
FIVE
ORIENTAL
TALES

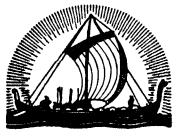
UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME

THE CONFESSION OF A FOOL

BY AUGUST STRINDBERG

TRANSLATED BY ELLIE SCHLEUSSNER
WITH A PREFACE BY ERNEST BOYD

The stirring story of Strindberg's first marriage and of the final struggle between an overwhelming physical attraction and a strong mental repulsion. $2.50



NEW YORK THE VIKING PRESS MCMXXV

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COMTE DE GOBINEAU

WITH A PREFACE BY ERNEST BOYD

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PREFACE

If Joseph Arthur, Comte de Gobineau, were alive to-day, his racial philosophy of "historic Aryanism" might have earned for him the notoriety and success which the latter-day prophets of Nordic supremacy enjoy. He had, however, the misfortune to live from 1816 to 1882, during a period when his pre-Nietzschean doctrine of the superman had little chance of acceptance from a world recovering from the passage of Napoleon, and when his anti-democratic, amoral conception of history and politics directly challenged all the superstitions of nineteenth century democracy. His writings attracted little attention, and even the élite who were aware of him, like Mérimée and Alexis de Tocqueville, were interested in his remarkable personality rather than influenced by his ideas. It was not until Wagner and Nietzsche discovered him that his fame was established upon an enduring basis, and then, the process of making a French writer famous via Germany was necessarily complicated. When the Gobineau Vereinigung was established in Freiburg in 1894, for the purpose of publishing the manuscripts entrusted to its care, few French members belonged to it. Gobineau had ceased to exist for the French public, and most of his works were unprocurable.

Most English-speaking readers will think of Gobineau as part of the propaganda on behalf of Nietzsche which was interrupted by the World War. The editor and translator of Nietzsche, Dr. Oscar Levy, had sponsored Gobineau, and the

"Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races," followed by "The Renaissance" was offered to a not very enthusiastic public in the years immediately before the war. Both books disappeared into the limbo of all things Teutonic, the impression being that the "Essay" was an apologia for Prussianism, and its author a species of renegade, a French version of Houston Stewart Chamberlain, who owes every idea in "The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century" to Gobineau, it so happens. In France, however, the effect of the war was to produce a great Gobineau revival. As one French critic put it, Gobineau was "disannexed" from Germany, his out-of-print works began to appear once more in the book shops, and some of those which had been published in French only in Germany, such as the sequel to "The Renaissance," the recently translated "Golden Flower," were published in Paris. In 1919, the original Gobineau Vereinigung was dissolved, and the copyrights in his works were ceded to Gobineau's daughter two years later, thereby facilitating the publication of his works in his own country.

In America, curiously enough, Dr. Levy had been anticipated by more than half a century, for the first translation of Gobineau into English was made in Philadelphia in 1856. One year after its completion, the first part of the famous "Essay" was published under the alarming title, "The Moral and Intellectual Diversity of Races, with Particular Reference to their Respective Influence in the Civil and Political History of Mankind." Meanwhile, another admirer of Gobineau was at work in Philadelphia, Dr. Charles D. Meigs, who translated "Typhaines Abbey," a novel of feudal France, which was preceded by an introduction so enthusiastic that Gobineau wrote to his wife: "The preface of Meigs is the funniest delirium of admiration in the world . . . This excellent Dr. Meigs is a terrible man." Meigs and Gobineau were in constant correspondence, and four days before his death, this fanatical

translator wrote: "I am answerable for it to both girl and man and to the whole republic of letters. I am willing to live and die by it, for it is no semblance of a lie, but all is pure and absolute truth, and that is what the world will confess when it shall have analysed your intellectual and moral essence as I have done." Ten years later, in 1879, *Les Nouvelles Asiatiques,* appeared in the present version which seems to have escaped the attention of even the most diligent of Gobineau's bibliographers. The original text was published in 1876, and contained a chapter of travel impressions which is not in the character of the five tales, and is regarded by some experts as a piece of padding added to satisfy the demands of a publisher; it has, therefore, been omitted, together with a brief prefatory note in which Gobineau reiterates his theory of race.

Gobineau has better claims upon the modern reader than any based upon his racial philosophy, about which there has been so much dispute to the neglect of his imaginative writings. The theory of Aryan superiority, with its corollary that miscegenation is destroying civilization, need not be admitted in order to enjoy the author's vivid travel impressions, *Trois ans en Asie* or the *Voyage à Terre-Neuve,* or the superb stories unhappily named *Souvenirs de voyage,* his fascinating novel, *Les pléiades,* and these "Five Oriental Tales." As a French diplomatic official Gobineau travelled widely, in Persia, Brazil, Newfoundland, and in every part of Europe. He held heretical views about religion, about the French Republic, about cuneiform inscriptions, and the variety and number of his writings testify to his passionate concern for a multiplicity of subjects. Yet, out of all that restless activity, what remains to enchant us is his imaginative re-creation of racial types and racial character, his power to transmute into colorful fiction the ideas upon which he rested his disputed theories. The general philosophical and historical background out of which "Five Oriental Tales" was written can be found in *Trois ans en Asie*

and *Les religions et les philosophies dans l'Asie centrale*, and fervent admirers of Gobineau delight in tracing the close connection between his stories and his serious writings.

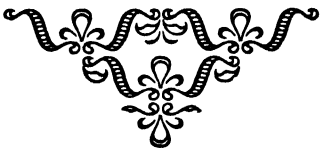
When he wrote this book he was French Minister at Stockholm, *his last post, from which he retired on pension a year later. His* experiences in the East and the long years of his intensive preoccupation with racial theory were behind him. In this volume there is the nostalgia of memories and the enchantment of distance which enabled him to forget theory in the pleasures of evocation. He wanted to show that, "contrary to the belief of the moralists," men were not everywhere the same, yet he tells us the story of Romeo and Juliet in "The Lovers of Kandahar"; in "The Illustrious Magician" he relates a fable of wifely devotion; in "The Story of Gambèr-Aly" we observe once more that the eleventh commandment is: "Thou shalt not get found out." There is a charming humor of Voltairesque quality in this story and in "The War of the Turkomans," that benign irony of which Anatole France was master. Gambèr-Aly's parents are unforgettable, and the picture of court life is full of sly strokes, just as in the account of the Turkoman campaign there is a satire upon all wars.

It is not surprising that Barbey d'Aurevilly was one of the few contemporary critics to admire Gobineau wholeheartedly, for "The Dancing Girl of Shamakha" might have had her place in *Les Diaboliques*. But Gobineau brought to his treatment of these themes a profound knowledge of wild and exotic life which gives an intensity and color to his stories which mark them off from the ordinary fiction of deliberately exotic setting. His Orient is something much more closely realized, more truly felt than that of Loti, who followed in his footsteps, as a comparison of *Vers Ispahan* with Gobineau will show. He saw these Eastern races with the same eyes as Stendhal turned upon Italy, and these two isolated figures in modern French literature present many points in common, beside their inevitable

wait for the appreciation of posterity in compensation for the neglect of their contemporaries. Gobinism and Beylism are allied creeds in their fierce cult of individualism. Henri de Beyle, as he liked to style himself, and Comte Arthur de Gobineau were alike in their submission to the fascination of danger, of living dangerously in the Nietzschean sense, and they instinctively gravitated towards races and types, towards periods in which the veneer of civilization rubs off easily, leaving the natural character, the individual alone in the face of circumstance.

Like Stendhal, Gobineau died and was buried in Italy, where he spent most of his time after his retirement. It was in Rome that he first met Wagner, in the year when his *Nouvelles Asiatiques* was published, and to Bayreuth he made two visits, the last a few months before he died. His death took place in a hotel at Turin, on the 13th October, 1882, as he was trying to reach friends. He was in the hands of strangers and was buried without pomp, amidst a complete silence in the French press. A lonely figure, he died in loneliness, without even Stendhal's confidence that the day would come when he would be read. To Wagner he owed the organization of the Gobineau Society and the crystallization of that opinion to which his posthumous fame can be traced. As a thinker he forestalled both Nietzsche and Spengler, and as a storyteller he will always appeal to the civilized minority of readers who appreciate irony and imagination.

THE DANCING-GIRL OF SHAMAKHA



THE DANCING-GIRL OF SHAMAKHA

DON JUAN MORENO Y RODIL was a lieutenant in the Segovian Chasseurs, when his regiment became involved in a military insurrection which miscarried. Two majors, three captains, and a couple of sergeants were taken and shot. As for him, he made his escape, and after having wandered through France for several months in an exceedingly wretched condition, he succeeded, by means of some acquaintance he had formed, in procuring an officer's commission in the Russian service, and received orders to join his corps in the Caucasus, where, at this time, fighting was of daily occurrence.

Lieutenant Moreno embarked at Marseilles. Naturally of a rather stern disposition, his exile, his hardships, and, above all, his deep regret at leaving for many years, at least, a woman whom he adored, strengthened his natural tendencies, so that no one less than he was tempted to seek after the joys of existence.

After a good voyage his ship touched land at the lower end of the Black Sea, at the little town of Poti, which was at that time the principal port of the Caucasus on the European side.

On a coast partly sandy and partly muddy, covered with marsh-plants, a dense forest, half submerged in water, stretched indefinitely into the interior of the country, following the course of a broad river with a winding bed full of rocks, mud, and the trunks of fallen trees. It was the Phasis, the golden river of antiquity—to-day the Rioni. Here, in the

midst of luxuriant vegetation, fever reigns, and everything belonging to animal nature suffers from it in proportion as vegetable nature flourishes. Fever has royally usurped there the sceptre of Acté, and of the Children of the Sun. The houses, built in the midst of stagnant pools, are elevated on the stumps of large, felled trees, in order to escape the floods. Enormous plank foot-paths unite them with one another; heavy roofs, covered with shingles, project a thick screen in front, and protect, as much as possible, from the frequent rains the narrow windows of the dwellings, which resemble snail-shells.

Moreno was struck by these novelties. On board ship his rank as a Russian officer was known, and this had been announced upon his landing. As he was strolling through a tolerably wide street, he saw approaching him a tall and extremely fair young man, with a nose perceptibly flattened, eyes fixed in the air, and an upper lip adorned with a small, thin mustache, bristling like that of a cat. This youth was not handsome, but he was active and well made, and his manner frank and cordial.

He wore the tunic of an officer of engineers, and the silver aigulets peculiar to the members of this corps who have been distinguished in their studies. Nothing daunted by the reserved manner of Don Juan, this young man abruptly addressed the following little speech to him in French:

"Monsieur, I have just learned that an officer in the Imeritian Dragoons is at Poti, on his way to join his corps. This officer is yourself. I hasten to place myself at your disposal as a comrade. My route is the same as yours. If you please, we will travel together, and, to begin with, I request the honor of offering you a glass of champagne at the Grand Hôtel de Colchide. Besides, if I mistake not, dinner-hour is not far distant. I have invited some friends, and you will not deny me the pleasure of presenting them to you."

All this was said with that good grace, that lively manner, which the Russians have inherited since the French, who get the credit of having invented it, have lost it.

The exiled Spaniard accepted the hand of the new-comer, as he replied:

"Monsieur, my name is Juan Moreno."

"And mine, monsieur, is Assanoff—that is to say, it is really Mourad, son of Hassan-Khan. I am a Russian—that is to say, a Tartar of the province of Shyrcoan, and a Mussulman, at your service—that is to say, after the manner that M. de Voltaire might have been so—a great man, whose works I read with pleasure when I have not those of M. Paul de Kock at hand."

Thereupon Assanoff, passing his arm through that of Moreno, drew him toward the square facing the river, where could be seen a large, low house, a long barrack, on the front of which might be read, in white letters, on a sky-blue sign, "Grand Hôtel de Colchide, kept by Jules Marron (senior)," the whole being in French.

On their entrance into the dining-room, where the cloth was laid, the two officers found the guests already assembled, sipping grain-brandy and eating caviar and dried fish in order to excite their appetites. Of these guests some scarcely deserve mention: two French bagmen, one of whom had come to the Caucasus to purchase food for silk-worms, and the other to procure knobs of trees; a taciturn Hungarian traveler, and a Saxon lace-maker going to Persia to seek his fortune. These, however, are only supernumeraries, foreign to our story. We shall interest ourselves more in those who follow. The mistress of the house, Madame Marron (senior), who presided at the banquet, first claims attention.

She was a large, good-humored person. She had certainly passed her fortieth year, yet by no means left on the other side of that boundary her claim to be attractive: at least her piercing

glances said as much, and were constantly on the offensive. Madame Marron, with her florid complexion, overstepping, perhaps, in the ample girth of her body, a modest estimate of the attributes which charm, amplifying them on the contrary with a prodigal generosity, wore black ringlets shed down the sides of her cheeks in cascades, and joining her belt in a very enticing manner. This lady had a lively fund of conversation, relieved by picturesque expressions, and pervaded by a Marseilles accent. The house was rented under the name of Marron (senior), as we have already learned, but what the most confidential cronies of Madame Marron knew in relation to this husband restricted them to saying that they had never known him, and had only heard him spoken of by his wife, who from time to time at distant intervals expressed the hope of at length seeing him appear.

As an indisputable fact the lovely mistress of the Grand Hôtel de Colchide at Poti had been long known at Tiflis under the name of Léocadie; she had been a milliner there, and the entire Caucasian army, infantry, cavalry, artillery, and engineers (if there be any such there), had bowed submissively to the power of her perfections.

"I know well enough," said Assanoff to Moreno, while relating to him in substance these facts—"I know well enough that Léocadie is neither young nor very pretty, but what can you do at Poti? The devil is smarter there than elsewhere, and—only think of it!—a Frenchwoman at Poti! How do you imagine she could be resisted?"

He then presented his companion to a man of massive build, vigorous and blond, with light-gray eyes, thick lips, and an air of confirmed jollity. He was a Russian. This smiling giant wore a traveling-suit, less elegant than easy, which gave evidence of his fixed intention to eschew all discomfort. Grégoire Ivanitch Vialgue was a rich proprietor, a sort of country noble, and at the same time a sectary. He belonged to one of those

reprobate churches which are always found in conjunction with Christianity, those churches which powerful communions exterminate from time to time by fire and sword, but which, like trails of dog's-grass, preserve some unperceived shoot and reappear. In a word, he was a Doukhobór, or "Enemy of the Spirit." The Russian Government and clergy had taken up arms against these religionists to whom Vialgue belonged. When they discover them in the interior provinces of the empire they do not put them to death as was done in the middle ages, but they seize them and send them to the Caucasus.

The Enemies of the Spirit believe that the sound, good, innocent, inoffensive part of man is the body. The flesh has of itself no evil instinct, no degrading tendency. To nourish itself, to reproduce, to rest, are functions which God has given it, and He appeals to them incessantly by means of the appetites. In so far as the flesh is not corrupted, it seeks simply and solely opportunities of satisfaction, which is to walk in the paths of heavenly righteousness, and the more it satisfies itself the more does it abound in a sense of sanctity. That which corrupts it is the spirit, which is of diabolic origin. The spirit is perfectly useless for the progress and maintenance of humanity. It alone invents the passions, the so-called needs and supposed duties, which, in one way or another interfering with longings of the flesh, beget evils without end. The spirit has introduced into the world the genius of contradiction, of controversy, of ambition, and of hate. It is from the spirit that murder springs, for the flesh lives only to preserve and by no means to destroy. The spirit is the father of folly, hypocrisy, excesses in all the senses, and consequently of the abuses and excesses which are constantly laid to the flesh—an excellent thing, easy to entice by reason of its very innocence, for which cause truly religious and truly enlightened men should defend it by banishing with all speed the seductions of the spirit. For the rest, there is to be no positive religion, in order to avoid intolerance and perse-

cution; no marriage, in order to have no adultery; no constraint upon appetite, in order to crush thoroughly the revolts of the flesh; and, lastly, the systematic abandonment of all intellectual culture—a hateful pursuit, which, ending only in the triumph of wickedness, has operated solely in behalf of the devil's power.

The Enemies of the Spirit, setting aside the entire result of intellectual effort, do not even value skill, and believe in limiting it to the most indispensable manufactures and the most simple processes. On the other hand, they value the plough highly, and prove themselves experienced farmers and admirable cattle-breeders. The farms established by them in the Caucasus are beautiful, well ordered, and prosperous; and, if it is too classical and too florid to compare the customs which obtain there with those which of old flourished within the temples of the Syrian goddess, it may be affirmed with sufficient accuracy that the Doukhoboretz far exceed the American Mormons in conduct and self-government.

"You will never meet a more good-natured man than this," said Assanoff to his friend, as he pointed out to him the opponent of current opinion. "A braver, gayer, more obliging man does not live. I have been in the department near where he lives, in the vicinity of mountains, and how much I have enjoyed myself there, and to what an extent he has been useful to me, it would be quite impossible to tell you—you would not believe me!—Halloo! Grégoire Ivanitch, you old rascal! you infernal knave! come here till I embrace you! Are you going with us to-morrow?"

"Yes, lieutenant, I hope so. I don't believe there is any reason why I should not set out with you to-morrow. But, as for going as far as Bakou, no! I shall stop at Shamakha."

"A villainous hole, is it not?" replied Assanoff, as he seated himself like the other guests at the table, and unfolded his napkin.

"You don't know what you are talking about," answered the

sectary, ingulfing in his mouth an enormous spoonful of soup, for Madame Marron helped the guests according to their rank, and a little Abazian servant had just set a plate before Grégoire Ivanitch.

Léocadie, who was familiar with the Caucasus in all its details, felt it her duty to join in the conversation.

"Hold your tongue!" cried she, casting on Grégoire Ivanvitch a look expressive of profound indignation. "I know who you are, and I also know what you wish to insinuate, but I will never permit that at my table, and in the respectable house of M. Marron, conversation should be held which would make even sappers blush."

Léocadie blushed violently herself, in order to prove that her modesty was by no means inferior to that of the members of the military corps whose virtue she had just vaunted.

"Come, jealous one, come!" said Assanoff, waving his hand in a soothing manner. "It appears that your experience detects snares where my innocence never suspects them. Be calm! My fidelity to my vows is immovable.—Explain to me, Grégoire Ivanitch, what you wish me to understand, for I am naturally curious."

"It is well known," forthwith replied the Doukhoboretz, pouring out a large glass of Kakhetian wine, "that the town of Shamakha is celebrated for the dainty selection of its amusements. It was formerly the residence of an independent Tartar prince. A school of admired dancing-girls of all countries was established there, and they were famous even in the Persian provinces. Naturally, people came in crowds to this delightful resort to enjoy the sight and the conversation of so many beauties. But Providence did not wish to leave the sole possession of these treasures to Mohammedans forever. Our imperial troops attacked Shamakha, as they had done other residences of provincial potentates. The infidels resisted bravely, but at the moment of succumbing a fury took possession of

them, and they resolved to effect a general massacre of all the dancing-girls, lest they should see the Russians happy in their turn."

"That is one of those atrocities which, if often repeated, would end in making me embrace your religion," interrupted Assanoff.

"But the massacre was not complete."

"Ah! that is better."

"The Russian regiments took the place by storm just as the slaughter began. It was a frightful spectacle. The gaping breach gave entrance to crowds of soldiers eager to lay violent hands on the defenders of the town, who were so enraged that they would not recoil an inch. To their great astonishment, our men found here and there the corpses of young girls, richly attired in red-and-blue gauzes, spangled with gold and silver, covered with jewels, and lying on the pavement in their blood. Pushing still farther into the heart of the streets, they perceived various groups of these victims still living, whom the Mussulmans were pressing at the point of the sabre. At once they rushed boldly into the midst of the tumult; and, when all resistance was over, it was found that they had saved about one fourth of these adorable beings, who had carried even to the sky the glory of Shamakha."

"If your story had not ended with this happy turn," cried Assanoff, "I should not have been able to finish my dinner, but, after the manner in which you have told it, I believe I shall get as far as the dessert.—Madame, will you be good enough to let them bring me some champagne?"

The movement which followed this demand momentarily interrupted the conversation; but when the company had drunk the health of the officer newly arrived in the Caucasus, which Madame Marron proposed in a most gracious manner, and after a fashion which would have annoyed the joyous engineer

if he had possessed a temper liable to be affected by such trifles, one of the guests renewed the thread of the discourse.

"I went," said he, "as far as Shamakha some months ago, and I was told there that the most popular dancing-girl was a certain Omm-Djéhâne. She turned all heads."

"Omm-Djéhâne," replied the Enemy of the Spirit, bluntly, "is a pitiful minx, full of caprice and folly. She dances badly, and if she is spoken of it is solely on account of her unsociable disposition and wicked oddities. Besides, she is not even pretty—not in the slightest degree."

"It appears, my friend," cried Assanoff, "that we have no occasion to be proud of this young person?"

"In the sense in which you appear to understand it," replied the first speaker, "Omm-Djéhâne is not, in truth, especially deserving of attention. I met with a retired infantry-officer who had known her since her childhood. This beauty was originally of a Lesghian tribe, now extinct, and, as you know, her fellow-countrymen have never been remarkably famous for tractability. Picked up by soldiers when she was three or four years old, amid the ruins of a burning mountain village, and from the body of her mother, who lay dead above an officer whom she had stabbed, the wife of a general claimed her and purposed giving her a European education. She was exceedingly well cared for, dressed nicely and precisely as the two daughters of the house. She was placed under the governess intrusted with the education of these young ladies, and learned quickly, and better than they, Russian, German, and French. But one of her favorite tricks was to plunge kittens into boiling water. She was ten years of age when she came near strangling, at the turn of a staircase, her governess, worthy Mademoiselle Martinet, who had called her a little blockhead eight hours previously, and she rendered a magnificent coil of chestnut hair unfit to be ever used again.

"Six months later she did better than that. She recollected, or rather she had never forgotten, that a year before the youngest daughter of her benefactor had pushed her while they were playing. She was thrown down, and a lump on her forehead was the result. She felt it her duty to devise means of effacing this outrage, and with a well-directed stab of a penknife she reached and laid open the cheek of her little playmate; luckily thus, for she had intended to blind her. The general's wife had enough of this last piece of business, and, banishing the young rebel from her heart and home, she intrusted her, together with a small sum of money, to a Mussulman woman.

"When she reached the age of fourteen, Omm-Djéhâne ran away from Derbend, where her new adopted mother lived. It is not known what became of her for two years. Now we find her one of the dancing-girls of the troupe taught, conducted, and managed by Madame Forough-el-Husnet, otherwise called the Splendors of Beauty. As for the rest, Grégoire Ivanitch is right. Many men have sought to win Omm-Djéhâne, but no one has succeeded."

Assanoff found this tale so wonderful that he desired to have Moreno share his enthusiasm. But this was labor lost. The Spaniard took no interest in what he called the freaks of a worthless girl. Finding him silent, the engineer judged him to be sullen, and ceased to notice him in proportion as his own imagination derived an increase of ardor from champagne.

