

KARAH KAPLAN;

OR,

THE KOORDISH CHIEF.

A TALE OF PERSIA AND KOORDISTAN.

BY

THE HON. CHARLES STUART SAVILE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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CHAPTER I.

Long have I been forlorn, and all for thee.

TITUS ANDRONICUS.

IN an anderoon of a large house, situated in a magnificent garden, within the walls of the city of Hamadan, and surrounded by every luxury which wealth could command, and taste suggest, sat, or rather reclined a lovely girl, on whose countenance sorrow was depicted in

the most marked manner. Though her age could scarcely have been sixteen, yet her form was quite developed :—and a beautiful form it was, fair in all its proportions, a model indeed of symmetry and elegance. The light hair and blue eyes, however, of this girl, proclaimed her of a different descent or nation than that of Persia ;(1) while the sadness that overpowered her countenance, bore marked evidence that happiness had long ceased to be her portion. Katrina indeed, was a Georgian and a Christian of the Greek Church, born at Tiflis,(2) and brought up during the first portion of her life in her native town. Her father being a merchant, had frequent occasion to make journeys into Persia ; in order to carry on transactions appertaining to commerce at Tabreez. This man being ardently attached to his daughter, had several times, notwithstanding the entreaties of her mother, taken the young Katrina with him, in order to keep him company on

the road, and beguile the tedium of the journey with her society. It so happened, that on one of these occasions, the old merchant had been obliged to leave Tabreez somewhat sooner than he intended, on account of the sudden breaking out of war between the Persians and the Russians; and being desirous of avoiding insult, he placed himself under the protection of a small Muscovite detachment, that was hastening to join the main body of the invading army. Unfortunately this act was the very worst he could have performed, for had he quietly sojourned at Tabreez, till the conclusion of hostilities, although he might certainly have been exposed to some insult, still he had so many friends among the Persian Armenian merchants, that his property would have been in little or no danger; but disregarding their entreaties and protestations, he hastily quitted the city, and accompanied by his daughter and servants, sought out, as already mentioned, a

detachment of Russian infantry, which was on its march towards the main body of the army, which it had quitted on a foraging expedition. Soon after he had joined this company, they were attacked by a very large Persian force, which overwhelming the handful of Russians put them to rout; but not until after a most desperate resistance. Among those who fell was Alexis Sumbartoff, the Georgian merchant, while his daughter, then about fourteen years of age, was taken captive and carried to Khoi, a town situated in the north of the province of Azerbijan.

It happened, most unfortunately for Katrina, that the officer who commanded the detachment which had taken her prisoner, was a sycophant and a creature dependent on Meerza Sadek, and being desirous of the favour of that powerful personage, he had sent the beautiful girl, now become a slave, as a present to him. The sensual Persian, on beholding the

youthful Georgian, was instantly captivated by her beauty, and offered notwithstanding her religion to make her his wife. This offer, Katrina, who was overwhelmed with grief at the loss of her beloved parent, indignantly refused, and although at one time entreated, and at others persecuted in the hopes of changing her resolution, she succeeded in keeping the Persian at a distance for a whole year. During this time, also, many attempts were made to induce her to become a Mahometan, and though by so doing, she would have become at least nominally free, she resolutely refused to apostatize. Indeed it must be owned, that the Meerza himself was never very anxious on the subject, and had been heard to observe more than once to a friend, that it was the most amusing thing in the world, to listen to the pretty infidel as she knelt before, and prayed to the pictures of her saints. "By Ali," he was wont to exclaim; "she almost induces me to

become an infidel myself, while I hearken to her musical voice, and watch her beautiful attitudes."

At length the love, or rather passion of the Meerza for his fair captive, became so violent, that he would stand no longer delay, and obtained by force, what was denied to his entreaties. From the hour of this, to her, dreaded event, the poor girl drooped, the rose faded from her cheek ; and it was evident from her downcast manner, that her heart was broken ; still the passion of her lord and master continued unabated ; he lavished every possible luxury on her, forcing on her acceptance the most magnificent presents, and giving her an establishment of almost royal splendour. When peace between Russia and Persia was proclaimed, he succeeded in preventing any communication taking place between his slave, and the Russian ambassador at Teheran, and unhappily for Katrina, her existence, or rather

her present position was even unknown to any of her countrymen. In vain had she attempted to send news to her friends in Georgia, concerning her deplorable situation, in vain had she implored Meerza Sadek to grant her freedom, or at least to allow her relations to ransom her, for in the first instance every letter was intercepted, and in the second, every entreaty was met with a decided negative.

It was during the absence of her detested lord and master at Sultaneah, that Katrina was sitting in her splendid anderoon, according to her daily custom, and pining away in solitude the unhappy hours that dragged their tedious course over her head, unsoled by the society of any sympathizing friend, or gladdened by the sight of a single really beloved object.

It was now about noon, the Azam(3) was sounding through the city, recalling to her mind, if indeed she had ever forgotten that she was in an infidel land, and worst of all, what

was she? Alas! the wife, or rather slave of one who denounced the christian religion as an imposture.

“O, merciful God!” she cried, as the last echo, caused by the nearest Mollah’s voice, ceased to sound, “how long is this to continue? how long am I to linger on this miserable life? Gracious Redeemer of the world! look down upon me, let me die, sooner than be forced to drag on my present hateful existence; let my sense of hearing, at least, cease to be polluted with these horrid cries, which ring in my ear like curses. O Maria!” she continued, throwing herself before a portrait of the Virgin, “intercede for me—intercede for me.”

The feelings of anguish which racked the breast of the unfortunate captive, became here so poignant and heart-rending, that she could no longer endure them; but throwing herself in agony on the gorgeous cushions that were arranged around, she gave vent to her distress

in a flood of tears. The fit of weeping became, however, by degrees less violent, but broken sobs at intervals, gave evidence that her misery was unassuaged ; at this moment, her attention was excited by a slight noise from without ; it came nearer and nearer, the curtains of the door were agitated, and then pushed aside, and a tall handsome young man entered the room. Katrina, alarmed at such an apparition in a Mahometan anderoon, was on the very point of shrieking for assistance, when the new-comer, pressing his finger to his lip, exclaimed in a suppressed voice,

“ Hist, sister ! do you not know me ? ”

For a moment Katrina stood motionless, as if struck by catalepsy ; anxiously she gazed upon the features of the form before her, then, as an expression of recognition passed over her own, rushing into his arms, she exclaimed,

“ My brother ! my brother ! ”

The two remained clasped for several mo-

ments to each other's bosom. Nature was too powerful, she had triumphed over speech, and the brother and sister could only press each other more closely to their hearts, and gaze on each other's faces. At length, regaining the power of utterance, the young man exclaimed in a voice which thrilled through the nerves of the hearer, and raised her feelings to ecstasy,

“Katrina, Katrina, do I again behold you ! Sister, life feels restored to me once more, for months, aye years, have I sought for tidings concerning you. I have endured all the torments of despair, I had thought my eyes would never rest on you again ; but O blessed Virgin ! my prayers to thee have been heard, here she is, my sister ! yes, your brother lives again !”

Another embrace followed this impassioned rhapsody. Tears flowed in torrents from the eyes of the Georgian woman—they were no longer tears of agony, but the offspring of the purest joy.

The first thrilling effects of the meeting, having passed away, the two became calmer, and Katrina turning to her brother inquired of him, how he had discovered her place of residence; at the same time informing him of the many vain attempts she had made, to send tidings concerning her captivity, to her friends in Georgia. The lip of the brother curled with anger at learning the tyranny to which his sister had been subjected; but on hearing how Meerza Sadek had forced her to become his wife, he started to his feet, and heaping every possible execration on the head of the Persian, swore to revenge his own, and his family wrongs.

While he was giving way to the violence of his rage, the young Katrina had time for consideration, and she recollected that it must be at the hazard of his life, that her brother was in his present situation—in the anderoon of a Mahometan noble—having entered it by stealth. She was aware, indeed, that discovery

would be death to him, and how it was possible to avoid that discovery, she knew not. The joyous expression that had temporarily lighted up her features disappeared, as this idea rose to her mind. Madly she turned to him, and entreated him to look to his safety. Sumbartoff clenched his teeth, as she spoke, and smiled contemptuously.

“Think you, sister,” he exclaimed, “that I am ignorant of the imminent peril that exists, in entering the harem of a Mussulman? But with such an object as mine in view, no danger can appal me. The joy that I now feel is enough to atone for every hardship, and for all the misery I have endured since our separation. O what a bitter separation it has been! you also, my sweet sister, have experienced its anguish; it has paled your dear cheek, and dimmed your bright eyes; but cheer up, a brother’s love shall rescue you—a brother’s arm defend you!”

“Nay, nay, this must not be,” replied

Katrina, "you must not think of me; every moment increases the danger of your discovery, and although in these countries a brother is allowed to see his sister, even when she is the wife of another, still, on account of our being Christians, (for which God be praised!) the servants of the household will pretend unbelief of our relationship, and treat you with the same severity as if no ties of blood were between us."

"I care not, sister," returned Sumbartoff. "I fear nothing. Hear me a moment: it is now but three months, since I discovered your place of residence; since that time I have scarcely slept, but have passed it in devising schemes for your liberation. I know well, that if I implored the aid of the Russian ambassador at Teheran, and preferred my petition to him, he would use every effort to assist me(4); but insurmountable obstacles would be thrown in my path by the accursed Meerza Sadek—he

would either deny having purchased a Georgian slave, or if he admitted that, would swear you were dead ; and vain would be every attempt to prove the contrary, for the harem of a Mussulman is sacred to its lord and master ; nor could Fath Ali himself, absolute and despotic as he is, order a search to be made therein. Thanks be to Providence, however, I am not wanting in worldly goods ; money is all powerful, and with it, I have traced out my plan of action. I have spent the last three months in purchasing horses, and in placing them at different stations on the road, between Hamadan, and the frontiers of Georgia.(5) With the same money too, I have bribed the woman who is at the head of your household, to procure me this interview ; that woman now remains without, ready to give us warning of any approaching danger."

"But still," exclaimed Katrina, "your steps may have been dogged, you know not how

jealous and vindictive these Persians are;—fly brother!” continued the trembling girl, “fly while there is yet time and save your life; leave me to my fate, for of what value is my life, when compared with yours?”

“Not without you, my sister, not without you,” answered Sumbartoff, firmly. “You must accompany me!”

“When?” inquired Katrina.

“When? now!” said the Georgian. “This very night you leave these hated walls—say, are you ready?”

“I dare not,” cried his sister, “the scheme is fraught with too much peril; suppose we were discovered!”

“And if we were,” said the Georgian, proudly; “is not death preferable to dishonour; and is not every moment you remain here, both dishonour and disgrace? Are you not now the slave of one who denounces us as infidels, and who is the persecutor of our

religion? Can you remain here in your present position? Can you live the toy, the minion of such a wretch?"

"Oh no! brother," said Katrina, "think not so ill of me, can you suppose I have had a moment's happiness since the dreadful day on which my father lost his life? By the blessed virgin, if it were not for the fear of hazarding your safety, I would fly with you this moment; but no, I must remain here, a miserable, lost, and wretched captive. It is enough, that I suffer alone, without endangering a life more precious than my own."

"Sister," cried the Georgian, "with a last effort, his whole frame trembling with agitation, my own sweet Katrina, do you remember the walks we took together in our childhood, do you remember the green fields and gorgeous forests, which encircle the smiling Teflis? Can you forget our happy home, the house of your infancy? Katrina! those fields are verdant

still — those forests spread their gigantic branches wide as ever; but there is, alas! a desolate house in Teflis, in which the merry song, and joyous laugh once sounded till the echo rang again. Yes, Katrina, in that house we first saw the light; it is there we first learned to love each other, it was once our happy home. O sister, sister, its portals are still open, and though he, who would once have welcomed and pressed us to his heart, sleeps in the cold grave, there still breathes one, in whose veins our blood runs fresh and full, who sighs to behold the day, when she may welcome the children of the noble Sumbartoff to the home of their fathers. Come, hesitate not, let us leave this infidel land, and return to kindred hearts and holy shrines.”

These words were uttered in tones that thrilled to the very soul of the Georgian woman; for a moment she was transported to her native land, amidst the scenes of her joyous

girlhood. In that one retrospective glance, the treasured memories of a warm and guileless heart, passed vividly before her; she thought of what she had been, and then of what she was. Starting as this last chord jarred upon the harp of memory, the poor girl no longer hesitated; but throwing herself into the arms of her brother, exclaimed, "I am ready, bear me quickly hence, we will escape, or perish together."

At this moment, the door of the room was burst open, and Meerza Sadek stood before them.

CHAPTER II.

Laertes.—Alas, then, she is drowned?

Queen.—Drowned, drowned.

HAMLET

To account for the sudden apparition of the Persian nobleman, it will be necessary to observe, that in consequence of some urgent affairs, appertaining to the government of the province, the Meerza had been dispatched to Hamadan, by Prince Mahomed Reza ; but unfortunately for the young Katrina, his departure from the camp had been so sudden, and his journey to Hamadan so rapid, that he had

not found an opportunity of sending on a chupper to apprise the members of his family of his coming. On arriving at the door of his house, his anxiety to behold his Georgian slave was such, that immediately on dismounting, he proceeded to his anderoon. The first notice of his presence, given to the woman who was keeping guard over the door, in order to give notice to Sumbartoff of approaching danger, being the passing by of her master; she had not even time to raise a single cry; and thus, without warning, the Persian stood in the presence of the Georgians at the very moment they were in each others arms.

On beholding a man in his anderoon, the first movement of the Meerza was to place his hand to his girdle, where the dagger of a Persian usually hangs, but the place of that weapon being occupied by a roll of paper,(1) he rushed upon Sumbartoff, and seizing him by the throat, attempted to hurl him to the ground,

at the same time calling loudly for assistance.

Sumbartoff, however, was too powerful for his adversary, and extricating himself from his grasp, he dashed him against the wall. But at this moment, the room was filled with ferashes, waving their drawn swords in the air; the scimitar, of the Georgian instantly flew from its scabbard, and having placed his back against a wall, the young man was enabled, for awhile, to keep the infuriated Persians at a distance. Maddened at the vigorous resistance shown by a single man, one of the attendants drew a pistol, and presenting it at the Georgian, pulled the trigger. The piece went off, but fortunately, Sumbartoff had been enabled to strike it upwards, and the ball lodged in the ceiling. Under cover of the smoke caused by the discharge, the young man leapt forward, and before they could prevent him, had rushed from the room. He had already

gained the courtyard, and in another instant would have reached the street, when he stumbled over the body of the kaneez ; who, in her terror, had remained kneeling before the door, and came heavily to the ground. The very means, indeed, he had provided for his safety, being the occasion of his capture.

In his fall, his sword escaped from his hand, and thus, he was exposed, completely unarmed, to the rage of his opponents. Just, however, as the foremost ferash had sprung upon him, and was in the act of plunging his sword into his body, Meerza Sadek was heard commanding them to take the dog alive. Upon which, by the united efforts of the whole household, he was secured, and firmly bound.

During the short combat, the unhappy woman who had been the innocent cause of the whole scene, had fainted ; and by the directions of the Meerza, was carried into an inner apartment, there to await the judgment of her

master. In the meantime, the furious husband commanded the Georgian youth to be brought forward, and on his appearance, heaped every possible invective and abuse upon him.

“ Dog, worm, reptile,” he cried; “ thanks be to Ali, I have defiled your ancestors’ graves; may they rot for ever in Jehanum. How comes it that you have thus dared to enter this house?”

“ Dog yourself,” retorted the Georgian; “ answer me first, how you have dared to keep a Russian subject, and my sister, as a slave in your anderoon !”

These words were uttered in broken Persian, betraying by the accent, the country of the speaker. The Meerza, for one moment, turned pale while he listened, but dissembling his confusion, he roared out :

“ What lies are these? My wife the sister of a doubly denounced infidel! By the soul of my father, this insolence is too much.

Here, ferashes ! throw the unclean swine into the tank,(2) and hold him down till his foul breath has passed away !”

The attendants, at this command, began to drag the unfortunate man towards the water ; but Sumbartoff, although on the very brink of destruction, preserved his courageous demeanour.

“ Man,” he cried, “ beware ! I am a Russian subject. You have unlawfully detained my sister in your power ;—lay hands on me at your peril. Remember, my nation is no weak one !”

“ What proof have I of your being what you assert ?” demanded the Meerza sarcastically. “ It requires but little penetration to pierce so slight a subterfuge. I give no credit to your falsehood. Bachahau,” he continued, “ obey me ; cast the dog into the water.”

Sumbartoff struggled in the midst of his bonds, but in vain. Being overpowered, he

was thrown head-foremost into the tank, his legs were seized by several of the ferashes, and he was held down in that position by the united efforts of his opponents.

At first, the death struggles of the victim were appalling; the bubbles of his expiring breath rose gurgling to the surface. By degrees, the water was less agitated, the bubbles rose singly, few and far between, then altogether subsided.(3) Upon which, the attendants drew forth the body, and carried it before their master, who having gazed on the features, now pale and distorted by the convulsive agonies of so fearful a death, exclaimed :

“ Bear the carrion hence, and cast it to some Christian dog who pollutes this town with his presence. Had I my wish, every one of that accursed sect should be treated like yonder carcase. Do you hear me,” he continued; “ bear it hence, and proclaim in public both the crime and penalty. Remember,

however, as you value your skins, that you utter not a word of his having called himself a Russian, or of his claiming kindred with my wife. Go, be wise, you know me well."

The men hastened to obey the mandate, and the corpse of Sumbartoff was borne away from the scene of his murder, when the Meerza, rising from his seat, proceeded to the inner apartment, into which the senseless Katrina had been conveyed; and on entering her presence, found her just returning to a state of sensibility. Sternly and fixedly he stood, awaiting her perfect consciousness, then approaching her, he cried:

"Woman! what have you done?—how comes it, that on returning home, I find you forgetful of the duties of a wife, and in the embrace of a man? Know you not, that if I will it, your life is forfeited?"

"Meerza," returned Katrina, "that man is my brother. Is it a crime to have been over-

joyed at beholding him, after our long separation?"

"What!" cried the brutal Mussulman, "the same lie again! By Ali, this maddens me. Think not so easily to deceive me! you shall not laugh at my beard with impunity."

"As I hope for mercy hereafter," shrieked the Georgian woman in agony, "I speak the truth. He *is* my brother—harm him not."

"Silence, girl!" said the Meerza, "hold thy lying tongue. A brother does not visit his sister by stealth—he does not wait the husband's absence, but comes boldly forward, and claims his permission to see her."

"Meerza!" answered Katrina, imploringly, "you know full well the impossibility of such a course of action. It is you who have prevented all intercourse with me and my friends. You know, that had my brother asked to see me, you would have denied my

being here. Meerza, you are wilfully incredulous. Take heed, however, harm not my brother; for my brother, indeed, he is."

"As for that," said Meerza, sneeringly, "he shall receive no further harm from me, whatever else may befall him."

"Bless you for those words!" replied Katrina, exultingly; "may every blessing be showered on your head—may your fortunes prosper. Let my Lord grant me one request: oh! say that I may once again see and embrace my brother."

"Why, girl," cried the wretch, with a fiendish laugh, "the meeting would be sufficiently harmless, since he would now receive your embraces somewhat coolly. Ha, ha, ha!"

"What mean you?" shrieked Katrina. "Meerza!—man!—fiend! speak—say you have not murdered him."

The wretched woman seized the hand of her brutal tyrant; she strove to read her answer

in his countenance; a bitter sneer met her gaze, and with laughing mockery he said:

“Why, girl, I have only cooled your brother’s courage, in the tank.”

There was little in the words themselves, to alarm, but the tone, the manner, the ill-concealed triumph of revenge, proclaimed their full import to the suffering heart of Katrina. She knew she had lost her brother, and with one long, piercing scream of agony, fell senseless to the ground. Even the kaneezes, hardened as they were by their prejudices, to the woes of a Christian, even they seemed horrified at what had occurred; and no doubt, had their master been absent, would have given way to their indignation; but he was before them, and such was their dread of the monster, that in silence they attended on the fainting Georgian. Their very blood, however, was chilled to ice, on Meerza Sadek’s exclaiming:—

“ Bring hither, on the instant, that accursed Zarleb,(4) that she may receive the punishment of her perfidy.”

This unhappy woman, who was the kaneez who had promised to keep guard for Sumbar-toff, had deluded herself with the hope that her share in the fatal meeting of the brother and sister had been overlooked, and had even ventured to enter the anderoon, and mingle with her companions ; she little knew her master's keen and crafty penetration, and that he had at once seen through the whole plot, on observing her bewildered agitation at his sudden presence. On his calling her name, the terrified creature fell on her knees, crying loudly for mercy.

“ Mercy for what,” he said, “ you, at least, can have no excuse to plead, faithless to your trust, and to your duty to me ; instead of barring all access to the anderoon, you connived at the entrance of an infidel stranger ;

wretch ! you could not resist the touch of infidel gold. Let her be searched."

This surmise of Meerza Sadek's proved true ; a purse full of Russian ducats was found upon her, and placed in his hands ; he glanced at the coins, and quietly rising, seized the unfortunate woman by the hair, and dragged her from the room. He then called his attendants, and commanded them to procure the fiercest cat they could find.(5) The animal was brought, and according to the Meerza's directions, was tied by the hind paws to the bare calf of the woman's leg, with its head downwards ; the hands of the slave being fastened behind her, the cat was then struck by the whips of the ferashes, till maddened with rage, it dug its claws and teeth deep into the flesh ; nor till the pain and fright had driven the poor woman into fits, did her lord give the signal for cessation. His malice being thus gratified, Meerza Sadek proceeded to his dewankhaneh, and

calling for a kaliaun and coffee, smoked the one, and drank the other with as much coolness as if nothing extraordinary had happened; nay! he even commanded his secretary to be summoned, and with his usual nerve, dictated letters, and issued various orders.

The crafty wretch, however, little imagined that he had for once miscalculated the extent of his influence.

CHAPTER III.

“ Some twelve days hence,
Our general forces at Bridgnorth shall meet :
Our hands are full of business ; let’s away ;
Advantage feeds him fat, while men delay.”

SHAKESPEARE.

THE delicious spring season of Persia had been succeeded by the intensely hot and arid months of summer. The rivulets had been dried up, the rivers become rivulets, and the ground parched by the ever unclouded rays of the sun. This season also had flown, and autumn held its more genial sway over the land ; the parched ground had begun to be refreshed by showers, the harvest had been ga-

thered, the many and exquisite fruits of the country had ripened, and nature which had been, to all appearance, drooping and withered, once more showed signs of reviving from her languor.

It was about this time, that the Koordish tribes under the dominion, or in the vicinity of Karah Kaplan, appeared to be in a state of great activity ; numerous gatherings were observed to take place among them, while choppers were frequently sent from tribe to tribe. The warriors, also, were continually practised in the use of arms, while every horse that was fit to bear a burden, was kept in constant exercise and training. Every thing, indeed, connected with these wild men, gave token of their being on the eve of some great enterprise.

