be told, nor how the Pariah became rich. The eye that looks beyond the confines of this world can be no stranger to what passes within them."

"Can you read my thoughts?"

"Ay;—thou wouldst marry a man of caste, but that may not be; yet shalt thou wed."

"Never, I would sooner perish than wed a Pariah."

"That thou wilt not do, and yet marry. Brahma never brought so comely a creature into this world to discredit his creation. Thou wilt be a propagator of beautiful sons and daughters; but I must look more closely to the lines of thy face through the dark-

ness that now surrounds thee, before I can obtain a true sign of thy destiny. I must read the stars too, and that can only be done at night. Come to-morrow by this time, and thou shalt hear more ; but let thy sleep be gentle : there is already a fair augury for thee. Parvati, conduct the Pariah to the light." The dog immediately trotted from the dark extremity of the cavern, and, placing itself just without the entrance, gave a single short bark.

"You are summoned ; to-morrow you will hear a more copious record. The volume of futurity is not read in a moment ; its page is filled with characters which require the sage's expounding. Come to-morrow, and do not forget your gold. If you would learn the secrets hid in the bosom of time, you must pay the price."

Yhahil was disgusted at the impatient covetousness of the jiggerkhar, but her anxiety had become so predominant that she determined to purchase the promised prediction at whatever cost. She hastened to her home under a new but agreeable excitement. Like all her race, though naturally of a strong mind, she was superstitious. Superstition, in fact, was inseparable from the dogmas of that idolatrous creed in the belief of which she had been reared. Her two singular escapes from death had impressed her mind with a solemn assurance that she was foredoomed to something uncommon. The impression haunted her, and she was impatient for the morrow, to hear her anxious longings confirmed by the oracle of the pythoness. Her father remarked the unusual vivacity of her manner, and was pleased, as it encouraged a hope that the root of her prejudice was losing its hold in her heart. The mother was no less overjoyed, and the outcast's home was for that evening a scene of joy.

By noon the following day Yhahil was again at the jiggerkhar's dwelling. The crone was seated as before with the mangy dog upon her lap, and, as the anxious girl approached, extended her hand, exposing her withered palm. Yhahil placed a mohur upon it, but the long fingers did not close over the gold. The coin remained unclutched, yet the hand continued extended. The hag's countenance darkened, and her eye emitted a fierce lurid glare.

Another mohur was placed upon the former. The fingers immediately compressed the two pieces of pure mintage, the old woman's countenance relaxed into a subdued expression of gratified avarice, the dog again licked her face, as if it participated in her satisfaction, and, rising, she said, "Follow me."

Yhahil entered the cave as she had done the preceding day, and remained some minutes without hearing a sound. At length the old woman's voice was heard through the gloom as before.

"The volume of futurity is still clasped. In the broad skies it is written that I shall read further, and that you shall know further, but not now; come to-morrow at this time, and you will ascertain what you seek to be informed." The disappointed girl retired from the cavern, deeply mortified; but there was something too terrible in the aspect of the jiggerkhar to render exposition prudent. She therefore departed without uttering a word.

For several days the same mummerly was repeated and the same pretences urged; the same fee was received at every visit. At length the crone, perceiving that the patience of her victim was gradually waning, promised her with an asseveration of blasphemous solemnity, that on the morrow her doom should be read upon paying a double fee.

Yhahil had now proceeded too far to retreat, and on the following day she appeared once more at the jiggerkhar's den. The prophetess was seated as usual before the entrance, and received her visitor with a smile, as the latter dropped ten gold mohurs into her filthy hand. She now took from her pocket a snake, and shaking it by the throat with her finger and thumb, made it hiss violently; then muttering a few words she entered the cave, and desired the anxious Pariah to follow. This the latter did without emotion, having so frequently obeyed the injunction, without witnessing any terrifying result. In fact, her anxiety had now reached to such a painful climax, that she felt reckless of all consequences, and stood with unshrinking firmness in the presence of one possessing, as she imagined, the awful power of divination.

She had not remained long within the cavern when she heard

the snake hiss ; the dog uttered a heavy moan, a sudden flash was seen to break through the gloom, and a stream of blue light rose from the floor : the whole space was illuminated. The old woman stood behind the flame, which shone full upon her unearthly form, throwing over it a pale grey, quivering radiance, which added tenfold to the natural hideousness of her aspect. The snake was coiled round her neck ; a guana* crawled at her feet, where the dog lay with its head erect, looking into her face. Yhahil blanched not, though every drop of her blood appeared to recede with a sudden gush upon her heart.

“The word of divination comes,” said the sybil. “Your destiny has been perused, and it will be as fruitful as you have been liberal. You will not live a maiden, and you will die ennobled. Go to the Mogul capital, and look for the consummation of a blessed lot, or remain where you are, and perish an outcast. Go,—your doom has been read.”

The light now gradually faded, and the place was involved in intense darkness. Yhahil quitted the cavern. Absurd and evident as the juggle had been, she was fully impressed with a notion that she had heard the voice of an oracle. Her bosom swelled with joyous anticipations. She seemed to tread on the clouds as she sought her home. For days her spirits were so buoyant that her parents became uneasy : the excitement, however, at length subsided, and she appeared to have become rationally happy. This was an event of real gladness to the delighted father, a feeling also in which the mother fully participated.

CHAPTER IV.

MY father,” said Yhahil, one day, “I have a great desire to visit the Mogul capital.”

“Why, my child?”

* A huge lizard, frequently upwards of three feet long.

“Because the Mahomedans have no more antipathy towards Pariahs than they have towards the castes ; and among them our wealth would gain us respect, though our social degradation did not.”

“Well, I see no objection to the change. As you know, I once saved the Emperor’s life, and his liberality upon that occasion was the source of all my present wealth. For a while he was a wanderer in foreign countries ; but he has since resumed his throne, and governs his subjects with equity. He might chance to remember and acknowledge the outcast, though princes have not the credit of awakening unwelcome recognitions. We will go : any change will be for the better, and at Delhi the facilities of traffic are great.—We will go.”

The wife, who was obedient to her husband in all things, made no objection, and the Pariah family were soon settled in the Mogul capital. In a populous city, where beauty is sought after and admiration easily won, the personal attractions of Yhahil could not long remain a secret. The beautiful Pariah was continually spoken of, and at length the reputation of her attractions reached beyond the immediate neighbourhood in which her parent had taken up his abode. She seldom quitted the house that there was not a buzz of admiration ; and as it was not the custom of her tribe, as of women of caste, to appear seldom abroad, and then always with the face covered, she was seen every day, and the fame of her beauty spread rapidly over the city.

Passing one morning through the bazaar, which was greatly crowded, she was struck down by the pole of a palenkeen. The person within having been immediately made acquainted with the accident from the cries of the crowd, ordered his bearers to stop, and proceeded to the sufferer’s assistance. Commanding her to be put into his palenkeen, and having ascertained where she lived, she was carried home, he walking by her side.

The father, surprised at witnessing so unusual a cavalcade approaching his door, rushed out with instinctive apprehension of mischief. Upon seeing his daughter, he began to make heavy lamentations, until he heard her assurances that she had only

been stunned ; and quitting the palankeen she speedily removed his alarm. The stranger was invited to partake of some refreshment, which invitation he did not decline. He was evidently a Mahomedan of rank ; and the Pariah was flattered at seeing a man, to whom the multitude bowed in homage, seated at his board, from which all but outcasts had been hitherto excluded. The guest at length retired, after having signified that he should occasionally repeat his visit, which was anxiously pressed by the parents, and seconded by their daughter, not without that silent eloquence of the eyes, which speaks with a sweeter emphasis than the tongue can impart to words.

It was soon ascertained that the gallant Mahomedan was the son of Beiram Chan, prime minister of Humayoon. This adventure naturally led to an intimacy ; and young Beiram could not behold the beauty of the Pariah's daughter without feeling his heart moved. He was young and handsome, full of generous impulses, though too apt to be driven by those impulses beyond the strict line of prudence. He was an object of admiration among the chief ladies of the Emperor's court, yet he had not fixed his affections, though they had several times wavered between two or three Mahomedan beauties. The lovely Yhahil at once decided him. He had seen nothing among his own countrywomen to approach her transcendant loveliness ; his resolution therefore was soon fixed to give them all up, and cleave to the charming stranger. This, however, occurred to his sober reflections as likely to involve him in considerable perplexity. It would never do for the son of a Mogul noble to ally himself with the daughter of an outcast, except by those temporary ties which may be ruptured at will ; and, even upon any terms, it would not, he knew, receive the approbation of his family. He did not for a moment imagine that Yhahil would refuse the sort of alliance which he meant to propose to her, feeling conscious that he was not indifferent to her, and knowing, as she must do, the impassable barrier to a conjugal union between them. Their eyes had exchanged those glances which are the precursors of a declaration on the one hand, and of acceptance on the other : still he

hesitated to avow himself, being unwilling hastily to rouse the indignation of his parent.

Yhahil's father and mother had observed the reciprocations of attachment which had been mutually manifested by their daughter and the Mogul minister's son, and knowing the stern severity of virtue which governed all the actions of their beloved child, they looked forward to her ratifying the conquest, which she had evidently made, by becoming the wife of a Mahomedan noble.

"My girl," said her father, as he one day embraced her with anxious tenderness, "I still hope to see my home blessed through you. You have, I trust, won a good man's love."

"Of whom do you speak?" asked the daughter, with a fluttering heart.

"The minister's son."

"He has never avowed his passion."

"But it needs not the tongue's avowal to confirm the evidence of a silent yet more credible expression that he loves thee. You will hear him declare himself before the horns of the next young moon meet. Tell me, Yhahil, do you love him?"

"I do, father."

"Would you wed him?"

"I never could love the man I would not wed, nor wed whom I could not love."

"I am satisfied."

The parents from this time looked anxiously for the Mahomedan's declaration, but it came not, and they began to be impatient, though it was more than ever evident that he loved their child.

The minister's son paid his visits daily at the Pariah's house, and his attachment to the daughter increased with their acquaintance. He found that she possessed an understanding, though not highly cultivated, yet of a rare order. The degradation in which she had been held in being of no caste, had deprived her of the means of raising her mind to the elevation of which it was capable; she had nevertheless not neglected it. All the means

within her reach she had employed, and her natural quickness of perception had given her advantages possessed by few. She had not been allowed to attend the village school in consequence of the disgrace attached to her social station ; but she had availed herself of the assistance of a learned Mussulman who dwelt at some short distance from her father's abode, and he had given her an insight into the history and literature of her country, and what he could not teach, her own readiness of apprehension supplied.

At this period education was cultivated by the Hindoos in every village, by a national edict ; knowledge was universally inculcated, and it was then as rare to find a poor villager who could not read as it is now to find one who can. In fact, the whole social system seems to have undergone a complete revolution. During those ages when Europe was enveloped in intellectual darkness that exposed her to the contempt of the very countries which are now drawing from the stores of her wisdom and science a harvest which bids fair to ripen into universal civilisation, Hindostan was distinguished by a race of philosophers, who, but for the conquest to which that country has been subjected, and the degrading dominion under which its vast population has so long groaned, would probably have raised it to an elevation in intellectual and social dignity, not inferior to ancient Greece at the brightest period of her glory. "Education has always, from the earliest period of their history, been an object of public care and public interest to the Hindoo government on the peninsula of India. Every well-regulated village under those governments had a public school and public schoolmaster. The system of instruction in them was that which, in consequence of its efficiency, simplicity, and cheapness, was a few years ago introduced from Madras into England, and from England into the rest of Europe. Every Hindoo parent looked upon the education of his child as a solemn duty which he owed to his god and to his country, and placed him under the schoolmaster of his village as soon as he had attained his fifth year. The ceremony of introducing him for the first time to the schoolmaster and his scholars was publicly recorded, and was attended

with all the solemnity of a religious observance ; a prayer being publicly offered up on the occasion to the figure of Genesa, the Hindoo God of Wisdom, which was at the head of every Hindoo school, imploring him to aid the child in his endeavours to learn and become wise.*

Yhahil had imbibed, as deeply as the son of Beiram, the impressions of love.

"Yhahil," said the Mahomedan one day, when they were seated in a veranda that overlooked a garden at the back of the house, "do you think you could be happy to quit your parents?"

"No ; I see no circumstance that should render it necessary for me to quit them."

"Surely you are not serious?"

"In truth I am. Why should I leave them under any temporal change that you can imagine?"

"Suppose you should be married?"

"They could still be with me."

"But your husband might not like them."

"Then he could not like me. They who love truly feel kindly towards those who are dear to the objects of their love. If not, their hearts are hollow."

"But there are other unions which would render it impossible for your parents to live with you."

"What may those unions be? I know of none."

"Suppose you were living with the objection of your affection in an alliance of fervent attachment without being bound by the compulsory obligations of marriage."

"I could never be in such a position, therefore your argument is of no weight."

"Is there no man, Yhahil, with whom you would consent to pass your life, free from those civil restraints which so frequently chill the warm glow of hearts, and render wedlock a condition of dull monotonous dissatisfaction?"

"That may be, but with all its evils, these, when weighed against

* Extract of a letter of Sir Alexander Johnston to Mr. C. Grant, upon the Hindoo national education.

the good, are lightest in the balance, and I would rather be a Pariah's wife than an Omrah's harlot."

"I thought you had determined never to wed a Pariah—your father has told me as much."

"And he told you truly—it will therefore follow that I am determined never to become the harlot of an Omrah."

"Yhahil," said the minister's son, "I need scarcely say that I love you ; but you will hardly imagine with what fervour, and let me ask you to state candidly if that love is reciprocated?"

"Omrah, I am a girl unhackneyed in the ways of the world, and know little of the artifices of life. I am not aware, therefore, that any motive can exist why I should not readily confess to you that my heart has received a strong impression from your delicate attentions to me ; but let me assure you at once, for I have a disquieting suspicion, that, the moment they cease to be delicate, my respect for you will likewise cease, and a woman's love without her respect is a jewel in so bad a setting as only to disgrace the wearer."

"Yhahil, you cannot imagine that I can fail to respect one who has so entirely engrossed my affections. I love you with an earnestness which death only can subdue ; but you know there are certain social impediments——" he hesitated. The blood mantled to the beautiful Pariah's brow.

"Proceed," she said, "why do you hesitate ? Let me hear what you propose : there should be no disguise after the mutual confessions which have passed between us."

"I am sure, Yhahil, you cannot be unreasonable. Where there is a sincere interchange of attachment there should be no suspicion. I need not point out to one of your superior mind that the mere circumstance of your being a Pariah precludes the possibility of my making you my wife. If I did so I should be despised by my countrymen, and you would be an object of scorn among their wives and daughters. I would not for an empire expose you to the chance of such indignity. Nevertheless, there is no social bar to a union of hearts apart from those civil ties by which *كنا* is recognised by the world. We may still be united, we

may still be dear to each other, and reciprocate affections which no time shall subdue, no contingencies stifle. My proposal is, that you be mine in spite of the civil impediments which interpose between us and a conjugal alliance."

Yhahil had listened in silence ; every drop of blood had receded from her face, and left her lips as pale as ashes. They quivered with indignant emotion, but she answered with deliberate and solemn calmness,

"Omrah, you may be privileged by your rank to insult a Pariah, but your dignity as a man ought to have withheld you from insulting a woman. What has there been in my conduct, since our acquaintance, to lead you to imagine that I could violate the purity of my womanhood in favour of a man who evidently does not know how to appreciate a woman's virtue? Though considered an outcast by my countrymen, I am, nevertheless, not destitute. I have a home in which there is no deficiency of comfort, and the means of this world's enjoyments are abundantly within my reach. Why then should you imagine that I am prepared to sacrifice my honour to the base passions of a Mahomedan noble? I despise your love—I reject your alliance ; from this moment we are strangers to each other."

She waited not her lover's reply, but retired from the veranda.

Her parents were surprised at observing the change which had passed over the beautiful countenance of their daughter. She appeared dejected : the bright smile had ceased to play upon her sunny face, and her cheek was pale. The minister's son paid his usual visit, but Yhahil refused to see him. She disclosed to her father the cause of her coldness ; he approved of her resolution, and the handsome Mahomedan was forbidden the house. He frequently attempted to obtain admission, but was always refused. He sent billets,—they were returned unopened. The force of his passion rose in proportion as it met with resistance, and he resolved to see the object who had excited within his bosom such intense emotion. He appealed to the father, but found him inexorable ; the mother was a cipher, and refused to interfere. He became impetuous ; this only provoked a more determined opposition. Yhahil would

not see him, and interdicted his messengers from being admitted to her presence.

The disappointed lover ceased not to encourage his passion, though it was no longer requited. He became more than ever anxious to possess the object of his attachment upon any terms, even at the hazard of incurring the general odium of his countrymen.

Yhahil used frequently to walk in the suburbs of the town, accompanied by a single female attendant. The restraints imposed generally upon Hindoo women had no influence upon her. She appeared abroad daily without reluctance. She had not seen the minister's son since her rejection of him, though her wanderings were never restricted. The mortification occasioned by his proposal had bowed her proud spirit, and she was determined to treat him with repelling scorn, should he ever cross her path. For the present she was spared this exercise of her indignation.

One morning she went out as usual, but did not return at her accustomed hour. After a while her parents became uneasy. Evening drew on and neither their daughter nor her attendant appeared. Night advanced, and her place at the family meal was unoccupied. Their distress was excessive. The next day passed, and she did not return. A dark suspicion crossed the parents' mind that she had fallen into the Mahomedan's hands, and that he had forcibly removed her from her home.

"There is but one way of frustrating the evil designs of that man," said the father to his sorrowing consort. "I will throw myself upon the Emperor's justice, and beseech him to enforce the restoration of my child. He is a mild and merciful prince, whose clemency is only excelled by his justice. He will remember that I once saved his life, and force the son of his minister to restore my daughter."

"Alas!" said the mother, "princes are apt to think too lightly of the moral delinquencies of their nobles to imagine there is much enormity in taking away the daughter of an outcast."

"I have better hopes of the man who has been taught in the school of adversity the difficult lesson of virtue. Cast from his throne to wander for several years among strangers, he has per-

sonally known what it is to suffer privation. Since his restoration to sovereignty he has exercised the best virtues of a king. Why then should I distrust the equity of a man whom I have known by experience to be generous, and whom all acknowledge to be just."

"But how will you obtain an audience?"

"I will cast myself at his feet at the next durbar, and implore the royal interference to obtain the restoration of my child. It is not much to ask from one who, though he has cancelled one bond of obligation, may still do a supernumerary kindness to the man who risked a valueless life to save that which has been a blessing to his people."

The unhappy father determined to throw himself upon the kindness of the Mogul monarch on the very next day of audience, and, having come to this resolution, his hopes, of again beholding his daughter immediately began to revive.

CHAPTER V.

ON the next day of public audience the bereaved parent repaired to the Dewan Aum, or Hall of Public Audience. When he entered he was dazzled by the extraordinary splendour of the scene. The musnud upon which the Emperor sat was so costly a work as to be one of the marvels of the age. It was in the form of a peacock with the tail outspread, entirely composed of diamonds and other precious stones. It was valued at seven crore of rupees.* The apartment was built entirely of white marble, and richly ornamented with representations of various flowers. Over the arches which supported the roof was the following inscription in Persian characters, beautifully inlaid with silver on a ground of dark, but brilliantly polished marble—"If there be a heaven upon earth, it is here, it is here, it is here." The letters were admirably formed, and distinctly legible from the floor.

* About seven millions sterling.

In this hall, beside the throne, was an immense block of crystal, upon which the Emperor used to sit when he held private audience with his ministers. It was sufficiently broad to have formed a table. The apartment was lighted by a dome, the largest in the palace, richly inlaid with gold.

When the Pariah entered, the hall was nearly filled. As he attempted to approach the royal presence, he was stopped by one of the guards.

"Whom do you seek here?" asked the soldier.

"Your sovereign."

"He does not hold conference with strangers, especially upon days of state ceremony."

"Your king is reported wise, and not only wise, but just. I come to offer an appeal to his royal justice; and you do both him and me wrong by defrauding him of the opportunity of exercising his justice, and me of receiving that benefit from it which, if report do not belie him, he would be delighted to confer."

"Are you not a Pariah?"

"What then? Are the natural rights of man less my nature's privilege than another's? Mahomedans do not despise Pariahs, and your sovereign least of any."

"You cannot have audience here."

"Why?"

"Because this place is appropriated to the ceremonies and business of state. You must send a petition."

"Nay, soldier, I must see your king: withhold me at your peril!"

"Advance but a single step further, and I shall cut you down."

"My blood, then, be upon your head."

The Pariah stepped forward; the soldier did his best to put his threat into execution, but his intended victim had sprung beyond the reach of the stroke.

"Justice!" he cried, in a loud shrill voice, that rang through the hall; "justice from the Emperor of the Moguls."

"Who is it that demands justice?" asked Humayoon, with mild dignity; "let him approach."

The stranger immediately advanced, and prostrated himself before the King.

“Rise !” said the Emperor, “and state your cause of grievance, if you have any.”

The petitioner rose, and was instantly recognised by the sovereign.

“Vuluvir !” he cried—“do I behold him to whom I am indebted above all men in my dominions ?”

The Emperor descended from the musnud, raised the Pariah and embraced him, to the surprise of his court.

“Nobles,” said he, “to this outcast from his own community I owe my life. When pursued by the emissaries of him who had usurped my throne, I cast myself into a river and was nearly drowned. This generous benefactor, although then grievously prostrated by famine, plunged into the stream, and, as I was sinking, dragged me to the bank. In his dwelling I found an asylum. He watched by my lowly couch while the paroxysms of fever were upon me, moistened my parched lips, wiped from my forehead the dews of agony, and restored me to life. My debt to him is such as my empire could not repay.”

“Nay, mighty King,” cried Vuluvir, while the big tear rolled slowly down his cheek, “that deed of common charity was abundantly requited. The two thousand rupees with which your gracious liberality honoured me, were the foundation of my present affluence. Upon them I have erected a fortune which might place me in that respect upon a level with nobility ; but I am still a miserable man.”

“State your cause of grievance,” said the Emperor, leading him to the block of crystal, upon which he desired him to be seated. Humayoon having taken his place upon the musnud, Vuluvir said, touching the floor with his fingers and putting them to his forehead—

“Sovereign of the Moguls, I have a daughter, the child whom you once fondled in your royal arms, and who has since often expressed her pride in having received those caresses. That daughter I may say, without a parent’s vanity, is a creature endowed with the highest perfections of woman. She is the joy

of my heart, and her loss would be a bane which I reel I could not survive. She has been stolen from me."

"I remember thy daughter well, Vuluvir; she promised to be all thou sayest. But who has robbed thee of her?—say, and to the farthest limits of my dominions he shall be sought and visited with the chastisement he deserves."

"I attribute her abduction to the son of your minister."

"Son of Beiram, stand forth," said the Emperor, solemnly; "what have you to answer to this charge?"

The young Omrah was silent.

"What construction am I to put upon your silence?" asked Humayoon, sternly.

"I plead guilty to the charge: I am at the Emperor's mercy."

"Vuluvir," said Humayoon, turning to his former host, "your wrong shall be redressed, and your daughter restored."

The offender was immediately committed to the custody of an officer; and that very night Yhahil was delivered to the arms of her anxious parents.

The next day, Vuluvir was summoned to the imperial presence. "My friend," said the sovereign, "I know that the religion you profess is one from which you derive little consolation, and to which none of your tribe are bound by very strong attachments. It is my intention to ennoble you, provided you consent to become one of the faithful; and in your conversion I shall look for that of your family." After a conference of some length, the Pariah embraced the Emperor's proposal; and the next day was raised to the rank of Omrah, with a sum from the treasury sufficient to support that dignity. His wife and Yhahil became, likewise, converts to the new faith. The idea of being now naturalised among a people who welcomed her and her parents as their common kindred, poured a flood of joy upon Yhahil's heart. She felt no longer degraded, and began to soften in her indignation towards the man who forced her from her home. He had, however, committed no violence. She had been carried to a house engaged for the purpose of securing her; but, when there, the noble only pressed his suit without offering the slightest offence to her purity.

She repelled his advances with unqualified indignation ; he treated her, nevertheless, with uniform respect. The recollection of this disarmed her anger, and she besought her father to solicit his release.

“My daughter,” said he, embracing her, “you have always found me ready to meet every wish of your heart, but in the present instance I have secret misgivings which deter me from compliance. To come at once to the point, I fear the violence of that young noble.”

Yhahil smiled.—“His violence, my father, was not shown when I was in his power, and I can forgive his rashness in his forbearance.”

“But, surely, the man who would forcibly tear a daughter from her parent’s roof is to be feared.”

“I do believe—nay I am sure, that he loves me ; and though he sought to win me to a dishonourable intercourse while I was a Pariah, I think he might no longer hesitate to wed me as an Omrah’s daughter. I love him, father. He must be liberated for my sake. If we should ever meet in future, it will be as honourable lovers, or as strangers, but I must no longer be the cause of his captivity.”

“I will seek the Emperor and make known your wishes, but——”

“My father, listen to me : my mortal destiny has been traced. Before I quitted our dwelling in the land of my birth, I sought the abode of the jiggerkhar. Her revelations have been marvellously fulfilled—the consummation only remains. She promised me wedded happiness, and I feel I shall enjoy it.”

“Enough, my child, your desire shall be instantly accomplished ;” and the converted outcast was admitted without delay to the presence of Humayoon.

“Well, Mahomed Chan,”—the name which had been bestowed upon the newly-made Omrah,—asked the Monarch, “what seek you ?”

“The release of your minister’s son. It is at my child’s solicitation that I venture to ask this favour.”

“He shall never have his liberty until he makes your daughter full reparation for the insult he has offered her. It is necessary that the noble should suffer punishment for his violations of the law, else with what justice can we punish the humbler delinquent?”

“My daughter has forgiven him: he offered her no personal disrespect, save in forcing her from her home.”

“One of the greatest infractions of public decorum,” cried the sovereign, hastily; “and a most reprehensible trespass upon the sanctity of private life. His liberty shall be conditional. He has violated the obligations of honour as well as the laws of his country; he must therefore pay the penalty.”

Humayoon ordered the offender to be brought before him, and, after upbraiding him with having committed a scandalous offence, asked him if he was ready to repair the wrong he had done to the lovely Yhahil.

“If marrying her will be considered a sufficient reparation of the injury I have unadvisedly inflicted, I am prepared to offer that reparation on the instant.”

“I know not,” said Mahomed Chan, “that my child may be willing to accept the man who has offered her so serious an insult; but if you will accompany me to my home you can urge your suit.”

“Upon condition that he becomes the husband of her whom he has so grossly offended I grant him his liberty,” said the Emperor; “otherwise his captivity will be for life.”

The father returned to his home with the minister’s son, whom he presented to Yhahil. She received him with withering coldness. He flung himself at her feet.

“I acknowledge my fault,” he cried, passionately. “I have wronged you—grievously wronged the object of my soul’s adoration, and come to repair the wrong I have done by making her the partner of my life. I feel she would ennoble a diadem. Will you become mine?”

“Can you think I have reason to trust you?”

“Yes—you know that passion impelled me to act as I did; love

was at the bottom of it, and if you have a woman's heart you will forgive me."

Yhahil smiled; the young Omrah rose and clasped her to his bosom.—“You are mine for ever; this day shall consummate our union. I shall receive my freedom from the sovereign only to cast over my heart the golden fetters of bliss.”

Yhahil yielded to his embrace; there was joy in the late house of mourning. On that very day the lovers were married. The Mogul Emperor honoured their union with his presence, and ratified it with his blessing. The jiggerkhar's prophecy was accomplished, and never was there a happier union than that formed between the Pariah's daughter and the Minister's son.



HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

Heg. 964 (A.D. 1556).—The young King Akbar fought a desperate battle at Paniput against Hamoo, vizier of Mahomed Shah Adily, who now claimed the throne. During the action, fifteen hundred elephants fell into the hands of Akbar, who, marching from Paniput, reached Delhi without opposition. Mankote was delivered up to the King after a siege of six months.

Heg. 965 (1558).—A reconciliation took place between Akbar and Beiram Chan, which was cemented by the latter marrying Sulima Sultana Begum, niece of the late Humayoon, which took place with consent of the King, who was present at the nuptials. Shortly afterwards the breach was renewed between the King and the Regent.

Heg. 966 (1558).—Beiram Chan assembled troops, in order to establish himself in the Panjab. Upon Akbar despatching a messenger to him, Beiram sent the ensigns of state, his elephants, banners and drums to the King, and declared his intention of proceeding to Mecca.

Heg. 967 (1559).—Beiram Chan having proceeded as far as Bhickanere, repented of his resolution to relinquish public life, returned to Nagoor, and began to levy troops. The King sent against him Moolla Peer Mahomed, who had lately returned from exile, to which he had been sent by the regent.

Heg. 968 (1560).—The ex-minister being reduced to the greatest distress, resolved to throw himself upon the King's mercy. Akbar accepted his submission. On entering the court, Beiram hung his turban round his neck, and advancing rapidly, threw himself at the foot of the throne. Akbar, stretching out his hand, desired him to rise, and placed him in his former station at the head of his nobles.

Heg. 969 (1561).—One day, while hunting in the vicinity of Nurwar, a royal tiger crossed the road. The King urged his horse forward, and with a single sabre-stroke stretched it dead upon the plain. The nobles present, in the excess of their joy, ran to kiss the royal stirrup, and offered thanks to God for his preservation.

Heg. 970 (1562).—Sulim Shah having taken a number of Ghoorkas prisoners in war, ordered a prison at Gualior, wherein they were confined, to be blown up with gunpowder. Upon this occasion Kumal Ghoorka had the good fortune to escape, being only thrown to some distance, without receiving any considerable injury.

Heg. 971 (1563).—Akbar returning from Nurwar towards his capital, fell in

with a herd of wild elephants. He ordered his cavalry to surround and drive them into a kedda, or fold, which was effected with some difficulty. One of the male elephants, finding itself confined, broke through the palisades. Three trained elephants were despatched to secure it, and, before it was overpowered, it afforded the King much sport.

Heg. 972 (1564).—Akbar quelled a formidable conspiracy of Usbeck chiefs.

Heg. 973 (1566).—Juanpoor was captured by Akbar's armies.

Heg. 974 (1566).—The Usbeck chiefs again rebelled, and were subdued.

Heg. 975 (1567).—This year was distinguished by the siege of Chittore, in which were eight thousand Rajpoots, with an ample supply of provisions. The King having invested the fort, employed five thousand workmen of different descriptions to conduct the siege. The approaches were made by *sabat*, a description of defence peculiar to India. The besiegers are protected by stuffed gabions, covered with leather, behind which they continue their approaches until they arrive near the walls of the place to be attacked. The governor appearing on the walls was shot with a matchlock by the King. The Rajpoots immediately performed the Johur, putting their wives and children to death. The fort was stormed by the Moguls, who obtained possession of it without further resistance.

Heg. 976 (1568).—Akbar obtained possession of Runtunbhore.

Heg. 977 (1569).—The favourite sultana gave birth to Prince Selim, who afterwards reigned under the name of Jehangire.

Heg. 978 (1570).—Prince Morad was born.

Heg. 980 (1572).—Akbar defeated Ibrahim Hoossein Mirza, and laid siege to Surat, which surrendered, and the King returned to Agra.

Heg. 983 (1575).—The Afghans were defeated by the King's troops, and their general was taken prisoner. He was put to death by the Mogul leader, and his son, who had been severely wounded in the action, died a few days after. The Mogul general took possession of all Bengal, and sent the elephants and other spoils to the King.

Heg. 984 (1576).—Akbar went this year to Ajmere, and employed Shahlaz Chan Kumbo against Koombulmere, a strong fortress, in possession of the Rana of Oodipore, which was eventually taken.

Heg. 986 (1578).—Died Hoossein Koolly Chan Toorkoman, governor of Bengal.

Heg. 987 (1579).—A great fire happened in the Furash Khana, at Futte-pore, which consumed many tents, lined with velvet and brocade of great value.

Heg. 989 (1581).—The King's brother, Mahomed Hukeen Mirza, invested Lahore.

Heg. 991 (1583).—The King was taken dangerously ill, and the people became apprehensive of his death; but he recovered, and bestowed large sums in charity.

Heg. 992 (1584).—Mirza Khan was defeated by Akbar's troops in a sanguinary battle.

Heg. 993 (1585).—Prince Selim, who afterwards ascended the throne under the title of Jehangire, married the daughter of Rajah Bhugwandas.

Heg. 995 (1586-7).—This year the daughter of Ray Singh was likewise married to Prince Selim.

Heg. 997 (1589).—Died the learned Azd-ood-Dowla Shirazz, who had lately come from Guzerat.

Heg. 998 (1589).—Mirza Azeez Koka was appointed governor of Guzerat.

Heg. 1004 (1596).—The Prince Morad Mirza and Mirza Chan laid siege to Ahmednugger, but finally entered into negotiations with the besieged, by which it was stipulated that they should still retain possession, but that Akbar should have the province of Berar.

Heg. 1011 (1602).—The celebrated Abul Fazel was attacked by banditti on his way from the Deccan to the capital, and murdered.

Heg. 1014 (1605).—Akbar died after a prosperous and glorious reign of fifty-one years and some months. He was certainly the greatest of the Mogul monarchs.



The Defence of Chittore.

CHAPTER I.

THE Governor of Chittore was upon the ramparts observing the progress of the enemy, who were making their approaches behind wicker frames filled with earth and covered with leather. The town was plentifully supplied with provisions; the garrison consisted of eight thousand Rajpoots, and it was determined to resist whilst a stone remained in the battlements. The siege had already continued six weeks, directed by Akbar in person, but no material effect had been produced. The besieged fought with that determined spirit peculiar to the Rajpoot character. The fortifications were of great strength, and although the garrison had made several desperate sallies, their loss had hitherto been insignificant.

Akbar was vexed at being detained so long before the place, as he was in the habit of carrying much more promptly the towns which he invested with his armies. He, however, knew the strength of the garrison, was well acquainted with the characters of the men who composed it, and had therefore made up his mind that Chittore would not be an easy conquest.

While the governor was standing on the ramparts, he was joined by his wife, a handsome woman, under thirty, although the mother of two marriageable daughters.

"Jugmul," she said, whilst a glance of fire shot from her dilated eye, "will these scoffers of our gods prevail?"

"I know not—their king is brave."

“Is there a living soul within these walls of whom you cannot say as much?”

“I trust not; but he is likewise a successful general, and success is not the issue of chance, but of talent.”

“Have we not encountered both before now?”

“Yes; but the latter has its degrees, and the interval between great and little is extreme.”

“Then you despair of driving these Moslems from before our walls.”

“You know that a Rajpoot never despairs. Nevertheless, of this I am certain, that nothing but a desperate resistance and an extensive destruction of the enemy will cause him to relinquish his present purpose.”

“Jugmul, he knows not that there are women within this fortress who fear not to encounter his men in a struggle of death. Let him beware how he provokes such a collision.”

“You miscalculate the energies of the wives and daughters of Chittore, if you measure them by your own.”

“Should the extremity arrive, it will be seen whether I have misjudged my countrywomen. Meanwhile, Jugmul, I claim to be a partner in your toils, and to share the glory as well as the labour of your resistance to this Moslem sovereign. It is but just that the wife should partake of her husband’s honours, of which I trust you are about to reap a full harvest.”

At this time, Chittore was invested by an army of thirty thousand men, commanded by Akbar in person, acknowledged the greatest leader of his age; yet this did not dispirit the governor’s wife, who was evidently more sanguine than her husband in the valour and resources of the garrison. Her eldest daughter, a lovely girl of sixteen, was engaged to a young Rajpoot chief, who when the siege commenced had thrown himself into Chittore with a few resolute followers.

Peirup Singh had not only the qualities of daring valour and indomitable resolution in common with his race, but was moreover young, handsome, and intelligent. He was ardently attached to the beautiful Kherla Nuny, though she had not yet experienced

the glow of fervent affection. The young Rajpoot had been the choice of her parents, not of herself; her feelings, therefore, towards him, when brought to a sum, would have formed a total amounting to little more than indifference. She felt no objection to the choice of her parents, for she had no reason on the score of his general qualities; but she did not love him.

Peirup Singh was anxious that their nuptials should immediately take place, notwithstanding the siege, which had already been going on several weeks; and from the strength of the garrison, and the resolution of the foe, there was every reason to apprehend that it would not be terminated for some months to come. He therefore sought the Rajpootni to propose an immediate fulfilment of his wishes.

“Kherla,” said he, “youth is the beautiful season of life; but in proportion as it is beautiful it is fleeting. The hours of enjoyment are sparingly meted out to us, it were therefore unwise to cast any away. I rejoice in the possession of your love, but would be made happy in the possession of you.”

“Peirup Singh,” replied the noble girl, “you have been promised that possession, and shall have it when the season comes; but I could not wed amid the dangers which surround us. When your valour has contributed to drive the enemy from our walls, I will give myself up to your future good guidance.”

“But why delay my happiness? Think you I shall fight less effectually as your husband than as your lover?”

“I know not; but I would be the spouse of a brave man. You have the reputation of being such, yet I have had no proof of it. Ample opportunity is now afforded you of showing that your reputation does not fall below your merit.”

“Ha! must I prove my claim to your love, Kherla? This is rather a mortifying exaction.”

“Not to a brave man, who is always proud to ratify by deeds of arms the reputation to which he lays claim.”

“But I promise you, the moment you are mine I will give you those proofs you require that your husband is unable to dishonour the name of Rajpoot.”

“Nay, Peirup Singh, the siege is still going on. I cannot comply with your wishes until the Moslem tyrant is either slain or driven from the neighbourhood of our homes. If you were to steep your sabre in his heart’s blood, my consent to an immediate union would be won. It may be worth your thinking of, Peirup Singh.”

In Akbar’s army was a Rajpoot, who having quitted Chittore in disgust, had enrolled himself among the Mogul troops. The cause of his abandoning his countrymen was this:—Having become attached to the younger daughter of the governor, who encouraged his addresses, her parents had refused their consent, not considering him eligible in point of rank for such an alliance. The girl, in consequence, implicitly obeying the directions of her parents, rejected him. His mortification was extreme.

All the passions of these fierce warriors are proportionably strong, and his disappointed feelings immediately urged him to an act of treachery. He went over to the enemy, and made those communications which greatly facilitated the progress of the siege. Akbar well knew how to profit by the information received, but did not trust the man beyond the line of wary policy. The Rajpoot was allowed to see nothing by which he could betray the Emperor’s designs to his countrymen, yet he was apparently treated with confidence and kindness. He, however, soon perceived that he was suspected. This discovery raised his indignation, and he immediately embraced the hollow maxim, suggested by his passions, that the man suspected of being a traitor is justified in becoming one. He was a fierce hot-blooded desperado, who sacrificed everything to the gratification of his feelings. Thinking that he might by a second act of treachery win the consent of Jugmul to wed his daughter, and thus gratify at once his love and his revenge, he determined to seek the governor of Chittore, and propose, as the price of his consent, to slay the Mogul monarch.

The first difficulty was to obtain admission into the fort. Aware that on one side, where the wall was so high as almost to preclude the possibility of scaling it, the sentries posted were fewer and less

vigilant, he resolved alone to attempt to climb the wall in this spot. One dark night, having provided himself with several spikes about nine inches long, he proceeded cautiously to the rampart. He had quitted the camp unknown to any one, having passed the sentries by daylight without suspicion, upon some natural pretence. When he reached the base of the rampart, which was here at least eighty feet high, he began to try his spikes upon the masonry. The stones were laid one on the other without cement, so that the interstices between them were sufficiently spacious to admit, with a little management, the introduction of his spikes. Fixing the first about a yard from the ground he stood on it, and placing another a foot above it he again raised himself, and pursuing this plan with cool perseverance, in spite of the great peril, he at length reached the summit of the battlement.

Whilst he was thus ascending, with the patient earnestness of a man who has a personal feeling to gratify, the sentinel above was fortunately whiling away the hours by chanting one of his native songs, which prevented him from hearing any sound made during this perilous ascent.

Previously to attempting the wall, the Rajpoot had cast off his dress, so that, the night being dark, the deep hue of his skin was not likely to be perceived by any eye that might look over the parapet. The white tunic of the soldier upon the ramparts, on the contrary, rendered him visible to a considerable distance through the darkness. When the Rajpoot reached the summit, he sprang over the parapet as the sentinel was leisurely walking from him. Having fairly gained the ramparts, he went deliberately up to the soldier, and, addressing him as if he were one of the garrison, had no difficulty in accounting for his appearance without exciting suspicion. Seeing that he was one of his own caste, the unsuspecting Hindoo entertained no doubt of his belonging to the troops under the command of Jugmul, and consequently allowed him to proceed without further interruption. The Rajpoot threw himself under the portico of a temple, and slept soundly until morning. At an early hour he appeared before the governor.

“You are, no doubt, surprised,” said he, “to behold me again within these walls. You have considered me a traitor, but I shall be able to prove to you that you have been deceived, and to show that I may be the means of saving this town from the cruelty of a vindictive foe.”

“The man who, under the emotions of anger, seeks an enemy’s camp,” said Jugmul, “is to be suspected.”

“But you cannot be ignorant that by seeking the enemy’s camp, I may have obtained that information which will enable you to foil his approaches, and save the lives and properties of those under your government.”

“Show me that you have done so before you expect that I should believe you are not a traitor.”

“I have now sought you to make a proposal for the benefit of all within this fortress.”

“Declare it.”

“Upon certain conditions I undertake to kill the Moslem Sovereign.”

“What are they?”

“That you will give me your daughter in marriage.”

“Had I twenty daughters I should not think it too great a reward for so signal a service. Destroy the tyrant who has led his troops before our walls, and I pledge myself to give you my daughter with an ample dowry.”

“I promise, at least, to attempt his death, and nothing but my own will secure his safety.”

“I need not tell you that you are believed to have deserted to the enemy from an impulse of revenge towards me. When once an impression of this kind is excited in the breasts of brave and honourable men, it is no easy thing to remove it. If you can accomplish what you propose you will be immediately restored to the good opinion which, so far as now appears, you have justly forfeited.”

The Rajpoot was sufficiently satisfied with his reception, but, when he desired to see the object of his attachment, her father replied :—

“No. You are still under the imputation of treachery; that imputation must be removed before you can have any intercourse with my daughter.”

“Do you suspect my integrity?”

“I have no warranty for your honesty, and therefore till you show that your absence from the city was not dishonourable to you, I can look upon you in no other light than that of a traitor.”

“Treat me as a traitor then, and order me to be flung from yonder battlements.”

“No! you have undertaken to prove your zeal for the welfare of your country, and I should be loth to deprive you of the opportunity.”

“Will you believe me faithful if I make a vacancy in the Mogul sovereignty before the waning of another moon?”

“The destruction of the Moslem king will restore you to my confidence, and to that of your countrymen.”

The Rajpoot returned to Akbar’s camp. His absence had been noticed. He was summoned before the Monarch. When he entered the presence, Akbar eyed him with keen and significant scrutiny, but the man did not blanch.

“Soldier,” said the Emperor, “you were absent last night from the camp. What was the object of your absence?”

“The king’s interest.”

“The king’s interest is not to be promoted by a breach of discipline.”

“I obtained admission into the fort, and have done the base work of a spy for the benefit of my country’s enemy.”

The Emperor was silent for a moment, but his eye fixed with an intense expression of inquiry upon the traitor. “What did you learn?” he at length inquired.

“That a sally will be made by some of the choicest troops of the garrison, on the second morrow from the present. The governor is determined to suffer extermination rather than capitulate, and has employed a secret assassin to take the Sovereign’s life.”

“Know you where he lurks?”

‘ In the Moslem camp.”

Akbar was not to be deceived by this flimsy artifice. He had too acute a perception of human motives to be persuaded that a man would thus gratuitously hazard his life for the interests of one to whom he was nationally an enemy, but he disguised his suspicions, and ordered the soldier to take his bow, in the use of which he was reported to be singularly expert, and accompany him before the enemy’s walls. The Emperor was attended by only a few followers ; a syce* led a horse behind his royal master.

When they were within bow-shot of the ramparts, seeing a group of the foe so near, the besieged crowded to the battlements, expecting that it was the preliminary of an assault. The governor was visible above the rest by his elevated stature.

“ Now,” said Akbar to the Rajpoot, “ prove to me the truth of what you have lately represented by sending an arrow into the brain of yonder chief.”

The Rajpoot affected to comply, and advanced gradually towards the syce, who was leading the Emperor’s charger, and now stood nearly on a line with the royal group, a few yards to the left. The Rajpoot having placed himself beside this man, fixed an arrow in the string of his bow, and directed it towards the rampart. While the eyes of Akbar and his attendants were gazing upon the object towards which they expected every moment to see the arrow winged, the soldier, suddenly turning, discharged his shaft direct at the Sovereign. It pierced his shoulder and fixed in the bone. The Hindoo instantly flung down his bow, drew his dagger, and stabbing to the heart the attendant who was holding his royal master’s horse, vaulted upon its back, plunged his heels in its sides, and darted towards the city with the velocity of a thunderbolt.

The nobles stood amazed. Akbar’s eye glanced fire, but he was silent, and walked back to the camp, where the arrow was with some difficulty extracted. He was unable to quit his tent for some days ; but within a fortnight the wound was healed.

* An Indian groom.

Meanwhile, the Rajpoot, after he had discharged the arrow, rode to the city gate, and was immediately admitted. What he had done was reported to the governor, who immediately granted him an interview.

“I now come to claim my bride—my arrow has pierced the Moslem king.”

“Is he slain?”

“It is impossible he should survive.”

“It will be time to fulfil the conditions of a promise when it is proved that the contract has been completed according to the terms stipulated.”

It was soon known in the besieged city that Akbar was recovering from his wound.

The Rajpoot was again summoned before the governor.

“You have failed,” said Jugmul, “to perform your undertaking.” The man’s brow contracted. “My pledge is, therefore, cancelled; and I now determine that you shall pay the penalty of a double treachery. Though a traitor to your country, had you been the successful instrument of its vengeance, however base the motives, your life should have been spared, and my child have become a sacrifice: as it is you are not worthy of confidence, and therefore deserve to die.”

He was immediately conducted to the Mahomedan camp, under a guard, with a letter from the governor to the Emperor, stating, that he gave up the traitor to be dealt with as the Mahomedan sovereign should deem proper. Akbar sent back the guard with a courteous message, and ordering one of the state elephants to be brought before him, commanded the traitor to stand forth. The man advanced with an undaunted countenance, expressing an utter contempt of death. He crossed his arms over his breast, and directed towards the Monarch a look of defiance. At a signal from the royal hand, the elephant was urged forward by the mahout, and, upon reaching the criminal, it felled him to the earth with his trunk, placed its huge foot upon his body, and instantly trod him to death.