Dinner over, the Frenchman and the Hungarian sought their rooms. Moreno did likewise, and Assanoff began to play cards with two of the other guests and Madame Marron, while the Enemy of the Spirit looked at him with a glance that grew more and more clouded as he drank his brandy. These various amusements lasted until the players were startled by a deafening noise which resounded beside them. It was Grégoire Ivanitch, who had tumbled down on his back. Assanoff had lost

his money; and two o'clock in the morning was about to strike. So each one betook himself to bed, and the Grand Hôtel de Colchide was wrapped in repose.

It was scarcely five o'clock when a servant of the hotel knocked at the door of Moreno's bedchamber, to inform him that the time for departure was at hand. A few moments afterward Assanoff appeared in the corridor. His uniform cloak was thrown over his shoulders in a manner more than negligent. His red silk shirt, very much rumpled, was unfastened at the throat; and his white cap was, as it were, planted on his thick, curly hair, which was innocent of toilet offices. As for his face, it was haggard, pale, and drawn; his eyes were red; and the engineer greeted Moreno with a frightful yawn, stretching out his arms to their full extent.

"Well, my dear friend," he cried, "it seems we must start. Do you like getting up so early when you are not on duty, or even when you are?—Halloo, George, you rascal, bring us a bottle of champagne to put us in trim, or deuce take me if I don't break your bones!"

"No, no champagne!" said Moreno. "Let us be off. You forget that we were told, yesterday, how important it is to get in motion early, with the long journey we have before us."

"Certainly, certainly, I remember; but I am, above all things, a gentleman; and a man like me is bound to begin the day otherwise than as a wretch."

"Let us begin like sensible men, and be off."

The engineer suffered himself to be persuaded, and, singing the air of the "Fraises," then very much in vogue in the Caucasus, he took the way, with his companion, toward the bank of the river, which they proceeded to ascend. Their means of transport was of the most simple character, and little in harmony with the claims of a Tartar officer and a man of refinement. There were at their disposal simply a long, narrow boat and four boatmen, who for their own convenience made

much less use of the oars than of a long rope to which two of their number had just harnessed themselves, and who, walking along the bank after the manner of towing-horses, drew the boat by this tow-line. The crew of the Argo, when it visited this country under the command of Captain Jason, would have found this team primitive. Not that there does not exist a line of steamers about which European and American newspapers have made some stir, but, sometimes for one reason, sometimes for another, the boats do not run; and, to sum up the matter, Moreno and Assanoff, wishing to be off to Koutais, and thence to reach Tiflis and Bakou, had no other choice but to take their places in this canoe, which they did.

It was fine to see them in the narrow boat, which a white awning protected from the rays of the sun, seated or lying amid their chests, smoking, chatting, sleeping, or keeping silent, and progressing with a most majestic slowness, while two of the sailors pushed with boat-hooks, and the other two, with the rope over their shoulders, tugged their best, with bent backs and measured steps, as they walked along the bank. It cannot be said that the forest commences only at the outskirts of Poti. Poti is, as it were, absorbed in the forest; but when the inclosure, paved with stone and flanked by towers, where the Mussulmans formerly penned up their slaves, for whom this place was the principal emporium in the Caucasus, is left behind, dwellings are no longer to be seen, and one can then believe in the existence of places which human beings have never visited. Nothing could be more deserted in appearance, nothing more inhospitable, wild, or repellent: a rapid river rolling its waters, which are either slimy or charged with sand, over a bed filled with rocks from which the tide every instant recoils; banks torn and made steep by the sudden and pitiless floods of winter, presenting here a barren shore, there an unexpected escarpment; trunks of trees drifting and raising their mutilated boughs in the air as though calling for pity, some-

times rolled on top of one another in threes and fours, and half buried, but always shivering, always restless in vain, for the angry stream passes over them, chiding more loudly amid their branches; and on both sides of this tumult is the solemn silence of a forest which appears boundless. We can see the scene. The river bellows, roars, leaps, eddies, and rushes; the boat on which are the two officers ascends it slowly to the measured step of the two boatmen who draw it. The forest leaves shiver in the morning wind; some are large, others small, these in shadow, those in light; through distant glades the sun-rays play in the greenery, and cast bands of light which seem like the coming and going of elves. Against the sky, blue and clear, the delicate tops of the ashes, beeches, and oaks, stand out, mightier than the race of their fellows.

Moreno was observing this positively wonderful spectacle with unwonted interest, when Assanoff, who was a little refreshed and recovered, proposed that they should leap out on the bank, and, while lightening the boat, give themselves, at the same time, the pleasure of a walk. The idea was cordially welcomed by the Spanish officer, and the two companions started to walk through the high grass, getting ahead of their boat, and from time to time, with the certainty of overtaking it, penetrating for some distance into the glades.

It was thus that Moreno had opportunities of perceiving that the wooded country traversed by the Rioni is by no means so deserted as he had hitherto imagined. From time to time he and his companion saw, issuing quickly from the thicket, frightened droves of little black pigs, very like young wild-boars, with long and hard bristles and delicate limbs—rough, brisk, nimble, and pretty enough to make them disown their European brethren. These little communities, at the sight of strangers, would rush at full speed across the copses, and often discover a square hut hidden in the wood under the trees, which sent up the bluish smoke of its hearth toward the sky, and was

always inhabited by human beings, men, women, and children, on whom, it must be admitted, the dower of beauty had been as lavishly bestowed as the rags of wretchedness. Since human societies have existed, it has been known that the inhabitants of the valley of the Phasis are beautiful. They have had it proved to them by their being kidnaped, sold, worshiped, and massacred; for men, collectively or individually, have been endowed by Heaven with no other means of demonstrating their affection. And yet after all this beauty cannot be considered fatal, since it has brought out of the forest of Phasis and the wretchedness of its hovels so many famous and powerful queens, so many royal favorites and lines of kings. In order to seat both men and women on the throne, or to put the throne under their feet, Destiny has asked nothing of them—neither genius, nor talent, nor noble birth—she has been contented to behold their beauty. Sometimes history exaggerates, and for one pretty girl, met by chance, who leaves on the casual observer a happy impression that reflects on all the province, how many rubicund hostesses are there who stamp—thanks to the same judge—their defects upon all the hostesses of a kingdom! But here nothing like this can happen. Nature has truly surpassed herself, and imagination cannot soar beyond her. All that has been said, written, or sung, of the physical perfections of the people of the Phasis, is true to the letter; and the most searching examinations, if a true report be desired, could find nothing to rebut. What is especially remarkable, and seems to contravene all rules, is that these peasants, these unfortunates, both men and women, are gifted with extreme dignity and grace. Their hands are exquisite, their feet are adorable; figure, limbs—all are perfect; and one can conceive how well balanced and equable must be the carriage of beings who have not a defect in their persons.

Assanoff was too well accustomed to the sight of these Imeritian and Gooriel girls to be as much struck with them as was

Moreno. He found them pretty, but, as civilization enamored him, he considered that Madame Marron was endowed with attractions much superior, even though they were a little faded by the friction of years.

It has been observed, perhaps, that the Enemy of the Spirit did not set out with the officers: still, from his statements of the previous day, it is to be supposed he intended doing so. Assanoff, hardly master of his senses at the time of departure, had made no inquiry concerning the absence of his friend; he only thought of it when the boat was already far on its way. Moreno had taken no part in the conversation of the day before, so that Grégoire Ivanitch was at perfect liberty to follow his own inclination. Night had brought counsel to him. He had reflected, thinking over the matter a little in his cups (and he was never so prudent and so sagacious as when he was tipsy), on the folly of arriving at Shamakha with a giddy youth very much interested in his pleasures, and not at all in being agreeable to him. Grégoire was very far from being so blind as to think that, in return for the many opportunities of pleasure his religious principle and high standing had enabled him to place in the young engineer's way, the latter would be incited to generosity on his account, and would have any scruple for once in his life of treading on his corns or causing him unpleasantness. On the contrary, he knew for certain that nothing would be more agreeable to the civilized Tartar than an encounter from which would inevitably result a collection of jokes, good or bad, of jeers, and of boastings, with which to enliven for a year all the garrisons and all the departments of the Caucasus. In consequence, he reconsidered his promise—resolved to travel alone and quickly, and somehow, after the departure of the soldier, he in his turn hired a boat, arranged matters so that a short distance was kept between himself and those who preceded him; then, when night had fallen, instead of going to spend it with the two friends in a log-cabin belonging to the

state and reserved for the use of travelers, he doubled his relays of boatmen, landed at Koutais in the morning, took the post, passed through Tiflis without stopping, and arrived at Shamakha.

Shamakha is not a large town, nor is it even an interesting one. The old original city has almost entirely disappeared to make room for a mass of modern buildings, well enough intended, perhaps, but, to a certainty, wholly destitute of character. Rich Mussulmans have built themselves Russian houses suitable to their wants and habits. There are government stores, barracks, and a church, like what one sees everywhere; and the chief of police, an old cavalry-officer and a brave man, who bred singing-birds and spent a great part of his life in the enormous cage where he housed his pensioners, was, in addition to the governor, the best-lodged man in the country, since his dwelling was most like that of a German burgher. Thither Grégoire Ivanitch Vialgue repaired, knocked at the door, and was admitted.

He entered the *salon* with the unconstrained air natural to him, and did not even salute the holy image placed in an angle at the height of the ceiling.

"My worthy friend," said he, "I have made a long journey. I come from Constantinople, last from Poti; I have not taken one hour of rest, and I bring you fortune."

"Then, welcome," answered Paul Petrovitch; "assuredly, welcome! Fortune is a good lady, of a certain age, capricious; but nobody in the world, I think, has ever knowingly shut his door against her."

"Briefly, I have succeeded in our scheme beyond all hope."

"Tell me everything in detail," replied Paul Petrovitch, with a happy air, spreading his blue cotton handkerchief with red stripes over his knees and inserting in his nose a huge pinch of snuff.

"Here is the story: As we agreed, I betook myself, after

leaving you two months ago, to Redout-Kalé, where I met the Armenian to whom I had given a rendezvous. He explained to me the situation. He and his partners have bought cheaply, by my faith, six little girls and four little boys. He reckons that of these ten children, who are exceedingly promising, at least four will be of exceptional beauty, and one little girl (he actually got her for a piece of bread) seems bound to reach unheard-of perfection."

"You gladden my heart, my dear friend," cried Paul Petrovitch.

"The Armenian called my attention to the fact that, inasmuch as he sold out last year all the best he had in readiness, he had resolved this time to improve his wares still further."

"He is an intelligent man; I have always said and thought so," growled Paul Petrovitch.

"With this design," continued Grégoire, "he has acquired a pretty country-house, where he lives with four daughters, two nieces, a nephew, and a cousin of his wife's—ten in all. You follow the particulars?"

"Perfectly."

"For all this little community he has procured passports, papers, documents perfectly correct, everything necessary. I have seen the prices in his books, and, honestly, the cost has not been dear."

"I am almost angry about it," said the chief of police; "it is what I call discrediting authority when those who are clothed in it allow themselves to make too easy concessions. But my principles, perhaps, are a little strict. Go on."

"The Armenian has engaged a master of Russian, a master of French, who, at the same time, understands geography, and a Swiss governess. These various expenses of the establishment are not ruinous, and the result of the speculation is, that our company is henceforth in a condition to furnish wives and worthy stewards to all Turks who believe in keeping up a com-

fortable establishment, or else to persons belonging to different communions who know how to appreciate beauty and talent."

"This Armenian is certainly a man of genius," murmured Paul Petrovitch, raising his eyes to heaven and folding his hands over his stomach.

"That is almost what our American partner at Constantinople said when we divided our profits last year. But it is beyond doubt that the way in which we are walking to-day and the unlimited extension of our business are bound to elevate us beyond our hopes."

"I think so, my good, my perfect friend, and, what is more—for I do not alone consider my own affairs: I am interested also in the success of my fellows; I am above all things a philanthropist—I look to the good we do."

"The thing is clear," returned Grégoire Ivanitch, with a grin of superiority; "we buy, for a hundred rubles each, four wretched brats condemned to vegetate here in starvation in the mud; we make them docile, sweet, lovable, sociable; they become fine ladies and gentlemen, or at least good citizens and honest servants. I would like to know who can boast of being more to the world than we are. But it is not to theorize that I come to see you. Here are your dividends."

Thereupon Grégoire Ivanitch drew from the pocket of his frock-coat a large pocket-book, and from the pocket-book a bundle of bills, and during a good half-hour the two friends were immersed in calculations, the result of which evidently caused lively satisfaction to Paul Petrovitch. When all this complication was ended, the worthy chief of police called loudly for brandy, and while the glasses were filled, emptied and filled afresh, the Enemy of the Spirit said to his comrade:

"The most beautiful stuffs have a wrong side. Last year was good, next year will be better; this year we have scarcely anything but articles of no value, thanks to that idiot of a Léocadie Marron, who bought us three girls with crooked

figures. If our worthy dancing-mistress, Forough-el-Husnet, wishes to help us, she can do so. Her assistance will come in well."

"Little father, you need not try to deceive me. You want to sell the Splendors of Beauty herself. But you are wrong; she would never consent to it, nor any more should I."

"What an absurd idea you are driving at, Paul Petrovitch! The Splendors of Beauty could have gotten a position if she had lived—and we also—twenty years ago, when taste was different from what we hold it to be. That woman ought to weigh—what does she not weigh? Henceforth, only women who are slight are in demand—and that is what is called having a distinguished air. I am sure that the Splendors of Beauty would not bring two hundred rubles, and she would want to keep at least half of it, if not more. That is not what I should call business. No, do not credit me with ridiculous notions. I never for a moment thought of the Splendors of Beauty; of Omm-Djéhâne I don't say I did not. She is not pretty, but she speaks French and Russian. We ought to make a pretty good profit on her, but, as we have not had in her case the expenses of education, maintenance, or training, we shall have to make a deduction. I have just met a tree-knot merchant, a Frenchman, at Poti, who assured me that he knows an old retired Kaïmakam, at Trebizond, who is looking out for a well-brought-up woman; he wishes her to be a Mussulman, so that he may be spared the fatigues of converting her. Omm-Djéhâne, it seems to me, would exactly fit this case."

"Omm-Djéhâne will suit your Kaïmakam if it suits Omm-Djéhâne," answered the chief of police, sententiously. "Speak about it to the Splendors of Beauty; you will hear her opinion."

With this final word the partners separated; but at this juncture a remark should be made. It would be erroneous to consider the Enemy of the Spirit either a kind of melodramatic villain, or even a man to any extent depraved. He was neither

one nor the other. So far as morality was concerned he held the ideas of his co-religionists, which was not his fault, since he had been brought up by them, with them, and like them. It could almost be said that he acted as he did in innocence, since he did not see any harm in what he conceived to be reason and truth. He had a distorted and purblind soul, but he was not, properly speaking, a scoundrel; and, as for his business, he conducted it with a tranquillity of conscience perhaps as warranted as that with which the contractors of matrimonial enterprises in Paris must assuredly be endowed after forty years of success. European laws sternly forbid the slave-trade; this is a matter of fact. On this ground, the Russian chief of police, the Armenian merchant, the American speculator, and the French commercial traveler, were rascals, pure and simple. But the Enemy of the Spirit and his Asiatic clients had wherewithal to keep their minds at ease in a country where marriages are never contracted, even in the most ordinary circumstances, except by the sale, pretended at least, of the woman; and where the male slave ranks in the family immediately after the children, and above the servants. This is not said to elevate Grégoire Ivanitch on a pedestal, but solely to present him in a true light. He was, and this can be justly affirmed, to all appearance a *bon vivant,* absolutely free from every kind of scruple as regarded the pursuit of his own pleasures and those of others; naturally obliging, and, as for the rest, wishing no harm to any one in the world—except, of course, to the Spirit, and this on the score of all our earthly woes. On that point he was firm.

After he had left the chief of police, he repaired to the house of the Splendors of Beauty, and found that lady in a state of health as satisfactory as that in which he had left her at the time of their last interview. She occupied a room which, though built on a plan almost European, was none the less furnished and arranged after the Tartar fashion. There were,

indeed, to be seen, hanging on the whitewashed walls, gilt frames surrounding colored engravings, illustrative of the story of Cora and Alonzo, as well as a lithographed portrait of Marshal Paskevitch adorned with ferocious mustaches, and, by a most ingenious conception of the artist, looking toward Erivan with one eye, while the other followed the direction of Warsaw; but, aside from these traces of exotic luxury, the rug which covered the floor was Persian, and along the walls there extended little narrow mattresses, forming divans, and covered with native materials. The Splendors of Beauty, with a full-moon face, eyes like two black diamonds a little dimmed, a pomegranate mouth, and an opulence of development in all her person which would have ecstatically ravished a true Mohammedan, was extended on a heap of cushions and calmly smoking her *chibouque,* which she supported with her right hand, while with her left, lazily resting on the divan, she turned the beads of the *tesbyh,* or Mussulman rosary. In short, she was conscientiously pursuing the routine of her daily occupations, which consisted in doing nothing.

It would be bold to assert that she thought of nothing. That paradisal condition exists for men in many countries, but it is doubtful whether in any region it is attainable by women. The dancing-mistress, then, probably was thinking of something. On perceiving Grégoire Ivanitch, she said to him, with a kind of liveliness:

"Selam Aleykum! you are welcome!"

"Aleyk-ous-Selam!" replied the Enemy of the Spirit. "My eyes shine with the pleasure of seeing you!"

"Bismillah! be seated, I pray you."

She clapped her hands, and an exceedingly dirty servant appeared.

"Bring a bottle of *raky* and two glasses."

Grégoire seated himself, the brandy was placed between him and the lady of the house, two or three draughts were

taken, and then the interlocutors, being in a comfortable condition, began their conversation.

"Madame," said the Enemy of the Spirit, "I have just laid before the worthy Paul Petrovitch a very fine opportunity for securing Omm-Djéhâne's good-fortune."

"If you secure her good-fortune," replied the Splendors of Beauty, "she will perhaps be grateful for it, but then we must know how you purpose doing it."

Grégoire Ivanitch waved his right hand in the air, and nodded his head, with an expression of disinterestedness and magnanimity.

"Bah!" said he; "I know. If I had anything to do with the matter she would not appear interested to-day, just as she did not three months ago. She does not want to hear her slave speak, that is certain, and her slave is not at all disposed to give himself a stomach-ache in order to incur contempt. These follies are the resort of the servants of the Spirit. No, leave me out of the question. I come in good faith to propose to Omm-Djéhâne that she marry a Kaïmakam. To give you the whole story, I took away her photograph which the wife of the general had taken eight years ago. I showed it to the worthy man of whom I speak, and, truly, he has caught fire. He is a worthy man, I repeat. He is only seventy years of age; he is a strict Mussulman; he drinks neither wine nor brandy—which will please Omm-Djéhâne, who hates strongly whatever is good; he has a most rooted horror of Europeans—which will commend him to her, whose feeling in that direction is no secret; and, lastly, he is rich. I know he owns estates in three villages on the outskirts of Batoom, and he has, into the bargain, a pretty income arising from the silver-mines of Gunush-Khanêh. Do you see?"

"I love Omm-Djéhâne tenderly," replied the Splendors of Beauty. "She is my adopted daughter, and my heart bleeds already as I listen to your words. How will it be when I must

be separated from this child? I shall die a thousand deaths! I shall be buried! I am buried! But it deserves consideration. How much will you give me for such a sacrifice?"

Grégoire Ivanitch stroked his chin.

"That is, indeed, a matter of importance. Omm-Djéhâne will receive a third of what the Kaïmakam gives; I shall get the second third as having been the promoter of the happy union; and you will divide the third portion with our good and dear friend, the chief of police. The purchaser offers two thousand silver rubles."

"Two thousand silver rubles!" replied the dancing-mistress with an air of consternation. "Do you think of it? How could you hear such a proposal without bursting into laughter? A girl who is a pearl of virtue and innocence, who has only danced before the most respectable people, such as generals and colonels—at most (once or twice) before majors—a girl who speaks Russian and French like a native, who can read and write, and who knows geography—a girl who—"

Grégoire Ivanitch laid his hand on her mouth with gentle familiarity, and continued the litany himself:

"A girl who is charming, but very thin, with eyes rather pretty, but blue, and not usually very tender—a girl who knows a host of pretty things, I admit, but who can also handle the knife in an exceedingly disagreeable fashion, as I myself have received proof in my shoulder, and who, unhappily, is not always of a complaisant disposition—a girl, in short, who is a devil incarnate! For my part, I consider that to pay two thousand rubles for her is to purchase unhappiness at as high a rate as possible."

"But a sixth of the amount, and no more, for me!"

"You mean to say a third."

"How? I must divide with Paul Petrovitch."

"Which means that you take all, in addition to what you already make out of him. Do you imagine that when he is

drunk he does not weep on my bosom on account of the poverty to which you are reducing him? 'Grégoire Ivanitch,' said he to me, 'that woman is so lovely, so amiable, so smiling, that she will bring me to the grave in the same costume I had when I entered the world!' And then he shed floods of tears. I have to dry his tears and put him to bed myself. Don't talk nonsense to me! You will have a third for yourself, and you can take it or leave it."

"Well, Grégoire Ivanitch, you are a true father to me. I never cease repeating it. I often say to myself when I am all alone, 'Splendors of Beauty, remember that Grégoire Ivanitch is your father!' Only tell Paul Petrovitch to give me a gold watch, with enameled flowers on the back, like that of the governor's lady, and then I will speak to Omm-Djéhâne."

"I don't mix myself up in these matters. You can get out of Paul Petrovitch whatever you want, and you don't need a go-between. Besides, time flies. Do you, or don't you, wish to begin our business to-day?"

The Splendors of Beauty swayed her head from right to left with a submissive air.

"One can refuse you nothing, Grégoire Ivanitch. Wallah! Billah! Tallah! I shall set to work at once, but at least give me as a remembrance of your kindness, that little turquoise ring that you wear on your left hand. Turquoises are a pledge of good luck."

The Enemy of the Spirit gallantly drew the ring off his finger and presented it to the lady, who placed it first on her forehead, and then drew from her bosom a cashmere purse, in which she hid her new acquisition among other older ones. This done, Grégoire Ivanitch took his leave, and immediately the Splendors of Beauty, making an obvious effort, raised her generous bulk, got upon her feet, and with an undulatory movement of the hips, which rapturously delighted countless admirers daily, she left the room, her *chibouque* in one hand and

her rosary in the other. She passed, without stopping at them, the doors of several of her pupils' cells, and opened at last that of Omm-Djéhâne, which she entered.

The room was small and narrow. It contained only one very short sofa set in a corner; no European engravings; no kind of luxury anywhere; no *chibouque*—Omm-Djéhâne did not smoke; no glass and no bottle—she did not drink; nothing, not even a pot of rouge or white-lead—she did not paint, a most unheard-of omission on the part of a city woman, and people who were most pleased with her cited this eccentricity as one of the most regrettable features in her character.