Seated in a tent, surrounded by the chiefs of several other tribes, and by the oldest and most experienced men of his own, sat Allah

Verdee Khan, Karah Kaplan. It was evident, by the serious countenances of all present, that a most important discussion was going on, and fixing the general attention. At the right hand of Allah Verdee, sat an old man, with a grisly beard and enormous moustachios, bearing equal signs of age. A pair of black shaggy eyebrows overhung eyes of extraordinary brilliancy, the which, no toil, hardship or age had dimmed. His person was large and powerfully built, and his sinews enormous, which his much-scarred visage bore witness to its having mingled in many a fray and battle field. This man was Thamasp Khan, chief of a neighbouring tribe, and a firm ally of Allah Verdee, whom he looked upon as a son, and to whose father he had been nearly related. On the left of the young chieftain, sat another warrior, of gigantic mould, and of nearly the same age as Thamasp, and on whose countenance the lines of ruthless ferocity were deeply imprinted. This

was Massooreh, the younger brother of Thasp, a Khan renowned throughout Iran on account of his desperate deeds, which savoured of almost supernatural prowess.

The slight but athletic form of Karah Kaplan, did not, however, appear to disadvantage, although placed between these two giants ; for so well proportioned were his limbs to his height, that though small, he by no means appeared dwarfish. It was, indeed, well known, that when equally well armed and mounted, he was more than a match for either of the two brothers, making up in activity, for what he was deficient in strength and size.

Besides the above-mentioned persons, there sat around various other leaders, of more or less renown, belonging to the Karah Kaplan and the neighbouring tribes. Among these, was the gigantic Moorad, who always had a seat at his master's counsels, and whose advice and observations were looked upon with as

much respect as his wonderful prowess in the field.

“ Barakillah, Thamasp Khan,” observed Karah Kaplan, in answer to a remark made by that person, “ you have spoken well ; it would never do to permit the padersooktehs to imagine the real motive of our gathering together. It will not be amiss to send forth a report that we are about to make reprisals on the Pasha of Soolimonieh,(1) and allow such a report to continue until we are on the march ; then our movements will be so rapid, that the first intimation his Majesty, the Shah, will have of our approach, will be a charge of our warriors in the very heart of his camp.

“ And the seating of Allah Verdee Khan upon the royal musnud,” continued Thamasp laughingly. “ By the holy camel, it will astonish the old king to find himself, on a sudden, without a throne. After enjoying in quiet, nearly a quarter of a century of regal authority,

he will be fit to tear his long beard to shreds."

"You are sanguine, my friend," replied Allah Verdee, "it is a good omen, when one of your experience speaks so confidently of a successful issue. It is true that these Iranees keep but a poor watch, and their sentries are marvelously given to slumber on their posts, Allah preserve them!"

"Allah preserve them?" cried Massooreh, sharply; "say rather, Allah confound them. May all such lazy hounds meet the just reward of their carelessness; may they ever prove themselves worthy children of the asses that begot them. What was Fath Ali's father but an ass to trust himself within the clutches of his brother, the eunuch? What was Aga Mahomed himself, but an ass, to allow the very man, condemned by him to death, to attend upon him as usual, the night previous to their intended execution, when they cunningly

turned the tables upon him? Well! and what can Fath Ali be but an ass. He is the son of an ass, and the nephew of an ass! I tell you, one and all, that he and his whole court are a set of asses."

"The better for us," returned Karah Kaplan. "The greater the ass to be encountered, the easier the victory. Inshallah, my friends, before six months are passed, we shall be seated on the musnud at Teheran, and a Koor-dish monarch shall give laws to Iran."

"Inshallah!" exclaimed several voices. "May Shah Allah Verdee live for ever."

"Be not too certain of success," said a very old man, of inferior rank to the rest, but whose advanced age entitled him to a voice in such an assembly. "Remember that an ass can kick, and that a wolf may receive his death from the hoof of the quiet looking animal, whom he may have incautiously approached, being too confident in his own strength and of the other's imbecility."

“ Bash Ali,” returned Moorad, “ are you still at your croaking ? It is true, that if you foolishly take hold of the hind leg of an ass, he may knock out your teeth with a kick ; but how can the poor beast harm you, if you walk up at once to his head ? Bash, man, when you were sixty years younger, you spoke not thus. I have heard that you were formerly wont to take the lion by the mane.”

“ Young man,” replied the other, sternly ; “ age chills the blood and freezes enthusiasm, but it also clears the brain ; what an old man loses in bodily vigour, is supplied by prudence and forethought. Give me the hand of the young man, but guided by the head of age.”

“ Then Ali,” observed Karah Kaplan, “ you approve not of our enterprise, you would desire us to remain quietly in our camp, sitting on our heels ; or, at most, confining our warfare to attacks upon caravans. Say, old man, is such your counsel ?”

“ Nay, my honoured master,” said the vete-

ran ; “ far be such advice from the threshold of my lips. I only spoke of the uncertainty of success, and recommended caution ; for Sahib, it is far from the wish of Ali to counsel indolence ; but surely, it deteriorates not from courage to be accompanied by prudence.”

“ And,” said Allah Verdee, “ are we not proceeding with all due prudence ? Here are the warriors of several powerful tribes collected together, each single man being worth four Iranees, and with these troops, we are about to attack Fath Ali’s camp at Sultaneah, at the moment when he will be least prepared for such a visit, and at the time when many of his troops are disbanded for the season, on account of the autumn having arrived. Such are our intentions ; do they lack either prudence or forethought ?”

“ Pardon me, Sahib,” replied the old man, “ and allow me to ask whether you have really good reports of the number of the king’s troops

that remain at Sultaneah ? Have you well considered in what manner you are to oppose the royal artillery ? for, methinks, you will be scarcely able to carry guns thither, if you wish your progress to be fast. Moreover, have you well conned over the necessary steps to be pursued, should your enterprise upon the camp prove successful ?”

“ As for your first question,” answered, Karah Kaplan, “ we can at once answer ; yes, we know well the force of the Shah’s army, both as to its numbers and quality ; and, Alhamdellillah, it is far more respectable with respect to the former than the latter. For your second question, I return for answer, that it is not my intention to oppose the artillery at all, as I purpose making a sudden attack, and intend capturing the guns before their defenders shall have time for resistance. And for your third question, have you not yet lived sufficiently long, to be ignorant that, in Persia, one

decided victory leads to another. By my father's beard, I should like to know who would oppose our progress to Teheran, when once the royal troops have been scattered like leaves before us. Besides, we shall have deserters flocking in by wholesale. Ali ! trouble us no more with such dispiriting remarks ; and, once for all, croak not out of your foul mouth, like a frog in a putrid marsh."

The octogenarian remained silent at this reproof ; but shook his head, as if unconvinced.

"Tell me, Thamasp Khan," continued Allah Verdee, "how many men can you for certain bring into the field ?"

"By the permission of Allah," replied the old Khan, "my brother and I are at present so well prepared, that in six days from this period, five hundred horsemen from our tribe could throw their shadows on the plain, and in a fortnight, we could muster about a third more.

As for the first batch, however, every man would be a perfect warrior, each in himself a Rustum."

"And my tribe, mashallah!" added another chief, "can furnish a hundred troopers, well mounted, and ready to proceed on a chuppow to the end of the world ; men who can eat fire and digest iron as easily as kabobs and pilloule."

Various other leaders here detailed the numbers of their men able to proceed to the field ; and, accounting properly for some exaggeration, it was evident that the different allied tribes, combined with that of Karah Kaplan, could furnish, in all, about three thousand men, all cavalry—a most formidable body, considering the daring character, prowess, and skill of the Koords.

It was plainly the intention of Karah Kaplan (as may have appeared by the above conversation) to strike a blow for the crown of Persia ;

nor let this determination surprise the reader, as it is an authenticated fact, that scarcely a Persian exists, let him be of the lowest grade, who has passed through life, without having, at some period or other, felt a hope that the day might come which would behold him a Shah, as he reasons thus :—“ Every thing is in the hands of Allah. What Allah wills, will be.” The throne of Iran is hereditary. Still, should an usurper gain possession of it, and keep up his power with a strong force, his subjects will look up to him with as much respect as if his ancestors had swayed the sceptre from time immemorial ; consequently, the throne of Persia, though theoretically hereditary, belongs, in reality, to any one who is sufficiently powerful to make might right. It, however, may be surmised, that in future the succession in Persia will be more regular, in consequence of the recent influence of European powers, who will and have assisted the rightful heir to his

kingdom. The present Shah (Mohamed) is now third in succession. The first of his line who reigned over Persia, was the well-known and dreaded Aga Mahomed Kujur, the tyrannical, but talented eunuch. His nephew, Fath Ali, succeeded in comparative quiet, as his uncle had previously cut off all who might oppose his accession to the throne.

The present monarch, Mohamed Shah, is grandson to Fath Ali, and son to the late Abbas Meerza, prince royal of Persia, who died in 1833, some months before his father. Whatever may have been the monstrous ingratitude shown by the present Shah and his ministers, Mahomed never would have gained possession of his kingdom, had it not been for the assistance afforded him by the English; and most of all, does he owe his throne to the indefatigable exertions of Sir John Campbell, at that time our envoy at the Persian court. By the assistance of that talented person, Ma-

homed ascended his throne with but slight tumult, notwithstanding a host of uncles and cousins, the progeny of his grandfather, who certainly presented his subjects with the most numerous legitimate family ever known to spring from one man.(2)

The condition of many of these princes is at present pitiable, they being reduced to the most abject poverty. Surely they have good reason to curse the law of polygamy, and most of all, the hoary libertine who begot, and then left them totally unprovided for, bequeathing them no other legacy than their rank.

But to proceed after this digression with our story; it must be observed that Karah Kaplan's bosom burned with the fiercest rage at the loss of Zoraya; but his anger was chiefly excited by the fact of that loss being occasioned by the almost unassisted powers of a single man. It seemed to him almost miraculous that an Eliaut of low grade, and educated as a

shepherd, should have, in the first instance, combated with, and vanquished the strongest and ablest warrior of the tribe; and, secondly, should have penetrated alone into the very heart of the camp, and carried off a captive maiden from the very arms of the chief, and under the noses of the sentinels. It appeared, indeed, as if supernatural powers had been bestowed upon the youth; still he was not invincible, as was clearly proved by his being overcome with such facility by Moorad near Sultaneah. Indeed, the supposed death of Feridoon was the only consolation that Allah Verdee had received, for he had believed during some space of time, that Moorad had struck Feridoon his death blow, and thus far, both the chieftain and his foster-brother considered themselves avenged; but Karah Kaplan panted for something more substantial than revenge. His love for the lost Zoraya burned with undiminished flame, and he felt that,

apart from her, life would be a burden. In gathering, therefore, together the tribes, it was at first only his intention to make a sudden attack upon the royal camp, and to attempt the carrying off of the maiden. By degrees, however, more ambitious hopes had entered his imagination, and he determined to strike a bold blow for the crown itself. It is true, that some of his friends considered that it would have been more politic to have directed his arms at once against Teheran, the capital of the kingdom, and made himself master of that city during the absence of the troops ; but in going against the camp at Sultaneah, Karah Kaplan was swayed as much by love as ambition. He likewise anticipated that the defeat of the royal army would cause a panic over the whole country, of which it would be easy to take advantage. Besides, in no kind of warfare were the Koords so expert as in that of the open field, where full scope could be

given for putting into practice their admirable horsemanship.

Allah Verdee had also lately learned from some spies that Feridoon had not been slain, but was actually out of danger, and fast recovering from the effects of his wounds, and that it was the intention of Ismael and Mehtee Khan to unite the lovers as soon as the youth's strength should be thoroughly restored. The idea of Zoraya becoming another's, was alone wormwood and gall to the Koordish chief; but that the Eliaut youth should be the fortunate possessor of such loveliness, drove him nearly frantic. The news of Ismael's good fortune and restoration to rank, had also reached the ears of Allah Verdee, who was, therefore, aware that no bar could now arise to the union. Had, indeed, Feridoon remained in his former humble sphere, or had he been slain during the encounter with Moorad, some hope might have existed; but now, the only

chance of gaining possession of the maiden, was by making a bold attempt before the time fixed for the nuptials, which could not take place until the end of autumn, on account of the health of Feridoon, which would not be sufficiently recovered before that time.

“ Barakillah !” exclaimed Karah Kaplan, when the numbers of armed men ready for the field was announced, “ surely we are sufficiently strong to burn the fathers of three Shahs ; even the cautious prudence of Ali must be satisfied.

“ Inshallah !” answered the old man, mournfully. “ Inshallah ! may success attend you.”

“ May attend !” cried Massooreh, “ say rather must attend ; what opposition can the Iranee serbaz make to us ? Bash ! before they can open their mouths, and cry Allah ! their hearts will have dissolved. Would that I was as certain of a prosperous issue to all my undertakings, as I am to this.”

“ I shall hardly know the blessings of sound sleep,” observed Moorad, “ till I find myself coping, hand to hand, with the dogs. Inshallah ! I will find out where the bankrupt Eliaut youth hides himself, and make him bite the dust under my charger’s feet. Mashallah ! till the last drop of his life’s blood, flow from his accursed heart, through an outlet made by my sabre’s edge, I shall not deem my vengeance complete. May perdition seize him, and his !”

“ That bankrupt Eliaut, as you term him,” observed Thamasp Khan, “ must be a youth of marvellous cunning, to have entered, and carried off a captive from this camp. He may be a burnt father, and his family defiled, but he can neither be an ass, or one at whose beard it were fit to laugh.”

“ He fell, however,” answered Karah Kaplan, bitterly, “ he fell before our gallant Moorad, like a tree before the axe of the

woodman. Methought he would never have risen more ; but it appears that some guardian angel hovers near him, how else could he have survived the wound he received ?”

“ I have of late considered,” observed Moorad, “ that all the evil that has arisen, is owing to my having failed to cut the throat of the old foozool, whom I discovered lying in a corner of the caravanserai of Hamadan, at the time I was detailing our plot to the Chervador Hussein. Would to Ali I had stopped his breath, and so prevented any future mishap. I have every reason for believing, that the old dotard was none other than the young Eliaut’s father, and the same old man who lately discovered the treasure on the mountains. How else was the braggart boy at hand, when I was bearing off the maiden ? He must have been aware of my coming. Curses light on that day, when for the first time in my life, I was forced to fly vanquished from a single man !”

“ You would have certainly acted wisely,” said Thamasp Khan, “ had you sent the old man’s soul to Jehanum ; how he must have chuckled at his being able to deceive you !”

“ Still it would have been dangerous,” returned Moorad, “ to have slain him in the caravanserai ; for, although the tongues of dead men tell no tales, the bodies may, and it might have excited suspicion, had the corpse of the old man been found there ; and suspicion might have caused investigation, and that was by no means desirable. As it was, methought that I had terrified the reprobate old sinner into silence ; however, if he ever fall into my clutches again, he shall rue the day when he disobeyed my injunctions.”

“ May your revenge be complete,” cried Allah Verdee, “ your quarrel is mine—your success is mine !”

“ May the shadow of my honoured master never be less,” said Moorad respectfully.

“Inshallah! the day is not far distant, on which I shall make my obeisance to him as a subject; though Allah knows, that my love and reverence for his person, can never be greater than at present. Inshallah! Iran ere long will be governed by a Shah, who will make amends to his country, for the imbecility, and weakness of him, who at present sways the sceptre. May Allah Verdee Shah, soon place his foot on Fath Ali’s neck.”

“Barakillah! Moorad,” exclaimed all present, “you have spoken like a Locman; may your words prove prophetic.”

The assembly now broke up, and a substantial banquet was spread upon the ground, of which the Koords partook, and after some conversation of a light matter, the company separated, betaking themselves to their respective tents.

CHAPTER IV.

“ And time it is, when raging war is done
To smile at 'scapes and perils overblown.”

TAMING THE SHREW.

“ ALHAMDELLILLAH ! my dear Zofea, he is now able to quit his couch, and Inshallah ! will soon be quite recovered.”

“ And then, my Zoraya, we shall behold you the sole inmate of the anderoon of a fond and devoted husband ; may you long continue such ; indeed, if it be otherwise the fault will be yours !”

“ If to love and adore him, who weds me,

will occasion my remaining sole tenant of his heart, it will be no fault of mine if I reign there not long alone. O Zofea! how happy has been my destiny; do you not remember laughing at the very idea of my marrying for love? Confess now, have you not been entirely mistaken in denouncing the possibility of my refusing the Prince's alliance; for have not all these impossibilities, as you term them, come to pass?"

The reader will perceive that the two Hamadane friends, were once more together. Zofea had arrived the day previously at the camp on her way to Tabreez where her husband had been of late appointed to a high situation. She had heard of the intended nuptials that were to take place, between Feridoon and Zoraya, and had hastened to congratulate the latter upon her happy destiny. She found the maiden in her tent, attended by Nargis, and her kaneezes, the former of whom had been liberally recompensed for the pain she had undergone, and

had been again placed near her mistress's person. After the observations usual at the commencement of a visit, the matron inquired after the health of Feridoon, when the answer detailed above was given.

“ You speak the truth, though not the whole truth,” said Zofea in reply to the last remark ; “ you must remember that my opinion was that it appeared impossible that you could refuse the Prince's offer, without dire consequences ensuing, and so far I was right : the refusal cost your father a bastinado, his house, thirty thousand tomans, a Begler Begship and the favour of the Shah ; besides had not Ismael Khan found a treasure, and so got into favour at court, Mehtee Khan's situation would have been still worse ; and all this misfortune was caused by your refusal to marry without being in love.”

“ But, Khanum,” observed Nargis, “ all is well that ends well. Our beloved mistress is

happy, and that is sufficient to atone for all the evils undergone. It is to be doubted, too, whether my master owed his disgrace entirely to the Prince's anger; methinks his downfall had long been plotted by that most defiled of wretches Meerza Sadek."

"How I should like to tear that odious monster into a thousand pieces," cried Zofea; "may his perjury soon become apparent. I have heard the account of a Gholam Shah, who beheld one of the Meerza's creatures struck blind by lightning; it says that the conscience of the wretch, being appalled, he confessed that he was forced by Meerza Sadek to accuse your father wrongfully."

"But alas!" returned Nargis, "how is such a crime to be brought home to one so powerful; why he basks in court favour like a serpent in the sun."

"The sun may be obscured, and the serpent trodden under foot," observed the matron.

“Inshallah! the day approaches in which the crafty Meerza, shall be choked by the very dirt he has forced down other throats. Mehtee Khan has a friend in Ismael, who for the love he bears his son, will exert himself to the utmost to obtain justice for the parent of the girl beloved by that son. Depend upon it, Jaunum, your father will ere long be covered with the kalaat of favour.”

“Inshallah!” was the ready cry of the kaneezes present, notwithstanding the fingers of several still tingled with the recollection of the unjust bastinadoes inflicted on those members by the orders of the self same master for whose restoration they were praying.

Zofea now asked her friend for an account of her adventures since her abduction. Zoraya complied, and detailed her coming to her senses in the cavern, her journey to the Koordish camp, and her being placed by Moorad under the charge of his wife and mother.

“I was several days,” she proceeded, “under the canvass tent of these two women. Allah knows they treated me with kindness, and used every means in their power to alleviate my unhappiness; but what could console a miserable captive, borne away from her paternal roof and her friends, to the tents of one at whose very name she trembled? O! how I prayed even for death, that I might be freed from my hateful captivity. How I shuddered at every mention of Allah Verdee, and often had I cause; for his name was ever on the lips of those around me, and uttered in terms of the most fulsome flattery. Had however the chieftain been an angel in mortal guise, I could not have abhorred him less; had he been a fiend I could not have hated him more. Alas! my Zofea, I cannot give you an idea of my feelings during the few days I past in that valley.

“At length, I heard that Allah Verdee had arrived, and the same mouth that uttered the

news, apprised me that I was about to be conducted to the anderoon of my abductor. For some time I was, in consequence, convulsed with grief. I tore my hair, and rent my clothes, filling the air with my lamentations. The women, under whose charge I was, verily believed I was going mad, and besought me to be composed, observing, that if I continued in such a state, that I should bring them to punishment for not having taken sufficient care of me. At this moment, I heard the hateful voice of Moorad Beg outside the tent, giving orders for my immediate proceeding to the chieftain's tent; at the sound of those words, I arose, and dried my tears, for a sudden thought had struck me. I determined to see whether any spark of generous feeling was to be found in the breast of Karah Kaplan; for it was to that feeling—if Inshallah he possessed any—that I intended to appeal. I had heard of lions showing signs of pity, and I

fondly hoped that the human heart would not be outdone by a wild beast. Yes, I clung to this last chance, as a drowning wretch clings to a plank, that is scarcely able to bear his weight above the waves.

“ To be brief, I proceeded to the dreaded spot. I entered within the canvass walls that hid them from the vulgar gaze, and after a short while was conducted to a small tent, pitched at a short distance from the others. My heart sunk as I observed this, as it plainly showed that the Khan expected violence on my part, and, therefore, desired, perhaps from some latent feeling of shame, to be away from where he might be heard. Well ! I entered and found myself for the first time face to face with the bold Koordish marauder. I must here observe, that there was nothing ferocious or savage in his appearance, indeed, in outward form he is far from being repulsive, and had I met him under any other circum-

stances, the impression produced by him on my mind, might have been favourable. Would you believe me, my Zofea, that I also imagined that I perceived in his features a slight resemblance to Feridoon; notwithstanding, the difference of their complexions, Allah Verdee being light and grey-eyed, while the latter has the true appearance of a Persian."

"You seem, dilum," interrupted Zofea, "to have made a tolerably strict survey of different objects, considering your situation. For my part, I should have been too alarmed to have taken notice of any thing."

"The criminal on the point of receiving condemnation," replied Zoraya, "scans most accurately every feature of his judge, in the hope of his discovering some trace of mercy there. So was it with myself; I observed well the face of the Koordish chieftain, and reading in his mild and gentle countenance no sign of a cruel disposition, I felt my spirits

revive ; but, alas, how greatly was I deceived ; the hungry wolf, would have been more inclined to spare an unprotected lamb, than Karah Kaplan to allow any generous emotion to intervene between him and his passions.

“ On my entrance, he inclined his head, and pointing to his nummud(1) bade me be seated. I obeyed at once, being determined to avoid as long as possible exciting his anger. He then bade the kaneezes who had conducted me to his tent, retire, and on their departure turned to me, and gently requested me to take off my veil. This was a great trial, and I hesitated, but on his repeating the wish a second time, in the same gentle but firm tone, I deemed it better to acquiesce. On my uncovering my face, he clasped his hands together in an ecstasy, and exclaimed,

“ ‘ Beautiful ! O ! Khanum can you wonder at my heart being consumed, after having once beheld those charms. By my father’s soul, I

never loved till now. I am henceforth your most devoted slave.'

"With these words he attempted to take my hand; I, however, anticipated the movement, and starting to my feet withdrew a few steps from him.

" 'Nay, Khanum!' he cried, 'this is not well; why do you thus shun me, am I but dirt in your sight, that you fly from me like a deer from a huntsman? Come hither, put an end to that semblance of coyness; remember, you are in the presence of one who adores you.'

