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THE ORIENTAL ANNUAL.

BY THE REV. HOBART CAUNTER, B.D.

With 22 Illustrations by W. DANIELL, Esq. R.A.

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THE
ROMANCE OF HISTORY.

India.

BY THE REV. HOBART CAUNTER, B.D.

“ Truth is strange,
Stranger than fiction.”

LORD BYRON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
EDWARD CHURTON, HOLLES STREET.

1836.

ROMANCE OF HISTORY

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BY THE REV. THEODORE MARTIN, D.D.

NEW EDITION, REVISED BY THE AUTHOR

THE HISTORY OF THE

ROMANCE OF HISTORY

OF THE

ROMANCE OF HISTORY

Vol. I

1870

LONDON :
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Dorset Street, Fleet Street.

TO

DR. WILLIAM BEATTIE, M.D.

THE FOLLOWING VOLUMES

ARE DEDICATED,

BY HIS VERY SINCERE FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

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P R E F A C E.

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

This being a portion of history with which the general reader is less familiar than with that em-

braced in the preceding series of this work, the choice has been made under the impression that it may lead to a more extended reading of those annals which contain some of the most interesting facts to be found in the records of ages.

But while I feel that the subject is an important one, I have not been insensible to the difficulties with which it is encompassed ; and in proportion to the success of those volumes already before the public, has my consciousness of these difficulties been raised : for, feeling that I have had greater impediments to success to overcome, I cannot but be less sanguine in the expectation that I have realized what has been so well done by my predecessors in a similar field.

Romantic as are many of the events which the Mahomedan annals supply, they are nevertheless all of one tone and colouring. They want the delightful blendings and tintings of social circumstances. Their princes were despots, their nobles warriors, their governments tyrannies, and their

people slaves. The lives of their most eminent men, who were distinguished chiefly for their deeds in arms, present little else than a series of battles. Their principal amusement was the chase, in which similar perils to those presented in war were courted for the stern glory which followed desperate achievements.

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

the human race, are no longer objects either for the rich colouring of romance, or the graver delineations of moral narrative.

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

36, Somerset Street, Portman Square,

Dec. 12, 1835.

Historical Summary.

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

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

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

Jeipal, a powerful prince of India, of the Brahmin

A. D. 977. caste, raised a numerous body of troops to oppose the Mahomedans, and brought together a great number of elephants, with a design to attack them in their own country ; but the king of Ghizny, sending an army to oppose the Indian chief, the hostile forces came in sight of each other on the confines of Lumghan. Here some smart skirmishing ensued, and Mahmood, the son of Subooktugeen, afterwards celebrated as the conqueror of India, though then but a boy, gave proofs of that valour and conduct which so eminently distinguished his future life.

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

Jeipal, on reaching his capital, refused to fulfil the conditions, and Subooktugeen again marched his forces towards Lahore. The Indian general advanced to meet and give him battle. The Hindoos were everywhere defeated, and pursued with prodigious slaughter to the banks of the Neelab. By this victory the conqueror acquired immense wealth, and a considerable accession of territory, causing himself to be acknowledged king over the conquered country, and appointing one of his officers with ten thousand horse to the government of Pishawur.

About this time died Munsoor, king of Bokhara ; he was succeeded by his son Nooh, against whom a formidable rebellion was raised by a chief named Faik. Nooh having formed an alliance with the king of Ghizny, the rebel was attacked and defeated by the latter, for which signal service the sovereign of Bokhara con-

ferred upon Subooktugeen the title of Nasir-ood-Deen, Hero of the Faith ; and upon his son Mahmood that of Syf-ood-Dowla, Sword of the State. A. D. 977.

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

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

The Traveller's Dream.

The Traveller's Dream.

CHAPTER I.

IN the forests of Candahar, a solitary traveller was pursuing his way. Overcome by the heat of noon he sat down on the margin of a small stream that gurgled through the thick underwood, allowing his horse to crop the fresh herbage upon its banks. The scene around him was gloomy but imposing. So thick was the growth of the jungle that the sun's rays could not penetrate, except here and there, where patches had been cleared by the charcoal-burners or for purposes of fuel; and these were comparatively few. Some of the trees were of a growth so stupendous as to impart a character of sublimity to the whole aspect of the forest. Many of them reached the prodigious height of a hundred and thirty feet, presenting a straight branchless stem, which rose like a colossal pillar from the ground to the altitude of twenty yards

without a single branch or even a sprout upon its surface. Under the vast leafy canopy which spread out above it, the wild elephant frequently reposed, and seemed, by comparison with the stately growth beside which it rested, but as some ordinary animal.

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

The stranger was impressed by the somewhat painful novelty of his situation, and solemn thoughts were awakened in his heart. He sat calmly gazing upon the brook as it bubbled before him, when his attention was suddenly roused by a crashing of the bushes, immediately accompanied by a loud roar, and in another moment his horse was prostrated by the paw of a huge lion. The traveller started from his seat, drew his sword, and coming behind the

ferocious visiter, cut the sinews of its hind leg, and before the animal could turn, repeated the stroke on the other, and thus completely disabled it. The savage instantly relinquished its prey, but so tremendous had been the stroke of its paw and the succeeding laceration so extensive, that the poor horse rolled upon the streamlet's bank in the agonies of death. The lion roared with appalling fury—its eyes glared—its mane bristled—but it was unable to resent the injury it had received. It dragged itself forward upon its fore-legs with a vain endeavour to retaliate. Its vanquisher approached fearlessly, struck it across the skull with his sword, and, repeating the stroke, laid it dead at his feet.

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

Strapping to his shoulders a kind of wallet which had been fastened to his saddle, he commenced threading the thicket. His journey was long and arduous, but on emerging into an open space, he saw a doe grazing with her fawn. The latter had just been born, and the traveller coming

suddenly upon them, secured the little one, while the affrighted dam fled in terror. Pleased with his capture, he bound the fawn's legs, and placing it under his arm, proceeded on his way.

He now quitted the cleared space, and plunged again into the jungle, satisfied at having procured something to relieve his hunger, should he be obliged to pass the night in the forest. When he had at length reached a convenient spot where he might prepare a meal, he placed the fawn beside the trunk of a blasted tree, and having kindled a fire by the friction of two dry pieces of wood, he was about to sacrifice the little animal, but perceiving the mother at a short distance gazing upon him with an expression of the deepest distress, he paused. The tears rolled down her cheeks—her head was raised, and her eyes intently fixed upon the stranger's countenance. They next turned upon her innocent offspring that lay bound at the root of the tree, unconscious of its danger, but still yearning for its parent. She gradually advanced within a few yards of the spot on which the traveller stood. He retired several paces; the anxious dam immediately sprang towards its young, lay down by it, and caressed it with an intelligible joy. On the traveller's approach she quitted her fawn with a

bound of terror, but still retreated only a few yards, manifesting the strongest symptoms of maternal suffering.

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

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

The release of the fawn had softened the stran-

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

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

The traveller having collected some dried leaves strewed them under the broad foliage of a tree, the branches of which formed a thick canopy within six feet of the ground, and casting himself upon this easy woodland couch, courted that slumber

which his fatigue had rendered welcome. His reflections were peaceful. He reverted to the occurrences of the day, and though the loss of his steed was a subject of uneasy recollection, yet it was more than countervailed by the happy remembrance of that little episode in the brief chronicle of his life, which he never afterwards reverted to without satisfaction—the restoration of the fawn to its bereaved dam.

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

and the kingdom of Ghizny is assigned to you in this world as your reward. Let not your power, however, undermine your virtue, but continue through life to exercise that benevolence towards man which you have done this day towards the brute." Having uttered these words, the celestial messenger disappeared, and the stranger awoke.

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

The dews fell heavily, and a thin silvery mist began to rise and invest every object with an ashy tint, as the moon gradually faded in its far descent behind the distant hills. The grey dawn at length broke slowly over the plain, but was not perceptible to the traveller's eye until the valleys were flooded with the young dewy light. The mist had thickened. The leaves of the trees dripped with their liquid burthen, and every spot that was not protected by a mantle of thick foliage, presented a bloom of moisture from the atmosphere,

that seemed tinted with hues from fairy-land. Each blade of grass curved under its watery load, bending its delicate neck as if proud to bear the pure deposit of the skies. Everything was clothed in the same soft drapery, which was shaken off by the morning breeze, when each object resumed its natural variety of hue, and harmonious conformity of light and shadow.

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

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

As he pursued his solitary way through paths to which he was a perfect stranger, he could not help recalling the vision which had haunted

his sleep. It had come so vividly before him that he more than half persuaded himself it must have been intended to be a direct revelation from Heaven — and yet, that a man without a name, without a home, a stranger in the land, should become the monarch of a powerful empire, seemed one of those impossibilities only to be dreamed of, but never realised.

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

CHAPTER II.

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

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

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

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

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

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

“ Then I am in the presence of robbers ?”

“ Ay !—and what then ?”

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

The robber laughed ; and, turning to his comrades, said — “ Here's a fellow that won't be plucked without fluttering ; we must try blows to bring down the game, if he chooses to be deaf to persuasion. Come,” said he, turning to the traveller, “ get rid of that unsightly hump upon your shoulders, and show how straight a man you are when you stand upright, without an incumbrance.”

“ Life,” replied the traveller, “ is only to be

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

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

The robbers paused, surprised at the determination to oppose himself against such palpable odds ; but, in order to prove how the hero had miscalculated his chances, one of the men discharged an arrow, and transfixed his sword-arm, pinning it to the tree. The traveller immediately snapped off the shaft, and raised his arm to strike, but it fell powerless beside him. He was instantly overpowered and disarmed ; but, upon examining the contents of his load, great was the disappointment of the bandits. They scattered its contents upon the ground, deriding the stranger's risk of his life for property so valueless.

"Well," said the robber who had already spoken, "as he keeps no purse, we must make one out of

him. His limbs are of the right mould, and your purchasers of slaves will give something for a sturdy labourer. We'll bid you good-bye when we can provide you a master who knows how to pay for being furnished with a brawny pair of shoulders, that he may lay his own load upon, without carrying them under his own head. Come along; you shall rest quietly till that awkward puncture in your arm is healed, and then you shall be shown the way to the next hamlet."

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

As there was no spare dwelling for the stranger, one was immediately constructed by a couple of the robbers, and completed in about two hours. It consisted of a few slight bamboos, driven into the ground at intervals of a foot, under the

foliage of a low tree, which formed the roof. These bamboos were crossed with smaller canes, and the interstices filled with broad leaves and dried grass: the turf being cleared from within, the habitation was complete.

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

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

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

“We’ll run the risk; a brave man never can discredit his courage, and to skulk in the track of

treachery is the choice only of cowards. We'll trust you."

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

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

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

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

disposable commodity, and get something for our trouble and care of you."

The stranger now proceeded with his captors, and, after a march of some hours, they reached a village bordering upon the forest. It consisted of a few miserable huts, and its inhabitants were of the lowest class. Shortly after their arrival, a merchant made his appearance, who purchased the prisoner from the robbers; and he was left with a stranger in the new and unenviable character of a slave. This was anything but a realization of his dream; it however satisfied him, if he harboured a different conviction before, that dreams are the mere fantastic creations of an excited brain, and he felt ashamed of having allowed so flimsy an illusion to obtain one moment's influence over his mind.

There was nothing to be gained by despondency, and he resolved to submit to his destiny, with a secret trust in God, and a determination to direct the tenor of his life according to the pure suggestions of a rigid and inflexible conscience. So soon as he had become the merchant's property, the latter examined his wound, and, having carefully dressed it, as carefully felt his chest and limbs, in order to form some idea of the

texture of his muscles. This preliminary settled, he expressed himself well satisfied with his purchase. The merchant was a little shrivelled man, with a light brown complexion, exhibiting a dull ochreous tinge, as if in him the whole biliary structure were placed in his head. He had a thin straggling beard, so scattered over the corrugated surface of his sharp-pointed chin, as to give him the appearance of a senile hag, rather than that of a venerable slave-dealer. He was accompanied by several athletic attendants, who amply made up in bone and sinew for the deficiency of their master in both particulars.

Having asked his new slave a few questions, respecting his former habits of life, and thus ascertained that he had been accustomed to those hardy exploits likely to have inured his body to endurance, calculating that he should make a handsome profit by his bargain, the thrifty chafferer ordered him to be carefully attended to. After a day's rest at the village, the merchant directed his route towards Khorassan, whither they arrived, after a laborious journey. The slave was lodged at the house of his purchaser, who fed him well, and used him with sufficient kindness, in order to bring him into the best possible condition for sale.

He took care to have it rumoured that he had a stout handsome fellow to dispose of, such as could not be matched in all Persia ; in consequence, many persons, willing to purchase, came to see the marvel ; but, finding that the description was not exactly borne out by the reality, and the sum demanded being more than they could afford, or were willing to pay, they declined entering upon a bargain.

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

determined to raise his demand in proportion. With a portentous smile quivering upon his features, he approached the object of his anticipated gain, and said—

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

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

“Are you willing to pay for it?”

“How?”

“In money.”

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER III.

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

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

tan, formed connexions among the people, and his descendants have become Toorks. I am now a Toork.

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

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

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

What a singular change had come over the destiny of the stranger within the lapse of a few years! The bondsman, who had bent the knee to

his superiors, was now bowed to as a great and glorious being. He was the favourite of the Governor of Khorassan; he directed his master's councils, commanded his armies, and was the oracle of his cabinet. He was constantly with the Governor, and nothing of moment was undertaken without his advice. He was now the happiest of the happy. Beloved by his ruler, the idol of all subjected to his control, the terror of those neighbouring potentates, who were hostile to the government of his kind patron—he had scarcely a wish to gratify, and he felt that the clouds which had hung upon the dawn of his career had rendered the succeeding brightness only more vivid and joyous.

Aluptugeen had a beautiful daughter, whose affections were courted by the most powerful nobles of Khorassan; but she continued deaf to their advances. She was a woman of rare endowments, and therefore an object naturally coveted by such as thought themselves in a condition to woo her. She was not to be won. Many, with whom her father would have gladly sought an alliance, were rejected, and the beautiful Zahira remained unwedded. Her coldness was the universal topic of expressed surprise; still she listened not to the

voice of the wooer. She was her father's only child; and he felt naturally anxious, through her, to perpetuate his race: the disappointment, therefore, saddened him. But there appeared no remedy, as he did not choose to interfere with the antipathies or predilections of a beloved daughter.

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

It was impossible they should frequently meet, without that optical revelation which is invariably made where two hearts throb in unison; and when he was satisfied, by the eloquent exchange of a

certain tenderness not to be mistaken, which the eye so legibly communicates when it is really and evidently felt, that his passion for the lovely daughter of Aluptugeen was returned in full force, he no longer hesitated to declare his passion, which declaration was received with an approbation that excited him to a perfect delirium of joy.

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

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

“Lady, I pretend to no virtue, beyond those of

the nobles who compose the brilliant assemblage of your father's court. There is, that I know of, but one main difference between us ; they have inherited rank and opulence—it came to them without effort ; mine, though descended from a line of kings, has been obtained with the point of my sword.”

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

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

On that very day, the Ameer-ool-Omrah sought an audience with Aluptugeen, and declared his passion for the daughter of that prince. The Governor expressed no surprise, but said, “You know Zahira is my only child—a sweet blossom, that now for

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

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

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

The marriage was almost immediately solemnized with great pomp and splendor ; and though some of the rejected nobles looked with envy upon the happy bridegroom, it was nevertheless an

event that diffused joy throughout the whole district of Khorassan. Shortly after this union, on the death of Abdool Mullik Samany, who reigned over Transoxania, the nobles sent a deputation to consult Aluptugeen regarding a successor. The dynasty of Samany was very powerful. Its power extended over Khwaruzm, Marvur-ool-Nehr, Jourjan, Khorassan, Seewustan, and Ghizny. The kings held their court at Bokhara. When the deputation arrived from Bokhara, Aluptugeen hesitated not to express his opposition to the accession of Prince Munsoor on the plea of his being too young, recommending that his uncle should for the present assume the reins of government.

Before this answer reached the capital, a party had placed Munsoor upon the throne; consequently, when the young king sent a summons for Aluptugeen to show himself at court, the latter, apprehensive that mischief was intended, made excuses, and did not appear. In the year of the Hegira 351, and 962 of our era, Aluptugeen raised the standard of rebellion and marched to Ghizny, which was subdued by the bravery and conduct of his son-in-law, and there established an independent power.

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

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

Aboo-Isaac survived this event but a short period, when the husband of Zahira was unanimously acknowledged King of Ghizny by the chiefs and nobles. Thus was the dream ful-

filled—the quondam slave became a powerful sovereign, and was no less a man than the celebrated Subooktugeen, father of the still more celebrated Mahmood Ghiznevy, who may be termed the first Mahomedan conqueror of India.

Historical Summary.