When her mistress entered, the young dancing-girl was seated, with her cheek resting on her left hand, and her elbow on a cushion. She was looking straight before her—given over to an absolute oblivion of thought and sense. She was dressed in a straight robe of crimson silk, striped with yellow, and strewed with blue flowers; a handkerchief of red gauze embroidered with gold was twisted in her black locks; she wore on her neck a gold enameled necklace, and in her ears as well as on her arms ornaments of the same metal.

Grégoire Ivanitch was right: Omm-Djéhâne was not what is called pretty; nevertheless, she had affected and engrossed him. A potent charm exhaled from this young girl. If you sought to specify its causes, you could not find them, yet their action did not cease to make itself felt. She was one of those creatures who entice, who intoxicate, who bewitch, you know neither how nor why. Indeed, a cold critic would have found but one adjective to apply to her; he would have said, "She is strange"; but no critic could have remained cold in her presence.

"My soul," said the Splendors of Beauty, sitting down beside her, "listen to me attentively."

Then when she saw Omm-Djéhâne's eyes fixed on her, she repeated to her from beginning to end the conversation she had

just had with Grégoire Ivanitch. From the numerous oratorical devices that she employed, from the various persuasive sentences interspersed in her narrative, from the honeyed and caressing tone given to all her words, from her reservations, and from her countless oaths, it was evident that the dancing-mistress did not expect to convert the young Lesghian easily. How agreeably was she surprised when, after a very few moments of reflection, the latter gave an encouraging answer, such as she had not foreseen!

"How," said she, "am I to be sure that this Grégoire Ivanitch and the others are not laying a snare for me?"

"You are disposed, then, flower of my heart, to accept the Kaïmakam as a husband?"

"At once; but I don't want to be deceived."

She said these words bluntly; her eyes, which were rather gloomily buried under a projecting forehead, appeared to retire more and more, and the whole expression of her face was so speaking, that the Splendors of Beauty answered decidedly:

"How can you suspect it? People would find it difficult to accomplish, I think."

Omm-Djéhâne did not answer a word; she fixed her gaze on the floor and fell into a reverie.

Her mistress, surprised at her wonderful meekness, put her arm round her neck, and was about to kiss her, when the dirty little servant entered.

"Madame," said she, "his lordship the chief of police has sent to tell you that you must go to the house of the governor this evening, with Djémylèh and Talhemèh, to dance."

"Is there a banquet?"

"There are guests."

"Officers?"

"His servant told me so, but there will also be the Mussulmans Aga-Khan and Shems-Eddyn-Bey."

"Do you know if Grégoire Ivanitch will be there?"

"I don't know, but his lordship the chief of police said you must put on your finest clothes; you will get large presents."

The little slattern retired.

"Large presents—large presents! that is easily said," murmured the Splendors of Beauty; "they never fail to promise as much every time, and if I believed it I should die of hunger. At any rate I shall go, that is clear. How can it be avoided?—As for you, my eyes, since you are as good as married to a Kaïmakam, you don't need to amuse dogs, and you can stay here—so that is settled."

"It is not settled at all. On the contrary, I shall go with you and the others to the house of the governor. Look! I have just made the Istikhareh three times in succession while you were talking to Douer-al-Zemâr" (the Pearl of Time was the real name of the young slut), "and three times I have had the same number of beads."

She showed her rosary, which she clasped in both hands, and, muttering a fragment of a prayer, arose.

The Splendors of Beauty found absolutely no reply to so strong an argument as that of a decision of the Istikhareh, and as she had imposed unwonted fatigue on herself, she went back to her chamber to sleep until the hour for dressing, leaving Omm-Djéhâne to reflect, if she chose, on this new adventure in which her life, already so disturbed, seemed to be involved.

It was perfectly true that the Governor of Shamakha intended giving a banquet. He was entertaining two traveling officers *en route* for Bakou, Lieutenant Assanoff and Cornet Moreno; and on this occasion he had invited the officers of the infantry battalion garrisoned in the town, and his bosom-friend the chief of police.

Assanoff and Don Juan, besides having arrived later than the Enemy of the Spirit, had reached Shamakha slightly fatigued with travel, but so much the more happy to find themselves near the end, for Shamakha is not far from Bakou.

They had with difficulty remained some hours at Tiflis. The authorities had pledged them to join their respective corps without delay, in view of the fact that serious movements were talked of in Daghestan. It was a consoling prospect for Moreno. In proportion as he got farther from Spain and the woman he loved, the discouragement felt in the first hours of departure became transformed into a morbid resignation, which destroyed the value of life. He felt that his previous existence was ended, and he did not experience any desire to take hold of a new one. Herodotus relates that formerly in Egypt, when the army became discontented with the proceedings of the sovereign, men of the warrior rank took their arms, formed bands, and crossed the frontier. The servants of the abandoned monarch pursued them at his command and said to them: "What are you doing? You are deserting your families; you are losing for a whim your houses and what property you possess!" They answered proudly: "Property? With what we hold in our hands we shall endeavor to acquire better. Houses? We can build them. Women? There are plenty of them in the world, and from those we shall meet we shall have other sons." Then, after this answer, they departed, nothing availing to stay them.

Moreno was not one of these rude handlers of the sword, whose like is hardly to be met with in present times. Whether it be the result of custom, or whether it be a greater delicacy and weakness of imagination and courage, there exist few men to-day whose happiness and vital force do not reside outside themselves in another being or thing. Almost every one resembles an embryo. He receives that which makes him live from a centre of life which is not his own; and if, by evil chance, he is separated from it, it is doubtful, perhaps impossible, for him to live in comfort. Moreover, all that Don Juan had seen until now, among the scenes to which he was transplanted, had the effect of a dream upon him—of one of those

particularly confused dreams where reason does not enter. Assanoff had explained to him, after his own fashion, what was going on around them, but besides the fact that the engineer perceived nothing in it that was not natural, which made him pass lightly over features the most worthy of comment, he was of an unstable temperament, and could follow out neither an explanation nor an argument. However, Moreno liked him. The flagrant drunkenness of Assanoff repelled him; his gayety attracted him. Assanoff had a blundering spirit, but he had a spirit. Ordinarily he went astray, but on some occasions he showed feeling. During the long journey and endless *tête-à-tête* he related many things to Moreno; and Moreno, on his side, permitted himself to be confidential with him. Assanoff was deeply moved at the misfortunes of the exile, and displayed an almost womanly tenderness for the lover. Sometimes in speaking of himself he confessed himself to be in his own opinion nothing but an ill-fashioned barbarian, and, he would add, almost unwashed; but he soon recanted this assertion, and proclaimed himself a nobleman. To give the gist of the matter, he was proud henceforth to recognize Moreno's superiority of intelligence and character.

It may be recollected that, in stories of the Crusades, a generous emir, a brave Bedouin, or at least a faithful slave, casting in his lot with that of the Christian master, is always spoken of. If the occasion offers, this inferior voluntarily dies for his master after sacrificing his interests for his. Such a conception has so permeated our idea of Eastern peoples, that it is to be found in the novels of Cervantes, and Walter Scott has consecrated it in the persons of the two Saracen slaves of Brian de Bois Guilbert. It is because this fiction really rests on a partially true foundation. The heart and the imagination, the sole springs of devotion, hold a very large place in the organization of Asiatics. Liable to love much, these people have made great sacrifices for what they love. Thus, from

the moment in which Assanoff discovered in Don Juan a nature sympathetic with his own, he loved him thoroughly and unreservedly.

The governor's dinner resembled all banquets of the kind. There was deep drinking. As for Assanoff, God forbid that he should have missed this occasion! He was in such spirits that he would have surpassed himself had not the watchfulness of Don Juan slightly restrained him, so that the only result was an inflamed face, together with a slightly unsteady gait, and an incoherence of speech more marked than usual. In order not to annoy Moreno, he stopped at this stage. On leaving the table they went into the *salon,* where they began to smoke. At the expiration of half an hour two personages of note among the native population made their appearance among the officers, the greater number of whom were in a more advanced state than Assanoff. Aga-Khan and Shems-Eddyn-Bey saluted all the persons present with dignity and affability, without appearing in the slightest degree to notice anything unusual. They sat down after having refused pipes, and declared that they did not smoke. Moderation in all things and sobriety were then fashionable by way of contrast, and enjoined on the Mussulmans of the Caucusus.

After some time the dancing-girls were announced. The governor ordered them to be admitted, and they appeared.

The Splendors of Beauty walked at their head; then came Omm-Djéhâne, followed by Djémylèh and Talhemèh, two very agreeable young ladies, no less painted than their mistress, and all clad in long robes, falling straight to their feet in numerous folds. Gold and silver glittered in the silk and gauze that abounded in their clothing in strange magnificence and sumptuousness. Necklaces, long and drooping ear-rings, numerous bracelets, gold and precious stones, all gleamed and resounded at each movement of these lovely beings. Meanwhile all eyes were turned on Omm-Djéhâne—whether it was the ab-

sence of paint, whether it was the greater simplicity of the dress, whether it was rather—and this is in all probability the true reason—the conquering charm of her person. Once having looked at her, one's eyes could not leave her. She turned on each a look, cold, indifferent, almost insolent, almost irritating, and that was in no small degree attractive. Besides, although her eyes were infinitely less beautiful than those of Djémylèh, although her figure had not the plumpness of Talhemèh's, and although in no respect could she compete with the exuberant perfections of the Splendors of Beauty—that queen so certain of her conquests—she disturbed each of them, and it required an effort to escape from her magic.

Never have fashionable singers or renowned *comédiennes* made their entry into a European drawing-room with more dignity than did these dancing-girls, and never were they greeted with more homage. They did not salute any one but the two Mussulman dignitaries, on whom they all, except Omm-Djéhâne, cast a glance of the most flattering import—a glance to which they responded by a reserved smile, while stroking their beards in a manner that would have done honor to Marshal duc de Richelieu. That over, the ladies seated themselves close to one another on the carpet in a corner of the room, and assumed the perfectly unconcerned air of persons engaged in needlework.

Meanwhile there had appeared behind them four men to whom no one paid the slightest attention. They squatted themselves in a corner of the *salon* opposite that occupied by the dancing-girls—they were the musicians. One carried a light guitar, called a *târ;* another a kind of rebec, a violin with a long handle or *kémantjêh;* the third had a *rebab,* another stringed instrument, and the fourth a tambourine, an indispensable element in all Asiatic music, in which the rhythm is always exceedingly marked.

With one accord the company asked that the dance should

begin. The governor and the chief of police constituted themselves more particularly interpreters of the general wish to the Splendors of Beauty; and the latter, having allowed them to beg of her for the space of time becoming an artist who knew her worth, and having shown her modesty by a sweet confusion, advanced slowly into the middle of the room, and made an imperceptible sign with her head to the musicians, whose instruments started all at once. Every one had pushed back his chair against the wall, so as to leave an ample space absolutely free.

Then, to an exceedingly slow and monotonous air, accompanied by the tambourine, which gave forth an abrupt, rumbling, and strident sound, the dancing-girl, without moving from the spot, and resting her hands on her hips, made some movements with her head and entire body. She revolved slowly; she looked at no one; she was impassive, and appeared as though absorbed; attention followed her, waited for an activity which did not come, and, precisely by reason of this deceived expectation, became every instant more intense. The impression produced by this kind of feeling can only be compared to that which we experience on the sea-shore, when the eye constantly asks each wave to do more, to swell higher, to roll farther than the preceding wave; when we listen to its roar in the hope, time after time disappointed, that the roar just coming will be louder; and while we remain there seated on the strand whole hours glide past, and we can scarcely tear ourselves away. It is thus with the fascination exercised on the senses by the dancing-girls of Asia. There is no variety, there is no liveliness, they but rarely execute a sudden movement, but from this measured revolution there is induced a torpor pleasing to the mind, in which it delights as in a half-sleepy intoxication.

Then the fascinating dancing-girl moved slowly on the floor, half extending her rounded arms; she did not walk, she glided

with an imperceptible undulation; she advanced toward the spectators, and, passing slowly near each, induced in him a kind of expectant shiver, leading him to hope that, perhaps, she would bestow some mark of attention on him. She did no such thing. Only when she was before the two Mussulmans she allowed them to infer a fresh and thoroughly appreciated indication of her respect and preference by doubling the very short pause with which she had honored the others, which proceeding was quickly perceived and applauded; for, in this modest dance, the slightest shade of meaning is accurately noted. When the music stopped, the enthusiasm of the spectators burst forth in applause. Moreno alone remained unmoved. People do not like this sort of thing at first sight, and the pleasure caused by national diversions requires in all countries experience and initiation. It was not so with Assanoff; his delight vented itself in a quite unexpected fashion.

"By Jove," said he, "I am a civilized man, and I have been at the Cadet School at St. Petersburg; but may the devil take me if, in all Europe, anything can be found equal to that we have just seen! I want some one here to dance the Lesghian with me. Has no one a single drop of blood in his body? Are you all fools or Russians?"

A Tartar officer in the infantry rose and took Assanoff by the hand. "Come," said the foot-soldier, proudly, "Mourad, son of Hassan-Bey, if you are the son of your father, show what you are made of."

The engineer responded by a glance the like of whose hard and savage but fiery expression Moreno had never seen, and in their uniform cloaks the two Tartars began to dance the Lesghian. The orchestra had loudly attacked the barbarous melody peculiar to this step. There was nothing languishing, nothing lingering about it. Hassan, son of Mourad, was no longer drunk; he felt himself to be the son of a prince and himself a prince. He might have been taken for one of the

soldiers of the ancient Mongol, Kubla Khan; the tambourine sounded, throbbed hotly, with a passion of cruelty and conquest. The lookers-on, with the exception of the Spaniard, were under the influence of wine and brandy, and had neither heard the words of Assanoff nor comprehended the feelings which moved him. All that they knew definitely about the strange spectacle was, that the engineer danced the Lesghian wonderfully, and this drama, which depicts battle, murder, blood, and especially revolt, was played before the conquerors without their remotely dreaming of its meaning, still less dreading its significance. Don Juan alone remained bewildered by the new expression shed over the features of Assanoff, and when the dance was ended amid hilarious stampings from the Russian officers, and general attention was drawn off by the entrance into the room of a bevy of servants bearing fresh pipes, tea, and brandy, he drew his friend into a corner of the room, which happened to be that where the dancing-girls were, who had all risen to their feet during the Lesghian, and said to him in a whisper: "Are you mad? What is this farce you have just been playing? Why have you made a show of yourself? If you love your country, can you not show it otherwise than by contortions?"

"Be silent!" answered Assanoff, roughly; "you don't know of what you are speaking. There are things you cannot understand. Truly, I am a coward, a wretch, and the last of men is that infamous scoundrel of a Djémiloff who has just danced with me; he is no less degraded, though he danced like a man. But, look you, there are still moments in which, however low one's courage may be, he yet feels it rise; and the day has not yet come when a Tartar can see the daughters of his country dance without tears of blood swelling under his eyelids!"

Tears of blood, perchance, formed there, while Assanoff spoke; how can we know? What is certain is, that great tears

rolled down his cheeks. He was dashing them quickly away with one hand before they could be noticed, when he felt his other grasped; he turned, and saw Omm-Djéhâne. She spoke to him hurriedly in French: "To-night! two hours before the *destèh!* at my door! Do not knock!"

Immediately she moved aside. As for him, this utterance of a lovely being—of a being who had hitherto been considered insensible and perfectly impregnable, and who was, as it were, the glory of the dancing-girls of the town, precisely because she seldom consented to display her talents—her delightful word suddenly recalled him to a sense of the civilization which, for some minutes, he seemed to have completely forgotten, and, passing his arm through that of Moreno, he drew the Spanish officer some steps aside, and whispered in his ear:

"Hang it, I'm a lucky dog!—I have a rendezvous."

"With whom?"

"With the Flower of Peas. I will tell you all to-morrow. But, hold on—I must get tipsy!"

"No, it seems to me you have sufficiently lost your head this evening."

"Head, heart, senses, mind into the bargain. A fine story! —a fine story! I shall make good use of this little person. I shall take her away to Bakou, and we shall give artistic *soirées!* But mum! Let us be as cautious as troubadours until to-morrow morning."

The additional refreshments that had been introduced, assisted by the brilliancy of the eyes of the Splendors of Beauty, of Djémylèh, and of Talhemèh—for Omm-Djéhâne kept apart, under the safeguard of the two grave Mussulmans, who, without appearing to do so, extended a very effectual protection to her—the frightful noise, the dancing, which was resumed and sustained for some hours—in short, all the delights of the evening, had the result that might be anticipated. The gov-

ernor was carried off to his bed; the chief of police reached his on the shoulders of four men; half of the officers slept on the field of battle, the other half scattered through the streets in parties, glorious but overcome. The three dancing-girls did or did not go back to their abode; it has not been fully ascertained what became of this detachment. Omm-Djéhâne alone peacefully regained the common dwelling under the protection of the friends in whom she trusted, and who left her cursing from their hearts the ignoble swine of Christians whom prudence had compelled them to treat with regard. As for Assanoff, after he had seen Moreno as far as their lodging—the inn—and ascertained that the hour of rendezvous had almost arrived, he hastily ran to post himself against the door of the dancing-girls' home, giving no other sign of life, as Omm-Djéhâne had instructed him.

The street was deserted and completely silent, the night gloomy, and it wanted about three hours of daybreak. It was the beginning of September. It had rained during the day, and was not warm. But the waiting was of brief duration. Assanoff, who was all ears, heard a step in the house; the door opened, and some one asked, in a whisper:

"Are you there?"

He passed his arm through the chink of the door, clasped a hand that met his, and replied:

"Of course I am! How should I not be here? Am I a brute?"

Omm-Djéhâne drew the officer inside, and closed the latch as noiselessly as she had opened it. Then, going before her guest, she hastily crossed the little central hall of the dwelling, from which they entered the principal room. In this place there were several divans against the walls, some chairs, and a table on which burned a lamp.

Omm-Djéhâne turned toward the officer, and regarded him in a manner so haughty that involuntarily he took a step

backward; then he looked with stupefaction on the young girl. She had discarded her dancing-girl's dress; she was attired as a lady of rank of Daghestan, and carried at her girdle a pair of pistols and a knife. Whether by chance or whether by design, her right hand strayed toward these weapons. She pointed out a chair to Assanoff with a commanding gesture, and seated herself on the divan a few paces from him. She held in her hand the rosary with which she had performed the ceremonies of Istikhareh on the occasion of her first appearance in this narrative. She again had recourse to the coral beads, which she rolled and passed between her fingers.

"Welcome, Hassan! For four years I have incessantly asked of my rosary whether I should see you; to-day it assured me that I should. That is why I went to the governor's house, and you are here."

"From the manner in which you receive me I don't understand what I am to do."

"You are going to learn, son of my aunt."

"What do you mean?"

"I was four years old, and you were twelve; I remember, and you have forgotten! Ah! son of my race, brother of my soul!" cried she, suddenly, with a passionate outburst, and stretching out her trembling hand toward the young man, "when you are asleep do you not see our hamlet, our village, on its rocky eminence, rising straight into the blue of heaven, with the clouds above it, out of ravines full of trees and bowlders? Do you not see, moreover, the nest in which we were born, far above the plain, far above ordinary mountains, far above bondsmen, amid the dwellings of noble birds, in the bosom of God's air? Do you not see our protecting walls, our towers leaning over the abysses, our terraced fastnesses rising watchful above each other, and from their windows eager to see the foe from afar? And their flat roofs where we slept in summer, and the narrow streets, and the dwelling of Kassem-

Bey, fronting ours, and that of Arslan-Bey before, and your playmates Sélym and Mouryd, who died in their blood, and my companions Ayeshah, Loulou, Péry, little Zobeydèh, whom her mother carried in her arms? Ah, wretched coward, the soldiers threw them all into the flames, and the hamlet burned over them!"

Assanoff began to feel very uncomfortable. Beads of perspiration formed on his forehead. Mechanically he clasped his hands on his knees, which he kept very close together. But he did not utter a word. Omm-Djéhâne continued in a hollow voice:

"You never dream at night, then? You lie down and sleep, and you remain there, don't you, like a lump of inert flesh bereft of thought, till morning—till mid-day, perhaps? Of a truth, you do well. Your whole life is only a death! You recollect nothing—nothing at all? Your uncle was my father, my father—do you know that? No, you don't! I am going to tell you it: my father, Élam-Bey, in short, was hanged to a tree on the left going up the path; your father, my uncle, was nailed by a bayonet-thrust to the door of his house. You don't recollect? You were only twelve years old; but I was four, and I have forgotten nothing. No, nothing, nothing, I tell you; not the smallest, not the minutest circumstance. Your uncle, when I passed him, carried by a soldier—your uncle was hanging to a tree as that dress against the wall there hangs to that nail behind you."

Assanoff felt an icy shiver in his bones; he seemed to feel the swinging feet of his father and his uncle on his shoulders, but he did not say a word.

"Then," continued Omm-Djéhâne, "you were taken along with some boys who by chance had escaped the fire and the slaughter. You were sent to the Cadet School at St. Petersburg, and brought up, as the French say. They removed your memory, they removed your heart, they took away your religion

without even caring to give you another for it; *but they taught* you to drink well, and I discover your features already disfigured by debauchery, your cheeks mottled with blue. A man? No, a wreck! you know it yourself!"

Assanoff, humiliated and mortified by this girl, and by the pictures, above all—by the pictures too exact, too sore, too true, which she called up before him—Assanoff tried to defend himself.

"I have, however, learned something," muttered he; "I know my duty as a soldier, and I have never been accused of lacking courage. I bring no discredit on my family—I have honor!"

"Honor? You!" cried Omm-Djéhâne in a perfect transport. "Go and tell this rubbish to people of your own kind, but don't think to impose on me with big words. Have not I also been bred among the Russians? Honor! It is to wish to be believed when you lie, to wish to be thought honest when you are only a scoundrel, and to wish to be thought fair when you cheat at play. If you meet another rogue of your kind—both men of honor—you fight, and are justly killed on the day when, by chance, you have not done wrong. That is what honor is; and if you truly possess it, son of my aunt, you may consider yourself a perfect European, depraved, perfidious, a thief, an assassin, faithless, lawless, godless, a hog drunk with all imaginable drunkenness, and rolled in all the sloughs of vice."

The virulence of this attack seemed to Assanoff to pass a reasonable limit, which caused him to regain partial possession of himself.

"He proves nothing who tries to prove too much," said he, coldly. "Let us not discuss whether you are right or wrong; but, however that may be, without asking my consent, they have made a civilized man of me; I have become one. I must remain one. You will not prove to me that I do any harm in living after the manner of my associates. Besides, to be frank

with you, I am bored; I don't know why, but, lacking nothing, I yet lack everything. If a bullet picks me out, I am ready to wed it. If brandy carries me off, much good may it do it! That is all I want. Come, Omm-Djéhâne, I am glad to see you! Why didn't you stay with the general's wife? That would have been better than this house."