CHAPTER II.

THE siege now proceeded with vigour. The Emperor gave orders that approaches should be made by a *sabut*, a description of defence for the besiegers peculiar to India. They were conducted in the following manner:—the zigzags, commenced at gun-shot distance from the fort, consisted of a double wall, and by means of blinds or stuffed gabions, covered with leather, the besiegers continued their approaches till they arrived near the walls of the place to be attacked. The miners then proceeded to sink their shafts, and carry on their galleries under ground, for the construction of the mines; in which, having placed the powder and blown up the works, the storming party rushed from the *sabut*, or superficial galleries, to assault the place.* On the present occasion, two *sabuts* or superficial galleries having been constructed, two mines were carried, under bastions, at different spots.

Akbar being determined to obtain possession of the place, at whatever cost, daily inspected the working of the mines, which were prepared with great expedition. Several sallies were made by the besieged, which, though well directed and vigorously maintained, were invariably repulsed by the steady discipline of the Mogul troops.

Encouraged by the presence of their sovereign, the miners worked with incredible diligence, and the soldiers displayed a valour against the frequent sorties of the besieged, which completely repelled the headlong valour of the Rajpoots. Akbar marked with his especial notice, not only every officer, but likewise every common soldier who distinguished himself; and thus, besides securing the affection of his army, excited deeds of individual heroism and of united valour, as gratifying to him as they were astonishing to the foe.

* See Brigg's translation of Ferishta, vol. ii., page 230.

Meanwhile, within the fort, considerable confusion prevailed at the progress which the Mahomedans were making in their approaches, and at the unsuccessful issue of the sallies of the besieged. The governor's wife was daily on the ramparts encouraging the men. An attempt by the foe to scale the walls had been repelled with determined resolution by the garrison, during which the heroic matron had, with her own hands, hurled several Moslems from the battlements as they reached the summit. Anxious to reap that glory considered the exclusive inheritance of the other sex, she determined upon an act as desperate as it was uncommon.

"Jugmul," said she, "I will visit the enemy's camp, and try if a woman's arm cannot reach his heart."

"Go," said her husband, "if you think that you have a reasonable chance of ridding us of the foe. But what is your plan?"

"Merely to be conducted to the Mahomedan's tent; then trust to this arm and a woman's resolution for the issue."

The resolute Rajpootni arrayed herself in her most becoming attire, and about dusk sought the hostile camp. She was still a handsome woman. Being stopped by the guard, she represented herself to be a minstrel, desirous of exhibiting the superiority of her art before the Mogul Emperor. She was alone, and there did not appear much risk in admitting a woman unaccompanied within the Mahomedan lines. It was announced to Akbar that a Hindoo musician was anxious to play before him. The Monarch who, after the harassing fatigues of the day, was fond of seeking relaxation from the anxieties which his present undertaking naturally accumulated upon him, commanded her to be admitted. As she entered the royal presence, Akbar was extremely struck with her natural dignity of deportment, and the commanding expression of her countenance. He instantly saw that she was not a common minstrel, and, at once suspecting treachery, gave orders that no one, on whatever pretence, either man or woman, should be admitted into the camp.

"Well, gentle dame," said the Sovereign, "what are your wishes?"

"I have heard that the Mogul Monarch is a munificent bene-

factor to those who have the good fortune to succeed in administering to his pleasures. I would attempt to do as much, being held to have great skill upon my native vina."

"A graceful instrument," said the Emperor. "Approach and try your skill, which, if it be at all equal to your beauty, cannot fail to delight."

She approached him; and Akbar having placed her on his right hand, bade her play; at the same time watching her with so keen a survey, that the Rajpootni began to fear she was detected. With an unruffled brow, however, she commenced tuning her vina, which is the Hindoo lute, and played an air with considerable skill. The sovereign was gratified. She played several airs with great taste and feeling. The enthusiasm of the performer was at length communicated to the Emperor; and in the excess of his gratification, he was thrown off his guard. Seizing a favourable moment, when his eyes were withdrawn from her, she drew a very small taper dagger; but before she could plunge it into the body of her intended victim, he had seized her wrist, and forced the instrument from her grasp.

"A very happy close to thy minstrelsy," said Akbar, with a severe smile.

"I have failed," said the heroic woman, undauntedly, "and am prepared for the issue. Give your orders, king, I am prepared to die. I did not make this attempt without weighing the penalty. I care not for the mode: you will see that I can defy your tortures; and, to give you some idea of the spirit of that foe which you seek to overcome, take the solemn assurance of a doomed woman, that there is not a living soul behind yonder battlements that would not brave death in any shape to be avenged upon the despisers of their gods."

Akbar made no reply, but, ordering her to be placed under a strong guard in a vacant tent, on the following morning sent her with an escort to the gate of Chittore, telling her, as she quitted his camp, that the Emperor of the Moguls warred not with women. The haughty Rajpootni was deeply moved at her failure and the Mogul's magnanimity. It, however, did not alter her determina-

tion to accomplish his death, though at the expense of her own life. She felt no longer surprised that his troops were invincible, and himself so renowned; and her hopes of forcing him to raise the siege began, from this moment, to decline. She discovered in Akbar the virtues of bravery, and a contempt of death to a degree that would have done honour to a Rajpoot; and besides those virtues, which he possessed common to all brave men, she could not but perceive that he was endowed with some peculiarly his own. She expressed her fears to Jugmul, that under such a leader the enemy must eventually prevail. "But we can die," she said, with energy, "fighting on our ramparts; and their success, whenever it comes, will be recorded in characters of blood."

"Wife!" said the governor, "we have no reason to despair yet. The garrison is still strong and resolute; we have provisions for at least five months' consumption, and long before that period it must be decided whether the Moslems or Hindoos are to be masters of Chittore."

"He, Jugmul, who could spare the life of one who attempted his, and give her safe conduct to her friends, is no ordinary man. We have more to dread from Akbar's magnanimity, than either from the number or bravery of his followers, though he is acknowledged to command the best disciplined armies in the East. What immortal glory would radiate from my brow if this arm had not failed to rid the world of so distinguished a foe."

"You are eloquent in his praises."

"Because he deserves all the good I can say of him, and all the hatred I can feel towards him. Jugmul, I could barter my own life, and that of all those of whose lives mine has been the source, to send that man to the Assuras."

The next morning the governor and his wife were on the ramparts inspecting the defences; for, from the enemy's movements, they hourly expected an assault, against which every provision was made which prudent foresight could suggest. Whilst Jugmul was surveying the progress of new works that he had ordered to be raised behind some low bastions where he considered the fortifica-

tions weak, a sudden explosion was heard from before the walls, which dismayed the besiegers. The shock was so great that all standing upon the ramparts were thrown upon their faces. A considerable part of the lowest wall had fallen, and opened a practicable breach. A second explosion followed, still more terrible, and added to the ruin, opening another breach not less formidable. It was soon evident that the enemy had sprung two mines, and the besieged expected that the destruction of their ramparts was about to be followed by a general assault. They crowded the breach, to defend their city with a wall of human bodies. The enemy, however, did not storm the town, as was expected. The cause of this, although for a moment matter of anxious conjecture, was soon ascertained. Two thousand of Akbar's choicest troops, prepared to storm, had advanced when the first mine exploded, under the supposition that both mines had been sprung at the same moment. The party immediately divided into two equal bodies, in order to enter both breaches at once. One of the mines only had ignited, and, when the party reached the other, they were scattered as with the shock of an earthquake. The ground opened beneath their feet; numbers were blown into the air; others had their limbs torn from the quivering trunks, and a scene of consternation prevailed, altogether indescribable. Fifteen Mogul officers and above four hundred men were killed.

This unforeseen disaster damped the energies of the storming parties. They paused until the confusion subsided, thus giving their enemies time to prepare for defence. They then advanced boldly—but not with elated hearts—to the breaches. They were received with unshrinking valour by the besieged. Every attempt to make good an entrance was withstood by men determined to die in defence of their walls. The Mahomedans were repulsed. They returned to the camp greatly dispirited, not covered with shame indeed, but without the glory of success. Akbar, conscious that the cause of failure was to be sought in the accident which had occurred previously to the assault being made, visited the men in person, encouraging them under their disheartening defeat, raised their sinking spirits, and animated them for fresh encounters.

The spirits of the besieged were so elated by their success and the destruction of the enemy, that they began with extraordinary energy to repair the breaches, which by the next morning they had filled up with a thick wall of mud. This was a secure defence, for the moisture of the material rendered the surface so slippery, that the difficulty of scaling such an impediment was so great as to render the attempt impracticable. This did not dismay the besiegers, who prepared to renew their attempts upon the town with increased activity. Akbar's was not a mind to be overcome by difficulties; it became more elevated in proportion as impediments multiplied. He gave his orders with that calm earnestness of resolution which showed he would be satisfied with nothing short of complete success. His men evinced the greatest alacrity in their obedience to the orders of their officers, and soon recovered from the effects of their late mischance. The Hindoos were no less assiduous in providing against all possible contingencies; and, in the course of a few days, the works of Chittore were nearly as secure as before the opening of the breaches by the mines.

A few nights after the accident from the explosion of the mine, the Emperor, who had given orders that other works should be constructed, was in the batteries directing the workmen. While there, he observed the governor of Chittore superintending, by torchlight, the repairs of the walls, which were now nearly completed. Seizing a matchlock from one of the attendants, he directed it with so true an aim as to lodge a ball in Jugmul's forehead. It was easy to perceive that the greatest confusion prevailed upon the ramparts of the besieged city. Persons were seen hurrying to and fro, and the walls were soon crowded with troops and citizens. Akbar, from this moment, saw that the game was in his own hands. The death of their governor he knew would render the garrison despairing and reckless; he consequently prepared for some of those dreadful eruptions so common among Rajpoot soldiers when driven to extremity.

Day had scarcely dawned, when his camp was attacked with a fury which nothing but the better discipline of his soldiers, and great numerical superiority, could have repelled. The Rajpoots,

headed by their late governor's widow, fought with a desperation which, for the moment, bore down all opposition. The widow urged her horse with heedless fury towards Akbar's tent. An Omrah placing himself before her to oppose her further progress, she buried a short spear in his body, and, continuing her career, reached the royal pavilion. Here she was opposed by the guards, the foremost of whom struck her in the face with his sword; but having speared him, she flung herself from the back of her charger, and, rushing into the tent, sprang towards the couch,—it was empty. With some difficulty she was secured, but not until she had wounded several of the guard, and received a second severe wound in the neck, from which the blood flowed so copiously that she was obliged to relinquish the contest, becoming faint and unable to continue her exertions. By this time her followers had been nearly all cut off, and few returned to the city to bear the lamentable tale of discomfiture.

Akbar entered his tent, and saw the noble woman who had made such a brave effort to avenge her husband's death fainting upon the ground, reeking with her own blood and that of her foes. He instantly ordered her wound to be dressed, and that she should be carefully attended during the night. He was charmed with her heroism, he revered her distress, and determined to offer very advantageous terms on the morrow if the garrison would capitulate. The obstinacy of the besieged had won his admiration, and he was heard to say to a confidential officer that with such troops he would undertake to conquer the world.

Next morning the captive widow rose from her couch, and demanded to see the Emperor. She was immediately brought before him.

"Sovereign of the Moguls," she said, undauntedly, "I have thrice sought your life. I have freely braved your vengeance. I am prepared for the infliction which I have provoked, and my failure deserves. What death am I to die?"

"Allah forbid, lady, that I should punish any one for trying to take away the life of a foe in honourable warfare. It is but natural that you should seek to accomplish the death of him who

has destroyed your husband, not from feelings of enmity, for I admired his bravery and esteemed his patriotism, but as a melancholy means to a glorious end. His death is one of those sad contingencies inseparable from a state of active hostility. I have now to propose to you terms for the capitulation of Chittore."

"If I have influence to decide upon a proposal that involves the dishonour of my countrymen, I will bid them resist till there shall no longer remain among them an arm to strike."

"But, lady, the terms I intend to offer will be alike honourable to you and the inhabitants of yonder fortress."

"No terms from the sovereign of the Moguls can be honourable to those whom he has so irreparably wronged. I will listen to no accommodation short of disbanding your army, and leaving the city of Chittore to enjoy that peace which you have wantonly interrupted. I am now in your power. I seek not to stay your vengeance. Wreak it upon me, with the flush and glow of a tyrant's satisfaction. I will brave you with my last gasp of life. I will defy you with my expiring breath; but never could I listen to terms from the man who has profaned the sacred sanctuary of the Hindoos, and cast down upon the threshold of their temples the representatives of their gods."

"Lady, I would show the difference between the magnanimity of the Mahomedan and the Hindoo. You have thrice sought my life with an asperity of passion, sanctioned only by what you consider the sacred obligations of revenge. You have refused to listen to terms of honourable accommodation. You have expressed towards me the deadliest animosity. You are in my power, and I could in a moment prevent all further exercise of your hatred; but I forbear. You are free. I have commanded an escort to be ready once more to bear you to the gates of your native city."

The Rajpootni turned her head; a tear for an instant glazed her eye, but the warm glow of pride dried it in its crystal formation, and it ceased to flow. She uttered not a word, but silently quitted the tent, making a haughty salaam to the Emperor as she passed, mounted a litter which had been prepared to convey her,

and in a short time was once more within the gates of Chittore. Her heart now swelled with thoughts of desperation and of death. She acknowledged the magnanimous forbearance of her enemy, and accepted life only to perform a last and awful duty among her family and her countrymen. Her soul dilated with the solemn purpose which she was about to fulfil—the crisis had arrived.

CHAPTER III.

THE inhabitants of Chittore now gave themselves up to despair. Their governor was dead, a great number of the garrison had been slain in the late sally, and no hope of rescue appeared. The effect was dreadful. The fear of falling into the enemy's hands drove many to deeds of desperation only heard of among those whose minds have been obfuscated by the gloom of that superstition of which idolatry is the monstrous parent. Whole families destroyed themselves, dying in each other's arms, and with their expiring breaths cursing those who had induced them to embrace such a dreadful alternative. There was scarcely a house that was not filled with the dying and the dead. The groans of death within mingled with the clamours of war without, and the great conqueror of nature was about to reap a full harvest of triumph.

Day after day passed, and these scenes were repeated. Corpses lay in the streets, and "there was none to bury them;" so that the steams of pestilence began to rise and load the air with the elements of destruction. For two or three days the heroic widow of Jugmul, who now directed the defence of Chittore, was confined to her couch; but the moment she was able to rise, she quitted her house and repaired to the ramparts. The despair of the citizens had reached her ears; she heard it in moody silence, but calmly gave her orders, and, summoning her chief officers, among whom was Peirup Singh, she said—

"The enemy are invincible, and we have nothing now but to

prepare for our final change. I need not tell you how the Rajpoot comports himself at this hour of extremity."

"Nay, why this despair?" asked Peirup Singh. "We are not yet vanquished. The garrison is still numerous, our soldiers are brave, and our enemies enfeebled by the late conflict."

"They are mighty in their strength; we are only mighty in our weakness—they to vanquish, but we to perish. I need not bid you prepare, because I know none of our blood can be backward to meet death as becomes the brave."

Peirup Singh, though a courageous man, was by no means prepared for such an issue as the Rajpootni's widow seemed to contemplate. He loved her daughter, and, with the prospect of enjoyment before him, did not precisely see the necessity of that desperate alternative to which the late governor's relict alluded. Even should they be obliged to capitulate, the magnanimity of Akbar was too well known to warrant the supposition that he would treat the vanquished with tyranny; the Rajpoot therefore thought that a capitulation in time to so generous an enemy would be their safest policy.

When he expressed these sentiments to her, who directed the movements of the besieged, she said, with an indignant glance at the proposer of so degrading an act of pusillanimity—

"What! does the suitor of my daughter make a proposal so unworthy of his race? It is enough; henceforward you are a stranger to my home."

She turned from him, and would not hear his reply. Having given her orders in case an assault should be made by the foe, she visited the houses of those whom despair had urged to fatal extremities. The sad sight only nerved her heart to fiercer resolution. She looked upon the dead without a sigh. She conversed with the dying as if they were about to be hushed in a joyous sleep, and there was neither regret nor anguish in their expiring groans. The dead bodies scattered about the streets, and exhaling the elements of death, moved her not to an emotion. Her soul was passion-cased—it was absorbed by one intense feeling. Upon entering her home she was met by her elder daughter.

“Kherla,” she said calmly, “death has been doing much unsightly work among us. The conquerors will not find their garland of victory a beautiful wreath. The foul steams of decaying mortality will hang upon and blight it. My child, we must go to another change. Are you prepared to quit a base world for a brighter? Agni* must be our guide to the mutation which awaits us when these poor bodies shall have become ashes.”

“My mother, I am ready to perform the conditions of my destiny. I desire not to exist longer than I can live in the freedom to which I was born; and, rather than become the captive of the Moslem, I am willing to encounter the flames which shall give me a release from those bonds the foe are preparing to cast upon us.”

The mother embraced her child. The younger girl had overheard this conversation, and her heart palpitated. She had hitherto found life an acceptable and sweet possession. She, therefore, felt no desire to embrace the faggot, and have her spirit dismissed from her body on wings of flame. She was full of youth and health, highly susceptible of enjoyment, with a fine flow of animal spirits; and to her, therefore, death was at once a terror and an evil. She was summoned into the presence of her parent, who said with a calm but stern voice,

“Girl, you must prepare for your last hour. The summons of Yama has reached us, and we have no choice. When he calls, obedience is our duty, and the performance of our duty cannot but be a blessing. We must perish, my child.”

The poor girl shuddered but did not utter a word, knowing how ill the stern temper of her only surviving parent could brook resistance. She bent acquiescently, but the tear started into her eye as she turned from the bold mother to conceal her emotions. Having dismissed her children, the heroic matron began to prepare her mind for the approaching sacrifice.

The rite of the Johur was now determined on. The whole

* The God of Fire.

garrison, amounting to five thousand, three having already perished, were assembled. The governor's widow told them that the last effort was to be made. Nothing remained between subjugation and death. They heard her without a murmur, but with that profound silence which, in a multitude, betokens an inviolable unity of purpose, and began to assume the saffron robe. They were soon prepared to sally from the gate. Peirup Singh was among them. He looked defiance but spoke not. Their swords gleamed in the sun. The stern Rajpootni gazed with a glancing eye of pride, as she beheld the brave band going forth to the sacrifice, knowing that their swords would be steeped in the blood of their foes. She waved her hand when all were ready; the gates were thrown open and they marched forth to the fatal conflict. Their shouts were deafening as they pushed forward like a living deluge. The Moguls knew what they had to expect from the desperate valour of these devoted soldiers. The onset was terrific. Death followed everywhere in the track of those unshrinking assaulters. There was no quarter accepted. The moment a Rajpoot was taken prisoner he fell upon his own sword. The carnage among the Mahomedans was dreadful. They fell by hundreds before the swords of those infuriated men who had devoted themselves to destruction. The Hindoos fought against an enemy more than five times their number with a determination that spread consternation through the Mahomedan ranks. Even Akbar was amazed. He appeared in person in the thickest of that awful struggle, and was twice wounded by a Rajpoot sabre; but his armour protected his life, and the half naked bodies of his foes exposed them to the invincible force of his sword.

For several hours the sanguinary strife continued, until almost every Rajpoot was slain. Upwards of two thousand Mahomedans were left dead upon the field, and full twice that number wounded. The brave Hindoos had raised a memorable trophy round their bodies never to be forgotten. Akbar visited the field of carnage. He was astonished at the impetuous and unflinching valour displayed by the foe. He dropped a tear as his eye glanced over the field covered with slain. He had obtained a dearly-

bought victory. It was evident that had the enemy met him upon equal terms, with them would have remained the honours of triumph. The sacrifice had indeed been great, but the victory was complete. As soon as the wasted energies of his troops should be recruited he determined to make an assault upon the town if the terms which he was disposed to offer were rejected.

Among the few Rajpoots who had survived the carnage of that sanguinary day was Peirup Singh. He sought the lovely Kherla Nuny, hoping that she would fly with him from peril to happiness, but it was evident he knew her not.

“Kherla,” said he, “all is lost. We have done everything that brave men could do, and Chittore is at the foe’s mercy. Let us fly, my bride, while the means of escape remain to us. I can take you to a place of safety.”

“Who are you?” calmly asked the noble girl.

“Is it possible you can ask such a question of Peirup Singh, your accepted bridegroom, who is prepared to convey you from this scene of carnage to a home where happiness awaits you?”

“Peirup Singh, the bridegroom of Kherla Nuny, would not dishonour his kindred. The daughter of Jugmul can never unite herself with one who, after having assumed the saffron robe, has run from the foe and hid his recreant head behind stone walls. Dost thou fear to die, Peirup Singh?”

“No ; but I deem life a gift not to be rashly thrown away when it may be appreciated and enjoyed. If good can be purchased by the sacrifice it is our duty to yield it up, otherwise such a sacrifice becomes a foolish and culpable suicide.”

“Is not the avoidance of disgrace a good? Is escape from death, with the brand of infamy upon a man’s brow, no evil? He who would hesitate between life and disgrace, has a petty soul ; but he that would accept the one with the polluted inheritance of the other is the worst of recreants. We never can be united, Peirup Singh.”

The rejected Rajpoot was deeply mortified—she would not listen to his expostulations ; but quitting his presence, turned upon him a look of withering scorn. He was confounded. Be-

tween shame and passion he stood aghast. He remained for some time irresolute, when on a sudden the apartment was filled with a thick curling smoke. He rushed into a court towards a passage whence the stifling vapour proceeded. The awful truth at once burst upon his sight. The funereal fire had been kindled in a large subterranean chamber, in which all the members of the family, except the late governor's widow and her younger daughter, had assembled, to the number of a hundred and forty-seven. Peirup Singh looked into the opening, and beheld the beautiful Kherla waving a torch with which she had just ignited the combustibles strewed over the apartment. In a few moments the smoke shut out all from his sight, and the crackling flames prevented his ear from catching the groans of the dying. The forked fires rose to the skies with a horrid hissing, as if of demons triumphing in the frightful consummation of death. Both the sight and the sound were horrible. There was no rescuing the infatuated girl from that destruction upon which she had voluntarily rushed. She had already become the virgin bride of death. Young and numerous were the bridesmaids of that fiery marriage. Peirup Singh quitted the scene of horror with a deeply smitten heart.

CHAPTER IV.

AKBAR sent a Vakeel, offering to the besieged most liberal terms, which were indignantly rejected.

"Tell your king," was the reply, "that we accept no terms from him who seeks to dispossess us of our homes. We deem that capitulation is a word only admitted into the vocabulary of cowards."

The Vakeel returned, and Akbar determined to storm the town. On that very day two mines were sprung, which made a breach in the walls in two several places as before. The heroine who now commanded Chittore was undismayed at what she saw. The whole garrison had been cut off except about two hundred men.

Multitudes of citizens had destroyed themselves and their families to escape falling into the conqueror's hands. She, however, summoned as many of the inhabitants as were in a condition to make a final effort, determined to offer resistance to the enemy so long as there remained a man within the fortress able and willing to fight.

The moment the breaches were formed the heroic widow ordered new works to be raised, and thus a slight defence was opposed to the foe in an incredibly short space of time. High wooden frames, filled with mud, had been previously prepared, and were instantly placed in the openings of the rampart. Upon the battlements stood a small but determined band, with large vessels containing a boiling liquid of the consistence of pitch, ready to pour it upon the besiegers' heads as they attempted to scale the shattered walls. A number of females armed with missiles likewise crowded the ramparts, determined to take their part in the close of this desperate game. All the principal women within the fortress had already suffered themselves to be sacrificed by their husbands, sons, or brothers; those that remained were only a few who had escaped the general massacre to die in the breaches of their native city.

While the inhabitants were working at the breaches Peirup Singh came before the mother of his beloved. She moved from him with a glance of scorn.

"Nay," said he, "turn not from a despairing man. I come here to redeem that honour which you consider I have forfeited. The master-passion within me is now quelled, and I yield to the sadder circumstances of my destiny."

"The man," said the Rajpootni, "who prefers life to glory deserves not to die the warrior's death. There are enough on these battlements to leave a record for the dark page of history of the desperate defence of Chittore. You may go and propitiate the conqueror, and live with the galling iron of bondage entering into your recreant soul. We seek no aid from Peirup Singh."

The Rajpoot bit his lip, but stirred not. The hurried glance of his eye, which darted like a sunbeam towards the advancing hosts, expressed the fierce resolve which swelled his heart at this moment of advancing peril. It was the glance of a bayed tiger. He drew

his sword and walked with a deliberate but firm step to the least protected part of the breach.

The enemy advanced at a quick trot, and poured forward like a sudden irruption of the sea. When the foremost reached the trench the shock was terrific. They were forced back by the besieged with a resolution which nothing could withstand. The scalding preparation was poured upon their heads. This new mode of resistance confounded them. They drew back from the rampart, and renewed their attack only to meet with a similar reception. Time after time they were repulsed, but the besiegers being greatly exposed in the breaches, suffered extremely from the enemy's matchlocks. Peirup Singh fought with the fury of a gored lion. He was twice severely wounded, but did not retire from the station he had chosen. Evening put an end to the struggle, and the Mahomedans were obliged to retreat.

Their temporary success elated the besieged, still it was evident that they could not maintain a successful opposition for another day. Their numbers had been much diminished by the enemy's well-directed fire, and the temporary defences were considerably weakened by continual assaults. Nevertheless, it was determined that resistance should be offered so long as there was a man to stand in the trench.

Next morning the attack was renewed. Many of the Mahomedans were hurled headlong from the walls in attempting to scale them, but were succeeded by fresh troops equally resolute; and at length, in spite of the exertions of the despairing Hindoos, they obtained a footing, and the trench was carried. Peirup Singh, having killed several of the foe, was shot through the brain with a matchlock, and fell dead into the ditch. The heroic Rajpootni widow, who, though dangerously wounded, still stood upon the battlements encouraging the brave defenders of Chittore, rushed forward to meet death in the trench, but the enemy generously dropped their swords as she advanced, and attempted to take her alive. Perceiving the intention, she instantly retreated towards the town, followed by a party of Akbar's soldiers. Though still reeking with her blood, she gained her home before them, and,

having entered, securely fastened the door. Summoning her only remaining daughter, she cried—

“My child, the moment is come when we must consummate our triumph. We shall not fall alive into the hands of the foe.”

She seized a torch which had been kept ready lighted to meet such a melancholy contingency. The daughter had not the mother's heroism—she shrieked as she advanced towards the pile, and would have retreated, but her resolute parent, with the last collected effort of strength, dragged her onward. “There is no alternative but death, my child,” she said, calmly. She reached the pyre, took the trembling girl in her arms, ascended the fatal platform, applied the torch, and in a few moments both mother and daughter were wrapped in the embrace of death. The soldiers entered, having burst open the door, and found their prey had escaped them. They gazed upon the flaming pile, upon which oil had been poured to excite it to quicker combustion. They were deprived of their victim. The flames were singing a fearful requiem over her ashes. It was a horrible sight to witness the combined consummation of superstition and despair.

The fortress was soon filled with the victorious Mahomedans. Those Hindoos who had not adopted the desperate resource of self-immolation, and had survived the carnage, thronged to the temples, the entrances of which they barricaded, determined to die in their sanctuaries rather than yield to the upholders of a different faith. Akbar himself entered the town, and ordered the temples to be forced. They who had sought sanctuary thither perished without a murmur. They attempted no resistance, but suffered themselves to be slaughtered like animals for the sacrifice. Several thousands thus became martyrs to their prejudices, and died with a smile of defiance upon their lips, without raising a hand in self-defence. The Emperor, however, did not evince that bigoted zeal which has so much disgraced the religion of every country in which it has been actively displayed, but spared the venerable monuments of an ancient, though besotted, superstition. His taste admired the structures, whilst his soul contemned the profane rites which they had been reared to consecrate, and

though he destroyed the monstrous idols of the heathens, he allowed their temples to stand, many of them noble monuments of Hindoo talent and architectural skill.

When the fortress was fully in possession of Akbar he gazed with astonishment upon the prodigal sacrifice of human life which had occurred in almost every house. The Johur had taken place, and many thousand females of all ages signalled the detestation of their foes by submitting to a voluntary death. Multitudes of either sex surrendered their lives, some by the sword, others on the flaming pile. Blood flowed in torrents. The steams of death rose to the fair heavens, which looked down calmly and beautifully, but through which glanced an omnipotent eye upon the violence, the follies, and the delinquencies of men.

So great had been the destruction that little treasure was found by the conquerors within the fortress. They who perished by a voluntary decease had taken care previously to consume or destroy everything of value which they possessed. Even the treasures of the temples had been disposed of, so that the conquerors entered a depopulated town, rendered a scene of utter desolation, a fit abode only for the reptile and beast of prey.

That portion of the garrison which had last sallied from the gates to die fighting for their country and its shrines perished in a cause which they imagined would end in their transportation to higher scenes of enjoyment in new states of being. They first purified themselves with water, offered adoration to the Divinity, made benefactions to the poor, placed a branch of the toolsi in their casques, and the saligram round their necks, emblems of death and the grave; and having cased themselves in armour, and put on the saffron robe, they bound the mor, a funeral coronet, round their heads, embraced each other for the last time, and rushed forth to perish in the fierce conflict of arms.

As the king walked through the now desolate streets he was deeply affected. Disfigured bodies, black and putrid, and exhaling the horrible odours of decay, lay before him in all their revolting deformity. The corpses of those who fell by their own hands had been just put under the surface of the ground, and were

seen protruding through the earth from their superficial graves, filling the air with the seeds of pestilence. Women and children were still among the dead and dying, at the last extremity, imploring piteously for a cup of water to slake the raging thirst that was consuming them, and adding intolerable torment to their expiring agonies.

All the corpses were ordered to be collected together and consumed upon one vast pile, and fires were kept burning for days to purify the air and cleanse the polluted town.

Such were the frightful circumstances under which the Mogul emperor became master of Chittore. It is, in truth, melancholy to contemplate the horrors which frequently follow on the heels of human ambition. It seems to look upon the sanguinary devastations of war as a sort of legalised licence to destruction, and they therefore fail to excite our sympathies; but if we consider what an awful amount of human beings have been cut off by the sword, or by those scourges so often the frightful handmaids of war, pestilence and famine, we should be startled at the prodigious total. Animals destroy each other singly, and in obedience to an irresistible instinct to support their own lives, which, to them, is the greatest boon of heaven, because they have no prospects beyond, but the rational portion of God's creatures destroy each other by large masses and in mighty sums merely to substantiate the sordid calculations of interest, to appease their base passions, or to realize the aims of a bloated ambition.

Akbar having done all in his power to alleviate the miseries of the few surviving native inhabitants of Chittore, commanded the walls to be repaired, appointed Asuf Chan Hirvy governor of the fortress, leaving with him a numerous garrison, and returned with the rest of his army to his capital.



HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

1603 A. D.—In the year of the Hegira 1014, Prince Selim ascended the imperial throne of the Moguls immediately upon the death of his father Akbar, who expired at Agra, amid the general lamentations of his subjects, who loved him as their father, admired him as their leader, and feared him as their prince.

Heg. 1015 (1604).—A conspiracy was formed in favour of Chusero, Jehangire's eldest son. When it was discovered, the prince appeared in arms and broke out into open rebellion. He marched to Delhi, ravaged the country, and laid the suburbs under contribution. Many houses were burned, many persons perished, and thousands were utterly ruined. Jehangire, hearing of these outrages, immediately commanded his captain-general to put the army in motion and pursue his rebellious son. Suspecting that officer's loyalty, however, he recalled him just as the latter was about to quit the city gates, and gave command of the imperial forces to Ferid Bochari, paymaster-general of the army, who pursued the rebel to Lahore, where he was entirely routed. As the person of Chusero was known to the troops generally, they did not attempt his life, and he was permitted to escape. He was, however, soon after taken prisoner, which put an end to the rebellion. In the same year a peace was concluded with Persia.

Heg. 1018 (1609).—Shere Afkun, a Turkoman noble, slew the Suba of Bengal, and was immediately killed by the latter's troops.

Heg. 1019 (1610).—Jehangire married the beautiful widow of Shere Afkun Noor Mahil.

Heg. 1020 (1611).—The Afgans, a fierce and untractable people, inhabiting the mountains beyond the Indus, rebelled, and entering Cabul with a considerable army, committed the most cruel excesses. The rebellion was suppressed by Nadili Meidani, who pursued the Afgans to their native mountains, putting a great part of their ill-disciplined troops to the sword. The close of this year was distinguished by two formidable insurrections, one in Bengal, the other in Behar; the former was put an end to by Sujait Chan, who for this signal service was advanced by his imperial master to the title of Rustum Zimân, which signifies the Hercules of the age. The insurrection in Behar was quashed in consequence of the rebel Cuttub, who assumed to be the Prince Chusero, being killed by a brickbat.

Heg. 1022 (1613).—Prince Purvez was despatched with an army against

Amar Sinka, Rana or Prince of Odipoor, in the Deccan, who had attacked and defeated the imperial troops. He was unsuccessful. Jehangire recalled him and sent Mohabet Chan to replace him. The army, however, being reduced by disease, and in a state of insubordination, Mohabet was not in a condition to oppose the Rana. Prince Churrum, the emperor's third son, was consequently sent with fresh troops to supersede Mohabet. He entered by the mountains, engaged the enemy, and obliged him to sue for peace.

Heg. 1023 (1614).—Chan Azim and Man Singh, the two principal supporters of Chusero's rebellion, died. They were both distinguished under the reign of Akbar, who advanced them to high offices in the state.

Heg. 1024 (1615).—Sir Thomas Roe, the English ambassador to the court of Agra, arrived at Boorampoor, where he was courteously received by Sultan Purvez, governor of that province. He was subsequently received by the Emperor at Ajmere with the greatest affability and kindness. Disturbances in Guzzarat and Cabul quelled.

Heg. 1025 (1616).—Sultan Churrum's name was changed to Shah Jehan, or King of the World. The princes of the Deccan having rebelled, Shah Jehan forced them to sue for peace, for which eminent service he rose into high favour with the Emperor.

Heg. 1027 (1618).—The Vizier Actemad-ul-Dowla, father-in-law of the Emperor, died. Aurungzebe born. His mother was the Sultana Kudsia, daughter of Asiph Jah. The name Aurungzebe signifies the Ornament of the Throne.

Heg. 1029 (1620).—Shah Jehan marched a second time into the Deccan, and reduced to subjection the princes, who had again rebelled. His eldest brother, Chusero, was delivered into his hands.

Heg. 1030 (1621).—Chusero was assassinated under the walls of Azere by command of Shah Jehan.

Heg. 1031 (1622).—Shah Jehan assumed the Imperial purple, attacked the fort at Agra, but was repulsed by Asiph Jah, the new Vizier, and brother of the Sultana Noor Jehan.

Heg. 1032 (1623).—Jehangire prepared to march against his rebellious son, who endeavoured to justify his rebellion. An action ensued in which Shah Jehan was entirely defeated. Sultan Purvez arrived in the camp, and under the tuition of Mohabet received command of the imperial forces. He defeated the royal insurgent upon the banks of the Nerbuddah.

Heg. 1033 (1624).—Shah Jehan entered Bengal, defeated the Suba, took possession of that province and likewise of Behar. Prince Purvez advanced with the imperial army and again defeated his rebellious brother, who fled towards the Deccan, was joined by the Rajah of Ambere, and besieged Boorampoor, but was repulsed.

Heg. 1034 (1625).—Shah Jehan was pardoned by the Emperor. Candahar, a fortified town of Afghanistan, was taken by the Persians under the command

of Shah Abbas their King, who appeared before it in person. The Usbeck Tartars invaded the province of Ghizni, but after an obstinate resistance of nine months were driven out of the empire.

Heg. 1035 (1626).—Mohabet was accused of treason, and summoned before the Emperor. He obeyed, was grossly insulted, surprised Jehangire in his tent, made him prisoner, and carried him off to his own camp. The Vizier attempted a rescue, but was defeated with great slaughter. Mohabet resigned his power, was obliged to fly, and declared himself in favour of Shah Jehan.

Heg. 1036 (1627).—Jehangire died. Dawir Buxsh, grandson of the late Emperor, was raised to the throne, deposed, and murdered. Shah Jehan arrived at Agra, and was proclaimed Emperor.

Heg. 1037 (1628).—Shah Jehan ascended the throne of the Moguls.



The Light of the World.

CHAPTER I.

THE morning dawned upon two travellers in the midst of a blighted wilderness. As the sun threw its level rays over the horizon, they flooded a plain where no boundary could be traced but the sky, and from which the dominion of vegetation was almost wholly withdrawn; there being nothing to relieve the dull, uniform sterility of the scene but occasionally the trunks of a few stunted trees, which appeared to stand there only as so many legible records of the utter barrenness of the spot. These sad wayfarers rose from beneath the scanty shades of one of those skeletons of the wilderness to pursue a journey with a deplorable prospect before them. They were far advanced upon a wide inhospitable desert, where no welcome serai was to be seen, and where the passenger was seldom met. The refreshing well was nowhere found in these dreary and unfruitful solitudes.

The travellers were a Tartar and his wife, who, in consequence of a marriage not approved of by their respective families, had fled from their country to seek that home in another which was denied to them in their own. The man was handsome, of noble carriage, possessing all the generous qualities of his race; bold, active, enterprising, with great capability of endurance, and withal of a mild and placable spirit. The woman was young, beautiful, but extremely delicate; and to crown her husband's misery and her own, she was about to become a mother. When they arose on this sad morning, they consumed the last of their provisions.

They had only a small quantity of water in a leathern bottle, which the Tartar made his fainting wife drink before they proceeded on their way. What a deplorable condition ! To linger was certain death, and to advance seemed only a dallying with hope—there appeared no chances of relief. They had several days' journey to perform, without being provided with any sustenance for so long and arduous a travel ; and the chances of meeting with passengers were so remote as to render their perishing in the wilderness almost a certainty.

The Tartar's wife was mounted upon a small lean horse, which for the last several days had been so sparingly fed that it could scarcely proceed. The wretched woman was unconscious of the extent of her danger. She knew not that the whole of their provisions were exhausted, save one small rice cake which the tender husband had reserved for her use. He kept from her the awful fact of their utter destitution, lest in her precarious condition it should bring on premature labour where no assistance could be obtained, and she would thus probably perish. In spite of the misery of his situation, he still entertained the hope that he should obtain relief ; and trusting in the mercy of Him who guides the wanderer as well in the wilderness as in the populous country, he pursued his journey though with a heavy and foreboding heart. As the sun rose, the heat became intolerable. There was no shelter from its scorching rays. The anxious Tartar held an umbrella over the head of his wife as he walked painfully along by the side of her lean ambling pony ; but after a while his arm became so cramped that it was with difficulty he could bear the weight of the chatta. This, though not great, was the more sensibly felt from the elevated position in which he was obliged to keep his arms. He was, however, marvellously sustained by the excitement of his anxiety for the dear object near him, who bore with unrepining endurance privations which in her state were especially deplorable. They travelled through a long and toilsome day. The rice cake was consumed long before they halted for the night.

There being no shelter near, the husband fixed the handle of

his umbrella into the ground, and throwing over it a thin palampore,* formed a kind of rude tent, under which his wife might repose without immediate exposure to the unwholesome night air. She was exhausted with fatigue; her tongue was parched with thirst, and the rapid increase of circulation too plainly told that fever was fast coming on. To attempt to depict the husband's agony were a vain endeavour. Without food—without water—his wife actually in the pains of labour—with no hope of relief—in the midst of a vast wilderness, which even the wild beasts shunned as a solitude where only death and desolation reigned—he had no thought but that both must lie down and die. The sufferings of his hapless companion were appalling, yet she bore them without a murmur. The severity of her pangs aggravated that thirst by which she had been so long and so grievously oppressed. He had but one alternative, and did not hesitate to adopt it in such a trying emergency. His wife's agonies were every moment increasing. He quitted the insecure canopy which he had erected for her temporary accommodation, seized his dagger, ran to the pony, and, in a paroxysm of tumultuous anxiety to save the life of the object dearest to him upon earth, plunged it desperately into the animal's throat. Having caught the blood in a wooden trencher, he bore it to the tent.

During his short absence, his wife had become a mother. The cry of the poor babe raised within him, at this moment, emotions of parental joy; but these were in an instant stifled by the consciousness of those awful perils by which he was surrounded. He put the bowl to the lips of the suffering mother; she took a small quantity, and was in a slight degree refreshed. He now kindled a fire upon the wide blasted desert, and broiled some flesh of the animal which he had just slaughtered. It was tough and rank. The juices, however, of this unpalatable repast subdued in a degree the yearnings of hunger and the dreadful pangs of thirst.

On the morrow, when the sun again cast its vivid light upon the vast level of the wilderness, this wretched pair arose to pursue

* A counterpane

their journey. The Tartar dreaded the increased difficulties which he should have now to overcome. His companion was so weak that she could scarcely stand; yet she was obliged to carry her infant, as he was loaded with their baggage and other necessaries, that had hitherto been confined to the back of the pony. They had scarcely commenced the prosecution of their melancholy journey, when they were cheered with the prospect of relief. Not more than half a coss* distance before them, a beautiful lake seemed to smile in the morning sun, and to invite the suffering travellers to bathe their limbs in its limpid waters. The margin was dotted with groups of trees, displaying a luxuriant foliage, which was reflected in the still mirror below, and promised a grateful shade to the travel-worn passenger. Oxen appeared to be grazing on its margin, and every now and then, in the luxury of the most exquisite enjoyment, to hide themselves under the pellucid surface of its calm waters. Beyond, a gorgeous city reared its battlements amid the solemn silence of the desert, over which it seemed to cast the glow of its splendour, and to speak with a mute but eloquent voice of cheering to the heart of the forlorn wanderer, of which they alone can appreciate the magic force who have braved the perils of the wilderness, and seen death stand before them face to face amid its vast and inhospitable solitudes.

The Tartar and his wife, overjoyed at the sight, made the best of their way towards the lake and the city, in which the stir of busy life seemed to prevail; for they saw, as they imagined, multitudes of their fellow beings issue from its gates and spread over the adjoining plain. The scene, to the excited imagination of the travellers, was animated beyond description. The sight of human habitations, and of human beings who could afford them succour; of water in which they might assuage the pangs of the most painful of bodily privations; of houses in which they might find shelter after their perilous journey—all gave such a stimulus to their exertions, that even the weak and suffering mother, with the

* The coss is about two miles.

assistance of her husband's arm, was able to go onward with tolerable firmness.

When they had proceeded for some time, the lake and the city still appeared before them, but no nearer. It seemed to them as if they had been moving their limbs without advancing a single step. They still, however pressed forward under the delusive expectation of reaching the fair goal of their hopes ; but after a while the lake began suddenly to disappear, the city was by degrees shrouded in mist, which dispersed in the course of a few minutes, and, to their consternation, they saw nothing save the wide arid expanse of the desert before them. The unhappy woman sank upon the earth in a paroxysm of mental agony. The miserable man was now perfectly overwhelmed with despair. He feared that his wife was dying. She could no longer carry the infant ; there was, consequently, but one alternative. The struggle of nature was a severe one, but no choice remained between death and parental inhumanity. The desire of life prevailed ; and it was determined, after an agonizing conflict, that the infant must be sacrificed. The mother's tears were dried up on her burning cheeks, and the father's pangs were lost in the anxieties of the husband. The appeals of nature were only stifled by louder appeals in both their bosoms ; and, however fierce the repugnance, it was to be resisted and overcome. The death of their babe was the least of two evils ; they therefore submitted to the stern severity of their condition.

It was agreed by the half-distracted parents, that the newborn pledge of their affections should be abandoned. The mother having kissed it fervently, consigned it to the arms of her husband, who, having taken it to a spot where the stunted stock of a tree protruded from the scorching sand, placed it under the scanty shade of this bare emblem of sterility ; and, having covered it with leaves, left it to the mercy of that God who can protect the babe in the desert as well as the sovereign on his throne. On rejoining his wife, the Tartar found her so weak that he feared she would be unable to proceed. Though released from the burden of her infant, her prostration of strength was so extreme, from the

united effects of mental and bodily suffering, that she could scarcely rise from the earth. The pangs of thirst were again becoming horrible ; still, after a severe struggle, she rose, and the wretched pair pursued their journey in silence and in agony.

They had not proceeded far before the invincible yearnings of nature prevailed over mere physical torment, and the bereaved mother called in a voice of piteous anguish for her child. She could no longer endure the pains of separation. The idea of having voluntarily consented to become the instrument of its death, was a horror which increased with every step, and she sank exhausted upon the sand. The sun, now rising towards its meridian, poured upon her the fiery effulgence of its beams. The husband's heart was subdued by her sufferings. Dashing a tear from his cheek, he undertook to return and restore their infant to the arms of its distracted mother. Fixing the handle of his umbrella again in the ground and throwing the palampore over it, he placed his wife under that frail covering, and immediately retraced his steps. With a sad heart he reached the spot where he had lately deposited the infant ; but what was his consternation at beholding the leaves removed, and a black snake coiled round it, with its hideous mouth opposed to that of his child ! In a frenzy of desperation he rushed forward ; but instantly arrested by the instinct of paternal fear, he stood before the objects at once of his tenderest interest and of his terror, as if he had been suddenly converted into stone. The previous motion, however, had evidently alarmed the monster ; for it gradually uncoiled itself from its victim without committing the slightest injury, and retired into the hollow trunk which marked this memorable spot. The father snatched up his child, and bore it in ecstasy to its mother ; but she was extended under the palampore in the last struggle of expiring nature. Her feeble spirit had been overborne by her lengthened sufferings of mind and body, and she now lay at the point of death. She raised her eyes languidly, received the babe with a faint smile upon her bosom, and tenderly kissed it. The effort overcame her, and she fainted. After a short time she rallied—but it was only to die. The husband hung over her with

mute but intense tenderness, cursing in his heart with a bitterness which that very tenderness aggravated, those relatives who had caused the death of all he valued upon earth, and rendered him the most desolate of men.

“Aiass,” said the dying woman, “dig me a grave in the wilderness ; don’t leave this poor body to the beasts of prey. We shall be restored to each other. There is a paradise beyond this world where all the good meet and are blessed : we shall be among them. I die happy in the possession of your love, and in the consciousness of never having forfeited my claim to it.”