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

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

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

- A. D. Heg. 392. Mahmood again marched into Seestan
1003. and brought Khuluf the governor, prisoner to Ghizny.
1004. Heg. 395. Rajah Beejy Ray, governor of Bhateea, having refused to pay tribute to Anundpal, the son of Jeipal, on whom he was dependent, Mahmood took Bhateea by assault ; two hundred and eighty elephants, numerous slaves and other valuable spoils were obtained in the town, which the conqueror annexed, with all its dependencies, to his own dominions.
1005. Heg. 396. Elik Khan, king of Kashgar, and father-in-law of Mahmood, invaded the latter's territory. Mahmood was returning from the siege of Moultan when the news reached him. He immediately hastened to meet the invader, and a desperate battle was fought near Bulkh, in which the king of Kashgar was entirely defeated. This year the king of Ghizny likewise defeated Sewukpal, who had thrown off his allegiance, and made him prisoner. The rebel was compelled to pay four hundred thousand dirhems, about eight thousand three hundred pounds sterling.
1008. Heg. 399. Mahmood made himself master of the fort of Bheem. There, on account of its vast strength, the Hindoos had deposited the treasure consecrated to their idols, so that the booty obtained by the conqueror was prodigious ; the specie alone, independent of plate, bullion, and jewels, is said to have amounted to upwards of three hundred and thirteen thousand pounds sterling.
1010. Heg. 401. Mahmood defeated the prince of Ghoor, and annexed his country to the dominions of Ghizny.
1011. Heg. 402. Mahmood reduced Tahnesur, a holy city of the Hindoos, about thirty miles west of Delhi, which he plundered, broke the idols, and sent the

principal idol Jugsoma, to Ghizny, to be trodden under- A. D.
foot. A ruby is said to have been found in one of the 1011.
temples weighing four hundred and fifty miskals ; a
size altogether incredible.

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

Heg. 406. Abool Abass Mamoon, king of Khwar- 1015.
uzm, obtained Mahmood's sister in marriage.

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

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

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

Heg. 412. Mahmood defeated Nunda Ray, who had 1021.

- A. D. 1021. slain his ally the Rajah of Canowj, securing considerable treasure, besides four hundred and eighty elephants. His general also reduced Nardein, in which was a famous temple containing a stone with curious inscriptions, and, according to the Hindoo traditions, forty thousand years old.
1024. Heg. 415. Mahmood marched to Somnat, which he finally took, and destroyed the celebrated Idol, in the belly of which was discovered a quantity of diamonds, rubies, and pearls of immense value. Among the spoils of the temple was a chain of gold weighing two hundred mauns, or about four hundred pounds weight. It hung from the top of the building by a ring and supported a great bell, which called the people to worship.
1026. Heg. 417. Mahmood returned to Ghizny after an absence of two years and six months. This year he marched against the Juts, destroyed four thousand, and according to some eight thousand, boats. Few of the Juts escaped destruction : those who did, fell into the hands of the conqueror.
1027. Heg. 418. Mahmood died at Ghizny in the sixty-third year of his age. He reigned thirty-five years, and was buried by torch-light with great pomp and solemnity in the Kesr Firozy at Ghizny. This celebrated monarch was in person about the middle size, but well made, and strongly marked with the small-pox. His son Mahomed succeeded to the throne.

The Idol of Somnat.

The Idol of Somnat.

CHAPTER I.

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

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

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

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

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

Here, as I have already said, according to her invariable practice, about the period of sunrise, a beautiful young Hindoo mother was performing those lustrations imposed by her religion, and which, apart from any spiritual consideration, are indispensable in a tropical region. The beach sloped gradually into the sea, in which she stood up to the shoulders, her long black hair streaming like a silken fringe upon the rippling waters. Her eyes were frequently bent downward, as if in reverential abstraction, after which she would raise them to the clear blue sky, rich with the pure tints of heaven, and brightened by the fresh genial radiance of the morning sun. She was only dawn-

ing into womanhood though a mother, her age not being yet sixteen. Her child was lying on the beach wrapped in a small coverlet, and basking in the young sunlight. The babe was but a few weeks old, and the youthful mother felt for it all the yearning of a parent for her first child. She looked at it occasionally from the place where she stood, draining the water from her streaming tresses, and cleaning them with a care that showed a consciousness of their beauty, and her eye glistened with a parent's pride as she gazed upon the earliest fruit of her wedded love.

The infant was laid upon the dry soft sand, a few yards above where the water reached at high tide. Several other women were at this moment bathing at some short distance from the young mother, who now quitted the water, having first carefully arrayed her hair, and in a short time was wrapped in that loose becoming drapery which sets off to such advantage the slender, but round and graceful forms of the Hindoo women. Her bust was enclosed in a vest of bright crimson silk, fitted closely to the shape, and covering the arm midway from the shoulder to the elbow. A long piece of fine muslin encircled her head, falling over her neck and shoulders behind, and passing the lower

parts of the body in a variety of elegant undulating folds peculiar to the taste of oriental beauties. Standing a few yards from her babe, she arranged her dress with a neatness and precision which sufficiently indicated a consciousness of the becoming. She had just completed this necessary arrangement of her toilet, and was about to turn towards her tender offspring to proceed homeward, when a wolf darted from the neighbouring thicket, seized the unconscious infant, and was retiring with all speed towards the wood. The distracted mother gazed for an instant in speechless agony, but quickly recovering herself, she sprang after the beast with the swiftness of an antelope, screaming the while with an energy that made the forest re-echo her cries.

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

aspiration for the bereavement of the young mother rise to their lips.

The wolf had nearly reached the thicket with its prey, and the wretched parent was about to yield herself up to the wild impulse of despair, when a horseman emerged from a path in the wood, and seeing the distress of a young and beautiful woman, the cause of which became instantly evident, he urged his steed forward, and reaching the wolf before it had time to enter the jungle, struck it on the back with his sword. The blow was given from so sinewy an arm as almost to sever the brute in twain. It immediately dropped its prey, writhed for a few moments and died. The eager mother threw herself frantically on the body of her first-born, and began to bewail its untimely fate with piercing shrieks of loud and bitter agony. Supposing that it was dead, she clasped it to her bosom and called upon her idol to restore the joy of her life ; but the stone divinity, dumb and insensible as the earth on which she had prostrated herself, heard not her lamentable cry. The huge image of Somnat, adored by millions of enthusiasts, and enriched by the perpetual offerings of wealthy devotees, standing within the walls of a gorgeous temple, which

might have vied with the proudest palaces of Egypt's kings in the brightest days of their renown, heard not the tender supplications of one of its devoted adorers, but stood in its grim majesty inaccessible to the appeal which might have melted any stone that had not been employed to fashion a divinity.

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

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

By this time the stranger, beneath whose sword the wolf had died, stood near, apparently enjoying the rapture of the young Hindoo. For a few moments he left her to the feelings in which her

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

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

“I am happy,” said the stranger, “in having been the instrument of preserving your infant from the ravening wolf. Though our creeds differ they ought at least to concur in the natural law of reciprocal benefaction. I rejoice to have saved the

child of one who has been taught to look upon me, and those who profess a similar faith, as fit to hold intercourse only with the scum and off-scouring of human society, and trust that while such an act offers an appeal to your gratitude, it will convey a lesson of wisdom. I would that you should not only look upon me as the saviour of your babe, but put me on the footing in social dignity with those of your own belief in matters concerning the life which is to succeed the present, and think not that all virtue expires when not fostered by the warm atmosphere of Hindoo superstition."

"Stranger," replied the mother, looking tenderly upon her child, now drawing from her the maternal nutriment, "I cannot gaze upon this dear object without being sensible that, apart from all prejudices raised by those conventional laws which different creeds impose, I am your debtor for the greatest enjoyment which this world can realize. You have restored the infant to its longing mother, and whatever the restraint by which I may be repelled from welcoming the saviour of my child with those outward expressions of acknowledgment which I might be permitted to show to a member of my own faith, believe me I shall never forget that the greatest debt of my life

is due to one who is considered the enemy of my country's gods, but whom I have found to be the most signal and magnanimous of friends."

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER II.

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

The Hindoo father was a young man of about

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

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

“The vengeance of Siva will be directed against this house for the folly of a woman. The god of Somnat has seen the pollution offered to the offspring of one of his worshippers. Take heed that the fiery gleam of his eye does not blast thee, when thou next offerest thy oblations at his holy shrine.”

The youthful mother raised her head; the long lashes that fringed her soft but intensely bright eyes were moistened with the dew of sadness. It gathered gradually, until the weight of the liquid gem was too great a burden for the trembling lashes to support, and then trickled slowly down her clear brown cheek. She uttered not a word, but clasped her babe with greater fervour to her bosom. The husband saw her emotion, and was moved; nevertheless, he bade her quit the apartment and leave him to his repose, which, alas! came not, for the excitement had only aggravated his malady. He was scorched with fever; and, in the course of that night, his peril was imminent. The tender partner of his home and of his love did not quit his side for a moment. She saw his danger; and the gloomy thought of her own death came with the chill of a night-blast upon her soul. The awful customs of her tribe forbade that she should outlive him; and the horrible man-

ner in which her death would be consummated seemed to freeze the very fountain of life as she thought upon it. To be cut off by the appalling process of cremation, ere the sweet fragrant blossom of existence had fairly opened into womanhood, was a sad and bitter thought. Still, the sufferings of the man she loved recalled her from these sad reflections, and she gazed upon him with an interest in which, for the moment, all her prospective sufferings were absorbed. He spoke not, but the thought of that contamination, which he supposed to have passed upon his child by the contact of one of another creed, evidently remained the paramount impression on his mind ; for, when the mother presented him her infant for a paternal caress, he turned from it with a shudder, and refused to allow it to be brought into his presence.

Hour after hour the tender consort watched by his side, submitting without a murmur, or even a look of dissatisfaction, to the petulance induced by his disease. She watched him, as he lay upon his rug—anticipated his wishes—soothed his sufferings—prepared whatever he took with her own hand—but all her attentions seemed likely to be bestowed in vain. The full, rapidly-throbbing pulse, the burning brow, the dry palm, and the

brown furred tongue, upon which the cool liquid was evaporated the moment it came in contact with it, all proclaimed the jeopardy in which the invalid lay.

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

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

This was no very encouraging expectation. The unhappy young creature now felt assured that her husband could not live, unless restored by superhuman means. The creed in which she had

been reared taught her to trust in the efficacy of such means, and to believe that they would be accorded to a pious solicitation; she was therefore determined to offer her supplications in the temple, in the hope of averting her husband's death, which, in fact, would involve her own. At this moment a Brahmin, and one of the officiating priests of the sanctuary, entered the sick man's apartment. He was a sanctified man, with a gross misshapen body, gross from indolence and indulgence, and bearing about him the unequivocal marks of the coarse bloated Sybarite. His shorn scalp bore not indeed the frost of age, but the deep corrugations by which the forehead was crossed showed, in characters too legible to need interpretation, that time had already prepared the furrows for the seeds of death. The old man's countenance was haggard, though placid; but it was placid rather from insensibility, than from the access of elevated feeling. The eye was sunk beneath a projecting brow, that hid much of its expression, and its faded lustre spoke not that mute language of passion which his heart frequently prompted, but which the eye was too lustreless to betray. His legs were shrunk to the bones, and seemed scarcely able to bear the burthen of obesity which

laziness and indulgence had imposed upon them. He hobbled to the couch of the dying man, looked at him for a moment, doubled his legs under him as he seated himself upon the floor, desired the cocoa-nut hookah to be brought, and, having inhaled the sedative luxury for a few moments, said, with an air of the utmost unconcern, "Thy soul is about to assume a new body; what are thy hopes?"

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

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

"No," said the dying man with energy, "I would fain live, because there is a dark uncertainty in the future that clogs my spirit and weighs it down. It is an awful thing to die, and I would,

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

if possible, escape death until age should no longer encourage a desire of life.”

“ Dost thou think old men wish to die ? ”

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

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

“ But the blessed Vedas teach us otherwise ? ”

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

He continued smoking for a few moments, during which not a voice interrupted the silence. Having swallowed a large pill of opium, he rose,

and, taking the invalid's wife on one side, said to her, in a low husky whisper—"The hand of death is upon thy husband; nothing short of divine interposition can save him. If he dies, you know that his widow must accompany him to the swerga."

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

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

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

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

"Save me! Why would you save me from a sacrifice which I deem an immunity from mortal

cares? In this life, a woman's condition is one of endurance, of slavery, of pain; I would be glad to enter upon an existence where each and all are unknown."

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

By this time the opium was beginning to act upon the aged debauchee, and his eyes emitted the fire, and his limbs the elasticity, of youth—so potential is that debasing drug. The lovely Hindoo was shocked; but it was dangerous to offend a Brahmin. Advancing, he laid his shrivelled hand upon her shoulder, and said—"Daughter, come to the temple this night, and bring thy offerings to the idol; be assured thou shalt not want an inter-

cessor. Think no more of burning. When thy husband dies, thou mayest yet be happy. The multitude must think that the sacrifice is performed, but trust to me, and, feeble as this arm may seem, it will prove an arm of might in thy protection—it shall snatch thee from the flames.”

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

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

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

CHAPTER III.

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

At rather a late hour the melancholy wife quitted the side of her husband, whose malady had not abated, and repaired to the magnificent temple of Somnat, at that time the most celebrated in Hindostan. It stood upon an elevated part of the town, and covered a vast space of ground. It was a ponderous edifice, exhibiting that elaborate detail of ornament combined with massive grandeur peculiar to the early Hindoo temples. Within, it consisted of one vast aisle several hundred feet long, the roof supported on either side by magni-

ificent columns, ornamented even to superfluity with sculpture, each column detailing an episode from the Mahabarat. Every pillar was cut from a single block of granite, elaborated with an accuracy of touch, and a justness of proportion, not exceeded by any monuments of ancient art, save those of Greece. The light was admitted through a vast dome in the centre, beneath which the huge idol stood like a Colossus, casting one unvarying expression of grim insensibility upon its prostrate but humble adorers. The figure was of stone, clumsily wrought into a monstrous form. The head was ornamented with gems of prodigious value, similar gems being likewise fixed in every pillar of the temple. Its eyes were formed of two rubies of such transcendent lustre as to inspire the worshippers with a holy awe when they prostrated themselves before this hideous image.

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

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

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

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

With a resolved but throbbing heart the beautiful Hindoo wife entered within the black narrow portal of this gorgeous but gloomy structure. The lower part of the edifice was involved in a shadowy light which imparted a cavernous solemnity to this

house of a most unholy worship. The huge idol rose amid the distance surrounded by a blaze of light that filled the dome in which the colossal image stood, but did not extend far enough to pierce the distant gloom.

As she stalked forward with a measured pace, the monstrous figures surrounding the columns seemed to glare upon her from their granite pedestals like so many petrified ogres. Her heart throbbed with emotion. The object of her visit at this dark hour of night rose to her memory with an impetuous impulse, whilst the associations of the gloom of the grave, and that of the consecrated edifice which she had now entered for the purpose of propitiating a deaf and dumb idol for the benefit of a departing soul, and to arrest the summons of death, sent a chill through the whole mass of her blood which seemed to reach and congeal the very fountain of life. When she reached the dome there was not a person but herself that she could perceive in the sanctuary. The light of the solitary lamp hanging from the centre of the dome was reflected from thousands of brilliant gems which cast a radiance around the figure of intense and dazzling brilliancy. She prostrated herself before the image, and poured the full tide of her

heart's emotions in a prayer for the restoration of her husband.

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

Having paid her devotions, the supplicant approached the base of the idol, and laid a handful of gold upon it ; for her husband was wealthy, and the god of Somnat never heard a vow that was not accompanied by an offering. She prayed that her husband might be spared to her ; or, if the slender thread of his destiny was already spun, that his soul might be transferred into a nobler body, and be thus advanced one step nearer to that final and beatific state of absorption so anxiously desired by all faithful Hindoos. As she concluded, there was a strange unearthly sound heard from within the image ; the eyes seemed to glow with

more intense brightness, and when she rose from her posture of prostration, to her surprise the aged Brahmin who had lately visited her husband stood before her. She looked upon him, however, without apprehension, feeling herself in the presence of an omnipotent agent, and not entertaining a thought, in the innocence of her pure heart, that the altar of deity could be polluted by the most licentious impurities.

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

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

“Yes: where it is his will to favour those whose homage he approves, he reveals himself to them in the likeness of his creatures, generally assuming

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

the form of some devout priest, whose ministrations he especially approves, and thus signifies his approval. You will see him this night, under the similitude of a favourite Brahmin. He has determined to grant your supplications.”

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

Guileless as the mother dove, she did not dream that danger could accrue from her meeting a spiritual being who merely condescended to assume the garb of mortal flesh, in order to render himself intelligible to mortal faculties; and as, according to the impure creed in which she had been reared, gods had occasionally united themselves to mortals in an alliance of love, her heart's purity was

not shocked at the idea which the Brahmin broadly hinted, of the divinity of Somnat favouring her by such especial predilection. She was aware also that her husband, as well as herself, would look upon it as a signal mark of distinction, and feel himself honoured at his wife's exaltation by so eminent a token of divine preference.