"These sentences were addressed to me in an imploring tone, like as from one who was requesting a favour from a superior. I answered as mildly as possible that his protestations were useless, and that whatever might otherwise have been my inclination towards him, his conduct in dragging me away from my father's tent, had quite a contrary effect from exciting love in my heart. Instead of

bursting into a fit of passion at this answer, he continued to urge his suit; offering the violence of his adoration as an apology for his late conduct.

“Seeing, therefore, that it was vain for me to proceed further in that strain, I threw myself on my knees before him, and besought him to be merciful.

“‘You are a man, and a Mussulman,’ I said. ‘In the name of Allah disgrace not such titles; as you hope for happiness yourself and your children, restore me to my father, and I will ever pray for you; but do not keep me a prisoner, and above all, profane not my ears with your declarations of love. I am a maiden and cannot listen to them.’

“His answer to my prayers, was the raising me from the ground, and imploring me to accede to his wishes. For some time, we thus continued alternately beseeching each other, till at length, we grew warmer; I began to

revile him, he to threaten me; at length totally throwing aside his gentle manner, he sternly exclaimed,

“‘Khanum, I have hitherto treated you with every consideration, more, indeed, as if I had been the captive, you the mistress; force me not to turn the tables by your untimed affectation of hatred; it is true, that you have been forcibly torn from your friends and home, but, it is also true that we did not proceed to such extremities, till every possible fair means had been essayed. Did I not request your hand in marriage in the most humble manner; and did not your father spurn my offer as if I had been an Infidel, or a Jew? Did he not brand me with the appellations of cut-throat and robber, and laugh to scorn the very idea of my alliance? By my ancestors' souls, was such usage bearable? No, Zoraya! I loved you too ardently; I swore to possess you at all hazards. Once I was foiled by the unex-

pected interference of an Eliaut youth—may his body wither ! But, now Alhamedlillah you are within my power, alone, unprotected, and may my beard be laughed at by every child in the universe, if I make you not mine own ; still I would rather not force your inclinations ; it were far better that you came to mine arms as a willing bride.’

“ Thus he spoke. O Zofea, what words they were ! I gave myself up for lost, still I determined to make a last effort, and once more implored him by the memory of his father and mother to spare me ; he listened attentively, and on my ceasing to speak, observed, ‘ Khanum, if I send a messenger to your father, informing him of your situation, and asking him for his consent to our marriage, will you, if he grant it, cease to listen to my declaration of love with a reluctant ear ? On that condition I will await the answer ; speak, if your father is ready to give his sanction, will you be my wife ?’

“At this moment, the image of my Feridoon rose vividly in my remembrance. I felt that to even feign the possibility of my loving another would be treason to him. I accordingly at once told Allah Verdee of the state of my affections, and the utter incapability of their ever changing. O Zofea, had you beheld him at that moment, you would almost have died with terror, the whole aspect of his countenance changed, and his eyes sparkled with fury, while his teeth ground audibly; rising up suddenly, he seized me violently round the waist, and exclaiming, ‘By Mahomed nothing shall save you now,’ he tore open my vest, and pressed his lips to my bosom, covering me with kisses. I struggled and shrieked; but I was like a child in his grasp; at length, just at the moment, when my heart was about to faint with despair, the sides of the tent burst open, and O paradise! O happiness! Feridoon rushed in, and struck the fiend senseless to the ground.”

“ May that youth’s steps be fortunate,” cried Zofea, “ may his destiny be unclouded ! Were he to commit evil for the rest of his days, he would merit pardon for that one good deed ; but go on, Jaunum, I am all attention.”

Zoraya now proceeded with her recital, informing her friend of the wonderful escape she had made from the Koordish camp, winding up her account with a description of the encounter between Moorad and Feridoon, when the latter was wounded.

“ Allah is great,” cried Zofea, when the maiden had ceased, “ this is a wonderful tale ; such adventures are scarce, Alhamdellillah, else the peace of anderoons would be somewhat troubled. I wonder, however, Jaunum, that your lover suffered himself to be vanquished by his opponent. I had thought him a perfect Rustum.”

“ Did you but know of the wondrous size, and strength of Moorad,” replied Zoraya, “ you

would cease to wonder at the issue of the fight ; he is one who might oppose a tiger single handed."

" How then did it happen," observed Zofea, " that he was conquered by the Eliaut youth, in his first attempt at carrying you off? He took to flight upon that occasion, if I mistake not."

" I have heard Feridoon say," returned the maiden ; " that it was the hand of fate alone that conferred upon him the palm of victory. Had it not been for an accidental circumstance, the Koord would have been the victor, notwithstanding the inferiority of his arms : Allah forbid that Feridoon should again oppose him."

" That Moorad must be a marvellously proper man in outward appearance," said Zofea ; " where I in a safe spot, I should like to set eyes upon him."

" Afakerillah," cried Zoraya, " may many

fursuks intervene between him and us. I should not consider myself in safety, were he within two days' journey, though he were loaded with fetters, and confined in the strongest prison, for I consider him as one who holds at defiance both bars and bolts."

"He seems to have thoroughly alarmed you, my Zoraya," replied the matron; "but tell me, do you imagine that Karah Kaplan will give up all attempts at possessing your person! If he be half the man I esteem him, he will never allow himself to abandon all hope, particularly having once clasped you in his arms, and pressed his lips to yours; his feelings must be maddening to have had the prize he deemed secure, torn literally from his very grasp."

"What hope can still remain for him," said Zoraya; "the attendants that surround our tents are now too much on their guard, to suffer any of Allah Verdee's followers to gain

access to me, save by an open attack on the camp ; and with all his courage and daring, he is not such a dewaneh as to commit such an act of folly.”

“There is no act too dangerous or daring in the eye of the passionate lover,” said Zofea ; “provided it holds out the slightest prospect of success.”

“Willah, Billah !” cried the maiden, “let us speak no more on the subject, the very idea of my being again in the power of the Koordish robber is madness. Inshallah ! may fate drive my image far from his remembrance.”

“It is not so easy to forget,” observed her friend “but I will obey you, and talk of themes more pleasant. What thinks the Shah concerning the deeds of Feridoon ?”

“The king of kings,” replied Zoraya, “has condescended to praise his prowess to the skies, and says, that since the days of Zaul and Rustum, such deeds have been unknown in

Iran. His Majesty also intends to load him with honours, when he is sufficiently recovered to enjoy them. May the graciousness of the Shah be ever on the increase! I trust that through the interest of Ismael Khan, my father will once more be restored to favour."

"But alas!" said Zofea, "he will never behold his thirty thousand tomans again; the Shah loves money too well to restore them, even were the innocence of Mehtee Khan proved to his thorough satisfaction. His Majesty would sooner disgorge his own heart, than give up gold, once clutched."

"That is nothing," said the maiden; "restored to favour, my father would scarce give a thought to such a paltry sum, which is, in reality, but a small tithe of his many concealed treasures. He dare not, however, show any signs of possessing wealth, until he be certain that the eye of the Shah is turned towards him with a favourable aspect."

“And Inshallah! such an issue will soon take place,” said her friend; “may providence soon rain down honours in a plenteous stream upon the head of Mehtee Khan, and cover his shoulders with the kalaat of court favour. O! had he possessed such a wife as myself, he would never have fallen. By Ali! Taki Khan chose me to govern his anderoon in a fortunate hour; his fortunes have been on the rise ever since. Mashallah, he is a happy man.”

Whatever might have been the sentiments of Zoraya and her kaneezes concerning the perfect felicity of Taki Khan, they refrained from any remarks, though it was surmised by most present, that the public honours of that nobleman were but a poor compensation for the tyranny he underwent in private, and the subjection he was kept under, while within the precincts of the anderoon. There was a story indeed extant, that on one occasion, having attempted to rebel against his wife’s authority, that Zofea

had coolly ordered her kaneezes to administer the bastinado to him, and that Taki Khan, notwithstanding a most violent resistance on his part, had tasted most plentifully of the stick;(2) this was, however, merely a report, although it certainly originated in some of Zofea's kaneezes, who deposed to having broken poplar wands on the soles of their master's feet upon that occasion, at the command of their mistress. One black eyed maiden, in particular, was wont to be overcome with mirth, while reciting and mimicking to her delighted audience, the violent and agonized contorsions into which the Khan had been thrown by the application of female discipline.

The visit of the Hamadane matron was at length brought to a close, and that important personage having repeated her wishes for Zoraya's happiness, bade the maiden adieu, and betook herself to the tents of her obedient husband.

CHAPTER V.

“ Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! beware Macduff.”

SHAKESPEARE.

THE gathering of the Koordish tribes had proceeded with unabated zeal, and Allah Verdee found himself about the middle of autumn perfectly prepared to take the field, at the head of a most powerful force. His followers consisted in all, of above three thousand men, well mounted and armed from head to foot, each single man being thoroughly conversant with his duty; strong, athletic, inured to

every hardship, and unconscious of the very meaning of fear. In order to prevent the report of his intention of attacking the king's camp being widely circulated, Karah Kaplan had given out that the Koords proposed marching towards Soolimoniah, in order to lay waste that district, and revenge some pretended injury received at the ruler's hands.(1) Allah Verdee knew, indeed, that it would most probably reach the Shah's ears, that the Koords were arming against him, but he was well aware, that without good confirmation of such an intention being true, Fath Ali would treat the report with ridicule, and most probably repay the bearer of the news with a sound bastinado; besides, he felt confident that nothing would give the Persian government greater pleasure than his carrying into real execution his ostensible purpose of attacking the Pasha of Soolimoniah, and that having such an idea

raised, they would not trouble themselves concerning the gathering of the tribes, much less throw any opposition in his way.

The Koordish troops being prepared to proceed on their journey, the day of departure alone remained to be fixed, and accordingly the chief astrologer of the camp was busied in consulting his astrolobe, in order that he might discover a fortunate hour for the setting forth of the expedition.

It was about the hour of sunset, after a most scorching day, that Karah Kaplan, accompanied by Moorad, bent his steps towards the tent of the old man, who was esteemed the wisest soothsayer among the Koords. On entering, they found him profoundly engaged in making calculations and casting up figures ; so fixed was his mind upon his task, that he either perceived not, or pretended to perceive not the entrance of the newcomers, who seeing

how busily he was employed, refrained for some time from interrupting him, but remained in silence watching his operations.

Kerbelai Hassan, for such was the name of the astrologer, was far advanced in years, and of a withered aspect. When young, his stature must have been towering, but a natural stoop, added to the infirmity of old age, prevented his height from being so apparent as it otherwise would have been. His face was long and meagre, and his cheeks hollow, giving him the appearance of one who had suffered as much from ill health and privation as from years. His beard, which was perfectly white, was long and thick, and his upper lip was covered with enormous moustachios of the same colour, which entirely hid his mouth, except when he was in the act of speaking, when his wide jaws, opening like a cavern, revealed gums, toothless and clammy; his eyes, though deep sunk in their sockets, shone with an un-

common brilliancy; plainly proclaiming, that though the powers of his body might have been weakened, that his intellect still burned fresh and vigorous as in youth. At the present time, he was richly, almost gaudily dressed, the vivid colour of his apparel contrasting awfully with his withered countenance, and causing it to appear still more ghastly than had he been clad in garments of a more sombre hue.

Kerbelai Hassan had for many years been looked up to as the wisest astrologer among the Koordish tribes; and no expedition of any consequence was begun without his being first consulted. Even in affairs of minor import, both old and young flocked in crowds to have the benefit of his advice, and to hear the prophetic words that issued from his lips. Numerous were the wondrous works ascribed to him, and countless the miraculous prophecies reported to have been his. Indeed, in the

opinion of all who knew him, he was one who knew the past, the present, and the future. And to have publicly expressed the slightest doubt of his powers, would have been the means of provoking both insult and injury, and being branded as a Kafr (2) and an Infidel.

This was the personage whose tent Allah Verdee and Moorad had entered, and whose movements they were closely watching. For some time, the old man scarcely moved, his eyes remaining fixed on the paper before him; broken words escaped his lips as he added figure to figure, and made his calculations thereon. At length, happening to observe, "By Hassan! by Kerbelai! worse and worse," Karah Kaplan, who was becoming impatient, walked up to him, and placing his hand on the old man's shoulder, exclaimed,

"What is worse and worse, Kerbelai Hassan?"

The old man looked up, seemingly unstartled by the interruption, and without attempting to rise, calmly answered,

“The destiny of the expedition, Sahib. I cannot find a fortunate hour for its setting out.”

“How mean you ?” returned Karah Kaplan. “Does fate frown upon us ?”

“Alas! so it is!” replied the astrologer. “Look, Sahib,” he continued, pointing to some unintelligible marks on the paper he held in his hand. “Look how angry is the appearance of the stars ; they portend blood and death to the chiefs of one of the sides engaged.”

“And may not that side be the Persian ?” said Allah Verdee. “It is indeed most probable that many of the Iranee leaders will fall.”

“But unfortunately,” returned Kerbelai Hassan, “as I proceed further in my calculations, it becomes plainer to me that it is the

Koordish party that is menaced with overthrow; indeed, every hour that I fix upon for your starting hence, turns up black and lowering; days, even months hence, the same issue threatens."

"Nay, surely you mistake!" cried Moorad; "it is impossible that an expedition so well planned as ours can fail. Run over yon figures again, friend Kerbelai, and you may discover some miscalculation."

"Moorad Beg," returned the old man, sternly, "for sixty years have I given myself up entirely to the study of astrology, and am too well conversant with the movements of the heavenly bodies, to make an error. I am convinced of the truth of my observations."

"Is there no possible means of averting the threatened fate?" demanded Moorad. "It were hard to give up an undertaking so promising in its appearance. For the love of

Allah, my friend, use your utmost efforts in order to find a star favourable to us."

"It is vain to contend against fate," said Kerbelai Hassan. "Were it in my power, you might be sure of my changing the aspect of the planets ; but that power rests with one alone ;—there is but one God."

"True," observed Karah Kaplan. "Still, though the stars be threatening, there may surely be some plan remaining for rendering their threats in vain ; for instance, by some ceremony on our setting forth, or by our proceeding at first in a different direction from that really intended to be pursued,"

"Those measures I have already tried," was the reply. "I have essayed every known expedient, still the stars continue adverse ; even the planets, usually favourable, are wrapped in gloom, while those of the more malignant nature, are now so in a tenfold degree. Alas !

nothing is revealed but a fatal issue to the expedition which threatens to end in blood and overthrow ; and my art causes me to be almost certain that it is our party that will prove unfortunate. There is but one hope, and even in that very hope a contradiction.”

“How ?” exclaimed the Koordish chieftain eagerly. “Speak out, and I will reward you well.”

“Sahib !” answered Kerbelai Hassan, “the same conjunction of the planets that threatens destruction to the Koords, foretells honour and distinction to await your *father's son*, in consequence of that very circumstance.”

“Nay, then,” cried Karah Kaplan, “if such be the interpretation of what has been revealed to you, there must be some error. My father had but one son, that son is myself; and how I am to benefit by the overthrow of my own tribe, I know not.”

“The ways of Allah,” replied Kerbelai Has-

san, "are inscrutable. What appears to mortal eyes mysterious and unaccountable, to him, is as plain as the noonday sky of summer."

"What, then, is your advice," said Allah Verdee, "under these circumstances? Give it me at once, openly and candidly."

"Sahib," answered the soothsayer, firmly, yet with a mournful voice, "I am old, still my intellect is as clear as the rippling stream that runs its course before my tent. Listen to me, I beseech you. My love for you is that of a parent. I remember the day of your birth. I have dandled you in my arms while a child. I know well your warm and enthusiastic disposition, your indomitable courage, and your unflinching nature. You have wisdom beyond your years; you are a warrior and a leader, superior to any in Iran, and command a body of warriors unequalled in the world. Still you are young, your blood runs hotly through your veins, and you only gaze on the sunny side

of your plans. You now intend to attack the Shah in the heart of his own camp, surrounded by his troops; and for that purpose, you have collected a formidable band of men. You are impelled to this expedition by more than one cause—ambition, love, and revenge, all excite you to it. Still do not despise the advice of an old and experienced man. Pause ere you take such a step. Remember that you are much inferior in numbers to the royal troops; remember your whole force consists in cavalry, and that you are totally deficient in artillery. Remember also that the Shah's forces are well disciplined, owing to the exertions of the Frank officers lately employed in his service. Remember—”

“ His highness has well considered these things,” interrupted Moorad, angrily. “ Your advice is perhaps well meant; but I trust that the Khan will not be deterred from his enter-

prise thereby. The planets may have been wrongly read ; it has so happened before. Kerbelai Hassan, shame on you, to attempt to deter your chief from one of the most splendid expeditions ever planned by man !”

“ I deserve not your reproaches, Moorad Beg,” returned the astrologer. “ I do but my duty in warning our master of the danger which surrounds him. May I be choked with the filth of all uncleanness, if I spoke not for the best. O, my beloved master,” continued the veteran, while the tears rolled in streams from his eyes, “ follow my advice ; be content with your present lot ; reverence the warning of Heaven, and turn your arms in some other direction.”

Karah Kaplan stood gazing upon Kerbelai Hassan for some time, without uttering a syllable, but evidently much moved ; his breast heaved violently, as if he were repressing some

feeling which required his utmost exertions to curb. At length, breaking silence, he exclaimed,

“Kerbelai Hassan, we know that you advise to the best of your ability. You are a good man, and your head is exalted in the tribe. I reverence your wisdom, yet I cannot follow your counsel. The tiger chief of Koordistan must not be deterred by any fear of danger, from following the path of glory. What would become of my name, were I now to disband the gallant warriors that are burning with the desire of attacking the Persian dogs? What would become of my renown, were it known that I changed my mind through fear? No! it cannot be! I have determined on my line of action. Afakerillah! never shall Karah Kaplan merit the name of the White Lamb, and allow his beard to be laughed to scorn. I go to Sultaneah. I am fixed—irrevocably

fixed on my purpose, though the stars shine upon me with the hue of blood."

"Mashallah!" cried Moorad, joyfully; "blessed be the fortune which placed an indomitable heart within your breast, Sahib. Inshallah! the day is at hand which will behold you seated on a royal musnud, giving forth such laws to Iran, that men shall twist their mustachios, and cry "Allah" with astonishment. It is thus I read your prophecy, Kerbelai Hassan, namely, that the overthrow of this tribe, and the elevation of their chief in consequence, is simply that in becoming a Shah, Allah Verdee will cease to be merely a Koord, as his tribe will be incorporated among the Iranees. How otherwise can there be any meaning in such contradictions as have issued from your lips?"

"You are sanguine!" cried the soothsayer. "Inshallah! may you not find yourself in error.

For my part, I have no such hopes, for I feel an inward presentment of evil. O may I be deceived !”

“ At any rate, Kerbelai Hassan,” observed Allah Verdee, “ now that I am bent on my purpose, betake yourself to your astrolobe, and find out what hour of the second day from this, is least lowering in its aspect, for on that day we proceed on our march.”

“ You have said it,” observed the old man, “ and your commands shall be obeyed.”

Karah Kaplan now arose, and having placed a purse in the hands of the soothsayer, left the tent in company with his foster-brother. As he was, however, passing through the doorway of the tent, he paused, and turning round, observed,

“ As you hope to retain my favour, mention not this conversation abroad, and be cautious that the unfavourable aspect of the heavenly bodies be known to none. I would not have

my followers disheartened. Mark me, old man, be careful of your tongue."

"Bachesm !(3) on mine eyes be it, if I disobey!" said Kerbelai Hassan. "The organ of my speech shall be tied with the bandage of secrecy; in the meanwhile, I will neither eat or sleep till I have done all in my power to discover the hour least threatening to the success of your enterprise. Salaam an Aleicum !" (4)

CHAPTER VI.

“ I conjure you, by that which you profess
(Howe'er you come to know it) answer me :
Though you untie the winds, and let them fight
Against the churches ; though the yesty waves
Confound and swallow navigation up ;
Though bladed corn be lodged, and trees blown down ;
Though castles topple on their warder's heads ;
Though palaces, and pyramids, do slope
Their heads to their foundations : though the treasure
Of nature's germins tumble all together,
Even till destruction sicken, answer me
To what I ask you. SHAKESPEARE.

A VERY short period had elapsed after the departure of the Khan and Moorad, when a female who had been watching them from a distance, approached the tent which they had left ; she was accompanied by several kaneezes who followed her at a short distance, and who at a sign from their mistress, remained stationary, while the Khanum, (for the foremost was

evidently of that rank), having lifted up the curtain which hung over the doorway, entered alone.

On perceiving a woman, the old man was evidently surprised, but suppressing his astonishment, he saluted her respectfully and requested to be informed of her business.

For a few minutes the lady remained silent, but by the trembling of her frame and the broken sobs which were audible from beneath her veil, it was evident she was labouring under great excitement. At length Kerbelai Hassan having repeated his question, she uncovered her face, and exhibited to the gaze of the astrologer, the beautiful features of Zaira, the wife of Allah Verdee. On perceiving in whose presence he was, the old man arose and bowed low, showing her far more outward respect, than he had done to her husband; indeed, the name of this neglected woman was adored throughout the camp, her bounteous deeds and charity having drawn upon her the

blessings of the Koords, who belonged to the tribe of Karah Kaplan.

“ I am come,” she at length observed, “ to ask whether Allah Verdee Khan is irrevocably fixed upon proceeding on his rash undertaking ; he has only just left your tent, and therefore you must be aware of his intentions.”

“ Khanum,” returned the astrologer, “ the moonsoon of the Indies bloweth not more steadily in its course, than the Karah Kaplan is fixed on his expedition. I have in vain attempted to persuade him to desist.”

“ May Allah bless you for your good advice,” said Zaira, “ would that he had followed it. But say, is there no hope of deterring him from this mad enterprise, which I fear must end in his total ruin.”

“ I have done all I could,” returned Kerbelai Hassan ; “ but every word of mine fell unheeded on his ear. I told him how ominously

the planets shone upon his proceeding, but he listened not."

"Then," exclaimed Zaira despairingly, "the conjunction of the stars is adverse."

"Alas lady, that it should be so," replied the old man, "long as I have studied the celestial bodies, I never saw them so darkening in their aspect: nothing but overthrow and destruction is to be read within them."

"Wallah! billah!" cried the wretched woman, "and notwithstanding all these warnings, he flies in the face of Heaven."

"Whatever hesitation he might have shown," said Kerbelai Hassan, "was overcome by his foster-brother Moorad Beg, who seemed ready to laugh to scorn all my advice and knowledge. With such a counsellor constantly at his side, how can prudence find its way to the acts of Karah Kaplan?"

"Curses light on Moorad's head," said Zaira, "may his father be burned; alas the

happiness and fortunes of his master must be sacrificed to serve the ambitious schemes of that monster, for should the Khan be foiled in his attack on the Shah's camp, Fath Ali will not rest, till he has completed the destruction of this tribe, as he will be fearful of their making a second attempt. O let me entreat you, by the love you bear your chief, to essay once more to implant in his mind the words of prudence; manage to see him alone, or in my presence, under any circumstances, when Moorad is absent, perchance he may be then better inclined to give ear to good advice."