The Tartar could not speak. He pressed the wife of his bosom to that heart which she had so fondly engrossed, and scalding tears of agony overflowed his cheeks. He threw his arms tenderly round her, his heart throbbing audibly, and buried his bursting temples in the hot sand beside her. She spoke not—she stirred not ; he raised his head to kiss her fading lips—her eye was rayless—those lips were slightly parted, but fixed ; a faint smile was on her cheek, yet no breath came. She was dead !

CHAPTER II.

AIASS raised himself from the earth, cast his eye with a look of reproach towards heaven, and gave way to a burst of sorrow ; then bringing the strong energies of his mind to resistance, the ebullition shortly subsided, and he bowed to the stroke with the fortitude of a man who looks upon endurance as his province, and upon calamity as his lot. During the whole of this melancholy day he did not quit the body. His wife’s dying request was in his ears and in his memory—“Dig me a grave in the wilderness,” and he resolved to comply with it. He passed twelve lingering hours in a broiling sun, occasionally casting himself under the palampore beside the corpse, close to which his infant slept unconscious of its loss. His thirst became at length so excessive that his throat and tongue swelled, and he began to

apprehend suffocation. His face was blistered and sore, his eyes inflamed, from the combined effects of weeping, and the glare of an ardent sun upon the white sand of the desert. Towards evening he was so overcome by his sufferings that he laid him down to die. The infant cried for nutriment, but he had none to give it. Taking the linen from his body, which was saturated with perspiration, he put it to the babe's mouth: this kept it alive.

The tongue of Aiass had by this time enlarged to such an immense size that he could not move it. The inflammation was so great that he was unable to close his lips. Expecting death every moment, he pressed still closer to his bosom the innocent pledge of conjugal affection, when he was unexpectedly relieved by the cracking of his swollen tongue. A copious discharge of blood followed, which passed into his stomach, and somewhat assuaged the fever that burned within him. He was so much relieved by this effort of nature, that he almost immediately sank into a short but refreshing slumber.

The sun had gone down in brightness; and when he awoke, the stars were looking upon him from their thrones of light, and the whole heavens smiling above him in their beauty. The intense, calm azure of the sky seemed an emblem of the repose that dwells there. A gentle breeze had broken the oppressive stagnation of the air, and fanned his hot, blistered features as with an angel's wing. His energies revived. Though the thirst by which he was still parched affected him greatly, still it was in some degree mitigated by that balmy breath of heaven, which he felt now for the first time since he had entered upon the desert. He commenced his melancholy task of digging a grave to enclose the remains of an object who had been dearer to him than his own life. He took his crease—a short dagger with a wide double-edged blade,—and began to remove the sand. It was an arduous and sorrowful labour. After an earnest application of mind and body for two hours, he succeeded in sinking a hole four feet deep. Into this he tenderly lowered the body of his departed wife, filled up the pit, and throwing himself upon it, lay there until morning. There was a discharge

of blood from his tongue once or twice during the night, which more than probably saved his life.

Towards dawn he fell into a deep and death-like sleep. He was at length awaked by feeling himself severely shaken. Upon looking up, he perceived himself to be surrounded by strangers. They were travellers on their way to Lahore. They gave him food and water: the infant was fed with goat's milk by means of a sponge. His strength being now somewhat recruited, he joined the travellers, and advanced with them by easy stages to their destination.

Lahore was the field in which the Tartar's talents soon displayed themselves. Aiass was no ordinary man. He attracted the notice of the Emperor Akbar, who had a singular faculty in discriminating merit, and from that moment rose to distinction. Akbar perceived his value, and made it available to promote the interests of his empire. The Tartar advanced by a regular but rapid progression until he became high treasurer of the state. He was a chief political organ of one of the wisest sovereigns which history celebrates, and held in great respect by the whole nation. The Emperor reposed implicit confidence in him: it was well deserved, and ended only with his life.

The daughter of Aiass, who had been so providentially preserved in the desert, as she grew up, excelled in personal attractions all the loveliest women of the East, and was therefore honoured with the designation of Mher-ul-Nissa: the Sun of Women. The extraordinary event which had distinguished her birth seemed but as the prognostic of future distinction. The child of the desert grew to be the perfection of woman. The greatest care was taken to make her mistress of every accomplishment which could impart additional fascination to the natural graces of her sex. In vivacity, wit, spirit, and all those elegant attainments in which women especially excel, she was unrivalled by few and surpassed by none.

Of her it might have been almost said, without any assumption of the licence of poetry—

“The force of Nature could no further go.”

In masculine vigour of understanding she stood alone and unapproached. Her beauty was the theme of universal praise. Suitors from all quarters sought her hand; but it was not easily won. Shere Afkun, a Turkoman noble of distinction, at length presented himself; and to him she was betrothed. The Mogul historians speak of Shere Afkun as the most eminent person of his age, and much esteemed by the Emperor, who never failed to bestow his favour upon brave men. The Turkoman was of lofty stature, and no less remarkable for the beauty of his form and features than for the rare qualities of his mind. He was universally acknowledged to be every way worthy of the beautiful Mher-ul-Nissa, by whose preference he felt equally flattered and delighted.

CHAPTER III.

SOON after she had been betrothed to Shere Afkun, the lovely Tartar was seen by Prince Selim, afterwards well known as the Emperor Jehangire, who became so desperately enamoured of her, that imagining there could be no obstacle to her union with a prince of the blood, he applied to his father Akbar, for his consent to espouse the beautiful daughter of the high treasurer, Chaja Aiass.

The Emperor sternly refused his consent; at the same time upbraiding his son with seeking to degrade himself by a mean alliance. Prince Selim was abashed; and, to his mortification, the accomplished Tartar shortly after became the wife of Shere Afkun.

Selim was from that moment the implacable foe of his successful rival. He could not bear to hear the hated name mentioned in his presence, and, with cowardly vindictiveness, determined upon his destruction. He kept these feelings a secret from his father, who esteemed the Turkoman too highly to approve of the prince's hostility towards him, and had, moreover, expressed his satisfaction at the latter's marriage with Mher-ul-Nissa. Selim, however, secretly fomented jealousies among the Omrahs against the popular

as well as imperial favourite. These were easily excited ; for there will never be found wanting persons ready to traduce those to whom they are conscious of being inferior in moral excellence ; and especially in courts where ambition is the ruling passion, nothing can be less difficult than to provoke the envy of men whose sole aim is aggrandisement, and who are therefore naturally disposed to think ill of any who happen to contravene those aims, or to cross the path of their ambition. The prince, therefore, had little difficulty in accomplishing his purpose. He secretly disseminated calumnies to the injury of Shere Afkun, who in disgust retired from court into Bengal, where he obtained from the governor the vicegerency of Burdwan, a considerable district in that province.

Here he lived undisturbed until the death of Akbar, which caused the sincere regret of the whole nation, who in mourning the decease of their Emperor deplored the loss of a great and a good man. When Prince Selim became sovereign, his passion for the daughter of Aiass revived in full force. The restraint being removed under which the smothered flame had been so long and so painfully suppressed, it burst forth with increased fierceness. He was now absolute ; and being determined to possess the object of his disappointed love, he made advances towards a reconciliation with Shere Afkun ; but the brave Turkoman for a time resisted all his importunities, perceiving their object, and resolving to part neither with his wife nor with his honour, as he could not resign the one without relinquishing the other. His strength was prodigious, and his bravery equal to his strength ; his integrity was unimpeached, his reputation high, and he was alike feared and respected by all classes. Upon every occasion where danger was imminent, he was foremost to encounter it ; while his desperate valour was the theme of many a romance and of many a song. His bodily vigour was so great, that he had slain a lion single handed ; from which circumstance he obtained the cognomen of Shere Afkun, or the Lion-slayer, his original name being Asta Jillo. He was, however, no less esteemed for his virtues than for his bravery ; and Mher-ul-Nissa fully appreciated his rare endowments. She was proud of his reputation. To her the Emperor's feelings were

no secret ; but she avoided his presence, in obedience to the wishes of her husband, who was not altogether without his suspicions that the hostility which the new sovereign manifested towards him was solely on her account. He continued, therefore, in the province of Bengal, without visiting the imperial capital.

Not long, however, after Jehangire had ascended the throne of the Moguls, Shere Afkun was invited to court, whither, after repeated solicitations, he repaired, trusting to his own high reputation for security against any tyrannical exercise of the sovereign power. Upon his arrival he was much caressed by the Emperor, in order to lull suspicion. Open and generous himself, he suspected no treachery in others. He left his wife at Burdwan, not willing to expose her to the chance of attention from the sovereign, that might keep alive former predilections, and renew his royal rival's criminal hostility.

The young Emperor's court was splendid in the extreme. He was fond of state ; but hunting being his passion, a day was appointed for the chase. All the chief nobles of the empire attended, hoping to have an opportunity of exhibiting before their royal master their skill and prowess in a pursuit at all times extremely dangerous in eastern countries. A vast train, swelling to the number of an army, issued from the gates of Lahore. The cavalcade was prodigious. Upwards of five hundred elephants, upon which rode the Emperor and his court, led the van towards a jungle where the quarry was expected to be roused. The howdah of the royal elephant was covered by a silken canopy, and its whole caparison profusely ornamented with precious metals. Thousands of spears glittered in the sun, the rays of which were reflected in streams of glowing light from those various arms borne by this motley cavalcade. The neighing of steeds was mingled with the busy hum of men who thronged to the scene of exciting enjoyment.

Shere Afkun accompanied the court on horseback, armed only with the sword with which he had slain a lion—having by that act immortalised his name in the annals of his country. His royal master showed him a very marked respect, occasionally consulting

him respecting the chase ; thus aggravating the jealousy of the nobles, already sufficiently fierce against him. He received the Emperor's courtesies with a cold but modest respect, not entirely forgetting former unkindness, though without suspicion of future injury.

The royal party at length entered the jungle, where the forest haunts of the lion and tiger were shortly explored. The hunters soon enclosed a mighty beast of the latter species, of which Jehangire being apprized, immediately proceeded to the spot. He began to entertain a hope that the period so long desired was arrived when he should have an opportunity of exposing the life of his former rival in an encounter from which the latter would have little chance of escaping. Seeing the tiger at a short distance, surrounded by hunters, lashing the ground with its tail and giving other tokens of savage hostility, the despot demanded of those around him, who would venture to attack the ferocious beast ?

All stood silent and confounded. They had not expected such a proposal : nor did they appear to entertain any wish to expose their lives in a conflict in which more danger than glory would be reaped.

As none of them advanced, and the Emperor began to knit his brows and show symptoms of displeasure, Shere Afkun already entertained a hope that the enterprise would devolve upon him ; but, to his extreme mortification, three Omrahs stepped forward and offered to encounter the forest tyrant. Jehangire cast upon the bold Turkoman a glance of such unequivocal expression that his pride kindled, and he longed to show how little backward he was to engage the brindled foe ; but as three nobles had first challenged the encounter, he could not set aside their prior claim to a distinction which they insisted upon striving for.

Upon receiving the approbation of their royal master, they severally prepared for the encounter, dismounting from their elephants, and arming themselves with sword, spear, and shield. Shere Afkun, fearing that he was likely to be rivalled, and that his fame would be tarnished by inferior men undertaking a conflict which by his silence he might be supposed to have declined, ad-

vanced, and presenting himself before the sovereign, said firmly : "To attack an unarmed creature with weapons is neither fair nor manly ; it is taking an advantage of an animal which cannot plead against such injustice but by a fierce retaliation. Such is not in accordance with the character of the truly brave. All manual contests should be undertaken upon equal terms. The Deity has given limbs and sinews to man as well as to tigers, and has imparted reason to the former in order to countervail the deficiency of strength. Let the nobles of your imperial majesty then lay aside their arms and attack the enemy with those only with which the Deity has provided them. If they shrink from such an encounter, I am prepared to undertake it."

Jehangire rewarded the speaker with a smile of gracious approbation ; but his Omrahs, one and all, declined such a perilous contest, insisting upon the madness of the enterprise. To the Emperor's infinite surprise and delight, the bold Turkoman instantly cast aside his sword and shield, and prepared to engage the tiger unarmed.

The circle of hunters, which had surrounded the forest tyrant, opened to admit the champion. The ferocious beast with which he was to engage lay at the root of a tree, snarling hideously as its enemy approached, erecting the fur upon its tail and back, passing its tongue every now and then over the terrific fangs with which its jaws were armed, but seeming ill disposed to commence the contest. Shere Afkun was stripped to his trousers, and his fine muscular frame, a model for an Indian Apollo, exhibited its noble proportions as he advanced cautiously but firmly towards his foe. The tiger lay upon its belly without attempting to stir, nevertheless giving evident tokens of a determination to retaliate if attacked. The ponderous paws projected from beneath its chest ; and upon these it occasionally rested its head, until roused by the approach of its adversary. Every eye was fixed upon the scene ; every heart throbbed with the strongest emotion of anxiety. The sovereign alone sat upon his elephant, apparently calm and undisturbed ; but the deep flush upon his cheek showed that he took no ordinary interest in the approaching encounter. He did

not utter a word as he saw the man whom he considered doomed to inevitable destruction march resolutely up to the prostrate tiger and strike it in the ribs with his foot. The animal, now excited to ferocious resistance, instantly sprang upon its legs, but crept backward with its face to the enemy and its belly to the ground. Shere Afkun advanced as it retreated, keeping his eyes fixed upon those of the enraged beast. At length the latter suddenly turned, and bounded forward; but was stopped by the spears of the hunters, who still encircled it at a distance, all armed to prevent its escape. Finding its purpose foiled, it again turned, and being beyond the influence of the Turkoman's eye, prepared to make its perilous spring.

Shere Afkun now retreated in his turn, and, pausing near a tree, awaited the approach of his enemy. It instantly bounded onward, sweeping its tail above the ground with an uncertain motion, but without uttering a sound. The brave champion, who from experience was well acquainted with the habits of those animals which are the terror of the jungles and their immediate neighbourhood, well knew that the creature was about to spring. Placing his right foot forward, and planting his left firmly against the projecting root of the tree, he calmly awaited the menaced peril. The tiger crouched, and uttered a short sharp growl, projected its body forward with a celerity and force which nothing could have resisted; but the wary Turkoman leaped aside as the living projectile was about to fall upon him, and turning quickly, seized his baffled foe by the tail; then swinging it round with a strength and dexterity that astonished every beholder, brought its head in such violent contact with the tree, that for several seconds it was completely stunned. After a while, however, it recovered, but lay still and panting, not at all relishing, as it seemed, a renewal of the conflict. As the victory was not yet decided, Shere Afkun again approached the prostrate beast in order to rouse it to resistance. He kicked it several times, but it only growled, lashed its tail, showed its fangs—remaining perfectly passive under these acts of aggression.

The hero, tired of this indecisive mode of warfare, seized it

again by the tail, and, swinging it round as he had already done, brought its head once more in stunning contact with the tree. The blow, though severe, did not produce the same effect as before ; for the enraged animal, suddenly rising to the full height of its stature, turned on its aggressor with a savage roar, and seized him by the fleshy part of the thigh behind. As his trousers were loose the tiger was somewhat deceived, and therefore, fortunately, did not take so large a mouthful as it no doubt would have done had the limb been entirely naked. Shere Afkun instantly grasped it by the windpipe, and, squeezing it with all his might, soon obliged the creature to quit its hold ; but with a violent twist it freed itself from the strong grip of its adversary, and instantly renewed the encounter.

The struggle now became indeed terrific, and the anxiety of the spectators increased in proportion. Jehangire could no longer control the feeling by which he was overborne. His parted lips, between which the tongue protruded with a quivering nervousness of motion, his eyelids so raised as to discover the entire orb of his eager, restless eyes, the tremulous aspect of his whole frame,—showed the extent of his interest in the issue of this unnatural strife.

By this time the tiger had again rallied, and having raised itself upon its hind-legs, struck both its fore-paws upon the Turkoman's breast, tearing the flesh from the bone. Shere Afkun fell under the weight of this deadly assault ; but, still undismayed, after a desperate effort he contrived to roll over upon his panting foe, now nearly exhausted from its exertions and by the severe blows it had received, and, forcing his hand between its extended jaws, griped it so firmly by the root of the tongue, that in a few seconds it lay strangled beneath his grasp. He then rose streaming with blood, pointed to his dead enemy, made a salaam to the Emperor, and quitted the field grievously lacerated.

The Emperor was astounded at the issue. The champion was borne home in a palankeen, and for several weeks his life was despaired of. To the surprise of Jehangire, Shere Afkun eventually recovered, though he carried the marks of the tiger's claws to his

grave. The royal rival was nevertheless determined not to forego his purpose of destroying this remarkable man, though he feared to do it openly. Meanwhile the hero went abroad, everywhere unattended, utterly unsuspecting of a design against his life. He was not conscious of having offended a human creature, and therefore did not suppose that any man living could desire his death. He lived in retirement ; but whenever he appeared at court, which he occasionally did, he was always treated by the sovereign with marked respect and great apparent cordiality. This, however, was only to mask the most sanguinary intentions, which were no secret to many of the nobles, who, in common with their master, desired the destruction of a brave man because he was a hated rival.

Private orders had been given to the driver of a large elephant to waylay the Turkoman and tread him to death. The opportunity did not immediately occur, as the victim went abroad at uncertain periods ; and though his movements were watched, it was found a difficult matter to come upon him at a favourable moment. One day, however, as he was returning from the public baths through a narrow street, observing an elephant approaching, he ordered his palankeen-bearers to turn aside and permit it to pass. As the huge animal came near, he at once perceived that there was no room for it to pass without crushing the palankeen, and thus endangering the lives of himself and attendants.

The elephant still came onward. Shere Afkun called to the mahoot to stop, but his order was disregarded. The phlegmatic Hindoo, sitting upon its neck apparently in a state of half consciousness, took no heed of the peril of the party before him. The Omrah, seeing that it was impossible to avoid the approaching danger except by making a timely retreat, ordered his bearers to turn and carry him back to the baths ; but they, terrified at the evident hazard to which they were exposed, threw down the palankeen and fled, leaving their master to settle the question of priority of right to a passage on the Emperor's highway. The hero, undismayed by the formidable aspect of the jeopardy by which he was menaced, sprang instantly from the ground, drew his sword, and, before the elephant could accomplish its fatal purpose, severed

its trunk close to the root. The gigantic animal immediately dropped and expired. The mahoot leaped from its neck as it was in the act of falling, and escaped.

Shere Afkun, suspecting that in urging the elephant upon him the fellow had been actuated by that personal feeling which so generally exists between Hindoo and Mahomedan, forebore to pursue him, thinking the mean passions of a hireling too contemptible to rouse his indignation ; he therefore allowed the offender to escape unmolested, and coolly wiping the blade of his sword, returned it to the scabbard.

Jehangire witnessed the whole scene. He had placed himself at a small lattice that overlooked the street. He was perfectly amazed, but disappointment and vexation banished from his bosom the better feelings of nature. Shere Afkun waited upon him and communicated what had passed : the Emperor extolled his bravery with warmth, and thus escaped his suspicion.

CHAPTER IV.

REPEATED disappointment only served the more to exasperate the sovereign's jealousy. It raged like a furnace within him ; for to exercise a due control over their actions is not the general character of despots. His peace of mind was perpetually disturbed by the fierceness of his emotions, and he became more than ever bent upon the death of his successful rival in the affections of Mher-ul-Nissa.

Shere Afkun was not permitted to remain long unmolested. Kuttub, Suba or governor of Bengal, knowing his master's wishes, and in order to ensure his future favour, hired forty ruffians to assassinate the dreaded Omrah. So confident was the latter in his own strength and valour, that he took no precaution to protect himself against secret or open enemies. He lived in a solitary house in which he retained only an aged porter, all his other servants occupying apartments at a distance. Relying upon his

own courage and the vigour of his arm, he had no apprehension either of the secret assassin or the open foe.

This was a tempting opportunity. The murderers were engaged, and had been promised such a reward as should urge them to the most desperate exertions in order to ensure the consummation of their employer's wishes. They entered the apartment while their victim was asleep. A lamp hung from the ceiling and threw its dim light upon him as he reclined in profound slumber. There was no mistaking the hero, as he lay with his noble head upon his arm, his expansive forehead turned towards the light, every line blended into one smooth unbroken surface denoting the perfect placidity of repose. Over his muscular frame was lightly thrown a thin coverlid, which did not entirely conceal its beautiful proportions, exhibited in the indistinct but traceable outline of the figure beneath. He slept profoundly. The murderers approached the bed and raised their daggers to strike; when one of them, touched with remorse at the idea of such an unmanly assault upon a man who had so signalised his courage and virtues, cried out, under an impulse of awakened conscience, "Hold! are we men? What! forty to one, and afraid to encounter him awake?"

This timely interposition of the assassin's remorse saved the life of his intended victim; for the Turkoman, aroused by the manly expostulation, started from his bed, seized his sword, and retiring backwards before the assassins had all entered, reached the corner of the apartment, where he prepared to defend himself to the last extremity. As he retreated, he had drawn the couch before him, thus preventing the immediate contact of his enemies, who endeavoured in vain to reach him; and as they were only armed with daggers, he cut down several of them without receiving a single wound. Urged on, however, by the great amount of the reward offered, the murderers still pressed upon him, and succeeded at length in dragging the couch from his grasp, though not before he had caused several others to pay for their temerity with their lives. He was at length exposed to the full operation of their brutal fury. Ten of his enemies already lay dead upon the floor, showing fatal evidence of the strength and celerity of his

arm ; there, however, remained thirty to vanquish ; and, placing his back against the wall, the hero prepared for the unequal and deadly struggle.

Seeing him now entirely exposed to their assault, the ruffians rushed simultaneously forward, in the hope of being able to despatch him at once with their daggers ; but they so encumbered each other by suddenly crowding upon their victim in their anxiety to prevent his escape, that they could not strike. He meanwhile, taking advantage of the confusion, laid several of them dead at his feet : nevertheless they pressed forward, and the same result followed. Shifting his ground, but still managing to keep his back against the wall, he defeated all their attempts ; and such was his fearful precision in employing his sword, that not a man came within its sweep without receiving practical experience of the strength with which it was wielded. Besides those already slain, many others of the assailants fell desperately wounded. At length the rest, fearing the extermination of their whole band, betook themselves to flight, and left him without a wound.

The man who had warned Shere Afkun of his danger stood fixed in mute astonishment at the prowess of him whom he had received a commission to murder. He had been so paralysed, that he could neither join in the attack, nor defend his victim from the sanguinary assault which the latter had so heroically defeated. He had no time for meditation. The charge had been so sudden, and the defence so marvellous, that his mind remained in a state of stagnation, and was restored to its proper tone only upon seeing the extraordinary issue. Perceiving himself to be alone with the man whom he had undertaken to destroy for a base bribe, his heart sank within him—he felt that he deserved to die ; but his intended victim advanced, and kindly taking his hand, welcomed him as his deliverer. Having ascertained from the man's unreluctant confession by whom the assassins had been hired, the hero dismissed him with a liberal benefaction.

This remarkable exploit was repeated from mouth to mouth with a thousand exaggerations ; so that wherever Shere Afkun appeared, he was followed and pointed at as a man of superhuman

powers. Songs and romances were written to extol his prowess and magnanimity. He was cheered by the populace wherever he approached. Mothers held up their babes to behold this extraordinary warrior, blessing him as he passed, and praying that their sons might emulate his virtues. He was flattered by these universal suffrages in his favour ; nevertheless, in order to avoid a recurrence of perils similar to those from which he had so recently escaped, he retired to Burdwan.

Meanwhile the Emperor, burning with secret rage at hearing the valour of his rival the theme of every tongue, gave orders to his creature, the Suba of Bengal, to seek a more favourable opportunity than he had before availed himself of, to destroy this detested Omrah : for such was his astonishing strength and dexterity, that the Suba dared not attack him openly.

Being now at a distance from court, the bold Turkoman thought himself beyond the influence of his sovereign's jealousy, and, with the natural frankness of his character, immediately cast aside all suspicion of mischief. The Suba coming with a great retinue to Burdwan, about sixty miles from the modern capital of Bengal, with a pretence of making a tour of the territory placed under his political superintendence, communicated to his officers the secret of his mission. They heard him with silent pleasure ; for most of the nobles being jealous of a rival's popularity, with a mean and dastardly spirit joined readily in the scheme for his destruction.

Unsuspecting of any hostile intention towards him, the devoted Omrah went out to meet the Suba as he was entering the town, and the latter affected to treat him with great cordiality. He rode by the governor's elephant, familiarly conversing with the nobles who formed his suite, and frequently receiving a gracious smile of approbation from the Emperor's vicegerent. He was completely thrown off his guard by this apparently courteous bearing ; and abandoning himself to the generous warmth of his nature, invited the Omrahs to his abode, resolving to entertain them with a munificence equal to the liberality of his disposition ; a determination which he knew his wife, the beautiful Mher-ul-Nissa, would

not be backward in fulfilling. Full of these hospitable resolutions, he pressed forward with a gaiety which showed the utter absence of suspicion.

In the progress of the cavalcade, a pikeman, pretending that Shere Afkun was in the way, rudely struck his horse. In a moment the latter's suspicions were roused; his countenance darkened, and he cast around him a look of fiery indignation. Without an instant's delay he drew his sword and clove the offender to the earth. Knowing that no soldier would have thus acted without orders, the insulted noble immediately saw that his life was aimed at, and directly spurring his horse towards the elephant of the treacherous Suba, he tore down the howdah, seized the cowardly Kuttub by the throat, and buried his sword in the traitor's body before any of his guards could rescue him; then turning upon the Omrahs, five were almost instantly sacrificed to his just revenge.

Reeking with their blood, the avenger stood before the host, sternly braving the retribution which he saw them preparing to inflict, and hailing them with a loud defiance. He expected no quarter, and therefore determined not to yield without a struggle. His mind was braced to the extreme tension of desperate energy, and he resolved that the coveted prize of his death should be dearly won. Those who were within the immediate reach of his arm he slew without distinction, and such was the fatal celerity of his motions that the enemy fled before him in dismay. He did not pursue, but challenged the unequal strife. Like a grim lion, he stood defiant before them, spotted with the gore of the slain, and prepared for fresh slaughter, but there was not a foe daring enough to approach him.

Terrified at his prowess, the soldiers began to discharge their arrows and matchlocks at him from a distance. His horse, struck by a ball in the forehead, fell dead under him. Springing upon his feet, he slew several of the enemy who had ventured to rush forward in the hope of despatching him while encumbered with the housings of his fallen charger. They fled at the sight of their slain comrades, and left their unvanquished destroyer to the aim

of his distant foes, who fired upon him without intermission. Covered with wounds and bleeding at every pore, the still undaunted lion-slayer called upon the Suba's officers to advance and meet him in single combat, but they one and all declined the encounter. They saw that certain death to each of them must be the issue of such a contest. It was evident, moreover, that their victim could not escape the aim of so many enemies.

At length, seeing his end approaching, the brave Turkoman, like a devout Mahomedan, turned his face towards Mecca, threw some dust upon his head by way of ablution, there being no water near, and standing up, calm and undismayed, before the armed files of his murderers, received at one discharge six balls in his body, and expired without a groan.

Thus perished one of the greatest heroes whose exploits have had a conspicuous place in the histories of nations.

The beautiful widow was immediately transported to Delhi, but Jehangire refused to see her, whether from remorse or policy is uncertain. He ordered her to be confined in one of the worst apartments of the harem. This was exceedingly galling to her sensitive and haughty spirit.

The harem of an eastern prince is at once the penetralia of the political and social sanctuary, whence emanate all the cabals and conspiracies so rife in the cabinets of Moslem potentates; it may, therefore, be as well to give a brief description of a Mahomedan sovereign's domestic establishment.

In the harem are educated the Mogul princes and the principal youth among the nobles destined for posts of responsibility in the empire. It is generally separated from the palace, but so nearly contiguous as to be of ready access. None are admitted within its apartments except the Emperor and those immediately attached to its several offices, the duties of which are performed by women. It is generally enclosed by lofty walls, and surrounded by spacious gardens, laid out with all the splendour of eastern magnificence, where every luxury is obtained which the appetite may demand or money can procure. Those inmates who form the matrimonial confederacy of the Mogul potentate are among the most beautiful

girls which the empire can furnish. They are taught embroidery, music, and dancing by certain old women hired to instruct them in every blandishment that may captivate the senses and stimulate the passions. These lovely captives are never permitted to appear abroad except when the Emperor travels, and then they are conveyed in litters closed by curtains, or in boats with small cabins, admitting the light and air only through narrow Venetian blinds.

The apartments of the harem are very splendid, always, however, of course in proportion to the wealth of the prince. The favourite object of his affections exhibits the dignity and enjoys the privilege of a queen, though of a queen in captivity. While her beauty lasts she is frequently regarded with a feeling almost amounting to idolatry, but when that beauty passes away the warmth of love subsides, her person no longer charms, her voice ceases to impart delight, her faded cheeks and sharpened tones become disagreeable memorials of the past. Neither her song nor her lute is now heard with pleasure, for in the beautiful imagery of the Persian poet, "When the roses wither and the bower loses its sweetness, you have no longer the tale of the nightingale."

The favourite, however, while she continues her ascendancy over the heart of her lord, is treated with sovereign respect throughout the harem. She smokes her golden-tubed hookha, the mouth-piece studded with gems; and enjoys the fresh morning breeze under a veranda that overlooks the gardens of the palace, attended by her damsels, only second to herself in attraction of person and splendour of attire.

" Her smiling countenance resplendent shines
 With youth and loveliness ; her lips disclose
 Teeth white as jasmine blossoms ; silky curls
 Luxuriant shade her cheeks ; and every limb,
 Of slightest texture, moves with natural grace,
 Like moonbeams gliding through the yielding air." *

* Uttara Rama Cheritra, a Hindoo drama, translated by Horace Hayman Wilson, Esq., from the original Sanscrit.

Here she reclines in oblivious repose upon a rich embroidered carpet from the most celebrated looms of Persia. Through an atmosphere of the richest incense she breathes the choicest perfumes of Arabia the happy, and has everything around her that can administer to sensual delight; still she is generally an unhappy being. She dwells in the midst of splendid misery and ungratifying profusion, while all within herself is desolation and hopelessness. Her sympathies are either warped or stifled; her heart is blighted and her mind degraded. She cannot join in the enthusiasm of the inimitable Hafiz*: "The breath of the western gale will soon shed musk around; the old world will again be young," but languishes, as the seasons return, in the most debasing captivity, and feels that the western gale breathes **not upon her** either the freshness of freedom or of joy.

CHAPTER V.

THE daughter of the Tartar Aïass was a woman of haughty spirit, and could ill brook the indifference with which she was treated by her former admirer. It preyed deeply upon her mind. She was not ignorant of the Emperor's hostility towards her late husband, though unconscious that it had been the cause of his death. She severely felt her bereavement; and the change from perfect freedom to captivity—from the affection of a generous husband to the indifference of a capricious master, deeply mortified her. Meanwhile, however, she was not idle: the resources of her mind were no less fertile than extraordinary.

Being very expert at working tapestry and all kinds of embroidery, and in painting silks with the richest devices, she applied herself with great assiduity to those employments. By intense

* Hafiz was a lyric poet, called, by way of pre-eminent distinction, the Anacreon of Persia.

application, she acquired an expertness which enabled her to transcend the works of the best manufacturers in the empire. In a short time the exquisite productions of her taste and skill became the talk of the capital, and she immediately became a person of importance, apart from her being the widow of the renowned Shere Afkun. The ladies of the Omrahs of Delhi and Agra would wear nothing upon grand occasions but what came from the hands of the lovely Mher-ul-Nissa ; she was consequently soon pronounced the oracle of fashion and of taste.

While she affected an extreme simplicity in her own dress, she attired her attendants in the richest tissues and brocades, making those who had attractive persons the vehicle of setting off to advantage the works of her own industry. She thus amassed a considerable sum of money, and became more celebrated in her obscurity than she had hitherto been as the wife of the most distinguished hero of his age. Her milder glories had been hitherto eclipsed by the predominancy of his.

Notwithstanding the success of her exertions in the occupation to which she had devoted herself, the daughter of Aïass the Tartar was still an unhappy woman. She loathed her captivity : she felt the moral degradation to which she was subjected, and that the influence which she imagined herself born to exercise was extinguished by an untoward destiny. She had always entertained a secret conviction that the strange events of her birth portended a mortal distinction of singular splendour ; it therefore mortified her to find that she continued to live celebrated only as a fabricator of brocades and tissues. Her spirits drooped : she grew peevish and irritable. Her occupation became a toil, and she talked of relinquishing it, when one day she was apprised that there was an old woman in the harem who pretended to look into the future and read the destinies of mankind. Mher-ul-Nissa immediately sent for the prophetess. The crone appeared before her, bending beneath the weight of years. Upon seeing the widow of the late Shere Afkun, she lifted her skinny arms, clasped her bony fingers together, and muttered a few incoherent words which had more the seeming of madness than of prophecy : there

was, however, more sanity than madness in the mummerly—it was a sort of label to her draught of foreknowledge.

“Well, mother,” inquired Mher-ul-Nissa mildly, “what do those strange words portend? I would know something of my destiny, if it is in thy power to read it: if not, take this, and leave a blessing behind thee; for an aged woman’s curse is a dreadful thing to hang over any one’s head.” Saying this, she placed a gold mohur upon the beldam’s right palm, who giving a chuckle of delight, mumbled forth her vaticination with a distorted grin of satisfaction. “You were born in a desert to die upon a throne. She who as a babe was embraced by a reptile, as a woman will be embraced by a king. The infant that was brought into the world amidst famine will go out of it amidst plenty. The star, so puny at thy birth, will expand into a sun. I am not deceived;—believe me, and leave here a proof of your faith.” She extended her hand, and having received another golden recompense, retired.

Mher-ul-Nissa was willing to believe the prophecy of the sibyl. There was something in it, in spite of its vague generalities, that harmonized closely with those silent presentiments which she had for some time past permitted herself to cherish. She was ambitious, and a thirst after distinction was her ruling passion. Her mind was too strongly fortified against superstition to render her the dupe of a juggler’s predictions; nevertheless, the mere promise of aggrandisement was agreeable to her ear, and she therefore lent a willing attention to what her reason despised, not caring to pay for the indulgence a thousand times above its value. She cherished the promise of worldly exaltation, not because she believed the hag who made it had a further insight into futurity than her neighbours, but only because the theme was grateful to her sensitive ambition; and there moreover existed a strong presentiment within her, that she should rise from the grovelling condition to which she was now reduced, and be exalted in proportion to her present degradation.

Actuated by this feeling, she did everything in her power to give currency to her reputation. She well knew that her taste

was the theme of general approbation, and the marvellous power of her beauty began to be talked of beyond the precincts of the harem. An Omrah of distinction, holding a high office in the state, offered her his hand, and it was soon noised abroad that she was about to become his wife. She secretly encouraged this report, though she had given him no pledge, hoping that it would come to higher ears and procure her an interview with the Emperor.

This state of things could not last long ; and when pressed by the impatient noble for a definitive answer to his offer of marriage, to his astonishment and that of all who were acquainted with the circumstance, she declined it. Mortified at his repulse, he determined to obtain by force what was denied to his entreaty, and took an opportunity of violating the sanctity of the harem by appearing before her. She was alone in her apartment when the disappointed lover entered. He commenced by upbraiding her with her caprice, which she bore with dignified patience, until, irritated by her calmness, the Omrah seized her arm and roused her indignation by the most offensive menaces. He being a powerful man, she was as an infant in his grasp ; nevertheless, with the impulse of roused passion, she suddenly burst from his embrace, rushed into an inner chamber, and, seizing a crease, commanded the intruder to retire. Maddened by disappointment, he sprang forward to repeat the violence which he had already offered : she instantly raised her arm and buried the dagger in his body. He fell reeking in his blood. He was borne from the apartment insensible ; and a confinement of three months to his bed, under the daily peril of death, taught him a lesson never to pass from memory but with his life. Other suitors sought the hand of the Tartar's daughter, but all with like success.

The accomplishments of this singular woman were soon carried to the ears of the Emperor, who had probably by this time forgotten the ascendancy which she once held over his heart ; or perhaps it was that the mortification of her having been the wife of another rendered him sullen in his determination not to see her. He resolved, however, now to visit her, in order to have

ocular proof whether the voice of public report were a truth or an exaggeration. One evening therefore he proceeded in state to her apartment. At the sight of her unrivalled beauty, all his former passion revived in an instant. She was reclining on a sofa in an undress robe of plain white muslin, which exhibited her faultless shape to the best advantage, and became her better than the richest brocades of Bagdat, or the finest embroideries of Cashmere. As soon as the Emperor entered, the siren rose with an agitation that served only to heighten her charms, and fixed her eyes upon the ground with well-dissembled confusion. Jehangire stood mute with amazement, and rapture took immediate possession of his soul: he felt, if he did not utter, the sentiment of an eminent poet of his own religion:—

“Sweet maid, if thou wouldst charm my sight,
 And bid these arms thy neck infold;
 That rosy cheek, that lily hand,
 Would give thy lover more delight
 Than all Bocara’s vaunted gold,
 Than all the gems of Sarmacand.”

He was dazzled by the perfection of her form, the dignity of her mien, and the transcendent loveliness of her features. Advancing to where she stood with downcast eyes and suffused cheeks, blushing in the dazzling plenitude of her beauty, he took her hand and said: “Sun of women, the Emperor of a great and mighty nation throws himself at thy feet as an act of just homage to thy beauty. Wilt thou be the Sultana of Jehangire the predominant?”

“A subject has no voice,” replied the enchantress; “and a woman especially can have no will but that of her sovereign: it is his privilege to command—her heritage is to obey.”

Jehangire again took her hand, declared his resolution to make her his Empress, and immediately a proclamation was issued for the celebration of the royal nuptials with the lovely relict of the late Shere Afkun.

A general festival was observed throughout the empire. Those rich embroideries which had lately been the admiration of the

ladies of Delhi no longer issued from the harem. The humble embroidress cast aside the distaff for the crown, and in the issue proved to be one of the most extraordinary women which the pen of history has celebrated. She became the principal director of the complex machine of government. The name of Mher-ul-Nissa was exchanged for that of Noor Mahil, "The Light of the Harem."

From this moment she was acknowledged as the favourite wife of the Emperor of the Moguls. In the climax of her exaltation her name was again changed to Noor Jehan, or, "The Light of the World." As a distinguishing mark of her pre-eminence in the sovereign's affections, she was allowed to assume the title of Shahe, or Empress. Her family was held next in rank to the princes of the blood, and advanced to places of the highest trust. Its members were admitted to privileges which had never before been enjoyed by subjects under the Mogul domination. The current coin of the realm was stamped with her name, as well as with that of the sovereign! She converted the harem into a court, where the mysteries of state policy were discussed with a freedom and a power seldom known under despotic governments.

It was from the harem that those celebrated decrees were fulminated—for though they passed in the Emperor's name, it is credibly attested that they emanated from his Sultana—which rendered the reign of Jehangire one of the most politically prosperous in the annals of Mahomedan history. Her influence exceeded that of any other person in the empire, not even excepting the sovereign; and perhaps, under the rigid scrupulosity of Mogul policy with regard to women sharing in the administration of the state, there never has been an instance of one of the sex attaining an ascendancy so paramount, and such perfect political control over the destinies of so many subject principalities as the renowned Noor Jehan.

CHAPTER VI.

A FEW years after the elevation of this extraordinary woman, Churrum, the third son of Jehangire, who afterwards ascended the imperial throne under the assumed designation of Shah Jehan, began to interrupt the harmony of the state. He had been sent with a powerful army into the Deccan to quell a formidable confederacy against the reigning authority, and having succeeded in reducing the insurgents to obedience, began to show his ambitious designs upon the crown. Under the most plausible pretences, and while in command of the army with which he had just quelled a dangerous insurrection, he persuaded the Emperor to put into his hands Chusero, Jehangire's eldest son, and consequently heir to the throne, who had been imprisoned for rebellion. It soon became evident why he had been so urgent to obtain the person of his rebellious brother. Chusero was the grand obstacle between him and the crown. The traitor Churrum now shortly threw off the mask, and publicly declared his designs. His success in the Deccan had endeared him to the troops; his courage had gained their confidence, and his liberality secured their affections. Confiding in his imagined power, he disregarded the mandates of his father, continued in arms, and commanding his unhappy brother to be murdered under the walls of Azcre, immediately assumed the imperial titles.

The Sultana had long suspected the intentions of Churrum. In spite of the veil which he had thrown over his base designs, they did not escape her penetration. Ambition was the dominant feeling in the bosom of this crafty prince. The Empress, seeing the evils likely to accrue from this fierce passion if suffered to operate unchecked, determined to take precautions to contravene his measures. Before the death of Chusero she saw that the unnatural brother, into whose power he had fallen, had a design upon the throne. Every action of his public life had shown a secret but undeviating perseverance in the pursuit of dominion,

not to be mistaken. His cunning she felt might be overreached, but his talents were formidable. He was not only a crafty intriguer, but a brave and successful general. He had become the idol of the army; and with such a mighty engine to power, she dreaded the final success of his schemes. She declared her suspicions to the Emperor, who was at first unwilling to entertain them; but the wife had such an influence over the mind of her royal husband, that he always listened with great confidence to her suggestions. She assured him that Churrum must be watched, advised his recall, and that the army should be placed under a less dangerous command. She insisted upon speedy and decisive measures, in order to obviate danger to the state. To the Emperor's doubts of Churrum's ambitious intentions she answered:

“A man does not seek the instruments of authority but to employ them. When princes lay themselves out for popularity they intend to make the mob their tools, and the citizens their stepping-stones to dominion. He who has once deceived is never to be trusted; and I can too well discover that, under the smiles of allegiance which so frequently play upon the features of Prince Churrum in his father's presence, hypocrisy lurks like the serpent in a bed of flowers.”

After a while Jehangire was convinced by the arguments of the Sultana of his son's evil designs, which an account of Chusero's death soon confirmed. He was enraged at such a sanguinary act of ambition, and determined to punish the fratricide. In order to obviate the stigma which he knew would be attached to the crime of murdering a brother, the crafty prince affected such extreme grief, that he was believed by many to be innocent of so atrocious an offence. Jehangire, however, or rather his Empress, was not to be deceived by this barefaced hypocrisy: the former wrote him a letter, accusing him of the crime; at the same time ordering the body of his murdered son to be disinterred; it was brought to the capital, and buried with the honours due to his rank.

Although Prince Churrum was married to a niece of Noor Jehan the hostility between him and the Empress had risen to such a height that it was perfectly implacable. The rebellious prince well knew that he owed the indignation of his parent to her influence ; he therefore resolved to lose no time in endeavouring to get her into his power. Seeing no probability of a reconciliation with his father, he determined to continue in his rebellion.

At the suggestion of his consort, Jehangire prepared to reduce his son to obedience ; but his troops being at a distance, he could not bring an army into the field. At this critical juncture, a courier arrived from Mohabet Chan, the imperial general, stating that he was advancing, with all the forces of the Punjab, to join the royal army. Shortly after, the troops of Jehangire engaged the rebels and entirely defeated them. The refractory prince was so overcome by this unexpected reverse of fortune, that he meditated suicide. The paroxysm, however, passed, and he fled to the mountains of Mewat, where he found for the moment a secure refuge from the anger of his father and the hostility of Noor Jehan. Misfortune followed him : his party was defeated in Guzerat. Still the royal rebel was so formidable, that it was resolved to take him alive, as the only means of extinguishing the flames of civil war, always disastrous to the victors as well as to the vanquished. Mohabet Chan was therefore despatched, at the head of a large detachment of Rajpoots, a race of soldiers proverbially brave, to capture the royal insurgent. Churrum, in consequence, quitted his retreat, determined to face the danger and try the chance of another battle. Crossing the river Nerbudda, in the province of Malwa, he threw up works to defend the ford. Of the large and well-appointed army which had followed him into the Deccan there remained only a small dispirited remnant, and desertions were daily thinning his lines. He had no reliance upon the soldiers, dejected from successive defeats, and murmuring for their arrears of pay, which he was unable to provide. He lost his energy, became incautious and irresolute, and allowed himself to be surprised by the imperial general, who routed his

disheartened forces with great slaughter, and forced him again to seek refuge in the hills. He soon, however, passed through Golconda, and took the route to Bengal.

His escape was a source of severe mortification to the Sultana, who foresaw that the repose of the state was not likely to be secured until he should either be taken or destroyed. She was besides anxious that the succession should be fixed upon Shariar, the fourth son of Jehangire, who had married the daughter whom she had borne to Shere Afkun. By her representations, no doubt in the main just, the Emperor's enmity towards his son was kept alive; of which the latter being aware, saw that it would not be prudent to trust himself within the walls of his father's capital. He had more than once thought of throwing himself upon the paternal clemency; but his knowledge of the Sultana's vindictive spirit, and the consciousness of his own manifold derelictions, kept him from running the risk of captivity for life, if not of undergoing extreme punishment.

His affairs, however, now began to assume a more favourable aspect. Having invested the fort of Tellia Gurri, in Bengal, with a new army which he had raised in that province, after an obstinate defence by the garrison, he succeeded in carrying the place by storm. This unexpected success animated him to new exertions. He now overran the whole district, which shortly submitted to his arms. He reduced Dacca, a considerable city, and once the capital of Bengal, in which he found an immense treasure in gold and silver, besides jewels and warlike stores. The Suba was deposed, and a new governor raised, who ruled in the name of Shah Jehan, by which title Prince Churum finally ascended the imperial throne.

No sooner had he settled the government of Bengal, than he turned his thoughts to the neighbouring province of Bahar. The governor fled at his approach; but the wealthy zemindars crowded to his camp to offer him their allegiance. He accepted their submission, together with the rich presents which they brought to ratify the mutual compact of protection and affiance, and to confirm their sincerity.

runt occurrence, and

which greatly tended to strengthen him in his new conquests, was the unexpected submission of Mubarick, governor of the fort of Rhotas, who came to his camp, presented him the keys, and made a vow of perpetual fealty. This fortress was considered unimpregnable. It had never been taken by force, and was therefore looked upon by the rebellious prince as a place of security for his family. Here he immediately removed them; and being now relieved from immediate anxiety on their account, he was better prepared to encounter the dangers of the field, and to brave the vicissitudes of fortune.

This uninterrupted current of success inflamed the pride of the royal rebel, and he fancied himself in a condition to contend for the imperial sceptre with that army which had already twice so signally defeated him. Mohabet Chan had again taken the field, and marched as far as Benares, on the banks of the Ganges, to chastise the insurgents, who mustered upwards of forty thousand horse,—a force scarcely inferior to the imperialists in number,—and were drawn up on the bank of a small stream.