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

The beautiful Hindoo looked on without a blush,

under the persuasion that these were sacred ministrations peculiar to the divinity of Somnat, and she came to the conclusion that such were the pleasures in which that divinity delighted to revel. After these orgies had been gone through, and the temple of religion made a scene of revolting indecency, the lamp was suddenly extinguished, and the immense edifice involved in profound darkness. The young wife was confounded. She heard the laughter of those who, like the Greek bacchantes, had been performing the grossest scenes in the very presence of their deity, and shouts of joy seemed to issue from a thousand throats. She stood mute, between astonishment and apprehension. Her awe had given way to momentary terror. She was preparing to retreat toward the portal, through which she had entered, when a soft but repulsive voice caught her ear :

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER IV.

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

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

When this part of the ceremony had been performed, in the strictest manner prescribed by their formularies, fire was brought from the temple, where it had been purposely kindled, and certain herbs, consecrated to this solemn purpose, were dis-

* The Ganges.

posed near the body in four different places. Some relatives of the deceased cast into the fire a quantity of dried cow-dung pulverised. During this portion of the preparatory rites, the officiating Brahmin was occupied in prayer, but paused in the midst of his orison, to perform an essential part of the funeral solemnities. A cow, adorned with flowers, was introduced at this auspicious juncture, and presented to the minister to prevent the defunct from being unhappy in his mutation, which the venerable hierophant promised, without any reservation, that he should not be, in consequence of the Brahmin's prayers. Several offerings of a different kind, but no less valuable, were made to this disinterested priest before the obsequies were completed.

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

The body was now washed. On the forehead was marked the sign of the caste, with a compost of ochre, fine clay, and oil; it was then arrayed in the funeral robe, and a piece of areka-nut forced into its mouth. A small fillet of linen was next

torn into strips over the face ; with those strips the two thumbs were tied, and the corpse being rubbed with a piece of sandal-wood, which emits a very strong and fragrant odour, was laid upon a palankeen, covered with red cloth, the Hindoo pall, and ornamented with flowers.

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

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

single piece of cloth wrapped round their bodies, hanging from the head to the knees.

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

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

All these forms having been scrupulously observed, the corpse was placed upon a stone always erected near the Chodelet, which is the place appointed for cremation of the deceased. This stone represents Aritchandren, a virtuous king, who, becoming slave to the chief of the Pariahs, was employed by his master to take care of the Chodelet, and receive the taxes to be paid on burning the dead. After various fantastic mummeries and vociferous supplications, some pieces of copper money were buried before Aritchandren, together with a small bit of new cloth and a handful of rice, by way of a burial fee. One of the Pariahs, whose office it was to look after the fire, then approached the stone, and informed Aritchandren,* that, having received the regular tribute, he must permit the body to pass. The palankeen was now sent back, the hair and nails of the defunct were carefully cut, and the funeral pile was prepared. Branches of the sandal tree were made use of for this purpose, it being imagined by all pious Hindoos that this tree has more virtue than

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

any other, save the mango, in promoting the happiness of the deceased, both being trees consecrated to their gods. Branches of the *ficus religiosa* and of the banian tree are occasionally used, but only by those who cannot afford to purchase the more costly wood of the rarer trees.

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

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

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

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

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

the madness of bigotry has imposed upon the credulity of devout but imbecile minds.

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

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

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

“But would you not rather evade this fiery death?”

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

“Would you rather live?”

“Not if it be my duty to die!”

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

“ What are they ? ”

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

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

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

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

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

“ I fear thee not,” she cried, rising ; “ conduct me to my doom ; the gods will applaud what their priest may scorn ; but I reverence the one and

despise the other." She beckoned to her women, who approached; and declared to them that she was ready to ascend the pyre, upon which her husband's body had been already some time laid. The ministering priest did not utter a word, and made ready to commence the initiatory ceremonies.

CHAPTER V.

THE unhappy widow now prepared herself to perform the dreadful sacrifice which was to free her from the cares of this world and exalt her to the Swerga bowers, or Hindoo Paradise. She was stationed before the door of the house of mourning in a kind of rostrum, which was profusely and extravagantly ornamented; tomtoms, trumpets, and cymbals continuing their deafening clangour as before. She placed a small piece of areka-nut between her almost motionless lips and softly aspirated the name of Somnat's idol. She next adorned her head, neck, and arms with all her jewels, arraying herself in sumptuous apparel, as if about to appear at the marriage ceremony instead of a funeral solemnity.

The array of her person being concluded, she proceeded toward the place of sacrifice, accompanied by numerous friends, to the sound of those instruments which had already preceded the procession of her husband's body. Several Brahmins, including the hierophant, walked by her side encou-

raging her with assurances that she was going to enjoy eternal felicity in regions where there is no misery known, and where she would become the *sita** of some god who would espouse her as a reward for her constancy and virtue. They further promised her that her name should be celebrated throughout the earth, and sung in all their future sacrifices. This proves a strong stimulus to some women, who go to the pile voluntarily, and with an enthusiasm truly astonishing ; for there is no legal obligation to perform the *suttee*.

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

* Bride.

“Dost thou think I would escape that fiery passage to everlasting repose? Thou wouldst withhold me from my glory. My soul shall ascend on wings of flame to the abodes of those who never die. I see the beckoning spirit in yonder cloud waiting to bear mine to its eternal home. Thou wouldst tear me from my bliss. Away, away!”

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

The beautiful widow now advanced to the foot of the pyre, prepared to consume that exquisite frame in the early freshness of its blossoming youth. The Brahmins crowded round her, endeavouring to sustain her fortitude to endure the coming trial by songs in which they artfully introduced the

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

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

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

No sooner was the fire kindled than the notes of innumerable instruments were heard, shouts and acclamations rent the air, in order to prevent the sufferer's screams of agony being heard. Ghee was poured upon the burning pyre to accelerate the horrible process of destruction, and the flames

raged with such fury that in a short time not a vestige remained but the ashes of the dead. The crowd then quietly dispersed, rejoicing at having witnessed so acceptable a holocaust.

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

Mahmood, perceiving the ramparts almost deserted, ordered his troops to advance to the walls and apply the scaling-ladders, which was instantly done; and they commenced to mount the ramparts, shouting aloud "Allah Akbur!" God is great! Those Hindoos who remained upon the

battlements, offered a spirited resistance. With the wild energy of despair they rushed upon the Mahomedan soldiers as they ascended, and threw them headlong from the ladders. Hearing the noise of the assault, and the enemy's war-cry, those citizens who had quitted the walls in order to propitiate their divinity by prayer, returned to the ramparts in vast numbers, and opposed themselves to the besiegers. These latter, no longer able to retain their footing, wearied with their exertions, and dispirited by such unexpected opposition, fell back on all sides, and were at length obliged to retire.

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

took to dispose of those offerings in a manner worthy of the liberality of the devotees who presented them.

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

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

Their success against the besiegers had greatly elated the citizens, and they began to despise the foe which they had so much dreaded. In order to show his contempt for the Mahomedans, a devotee let himself down by a rope from the rampart, and advancing towards the enemy's camp, stood before the king's tent, braving Mahmood with his late failure, and prophecying that every Mahomedan would be blasted by the breath of Somnat's idol before the rising of another sun. He was at first looked upon as a madman, but some of Mahmood's soldiers being at length incensed at his audacity, seized him, and brought him before their sovereign. Upon being asked why he had quitted the town, he replied

he came to warn them that they would be all swept from the face of the earth by the vengeance of a god, who would not spare them for their attempt to profane his holy shrine.

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

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

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

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

The Hindoo smiled as he heard the order given.

“My death will be avenged,” said he, “though you send me to paradise. You may deprive me of life, but you can’t withhold from me the power of defying and scorning the race of Islam.”

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

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN the Hindoo widow ascended the pile, the straw by which it was surrounded was immediately ignited, and having been previously wetted in a slight degree, a smoke was raised which enveloped the whole fabric, and completely concealed the victim from view. She was wrapped in a holy trance, and it was some moments therefore before she became sensible that the fire had not reached her. To her surprise she felt herself gradually sinking amid a gloom so cavernous that the first idea which flashed upon her mind was that death had done its work upon her body, and that she was descending into those regions of everlasting darkness where the wicked expiate their crimes in this world by unmitigated and eternal penalties. She, however, perceived that the dead body of her husband was still beside her, and this restored her to consciousness. In a few moments the descent of the platform was arrested; she was suddenly seized and lifted from it; the frame instantly rising

with the corpse, which was consumed without the horrible sacrifice of a living body.

The widow was confounded at her situation. The effects of that stimulating potion which she had taken to sustain her through the awful rite about to be consummated, had subsided, and she trembled at the apprehended terrors in store for her. She was encompassed by a gloom so profound that she could not distinguish a single object. She heard not a sound, save a breathing almost close to her ear, which satisfied her of the juxtaposition of some living being. She did not stir, but endeavoured to collect her scattered thoughts. Her natural energy of character overcame the more violent impulse of alarm, and in a calm collected tone she said, "Why am I thus torn from the embrace of my dead husband, with whom I was about to proceed to the bowers of Paradise?"

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

After some time, hearing no sound near her, not even of a respiration, save her own, she began to

grope around. The intensity of the darkness had somewhat subsided, and her eye had become sufficiently familiar with it to be enabled to obtain a dim perception of objects. She proceeded cautiously forward until her progress was arrested by a wall. Following the course of the masonry she perceived that she was in a small circular chamber, from which there was a passage through a low narrow portal. The floor of the apartment consisted of earth, covered with dried cow-dung, which was perceptible to her as she trod the chamber with naked feet, having cast off her sandals before she ascended the funeral pile. She had already strung her mind to the necessary climax of determination which had enabled her to brave death in its most horrid form, and was consequently not terrified at the idea of dying under circumstances less appalling.

She was on the floor, her mind filled with images of death, when suddenly a light was seen approaching through the dark passage opposite to which she happened to be lying, and a bright figure, enveloped in light, appeared to enter the portal. Every part of the figure was illumined; and yet the light did not appear to radiate from it, for all around was darkness. It was about the

size of a man, and exactly resembled the huge idol of Somnat. The widow started to her feet as the singular object approached. It advanced to the centre of the apartment, and remained stationary.

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

ble. By whom then had she been rescued from death?

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

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

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

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

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

defiled, and his temple desecrated—that I am betrayed, and that you are a villain.”

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

Beginning to feel drowsy from the effects of the draught which she had taken before ascending the pile, and fearful lest, if she allowed herself to be overcome by sleep, some base advantage might be taken of her, she paced the vault rapidly in order to dissipate the effects of the narcotic, the influence of which had not entirely subsided. In a short time some one again entered the apartment, and the same voice informed her that a curry had been prepared, and a jar of gangetic water provided for her; neither of which she felt any inclination to touch. It occurred to her that the food might contain some treacherous drug; she therefore determined not to taste it.

Her heart now reverted to her infant with all a

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

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

The sudden glare which had succeeded to the

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

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

of those who despise the favours of Somnat's god."

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

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

CHAPTER VII.

ALTHOUGH Mahmood had been so severely foiled in his attempts upon the city of Somnat, still he resolved not to abandon the enterprise. Their success in repelling the besiegers had elevated the courage of the Hindoos to the highest pitch of enthusiasm. They persuaded themselves that the power of their idol had been exerted in favour of his worshippers, and that their enemies would perish to a man. Several fanatics singly quitted the fort, to cast defiance in the enemy's teeth, and brave death, which the Mahomedan sovereign inflicted upon them, with undaunted resolution, worthy of a better cause. They appeared to glory in their martyrdom, as scarcely an hour had passed, since the first repulse of the besiegers, in which these executions had not taken place in sight of the ramparts.

The Hindoos, confiding in their numbers, and in the protection of their idol, determined upon a sally, which, with the blind fury of zealots, they made about noon, under the glare of an intensely

ardent sun, reflected with augmented ardour from the high battlements of their city upon the adjacent plain, on which the Moslems were encamped. On a sudden the gates were opened, and outpoured a multitude of ill-armed and undisciplined troops, bent upon slaughter. They rushed forward, shouting like maniacs, but were embarrassed by their numbers. They did not appear to have calculated upon the regular and steady discipline of their enemies, who had been inured to warfare, and accustomed to conquer, under the conduct of their warlike monarch, but expected to overwhelm them by the mere force of numbers, backed by the potent aid of their stone god.

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

The idolaters from the ramparts beheld the rout of their troops with dismay. They pressed again into the temple, prostrated themselves before their idol, made piaculary offerings, and supplicated his aid to chastise the murderers of his true worshippers. The deity was deaf to their entreaties. Shouts of the victors and cries of the vanquished were wafted by the gentle breeze to the sanctuary, but its stony idol was unmoved. They repaired again to the ramparts, expecting that the Ghiznivites, flushed with success, would storm the city. The frantic Hindoos, however, were determined to defend their walls to the death. They saw the enemy rushing forward—they heard their shouts of triumph—the scaling ladders were already applied—when unexpected succour was seen advancing along the distant plain. It was an army of their countrymen, marching to the relief of Somnat. Arriving before the Ghiznian camp, they presented themselves in order of battle. Mahmood, determined to frustrate this attempt to reinforce the garrison, recalled his troops from the pursuit, and, having left a portion of his army to keep the garrison in check, advanced with the remainder towards the Hindoo forces. These were fresh, having performed but a short and leisurely march, while

the Mahomedans were fatigued with their late exertions, and flushed with the excitement of victory, which rendered them too confiding and careless. They, moreover, entertained a contemptible idea of their enemies, and thus gave them an advantage, of which the latter did not fail to avail themselves.

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

to infuse new energy into those troops which had marched to raise the siege of their beloved city.

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

The Mahomedans began now to waver in their turn. The Hindoos being inspired with fresh courage advanced to the charge with an impetuosity which caused the Ghiznivites to recoil ; Mah-

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

The garrison of Somnat beholding the defeat of

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

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

Mahmood had not forgotten the beautiful Hin-

doe widow whose infant he had rescued from the wolf; and one of his first objects upon entering the city was to ascertain the place of her abode. He soon learned that she had followed her husband to that unknown land which can only be reached through the dark valley of the shadow of death. He was deeply affected. Her beauty had excited his admiration. The scene in which he had become with her so principal an actor had left a deep impression on his mind, and a tear rose to his eye as he heard the sad tidings of her death. He demanded to see the child. It was brought before him. He took it in his arms, in spite of the horror with which its rigid guardians looked upon the profane act. The infant smiled in his face, as if it recognised the obligation which it was under to him. It put its little hand upon his cheek. He was moved. The stern but generous warrior felt his heart swell. Giving it to an attendant,

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

The relatives were amazed. They expostulated; they imprecated the vengeance of their god upon the unsanctified mortal who should dare turn from

his faith the son of a Hindoo. Mahmood smiled at their objurgations, and dismissed them, but retained the infant.

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

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

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

The Hindoo child was sent into the king's harem and placed under the charge of a nurse. Meanwhile

the Sovereign issued orders that the chief Brahmin who had officiated at the late suttee should be sought after, being determined to make a severe example of him, and then proceeded to the temple.

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

CHAPTER VIII.

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

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

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

“You are uttering blasphemies,” replied the Brahmin, now assuming his natural voice, perceiving he was discovered. “The gods delight to reward their pious ministers, and the divinity

which you have all your life served, and to whom I have ministered during the longest period of mine, has yielded thee to the embraces of one who adores thee.”

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

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

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

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

The old man rose with difficulty, muttering curses, and hobbled from the vault. Unappalled by the prospect of the vilest persecution, or, with perhaps more probability, of a horrible death, the lovely Hindoo calmly resigned herself to her destiny, resolved to perish, under whatever aspect death might approach her, rather than become the victim of her odious persecutor. Her mind was agitated by a tumult of conflicting thoughts. She had been made sensible of having lived hitherto under the delusions of a false faith. Her conclusions upon the nature and quality of Deity became vague and undefined, and she knew not on what to repose her trust. Still her soul was impressed with the

one vast idea of omnipotent agency, and she felt that she was under both its dominion and its power. The purity of her own conscience gave her confidence that she should not be deserted.

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

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

“ Whither would you lead me ? ”

“ You will shortly know.”

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

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

The widow replied not, but by a movement of her hand signified her consent to follow. One of the women went before with the light, and the other behind. They passed through a long narrow passage, vaulted over head, and evidently underground. There was no outlet on either side. It was terminated by a straight staircase, so narrow that only one person could ascend at a time. Upon reaching the top, there was a small square landing-place, with two doors at opposite sides. “ Here you will enter,” said the foremost woman, pointing to one of the doors.

“ Whither does it lead ?”

“ Into the bosom of the idol. There you will meet the god — there you will be advanced to endless

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

honours—there one who adores you awaits your coming.”

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

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

chantment. The wealth of a universe seemed to be concentrated in that one spot.

The widow had not long gazed upon the vast wealth before her, when a small door which she had not hitherto perceived, slowly opened and the old Brahmin entered. There was an expression of triumphant malignity in his deep dull eye. He closed the door carefully behind him. "Now," said he, approaching his victim, "for the consummation at once of my pleasure and of my vengeance. Here resistance will be vain. My ministers are at hand. Those women who conducted you from the vault are within call, therefore be advised. Consent to be the bride of Somnat's idol, in the bosom of which you now stand, and the wealth which you behold is at your disposal; refuse, and the idol's curse will follow you through the world to the place of everlasting retribution."