The astrologer shook his head doubtingly, observing at the same time, that he feared that no words of his would prove efficacious in changing the intention of Karah Kaplan, who was well known to be most obstinate of purpose. The Koordish woman, however, impelled by her love for her husband, pressed the soothsayer to exert himself once more, and try

to change the bold chieftain's determination, at the same time she drew forth a purse, and presenting it to him, promised to double the gift, if he succeeded in persuading Allah Verdee of the utter folly of his intended undertaking. The old man received the gold, and feeling its weight, swore that he would leave no stone unturned in order to deserve his reward, at the same time, however, observing that it would be easier to stem the stream of a torrent at the commencement of spring."

Zaira now took her departure and rejoining her attendants turned her steps towards her own part of the camp, at the very moment however of her exit, Moorad chanced to pass the spot, and though she was closely veiled, instantly recognised her. At once divining the purpose of her visit, he allowed her to proceed without appearing to notice her, and then abruptly entered the astrologer's tent, where without proffering any salutation, he angrily exclaimed :

“As you value your skin, Kerbelai Hassan, inform me why yonder woman has been here?”

“What woman,” returned the soothsayer; “many come here and go without even my knowing who they are.”

“Palter not with me,” said Moorad sternly, “I am no child to be easily deceived, you have just received a visit from the Khanum Zaira; instantly tell me why and wherefore, or by your father’s soul, I will force yours from your body.”

“Nay! Moorad Beg! be calm,” said the old man, surveying the enormous proportions of the angry Koord with great alarm, “do you wish to frighten my life away?”

“Speak out with candour,” replied Moorad in a more conciliatory tone, “and you will have no reason to fear. Tell me, why the Khanum has been here.”

“A woman is naturally anxious to know

something concerning the destiny of her husband," said the soothsayer, " thus it was with the Khanum Zaira. She is aware that Allah Verdee Khan is about to enter on a dangerous path, and came hither to know the issue."

" And how answered you?" demanded the other.

" I told her that it had not been the will of Allah to reveal implicitly the fate of the expedition, but that the planets seemed propitious."

" Padersookhteh, you lie," cried Moorad furiously. " I marked well the form of the woman as she went hence, her frame was trembling with agitation, and she was sobbing violently; had she heard good news, it had been otherwise. By Hussein, I warn you to beware of forcing lies upon me. Out, foozool, out at once with the truth."

" I have said nothing but the truth," answered Kerbelai Hassan, " by the beard of the

Shah, may I be grilled if I spoke a lie, I am a man of candour ; Moorad Beg ! what words are yours ?”

While uttering this sentence he turned slightly round, pretending to search for something on the ground, in order to hide his face from the scrutinizing gaze of his acute cross examiner, while so doing the purse that he had received from Zaira, and which he had placed within his shawl girdle, fell to the ground, it was immediately perceived by Moorad, who seizing it, cried out,

“ So, you have been receiving presents from the lady Zaira ; nay ! attempt no denial, this purse is well known to me, it was worked within my anderoon, and sent as a present to the Khanum.”

“ I deny not that I have received that purse and its contents as an enam from the Lady Zaira,” observed Kerbelai Hassan ; “ a woman is naturally generous to him who gives good

information concerning her husband's welfare."

Moorad answered not, but proceeded to open the purse and to count its contents, having so done, he turned to his companion, and addressed him in a still more angry tone than he had yet used.

"Dog!" he cried, "your lies are too apparent to deceive an idiot; here are contained fifty tomans, the amount is far beyond what you would have received for such intelligence as you pretend to have given the Khanum. This is a bribe, you are employed on some duty disadvantageous to myself or you would not thus hesitate to tell me all. Listen, old fool, if you confess not the whole truth instantly, your death shall be the consequence, you know me well, I am a man of my promise, tell me what dirt you have been eating."

Moorad's countenance was one of those, that was fearful to gaze upon when lightened up with

anger. There was such a terrible appearance of desperate intention on his features in such a case, as to appal the heart of the stoutest. His voice too, though naturally soft and musical, could put on such a harsh and grating tone that few were able to listen to it without trembling. Thus it was with Kerbelai Hassan; awed almost to annihilation by the furious manner of his visitor, his presence of mind completely left him, and in the most supplicating posture he beseeched Moorad to restrain his rage, at the same time giving a full and authentic account of his interview with Zaira.

Moorad perceived at once that Kerbelai Hassan had at length spoken the truth, he, therefore, ceased to abuse him; but turned his angry feelings against the wife of Karah Kaplan.

“Curses light on the minx,” he exclaimed, “does she pretend to love her master and at

the same time wish him to leave the path of honour, and throw himself headlong down the precipice of cowardice. O woman, woman, of how many evils are you not the cause? How many bold hearts have you not deterred from the pursuit of glory. Mark me, Kerbelai Hassan," he continued sternly, "if you but utter one single syllable of such advice as may pretend to deter the Karah Kaplan from his enterprise thou diest, neither your age, your wisdom or your gray beard shall prove any protection against my wrath."

"As Mahomed is the prophet," answered the astrologer, "your slave shall implicitly follow your commands; no advice from my lips shall be given to the Khan, save such as may excite him to take the field with all possible expedition."

"Be it so," replied Moorad, "take heed you fulfil your promise; as I am a true Koord, it were safer for a lamb to enter the den of a

wolf, than for you to provoke my wrath. I will now leave you to your astrolobe; search well for a fortunate hour, and should you be unable to discover one, use your invention; but let it be as soon as possible, every moment we linger here after to-morrow, is so much time wasted, and time thrown away is never regained. Adieu, peace be with you, ponder well over my words."

Having thus spoken, the gigantic Koord stalked from the tent, leaving the astrologer, the choice between the incentives of fear and gain. On the one hand, if the departure of his chief were not delayed, he would forfeit the reward promised by Zaira; on the other hand, did he persuade Karah Kaplan of the futility of his scheme and thus deter him from his enterprise, he incurred the risk of exciting the rage of the dreaded Moorad, who would not fail to carry his threats of vengeance into execution. Having maturely weighed the various advanta-

ges and disadvantages which were likely to attend his acts, the old man decided upon obeying the mandate of Moorad, the fear of whose anger overcame the desire of gain. Great, indeed, must have been the terror, that could cause either a Persian or a Koord to prefer his own safety to the possession of gold.

CHAPTER VII.

With conscious pride I view the band
Of faithful friends that round me stand ;
With pride exult that I alone
Can join these scattered gems in one ;
For they're the wreath of pearls, and I
The silken cord on which they lie.

'Tis mine their inmost soul to see—
Unlocked is every heart to me ;
To me they cling, on me they rest,
And I've a place in every breast ;
For they're the wreath of pearls, and I
The silken cord on which they lie.

SIR WILLIAM JONES.

It was towards the close of the day following that on which the above circumstances had taken place, that Allah Verdee Khan having been employed the whole of the cooler portion of the afternoon in reviewing his followers, and surveying their equipments, proceeded to inform them, that in the course of the following

day, the journey towards Sultaneah would be commenced, and that it only remained with Kerbelai Hassan to announce the hour most propitious for their starting.

The body of men collected for the purpose of making such a desperate attempt, as an attack upon the royal camp, consisted of the finest specimens of humankind ever beheld together in such numbers, which consisted of above four thousand horsemen ; as for their purpose foot soldiers would have been an incumbrance, as it was the intention of their leaders to proceed with all possible speed towards Sultaneah, and to attack the Persians before any report of their approach could reach the camp. Three days previously, indeed, Allah Verdee had despatched a spy, to make recognisances concerning the position, and watchfulness of the royal camp, and for that purpose he had selected the same man who had been the second sentinel whom Feridoon had passed, while leaving the tent of Karah Kaplan in com-

pany with Zoraya, when the man had detained them until he had perused the forged pass, produced by the Eliaut, purposing to be sealed with the seal of the Koordish chief. Allah Verdee had selected this man for the duty of a spy, both on account of his courage and penetration, as his being acquainted with the person of Feridoon.

His instructions were to disguise himself as a Persian beggar, and in that dress to rove about the camp, until he had discovered where the tents of both Feridoon and Zoraya were pitched, and after having made himself acquainted with these particulars, to leave the camp and proceed to a cavern, situated at the entrance of a defile leading from the Cotall of Dorkanee, to the plain of Sultaneah, and there to await the coming of his chief, who would pass that way.

It was the intention of Karah Kaplan, should he fail in the principal part of his enterprise,

namely the surprisal of the camp and the capture of the Shah, to at least strike a blow for the seizure of Zoraya or failing in that to revenge himself on the Eliaut youth and his father. It appeared, indeed, to Allah Verdee, that the abduction of the maiden would be by no means a difficult act of performance, even were the Koords in full flight; for the attack upon a single tent, and the carrying off its inmates, would be the work of but a few minutes.

The leaders of this redoubtable force of Koordish horsemen, were clad in chain armour, as well as some of the men, who were rich enough to afford such an expensive equipment. The body guard of Karah Kaplan consisting of ten men, was apparelled in suits of the best manufacture, the rings being of the finest steel, and the plate portions inlaid with gold and ornamented with Arabic characters of the same metal. The sabres of these warriors were of the purest Khorasan steel, so finely tempered

that the blades in the hands of skilful swordsmen, would have divided the thinnest muslin handkerchief in twain. The scabbards of these weapons were mostly composed of silver, while the handles were made of the horn of the rhinoceros, a most scarce and highly prized article in those parts. Many of the horses mounted by the Koordish band could have boasted of a Nejdee origin and were admirably adapted both for speed and powers of lasting; their condition too was excellent, each being in perfect racing order: on account therefore of the well-known bottom of these animals, it was judged that four days would suffice for their reaching the royal camp, without the steeds being knocked up.

Among the many Koordish leaders, the two brothers, Thamasp and Massooreh shone conspicuous; the former was owner of a horse which had been known on one occasion to have accomplished the distance of above thirty-

five fursuks in the course of twenty-four hours, over a rocky and mountainous country, when hotly pursued by an enemy, by whom his master had been surprised, when attended by a small body of followers only. Thamasp was so fond of this animal, that he almost invariably attended at the times of its grooming and feeding. There was, indeed, a solitary subject of dispute between this chief and Moorad, concerning the respective merits of their steeds; the one extolling the superior swiftness and lasting powers of Goorgsifid, the other declaring that Murwari's equal could not be found. There had, indeed, been one trial between these horses in a race, in which Murwari was the victor, but notwithstanding this, Thamasp Khan would not acknowledge that the palm of superiority belonged to him, but said that Goorgsifid(1) was ill at the time of trial. He would, however, never allow his favourite animal to strive again for victory against his rival,

although continually challenged thereto by Moorad Beg.

Still, as observed above, Thamasp Khan and his brother were as well mounted and presented as perfect specimens of warriors as any other two chiefs in Koordistan. Their undaunted courage, their great renown, and their well known skill in martial exercises, were virtues sufficient to inspire the breasts of their countrymen with the greatest ardour; and the sight of their well disciplined followers, joined with those of Karah Kaplan, raised even the spirits of the veteran Ali, who, seeing that the enterprise against the royal camp was determined upon, gave up all opposition, and entered heart and soul into the scheme.

The whole of the afternoon had been taken up in reviewing the forces, and exercising them in their various evolutions, which having been performed to the satisfaction of their chief, he addressed them with an inspiring and

eloquent oration, explaining his intentions, and promising the most ample rewards in case of his enterprise being crowned with success ; he called to their recollection the famous deeds of their ancestors, and entreated them to prove themselves fit descendants of those heroic warriors.

The words of the gallant chieftain acted on the hearts of his followers, as oil on a furnace. Every man, as he waved his sabre above his head, swore to fight to the last ; and the words of these warriors were not so many empty sounds, for not a breath heaved the bosoms from whence they issued, that did not come from the lowest region of the heart. Not a Koord could have been found that day in the camp of Allah Verdee, who would not have devoted the last drop of his blood to the service of his chief.

Having reviewed and dismissed his troops from the parade ground, Karah Kaplan turned

his steps towards his anderoon ; on entering which, he discovered his wife Zaira weeping bitterly, and refusing every consolation offered her by Khatoon, the mother of Moorad, who was adding her words to those of the attendants present. It must be observed that Khatoon was foster mother to the chief, and as such, possessed great influence both in the anderoon, and over the young man himself, who felt towards her the utmost affection, and often lent a listening ear to advice coming from her lips, which otherwise he would have spurned.

On observing how bitter was the anguish that oppressed the bosom of Zaira, Allah Verdee felt some slight feeling of remorse, as he remembered how lightly he had treated this lovely woman, and how cruelly he had trampled on her best affections ; the effect of these feelings caused some contrition in his mind, and approaching the weeping Khanum, he

asked her in a soft and endearing tone, the occasion of her grief. Few as were the words addressed to her, and common-place as was the question, the manner in which they were uttered, recalled to her mind the happiness of former days, and transplanted her to bygone and well-loved scenes. What a blessing is memory to mankind, excepting when the looking back upon past actions recalls the remembrance of some horrible crime or unredeemed and irredeemable folly!

Thus it was with Zaira; the soft tones of her husband's voice, called back the memory of the time of their nuptials, when Karah Kaplan was all that a fond husband could be, and when every endearment of an ardent lover showed itself spontaneously in his actions. In those days, and they had not been long past, Allah Verdee, while fondly clasping her in his arms, had frequently sworn that his love for her would end with life only, besides which,

his words had then been of the same affectionate tenor as those which he used at the present moment, on beholding her unhappiness.

“Alas! my Lord,” she answered, “how can I be otherwise than miserable, when the light of mine eyes is about to depart from them?”

“I have often quitted my encampment,” returned the chieftain, “yet never did I witness before such grief as is now apparent.”

“True Sahib!” said his wife, “you have left us on many and daring expeditions, but though dangerous, they were safe in comparison to this enterprise.”

“Zaira,” observed Allah Verdee, “you will render me impatient if you proceed thus; have I not over and over again related to you how overpowering and well disciplined is the force that I can bring into the field? composed too of the choicest warriors of Koordistan, each man a Rustum in power, and a mode of fidelity? have I not told you that a stronger and more

united band never fought in unity before? and know you not that the attack of the Koords is as a bolt from heaven, coming suddenly, giving no warning, but causing in its quick progress, destruction and death? As the roar of the thunder, is the trampling of our steeds; as the flash of the lightning, is the shining of our scimitars. Zaira! I am ashamed of you; how comes it that a Koordish woman should allow such fears to enfeeble her understanding?"

"Alas! my Lord," said Zaira, "I cannot prevent myself feeling the dreadful foreboding that *will* arise in my bosom; namely, that the gallant army you reviewed to-day is doomed to destruction."

"By Hussein!" exclaimed Karah Kaplan impatiently, "these constant attempts at dissuading me from my enterprise will drive me frantic; once for all hear me, I am pledged to stand or fall by the success or fate of the expedition; I have promised my warriors to lead

them against the Iranees, and were I to allow the tears of a woman to prevail against a promise, I should cease to deserve the name of Karah Kaplan, but on the contrary, should merit that of a trembling, cowardly cur."

"Never," said Zaira emphatically, "never could Allah Verdee Khan be branded with such terms; every action of your life would at once give the lie to them. In the name of Allah, I entreat, I implore you to rest satisfied with the honours you have already earned."

"I cannot," replied the Khan, "I have set my mind upon the attack, and it would be easier to change my faith than to prevent me from proceeding to Sultaneah."

"Allah Verdee—my soul—my life," cried the Koordish woman, throwing her arms around her husband's neck, and pressing him to her bosom with energy, "can nothing turn you?"

"Nothing," said Karah Kaplan; "even had I not pledged myself to the deed, my hatred to

the Iranees would prompt me to attempt their destruction ; may every possible curse be hurled upon those hateful defiled dogs, and all that has got Iranee blood within its veins.”

As the chieftain uttered these words, with fury in his looks, Khatoon hastily walked close up to him, and holding out her shrivelled hand, exclaimed in a most agitated manner—

“ Hold, my lord, you curse yourself.”

On hearing these words, Karah Kaplan remained motionless from surprise, his eyes fixed upon the old woman ; at length recovering the use of his tongue, he observed,

“ Khatoon, are you mad ?”

“ Sahib,” returned his foster-mother, “ I am not mad. I mean what I say ; pause ere you curse what is of Iranee blood, lest the curse fall on your own head.”

“ By Mahomed ! by Ali !” roared out the Khan furiously, “ you are all conspired to drive

me frantic. Old woman, what can cursing the Iranees have to do with me?"

"You are an Iranee yourself," replied Khatoon, "insomuch as you are born of Iranee parents, for both your father and your mother were such."

Karah Kaplan was for a moment persuaded that Khatoon had lost her senses, but on looking steadfastly on her face, he beheld no signs of insanity in her eye; on the contrary, it returned his gaze with the calmness of a sound mind.

"Woman," he at length observed, "there is mystery in your words; explain them, for I understand them not. As you value my friendship, take heed of deceit."

"Khan," said his foster-mother, "I had hoped to have gone down with the secret of your birth confined to mine own bosom; but Allah hath willed it otherwise; your curses on the Iranees have wrung the truth from my lips."

“Tarry not,” cried Allah Verdee, trembling with agitation ; “as you love me, explain your meaning quickly.”

“My Lord,” answered Khatoon, “prepare your ears for a tale which will excite your utmost surprise. What, however, I shall relate, will be nothing but the truth ; you must not, therefore, be offended.”

“The late chieftain of this tribe, your supposed father—”

“*Supposed* father !” ejaculated Karah Kaplan.

“The late chieftain,” continued Khatoon, unheeding the natural interruption, “was, as you know, devotedly fond of the most daring expeditions and dangerous exploits ; he levied contributions both far and near, and his name was spread in all directions as a terror to the caravans that travelled these roads. He was one of the finest and strongest men in the country, as you may well remember, though you knew

him not in his prime; indeed, you recollect him as an aged, though not infirm, warrior only. He possessed, at the time I speak of but one wife, whom he loved most affectionately; and notwithstanding the difference of their ages, his love was most truly and ardently returned. You may imagine his grief when she died suddenly, in giving birth to a son."

"Myself?" said Karah Kaplan.

"It was not, Sahib," returned Khatoon; "that child has long since been numbered with the dead. But, to my story;—as the mother breathed her last, the old Khan looked round for some one to suckle his boy. It so happened, that I had just given birth to Moorad——"

"Woman! I see it all," exclaimed Allah Verdee, dashing his hand upon his brow; "you wish to make me believe that Moorad was the son of the late chieftain."

“ Pardon me,” returned the old woman, “ you are again mistaken ; Moorad is my own son. However, to proceed,—the Khan commanded me to nourish his motherless child. The command was, of course, obeyed, and I took you to my bosom. In the meanwhile, in order to beguile his mind, the Khan left the camp, and proceeded on a chappow. In a few days he returned, bringing with him the corpse of a woman and an infant.”

“ Am I the same as that infant ?” inquired Karah Kaplan, his impatience knowing no bounds.

“ You are,” replied his foster-mother ; “ the Khan brought you to me in his arms, observing that he had met that day with a small party, consisting of a Persian, his wife and child, and several servants, whom he had attacked and plundered ; the Persians, however, had made such a desperate resistance, that it was not before all the men of their party had

fallen, that the Koords obtained possession of the baggage, on securing which, they galloped off with your mother and yourself; but on coming to a halting-place, it was discovered that the former had received an unintended wound from a pistol during the conflict, the pain of which she had in vain attempted to stifle, for her faintness betrayed her state. Reining in their horses, the Koords hastened to examine her condition; but it was too late, she breathed her last, having only just time to inform the Khan that her husband had been one of the noblest blood in Iran, and that you were her son, begotten by him. Before, however, she could mention his name, she expired, to the great grief of the chieftain, who informed me that she was possessed of the greatest beauty. Well, the Khan bore the corpse of your mother to our camp, where she was buried; you, as I said before, were brought to me in the arms of the chieftain, who in-

formed me how you had fallen into his hands, and bidding me find a nurse for you. It so happened, that on the same evening, the infant son of the Khan had been taken suddenly ill with the most violent convulsions ; indeed, he was on the very point of death as the Khan entered, and he expired shortly afterwards. The old man bore his bereavement with the utmost fortitude ; and instead of breaking out into useless lamentations, he calmly observed :—

“ ‘ The will of Allah must be fulfilled ; no doubt, the double loss which I have sustained in the deaths of my wife and child, are sent as punishments for the misdeeds of my life. Have I not this very morn been the cause of yonder infant’s ’ (pointing to you, Khan) ‘ becoming an orphan ; have not my hands been imbued in the blood of his father, and, also, unintentionally, in that of his mother ? Allah knows, I have eaten much dirt in my

lifetime, and, consequently, I bow with resignation to his will; God is great—his ways are inscrutable.’ These were the words of the chieftain, while he gazed mournfully on the corpse of his son. His heart was softened by his misfortunes, and although he attempted to restrain them, a few tears forced their way over the threshold of his eyes, and rolled down his cheeks; they were few in number, but they were drops of the most heartfelt contrition.”

“As you love me, Khatoon,” interrupted Allah Verdee, “hasten over your own observations upon what passed, and let me know what became of myself.”

“Pardon me, Khan,” replied the old woman, “I know that I am prolix in my discourse; but you must excuse me. I am now old, but I love to linger on the memory of my youthful years. To proceed, however; we were alone when the child expired, and his

death had so soon followed his attack of illness, that no one had been aware of his danger. I was about, therefore, to call for some attendance, when the Khan, placing his fingers to his lips, observed :

“ ‘ Listen, Khatoon, one moment ; I am now old, it is unlikely that I shall ever beget another child, and I would fain not go down to my grave without leaving an heir to my glory, and, if possible, I would desire that heir to be at least supposed my son, as it would prevent confusion in the tribe. My intention is, therefore, as follows : I have deprived yonder defenceless child of its parents, it is but justice that I should repair that loss by adopting him ; but I intend doing so, thoroughly and completely, as I will pass him off as my own child. Here, dress him in the clothes of my dead son, and deck out the corpse in those the child now wears. As soon as that is done, I will call for assistance, and give out that the

infant whom I have this day conducted hither has died. Of course, you must always pretend that the survivor is my son.'

"I immediately obeyed my master's injunctions, and changed the habiliments of the two children; this being done, the Khan swore me to secrecy, and calling out, commanded those who entered, to pay the last duties to the corpse. Not the slightest suspicion was excited, and the chief's son was buried next morning, along with his supposed mother.

"Ever since that time, you have been brought up as the son of the chief, and as such, have received the respect and allegiance of the tribe. The late Khan, as you know, was killed about seven years ago, and dying with the secret unrevealed, you succeeded him, and have raised the glory of the tribe as much as if you had really been a Koord. This is, my Lord, the story of your life; I would never have

given utterance to it, had you not begun to revile the Iranees so bitterly, that I feared your curses would fall upon your own head."

CHAPTER VIII.

“ Am I left alone on earth
To mourn—I dare not curse—the day
The day that saw my solitary birth?
Oh! thou wilt love me now no more!”

BRIDE OF ABYDOS.

DURING the above narration, Allah Verdee had stood with his eyes firmly fixed upon the countenance of the speaker; which, however, flinched not under the inspection, but answered the gaze with the bold front caused by a consciousness of uttering the truth.