"That woman," answered the dancing-girl in accents of hatred and scorn—"that woman! She had the insolence to say several times, and in my presence, that she wished to take my mother's place. She said, several times, and in my presence, that the Lesghians were no better than savages, and one day when I replied that their blood was purer than hers, she laughed. That woman! She took me once by the arm and put me out of the room like a servant, because I climbed upon an arm-chair, being too small to reach their idols and throw them down. Besides, you know well enough that it was her husband who led the troops against our hamlet."

Omm-Djéhâne was silent a moment; then she suddenly cried out:

"I was only waiting for the day when I should feel strong enough. Six months later I should have killed her two daughters."

"You strike hard," said Assanoff, with a laugh. "Fortunately, you betrayed yourself, and were dismissed at the right time."

He spoke in a careless tone which did not contrast ill with that of the previous moment. Omm-Djéhâne looked at him a moment without uttering a word. Then she stretched her arm along the divan, took a *târ*, a Tartar mandolin, which was lying there, and with a distraught air began to tune it; gradually, without seeming to think of what she was doing, she began to play and sing. Her voice was infinitely sweet, and remarkably thrilling. At first, she sang very softly, so that she could hardly be heard. It seemed as though there were

only detached chords, notes following one another without being connected by any motive. Insensibly, a marked air grew out of this indistinct melody, precisely as some ethereal apparition rises in the midst of a mist, comes gradually nearer and nearer, and takes definite form. Overcome by a mighty emotion, by an overpowering curiosity, and by an irresistible flash of memory, Assanoff raised his head and listened. Yes, it was evident that he listened with all his ears, with all his mind, with all his heart, with all his soul.

Presently words mingled with the song. It was a Lesghian poem. It was, in fact, an air which the daughters of the tribe sang most cheerfully and oftenest when Assanoff was a child. Every one knows the potent effect, the overmastering magic generally wrought by this kind of influence upon men born among the mountains, in the bosom of small communities, where, as distractions are few, memory remains forever sovereign of the imagination. The Swiss have the *Ranz des Vaches*, and the Scotch "The Bagpipe's Summons." Assanoff was possessed by a precisely similar feeling.

He was born a short distance from Bakou, in the midst of a group of rugged cliffs, presenting as strange and as sublime an appearance as can be seen anywhere. It is a cluster of sharp peaks, widely separated from each other by deep ravines, and rising from narrow bases to the region of the clouds. Occupying the rocky uplands of these gigantic points —uplands so narrow that one could swear from a distance that only eagles could build their nests there—were located, hanging as best they could, the villages, the hamlets, of these terrible men, who have known little but warfare, pillage, and destruction. The Lesghians abide there, always on the alert, awaiting their prey, suspecting attack, watching from afar, overlooking everything.

The song of Omm-Djéhâne called up before the excited soul of Assanoff, with the most harrowing vividness, the re-

membrance of the ancestral hamlet. Again he saw everything —everything he had thought forgotten—everything—the fortified ramparts, the precipices whose murderous depths his childish eye had sounded with insatiable curiosity; the streets, the flat terraces scorched by the sun, and vanishing beneath the snow; the houses, his own house, his room, his father, his mother, his kin, his friends, his foes! There was nothing he did not recall. The words which Omm-Djéhâne sang, the rhymes she interwove, possessed him as with an iron grasp, and bore him to the mountain ravines, to the paths where, from beneath a thicket, he had so often watched the advance of the Russian columns, and run to tell his father. For among the Lesghians the children of the nobility are acute and bold warriors from the time they can walk. A sublime charm filled the soul of the half-converted barbarian. His habits were European, his vices smacked of Russian and French, but the depth of his nature, his instincts, his characteristics, his leanings, whatever virtue he possessed, all were as Tartar as was his best blood.

What became of Mourad, son of Hassan, engineer officer in the service of his imperial majesty, whilom pupil in the Cadet School, and prize-man of the examinations, when his cousin arose, without ceasing to sing and to play on the *târ*, and began to perform across the room a slow and strongly rhythmic dance? He left his chair, threw himself at full length in a corner, held his head between his two hands, which were convulsively closed upon his hair, and, through tears which blurred his vision, followed with painful intensity the movements of the dance, exactly as he had done for Forough-el-Husnet, only, as may be imagined, with far more anxiety and with far more passion. It is furthermore true that Omm-Djéhâne danced in a manner quite different from her mistress. Her steps meant more; her gestures, while even more reserved, were more moving. It was the dance, the song, of the hamlet. From the

whole person of the young girl there went a sort of electric current, which completely enveloped her kinsman. Suddenly, abruptly, she stopped, ceased to sing, threw the *târ* upon the cushions, and, sinking beside Assanoff, she put her arm round his neck.

"Do you remember?" said she.

He gave a sudden groan, cried out in anguish, and hid his head in his cousin's lap. It was pitiful to see this big fellow shaken by such grief.

"Then you do remember," pursued the Lesghian. "You see what you find me. I have been the servant of the Franks, and I ran away; I have been the servant of the Mussulmans, and they beat me; I ran through the woods—I almost died of cold and hunger—I am here—I do not want to stay—you understand well why! As for you, why have you come to-night? See, you thoroughly understand? They wish to sell me to a Kaïmakam somewhere in Turkey. I have accepted, dreading worse, and to escape further torment. I am your flesh, I am your blood; save me! keep me near you; son of my uncle, Mourad, my love, my own, my dear heart, save me!"

She lifted his head and kissed him passionately.

"I will save you," answered Assanoff, quietly. "May all the devils strangle me, if I don't save you! You are all my family! Ah, those Russians! may Heaven confound them! They have killed me, they have burned me, they have ruined me! But I shall requite them a hundred-fold for the evil with which they have overwhelmed me, and you too! Do you want me to desert?"

"Yes, desert."

"Do you want to go to the mountain to join the other revolting tribes?"

"Yes, I do."

"Upon my honor, I do also! And it will be at once, that is to-morrow—or rather to-day, for dawn is just breaking.

We will become once more what we are, Lesghians and free! And I will marry you, daughter of my aunt, and you shall be saved, and I also. For, after all, I am a Tartar. What is there in common between Mourad, son of Hassan-Bey, and all these Frank gentlemen? Don't I know what they are worth? Have you read Gogol? There is a writer! He settles them as they deserve! Oh, the scoundrels!"

Jumping up suddenly, he strode up and down the room in a frenzy, given over to an excess of passion. Then he stopped before Omm-Djéhâne, looked at her fixedly, took her two hands, and said to her:

"You are indeed very pretty. I love you with all my heart, and I will marry you, on my word of honor. We shall have Russian heads on the table at our wedding-feast—does that please you?"

"Much, and for each head a thousand kisses."

"You know French?"

"Yes."

"So much the better. We will amuse ourselves sometimes by speaking it."

"Mourad, son of Hassan-Bey, how shameful!—Forget forever all these infamies."

"You are right. I am a Tartar, and nothing else. I don't want to be anything else, and I may be torn in ten thousand pieces if our children are not thorough Mussulmans. But enough of talking. See what remains to be done: I am about to leave you because it is day. Come to me at noon at the posting-house. There I will dress you as my orderly. At one o'clock we leave in a large *tarantass* that has been loaned me. We spin along rapidly; six leagues from here we shall leave the road, and good-by! The Russians will never see you here again. As for me, they shall only behold me with a sabre in my hand."

Omm-Djéhâne threw herself into his arms. They kissed each other, and Assanoff departed.

When he was in the street he was delighted with himself, delighted with his projects, and very much in love with his cousin, whom he thought adorable. It must be confessed that, as he was unaccustomed to follow more than one idea at a time, he had completely forgotten his traveling-companion, and when he arranged the posting-house as a rendezvous with Omm-Djéhâne, he never considered that Moreno was awaiting him there.

All at once he remembered it.

"Confound it," said he; "this is a nice blunder!"

He did not remain anxious long, such not being his habit, except to reflect.

"I will lay the whole thing before Moreno. He has been a conspirator, and knows what it is. Instead of interfering with me, he will help me."

When he entered the chamber where the Spaniard was sleeping on a bed of skins, he awakened him unceremoniously.

"Halloo!" said he; "who sold you this splendid bed that I knew nothing about?"

"You knew it perfectly well. I got it at Tiflis through the efforts of one of my countrymen, and you should remember that on that occasion you sagely explained to me, to my great surprise, that all the Jews of the Caucasus were of Spanish origin. But I fancy that you have not waked me up at this early hour, after a dinner and an evening such as yesterday's, to make me pass an examination on the persecutions of Philip II., in consequence of which the Hebrews fled to Salonica, and from Salonica pushed their investigations up to this point."

"No, not exactly; but excuse me, I am in some trouble. I rely on your good faith. Omm-Djéhâne is my cousin. I have resolved to marry her. I am going to escape with her to the

mountains. In a word, I am going to desert, and to declare war on the Russians."

Don Juan leaped from his bed in the utmost astonishment.

"Are you mad?" said he to his companion.

"I have been all my life, and think that in all probability I shall be so till my last breath. But in this instance I shall perform the most generous, the most chivalrous, and the noblest action imaginable, and I do not think that you are the one to deter me."

"And why, if you please?"

"Because you have done exactly the same thing, and that is the reason I have the honor to be your friend."

"Come, now! There is not the slightest resemblance. I was a conspirator because my friends were so, and I did not desert them; and, besides, the matter concerned my legitimate prince. What you wish to do is simply brigandage. You are going off with bandits, with a dancing-girl, let me tell you, and from being an elegant and amiable man, as you are, from being a brilliant officer born to distinction in all the *salons*, you meditate becoming a sort of gross savage, fit only to be shot in a hole."

"You forget that my father was a gross savage, and that, for that very reason, he was shot as you say."

"My poor friend, I should be grieved to distress you; but, since your father came to this unenviable end, you ought not of your own free-will to make it your object. Come, now, Assanoff, be reasonable, if you can! Your father was a savage? Well, you are not one. Where is the harm in that? Then, can all be alike from generation to generation? Do you want me to tell you what effect you produce on me?"

"Speak candidly."

"You incline me to laugh, for, if you go on, you will be ridiculous."

The engineer blushed hotly. The fear of becoming ridiculous upset him. Still he continued:

"My dear friend, Omm-Djéhâne will be here soon. As you may conceive, I won't send her back. On the other hand, are you going to betray me? Ridiculous or not, the wine is drawn and must be drunk."

With this he sat down, began to whistle, and poured out a glass of brandy from a decanter which happened to be at hand.

Moreno saw that he must not interfere with him. Accordingly, he ceased to press the matter, and busied himself with his morning toilet almost in silence. Assanoff, for his part, was not very talkative, and interrupted his reverie only by a few insignificant words, thrown in haphazard, from time to time. He was annoyed at his friend's opposition; besides, he did not himself, now that he was cool, find his plans so practicable, or rather so pleasant to carry out, as they had seemed to him to be in the moment of enthusiasm and passion; then, again, Omm-Djéhâne had produced the liveliest impression on his mind, in some slight degree by reason of her relationship, but more because of her beauty, most of all by the singularity of her nature; but, as for marrying her! In fact, he found her deficient, educated though she was in French. The truth is that poor Assanoff was not a Russian, not a savage, not a civilized man, but a little of all three, and poor creatures whom periods and conditions of transition deform in this way are exceedingly incomplète and exceedingly miserable, and reserved rather for vices and misfortune than for virtues and happiness. In order to evolve ideas and originate an expedient he set to drinking, and, after some glasses, he hit upon a solution for his greatest imminent difficulty, the impending arrival of Omm-Djéhâne. This solution was of the simplest kind: it consisted in his taking up his cap while Moreno's back was turned and allowing his faithful friend to arrange all matters,

as he best knew how, with his cousin, of whom he had so suddenly made a traveling-companion, an accomplice, and a betrothed.

At the stroke of noon Omm-Djéhâne, having left her lodging without any difficulty, since the dancing-girls, who had, thank God, returned, found nothing more pressing or necessary to do than to seek the repose of their couches—Omm-Djéhâne had taken the by-streets, and on reaching the posting-house, veiled after the fashion of Tartar women, had knocked discreetly at the entrance-door. Assanoff's orderly had opened it, and she had passed the soldier quickly without speaking; as for him, supposing that his officers were awaiting the woman, he had not even dreamed of questioning her. Thus it happened that the dancing-girl entered the room where Moreno was employed in strapping his valise for his departure, which would take place in an hour. He raised his eyes at the sound, saw the young girl, and mechanically looked around for Assanoff. Omm-Djéhâne gave him no time for embarrassment.

"Monsieur," said she, "I come here to seek Lieutenant Assanoff. He must have told you that I am his cousin, and, as he must be communicative, he will have certainly added that I was his betrothed. Therefore, as it seems he is absent, allow me to wait for him."

"Mademoiselle," said Moreno, coldly, offering the new-comer a chair, however, "you are right: Assanoff is communicative, and I know that you are his cousin, or at least that he believes so. But as to becoming his betrothed and all which that involves, of which you do not speak, we have not got so far, and I beg of you to alter your designs."

"Why, monsieur?"

"Mademoiselle, you will ruin Assanoff without benefiting yourself."

Omm-Djéhâne assumed an aggressive air.

"Who says that I seek my own benefit? Has Assanoff commissioned you to speak as you are doing?"

Moreno felt that he must not let his zeal carry him away. He parried, as the fencing-masters say, and bore his point differently.

"See here, mademoiselle, you are not an ordinary person, and it is unnecessary to look at you long in order to read your soul in your features. Do you love Assanoff?"

"Not at all."

Her eyes were full of scorn.

"Then what do you want to make of him?"

"A man. He is a woman, a coward, a drunkard. He believes everything that is told him, and I can twist him as I wish. How can you suppose I could love him? But he is the son of my uncle, the sole relative left to me; I do not intend that he shall disgrace himself any longer; he will take me with him, I am his wife; whom would you have me marry, if not him? I shall wean him from his shameful habits. I will serve him, I will guard him, and when he is killed it will be like a hero, by his family's foes, and I shall avenge him."

Moreno was somewhat astonished. He had relatives in the mountains of Barcelona; but he knew no Catalonian, man or woman, with the energy of this little woman. To find a rival worthy of her, he would have had to go back to Almogavares, and he had not time to seek so far.

"I entreat you, mademoiselle, let us be less violent. Assanoff does not deserve to be spoken of in that style; he is a brave man, and you shall not lead him astray."

"Who will hinder me?"

"I."

"You?"

"Precisely."

"And who may you be?"

"Juan Moreno, formerly lieutenant of Segovian Chasseurs,

at present cornet of Imeritian dragoons; a great servant of the ladies; but somewhat self-willed."

He had hardly done when he saw the gleam of a shining blade within an inch of his breast. Instinctively he stretched out his arm, and had time to seize Omm-Djéhâne's wrist, just as the keen knife was entering his flesh. He twisted his assailant's arm, and pushed her back without releasing her (on her side she did not let her arm fall); she looked at him with the eyes of a tigress. He fixed her with the eyes of a lion, for he was angry, and pushed her violently against the wall.

"Mademoiselle," said he, "what child's play is this? If I were not what I am, I should treat you as you deserve."

"What would you do?" replied Omm-Djéhâne, impetuously.

Moreno burst out laughing, and suddenly letting her go, without making the slightest movement which implied a desire to disarm her, he answered:

"I should kiss you, mademoiselle; for that is what girls get who allow themselves to tease the boys."

So saying, he drew his handkerchief from his pocket, and put it to his breast. The blood was flowing rapidly, and spotted his shirt. The blow had been well directed; happily it had not penetrated, or Moreno would have measured his length on the floor never to rise again.

Omm-Djéhâne smiled, and said, with a triumphant air:

"It did not want much; another time I shall have a surer hand."

"Many thanks! Another time I shall be on my guard, and see, you have all at once spoiled your schemes.—Come, Assanoff, behold mademoiselle's charming fancy!"

Assanoff was on the threshold, his face crimson, his eyes starting out of his head. He had just finished his debauch with the *raky* of the chief of police, and Heaven willed it that drunkenness should make him regard Omm-Djéhâne with horror.

"May the devil take her, this young lady! What more has she done?—See here, Omm-Djéhâne, leave me in peace. What old wives' tales have you been telling me? Do you suppose I'll bother my head about the Caucasus and its brutes of inhabitants? My father and mother? Look here, between ourselves, they were infamous brigands; and as for my aunt, ah, the sorceress! You cannot deny that she was a sorceress! Besides, I want to spend next winter in Paris. I shall go to sup at the most famous *cafés*. I shall go to the little theatres.—You will come with me, Moreno—you will come with me, won't you? Ah, my good brother, don't leave me. Let us go to the opera.—Omm-Djéhâne, come now, give me your arm. You will see some young girls there who dance a little better than you, I can tell you. Listen! No—come nearer, till I tell you something. Would you like us to go to Mabille? It seems there is nothing more left."

It is said that the steady look of a man affects brutes in a wonderful manner; that it terrifies them, makes them retreat, and reduces them, after a fashion, to naught. Whether this be true or not, Assanoff could not endure the expression of the eyes the young girl kept fixed on his. He ceased speaking; then he turned right and left, evidently trying to escape a painful influence. Finally, when this new source of trouble finished by bewildering his faculties, he fell on the bed and did not stir. Then Omm-Djéhâne turned to Moreno, and said, coldly:

"Monsieur, you should be satisfied. I see and you see, too, your friend incapacitated for committing the act of folly you were afraid of. I congratulate you. He is even a more civilized man than I believed him to be. He has just denied his father; he has just blackened the memory of the woman who brought him into the world. You have heard him insult his family, and what his country is in his estimation he has avowed to you. As for me, I cannot divine why Heaven saved either of us when our tribe was destroyed; putting in my woman's

breast the heart he should have had, and giving him the cowardice for which I should not have had to blush. Well, so things are; we shall not change them. Allah is my witness, since I have thought I have had but one desire: to see him—him who is on the bed there—him who is extended there like a foul beast! Yes, Allah knows it: knowing him to be living, I said to myself in my greatest sufferings: 'All is not lost, nothing is lost! Mourad lives! he will come to my aid.' I remember, among others, one of the most wretched nights in my wretched existence; I was alone in the depths of a wood, crouching among the roots of the trees. During two days I had eaten only a scrap of mouldy biscuit, which some soldiers had thrown away at the outskirts of an encampment. It was winter; the snow was falling on me. I consulted my rosary, and the infallible answer it repeated was, 'You shall see him again—you shall see him again!' And, in the horrible depths of my frightful distress, that hope sustained me. Every day since then I have said to myself, 'I shall see him again, but where? but when?' The Istikhareh told me it would be soon; it would be here. I came here. Yesterday I was apprised again. I was assured that the moment was at hand, and truly I have seen him—there he is—and you see him, too. You, who are a European, are doubtless proud of what your kind has made him. As for me, I am but a barbarian—you will allow me to be of another opinion. Keep him, then! He will not be found in the midst of the warriors of his nation; he will not fight to avenge his country—I will not say to free it—I know that is no longer possible. He will not protect his cousin—the last, the only daughter of his race—he will not raise her out of misery and despair. No, no, no! He plunges her back there! Adieu, monsieur, and if the curse of a feeble being who has never done you wrong can have weight in the balance of your destiny, may it weigh all—"

"No, Omm-Djéhâne, no! Do not curse me; I do not deserve

it. Pardon me the harsh words I have used toward you; I did not know you. Now that I know who you are I would give much to come to your aid. Come, my dear child, be seated. Speak to me as though I were a brother. I agree with you: we live in a sorry world, and, barbarous or civilized, the best of it is worthless. What do you need? Can money help you? I have not much. Come, here is what I have left; take it. I would give anything in the world to help you. You stare at me! I am not setting a snare for you! And see, poor Assanoff, I should not have turned him from you if he had not turned himself. You know his habits now. What could you expect from him?"

"You do not get drunk, then?" asked Omm-Djéhâne with a certain surprised intonation.

"It is not the custom of my country," answered he. "Now, let us speak of you. What will you become? What do you expect me to do?"

She kept her eyes fixed on those of Moreno for some instants as she said to him:

"Are you in love with a woman in your country?"

Don Juan paled slightly, as happens to wounded men when the raw flesh is suddenly touched; notwithstanding, he replied:

"Yes, I love a woman."

"Do you love her well?"

"With all my soul."

Omm-Djéhâne gathered her veil about her, covered her face, stepped to the door, and, staying a moment on the threshold, she turned toward Moreno, and said to him with the emphasis Asiatics use when uttering such words:

"May the blessing of Allah be upon her!"

The officer was moved to the depths of his heart. Omm-Djéhâne had disappeared. Assanoff snored like a humming-top. The orderly came to say that the horses were harnessed and the *tarantass* waited. The engineer was carried to the ve-

hicle, and, setting off at a gallop, the two friends departed from Shamakha, soon leaving the little town hidden behind them in the eddies of dust which their four wheels raised in clouds.

The landscape before and behind Shamakha, on the side of Bakou, is of singular grandeur and majesty. It is not exactly the usual aspect of the Caucasus. There savage cliffs abound, forests full of shadows and horrors, valleys where the sun ventures, but does not abide; mighty torrents falling in broad sheets over gigantic rocks, and in their struggle with these masses scattering in foam and furious currents; narrow, breathless defiles; gorges like those of Souram, where the steepness, the height, the dizziness, recall the descriptions of story-books. Then through all this flow sluggish rivers; it is they which form the contrast in these wild pictures with what is presented by the great valley which leads to Bakou. There, on the contrary, there is plenty of space, plenty of clear air and limpid light; a clayey soil, dusty in summer—a fine, implacable, stifling dust—in winter a deep mud, where the lightest *troïkas* are ingulfed above the hubs; then, running parallel, right and left, are distant mountain-ranges. It is already an outpost of the large valleys, the great chains, the immense spaces of Persia.

Moreno had been so affected by his unexpected encounter with the dancing-girl, and, above all, by what he imagined her and what he understood her to be, that he remained almost insensible to the magnificent scene through which the carriage passed, borne along by its four horses, and was lost in his reflections. The wound in his breast continued to be somewhat painful; the flesh had been badly cut. Don Juan had dressed it as well as he could, but this severe sensation, this violent contact by which the young Lesghian had, after a fashion, taught the young officer in the twinkling of an eye what she was, and the souvenir he was destined to carry of his interview with her, did not mingle any bitterness with the reflections which they caused, and the final judgment of Moreno

was sound and judicious. Perhaps a German, a Northerner, would have difficulty in understanding a temperament which a Spaniard felt to be more in accord with his.