The battle was desperate, but decisive. The rebels were routed after a prodigious slaughter. The conduct of Prince Churram on this occasion was marked by reckless bravery. Plunging into the thickest of the fight with five hundred horse, who had resolved to devote themselves to death with their leader, he maintained a sanguinary struggle against immense odds, and would, no doubt, have fallen a victim to his despair, had not some of his officers seized the reins of his charger, and forced him from the battle to a place of security. He fled to the fort of Rhotas, where he had left his family. The plunder of his camp, which contained the spoils of Dacca, saved him from immediate pursuit.

Leaving his family in the fortress, where he imagined they would be secure, the wretched prince collected the scattered remains of his army, and threw himself into Patna, which he determined to defend, but thought it prudent to evacuate the city at the approach of his enemies. He fled through Bengal towards the Deccan. The provinces which he had so lately conquered fell again under the legitimate authority. When Mohabet had settled

the government of these districts, he marched after the royal fugitive.

Though his fortunes were reduced to so low an ebb, the prince did not despond. His mind was active, and these severe reverses only seemed to animate him to new enterprises. He attached to his desperate fortunes the Rajah of Ambere, who entertained some cause of enmity towards Jehangire. Strengthened by the forces of this new ally, he reduced the city of Boorhampoor; when the imperial army arriving, forced him to raise the siege and take shelter in the mountains of Ballagat. In his retreat he made an attempt upon a strong fortress on the frontiers of Kandeish, where he was repulsed with considerable loss.

This completed his ruin. His nobles no longer followed him; and the troops, under the sanction of their example, deserted his standard. A thousand horse only remained. "His spirits sank within him; his misfortunes oppressed him, his guilt and folly were always present to his mind. Sickness was added to his other miseries. He was hunted like a wild beast from place to place; all mankind were his enemies—he was their foe. Where he thought he could not overcome, he fled; he spread devastation through places where he could prevail. He was, however, tired of rapine. Worn down by contention and hostility, he wrote letters of compunction to his father: he enlarged on his own guilt,—he even added, if possible, to his own wretchedness and misfortune. Jehangire was often full of affection—he was always weak: and he was shocked at the miserable condition of a son whom he had once loved; his tears fell upon the part of that son's letter which mentioned guilt, and his crimes vanished from memory.

"In the midst of this returning softness, Jehangire was not altogether void of policy. He wrote to his son, that if he would give orders to the governors of Rhotas, of Azere, and other places which were still held out in his name, to deliver up their forts, and send his three sons, Dara, Aurungzebe, and Murad, to court, he would be forgiven for his past crimes. Churram embraced the offer with joy; he delivered up the forts and sent his children

to Agra. He, however, found various pretences for not appearing in person at court. He alleged that he was ashamed to see a father whom he had so much injured; but he was actually afraid of the machinations of the Sultana. He made excursions, under a pretence of pleasure, through all parts of the empire, attended by five hundred horse. He was sometimes heard of at Ajmere, sometimes at Tatta on the Indus, and again in the Deccan."* Such was the termination of this formidable rebellion, the suppression of which Jehangire entirely owed to the vigilance and foresight of his Empress, Noor Jehan. This remarkable woman was ever conspicuous amid the great stir of the times; and in every action of her life she displayed that predominancy of mind which had distinguished her even before her exaltation to the imperial sceptre, which she may be said to have wielded,—for though it appeared in the hand of her husband, she gave strength to the grasp by which he held it, and imparted stability to his throne.

CHAPTER VII.

AMONG the extraordinary occurrences of Noor Jehan's life, perhaps there is none that more forcibly develops her character than her bearing towards Mohabet Chan, after the signal services which he had rendered the state by suppressing the rebellion of Prince Churruum. The eminent abilities displayed by Mohabet during his command of the imperial armies had won for him the confidence of his master and of the Empress; and this confidence was increased by his suppression of the most formidable rebellion which disturbed the reign of Jehangire. His family was raised to offices of trust in the state, and the Emperor treated him with a distinction that excited the envy of the nobles. But the gratitude of princes has ever been a questionable virtue; their suspicions are readily excited, and there are never wanting engines to set those suspicions at work.

* Vide Dow, *ad loc.*

The Sultana soon became apprehensive of Mohabet's influence with the Emperor ; and therefore, to abridge it, put in operation the active energies of her mind. Jehangire was naturally a credulous man, and the rebellion of his son had rendered him suspicious. The virtues of his general ought to have placed him above the petty surmises suggested by envy ; but his abilities had raised him enemies at court, and his master wanted firmness to repel the insinuations levelled against the man who had been the main prop of his throne. Mohabet soon perceived a change in his sovereign's feelings ; but, conscious of his own integrity, he was at no pains to remove the prejudices excited against him. He was conscious that he owed much of the growing coldness evident in the Emperor's manner towards him to the misrepresentations of Noor Jehan ; and thence grew a strong and mutual antipathy, which had nearly proved the means of transferring the empire from the house of Timur to another dynasty.

The immediate cause of that open rupture which ensued, and had nearly cost Jehangire his crown, was an accusation made to the Sultana by a noble that Mohabet had sanctioned his son's death, which the father expressed himself determined to avenge. He further stated that the general entertained a design of raising his sovereign's second son to the throne. This was reported to the Emperor ; it immediately excited his fears, and he listened with weak credulity to a charge of treason against his general. Blinded by his terrors, he forgot the services which that great and good man had rendered to the state, and weakly listened to the voice of his slanderers.

Mohabet, who was at this time in Bengal, received his master's imperative orders to repair immediately to the capital. As he did not instantly obey, he received a second summons, still more peremptory, accompanied with such manifestations of displeasure, that he could no longer mistake the danger of his situation. Although surprised at this total change of good feeling towards him, yet having really done nothing justly to excite his sovereign's displeasure, he resolved to obey the mandate at all hazards, but to take every necessary precaution against his enemies, whether

secret or open. When, however, he reflected upon the unworthy requital he had received for his services, indignation and disgust overbore his first resolution, and he came to the determination of retiring to a castle of which he had some time before been appointed governor; but, to his astonishment, he found that an order had been received at the fortress to deliver it up to a person whom the Sultana had appointed to take immediate possession. This unjustifiable act of tyranny convinced him of what some of his friends at court had already apprised him, that his life was in danger from the secret machinations of his foes; he determined therefore not to put himself in their power before he had at least made some effort to ascertain the extent of his peril.

He wrote to the Emperor, expressing surprise at his hostility towards an unoffending subject, and declaring that, though he had the greatest confidence in the honour of his sovereign, he had none in that of his evil counsellors. The only reply which he received to this temperate expostulation was an order, still more peremptory than those already sent, to appear at court without further delay. To refuse was to rebel; he therefore addressed another letter to his imperial master. In it he said, "I will serve my sovereign with my life against his enemies; but I will not expose it to the malice of his friends. Assure me of safety, and I will clear myself in your presence."

This letter was construed by the Sultana, who directed all the Emperor's measures, into an indignity. Jehangire was angry, and despatched a messenger, summoning Mohabet, in very reproachful terms, to appear before him. The general prepared to obey; but took the precaution of going with an escort of five thousand Rajpoots in the imperial pay, who had long served under him, and were devoted to their commander. With this guard of faithful soldiers he proceeded towards Lahore, where the sovereign at that time held his court.

When the Empress heard that Mohabet was advancing with so numerous an escort, she became alarmed. She feared that such a formidable force might either terrify the Emperor into a reconciliation, or place his crown in jeopardy. Either way there was

cause for apprehension. She persuaded him, therefore, not to admit the refractory general into the camp, for at this time the imperial retinue was on its way from Lahore to Cabul. When he arrived near the royal encampment, a messenger was despatched to inform him that he would not be allowed to enter the presence of his sovereign until he had accounted for the revenues of Bengal, and the plunder taken at the battle of Benares. Provoked at such a demand, the general despatched his son-in-law to complain of the indignity ; but no sooner had the young man entered the Emperor's presence, than he was stripped, bastinadoed, covered with a ragged robe, placed upon a lean tattoo* with his face towards the tail, and thus sent back to his father-in-law amid the jeers of the whole army. This was an insult not to be forgiven. Mohabet was grieved at the Emperor's weakness, but attributed the scandal of the late scene to the Sultana, to whose intrigues he imputed her royal husband's violent hostility. He saw that to put himself in her power was at once to relinquish his liberty, if not his life ; and he accordingly formed his resolution. It was no less decisive than bold. He resolved immediately to surprise the sovereign and carry him off.

The imperial army lay encamped on the banks of a river, across which was a bridge. On the morning after the maltreatment of Mohabet's messenger, they proceeded on their march. Not being in an enemy's country, no precautions were used against surprise, as no danger was apprehended. The army commenced its march early in the morning ; and Jehangire, being in no haste to move, continued in his tent, intending to follow at his convenience. When the imperial troops had crossed the bridge, Mohabet advancing with his Rajpoots, set it on fire, and thus cut off the sovereign's retreat. He then rushed forward to the royal tent. His face was pale, but his whole aspect severe and resolute : there was no mistaking the purpose which was legibly written in every feature. He was followed by his brave Rajpoots. Resistance was vain. The guards and nobles were instantly disarmed.

* A native pony.

Jehangire had retired to the bath, whither Mohabet followed him. The guards attempted to oppose the latter's entrance ; but putting his hand upon his sword, and pointing to his numerous followers, no further opposition was made, and the bold general entered the bathing-tent. The Omrahs present, seeing the folly of resistance, relinquished their arms and became silent spectators of the scene. Mohabet passed them with a stern countenance, which brought to their memories the outrage of the preceding day, but did not utter a word.

Meanwhile information of what had happened was carried to the inner tent, where the Emperor was, by some of the female attendants. He seized his sword, but was soon brought to a sense of his defenceless position. Perceiving that all his guards and nobles were disarmed, and that Mohabet was accompanied by a band of resolute followers prepared to obey his commands to the very letter, he approached the general, whom his conscience now told him he had treated with signal ingratitude, and said, "What does this mean, Mohabet Chan?" Mohabet, touching the ground, and then his forehead, thus replied :

"Forced by the machinations of my enemies, who plot against my life, I throw myself under the protection of my sovereign."

"You are safe," answered the Emperor ; "but what would these who stand armed behind you?"

"They demand full security," rejoined Mohabet, "for me and my family ; and without it they will not retire."

"I understand you," said Jehangire : "name your terms, and they shall be granted. But you do me an injustice, Mohabet : I did not plot against your life ; I knew your services, though I was offended at your seeming disobedience of my commands. Be assured of my protection ; I shall forget the conduct which necessity has imposed upon you."

Mohabet did not reply, but, ordering a horse, requested the Emperor to mount. They then rode forward, surrounded by Rajpoots. When they had proceeded beyond the skirts of the camp, the imperial captive was respectfully requested to place himself upon an elephant, in order to avoid accident in any con-

fusion that might ensue from his departure. He readily complied with the general's request, seeing that opposition would be fruitless, and ascended the elephant, upon which three Rajpoots immediately placed themselves as guards. Some of the nobles, seeing the captivity of their sovereign, advanced to oppose his progress, and were instantly cut down by the followers of Mohabet. There was no further interruption offered, and Jehangire was taken to Mohabet's tent. Here the latter explained himself to his royal prisoner, assuring him that he had no design either against his life or his power. "But," he continued, sternly, "I am determined to be secure from treachery."

Mohabet was greatly disappointed that he had not been able to secure the Sultana. During the confusion caused by the entrance of his numerous followers into the imperial tent, she had contrived to escape, and passing the stream upon her elephant, had joined the army, to whom she communicated the disaster of her husband's captivity.

Mohabet not considering himself secure while the Sultana was at large, determined to leave nothing unattempted to get her into his power. He had now publicly shown his hostility; the banner of rebellion was raised, and no alternative remained but to pursue his purpose with the same resolute boldness with which he had begun it. He was conscious of the resources of his own genius. He was the idol of the troops which he commanded; and though aware of the consummate abilities of the Sultana—who in fact directed the movements of the imperial army—and of her brother the Vizier, still he knew they were not popular with the troops, and that, moreover, a great number of the Omrahs were dissatisfied with the influence exercised by her and her family.

Mohabet having returned with the Emperor to his former camp on the banks of the river, found that Sujait Chan, an Omrah of high reputation, had just arrived to join the imperial army. Finding the camp deserted, and the Emperor a prisoner in the hands of his rebellious general, Sujait upbraided the latter with treachery in the presence of his Rajpoots. The general, at once enraged and alarmed, ordered his troops to fall upon the haughty noble, whom

they immediately slew, together with his whole retinue. This decisive stroke of severity at once terrified the other nobles, who had been watching for an opportunity of rescuing their sovereign, and they fled across the river, carrying to the imperial army the melancholy intelligence of Sujait's death.

This information produced a general gloom. The captivity of the Emperor excited the indignation of the Sultana, and of Asiph the Vizier. Noor Jehan summoned the nobles who had just joined the army; and upbraided them with their cowardice in not hazarding their lives in defence of their royal master. A council was promptly summoned, and a consultation held as to the best method to be pursued for rescuing the sovereign out of his enemy's hands. There was no time to be lost: the moment was critical; delay only diminished the chances of success, as it strengthened the power of the rebel, who was universally popular. It was determined to recross the river with the dawn, and attack Mohabet. Jehangire, whom they had contrived to apprise of this intention, began to fear for his life. He instantly sent a messenger to the Vizier to desist; but that minister not considering himself bound to comply with the commands of a captive monarch, determined to persevere in his intention.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT daybreak the Vizier retraced his steps with the army. Upon reaching the bridge, finding that it had been burned down, he instantly came to the determination of fording the river; but the water was very deep, and in this attempt many were drowned. The banks on the opposite side were so steep, that those who gained them had to contend with an enemy under great disadvantage. The enemy, too, were vigilant and active, and cut them off as fast as they quitted the water. Nothing could withstand the headlong valour of the Rajpoots. Not a man escaped; the moment he gained the bank, he was slain in at-

tempting to ascend it. The imperial army, however, was numerous, and the rear pressing upon the front, many at length made good their footing; but it was to encounter foes whose principle of warfare was to vanquish or to die. The action continued for several hours, and the slaughter of the imperial forces was prodigious. The Vizier did all in his power to encourage the troops, to no purpose—they were dispirited; but still, trusting to their numbers, they continued the struggle under the greatest disadvantages.

Noor Jehan witnessed the whole scene from the river-bank, and her alarm was excessive at beholding the slaughter of the royal forces. Her resolute spirit was roused, and her determination instantly taken. Mounted upon an elephant,—on which was likewise her daughter, a beautiful maiden, in the prime and freshness of youth—armed with a bow and arrows, she plunged fearlessly into the stream. The Empress was followed by several nobles, who, ashamed at beholding the resolution of a woman, followed her into the river, and made for the further side. Urging her elephant to the middle of the channel, she waved a scarf to encourage the Vizier's troops. Undaunted at the carnage before her, she stood in the howdah, and discharged her arrows with fatal aim at the foe. Three Mahoots were successively killed; yet she maintained her position, and having exhausted her quiver, demanded another to be brought. Her elephant was three times wounded, and her situation became extremely dangerous from the violent plunges of the animal under the excitement of suffering. Still she continued to discharge her arrows with fearless determination. Her daughter was at length wounded in the arm, which only stimulated the heroic mother to greater exertions. She urged her elephant forward to the bank, soon exhausted another quiver of arrows, and called for a fresh supply. The sight of her heroism gave an impulse to the wavering courage of her brother's troops, and many effected their landing.

The battle now became sanguinary in the extreme; but the imperialists gained no ground. In spite of the Sultana's presence, they could not overcome the determined resistance of the

Rajpoots; nevertheless, they fought with a bravery worthy of better success. Noor Jehan, having urged her elephant close to the bank, a Rajpoot gave it a severe wound with his sword, just at the root of the trunk. With a shrill cry the huge animal fell; but whilst it was in the act of falling, the Sultana had placed an arrow in the string of her bow, and fixed it in the brain of her foe, who rolled dead upon the plain. When the elephant fell, both mother and daughter were thrown into the stream, and, as the current was rapid, their lives were in jeopardy; but the Empress, seizing her bow with her teeth, swam towards some Omrahs, who were crossing to second her heroic exertions. Her daughter was delivered from peril by the enemy and made prisoner. Meanwhile, the mother breasted the current, and with difficulty reached an elephant, upon which a noble was seated, who rescued her from the river. Whilst she was in the water, a ball from a matchlock struck her in the side; but it passed round by the rib, and thus did not enter her body.

Undismayed by the danger she had just escaped, the Empress continued to discharge her arrows at the enemy, doing considerable execution with her single arm. Mohabet was the chief object of her aim; but he was too far from the bank to enable her to accomplish her fatal purpose. Her danger was becoming every moment more imminent; she nevertheless urged her elephant forward, reckless of personal consequences. She had already exhausted three quivers of arrows, when a fourth was brought to her. At the first discharge she struck a soldier in the body, who instantly tore out the shaft from his flesh, and with a fierce resolution of revenge leaped into the stream. He held his sword above the water with one hand, and dashed with the other towards the Sultana's elephant. Already was his arm raised to strike; but before he could accomplish his purpose, another arrow from the heroine's bow was buried in his breast, and he sank beneath the whirling eddies.

A number of Rajpoots now rushed into the river to seize the Sultana. They soon surrounded her; but she plied her bow so vigorously, that several of them were wounded. They were, however, about to make good their capture—the glory of the Moguls

was in jeopardy. A Rajpoot had ascended the back of her elephant, and commenced a fierce struggle with the Omrah who accompanied his mistress. At this moment, the huge animal having received a severe wound behind, sprang suddenly forward, making its way through the soldiers by whom it had been surrounded, and scrambled up the bank. It was immediately despatched. As it fell, Noor Jehan leaped from the howdah, and with a voice of stern command summoned some of the imperial troops, who were engaged in a desperate conflict with the enemy, to her rescue. They obeyed a voice which they had long been taught to consider as that of their sovereign. She was soon surrounded by friends and foes. Seizing a sword, she fought with a heroism that astonished even the Rajpoots, with whom valour is a heritage. A deep sabre-cut in the shoulder seemed only to add a stimulus to her resolution. The man who had inflicted the wound received from her arm a signal retribution : she dashed her sword into his skull, and he was instantly prostrated among the dead.

The battle now raged with prodigious fury; but the imperialists were fast giving way. At length the Sultana was left fighting with unabated energy, supported by only a few soldiers. The moment was critical. Two Rajpoots advanced to seize her; she saw there was not an instant to be lost, and rushing to the river's bank, turned her head upon her foes with a haughty expression of defiance, and leaped undauntedly into the torrent. The two soldiers followed, resolved to make her their prisoner or die in the attempt. In spite of her wound, with a resolution which nothing could subdue, she bore up against the rapid current; but, notwithstanding all her exertions, was carried by its force down the stream. As the soldiers were more encumbered, the body of each being protected by a thick quilted tunic, the royal fugitive gained considerably upon them. That portion of the imperial army which had not yet crossed the river, watched her with intense anxiety. She rose buoyantly above the waters, and after great exertions, landed upon the opposite bank. Her pursuers were by this time close upon her. Determined not to be made a prisoner, she prepared for a desperate resistance.

One of the Rajpoots being before the other, first gained the shore. The bank was steep: just as he reached the brink, his foot slipped, and he partially fell, but clung to the roots of some wild shrubs that protruded from the earth. The opportunity was not to be lost: Noor Jehan drew a dagger from her girdle, and as the soldier was struggling to regain his footing, struck him with all her force upon the temple—his body being protected by the quilted tunic, his face was the only part that she could successfully strike. The blow was dealt with fatal aim; it divided the temporal artery, and the man fell back into the water, deluged in his blood. His companion, who had been carried farther down the stream, gained the bank during this fatal struggle. Overcome by the extraordinary heroism of the Sultana, he approached her with a profound salaam, and said, "Lady, your heroic bearing deserves a better meed than captivity. You are now within my power; but, astonished at the matchless valour you have displayed, I cannot persuade myself to make you prisoner. Promise me a safe conduct back to the army to which I belong, and you are free; refuse me, and I will plunge immediately with you into the stream, where we will both perish together."

"Soldier," replied the Sultana with composed dignity, "I accept your terms. I promise you a safe conduct to your friends. Your behaviour is noble, and claims my esteem: what boon can I offer you?"

"A Rajpoot never accepts a boon from a foe. Besides, I have no claim upon your generosity. I do not spare you because you are Empress of the Moguls, but because I admire the valour which you have exhibited as a woman. With women it is a rare quality, and deserves its reward. I should have felt the same towards a Pariah who had displayed as much."

Noor Jehan was received by her friends with shouts of joy; and the soldier who accompanied her was conducted to a ford some distance up the river, where he passed over to the army of Mohabet.

Seeing their Empress safe, two Omrahs, with their followers, crossed the stream and joined the imperialists, who were now giving way on all sides. Encouraged by this fresh accession of

force, the retreating party again rallied, and the contest was maintained with renewed vigour. The Rajpoots were in their turn repulsed. They retreated towards the tent in which the Emperor was confined. Several arrows and balls piercing through the canvas and exposing Jehangire's life to great danger, he was covered with a shield by an officer of the guard. Meanwhile, Mohabet rallied his troops behind the tents and turned them upon the flank of the imperialists, who, dispirited by this fresh assault, gave way, and a general rout followed. Mohabet, after a hard contest, remained master of the field, which was literally covered with the slain.

The Vizier, seeing that all was lost, fled from the scene of carnage, and reaching the castle of New Rhotas, shut himself up there with five hundred men. The castle was strong, but offered a retreat of very equivocal security against an army flushed with recent conquest, and commanded by the greatest general of his time. Noor Jehan escaped to Lahore; yet her safety was anything but certain, being without troops, and all the bravest Omrahs of the imperial army either slain or in captivity. Nevertheless she bore her reverse with that indomitable resolution so natural to her lofty and energetic spirit.

Mohabet despatched a messenger to the Vizier with assurances of safety; but the latter declined putting himself in the power of a successful rebel; upon which the incensed general sent his son with a strong detachment to invest the fort of Rhotas. He almost immediately joined this officer with his whole army, and after a feeble resistance the Vizier surrendered at discretion. He was, however, treated with great urbanity and kindness by the conqueror, which not only conciliated his good opinion, but won his friendship.

Meanwhile the Emperor forwarded a letter to his royal consort, begging her to join him, speaking in high terms of the respectful treatment he received from Mohabet, and giving her assurances of a kind reception; urging her at the same time to forget past causes of animosity, and lay aside all thoughts of further hostilities, that the empire might not be involved in the horrors of a civil war.

He besought her to follow him to Cabul, whither he was then proceeding ; declaring that there was no restraint put upon his actions, but that he was allowed to direct his march wherever he thought proper.

Noor Jehan, seeing at a glance the desperate condition of things, determined to comply at once with the Emperor's commands, being satisfied that there was more danger in resistance. She therefore came to the resolution of choosing the least of two evils, and, setting out from Lahore, joined her captive husband on his march towards Cabul. Mohabet sent a strong detachment to meet and pay her the honours due to her rank ; but she was not to be deceived by so flimsy an artifice. It was evident to her that she was surrounded by her future guards ; nevertheless she affected to receive the ostensible compliment, and met the Emperor with a cheerful countenance.

She was immediately subjected to a rigorous confinement. Her tent was surrounded by troops, and she was not permitted to stir abroad. Mohabet accused her of treason against the state, and insisted that so dangerous a criminal should be instantly put to death. "You who are Emperor of the Moguls," said he to Jehangire, "and whom we look upon as something more than human, ought to follow the example of God, who has no respect for persons."

CHAPTER IX.

MOHABET, feeling that his future safety depended upon the death of Noor Jehan, had sent a soldier to despatch her. The minister of destruction entered her tent after midnight, when she was plunged in profound repose. Her beautiful limbs were stretched upon a Persian carpet, the rich colours of which glowed in the light of a lamp that burned upon a silver frame near her bed. Her fine features were relaxed into that placid expression which sleep casts over the countenance when no dis-

quieting dreams disturb and excite it into muscular activity. The slow and measured breath came from her lovely bosom like incense from a sacred censer. Her right arm, naked to the shoulder, and on which the scar of the wound she had lately received appeared still red and tender, was thrown across her bosom, showing an exquisite roundness of surface and delicacy of outline that fixed the attention of the rugged soldier, who hesitated to remove so beautiful a barrier to that bosom which his dagger was commissioned to reach. He stood over his victim in mute astonishment. He was entranced by her beauty. The recollection of her undaunted heroism disarmed his purpose, and he dropped the weapon of death. Noor Jehan was roused by the noise ;—she started from her slumber. Seeing a man in the tent, she sprang from her couch, and, eyeing him with calm disdain, said,

“I apprehend your purpose ; you are a murderer ;—Noor Jehan is not unprepared to die even by the assassin’s dagger. Strike !” she said sternly, and bared her bosom.

The man was overcome ; he prostrated himself before her, pointed to the fallen weapon, and besought her to forgive the evil purpose with which he had entered her tent :

“I am but an humble instrument of another’s will.”

“Go,” replied the Sultana with dignity, “and tell your employer that your mistress and his knows how to meet death when it comes, but claims from him the justice awarded to the meanest criminal. The secret dagger is the instrument of tyranny, not of justice. I am in his power ; but let him exercise that power as becomes a brave and a good man.”

Mohabet was not surprised, though greatly mortified, when he found that his purpose had been thus defeated. He therefore sought the Emperor, and insisted that he should immediately sign a warrant for the death of his Sultana. Jehangire knew too well the justice of the demand, the wrongs which she had heaped upon the man who made it, and his own incapability of resistance, to disobey. Not having seen the Empress for some time, he had in a degree forgotten the influence of her charms ; and prepared,

though with reluctance, to comply with the sanguinary requisition. When the awful announcement was made to the Sultana, she did not exhibit the slightest emotion. "Imprisoned sovereigns," she said, "lose their right of life with their freedom; but permit me once more to see the Emperor, and to bathe with my tears the hand that has fixed the seal to the warrant of my death." She was well aware of the influence she still possessed over the uxorious Emperor; and, her request being complied with, she attired herself in a plain white dress, with the simplest drapery, which showed her still lovely figure to the greatest advantage, and was thus brought before Jehangire in the presence of Mohabet. There was an expression of subdued sorrow upon her countenance, which seemed only to enhance the lustre of her beauty. She advanced with a stately step, but did not utter a word; and, bending before her royal husband, took his hand and pressed it to her bosom with a silent but solemn appeal. Jehangire was deeply moved. He burst into tears, and raising the object of his long and ardent attachment, turned to Mohabet, and said in a tone of tremulous earnestness, "Will you not spare this woman?" Mohabet, subdued by the scene, and feeling for his sovereign's distress, replied,

"The Emperor of the Moguls should never ask in vain."

Waving his hand to the guards, they instantly retired, and the Sultana was restored to liberty. She, however, never forgot the wrong, and determined to avenge it. She manifested no signs of hostility, but always met the general with a cheerful countenance and a courteous air, by which she completely lulled his suspicions. Secure in the general estimation of the troops, and especially of his faithful Rajpoots, he felt no fears for his own personal safety; and having completely won the good opinion of Jehangire by his late act of generous forbearance towards Noor Jehan, he had little apprehension from the intrigues of the latter, however she might choose to employ them. He, however, knew not the person of whom he judged so lightly. Her aims were not to be defeated but by the loss of liberty. She never lost sight of her purpose save in its accomplishment. Nothing could reconcile her to the

degradation which she had been lately made to endure. Her daughter indeed had been restored to her; but she likewise had been deprived of freedom, and treated with the indignity of a prisoner. The wound of the latter, which was slight, had soon healed; yet the mother felt that she had received a double wrong in the captivity of herself and child. She employed her time in devising schemes of vengeance; but for six months she plotted so secretly, that not the least suspicion was excited in the mind of Mohabet. Jehangire treated him with the open confidence of friendship, and the Sultana appeared to meet him at all times with amicable cordiality. This, however, was only the treacherous calm which often heralds a tempest.

One morning, when the general, accompanied by a considerable retinue, went to pay his customary respects to the Emperor, he was attacked at the same moment from both ends of a narrow street. He was fired at from the windows of several houses. Great confusion ensued; but Mohabet's followers being well armed, he put himself at their head and cut his way through the assailants. His escape was a miracle; the whole of his retinue were either wounded or slain, yet he was unhurt. The plot had been so well concerted, that not a single creature was prepared for it but those persons to whom it had been communicated. The spirit of disaffection soon spread. The guards who surrounded the Emperor were attacked by the citizens; and all, to the number of five hundred, put to the sword. The whole city of Cabul was in an uproar; and had not Mohabet fled to his camp, which was pitched without the walls, he would have fallen a sacrifice to their fury. Enraged at their perfidy, he prepared to take a speedy and ample revenge. The Sultana, perceiving the failure of her scheme, was aware that she was in a situation of extreme peril. The citizens, terrified at the preparations which the incensed general was making to punish their perfidy, sent some of the principal inhabitants to him, supplicating his forbearance; declaring that the tumult originated with the rabble, and offering to give up the ringleaders to his just indignation. Although Mohabet suspected that Noor Jehan had been the principal

instrument of the attack upon his life and the massacre of his guards, he dissembled his resentment, and accepted the offers of submission, but made a vow never again to enter Cabul. Having punished the ringleaders, he quitted the neighbourhood on the following morning, taking the Emperor with him.

On their way to Lahore, Mohabet suddenly resolved to resign his power, and to place Jehangire again at liberty. The resolution was as inexplicable as it was sudden and unexpected. He had no wish for empire. Having punished his enemies and vindicated his own wrongs, he exacted from Jehangire oblivion of the past; then disbanding his army, and retaining only a small retinue, he left his sovereign to his entire freedom. Noor Jehan, not in the least moved by this act of generosity on the part of a man whom her own intrigues had forced into rebellion, resolved now to seize the opportunity of consummating her revenge. She could not forget the indignities she had endured at the hand of Mohabet; that he had once attempted her life, obliged the Emperor to sign her death-warrant, and held her in odious captivity. She demanded that her royal consort should immediately order his execution.

“A man,” said she, “so daring as to seize the person of his sovereign is a dangerous subject. The lustre of royalty must be diminished in the eyes of the people, while he who has dragged his prince from the throne is permitted to kneel before it with feigned allegiance.”

Jehangire, remembering the provocations which Mohabet had received, and his temperate use of power, was shocked at the Sultana's vindictiveness, and commanded her, in a severe tone, to be silent.

Although she made no reply, she did not relinquish her design. Shortly afterwards, an attempt being made upon the general's life, he found it necessary to quit the camp secretly. The emissaries of the Empress were sent to capture him, but he effected his escape. He who had so lately had a victorious army at his command was now a fugitive, without a follower, and obliged to fly for his life. He had left all his wealth behind him, which was

seized by the implacable Noor Jehan; and she issued a proclamation through all the provinces of the empire, denouncing him as a rebel, commanded him to be seized, and set a price upon his head. This violence on the part of the Sultana was disapproved both by the Emperor and the Vizier, the latter of whom did not forget the courtesy shown to him by the fugitive after the defeat of the imperial army, when he was made prisoner by that very man who was now pursued with such hostility by a vindictive enemy who owed to him her life and liberty.

Asiph, Noor Jehan's brother, was not insensible to the merit of Mohabet. He knew him to be the best general of his time, an ardent lover of his country, and that he had been forced into rebellion by acts of repeated and unjustifiable aggression. He felt assured that such was not a man to be cast off from the state without doing it an injury that could never be repaired. Besides, he feared the lengths to which the Sultana's ambition might carry her, and considered it was high time it should be checked. Although Mohabet was a wanderer and a refugee under the denouncement of death, he bore up against his reverses with the same magnanimity which had actuated him when at the summit of his power.

The Vizier having found means to assure him of his friendship, Mohabet mounted his horse and rode four hundred miles without a single follower, to meet and confer with that high functionary; trusting to his bare and secret promise of protection. The minister was at that time encamped in the road between Lahore and Delhi. Mohabet entered the camp in a mean habit, late in the evening. Placing himself in the passage which led from the apartments of the Vizier to the harem, and telling the eunuch that he wished to see that minister, the fugitive was immediately led into the latter's presence. When Asiph saw the wretched condition of Mohabet, he fell upon his neck and wept. Retiring with him to a secret apartment, the general declared his determination, notwithstanding the low ebb of his fortunes, to raise Shah Jehan to the imperial throne. Asiph was overjoyed at this

declaration, as that prince was allied to him by the double tie of friendship and family connexion.

The result of this conference was a general declaration, in favour of Jehangire's third son, who had already twice rebelled ; but the Emperor dying a few months after, the state was freed from the probable effects of a civil war, and Prince Churrum ascended the imperial throne, under the title of Shah Jehan. From that moment the Sultana retired from the world, devoting the rest of her days to study, and the quiet enjoyments of domestic life. As her power ceased with the death of Jehangire, her haughty spirit could not brook the public mortification of seeing herself holding a secondary rank in the empire. She never henceforward spoke upon state affairs, or allowed the subject to be mentioned in her presence. The singular beauty of her person continued almost to the last moment of her life ; nor was the structure of her mind less remarkable. She was a woman of transcendent abilities ; she rendered herself absolute in a government in which women were held to be both incapable and unworthy of holding the slightest share. It was not merely by the permissive weakness of Jehangire that she acquired such a political dominancy in the state ; but by the pre-eminent superiority of her own mental endowments, and the indomitable energy of her character, before which the inferior mind and spirit of her royal husband shrank into comparative insignificance. She had as well the resolution to achieve as the intellects to project, and kept a mighty nation in awe by the extreme vigour of her administration. Though her passions were violent, her chastity was never impeached, and she lived an eminent pattern of conjugal fidelity. To her, the world are indebted for that delicious perfume so well-known by the name of atar of roses, which she discovered during her retirement from public life. She died in the city of Lahore eighteen years after the death of Jehangire.



HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

A. D. 1628.—In the year of the Hegira 1037, Shah Jehan ascended the Imperial throne of the Moguls. The Rajah of Bundelcund was taken prisoner by Mohabet, who was shortly afterwards removed from the head of the army. The Usbeck Tartars made a successful irruption into the imperial dominions, laid siege to the fort of Bamia in the mountains of Cabul, and made themselves masters of it.

Heg. 1038 (1629).—Chan Jehan Lody escaped from Agra. Having opposed the accession of the reigning Emperor, he had been publicly disgraced. He was pursued and overtaken ; but his retreat was secured by the gallantry of his son, Azmut, who engaged the imperial army, and thus enabled his father to get beyond the reach of his enemies. The noble Azmut, however, fell a sacrifice to his filial intrepidity ; he was slain gallantly fighting against a host of foes. Lody having effected his escape, found an asylum at the court of the Nizam at Dowlatabad. This year died Shah Abbas, Sovereign of Persia.

Heg. 1040 (1631).—Shah Jehan sent a large army into the Deccan to oppose Chan Lody, who had induced the princes of that extensive district to take up arms against the house of Timur. For a while Lody was successful against the imperial general, Eradit, whom he prevented from penetrating into Golconda, by throwing himself into the passes of the mountains before his march, and thus repelling his advance. He was finally obliged to retreat ; and being attacked by Lody, was defeated with great slaughter. Six Omrahs of the imperial army were slain. After this defeat, Eradit was superseded, and the Vizier appointed to command the army. This struck the confederates with dismay, and they abandoned their brave friend. The Nizam proposed terms ; and Lody, being at length left without support, was pursued by a detachment of the Vizier's forces, and slain, with thirty followers only, who had resolved to participate in his fallen fortunes. During this year Shah Jehan's favourite Sultana died in childbed. She was the daughter of Asiph Jah, the Vizier, and niece of the celebrated Noor Jehan. The magnificent Taje Mahal was raised at Agra as a tribute of respect for her memory.

Heg. 1044 (1633).—Prince Dara, the Emperor's eldest son, married the daughter of his uncle Purvez. About the same time, Suja, the second son, espoused the daughter of Rustum Suffavi, of the royal line of Persia.

Heg. 1044 (1634).—Mohabet died. He was the greatest general of his time.

Heg. 1045 (1635).—A new throne of solid gold was erected at Agra. It was seven years in finishing, and the value of the jewels alone amounted to twelve hundred and fifty thousand pounds sterling. Among the ornaments was a parrot, the size of life, cut out of a single emerald.

Heg. 1046 (1636).—The Emperor again sent an army into the Deccan, reduced the refractory Rajahs to obedience, and concluded a peace with Persia.

Heg. 1049 (1639).—The capital of Bengal was destroyed by fire.

Heg. 1051 (1641).—Asiph Jah, the Vizier, died, in the seventy-second year of his age.

Heg. 1052 (1642).—Shah Jehan removed his court from Lahore to Agra, and completed the Taje Mahal, a splendid mausoleum, raised at vast expense, to the memory of his favourite Sultana, Mumtaza Zemani, niece to Noor Jehan.

Heg. 1053 (1643).—The Usbeck Tartars, who had made incursions into the Emperor's territories, were defeated by Ali Murdan, governor of Cabul.

Heg. 1054 (1644).—Aurungzebe was removed from the government of the Deccan.

Heg. 1055 (1645).—The Sultana, Noor Jehan, died at Lahore.

Heg. 1056 (1646).—By an imperial edict Prince Morad was banished to the mountains of Peshâwir.

Heg. 1057 (1647).—Aurungzebe defeated the Usbecks, and took their camp.

Heg. 1058 (1648).—The repairs of Delhi were finished, and the Emperor mounted the throne of his ancestors in this city, which afterwards became the capital of the Mogul empire.

Heg. 1059 (1649).—Aurungzebe defeated the Persians, who had become masters of Candahar.

Heg. 1062 (1652).—Dara was appointed successor to the empire, under the title of Shah Belind Akbal—the Emperor of exalted fortune.

Heg. 1066 (1656).—Mahommèd, the son of Aurungzebe, took Hyderabad, and defeated the King of Golkonda.

Heg. 1067 (1657).—Shah Jehan was seized with a paralysis, and his life despaired of: the management of public affairs consequently fell into the hands of Dara.

Heg. 1068 (1658).—Aurungzebe, secretly aspiring to the throne, induced his brother Morad to join him, and defeated the imperial army, under the command of Dara, who retired to Delhi. Having raised fresh forces, they were corrupted by the wily conqueror. The confederate princes appeared before the capital with the combined army. Aurungzebe sent a message to his father, who commissioned his daughter, Jehanara, to visit him: she was deceived by his duplicity, and incautiously betrayed to him the resources of her brother Dara. He

intercepted his father's letter to that prince; and shortly after Mahommed. Aurungzebe's son, seized within the citadel at Agra, Shah Jehan, who offered him the crown of the Moguls as the price of his release. It was declined by Mahommed. Morad having discovered the duplicity of Aurungzebe, in attempting to defeat it was seized by his crafty brother, and sent prisoner to Agra. The ambitious conqueror advanced to Delhi, and mounted the imperial throne. Dara fled to Lahore.



The Prince and the Fakcer.

CHAPTER I.

ON the crest of a lofty hill in the province of Delhi, towards the north, was a fortress of impregnable strength, which had been frequently converted by the Mogal emperors into a state prison. The hill was inaccessible on all sides, presenting, to a height of two hundred and thirty feet from the base, sheer walls of rocks, upon the scarp'd summit of which a light parapet surrounded one of the most extraordinary fortresses ever constructed by the art of man. Within the parapet it consisted of a shaft, sixty feet deep, sunk into the living stone. At the bottom of this shaft, chambers of considerable dimensions had been hollowed out, lighted by narrow loopholes, perforated through the mountain to the light, of which they admitted just sufficient to render "darkness visible," and cast a sepulchral gloom through the apartments of this cavernous retreat.

The entrance of this stronghold was a circular aperture at the top of the rock, like the mouth of a well, four feet in diameter; through which the garrison, captives, provisions, and all things in short necessary to be deposited below, were lowered by means of a rope attached to a windlass.

In one of the chambers of this mountain fortress a prisoner was confined whose youth and accomplishments appeared to deserve a better fate. He was in the beautiful dawning of his manhood, when the blood bounds from the heart with a pulse of joy, and flows back again with an untroubled current. He had just passed his nineteenth year. The breeze of the mountain had fanned his

cheek, and spread over it the glow of pure but delicate health. The down upon his upper lip had strengthened into a sleek dark curl. His limbs were rounded to their full proportions; and his whole form was one of a symmetry better adapted for the rich woofs from the looms of Cashmere than for the helmet or cuirass. The languid expression of his dark, restless eye, showed that he was unhappy. The only furniture in his prison was a rug upon which he slept, a hookah, a lamp, and a few utensils employed at his meals.

Notwithstanding the severity of his captivity, the prisoner kept up a sort of state in his solitary cell: he treated those attendants who had been appointed to wait upon him with a dignity which commanded respect, and at the same time with an amenity which won obedience. His dress, though of ordinary materials, except that portion of it which covered his brows, was disposed with a taste which at once bespoke refinement of mind and a consciousness of personal elevation. His turban, composed of a fine, thin white muslin, worked in gold, was folded round his head with a care that evidently showed an attention to what was becoming; its numerous convolutions being precisely defined, and managed with almost geometrical precision. A common Cashmere shawl, loosely twisted, encircled his waist, the ends hanging on one side with that peculiar air of elegance which Orientals, whether Mussulman or Hindoo, know so well how to exhibit.

The prisoner had just thrown himself upon his rug to take his rest for the night, when an unusual stir upon the ramparts above roused him. He rose to listen. A parley was evidently going on with some one beneath the fortress. He repaired to a small ante-chamber, in which was a loophole that looked into a deep glen, whence the mountain rose within the bosom of which the place of his painful captivity had been hollowed. The night was calm: not a breeze stirred the thick foliage of the valley. The heavens were starred and radiant, though the moon's lamp was not yet hung out upon the battlements of heaven. The faint beams of the stars, though they scattered the radiance of their glories over the whole azure surface of the skies, did not penetrate the depths

of the ravine formed by the mountain, down the sides of which the prisoner strained his eye from one of the narrow apertures that admitted light and air into his prison. The whole valley was immersed in that equivocal gloom, the more perceptible from contrast with the sparkling heaven, that seemed to smile in its beauty at the dull and torpid earth.

The captive, placing his ear against the artificial fissure in the rock, heard the following dialogue :

“ I am the Prophet’s messenger,” said a voice below. “ I have a commission to the prisoner : refuse me admittance, and the curse of God’s vicegerent be upon you !”

“ If the Prophet’s curse is breathed from the lips of one of his holy messengers, say who that messenger is.”

“ The fakeer of the valley, over whose reverend head ninety-six years have rolled ; whose fasts and penances have gained him one of the high stations in Paradise, to which he will be exalted when the angel of death shall waft him from the shores of time to that unknown land where the harvest of eternal joys shall be reaped.”

“ I know that voice, and shall heed the injunctions of so holy a man ; but you must ascend alone : and I have no choice but to obey the orders imposed upon me, which are, to examine the person of every one admitted into this fortress. If it were the Prophet himself, I should be obliged to subject him to the scrutiny.”

“ Examine me as you will, but let me see your prisoner. I come a messenger to him from God’s Prophet, and must perform my mission. Obedience is man’s heritage ; resist the divine will at your peril. Lower the rope, that I may ascend.”

The prisoner was amazed at this announcement of a visitor—an accredited minister of the Prophet too ; but, upon reflection, he thought it might be the friendly interposition of some one who wished to break his bonds, and release him from a captivity as odious as it was undeserved.

The reverence formerly entertained for some of the fakeers was sufficient to prevent any surprise at the readiness with which the soldier upon guard consented to admit him into the fortress. The

man who demanded admittance was well known to all the country as a troglodyte saint, inhabiting a cavern hollowed out of the earth in the valley immediately beneath the fortress, and whose severe mortifications had elevated him to such a degree of sanctity as to render his intercession with the Divinity a sure pledge of pardon. He was held to have immediate communion with Heaven; no one, therefore, ventured to gainsay anything insisted upon by this holy man. He always bore about him the sacred filth of his long penance; and the very odours from his body, which was foul with the unwashed incrustations of years, were supposed to be redolent of that paradise where, as he maintained, a place was reserved for him at the right hand of Allah's inspired minister.

Shortly after the dialogue just mentioned, the door of our captive's chamber was unclosed, and the fakeer stood before him, accompanied by one of the garrison. The holy man was quite naked, so that nothing could be concealed about him. Although the skin hung loose upon his long narrow countenance, like shrivelled parchment drawn over the bones of a skeleton, nevertheless there gleamed from underneath his sharp projecting brows a pair of eyes which appeared as if they had concentrated the rays of the midday sun, lancing them at intervals from orbs that seemed to glare with the intense lustre of those potential fires which light the throne of Eblis. He was perfectly straight; but his head had sunk upon the shoulders, where it seemed to rest, giving to the upper part of his figure an aspect of hideous deformity. His arms were long, fleshless, and so stiff that he could not bring the joints even to a curve. He was a living skeleton.

The prisoner gazed upon him in silence, but did not utter a word. The fakeer stood still for a moment; then opening wide his gaunt, bony jaws, which displayed a black toothless chasm, and giving a sudden jerk of the head, a ring dropped from his mouth upon the floor. He now shook from his long bushy hair a single blossom of the rhododendron, and a small bit of panel, upon which was rudely scratched the form of a dove escaping from the talons of a hawk. They both fell beside the ring. Pointing emphatically to the three several objects he quitted the

cell, and immediately gave the signal to be drawn up. The soldier who had accompanied him remained behind, gathered up the things which the holy visitor had cast upon the floor, showed them severally to the prisoner, though he held them at a distance, and asked him what was the communication intended to be conveyed?

"I am not read in the lore of sages," replied the youth; "neither do I understand the mysteries of vaticination. You would probably make a better interpreter."

"I fear this will only increase the rigours of your confinement, unless you can explain why the holy man of the valley has made you this strange visit."

"In truth, I know not. I never saw him until this night; and how should I be able to expound what you, who are familiar with the stranger, cannot comprehend?"

"He would not have visited you without a motive."

"But I may be unacquainted with that motive."

"He is not a man to act without calculating results."

"Nevertheless his calculations may prove erroneous."

"Then you do not understand the nature of his communication?"

"I do not."

"These symbols will be shown to those who are quick at expounding riddles. Yet it is scarcely to be conceived that so worthy a minister of the Prophet should have addressed his symbols to one who cannot read their meaning."

"He is but a man, and all men are alike prone to error."

"True;—you may soon look for confinement in a deeper and darker chamber."