As the old woman ceased, the chief drew a long breath through his clenched teeth, and for some minutes remained silent, apparently in

deep thought, all present imitated his example, and so still was the quiet, that the beat of her neighbour's heart, was audible to each trembling kaneez.

At length the Khan breaking silence, turned to his foster-mother, and in a most melancholy voice observed,

“Khatoon, I am unwillingly forced to confess my conviction of your having spoken the truth, your manner and appearance evidently acquit you of falsehood ; but, alas, that you should have ever given utterance to such words ! My heart is crushed by them—I feel at my wit's end. Wahi ! what are the vain-glorious boasts I have made of my origin ? What are they ? Why, bash ! empty air. O ! cursed Takdeer, that I should have lived to know that I am an Iranee !”

The chief at these words, pressed his hand over his eyes, and remained for some time absorbed in grief ; groans, audible groans issued

from his chest, striking terror into the hearts of the attendants, who had never before beheld him so deeply moved; they knew, however, the violence of his rage, when his passions were much excited, and each trembled as she watched the agitated state of the dreaded man: not even did Zaira his wife, the companion of his bosom dare to address him; although, she would have given worlds could she by any means have assuaged his grief.

At length, Allah Verdee, slowly rising to his feet, uncovered his face, and frowning severely on Khatoon, exclaimed,

“Khatoon, from your bosom did I draw sustenance when an infant, that circumstance alone protects you from my wrath. Why not have allowed this accursed tale to have remained untold? Why not have left me in ignorance of my birth? What end could your unveiling such a miserable truth answer. O! woman! woman! too truly hath the poet said,

“ Tell not the secrets of thy brain to
Woman, lest she make them clear and visible
As the midday-sun.”(1)

O! would to Mahomed, I had died ere I had known of this foul misfortune, I had gone down to my grave happy, exulting in the glorious name I bore, and thanking Allah that the blood that flowed in my veins was descended from a long line of Koordish ancestors. Woman! you have embittered my life. You have deprived me of all that can make existence enjoyable.”

“ My Lord !” answered Khatoon, “ I spoke as I thought for the best. If I grieved my master, I wish my tongue had been cut out, ere it had uttered the words, that have caused that grief.”

“ Of what avail, are your regrets at present?” said Allah Verdee. “ Can they restore tranquillity to my breast? But, mark you all present, let there be silence concerning what

has been said. If I hear one syllable of this story outside this tent, not one who now stands before me shall look upon another day; be wise, therefore, and silent, or you die!"

With this injunction on his lips, the angry chieftain hastily quitted the tent, leaving his auditors in a state of the greatest alarm. As soon as he was out of ear-shot, however, Zaira turned to Khatoon, observing,

"Alas, the unfortunate hour, in which you have disturbed the mind of our Lord!"

"Fear not, Khanum," answered Khatoon. "No harm is done; as soon as the anger of the moment has passed away from the mind of Allah Verdee Khan, he will become calm, and Inshallah be more ready to be guided by your good advice."

"How?" demanded Zaira.

"It is more than probable," was the reply, "that on mature reflection, the Khan will feel

less desire to attack the Iranees, now that he is aware that they are his own countrymen ; the ties of blood, may perchance, struggle against his wish for aggrandisement, and the demon of ambition may give way to the good genius of consideration."

" O ! may Allah grant such an issue !" cried Zaira. " If it be so, you have not told your tale in vain ; but say, is what you have related really the truth ?"

" May I never again behold the light of the glorious orb of day !" cried Khatoon, " if a single lie has mingled with my words. No, Khanum, what I have uttered is the truth ; Allah Verdee Khan is born of Iranee parents."

Zaira sighed half in pleasure, half in pain, the former feeling arose in her bosom from the hope of her husband's being now more likely to be persuaded of the futility of his intended expedition ; the latter sensation was

naturally excited by the idea of the anguish, which the late intelligence must have caused to her beloved's heart.

After some time, she once more turned to Khatoon, and asked whether the late chief of the tribe has ever discovered the name and station of the parents of his adopted child.

“Not the slightest clue,” answered Khatoon, “was ever obtained by him on that point; the mother as I said before, died before she could make known her husband's name; and among the plunder taken, not a mark or letter of any sort was discovered, which could lead even to a supposition. Indeed, no very strict inquiry was ever made by the old Khan, who was never very desirous of learning the names of Allah Verdee Khan's parents.”

“At any rate,” replied Zaira, “though born of Persian parents, he is now a real Koord; he has been adopted by a Koord, he has been brought up among Koords; he has sucked

in Koordish prejudices from his childhood. Still, therefore, though the knowledge of his Iranee origin may lessen his hatred against the Iranees themselves, still, the good of the tribe will ever be the first object of my husband's wishes ; and, instead of bringing down destruction and misery upon them, he will labour as he has ever done, for their happiness and glory. If such be the issue of what you have related, you have, indeed, performed an inestimable service, by letting him know the secret of his birth."

As the Khanum was uttering these sentences, the voice of Karah Kaplan sounded from without ; she paused and listened, and her feelings may easily be conceived, when she distinctly heard him utter the following words :

" Never Moorad ; sooner would I proclaim myself a coward ; mark me, see that all are thoroughly prepared to start hence for Sultaneah, three hours before sunrise."

“To hear is to obey,” was Moorad’s answer, “may a favourable issue be granted to the expedition of Allah Verdee Khan, whom I hope, soon to hail by the title of Allah Verdee Shah,”

CHAPTER IX.

“ A vein had burst, and her sweet lips’ pure dyes
Were dabbled with the deep blood which ran o’er ;
And her head drooped, as when the lily lies
O’ercharged with rain :—”

BYRON.

ON Karah Kaplan’s leaving the tent, where he had learned such an unexpected secret, he directed his steps unattended and hastily, to where he knew his foster-brother most probably would be found, and on meeting with him, commanded his company to a solitary part of the camp.

On finding himself alone with his devoted follower, the Khan proceeded to recount the

strange story told by Khatoon, and finished his recital by describing the tumult it had excited in his mind. Moorad heard his chieftain with attention, and at once attempted to soothe his grief.

“What difference, Sahib,” he observed with warmth, “can it make whether the blood that flows in your veins is Koordish or Iranee; are you not at least, the adopted son of the late chief, and as such are you not a Koord? You have been brought up amongst us, our habits are yours, and you have ever been accustomed to look with contempt upon the Iranees. You are our chieftain, you have won the affections of our tribe, who, I can affirm, would never decrease their allegiance towards you, were it even proved that you were born of Yezeedee parents.”

“But, Moorad,” observed Karah Kaplan, “your words cannot alter the knowledge of my origin; you may take a lion’s cub, from the

forest, you may bring him up as a lamb ; still though you may have quenched the vicious propensities of his nature, you will not have altered his form ; thus is it with regard to myself. I am the acknowledged chief of a powerful tribe ; but, were it known by those who compose it, that they were commanded by one of Iranee blood, it would alter their feelings of attachment towards me. In form, in feature I should be to them an Iranee."

" Sahib," answered Moorad, " you wrong the noble spirits that serve under you ; they have too often been led to victory, at the sound of your voice, they have beheld too often your courage in the field, they have known too long your talents and energy, to change their feelings towards you. I judge of others by myself ; *my* devotion is unaltered by what I have just learned, whoever, whatever you are, Iranee, Yezeedee, Faringee or Yoodie,(1) it is the same to me. Tear out my heart, Sahib, and in its inmost re-

cesses you will find, LOVE FOR ALLAH VER-DEE, firmly engraven."

Tears! Tears, the overflowing of a full heart bursting with enthusiasm, rolled down the cheeks of the gallant Koord, at once expressing the sincerity of his words, and the excess of his devotion towards his chieftain. Never before had Allah Verdee seen his foster-brother so overcome, and the sight of the extreme agitation that shook the frame of the rough warrior, who, at other times, seemed immovable as a rock, had a powerful effect upon his mind; taking Moorad's hand in his, he observed, in the winning manner that had gained so many hearts to his service,

"Moorad—my friend—my brother, would that every member of this tribe resembled you."

"Sahib," replied his foster-brother, pressing the hand he held to his lips, "say not *if*, say rather that every member of this tribe *does* re-

semble me in their readiness to lay down their lives for the Karah Kaplan(2). By Mahomed, may the memory of my father be blotted out, if it be not as I have asserted! Grieve, therefore, yourself no more concerning your origin, I repeat again, it would make no alteration in the behaviour of your followers, were they to know all. However, there is no necessity of making the circumstance public."

"True," returned Allah Verdee. "It were better for the present to allow my followers to remain in ignorance of the source from whence I derive my origin; else it might be deemed by them a bad omen. I confess, indeed, that my desire, if not my intention of proceeding to Sultaneah begins to waver; what with the prophecies of Kerbelai Hassan, and the knowledge of my being a Persian, I am somewhat staggered in my expectations of success."

"Alas, Sahib," cried Moorad imploringly,

“ say not so ; for the love of Allah, do not allow the words of an old dotard to turn you from the path of glory ; remember, how much trouble and pains it has cost to assemble the troops under your command. Do not damp their energies, while they are burning with the desire of a conquest.”

“ Moorad !” observed Karah Kaplan, “ I said, not that it was my intention to give up the enterprise, I merely observed that my wish for it, was not so ardent as heretofore. One or two of Kerbelai Hassan’s sentences have struck deep into my memory. I cannot help calling to mind that the old man said that our tribe would be vanquished, while at the same time my father’s son would obtain honours by means of the same event. As long as I considered myself the son of the late chieftain, I, of course, treated the very idea with scorn, as I conceived myself an only child. But now that I know that I am by birth an Iranee, the

same certainty exists no longer ; for I may have a brother, in the royal army, and should it be so, although I may fall with my followers, *he* may be exalted by the self-same occurrence ; my downfall may be his rise. See you not, Moorad, the force of my observations.”

“Yield not, Sahib, to such mournful thoughts,” returned the other, “cast such gloomy ideas from your imagination ; put your trust in Allah, and think not on futurity. Every event which taketh place has long since been predetermined by Providence, and the decrees of destiny are fixed and irrevocable. Whatever, therefore, be your fate, meet it like a man, like a Koord, for the appellations are synonymous. At least, Sahib ! know that if misfortune come upon you, there is one who will not behold you suffering alone. No, Sahib ! I have cast my lot with yours : with you I live ; with you I die, with you I meet the frowns of fate, so help me Allah !”

“ My gallant follower,” replied the chieftain, “ I know your sincerity well ; thanks be to Allah, who gave me a friend like thee.”

“ Call me not by such a name !” said Moorad, “ I deserve it not, who am I in the sight of Allah Verdee Khan, that he should call me friend, let him entitle me his slave, and I am content.”

“ Nay, Moorad,” said Allah Verdee, “ you wrong yourself, I feel myself proud in calling you friend ; we are nearly brothers, we have suckled from the same breast, we have been brought up together, and knowing your fidelity and honesty, as well as I do, what name but that of friendship can I give to the feeling we entertain for each other.”

“ If you so command it, Sahib,” answered Moorad, “ it must be so, I will no longer cavil at an appellation, which raises me to the skies ; but, Sahib, Inshallah ! you are not going to give up your enterprise ?”

The two Koords had gradually approached the tent which contained Zaira, and her attendants, as Moorad made the above observation; the answer has been already related in the former chapter; when Karah Kaplan, turning to his foster-brother, exclaimed firmly and enthusiastically:

“Never, Moorad! sooner would I proclaim myself a coward. Mark me! see that all are thoroughly prepared to start hence, for Sultaneah, three hours before sunrise.”

“To hear is to obey;” replied Moorad, “and may a favourable issue be granted to the expedition of Allah Verdee Khan; whom I hope soon to hail by the title of Allah Verdee Shah.”

These words had no sooner been pronounced, than a shriek was heard from within the tent, so piercing, so agonizing that it startled the speakers. Allah Verdee well knew the voice that gave utterance to the sound, and con-

scious of the cause, rushed hastily through the canvass door.

On entering within the walls, a horrid sight met his eye : for supported by Khatoon and two kaneezes, reclined Zaira, from whose mouth the blood was flowing in torrents, daubing her clothes with its ghastly hue. The feelings of the enthusiastic woman, roused to the utmost pitch of excitement, had become too much for her, and on hearing the last determination of her husband, a vein had burst, and had deluged her in blood.

Allah Verdee beheld the state of his once beloved wife, and his heart was touched to its very core ; lifting her in his arms, he called upon her by every term of endearment to look up and bless him with a smile, swearing never to cease loving her.

“ Live, live, dearest of my soul !” he cried, “ live, or I die myself.”

Zaira raised her gaze languidly to her

husband's face, and a faint smile played over her features—she essayed to speak, but could not. Allah Verdee, however, felt a gentle pressure of her hand, as if she both heard and understood him ; by degrees the pressure relaxed—she leaned more heavily on her husband's bosom, and her eyes, which turned not away from the perusal of his features, became fixed in death.

CHAPTER X.

“The love of a mother blending,
Joy and misery in her gaze ;
The voice of a sister lending
Melody to our coming days.
Gems more glorious, and bright may be—
A sister’s smiles are pearls to me.”

BY THE HARROVIAN.

MEERZA SADEK in committing, or rather, (as it afterwards proved), in attempting to commit the horrid murder upon the person of his wife’s brother, had for once overrated the extent of his influence. Had he, indeed, confined his cruelty, and revenge to a Persian subject, he might have sinned with impunity ;

but his savage nature had overcome his usual caution, and in giving vent to that nature, he had worked his own downfall. He had not, indeed, sufficiently considered the power and energy of Russia, when he laid violent hands upon a subject of that mighty empire. He knew not, as he ought to have done, how persevering and firm was its government, in demanding the most ample satisfaction for any insult, or indignity, offered to any one under their protection ; for he had formed his judgment, from the manner in which the representatives of other European nations, resident at Oriental courts, were in general wont to treat the complaints made by their countrymen, concerning any injury, insult, or indignity received by them from the oriental authorities. He was well aware that the dignity of other European nations had often been lowered, by the weakness, and supineness shown by their ministers in such cases, and he foolishly

imagined that the same want of energy would be evinced, by the Russian Elchee,(1) with respect to the death of the Georgian, Sumbar-toff. The cleverest, and most cunning of men are, however, occasionally deceived, and as often occurs by their own calculations. In the present instance, Meerza Sadek had himself dug the mine, which was about to be the destruction of his greatness, and had applied, with his own hand, the match to the train which was to cause the explosion.

The ferashes of Meerza Sadek having quitted the mansion of their master, proceeded to the dwelling of an Armenian, and having entered it without the slightest ceremony, cast the body of Sumbartoff on the floor, when the chief ferash turning to the terrified owner, exclaimed,

“Dog of an infidel, we have brought you as an enam,(2) the corpse of one of your unclean faith, who has justly suffered the punishment

due to those, who have the audacity to violate the sanctity of a harem. By the head of Ali ! the burnt father was caught in the very act of embracing one of our Sahib's wives. Here, however, is the corpse, do with it what you think proper : bury it, eat it if you will, it is the same to us."

Having finished his insulting discourse, the ferash, accompanied by his comrades, quitted the spot, leaving the Armenian more dead than alive from terror ; for several minutes, the astonished man remained almost motionless, gazing on the lifeless form before him ; he might, indeed, have so continued for a much longer space of time, but for the entrance of his wife, who had seen and heard the whole transaction between her husband and the ferashes from a neighbouring apartment. On observing the stupified condition of her husband, the woman demanded of him in a somewhat sarcastic tone, whether he were deaf or

blind, that he allowed the body of a Christian to lie unnoticed on the floor. The voice of his wife recalled the Armenian to his senses, and he proceeded to raise the body of Sumbartoff in his arms; having gazed upon the cold pale features, he shook his head, and observed,

“I know him not, he is a stranger, what have I to do with him? what crime have I been guilty of, that such a misfortune as the corpse of a murdered man being brought to my house, should be entailed upon me? It were well to take and cast it forth; what have we to do with the victims of that most accursed of tyrants, Meerza Sadek?”

“Shame on you, husband,” retorted his wife, “one would imagine you were an infidel by your words; did you not hear the wretches, who brought the corpse hither, observe, that it was the body of a Christian; it would scarcely be fitting to cast forth one of our own faith, to be devoured by dogs.”

“What then can we do?” asked the Arme-

nian; "here it is; the sooner we get rid of it the better."

"Well," returned the woman, "seek out his friends, if he have any, and if he have none, why we must bury him."

"But that burying is an expensive affair," said her husband, "and I like not the spending of money, where I can have no return; and if this man be a perfect stranger here, and have no friends or relations, when shall I ever receive back the expences of his funeral?"

"A truce to your miserly thoughts," said the wife; "you make me ashamed of the day when we were wedded to each other. Hasten at once to the Kasheesh,(3) and inform him of what has happened."

"Wahi," exclaimed the Armenian, "here is the beginning of our misfortune, the priest will come hither, and having given orders concerning the body, will seat himself down, and quietly feast himself at my expence, until we have washed and dressed the corpse; and then, after the

burial is over, wine will be drunk, and bread eaten, as long as I have a shai in my house."

"Once for all," cried the woman, "I tell you that if you do not run for the Kasheesh, I will, so you had better spare your niggardly lamentations; remember too, husband," she proceeded in a more subdued manner, "remember we are Christians, for the sake of Him who died for us, let us be charitable without repining; every good act has its reward, let me entreat you to go at once for the priest."

The Armenian arose, and was about to leave the house, for the purpose proposed by his wife, when his attention was roused by a subdued groan, which appeared to proceed from the body of the Georgian; the groan was repeated, and the eyelids of the supposed dead man were moved by a convulsive twitch. The Armenian woman, upon this, seizing hold of her husband's hand, exclaimed in an anxious voice,

"Did you hear that groan? thanks be to Allah, he lives."

With these words, she flew towards the body, and lifting up the head gazed earnestly upon the face, when she was at once assured of life's not being extinct, by the eyes languidly opening and shutting; upon this she cried out to her husband to assist her; when the two proceeded to rub and chafe the hands and feet of the Georgian. Having so done until warmth began to be partially restored, they poured some hot wine down his throat and then laying him upon a soft mattrass, tore off his wet clothes and covered him with the warmest lahoffs they possessed. To be brief, their efforts proved successful and in a few hours, Sumbartoff was so far restored, that he sunk into a profound sleep; on awakening from which, he was able to thank his deliverers for their exertions, and having partaken of some food, to recount to them the history of his meeting with his sister and the consequent catastrophe.

“ Allah is great,” observed the Armenian, “ it is well that nothing worse has happened ; you must however take heed how you leave this town, as the Meerza is all powerful in these parts.”

“ I will not go hence without my sister,” said Sumbartoff. “ She is by rights no slave, and I will bear her hence or perish in the attempt.”

“ Afakerillah,” said the Armenian, “ be not rash ; you have already had a proof of the power of the Meerza, and know well that he has not only the power but the will to exercise his cruelty upon those who thwart him ; alas we poor christians in this city, have abundant reasons to be aware of his vicinity.”

“ But, my friend,” cried the Georgian, “ I care not for life, as long as my sister remains groaning in captivity ; either I must procure means of carrying her to our native land, or the Meerza shall a second time consign me to death.”

“ Nay,” observed the Armenian, soothingly, “ talk not so ; be guided by reason, I perceive by your accent that you are not a native of this country. Tell me, are you a Russian subject ?”

“ I am,” answered the Georgian.

“ Well then,” proceeded the other, “ listen awhile to good advice ; your nation is all powerful and much dreaded here, why not apply to the Russian authorities resident in this country, they will assist you.”

“ I know not,” answered Sumbartoff, “ in what manner the power of Russia can avail me. No power can force an entrance into a Mussulman’s anderoon, and should the Meerza deny that my sister resides within his house, how can I prove the contrary, particularly in a town so far removed as this from the Georgian frontier ?”

“ Can you not,” said the Armenian, “ demand satisfaction for the outrage just committed ; you can at least lay a complaint before

your Elchee, and if he be the person I take him for, he will scarcely turn a deaf ear to the recital of an attempt having been made by a Persian nobleman to put a Russian subject to death, under pretence of his having violated one of the laws of the country; that same nobleman being at the very time perfectly aware that no offence had in reality been committed, as you declared yourself to be the brother of her in whose presence you were found; but notwithstanding all your protestations, your life was cruelly and wickedly attempted."

"True, my friend," returned the Georgian, "most true; the Elchee will no doubt demand satisfaction for the outrage, but how will such a demand procure me my sister! Alas, it will prove no easy task to rescue her from her confinement."

"Nay," replied the other, "do not despond; remember that if you can but once succeed in hurling the Meerza from his seat, or dock his

power in any great degree, he will lose the services of many of his servants, who will of course desert their master in the hour of misfortune, and be ready to lend you any assistance within their means, provided you pay them well; do you understand? if you knew these padersookhtehs as well as myself, you would be at no loss."

"I know the Irancees to be a base, brutal, lying, sycophant, fawning, treacherous race," replied Sumbartoff, "and capable of performing any act, however despicable, with a good bribe in view. There is not one existing who would hesitate to cut his father's throat, provided he was well paid for so doing, and perform the deed in safety to himself; for to his other vices, an Iranee joins that of being a most arrant coward."

"You are right in the main," said the Armenian; "but it must be confessed that there are some gallant men among them; consider

the deeds of the Koords, for instance; there is no lack of courage among them."

"You can hardly, however, designate the Koords as Iranees," observed the Georgian. "They are a distinct race; and most of them owe no allegiance to the Shah; but on the contrary, are in open rebellion."

"But," said the Armenian, "notwithstanding all their hostility to the Persian government, they still fought on the side of Persia during the late war, and pretty havoc they made among the Russians. Why the Koords rode into the ranks of the Cossacks, and mowed them down, as easily as the Rayat mows down the standing corn.(4) Mashallah! the dreaded chief, Karah Kaplan, who is now in open rebellion, was one whose tribe performed most essential service on the side of Persia on that occasion. The manner in which the chieftain rode upon the lances of the

enemy, is the theme of many a song. I remember the occurrence well, having been at Tabreez at the time."

"Still, my friend," observed Sumbartoff, "you must allow me to observe that the Koords are not Persians. By the blessed Virgin, one man of those tribes would put a dozen Iranees to flight by the very glance of his eye ; but we wander from our subject. Suppose I proceed to my Elchee with all speed, tell me how can I be assured of my sister's safety in the meanwhile ? Remember, she believes me to be murdered ; and the bare idea of such an occurrence will drive her frantic ; and if I depart in secret from hence, she will not learn the news of my recovery, and perchance pine away through grief."

"Fear nothing, Sahib," observed the wife of the Armenian, coming forward, "leave the management of undeceiving her to me. I am

a woman, and will manage to procure admission to her presence. Inshallah! all will yet be right."

"Thanks," cried Sumbartoff; "thanks! Your kindness is ever on the increase. O, my benefactors!" he continued, with energy; "how can I repay you for all your kindness to me? You have saved my life; it is at your disposal."