Omm-Djéhâne, poor girl, had never for a single instant of her life escaped from the emotion produced by the capture of the hamlet. She had always had before her eyes, she had still, the flames devouring her home, the corpses of her kindred falling one upon another, the fierce and exasperated faces of the soldiers. She had still ringing in her ears the cries of despair and distress, the explosion of fire-arms, the shouts of the victors. Amid the cares with which she had been surrounded during her early childhood, in the general's family, she had understood absolutely nothing except that she was among assassins. She regarded herself not only as a slave, but as a degraded slave, and the freedom with which her protectress, a worthy woman, had related to each new visitor the authentic story of the little Lesghian, with a view, doubtless, of rendering the child more interesting, was always resented by Omm-Djéhâne as the height of insult. She saw nothing but the boasting and arrogance of the conquerors. She scarcely had to be educated: like all Asiatics, and especially the people of her nation, she was endowed with marvelous intelligence. Besides, having occasion to notice that knowledge passed for merit, and that the general's daughters, learning less thoroughly and easily, were scolded and wept at each of her successes, she had redoubled her efforts, and taken much delight in causing them this trouble. At one time she had conceived a very different idea. Not doubting that the Russians, for whom she entertained in her childish imagination as much scorn as hatred, owed their success solely to sorcery, and that the secrets of this sorcery were contained in the books she saw so highly valued, she made up her mind to become a magician in her turn. But in vain did she read everything that fell into her hands; as she found nothing which served her purpose, she became discouraged.

However, she never faltered in her belief that powerful witchcraft was at the bottom of all her troubles. For in spirit as in heart she always remained a Lesghian, and the form and character of her spirit altered no more than her affections.

So, as she told Assanoff, she had known all along that he had escaped from the massacre, and that he had been educated at the Cadet School. Since then she had seen in him her future husband. According to her way of thinking, she could have no other. On this point centered her dreams; the resolves she had made, apart from those caused by anger or hatred, which she never controlled too well, had always for their principal object the meeting with her cousin. She was always too distrustful to consult any one but the Istikhareh, but she placed absolute confidence in the responses of the rosary-beads. Having become a dancing-girl for subsistence, she did not consider herself in the least lowered. The dancing-girls of Shamakha have a reputation which is akin to glory; and, besides, the women of Asia, high or low, possess no social rank whatever; they are women, either empresses or servants, and women they remain, being allowed in consequence to say and do everything without incurring in reason or justice the responsibility of their thoughts and acts. They deal solely with passion, which, as the case may be, debases, kills, or crowns them. Omm-Djéhâne was not vicious—far from it; she was thoroughly chaste and pure; but she was not virtuous either, because, if she had had any desire so to do, she would have given up her chastity in an instant without a struggle, and even without the least suspicion of wrong-doing. It was not to be supposed, however, that she would have relinquished her reserve in favor of a Frank, such aversion did she entertain for the race.

Grégoire Ivanitch, the Enemy of the Spirit, had once fancied he took a lively interest in the young girl—and, naturally, had no scruples in trying her. From that source she had been in no danger. But there had followed, on the part of her mistress,

the Splendors of Beauty, a course of advice and insinuations, mingled with criticism and reproaches, modified, it is true, by the fear which Omm-Djéhâne inspired in all who approached her. The young girl did not yield, because she was waiting for Assanoff, and beause the Istikhareh had repeatedly assured her that he would soon come. It was for the sake of peace that she had agreed to be sold as a slave or a wife—it was all one—to the old Kaimakam in the neighborhood of Trebizond. She gained time, and did not scruple about breaking her word, if need were, at the time of ratification. Such was Omm-Djéhâne. Such had she hitherto been. To sum up, she was a poor creature, profoundly unhappy and pitiable, although she never wept for herself, and asked pity of no one.

As has been said, Moreno appreciated fully the main features of the situation. After some hours, Assanoff at last waked up. He was cross and disagreeable, did not pronounce Omm-Djéhâne's name, made no allusion to what had occurred at Shamakha, and relapsed into a moral and physical prostration that excited Moreno's pity. He saw that in the Tartar's heart a terrible struggle was going on, between his instincts, his tastes, his habits, his weaknesses, his concessions, and his remorse, in which no one of the contending forces was strong enough to gain the victory. The journey therefore was made in a dull manner and. in consequence of the state in which he saw his friend to be, the Spanish exile began to find life intolerable. When the carriage entered Bakou the first view of the town did not restore his gayety.

The Caspian, the weird and sombre sea, more inhospitable upon its Asiatic even than upon its European shores, covered the horizon afar off with its leaden waters, over which hung the dark and lowering sky. It had been raining; the streets and roads showed three feet of yellowish mud, so sticky that carriages, men, and animals, found difficulty in extricating themselves. The suburbs, composed of wooden houses built

after the Russian fashion, of government stores, of timber-yards and factories whose high chimneys sent the pit-coal smoke heavenward, were inhabited by a rabble half Tartar, half military. At rare intervals a woman dressed in European style passed by, with a hat which suggested Western fashions. The old fortified inclosure of the Tartar sovereigns' residence still preserved its trefoil-shaped gateway, and, when the carriage passed, small native beggars set out after it, turning somersaults, and, shouting out, in French in doleful accents:

"Give us some money, monsieur! Bandaloun!"

Which meant that they asked for money, and would also be gratified with a pair of pantaloons. Such is the education dispensed in a truly liberal fashion by light-hearted young officers. In the narrow streets, where the majority of the houses are still of the old style, there may be seen, amid numerous signs of Russian merchants and artisans, such notices as *Bottier de Paris; Marchande de Modes.* It must be admitted that these baits thrown out to public credulity are scarcely deceptive, and that what one buys in these shops is not of a nature to deceive the most confiding simplicity as to the place of its production.

Once arrived, Assanoff found distraction in the bustle. He roused himself, and recovered his ordinary temper. Besides, he had his awakening. On his side, Moreno, presented to his colonel, well received by his comrades, fêted by the Europeans, and feeling himself of necessity compelled to it, set himself to think less of the past. At the end of three months he had regained his lieutenant's epaulets. He took part in an expedition, performed his duty well, and was promoted to a captaincy. Soldiers look on life from a special standpoint: if they were offered paradise with the loss of rank, and hell with promotion, very few would hesitate; and as for those who might choose God's presence, there is not a doubt but they would pass eternity in bewailing their sacrifice. For several years, nevertheless, the desires of Don Juan's soul turned toward Spain; his love no

longer caused him the sharp pain of the first months; it was a tender habit, a melancholy preoccupation, which, as it were, completely saturated his soul. He wrote often, and was written to; they hoped, as well as they could hope, to see their separation ended. When politics closed the breach opened between them, it was evident that the material conditions of existence did not permit Moreno to leave the Caucasus, because he had nothing but his pay, and could not begin a new mode of existence; while the young woman was not rich enough to join her lover. There it remained. Neither married, but with the lapse of time they ceased to be very unhappy; happy they never were.

Long before this time, Moreno, returning rather late one night from the governor-general's, where he had spent the evening, saw at a distance in the deserted street which passed by the ancient palace of the Tartar khan, then reduced to a powder-magazine, a woman walking in the same direction as himself. It was winter and cold; several inches of snow covered the ground; everything was frozen, and the night was dark.

"Who can that unfortunate creature be?" said Moreno to himself.

The captain had seen much misery; he had witnessed many disasters; his own existence had not been bright. In such circumstances a man becomes either hard-hearted or kind. Moreno was kind. As well as the darkness would allow him, he followed with compassionate eyes this solitary creature as she went on; as he fancied that she faltered in her walk and staggered, he hastened to overtake and assist her, when, to his astonishment, he saw her stop before his own door, and then he heard hasty steps behind him.

He turned, and instantly recognized the Doukhoboretz.

Grégoire Ivanitch was hatless and cloakless, and was hurrying as fast as his already very considerable obesity would allow him. Moreno thought, correctly, as it happened, that the

Enemy of the Spirit was trying to overtake the woman, and the thought flashed across his mind that it was with evil intent; so he seized him by the arm, and shouted loudly:

"Where are you going?"

"Ah, captain, I pray you, don't stop me. The poor girl has escaped!"

"Who? What girl are you speaking about?"

"This is not the time for conversation, captain; but, since we are here, help me to save her. Perhaps we are too late, alas! and it is certain that, if any one can soothe her, it is you."

He dragged Moreno off. The latter, in his astonishment, went with him; and, when he was a few steps from his door, he saw with horror the woman staggering, and trying to hold herself up by stretching her arm against the door. She was about to fall on the threshold. He caught her, grasped her in his arms, and looked in her face. It was Omm-Djéhâne.

When she saw him she had a sort of electrical spasm which gave her a flash of strength. She threw her arms around his neck, kissed him passionately, and said but one word, "Adieu!"

Then her arms relaxed: she fell back. He looked at her aghast; and, of a truth, he saw that she was dead.

At this moment, Grégoire Ivanitch joined him, and assisted him in holding the insensible corpse. Moreno wished to carry it into his quarters.

"No," said the Enemy of the Spirit, shaking his head. "The unfortunate child was sick at my house; it is I who will wrap her in her shroud; it is at my expense she will be buried. She is dead! She did not like me, but I wished her well, and it is enough to make me consider myself her only relative."

"But tell me," said Moreno, "what has happened?"

"Not much. She did not wish to be sold; she refused to go to Trebizond, and she refused to dance, and, what never happened before, what no one had ever seen, she spent days and nights in weeping; she beat her breast, and tore her face with

her nails. The Splendors of Beauty did not know what to do, and was very anxious to get rid of her. As for me, I said to Omm-Djéhâne: 'My child, you are making a great mistake, and it is clearly the Spirit who is turning your head. Give over your foolish whims. Drink, laugh, sing, amuse yourself—do not refuse any fancy; you are young, you are pretty, you are admired, you dance like a fairy. The general himself will throw himself at your feet if you wish. Why won't you?'

"She answered me, 'Because I love, and am not loved.'

"We could learn nothing more. Meanwhile, I, who had once been in love with her after a fashion, took her out of friendship and carried her to my farm, where she consented to come. I took care of her, tried to distract her, and—would you believe it?—instead of weeping, she had a cough, and I had a doctor. He told her she must be very careful, and avoid taking cold. Do you know what she did? She went and rolled in the snow.

"Ah, the Spirit! the Spirit! Don't mention it! But you are all blind, you Gentiles. Finally, three days ago, she said exactly what I am about to repeat to you—it is sheer madness; but, whether or not, these are her exact words. She said to me:

" 'Take me to Bakou.'

" 'What for?' I answered.

" 'To die!' said she.

"Vexation choked me, and I answered roughly:

" 'You can die as well here as at Bakou.'

" 'No, I want to die on the threshold of Captain Moreno's door.'

"I thought she was delirious; she had never pronounced your name. Never once, I tell you. But she grew annoyed, and said angrily:

" 'Don't you understand me?'

"When she became angry the blood gushed from her mouth, and she suffered hours in consequence. I yielded.

" 'Very well—we will go.'

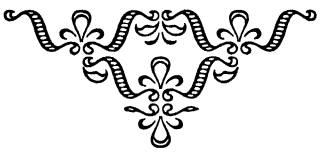
"We came. She sent to me just now for assistance, assuring me that she felt worse. It was only too true, and while I obeyed her—you see!"

The poor devil's voice was broken by a sob.

Moreno was profoundly grieved. He was wrong. The happiest thing for Omm-Djéhâne was exactly what had happened. What would she have become in life? If she had remained a true and faithful Lesghian, the loss of Assanoff and her first dreams would not have broken her heart. She had suffered much; doubtless she would have suffered more, but satisfied pride and an easy conscience would have sustained her to the end; and, whether she had continued to delight the men of taste in Shamakha by the enchantment of her dance, or whether she had preferred the obscure harem of the old Kaïmakam, she might afterward have reached an old age, and, like the wives of the ancient patriarchs, have seen its peaceable twilight pass into a peaceable and honored death. But she, too, had ended by being unfaithful to the gods of her country. She had fought against herself; she had made a stubborn resistance; she had fallen bravely, the victim of her struggle. But, after all, it is only too true, in the depths of her heart she had yielded. She had loved a Frank.

When Moreno told the whole story to Assanoff, the civilized Tartar was much moved. He refrained from getting drunk for a week; he was met everywhere singing the "Marseillaise." Afterward he grew calm.

THE STORY OF GAMBÈR-ALY



THE STORY OF GAMBÈR-ALY

THERE was at Shiraz a painter named Mirza-Hassan, and *Khan* was generally added, not because he was decorated with a title of nobility, but because his family had thought proper to confer the khanate on him at his birth. This is a precaution which is often taken, because it is agreeable to pass for a distinguished man; and if by chance the king should forever forget to accord to you a title which is elegant, to say the least, where is the harm in taking it? Thus Mirza-Hassan called himself Mirza-Hassan-Khan, a title as long as your arm, and when people spoke to him, they always addressed him thus: "How do you do, khan?" And he accepted it without winking.

Unfortunately, the state of his fortune was not equal to sustaining his rank. He occupied a house which was modest, not to say miserable, in one of the lanes adjoining the Bazaar of the Emir, which is still standing, not having been overthrown by earthquakes. This dwelling, which was entered by a low door, pierced in a wall, without windows or smoke-holes, consisted of a court-yard, eight metres square, with a basin of water in the centre, and a poor devil of a palm-tree in one corner. The palm-tree resembled a feather duster in distress, and the water in the basin was stagnant. Two rooms in ruins had no roofs, a third remained half covered, the fourth was good. In this the painter had established his *enderoun*, that is to say, the apartment of his wife, Bibi-Djànèm (Madame My Heart), and he received his friends in the other room,

where they enjoyed the advantage of being half in the shade and half in the sun, since only a fragment of the ceiling remained.

Mirza-Hassan lived in perfect harmony with Bibi-Djànèm, when she was not out of humor. But if by chance she had occasion to complain of a neighbor, or if anything of a doubtful character had been said to her concerning the habits and manners of her husband, at the bath, where she passed six or eight hours every Wednesday, then, it must be confessed, the blows rained on the ears of the guilty man. No lady in Shiraz, nor even in all the province of Fars, could pretend to handle that dangerous weapon, the slipper, so adroitly as Bibi-Djànèm, who had taken her degree in that kind of fencing. She seized the terrible instrument by the joint, and, with marvelous address, brought the iron-bound heel down on the head, the face, or the hands, of her unhappy spouse. The very thought of it makes one shudder; but still it was a happy household; such catastrophes hardly occurred more than twice a week, and during the remainder of the time they smoked the *kalian* together, they drank well-sugared tea out of English porcelain, and they sang the songs of the bazaar, accompanying themselves on the *kémantjeh*.

Mirza-Hassan-Khan complained, not without reason, of the hardness of the times, which generally forced him to keep the greater part of his effects, and sometimes those of his wife, at the pawnbroker's. But, without resigning himself to this annoyance he could never have permitted himself to dream of regaling himself with preserves, cakes, Shiraz wine, and *raky*, which was not likely. So they were resigned to it. They borrowed of their friends, of the merchants, of the Jews; and as it was always a difficult operation, because the khan enjoyed but a feeble credit, they deposited clothes, carpets, chests, or anything they had. When Fortune smiled, and dropped some piece of money into the hands of the family, they put into

practice a very wise financial system—they amused themselves with one third; with another they speculated; with the third they redeemed some regretted article, or liquidated the public debt. The last combination was rare.

The causes of so sad a state of affairs are not far to seek; some morose and uneasy people pretended to find them in the chronic disorder and improvidence of the husband and wife. Pure calumny! The sole reason lay in the culpable indifference of their contemporaries for people of birth and talent. Art was in a decline, to tell the whole truth, and this decline fell directly on Mirza-Hassan-Khan and his wife Bibi-Djànèm. *Kalemdans*, or painted ink-bottles, did not sell well; caskets were not in great demand; disloyal rivals, without the least merit, fabricated mirror-backs which ought to have made them blush, and had no more shame than to dispose of them at extremely low prices; and, to conclude, bindings for books were going out of fashion. When the painter's thoughts rested on this sad subject, he broke forth into bitter words. He considered himself the last and purest glory of the school of Shiraz, whose bold principles of color seemed to him superior to the elegant mannerisms of the artists of Ispahan, and he was never weary of proclaiming it. Nobody, in his opinion, equaled him—what! equaled?—no, nor approached him, in life-like representation of birds; his iris and roses might be plucked, his nuts eaten, and, when he undertook to produce figures, he surpassed himself. Without doubt, if the famous European who formerly composed a picture of Hezrèt-è-Mérièm (Her Highness the Virgin Mary), holding on her knees the prophet Issa in his infancy (the benediction and health of God be upon him!), could have beheld the manner in which he copied him, the way in which he rendered the nose of Hezrèt-è-Mérièm and the leg of the child, and, above all, the back of the chair—the famous European, I say, would have thrown himself at the feet of Mirza-Hassan-

Khan, and would have said to him, "What dog am I, that I should kiss the dust of thy shoes?" This opinion, without doubt just, which Mirza-Hassan-Khan had of his personal value, did not belong to him exclusively, a very flattering circumstance, and one which he loved to call up. If coarse people—merchants, artisans, chance customers—paid him badly for his works, and insulted him by disputing the price, he was compensated by the suffrages of enlightened men who were worthy of respect. His royal highness the prince-governor honored him from time to time with a commission; the head of religion himself, the Imam-Djumè of Shiraz, that venerable pontiff, that saint, that majestic, that august personage, and the vizier of the prince, and the chief of the huntsmen, would not consent to receive into their noble pockets an ink-bottle which was not of his manufacture. Could anything be conceived more fitted to give an exact idea of the skill and even genius displayed by this unequaled painter, who had the good luck to be called Mirza-Hassan-Khan? Nevertheless, it was a pity: so many illustrious protectors of art thought they did enough for their great man when they accepted his works, and always forgot to pay him, and he was foolish enough not to remind them of it. He contented himself with groaning about it, and parrying as well as he was able the blows from the slipper which followed every discomfiture of this nature, for Bibi-Djànèm never failed to attribute every unpleasant thing which happened to the stupidity, the folly, or the frivolity, of her dear husband.

This couple had a son, already quite large, who promised to become a very handsome boy. His mother doted on him; she had named him Gambèr-Aly. Mirza-Hassan-Khan had proposed to bestow upon him his title, which had become hereditary, but Bibi-Djànèm had violently opposed it, and spoke to her husband as she was in the habit of doing:

"Booby!" she said to him, "leave me in peace, and do not weary my ears with thy folly! Art thou not the son, the own

son of Djafèr the scullion, and is there any one in existence who is ignorant of the fact? Moreover, what is the use of giving one's self a title as thou dost? People laugh at thee, and thou dost not gain any more money by it! No! my son does not need these absurdities! He has better means of making a fortune. Before he was born, I made a pilgrimage for his benefit to the Imam-Zadèh-Kassèm, and that act of devotion never fails in its effect; when he was born, I provided myself beforehand with an astrologer. *I*, dost thou hear? and not thou, bad father! For thou never thinkest of anything useful! As I was saying, I took the precaution of providing an excellent astrologer. I gave him two *sahabgrans* (three francs). He promised me faithfully that Gambèr-Aly, if Allah pleases, shall become prime-minister. I am certain that he will become so, for I immediately sewed to his neck a little bag containing blue beads to bring him happiness, and red beads to give him courage; I placed on his arms talismanic boxes containing sentences from the book of Allah, which will preserve him from all misfortunes—inshallah! inshallah! inshallah!"

"Inshallah!" replied Mirza-Hassan in a deep voice, and with much docility.

And thus was Gambèr-Aly launched into existence by the cares of a prudent mother. Provided as he was with all the necessary safeguards, reason demanded that he should be allowed an honest freedom. Thus he was able, from the age of seven, to promenade at his will, quite naked, about the quarter, with his young companions. At an early period he became the terror of the grocers and provision-merchants, whose dates, cucumbers, and skewers of roast-meat, he stole with marvelous adroitness. When they caught him they scolded him, which he did not mind, and sometimes they beat him, but not often, because they feared his mother. On these occasions she was like a lioness, but more terrible. Little Gambèr-Aly scarcely had time to take refuge beside her, bathed in tears,

rubbing with his hand the parts offended by the irascible merchant; the matron scarcely had time to succeed in catching through his sobs and cries the name of the culprit: she did not lose a minute; she adjusted her veil, and precipitated herself from her door like a water-spout, waving her arms in the air, and uttering this cry:

"Musslmans! our children are being murdered!"

At this summons, five or six of her neighbors, who, moved by a warlike spirit, were accustomed to serve as her auxiliaries in expeditions of this sort, rushed from the depths of their dwellings, and followed her, howling and gesticulating like her; on the way they received recruits, they arrived in force before the shop of the criminal. The wretch tried to explain; they did not listen, and laid hands on everything. The idlers of the bazaar thronged around to join the action; the police threw themselves into the midst of the hubbub and tried in vain to restore order by dint of kicks and blows. It was fortunate if the merchant could escape being put in prison; but he always ended by paying a fine for having allowed himself to disturb the public peace.

Gambèr-Aly imperceptibly arrived at the solemn day when his mother, interrupting his sports, put on him a *shalwàr,* or trousers, a *koulidjèh,* or tunic, a girdle and cap, and sent him to school. Everybody must go through with that: Gambèr-Aly knew it, and submitted. At first he attended the educaional establishment of Moulla-Salèh, whose shop was situated between those of a butcher and a tailor. About fifteen scholars, boys and girls, were crowded there, together with the master, like oranges in a basket, for the space measured only a few feet. They learned to read and recite prayers, and from morning till evening the neighborhood was overwhelmed with the psalmody of the band of students. Gambèr-Aly did not remain long with Moulla-Salèh, because that illustrious professor, having been a mule-driver in a caravan before devoting him-

self to public instruction, had the bad habit of striking his pupils very hard when they allowed themselves to play tricks on the passers-by, instead of giving their whole attention to his wise teachings. Gambèr-Aly complained to his mother, and she made a descent on the professor, threw the three sous which she owed him for the past month at his head, and told him plainly that he would not see her son again.

On leaving this school, the little fellow went to the establishment of Moulla-Iousèf, where he studied six months; after that period the school closed, because the master turned druggist and abandoned the white turban of science for the sheepskin cap of civil life. The third tutor of Gambèr-Aly was an ancient musketeer of an old governor, concerning whom tradition preserved but one fact, that he had had his head cut off. Moulla-Iousèf, when he spoke of this patron, asserted, with the air of one fully convinced, that the judge had not abused his trust. He was gentle, loved children, did not beat them, praised their progress, and received, besides his regular salary, many little gifts from the mothers who were enchanted with his manners: his house was flooded with honey-cakes and pastry made of baked flour mashed with mutton-fat and powdered with sugar, not to mention preserved fruits and *raky*.

At sixteen, Gambèr-Aly had finished his education. He could read, write, and cipher; he knew by heart all the legal prayers, could even chant the *ménadjâts*, knew a little Arabic, recited in a very agreeable voice some lyric poetry and some fragments of an epic poem, and loved his parents sincerely. He felt a wild desire to seek adventures and to amuse himself at any price, except at the cost of his skin, for he was a great coward. This did not prevent him, any more than the greater part of his school-fellows who had entered the world at the same time as himself, from assuming the habits, manners, and swaggering airs, which in Persia characterize those who are called in Andalusia *majos*, that is, the elegant young men of the lower class.