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

"Be it so, then," cried the Brahmin, and seizing a staff, he was about to strike a gong that hung from an iron bar which crossed the chamber about six feet from the floor, when a strange noise was heard without, and the image vibrated to its

very foundation. The Brahmin trembled, and sank upon his knees. The beautiful Hindoo gazed on him in silence and without emotion. The noise increased—the walls of the chamber oscillated. With the calm confidence of speedy deliverance she looked forward to the result. Her companion was still upon his knees overcome by the stupefaction of terror.

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

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

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

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

The Brahmin was dragged from his den of infamy. He shrank from the gaze of the scornful

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

Historical Summary.

Heg. 421. A conspiracy was formed in favour of prince Musaood, the king's brother. Mahomed was surrounded in his tent by the conspirators and his person seized. The refractory nobles immediately joined Musaood and swore allegiance to him. Mahomed was deprived of sight and cast into prison. After a confinement of nine years he again ascended the throne for one year, and was eventually put to death by his nephew Modood, the son of Musaood. A. D. 1030.

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

Heg. 423. Khwaja Ahmud, the vizier, died. 1032.

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

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

Heg. 427. A new palace was finished at Ghizny. In it was a golden throne, studded with jewels, erected in a magnificent hall: over the throne was suspended by a golden chain a crown of gold, weighing seventy mauns or a hundred and thirty-five pounds, and emitting lus-

- A. D. 1036. tre from numerous precious stones. This formed a canopy for the king when he sat in state to give public audience.
1040. Heg. 431. Musaood, being defeated by the Sultans, and deserted by his generals, his subjects restored his brother Mohamed, whom he had blinded, to the throne.
1042. Heg. 433. Musaood was assassinated in the fort of Kurry. Modood, his son, marched against his uncle, and defeating him, put him and all his sons to death. About this time the Toorkomans of Toghrul Beg made an incursion into the Ghiznivite territories by the way of Boost, against whom Modood sent an army which gave them a signal defeat.
1046. Heg. 438. Toghrul Beg began to entertain treasonable designs against his sovereign, but upon his treachery being discovered, his adherents deserted him, and he was obliged to fly from the king's dominions.
1048. Heg. 440. Modood conferred the royal dress, drums and robes upon his two eldest sons, Mahmood and Munsoor.
1049. Heg. 441. Modood died, having reigned upwards of nine years. He was succeeded by his brother Abool Hussun Ally, who married the late king's widow; but was deposed two years after by Sultan Abool Rusheed, according to the most authentic accounts, a son of the Emperor Mahmood. He was assassinated a year after his accession by Toghrul Hajib, and Furokhzad, a son of Musaood, raised to the throne.
1058. Heg. 450. The king became afflicted with dysentery and died, after a reign of six years.
1058. Heg. 450. Furokhzad was succeeded by his brother Ibrahim, who sent an army into India and conquered

many provinces in that country which had not yet been visited by the Mussulmaun arms. It was during this reign that Eiz-ood-Deen returned from India where his father had been an exile, married a princess of the house of Ghizny, and was restored to the principality of Ghoor. A. D.
1058.

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

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

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

Heg. 511. Sultan Beiram became king of Ghizny. 1021.

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

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

Heg. 576. The kingdom of Ghizny was invaded 1180.

- A. D. by Shahab-ood-Deen Mahomed Ghoory, son of Eiz-
1180. ood-Deen. He finally evacuated the kingdom, carrying with him Mullik Shah, the king's son, a child only four years old, as a hostage.
1184. Heg. 580. Mahomed Ghoory made an attempt upon Lahore, whither the Emperor had removed his court, but being foiled, subjected the country to devastation by fire and sword.
1186. Heg. 582. The prince of Ghoor again returned to Lahore with a large army and took the city. The Emperor, seeing no means of escape, threw himself upon the mercy of his enemy. Mahomed Ghoory demanded instant possession of Lahore. The gates of the city were accordingly thrown open to receive him, and the empire passed from the house of Ghizny to that of Ghoor. Sultan Khoosrow Mullik reigned twenty-eight years.

The Royal Merchant.

The Royal Merchant.

CHAPTER I.

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

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

“ Because the yearnings of nature are too strong to be resisted. Besides, there I am known to belong to the blood of her kings ; here I am looked upon as a mere trafficker in merchandise,

upon which, indeed, I have grown rich, but in a manner that ill becomes the offspring of royalty.”

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

“ The merchant Sam was, in truth, son of the king of Ghoor, a mountainous region, which finally became tributary to Ghizny, and had been obliged to fly from his country on the death of his father, who, while attacking a fort, was killed by an arrow, which entered his eye. The son fled into India, and finally settled at Surat, a city of considerable commercial importance, about twelve coss from the sea. Being of an enterprising turn of mind, he assumed the business of a merchant, and, in the course of a few years of successful traffic, became a man of great wealth.

Although he found few Mahomedans at Surat, there were a number of old Parsee families, who had fixed their abode in a certain quarter of the city. With these he freely associated, as they were not so backward in holding social intercourse with strangers as the native inhabitants, among whom the exclusive prejudices of

caste were maintained generally with extreme rigour. The Parsees being a mercantile people, the royal merchant found that they very much advanced the success of his ventures, and with them, therefore, he dwelt upon terms of mutual good-fellowship. Having, however, reaped the full harvest of his industry, he was anxious to return to that exaltation in his native land which he had forfeited by his flight, especially now that he possessed the means of maintaining a dignity which his ambition rendered him eager to enjoy. His son, though he yielded to the wishes of his father, had other views. When he had left his native mountains, he was too young to retain any endearing impressions of home or of country; he, therefore, felt no desire to quit a spot which was endeared to him by other ties than those of a long residence.

Eiz-ood-Deen was in the habit of visiting the family of a Parsee, who had an only daughter, a beautiful girl in her thirteenth year. She was the pride of her father, and he watched over her with a vigilance only equalled by his fondness, being anxious to keep her from the view of suitors, as he had betrothed her to the son of a wealthy Parsee merchant in Bombay, to whom she was

shortly to be married. It happened that she felt an invincible repugnance to the young man to whom she was betrothed, but had never dared to express this repugnance to her father, knowing the extreme severity of his resentments when his purposes were crossed, and being well assured that even his parental affection would give way before the fierceness of his anger, if she should dare to rebel against his authority.

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

The sight of the Mahomedan rendered her more than ever averse to the Parsee, and she soon became

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

Eiz-ood-Deen had heard much of the beauty of the Parsee's daughter, but had been in the habit of visiting at his house for the best part of a year without having once seen her. She, however, had indulged herself, by seeing him enter and quit the house almost daily for several months, and the first favourable impression which his person made upon her in no degree subsided; so far from it, that she felt for the first time the two extreme passions of love and hate glowing in her bosom at the same moment—love towards the Mahomedan, and hatred towards the Parsee. She frequently pondered upon the misery of her lot, in being doomed to wed a man whom she loathed, and debarred, by the difference of creeds, from marrying

one with whom she fancied she could realize her fairest dreams of happiness. She became at length so excited by anxiety, that she determined to brave all hazards, and, in defiance of her father's anger, reveal her passion to the object of her love. It was some time before a safe opportunity occurred.

One morning her parent was suddenly called from home, and, to her joy, Eiz-ood-Deen appeared in the court. She raised the venetians as he approached the door, and exposing her young glowing countenance, upon which the blush mantled like the opening tint of the vernal rose, told him her father was not within. He stopped a moment to gaze upon her, but overcome with the novelty of the act she had committed, she withdrew her head, and dropped the venetian frame. The Mahomedan was riveted to the spot. He was so overcome by astonishment at the unexpected sight of so much beauty, that he had not the presence of mind to utter a word. At length the sudden impulse of surprise subsided, and he recovered his self-possession. As her apartment faced the court which was seen from the street, he knew it would expose the lovely girl to the worst suspicions if he remained under the window; he therefore entered the house, as if ignorant that the

Parsee was from home. He here encountered an old woman who, as he soon ascertained, was an attendant upon the young mistress of the mansion. She was a low caste Hindoo, and, knowing the sordidness of the class to which she belonged, he had no difficulty in bribing her to bring him into the presence of her young mistress. They met on that very morning. Vows of perpetual love were interchanged, and the beautiful girl agreed to fly with him to his native country, in order to avoid a union against which her heart revolted.

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

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

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

“Nay, my sire, a parent’s wish is law to a dutiful son, and I trust you have never found me so wanting in filial obligation as to oppose, even by a

thought, the desire of one to whom I owe not only my being, but the blessings of a happy life.”

“ Well, my son, I have long been prepared to visit the land of my fathers, and, if you concur, we'll take ship at the full of the present moon, when we shall enjoy the blessing of heaven's light by night as well as by day.”

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

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

“ What is the meaning of all this?” inquired

Eiz-ood-Deen, with a beating heart and quivering lip.

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

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

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

The following morning Eiz-ood-Deen was walking beyond the suburbs of Surat, and bent his

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

CHAPTER II.

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

The only thing that pained him at quitting the scene of his misery was the thought of leaving un-

revenged the death of that tender girl whom he had so fondly loved. But how was he to prove that she had been sent out of the world by violence? Besides, had he not been guilty of an act of deep moral obliquity in carrying on a clandestine intercourse with the daughter of a different tribe, corrupting her father's servants, and meditating her final abduction? He felt upon what tottering ground he trod, and therefore soon abandoned all thoughts of revenge. His father could not account for his agitation; attributing it, however, to those capricious sallies of youth which are frequently the mere sudden eruptions of passion arising from trifling disappointment, he did not take the trouble to inquire very minutely into the cause, but occupied himself about preparing for his voyage. As the transfer of property to any great distance was impracticable, he turned a large portion of his wealth into jewels, which were less difficult to be disposed of, could be easily secreted, and occupied little room. These preparations engaged him for some days, during the whole of which period Eiz-ood-Deen was a prey to the severest grief. He scarcely uttered a word. His father now imagined that his sorrow arose simply from the circumstance of his being about to quit a spot endeared to him by the

strong and linking associations of youth, but felt no doubt that when the first ebullitions after departure should subside, new scenes and new objects would soon absorb his attention, and win him from his partialities to the scenes of his boyhood.

Having made the necessary preparations, the old man purchased a vessel, which he manned with Hindoo sailors, for the best of all possible reasons, because no other were to be had. The vessel was a large clumsy boat, carrying about sixty tons, with no deck, save a kind of poop, under which there was one small cabin. She was manned by fifteen native seamen. Everything being put on board, the merchant Sam, with his son Eiz-ood-Deen, set sail from Surat with a favourable breeze. The old man's heart bounded as he quitted those shores which had been the place of his exile for years, and although he had filled his coffers with money in this strange land, his predilection for that of his birth had never been once stifled ; it was still glowing. He was anxious to lay his bones among those of his forefathers, and he tried to rouse the spirits of his son to the same level of gratification with his own ; but the image of death was too vividly impressed upon the mind of Eiz-ood-Deen to be so readily effaced. He could not banish it.

It seemed as if a fiery hand had seared it upon his brain with an impress so deep and glowing that the finger of death only could obliterate the tracing. His heart sickened when he reverted to the repelling reality.

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

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

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

“Alas! my boy,” said the old man, “there is little doubt but your suspicions respecting the end of that poor girl are correct. The strictness of the Guebres in maintaining the purity of their women is so severe, that even the slightest suspicion subjects them to certain death. The power of inflicting summary punishment upon offenders of this kind is in the hands of the parent, and pardon seldom passes from the domestic tribunal for those sins to which death is awarded. The poisoned bowl has sent that innocent victim to the land of shadows, where our spirits shall everlastingly wail or rejoice.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

portion as the peril increased, he braced his mind to meet the coming shock, but the poor old merchant was fearfully excited. He had looked forward still to years of enjoyment in his native land, to which he was attached by a link as strong as human sympathy could forge. He continued to pray, but his aspirations seemed not to rise beyond his lips; they were stifled in the terrors which gave them their first impulse, but crushed them in the soul as they struggled to get free.

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

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

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

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

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

A sudden reel of the vessel now brought her up against a wave which dashed with a terrific shock over her bow, that made her whole frame vibrate. The shock was so great that it forced up the lid of

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

A spar had separated from the vessel as she went down, and floated free upon the waters. The merchant and his son had both leaped into the sea, and after a few desperate struggles each grasped the spar, but the old man's exhaustion prevented him from holding it securely. The water bore him from his hold, and the agonised son saw him struggle in vain to reach it. Quitting the spar, he swam towards his father. The merchant threw out his arms with desperate energy to keep himself

above the surface, but every wave covered him. He shrieked—the water filled his mouth; again he shrieked—again the fierce waters stopped his cry—another and another struggle—there was a stifled moan. At length his arms fell—his senses faded—he became still.

At this moment the son reached him, but too late. He had begun to sink. There was no object on the surface. The spar rolled again near Eiz-ood-Deen, and he grasped it with the clutch of desperation. He was nearly exhausted, but with an instinctive desire of life, which they only can apprehend who have beheld death before them in an array of horror, he lashed himself to the spar with his turban, hoping that, should the storm abate, he might be rescued from his peril by some vessel, or cast on shore; for though the density of the mist prevented the eye seeing objects beyond a few yards, yet he felt satisfied that he could not be far from the coast. Perilous as his situation was, hope did not desert him; and he who had looked at the approach of death with indifference while there appeared a reasonable chance of escape, now shunned it with a fierce instinct of preservation, when its triumph seemed almost reduced to a certainty. He had not been long lashed to the spar when, through the uproar of the tempest, he heard a

strange noise behind him, and turning his head, to his consternation beheld the tiger making its way towards him through the gnashing waters. It snorted and panted with its exertions; still it raised its noble head amid the waves, rising above them with a buoyancy beautiful to behold, in spite of the painful apprehensions with which it was accompanied. In a few moments the tiger reached the spar, and placed its fore paws upon it, close by the side of the merchant's son. It offered him no violence, but, looking wildly in his face, seemed to eye him with an expression of sympathy, as if acknowledging a fellowship of suffering. Emboldened by the forbearance of the noble animal, Eiz-ood-Deen laid his hand gently upon its head. The tiger depressed its ears, gave a loud kind of purr, and crept closer to the side of its companion.

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

CHAPTER III.

EIZ-OOD-DEEN was so exhausted on being cast upon the strand, that when he had disengaged himself from the spar and crawled up the beach beyond the reach of the surf, he fell into a profound sleep. When he awoke, the tempest had almost entirely subsided; and to his astonishment he found the tiger at his side with one of its paws upon his breast and looking steadfastly in his face. The recollection that they had been companions in peril, and the favourable manner in which the ferocious creature had received his caress upon the spar amidst the turbulence of the excited ocean, abated his apprehensions of the animal's hostility, which seemed to have forsaken its natural instincts, and he laid his hand fearlessly upon its head. The tiger instantly purred, rolled upon its back, and exhibited marked symptoms of delight, rubbing its broad forehead against Eiz-ood-Deen's face, and spreading out its capacious tongue as if to show him the tenderness of

a tiger's caress. This was an exceedingly welcome indication of good fellowship to the merchant's son; nevertheless, he could not help fearing that when hunger should remind the voracious beast of the necessity of appeasing its natural longing, it might take a fancy to him for its first meal.

He was so bruised by the spar to which he had been attached when cast upon the beach, and moreover his strength was so reduced by his long and arduous struggles, that he could not proceed in search of some friendly habitation; he therefore bent his way towards the nearest jungle, to which the tiger leisurely followed, being determined there to pass the night and seek out an asylum the following day. As evening advanced, he crept into a thicket, and heaping some dry jungle-grass under a tree, threw himself upon it. The tiger quitted him; and he concluded that having found a congenial retreat, it had gone in search of a supper, which he hoped would prevent him from being distinguished by so flattering a preference as he had apprehended.

He had now time to reflect upon his bereaved condition. All his father's property had been put on board the vessel, and all had therefore gone to

the bottom, save a few jewels which the wary merchant had caused him to secrete about his person for the sake of security, in case the crew should turn pilferers and practically illustrate the doctrine of appropriation. The old man had stowed his most valuable gems within the folds of his own turban, which went to the bottom with him; so that of all his immense wealth a trifling wreck only was preserved by the son, who was now a comparative beggar in a strange country, with the habits of which he was not familiar, and towards the inhabitants of which he felt no sympathy. His future prospects were none of the brightest. Although he had escaped death under its most fearful aspect, he possessed nothing in his own estimation to render life desirable. He had been cut off from all that was dear to him in the world, and there remained nothing to enhance the world to him. He thought upon his parent's lamentable end, and wept. The dreadful fate of the Parsee girl rushed like the simoom blast across his heart and wrung it with intense agony. He wondered why he had not courted death amid the howling storm, and could scarcely account for his having used such endeavours to preserve a worthless and miserable existence: but he felt

that he was called upon to struggle through the difficulties by which he was beset; and the pride of resistance at length rousing his spirit, he resolved to rise superior to his destiny, and exert all his energies to lift himself from the depression into which a course of concurrent but hostile circumstances had plunged him.