The Armenian woman cast a somewhat sarcastic glance upon her husband, as the Georgian uttered these words, as if to taunt him with his mean and cowardly conduct at the commencement of the late affair; then turning to Sumbartoff, she observed,

"There is no need of thanks on your part, Sahib; we did but our duty, and merely acted as Christians ought to act towards a Christian."

"Whether you performed your duty or not," cried Sumbartoff, "is the same to me.

Inshallah ! Alexis Sumbartoff will be able to prove his gratitude towards those who have befriended him."

"What!" cried the Armenian, starting ; "Alexis Sumbartoff! well do I remember that honourable name. Knew you a Georgian merchant so called, who met his death near Khoi some three years since?"

"He was my father," replied the Georgian ; "and she who now pines away in captivity within the anderoon of Meerza Sadek, is his daughter, who was captured on the same occasion that our dear parent met his death at the hands of the Iranees."

"Ajaib! wonderful!" exclaimed the Armenian ; "why Alexis Sumbartoff was one of my oldest friends ; many is the transaction we have had together ; would that he had taken my advice and remained at Tabreez during the late war, instead of seeking the protection of a handful of Russian soldiers, in hopes of tra-

velling through the country in safety under their escort. Had he listened to me, he would have been still alive."

"Would that he had," said Sumbartoff, "I should in that case still possess a father; all things, however, are in the hands of Allah: whatever is the will of the most High, we must submit to without complaint. But, my friends, time presses; I must be hastening towards Teheran. Listen to me, in the caravanserai nearest to the northern gate of the town, you will find two horses, tended by one servant, in whose charge is my travelling sack and saddles; you can easily find the man—though habited in the Persian costume, his complexion and beard are of a light colour. Search him out, and bring him hither; at day-break I must pass the gates of the city."

The Armenian having listened to these directions proceeded to act upon them, and so ably did he perform his part, that by the time

the real dawn had began to streak the east with light, Sumbartoff had mounted his horse and prepared to start from Hamadan, accompanied by his attendant. At the moment that he vaulted to his seat, he turned to his new friends, and exclaimed,

“Do not forget to inform my sister of her brother’s safety ; tell her that I am about to risk all in the hope of delivering her from the clutches of that fiendish Meerza. Adieu, my friends, may every blessing attend you and yours.”

With these words he rode off, and was soon lost to the view of the Armenian and his wife.

CHAPTER XI.

“ Man’s life ’s a bubble of empty bliss,
Flung on the ocean of unebbing time
To drink the hues of every sunbeam-kiss,
To take the dyes of every varying clime.
Expanding mid the growth of every crime ;
Creation’s veriest fictions, without name,
End, aim—a hollow toy ; from out the slime
Of overwrought existence forth it came,
Expanded, burst, and left no trace where it had lain.”

SOME period had elapsed since the incidents detailed in the last chapter, when Meerza Sadek, while sitting in his tent at Sultaneah, received a summons from the Prince Mahomed Reza to attend upon him immediately ; this

was an order of such common occurrence, that the Meerza would have obeyed it, without giving much thought to the circumstance, had not his quick eye noticed an alteration in the usual manner of the man, who brought the message; so slight, however, was the change, that a person of ordinary observation would not have perceived it; but to a man of Meerza Sadek's penetration, it was most plain. Before proceeding therefore to the royal tent, the wily secretary in his usual calm and quiet manner put a few questions to the ferash, concerning the reason why his presence was required; the man however, sullenly answered, "I know nothing, I am merely the bearer of the commands with which I was entrusted."

Having in vain attempted to worm more out of the messenger, the secretary was fain obliged to rise, and summoning his attendants turned his steps towards the pavilion of his royal master. After having gone through the

necessary forms, he looked up towards his master's countenance; but to his great astonishment, the usual bland and welcome-giving smile was not there; but on the contrary its place was usurped by an angry frown. To a man, so conscious of crime as Meerza Sadek, such a change appeared most ominous; his tongue began to cleave to the roof of his mouth, his lower jaw drooped, and his knees knocked together. His fright was by no means decreased on the Prince addressing him in a stern, almost savage tone,

“Meerza, what is this,” he cried, “are you not content with eating dirt yourself; but you must needs try to make us do the same. Merdiki, accursed one, answer me what is this we hear?”

The secretary nearly fell to the ground at these words, every crime, every delinquency he had been guilty of, rose pictured in the most vivid colours to his imagination; but dissem-

bling as much as possible his agitation, he exclaimed,

“O most gracious Prince, what evil has your slave committed; he is ignorant of any crime.”

“Your lying tongue shall avail you no longer,” roared out Mahomed Reza, “Goromsog,(1) padersookteh, were you not content with enjoining one of your servants to ruin an honest man, by perjuring himself; but you must needs murder a Russian subject. Why as I sit upon a musnud, I declare that the Feringee Elchee has made such a statement to the Shah, concerning that deed of yours at Hamadan, which I never heard of till to-day, that, Mashallah, it has nearly caused a war. Tell me, fool, how dare you touch a subject of Russia?”

As the Prince uttered these words, the Meerza perceived his own ruin was intended; for although Meerza Reza, at present was pretending ignorance of the violence committed

on the person of the Georgian Sumbartoff, he had been long well aware of the fact, having heard it from the Meerza's own mouth ; it was plain, therefore, that something had occurred which had decided the Prince to sacrifice his minister ; still Meerza Sadek determined not to allow himself to be disgraced, without making an effort to save himself. Falling on his knees, he raised his hands towards his master, and in the most piteous accents implored him to be just.

“ Well,” answered Mahomed Reza, “ am I not about to perform an act of justice by bringing to condign punishment a wretch, who has been guilty of every crime under the sun. Here, Bachahau, bring forward the accusers of this impious wretch.”

During the commotion caused by the putting into execution of this last order, the Prince managed to address his unhappy secretary in a tone inaudible to all besides, “ Meerza,” he

said, "I am sorry for you, it is not in my power to save you. I am acting by command of the Shah. Medaneed do you understand?"

Meerza Sadek understood too well the meaning of these words; he knew that their import was, that either himself or his master must be sacrificed in order to serve an object, and that of course in such a case, the weakest of the two must fall; perceiving, therefore, that any protestations of his own must be useless, he rose from his kneeling posture, and stood awaiting with a beating heart, for what was about to follow.

He was not kept long in suspense, for before many minutes elapsed, a Frank dressed in the Russian uniform entered the royal presence, accompanied by a man, whose appearance caused the Meerza to give a start of surprise, for it was the Georgian, whom he had supposed dead, that stood before him.

This was the first intimation that Meerza

Sadek had received of Sumbartoff's being still alive. He had beheld him, as he imagined, in the last agonies of death, and had never for an instant deemed his recovery possible. Sumbartoff, and the two Armenians who had been the instruments of his escape from death, had kept the circumstance so secret, that it had not transpired until some time after, when the Georgian was enabled to have an interview with the Elchee of his country, whose absence from Teheran had caused a delay in a demand for satisfaction being made of the Persian government, in consequence of Sumbartoff's being unable to state his cause.

Immediately on learning the outrage that had been committed, the Russian Elchee had taken up the matter most strenuously, and had proceeded, accompanied by some of his suite, and the Georgian, to the camp of Sultaneah, and having procured an audience of the Shah, had laid the whole matter before his Majesty, de-

manding, in the strongest terms, the disgrace of Meerza Sadek, and the restitution of the Georgian woman, who was illegally detained in the Meerza's anderoon. In consequence of the firm and determined conduct of the Elchee, the Shah perceived that he was not to be trifled with, and issued a command to his son, Mahomed Reza, to confront his minister with his accusers, and to inflict upon him any punishment suggested by the Russians.

It was in pursuance of this command, that Meerza Sadek had been summoned before the Prince; who, in order to screen himself from evil consequences, determined to sacrifice his servant to the fury of those he had injured.

The accusation having been made by the Russian attaché, who had accompanied Sumbartoff to the royal tent, the Meerza was called upon for his defence. Although the trembling wretch knew that this was merely a form, he attempted with every power of eloquence he

could suggest, to prove that he had acted only as the laws of his country allowed.

“ By the head of Ali,” he observed, “ I found that man within my harem, in the embrace of my wife. Let me ask what Mussulman, who had the slightest regard for his honour, would have hesitated to put such an intruder to death ?”

“ But,” retorted Sumbartoff, “ I informed you of our relationship, which you wilfully pretended to disbelieve ; and without giving me an opportunity of proving my words, you attempted to murder me ; which attempt failed, through no good will of yours.”

“ It is a lie ! your Royal Highness,” exclaimed the Meerza. “ Yonder man is a Georgian and a Christian ; no inmate of my anderoon is either of that religion or country.”

“ Persian, you lie yourself,” retorted Sumbartoff. “ Listen, Sire, while I inform you how that wretch has destroyed the happiness of my family.”

The Georgian then proceeded to give a succinct account of the death of his father, and the captivity of his sister, winding up with the interview between Katrina and himself, and its dire consequences. On the Georgian ceasing to speak, Meerza Sadek attempted to deny the truth of his recital, but was cut short by the Prince, who, turning to the Russian, asked him what punishment he wished to be inflicted upon the accused.

“ He has attempted to take the life of a man,” was the answer ; “ by man let his life be taken.”

The Prince drew a long breath at these words ; they were not what he expected, knowing, as he did, the usual moderation of Europeans ; but seeing that the Russian was in earnest, and fearful of offending his father, the Shah, he called to his ferashes, and bid them take the Meerza outside the tent, and strike off his head. No sooner was this sentence pronounced, than the wretched nobleman,

throwing himself at the feet of the Prince, implored mercy in the most abject tones, beseeching him, by his father's soul, to spare his life. Mahomed Reza, upon this, turned to the Russian, but seeing no signs of pity on his countenance, he made a sign to his ferashes, and the unhappy man having been seized, was dragged towards the place of execution. At this moment, however, Sumbartoff stepping forward, and bidding the executioners to cease, made an obeisance to the Prince, and exclaimed :

“ Most gracious Sir, it is enough ; I seek not the life of that cowardly wretch. No ! thanks be to Allah, I am a Christian, and can forgive. Let him but deliver up my sister to me, and do with him as you will. For my part, I desire not his blood.”

“ By Mahomed, you come of a generous stock,” cried the Prince, overjoyed at this unexpected result. “ As I sit here, the Meerza shall do what you require, or suffer the consc-

quences of his refusal. Here, ferashes, bring him forward.”

Meerza Sadek having been conducted once more before his master, was informed of Sumbartoff's request; on hearing which, he was observed for a moment to hesitate, but the dread of death being strong upon him, he made a low obeisance, and exclaimed :

“ Be it so; your slave must obey your commands.”

The papers necessary for the deliverance of Katrina into the hands of Sumbartoff, on his arrival at Hamadan, were soon made out, and given to the Georgian; who having received them, left the royal presence, in company with the Russian attaché, and in an hour afterwards, was on his road to Hamadan, and in three days from that time, Katrina, now no longer a slave, was clasped to the heart of her beloved brother. As for Meerza Sadek, it will be as well to observe, that misfortunes did not come singly

upon him; for immediately after the departure of the Georgian, an accusation was made against him by Mehtee Khan, of having falsely traduced him and caused his disgrace, by false evidence. Among other witnesses brought against Meerza, was Ali Acma, the Loootee, who had been struck blind, on the hills near Sehadehoon, shortly after he had forsworn himself on the Koran, by order of his master.

To be brief, Mehtee Khan had, through the instrumentality of Ismael Khan, been restored to favour, and Meerza Sadek was in disgrace. In consequence, therefore, the latter having suffered a dreadful bastinado, was fined an enormous sum of money, and dismissed, with every mark of opprobrium, from his situation. He fell unpitied, and unlamented.

CHAPTER XII.

Barbarigo.—He shed

No tears.—

Loredano.—He cried out twice.

Barb.—A saint had done so,

Even with the crown of glory in his eye,

At such inhuman artifice of pain

As was forced on him : but he did not cry

For pity ; not a word nor groan escaped him.

And those two shrieks were not in supplication,

But wrung from pangs, and followed by no prayers.

THE TWO FOSCARI.

FERIDOOON had at length risen from the bed of sickness upon which the severity of his wounds had thrown him, and although still rather weakened from the loss of blood he had sustained, and the shock his constitution had undergone, he was able to go about nearly as well as ever. His first visit on his recovery

had of course been at the audience of the Shah, who had treated him with the greatest show of favour, and had addressed his conversation for some time, solely to him (of itself, a mark of uncommon condescension,) and on dismissing him, had invested him with a superb kalaat, and bestowed upon him the title of Khan. It may easily be conceived, therefore, how the society and friendship of the lately humble Eliaut was sought after. Had Feridoon placed the very slightest reliance on the words of his numerous professed friends, he would have believed that at the least any one of them would have given up fortune, rank, or even life itself, to serve him; for such were the expressions made use of by the numerous crowds of sycophants that courted his friendship. Whatever confidence, however, the young man might have placed on the lip-service of his new acquaintance, was checked by the timely advice of Ismael Khan, who,

whenever he perceived his son taken with any fulsome words, was wont to implant on his youthful mind, that, however ready a Persian might be to pay court to a rising sun, by so much the more was he prepared to turn away his countenance, when the same sun was on the wane.

It was early one morning that Feridoon was riding through the camp, accompanied by a retinue of attendants, when his attention was directed to an aged cripple, who solicited charity from him ; the Eliaut had drawn some money from his pouch, and was on the point of throwing it to the miserable wretch, when he suddenly thought that the features were familiar to him. Fixing a scrutinizing glance on the beggar, he recognized him at once as the sentinel who had examined his pass, on his rescuing Zoraya from the tents of Karah Kaplan ; wishing, however, to be certain of the man's identity, he accosted the apparent infirm object.

“Old man,” he observed, “whence come you? I have not seen you in these parts before?”

“So please your excellency,” returned the fakeer submissively, “your humblest of slaves is from Hamadan; but having heard much concerning the generosity of the nobles of this camp, he has come hither, in order to solicit alms, of which he is much in need.”

“You are from Hamadan?” said Feridoon, “why you hardly speak with the accent of that country, from which, indeed, I come myself. Methinks there is a Koordish twang in your speech.”

“I have been much in the company of Koords,” replied the man evasively, “and have, perchance, contracted somewhat their manner of speaking.”

“Evil society corrupts good persons,” said the Eliaut; “it tells not well, for your choice to have selected such companions. A lamb had better contract friendship with a wolf, than an

Iranee mix with Koords ; but tell me, how happened you to go so much among them ?”

“It was not from choice,” answered the fakeer, “that I went among them ; fate so ordained that I was taken prisoner.”

“What possible object,” said Feridoon contemptuously, “could the Koords have had in the capture of such a miserable wretch as you appear to be ? mark me, as you *appear* to be, for I should not wonder were your lameness and deformity altogether feigned.”

“Alas ! Sahib,” ejaculated the beggar, “would it were, as you say, I should not have then been reduced to misery.”

“Padersookteh,” cried Feridoon, in a passionate tone, “I can stand your mummerly no longer. I have seen you before, and with all your limbs perfect.”

The face of the fakeer underwent a marked change at these words, recovering himself instantly, however, he calmly observed,

“Your slave is ignorant of the meaning of your excellency; to the best of his knowledge, he has never before had the happiness of meeting your gracious highness, this day only has he entered the royal camp.”

“In that one assertion, the last I believe you,” said Feridoon; “this is, perchance, the first day you have entered *this* camp; but attempt not to deceive me; I am perfectly aware of your belonging to the tribe of Karah Kaplan. Here bachahau,” he continued, turning to his attendants, “seize him, bind him, and bring him along with you, I will hasten to the royal footstool, and communicate this piece of intelligence to his Majesty; it were well the asylum of the universe knew that one of Allah Verdee Khan’s followers was enacting the spy in the camp. See, therefore, that the miscreant escape not, and follow me as quickly as possible, while I ride forward to the royal palace.”

HAVING given these commands, the young man galloped off in the direction of the Shah's palace, while his pishkidmuds proceeded to seize and bind the fakeer; in vain did the man swear and affirm that he was only what he appeared to be, and no more! in vain, with strength far beyond what his weakly and deformed body seemed to possess, did he resist the attempt made to bind his arms. He was soon overpowered, and thrown to the ground, when several most interesting discoveries took place; firstly, his hump, on examination, proved to consist of a truss of dried grass, while an enormous wen which disfigured his neck, gave way under inspection, presenting to the gaze a piece of skin filled with cotton, while his crippled legs being relieved from their bandages, turned out to be wonderfully straight; in short, the wretched cripple became, by degrees, a well-made man of powerful frame, and lofty stature. As may be divined, this

discovery caused infinite merriment to the bystanders, who crowded round the impostor, making various jokes on his metamorphosis."

"Barakillah! cried one, "Feridoon Khan's ferashes are wonderful magicians: they have made a handsome man out of a goozoo."(1)

"Would to Mahomed," cried a lame man, who was leaning on crutches, "I could have the same kindness performed towards me. I would fain change these shrunken limbs for others more strong and straight."

"Did you think, O man of little sense, to deceive us," cried a Looatee present; "go home, and tell the dogs you herd with, that Iranees have eyes, and know how to use them; go home, and boast that you have really beheld men."

Many other jests were made at the expense of the detected spy, who certainly behaved with the utmost firmness under the circum-

stances. Casting a look of the most supreme contempt on those around him, he answered not a word to the taunts of his mockers, but suffered himself to be led along in silence. No sign of fear showed itself on his features, although he well surmised the dreadful trial he was about to undergo; on the contrary by his demeanour, it might have been supposed that he was proceeding to some ordinary business, instead of the presence of a despotic monarch.

On arriving at the royal palace, the pish-kidmuds, to whose custody the spy had been delivered, were commanded to proceed immediately to the presence of the Shah; the Koord was accordingly immediately dragged into the dewankhaneh, where he found the Shah, listening with the profoundest attention to the narrative of Feridoon, who was detailing the circumstances under which he had met with the follower of Karah Kaplan.

On the prisoner's appearing before him, Fath Ali turning to the Eliaut, who was standing before him, inquired :

“ Khan ! is this the man ?

“ So please your Majesty, it is,” returned the youth.

“ How comes it, padersookhteh !” cried the Shah, addressing the Koord, “ that you have entered our camp in disguise ? Confess at once on what evil errand you have come hither ?—Speak !”

The man looked fixedly upon the King's countenance, but answered not.

“ Do you hear, Merdiki ?” continued the Shah, “ or are you mad ?—Answer me at once, how comes it that a follower of the Karah Kaplan is discovered enacting the spy in our camp ?”

“ I understand you not,” answered the man coolly. “ I know nought concerning Karah Kaplan, save from report.”

“ What !” ejaculated the Shah, “ do you deny being one of his tribe ?”

“ I do,” replied the Koord; “ save from report, I know nothing concerning the chief whose name you mention.”

“ Feridoon Khan,” said the Shah, “ do you hear ?”

“ As I am your sacrifice,” answered the youth, “ I hear, but believe not. Yonder miscreant speaks falsely; I can swear to having seen him perform the duty of a sentinel in the camp of Allah Verdee Khan.”

“ Are you sure ?” asked Fath Ali, “ that you are right in your assertion ?—Are you convinced there is no mistake on your part ?”

“ Whatever doubt I might have had,” returned Feridoon, “ is entirely removed, now that I behold him divested of his hump, and his other disguises.”

“ O man of little sense, do not attempt to deceive us any longer,” cried the Shah address-

ing the prisoner; "confess all at once, as you value your skin. Have you not heard that the Khan is sure of your identity?"

"Human minds, O King, are prone to error," replied the man in an unflinching tone. "The Khan is no more than mortal, and mistakes me for another, on account of some strong resemblance."

"Why then have you entered this camp in disguise?" observed the Shah. "What motive could have induced you to alter your appearance? It is plain you wished to deceive us. Quick, answer my question."

"Pardon me, O King of Kings!" answered the Koord, "for the imposture I have been guilty of; I disguised myself, it is true, as a cripple; but only in order to excite compassion in the minds of the charitable."

"May your slave make a representation before the Asylum of the Universe?" observed Feridoon; "with your Majesty's permission,

may we send for the Mehter, who accompanied me hither, from the Koordish camp ; he can at once decide whether this man belongs to the tribe of Allah Verdee Khan."

" You have a clear brain ;" answered Fath Ali, " be it so, bring hither the man ; he will be a most material witness."

While some ferashes proceeded in search of the Mehter, the Shah fixed his penetrating eyes, firmly upon the supposed Koord ; but was much puzzled at observing that no sign of confusion was visible upon his countenance. His belief in the man's identity began to be shaken, and turning to Feridoon he observed in a low voice :

" Do you not conceive, Khan, that you may be mistaken ? Look at yonder man, how firm and unmoved he stands ; think you if he were really one of the tribe of Karah Kaplan, he could remain so calm under our examination ?"

" The King of Kings," returned Feridoon,

“ is humbly requested to pardon his slave, who dares to remain fixed in his former opinion.—As I am a true believer, I am sure of the man.”

“ Well!” said the Shah, “ if the Mehter recognise the fellow to be one of the Koordish band, no doubt of the fact can remain; and should the dog continue then to deny it, we must force him to confession, through the means of torture, which is far from my desire; but no other course will remain for us to pursue.”

At this moment the Mehter whose presence had been commanded, entered, and on being confronted with the prisoner, at once proclaimed him to be a member of the tribe of Allah Verdee Khan.

The Koord, notwithstanding the evidence against him, still persisted in his former story, and accused the Mehter of uttering falsehood, stoutly denying his ever having beheld the

Karah Kaplan. Fath Ali, however, sternly interrupted his assertions, by declaring that no doubt could remain in the minds of any but idiots, that the man was a Koord.

“ Dog !” he cried, “ we are neither women or children, that such flimsy lies can impose a moment upon us ; down upon your knees at once, and confess the real reason of your acting the spy in our camp,—beware of trifling with us any longer.”

“ I have spoken the truth,” replied the prisoner calmly. “ I know not Karah Kaplan.”

“ Padersookhteh ! exclaimed the Shah, “ I see it is vain to show mercy towards such a defiled wretch ; you will force us to try the effect of torture upon you ; still it is far from our desire to proceed to such extremities, Listen, if you will but confess all, you shall not only escape punishment, but be well rewarded : answer me, what are the intentions of Karah Kaplan ?”

“How can I, who know him not, inform you of his plans?” was the answer returned, uttered too in a cool, calm tone, as if the speaker was perfectly at his ease; indeed to an ordinary spectator, who had not heard what had passed, it would have appeared that the prisoner, from his collected manner, was expecting any thing but violent usage.

Fath Ali could restrain his rage no longer; but roared out in a furious tone to his ferashes, commanding them to exert all their powers of torture upon the unhappy wretch, in order to extract the truth from his lips.

The executioners advanced at this command, and laying hands upon the Koord bound him to a pole, which was stuck in the ground, and then proceeded to inflict the most excruciating torture, in various ways upon his person; but, although, the frame of the sufferer quivered with anguish, while his cheek by turns blanched and reddened, and his eyes

almost started from their sockets, no sound escaped his lips. Although one ear was sawed slowly and in slices from his head, he bravely stood the test ; a hot iron was then applied to the wound in order to staunch the flowing blood ; —the flesh hissed and crackled ;—the spectators shuddered—some fell deadly sick at the sight ; but still the prisoner, though frequently questioned, answered not, but kept a moody and disdainful silence.