When the soldier quitted the prisoner's cell, the latter began to muse upon the communication intended to be conveyed by his unexpected visitor. He knew the fakeer to be a man eminent for his piety throughout the country, and therefore held in the greatest reverence. He was supposed to have supernatural communication with members of another world, and, consequently, was as much feared as revered; which accounts for the respect and

forbearance shown to him by the garrison of the mountain-fortress during his mysterious visit to their prisoner.

After the fakeer's departure, the unhappy captive began to reflect upon the signification of those symbols which had been dropped upon the floor before him. It was evident they were intended to convey some information, which it was expected his wit would be quick enough to comprehend. Although he had obtained but an imperfect glance at the ring which the soldier who had accompanied the stranger held in his own hand and at a distance, yet he fancied it was familiar to him. He had, however, only a vague and indefinite recollection of it; still it occurred to him that it was not the first time he had seen the golden trinket. Upon considering the matter further, it struck him that the ring must be a pledge sent from some one interested in his welfare: it implied confidence in the messenger, and a religious man could only be a messenger of peace.

The more he thought, the more satisfied he felt that he had received a message which warranted the expectation of liberty. The rhododendron was a flower which grew upon the far mountains, where the genius of Liberty abides; it was therefore an emblem of that freedom which his heart panted to secure. In this symbol, then, he recognised the suggestion that his liberty might be obtained: but how? The third symbol was a sufficient corollary to the two first problems: a dove flying from a hawk told him, in terms sufficiently clear, that he must attempt his escape. It was by no means evident how this was to be accomplished; and the difficulties which presented themselves, as he calculated the probable chance of success, staggered his resolution, and almost crushed his hopes. It occurred to him, notwithstanding, that means would be supplied. That the fakeer had visited him for some especial purpose there could be no doubt; and he resolved to await the issue, satisfied it would not end where it had begun.

CHAPTER II.

NEXT morning the prisoner was confined to the ante room, and told that on the following day his cell would be changed for one deeper in the heart of the mountain. He knew that the lower he descended, the more cheerless would be his habitation. About sunset an arrow was shot through the loophole of his cell, to the shaft of which was attached a strip of the palmyra leaf: upon this was scratched with a stylus the following words: "Unfasten the twisted thread at the head of this arrow; break off the steel barb, attach it to the end of the thread, and lower it into the valley as soon as darkness shall render it invisible to your guards."

Soon after the sun had sunk behind the ocean, with a palpitating heart the captive obeyed this injunction, and drew up a strong silken rope, about the size of his fore-finger; attached to which was another strip of palmyra leaf, with the following direction: "Conceal this, and take the first seasonable opportunity to lower yourself from the rock. Despair not—you have friends; be vigilant and cautious—but despise difficulties." On that night the sky became overcast, and the heat oppressive to such a degree that the air of the prisoner's cell was scarcely respirable. There was no star visible throughout the whole expanse of the heavens. The sun had set behind vast masses of clouds, the skirts of which caught his rays, and reflected them in infinitely varied tints upon the summits of the hills. They were of an intensely opaque purple, but fringed with a fiery glow, as if the trains were already fired that communicated with the magazines concealed within their dark bosoms, and about to be ignited to a fearful explosion. The aspect of the skies had been lowering throughout the day. As evening advanced, the gloom had increased; and as the sun was withdrawing his light, which faded from the deepening volumes that hung around his disc, he seemed to glare ominously. He bade this world a sullen good-night, as

he descended behind the grey waters to enlighten other spheres, and leave this to its repose ; but the elements were too busy to allow that repose to be universal.

The hurricane roared over the sleepers' heads, and roused them from their dreams to witness the strife of nature in one of her sublimest conflicts. Long before midnight the tempest howled fearfully above the fortress. The sentinels upon the walls were drenched, and the clouds projected their fires, as if commencing the final conflagration. This was supposed to be the work of the fakeer, who had quitted the fort, muttering menaces of mischief. The storm was appalling. The soldiers shrank from the conflux of excited elements, and sought shelter within the shaft from their pitiless fury. The thunder burst with an explosion that appeared to convulse the whole expanse above. A peal shook the fortress to its foundation. The entire mountain seemed to stagger as if reeling over the chasm of an earthquake : a flash of lightning followed ; the bolt struck the rock, and split it almost to the base. The thunder again rolled above, and the immediate silence which succeeded was like the intense silence of death.

The mischief had taken place upon that side of the mountain inhabited by the prisoner. He started from his couch ; and so sudden was the effect produced by the thunderbolt, that, upon reaching the loophole, he perceived a huge mass had been struck down by the electric fire, and the side of the mountain so shattered, that by pushing against the fractured body, a large portion of rock which formed the wall of his cell gave way, and rolled with a hideous crash into the valley beneath. The cries of the monkeys inhabiting the trees succeeded to the dull booming sound of the falling rock, and mingled strangely with the furious collision of the elements above. The prisoner stood still awhile, amazed at the awful violence of the tempest, when the soldier who had attended the fakeer again abruptly entered his cell. He started at seeing the opening made by the lightning, and cautiously closed the door behind him.

“You must change your apartment this night ; there is too much of heaven's light here for a state captive.”

"I cannot well exchange for a worse," said the youth calmly : "conduct me whither you please ; I am resigned to my destiny. Paradise hereafter is for the wretched here, but not for those who make them wretched."

"God is merciful !" ejaculated the soldier ; "we are his instruments ; he ratifies the punishment of those we doom to trial, and will reward his own instruments who perform their duty conscientiously. I have sworn allegiance to the Emperor, and if he were to command me to cut your throat, I should not only be justified in my obedience, but should receive the divine sanction for doing my duty."

"This is the casuistry of tyrants ; and with such a plea for murder, who can wonder that so many souls are freed from the incumbrance of mortal flesh amid the dark and secret recesses of the dungeon, where no eye can behold the horrible deed, but His to whose vision there is no limit, and to whose knowledge there is no boundary."

"You say well, but you are too clever to be free. In these perilous times, princes who have wise heads upon their shoulders may be dangerous subjects ; therefore, 'tis the policy of courts to keep them from plotting. The hand of Heaven has been here to-night," said he, approaching the loophole, and surveying the opening which had been left by the thunderbolt : "the whole side of the mountain seems to have been splintered," he continued, running his hand along the side of the cell where the mischief appeared. "We must try what stone and mortar can do in the morning. But the leap is too high to apprehend escape."

By this time he had placed himself within the rift made by the lightning. His head was projected forward, and his eyes strained to pierce into the gloomy ravine beneath. This was too tempting an opportunity to be lost. The captive sprang forward, thrust his hands suddenly against the soldier's shoulders, who with a scream of agony bounded from the edge of the opening, and fell like a plummet into the hideous gloom below. His body dashed through the branches ; the chattering of the monkeys was heard for a few moments, and then all was still.

Happily for him who had thus opportunely got rid of a foe, the storm continued so violent that none of the garrison heard the cry uttered by the man as he was propelled from the rock, nor the crash which followed ; and as he did not return to his comrades, it was naturally enough surmised by them that he was keeping watch over the prisoner, of whom suspicions of an unfavourable nature had been entertained since the visit of the fakeer.

About two hours after midnight the storm abated. The clouds rolled from the heavens, and left its blue plains studded with stars, which cast a dun dingy light upon the objects around. The air was fresh and balmy. A gentle breeze stirred the foliage, from which it tenderly shook the spray gathered there by the recent tempest. The breath of heaven fanned the prisoner's cheek, and he felt as if it was kissed by the airs of paradise. He looked through the chasm which the lightning had formed in the mountain's side upon the far-spreading sky, and his heart leaped with an effervescent and holy joy. The aspirations of freedom went up from his bosom on the wings of gratitude. He saw the means of escape before him, and the flush of hope radiated upon his brow like the moon's light upon a calm solitary lake, in which its beauty is enshrined as flowers in amber. His thoughts were now free as the breeze which played upon his temples, and seemed as if imbued with the spirit of life. How the soul was tossed within him ! but it was in a tumult of the most exquisite fruition.

He took the cord from a nook in which he had secreted it from the prying gaze of intruders. It was slight, but strong ; and the hope of freedom subdued his fears of trusting to so slender a security. The difficulties of descending by so thin a rope were not easy to be overcome. The height from the ground on the side of the hill was at least ninety feet ; and it would be all but impossible to slide from such an elevation by a rope scarcely more than the third of an inch in diameter, and which, being of silk, was so slippery that a firm hold of it could not be secured.

About twenty feet below the rift grew a thick bush from a fissure in the rock. The prisoner having secured his cord to a large iron ring in the door which closed upon his prison, fastened the silver

mouthpiece of his hookah between the twistings, so that it crossed at right angles, and thus gave him a resting-place for his foot. Having made all secure, he slid down, tore the bush from the cleft, and with great difficulty regained his prison. He now continued to place, at intervals of about ten feet, small lengths of the stem and branches of the shrub, as he had already done the mouthpiece of his hookah, thus forming a kind of ladder.

Having prepared his frail instrument, he commenced his descent. He had passed the rope over a projecting crag above, in order to keep it clear from the face of the precipice. When he had descended midway, one of the steps broke, and he was left for a few moments clinging with desperate tenacity to the cord. He could not sustain himself—it flew through his hand; but his progress was fortunately arrested by the next step, which happened to be stronger, and sustained his footing. The shock, however, of his rapid descent gave increased momentum to the rope, which began to turn round with considerable velocity; and this was increased by every effort made to still it.

The prisoner was becoming dizzy with the fearful whirl. He was afraid to move, expecting every moment that he should be obliged to relinquish his hold, and commit himself to the abyss beneath; when happily the cord slipped from the projecting buttress above, and dashed him with considerable violence against the stony face of the mountain. Though severely bruised, he managed to retain his hold of the silken ladder, now no longer agitated; and after pausing a moment to recover his self-possession, he continued to lower himself until his progress was arrested by the branches of a large tree. Upon these he rested, and determined to remain till dawn.

As soon as the first beam of day slanted over the valley in which the escaped prisoner had taken refuge, he perceived that he was in the heart of a thickly-wooded glen, surrounded by a family of monkeys, which began to announce their dissatisfaction at his unwelcome intrusion by the most discordant chattering. Fearing that their din might give warning of his escape to the garrison above, he descended the tree with all possible despatch;

when his joy was only equalled by his astonishment at beholding before him the unsightly form of the fakeer.

“Welcome to liberty! God is merciful! Your enemies shall be scattered, and the captive prince enthroned! Retire with me to my dwelling, and you shall know further.”

Saying this, the holy man led the way, followed by the grandson of Jehangire: for he who had just escaped from captivity was no less a personage than Dawir Buxsh, son of Sultan Chusero, and heir to the imperial throne. Beneath the root of a large forest tree, a hole had been dug to the depth of seven feet, which led into a small cavern scarcely two yards square. The mode of entrance and egress was by means of the notched trunk of a small tree, that served as a ladder.

Before he entered the subterranean retreat of his venerable companion, the young prince, aided by the old man, twisted round a tree the cord by which he had escaped from the fortress, and with a stick tightened it until it gave way above, just where it had been chafed by the rough ledge over which it had been thrown to prevent contact with the mountain side. Having taken this precaution, he entered the sacred dwelling of the fakeer.

CHAPTER III.

“WELCOME,” said the venerable man, “to the abode of the free! You interpreted the symbols as I had anticipated, and your liberty is secured. The Emperor is dead, and the Vizier seeks to place you upon the throne as legitimate heir of the empire. You must repair instantly to the capital, and the crown will be placed upon your head.”

“May not this be a device,” asked the prince musingly, “to seduce me into the power of new enemies? Is not Shah Jehan in arms? What forces can I oppose to so powerful a rival?”

“The kingdom is divided. Your uncle Sheriar, at the Sultana’s instigation, claims the succession, and is prepared to substantiate

his claims by force of arms ; but the Vizier is determined to place the sceptre in your grasp ; and backed by the imperial army under the conduct of such a leader, no one can be in a condition to dispute your lawful inheritance with any chance of success. Your father's rebellion is forgotten, and the people shout your name with enthusiasm."

"But how," inquired the prince, with a keen glance at the venerable minister of the Prophet,—“how have all these facts reached this lone retreat?”

"My son," replied the old man solemnly, "this lone retreat is celebrated from one extremity of Hindostan to the other, and princes visit the cavern of the fakeer. I am consulted by the wisest legislators, as well as by the ignorant vagrant whose only abode is the forest jungle, and his bed the dry turf. I am respected, but I am also feared. My friendship has been won in your behalf: do not despise it, for my enmity can reach you even upon the throne, though surrounded by armies and directed by the wisest counsellors."

"Well, father, it is certain that I cannot be in a worse position than I was, confined in the dark bowels of yonder mountain. Liberty is a cheap purchase almost at any price. Your good-will assures me I can scarcely fail of success, supported by the alliance and directed by the counsels of so holy a man. But suppose the garrison should seek me in this retreat ; am I secure from their search?"

"They have too much respect for the old man of the valley to desecrate the sanctuary which he has rendered sacred by an occupation of more than fifty years. But even should they be so bold as to forget what is due to the character of one whose life has been devoted to God, their efforts to recapture you will not avail:—there is succour at hand."

"Who is advancing to my rescue?"

"One, my son, little accustomed to mount the war-horse : but when the heart once rouses the spirit to action, the meek dove becomes an eagle in all things—save in a thirst for blood."

By this time the sound of voices was heard in various directions

round the fakeer's abode. The wood grew so thickly in the valley, that in many parts it was impossible to penetrate ; and the fakeer's retreat was in the most inaccessible part of the jungle. There was, however, a narrow path leading to it from the plain, which happened to be known to one of the garrison, who undertook to conduct his comrades to the spot. Not anticipating any interruption in their search after the fugitive, a very small party had undertaken the pursuit.

The prince was alarmed as the voices approached, but his venerable companion endeavoured to assure him.

"Young man," said he, "this is not a moment for idle fears. Remember that the success of human endeavour is permitted only where it answers the wise ends of Him who is the source of all wisdom. I have heard that you once escaped the tiger's deadly spring : but know, that He who could pluck thee from the jaws of the tiger can likewise rescue thee from the arm of man. Bear this, moreover, in mind, that the prince who has no confidence in God cannot be fit to reign ; for no man can rule an empire wisely except God be with him."

The party in search of the prince had now surrounded the cavern in which he lay concealed.

"Father," said one of the soldiers, who seemed to be their leader, "our prisoner has escaped, and we must seek for him in your burrow. He would, no doubt, prefer being buried alive here, with such holy company, to occupying a more spacious abode higher up the hill, without any merrier companions than his own thoughts."

"Soldier !" said the fakeer, rising from his underground dwelling, and standing before the party with an aspect of stern indignation, "search where you list : profane the sanctuary of the Prophet's vicegerent by your unhallowed intrusion, and be the consequences upon your own head."

"My head for the consequences !" said the man, and leaped down into the subterraneous abode of sanctity.

At this moment the fakeer stepped behind a tree—struck rapidly upon a gong three blows, which resounded through the valley

The soldier now hailed his companions from below, announcing to them that he had found their prisoner. The party consisted of ten men, nine of whom had by this time surrounded the entrance of the cavern to assist their comrade in securing the captive: they had, however, no sooner done this, than each man fell to the earth transfixed with an arrow. A party of twenty Bheels, rushing from their ambush, instantly despatched and stripped the wounded soldiers.

“Now,” said the fakeer, addressing the prince, who had ascended from his place of sanctuary, “you see how little cause there was for distrust. Those who have been instrumental to your escape had calculated the probabilities of a recapture too nicely not to provide against such a contingency. You must follow your rescuers, who will conduct you to a place of security.”

“But shall I not leave you in jeopardy? Will it not be surmised that you have been privy to my escape, and will not my enemies wreak their vengeance upon you?”

“Should they do their worst, they can only cut off the ragged remnant of an existence now well nigh spun to its last thread. Let them do what they list—I fear them not. I have fulfilled the purposes of my vocation, and am ready to enter upon the consummation of my destiny. Still, while I live, the benefits of my experience are at your command.”

The prince now quitted the spot with the old man’s blessing, and followed the Bheels into the thickest of the jungle. These half-savage mountaineers threaded the thicket with surprising facility, clearing the way before their royal charge, and treating him with a rude courtesy which showed that they were less barbarians by nature than by circumstance. They were almost entirely naked, having only a narrow strip of cloth round the loins, and another round the head, meant to represent a turban, or rather a skull-cap. They were armed with bows and arrows of the rudest construction, but which they used with a skill perfectly amazing. During their progress through the forest, several of them took occasion to display their dexterity before the royal

stranger. A partridge rose from some long grass in an open vista in the wood, and, while on the wing, was transfixed with an arrow by one of the Bheels. A pigeon was killed in a similar manner. A hare fell a victim to the dexterity of a third archer.

After travelling about six hours, they reached a rude village, nearly on the summit of a hill, in the gorge of a deep glen. The prince was here shown into the best habitation the village afforded: which was a small hovel thatched with dried plantain-leaves, the walls consisting of thin bamboos interlaced with jungle-grass, the floor of mud being overlaid with a compost of cow-dung and straw. A coarse rug was spread in one corner, and this constituted the whole furniture of the apartment.

The soldier who had sprung into the fakeer's cave, and thus escaped the arrows of the Bheels, they took prisoner, and made him accompany them to the village. On their arrival, a consultation being held, they determined to put him to death. He was accordingly hung with his own turban upon the branch of a tree; and while struggling in the agonies of strangulation, six arrows were discharged at him. His body was afterwards cut down, stripped, and thrown into a well.

Dismal as the hovel was into which the prince was obliged to creep, the consciousness of freedom imparted to it an air of comfort which he had never yet enjoyed so sensibly even in his father's palace. Before evening closed in, a bustle was heard in the village, which was almost immediately followed by a palankeen and two hackeries,* accompanied by about twenty attendants. Such a circumstance having probably never before occurred in a village of poor Bheels, excited a considerable sensation among the inhabitants; some of whom, however, were evidently so little overcome by surprise, as to render it more than probable that the arrival had not been altogether unexpected. The prince could not help feeling surprise when the fact was announced to him; and on quitting the hut, in which he had flung himself upon the

* A hackery is a covered carriage, drawn by bullocks.

rug, in order to snatch a brief repose after the fatigues of his journey, his astonishment was only surpassed by his delight at meeting in the stranger, whose arrival had just been announced to him, the daughter of Sultan Shariar, who, immediately upon the death of Jehangire, had set up his claim to the imperial throne.

An attachment had long subsisted between the daughter of Shariar and the heir of Chusero, his eldest brother, who had been murdered by Shah Jehan, third son of the deceased monarch Jehangire. This attachment was originally encouraged by the parents; but Sultan Shariar had lately withheld his approbation upon the most futile pleas, his motives becoming sufficiently evident upon the death of his father, the late Emperor, whom he sought to succeed as sovereign of the Moguls. Prince Dawir Buxsh, son of Chusero, and consequently the lawful successor of his grandfather, had been imprisoned through the intrigues of his uncle, Shariar, who had persuaded the credulous Emperor that the young prince was engaged in a conspiracy against his life. When Jehangire died, Shariar immediately resolved to assert his title to the sovereignty of the Mogul empire. His daughter, whose affection for her cousin had not abated, in spite of her parent's hostility, effected the escape of Dawir Buxsh, through the intervention of the fakeer, who hired a body of Bheels, whom he placed in ambush near his underground dwelling, and accomplished the prince's retreat, as has been already described. The princess had for some days taken up her abode in the neighbourhood, and had been apprised about noon of the success of those measures she had employed for the prince's release. Upon receiving this information, she immediately set out for the village, where she arrived about the close of day.

The prince was overjoyed at so unexpected a meeting; he could scarcely control the excess of his rapture. Blessings seemed so to accumulate upon him, that he already began to fancy he had swallowed the last bitter in the draught of life, which had been sweetened by a medicament that had either expelled or spiritualized the minutest dross, and that there now remained nothing but a residuum of joy. He recollected the rebukes of

the holy man to whom he was so signally indebted for his release from an odious bondage, and readily persuaded himself that there was something prophetic in his solemn homily.

"Welcome," said he, "sweet lady," as he handed the princess from her palankeen: "this is, indeed, an unexpected but welcome meeting. To what am I indebted for so signal a gratification?"

"To a woman's affection, prince, which, like the lightning of Heaven, overcomes all obstacles; and, though it sometimes blasts that on which it falls, is nevertheless a light and a glory: love throws a beam of gladness over the dark lines of human destiny, as lightning gilds the storm."

"The comparison is somewhat ominous. I would rather feel the warm glow of a woman's love than the bright shaft which flies before the thunder. It has a deadly gleam, when one knows that death may be in its flash. The fires of true love harm not. But welcome, lady, to the retreat of a poor fugitive, whose only abode is the wretched hovel of the mountain robber."

"You will make but a short sojourn here among these rude though friendly mountaineers. To-morrow you may expect to meet friends ready to place you upon that throne which you were born to honour. I have had a hard struggle between filial love and the obligations of a plighted affection, but the latter have prevailed. As your affianced bride, I quitted my father's roof to join you, when I saw he would deprive you of your lawful inheritance. The Vizier has armed in your cause, and the imperial army under his command is now encamped in the neighbourhood of Lahore, where he is expecting you to join him, having been apprised of the measures to be adopted for your escape. My father's army is on its march towards the capital, and when the adverse forces meet, the struggle will no doubt be desperate."

The prince resigned his hut to the princess, who ordered in her palankeen, within which she determined to pass the night. Meanwhile, Dawir Buxsh was conducted to another hut, much less clean and commodious than that he had quitted, as a Bheel family had vacated it in order to accommodate him. The attendants of the princess were dispersed about the village, most of

them spreading their rugs under trees, satisfied with that sort of accommodation which, though no hardship in eastern climes, would be considered among the severest in countries where excess of refinement has almost given a new interpretation to privation.

CHAPTER IV.

THE royal fugitive now thought that he was beyond the reach of pursuit, and, in a state of enviable tranquillity, threw himself upon a rug in a corner of his hovel. He was too happy to sleep, and lay thinking upon the splendid prospects opening before him, and which appeared on the eve of consummation. The first man in the empire had armed in his cause; the whole imperial army appeared favourable to his pretensions, and few or none of the principal Omrahs, so far as he could ascertain, had declared against him. He was secure in the affections of the most beautiful princess of her age. Being young, in high health, and in the vigour of early manhood, he foresaw nothing but enjoyment.

As he lay pondering the happiness which his full and joyous heart flattered itself was in store for him, he seemed to be carried into a new but delightful world, where the visionary was not to be distinguished from the true, but where there was nothing of the one or the other to arrest that full tide of fruition which was flowing in upon him. His very body appeared to be lifted above this gross earth, and though it was reclined upon a coarse rug, within the small dirty sty of a Bheel, it was at that moment alive to sensations of thrilling delight. The soul was too buoyant to be tied down to the material pleasures of this gross world, but soared with the imagination into a new field of bliss, where, though it was entranced in a delusive dream of the moment, this was nevertheless one of those exquisite fictions which have all the glow and vividness of the most distinct reality. These happy visions at length gave way to a profound sleep; his senses were steeped

in an unconsciousness so absolute that no perceptible image passed over the fine speculum of the brain, which the heavy breath of slumber had rendered too dull for reflection. In the midst of his stubborn repose he was roused by sounds that portended evil. He listened ; the clash of arms was distinguishable, and presently blended with the shouts of conflict. Morning had not yet dawned, but the stars were bright above, and there was sufficient light to distinguish objects not very remote. The prince was staggered, he knew not what to think. It occurred to him that part of the garrison, from whose custody he had escaped, must have traced him to his retreat, and were in the act of attempting a rescue. Impelled by his apprehension for the princess, he rushed towards the hut which she occupied, but to his consternation found it deserted. None of her attendants were at hand. The shouts of battle still sounded in his ears ; he bounded forward, but was almost immediately surrounded. Being unarmed, he could offer no resistance. How suddenly was the beautiful fabric raised by the enthusiastic ardour of hope subverted ! His hands were instantly secured, and he was ordered to proceed between two soldiers, two preceding and two following.

Light streaks of grey were beginning to dapple the horizon. The prince was now made acquainted with the nature of the late conflict, which he already partly suspected. Sultan Shariar, having been apprized, just before the princess quitted her home, that she had projected a plan for the delivery of Dawir Buxsh, had ordered a strong party of troops to follow in her track, suspecting that she was about to proceed to the place where his competitor for the throne of the Moguls would lie concealed, if he should succeed in effecting his escape. The princess, the better to cover her design, quitted her home under pretence of making a pilgrimage to an ancient mosque raised by one of the early Mahomedan conquerers. Her intention was no secret to her father, who ordered her to be followed at a convenient distance, and brought back when she should have reached the place of her destination, with the Prince Dawir Buxsh, if he should be discovered there. This order had been executed with such success that both the princess and her

affianced husband fell into the hands of the detachment from Shariar's army, as has been already detailed.

As the dawn advanced the troops were galled by arrows from the Bheels, who lay in ambush in the various thickets of the jungle. Not an enemy was to be seen, and yet the frequent wounds received by the Sultan's soldiers as they descended the hill told with a forcible eloquence how deadly were the foes by whom they were surrounded. In order to keep their body as compact as possible, that it might present less surface to the arrows of the foe, they marched in close column of six deep, dividing in the centre, where the princess was borne in her palan-keen, and the prince, guarded by six soldiers, brought up the rear. The column was dreadfully galled as it proceeded. Several soldiers fell dead from the arrows of their secret foes. There was no evading the peril, and no possibility of reaching the bowmen, who were so intimately acquainted with every intricacy of the jungle that the moment they were pursued they disappeared among the thickets, where it was impossible to follow them.

The prince was vigilantly guarded; but in passing through a dark hollow of the wood, the two soldiers on either side of him received at the same moment an arrow in their temples, and expired on the spot, the four others being likewise wounded, though not mortally. A party of Bheels darted from the covert in an instant and seized the captive, but were impeded by the brave resistance of the four wounded soldiers, until a party of the main body came up and put those bold mountaineers to flight. In the struggle, their royal prisoner received a severe sabre-cut on the back part of his arm, which was bound up tightly with his turban to prevent the effusion of blood. Happily for Sultan Shariar's troops, their march through the jungle was not a long one, or they would have been more than probably cut off to a man.

Upon gaining the bottom of the hill, the detachment entered a naked plain, in which, after a short march, they halted near a village, under a topc or grove of mango trees. Such however was the severe execution done among them in their progress through the forest, that upon numbering their force, they discovered that

fifteen out of a hundred had been killed, and thirty-two wounded, nine of whom they were obliged to leave behind them at the village, to the care of the native surgeons. The prince's arm was here examined, but the hurt, though severe, was found to be only a flesh wound ; which being dressed, the detachment proceeded on its march after taking a slight repast, and halted a second time at another village, about two hours before noon. Here the prince began to suffer considerable pain from his wound. He became feverish and depressed. He requested to be allowed an interview with the princess, which was refused. The reaction of disappointment soon increased his feverish symptoms to an alarming extent. He was now as despondent as he had been previously exhilarated, and saw nothing in the future but gigantic miseries, or the shadows of departed joys. His heart sickened ; he gave way to unmanly sorrow. His ardent spirit, which had been elevated to the highest pinnacle of hope, sank at once into the very lowest depths of despair. He felt as if the stroke of death would be a blessing. His fever increased to such a degree that he was unable to proceed, for he had hitherto been forced to march like a common soldier. In consequence of his illness a rude litter was provided, upon which he was placed, a coarse cloth being thrown over it, to exclude the scorching rays of the sun, and he thus proceeded, borne upon the shoulders of six men. No entreaties could induce the officer commanding the detachment to allow him to hold a moment's conversation with Shariar's daughter, who was guarded with a vigilance that defied evasion. She was, however, treated with the greatest respect, and every attention paid to her comfort ; while her cousin, on the contrary, had not only been treated with marked disrespect, but subjected to many painful indignities. Of this his companion in sorrow was ignorant. Still, although every wish she expressed consistent with her security was immediately granted, yet her earnest solicitations to see the prince were refused. She therefore proceeded in silence and in sadness under this bitterest privation of her captivity.

The illness of Dawir Buxsh was studiously kept from her knowledge, nor until they reached their destination was the circumstance of his having been wounded made known to her.

Upon their arrival at Shariar's camp, the prince was consigned to a tent which was rigidly guarded ; and the father having upbraided his daughter with treachery, gave her into the custody of some of the female attendants of the harem, who took her to a tent in the rear of the encampment, likewise surrounded by a numerous and vigilant guard. Her ordinary attendants were withdrawn ; the men distributed in different divisions of the army, and the women sent to other services.

The royal prisoner was kept in rigid confinement ; and though his fever became high and threatened to be fatal, not even a servant was permitted to wait upon him. He was deeply galled at this indignity ; but the guards derided his expostulations, and he was left to struggle against his malady as he best might. The strength of his constitution prevailed. On the third day the violence of his fever abated, and his wound began rapidly to heal.

Shariar, hearing that the Vizier was advancing towards him with the imperial army, which, though less in number than his own, was composed of choicer troops, was afraid of proceeding to extremities against his prisoner, lest it should weaken his own cause by casting upon him the slur of having murdered a nephew and lawful heir to the throne. He was nevertheless in hopes that harsh treatment might aggravate the fever which the prince's wound had induced, and thus, by removing out of his way a dangerous competitor, leave the road to empire comparatively clear before him.

The Vizier had now advanced within two coss of Shariar's army, which was encamped on the opposite side of a narrow but deep stream, that divided the hostile forces. Shariar had taken up a strong position on the slope of a hill, flanked on one side by the stream, and on the other by a thick jungle. The Vizier crossed this stream during the night, at a ford about two miles below the enemy's encampment, and appeared next morning drawn up in battle array upon the plain. His army was formed into three divisions ; the right wing being commanded by Mohabet Chan, the second by an Omrah, who had distinguished himself in the

Deccan, under Shah Jehan, and the centre by the Vizier in person. As the army of Shariar was in too strong a position to render an attack prudent on the part of the imperialists, the Vizier, suspecting that the enemy, confiding in superior numbers, would rush down upon him from the height which they occupied, warily awaited the expected onset. He was not deceived in this conjecture. Shariar, conceiving that the impetuosity of a charge from the elevation of his position would give him considerable advantage, commanded a vigorous onset to be made against the enemy's centre, where the Vizier commanded. The shock was so great that the imperialists recoiled ; but Mohabet Chan immediately brought up his men, who, attacking the Sultan's troops with great energy upon the left flank, soon checked the momentary advantage which they had obtained, and the battle raged for some time with a pretty near equality of success.

The raw forces of Shariar were several times repulsed by the well-disciplined valour of the imperial soldiers ; but fresh troops rushed to the charge as their comrades gave way, and the balance of victory hung for some time doubtful. The Vizier's elephant was killed under him, but he leaped from the howdah, and fought on foot with a spirit which infused new courage into his army, and baffled the repeated assaults of the enemy. Whilst the right wing, under the command of Mohabet, and the centre, at the head of which the Vizier still fought in person, were maintaining a desperate conflict against superior numbers, with slow but manifest advantage, the left wing was repulsed, and obliged to retreat before the impetuous charge of its foes, headed by their princes. At this critical moment, Dawir Buxsh, who had managed during the confusion of the battle to escape from his guards, was seen in full career towards the contending armies. He had mounted a charger which had galloped from the battle on the death of its rider. Reaching the left wing of the imperial army as it was retreating before its victors, he shouted to the soldiers to support their sovereign. The enemy paused for an instant in their career of pursuit, unable to comprehend the arrival of a foe from their own camp. During that pause the imperialists rallied. Dawir Buxsh

placed himself at their head, charged and drove back the insurgents, who, becoming dispirited by so unexpected a check, faltered, retreated, and their retreat was soon converted into a total rout. The centre and right wing, commanded by the Vizier and Mohabet Chan, had already obtained so decided an advantage over the main body of the army to which they were opposed, that the rout of the enemy's right wing almost immediately decided the fortune of the day. The army of Shariar was totally defeated, and he fell into the hands of the Vizier. The slaughter was dreadful, the victory decisive.

CHAPTER V.

PRINCE Dawir Buxsh was received with loud acclamation by the troops. His late exploit gave them hopes of an emperor that would lead them on to conquest. He was borne in triumph to the imperial camp, and next day the army proceeded to Agra. Sultan Shariar's daughter had fallen into the victor's hands. The youthful sovereign desired that she might be brought into his presence; she accordingly appeared before him, her bosom agitated by conflicting emotions. She was at once elated by joy at her lover's release, and depressed by sorrow at her father's captivity. Her beauty was heightened by the singular variety of feeling which her countenance expressed. She fell at the prince's feet: he affectionately raised her, and said, with earnest but tender passion,

"Let not my preserver kneel to one who is indebted to her for his liberty—perhaps his life; for the dungeon soon puts an end to earthly captivities. The star of our destinies has risen—may it ascend in glory to its meridian! As soon as I am placed upon the musnud, our marriage shall be solemnized, and we will enjoy the consummation of our happiness, which adverse chances have so long delayed."

"But my father!" exclaimed the princess with a suffused eye and quivering lip—

“He will, for the present, remain a prisoner. He has sought to usurp the crown. The sovereign of the Moguls must perform his duty to his people as well as to himself.”

This was said with a tone of grave determination, which strikingly contrasted with the warm glow of tenderness that had preceded it. There was an expression of almost stern resolution in the calm but brilliant gleam of the speaker’s eye. The princess burst into tears.

“Be composed, lady,” said the prince, resuming his former tenderness, “and confide in my justice, which I trust will never neutralize my clemency. Your father has erred; and if he may not be forgiven, for your sake his life is sacred.”

The daughter gave an hysteric sob, threw herself upon the prince’s neck, and yielded to an irrepressible burst of emotion. She was relieved by the promise: a smile dilated her brow; her dark full eye expanded with a strong impulse of gratitude; and a single tear trickled slowly down her cheek, upon which a delicate smile quivered, like sunshine following the shower. The attendants were moved at the scene; the prince was subdued, still his determination relative to the prisoner, which had not yet transpired, remained unaltered. His attachment towards his daughter was strong and fervent, but he could not forget that he had been grossly wronged. The indignities so wantonly heaped upon him during his march to Shariar’s camp, when suffering from the pain of his wound, did not pass from his mind, and it is not the character of despotic princes to suffer injury to escape retribution.

The princess retired from the royal tent with a joyous satisfaction arising from the assurance that her father’s life should be spared. She could not for a moment suppose that the man by whom she was evidently beloved, would allow himself long to entertain feelings of hostility towards her parent, however great the provocation. But she knew not the heart of him upon whose clemency she relied. Revenge is the most difficult passion of our nature to subdue; and its indulgence, among absolute princes, is one of the greatest evils of despotism.

Dawir Buxsh proceeded to Agra, accompanied by the Vizier and Mohabet Chan, and was hailed as their Emperor by the universal acclamation of the citizens. He was immediately seated upon the musnud, and a proclamation issued for the celebration of the royal nuptials with the daughter of Sultan Shariar.

On the following day the prisoner was summoned into the presence of his imperial nephew. He appeared with an emaciated countenance and a dejected mien. He had been long suffering from a dreadful malady, which had almost reduced him to a shadow. His daughter was present when her parent entered, and seeing his bitter dejection, she threw herself upon his bosom in a paroxysm of filial grief. She was gently removed by the attendants.

“What does the man deserve,” asked Dawir Buxsh sternly, turning towards the disconsolate prisoner, “who has rebelled against his lawful sovereign, cast him into prison, treated him with indignity, and exposed his life to jeopardy?”

Shariar was silent.

“Silence is the most eloquent confession of guilt,” continued the Emperor; “dost thou not deserve that death, which, had your ambitious arms succeeded, you had no doubt in reserve for me?”

“I am in your power,” replied Shariar firmly; “you can exercise that power as your discretion may prompt. I may be your victim, but nothing shall force me to disclose my intentions. I acted as I felt justified in acting; it has ended in failure, and I am prepared to pay the penalty.”

The indignation of the young Emperor was kindled, and he said fiercely, “Hoary traitors must not escape punishment, however nearly allied to the throne. I have promised to spare your life,” said he, “but the light of heaven shall never more beam upon those eyes.”

Saying this he rose, and gave the signal to a soldier, who advanced and seized the unhappy Shariar. His daughter, with a wild scream of agony, threw herself between the ruffian and his victim; but she was instantly torn from the embraces of her

parent, who stood with patient resignation, awaiting the execution of his dreadful sentence. The soldier advanced, and plunged the point of his crease into both eyes of the unfortunate Sultan. With the blood trickling down his cheeks, mingled with tears, he implored to be once more permitted to embrace his child. She rushed into his arms.

“Tyrant!” said she, addressing the young Emperor, “this heart shall never be united with that of one whose hand is stained with my parent’s blood. I have no longer anything to render this world desirable, and quit it imprecating the malediction of a dying woman upon thy head!”

Saying this, she seized a crease which was stuck in the girdle of one of the guards, drew it suddenly before he was aware of her purpose, and plunging it into her bosom, fell dead at the soldier’s feet. The prince was staggered at the dreadful but unexpected issue of his own severity. He had never for a moment contemplated such a consummation. His attachment to the princess had been ardent, but he could not forget the wrongs received at the hands of her father.

From this moment a cloud of gloom hung upon his brow. He saw no one; and his seclusion gave umbrage to his subjects, who began to murmur at the want of enterprise in their new Sovereign. Rumours were daily spreading of Shah Jehan’s approach to avenge the indignity offered to his brother Shariar, and the death of that prince’s daughter; but the Emperor disregarded these rumours, fancying himself secure in the affections of his people, and in the support of the Vizier and Mohabet Chan.

Shortly after the decease of his affianced bride, the venerable fakeer stood before Dawir Buxsh, and with undaunted severity upbraided him with his cruel rigour towards his uncle.

“Your throne totters,” he said solemnly; “the sceptre which a tyrant sways is ever held in a feeble grasp, and by a precarious tenure. Justice can never sanction cruelty; and you should have remembered that you were indebted for liberty, most probably for life, to the daughter of that prince whom you have so wantonly

mutilated. The blood of that daughter will cry from the earth against you. Heaven has its punishment for guilty sovereigns, and your doom has gone forth."

The youthful monarch was subdued by the solemn earnestness of the holy man, and quailed before him.

"Father," he said, "I have but visited a rebel with merited retribution. His cruelties towards me have been repaid with cruelty, which the laws of justice sanction."

"But which," fervently exclaimed the fakeer, "the laws of religion forbid. The justice of tyrants is not the justice of the great and good God, who so tempers it with mercy that repentance converts it into a blessing both to the receiver and the giver. Justice becomes a bane where mercy is defied and scorned. Retribution is an attribute which belongs alone to Omnipotence ; man knows not how to exercise it. You have attempted to grasp the thunder ; beware that it does not recoil upon your own head with that terrible energy which leaves behind the fearful impress of destruction."

Bold as was the rebuke of this venerable man, and even insolent as was his intrusion and bearing, yet such was his character for sanctity, and so universal the awe in which he was held, that no one attempted to resent the indignity offered to their sovereign, and the fakeer quitted the imperial presence with a smile of calm defiance, as he tottered out of the palace. The Emperor called to mind his visit while he was a captive, and remembered that to him he was chiefly indebted for the success of the princess's plan for his escape, which had been eventually crowned with such complete success ; he therefore permitted him to pass from the palace without molestation. The old man's words, however, had sunk deep into the heart of Dawir Buxsh, and harrowed him to the quick. There was a fearful import in them which troubled him sorely ; they sounded like the dark presage of doom.

The rumours of his uncle Shah Jehan's approach daily strengthened, and he already began to fancy that he saw his own speedy downfall. Those nobles who were more immediately about his

person, whispered doubts of the Vizier's sincerity, and these doubts were but too soon confirmed. The report of Shah Jehan's march towards the capital was shortly verified. He reached Lahore at the head of a numerous army, and encamped a few miles from the city. The young Emperor had taken no measures to interrupt his passage, relying upon the fidelity of the Vizier and Mohabet Chan, both of whom, as he found out, too late, had favoured his uncle's designs upon the throne. He received a summons, which was communicated by the Vizier, to resign the sceptre into older and abler hands. When the unhappy sovereign upbraided his minister with treachery, the latter did not hesitate to confess that he had simply favoured his accession, in order to give time for Shah Jehan to collect an army and put himself in a condition to dispute his rights. "The Moguls," continued the Vizier, "do not like to be governed either by boys or by women, both of whom ought to yield to the natural supremacy of men."

This was not the time to dispute a doctrine subversive of all legitimate rights, with one who had the power to illustrate it in his own hands. Dawir Buxsh, without a moment's hesitation, seeing that opposition would be mere fatuity, consented to relinquish the imperial sceptre provided his life were spared, and a competent maintenance assured to him. No answer was returned to these stipulations, but on the following day the deposed Emperor was confined to one of the lower apartments of the Seraglio, and Shah Jehan proclaimed Emperor, with almost universal consent; such is human tergiversation! The people have no lasting affection for sovereigns. The favourite of to-day is an object of hatred to-morrow—

Within the hollow crown
That rounds the mortal temples of a king,
Death keeps his court.

Dawir Buxsh, who had been lately raised to a throne amid popular acclamation, was now hurled from his elevation, and more an object of pity than the meanest among those whom he had so lately governed. His cruelty to the unhappy Shariar too late filled

him with remorse. The death of that Sultan's daughter tortured his memory with a thousand bitter pangs. He saw that his fate was determined on, and the lingering desire of life made him look forward to death with horror.

On the morning after his uncle's accession to the throne of the Moguls, two eunuchs entered the prison of Dawir Buxsh ; he immediately knew that he was to die, and throwing himself upon his knees, was strangled whilst in the act of putting up a prayer to Heaven. The aspiration was cut short by the bow-string, and Sultan Shariar and his daughter were both fully avenged.



The Omrah's Daughter.

CHAPTER I.

L ODY CHAN was seated in the veranda of his palace, smoking his hookah, and enjoying the luxury of repose which that exquisite instrument is so admirably calculated to induce. Behind him stood a tall attendant dressed in a tunic of green cloth, his waist encircled by a red cummerbund, his head surmounted with a bright yellow turban, undulating a yak's tail over his master, to prevent mosquitos from sounding in his ears their little note of warning, or fixing their fine taper antennæ into those rich conduits through which the currents of life meander in ten thousand winding avenues to and from the heart. Beside this man stood another attendant, somewhat differently clad as to colour, but precisely similar in costume, waving a punka beside the Chan, in order to break the stagnation of the hot air of noon, in a shade where the thermometer would stand at ninety-eight degrees.

Lody was seated upon a carpet from the valued looms of Persia ; beside him stood a goblet of Shiraz wine, and at his right hand a matchlock, its stock richly inlaid with gold. From the eaves of the veranda fell a silk awning, which was lowered when the sun slanted its level rays above the horizon in its early rising, or flooded the plain with its departing glories, ere it sank behind the broad ocean. This awning was brocaded with the precious metals from the celebrated bazaars of Ispahan, unrivalled throughout the East for the richness of its tissues. The walls were panelled with polished steel, which multiplied the reflection of every object near,

and seemed to give an almost interminable space to the balconies by which the palace was surrounded. Arms, burnished with a care that showed how highly they were prized, hung from the pilasters which supported the projecting roof of the veranda, and various emblems of war were distributed around, with a profusion and an attention to effect, which sufficiently evinced how familiar the lord of this palace was with that bane of peace upon earth of which it has been too truly said, and but too little heeded, that

War's a game
Which, were their subjects wise, kings would not play at.

Everything around the palace of Chan Lody attested his predilection for this most desperate game of chance that man can engage in. He was one of the greatest warriors of his day. Being a descendant of the imperial family of Lody, he felt anxious to maintain the dignity of his house; but though glory was the fierce aim of his ambition, he never tarnished it by an act of dishonour. He was indeed an ambitious prince, but a generous soldier and a virtuous man.

Whilst he sat drawing through the golden mouthpiece of his beautifully embossed hookah the exhalations of a richly aromatic chillam, a stranger was announced desiring to have an interview with the Chan.

"Admit him," said Lody to the attendant, who instantly withdrew, and shortly returned, ushering in the stranger.

The latter appeared to be a youth of noble deportment and gallant bearing. He was evidently in the dawn of manhood, but had all its best attributes legibly recorded on his clear open brow and small decided features. Lody's eye relaxed into a faint yet bright smile as he bent it upon the noble stranger, whose salutation he returned with much courtesy.

"Chan Lody," said the youth, "you are aware that the Emperor Jehangire is in paradise; a usurper, aided by the influence of the Sultana, is upon the throne: the Sultan, Shah Jehan, now lawful sovereign of the Moguls, is on his march to vindicate his rights and seize the imperial sceptre: his route lies through your territories,

through which he demands your permission to pass, and a safe conduct. What answer shall I return, Chan Lady?"

Lody's brow became suddenly overcast; and he said bitterly, "Princes who solicit favours should know how to bestow them."

"Is this the answer I am to return to the Sultan?"

"No; when you have refreshed yourself with food and rest, I will give you my answer at length."

"Is it hostile or peaceable?"

"You will know when you receive it."

"Chan Lady, I accept not the hospitality of an enemy. If you deny what I come to solicit, I quit your presence with a full and unqualified defiance; if you grant it, I will eat your salt with joy, and the Prophet's blessing will requite you for the boon."

"Young man, your defiance or your blessing is to me alike indifferent. I have no desire that you should either eat my salt or make my palace a place of rest. Bear my answer to your master. I grant no safe conduct to rebels. A rebellious son cannot be a just prince. I would rather see the enemy at my gates, than Shah Jehan Emperor of the Moguls."

"A time may come when Chan Lady will be glad to forget that he has dared to insult his sovereign."

Saying this, the youthful messenger turned upon his heel and was about to depart, but the Chan ordered him to be detained; then, by way of adding contempt to his refusal, the indignant Omrah commanded the dress of a menial to be brought, and filling a small bag with rupees, he charged the sultan's envoy to deliver them, together with an old lean horse, to his master.

The young man departed; and meeting a shepherd at some short distance from Burhampoor, gave him the dress, the rupees, and the horse, bidding him deliver them to Chan Lady with this message:—that Prince Morad, son of the Emperor Shah Jehan, returned the gift designed for his royal parent, as the giver might one day need a beggar's boon, since adversity was generally the lot of insolent nobles and disaffected subjects.

The shepherd, not considering himself bound by the laws of honour, and not being harassed by delicate scruples, appropriated

the dress, rupees, and horse to his own purposes. What to one man was an offence, was to another a blessing.