He arose as soon as the broad light had made its way through the thick growth of the forest, when to his surprise he found the tiger again at his side. Its jowls were streaked with blood; and, from the roundness which its flanks exhibited, it was evident to him that it had not gone without its evening meal. It fawned before him with a fondness that won his interest for the noble beast, which wagged its tail, advanced into the thicket, then stopped and looked back, as if inviting him to follow. There was an earnestness in the animal's motions which determined the merchant's son to see whither it would lead him. Perceiving him prepared to follow, the tiger bounded forward with a suppressed roar. After passing through a portion of the forest where the growth was unusually thick, his dumb guide suddenly stopped, and Eiz-ood-Deen advancing perceived the tiger standing over the mangled body of a buffalo recently

slain. A portion of it had been eaten—the whole of the intestines: but the most fleshy parts remained entire. Eiz-ood-Deen drew a sharp double-bladed dagger, which he always carried in his cummerbund; and cutting off a slice from one of the haunches, returned to the spot where he had passed the night. Having kindled a fire, he broiled the meat; and climbing a cocoa-nut tree that grew near the beach at the edge of the jungle, he gathered several nuts, which afforded him a refreshing beverage, and was thus considerably refreshed by his morning's repast. The tiger lay at his feet and slept. Instead of feeling any terror in the presence of this powerful and ferocious creature, he was animated by a confidence that tended much to quiet the morbid anxieties of his mind. He felt a security against aggression, which gave a stimulus to his determination to grapple manfully with circumstances; and he began to think that he was still born to be a distinguished man.

As soon as he felt his body sufficiently recruited to proceed, Eiz-ood-Deen commenced his journey towards Ghizny. He had a long and dreary way before him, but was supported by the consciousness that, having been preserved from the tempest and from the natural ferocity of the tiger, he was

destined to sustain a character in the world. There was an excitement imparted to his thoughts by the singular peculiarity of his condition, and the shadows of despondency began to dissipate before the active energies of his mind. A new field of speculation appeared to be suddenly open before him ; and when the loss of those who were dear to him, and of his father's treasure, passed like shadows over his brain, they were repelled as by a sunbeam by some elevating impulse of thought, and he pursued his way through the forest with a comparatively unburthened heart. The tiger continued to follow him, as if loath to relinquish the companionship of one who had been its associate in peril, and towards whom its natural instincts of ferocity seemed to subside into those milder ones which belong to the gentlest of the dumb creation. It frolicked before his path, and fawned at his feet when he rested, exhibiting the strongest symptoms of delight when he patted its sleek broad back, purring under the pressure of his hand, relaxing its large bright eyes into an expression of gentle satisfaction, protruding its huge tongue, and passing it over its formidable jaws, at once showing its power and its docility.

It was a strange thing to see a creature of such

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

gently undulating its tail, it dropped a moment on its belly, then bounded forward, and was in an instant lost in the thick undergrowth which nearly covered the whole face of the jungle.

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

The tiger began voraciously to devour its prey ; and when Eiz-ood-Deen approached, and placed his hand upon it, the creature gave a quick short growl, raised its paw suddenly, and struck him down. He was stunned a moment with the force

of the shock, but, rising instantly, he retreated a few yards, and found to his extreme gratification, that the tiger's claws had not been protruded when it struck, as there was no wound.

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

Eiz-ood-Deen saw with regret the noble creature lying prostrate in death, remembering the peril they had shared in the late tempest, and the tiger's consequent gentleness towards himself. While he was gazing at the body of the prostrate beast, several men advanced from the thicket and surrounded him. "Who are you," said one of them, "that the brindled savages of the forest seem thus to respect?"

"A poor traveller on his way to Ghizny, which

he hopes, through your kind succour and direction, to reach."

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

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

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

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

"Ay, I suppose you are what those fools, who

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

There was clearly no use in contending with a set of desperadoes, who had evidently made up their minds to have their own way; the merchant's son, therefore, followed them, without attempting the slightest expostulation.

The robbers conducted him into a deep recess of the jungle, where there was the ruin of what appeared to be an ancient temple. It was low, not more than a few feet above the common level of the forest, and was entered by a narrow portal

which led into several small dark chambers, inhabited by the bandits, of whom there were upwards of thirty.

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

It happened that the robbers had received intelligence of a party of troops being on their way, with supplies, towards the camp of Sultan Ibrahim, sovereign of Ghizny, who had invaded India with a numerous army. As their route lay through a part of the jungle, the robbers determined to attack the detachment in a narrow pass, where they would be unable to act effectively, and plunder the waggons. This was accordingly attempted, and with some success. They partially robbed one of the waggons, and bore off an officer who defended it. In the evening they brought their prisoner to their forest dwelling. Dissatisfied with the issue of their expedition, they determined to attack the waggons again on the following day; and in order to effect this with greater security, they put to their captive certain

questions, which he refused to answer. Every temptation was offered to induce him to make disclosures, but he declined giving the slightest communication; this so incensed the robbers that they shot him to death with arrows. They were not, however, suffered long to triumph in their cruelty. On that night their haunt was assailed by the troops which they had so recently attacked, and the greatest part of the band were made prisoners.

CHAPTER IV.

EIZ-OOD-DEEN was made prisoner with the rest of the robbers, who were severally put in irons, and finally marched to Ghizny, where they were cast into separate dungeons. The merchant's son now looked upon his doom as sealed. Taken up as a robber and murderer, he saw little chance of escape, and began to look forward with dreadful apprehensions to undergoing an ignominious death. How was he to prove his innocence when he had been taken in the very den of those criminals who had committed the murder, and was declared by them to be one of their party? He could bring forward no proof of his innocence to countervail such strong presumptive evidence of his guilt. His mere declaration would scarcely be listened to, it being well known that the guilty almost invariably declare themselves innocent. He paced his prison with a restless and impatient step. It seemed as if the doom of destiny were upon him. Since the death of that guiltless girl,

whom he had hoped to make his wife, he had known nothing but misfortune. The conviction smote upon his heart that he had been saved from destruction, when the hurricane stirred the elements into frightful combination, and threatened every moment to engulf him amid the raging billows, only to meet a more dreadful doom upon land. He now regretted that he had not perished amid the turbulent waters which bore his father to the abode of spirits, or that the tiger had not struck him dead when it raised its paw against him in the jungle. What was to be done? There was no evading the doom which awaited him. He must die a degraded criminal, his body would be thrown to the vultures and to the jackals. It was a fearful thought! To have his bones whiten in the sun, and his flesh furnish a banquet for beasts of prey!

The robbers were severally tried, all found guilty, and executed. Their heads were placed upon the walls of Ghizny. His trial came last. The day preceding he endeavoured to prepare himself for the fate from which he concluded there could be no escape; but he could not brace his spirit to that pitch of resolution which defies the terrors of death, and renders the condemned man capable of going through the awful details of a public exe-

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

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

him, and he felt unconquerably loth to relinquish it, although at one time he had really persuaded himself that death would be a boon.

The summons at length came, and he prepared to follow the messenger into the presence of a fallible judge, who, he was persuaded, would pronounce upon him, though innocent, the dreaded penalty of the law. He entered the court with a tottering step, a drooping eye, and a bloodless cheek. The trial was summary, and the sentence speedily passed. He was adjudged to have his head struck from his body and placed upon the city walls — the trunk to be cast to the vultures. The execution was ordered instantly to take place, and, as little sympathy is shown for criminals in countries where despotism renders public executions occurrences of mere daily routine, Eiz-ood-Deen was bound without the slightest compassion being shown by those who had heard his trial and condemnation. His turban was rudely stripped from his head, and while the heartless official was binding it round his brow to cover his eyes, in order that he might not witness the descending stroke of death, he raised a piteous lamentation, calling upon the Deity to attest that he was innocent, and accompanying his cries with such strong

appeals to the humanity of his judge, that even the executioner was at length moved, and paused for a moment in his work of preparation.

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

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

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

The latter had three daughters, one of whom was reputed to be a girl of great beauty and accomplishments; nor did she belie the character which report had given her. Her father was justly proud of her. She was already betrothed to one of the wealthiest nobles in the Sultan Ibrahim's dominions. It had been an arrangement of interest, not of affection, and one in which the princess had acquiesced rather in obedience to the wishes of her

father, whom she tenderly loved, than to the suggestions of her own choice. When she met the preserver of her parent's life immediately after the event just related, the natural impulses of her heart drew from her expressions of gratitude so ardent and earnest, that Eiz-ood-Deen was deeply moved at the eloquent declaration of her feelings. He listened to her with breathless delight. There was no resisting the earnestness, which was so much enhanced by the corresponding influence of her beauty. But she was betrothed, and therefore to admire her was dangerous—to love her criminal: and yet to see her, under such a provocative both to admiration and love, and not give way to those strong tendencies of our nature roused into vigorous action, when that pure passion is awakened by which alone the fruits of our earthly paradise are matured, was all but morally impossible. The merchant's son, now raised to the dignity of a noble, and whose ambition therefore led him to think that he might aspire to the highest alliance, could not behold the beauty of this high-born maiden with insensibility. He soon felt that his heart had received an impression which had completely effaced the scar left upon it by the sad disappointment of a former love; yet he dared not avow it.

The two elder sisters were neither handsome nor agreeable, and had passed that period of rich and vivid freshness which imparts to the beauty of woman its best charm. They were rapidly advancing to the staid season of existence when the buoyancy of youth begins to decline, and you are continually reminded that its beautiful bright star has culminated. It happened that they had been both struck with the fine person of Eiz-ood-Deen, and manifested their partiality in a manner too obvious to be longer equivocal. The object of their mutual affection treated their advances with provoking disregard; but they, imagining that he was withheld by their rank from declaring his passion, each resolved in secret to take the earliest opportunity of letting him know that he was beloved by a princess of the house of Ghizny. Before, however, they could put their determination into practice, Eiz-ood-Deen had declared his admiration for the younger sister, who had answered his declaration by avowing a reciprocal attachment. This almost immediately came to the ears of the two elder sisters, who were outrageous at the discovery of his entertaining what they deemed so degrading a preference.

This discovery, however, did not abate the pas-

sion of these two tender maidens, and each resolved personally to declare her sentiments to the object of her affections. One evening, Eiz-ood-Deen received a message, through one of the attendants of the palace, from the youngest of the three princesses, as was represented, to meet her in the palace gardens an hour after sunset, as she had some special communication to make. Delighted at the idea of encountering the object towards whom his heart bounded with unceasing emotion, he repaired to the place appointed, expecting to see one whose presence was rapture. He entered the gardens and sprang towards a female already there awaiting his arrival, when to his surprise and mortification he stood before the eldest daughter of the prince whom he had rescued from death. The interview, however, was short. She began by declaring her passion; but he soon silenced her unwelcome avowal by telling her that his heart was fixed upon her youngest sister. Having made this declaration he quitted the garden, and the princess sought her apartment, burning with rage and disappointment.

Both the elder princesses meditated revenge; and in order to effect this, they took an opportunity of rousing the jealousy of the Omrah to whom their

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

The two elder daughters of the prince were grievously vexed at this mischance; and their jealousy of the younger sister was carried at length to such a height that Eiz-ood-Deen determined to

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

parasangs* in circumference as a hunting park, he assumed all the dignities of a sovereign. At length he was induced to attack Ghizny. Sultan Beiram, obtaining intimation of his intentions, contrived to get him into his power, and eventually poisoned him. This was the origin of the feuds between the houses of Ghoor and Ghizny.†

* The parasang varies from three to four miles.

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

Historical Summary.

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

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

Heg. 589. The general-in-chief marched to Benares, 1193. broke down the idols of above a thousand temples,

A. D. which he purified and consecrated to the worship of the true God. He then returned to his brother's dominions.

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

1206. Heg. 602. A band of twenty Ghoorkas conspired against the king's life. Mahomed Ghoory being encamped at a small village on the banks of the Indus, the assassins entered his tent and he fell under their hands pierced with twenty-two wounds. The treasure which this prince left behind him was incredible; he is said to have possessed in diamonds alone four hundred pounds' weight. He was succeeded by his general Kootb-ood-Deen Eibuk, who was crowned king of Ghizny.

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

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

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

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

Heg. 624. Altmish reduced the fort of Runtunbhore. 1227.

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

Heg. 629. Altmish reduced the strong fort of Gwalior, which surrendered after a year's siege. He 1231.

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

- A. D. also took the city of Oojein, in which he destroyed a magnificent temple, dedicated to Mahakaly, formed upon the same plan with that of Somnat. This temple is said to have occupied three hundred years in building.
1236. Heg. 633. Shums-ood-Deen Altmish, falling sick on the road to Mooltan, was obliged to return to Delhi, where he died the same year and was succeeded by his son Rookn-ood-Deen Feroze, who dissipated the public money, and excited by his excesses the general disgust of his subjects.
1236. Heg. 634. Ruzeea Begum, the king's sister, advanced with an army against Delhi, which she entered in triumph, deposed her brother, who died in confinement, and ascended the throne.
1239. Heg. 637. The queen excited the indignation of her nobles by raising to the post of Ameer-ool-Omrah a favourite slave named Yakoot. She married Mullik Altoonia of the Toorky tribe of Chelgany, governor of Bituhnda, in consequence of which her subjects revolted. Altoonia raised an army and marched against them,—a battle ensued, in which the queen and Altoonia were slain.

The Abyssinian Slave.

The Abyssinian Slave.

CHAPTER I.

IN consequence of the licentiousness and cruelty of Bookn-ood-Deen Feroze, king of Delhi, he was deposed, and his sister Ruzeea Begum raised to the throne. On her elevation, great rejoicings prevailed throughout her dominions ; and she gave splendid entertainments and public shows for several days, in order to impress the people with an idea of her munificence. She was a woman of masculine understanding, great energy of character, and much was expected from the administration of a sovereign, of whom her royal father had said, not long before his death, when asked by his officers why he appointed his daughter regent of the kingdom during his temporary absence, in preference to his sons,—“ My sons give themselves up to wine and every other excess ; I think, there-

fore, the government too weighty for their shoulders ; but my daughter Ruzeea Begum, though a woman, has a man's head and heart, and is better than twenty such sons."

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

During the games, a wild buffalo, which had been kept without food for two days, in order to render it more savage, was driven into the arena, and a large leopard, suffering under similar abstinence, opposed to it. The conflict was short but decisive. The leopard sprang upon its adversary, which received it upon its horns, flung it into the air with fatal force, and then finished the work of destruction by goring it until it was dead, without receiving a wound beyond a few superficial scratches. The animal, proud of its victory, pawed the ground in triumph, and roared, as if challenging another competitor. It galloped round the enclosure, raising the sand with its hoofs, scattering it in the air, and plunging with all the fury of frantic excitement.

The Queen sat in the balcony of a building

erected for the purpose of enabling her to witness the sports without risk. She was surrounded by her women, who appeared to take no common pleasure in the sanguinary pastime. Among them was the daughter of an Omrah, an extremely pretty girl, to whom her mistress was much attached, and who, by way of distinction, sat at her feet on the present occasion. She waved her handkerchief with all the energy of girlish delight as the victorious buffalo was careering round the area, when a champion appeared before the spectators, causing a hush of breathless suspense as he advanced towards the enraged animal, and declared aloud his determination to encounter it. He was a man singularly handsome, with the frame of a Hercules cast in the perfect mould of graceful proportion. He was tall, but robust; broad, but compactly formed; every muscle, for he was naked from his waist upward and from the knees downward, swelling from the surface of his body with an undulation of symmetry that appeared the very perfection of manly beauty. The calm but intense gleam of his eye, which did not for a moment relax, was a legible record, not to be misinterpreted, of his steady drift of purpose and indomitable resolution.

His lips were gently compressed, his head was slightly inclined upon the right shoulder, his step was deliberate but firm, and his whole bearing such as could not be mistaken for anything but that of a man of the highest physical endowments. He was armed with a short broad sabre, which he grasped in his right hand, and a heavy-bladed dagger was stuck in his belt.

The buffalo roared as its adversary advanced, pawed the ground, bent its head, and rushed furiously towards the stranger, who leaping on one side with great agility, the infuriated beast continued its career for several yards. It however soon returned to the charge, and with a celerity which required all the wary caution and cool activity, so eminently possessed by the champion, to avoid. It was again foiled, but it became only the more enraged, and pursued its enemy with such vigour that he had great difficulty to evade the intended mischief. At length, seeing that the danger was heightening as the animal was in full career towards him, he sprang out of its path, and striking forward with his sword, broke off one of its horns close to the head. The wounded beast bellowed with agony, and turned suddenly round upon its adversary, who, evad-

ing a contact with the same dexterity as before, struck his dumb antagonist so powerful a blow upon the neck as nearly severed the head, and the buffalo rolled at his feet in the pangs of death. He then coolly bowed to the Sultana, and retired.

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

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

“His name?”

“Yakoot.”

“To whom does he belong?”

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

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

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

“That fine limbs and a handsome frame are only outward tokens of beauty, and may conceal more deformity than the greatest monster exhibits to

a mere superficial scrutiny. Fruits of the richest colour contain the deadliest poison ; and they tell us of some, exquisite to the eye, that yield only ashes.”