The Shah beheld with surprise the fortitude of the tortured wretch, and his admiration being excited thereat, he proceeded to entreat the man to confess, assuring him of both protection and reward. He might as well have addressed a stone ; the heroic Koord surveyed the king with a curled lip, the only sound issuing therefrom being an indistinct cry of “ dogs ”

Fath Ali maddened at this behaviour, called out to the ferashes to proceed ; the remaining ear was sawed piecemeal from the head, the

hot iron was again applied, still the tortured man spoke not, although the sweat drops starting from his forehead, and running in streams down his cheeks bore evidence to the intensity of his anguish. Being unable to elicit anything from the prisoner, the Persians began to vary the manner of torture, the flesh of the Koord was pinched with hot tweezers, his beard was pulled hair by hair from his chin, his gums were seared, his finger nails torn from their sockets, still the man remained firm, his courage becoming greater, as his persecutors became enraged, and truly maddened with fury, like venomous reptiles they vented their rage upon the unflinching object, tearing his flesh from his body, and inflicting every pang than human invention could devise, and human cruelty could perform.

At length, Fath Ali once more gave the signal for the torturers to cease from their exertions, and addressing the prisoner, again

entreated him to confess. " By Mahomed !" he exclaimed, " you are a man of courage, you have shown this day what a Koord can undergo ; you have raised your countrymen in our estimation ; let that suffice, I would not kill so brave a man. Come comply, and we will make you every reparation in our power for what you have undergone ; in future a Cashmere shawl shall hide the loss of your ears, and silken vesture shall cover your scars. Court favour shall shine upon you like the midsummer's sun, and you shall bask in our smiles ; and for all these honours, you are merely required to confess the real truth concerning your errand hither ; the more I look upon you, the more I remark your unflinching bearing, so much the more am I convinced that some sinister plot is devised against us by Karah Kaplan. Speak, therefore, and tell us for what purpose you have been sent here."

The suffering wretch raised his eyes languidly to the countenance of the Shah, and a

smile of triumph illuminated his features ; it seemed as if he felt himself superior to the cruel arts of his enemies, and that it gave him satisfaction to remark their anxiety and curiosity. Still he spoke not a word ; again the Shah addressed him — again were honours, rank, wealth, and every earthly luxury offered him ; but with the same success, till at length Fath Ali vexed almost to madness at the obstinacy of his victim, cried out, “ Is there no one here, who can inform us of some torture which stops short of taking life, yet inflicts such an acute pang, that it could almost extort a cry from a corpse ? I promise the most ample reward to any one who can force this grilling dog to speak.”

“ We have hitherto had to do with men,” cried several ferashes, “ this accursed one is more than mortal.”

“ He has flesh—he has sinews,” cried the Shah, “ he must feel ; shame on you all that are so ignorant of your duty.”

“May your majesty live for ever,” said the Shah’s Hakim Bashee,(2) your slave begs to observe that he knows of a torture so severe, so racking to the nerves, that if he, that undergoes it, can remain silent under its operation, he must be a devil, he cannot be a man. I saw it used in the north of Hindostan, when it extracted confession, after every other means had failed. The pang inflicted though acute, aims not at life.”

“Barakillah, Meerza Baba,” cried Fath Ali. “Your head shall be exalted, you have travelled to some purpose; force but the truth from yonder padersookhteh, and your reward shall be great; but be quick, our heart is dried up with his obstinacy.”

“So please the Asylum of the Universe,” observed the physician, “your slave is ready: it will be no fault of mine, if the Koord remain longer silent.”

Having thus spoken, Meerza Babaturned to an attendant, and gave him some instructions; the

man departed, and presently returned with a mahogany case, from which the physician took a cupping glass, and a bottle containing spirits of wine. He next proceeded to bare the shoulder of the prisoner, after which he applied the cupping glass to his flesh, and having allowed it to remain on for several minutes, he produced a small bottle containing spirits of wine, and hastily drawing off the cupping glass, threw the liquid upon the part, at the same time applying a light. In an instant the shoulder of the Koord was enveloped in a clear blue flame, which was fed by the Meerza continuing to sprinkle spirit over it. The effect of this manœuvre immediately became evident, and the Koord for an instant writhed in agony, and then broke silence with a yell, which from its shrillness and intensity, seemed to have been extracted from the marrow of his bones.(3)

The shriek was accompanied by the following words, " For mercy's sake stop, I am a Koord,

Karah Kaplan intends to attack the camp three days hence at sunrise."

As this confession escaped the sufferer's lips, the physician extinguished the fire, and turning to the Shah, exclaimed,

"Your majesty, I trust, is satisfied."

"You are a good servant," returned Fath Ali, "and shall be well rewarded; we must, however, pay attention to the words of this defiled wretch. O man," he continued, addressing the Koord, "what words are these, is your master so mad, as to attempt a chappow upon our camp?"

The intense anguish which had extracted the unwilling confession from the mouth of the Koord, had now subsided, and the man had again resumed his undaunted demeanour. Gazing on the Shah with a look of contempt, he observed in a determined though faint voice,

"Dog of a king, you are unworthy the name you bear; know that the words I just now ut-

tered are bash ! empty air ! torn from my lips by the anguish of the moment. Once more, I repeat, that I know not Karah Kaplan."

"What say you?" roared out the Shah, in an excess of fury ; "do you mean, merdiki, to deny your words."

"I do, despicable Kujur,"(4) answered the Koord. "Aye frown, curse, if you will, I care not, your tortures may extract words from my lips ; but those words will be mere lies. Exert your efforts, padersookhteh, I spit upon you and yours. Pah ! I have defiled your father's grave."

The countenance of the Shah became livid at these taunts, which were indeed uttered by the Koord, in order to provoke the wrath of Fath Ali to such a degree, as to cause the monarch to command his instant execution, and thus relieve him from the pain he was suffering ; nor was he in error, for Fath Ali unable to contain himself, roared out to his ferashes

to strike the prisoner's head from his shoulders. One of the men immediately drew forth his scimitar, and in the next instant the head of the gallant Koord rolled upon the ground, while the quivering trunk remained upright, being held to the pole by the cords with which the man had been bound.

The executioner had struck the death-blow with such force, that the black Khorasan blade had not only cut through the neck of the victim, but had penetrated deep into the pole, requiring much force to be used in order to extract it.

At the sight of the gory head and the gushing blood, the Shah's fury relaxed, and it became evident that he repented of the deed. This was perfectly true; as he had destroyed all hope of hearing more from the Koord. He did not, however, utter his thoughts aloud, but contented himself by commanding the ferashes

to clear away the blood, and remove the corpse. He then proceeded to consult with his ministers, concerning the short confession that had been extracted from the Koord, and finding most of them agreed in believing that those words were the truth, he at once asked what they considered the best mode of acting. The opinions of these noblemen were various; some counselling a sortie from the camp, in order to meet the Koordish chief on his approach, others advising that the camp should be fortified, and the sentinels doubled.

While they were thus debating, Fath Ali, turning to Feridoon, observed:

“ Young man; we have remarked good signs of wisdom in your acts; your head seems clear, and your brain in right order; what say you with respect to the intention of this Dewanah chief?”

“ The King of kings,” returned Feridoon, “ has commanded me, otherwise I should have

deemed it presumptuous in one so young as myself to speak in the presence of such wise men, who have been selected by the wisdom of the Shah to conduct the affairs of the kingdom. At the royal command, however, I open my mouth, with all humility, and give utterance to the poor thoughts that rise in my mind. There are some here, I believe, who treat the attempt of Allah Verdee Khan with contempt, and laugh at the very idea of a Koordish tribe daring to beat a *chappow*, even within twenty fursuks of the royal camp."

"Aye," replied an old Persian noble present, "you speak the truth. Among those persons who deride the attempt, number Zar Khan, who has lived too long, and seen too often what Iranees can do, to give a moment's heed to an attack upon a nest of wasps. Bah! let the Koords come. We would crush them as easily as we could crush the noxious insect in

a gloved hand ; we could trample them as scorpions under our feet. It is true, they have stings, but it is our own fault if we allow them an opportunity of using them. If we bind our hands, and sit down quietly in a corner, smoking our kaliauns, why then we might be annoyed by their buzzing ; but for a camp like that of the King of kings, to be disturbed, even for a moment, by such scum, is as possible to conceive, as the idea of a mule being able to force an Arab steed to exert itself in order to overcome it."

" Pardon me," returned Feridoon, respectfully, " pardon me, if I utter what may seem contradictory to your opinion. It is true, that while proper precautions are taken, any attempt to overcome this camp, must prove abortive. I have, however, been among the Koords. I have beheld the admirable discipline they are under, and I know their strength and prowess in the field. Their coming is sudden, as a

whirlwind can they sweep the plain and disappear, leaving behind them devastation and ruin, as the marks of their progress ; besides which, their numbers are by no means despicable.”

“ Well then,” observed Fath Ali, who had listened most attentively to the remarks of the young man, “ if such be the case, what counsel do you offer ?”

“ The words of the spy, who has paid the forfeit of his imprudence,” replied Feridoon, “ were that the Koords would attack the camp at sunrise, three days hence. It is evident, therefore, that they intend to take us by surprise ; to prevent such an occurrence, it were surely not unwise to send some artillery to the Dorkanee Pass, by which the Koords will pass on their way hither ; let the artillery be flanked by two regiments of tofinkchis, besides which, troops might be placed in ambush, all along the pass, even to the spot where the Cotall opens into the plain, where a strong force

of cavalry might remain in waiting, in order to charge the Koords, should they succeed in forcing their way so far."

"Barakillah!" cried the Shah, "what you advise shall be performed. By our musnud, this cursed chief shall rue the day on which he dared to attempt such a mad enterprise. What! does he imagine we are asses, that we shall remain inactive, twisting our thumbs, while he and his defiled band make a *chappow* into our very camp? and that we shall content ourselves by crying out Aman! while he laughs at our beards, and proclaims the Iranees a set of cowbeards? By Ali! by our honour, when such a time arrives, Fath Ali will deem it time he should cease to command the destinies of Iran."

"That day will never come," cried the Grand Vizier. "The sun may stop in its course, the moon may cease to shine, but never can the Lord of the Universe be otherwise than

what he is at present—the wisest monarch that ever sat upon the throne of Iran.”

“Ayb na daurad,”(5) replied Fath Ali, “you are a good servant, and well beloved by us; see, however, that the advice of Feridoon Khan be carried into execution; let every preparation be made for the reception of the Koordish marauders. Inshallah, it shall be no fault of ours, if one of the audacious band return to the shelter of his own tent.”

“Inshallah, Inshallah,” was the general cry; “ere long, the Koords shall know that the Iranees are men, and have a king whose eye is everywhere.”

The Shah’s spirits rose in proportion to the doses of flattery administered to him by the practised courtiers; and having bestowed great praises upon the young Eliaut, he dismissed the assembly, enjoining them to prepare every thing that could ensure a warm reception for Karah Kaplan.

CHAPTER XIII.

“ Who thundering comes on blackest steed,
With slackened bit and hoof of speed?
Beneath the clattering iron’s sound
The cavern’d echoes wake around
In lash for lash, and bound for bound.”

GIAOUR.

IT was about an hour after midnight, when the foremost horsemen belonging to the daring band of Koords, headed by their chieftain, Karah Kaplan, entered the narrow and intricate pass of Dorkanee, having so timed their journey, that they might arrive at the royal camp before sunrise, that being the hour when the watch kept by the Persians would, most probably, be slack. A bright moon lighted up the surrounding scenery, and enabled the

horsemen to pursue their way over the rough and rugged ground, along which lay their route. But five days had elapsed since their setting out, yet, notwithstanding the pace at which they had journeyed, and the distance they had passed over, and the short halts they had made, not a man or steed was there that did not appear fresh and unwearied, such was the admirable training of the animals, and the enduring powers and hardihood of the men ; the spirits of all were excited to intoxication as they approached the spot where they expected to put their daring enterprise into execution. As for Allah Verdee, though he rode along, to all appearance, calm and collected, as when on a hunting excursion, it must be confessed that his pulse beat hard, and his blood rushed quickly through his veins, as he reflected how short a time might intervene, ere he was seated on a royal musnud, receiving the homage due to a Shah. But a few fleeting hours hence,

and his plans might either be crowned with success, and the most gorgeous palace be deemed by him too small a receptacle for his glory ; or, on the contrary, a few square feet of ground might be all that was wanting to house him for ever ; and in the latter case, what was to become of his gallant and devoted followers, who would be as a body without a head or arms. Expelling, however, the latter gloomy idea from his mind, he kept his thoughts fixed upon the certainty of a successful issue. Already had he concocted a code of laws by which it was intended to raise the glory of Iran, already had he, in imagination, driven away the Muscovites from the territories of which they had despoiled the Persian ; already had the Turk, the Arab, and the Afghan trembled at his power, and made the most abject submission ; already did he behold his subjects calling down blessings on his head, and thanking Allah for his goodness in bestowing upon

them such a king. These and other glorious waking dreams, kept up the spirits of the Koordish chieftain, and caused his heart to pant with the desire of entering on action.

As the band proceeded, the path became so narrow, that but two horsemen could conveniently ride abreast, so that, in consequence, the force was lengthened out into a line of nearly half a fursuk long. The moonbeams playing upon the cuirasses and casques of the moving troopers, presented the appearance of the waters of a rippling stream. Notwithstanding the ruggedness of the path, they proceeded on at a fast amble, bidding fair to descend shortly upon the plain of Sultaneah.

At a brief space from the spot where the Dorkanee pass enters the plain, it widens and becomes a large flat dell, covered with luxuriant grass, and forming an admirable situation upon which to marshal into array a much larger band of men than the one at present described. It

was here where Karah Kaplan, being well conversant with the locale, intended to make a short halt ; and having collected his followers, in order, to proceed thence with all speed to the camp, which was at the distance of about two fursuks, and pounce upon the unsuspecting Iranees, as an eagle on a flock of sheep. The Koords had indeed arrived within a fursuk of this defile, and were proceeding at a pace which gave them every hope of soon coming to the end of the Cotall, when their attention was excited by a vivid flash which lighted up the dark recesses, where the moonbeams had not reached ; the flash was accompanied by a loud report, echoing from rock to rock, till the sound was gone. At the same instant, a man who was in the act of answering a question put to him by the chief, fell with a groan from his horse, and on Karah Kaplan turning round in astonishment, he perceived by the dim light that several saddles were empty, which had been

tenanted but a moment before, while their late occupiers lay stretched on the ground. Before he could utter a remark, a second flash was seen, and a second report was succeeded by the same issue, the vacating of saddles and overthrow of the riders, accompanied also by the fall of several of the animals themselves.

“By Ali!” cried the chieftain, as the truth struck upon his mind; “by Ali, we are betrayed; here is artillery posted to oppose our progress!”

Again did the cannon roar, and half a dozen of the band measured their lengths on the ground.

“Forward, my brave followers!” cried Karah Kaplan, in as collected a manner as possible, and suppressing all signs of vexation; “forward—these guns must be silenced!”

With these words, he stuck his heel to his horse’s flank, and dashed towards the spot from whence the deadly fire had issued, but

his progress was immediately arrested by the base of a precipitous rock, to scale which, would have proved most difficult, if not impossible of performance. Far above, he could distinguish moving objects, from the midst of which, at short intervals, darted forth the fire which was hurling destruction upon his followers. Turning to those who rode nearest to his person, Allah Verdee hastily exclaimed,

“Massooreh! Moorad! there is but one way of acting—bid the warriors push forward as fast as possible; this cursed cotall once passed, we are safe. O that I had wings to enable me to reach yonder artillery!”

The order was given to move on, which was obeyed, but with great loss to the Koords, who were harrassed not by the cannon only, which they had first encountered, but as they proceeded further, by other, and as great perils. Guns were planted at every turn of the road, which mowed down the Koords like grass,

while at the same time, it appeared that the passes were lined with riflemen, who were dealing dreadful destruction among the marauders. To retreat was now as difficult as to advance, for cannon which had been passed unobserved, had opened fire in the rear of the unhappy band, who were, to all appearance, completely hemmed in by concealed enemies.

Notwithstanding all these disadvantages, the courage and energy of Allah Verdee remained unshaken, while his presence of mind was perfectly undisturbed by the terrible situation in which he was placed. Most gallantly did he push on in the face of every peril, till he succeeded in reaching the defile where he intended to marshal his men into battle array ; but on arriving there, he discovered to his poignant grief, that it was already tenanted by a strong force of Persian cavalry, who were drawn out in readiness to meet him. This band was much inferior to that of the Koords

in every respect, except in numbers and position, but the latter was scattered and wearied, and many among those that remained of its original force were wounded, while the Persians were fresh, well drawn up, and not a single man hurt among them. However, by the admirable generalship of Allah Verdee, assisted by the unflinching bravery and prowess of Moorad, Thamasp, and others, the Koords were at length collected together on the level ground; but alas! they were miserably shorn of their numbers; and by the light of the dawn which began to break, Karah Kaplan beheld the hopelessness of his cause; still, with the resolution caused by despair, he used every effort to cut through the foes that opposed him. Terrible were the effects of his sabre, and that of the gigantic Moorad; side by side they fought like demons, a heap of slain marking their course. Nor did any of the Koords belie their reputation for courage,

for once united in a body, they dealt murderous havoc around, most truly demonstrating that, had not precautions been taken against them, how perfectly their attack upon the royal camp would have succeeded. They were, however, now only fighting in their own defence, with the intention of cutting their way through their foes, and having proceeded along the plain, to cross the mountains once more by another pass at some distance, and return with all speed in the direction of their own valleys. Moorad, acting under the orders of, and in concert with his chief, succeeded in gaining the open plain at the head of a large band, in spite of the efforts of the enemy. Well had this warrior sustained his name. It appeared, even to his own companions, that he was more than mortal. Wherever he approached, the foe gave way before him.

“It is Rustum !” was the general cry of the Persians. “Who else could perform such

deeds?—It is his spirit come again upon the world!”

And, indeed, that character so famed in fabulous history, need not have complained at the comparison, for the deeds of the bold Koord appeared scarcely human.

At length, Moorad gained his point, and succeeded in cutting his way through the enemy, accompanied by a third of his band. As they were retreating at full speed, the brave warrior gazed around him, expecting to behold his master at his side; but he was not in sight. The only chieftain of renown near being Thamasp Khan, whose bloody blade gave token of the manner it had been used. On his hastily inquiring of the old warrior where he had last beheld the Karah Kaplan, Moorad was answered by receiving the same question—where? A cold thrill ran through his veins. He had that day braved the cannon’s mouth, the balls and

sabres of his enemies ; he had passed through the most appalling dangers unmoved ; he had borne up against his disappointment at seeing the expedition upon which he had set his heart nipped in the bud ; but the love for his chieftain had sustained him. Now, on missing him, the presentiment came over his feelings that Allah Verdee had fallen. He had beheld him not long before, fighting like a lion ; but now, that the worst dangers were passed, he was no more visible.

“Khan !” he cried, “I survive not this day ! My chief has fallen ; I must back and revenge his death with the last drop of my blood ! By Mahomed ! some more of these cursed Iranees shall feel the weight of mine arm !”

“I will accompany you,” cried Thamasp, “what is life without Karah Kaplan ? It were better to live without a head.”

With these words he was on the point of

reining in his steed and stopping the Koords in their retreat, in order to turn and once more attack their foes.

Moorad however knew that success was impossible and that the charging upon the ranks of the Persians must end in the total destruction of the remnant of the powerful force that had left their native valleys with every hope of victory. Anxious therefore to preserve the few that remained, he cried out to Thamasp in answer :

“Nay, Khan! your presence will be necessary to lead the remnant of our followers to their native valleys; it were useless to sacrifice more of our countrymen for a hopeless object. Proceed, I entreat you, to the valley of Karah Kaplan with all speed, bid them elect another chief and to remember that their former one died as he had lived, gloriously, and that his foster brother Moorad could not survive him. Go Khan—no answer—adieu—I go to

join my master in Paradise—attempt not to follow me. Comrades—adieu !”

Having thus spoken, Moorad turned sharply round and before Thamasp could make any answer, was out of sight. The old man for a moment hesitated whether or not he should comply with the last injunction of Moorad, but on reflecting how useless to their fallen cause would prove any attempt at a rally, he bade the Koords under his command continue their retreat at full speed ; still it was with a painful effort that he so acted ; the words seemed to stick in his throat and choke him ; his heart was ready to burst at the loss of his friend Allah Verdee and the certain death that awaited the devoted Moorad, besides which he had to deplore the fall of his brother Massooreh, who had been struck down by a cannon ball at the beginning of the combat. Burning therefore with rage and thirsting for vengeance he almost felt a desire to rally the handful of Koords

under his command ; stifling however his own feelings with a remembrance of his duty, his determination became fixed, and he proceeded at full speed in the direction pointed out by Moorad, soon distancing with his band the pursuers through the superiority of the animals they bestrode. The Persians indeed soon gave up the chase, and by no means unwillingly, for the Koords, though in flight, caused much havoc on their enemy's ranks by occasionally wheeling round and striking down some of the foremost. Being no longer therefore harassed by the Iranees, Thamasp and his companions proceeded at a rapid though steady pace, till they entered the mountain pass which led by a circuitous route towards their native plains.

In the meanwhile Moorad having wheeled round and faced the enemy was about to sell his life as dearly as possible, when suddenly

he imagined that he beheld his master in the distance; this idea was immediately reduced to certainty, as he perceived Allah Verdee on a rising ground surrounded by some of his followers, defending himself on foot most valiantly, with his back placed to a rock, against an overpowering number of foes. A determination to get to his chieftain's side now animated the spirit of his foster-brother throwing a pooshteen(1) over his person in order to disguise himself as much as possible, he spurred his horse to its utmost speed and avoiding a direct meeting with any of his foes, he succeeded in reaching nearly the same level as Allah Verdee, being about twenty yards distant from him. A moment more and he had been at his master's side; when just as he had arrived at the very edge of the cliff, a chance shot struck his horse Murwari, which fell dead. In an instant, however, Moorad had extricated

himself and gained his feet, but his cloak having been displaced, his chain armour and dress betrayed his identity.

“ It is he ! it is he ! ” was the general cry, “ it is the Koordish lion that hath drunk so much Iranee blood to-day ; tear the wretch to pieces, kill, slay him ; ” but although many voices, particularly those in the rear, echoed words like these ; still those persons nearest the dismounted Koord did not seem to have sufficient partiality to their proximity to show any wish of decreasing it. They had seen the effects of the powerful arm of the gigantic man, they had beheld him dart unscathed through fire and steel, and though he was now alone, and unhorsed, all appeared afraid to attack him. It so happened also that the Iranees had expended all their ammunition, and no weapons of warfare remained to them but their sabres, otherwise a generally volley would soon have put an end to all suspense.