Morad, galled by the indignity which had been so wantonly offered to him, proceeded towards his father's encampment. On emerging from a thick forest upon an extensive plain, he saw a party at some distance advancing in the direction of the jungle. As they approached nearer, he perceived a palankeen accompanied by a numerous train of attendants. Before they had reached the path which led into the forest, a wild elephant started from the thicket, and rushed with a short shrill cry towards the approaching cavalcade. Terrified at the sight of such a huge foe, the attendants dispersed ; and the bearers laying down the palankeen, fled in different directions. The elephant advanced with an aspect of deadly hostility towards the palankeen, which, as Morad perceived, from the curtains being closely drawn round it, contained a female ; and, from the number of her attendants, it was evident that she was a female of rank. Unappalled by the danger, he darted forward ; and being nearer the palankeen than the elephant, came up with the animal before it could reach its victim. Striking it with his sword just above the knee joint of the right leg behind, he at once disabled it, and diverted its attention from the object of attack. The huge creature immediately uttered a scream of agony, and turned upon Morad ! but unable to use the wounded limb, its movements were slow and embarrassed : Morad, therefore, had no difficulty in evading its assault by actively running behind it, and seizing his opportunity, he inflicted another wound on the other hind leg, which rendered the elephant unable to do mischief. It rolled upon the earth : and Morad calling upon his attendants to approach, took a matchlock, and placing the muzzle to the ear of the huge beast, sent a bullet into its brain. The animal uttered a short loud roar, and died.

Meanwhile the lady had quitted her palankeen, and stood before her youthful deliverer in the beaming lustre of her beauty. Her countenance was calm and unruffled, and her dark eye was fixed upon the dead elephant with an expression of resolute satisfaction that showed how little she had been disturbed by the past danger.

She made a graceful salaam of acknowledgment ; and, beckoning with an air of haughty command to her attendants, thanked her deliverer with a somewhat lofty courtesy, and, inviting him to return to her father's palace, entered her palankeen. Morad, who had been struck with her beauty, learned in a few words that she was the daughter of Chan Lody. Notwithstanding the late discourtesies which had passed between them, and the insult offered to his parent, he determined to escort the lovely girl to her father's dwelling. He had been charmed with the beautiful countenance and magnanimous bearing of the Chan's daughter, and now felt really anxious that a better understanding should exist between her parent and his own. He therefore returned with her to Burhampoor. On reaching Chan Lody's palace, the lady wished Morad to enter, in order that he might receive her father's acknowledgments for the signal service he had rendered his child.

"Lady," said the prince, "I am the son of Shah Jehan, to whom your father refuses a passage through his dominions. I cannot again enter the presence of one who has denied my parent and his sovereign so poor a boon."

"Life, prince, is a valueless possession, unless we hold it on those terms which make it worth the prizing ; and, believe me, I would rather mine were forfeited than be indebted for its preservation to a scion of Chan Lody's foe. You, however, have conferred the obligation nobly, at the risk of your own ; my courtesy, therefore, is the least I can offer you. Enter, and I will take upon me to secure for you my father's hospitality, who could not but be happy to entertain his daughter's deliverer."

"I should be sorry to test the hospitality of a man whose heart would be at variance with his urbanity. For what I have done, the approbation of my own conscience is a sufficient reward ; and your courtesy has cancelled whatever obligation you may have considered yourself under to me. But perhaps you will do me the favour to tell Chan Lody that he is indebted for his daughter's life to the son of Shah Jehan."

The lovely Jahanira a moment bent her piercing eye upon Morad, and said, in a tone of proud dignity, "Our acquaintance

then will end here, since you refuse the hospitality which has been at least courteously offered; but I am your debtor, and shall, I trust, live to cancel my debt. Farewell!"

She entered the palace, and Morad retraced his steps. As he pursued his journey towards his father's tents, he could not help reflecting on the sublime beauty of Chan Lody's daughter. She was evidently a woman of a lofty and indomitable spirit. Her parent's dauntless soul beamed in her full black eyes, and her small budding mouth, the lips of which met each other with a firm compression that seemed to mock the tenderness of a more gentle contact, showed there was a high resolve within her which nothing short of death could subdue. Morad was young and ardent. His whole soul quivered like a sunbeam at the bare thought of an enterprise that should cast a halo of glory around it and his bosom glowed with germane sympathy, where he beheld any symptom of feeling congenial with his own. The stern refusal of Chan Lody had roused his indignation; the proud spirit of his daughter had won him to a gentler mood, and her beauty ratified what her lofty bearing had expressed.

When he entered his father's presence, he reported the Omrah's refusal, but withheld the indignities with which it had been accompanied. Shah Jehan was mortified and indignant at this issue of his embassy to the haughty noble of Burhampoor; and, breaking up his camp, he proceeded to the capital by another route.

CHAPTER II.

WITHIN a few weeks after the events related in the preceding chapter, Chan Lody was apprised of Shah Jehan's accession to the imperial throne. He was too powerful an Omrah not to be conciliated; the Emperor, therefore, despatched his son Morad with a message to invite Lody to visit the capital, promising him oblivion of all past indignities, with assurances of future favour. The Chan, trusting to the dignity of his own character, and his

influence among the nobles, who honoured him as a man of lofty courage and impregnable integrity, consented at once to repair to Agra with his family, considering that his presence at the seat of government might be of some advantage to the state, as he was determined to watch with jealous scrutiny the motions of the reigning sovereign, to whose accession he had always been vehemently hostile. He, however, received Morad with courteous hospitality, as the saviour of his daughter's life ; and the young prince, remembering the impression which the lovely Jahanira had made upon him, offered himself to the father as her suitor. This was an alliance not at all coveted by Chan Lody, who, though he was by no means wanting in ambition, bore nevertheless too great an antipathy to the reigning Emperor to be desirous of a family connexion with him.

"My daughter," said he to Morad, "is the person most concerned in this matter. You must consult her. She knows my wishes and her own. Whatever her choice may be, I shall not obstruct it. When you have gained her consent, I shall not withhold mine."

Morad obtained an interview, and made his proposals. Jahanira paused, and surveyed him with a calm countenance, yet every feature radiant with that mind of which they were all most eloquent interpreters. After an earnest, but still respectful, scrutiny, she replied, "Prince, you are of noble birth, and therefore an alliance with you could not dishonour me ; you are of a manly and agreeable person ; you have the reputation of being brave, generous, just, and, in short, of possessing all the best qualities that belong to great and good men ; personally, therefore, I cannot object to you as the disposer of my future life. Moreover, you have saved that life ; gratitude, consequently, would induce me to accede to any honourable proposal which you could make me : but my father and yours bear a deep enmity against each other, and this is an impassable bar to such an alliance as you seek between the house of Timour and that of Lody."

Morad was mortified at this rejection, and returned to Agra with the poison of disappointment rankling in his bosom. He kept the matter secret from his royal parent, who, he knew, would have felt the greatest indignation at his having made such

a proposal to the daughter of a man who had treated him with offensive indignity.

Shortly after this, Chan Lody arrived with his family at Agra, and took up his abode in a large house surrounded by strong and lofty walls, not far from the palace. A few days after his arrival, he appeared at court, attended by his two sons. He was received by the Emperor with constrained courtesy, which satisfied him that the royal forgiveness so solemnly pledged to him was hollow and unsound. He was obliged to perform certain ceremonies which he considered not consistent with his rank and influence in the state; but seeing the impolicy of resistance at that moment, he patiently submitted to the indignity, though he clearly perceived that it was meant as a tacit retaliation. His son Azmut, a fine spirited youth of sixteen, followed his father into the hall of audience. The usher Perist, keeping him prostrate before the sovereign longer than the customary ceremony required, Azmut started up from the ground, sprang upon his feet, and was about to turn his back upon the royal presence when Perist struck him smartly upon the head with his rod, and ordered him in a peremptory tone, again to prostrate himself. The boy's spirit was kindled; with sparkling eyes and flushed cheeks he drew his sword, and made a stroke at the usher's head, which would have proved fatal, had not his weapon been struck down by some of the guards, who, on state occasions, were always in attendance in the courts of Mogul potentates.

Lody, suspecting that his life was aimed at, drew his dagger; and his two sons, placing themselves on either side of their father, with their weapons bared, produced a scene of general consternation. Many of the Omrahs unsheathed their swords, but the known valour of Chan Lody kept them in awe. The Emperor leaped from his throne, and ordered the refractory noble to be seized, together with his sons. One of the mace-bearers, who happened to be near Azmut, laid hold of him, but the youth instantly buried a crease in his throat. The confusion increased. Two Omrahs fell beneath the arm of Chan Lody, who, rushing from the presence, followed by his sons, sought refuge in his own house, and ordered the gates

to be instantly closed. He was proclaimed a rebel, and orders issued for his immediate apprehension ; but the house to which he had repaired was so strongly fortified, that the fulfilment of the royal mandate was anything but an easy matter.

The Emperor's rage was now at its height ; all his former hostility revived in full force, and he determined that the refractory Omrah should pay the extreme penalty of his rashness. He commanded Morad to besiege him in his castle. The latter, though he had scarcely recovered from the mortification to which he had been subjected by the beautiful but haughty daughter of the refractory noble, nevertheless undertook the command with some reluctance, respecting the virtues of the man whom, though he certainly did not love, he nevertheless could not despise.

The house was invested ; and the rebel, as Chan Lody was pronounced to be, summoned to surrender. He returned an answer of defiance. In reply to Morad's summons, he appeared with his sons and daughter upon the walls, and said, pointing to the latter, "You shall receive our answer from the lips of a woman, but that woman the daughter of Chan Lody."—"Prince Morad," said Jahanira, advancing to the very edge of the wall, "the brave never succumb to tyranny. Life is really only enjoyed by the free ; and tyrants grant not liberty when they can exercise their power upon those who do not acknowledge it. We are resolved never to yield, Prince Morad ; and even if your legions should overwhelm us, I need not remind you that the brave have a certain refuge in death."

The siege was pursued by Morad with such vigour for several days, that it was evident the besieged must shortly capitulate. Lody was embarrassed. He saw that there remained only one course—to cut his way through the enemy, and escape to Malwa. Desperate as the attempt was, he resolved to make it on the following morning. His sons and daughter determined to accompany him in his perilous flight. He communicated his intention to his women and the various members of his family, most of whom, he said, he must leave to the imperial mercy. Tears and groans followed the communication, but there was no

alternative betwixt death and captivity. He endeavoured to persuade his women that they, at least, would be treated with clemency. They answered with him renewed tears. He turned from them in an agony of grief; but his determination was taken, and, retiring to his apartment, he gave vent to the overflow of his feelings. Calling his three sons, he arranged with them the time for the desperate sally which was to be made on the following morning. His daughter, whom he loved as a son, and perfectly adored for the elevated heroism of her character, was present at this arrangement, and they finally separated for the night.

Lody could not sleep, and quitted his chamber to break the gloomy train of his thoughts. He passed into a large court, which was flanked by the women's apartments. The night was dark, the sky overcast, and the whole aspect of nature seemed to suit the gloomy habit of his soul. The dew fell heavily, but it cooled his fevered brow. As he passed by the apartments of his women, he heard groans as of persons in agony. He stopped to listen—they were repeated; there could be no mistaking the sound. His heart throbbed audibly. He entered—listened—all was still; every light had been extinguished. He passed through the different chambers, but there was no sound. He called upon several, who were wont to answer his summons with a ready alacrity; there was no reply. What could be the cause? Horrible, but indefinite, suspicions crowded upon his mind. He at length entered into an inner apartment, and, stumbling over some obstacle, fell upon his face. He arose, and, in a small ante-chamber, perceived a light glimmering faintly behind a curtain. Upon removing the drapery, he perceived the dead body of a female favourite. He raised the lamp from the floor, and saw that his hands and dress were stained with blood. Returning to the chamber in which he had fallen, a sad revelation of the mystery of the groans and succeeding silence was made horribly manifest. The floor was covered with gore, which still feebly welled from the bosoms of several women, in whom life was yet scarcely extinct. Every member of his harem was dead, or in the last pangs of dissolution. They had considered suicide as the prefer-

able alternative to falling into the power of those who were enemies to Chan Lody.

The sight was overpowering. The sacrifice had been noble, but it poured a tide of agony through the bosom of him for whom it was so unanimously made. The mothers of his children lay dead among the lifeless forms before him. He looked upon them, and, after the first terrible burst of grief had subsided, he uttered a vow of deep and implacable revenge. Summoning his children, they joined in his vow. Jahanira embraced her mother's corpse, and supplicated vengeance upon the heads of those who had forced her to self-immolation.

Tears rolled over Lody's cheeks, but he dashed them off, and called upon his children to assist him in performing the obsequies of the dead. His eye dilated with an expression of energetic resolution as he raised the bodies from their gory beds, wrapped them in clean linen, and, assisted by his sons, carried them into a garden beyond the court, where, having hastily dug a large hole, they buried them in one common grave. There was no prayer uttered—no ritual form observed—but the fervent aspiration of earnest and sorrowful hearts went up as a memorial to God.

As they quitted the garden, the young dawn began to glimmer in the east. Lody summoned his followers; though few, they were determined. It was a desperate cast, but the late scene had given an impulse to the spirits of each and all. The danger of the enterprise vanished before the daring which impelled him, and those who were so dear to him, to brave the peril, and either secure their escape or perish.

On a sudden, the gates were thrown open. Lody rushed out, followed by his three sons and his daughter, who spurred their horses towards the city walls. The imperial troops were struck with awe at the daring of this small but determined band. They swept onward like the whirlwind; all who opposed them were cut down. The light was still so imperfect, that the imperial troops, being suddenly roused by this unexpected assault, were confused, and fell before the swords of Lody and his followers, who finally succeeded in cutting their way through their foes, and escaping by the city gates.

CHAPTER III.

THE conflict between the followers of Chan Lody and the imperial troops had been short but desperate. Many of the latter, taken by surprise, were slain, whilst scarcely one of the assailants lost his life. Jahanira, upon a small roan Arab, rode immediately behind her father, through the thickest of the enemy. She dyed her virgin sword in blood. Just as she had reached the gate, Morad intercepted her passage.

“You have no further chance of escape,” he cried, attempting to seized the reins of her steed ; but she, striking her heels into the animal’s side, caused it to rear, and thus prevented Morad’s intention.

By this time the whole of her party had escaped, and she alone remained within the walls. A soldier now grasping the reins of her horse, she instantly severed his arm at the wrist with a single stroke of her keen Damascus sabre. The man, exasperated, urged a comrade to cut her down. The latter sprang forward, but she met him as he advanced, and buried her weapon in his throat. Morad commanded that the troops should retire, and urged his charger towards Jahanira.

“Lady, you are our prisoner.”

“Never !” cried Jahanira, drawing a dagger. “I will not survive captivity. Open yonder gates, and allow me to follow my father, or I will leave you only my body for the gratification of your revenge. You shall never take me alive !”

“Nay, this intemperance ill befits a daughter of the illustrious house of Lody. None but cowards die to escape the shocks of destiny.”

“And none but cowards submit to the caprices of tyrants. You once preserved my life ; but if you intend to inthral the life you saved, all obligation is cancelled between us, and I now dare you to mortal combat ; for, woman as I am, you shall find me no contemptible competitor.”

She spurred her Arab towards Morad and made a stroke at his head; but he suddenly reined back his horse and avoided the blow, which fell upon the animal's neck. It plunged violently, and the prince had great difficulty in evading the fierce onset of his beautiful antagonist, who at length wounded him in the arm; and seeing several horsemen approach to the aid of their general, she urged her little roan charger towards the gate. Morad, charmed with her heroism, ordered it to be opened; when, bounding through the portal with the swiftness of an arrow, she soon joined her father and brothers about four leagues from the city.

The Emperor having been roused by the sudden shouts of the fugitive and his followers, as they made their unexpected eruption from the castle, started from his bed, and seizing a sword, sent messengers to ascertain the cause; apprehending an insurrection of the citizens in favour of Chan Lody, who was extremely popular among them. On ascertaining that the Omrah had escaped, he despatched a large body of troops, headed by Perist, the usher, who was accompanied by several other nobles of distinction, and ordered to bring back the fugitives to the city either dead or alive.

Perist, eager to punish Azmut for the attack made upon him by that young warrior in the Emperor's presence, readily undertook the command, and promised that before the waning of another moon the heads of his master's enemies should either be blackening on the walls of Agra, or their bodies bound in chains within the state prisons. This empty boast satisfied Shah Jehan, who well knew the usher's hostility to the family of Lody, which he would have been willing to exterminate, even at the sacrifice of his own life.

Perist was a Calmuc Tartar, of amazing power of body, and no less intrepidity of spirit, who had raised himself to distinction in the imperial army by his gigantic strength and desperate valour. He had risen from a low station in the army to one of high distinction in the state, and this had emboldened him to seek an alliance that should perpetuate his name. The lovely Jahanira

had long been the theme of public panegyric, and the reputation of her beauty, together with her illustrious descent, made him desire to become united with this distinguished maiden.

Without having seen the object of his ambitious aspiring, but relying upon the reports of her high qualities, he sent his proposals, which were rejected with scorn. This roused the malignity of the Tartar. To be contemned by a woman was an injury never to be forgotten; and he meditated a distant but signal revenge. He expected that his treatment of the fiery young Azmut would rouse the indignation of his family, and most probably excite them to acts of violence. It had happened precisely as he had foreseen, and he now gladly seized the opportunity of following up to its issue the plan of retribution which he had so warily laid. He was not a man to let his resolution lie in abeyance until chance concurred to elicit the desired result; but he had that energy of malice which tries every hazard, however desperate, to realize the consummation of its most atrocious purposes.

Lody had well weighed the chances of pursuit; and knowing the fierce hostility with which the usher regarded him, had calculated the probability of being followed by his ancient foe. He urged forward his little band for fifteen leagues without halting, and was then stopped by a river. It was broad and rapid, and so swollen by recent rains, that to cross it seemed utterly impracticable. It flowed onward in a wide turbid stream, broken every now and then into small whirling eddies by the rapidity of its progress, and thus became so agitated, that there appeared no chance of stemming its tumultuous current. There was not a boat to be seen; all had been carried down the stream by the impetuosity of the torrent: and a wooden bridge was swept away by the extraordinary pressure of its augmented waters, which in several places overflowed their banks and inundated the country, except upon the higher grounds, to a distance of several miles.

This was a melancholy impediment. Here was a check which bid fair to frustrate their escape, but there was no choice; and with a foreboding heart Chan Lody and his faithful adherents encamped for the night upon the banks of the river. He threw

himself upon a rug to snatch a short repose after the bodily fatigue and mental excitement of the last twenty-four hours. His reflections were sad and harassing. The scene of the past night recurred to his mind with sickening vividness, and painful recollections swept over it with the might and suddenness of the whirlwind. The perilous situation in which he stood, perplexed and agitated him. He had but a few followers to oppose to the large body of troops which he was certain would be sent against him. The swollen state of the river forbade the possibility of flight, and the small number of his adherents banished every chance of successful resistance. For himself he entertained no apprehensions; but when he thought of his children, an involuntary pang, which he could not repress, shook his frame.

In proportion, however, as his reflections magnified the dangers by which he was surrounded, his spirit rose, and finally settled into a determination of resistance which nothing could disturb. Prepared to meet the worst emergencies of the morrow, he at length sank into a profound slumber, which was increased by that reaction of repose after excitement, which invariably follows the tension of mind produced by extreme mental disturbance.

He awoke with the dawn: and upon quitting his tent was informed that the imperial troops were in full march towards him. He immediately summoned his sons and daughter; and representing the utter impossibility of escape, asked them if they would wish to throw themselves upon the enemy's clemency?—that for himself he was resolved to die in arms. Hussein, the eldest son, swore he would follow his father's fortune, and perish rather than fall into the hands of a conqueror. Azmut made the same solemn vow.

“And you, my child,” said Chan Lody, addressing his daughter, “what reason is there that you should not live to form an alliance, which might perpetuate the race of Lody, with a man, perhaps, that would vindicate thy father's wrong?”

“Because,” replied the noble girl, throwing herself upon her parent's bosom, “I am from a stock that has ever preferred death

to captivity. There is no sex in soul ; and I feel mine to be as capable of those deeds which will excite unborn ages to noble emulation as they who exclusively claim the privilege of performing them. I am resolved to perish with the enemy's blood upon my sword, and will dye this dagger with my own rather than accept the clemency of tyrants."

The father embraced her : and having summoned his small but resolute band, declared to them his determination of dying in arms rather than yield to the approaching foe. This resolution was hailed with a cheer, and the troops prepared for action. There was a pass between two hills in their rear which opened into a narrow plain. Of this pass Chan Lody took possession, and he had scarcely disposed his order of battle, when the van of the imperialists appeared advancing along a rising valley. His position was a very strong one, being accessible only in front ; the river, which so effectually cut off his retreat, as effectually covering his rear.

The imperial army amounted to upwards of eight thousand men ; Chan Lody's did not exceed as many hundreds. The enemy advanced leisurely onward, and halted within about two furlongs from the pass where the fugitives were so advantageously posted. A message was immediately despatched to Chan Lody, summoning him to surrender. He returned a reply of haughty defiance, and the Emperor's troops advanced to the charge. They were so warmly received that, after a short but vigorous struggle, they were obliged to fall back. Though considerably dispirited by this repulse, relying upon their numbers, they again advanced to the charge with like success.

These attacks were several times repeated with a similar result, until evening terminated the conflict, when the imperialists retired within their camp on the slope of a neighbouring hill. They had suffered severely ; upwards of twelve hundred men having been slain, and nearly double that number wounded. Chan Lody's band had likewise suffered severely. Not more than a hundred and fifty remained unhurt. Three hundred were killed, and

many more desperately wounded ; so that he had nothing more consolatory to look forward to than their utter extermination, as soon as the sanguinary conflict should be renewed.

It was a gloomy prospect. A council was held among the survivors, who unanimously declared their resolution to fight to the last extremity ; but Hussein and Azmut both proposed that their father should attempt the river, and they would secure his retreat.

“ My father,” said Hussein, “ you may still live to avenge your wrongs. Besides, you have been severely wounded in the action of to-day, and your death will therefore be rather a suicide than a sacrifice, if you expose yourself merely to court destruction. You cannot, in your present state, endure the exertion of another conflict. Try the river ; your steed is stout, and may bear you to the shore in safety ; we will cover your retreat.”

“ The danger is equal,” replied Lody ; “ but it is more honourable to die on the field than in the river.”

Still they urged his retreat. “ But can I fly and leave my children ? No ! I will perish on this field. I will never leave my brave sons to meet an honourable death and live to become a mere man of sorrows.”

It was at length agreed, after considerable difficulty, that Chan Lody and one of his sons and daughter should try the river, and the other remain behind to keep the enemy in check until the fugitives had gained the opposite shore.

When this was determined, they separated for the night. With early dawn the brothers were at their posts. As the light was gradually stretching over the distant plain in a broad grey stream, a dispute arose between them which should attack the enemy. Whilst, however, the generous altercation was going on, Perist, who had struck Azmut in the Emperor's presence, appeared at the head of the imperialists.

“ It is decided,” said Azmut ; “ there is my enemy,—especially and personally mine. Hussein, you would not interfere with your brother's privilege to redress his own wrongs. Fly with my father, and leave me to my revenge.”

Saying this, he spurred his horse forward ; and his father, joined by Hussein, plunged into the river.

CHAPTER IV.

CHAN LODY and his son Hussein had great difficulty in stemming the rapid current. Their horses were carried a considerable distance down the stream, and almost exhausted before they reached the opposite bank ; fortunately, the channel was so full that the water was on a level with the land. When they had made good their transit, they shouted to apprise the generous Azmut of their safety, whom, however, they did not see ; for he was engaged in that perilous onset of destruction to which he had so heroically devoted himself.

The father's distress was great when he perceived that Jahanira had not followed them. He concluded that, fearing to encounter the peril of crossing the river, she had resolved to throw herself upon the clemency of the conquerors ; for the defeat of her brother and his small band was certain. Such a resolution, however, was so contrary to her nature that he rejected the supposition almost as soon as he had formed it, and came to the final conclusion that she had determined to share the fate of Azmut. The anxious father hoped, that, should they hear his shouts of safety, they would immediately fly from the unequal contest, and attempt the passage of the river, as he and his elder son had done with unexpected success.

He was not far from right in his judgment concerning Jahanira ; she had remained with Azmut, resolved either to perish or escape with them. No sooner had Chan Lody and Hussein plunged into the stream than Azmut spurred towards the imperialists, who were advancing slowly towards the pass. Seeing him approach, Perist ordered his army to halt, determined to have the satisfaction of slaying him with his own arm. Jahanira had armed herself with a bow and arrows. Following her brother, she

paused when she saw his foe singly advance to meet him. The hardy Calmuc, confiding in his own strength, awaited with a smile of anticipated triumph the coming onset of his impatient enemy.

Azmut was rejoiced to see the halt of the imperial army, as it would render secure the retreat of his father and brother, provided the current of the river did not prove too strong for them. Being upon a light active horse, he passed the usher at speed, and striking at him in full career, inflicted a deep gash on his knee. The Tartar turned, and Azmut wheeling at the same moment, their horses met with a tremendous shock, and the light charger of the latter rolled upon the plain. Its rider was upon his feet in an instant. Perist spurred towards him, but he parried a furious stroke, at the same time springing actively on one side, as his huge adversary attempted to ride him down. His danger, however, was imminent, and the moment critical. Jahanira beheld the peril of her beloved brother. She placed an arrow upon the string of her bow. The Tartar had again advanced upon Azmut, and as he raised his heavy sabre to bury it in the body of his youthful opponent, a shaft, sped with unerring aim, entered his temple, and he dropped dead at his horse's feet.

Azmut saw from whence the succour came, waved his arm in token of acknowledgment, and retreated towards the pass; but being on foot, he was overtaken by a party of the enemy's cavalry before he could reach his followers. The latter, however, rushed forward to his rescue, and for some time a desperate struggle ensued; it was short and decisive. Overwhelmed by numbers, the fugitives were cut off to a man. Azmut slew two Omrahs with his own hands, but was transfixed by a lance as he was in the act of bringing his sword upon the crest of a third. An arrow from the bow of his heroic sister entered the bosom of his destroyer, and she had the satisfaction of witnessing his death-pang while she beheld that of her brother.

Seeing that all was lost, and hearing her father's shouts, she spurred her horse towards the river, discharging several arrows in her flight at the pursuing squadron: the enemy expected that the

water would arrest her flight, and therefore slackened their speed as they approached ; but to their amazement she dashed fearlessly in, and pushed bravely for the opposite shore, upon which stood her father and only surviving brother.

The enemy halted upon the bank in amazement, not daring to attempt the passage. The turbid waters rolled rapidly on, foaming and hissing in their way, as they were occasionally interrupted in their course by the partial sinuosities of the channel. Her horse was slight, but full of fire, and pawed the turbulent stream with an impatient but resolute spirit. The undaunted girl was frequently sucked down by the eddies, but she maintained her seat and rose above them with an intrepidity that amazed while it mortified her hostile spectators. Vexed that she should have eluded them, several archers discharged their arrows at her as she was struggling amidst the perilous element. One shaft hit her on the turban ; this being saturated, repelled it ; but such was the force with which the arrow had been urged, that the turban was struck from her head, exposing it to the cowardly aim of her incensed foes.

By this time she had passed the middle of the channel where the current was strongest, and thus somewhat abated the chances of perishing amidst the troubled waters. Her enemies still continuing to discharge their arrows, as if in derision of their impotent malice, she raised herself in her stirrup, threw back her long raven hair which streamed around her like a fine sable fringe, and waved her arm, bidding them a mute defiance. Her father and brother cheered her from the shore, but her safety was still doubtful. Her horse was fast sinking. Its nose was scarcely perceptible above the agitated surface of the stream. There was but one resource—she flung herself from its back, and the noble animal almost immediately sank.

She was yet a considerable distance from the bank, and the current was still strong. She breasted it, however, with fearless energy, straining every nerve to reach the shore. The foe had ceased to impel their arrows, as she was by this time beyond the reach of anything like a certain aim. She flung her sandals from

her feet as they embarrassed her movements, and in spite of the fierce rush of the stream, she rose above it and gradually advanced towards the bank. It was evident that she would not be able much longer to continue her exertions, and her anxious parent was beginning to entertain his doubts of her eventual escape, when she caught the branch of a tree which was just underneath the surface, and sustained herself until she had recovered her breath. Just below, the bank had given way and formed a sort of frith, in which she finally landed, and was welcomed by her father with a transport of emotion.

When she had sufficiently recovered, Chan Lody could no longer subdue his anxiety to know the fate of his brave son. "And Azmut," he said, "has become a sacrifice to his father's safety, for I see him not."

"Yes," said Jahanira, solemnly, "he has met a soldier's doom. He is gone to the inheritance of the brave."

"God is just ; he did not perish unrevenged."

"No, the man who offered him an indignity in the imperial presence has paid the penalty of his daring. I slew him, father."

"My child!" the parent fell upon his daughter's neck and wept.

"Azmut died with his sword in his hand, reeking with the slaughter of his enemies. His was a noble death,—how much better than an inglorious life!"

Of Chan Lody's followers, three only survived,—the whole had been slain, except five who had plunged into the river a short time before Jahanira. Two had perished in attempting the passage, and three had succeeded in gaining the shore. With this wretched remnant of his little army, he proceeded towards Malwa, halting for the night at a small village about ten leagues from the river. His misfortunes had been severe, but they rather tended to render him resolute than to subdue his unbending spirit. His march into this province was speedy, but sorrowful. The loss of Azmut was a bitter grief. He was the pride of his father's house ;—a mere child in years, he had shown the wisdom of the sage, and the skill in arms of an accomplished warrior. Chan Lody lived but to

avenge his early and premature fate, and the idea of vengeance was a solace to his lacerated spirit.

When he reached Malwa, to the government of which he had been appointed by Shah Jehan, he began to levy troops, and soon found himself at the head of a small but well-disciplined force. His name was formidable throughout the empire, and the late events had obtained for him an almost universal sympathy. He was not, however, permitted to remain long unmolested. Within three weeks after he had crossed the river to avoid the imperial army, the waters had subsided, and his enemies having recruited their forces, advanced to Malwa. He met them in the field, but was defeated, and obliged to retire to the mountains, where he maintained a successful defence, until the monsoon obliged the enemy to retire. Lody had harassed them by frequent surprises, by cutting off their supplies, and by reducing them to such straits that they were finally obliged to leave him in undisturbed possession of the province which the Emperor had placed under his government. They were glad at length to escape the difficulties which he raised around them.

The Emperor was extremely perplexed at Chan Lody's escape. He knew the abilities of that Omrah, and the estimation in which his principles and talents were almost universally held. So long as he lived, the Mogul throne was a contingency. Nothing but the death of Chan Lody could give security to the reign of Shah Jehan. With these impressions, the Emperor determined to destroy that noble, as a maxim of state policy; and therefore, so soon as the monsoon had passed, he despatched a numerous army to drive him from his stronghold in the mountains, and bring him to Agra, alive or dead.

The imperial general was a noble of distinguished reputation, and commanded a numerous and well-appointed army. He encamped within a day's march from the mountains to which Chan Lody had retired for security. Conscious of his numerical superiority, he affected to despise his enemy. On the evening after he had encamped, a nautch-girl entered his presence, soliciting permission to dance before him. Struck with her sin-

gular beauty, she was allowed to exhibit her professional skill in his presence after the evening meal. He did not long enjoy the exhibition of her evolutions. He was taken ill shortly after having swallowed a copious draught of sherbert, and before the morning was a corpse. His mysterious death provoking inquiry, it was immediately ascertained that he had been poisoned. The sudden disappearance of the nautch-girl excited suspicion. She was nowhere to be found. The death of the imperial general soon reached Lody's ears, and all the mysterious circumstances attending it. "I can explain the mystery," said the Omrah's daughter; "I entered the hostile camp in disguise, and poison has removed a foe whose place will not be easily supplied."

The death of their general rendered the imperial army inactive for some time, and gave an opportunity to Lody to escape into the Deccan, where he had powerful friends.

CHAPTER V.

SHAN JEHAH was alarmed at the successful resistance which Chan Lody had made against his armies; but, being determined to crush him, he despatched for this purpose an exterminating force under Eradit, a commander of reputation. The talents of the imperial general, however, could not for a moment stand in competition with those of his adversary. In his flight from Malwa, with a few brave adherents, who continued attached to his fortunes, Lody foiled all the attempts of the Mogul troops, which pursued him to the number of twelve thousand. He harassed them by night attacks—cut off their supplies—fortified himself in the passes of the hills—until the enemy, wearied by long and difficult marches, roads almost impracticable, and constant watching to escape the assaults of a vigilant enemy, at length gave up the pursuit, and allowed the rebel, as they styled him, to continue his journey unmolested; after which he passed into Golconda, and presented himself before the Nizam at Dowlatabad.

The Nizam granted him protection, which was a source of extreme mortification to the Emperor, who, knowing the abilities of Lody, was fearful that he might offer a successful resistance to the imperial arms with the resources which his powerful ally would place at his disposal. He saw that there was no time to be lost, as delay would only enable his foe to unite the jarring interests of the Deccan princes, who were all avowed enemies to the house of Timour. He determined, therefore, to follow Eradit in person, with a numerous reinforcement. The Emperor's arrival in the Deccan had a sinister influence upon the cause of the magnanimous Lody. The refractory princes knew their sovereign's abilities, and dreaded his power. As they saw a storm impending, each fearing that it might fall upon himself, withdrew his aid from him to whom they had promised assistance, and all returned to their allegiance.

Shah Jehan, enraged with the Nizam for having received his enemy, determined to humble that haughty prince. He therefore despatched three armies against Dowlatabad: one under Eradit, amounting to twenty-five thousand men, and two others, of the same strength, under the separate commands of Raja Gop Singh and Shaista Chan.

For some time, through the talents of Chan Lody, the Nizam's troops baffled every attempt against his capital. According to his former policy, Lody had secured the passes of the mountains, and upon one occasion, rushing down upon Eradit, at the head of twelve thousand men, he defeated him with great slaughter, and obliged him to retire out of the province. This so exasperated Shah Jehan, that he suspended Eradit from the command, and put the army under that of his Vizier, whose reputation as a general considerably damped the ardour of the Nizam's forces. Lody still retained possession of the passes, from which every effort hitherto made to dislodge him had proved ineffectual.

Prince Morad accompanied the Vizier. His love for the heroic daughter of the refractory Omrah had not abated. Her beauty had at first forged a fetter round his heart, and her heroism riveted the chain.

One night, after a day of severe skirmishing with the enemy, Jahanira, who always followed her father to the field, had quitted her tent to breathe the fresh air of heaven. The night dews fell upon her burning brow and cooled her brain, which ached with the concurring excitement of bodily exertion and mental anxiety.

She saw that the arm of destiny was raised to smite. She wept. Her father's wrongs were not yet half avenged. That very day the Nizam had withdrawn his forces, and abandoned his brave ally, with whom there remained only a few hundred followers, to contend with an army of above eighty thousand men. The Nizam had submitted to the Vizier, and Lody was left without a single friend. Jahanira perceiving that his determination to die in arms was shortly to be realised, resolved to go with him to the peace of a less distracted world.

Absorbed in the intensity of these reflections, she had wandered beyond the boundary of the camp. The night was still and balmy; fresh dews descended from the hills, and moistened her blanched cheek, which was fanned by the passing breeze. The distant cries of jackals interrupted at intervals the repose of this solemn scene; and the lulling gush of a stream, which flowed through a neighbouring ravine, suited the melancholy temper of her spirit at this hour of darkness and of silence. She strolled onward thoughtfully. Raising her eyes to the side of a hill, where a narrow path diverged from the main road, she saw a figure emerge from a clump of trees, and stand in complete relief against the sky. She drew her dagger, and, approaching cautiously, cried, "Who's there?" at the same moment springing forward, and standing with her drawn crease within a few yards of the intruder.

"Jahanira!" exclaimed a voice, which she instantly recognised to be that of Morad.

"Why this intrusion, prince? Are you come a spy upon our path? Can the foe so fear to approach the bayed lion, that he is obliged to resort to stratagem? Locusts, prince, will desolate a country by the mere force of numbers: your armies may likewise overwhelm Chan Lody, but you will not subdue him."

"I come not as a spy, lady," replied Morad earnestly, "but to

renew my vows of eternal attachment to the noblest woman in the universe. If the lovely Jahanira will accept an alliance with the family of Timour, and become the wife of Morad, her father may be restored to his honours and influence in the state. All that is past will be forgotten."

"Nay, prince, what is past can never be forgotten. The death of Azmut, and the degradation of my parent, are scored with a fiery brand upon my heart, and cannot be erased. I have seen my brother slain—I have seen my father wronged. In this world, but one object remains to me and mine—revenge! We are a doomed family, Prince Morad; we shall perish together. There is no alternative between that and yielding our allegiance to a tyrant. The latter we shall never do; the former must be our destiny. We are prepared; but they who die desperately, with weapons in their hands, are to be dreaded. Let the oppressor tremble."

"Jahanira! why should this be? I come to offer you freedom—to raise you to a dignity which you were born to adorn."

"Freedom! Prince Morad? I have been free—I am free—I will be free—and there is no dignity higher than being the daughter of Chan Lody. Retire! this secret communication neither befits you to make, nor me to encourage. Why skulk under the cover of night to an enemy's tents? Leave me, or I shall be compelled to treat you as a foe."

"I came under the cover of night to avoid suspicion of treachery in the imperial camp. I have incurred some hazard, lady, in coming hither to declare myself, to release you and your family from certain death, and to offer you the heart of an Emperor's son."

"Which I reject, prince; for however I might respect the son of a tyrant, I never could wed him. My resolve is immutable. To-morrow, in the battle, remember that the daughter of Chan Lody has dared to reject the son of Shah Jehan!"

Morad was in the act of speaking, when she turned from him, waved her hand with an air of haughty courtesy, and ascended the hill towards her tent. Upon reaching it, she threw herself on

her couch, agitated by a tumult of conflicting feelings. Prince Morad's affection for her was not to be thought of without emotion ; she had rejected him—even with bitterness, yet he had twice saved her life ; but every other feeling was merged in her filial obligations.

“He is the son of my parent's worst foe,” she said mentally ; “I am therefore bound to withhold all feelings towards him but those of enmity.”

Morad was deeply mortified at the issue of his adventure. He had run the risk of incurring a base suspicion from his own party, and of being seized as a spy by the enemy, only to meet a cold and bitter repulse. He could not, however, withhold his admiration from the woman whose affections he sought to win, though she had met his advances with uniform haughtiness. He saw that hers was, in truth, as she had characterized it, a doomed family, and it grieved him that he could not rescue them from destruction.

Chan Lody's followers were reduced to a mere troop ; and, however strong his position, it was evident that he must eventually yield to such an immense majority of numbers. Morad dreaded the approaching onslaught. By daybreak the pass was to be stormed by the imperial army, and there could be no doubt of the issue. He would have laid down his life to rescue Jahanira from the impending doom, but this could not be.

Day dawned : the pass was attacked, and the imperialists were repulsed with great slaughter. Jahanira appeared among the combatants, fighting with a hero's energy. The pass was again attacked ; repulse followed as before, with immense loss on the side of the assailants. Lody's small band, however, was diminished by every fresh attack, and he was at length obliged to abandon the pass, with only a few followers. Descending into the plain on the other side of the mountain, he resolved there to await the coming of the foe, and fulfil his resolution of dying in arms. He was not allowed long to pause after he had quitted the hills. The imperial troops appeared in sight, and he prepared himself for the sacrifice.

Summoning his brave adherents, now amounting only to thirty-two, in which number was included his son Hussein and his daughter Jahanira, he addressed them with much earnestness, suggesting that they would seek their own safety in flight, and leave him to die alone by the hand of an implacable enemy. When he had concluded his pathetic address, there was a general murmur of sorrow. Not a man would stir. All expressed their determination to die in arms with their beloved leader. "Then be it so," said Lody; "our enemies shall still find that a few valiant men are formidable even to the last, and their destruction a dear-bought triumph."

The imperialists advanced in a large body towards the devoted band, who suffered them to approach within a hundred paces, when they discharged their matchlocks, which, being directed with deadly aim, did signal execution. The moment after the discharge, veiled for a moment by the smoke, Jahanira spurred her horse towards the advancing host. As she rode, she fixed an arrow in the string of her bow, and discharged it at the officer who led the detachment. It struck upon a small conical buckler with which he was armed, and the reed quivered as the head of the shaft pierced the tough buffalo hide that covered it. At this moment a ball from a matchlock entered the heroine's breast. She fell from her horse. The blood trickled from the wound. Morad rushed forward to raise her. She opened her languid eyes as he lifted her to his knee, fixed them on him with a look of stern despair, heaved a deep-felt sigh, and fell upon his shoulder—dead.

Chan Lody saw what passed. He gave the word to advance. His followers spurred their horses onward, and in a few moments came in contact with their foes. The onset was short but desperate. Hussein was struck to the earth by a stroke from Morad's sword, who felt no tender mercy for the brother of her whom he would have saved at the sacrifice of his own life. Her death had roused the fiercer energies of his spirit. Hussein fell beneath his arm.

The valour of Chan Lody's followers astonished their enemies.

They scattered death and dismay around them. Chan Lody slew no less than six officers with his own hand. He was at length disabled by a sabre-cut on the shoulder ; he dropped his sword, and was instantly surrounded and slain. He died with his eyes fixed upon the broad heavens—a smile was on his lips—the left arm grasped a dagger. His adherents fought to the last man—not one survived ; but the victors purchased a dear victory—the death of Chan Lody was signally avenged.



HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

Heg. 1068 (A. D. 1658).—Aurungzebe ascended the imperial throne of the Moguls. He was alarmed by the approach of his nephew, Soliman Sheko, who was finally deserted by his army, and obliged to take refuge in Serinagur. Soliman despatched a messenger to his father Dara, with the news of his ill-fortune. Dara, distressed at his son's misfortunes and his own, retreated from the banks of the Suttulege, on which he was encamped, and shortly after retired to Lahore, whence he was obliged to fly before the imperial army. Several of his nobles, perceiving his desperate circumstances, submitted to Aurungzebe. The Vizier, Meer Jumla, having arrived at court, Aurungzebe marched to Moulton; but finding his presence necessary in the capital, immediately returned to prepare against the invasion of his brother Suja.

Heg 1069 (1659).—Suja approached with a considerable army, but was met near Allahabad by the Emperor. In consequence of the treachery of Jesswint Singh, Suja was defeated with great slaughter; and taking flight, was pursued by the Emperor's son Mahomed, who followed him to Patna, whither he had fled in disguise. Upon the news of Suja's defeat, Dara retired to Bicker beyond the Indus. Having changed his course to Tatta, he crossed the desert, and after reaching Guzarat, gained over the governor to his interests. He here contrived to raise an army, and marched towards Agra; but was deceived by Jesswint Singh, who had promised to join him with a numerous body of forces, but treacherously deserted Dara, and joined Aurungzebe. Dara fortified himself in Ajmere. Hither the Emperor marched and offered him battle, and deceived his unfortunate brother by a stratagem; after which he routed his army, and reduced him to the most pitiable distress. Dara fled to the desert accompanied by his wife, who died under circumstances of dreadful privation on the march. The unhappy prince in his extremity sought the protection of Jihon Chan, an Omrah of great power, whose life had been twice saved during the sovereignty of Shah Jehan through the influence of Dara; Jihon delivered him into the hands of the conqueror; he was paraded with every mark of ignominy through Delhi, confined in a neighbouring village, and eventually put to death by order of Aurungzebe. Suja took the field after the death of his brother Dara, and was joined by the Emperor's son, Mahomed, who had conceived a passion for one of his daughters. Suja was finally defeated by the Vizier Jumla, and the prince Mahomed detached from

him by the artifices of his father, who ordered the unfortunate Suja to be seized and imprisoned.

Heg. 1070 (1660).—Suja was obliged to take refuge in Arracan, where he was murdered, and his family reduced to the greatest extremity.

Heg. 1071 (1661).—Soliman, the son of Dara, was seized through the artifices of Aurungzebe, and sent to Delhi. He was imprisoned in the fortress of Gualior, and, like his unfortunate father, shortly after murdered. During this year a dreadful famine raged throughout the empire.

Heg. 1072 (1662).—The imperial general, Shaista Chan, took one of Sevajee's hill-forts by flying a kite which concealed a blind match over the fort just at the moment the garrison were taking powder from the magazine. The kite was allowed to drop upon the powder, which was kindled by the match, and an explosion took place; the greater part of the fort was thrown down, and nearly the whole garrison buried in the ruins.

Heg. 1073 (1663).—An attempt was made by the Marajah to assassinate Shaista Chan, who escaped with the loss of three fingers; but his son was slain.

Heg. 1074 (1664).—Aurungzebe fell sick, and his son Shah Allum began to intrigue for the throne; but his efforts were foiled by the Emperor's unexpected recovery. Shah Allum was appointed to a command in the Deccan, in order to remove him from the capital.

Heg. 1075 (1665).—A dangerous insurrection broke out in Guzarat, and was quelled with difficulty. This year was distinguished by the death of Jumla, who had been appointed to the government of Bengal. Jumla was a man of great talent, having risen from a very low station to the highest offices in the state. He was much esteemed by Aurungzebe for his abilities, but still more dreaded than esteemed. During this year also there was an insurrection of Fakeers, who, under the influence of a very wealthy old woman, committed dreadful ravages, and marched to the number of twenty thousand towards the capital. Their march was marked by the most horrible cruelties. They totally defeated the imperial troops commanded by the collector of the revenue. At length the Emperor subdued them with their own weapons: employing the juggles of pretended enchantment, the insurrection was quelled, but not until almost every one of the enthusiasts had been slain.

Heg. 1076 (1666).—This year was remarkable for the death of Shah Jehan, and the capture of Sevajee, chief of the Mahrattas, who from the seventeenth year of his age had been pursuing a career of success almost unparalleled in the history of potentates. From commanding a small band of mountain robbers, he had raised himself to be the leader of a formidable army, with which he awed the surrounding provinces. He was at length taken prisoner by the imperial general, and confined at Delhi, whence he contrived to escape disguised in the dress of a man who had been admitted into his apartment with a basket of flowers. After enduring unparalleled hardships, he reached his

native mountains, where he was crowned sovereign of the Mahrattas, who from that period gradually increased in political importance, till they became the most numerous and influential of the native powers in India. They produced several distinguished warriors, among whom the names of Scindia and Holcar will be remembered so long as history has its records, and man the capacity to peruse them.



The Rebolt of the Fakeers.

CHAPTER I.