He had large pantaloons of blue cotton, very dirty, a tunic of gray felt with double hanging cuffs, his shirt open, leaving his breast free, his cap on one ear, his *gâma,* or large, two-edged sabre, hanging from the front of his belt, and serving as a rest for his right hand, while in his left he held a flower, sometimes placed in his mouth. This swaggering style became him marvelously. He had curly hair of an admirable black, eyes painted with *kohol,* as handsome as a woman's, a form like a cypress-tree, and in all his movements grace and to spare.

In this garb he frequented Armenian taverns; he found there, without doubt, few rigid Mussulmans, but, on the other hand, many wild fellows of his own sort, dangerous vagabonds of the kind called *loûtys,* or ragged, who think as little of giving a thrust with a knife to satisfy their anger as of pouring out a glass of wine; in a word, he saw very bad company, which for many people of a jovial turn is equivalent to enjoying themselves to perfection.

Where did he get the money indispensable to this joyous existence? That is a question which for many reasons it would not be well to look into too closely, and his manner of establishing an income might have led him where he had no desire to go, if his fate, directed or foreseen by the skill of the astrologer, had not traced, with a good deal of promptness, the line which he ought to follow, and this event occurred on one of the first days of the full-moon of Shàban. About four hours after evening-prayer, he had betaken himself to a nice little public-house not far from the tomb where the poet Hafiz sleeps.

There was a fine company there: two Kurds of unprepossessing exterior; a moulla of the class who sell marriage-contracts for two days or twenty-four hours—a style of morality but little approved by the pedantic portion of the clergy; four lively muleteers, whom the aspect of the Kurds did not in the least intimidate; two young fellows like Gambèr-Aly; an enormous artillery-man, a native of Khorassan, interminably tall,

but broad in proportion which reëstablished the equilibrium; and a pishkedmèt, or *valet de chambre* of the prince-governor, who was there on the sly. The Armenian landlord spread an ox-hide on the carpet, and brought, in succession, parched almonds which excite thirst, white cheese, bread, and skewers of *kébab* or fillet of mutton roasted between fragments of fat and laurel-leaves, the *ne plus ultra* of delicacies. In the middle of these trifles were solemnly placed a dozen of these *baggalys* or glass flasks, flat in form, which timid drinkers can easily conceal under their arms and carry home without any one perceiving it, and which contain nothing less than wine or brandy. They drank quietly enough for two hours. The remarks were agreeable, as might be expected from such distinguished people. Candles had just been brought and placed on the cloth, together with a fresh supply of bottles, when the moulla interrupted one of the Kurds who was singing a lamentable air through his nose, at the top of his voice, and made the following proposition:

"Excellencies, since the mirrors of my eyes have the distinguished happiness of reflecting to-day so many engaging countenances, the idea has just occurred to me of making an offer which will doubtless be accepted with indulgence by some one of the illustrious members of this society."

"Your excellency's excessive goodness transports me," replied one of the muleteers, who still preserved some coolness, but wagged his head in a manner fitted to give one the vertigo; "everything which you are about to command us to do is precisely what we are about to do."

"May your indulgence not diminish!" replied the moulla. "I am acquainted with a young person; she wishes to marry a man of consideration, and I have promised to find a husband worthy of her. To speak in full confidence—as one ought among tried friends—and to conceal nothing of the most exact truth from you, the lady in question is of a beauty to make

the rays of the sun grow pale, and drive the moon herself to despair! The most dazzling stars are pebbles without lustre beside the diamonds of her eyes! Her form is like a willow-branch, and when she rests her foot upon the earth the earth says 'Thank you!' and swoons with love!"

This description, which, however, gave a sufficiently advantageous account of the moulla's friend, produced but little effect—so little that one of the *loûtys* began to sing, with a trembling in his voice which sounded like gargling:

"The prime-minister is an ass, and the king is no better!"

This was the beginning of a song recently imported from Teheran. The moulla did not allow himself to be diverted from his idea, and continued in a tearful voice which contended successfully with his comrade's trembling nasal tone:

"Excellencies! this divine perfection possesses, behind the coppersmiths' bazaar, a house with three rooms, eight carpets nearly new, and nine chests filled with clothing. She has, moreover, *kabbalèbs* or contracts for considerable sums; I do not know the amount, but it cannot be less than eighty tomans!"

This second chapter of the lady's qualities aroused every one, and one of the *loûtys* exclaimed:

"Here I am! Does she want a husband? Let her take me! Where would she find one as good? You know me, moulla! If I do not have her, I shall die of love and regret!"

Thereupon he began to weep, and, in order to give an idea of the strength of his feelings, he drew his *gâma* and tried to give himself a good blow on the head; but the cannoneer restrained him; and as the rest, who had become attentive, perceived that the moulla had not told all, they begged the latter to continue to the end of his panegyric, that they might know whether there were not some shadow on the delightful picture which he had just traced.

"A shadow, excellencies! May your goodness not diminish!

May all benedictions fall like rain upon your noble heads! What shadow could there be? Is a fortune, like the one I have just computed for you, a defect? Is an immaculate virtue, comparable only to that of the wives of the Prophet, a subject for fault-finding? Now, this virtue, magnanimous gentlemen, is not of the kind which is affirmed without the power of demonstration! It is incontestable, established on irrefragable proofs, and these proofs, behold! They are letters of *tôbèh* dated this morning."

At these words the enthusiasm knew no bounds; the *loûty*, who had recently been restrained from knocking himself on the head, took advantage of the moment when every one was absorbed in his own thoughts, lifted his eyes and hands to heaven, murmuring, "Bèh! bèh! bèh!" and made a cut on his head which began to bleed. During this time the moulla had unfolded the precious document, and, placing it before the eyes of his audience, began to read in an imposing voice. But, before joining the auditors who were so deeply interested, the reader must learn what letters of *tôbèh* are.

When a lady has furnished causes for scandal, too indiscreetly repeated, public opinion unfortunately turns against her, and annoying remarks follow. Then the judge takes the thoughtless woman under his charge; he demands frequent gifts from her, keeps himself informed of her acts and behavior, and after some misadventures the lady generally feels the necessity of changing her manner of life. She can only effect this by marriage. But how to get married in a situation so difficult as hers? It is very simple. She seeks a religious person, explains her case, describes her desolation, and the religious person produces his writing-materials. He gives her a scrap of paper, bearing witness to the regret for the past which consumes the penitent, and, as Allah is essentially merciful when a person has the firm intention not to fall back into her sins, the former sinner finds herself whitened from

head to foot: no one has any longer the slightest right to suspect the solidity of her principles, and she is as marriageable as any other girl, provided she finds a husband. Nothing is more admirable than this sudden transformation, and it is not dear, being done at a very low price.

So the moulla read, in a clear and incisive voice, the following document:

"The said Bulbul (Nightingale), having had the misfortune to lead for a number of years a thoughtless life, declares to us that she profoundly deplores it, and regrets having afflicted the souls of virtuous people. We attest her repentance, which is known to us, and we declare her fault effaced."

Beneath the writing was the date, which was found to be that of the same day, and the seal that of one of the principal ecclesiastics of the city.

The reading was not finished before the most intoxicated of the two Kurds declared his resolve to kill any person who should be so imprudent as to dispute his right to the hand of the moulla's *protegée*. But the cannoneer did not allow himself to be intimidated, and dealt the provoker a blow full in the face; whereupon one of Gambèr-Aly's comrades threw one of the bottles at the head of one of the muleteers, while the other, almost at the same instant, overturned the moulla on his body; here the fight became general.

The prince's pishkedmèt—an official personage—had to keep within bounds; he comprehended instinctively that his dignity was in danger, and that, if it is disagreeable in itself to receive blows, it may also be compromising to carry the traces on the nose or any other part of the face; for how could he expect that these coarse people would pay any regard to the most necessary precautions? So the worthy servant rose as well as he could, and steadying himself on his legs, at the same time guarding his head with his hands, made a move-

ment to retire, but his pantomime was wrongly interpreted. Some of the combatants thought he was going to find the police. So they united against him in a common effort; but they were not all on their side, and Gambèr-Aly found himself acting as mattress between the poor pishkedmèt and his assailants, among whom two of the muleteers, more drunk, and consequently more furious, than the others, distinguished themselves. The unhappy painter's son was in a delirium of fear; he uttered piercing cries, and called his mother to his assistance. The valiant Bibi-Djànèm would certainly not have let herself be summoned in vain by her cherished child; alas! she was far away and did not hear. Meanwhile, Gambèr-Aly had surrounded the pishkedmèt with his arms, and pressed him violently, and the more blows intended for the poor man he received the more he begged him to save him by all that was most sacred in the world, and it was he who, without suspecting it, served as a shield to the man he was imploring.

It is probable that the contest would have ended greatly to the detriment of the dignitary of the palace and the young man, had not the Armenian landlord, a large, strong fellow, long accustomed to similar scenes which gave him neither surprise nor emotion, appeared in the room.

Without troubling himself to find out who was in the wrong or right, he seized with one hand the pishkedmèt's collar, with the other the back of Gambèr-Aly, and with a vigorous push thrust the two men through the open door, which he shut behind them. They rolled on the sand in different directions, and remained for some time stunned by the shock. Meanwhile the same idea had traversed the brains of both: without saying anything to each other, they were in equal anguish lest the garrison should make a sortie, and, judging it prudent to get away, they regained their feet by a violent effort. The pishkedmèt said to Gambèr-Aly:

"Son of my soul, continue to defend me! Do not abandon me; the holy imams will bless thee!"

Gambèr-Aly was not eager to seek solitude. He drew near to his *protégé*, and, holding each other by the hand, staggering a little, they emerged from the blind alley in which the drinking-saloon was situated. When they found themselves on the highway once more, their courage and their voices returned to them.

"Gambèr-Aly," said the servant of the palace, "lions have not as much intrepidity as thou! Thou hast saved my life, and, by Allah, I shall never forget it! Thou shalt not find that thou hast obliged an ingrate. I will make thy fortune! Come to me to-morrow at the palace, and, if I am not at the door, have me summoned; I shall surely have something to announce to thee. But, first of all, swear to me that thou wilt not speak to a soul of what has happened to us this evening, and that thou wilt not breathe a word of it to thy father, to thy mother, to thy pillow. I am a pious man, and one who is honored by every one for the severity of my habits from which I never depart; thou comprehendest, light of my eyes, that if people should begin to slander me, I should feel great chagrin."

Gambèr-Aly pledged himself with the most terrible oaths not to confide, even to an ant, the most taciturn and discreet of beings, his new friend's secret. He swore by the head of this friend, by that of his mother, his father, and his paternal and maternal grand-parents, and consented to be called son of a dog and a devil, if he ever opened his mouth with regard to their common adventure! Then, after having redoubled these fearful oaths for a good quarter of an hour, he took leave of the pishkedmèt, who was somewhat calmed, and kissed him on his eyes, promising to be faithful to the appointment on the morrow.

Gambèr-Aly had suffered a beating, and had feared that he was going to be killed. The danger past, and the pain of his bruises somewhat deadened, he felt very free; it was not his first affair, and he had no motives like the pishkedmèt for being uneasy about his reputation. Thus he was able to allow his imagination to become excited over the promises which he had just received, and, with his head full of dazzling fire-works, saturated with the splendors which were to come, he arrived at the paternal dwelling in the best humor in the world. All the stray dogs of the quarter knew him, and made no hostile demonstration toward his legs. These guardians of the night, stretched under the awnings of the shops, lifted their heads at his approach, and allowed him to pass without question. Thus he slipped into his house.

There, although the night was far advanced, he found his worthy parents facing a flask of brandy and a roast-lamb, a good quantity of whose flesh had already been consumed. Bibi-Djànèm was playing on the mandolin, and Mirza-Hassan-Khan, having taken off his coat and hat, with his head which had not been shaved for a week, and his beard dyed black, with an inch of white at the roots, was beating a tambourine enthusiastically. The pair, their eyes white with ecstasy, were singing in a thorough *falsetto:*

"My cypress, my tulip, let us intoxicate ourselves with divine love."

Gambèr-Aly stopped respectfully at the threshold, and saluted the authors of his days. His right hand rested more firmly than ever on the pommel of his *gâma;* his cap was crushed in, his shirt torn, his curls very much out of order. He had the air, according to the secret opinion of Bibi-Djànèm, who was a judge, of the most delicious scamp that a woman's good taste could dream of.

"Sit down, my dear," said the lady, laying aside her guitar,

while Mirza-Hassan-Khan finished an audacious trill and a skillful roulade. "Whence comest thou? Hast thou enjoyed thyself this evening?"

Gambèr-Aly squatted down, as his mother had just given him permission to do, but modestly, and resting against the door-casing, he replied:

"I have just saved the life of the prince-governor's lieutenant. He was attacked in the fields by twenty men of war, tigers in audacity and ferocity, all Mamacènys or Bakhtyarys, I am convinced! For only those two tribes furnish such gigantic men! I attacked them and put them to flight, by the favor of Allah!"

Thereupon Gambèr-Aly assumed a modest attitude.

"Behold the son whom I brought into the world!" exclaimed Bibi-Djànèm, regarding her husband with an air of triumph. "Embrace me, my soul! embrace thy mother, my life!"

The young hero was not obliged to disturb himself much in order to satisfy the tenderness of his admirer; the room was small; he stretched his body forward a little, and placed his forehead under the lips which were offered to him. As for Mirza-Hassan-Khan, he contented himself with saying, with a truly practical feeling:

"It is a good piece of business!"

"What did the noble lieutenant give thee?" pursued Bibi-Djànèm.

"He invited me to breakfast to-morrow at the palace, and will present me to his highness himself."

"Thou wilt be appointed general!" declared the mother with conviction.

"Or councillor of state!" said the father.

"I should not hate to be chief of the customs to begin with!" murmured Gambèr-Aly in a meditative voice.

He more than half believed what he had just invented on the spur of the moment, and this was caused by the special

laws which govern the vision of Oriental minds. A pishkedmèt of the prince, who wished well to the poor and interesting Gambèr-Aly, was necessarily a man of the rarest merit; hence, how should he not be his master's favorite? Since he was his master's favorite, he was his real lieutenant; all affairs were necessarily confided to him, and, with such powers, was it possible to admit that he should be niggardly in the recompenses which he was to heap on the head of his deliverer? In truth, Gambèr-Aly had not routed a band of ferocious and terrible marauders; and it was not necessary to say that he was coming out of a tavern? To whom would this indiscretion do any good? Was it not better to cover the whole story with an honorable varnish, since it was to end, for him, in the most extraordinary manner? Moreover, it was evident—and the pishkedmèt had not concealed the fact from him—that he had displayed a courage beyond all praise.

The dreams which the father, mother, and son, elaborated during that happy night, cannot be recorded. Bibi-Djànèm already saw her idol in the brocade robe of a prime-minister, and in fancy she had the wife of a cook, who had spoken ill of her the night before, bastinadoed. But it was necessary to sleep a little. The three people stretched themselves out on the carpet toward morning, and for three hours tasted, as they say, the sweets of repose; but, at dawn, Gambèr-Aly leaped to his feet, performed his ablutions, and recited his prayer after a fashion, in a sufficiently summary manner, and advanced into the street balancing himself on his hips as became a man of his quality.

When he arrived before the palace, he saw, as usual, seated before the grand entrance, a number of soldiers, servants of all grades, of solicitors, dervishes, and of people, in short, brought thither by their business or their particular connections with the people of the house. He made his way through the midst of the crowd, displaying the insolence peculiar to

young boys, and which is quite well endured from them, and demanded of the porter, in an arrogant voice qualified by a fine smile, if his friend Assad-Oullah-Beg (the Lion of Allah) was at home.

"Here he is," answered the porter.

"May your excellency's goodness not diminish!" said Gambèr-Aly, and he went to meet his protector, who received his salutation in the most amicable fashion.

"Your fortune is made," said Assad-Oullah.

"It is through your charity!"

"You deserve everything that is good. This is the state of the case: I spoke to the ferrash-bashi, the chief of the carpet-spreaders to his highness, about you. He is my friend, and one of the most virtuous and honorable of men. It would not be right for me to praise his integrity; it is known to the whole world. Justice, truth, and disinterestedness, shine in his conduct. He consents to admit you among his subordinates, and from this day forth you are one of them. Naturally, it is necessary for you to make him a small present; but he thinks so little of the goods of this world, that it will be solely as a mark of your respect. You will present him with five tomans in gold and four loaves of sugar."

"May the blessing of the Prophet rest upon him!" replied Gambèr, somewhat disconcerted. "May I venture to inquire what my wages will be for the illustrious duties which I am to perform?"

"Your wages!" said the Lion of Allah, in an undertone, confidentially, as he looked around to assure himself that no one was listening—"your wages are eight *sahabgrans* (about ten francs) a month. His highness's steward generally pays only six. You must let him have two for his trouble; four will remain for yourself. You would not wish to show ingratitude to your worthy chief by not offering him at least half! I know

you; you are incapable of such a thing; it would be a most unbecoming proceeding! We will say, then, that you have two *sahabgrans* left. What can you do with them except regale the *naybèferrash,* the chief of your squad, in order to make him your sure and devoted friend; for—do not deceive yourself!—under somewhat abrupt manners he has a heart of gold!"

"May Heaven overwhelm him with benedictions!" answered Gambèr-Aly, who had become very sad; "but what will remain for me?"

"I will tell you, my child," replied the Lion of Allah, with the grave, composed air which so well became his profound experience and his immense beard; "whenever you have occasion to carry a present to any one from the prince, or from your superiors, you will naturally receive a recompense from the persons honored by such favors, and especially because you are very good-looking, my child! Of course, you must share what you accept with your comrades; but you are not obliged to tell them exactly what has been put into your pockets: on this point some slight reservations can be made, which you will soon learn. And then, when you are ordered to bastinado any one, it is customary for the culprit to offer some trifle to the executioners, to induce them to strike with less force, or entirely aside. On this point you have some experience to acquire. This sort of innocent skill comes quickly, especially to a smart fellow like you. I doubt not that your chiefs will soon come to esteem you, and they will give you some commission to collect taxes in the villages. It is your business to make your own interests agree with those of the peasants, who never want to pay; with those of the state, which wishes always to receive; with those of the prince, who would be put out if he had his hands empty. Believe me, it is a perfect gold-mine! In short, a thousand occasions, a thousand circumstances, a thousand opportunities, will present themselves,

in which, I doubt not for a single instant, you will work wonders! And as for me, I shall be truly happy to have contributed to place you in a good position in this world."

Gambèr-Aly seized the inviting side of the picture so complaisantly spread before his eyes, and he was charmed with so many brilliant perfections. One point only troubled him:

"Excellency," said he, in a touching voice, "may all felicity recompense you for the good which you are doing to a poor, defenseless orphan! But, as I possess nothing in the world except my respect for you, how can I give five tomans and four loaves of sugar to the venerable ferrash-bashi?"

"Very easily," answered the Lion of Allah. "He is so good that he will wait. You will make the little offering from your first profits."

"In that case I accept your proposition with pleasure," exclaimed Gambèr-Aly, at the height of bliss.

"I will introduce you immediately, and you will enter upon your duties this very day."

Then the pishkedmèt, turning on his heel, led his young acolyte through the crowd into the court-yard. It was a large, empty space, surrounded by low buildings made of bricks dried in the sun, of a gray color, relieved at the angles by bricks burned in the kiln, whose red tinge gave to the whole quite a brilliant effect. Here and there mosaics of blue *faïence*, ornamented with flowers and arabesques, set off the whole. Unfortunately, a part of the arcades had crumbled away, others were full of holes; but ruins are the essential part of all Asiatic arrangements. In the middle of the square, a dozen cannon, with or without carriages, were displayed, and artillery-men were seated or lying around; some *djelodârs*, or grooms, were holding horses, whose satin backs were partly covered with housings of crimson, curiously embroidered; here a group of ferrashes were walking about, with their rods in their hands, to maintain good order, which did not exist; farther on soldiers

were cooking their food in pots; officers traversed the court with an insolent, mild, or polite air, according to whether they cared for the looks directed toward them. One was saluted; another, on the contrary, bowed respectfully before a more powerful man; it is the fashion of the world in all the kingdoms of the earth.

From the grand court-yard, Assad-Oullah, followed by his recruit, who was dazzled by so much magnificence, penetrated into another inclosure, somewhat smaller, the centre of which was occupied by a square basin filled with water; the waves reflected agreeably the azure shadows of the covering, formed of large enameled tiles of an admirable blue. On the margin of the basin rose immense plantain-trees, whose trunks disappeared under the tufted and luxuriant tangles of gigantic rose-bushes covered with fresh and abundant flowers. Opposite the low narrow doorway through which the two friends had entered, a lofty hall, which a European would have taken for the stage of a theatre, for it was entirely open in front and rested on two slender columns gilt and painted, presented, like the rear and side scenes, the most attractive and charming mixture of paintings, gildings, and mirrors. Rich carpets covered the floor, elevated about six feet above the level of the court; and there, reclining on cushions, his highness the prince-governor himself was condescendingly breakfasting on an enormous dish of *pillau,* and a dozen sorts of meat contained in porcelain plates, surrounded by many noblemen of fine presence, and his principal domestics.

Of the three sides of the court-yard which were not occupied by the saloon, two were in ruins, the third presented a row of sufficiently habitable rooms.

Gambèr-Aly felt very much intimidated at finding himself in so august a place, and, at the same time, as grand as the world, simply because he had had the good fortune to penetrate into it. Henceforth he felt that he had no equals on this

earth, since he belonged to a paragon of authority, who could cause him to be cut into small pieces, without any one having the right to say a word. Before entering this royal dwelling, he was perfectly free, and the prince-governor, being utterly ignorant of his existence, could never have had him hunted up. Henceforth, being *noukèr* (servant), he joined a party of that happy class which includes the lowest scullion and the prime-minister, and he could have the joy of hearing the prince exclaim within a quarter of an hour, "Let Gambèr-Aly be bastinadoed!" which would signify that Gambèr-Aly was evidently not one of the unknown herd, like his unlucky father, since the prince condescended to take notice of him.

While he was abandoning himself to these presumptuous reflections, Assad-Oullah, touching his elbow, said to him:

"There is the ferrash-bashi. Be not afraid, my child."

The recommendation was not superfluous. The chief of the carpet-spreaders to the prince-governor of Shiraz possessed a sufficiently repulsive mien—half of his nose had disappeared in consequence of carbuncles; his black, pointed mustache extended half a foot to the right and left of his ruined nose; his eyes sparkled darkly under thick eyebrows; and his gait was imposing. He had draped himself in a magnificent robe of Kerman wool, wore a *djubbèh*, or mantle, of Russian cloth richly braided, and the lambskin of his cap was so fine that the price could be calculated at a glance to be eight tomans at least, which, according to Western reckoning, is not far from one hundred francs.

This majestic dignitary advanced with a measured air toward the pishkedmèt, who saluted him by placing his hand on his heart; but Gambèr-Aly did not permit himself such a familiarity. He allowed his hands to slide down his legs from his thighs to below his knees, and, having thus bent himself as far as possible without striking the ground with his nose, he straightened himself up, hid his fingers in his girdle, and

waited modestly with downcast eyes until they should honor him by addressing him.