“ Ah ! you are one of those cautious beauties, Zophra, that will take nothing upon trust. You would look into a diamond to see what it is made of ; but I am content with its brilliancy, and seek not to know whether it is a mineral or vegetable, or a houri’s tear. Look at that man again, and say if he is not beautiful in his bondage—if he is a fit object for slavery.”

The Abyssinian had again come forward to exhibit his strength and skill in another encounter of quite a different character from the first. He was now about to wrestle with a gigantic man, dull in aspect and ungainly in his motions, though of colossal dimensions and prodigious muscularity of limb. They stood before each other, and immediately commenced the struggle. The larger competitor seized his adversary by the shoulder with such a vigorous grasp as left the impression of every finger. The Abyssinian soon, however, disengaged himself, and laying hold of his opponent by the waistband of his trousers, threw him forward with astounding force upon his face. The fallen champion rose actively to his feet, and with

a flushed countenance again placed his hand upon the shoulder of his opponent, and, striking him at the same moment just below the knee, cast him to the earth ; but, as he fell upon his side, the victory was not obtained, it being necessary that the vanquished man should be thrown upon his back.

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

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

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

The concluding feat of the day was a conflict with wooden swords between the Abyssinian slave and an Indian, a Catti Rajpoot, who had been

taken prisoner in a late invasion of some of the provinces of Hindostan. The Catti, as all his race are, was considered pre-eminently skilled in the use of the sword. The wooden weapons with which the combatants stood armed were made of a heavy wood and were long and broad.

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

Each of the champions had received slight blows, and appeared to be so equally matched, that it was difficult to decide which had the advantage. The Catti at length grew impatient and lost his caution. His attack was more impetuous and reckless. In proportion as he became heated the slave was cool; and taking advantage of his opponent's precipitation, just as the latter had

raised his arm to strike, Yakoot hit him suddenly above the elbow with such force that the bone of his arm instantly snapped, the fractured member dropped powerless by his side, and the wooden sword fell from his relaxed grasp.

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

CHAPTER II.

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

Amidst this scene of earthly beauty Yakoot was sad. He remembered with emotions of stern regret the savannas and forests of his native home, where the wild beast prowled and the hand of man was frequently lifted against his fellow with the deadliest purpose. He eyed with solemn composure the gorgeous blending of nature and art, by which he was at this moment surrounded; but it conveyed no gratification to his heart. His predilections were of a different temperament. He sought delight in the rugged and the severe, and therefore laboured with a smile of cold contempt amid the luxuries brought from almost every quarter of the world by the munificence of eastern regality. He had heard the applause of men, won by his prowess in the sports of the preceding day, but they moved him not. The approbation of the Sultana, which had been conveyed to him with a mandate that he was to appear before her on the following morrow, administered no joy: but amid the gloom of his condition, a light broke in upon his soul when he remembered the smile dancing upon the full pulpy lip of the beautiful Bameea as she applauded his feats of prowess in the arena. He had gazed upon her with an earnestness which called the blood into her cheek; and for the first

moment during his captivity, which had only been one of a few short weeks, he felt his bosom glow towards an object with that mysterious sympathy which binds the heart, although in a silken fetter, yet with a security more lasting than links of iron. There was no accounting for the sudden impulse that almost instantly seemed to overmaster the rugged severity of his nature, and draw his kindly affections forth in bland and assuaging emotions. But who was he that entertained thoughts of so pure and holy an intercourse as that which Heaven sanctions, when hearts are united and wishes harmonize? Was he not a slave? Could the high-born and refined look upon a bondman but with feelings of repugnance? And yet, while his lips muttered these querulous doubts, there was an antagonist presentiment within which repudiated them.

He was at one end of the garden, his eye wandering over the fairy scene around him, when it caught the shadow of a female figure advancing along one of the walks. His breast throbbed: the shadow so truly represented the outline of a form which of all others he desired to behold, that he could not be mistaken. He kept his eyes fixed upon the spot that was in a moment to reveal

an object upon which it would be rapture to gaze ; and, ere he could finish the expiration which mingled surprise and delight had suspended, the interesting Bameea stood before him. He bent his head as she approached, and touching the ground with his fingers, placed them upon his brows.

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

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

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

“That is, if I do not thwart her royal will. The tawny lion will purr under your touch if you cram his ravenous maw, and leave him the fierce liberty of his instincts. Sovereigns are never kind, lady, either from humanity or compassion, but merely to gratify their own selfishness ; I therefore

despise royal favours, and would rather labour in this garden under the fierce glow of a meridian sun, with such an object near me, to inspirit the dull hours of toil, as my eyes are now permitted to gaze upon, than be the fantastic puppet of a queen's bounty."

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

"Why that pause?"

"Oh! because—"

"Nay, my decision will depend upon your answer, lady."

"Because, I think you would be pleasant company sometimes, when our royal mistress lacks amusement, and our wits are dull, and cannot furnish it. Believe me, you'll find agreeable companions." Saying this, she tripped lightly off, as if she feared something from his reply that she would rather avoid hearing. The Abyssinian watched her receding figure as she glided down the path, until she was lost amidst its sinuosities, the walk being bounded on either side by tall shrubs.

Yakoot mused upon the past event. Bameea had not been sent to summon him. Why then did

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

Not long after Bameea's departure, Yakoot was summoned to attend the Sultana. He instantly followed the messengers, and passed into the royal presence. Ruzeea Begum was seated upon a fine cashmere shawl spread over a thick rug woven from the same wool, and worked in the richest devices. Behind her stood Bameea, waving over her mistress' head a beautiful bird of paradise. Beside the latter was a gold ewer containing perfumes which produced around her an atmosphere of delicious fragrance. Her hookha, sparkling with gems, stood on her left hand, the highly decorated

tube resting on a brocaded cushion. Her slippers, formed of the finest Bagdat tissue, worked in gold and embroidered with pearls, were placed beyond the rug upon a costly japan tray. A small circular mirror of burnished steel in a silver frame, and having a handle of the same metal, lay upon her lap. This she occasionally raised in order that she might ascertain if the henna had been properly applied to her eyelids, or if the various cosmetics employed in her toilet had produced their proper effects.

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

Ruzeea Begum was a woman of commanding

person, handsome but repelling, and exhibiting in her countenance the somewhat stern and decisive tone of her mind.

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

The slave was silent.

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

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

“Does the approbation of your sovereign give you no satisfaction?”

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

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

“My conduct will never be influenced by obligations however nobly conferred. I have a con-

science upon which is recorded, in characters stamped by the hand of Heaven, my rule of life—that I shall obey.”

Bameea hung down her head. She feared that this bold bearing might rouse the excitable temper of the haughty Queen; but Ruzeea Begum did not appear in the slightest degree disturbed, and answered with unusual mildness:

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

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

Rumours soon began to spread of the Sultana's criminal partiality for the Abyssinian slave. Some of the nobles expressed their disgust, and others retired from court. Within a month after

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

CHAPTER III.

THE Sultana was not long in discovering the mutual attachment which subsisted between the Ameer-ool-Omrah and Bameea. Her anger knew no bounds. She summoned the Abyssinian. He appeared before the presence of his sovereign, not without some suspicion of what was about to take place. Bameea stood behind the Queen. She saw by the scowl upon the royal brow that no good was intended towards the object of her love. The eye of Ruzeea Begum was restless, and her fingers trembled as she dipped them into the ewer of perfume that stood beside her. Her full expressive mouth was closed with a compression that indicated suppressed emotion, and the full undulating lip occasionally quivered. Her head was raised haughtily as the Ameer-ool-Omrah entered, and she fixed upon him her large penetrating eye with so searching a scrutiny that it seemed as if it would have reached the very core of his heart. He met her gaze with calm reve-

rence ; and having made his obeisance, stood before her with the unbending dignity of a man who has secured the approbation of his own conscience. For several moments the Sultana did not speak, and in her presence no one of course ventured to break the silence. Bameea trembled as she perceived the rising agitation of her sovereign, which was evidently increased by the unperturbed demeanour of the person whom she had summoned. Ruzeea Begum at length finding the ebullition rising to her throat, by a sudden effort suppressed it, and passing her hand gently across her brow, as if to dispel the cloud which for a moment overshadowed it, she said, in a tolerably calm tone,

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

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

“Death, if he slight a favour which it becomes his sovereign to grant and him to receive ; the praise of all good men, if he slight a favour that would degrade his sovereign, and dishonour him.”

“ You have treated your Queen with the basest ingratitude.”

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

The eye of Ruzeea Begum flashed fire.

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

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

“ Bear her from my sight,” said the angry Queen : “ henceforward I dispense with her services. But you,” turning to the Abyssinian, who stood before her in the same attitude of unruffled self-possession—“ you may look for punishment when

you least expect it. You have many enemies, and yet fancy yourself secure in the supremacy of your own valour; nevertheless, though you possessed the bravery of our holy prophet, and were endowed with a supernatural power of locomotion, there is no spot upon earth or in heaven where the vengeance of an insulted queen would not reach you."

"Hear me, before I quit your presence for the last time," said Yakoot solemnly. "I am threatened with your vengeance; it is right I should tell you that I shall do my best to anticipate and to repel it, whenever and wherever it may appear. From this moment I revoke my vows of fealty to the daughter of Shums-ood-Deen. When monarchs become tyrants, from that instant they cease to be accredited sovereigns, and lose all right to the allegiance of good men. Had I forfeited my claim to your respect by an act dishonourable to my name or title, I were content to suffer the heaviest penalty which human laws award to human offences; but, as my integrity has remained untarnished in your service, I feel that you have now heaped upon me a wrong of which I am not deserving, and from this moment I quit your presence as a foe."

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

That night he was passing towards his home, without a guard and unarmed. The street was dark and narrow. Towards the end there was a ruin used for the purposes of stalling cattle, where all the homeless and vagrant of the city congregated. He passed the ruin, but saw not a human soul, nor heard a sound. Musing upon the unpleasant occurrences of the morning, he walked leisurely onward. His heart was stirred to a quicker pulsation as he reflected upon what his beloved Bameea might undergo from the criminal jealousy of her royal mistress. On passing a house supported by a projecting buttress, the drapery of his loose dress caught in a fractured stone, and his progress was thus for the instant impeded. As he stopped, he fancied he heard the stealthy sound of footsteps, and, turning round, soon perceived three figures at a short distance cautiously approaching. They paused when they saw that he no longer advanced. The recollection of the Sultana's threat immediately struck upon his memory

like a flash of light. There was something so sinister in the movements of the three men that determined him to be upon his guard. He placed his back against the wall, having his left side protected by the projecting buttress. The men advanced, and upon reaching the place where the Ameer-ool-Omrah was stationed, sprang upon him simultaneously, and attempted to pierce him with their daggers. With a sweep of his muscular arm he levelled two of them to the earth, and raising his foot, impelled it with such quickness and force against the body of the third that he fell senseless. One of the assailants who had been struck down was almost instantly on his legs, and rushed forward with his dagger raised to strike; but, stumbling over his prostrate companion, the Abyssinian caught him in his arms, lifted him like a cushion in the air, and dashing him on the ground, left him there stunned. Releasing the weapon from the grasp of his fallen foe, he approached the other man who had been first prostrated by the sweep of his arm; buried in his heart the instrument with which he had just armed himself; and taking their turbans from the heads of the other two assassins, bound their hands and feet together, and in this painful

situation left them to the charities of the casual passenger.

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

The Queen affected great concern at what had occurred, and sent a messenger to Yakoot to congratulate him upon his escape from the murderous assault of his foes. He received her deputy

with cold formality, but did not even return a message. She was outrageous at her condescension being so openly slighted by a slave, as she still called the man whom her own voice had declared free, and whom she had raised to the dignity of Ameer-ool-Omrah. The smothered flame did not immediately burst forth, but, while it smouldered, gathered strength for a fiercer conflagration.

Yakoot, however, took no measures of precaution, although it was evident that the elements of mischief, were at work and rising into active combination. He resolved to counteract the perfidious designs of the Queen. The spirit of disaffection against her government had already begun to show itself. Her brother Beiram had won the affections of the troops, indignant at being under the dominion of a woman, and disgusted at the impure life which the sovereign was reputed to lead. Many of the nobles, too, were strongly disaffected against her; at the head of these was Mullik Altoonia, of the Toorky tribe of Chelgany, governor of Bituhnda, and tributary to the Queen. Yakoot, disgusted at Ruzeea Begum's rancour towards him, fomented the disaffection of that powerful noble by pointing out the flagrant enormities of the Sultana's government;

and, as a measure of precaution, secretly joined the councils of the rebels. The hostility of Ruzeea Begum knew no bounds, and she determined that he should expiate with his life the crime of having slighted her favour.

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

It was too evident now that his life was aimed at by secret enemies; and, without expressing his suspicions, but affecting to look upon the mur-

derous attempt of the morning as a mere accident, he resolved immediately to quit the city and retire to Bituhnda. The Sultana's government was becoming more and more odious every day, and it was clear to him that she had employed assassins in two several instances to take away secretly the life which she dared not openly attack. On that night he quitted the capital, and joined Mullik Altoonia, with several of the disaffected nobles. The moment Ruzeea Begum heard of their flight, she placed herself at the head of a considerable army, and, meeting the rebels half-way between Delhi and Bituhnda, a battle ensued, in which the royal forces were defeated by the conduct of Yakoot, who commanded the disaffected, and the Queen was made prisoner. She was sent to the fort of Bituhnda to Mullik Altoonia, who, being seduced by her beauty and affected distress, shortly after married her. Upon this, the Abyssinian retired in disgust to Delhi, and engaged in the service of Prince Beiram, who had been elevated to the throne.

CHAPTER IV.

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

The recollection of the fierce determination with which Ruzeea Begum had sought his life, was

incentive sufficiently strong to urge the general to devote his talents and energies to a cause which impelled him by a double motive—retribution, and a desire to rid the people among whom he had been naturalized from the dominion of a tyrant. A still stronger motive remained behind. Upon his return to the capital, Yakoot discovered that the late favourite had been removed from the palace, and knowing the Sultana's implacable passions, he had everything to fear for Bameea's safety. He had been able to ascertain nothing satisfactory respecting her, and his apprehensions were roused in proportion to the suspense which he was forced to endure. It was a sad thing to be divided from the object of his affections through the criminal passions of a woman whose power enabled her to be cruel, and whose malice urged her to exercise that power.

Although the Sultana was at a distance from Delhi, it soon became evident that neither had her vengeance slumbered, nor was she without tools to execute her will. The secret assassin once more attempted the life of the detested Abyssinian, who again frustrated the sanguinary intention. Finding that she was still so active in putting measures into operation for his destruction, he de-

terminated to march without a moment's delay, and by a decisive battle settle the question of her enmity for ever.

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

When Ruzeea Begum quitted Delhi on her journey towards Bituhnda, she took with her the unhappy Bameea, whom she treated with extreme rigour upon discovering the attachment which existed between her and the Abyssinian. She had confined her a prisoner in an apartment of the palace, and allowed her only the most homely food, debarring her even from the indulgence of an attendant, and exposing her to every mortification which her inveterate malice could suggest.

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

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

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

The Sultana struck her hands together, and several attendants entered, who were ordered to conduct the trembling Bameea to prison. She entered it with a painful apprehension of what the

jealousy of the Begum might prompt her to put in operation against the Abyssinian, towards whom it was evident that the gall of her malice was overflowing.

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

Bameea thought of escape, but this appeared impracticable. As an almost forlorn hope, she

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

The poor girl now abandoned herself to the strong impulse of despair. To her surprise she was visited by the Begum, who upbraided her with having attempted to corrupt the woman admitted to her apartment. "There is no guilt," said Bameea, with earnestness, "in using any means to escape the inflictions of tyranny. All things are lawful to evade the oppression of those who make their passions the medium of their actions. Your cruelty has rendered my life a bane,

and I am prepared to relinquish it whenever your malice shall suggest the sacrifice.”

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

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

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

“Never!” cried the agitated girl with energy.

“ You may keep me lingering through a life of wretchedness within a dungeon, but you cannot rob me of my soul’s freedom. My love will only expire with my death, and I will never purchase my liberty at the sacrifice you demand.”

The Sultana’s eyes flashed fire, and she quitted her victim without uttering a word; but there was a volume in her glance. That very evening Bameea’s food was changed. A curry was placed before her which had been prepared, as it appeared, with more than usual care. She eyed it apprehensively. Suspicions of the darkest description instantly took possession of her mind. She could not forget the Begum’s glance of fury as she quitted her prison: the curry, therefore, remained untouched; for though death would have been a welcome visitant, yet she resolved to avoid any but that which nature brings, so long as the choice was left her. A small quantity of the homely food upon which she had been accustomed to feed since her captivity, remained, and upon this she relieved the demands of nature.

That night was passed in sleepless agony. She looked forward to the dawn with a presentiment of terror. Phantoms passed before her mind which almost convulsed her frame to madness.

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

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

Historical Summary.

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

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

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

Heg. 685. The king's son Mahomed, a prince of great promise, was sent against the Moguls who had invaded Moulton. Having defeated them in a pitched battle, and being too eager in the pursuit of them, as they fled before his victorious arms, he was beset by a party which lay in ambush, and slain. The old king, now in his eightieth year, never recovered this shock, which threw him into a melancholy, and he died shortly after in the twenty-second year of his reign. His 1286.