ABOUT noon, under the scorching beams of a tropical sun, a young Mussulman was on his way towards the Mewat hills, accompanied by a party of fakeers. His hands were bound behind him with his turban, and he had nothing on his head but a silk skull-cap to resist the intense rays which shot from the cloudless heavens in an uninterrupted stream of glowing light. His black hair, which was long and bushy, fell over his shoulders and temples; thus supplying a natural protection against the influence of the solar fires, which were almost insupportable. He was urged onward by his companions at a rate which the excessive heat rendered extremely distressing, though to them it appeared mere matter of pastime. Accustomed as they were to undergo the severest bodily inflictions, what to him was positive torture was to them a relaxation from it.

Every one of his companions was perfectly naked, and each bore the marks of having submitted to the torturing process of some dreadful penance. Their limbs were sunken and fleshless, the skin shrivelled and discoloured by the severity of those torments to which their bodies had been exposed. Their nails protruded and curved into a point over the fingers and toes, like the claws of a beast of prey. Their hair, matted with the filthy accumulations of years, hung over the backs of these Mahomedan Nazarites, like the locks from a Medusa's head, and was frequently

so thick as to shroud them in a capillary veil, revolting to more than one sense, and agreeable to none. They were armed with huge clubs, the heads of which were charged with iron. These they used with considerable dexterity, being in the habit of employing them in the jungles for the purpose of destroying small game, upon which they frequently feasted with a gluttonous zest that would have shamed even the Roman Apicius.

“Ay,” said one, eyeing their prisoner with a look of Satanic triumph, “naked men know how to fight. Devotion is their shield, which all the outcasts from Paradise shall never be able to pierce.”

“I am in your power,” replied the captive; “but beware how you exercise your momentary ascendancy. Your foul revolt will not escape its due punishment: in spite of your devotion you will suffer the penalty—torture me for a false prophet else. Success has turned your brains. The war waged by enthusiasm is like a sudden burst of the tempest, which crushes the oak in its impetuous sweep, but quickly passes away; the surrounding plain springs out into renewed luxuriance and beauty, and thus smiles at the impotence of the hurricane.”

“Hold, blasphemer!” cried a huge gaunt devotee, the bones of whose joints were heard to clatter as he wielded his fleshless arms with the most extravagant gesticulations; “bend the knee to those holy men who have defeated the sons of darkness, and are about to place upon the throne of the Moguls a queen who shall close the dynasty of Timour, and fill the world with the children of the faithful,—for you are all aliens from the true stock.”

The prisoner turned from this filthy saint with an expression of disgust, and allowed him to rail at the Emperor and all his faithful subjects till he foamed like a gored bull with the frantic energy of his vociferations.

They now entered upon a scene of desolation not to be witnessed without deep emotion, which naturally follows wherever the melancholy consciousness arises that a vast addition has been made to the sum of human misery. For leagues, as they pro-

ceeded onward, nothing was to be seen but deserted villages ; the whole country having been laid waste, and bearing the appearance of "a land not inhabited." The jungles had been fired ; and for miles the ashes left by the devouring element, and the charred trunks of trees, which had for centuries lifted their sturdy limbs amid the feebler growth of the forest, showed how terrific had been the conflagration. Not a shrub, not a blade of grass, not a single trace of vegetation, was anywhere visible ; and as the stranger cast his eyes over the scene of devastation, he could not help expressing his indignation against the perpetrators of such wanton outrage.

"Ay," said one of the enthusiasts ; "we take care not to provide forage for enemies ; they who visit the stronghold of the fakeers, must make up their minds to take a hungry journey. If ever you live to see your friends, you will have strange news to tell them, believe me. When holy men seize the sword, and fight in carnal battles, no mortal arm can resist them. We have taught your sovereign what it is to oppose Heaven's vicegerents. He is already tottering on his throne. You shall see and know more anon."

The orgre-like being who spoke had taken so much opium during the journey thus far, as to have reached that pitch of excitement to which, when a fakeer arrives, he can submit to bodily tortures altogether incredible. His eyes glared with the glassy radiance of incipient madness. Though the heat was intolerable, and the earth steamed with the intensity of the sun's rays, like exhalations from a caldron, he leaped about, and threw himself into a thousand contortions, until his body was covered with a tawny scum from the severity of his exercise. After he had fatigued himself by these violent antics, he took a number of large needles, and having passed them through the flesh in several parts of his body, threaded them with silks of various colours, and then strutted before the party with the pride and bearing of one conscious of having performed an act for which he should receive the homage of his companions, who treated him with a reverence evidently very flattering to the spiritual vanity of this

mad visionary. Having at length relieved himself from the needles, he drew the silken strings through the wounds, and then attaching to each a small pointed instrument, exceedingly sharp, turned himself round until the rotation became so violent that the outline of his figure was scarcely distinguishable. When he ceased, his body was covered with gashes and reeking with blood.

After six hours of continued travelling, with scarcely a pause, the party arrived at the foot of a small hill, which had evidently been spared from the devastation that exhibited so sad a prospect in the surrounding country. The prisoner, though overcome by the excessive fatigue of so arduous a journey, was not allowed to pause, but compelled to proceed up the ascent. About midway a considerable ruin was disclosed, upon which the last rays of the sun slanted, as it was sinking behind the low hills that skirted the distant plain. The entrance was lofty, and encumbered with fragments of pillars, which time or violence had thrown down. Within was an extensive area; on every side of it were gigantic sculptures, representing the history of some Hindoo superstition, which had been greatly mutilated by the zeal of pious Mahomedans. This building was a dilapidated choultry, and had been converted into the vestibule of the abode of an old crone, bending beneath the weight of years, and mistress of inexhaustible treasures.

In this hall, Bistamia, which was the hag's name, was engaged in preparing the evening meal for her beggarly dependants—a thing she invariably did with her own hands. During the culinary process she appeared to mutter certain incantations over the smoking viands, which consisted of the most revolting ingredients.

When the stranger was brought before her, she eyed him with that haggard, feeble scowl peculiar to wicked old age, in which is exhibited the will, but not the power, of the demon. Her deformed and decrepit body was bare to the waist, and presented a loathsome image of living mortality.

What an antidote to the vanity of youth and the pride of beauty! Her white locks streamed over her brown, withered

shoulders, exhibiting one of those repelling contrasts which the eye cannot gaze upon without instinctively closing. Her skin hung from her like the dewlap of a sacred bull, but flaccid and bloodless, as if the principle of life were withdrawn from it. The nails of her fingers had grown into claws, and seemed as if they could distil poison, like those of the Egyptian lizard.*

“Her eyes with scalding rheum were galled and red,”

and her whole appearance seemed to speak “variety of wretchedness.” She approached the stranger, eyed him with a look of intense malice, and said—

“Who are you, son of a dog? How came you within these walls?”

“I am,” replied the stranger, “an officer of the imperial army, who, upon the issue of an unsuccessful encounter with your insurgent fanatics, have fallen into their hands. How I came within these walls, they will best explain to you.”

“Hah! an enemy! You shall soon learn how we treat enemies when they profane our sanctuary. Would you save your life!”

“I have no desire to die.”

“Ay, the burden of every coward’s song. Fall down, then, at our feet, and hail us Queen of the Moguls.”

“The Moguls were never ruled by women.”

“Say you so? We shall see. Bind him to yonder statue.”

Her order was speedily executed, and the hag began to prepare the last dish of the evening’s refection. This was a medley, fit only for the stomachs of ghoules or devils. It happened to be a certain day of the moon, and on this day the same mixture was always placed before her retainers. The first thing she ordered to be brought, when about to make her infernal stew, was the trunk of a human body, which had been conveyed for this very purpose from the scene of slaughter. She deliberately cut large pieces from the fleshy parts; these she divided into small squares,

* The Gecco.

with slow, calculating precision, and then placed them severally in a human skull that stood beside her. Having covered them with a layer of herbs that had been gathered under certain influences of the moon, she took from a covered basket a hooded snake, from the jaws of which the poisonous fangs had been previously extracted, and placed it alive in the skull. To this she added the legs of a frog, the tail of a lizard, the head of a bat, and the claws of an owl. Having placed the skull, with its contents, in a capacious earthen vessel, in which there was a sufficient quantity of water to complete the dressing, she put it upon the fire, and watched it with eager anxiety, muttering to herself a sort of mystical chant during the entire period of the cooking. The smoke ascended in volumes from the flame over which this disgusting mess was hanging, and soon filled the whole chamber with a thick and suffocating cloud.

The mode of hanging the earthenware vessel over the blaze was as remarkable as any part of the singular process. Two fakeers stood on either side of the fire, an iron bar resting upon the shoulders of each, from which the mysterious stew was suspended above the flame.

When sufficiently dressed, the skull was taken from the earthenware receptacle; its contents were put upon square pieces of plantain leaf, and the portions placed before each fakeer present, who devoured them with a greediness that made the prisoner's heart leap up to his throat.

The idea of those wretched enthusiasts was, that this abominable meal would have the surprising effect not only of rendering them fearless in the day of battle, but of inspiring their enemies with such terror that they would not dare to approach them; that, moreover, it would cause them to become invisible when engaged with their foes, who would thus fall an easy prey to persons so supernaturally endowed.

A portion of a mess which had been previously prepared was offered to the prisoner; but he rejected it with disgust, and partook only of some plain boiled rice, which somewhat refreshed him after so long and toilsome a journey.

When they had concluded their evening's repast, Bistamia retired from the scene of this extraordinary carousal, and the fakeers, flinging themselves upon the bare ground, without the slightest covering, were soon hushed in profound repose. The opium, in which they had indulged to excess, rendered their sleep so heavy that it seemed like the deep slumber of death. The flames, by which the chamber had been illumined, subsided by degrees, and the gloom of silence and darkness gradually succeeded.

CHAPTER II.

THE Mogul was left chained to one of the statues on the side-wall, when the fakeers betook themselves to their night's repose: the chain by which he was fastened only enabled him to seat himself upon the floor. He could not lay his body at full length, and was therefore obliged to lean his back against the figure to which he was attached. In that position he tried for some time to sleep, but without effect; feverish and distracting thoughts obtruded. His reflections were of the most melancholy character. He was surrounded by a body of enthusiasts, into whose power he had fallen, and who would very probably doom him to some cruel death, by way of celebrating the orgies of their sanguinary superstition. Fanatics are the worst of tyrants; who, alas! too often do the work of the devil, whilst they fancy themselves working in the service of their God. In proportion as the infatuation takes possession of their minds, they become cruel towards all such as they imagine seceders from the worship of that deity of whom they claim to be vicegerents, and see no virtue but in those who, like themselves, have been inoculated with the rabies of spiritual enthusiasm. In every age of the world, in every country, and among all communities, that sort of enthusiasm which claims exclusive spiritual endowment, and pretends to supernatural communications, is the greatest bane against which

pure Religion has ever had to contend. It invests her in a factitious garb that conceals while it arrays her. False zeal has driven more from the true fold than have fallen victims to the slaughter of war, the inroads of pestilence, or the devastations of famine. No one is driven into the paths of peace, or scourged into the embrace of virtue. All men are won to good by its own sweet suggestions, by gentle implorations, by the light and fragrant blessings which it offers to those who properly seek to possess them; not by those terrible denunciations which scare the timid, offend the proud, and provoke the contempt of the reckless.

The prisoner was pursuing these reflections with a melancholy sense of his present condition. He gazed round the apartment to see if he might encourage any hopes of escape. The embers yet glowing upon the stone floor, threw a sickly light around, which only rendered the remote gloom of the chamber still more murky. The fakeers, who were stretched at length near the smouldering fire, looked like so many semi-monsters under the power of enchantment. Their hard breathing, the only symptom of life which they exhibited, sufficiently indicated the intensity of their slumber, that seemed to have been rendered more profound by the horrible meal of which they had partaken just before they gave themselves up to the enjoyments of "nature's sweet restorer."

The prisoner, closing his eyes, tried to conjure up images before the speculum of his mind more agreeable than those realities upon which it was an agony to gaze;—finally overcome by bodily fatigue and mental exhaustion, he fell into an unquiet sleep.

His slumber was at length disturbed by the pressure of a gentle grasp upon his arm. He opened his eyes and perceived that there was an object standing between him and the light, which had already begun to dispel the gloom of the capacious apartment in which he lay. Unable to guess what such a visit could portend, he remained motionless, though not entirely without some painful apprehensions of mischief. After an interval of a few moments, the hand was removed from his arm and placed upon his brow. The tender pressure, the smoothness of the palm, the feminine

texture and delicate movement of the fingers, convinced him in an instant that it was the hand of woman, but not of her whom he had looked upon the previous evening with a loathing so absolute that his very blood curdled, and whose fingers would have rather pressed upon his forehead like the hard-pointed talons of a harpy, than with the soft and thrilling impress of an angel's touch.

That touch made every nerve thrill with emotion. The stranger leaned over him as if to hear from his breathing whether he slept profoundly or not. Her breath was as the air of Paradise. He could not be mistaken. There was an inexplicable but infallible sympathy which assured him,—with that mysterious power of conviction communicated how we know not, but still more powerful than any arising from positive testimony,—that the being before him was something far above the ordinary level of human nature. He listened instinctively to catch the music of her voice; his breath was for the moment suspended lest the least sound from her lips should escape his ear. He was in a waking trance, the more delicious from its succeeding to reflections which had so painfully harassed him.

“Stranger!” at length said a soft voice in a tone that seemed to come from the throat of a Peri.

“Who is it that calls me?” asked the prisoner, in a scarcely audible whisper.

“One who has compassion upon your condition, and would give you the means of freedom if you are disposed to embrace them.”

“Shall we not be overheard by those holy sleepers who are lying round yonder embers?”

“No; they are lapped in too profound a slumber to be easily roused.”

“To whom do I address myself?”

“To the granddaughter of Bistamia, who would escape with you the most odious of all slaveries. You will, no doubt, be surprised that I speak thus freely to a stranger, but mine is a desperate position, and I seek its alleviation under any circumstances.

To-morrow, when the fakeers shall have quitted these walls, which they will do to engage the Emperor's troops, I may see you again. I have sought you now to apprise you that a friend is at hand, bent upon your release. To-morrow we meet—farewell!" And her aerial figure glided through the gloom, without leaving the faintest echo of her footsteps, like a bright mist in a summer eve over the surface of a calm lake, upon which the mountains have projected their gigantic shadows.

Shortly after the morning had cast its fresh light into the gloomy hall the fakeers awoke, and rising from their hard bed, each with a sudden motion of the different limbs, caused the joints to snap with a sound like the cracking of nuts in rapid succession; after which they seated themselves, crossed their legs, and began to smoke, passing the tube from mouth to mouth, every one inhaling the luxurious narcotic from the same instrument. After a while *Distamia* entered.

"Come," said she, "'tis time you were on your way. The Emperor's troops were encamped last night beyond the country over which we have passed with the scourge of our power. They will be on their march by this time. You must all fight, and wrap the souls of your foes in the black veil of terror. Who undergoes the penance this morning?"

Without uttering a word, one of the fakeers who had accompanied the Mogul on the day of his capture, and rendered himself conspicuous by passing needles through his flesh, rose from his recumbent position, and, with an expression of callous indifference, advanced towards the spot where the flame had brightly blazed on the preceding evening. Rubbing two smooth pieces of a black-grained wood rapidly together, he kindled a tuft of dry grass on which some brushwood had been placed, and upon this several dry logs. A strong fire was soon burning, into which the devotee placed a long cylindrical rod of iron. In the course of a few moments it became red hot. When in this state he placed the point of the rod against his cheek, and deliberately pressed it until it had passed through his tongue, and was visible on the other side. It was then bent down on either cheek, towards the shoulder,

forming three sides of a square, to prevent the possibility of its being withdrawn. The stern composure of his countenance did not relax a single instant during the revolting infliction. His companions looked upon him with fatuitous admiration, making him the most solemn obeisance after the odious penance had been concluded.

The man next deliberately opened the wounds which he had made on the previous day, and passed different coloured strings through them. Thus adorned, he declared himself ready to go forth in his own invincible might, and crush the enemies of his venerable patron. Bistamia placed a golden boon within his half-closed hand, upon which he grinned as well as his locked jaws would permit, and was about to quit the place accompanied by his companions, when the hag said with a savage laugh: "On your return you shall enjoy a rare pastime with yonder son of a scurvy dog: I will reserve him for your merriment. A little easy blood-spilling without labour will be a relaxation, after the fatigue of making carrion in the gross. Go and prosper—slay and spare not!" They made their salaam, departed, and the prisoner was once more left to his own solitary reflections.

About noon, his visitor of the night approached him. As she advanced, the lightness of her step, and the buoyant elasticity of every motion of her frame, proclaimed the beauty which he had already anticipated. In a few moments, a lovely girl, in the very birth and freshness of womanhood, stood before him. She was young and beautiful as the morning stars when they sang together at the birth of creation. Her breath seemed impregnated with spicy perfume wafted on gentlest airs from the shores of Arabia the Happy. It invested her in an atmosphere of its own.

Her eyes were dark—of the deepest hue, but brilliant as gems, and soft as the soul of which they were eloquent interpreters. Her hair was raised in a cone on the top of her head, and confined by a long silver pin, giving increased altitude to her majestic figure, and exposing the whole of her finely-arched forehead to the rapturous gaze of the Mogul.

"I would not have escaped this captivity for worlds!" he cried,

as she stood beside him in the plenitude of her almost unearthly beauty.

"Stranger," she replied, "have you the courage to bear me from the house of bondage, if I free you from your chains?"

"Try me; and if I fail to realise your wishes, cast me back again to my prison, and gall my limbs with the fetters from which I should no longer deserve to be free."

She bent over him, and released his hands from the manacles that confined them, and he stood before her disencumbered of his bonds.

"Listen," cried the beautiful girl, "while I unfold to you the miserable position in which I stand. My grandmother has given me as a concubine to the fakeer who this morning underwent the penance which you witnessed. On his return from the battle he will claim me. I need scarcely tell you that I entertain towards him a disgust so intrinsic and unconquerable, that I am determined to die by my own hands rather than become the instrument of that man's pleasures. Upon you my hopes are fixed to release me from this horrible alternative. To-night, when the fakeers shall be hushed in sleep after their debauch, in which they are sure to indulge, we may fly from these detested walls. Meanwhile, you must resume your chains. You will now have the power of casting them off when you please. At midnight I will again visit you, prepared to fly with you from the most odious persecution to that freedom which I shall rely upon your honour for securing to me."

The sound of footsteps induced her to depart; and Bistamia entered, followed by several fakeers, who announced another defeat of the imperial troops by the naked army of an old woman.

"'Tis well," she cried; "to-morrow I shall place myself at the head of my brave followers for a final victory, and the imperial sceptre shall shortly be swayed by a wiser head than ever surmounted the shoulders of an Emperor."

In the course of that evening, the abode of Bistamia was filled with her victorious enthusiasts, who encouraged her absurd pretensions to the Mogul throne.

CHAPTER III.

AT midnight the granddaughter of Bistamia entered the dreary vestibule, and approaching the prisoner, he immediately released himself from his bonds. Several fakeers were sleeping in a distant part of the chamber, and among them the fanatic who had passed the red-hot iron through his cheek. The captive had scarcely cast aside his chains, when the fakeer started to his feet, and rushed forward like a demon. His appearance was beyond description hideous. The wound in his tongue, in which the iron rod was still fixed, prevented him from articulating; thus his efforts to speak were followed by unintelligible sounds, so discordant, that they seemed to come from the throat of some monstrous wild beast yet unknown to man. His eyes flashed with the lurid glow of a live coal, dimmed by the cold air, and the fires of which are fast fading. Some half-consumed logs still burnt upon the floor, where they had been kindled to prepare the evening's meal as before, and afforded sufficient light to show the ferocious aspect of this truculent visionary. He seized the trembling girl in his arms, for this was the monster to whose embraces she was to be devoted by her grandmother, and was about to bear her off, when the Mogul raised his chain, and, hitting him with all his force upon the temple, struck him to the earth. The wretched man gave a horrible howl as he fell; this was accompanied with a smothered groan, and all was still. The floor was almost instantly covered with his blood. The temporal artery had been divided with the force of the blow, and he lay dead before his intended victims.

The other fakeers had by this time advanced and seized the prisoner, who prostrated two of the fanatics with his chain before they could succeed in binding him. Bistamia was summoned. When she saw her favourite dead, she shrieked like a maniac, and staggering towards her granddaughter, laid her skinny fingers upon the latter's shoulders, and looking into her eyes as if she would work a demon's spell upon her, cursed her with a loud and bitter imprecation.

“Thou shalt die before to-morrow’s sun goes to his rest, and thy accomplice with thee. The expiring groans of both shall swell the song of to-morrow’s triumph. Chain them to yonder wall.”

This order was instantly obeyed; they were each chained to a figure in recesses of the wall, about twelve feet apart. They could just see each other. A guard of fakeers was placed over them. They were not allowed to converse. Those ferocious bigots took delight in dwelling upon the horrible tortures to which the Mogul was to be exposed, by way of signalling their contemplated victory on the morrow. They felt a savage joy in exciting their prisoner’s terrors; and the tears of the beautiful girl, who had become the companion of his captivity, only excited their stony hearts to fresh insults.

Next morning, just as Bistamia was prepared to quit the vestibule for the purpose of heading her army of fanatics, a messenger entered, informing her that the Emperor had employed magical incantations, in order to secure her defeat.

She was startled at this intelligence: Aurungzebe’s known sanctity led her to fear that a spiritual warfare pursued by him would be likely to turn the tide of success against her.

“What are the methods of the enemy’s sorcery?” asked the hag.

“He has delivered to each soldier in his army a small billet, written with his own hand, and, as it is supposed, with his own blood, containing magical incantations. He has moreover ordered similar billets to be carried upon the point of a spear before each squadron, which the soldiers are persuaded will counteract the enchantments of their enemies; so that they are advancing with a degree of enthusiasm which I fear will be irresistible.”

Bistamia was perplexed, for she had sagacity enough to perceive that the same credulity which had induced Aurungzebe’s troops to believe in the witchcraft of an old woman, would give them at least equal confidence in the pretended charm of their Emperor.

“Well, should they drive us to the foot of this mountain, the stronghold behind will defy them: a few resolute spirits may defend the hill from a host; and success has given courage to the

army of the fakeers. They will protect their potentate to the last drop of their blood."

"But where is our leader?"

"Dead."

"A bad omen of success!"

"Will not the presence of Bistamia inspirit the naked armies of Paradise, for thither they are on their way through a pilgrimage of warfare, to crush the outcasts? We shall teach them yet a terrible lesson. Come—to the field, and mind"—turning to the fakeers who had charge of the captives—"you look with a vigilant eye upon those doomed offenders who shall expiate their crimes with their blood. This night their death-pangs shall record our triumph."

Dashing her long pale locks from her withered forehead, she seized a dagger and staggered from the spot.

She had some reason for the confidence she expressed in the strength of the place selected for her abode. The hill was steep, and accessible only by a single path. By rolling down huge stones upon the heads of a besieging force, a few resolute men might defend the ascent against multitudes. This had been already done with fatal success. Beyond the vestibule, in which the two prisoners were confined, was an extensive range of apartments, hollowed out of the living rock. The entrance was from the ruin, through a long passage only fifteen inches wide and thirty feet in length, cut through the solid stone, and protected by a sort of massive iron portcullis, which was let down about the centre, and raised or lowered by means of heavy chains. The dimensions of the excavations beyond were prodigious; there being cavern after cavern, in which were deposited immense treasures of various descriptions, but how realised has remained a mystery, though considered to have been the produce of sorcery.

The neighbourhood of this spot was shunned as an enchanted region; and the desolation spread by the inexorable Bistamia around her dwelling, only tended to increase the superstitious horror with which she was universally regarded.

The Mogul's situation was now far more distressing than it had

been since his captivity among the fakeers. He could not behold his lovely companion suffering on his account without the keenest emotions. But for him she would be at that moment free; and yet the bitterness of these reflections was, in some measure, qualified by the knowledge that her liberty was worse than bondage, exposed as she had been to the loathsome advances of a man whom she could not look upon without abhorrence, and to whose detestable passions her innocence might have been eventually sacrificed. He felt, therefore, some consolation, amid the harassing thoughts which poured like a turbid flood upon his mind. He was forbidden to hold any conversation with his fellow-captive; so that, although they could see each other's misery, they were not allowed the sad consolation of reciprocating their thoughts. The moment he made an effort of this kind, one of his naked guards stood before him, and drowned his voice with horrible imprecations.

Four of these wretches were left as a guard over him and the partner of his captivity. They indulged in that loose freedom of conversation peculiar to the lowest and most depraved natures. Seated upon the bare stones of the apartment they smoked and chewed *bhāng** until they were nearly stupified. One of them then brought a leathern bottle full of arrack, from a hole underneath one of the pillars; and this strong spirit they continued to drink until they were all in a state of disgusting intoxication. They then danced before their prisoners, raving like maniacs, and flourishing their clubs over their heads with terrifying violence. Fatigued at length with these exertions, they threw themselves prostrate, and were soon in a swinish sleep.

The dead body of the fakeer still lay where it had fallen when the soul quitted its deformed tabernacle for a brighter or a darker destiny. The odours which exhaled from it were becoming extremely offensive; and the prospect of soon breathing an atmosphere teeming with the foul particles of corruption, was anything but a promising subject of contemplation to the wretched captives.

* An intoxicating leaf.

The thoughts of escape now took entire possession of the Mogul's mind. His guards were powerless, and he began to try the strength of his chains. He was fastened to the leg of a gigantic figure which stood in a niche, and which, therefore, the darkness of the place had hitherto prevented him from examining. It happened that the sun, being at this moment opposite to a small aperture in the roof of the building, poured a narrow but strong stream of light upon the figure. On examining minutely the limb to which he was fastened, the prisoner observed a large crack in the stone, just above the ankle; this opened in the slightest degree when he pulled the chain. He felt confident that, by a great effort, he could break off the stone limb; though even then he would only free himself in a degree, for his wrists were bound together by a handcuff, to which the chain was attached that fastened him to the statue. The discovery, however, gave him some hope of eventually being able to take advantage of it; and his mind became considerably calmed. He dreaded Bistamia's return, remembering her horrible menaces, and having good reason to believe that she would not fail to put them into execution, if something did not intervene to cross her sanguinary purpose.

The fakeers still slept. Except their loud breathings, nothing was heard to disturb the gloomy silence that reigned around. It was already long past noon, and no tidings had been received of the hostile armies. At length distant shouts came suddenly upon the ear. They sounded like the acclamations of triumph, mingled with those frantic yells peculiar to the fakeers when under a state of violent excitement. The sounds gradually approached, and it soon became evident that victory had favoured the Moguls. The clash of arms was now heard, cries of the pursuing and pursued were distinctly perceptible, and at length rose to a tumult.

In a few moments, Bistamia entered the vestibule, spotted with gore. The whole upper part of her bronzed fleshless body was uncovered. Her appearance was positively hideous. There was a deep gash in her neck, whence the blood bubbled. She staggered towards her granddaughter—a dagger glimmered in her bony

fingers. She raised it over the head of the trembling girl, who sat mute and motionless under her harpy clutch, blanched with terror. The old crone gave a gasp ; a guttural chuckle followed, and her arm fell ; she fixed her teeth, whilst her eyes glared on those of her victim.

The Mogul, in a paroxysm of alarm for the safety of one who had put her life in jeopardy for him, threw his whole weight on the chain which attached him to the statue. The cracked limb gave way. He rushed towards the hag, raised his chained hands to strike, but perceived that she was motionless. Her arm had not force to impel the dagger which had fallen from her feeble grasp, and the wretched creature lay dead on the bosom of her grandchild.

A party of Moguls entered. The drunken fakeers were instantly put to death, and the two captives released. The apartments beyond the vestibule were searched, and vast hoards of wealth discovered, which were seized, and ultimately deposited in the imperial treasury. The lovely Zulima was received with flattering courtesy by the Emperor, and shortly after became the wife of her late companion in chains, who proved to be the son of Shaista, one of Aurungzebe's favourite generals.



The Mahratta Chief.

CHAPTER I.

A CAVALCADE was on its way to Madura through one of those deep gorges with which the Western Ghauts abound. Evening had already set in, and thickened by the dense shadows of the mountains which intercept the sun's rays as he verges towards the horizon, the darkness was intense. The evening hour had been chosen by the travellers for the renewal of their journey, in order to escape the scorching heat of the sun, which in the daytime, when reflected from the bare sides of the hills, is so great as to be scarcely endurable. The night was lovely. The glen through which the party were passing was a profound hollow, above the mountains rose on either side, sloping upwards from the base, and thus presenting the form of a funnel. The sky, seen from this pitchy glen, appeared of uncommon brilliancy, and was so thickly studded with stars, that the light seemed to percolate through the entire expanse: but it reached not the bosom of the ravine through which the travellers were passing, being repelled by the ponderous shadows of the surrounding hills.

In the midst of the cavalcade was a palankeen of costly construction, borne upon the shoulders of four sturdy Hindoos. Round it hung a rich silk drapery which entirely enclosed and concealed the person within. Whining a dull monotonous chant, the hamauls* proceeded at a slow but steady pace, on account of

* Palankeen bearers.

the inequalities of the ground. A guard of a hundred and fifty soldiers followed close behind them. The murmurs of their voices as they chatted to beguile the tediousness of their journey was multiplied by the slumbering echoes of the hills, which were awakened at their approach, and appeared to mock them with their own hilarity.

They came at length to a gloomy pass between two huge masses of rock that seemed to have been cast there by some mighty convulsion of the earth. Here the strait was so exceedingly narrow that there was scarcely room to force the palankeen through. Two men could not go abreast. When the hamauls were just about to emerge from this mountain gorge, they found their progress opposed by a troop of armed men. Cowardly at all times, and rendered doubly so by their confined position, they would have cast down their burthen and fled ; but as this was impossible from the nature of the passage, they fell upon their knees with the palankeen still resting on their shoulders, and implored mercy of the armed strangers.

Little ceremony was used in reply to their supplications. The palankeen was lifted from their shoulders and taken possession of, together with its burthen, and the bearers were ordered to make the best of their way back through the passage, upon pain of summary chastisement. This was no easy matter to accomplish, as the troops followed so closely behind that several were already in the gorge. With some difficulty the passage was at length cleared ; but when the guards learned what had taken place, they pushed forward to recover their charge, and in a few moments the strait was again filled. The foremost man, however, was thrust through the body with a lance the moment he reached the end of the strait.

“Advance another step,” said a voice, in a tone that showed it had been practised in command, “and you die. We are in force sufficient to slaughter you like so many wild conies coming out of a burrow. Remain patiently where you are for a few minutes, and your march shall be no further impeded.”

“Where is the palankeen?” demanded the guard.

“Where it and its gentle occupant will be well attended to. We

know our prize. She must lack refreshment amid the rugged passes of these hills, and we are prepared to afford her a specimen of our hospitality."

"To whom will she be indebted for this compulsive courtesy?"

"To Sevagee, the Mahratta. The Princess Rochinara will be safe in his custody. Tell the Emperor, on your return, that his daughter is with those whom he contemptuously calls 'The Robbers of the Hills;' but Sevajee may live to dispute with him the throne of Delhi; he therefore need not deem an alliance with the Chief of the Mahrattas a disgrace."

By this time the party who had attacked the palankeen had dispersed, leaving only their leader, and a few followers. These, when sufficient time had been given to secure their captive, suddenly plunged into the recesses of the mountains, with most of which they were familiar, and left the troops of Aurungzebe to pursue their march, with nothing to protect but their own lives. They emerged from the glen, and in their rage at losing their sovereign's daughter, who had been committed to their custody, they sacrificed the hamauls on the spot, determined to represent to the Emperor that the treacherous Hindoos had purposely led them into the pass, in order to betray them into the power of Sevajee. They knew Aurungzebe to be an inexorable man, and feared the consequences of making known to him the loss of his daughter, whilst under their protection. He made no allowance either for accident or contingencies. Whenever anything happened contrary to his expectations, the presumed instruments of failure were generally punished, and too frequently with the loss of life. Like all tyrants, he was without pity; and his sympathies might really be said never to be excited, save where they received their impulse from something either directly bearing upon, or collaterally allied to, his own interests.

The soldiers dreaded an interview with their sovereign, who was at that time encamped near Madura, where he daily expected his daughter to join him. She had left the Deccan for that purpose, and was passing the Ghauts, when she was captured by the daring Mahratta, as already related.

The princess was borne from her guards, and carried for some hours through the intricate windings of the hills, until at length the bearers stopped before a small mountain fortress. It was still dark, but having emerged from the lower regions of this elevated range, the gloom had considerably diminished, and near objects were sufficiently visible to render the progress of travelling tolerably certain. The princess was desired to alight from her palan-keen, and being respectfully placed in a sort of basket, ingeniously woven from the husk of the cocoa-nut, was drawn up into the fortress, the entrance of which was through a low portal, terminating a narrow landing-place upon the naked side of the hill. Through this, after traversing a short passage, there was an ascent by steps into the fort, which was not extensive, containing a garrison of only sixty men.

The Princess Rochinara was ushered into a small but airy chamber; and two of her women, who had been taken with her, were allowed to attend upon their captive mistress. The princess was at this time only in her seventeenth year, of an agreeable rather than handsome person, finely formed, showy, of a healthy, vigorous constitution, and sprightly countenance. She was a great favourite of her father, and therefore not under much apprehension from her present captivity, knowing that he would immediately make an effort to rescue her from bondage, and the warlike efforts of Aurungzebe had seldom failed of being crowned with success. She knew not into whose power she had fallen, but imagined that a band of mountain robbers had captured her, and intended to retain her, merely for the sake of a liberal ransom, which she was satisfied her parent would never pay, but release her at the point of the sword.

For a day or two she saw no one but her attendants, and, having been accustomed to the seclusion of the harem, she did not find her solitude at all insupportable. One of her women, who was an adept at story-telling, and had made herself acquainted with many of the singular legends of Hindoo history, entertained her mistress by relating some of those monstrous fictions which abound in those two poetical depositories of the marvellous, the

Mahabarat and Ramayana. Thus the time was agreeably beguiled, until the princess became, at length, impatient to know something about her captivity, and into whose hands she had fallen. No information was to be obtained upon this interesting question. A pretty female slave daily brought the gentle captive her food, consisting of the most delicate viands and delicious fruits, but did not utter a word in reply to her questions, which only imparted a keener edge to her anxiety.

On the fourth morning after Rochinara had become an occupant of the mountain fortress, an unusual bustle announced an arrival; but nothing could be drawn from the slave when she paid her usual periodical visit; her lips appeared hermetically sealed, for not even the offer of a liberal bribe could tempt her to unclosethem. Patience, therefore, was the only alternative left; and in all cases of captivity it is a cardinal virtue. The princess, however, was becoming restless;—she rejected her food—she grew petulant, and no longer listened with any relish to the tales of her favourite woman. Her eyes were often suffused with tears; but during a rather strong burst of emotion, occasioned more from the idea of being neglected than of being a captive, the door of her prison was opened, and to her surprise, not unmingled with pleasure, her captor stood before her. He was a short, compactly built man, apparently under thirty years of age. His face was round and “full-orbed,” but every feature small and highly expressive. His eye was intensely brilliant, and seemed to possess a concentration of power that could pierce through anything opposed to its gaze. Its expression was somewhat severe—restless, quick, and scrutinising; but that of every other feature was bland even to playfulness. The forehead was both high and broad, and as smooth as the surface of a mirror. There was no hair on his face, except rather a strong moustache on the upper lip, which was in perfect harmony with the true Oriental cast of his countenance. His neck, bare to the shoulder, was rather short, and as thick as that of a Thessalian bull; whilst his ample expanse of chest denoted that strength

and hardihood with which he was particularly endowed. His legs were uncovered to the knee, and modelled with a neatness and upon such an exact scale of proportion as to combine masculine beauty with that physical vigour to which true symmetry is invariably allied.

The stranger stood with his arms folded before the princess, after having made her a courteous salaam. She gazed upon him at first only without displeasure; but it was evident, by the gradual brightening of her countenance, that a more minute scrutiny produced something the very opposite of dissatisfaction. She waited several moments for the visitor to address her; but he remained silent, keeping his eyes steadily fixed upon the interesting Rochinara, as if awaiting her commands. An arch smile danced in his eye, and an occasional undulation of the upper lip showed that he was not about to play the ruffian.

“To whom,” said the princess at length, in a gentle voice, “am I indebted for the constrained hospitality to which I am forced to submit?”

“To Servajee, Chief of the Mahrattas.”

“But why is the daughter of the Emperor Aurungzebe arrested in her journey, and forced to become an occupant of this fortress?”

“Because, lady, the Mahratta chief desires to be upon a better footing with the Emperor of the Moguls, and would make the daughter a medium of alliance with the father.”

“The Princess Rochinara could never stoop to so low a degradation as to become the wife of a mountain robber.”

“You mistake lady; I am a sovereign in these mountain solitudes, and all monarchs are equal in moral rights. The name of Sevajee will be heard of among the heads of nations: for who so renowned as the founders of kingdoms? You are in my power; but I shall not use that power to win you to my purpose. I am content to woo; and assure yourself, that no woman who can look upon the sun would be degraded by becoming the wife of the Mahratta chief. Whatever you desire, express it, and your command in all things, save quitting this fortress, will be obeyed. We

shall be better acquainted ; and when you know me, you may think me something nobler than a robber. We shall meet daily. Farewell !'

Making a low obeisance, with a calm smile he quitted the apartment.

CHAPTER II.

THE rise of the Mahratta power in India was one of those sudden and surprising revolutions which, amid the troubled currents of political events, have been so frequently seen to spring from the reaction of despotism. The Mogul empire, under the able though absolute direction of Aurungzebe, extended over nearly the whole of India. The most fertile and populous provinces of Hindostan were subjected to the dominion of a tyrant, who, nevertheless, governed wisely, though he ruled despotically. The extensive plains of the Deccan and of Hindostan proper, which are protected by that elevated chain of mountains called the Ghauts, forming a natural and almost impregnable barrier against irregular and undisciplined troops, were inhabited by a hardy and active race. They felt the galling yoke of a conqueror ; they were encouraged to resistance by their distance from the capital of their despot, and by the natural barriers which, under judicious management and an enterprising leader, were considered an almost certain protection against the inroads of an invading army. Besides this, the Mahomedan nations had been involved in such constant wars, and the successions of that mighty state were so continually disputed, and so bloodily contested, that ample opportunities were afforded to a leader of daring and comprehensive mind to assemble the disunited members of a vast and dislocated empire, at a distance from the seat of government, and establish them into an independent community, upon the wreck of that power by which they had been subdued. Such a leader was Sevajee, the founder of the Mahratta dynasty, which finally became the most flourishing in Hindostan. This hero was born in 1627, at Poonah, then a

village, but afterwards the capital of the Mahratta state. He was of noble descent, and great pains seem to have been taken in training him early to deeds of arms. He despised letters, but devoting himself to military exercises, soon commenced that career of enterprise which distinguished him above all the heroes of his day. Before he was eighteen, he had collected together a band of the inhabitants of his native glens, and commenced the daring but inglorious profession of a robber. By degrees he became a terror to the neighbouring princes, in whose territories his depredations were committed. From heading a few profligate adventurers, he rose to be the leader of a small but formidable army. Fortresses and cities submitted to his arms, and he found himself at length master of a considerable extent of territory, with an army of fifty thousand foot and seven thousand horse.

Such prodigious and rapid accession of power alarmed the jealousy of Aurungzebe, who was by this time securely seated upon the throne of the Moguls, and seemed resolved to extend his conquests to the farthest possible limits. He therefore sent a large body of troops under an experienced leader to crush the rising influence of the Mahrattas ; but the wary conduct of Sevajee, who was prolific in dacoit* stratagems, baffled the military skill and defeated the enterprises of the Mogul.

It was to reduce the growing power of this extraordinary man, that the Emperor had marched in person, and was encamped in the neighbourhood of Madura, in order to subdue some refractory Polygars who had disturbed the peace of that district, when his daughter was made captive by Sevajee on her way from the Deccan. So difficult were the various passes of the Ghauts for a regular army to traverse, and so impenetrable the jungles, that the bold Mahratta defied the hostile preparations of Aurungzebe, whose detachments he continually defeated, pouring down upon them like a deluge from the hills, committing prodigious ravages and retreating beyond the reach of pursuit to his mountain-holds.

The fortress to which the Princess Rochinara had been con-

* Dacoit gangs are organised bands of robbers.

veyed was situated in one of the most impracticable recesses of the Ghauts. The only approach to it was by a path so narrow that two persons could not proceed abreast, and in many places hollowed out of the living rock. It was reached by a gradual ascent of three miles, the road at various places overhung by vast ledges projecting from the precipice by which it was skirted. There a few resolute men might defend themselves against a host. Besides, this part of the country was so thinly populated, and so seldom visited on account of the asperities which it presented to the traveller, that it remained a sort of terra incognita. Sevajee's retreats, and among the rest the fortress already mentioned, were known to few or none save his own followers; so that he felt in perfect security against the irruptions of invaders.

The captivity of the princess became daily less and less irksome; all her wishes were complied with, and she finally entertained no further desire to quit a prison where in fact she enjoyed more liberty than in her father's harem. She had been much struck with the frank countenance of the Mahratta, who used daily to visit her, until at length his visits were looked forward to not only with pleasure, but anxiety.

The princess was young, Sevajee was handsome, and, what is always attractive in the eyes of an Eastern beauty, brave. She quickly felt her heart subdued; the merits of the Mahratta could not escape her woman's scrutiny, quickened as this soon was by certain tender predilections.

She now frequently challenged the opinions of her women upon Sevajee's merits, to which they appeared as keenly alive as their mistress, and it was finally no secret throughout the garrison that their chief had obtained a conquest over the affections of the Princess Rochinara.

The royal captive had attracted the admiration of one of Sevajee's officers, in whose bravery and conduct his chief had great confidence. One day when Sevajee was abroad, this officer ventured to declare himself to the interesting captive. He was rejected with indignation. His passions were roused, and he treated the princess with unmanly violence. She was saved from

his brutality by the interference of one of the garrison, who, upon Sevajee's return, informed him of what had happened. The Mahratta made no reply, but repairing to the princess's apartment, learnt from her the precise particulars. Summoning the garrison before him, he thus addressed the offender :—

“You have violated the sanctity of a warrior's home. Arms are placed in our hands to protect, not insult the weak. You must expiate the wrong you have committed. I stand forward as the champion of an insulted woman. You are brave, and know how to defend yourself. There is space within these ramparts to try your prowess against mine. Arm yourself, and let this matter be instantly decided.”

Sevajee took his sword, and the combatants repaired to the summit of the rock. His adversary was much taller and bigger than himself, but far less active and firmly set. He was, however, a hardy, desperate fellow, who had proved his valour in many a rough encounter. He smiled as he stood before his chief, as if the contest were to him a pastime. Both were armed with a short sabre, a shield, and a broad-bladed dagger stuck in their girdles. The shield was small, reaching from the wrist to the elbow of the left hand, rising to a cone, and terminated by a sharp brass boss. It was covered with an untanned hide.

Sevajee commenced the strife by darting upon the offender with the quickness of an eagle's spring, dashing his shield against that of his opponent, and wounding him with considerable severity on the hip. The man, however, coolly forced backward his indignant chief, and recovering his own guard, advanced upon him with a calm, sullen smile, and struck at his head with a force that would have reached through the skull to the chine, had not the interposing shield caught the blow, and frustrated the intended mischief: it however struck the boss from the buckler, and shattered the frame so completely that Sevajee was obliged to cast it from him, and expose himself unprotected to the attack of his formidable foe. Trusting, however, to his activity, he parried the blows of his adversary, and baffled his advances by springing

on one side ; the other, exhausted from fatigue and loss of blood, dropped his sword ; Sevajee instantly raised his and struck him to the earth. His arm was nearly severed, just below the shoulder, and in this sad state, reeking with gore, he was lowered from the fortress, either to die or make his escape.

This feat of gallantry, in vindication of an insult offered to the daughter of Aurungzebe, completely decided her affections. She accepted the Mahratta's proposals, and from this time felt a greater pride in being the wife of a petty sovereign than the daughter of a mighty emperor.

Sevajee now daily increased in power and influence among the sovereigns of the principalities by which he was surrounded. He was enabled to muster an army of fifteen thousand men, and had become the terror of the neighbouring potentates. He was, to all intents and purposes, sovereign of the Mahrattas, and had made the daughter of Aurungzebe his queen, with her own consent, before she had been in his power two months. His followers were a hardy race, selected from all tribes for their daring exploits, or feats of personal strength.

A common cooley or porter of the mountains had been admitted into his army, and finally raised to a place of trust ; the first, in consequence of a singular act of daring, and the last by an uniform adherence to the interests of his master. As the act was singular which first brought this man under the notice of the Mahratta chief, it may be worth recording.

Sevajee was one day passing through a mountain jungle, when a leopard appeared making its way stealthily through the bushes, as if threatening hostility. The cooley was descending the hill at this moment, and seeing the leopard, volunteered to attack it, with a weapon as singular as it was formidable. Opening a small leathern wallet, he took from it an iron instrument, which fitted the hand, covering the fingers like a gauntlet. Beyond the tips of the fingers, it extended to the length of at least three inches, curving like claws, tapered to a point as sharp as the tip of a dagger, being brought to an edge under the curve, nearly as keen as that of a

razor. The man fixed it on his hand,* and entered the jungle. The leopard seemed uneasy at his approach, waved its tail, rested its head upon the earth, yet made no attempt to spring. The cooley did not give his enemy time to commence an attack, but advancing boldly, struck it on the right eye, and drawing the instrument across its head, blinded it in a moment. The wounded beast started up, and yelled in agony; when the man deliberately plunged the weapon under its belly, opened a prodigious gash, and the animal's entrails protruded through the wound. It rushed forward, and came with such stunning contact against a tree, that it instantly fell, turned upon its back, and not being able to see its aggressor, another stroke from the instrument despatched it: the victor returned to Sevajee without a scratch. This won the Mahratta's admiration; the cooley was immediately enrolled in Sevajee's army, and from henceforth became a distinguished man.

It was of similar daring spirits that the followers of this formidable chieftain were composed; and when they became numerous, they roused the apprehension of Aurungzebe, who was determined to crush a rising power that threatened to shake the Mogul throne. When made acquainted with his daughter's captivity, he resolved that her deliverance should involve the death of his foe.

CHAPTER III.