The ferrash-bashi passed his hand over his beard with an approving air, and, by a gracious glance, informed Assad-Oullah of his approbation. The latter hastened to say:

"The young man is meritorious; he is full of honesty and discretion: I can swear it on your excellency's head. I know that he seeks suitable companions, and shuns bad company. Your excellency will certainly protect him, through your inexhaustible goodness. He will do everything in the world to satisfy you. We have made a special agreement to that effect."

"That is well," replied the ferrash-bashi; "but, before concluding the bargain, I have a word to say in private to this worthy young man."

He took Gambèr-Aly aside, and said to him:

"The noble Assad-Oullah treats you like a father! But, confess, how much did you offer him?"

"May your goodness not diminish!" said Gambèr-Aly, ingenuously. "I do not allow myself to offer a present to any one whatever, since the miserable state of my fortune obliged me to wait, counting the days, until I could present myself to your excellency."

"But thou hast, at least, promised him something?"

"By your head, by those of your children!" cried Gambèr-Aly, "I have taken no steps of any description, waiting until I could receive your orders on this point."

"Thou hast done well. Act always as discreetly, and thou wilt find thyself better off for it. Do not trouble thyself about me. I am but too happy to be able to serve thee. But, as thou art making thy entrance into life, thou must be taught to give to each man what is due to his rank, without which the stars themselves could not serve in heaven, and the entire universe would be a prey to disorder. Thou knowest that a

pishkedmèt is not a ferrash-bashi; hence, thou canst legally give to the first but just half of that which thou intendest for the second; and, in order to arrange things exactly, give Assad-Oullah-Beg, as soon as you are able, five tomans and four loaves of sugar. You see that I make a point of looking out for your little interests."

Thereupon the ferrash-bashi gave Gambèr-Aly a gentle, friendly tap on the cheek, and, after having notified him that henceforth he formed one of the prince's men, he retired, betaking himself where his duty called him. The new servant of the great could not help feeling some chagrin at his situation. The Lion of Allah had mentioned only a third of what he should be obliged to disburse—instead of five tomans and four loaves of sugar, he found himself pledged to fifteen tomans and twelve loaves of sugar. It was not quite the same thing; but he subdued his feelings on this wretched subject, and thanked his protector demonstratively, kissed the hem of his robe, and, as he now had a right to do so, he began to wander hither and thither in the palace-courts, accosting his comrades, some of whom he already knew through having met them at the houses of the sedate people which he ordinarily frequented, and entering into conversation with the others. He was immediately appreciated, and was shown incredible kindness. The prince's tea met with his approval, and he even managed to slip several lumps of sugar into his pockets without any one's seeing him. Then they played at all sorts of inoffensive games, and, as Gambèr-Aly was not a novice, he made by the operation, artfully conducted, twelve *sahabgrans* (fifteen francs), and general esteem. In short, he appeared to every one what he was in reality—a very fine fellow, physically and morally.

In the evening when he returned home, his mother made haste to question him.

"I am overwhelmed with fatigue," he replied, with a non-

chalant air. "The prince absolutely insisted on my dining with him. We played cards all day, and, through prudence, I would not win from him anything except this small amount of money; some other time, when I have became completely anchored in his good graces, I shall not treat him so well. We agreed that, in order not to give offense to jealous people, I should pretend for a while to be one of his ferrashes; then I am to become vizier. Meanwhile, I have nothing to do but enjoy myself all day long. We leave shortly for Teheran, and his highness intends to recommend me to the shah."

Bibi-Djànèm pressed her adorable son in her arms. Finding him somewhat agitated, she promised to give him the next morning a large bowl of an infusion of willow-leaves, a wonderful preservative against fever; and, as Mirza-Hassan-Khan had brought home ten *sahabgrans*, the proceeds of the sale of two ink-bottles, she prepared some pastry and a dish of *kouftehs*—some little balls of minced meat fried in vine-leaves, the perfection of which had always gained for her an incontestable glory. They ate and they drank, and half the night passed away in the lap of perfect joy.

In the morning Gambèr-Aly, having taken his elixir, and received the maternal advice not to allow any one to cheat him, went to resume his duties at the palace.

The approaching departure of the prince-governor for the capital, announced by the young ferrash, who had upon this point only the information furnished by the ardor of his own imagination, turned out to be perfectly correct, and Gambèr-Aly was completely astonished when his comrades announced to him that they were to leave in less than a week, as the prince was recalled, and even superseded—a fresh proof of the well-known sagacity of the government.

They do not take the trouble in that country to keep a minute account with the delegates of authority. They are appointed—they are sent; they collect the imposts; they keep

the largest part for themselves, under the pretext that the crops have been bad, that trade is not flourishing, that the public works absorb the resources. Their statements are not disputed, and whatever they say is received as true. Then, at the end of four or five years, they are removed; they are recalled; they are asked which they would prefer, to render an account or pay a stated sum of money. They always select the second alternative, because it would be difficult for them to present correct accounts. Thus they are deprived of one-half or two-thirds of what they have amassed, and from what remains they make presents to the shah, ministers, ladies of the harem, and influential people, and, in consideration of a good price, another government is conferred on them, which they proceed to administer without any change of system, to arrive at the same conclusion. It is not necessary to expatiate on the merits of the system. The people are charmed to see their governors disgorge; the governors spend their lives in enriching themselves, and finally die poor, without even having dreamed that such must inevitably be their end. As for the supreme power, it saves itself all the cares of surveillance and teasing its agents, which would be in bad taste.

His highness the prince, having worked the province of which Shiraz is the capital for a sufficient length of time, was invited to come and give an account of his affairs to the pillars of the empire—that is to say, to the chiefs of the state. Thus all was proceeding according to rule; but, as usual, and since nothing in the world is perfect, it was a trying moment for the disgraced man. He did not know exactly at what price his ransom would be fixed.

Early in the morning, even before daybreak, his steward fled, carrying with him some small and valuable souvenirs. The ferrash-bashi was gloomy. He was suspicious about his office, which could hardly continue to be as lucrative as in the past. The pishkedmèts were exchanging many reflections in

a low tone; the stablemen, the ferrashes, soldiers, *kavédjys*, having nothing to lose, were at the height of bliss at changing their residence. From time to time some article or other disappeared, and might have been found a month from that day in some shop of the bazaar. As for the people of Shiraz, when they heard the news, they abandoned themselves to a joy approaching delirium. They praised to the skies the justice, goodness, and generosity, of the shah; they compared him to Noushirwan, an ancient monarch, to whom they attribute the virtues which in his time they doubtless attributed to some one else; and there was an outbreak of songs, each more malicious and audaciously slanderous than the last, throughout the whole extent of the bazaars of the city. Nothing equals the ingratitude of the people.

The ferrash-bashi took Gambèr-Aly aside.

"My child," said he, "thou seest that I am extremely busy; I must put my tents in good condition for the journey, take care that the mules are shod, and, in short, that nothing is lacking. Thus, I have no time to occupy myself with my own interests. See, here is a note for eight tomans, which is signed by one of the clerks of the arsenal, Mirza-Gaffar, who lives on Green Place, on the left, beside the pond. Go find my debtor, tell him that I can wait no longer, for I do not know when I shall return, and that I am going away next week. Settle this little piece of business to my satisfaction, and thou wilt have no cause to be displeased."

Thereupon he winked in a highly significant manner. Gambèr-Aly, enchanted, promised to succeed, and betook himself rapidly to the place where his superior had sent him. He had no difficulty in finding Mirza-Gaffar's dwelling, and, having approached, he rapped loudly on the door. He had put his cap on askew, and armed himself with his most deliberate air.

After a moment's delay the door was opened; he found him-

self in the presence of a little old man, who wore an immense pair of spectacles on a hooked nose.

"Health be upon you!" said Gambèr-Aly, abruptly.

"And upon you, my amiable child!" replied the old man in a honeyed voice.

"Do I speak to the very lofty Mirza-Gaffar?"

"To your slave."

"I come on behalf of the ferrash-bashi, and I have here a note for eight tomans, which your excellency will pay me immediately."

"Certainly. But will you not allow me to charm myself with the sight of your beauty? The angels of heaven are nothing in comparison with you. Honor my house by accepting a cup of tea. It is warm, and you have taken too much trouble in deigning to transport your noble person hither."

"May your goodness never decrease!" replied Gambèr-Aly, becoming more supercilious at the sight of the little old man's politeness. Nevertheless, he consented to enter, and sat down in the saloon.

In an instant Mirza-Gaffar brought a chafing-dish, lighted the fire, placed a copper kettle upon the charcoal, arranged the sugar, took down the tea-caddy, lighted the *kalioon,* offered it to his guest, and, after having inquired after the health of his distinguished friend, and returned thanks to Heaven that all was well in that quarter, he begun the conversation thus:

"You are a young man so perfectly accomplished and adorned with the gifts of Heaven, that I do not hesitate to tell you the whole truth, and may malediction and damnation fall upon me if I depart one hair's-breadth from the most perfect sincerity, either to right or left! I am going to pay you instantly, but I do not know how to do it, for I have not a cent."

"May your goodness never diminish!" replied Gambèr-Aly, coldly, handing him the *kalioon;* "but I am not authorized by

my venerable chief to listen to such language, and I must have money. If you do not give it to me, you know what will happen: I shall burn your grandfather, and your grandfather's grandfather himself!"

This menace seemed to act forcibly on the old clerk, who probably did not relish such havoc among his ancestors. So he exclaimed in a lamentable voice:

"There is no more Islam! there is no more religion! Where shall I find a protector, since this houri-face, this full-moon of all qualities, regards me unkindly? If I were to humbly offer you two *sahabgrans,* would you speak in my favor?"

"Your goodness is excessive!" replied Gambèr-Aly. "When did any one ever see a ferrash of the prince accept such a sum?"

"I would lay all the treasures of the land and sea at your feet if I possessed them, and would keep nothing for myself; but I do not possess them! By your head, by your eyes, through pity for a miserable old man, accept the five *sahabgrans* which I offer you with good-will, and be so good as to say to his excellency, the very noble ferrash-bashi, that you have seen for yourself my profound misery."

"I submit one humble request," interrupted the ferrash. "I ask nothing better than to assist you in obtaining a favorable answer to your prayers; but your excellency must be reasonable. To please you I will accept the present of a toman with which you honor me; it was not necessary, but I should feel inexpressibly confused if I were to disoblige you. So, a toman, and let us say no more about it. You will give me two tomans for my chief, and I undertake to arrange the affair. But, as the man we have to deal with is hasty and impetuous, it would be well if your excellency did not make your appearance in his noble dwelling for a week to come. Something unpleasant might happen."

They argued for an hour, drank many cups of tea, embraced

each other cordially; then, as Gambèr-Aly remained firm, the arsenal-clerk yielded, gave him a toman for himself and two tomans for his master, and they parted with reciprocal assurances of the most perfect affection.

"Health be on you!" said Gambèr-Aly to the chief of the ferrashes.

"It is well! What hast thou obtained?"

"Excellency, I found the rascal on the road, he was running away; I took him by the collar, I reproached him with his crime, and in spite of the passers-by, who wished to interpose between us, I turned his pockets inside out, and I bring you the toman which I found there—there was no more!"

"Thou liest!"

"By your head! by my head! by my eyes! by those of my mother, of my father, and of my grandfather! by the book of Allah, by the Prophet, and all his predecessors (health and blessings be on them!), I am telling you only the pure truth!"

The ferrash-bashi flew off like an arrow, and, boiling with indignation, rushed to the house of the clerk, knocked, and was not answered. He inquired of a rope-maker who lived near. The rope-maker assured him that Mirza-Gaffar had set out two days before, and sustained his statement with a flood of oaths. What was not to be disputed was that the ferrash-bashi had been cheated. He returned very sadly to the palace. Gambèr-Aly was evidently not in the wrong.

"My son," said his superior to him, "thou hast done thy best, but Fate was against us!"

After this affair, Gambèr-Aly continued to grow in favor, and he was regarded as the pearl of the prince's household. They gave him all kinds of commissions; he found it profitable, and, although generally he did not succeed to the entire satisfaction of those who employed him, his candor was so great, and his countenance so sincere, that they could not be angry with him because

of the unfortunate circumstances. Meanwhile, the preparations for departure being completed, the prince gave the order to set out. At the head of the convoy marched horsemen armed with long lances, soldiers, stablemen leading horses; then the baggage, the prince's grooms, the principal officers of his household; at last the prince himself on a magnificent horse, and all the authorities of the city and their attendants, who were to accompany him for a league and a half beyond Shiraz; then some more baggage, soldiers, ferrashes, and a crowd of muleteers. The harem followed on a parallel road, the ladies shut up in *takht-è-réwans*, or litters, borne by a mule at each end (an admirable invention, be it parenthetically observed, for gaining an exact idea of the most thorough sort of sea-sickness); the female servants were in *kéd-javêhs*, a sort of basket, placed right and left of some animal. The conversation, the cries and groans of these illustrious persons, and the invectives with which they overwhelmed the poor muleteers, were audible at a great distance. This brilliant departure, however, had some accompaniments which were not so brilliant. The gentle sex had assembled in a crowd; the dervishes accompanied them; there were also many old acquaintances of Gambèr-Aly, whose torn clothes, *gâmas*, long mustaches, and insolent airs did not give promise of anything very edifying. As soon as the convoy appeared, there was a concert of cries, and they howled with more effect because Bibi-Djànèm was in the front with a troop of her friends, long since drilled for all kinds of aggressive measures, and terrible to the bravest. The strongest names were easily found by these veterans: "Dog!" "Son of a dog!" "Great-grandson of a dog!" "Bandit!" "Robber!" "Assassin!" "Thief!" and many other epithets, issued fervidly from the lips of those warriors. In the midst of such ejaculations, a reserve of street boys, safely intrenched behind their mothers, sang at the top of their voices fragments like the following:

"The Prince of Shiraz, the Prince of Shiraz,
Is a fool! is a fool!
His mother is a jade, and his sister is the same!"

For several moments his highness, vividly interested, without doubt, by the conversation of the nobles who surrounded him, did not appear to see what was going on, nor to hear what was said, or rather screamed in his ears. At length, however, he lost patience, and made a sign to the ferrash-bashi. The latter gave orders to his men to disperse the crowd by blows with their clubs. Each one entered into it with all his heart, and Gambèr-Ali, striking like the rest, heard a well-known voice vociferating in his ears:

"Spare thy mother, my jewel! and cause thy father and me to come to Teheran as soon as possible, to share thy grandeur!"

"If Allah pleases, it shall soon be so," exclaimed Gambèr-Aly, with enthusiasm. Thereupon he fell upon another old female rioter, and, seizing a dervish by the beard, he shook him vigorously. This act of valor made the crowd recoil. The ferrashes regarded their comrade as more than ever a lion, and, perceiving the disorder abating, they rejoined the rear-guard, laughing like madmen.

The journey was accomplished without any accident. After a march of two months they arrived at Teheran, the Abode of Sovereignty, according to the official expression, and the negotiations between the prince and the pillars of the state began. Many ruses were employed on both sides; they threatened, they made innumerable promises, they sought some intermediate terms. Sometimes the affair progressed, sometimes it retrograded. The grand-vizier favored severity; the shah's mother inclined to indulgence, having received a fine turquoise, well set and surrounded by brilliants of a proper value. The shah's sister showed malice; but the head of the *valets de chambre* was a devoted friend; he was counterbalanced, it is true, by the pri-

vate treasurer of the palace; that may be, but the ordinary pipe-bearer's desire to see all settled for the best could not be doubted. Gambèr-Aly paid but little attention to these great interests. His affairs had begun to go very badly, and uneasy thoughts as to his fate often occurred to him. It was, to some extent, his own fault. Having become somewhat spoiled, he privately resolved not to give anything to the ferrash-bashi, nor to the pish-kedmèt, Assad-Oullah. Although, as was universally known, he had had frequent opportunities of realizing profits, he had always pretended, in face of the evidence, that his poverty was extreme; which, however, did not prevent his spending a part of the day in gaming, and displaying gold with a good deal of ostentation. His two protectors had at length opened their eyes. They were grave people; they said not a word. Nevertheless, Gambèr-Aly quickly perceived that he was no longer treated with the same favor, nor, above all, with the same affability. Lucrative commissions were no longer intrusted to him, they went to others; hard and confining duties—driving the pegs, mending the tents, shaking the carpets—occupied him a good part of the day. If he undertook to wander about the kitchens, as in former times, the chief, a great friend of Assad-Oullah-Beg, sent him off to his own quarter with harsh words; in short, all was changed, and the poor child felt that the enemies whom he had made by the subtlety of his mind and his sharp tricks were only awaiting a fitting opportunity to cause the whole weight of their resentment to fall upon him.

One morning, while the ferrashes were amusing themselves before the door, Gambèr-Aly, always good-humored in spite of his troubles, always brisk and lively, was contending with two or three of his comrades, chasing them and being chased by them in turn, when he found himself driven against a butcher's stall. One of the players, named Kérym, a feeble, consumptive youth, jestingly seized one of the knives lying on the stall, and laughingly menaced Gambèr-Aly with it. The latter, without malice,

snatched the instrument from his hands, but, in struggling with him, by an almost inexplicable fatality, he struck him in the side. Kérym fell, bathed in blood. A few minutes later he expired. The innocent murderer, in despair, completely lost his head; the other ferrashes who had witnessed the action, and were sure that it was involuntary, hastened to shelter him from the dangers of the first excitement. They thrust him into the stable, and Gambèr-Aly ran and threw himself against the right leg of his highness's favorite horse, fully determined not to quit this inviolable sanctuary during the rest of his days. At the end of two hours, however, he was somewhat composed. The underaide in the kitchen had confided to him, under the seal of the greatest secrecy, that the brother of the dead man and two cousins had come to the palace. They had spoken to the ferrash-bashi, and he had asked them in the presence of all how they intended to avail themselves of their rights. They replied that the murderer must be delivered to them to do what they pleased with, or else fifty tomans. "Fifty tomans!" said the ferrash-bashi, in a scornful tone. "Fifty tomans for the worst of my men, who would have died in less than a month! May your goodness not diminish! You are ridiculing us all! If you will take ten tomans, I will give them myself, that my poor Gambèr-Aly may not be hurt."

This is what the scullion related, and Gambèr-Aly rejoiced with all his heart for the favorable turn which his affair had taken. He admired the infatuation of his chief in regard to him; but he knew himself to be so charming that he could understand it fully. He conversed a long time with his friend; then, toward midnight, he lay down on the straw beside the sacred horse, and fell into a profound slumber. Suddenly a vigorous hand shook his shoulder; he opened his eyes: before him stood the *mirakhor*, the chief of the manger, a redoubtable personage, who has the control of the horses and stables in all great houses, and whom even the *djelôdars*, or grooms, obey.

"Fellow," said he to Gambèr-Aly, "thou wilt decamp, unless, thou scamp, thou hast fifty tomans to give to thy master, the ferrash-bashi, and as much more for Assad-Oullah, the pish-kedmèt, and the same to thy slave. If thou wilt not, or canst not, begone!"

"But they will kill me!" cried the poor fellow.

"What matters it to me? Pay, or leave!"

Thus speaking, the *mirakhor*, who was a sort of giant, a Kurd Mâfy, a veritable son of the devil, as his compatriots boasted, lifted Gambèr-Aly by the neck with as much ease as he would have lifted a chicken, dragged him, in spite of his cries and struggles, to the door of the stable, and, there looking him in the face with tigerish eyes, exclaimed:

"Pay, or go!"

"I have nothing!" roared Gambèr-Aly, and, by an accident which did not often happen, he spoke the truth. His last cent had been lost that morning at play.

"Well, in that case," retorted his terrible conqueror, "go get bled like a sheep by Kérym's relatives!"

He shook his victim vigorously, and flung him into the court-yard; then, reëntering the stable, he closed the door. Gambèr-Aly, at the height of terror, believed at first that he was in the midst of his enemies; the moon shone brightly, the sky was magnificently clear, the terraces of the city received its rays, the trees waved softly, the stars were suspended in an atmosphere whose infinity extended beyond them. Gambèr-Aly felt no disposition to go into ecstasies over the beauties of Nature. He only perceived that the silence was profound; the grooms were sleeping here and there under their coverings; excess of terror gave to the son of Bibi-Djànèm a sudden inspiration, and a sort of courage. Without further consideration he rushed to the entrance of the court-yard, passed through, traversed the streets rapidly, turned to the left, and found himself close to the city walls. It was not difficult to discover a

hole; he lowered himself into the moat, and, climbing the counterscarp, set off at the top of his speed across the desert. The jackals whined, but he cared not. One or two hyenas showed him their phosphorescent eyes, and fled before him. People with strong imaginations never have but one sensation at a time. Gambèr-Aly was too much afraid of Kérym's relations to fear anything else. Thus he ran without stopping, without taking breath, for three hours, and day was breaking when he entered the town of Shahabd-Oulazym. He did not stop to look at the houses, but, increasing his speed, he arrived before the mosque at the moment when daylight appeared; he opened the door abruptly, threw himself on the saint's tomb, and, feeling himself safe, quietly swooned.

Abdoulazym was, in his day, a very pious person related to, or connected with, their highnesses Hassan and Houssein, sons of his highness the cousin of the Prophet, health and blessing be upon him! Abdoulazym's merits are immense; but at that moment Gambèr-Aly appreciated but one, which is, that the mosque with a gilded dome, built over the tomb of the saint, is the most inviolable of all sanctuaries. So that, once arrived there, Gambèr-Aly found himself absolutely safe. When he had become sufficiently recovered from his state of syncope, he roused up and seated himself at the foot of the tomb. He was not alone; a man with a dirty and cadaverous countenance was standing beside him.

"Calm yourself, my boy," said this good man to him; "whoever your persecutors may be, you are in perfect security here, as much so as I am."

"May your goodness not diminish!" replied Gambèr-Aly. "May I inquire your noble name?"

"I am called Moussa-Riza," replied the stranger, with an air of assurance; "I am a European, a Frenchman, in truth, and I am called Monsieur Brichard among my fellow-countrymen. But, by the grace of Allah, I have embraced Islamism,

in order to arrange some little affairs which I have on hand, and the minister of my nation has the meanness to wish to make me leave Persia. So I remain here in order not to fall into his hands, and I perform miracles in order to prove the greatness of our august religion."