- A. D. grandson Keikobad, immediately ascended the throne without opposition.
1288. Heg. 687. The king, having excited the disgust of his subjects, was cut off by assassins as he lay sick at Kelookery. The ruffians found him lying on his bed in a dying state, deserted by his attendants. Having beat out his brains with bludgeons, they rolled him up in the bed-clothes, and flung him out of the window into the river. Julal-ood-Deen Feroze Khiljy, one of his ministers, who had been the cause of the late king's assassination, ascended the musnud, and was cut off by the treachery of his own nephew Alla-ood-Deen, after a reign of seven years and some months.
1297. Heg. 696. Alla-ood-Deen Khiljy was raised to the musnud after some opposition. His first care was to secure the favour of the troops; and after having defeated the queen-dowager, and the Prince Kudder Chan, he ascended the throne in the ruby palace.
1297. Heg. 697. Kowla Devy, wife of the Prince of Guzerat, fell into the hands of the king's brother. She was a woman of remarkable wit, beauty, and accomplishments, by which Alla-ood Deen was so much captivated, that he took her into his harem. This year was rendered memorable by the death of Zuffur Chan, the greatest general of his time. His bravery became so proverbial among the Moguls, who had so frequently felt the force of his arm, that when their horses started it was usual among them to ask if they saw the ghost of Zuffur Chan. His death was a severe loss to Alla-ood-Deen, who, however, feared him, and therefore expressed no regret at his death.
1299. Heg. 699. Rookn Khan, Alla-ood-Deen's nephew and brother-in-law, having aspired to the throne, attempted to assassinate the king while he was enjoying

the pleasures of the chase. Alla-ood-Deen was pierced A. D.
by two arrows, and he lay on the ground insensible. The Prince Rookn Chan drew his sword, and ran to cut off the king's head; but being told that he was quite dead, he deemed it unnecessary to sever the head from the body. Proceeding immediately to the camp, he was proclaimed king; but Alla-ood-Deen, recovering his senses, appeared in his capital, was welcomed by the citizens, and the usurper immediately deposed and executed.

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

Heg. 704. Ray Ruttun Sein, Rajah of Chittore, 1304.
escaped from Delhi. Alla-ood-Deen, having received an extravagant account of one of the rajah's daughters, agreed to grant the father his release, upon condition of his giving up this daughter for the king's harem. The rajah, tired of a very rigorous captivity, reluctantly consented to this odious proposal; but when his family heard of it they concerted measures for poisoning the princess, in order to save the reputation of their house. But the rajah's daughter adopted a stratagem, by which she obtained her father's release, and preserved her own honour. Having selected a number of faithful adherents, she concealed them in litters, used by women only when they travel in the East, and proceeded to Delhi with her ordinary retinue. Arriving at night, by the king's especial permission the litters were allowed to be car-

- A. D. ried into the prison, supposing they contained the
1304. female attendants of the princess. No sooner however were they within the walls than the armed men, leaping from the litters, put the king's guard to the sword, and carried off the rajah.
1306. Heg. 706. Dewul Devy, daughter of the beautiful Kowla Devy, fell into the hands of one of the king's generals, and was brought to Delhi. In a few days after her arrival, the beauty of Dewul Devy inflamed the heart of the Prince Khizr Chan, to whom she was eventually given in marriage.
1309. Heg. 709. Mullik Kafoor defeated the allied rajahs, who had combined to make him raise the siege of Wurungole, which he carried by assault after a vigorous siege of several months, and returned with his army and immense treasure to Delhi. On his approach to the city, the king himself came out to receive him near the Budaon gate, where the conqueror laid all the spoils at his royal master's feet.
1310. Heg. 710. Mullik Kafoor defeated and took prisoner Bilal Dew, Rajah of the Carnatic.
- Heg. 711. This year was rendered memorable by the massacre of the newly-converted Mahomedan Moguls. Fifteen thousand lay dead in the streets of Delhi in one day, and all their wives and children were enslaved.
1312. Heg. 712. The Rajah of Dewgur was inhumanly put to death by Mullik Kafoor, with the consent of Alla-ood-Deen.
1316. Heg. 716. Alla-ood-Deen died, after a reign of twenty years and some months, not without suspicion of having been poisoned by Mullik Kafoor, who aimed at getting the reins of government into his own hands.

The Rajpoot Marriage.

The Rajpoot Marriage.

CHAPTER I.

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

Jaya was a young Rajpootni now only in her fifteenth year ; but, though so young, she had attained the perfect maturity of womanhood. Her form was slight, but every muscle had its due and exquisite proportion, and the whole compact was harmonized to the perfect roundness and undulations of beauty. Her limbs were small, but exquisitely moulded ; and whenever she spoke, every member appeared to exhibit a sympathetic energy, which made the gazer admire with how many modes of expression, both silent and vocal, nature had gifted this rare Hindoo. Her eyes were of the deepest black, but so soft amid their radiance, that it seemed as if they had looked upon the things of paradise, and borrowed the celestial blandness which everywhere reigns in that region of supernal repose. Her skin had the rich blooming brown of the ripe hazel-nut, and under it the sanguine streams circulated with a healthy freedom, that carried life in its free young impulses through ten thousand channels, over every part of her exquisite frame. The mouth appeared as if it had been kissed by the lips of a cherub, and had stolen its gentle delicate bloom, over which her breath came like an exhalation. She was beautiful and tender as the mother dove, yet inheriting all the firmness of

her race, which could both endure and act when the energies requisite for endurance and action were demanded.

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

As the cavalcade proceeded, a violent storm came on, and there was no village or hamlet near. The covering of the hackery was very slight, and therefore afforded but an imperfect protection

against such a mischance. The rain began to fall heavily, and the distant lightning to gleam, followed by the low muttering thunder which rapidly approached. A ponderous mass of vapour, of a dull slate colour, rolled heavily onward, and very soon excluded the sun, producing a gloom as deep as twilight, and investing every object with the same dusky tint. The rain at length fell in torrents, and the cloud above poured from its dark womb a stream of fire, which burst through the shower, and was reflected by the large falling drops in ten thousand vivid scintillations. At every flash the whole region round was flooded with a blaze of ghastly light.

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

The beautiful Jaya heeded not the storm; but her women crowded more closely towards their mistress, hid their heads in their hands, and gave expression to fearful lamentations. The tempest heeded not their terrors, but raged with redoubled fury. The frail covering of the vehicle

in which they rode was soon soaked through, and the rain was beginning to drip upon the heads of those within. Palampores were spread over it, which seemed, for a time, to keep out the intruding water ; but they soon became saturated, and the rain at length forced its way so copiously into the hackery, that it was found expedient to stop and seek shelter somewhere from its pitiless fury.

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

The entrance to the cave was lofty and rugged, the sides having been broken away, and the angles splintered, as if great manual violence had been employed to disfigure what the severe labour of man had originally executed with no little atten-

tion to nicety of proportion and simplicity of effect. Dilapidated as it was, the portal was not devoid of beauty ; but without staying to enjoy the pleasure of admiration, the whole party passed anxiously into the cavern. Fires were immediately kindled, and many noxious reptiles and large bats ejected, before the place was considered safe, even as a temporary refuge from the storm, which continued to rage with undiminished violence.

Towards evening the rain ceased, but it was then considered by the travellers too late to renew their journey, and Jaya was content to pass the night within the gloomy cave where she and her attendants had found sanctuary. The hackery was wheeled in, the bullocks unyoked, and the lovely Rajpootni entered the vehicle, round which the drapery was closely drawn, where she resigned herself to repose, her attendants lying upon rugs round a large fire which had been kindled in the centre of the cavern. The apartment was of considerable magnitude, hollowed out of the mountain, exhibiting a square area of about sixty feet on all sides, and five yards high. No light was admitted but through the door. The original purpose of the excavation was mere matter of conjecture, but it had evidently not been lately the resort of

human beings. The ceiling was crowded with large bats, measuring nearly four feet from the extremities of the wings, having heads like small foxes, and bodies larger than rats. They clung to the roof of the chamber; but, scared by the flames which had been kindled underneath, frequently dropped into them, scattering the fire in every direction in their fierce struggles to escape, to the great peril of the travellers. When seized, they bit the venturous hand to the bone, and thus greatly disturbed the repose of the Rajpootni's followers. These creatures, however, were not the most formidable disturbers of their rest.

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

lately subdued, and a surprise was seriously apprehended.

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

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

"We are under the protection of One," said

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

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

The officer who commanded, ordered them to halt just within the entrance, seeing that the place was occupied. The fire had been nearly extinguished the moment the approach of an enemy was announced, so that there was only a very imperfect light emitted by the rapidly expiring

embers of the fire which had been kindled in the centre of the cave. The officer stepped forward, and raking the still glowing ashes together, excited them into a gentle flame with his breath, lit a torch, and looking inquisitively round the gloomy chamber, said to the chief of Jaya's escort, "Whom have we here?" pointing to the hackery in which the lovely Hindoo still sat, secluded from the profane gaze of her Mahomedan foe.

The Hindoo was silent.

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

"A woman."

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

Saying this, he laid his hands rudely upon the curtains of the hackery, and attempted to draw them aside, when the Hindoo, angry at this violation of a woman's sanctuary, seized him by the arm, and attempted to drag him from the spot. The enraged Mussulmaun instantly drew a short sword and cut him down. Jaya, hearing the

stroke and the groan which succeeded it, sprang from her place of refuge, and stood before her enemy in the peerless eminence of her beauty.

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

CHAPTER II.

THE Mahomedan officer had been quite struck with amazement at the sight of the beautiful Rajpootni, and he bent the knee with gallant homage. He was, however, delighted to find that the very object whom his sovereign was desirous of obtaining, had fallen into his hands. The charms of Jaya had been heard of at Delhi, and the king was anxious to behold the celebrated daughter of his prisoner, but she had hitherto eluded his emissaries. Her having now so opportunely crossed the path of one of his officers, was a subject of congratulation to the latter, as he had reason to expect that he should not only receive his sovereign's approbation, but be advanced to some more lucrative post than that which he now enjoyed. These reflections passed rapidly through his mind, as he gazed upon the transcendant beauty of his captive.

“Lady,” he said, “this is a fortunate meeting. We have been looking for you daily. Your presence at Delhi will be welcome to the king, and no

doubt to your father, who will be restored to liberty so soon as you are placed in the harem of our munificent sovereign."

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

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

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

"We will discuss this question further on the

morrow," said the Mussulmaun, with sinister courtesy. "Meanwhile you must make up your mind to pass the night in good, if disagreeable company."

"Then I am to consider myself your prisoner?"

"As you will, lady."

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

The unhappy Jaya was the only one among them whose eye-lids sleep did not visit. She had now a melancholy prospect before her. She should probably see her father indeed, but under what circumstances?—he in captivity, and she in the harem of a Mahomedan prince! The thought was agony. Not only the prejudices in which she had been reared taught her gentle soul to revolt

from an alliance with a man by whom the idols which she had been instructed to adore were considered mere senseless wood and stone; but she had a tenderer motive for shrinking from a union which would render her life a burden, and her thoughts a torture. She could not bear to think that fine link of association should be snapped which had combined two hearts in the willing fetters of a most holy love, and the dews of terror moistened her clear brow as she thought upon the probable issue of this melancholy day. She could not rest. The night stole on sullenly and slow, and when the first grey tint of morning pierced through the darkness in which the cavern was wrapped, Jaya was still awake. She looked under the curtains of her prison-house, and saw all around her sunk into profound repose, save the stern sentinels at the portal who kept reluctant watch and stalked to and fro like the ghosts of departed warriors.

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

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

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

While these necessary preliminaries to their

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

The order was given to march. The bullocks were immediately harnessed to the hackery, and the party quitted the cavern. The Hindoos marched in couples, having been previously disarmed, a Mahomedan being placed on either side of every couple as a guard. The Rajpootni's vehicle was so strongly guarded as to remove all chance of escape. Before it marched a detachment of six men armed, and behind it a similar number. The bullocks, uneasy at the clattering of arms and the unusual restraint imposed upon them,—for the Hindoo driver had been replaced by a Mussulmaun, who applied the lash with considerable severity,—

became restive, and at length refused altogether to proceed. The more they were urged by the application of the whip, the more they kicked and plunged, and they were at length obliged to be unyoked and led forward. In this dilemma the leader of the Mahomedans approached the hackery, and without removing the curtains addressed himself to his beautiful captive and said—

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

“Perhaps,” said Jaya composedly, “you are not aware that we Rajpoots never hesitate at dying when urged to do that against which our hearts recoil and our principles revolt. I am willing to bear the shocks of destiny so long as they do not urge me beyond the boundary line of my own conscience; but no earthly power shall force me to an

act which that conscience forbids. I am a woman, it is true, and a weak one; but know that the weakest Rajpoot that ever breathed would not shrink from death to escape degradation. I tell you now solemnly, in the ears of Him who knows all secrets, that should you force me from the vehicle, you shall not bear me alive from this spot. I have the means of destruction which you know not of,* and will employ them the instant you attempt to force me to an act that, to me, would be an act of pollution."

The Mussulmaun was too well aware of the fierce determination of her race, when urged to desperation, not to fear that she would do as she had threatened if compulsion were used to enforce obedience; he therefore replied with mild civility,

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

"Then I embrace the first alternative; here shall I remain until you are in a condition to pro-

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

ceed. Do as you will, my resolution is taken, and you may as well attempt to give rotation to those stars which are fixed in the everlasting firmament, as strive to divert me from my unalterable purpose. You have heard my resolve, and I now claim from your courtesy no further parley. I would be left to the best consolations I can derive from my own thoughts."

The Mahomedan, seeing that it would not be a wise stroke of policy to push matters to extremity, gave orders that the bullocks should be again yoked to the hackery, hoping, as they had been released from the harness for some time, that they would proceed quietly. He was, however, disappointed. The moment the refractory animals were urged forward, they showed their determination not to proceed, and commenced snorting and kicking with great fury. No coaxing could induce them to advance, and the application of the whip only seemed to exasperate their obstinacy. They were sleek and well fed, having been accustomed to gentle treatment; the rough driving, therefore, of the stranger by no means suited their wayward tempers. The man, becoming angry at this determined opposition of the rebellious cattle, began to whip them with great severity, under the notion

of illustrating practically the dominancy of man over the brute ; but in this instance his illustration was the reverse of beneficial, for it recoiled upon himself, to his extreme annoyance and mortification. The more ardently he applied the whip, the more vehemently the oxen plunged ; and their violence at length became so great that they overturned the hackery, from which the mortified Jaya and her two women were precipitated with considerable force. The calm but indignant Rajpootni instantly rose, dropped a veil over her mantling face, and, reproaching the officer with having purposely ejected her from the vehicle, expressed her determination not to advance another step with the Mahomedans.

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER III.

JUST as the party with their lovely captive had turned from a narrow path into an extensive plain, they perceived a large body of horsemen in full career towards them. The Mahomedan instantly halted his men, and forming a hollow square, in the centre of which he placed his prisoners, calmly waited the onset. It soon became evident that the strangers were a squadron of Rajpoot cavalry. They swept across the plain like a tempest, headed by a youthful warrior, who rode a beautiful white Arab, every vein of which might be traced through its skin as it pawed the ground, when its rider halted to array his troop for the onset of death. When his order of battle was made, he sent a trooper to summon the Mahomedans to surrender themselves prisoners or abide the issue of an encounter, in which they must look for extermination at the point of the sword. This summons was received by the adverse party with shouts of defiance, and the onslaught commenced with ter-

rible energy on the part of the assailants, who were received with great firmness by their foes.

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

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

Jaya had stood in the midst of the carnage gazing with an anxious eye upon the scene of death; and although in the leader of her rescuers she traced the well-known features of one who was as dear to her as the first-born to its yearning mother, she uttered not a cry, but calculated the

probable issue of the contest with a throbbing heart, whilst her outward demeanour appeared perfectly undisturbed by any inward emotion. Jeipal leaped from his horse, which he left to its own freedom, and sprang towards his beloved.

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

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

The Hindoo prisoners being now set at liberty repaired to a grove of trees, under which they squatted themselves, chewed their betel-nut and chunam, smoked, and flung little balls of rice down their throats until filled almost to the uvula; then

rising with the greatest apathy, as if nothing had happened to interrupt their composure, snapped their joints, adjusted their turbans, and declared themselves ready to proceed. The bullocks were once more yoked to the hackery, and, being driven by one with whose voice they were familiar and accustomed to obey, they went leisurely forward without the slightest reluctance. Jeipal rode beside the vehicle, the curtains of which, in accordance with Eastern usage, were still kept down; but the lovers found no difficulty in carrying on their conversation through them. The Rajpootni had now less time to think of the sorrows arising from her father's captivity, her mind being occupied by one to whom she ever lent a willing ear; her countenance therefore recovered its brightness and her voice its vivacity.

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

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

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

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

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

“You go on an enterprise of danger.”

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

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

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

“Go, Jeipal, I would not withhold thee from

such deeds as constitute man's nobility. Bear my love with thee."