In the meanwhile Moorad had directed his gaze towards the spot where his master was fighting and the eyes of the chief and his foster-brother met ; it was but for a moment, but in that short space they had looked a bitter farewell to each other. Moorad being aware that all hope had fled, determined to sell his life as dearly as possible ; although on foot and opposed to mounted warriors, he had already spilt the blood of several of his antagonists, when there rose an universal cry of “ push him over the cliff, press upon him, he must go over.” This order was obeyed, about a score of Persians dismounting, placed their sabres before them, in the manner of spears and began to press the Koord slowly, but steadily to the edge of the precipice. Moorad now perceived his hour was come, he cast a last look at his master, and then concentrating his whole force into one powerful effort, he cried with a loud voice, “ Allah il lullah, va Maho-

meddan rasool illah,(2)” and dashed headlong upon his foes. With a blow of his sabre, he cleft a Persian to the chin, and then hurling the weapon from him, seized two of the nearest warriors by their throats and holding them in his gripe with irresistible force, dragged them along with him over the cliff, when all three falling together, were dashed to pieces.

CHAPTER XIV.

“ Is this our foeman’s face ?

Oh, no, no, no, it is mine only son !

Oh, boy, if any life be left in thee,

Throw up thine eye ; see, see, what showers arise,

Blown with the windy tempest of my heart,

Upon thy wounds, that kill mine eye and heart.

* * *

O boy, thy father gave thee life too soon,

And hath bereft thee of thy life too late !”

SHAKESPEARE.

KARAH KAPLAN had beheld the fall of his devoted follower with the deepest anguish, rendered the more intense by the impossibility of affording him any assistance, being himself hemmed in entirely by foes. About twenty

of his own adherents all of them unhorsed were still around him, fighting with the desperation of madmen; forming a solid and compact body round Allah Verdee they warded the blows aimed at him. One by one did these gallant heroes fall a sacrifice to the Persian sabres, each man as he fell crying out to his comrade to defend the chief to the last. Karah Kaplan boiling with rage at witnessing Moorad's fate, was anxious to rush into the midst of his foes, but was held back by his followers who swore, that as long as one of them remained alive, Allah Verdee should not fall. Dreadful was the slaughter committed by these desperate men, the death of one of whom cost the lives of at least three of their adversaries; but human valour must yield to numbers: one by one the Koords fell victims to their courage, until at length the chieftain found himself alone opposed to the infuriated Iranees. Still he was both unwounded and

unwearied, while his excellent chain armour was sabre proof. He wished not however for life; his expedition had failed, the flower of his tribe had been cut off, his friends had been slain, among the dearest and most devoted Moorad Beg was numbered, and he felt that to live now, would be to live, dishonoured and inglorious.

As the last of the Koords fell under their blows, the Persians raised a shout of triumph and the cry of "Victory, victory," ran through their ranks, while at the same time the following exclamation was heard "Karah Kaplan alone remains, make a prisoner of him, kill him not as you value your own lives."

This order evidently came from one possessed of authority; and Allah Verdee, turning his eyes towards the spot from whence it proceeded, perceived Feridoon approaching. At the sight of his rival, whom he instantly recognised, Allah Verdee felt a desire for life return.

“Never,” he said to himself, “shall the pader-sookteh be able to boast of subduing me.” At the same time the chieftain looked around; a heap of slain lay between him and his foes, impeding their progress; although all possessed fire-arms, their ammunition was entirely expended, so that from those implements he had nothing to fear. Behind him was the cliff, which once having ascended, he might, by exerting his utmost agility, proceed unharmed over the mountains. These thoughts flashed like lightning across his mind, and quick as lightning, they were acted upon. Trained from his earliest childhood to climb up the rockiest precipices like a cat, and to bound from point to point like a roe, where footing scarcely appeared possible, Karah Kaplan found no difficulty in ascending the cliff, before which he had remained at bay. A shrill cry followed the execution of his attempt. “He flies! he flies!”

was in the mouth of every one ; but ere his enemies could seize hold on him, he was out of their reach ; stones hurled by the exasperated Iranees, flew like hail after him, some of which reaching their goal, fell harmless from his chain armour. A few moments had scarcely elapsed, ere the active Koord was far above them ; at one time, hidden by a projecting rock—at another, appearing again from behind its shelter, in order to gain another point. Karah Kaplan, however, was not proceeding alone. Not far behind, and evidently gaining upon him, was Feridoon, whose youth, spent among the Alwend mountains, where he had tended his flocks, had taught him the agility of a goorkhur.

Almost as soon as Allah Verdee had commenced his flight, the young Eliaut had followed, and being unencumbered with chain armour, was fast approaching the retreating

foe. The Koordish chief, while looking back, perceived his pursuer, and anxious as he might have been, at any other time, for a rencontre with Feridoon, at present, such was far from being his desire. Piece by piece did he cast off his armour and other heavy incumbrances, in the hopes that being thus lightened, he might outstrip his rival; but it was of no avail, though every muscle was strained, and every effort used. The enemy came steadily on, until he was almost within grasp of the Koord, who exasperated to the utmost verge of madness, tore a rocky fragment from the earth, and hurled it at the Eliaut; it missed his aim, else Feridoon had met his fate upon the spot. Another moment, and the two adversaries were close together, so close, that they could not use their sabres. There was but a slight level where they stood, scarce large enough to hold a dozen men, and upon this did Allah Verdee

and Feridoon meet face to face. In an instant they were locked in each others arms, each straining to cast the other over the cliff.

While this race for life and death was going on, an anxious figure remained below, its eyes fixed upon the form of Feridoon, as if they were glued to it, and were forced to turn at the will of the ascending youth. Ismael, however, for it was he, was not idle during this time, for a small portion of ammunition happening to remain in his pouch, he was engaged in loading his rifle. At the moment his son and the Koord commenced their desperate struggle, he had thrust down the bullet, and bringing up the stock to his shoulder, he remained stationary, taking as true an aim as possible, at the person of Allah Verdee. But to draw the trigger was dangerous, as the two young men were so closely locked in their hostile embrace, that it would have been almost impossible to have

struck the one without wounding or killing the other.

The wrestling went on. For more than a minute did the combatants move neither hand or foot, so well were they matched; each was a perfect wrestler—each was desperate. At length, the strength of Feridoon began to give way; his late illness had weakened him too much for such a contest; he clenched his teeth, and attempted by his superior size and weight to bear down his enemy, it was in vain; he had become like a child in the hands of Allah Verdee, and in another instant, would have been hurled over the cliff, when Ismael, in an agony at beholding the result of the strife, commending his shot to the care of Providence, pulled the trigger; the rifle went off, and the ball striking Karah Kaplan full in the side, caused a dull heavy sound, like lead falling on water. The shot had struck him so palpably, that the Koord released his grasp

on the instant, and fell back upon the ground.

Feridoon had been so completely absorbed by his late perilous situation, that he had paid no attention to the report of the rifle; and on Allah Verdee's falling, he imagined that he had done so from exhaustion. In a moment, he had planted his knee upon the breast of the Koord, and placing his hand upon his throat, called out to him to yield. But Karah Kaplan heard him not; he was, to all appearance, dead. Feridoon, too, perceiving the blood flowing from the side of the wounded man, at once divined the cause; and at the same time, it occurred to him that a shot had been fired at the moment the chieftain had fallen; looking down the precipice, he perceived his father, holding the smoking rifle that had just sped the fatal ball.

Several Persian soldiers who had followed, though more slowly, the steps of the late com-

batants, now came up, and at the command of Feridoon, raised the body of Karah Kaplan, and prepared to descend with it.

“ Barakillah, Sahib,” cried one of the men, “ this has been no bad morning’s work. Inshallah, our faces will be white before the Shah.”

“ And Alhamdellillah,” cried another, “ the Khan will be exalted to the skies. Mashallah ! did you see how he wrestled with the dead padersookteh ; had it not been for him, the Koord would have escaped.”

“ Silence,” said Feridoon, “ reserve your flattery for him to whom it is due ; “ had it not been for my father, Ismael Khan, I should not have been alive to hear your fulsome words. Here zood, zood,(1) bear the body down, we must bear it as fast as possible to the camp.”

The men proceeded to obey the injunction in silence ; when, as they had descended nearly

to the spot where the great struggle had taken place, previously to the flight of Karah Kaplan, a groan burst from the lips of that chief. So hollow, so deep was the sound, that those who were carrying him, nearly dropped their burden from terror. Feridoon, however, had heard the groan and crying out, "He lives," bade them take the greater care of the wounded Koord. At length, they reached the spot where old Ismael was standing anxiously waiting his son's approach. In a moment the two were locked in each other's arms ; both experienced the most heartfelt joy, both felt gratitude, the one to his earthly, the other to his Heavenly father. Feridoon experienced all the fervour of love for a father, who had saved his life, and Ismael was imbued with the greatest reverence, and devotion for the Father above, who had directed so well the shot, that had been fired at such a hazardous moment.

As soon as the first transports consequent on the meeting had taken place, Feridoon observed, that as Karah Kaplan still breathed, it was their duty to do all in their power to save his life. In consequence, the chief was stripped of his upper garments, and on his cuirass being removed, it was discovered that the ball had lodged deeply in his side, the steel plate had however somewhat lessened the force of the bullet, or the wound had proved mortal on the spot; as it was indeed, there was no hope of life being saved. On water being sprinkled over his face, and his wound being bound up, Allah Verdee opened his eyes, and having for a few moments stared vacantly around, he became restored to consciousness. On perceiving his situation, a momentary flush tinged his pallid cheek, and he essayed to speak; but his parched tongue refused to give utterance to any sound; a leathern cup full of water, was

therefore held to his lips, which was drained with avidity. The action of drinking, however, drew back the folds of his perihan,(2) and the talisman,(3) which is always worn by Mahometans round their neck, became exposed.

Ismael's eyes glanced upon it, and in a moment every feature of his countenance was convulsed, every muscle trembled with agitation. He seized the charm, and gazing upon it earnestly, exclaimed in a hollow voice, "Man ! as you hope to enjoy paradise, tell me where you procured this talisman."

"It was my mother's," replied Allah Verdee faintly.

"How came it in her possession," ejaculated Ismael, "I beseech you to tell me."

"I know not," returned the dying man, "it was found upon her at the time of her death, just after she was taken prisoner."

“Taken prisoner,” cried the old Eliaut.
“When? how? where?”

“What is it to you?” answered Karah Kaplan. “However, as you are an old man, and appear interested, you must know that my mother was a Persian, so was my father; the latter was attacked and slain by Koords in the province of Hamadan. My mother and I, (then an infant) were borne away captives; she survived but a few hours; yon talisman was taken from her neck and placed on mine, I was carried to the tribe to which our captors belonged, the chief adopted me; at his death I succeeded him. You have my history.”

“Her name?” cried Ismael, in agony.
“Your mother’s name, what was it?”

“Ayesha!” said Allah Verdee, as he sank back, exhausted.

The above had been uttered in broken sentences; but every word went to the heart of the old man; he fixed his eyes stedfastly on

the features of the Koordish chieftain, and perceived or imagined he perceived, a resemblance to one whom he had long mourned. Ere however he could utter a word, much less move a limb, Karah Kaplan raised himself by a sudden effort to a sitting position, his glance rolled around; but it was no longer that of consciousness, for in a wild and delirious voice, he cried,

“Charge the dogs, kill all, spare them not. Here Moorad, Massooreh, strike as you are men. Curses light on the defiled swine, remember we are Koords. Victory! victory! they fly, by Mahomed, we are avenged.”

As these words were uttered, dreadful convulsions seized upon the speaker, he sprung up almost to his feet, and then fell dead to the ground.

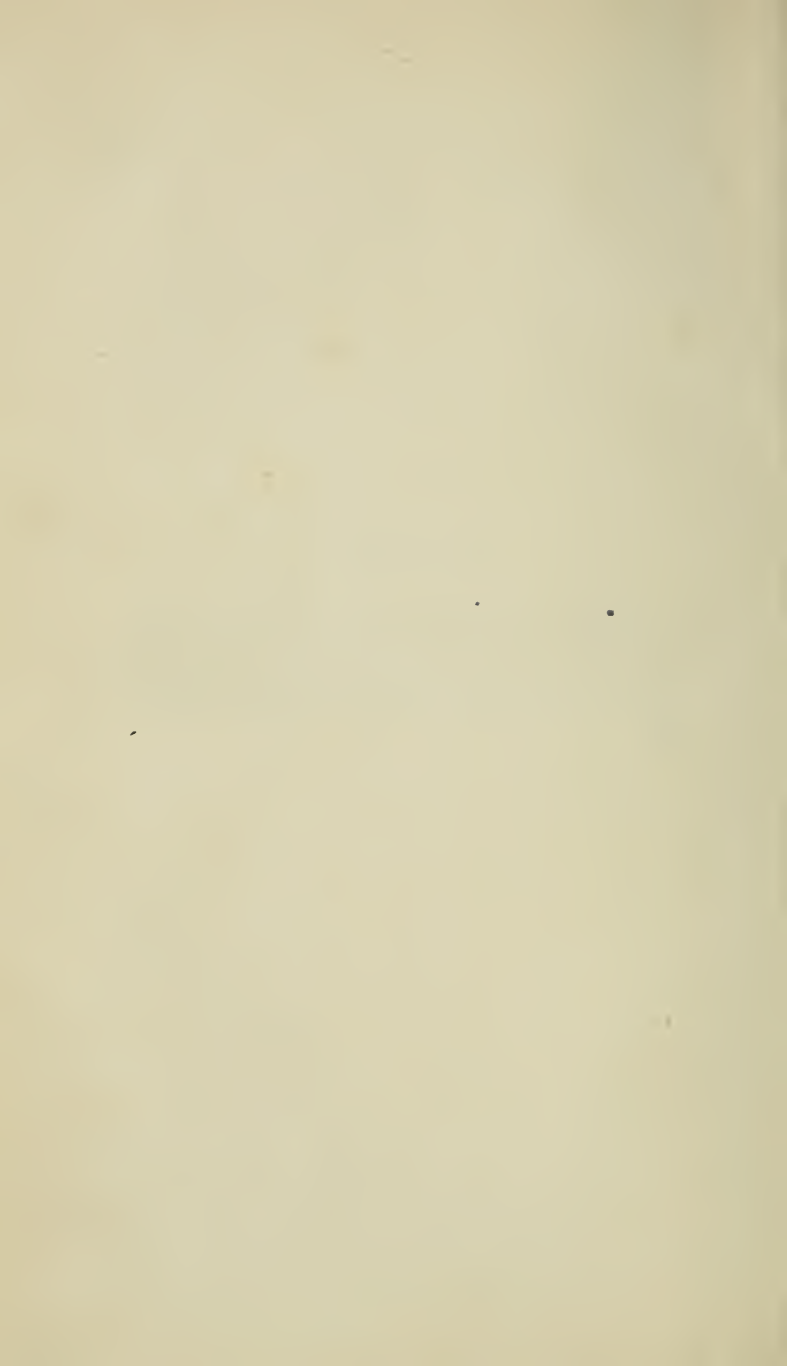
Ismael remained spell-bound as the last breath left the body of the Koordish chief. The hideous truth was too apparent; alas! the

shot fired by the old man had sent to his account the long lost, unforgotten, much lamented child of Ismael's first wife, Ayesha.

Allah Verdee had fallen by the hand of a
FATHER.

NOTES.

The reader, who may find himself at a loss to make out the meaning of the oriental words and expressions contained in this work, will, on consulting the notes of this, and the other volumes, receive the required explanation.



NOTES.

CHAPTER I.

(1) *The light hair and blue eyes, however, of this girl, proclaimed her of a different descent, or nation, than that of Persia.*

See Don Juan :—" Katinka was a Georgian, white and red ; with large blue eyes, a lovely hand and arm, and feet so small, they scarcely seemed to tread, but rather skim the earth."

(2) *Tiflis.*

Tiflis is the chief town of Georgia.

(3) *Azam.*

See vol. i.

(4) *I know well, that if I implored the aid of the Russian ambassador, at Teheran, and preferred my petition to him, he would use every effort to assist me.*

One of the conditions contained in the treaty, between Russia and Persia, at the conclusion of the last war, was that all Russian subjects, who had been taken prisoners by the Persians, and sold into slavery, should be immediately liberated. Many instances, however, occurred of female slaves being concealed by their masters, and being reported as dead.

(5) *I have spent the last three months in purchasing horses, and placing them at different stations on the road, between Hamadan and the frontiers of Georgia.*

The distance between Hamadan, and the banks of the Aras is about sixteen days' journey for a caravan, and about five for a courier.

CHAPTER II.

(1) *The first movement of the Meerza, was to place his hand to his girdle, where the dagger of a Persian usually hangs; but the place being occupied by a roll of paper, he rushed, etc.*

The court Meerzas, as a mark of distinguishing their office, wear in their girdle a roll of paper instead of a dagger. It must be observed that many soi-disant

Meerzas avail themselves of this privilege without having any legal right thereto.

(2) *Here, ferashes! throw the unclean swine into the tank.*

In front of almost every house in Persia, deserving of such a name, is a courtyard, in the centre of which is a large tank of water, from whence in general plays a fountain.

(3) *By degrees, the water was less agitated,—the bubbles rose singly—few and far between—then altogether subsided.*

The above is a true description of the death of a man discovered in the anderoon of a Persian of high rank, well known to the author.

(4) *Zarleb.*

Zarleb when literally translated, signifies golden lip, from *zar* gold, and *leb* a lip.

(5) *He then called his attendants, and commanded them to procure the fiercest cat they could find.*

The above punishment was really inflicted upon a female slave, by a Persian Khan, who himself informed the author of the circumstance.

CHAPTER III.

(1) *Soolimoniah*

“ Upon our arrival at Hamadan, we found a Turkish ambassador on his way from Bagdad to the Persian court, charged with a mission from the Porte, the object of which was to reclaim the money, property, cattle, etc. which had been carried away by the Persians, at the capture of Soolimoniah. Some idea may be formed of the national feeling of the Persians towards the Turks, by the treatment of their representative; a feeling which comprehends every sentiment that contempt, prejudice and hatred, can supply to a bigoted people. It is however, fully repaid by the Turk, who indulges freely in every execration against the Persian, that his ferocious spirit can suggest.”—*See Morier's Second Journey in Persia, etc.*

Soolimoniah is situated exactly on the boundaries of the Turkish frontier, and has frequently passed into the hands of the Persians. The Pasha of Soolimoniah, may be almost considered independent. Of late years, however he has acknowledged himself to be under the government of Turkey, and has paid a nominal tribute to the Sultan; the country under him is in the most law-

less condition, the inhabitants subsisting entirely by plunder.

(2) *Who certainly presented his subjects with the most numerous legitimate family, ever known to spring from one man.*

The author has only met with one man, who could repeat the names of all the sons of Fath Ali. This person was the chief of the Lookees, or buffoons in Tehran, and was called Lookee Ali Khan, which title was actually conferred upon him by Fath Ali Shah, to the indignation and horror of all the nobility of Persia. Lookee Ali Khan, was exceedingly fond of paying visits to the English residents at Tehran, and was not to be got rid of without the present of a gold toman, or ducat. If this was not given him, he would stay for hours, under the window of the person upon whom he had conferred the honour of a call, and remain bawling and roaring out the most obscene language, generally in abuse of the Russians. It is, however, justice to observe, that he used to divide the money thus received, among the poor. He was also generally considered to be half mad. The author has more than once had to pay the tax expected by this importunate person, in order to obtain peace and quietness.

CHAPTER IV.

(1) *Nummud.*

A kind of carpet made of felt; the best are manufactured at Hamadan.

(2) *Had tasted most plentifully of the stick.*

This is a fact, only the person bastinadoed was no other than Hadgee Meerza Agasee, the present prime minister of Persia. He had married a sister of Mahomed Shah, and having offended her one day, she quietly ordered his shelwars, (trousers,) to be taken down; when her kaneezes inflicted a most severe flagellation upon the back of the unfortunate husband, who was obliged to submit to it, on account of the rank of his wife.

CHAPTER V.

(1) *And to revenge some pretended injury received at the ruler's hands.*

See note 1, chapter iii, vol. iii.

(2) *Kasr.*

A name of reproach given by Mahometans to all who do not acknowledge their prophet.

(3) *Bachesm.*

Literally, on my eyes be it: meaning, what is commanded shall be performed.

(4) *Salaam Aleicum.*

An Arabic exclamation meaning, "peace be to you."

CHAPTER VII.

(1) *Goorgsifid.*

Literally a white wolf, from *goorg*, a wolf, and *sifid*, white.

CHAPTER VIII.

- (1) *Tell not the secret thoughts of thy brains to
Woman, lest she make them clear and visible
As the mid-day sun.*

FERDOUSI.

CHAPTER IX.

(1) *Yoodee.*

A Jew.

- (2) *Every member of the tribe does resemble me in
their readiness to lay down their lives.*

For an account of the fidelity and devotion, which the Koords bear their chiefs, see "Rich's Koordistan."

CHAPTER X.

(1) *Elchee.*

The ambassadors or envoys to and from foreign courts are called in Persia by the term of Elchee.

(2) *Enam.*

See notes to volume first.

(3) *Kasheesh.*

Kasheesh is the Persian name for a christian priest.

(4) *Why the Koords rode into the ranks of the Cossacks and mowed them down, as easily as the Rayat mows down the standing corn.*

A fact, which occurred in the course of the last Russian and Persian war. Had the Persian Infantry behaved with the same gallantry as their cavalry, the result of the war might have been very different.

CHAPTER XI.

(1) *Goromsog.*

Goromsog is one of the most opprobrious Persian terms that can possibly be made use of.

CHAPTER XII.

(1) *Goozoo*.

A hunchback—a deformed man—a cripple.

(2) *Hakim B shee*.

Chief physician.

(3) *Which from its shrillness and intensity, seemed to have been extracted from the very marrow of his bones.*

The author was informed by an eye witness, that the above torture was inflicted upon a Hindoo, by *English* officers in Hindostan, in order to make him speak. The man (who was a spy) had been found in their camp, and pretended to be dead. The torture caused by the burning spirits of wine, which was applied by an English surgeon, was so acute, that (although he had undergone various other torments without moving a muscle,) he jumped up in an agony of pain, and gave utterance to a yell, which the person who had related the story, said he could never forget, as it rang continually in his ears.

(4) *Kujur*.

The present king is of the tribe of Kujur.

(5) *Ayb na daurad.*

There is no harm in it, literally "it has not harm," from *Ayb* vice, *na*, not, and *daurad*, has.

CHAPTER XIII.

(1) *Pooshteen.*

A very large cloak.

(2) *Allah illullah, va Mahomedan rasool illah.*

The Mahometan profession of faith meaning, "God is God, and Mahomed is the prophet of God."

CHAPTER XIV.

(2) *Zood, Zood.*

Quick! Quick.

(2) *Perihan.*

The linen shirt worn by orientals is so called in Persian.

(3) *And the talisman which is always worn by Mahometans round their neck, etc.*

I have invariably observed that every Mahometan wears round his neck, next to the skin, a square packet, sometimes much ornamented on the outside, at others of

very simple manufacture. It hangs over the breast, being suspended round the neck by a silken string. It is considered as a preservative against the evil eye, and the interior consists of some verse or verses taken from the Koran.

THE END.

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