THE Mahratta, who had been wounded by Sevajee, on being lowered from the fortress, lay some time upon the ground exhausted from loss of blood. As evening advanced, he crawled into a thicket, and threw himself at the root of a tree surrounded with high coarse grass, upon which he slept until the morning. He tore his turban into strips as well as he was able, stanch'd the blood that flowed copiously from his wounds, and bound them

* A similar instrument is frequently used by the fakeers when they are passing through the jungles, and with like success.

up. By the next morning his limbs were so stiff that he could scarcely move ; he was parched with a painful thirst ; his head was confused, and objects floated before his sight in ten thousand fantastic configurations. A thin spring welled from a chasm in the hill ; and being acquainted with the locality, thither he dragged his enfeebled body, and bathed his temple in the limpid waters. He drank copiously of the pure element, and was somewhat refreshed. Still, unable to use much exertion, he cast himself again at the root of the tree and slept.

Thus passed the day. The second night came, and he was still there, helpless as a babe. He thought that here his death-bed was made, and resigned himself with sullen courage to his fate. The cries of the jackal disturbed his slumbers, and continually reminded him that he was at the mercy of the prowling beast of the forest. The bright moon looked from her glorious temple of serene and delicate blue, illuminating the boundless expanse through which she marched to her zenith with the majesty and beauty of a thing of heaven, and poured the gentle stream of her light upon the wounded Mahratta, who slept in spite of bodily prostration and of mental suffering. The morning broke upon him bright and cloudless. He was relieved, and his limbs less stiff ; for it is astonishing how rapidly the natives of eastern countries recover from the most desperate wounds, owing to their habits of excessive temperance. He quitted the jungle, and proceeded leisurely down the mountain. His progress was slow and difficult ; and he was frequently obliged to seek the cool recesses of the forest in order to recruit his exhausted frame.

After a toilsome march of two days he reached the bottom of the Ghauts. He knew that a detachment of Aurungzebe's army lay encamped in the plains. It was commanded by a general of reputation, and amounted to fifteen thousand men, prepared to attack Sevajee in his stronghold ; but the difficulty was how to reach this through the numerous mountain ravines among which it was concealed and protected.

The wounded man crawled into the camp and desired to be conducted to the general's tent. " I can lead you to the abode of

Sevajee," he cried. This was sufficient to remove all reluctance from the minds of the soldiers, who at first showed a disinclination to conduct the stranger to their general. They suspected him to be a spy; but the possibility of his being a traitor gave him a better claim to their courtesy, and they brought him to the tent of the Omrah, under whose command they acted.

"What is your motive, soldier," inquired the general, "for entering an enemy's camp."

"Behold these wounds!" said the man. "They were inflicted by the tyrant who now holds sway over the Mahrattas. That is my sufficient answer why I appear in the Mogul camp."

"Personal enmities are but a poor recommendation to confidence. He who would betray a friend would be little likely to serve a foe."

"Where a person has his revenge to gratify, you have the strongest guarantee for confidence. Apart from all motives that raise man in the scale of moral dignity, that wrong which stimulates to vengeance will render him true to those who promote his deadly purposes; for vengeance is like the raging thirst of fever, never to be slaked till the cause is removed. Until mine is appeased, you may trust me; after that I make no pledges. Do you accept my services?"

"What do you undertake to perform?"

"For a sum of ten thousand rupees, to be paid after the terms of the contract have been fulfilled, I undertake to conduct you to the fortress in these mountains where Sevajee usually resides, and to put you in possession of it. I have a brother among the troops who compose the garrison. He will, I know, promote any scheme that shall bring retribution upon him by whom I have been so grievously wronged. Send a body of fifteen hundred men, when I am sufficiently recovered to march with them, and my life for the issue."

This plan was concurred in, the man taken to a tent, and his wounds dressed. In three weeks he was in a condition to proceed against the stronghold of the Mahratta chief. Fifteen hundred men were selected for the enterprise; and these were followed

at a short distance by another strong detachment, unknown to the Mahratta guide in case of treachery.

For two days they threaded the mazes of the hills by paths almost impracticable, and halted in the evening of the second day in a wood about three miles from the fortress. The Mahratta, quitting the camp, proceeded up the hill alone, and making a certain signal, well known to the garrison was drawn up the rock. The soldiers were surprised at beholding their old comrade, who had been so recently expelled, and whom they all considered to have furnished a feast for vultures or jackals. He desired to be conducted before their chief, to whom he expressed the deepest contrition for what had passed, and begged to be again admitted among that community from which he had been expelled. Sevajee, deceived by the soldier's apparent contrition, and knowing him to be a man of great daring and skill in conducting a perilous enterprise, consented to his re-admission among his hardy band of mountain warriors.

Before quitting his new allies, the traitor had arranged that, should he gain admission into the fort, he would, in conjunction with his brother, admit them during the midnight watch: that if the thing turned out not to be practicable on that night, they must retire into the thickets, and there await the desired opportunity.

An hour before midnight a body of four hundred men wound slowly up the hill by the dim light of the stars, and concealed themselves in a hollow about two hundred yards from the fort. This hollow was covered with a thick growth of jungle grass and underwood, which effectually concealed them from observation. The Mahratta had contrived that his brother should be upon guard at midnight at that part of the ramparts where admission was obtained into the fort.

The matter had been so secretly arranged, that nearly a hundred of the Moguls were drawn up into the fortress before any alarm was given. A soldier hurried to Sevajee's apartment, and roused him with the unexpected cry of—"We are surprised! the Moguls have obtained possession of our mountain citadel."

The Mahratta chief grasped his sword, and hurried to that part of the ramparts where the two brothers were in the act of drawing up the enemy. As there was but an uncertain light, his approach was not observed. With the quickness of thought he severed the cord just as a Mogul soldier had been drawn to the landing place. He did not stay to hear the crash of the succeeding fall, but cutting down the traitor who had admitted the foe, made a speedy retreat to collect the slumbering garrison. He was shortly surrounded by his faithful followers, who all flew to the ramparts.

The Moguls had already destroyed several of the Mahrattas who were taken by surprise, and in the suddenness of their alarm had started unarmed from their beds. Sevajee fought like a lion. The darkness gave him a great advantage over the enemy, who were perfectly ignorant of the localities, though their guide, the treacherous Mahratta, had given them what information the hurry and confusion of the scene permitted. Sevajee sought him out amid the fierce struggle of attack and resistance. They perceived each other in the imperfect light; the rebel would have retired, but the indignant chief arrested his purpose, and compelled him to turn in self-defence. Knowing Sevajee's skill at his weapon, the Mahratta sprang upon and closed with him, hoping to despatch him with his own dagger; but this purpose was foiled by his active foe, who drew it suddenly from his cumberbund, and flung it over the battlements. The struggle was now desperate. They tugged and strained with the fury of gored bulls. They glared in each other's faces, inhaling the hot breath as it came quick and gasping from their parched throats, and steaming at every pore with the might of their exertions. At length Sevajee, dashing his head in the face of his foe, obliged him partially to relax his hold, and at the same moment springing backward, entirely disengaged himself; and while the other was half stunned, he suddenly rushed forward, forced his head between the traitor's legs, raised him upon his neck, and with irresistible force flung him over the battlements.

Sevajee again seized his sword; but perceiving that the Moguls

were masters of the fortress, he flew to the princess:—"You are in the enemy's power—you will be taken to your friends, and have therefore nothing to fear—with me, captivity is the harbinger of death."

"Fly," said Rochinara eagerly; "if there is yet a chance of escape, seize it, and leave me to make my peace with the victors."

There was no time for parley. Sevajee proceeded to a part of the rampart which abutted upon a face of the hill, where the precipice was here and there feathered with shrubs, that grew from the interstices of the rock, and its surface broken into inequalities by projecting ledges, which would not have afforded footing for a goat. At the bottom rolled a deep stream, that gurgled through a straitened channel, and foamed between large masses which had fallen into it from the superincumbent mountain.

The moment was critical. Sevajee commenced this perilous descent. His danger was imminent. The small projections to which he was obliged to trust his footing frequently gave way under the pressure of his step, and he several times despaired of making his escape. About midway the shrub which he had grasped proved too weak to support his weight, and he slipped several yards down the precipice. His course was luckily arrested by a thick bush, something like a huge tuft of birch, which at once broke his fall and arrested his progress.

He was now within forty feet of the water. Here, to the edge of the rivulet, the hill was less precipitous; and having paused a few moments to rest himself, he determined to slide down the rest of the precipice into the stream, which would break the force of his fall, though it would expose him to the chance of being drowned. Tearing up part of the bush, he placed it under him, in order to prevent himself from being wounded by the rocky projections of the hill. It was a desperate hazard; but he at length let himself slip from the ledge. Sustaining some severe bruises, he was precipitated with considerable violence into the rivulet, which fortunately happened at this spot to be deep, and

its channel tolerably free from masses of rock. After a short struggle he gained the opposite bank, and was soon beyond the reach of pursuit.

Meanwhile the princess was taken from the fortress, and borne by easy marches to Delhi, whither her father had retired, leaving his generals to complete the conquest of the Deccan and the subjection of the Mahrattas.

Aurungzebe was greatly exasperated when he discovered that she was about to become a mother. She had ever been his favourite child, and he calculated upon marrying her to some powerful prince, who would strengthen his political influence. She was confined to the harem, and he refused to see her. As soon as her babe was born, it was taken from her, and put under the care of a nurse, no one knew where. It being a boy, the Emperor was determined that it should be brought up in ignorance of its birth. The mother was wretched at being separated from her infant. The Mahratta chief had ever treated her with tenderness and respect, and she was far less happy amid the splendours of the imperial palace than in the rude citadel of the mountain warrior. She implored to be allowed to see her child; but her parent was inexorable, and the bereaved mother poured out her silent sorrows amid the monotonous seclusion of the harem, where she found neither sympathy nor consolation.

CHAPTER IV.

SEVAJEE soon summoned his warriors into the field, and, at the head of ten thousand men, invested the fortress of which the Moguls had possessed themselves. In the course of a few weeks he starved them into a surrender. From this time he so rapidly extended his conquests that he was looked upon as a formidable potentate even by the haughty Aurungzebe. He sacked the neighbouring cities, and so enriched himself with the plunder, that he was finally enabled to appear in the field at the head of a

very formidable army. His personal prowess and conduct as a leader were the theme of universal praise. Though he could neither read nor write, yet so exact and tenacious was his memory, that the smallest disbursements of his government were never forgotten, and no one could dare attempt to deceive him, even in the minutest matters of financial computation, without certainty of detection. He knew the name of almost every man in his army.

Some time after his escape from the fortress, he was surprised by the imperial general with only a few hundred followers. In this dilemma the Mahratta chief intimated to the Mogul general that he should be very willing to submit to his master's clemency, but was afraid to trust his own person to the mercy of a man who felt such deadly hostility towards him. He consequently proposed a meeting between himself and the imperial general at a distance from their respective armies, and that each party should repair to the spot accompanied by only one attendant. Not doubting that this proposal would be acceded to, the wily Mahratta put a suit of strong chain armour under his cotton robe, and a steel cap under his turban. Then arming himself with a dagger, he proceeded to the place of meeting.

According to his military code of morals, treachery towards an enemy was, under any circumstances, justifiable: he therefore determined to employ it upon the present occasion at all hazards. Distributing his men in ambuscades near the spot, he soon had the satisfaction of seeing the Mogul draw near with an escort of eight hundred men, whom he left at some distance, and advanced with a single follower to the appointed place of meeting. Sevajee appeared apparently unarmed, expressing great apprehension and affecting alarm at the presence of his enemy. At length, coming up with hesitating steps, according to the Oriental custom, he embraced his foe, at the same moment drawing his dagger and plunging it into his body. The Mogul, feeling himself wounded, instantly drew his sword and struck Sevajee on the head, which was protected by the steel cap; the blow therefore fell harmless, and the wounded general sank under the repeated stabs of his

treacherous assailant. His attendant, rushing to his master's assistance, was likewise slain.

The blast of a horn roused the Mahrattas from their ambuscade, and falling upon the Moguls thus taken by surprise, they slew a great number, and the rest, panic-stricken, fell back upon the main body, carrying the melancholy intelligence of their leader's death. Meanwhile the Mahrattas escaped among the intricacies of the mountains, and the Moguls were forced to retreat. Sevajee next marched with his victorious troops to Singurh, one of his strongest fortresses, which had been wrested from him by the Moguls. Like all hill-forts, it was built upon the summit of a lofty rock that rose to the height of ninety feet from a deep glen. It was considered inaccessible on all sides. At the back, where the precipice declined gradually inward from the summit, the ramparts were not so strong, as any attempt on that side appeared utterly impracticable. On the ridge just outside the parapet that beetled over the base of the rock, grew several trees, the roots of which were partly bared, and projected from the naked face of the hill, in which they were fixed with a tenacity peculiar to those mountain trees that vegetate amid the most scanty supplies of earth, and insert their tough fibres between the fissures of rock composing the face of the precipice.

The daring Mahratta was determined upon regaining possession of this stronghold, and having fixed upon the point of attack, prepared his followers for the desperate enterprise. These consisted of a thousand Mawabees, mountain marauders, who followed the fortunes of their leader, seduced by the hope of plunder and the love of adventure. Choosing a dark night, he resolved to enter the fort on the least practicable side, where he knew such an attempt would never be suspected. Having procured a long cord as thick as a man's thumb, he caused it to be knotted at intervals of about two feet. When this was prepared, he placed it upon his shoulder and proceeded alone to the fortress through an unfrequented part of the mountain, ordering his men to follow in small parties, and unite in a thicket a few hundred yards from the base of the rock.

Arriving at the desired spot, Sevajee took a leaden ball, and attaching it securely to a slight cord, threw the former, with a precision which only long practice in similar feats could have produced, over the projecting root of one of the trees that grew beneath the battlements. This done, he drew the rope with which he had come provided gradually up, and contrived, by means of the small cord, to pass a hook, fixed to the end of the knotted rope, over the root. The hook, upon being pressed by means of a spring, clasped the object upon which it rested with a perfectly secure hold.

Everything being now ready, the Mahratta summoned his band. There were no sentinels placed upon that side of the rampart, on account of the supposed impracticability of an ascent. The night happened to be extremely dark, which favoured the purpose of the assailants. Sevajee mounted first. With the agility of a cat he clambered up the rope and quickly gained the ramparts. The next that followed, being a heavy man, and not over active, paused about twenty feet from the ground, alarmed at the motion of the rope, which swayed with such a rapid and violent oscillation that he was unable to proceed; and after hanging a few moments by his hands, his feet having slipped from the knot on which they rested, he quitted his hold and fell to the ground.

He had nearly disconcerted the whole enterprise. There was an awful pause. None of the Mawabees attempted to mount. Sevajee began to grow impatient. Shaking the rope, and finding there was no weight upon it, he slid down to ascertain the cause. This was soon explained, but no one would venture to ascend. The Mahratta, unappalled by the general refusal, approached the man who had fallen, and instantly ordered him to mount. He refused, and Sevajee, without a moment's hesitation, plunged his creese into the rebel's heart. He now gave the same order to a second. Terrified at the fate of his companion, the Mawabee grasped the rope, and Sevajee followed close after, to prevent him from quitting his hold. With much difficulty they reached the top, when the undaunted Mahratta descended, and forced another

of his followers to go before him. This he repeated until more than a dozen men had gained the parapet. Taking courage from the success of their companions, the rest attempted the ascent one after another, until the whole were safely raised to the battlement.

Sevajee was the first to leap over the wall. A sentinel, alarmed at the noise, hastily approached ; the Mahratta chief seized him by the cumerbund and the trousers, and swinging him over the parapet, cast him into the empty void beneath. He uttered a shrill shriek as he fell, which seemed to rise to the very heavens, like a sudden peal from the grave, so quick and piercing as to vibrate to the brain with a painful intensity. In a few moments the whole garrison were in arms, and the struggle commenced. They had, however, the double disadvantage of contending against superior numbers and the shock of sudden surprise ; nevertheless, they resisted with the fury of madmen. They demanded no quarter, and none was given.

The whole garrison was cut off to a man, and the morning dawned upon a scene of carnage never to be forgotten. Not a single Mogul survived to tell the melancholy story of defeat, and the Mahratta chief took possession of Singurh amid the shouts of a sanguinary triumph. The bodies of the slain were flung over the battlements to be devoured by birds and beasts of prey, their bones to whiten in the mountain wilds, under the scorching beams of a tropical sun, far from the home of their fathers, of their wives and little ones, and where the solemn rites of sepulture were denied to their remains.

By degrees, Sevajee obliged the imperial troops to evacuate the mountains ; and after a while they were recalled to Delhi by Aurungzebe, who was exceedingly mortified at being thus perpetually baffled by a mountain chieftain, whose principle of government was a mere system of predatory warfare, in which he extended his political influence and his territory by any measure, however inconsonant to the general practices of military conduct. Sevajee now began to be conscious of his power, and determined therefore to seek more advantageous conquests. His career was

attempted to be checked by Shaista Chan, an omrah high in the confidence of Aurungzebe. This general advanced with a formidable army against the Mahratta, and carried on his operations for some time with great success. Sevajee was unable to meet the Moguls in the field, and therefore had recourse to that mode of predatory and irruptive warfare which had hitherto been attended with such success. The Mogul, however, somewhat altered his tactics in order to contravene those of his enemy, and with such advantage that he reduced Sevajee to considerable embarrassment. Finding that the imperial troops were daily obtaining a stronger footing in his dominions, having taken several of his forts, the Mahratta determined to have recourse to one of those bold and daring exploits for which his whole military career has been so celebrated, and which had invariably been attended with signal success.

Shaista Chan, having made himself master of Poonah, the capital of Sevajee's dominions, situated upon the banks of a considerable river, on the level country, about fifty miles from the Ghauts, occupied the palace of the Mahratta chief. The town was at this time little better than a village, surrounded by a low mud wall, and easily accessible from every quarter. Shaista, not imagining that the bold adventurer, who was only secure among the hills, would venture to attack him in the open country, was rather remiss in placing guards round the town to anticipate any sudden assault. Taking advantage of this remissness, Sevajee selected a small band of resolute soldiers, advanced towards Poonah, and concealed himself in the neighbourhood. Having heard that a Mogul chief, jealous of Shaista Chan's influence with the Emperor, had secretly expressed strong sentiments of disaffection, he found means to tamper with him, and seduced him at length to favour his enterprise.

The residence of the imperial general was a large loose building composed entirely of mud. Having been admitted into the town about midnight, and the guards previously removed through the management of the treacherous Omrah, Sevajee and his followers, armed with pickaxes, attacked the frail wall, and soon forced an

entrance into the cook-room. Raising a shout of exultation they rushed into the interior of the house, brandishing their naked swords. At the head of them appeared their chief, encouraging them to the work of slaughter. Shaista, hearing the clamour, started from his bed; but not having time to arm himself, was obliged to make his escape through a window. In effecting this, however, he was severely wounded by the Mahratta chief, who severed one of the fingers from his right hand, and likewise slew his son. The Mogul general, overcome by this disaster, and dreading the further jealousy of his own officers, solicited his recall. He shortly after quitted the Deccan, and the army being placed under an inactive commander, all military operations against the Mahrattas were for a time suspended, and Sevajee soon recovered what he had lately lost.

CHAPTER V.

AURUNGZEBE, exasperated beyond all bounds at being thus perpetually foiled by a petty chieftain, determined at once to stop the further progress of his arms. He therefore sent against him Mirza Rajah, a gallant Rajpoot, accustomed to make war in a mountainous country. Sevajee at length found himself opposed to a man whom he was unable to resist. As the Mogul army more than five times outnumbered his own, he was obliged to retreat to his mountain fastnesses, whither he was pursued by the victorious Mirza. All his fortresses shortly fell into the enemy's hands, and he was driven to extremity. At length, the fort in which he had placed all his treasure was invested.

It resisted for many weeks; but one morning, when the magazine was open to supply the garrison with powder, a paper kite, to which a blind match had been previously attached, was raised over the battlements and dropped into the combustible repository. A tremendous explosion succeeded, and the fortress became an easy capture. Finding that he had no chance of being

able to recover it, he resigned himself to his destiny, and upon receiving a solemn pledge from Mirza Rajah that he should meet at Delhi with a safe and honourable reception, he disbanded his army, and delivered himself up to the victorious Rajpoot.

On his arrival at Delhi, the Mahratta chief was ordered into the Emperor's presence, and commanded by the usher to make the usual prostration ; but he refused to obey, and casting towards Aurungzebe a look of indignant scorn, expressed contempt for his person.

“I am now in your power,” he said haughtily ; “but your victory over me has been to you a disgrace, and to me a triumph. You have subdued me by mere numerical force. For years, with a few hardy followers, I have baffled your hosts. You have at length taken captive the object of your dread : but princes should not forget their pledges. When I delivered myself into the hands of your general, I was assured of honourable treatment. Am I then to be degraded by being commanded to prostrate myself before a man, even though he be Emperor of the Moguls? We are both sovereigns, and be assured that the Mahratta chieftain will never pay that adoration to man which is due alone to God.”

Aurungzebe did not condescend to reply. He was deeply incensed, and turning to the usher, ordered that the refractory prisoner should be taken from his presence. In spite, however, of this rude bearing, the Emperor was much struck with the unbending boldness of the mountain warrior. He could not but feel respect for the man who had for years defeated his armies, and raised himself to sovereignty from being chief of a mere band of robbers. The exploits of Sevajee had reached as far as Delhi, and public curiosity was excited to see this remarkable man. His bearing in the imperial presence astonished all who heard him, nor were they less surprised at the forbearance of Aurungzebe, who was not generally backward in administering summary justice where occasion seemed to demand it.

It happened that, while the Mahratta chief was before the Emperor, the principal ladies of his harem saw what passed from behind a curtain. Among these was the Princess Rochinara, to

whom the memory of Sevajee was still dear, though the lapse of years had somewhat weakened her former impressions. She had never been allowed to see her child, nor would her father ever give her the least information respecting him. This was a bitter penalty for having degraded herself in the eyes of the haughty representative of the house of Timour, by an alliance with a petty chieftain, whom that proud potentate looked upon in no other light than that of a mere marauder. The princess had often sighed for the freedom she had enjoyed during her short abode in the mountains which overlooked the coast of Malabar.

When Sevajee appeared before the Emperor, all Rochinara's former partialities revived. She was struck with his lofty deportment of fearless independence. The toils and military enterprises of years had not abated the fire of his eye, or the beauty of his person. He was still the man to win alike a lady's love and the warrior's admiration. When the princess perceived the silent indignation of her father, as he ordered the noble Mahratta to be removed from his presence, she trembled for the safety of a man whom she felt to be still dear to her. His boldness, and the reputation of his exploits, had won the admiration of many Omrahs of the Emperor's court, and they interceded with their indignant master in behalf of the captive. Aurungzebe, notwithstanding their intercession, expressed his determination to confine Sevajee for life, recalling to mind with a bitterness which years had failed to mitigate, the disgrace he had heaped upon the house of Timour, by espousing, without her parent's consent, a princess of that illustrious race.

Hearing that her father was inexorable, Rochinara sought his presence, and falling at his feet, pleaded for the liberty of his prisoner, and endeavoured to extenuate his conduct at the late interview.

"Though I despise pomp," said the Emperor, in a tone of severe solemnity, "I will ever insist upon receiving those honours which the refractory presume to refuse. Power depends as much upon the empty pageantries and ceremonies of state as upon abilities and strength of mind. The former, in fact, are the most

successful instruments of the latter. When the rebel, whom I have condescended to admit into my presence, knows how to honour the sovereign of the Moguls, he may expect his indulgence."

"Allow him, my father, another interview, but abate somewhat of the rigour of court form. In his native mountains he has not learned to be courtly, but nature has taught him to be magnanimous; and let not Aurungzebe, though mighty, yield to him in this, or in any other quality which the brave respect."

"Well, then, to please a daughter whom I love, I will indulge the haughty mountaineer with a remission of some portion of that state-ceremony which it is customary to offer in the imperial presence, and of that external homage which conquered princes owe to the Emperor of the Moguls."

A message was sent by Rochinara in the warmth of her zeal to the keeper of Sevajee's prison; and the Mahratta, without being consulted upon the measure, was introduced into the Dewan Aum, or hall of public audience. The corrugated brow and compressed lip, apparent to all present, as he entered, proclaimed in terms sufficiently intelligible his determination not to succumb to a superior.

When he had reached the centre of the hall, the usher advanced and commanded him to make the customary obeisance at the foot of the throne.

"I was born a prince," said Sevajee, "and am incapable of acting the part of a bondsman. Chains cannot enslave the soul of the free."

"But the vanquished," replied Aurungzebe, "lose all their rights with their fortune. The chance of war has made the Mahratta chief my servant, and I am resolved to relinquish nothing of what the sword has given."

"The chance of war has indeed placed me in your power; but not as your servant. I received the pledge of your general that I should be treated as a prince, not as a slave. I have yet to learn if the sovereign of a great empire can descend to the low and pitiable degradation of a lie."

“The law of the conqueror is his will—of the vanquished, obedience.”

Sevajee turned his back upon the throne: Aurungzebe, losing his usual equanimity, started from his seat: his lip quivered, his cheek became blanched, his hand was laid upon his dagger, and he was about to issue some terrible order against Sevajee, when that prince turning towards him said, with an undaunted tone—

“Emperor of the Moguls, restore to me your daughter, whom you have torn from the protection of a husband, and I will honour you as a father: give me back my child, which you have withheld from the longings of a parent, and I will venerate you as a benefactor: restore me to my subjects, and I, as a tributary prince, will acknowledge your supremacy: but be assured that no reverse of fortune can deprive me of my dignity of mind, which nothing shall extinguish but death.”

The Emperor's wrath appeared to subside at this request, which he affected to treat as absurd. Pretending to look upon Sevajee as a madman, he ordered him from his presence and gave him in charge to the director-general of the imperial camp, who had orders to subject him to a rigorous confinement. He was in consequence imprisoned in that officer's house, and guarded with a vigilance that seemed to defy all chance of escape.

Months flew by, and Sevajee became extremely uneasy under his captivity, which was however relieved by occasional communications from the princess; she having contrived to convey information to him from time to time by means of a person who was permitted to enter his prison with flowers. This man was well known to the director-general, who had the highest confidence in him; but the gold of Rochinara and the promises of remuneration made by the Mahratta, corrupted the integrity of the vendor of flowers, and he finally became instrumental to one of the most extraordinary escapes which the pen of history records. For weeks he had been in the habit of visiting the prisoner at stated periods, under the plea of selling him flowers, of which the latter

affected to be extremely fond. Not the slightest suspicion was awakened.

One morning the usual attendant entered Sevajee's prison with his first meal, but to his astonishment found that the captive had escaped. Upon the floor lay a man apparently in deep slumber. He was upon his face, quite naked. An alarm was instantly raised, and the director-general hastened to the prison. The naked man turned out to be the flower-seller, whose sleep was so profound that he awoke with the greatest difficulty. Upon opening his eyes he appeared amazed at seeing himself naked, and no less so at being surrounded by inquisitive persons who questioned him concerning the prisoner's flight. He protested his utter ignorance of the matter, but observed that he had been evidently robbed of his clothes, though by whom he could not tell, unless the Mahratta had taken them the better to effect his purpose. He affected to be astonished at having been found in such a state of unpremeditated oblivion ; but, as if struck by some sudden recollection, he stated that Sevajee had induced him to drink a glass of sherbet, shortly after he entered his room, which he could now have no doubt had been drugged with opium, as he had swallowed it but a short time when he was overcome by a drowsiness which he could not control, and had evidently sunk down senseless from the powerful effects of the opiate. His story was sufficiently plausible ; and, fortunately for him, under the sanction of his supposed integrity, was believed ; the man thus eluded suspicion. An alarm was immediately raised, and a search made after the fugitive, but he was nowhere to be found. When the Emperor was informed that Sevajee had quitted his prison he was greatly exasperated, and ordered several bodies of men to be despatched in search of him ; but his vexation was destined to receive a still greater aggravation, for shortly after the news had reached him of the Mahratta's escape, he discovered that his favourite daughter had become the partner of his flight.

CHAPTER VI.

SEVAJEE had found no difficulty in leaving his prison unsuspected, disguised as the flower vendor, being about the same height, and loosely clad, according to the fashion of Eastern countries. As had been preconcerted between him and the princess, he repaired to the harem with his flowers, and the man whom he personated being known to the attendants, who were prevented from approaching his representative too nearly by some natural pretence, which women in the East are seldom at a loss to find in order to secure the success of any favourite scheme, Sevajee obtained admittance without incurring suspicion. It was now arranged that he should instantly hasten to a certain jungle, where he was to await the arrival of Rochinara, who, under pretence of devotion, would quit the city immediately, and join him at the appointed spot.

This plan was successfully executed. The empire being at this period in a state of general peace, no rigid scrutiny was observed towards persons passing to and from the city as in more turbulent times. On leaving the gates, Rochinara gave orders to be carried towards a particular mosque; but no sooner had she got beyond the reach of observation, than she stepped out of her palanquin, commanded the bearers to wait for her at a certain spot, and declared her intention of proceeding with one favourite attendant to the sacred edifice. The men retired, and the princess quitting the high road, diverged from the mosque, and hastened towards the jungle.

Though utterly unaccustomed to such exercise, Rochinara and her woman made their way through a rough and unfrequented track to the place of appointment, being directed by the few casual passengers whom they happened to meet. They wisely confined their questions upon this point to pariahs, several of whom were passing on their way towards the same spot: these persons having

so little intercourse with any but individuals of their own tribe, there was the less chance of detection from their communicating with the citizens, or with those who would, no doubt, be sent in pursuit of the fugitives.

After a tedious journey of full two hours, the princess and her attendant joined Sevajee in the jungle. He had now cast off his disguise and resumed his own attire.

“We must travel alone through this forest,” said he, “and when we reach its borders towards the south, I will provide a hackery for you and your companion, and we shall proceed with better chance of security; but we must avoid the public roads until we reach the coast. What think you, lady, of this?—’tis an arduous undertaking for tender limbs and gentle spirits.”

“The daughter of Aurungzebe, Sevajee, will know how to meet difficulties. The energies of woman are not known until they are tried, and none of the race of Timour ever shrank from danger.”

“Let us proceed then; our course lies amid perils, but they are already half overcome in the resolution to brave them.”

They proceeded warily on their way, apprehensive that every sound might be the forerunner of discovery. The jungle was thick, but broken into frequent vistas, where they occasionally reposed from the fatigues of their journey, which were rendered more harassing from the circumstance of the travellers being frequently obliged to make themselves a path, by putting aside with their hands the thick growth of underwood that impeded their progress.

Towards evening they halted in a small glen, which was entered by a defile formed by the proximity of two small hills. It was a sequestered spot in the heart of the forest. The jackal was already beginning to raise his dismal cry, and the occasional crackling of the bushes announced that they were not the only sojourners in the jungle. The travellers kindled a fire in order to keep off the beasts of prey, and Sevajee having fixed a bamboo in the ground, untwisted from his waist several folds of a close kind of calico, threw it over the pole, and thus formed a rude

tent, under which he strewed some dried grass as a bed for the princess and her attendant.

The only access to this glen was through the defile already mentioned. The Mahratta therefore placed himself upon the road which immediately led to it in order to keep watch, lest any person sent by Aurungzebe in pursuit of the fugitives should happen to take that track. The dense growth of the forest rendered it so dark that no object was to be discerned beyond the distance of a few paces ; but Sevajee, having been much accustomed to thread the jungles by night in his own native hills, had acquired a quickness of perception peculiar to himself in detecting the movements of approaching objects. For some time he trod the path of this forest solitude without any interruption ; but at length the sound of distant footsteps caught his ear. He immediately advanced, and soon ascertained that a party of the Emperor's guard were approaching. It consisted of ten men. One of the soldiers preceded the rest, bearing a large torch. The Mahratta retreated quickly to the tent, extinguished the fire which had been kindled to scare the beasts of prey, and having roused the princess and her attendant, led them into a thicket on one side of the glen, where he desired they would remain until he should return.

"I go," said he, "to baffle our pursuers, who are now close upon our track. Should I fail, I am determined never to fall into their hands alive. For you there is mercy, for me none. Should I perish, return to your father, and he will still succour you."

"Never ! I wear a dagger, Sevajee, and the same hour that concludes your existence, shall likewise conclude mine. I shall not submit to another separation."

"The act I contemplate is desperate. If I succeed we are safe ; if I fail, we are lost."

Having tenderly embraced Rochinara, he quitted her, and hurried to the defile. By this time the Moguls were within a hundred yards of the gorge. The Mahratta grasped a creese in either hand, and placed himself behind a short but thick shrub which grew on one side of the entrance to the defile. As soon as

the man who carried the torch reached the place of his concealment, Sevajee stabbed him to the heart, seized the torch, and pressing his foot upon the flame, extinguished it, at the same moment plunging his second dagger into the breast of the officer who led the party. This was the work but of a few moments. The confusion was indescribable. Sevajee, whose eye had been accustomed to the darkness, was able to see his foes, though they could not perceive him. He stabbed four of them in succession, they being unable to perceive from whence the stroke of death came. His enemies knew not where to strike. Six already lay upon the earth weltering in their blood. Two others shortly shared the same fate ;—another followed, and one only remained to be sent to a similar account. Upon him the Mahratta sprang in his eagerness to complete the work of carnage, seized the sword with which his foe was armed, and wrested it from him ; but with the exertion his creese fell, and he could not recover it.

They were now both unarmed, and the struggle was desperate. The Mogul was a tall, powerful man, but no match for the Mahratta in activity and prompt vigour. He fell under the assault of his active adversary, yet still retained him in his grasp. Sevajee seized his prostrate enemy by the throat, and pressing him firmly upon the windpipe, endeavoured to strangle him ; but the sudden agony imparted an impulsive energy to the Mogul, who, doubling his legs under Sevajee's body, suddenly raised him, and cast him to a distance of several feet upon his back.

It happened that in turning to regain his feet, the Mahratta accidentally placed his hand upon his enemy's sword, which had fallen to the ground during their struggle. He lost not a moment, but buried it in the Mogul's body before he could raise himself from his recumbent position. Thus, aided by the darkness, Sevajee destroyed ten men without receiving a wound.

Having paused a moment to breathe, after his exertions, he rejoined the princess, whom he found anxiously awaiting his return. They passed the whole night in the thicket, exposed to the ravages of wild beasts, which, however, happily did not molest them, and on the following morning they pursued their dreary

journey, encompassed by perils, which the princess bore with a heroism worthy the daughter of Aurungzebe. Having procured a couple of miserable tattoos,* at a village on the borders of the jungle, the travellers proceeded by easy stages, and without suspicion, to Muttra, thence to Benares and Jaggernaut. From the latter place they went round by Hyderabad, and at length found themselves among the native hills of the Mahratta chief, where his fierce but gallant followers soon rallied round him.

About the time of his daughter's flight the Emperor was taken ill, and for many weeks his life was despaired of. This circumstance considerably abated the eagerness of pursuit after the fugitives, as the attention of every one was directed to the danger of the sovereign. A gloom prevailed through the empire; for the wise policy adopted by Aurungzebe, in spite of his hollowness and hypocrisy, had rendered him the most popular monarch that ever sat upon the Mogul throne. With all his moral blemishes, his public character stood very high, and the general prosperity which his wise administration diffused, added to the rigid piety which seemed the mainspring of all his acts, rendered him an object of all but idolatry with a large portion of those who lived in ease and affluence under his wise supremacy. He at length recovered, to the universal joy of his subjects, and seemed to have forgotten his daughter's flight.

A youth now appeared at court, in whom the Emperor took great interest, but whose birth and parentage were a mystery. No one could tell to whom he belonged, or whence he came, and yet the Emperor treated him with marks of distinguished favour. He was a remarkably handsome young man, had just entered his seventeenth year, and was eminently expert in every military exercise. In all hunting excursions, honoured by the sovereign's presence, he was the foremost to court peril, and always successful in pursuing the dangerous adventures of the chase. He soon excited the attention of the Omrahs by his daring, and the singular skill which he displayed in feats of arms. Who he could

* Native ponies.

be, was a frequent inquiry ; but on this question the profoundest political sages appeared just as ignorant as the most unlettered menials.

The young man gradually won the good opinion of all. His courtesy and amenity of manners were no less conspicuous than the more chivalric features of his character. Aurungzebe was gratified at the general approbation awarded to his favourite, and lost no opportunity of strengthening the flattering impression. In several incursions of the rebellious Usbecks, this youth had distinguished himself, and the Emperor looked forward to his becoming one of the most conspicuous leaders of his time. He was not only remarkable for his superiority in military exercises, but his talents in the cabinet were likewise highly promising, and though he was an object of jealousy to some of the nobles, who were mortified at seeing a stranger and a mere youth so flattered by their sovereign, yet with the majority he was a great and deserved favourite.

CHAPTER VII.

SEVAJEE, on his return, finding that there was no enemy to oppose him, soon regained the territory which he had lost during his captivity. All the mountain forts again fell into his hands, and he found himself in a better condition than ever to frustrate the supremacy of the Mogul Emperor in Southern India. In a few months this enterprising warrior was at the head of an army of fifty thousand soldiers, all daring men, accustomed to the privations and fatigues of mountain warfare, and possessing that activity, hardihood, and bodily energy peculiar to mountaineers. Calculating his power, Sevajee determined upon some exploit that should signalize his return from what he considered a humiliating bondage. Assembling a body of fifteen thousand choice troops, he marched towards Surat, during the rains, when an assault from enemies was the least expected.

One morning a Banian entered that city, offering various stuffs

for sale. Being a facetious man—as, indeed, most of those itinerant traders are—and having a quantity of choice brocades, he readily found admittance into the houses of the opulent citizens. Surat at this time was surrounded only by a slight mud wall, a very insufficient defence against the attacks of a daring enemy; but, secure in their immense wealth and commercial importance, the citizens never seem to have thought upon a hostile attack from any quarter, and it being now the period of the monsoon, they slumbered in perfect security. The Banian visited all parts of Surat with his pack, meeting everywhere with a flattering reception, and especially in the houses of the wealthy merchants. For three days he continued in the city. When he had sold all his merchandise, he departed with the general goodwill of the citizens.

In order to mislead the inhabitants of Surat, Sevajee had divided his forces into two bodies, with which he encamped before two important places, as if about to besiege them. Suddenly he ordered the troops to withdraw from those places, leaving only small parties who had received his instructions to keep up a continued clamour, and have lights burning during the night, in order to give the appearance of a large army encamped on the spot. These devices were completely successful in lulling the suspicions of the citizens of Surat. The streets were thronged by day with thrifty traders, the bazaars with busy chafferers, who by night reposed in unapprehensive safety. In the midst of their slumbers, however, they were roused by the din of arms. Starting from their beds, they were stunned with the shrieks of women and the cries of men. The confusion was indescribable. An enemy was within the walls, but amid the darkness it was impossible to distinguish friends from foes. The clash of arms was everywhere heard, mingled with the groans of the dying and the shrieks of the despairing. Terror magnified the danger. The enemy appeared an overwhelming host, sweeping through the streets like a torrent, and spreading death around like a blast of the simoom. There was little or no resistance. A long and indolent security seemed to have unnerved every arm, and the bad cause triumphed.

Day dawned, and presented a spectacle of general devastation.

The Mahrattas had become masters of Surat. The Banian who had received the hospitality of its citizens was recognised in the Mahratta chief, who now reclaimed without an equivalent the merchandise which he had so lately sold. The mercy of the conqueror was propitiated by submission to the pillage which he directed to be made. He permitted no bloodshed after the surrender, but practically showed, however, that he fully understood the law of appropriation. All the rich merchants and factors were obliged to exhibit their stores, and redeem them at a valuation. For three days the work of plunder continued, but no personal violence was offered to any of the inhabitants. When Sevajee had satisfied his appetite for pillage, and that of his troops, he retired from the city of Surat, with booty supposed to have exceeded in value one million sterling.

Aurungzebe was exceedingly mortified when he heard of this daring violation of the laws of honourable warfare; looking upon it as an act of mere predatory aggression, at once unbecoming a soldier and a prince. He now took the same resolution which he had already so frequently acted upon, but with little eventual success, of sending an army against Sevajee that should extinguish his power for ever. Accordingly he ordered a hundred thousand men under command of an experienced and active general to proceed to the Deccan. The young favourite already mentioned was made second in command, and marched with the high and proud hope of distinguishing himself in the field against the most formidable enemy of his sovereign. His birth was a general mystery, but such were his popular virtues, that although Aurungzebe had raised him to a post of distinction about his own person, still this advancement had excited little jealousy among the nobles, who generally admitted him to be deserving of such honour.

When the Mogul army reached the Deccan, they found Sevajee at the head of a numerous force. By adopting his usual system of mountain strategy, harassing his enemy by sudden surprises, cutting off their supplies, falling upon straggling parties, and keeping up continued alarms in their camp, the indefatigable Mahratta

soon thinned their ranks, and reduced them to considerable distress. He carefully avoided meeting his enemies in the open field, conscious not only of his own numerical inferiority, but of the superior discipline of the Moguls. By no stratagem could they withdraw him from his mountain fastnesses. The troops at length became dispirited, and clamoured either to be led at once against the mountaineers, or return to the imperial city, as they were wasting their energies in difficult marches and skirmishes, without coming into fair contact with a foe.

In order to still these murmurings, the youthful officer, who had been appointed second in command, offered to lead a detachment of twenty thousand troops among the hills, and engage the enemy upon his own ground. This proposal was acceded to by the general in chief. The young commander repaired with his detachment to the mountains. Sevajee, as usual, avoided a conflict until he could avail himself of some advantage of position.

One morning the Mogul camp was suddenly attacked, but the young general forming his squadrons behind their tents, soon repulsed the assailants, and pursuing them into the gorges of the mountains, slew many, and took several prisoners. In the heat of pursuit he was separated from his troops. Turning into a narrow valley, he received an arrow discharged by some hidden archer, through the fleshy part of his left arm. Heated by the ardour of pursuit, and pained by the wound, he spurred forward, forgetting that he was alone. Suddenly his horse was shot under him : he fell—but almost instantly springing upon his feet, looked round and perceived that he was not followed by a single Mogul. Just as he was preparing to retrace his steps, he saw an armed Mahratta advancing towards him. Calmly awaiting his approach, and perceiving that he was no common enemy, the Mogul cried—
“Do I see the leader of the Mahrattas?”

“Why do you ask?”

“Because of all others he is the man I would meet hand to hand.”

“Then you may enjoy your wish, for Sevajee stands before you.”

There was no further parley ; the two leaders encountered with mutual animosity. The struggle was fierce but short. The Mogul, being embarrassed by the wound in his arm, and somewhat enfeebled by consequent loss of blood, was unable to bring his best energies to the encounter. Sevajee was superior both in strength and activity, and very soon struck his adversary to the earth by a severe sabre-stroke on the head. The Mogul, being stunned, was quite at the mercy of his foe ; but that foe was as generous as he was brave. Struck with the youth and beauty of his enemy, Sevajee supported the youth's head, and opening his vest to expedite the recall of his senses, saw to his astonishment the distinct mark of a spear-head upon the right breast. Raising a clear shrill cry, in a few moments he was surrounded by his followers, whom he ordered to lift the wounded officer and bear him to one of his mountain fortresses in the neighbourhood. The blow which he had received on the head was so severe as to render him insensible : the sabre, had, nevertheless, inflicted no wound. The numerous folds of his turban had repelled it.

Upon recovering his consciousness, the young Mogul perceived that he was in the hands of his enemy. The wound in his arm had been dressed and carefully bandaged, and in the course of that evening he became an inmate of one of Sevajee's strongholds. On the following day he was brought into the presence of Rochinara, who greeted him with a courtesy which seemed to throw a gleam of sunshine upon his captivity.

Sevajee approaching him with a bland air besought him to bare his bosom. He immediately exposed it to the view of the princess, who, gazing at him for a moment in speechless astonishment, rushed forward, threw herself upon his neck and covered it with her tears. " My child," at length she cried—" my long lost son, you are come here to freedom and to joy : in your vanquisher behold a parent,—in me behold a mother. That mark upon your breast, stamped there before the light of heaven had beamed upon the embryo babe, is too strong and unerring a signature by God's hand to be mistaken."

The youth's astonishment was extreme, but there were certain

passages in his life with which he alone was familiar, that to his mind perfectly ratified what he now heard, and elucidated what to his mind had ever been wrapped in painful secrecy. Sevajee embraced his son, who told him that a mystery had always hung over his birth, which he had in vain endeavoured to unravel. He had been brought up at a solitary village, in a family with whom, though treated with kindness, he was not happy. He had been instructed by a learned Mussulman in the literature of his country, and his natural predilection for all manly exercises naturally led him to become an adept in the use of arms. He was treated with evident deference by the persons who had the charge of his infancy, which always induced him to suspect that his birth was above their condition. At the age of fifteen being summoned to the court of Aurungzebe, he was immediately distinguished by his sovereign, and shortly raised to a post of responsibility.

The meeting between the long-lost son and his parents was one of tender and reciprocal congratulation. Sambajee, by which name he was henceforward known, was too much rejoiced at having been restored to his parents to feel any desire of returning to the imperial court.

As soon as his wound was sufficiently healed to enable him to venture out, he rejoined the Mogul army. As he was extremely beloved by the troops, among whom was a large body of Rajpoots, he had no difficulty in persuading those more especially under his own command, to revolt from the Emperor and join the forces of Sevajee. To the surprise and consternation of the Mogul general, in one night nearly one half of his army went over to the Mahrattas, and left him no longer in a condition to face those formidable enemies of the state. Breaking up his encampment, therefore, he returned to Delhi with the news of his ill success, occasioned by the revolt of the troops and their union with the foe. Aurungzebe could not repress his indignation at these tidings. He now saw that the strength of his enemy was increased to such a degree as to render him a dangerous rival!—that the harmony of his family was disturbed, and his favourite, on whom

he had lavished honours and whom he had intended to advance to still higher distinctions, had turned traitor.

Sevajee now became the most powerful prince of Southern Indi . He could muster an army of fifty thousand foot and a hundred thousand horse. Dreaded by the neighbouring potentates, and having raised the reputation of his arms by foiling the legions of Aurungzebe, he determined to satisfy his pride and dazzle his followers by a formal coronation, modelled upon that of the Mogul, in which the weighing against gold and other pompous ceremonies were not omitted. Gifts to an immense value, bestowed upon Brahmins, gave lustre to this as well as to other high political festivals.

From this time the prosperity of Sevajee continued without abatement until his death, which happened in the year 1680, at the age of fifty, and he was succeeded by his son Sambajee. The Princess Rochinara did not long survive him.

THE END.