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

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

Shortly after the rescue of the Chittore Rajah's daughter, as already detailed, the king ordered Ray Ruttun Sein, who had now been some weeks

in confinement, to be brought before him. The Rajpoot entered the imperial presence with a lofty deportment, and stood before the Mahomedan sovereign, awaiting the royal communication.

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

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

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

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

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

“ I am.”

“ At what price ?”

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

“ You have a daughter ?”

“ Well !”

“ I would make her the partner of my throne.”

“ Proceed.”

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

“ If this is the generosity of princes, such can be no longer a virtue ; it must therefore be a virtue to despise it. To be the pander of kings is no honour ; but for a father to bring pollution upon his child is the most flagrant enormity.”

“ Then you refuse the offer of liberty ?”

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

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

The Rajah was conducted back to the strong apartment in which he had been confined since his captivity, but on the following day he was

removed to one of the dungeons of the state prison.

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

and rigid self-restriction. He was brave when the impulse of the moment roused his energies ; but as soon as the impulse subsided, the strength of his passions overcame him, and he sank into the imbecility of the mere sensualist. His bearing had been bold and determined before the king, whose prisoner he had become ; but no sooner was he cast amid the dungeon's gloom, than the strong bias of his nature prevailed, and he became irresolute, querulous, and despairing.

Every day he felt the rigours of confinement more and more irksome, and at length thought that he had been imprudent in so resolutely opposing the king's will. He began to persuade himself that a dutiful daughter should make any sacrifice for the advantage of her parent, and under this impression proceeded to argue that she ought, if called upon, to sacrifice her honour to his comfort. Besides, to be the object of a sovereign's affection was not a thing to be regarded lightly. The political influence of Alla-ood-Deen might, by such an alliance with him as that monarch proposed, place the petty Rajah of Chittore at the head of the princes of his country. Such an alliance might be the stepping-stone to distinctions that should raise his family to the highest elevation

of temporal distinction. After indulging in similar reasonings at different times, he finally made up his mind that he had been too rash in so peremptorily rejecting the proposal of the Mahomedan sovereign, and determined to let him know, at the earliest opportunity, the change which had passed over his thoughts like a pestilential exhalation, and that he was disposed to concur in the king's wishes. Having come to this determination, he lay down upon his rug and slept.

CHAPTER IV.

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

Having formed his plans, he obtained an interview with the keeper of the Rajah's prison, and represented to him that he was anxious to be introduced to Ray Ruttun Sein, who had some jewels which he was anxious to dispose of, and which the fictitious Jew declared himself ready to purchase. In order to induce the keeper of the prison to accede to his proposal, the counterfeit Israelite offered to give him ten per cent. upon the value of the purchase, which he said would

probably exceed a lac of rupees. The rapacious functionary agreed to admit the pretended dealer to the Rajah's prison, provided the door were not closed during the transaction. This was finally acceded to: it was therefore arranged between the prison official and Jeipal, that the former should remain in sight, though not within hearing, while the latter agreed upon the terms of sale with the captive prince.

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

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

"Gently; Jeipal stands before you."

"Jeipal! how came you hither?"

"We have but a short time for parley. I have obtained admission in the disguise of a Jew, and

under pretence of purchasing your jewels. My object in coming hither is to apprise you of my being near, and to ascertain the cause of the king's severity."

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

"We must be revenged."

"How?"

"I come not here to be an idle spectator of the Mahomedan's tyranny. You may yet be free. His death would put an end to your captivity."

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

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

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

"Never!"

At this moment the keeper of the prison perceiving Jeipal's energy, and suspecting that something more than mere bargaining was passing

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

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

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

It was announced that the king, accompanied by all the nobles of his court, would, on the following week, proceed on a hunting excursion to a

forest within about eleven coss, or twenty-two English miles, of the capital. This was an announcement which made Jeipal's heart leap within him. His plan was instantly formed. Hope danced before him like a young fair cherub from the skies, and he hailed the phantom as the harbinger of his future bliss.

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

The chase began, and continued for three days, during which period hundreds of animals of all

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

Whilst the king was thus engaged, an arrow entered his body from behind; and this was followed by another, so rapidly discharged, that he fell forward upon his face before he could discover from what quarter the treachery proceeded. He lay for some time insensible, and, when he recovered, found that his wounds had been stanch'd by some Pariahs, who had their miserable abode in the jungle, and who discovered him insensible and

weltering in his blood. With their assistance he crawled to one of the huts of these wretched outcasts, where he remained several days, until his wounds were sufficiently healed to enable him to move. He was afraid to make the Pariahs acquainted with his rank, lest the assassins who had aimed at his life should be still near the spot, and his wretched benefactors be induced to betray him. His horse having been removed, he could not stir until his wounds were in a state to enable him to walk.

When it was found that the king did not return to the capital, the citizens made lamentation for him as for one dead, and had already raised to the throne his nephew Rookn Chan. The customary prayers were read from the Koran; the Khootba was formally pronounced in the name of Rookn Chan, and the public criers were ordered to proclaim his accession. The prince, now descending from the throne, proceeded towards the harem; but the chief eunuch with his guard stopped him at the door, protesting that until he showed him the head of Alla-ood-Deen, the prince should not enter while he had life to oppose him.

Meanwhile Alla-ood-Deen, having quitted the abode of the hospitable Pariahs, walked to a neigh-

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

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

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

“Our faith forbids such a union.”

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

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

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

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

days she shall be delivered to your protection. It is a parent's severest sacrifice."

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

CHAPTER V.

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

in order to escape the miseries with which she was threatened.

“Nay,” said the beautiful girl, “it is time enough to die when no other means of escape remain; but why should I leave those who are so dear to me, so long as I am enabled to continue with them,—and why should I seek death as a release from misery yet at a distance, while the means of enjoyment are so near? I promise you I will perish rather than submit to pollution; nevertheless, I will live so long as my beloved Jeipal can be by to protect me with a husband’s arm, and to cheer me with a husband’s blessing.”

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

On the day appointed, Brahmins poured in

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

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

The preliminary arrangements being made, the officiating Brahmin prayed that Vishnu and Lakshmi would descend into the two large vessels

* The Hindoo Hymen.

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

After having received the necessary instructions, the paternal representative put upon his niece's palm a number of plantains, together with a small coin of gold. He next placed the right-hand of the bride within that of the bridegroom. The mother now advanced, and having poured water upon their hands, the young couple were

finally united. The Brahmin then took the tali, or marriage symbol—equivalent to the ring in Christian marriages—presented it first to the gods, then to the bride and bridegroom, and finally to the guests, all of whom put their hands upon it. This being concluded, the tali was given to the husband, who tied it round the bride's neck; which completed the ceremony.

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

it with the rice, repeated several prayers during the process. Now filling both his hands with rice from a large platter, he flung it first over the husband's shoulders, and next over those of the wife. All the company present immediately rose, and then the same ceremony was repeated. This, among Hindoos, is the universal matrimonial benediction.

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

Jaya, "to rescue your parent from that odious thralldom to which he is likely to fall a victim if not speedily released, and, whatever the hazard, it has now become my duty to risk my life in securing his freedom."

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

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

"In the veranda with her happy Jeipal."

"Are you certain?"

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

"What think you of this marriage?"

"It is an ominous union. She must not live. The Mahomedan will never relinquish his desire to obtain her while she is alive, and our house

shall not be degraded whilst we have the means of obviating it."

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

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

"But how is their death to be accomplished?"

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

Jaya was so agitated at what she heard, that she could scarcely support herself, and fearing lest the base plotters against her life should enter her apartment, she got under a small charpoy* which stood in a corner, having first thrown upon it a palampore, that hung down over the side, and

* A bed-frame.

thus effectually concealed her. It was a fortunate thing that she took this precaution; for her uncle, in order to be sure that his conversation with his wife had not been overheard, looked into the room, but seeing nobody, and not suspecting that any one could be hidden under the charpoy, he quitted the apartment with his partner in iniquity, both being perfectly satisfied that their murderous plan was a secret which could transpire only in its consummation.

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

her proposal of obviating the menaced destruction, which was as follows.

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

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

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

“They next caused two tents to be set up at the distance of a bow-shot the one from the other, the doors or entrances being placed exactly oppo-

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

tent whatever animal the company chose to name, and before their eyes set them to fight in the manner above described.”*

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

Jeipal began to eat of the mess before him in order to give encouragement to his wife's relation, who was placed by his side. The latter unsuspectingly ate of the poisoned food, and in a very short time had consumed the whole contents of the fatal dish. Jeipal, meanwhile, was not backward,

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

but followed the example of Jaya's uncle, and soon saw the bottom of his platter. Jaya had not tasted hers, which being remarked by her aunt, the latter pressed her with extreme urgency to eat, but her solicitations being firmly resisted, she expressed great anger. "Is it thus you serve your guests, to refuse partaking of your own wedding banquet, as if you were not willing that they should enjoy it, or begrudged what has been provided?"

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

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

"I know it has been prepared for me, and therefore decline it; but to show you how little selfish I am in partaking of anything especially prepared for me, I resign it to you with the greatest cheerfulness—pray eat it, and I shall be much better satisfied than taking the indulgence myself."

The woman shrank back with a consciousness that she had been detected. In a short time the poison began to operate upon her husband. His cheeks became blanched—his lips closed with a convulsive compression—his whole body stiffened,

and he fell upon the floor. The poison was of so potent a nature that within a few minutes he was a corpse. Considerable confusion prevailed; the body was removed; but such is the characteristic apathy of the Hindoo, that the banquet was concluded without further interruption. No inquiry was made as to the cause of the man's death. It was looked upon as a sudden visitation for some secret crime. No pity was expressed for the sufferer, but to one it was an event to be deeply deplored. The wife had the awful prospect of expiring amid the flames upon the body of her deceased husband.

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

The day of sacrifice dawned. The noisy tom-toms and harsh brazen trumpets warned her of the solemn obligation which she was called upon to fulfil. The shouts of thousands of mad enthusiasts rent the air; but she was reluctant to answer

their acclamations by exhibiting herself as a willing oblation. The Brahmins, perceiving her fears, administered opium in such quantities that she soon became stupified ; still, nothing could remove her extreme horror of death.

The opium at length took such an effect upon her, that she scarcely knew what she did, and was finally induced to accompany the Brahmins to the pile. The sight of it renewed her terrors. After a while the effects of the opiate had somewhat subsided, and when within the area in which the fatal pyre had been reared, she positively refused to ascend it ; but it was now too late, — she had gone too far to retract. The Brahmins surrounded her ; — the tomtoms began their din, — the trumpets their clamour, and she was forced upon the fatal platform. Fire was instantly applied. She raised herself amid the flames, but was forced back by the officiating Brahmins with long bamboos. Her hair streamed upon the breeze — her arms were a moment raised with the violent action of agony — her eyes almost started from their sockets, but the flames rose higher and fiercer. Being struck in the temple with a bamboo, she fell backward into the devouring element, and was no more seen.

CHAPTER VI.

THE only thing that now remained to complete the happiness of Jaya was her father's liberty. It happened about this time that Ray Ruttun Sein was taken alarmingly ill. Fearing that his former summons might not be attended to, and more than ever anxious to obtain his freedom, he sent to his daughter to entreat her to visit him that he might see her before he died. Alla-ood-Deen had promised the Rajah, that the moment the beautiful Jaya appeared within the walls of his capital her father should be restored to liberty. The latter evidently preferred his own personal ease to his daughter's honour ; nevertheless she determined to accede to his wishes, but at the same time resolved that her presence in Delhi should be the means of her parent's escape. In reply to his communication she wrote, that she should shortly appear at the Mahomedan capital, in obedience to his and the king's wishes, and when she had made the necessary preparations for her journey she would

let him know the day on which he might look for her arrival. She had devised a plan for her father's escape, which, with the concurrence of her husband, she prepared to put into practice without further delay. Alla-ood-Deen was beyond measure elated when he heard that the lovely Jaya had at length consented to become the pride and glory of his harem. He immediately ordered the rigours of her father's captivity to be abated. He was removed to a commodious apartment where every thing he required was provided, and his disorder began gradually to subside. The king went to visit him in person, but Ray Ruttun Sein could not meet cordially the man who had treated him with such wanton indignity, and forced him to an act against which his conscience rebelled.

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

“I had rather be supreme in my own little principality than second even under so great a sovereign as he who sits on the throne of Delhi. All I desire is my freedom, and I only regret the

nature of the ransom which your tyranny forces me to pay.”

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

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

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

“She had been pledged to him from infancy.”

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

“Our destinies are not dependent upon the will of kings. It has been hers to marry Jeipal, and all the powers of your extensive regality cannot

sunder the mystical link which unites them. You may separate them from each other, but that conjunction of soul in which they are mutually joined is beyond your control—you cannot annul it.”

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

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

Alla-ood-Deen quitted his presence with some lurking apprehensions that it was the Rajpoot's intention still to evade his demands; he was therefore daily urgent to know the day which his daughter had fixed for her appearance at his capital. A week elapsed, but no communication had been made by the wife of Jeipal, and her father began to suspect that she had no intention of fulfilling her promise. On the following morning, however, he received a written communication from her, in which she stated that on the tenth day following she should be at Delhi; at the same time detailing to him a plan which she had devised, in concurrence with her husband, in order to effect his escape. He was delighted with the scheme, and pre-

pared to advance its accomplishment to the best of his power. The idea of escape from the odious thralldom to which he had been subjected, gave such an impulse to his spirit that he soon shook off the lethargy of disease, and within a week was perfectly restored to his usual state of health.

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

Ray Ruttun Sein waited with impatience for the day when he should welcome his daughter's arrival at the Mahomedan capital. Alla-ood-Deen was no less impatient to behold the woman to whom report had ascribed such singular personal endowments. His harem was fitted up for her

reception with extraordinary splendour; and he lavished his treasure with a profuse liberality in preparing to welcome this Hindoo beauty in a manner worthy of his princely munificence.

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

There was a strong guard within the court. No sooner were the litters deposited, than the curtains of the principal one were drawn aside, and Jaya stepped out. Giving a signal, an armed warrior started from every litter; then, putting

arms into the hands of their bearers, they attacked the guard, whom in a few minutes they slew to a man. Jeipal, who headed the party, now rushed into the building, cutting down all who opposed his progress until he reached the apartment of Ray Ruttun Sein, the locality of which had been previously indicated to him by the Rajah, in reply to his daughter's last communication. Ray Ruttun Sein was already prepared for the rescue. Hearing the noise caused by his son-in-law's approach, he opened the door of his chamber, and met him at the threshold. Jaya followed close behind, and springing into her father's arms embraced him passionately.

"Come," said Jeipal, "we have not a moment to lose. The alarm will be given, and a detachment sent to reinforce the guard outside the gate. Horses await us at a village a coss from the city. We must fly for our lives, for the pursuit will no doubt be hot."

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

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

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

of the fugitives. There were no bounds to his rage, and his violence increased to such a degree that he was obliged to be tied down to his bed.

Meanwhile the Rajah and his followers pursued their flight, and halted only for a few minutes until they fancied themselves beyond the reach of pursuit. They had ridden forty coss by noon the following day. Their horses being somewhat lamed by the severity of their journey, they were obliged to rest for the day ; but fancying there was no longer anything to apprehend from pursuit, they fairly congratulated themselves upon their escape.

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

There was a bright moonlight. About two hours before midnight one of Jeipal's scouts apprised him of the approach of pursuers ;—he had calculated their number at about eighty men. These would no doubt be followed by speedy reinforcements. There was no time for hesitation. Jeipal placed six of his followers in ambush at the base of the

hill, with orders to keep the enemy in check, while Jaya and her father pursued their flight with all speed. They again mounted their horses, somewhat recruited by their day's rest and good feeding, and were off towards Chittore with the swiftness of thought. Jeipal, having seen them safe on their journey, descended the hill with the rest of his little band, commanding them to follow within reach of a signal. As he arrived at the ambuscade where his six men, armed with bows and arrows, were concealed, he perceived the enemy in full career across the plain. The moon was in mid heaven, pouring her soft and tender light upon the advancing squadron. As it neared the bottom of the mountain, Jeipal discharged an arrow and shot the leader dead. Another and another followed; and before the party could imagine that they were assailed by a secret foe, ten of them were either killed or disabled. This checked their career; they halted, and retreated a couple of hundred yards beyond the ambush.

After a short pause they advanced at full gallop, and reached the base of the hill in a few minutes, with the loss of another ten men, killed or desperately wounded. Jeipal now gave the signal, and was joined by the rest of his followers, who,

rushing down the steep, sent their arrows among the Mahomedans at the moment they were dismounting from their horses. They were thrown into confusion at this fatal discharge, and, before they had recovered from their consternation, were attacked sword in hand by the furious Rajpoots. The slaughter was terrible. Encumbered by their horses they could not act in unison, and their leader being killed they were dispirited. In a few minutes half of them were slain; and the rest, remounting their steeds, galloped back across the plain, where they were soon joined by a second party from Delhi, which came to a halt beyond bowshot from the mountain.

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

The Rajah, with his daughter, her husband, and their companions, eventually reached the hilly country, where they for the present determined

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

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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