"May blessings rest upon you!" said Gambèr-Aly, devoutly; but he conceived a fear of this unfrocked European, and resolved to watch him narrowly. The visit of the official of the mosque, which took place during the course of the morning, was more to his taste; he was given something to eat, and was promised good food every day, from the endowments of the place, and they assured him that no one would think of disturbing him in the venerable sanctuary to which he had had the good-fortune to retire. They even wished to persuade him not to confine himself to the interior of the mosque; he could, without fear, wander at his ease in the courts, in the very face of the chief of police; but he was deaf to the suggestion. In vain did the refugees, who inhabited the largest part of the consecrated territory in great numbers, and kept house in all the corners, offer him the attractions of amiable and lively conversation, and a thousand opportunities of entering into trade in a small way; he was too much afraid—he would never leave the holy tomb. It was easy enough for them to trust to a moderate protection! What had they done, after all? Robbed some merchant? cheated their master? angered some subaltern employé? It was clear that for such peccadillos people would not infringe the prerogatives of the mosque, and draw down upon themselves the indignation of the clergy and populace; but as to him it was quite another affair! He had had the misfortune to fall upon that fool of a Kérym, who had been so stupid as to die. He had blood upon him, and, moreover, the enmity of that rascal of a ferrash-bashi pursued him. The tomb, the ashes of the sainted imam, were not too much to protect him; the imam himself should have come to life

again and appeared in person. Thus he persisted in keeping Moussa-Riza company. These two brave men lived continually on the alert; every new face which appeared in the mosque represented to them a spy; Gambèr-Aly thought he recognized in each an emissary of the prince's house, and his associate thought it was one of his minister's men. Two deplorable existences! The wretched men were growing thin perceptibly, when, one morning, there was a great commotion, and they thought themselves lost; the keepers informed them that the shah had announced his intention of paying his respects that very day to Shah-Abdoulazym. In consequence, they cleaned a little, dusted slightly, and spread some carpets. The population of the town was all abroad. Moussa-Riza communicated to his companion a very prudent thought: it was, that they should take care that they were not carried off by their persecutors under cover of the tumult which would certainly accompany the entrance, stay, and exit of his very lofty presence the King of kings. Bibi-Djànèm's son considered this a very reasonable idea; and, from the moment when it took possession of his mind, he glued himself to the tombstone, and removed his shoulders only to apply his breast. Meanwhile, the noise outside became frightful. The sound of the small cannon mounted on camels resounded on all sides; the hautboys and tambourines composing the music of the artillery called *ʒambourèk* were heard faintly in the distance; then it increased, then burst forth; a crowd of royal ferrashes, and running footman in red tunics and large, tall hats, ornamented with spangles, rushed into the mosque; after them entered, with a less hasty step, the *ghoulâms,* or noble horsemen, decorated with silver chains, their guns on their shoulders, and the upper servants, and the aides-de-camp, and the *mogerrèbs-oul-heʒrèt,* those who approach the presence, and the *mogerrèbs-oul-khagân,* those who approach the sovereign; and, at length, the sovereign himself, Nasr-Eddin-Shah, the Kadjâr, son of a sultan, grand-

son of a sultan, appeared and approached the reliquary. The praying-carpets were spread under the august feet, and the master of the state began to execute a certain number of *rikâats,* inclinations and genuflections, accompanied by ejaculatory prayers, such as his piety, the state of his personal affairs, and the feelings of the moment, suggested. But in the midst of the uproar, which did not cease, it was impossible for the prince, however deeply absorbed in his devotional exercises, not to perceive the two haggard faces under the protection of the saint to whose intervention he himself had recourse. He knew the first, Moussa-Riza, and did not meddle with his affair. The second was entirely new to him; his handsome face, his pallor, his evident distress, his youth, interested him, and, when he had finished his prayers to his satisfaction, he inquired of the keeper of the mosque who the man was, and for what cause he thus held himself against the imam's tomb.

The keeper of the mosque, being very pitiful by nature, related to the shah Gambèr-Aly's adventure in the manner most fitted to excite his compassion. He succeeded without difficulty, and the High Presence said to the poor fellow: "Come, in the name of Allah! rise and go! Nothing shall be done to thee!"

It was sufficient, doubtless, and Gambèr-Aly ought to have comprehended that, under the shadow of the sovereign protection so miraculously extended over him, he ought not henceforth to cherish any apprehensions. But he did not see it in that light. His mind was so troubled that he imagined the most absurd things. He thought that the shah spoke to him thus only in order to cause him to leave the sanctuary, and that orders had been given to the *ghoulâms* to cut his throat at the door of the mosque. How could he persuade himself that his master himself would condescend to become an accomplice of Kérym's relatives? It was one of those follies which arise in diseased brains. Instead of throwing himself

at the feet of his deliverer, instead of thanking him and heaping him with benedictions, which would have procured for him, in addition, a generous alms, he began to utter frightful cries, to invoke the Prophet and all the saints, and to declare that they might massacre him where they pleased, on that spot even, but he would not go out. The shah was good enough to reason with him. He sought to reassure him; he repeated to him, more than once, that he need in reality fear no one, and that henceforth his life was safe, but he did not succeed in persuading him, and then, naturally, the High Presence became impatient, cast a terrible look on Gambèr-Aly, and said, roughly, "Die, then, son of a dog, since thou wilt have it so!"

And thereupon the High Presence departed, and his suite quited the mosque. Gambèr-Aly, sure that his last moment was approaching, and employing his last resource, immediately undid the piece of cloth which served him for a girdle, tore it into several strips, made a cord of it, fastened one end of this cord about his body, and the other to the tomb, in order to enable him to prolong his resistance when the executioners should come. He was afraid also—for what did he not fear? —that, in order to carry him off with more facility and less scandal, they would mix some narcotic with the food which the keepers of the mosque gave him. He resolved not to eat any more. So that day he refused food. The most affectionate supplications on the part of the priests, the encouragements of the devotees, ordinary visitors of the mosque, and who made him relate his story, one after another, nothing moved him. He persisted. That night he did not sleep; his ears were on the alert. Every noise, the rustling of the leaves of the trees as the wind moved them, the least thing, put him beside himself. During the next day he remained stretched on the pavement, only raising his head from time to time to see whether they had not detached his cord; and then he let his forehead fall

again upon his hands, and returned to a half-slumber full of frightful hallucinations.

Meanwhile, in all the houses of Teheran, on all the squares, in the bazaars, at the baths, nothing was talked of but his adventure. The accounts of his conversation with the shah, retailed, augmented, modified, changed, served as texts for interminable commentaries. Some insisted that he had assassinated Kérym intentionally; others maintained, on the contrary, that it was Kérym who had tried to kill him, and that he had only defended himself. A third, better informed, was certain that Kérym had never existed, and that poor Gambèr-Aly was the victim of a calumny invented by the ferrash-bashi of his prince, and Assad-Oullah, the pishkedmèt. The women, on hearing of the remarkable beauty of the refugee at Shah-Abdoulazym, were all favorable to him, and all wished to see him; so that on the third morning, at daybreak, bands of ladies mounted on asses, others on mules, some on horses with maids and servants, in short, the female population *en masse*, set out for the holy mosque; and so great was the multitude, that there was no break in the indefinitely long line of pilgrims, from the city gate to the town. This crowd soon filled the mosque; they pushed, they crowded, they mounted on each other's shoulders, in order to have at least the bliss of looking at Gambèr-Aly; they cried! "How handsome he is! Blessed be his mother! Eat, my son! Drink, my son! My dear uncle, do not allow thyself to die! O my adored brother! wilt thou rend my heart? Gambèr-Aly of my soul. Here are preserves! Here is sugar! Here is milk! Here are cakes! Speak to me! Look at me only! Hear me! No one shall touch thee! By my head, by my eyes, by the lives of my children! we will tear any one to pieces who dares to give thee an unkind look!"

But Gambèr-Aly did not utter a word in reply to these

reassuring speeches. He was worn out with emotion and hunger, and in reality was going gently toward the bridge of Shirat, where lies the road of the dead.

And while the women, old and young, married and single, were thus going to Shah-Abdoulazym, and while these waves of blue veils and white *roubends,* or head-dresses, alternately entered and departed from the holy place, heaving sighs, uttering cries, wringing their hands with grief for the imminent loss of the handsomest young man that had ever existed, at the gate of the city the soldiers of the guard were suddenly seen to quit their *kalioons,* rise to their feet, and salute profoundly. One horseman, two, three horsemen rapidly crossed the bridge thrown across the moat; behind them passed, no less rapidly, a group of well-mounted domestics; and, behind them again, appeared a very elegant European carriage, harnessed to six great Turcomans, ornamented with red-and-blue pompons, driven *à la Daumont,* which raised a cloud of dust; and in the carriage were seated four ladies completely enveloped in their blue veils and *roubends.* This gay apparition made its way without ceremony through the cavalcade of mules and asses, and soon arrived at Shah-Abdoulazym; the *kaleskadjys,* or postilions, drew up before the grand entrance of the mosque; the horsemen helped the four ladies to alight, and the latter immediately entered the holy place; their servants did not hesitate to make a way for them, so that, in spite of the vociferations and insults of the women thrust abruptly aside, the new arrivals found themselves, as they wished, face to face with Gambèr-Aly.

One of them crouched on the floor beside the youth, and said to him in a sweet voice:

"Thou hast nothing more to fear, my soul! Kérym's relatives have compounded for thirty tomans; here are thy letters of remission; no one has any further right over thy life. Come, follow me! I gave the thirty tomans."

But Gambèr-Aly was no longer in a state to understand

anything. He looked at the paper which the lady presented to him with a dull eye, and without moving. Then, by the very act announcing herself as a person of decision, the refugee's benefactress, raising her voice, said to her friends:

"Call the keeper of the mosque directly!"

That dignitary was not far off; he hastened to them, and, when one of the cavaliers had whispered a few words in his ear, he saluted no less humbly than the porters of the city had done, and declared that he would answer for his obedience with his life.

"Here is the liberation of this man," said the lady; "as he is not in a state to understand anything at this moment, I am going to take him away in my carriage. I hope it will not be a violation of the sanctuary, since, being no longer either guilty or pursued, he cannot be a refugee. What think you?"

"Whatever it pleases your excellency to command, is necessarily right," answered the old priest.

"Thus you consent to my demand?"

"By my eyes!"

The lady made a sign, and the horseman detached the cord and carried away in their arms Gambèr-Aly, who immediately uttered doleful cries. At this sad voice, the women who filled the mosque were much moved; many of them had taken umbrage at the rather abrupt manners of the *ghoulâms* accompanying the unknown lady, and a general murmur arose, in the midst of which remarks like the following could be distinguished:

"What an infamy! There is no longer any Islam! Help, Mussulmans! The sanctuary is being violated! What is that famished old ghoul who wants to eat young men?—Daughter of a dog! daughter of a father who is burning in hell! we will roast thy ancestors! Leave this boy! If thou permittest thyself to touch him or even to look at him, we will tear thee to pieces with our nails and teeth!"

Their rage increased, and the lady's servants had already begun to range themselves around her and her companions, to preserve her from attacks. To do the lady justice, her courage was equal to the occasion. She returned insult for insult, and showed herself to be no less ingenious in this sort of exercise than her assailants. They called her old; she called her enemies decrepit with age: they cast suspicion on the purity of her intentions; she retorted by the most enormous accusations. In this passionate colloquy between persons of the timid and feeble sex, a treasure of epithets was squandered, and there is no exaggeration in affirming that the most respectable and the most erudite of the fish-wives who are the ornament of Paris and London would have found something to learn on that day. Nothing is more chastened, measured, and flowery, than the language of an Oriental; but an Oriental woman prides herself only on expressing whatever it suits her to say in the most energetic manner possible.

In order to put an end to this scene, the keeper of the mosque took the letter of pardon, ascended the *membèr,* or pulpit, made a short preamble, read the document, praised in pompous language the charity, virtue, goodness, and all the virtues, cardinal and principal, immaculate and otherwise, with which are adorned the pure, veiled beings whom the tongue must not name, nor the imagination contemplate in a dream, and finished with an eloquent adjuration to allow free course to the exercise of the aforesaid virtues, and of the aforesaid charity, since if care were not taken of poor Gambèr-Aly, and that immediately, his life would not be prolonged beyond the space of a few hours.

In consequence of this lugubrious conclusion, sobs broke forth on all sides. Many woman began to give themselves horrible blows with their fists on their breasts crying. "Hassan! Hussein! Ya Hassan! Ya Hussein!" (an invocation to the holy martyrs). Others fell into convulsions; those nearest the

unknown lady, precisely those who had declared their firm intention to tear her to pieces with their nails and teeth, began to kiss the hem of her veil, and declared that she was an angel descended from heaven, as remarkable for her youth and beauty as for the perfection of her heart, and they helped her to control Gambèr-Aly who struggled still, but who was nevertheless transported to the carriage, the blinds of which were lowered. This done, the horsemen remounted their steads, the *kaleskadjys* whipped their horses, turned again into the road to Teheran, and disappeared.

Bibi-Djànèm's son had absolutely fainted, convinced that all was over with him, and that he was to be put to death. Excessively weakened by the state of his mind and his long fast, fever and delirium seized on him, and he became very sick. During the moments when his consciousness returned, he thought he was in prison. Nevertheless there was nothing in the aspect of the chamber whither he had been carried to confirm him in this sad thought. It was a charming room. The walls were painted white, and the regular recesses in which coffers and vases of flowers are placed were framed by paintings of pink and gold, relieved by light green. The bed was adorned with immense coverings of red silk; pillows and cushions, large and small, of fine, embroidered linen, were piled under his head and arms. He was guarded by a negress, old, it is true, and ugly, but very good-natured, who obeyed his every request, who nursed him, called him the uncle of her soul, and did not in the least resemble an executioner. Two or three times a day, he received a visit from a *hakim-bashi,* or chief doctor, who was a Jew, well known to him as the favorite practitioner in the fashionable world, and he could not help acknowledging to himself that the sole fact that he was being attended by Hakim-Massy was a real honor of which he might be proud. Hakim-Massy had told him, with his usual kindness, that all was going on well, that he would be on his feet in a few days,

and that his cure would proceed the more quickly in proportion as he gained the belief that he had nothing more to fear from Kérym's relatives, or from the shah, or any one else. These assurances, coming from so distinguished a person as Hakim-Massy, did not fail to make an impression on the young man, and as the negress confirmed him all day long, the trouble of his mind was gradually allayed. When the invalid was in a state to enjoy diversions, he was visited by a very amiable moulla, who congratulated him on his happy destiny; by a well-known merchant from the bazaar, who offered him a handsome turquoise ring; by a cousin in the seventh degree of the chief of the tribe of Sylsoupours, who invited him to come and hunt with him, with falcons, as soon as he should be quite recovered. As soon as he began to leave his bed, the negress informed him that he had four servants at his command, and could order, without fear, whatever would be agreeable to him.

"But, aunt of my soul," exclaimed Gambèr-Aly, at length, "who am I? Who are you? Have they cut my head off without my knowing it? Am I already in paradise?"

"It depends only on thee, my son," replied the negress, "to have it so, and that without giving thee any kind of trouble. At all events, for the time being, thou are certainly a person of rank, for thou art a *naẓyr*, superintendent-in-chief of the fortune and domain of her highness Perwarèh-Khanoum (Madame Butterfly), who received a week ago, through the goodness of the shah, the official title of Lezzêt-Eddolouèh (the Delight of Power)."

At these words, Gambèr-Aly was submerged in the waves of such an ecstasy that he remained absolutely pulseless, breathless, and speechless.

The first time that he made his appearance in the palace court-yard, he found all the servants ranged before him, according to their degree, of course. All saluted him with the most profound respect, and he reviewed them as was befitting the

duties of his office. He was dressed in an immense *djubbèh* or mantle, with sleeves of white cloth, trimmed with colored silks; under it he had a robe of cashmere; and from time to time he drew from his bosom, without affectation, a little satin bag embroidered with pearls, and, taking from it a handsome watch, he looked at the hour. He wore red-silk trousers—in short, he was dressed to his entire satisfaction.

When he desired to go to the bazaar, they brought him a charming horse caparisoned like those belonging to the nobles of the court. One of the *djélodars* supported him under the arms, that he might mount into the saddle, and four ferrashs marched before him, while his *kaliândjy* bore his pipe beside him. He was recognized in the galleries, and a chorus of benedictions broke forth as he passed. The women, especially, overwhelmed him with compliments. On the whole, he was enchanted with his popularity. He had reason to be so, which fully proves, be it observed in passing, to please the people who always require a moral, that true merit always ends by obtaining its reward.

Everything would lead one to suppose that Gambèr-Aly developed superior qualities in his office of steward, for we see him gradually pass from a state of relative poverty to evident opulence. Before the expiration of a year, he mounted only costly horses; he had rubies, sapphires, and diamonds of the finest water, on his fingers. If some pearl of unusual value arrived at the principal jewelers', they hastened to notify him, and it was rare that he did not become the fortunate possessor of the treasure. The affairs of the former Governor of Shiraz having turned out badly, the ferrash-bashi and Assad-Oullah found themselves without employment. But not for long, as Gambèr-Aly, now Gambèr-Aly-Khan, took them into his service, and declared himself well pleased with their zeal. As soon as he found himself in a fortunate position, he sent for his parents without delay. Unfortunately, his father died just as

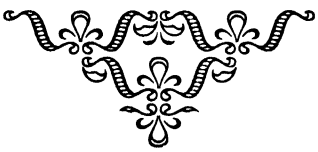
he was setting out. Bibi-Djànèm's despair broke forth, and exceeded all bounds: she tore her face with such ardor, and uttered over the tomb of the deceased such piercing cries, that, as her friends asserted, the world had never known a woman so faithful or so attached to her duties. Nevertheless, she joined her son, and was charmed to see him handsome and well-to-do. But she did not live in the palace, because, without any one being able to explain the reason, so accomplished a person did not please the princess. So she had a house to herself, and selected it in the vicinity of the great mosque, where she soon acquired a well-deserved reputation as a person of extraordinary piety, and one very well acquainted with what took place in the quarter. She never allowed, to her glory be it said, the wrong-doing of a neighbor to remain unknown, and, judged according to the very extended publicity given to all the acts and deeds of her neighbors, male and female, she was an incomparable trumpet.

At the end of two years, the princess, who was no less pious than Bibi-Djànèm, felt a wish to make the holy pilgrimage to Mecca, and, having so resolved, she announced that the upright Gambèr-Aly-Khan should be her traveling-husband. The traveling-husband is, without dispute, one of the most judicious of Persian institutions. A woman of quality, who is about to take a long journey and pass from city to city, may sacrifice her ease and take trouble for the salvation of her soul. At the same time, she desires to observe the proprieties, and cannot endure the idea of dealing directly with the muleteers, merchants, custom-house officials, or the authorities of the places she passes through. It is for this reason that, when she does not possess a husband, she takes one for the occasion. It is well understood that the happy mortal is nothing more than a steward, with extra authority. Who could see anything more in it? Gambèr-Aly-Khan was an important man; in short, he set out with the Delights of Power, and the latter, when she

arrived at Bagdad, was so well satisfied with his probity, and his manner of keeping the accounts, that she married him in earnest, and it will be charitable to suppose that she never had occasion to repent of it. Moreover, that is what Bibi-Djànèm affirmed.

The story ends here. It has often been related with variations by the admirable and profound astrologer who was mentioned at the beginning. He cited it as an incontrovertible proof of the trustworthiness of his art. Had he not foretold, on the day Gambèr-Aly was born, that this infant would be prime-minister? He is not prime-minister, yet, to be sure; but why should he not become so?

THE WAR WITH THE TURKOMANS



THE WAR WITH THE TURKOMANS

My name is Ghoulam-Houssein. But, as it was my grandfather's name, and my parents, in speaking of him, naturally always said "Aga," that is to say, my lord, they called me Aga only out of respect to the head of the family, whose name may not be lightly pronounced; and thus I have the same name as the innumerable compatriots whom I have in the world, and who respond to this name of Aga, for the reason that their grandfathers were named like them Aly, Hassan, Mohammed, or something else. Thus I am Aga. In course of time, and when Fortune has smiled on me—that is to say, when I have possessed a moderately clean coat, and a few *shahys* in my pocket—I have seen fit to give myself the title of "Beg." Aga Beg is not bad. Unfortunately, I have generally been so unlucky that my title of Beg has disappeared before the melancholy aspect of my outfit. Under these circumstances, I have become Baba-Aga—Uncle Aga. I made up my mind to it. Since the occurrence of circumstances, in which, I confess, my own desire went for nothing, which permitted me to visit, in the holy city of Meshed, the tomb of the holy imams, and to partake of the soup of the mosque as often as I could, it has appeared at least natural to me to decorate myself with the title of Meshedy—pilgrim to Meshed. It gives the air of being a religious, grave, sedate man. Thus I have the happiness of seeing myself generally known, sometimes under the name of Baba-Meshedy-Aga, or under that which I prefer,

Meshedy-Aga-Beg. But Allah disposes of all things as he sees fit!

I was born in a little village of Khamsèh, a province which borders on Azerbeydjân. My village is situated at the foot of the mountains, in a charming little valley with many murmuring streams, which flow through tall grass babbling with joy, and leap over polished stones. Their banks are lined with thick willows, whose foliage is so lively and so green, that it is a pleasure to look at them, and the birds build there in flocks, and keep up a twittering which brings joy to the heart. There is nothing more agreeable in the world than to sit under their cool shadows smoking a good *kalioon*. Much wheat is cultivated with us; we have also rice-plantations and dwarf-cotton, whose delicate stalks are carefully shaded from the heat of summer by castor-oil plants arranged in quincunxes, their large leaves forming a parasol above the white bolls of their comrades. A *moustofy*, a councilor of state of Teheran, a rich and respected man, named Abdoulhamyd-Khan, received the rents of the village. He protected us carefully, so that we had nothing to fear, either from the Governor of Khamsèh or from any one else. We were perfectly happy.

As for me, I confess that field-labor did not suit me, and I infinitely preferred to taste the grapes, the watermelons, and the apricots, to occupying myself in their cultivation. Thus I was hardly fifteen when I embraced a profession which pleased me much better than a peasant's life. I became a hunter. I caught partridges, hazel-hens, francolins; I hunted gazelles and roebucks in the mountains; I killed now and then a hare, but I kept few of them, because this animal having the bad habit of feeding upon dead bodies, no one likes to eat it, and, as it is difficult to sell it, shooting it is only throwing powder away. Little by little I extended my expeditions very far, descending even to the depths of the forests of Ghylan; I learned from the skillful marksmen of this country never to miss my aim,

which gave me, like them, the confidence to lie in wait for the tiger and the panther. These are good animals, and their skins sell well. I should have been extremely contented with my destiny, amusing myself with my business, and gaining a good amount of money, a fact which I naturally did not mention to either my father or my mother, had I not suddenly fallen in love, which spoiled everything. Allah is the master!

I had a little cousin, aged fourteen, named Leïla. I was very fond of meeting her, and I met her very often. As we had a multitude of things to say to each other, and did not like to be interrupted, we had chosen a precious retreat under the willows which bordered the principal brook, at the thickest spot, and we remained there for hours without observing the lapse of time. At first, I was very happy, but I thought so much of Leïla that when I did not see her I felt impatient and uneasy, and ran from side to side to find her. It was by this means that I discovered a secret which precipitated me into an abyss of grief; I perceived that I was not the only one with whom she made appointments.

She was so candid, so gentle, so good, so tender, that I did not suspect her for a single instant of disloyalty. This thought would have killed me. Nevertheless I was deeply grieved to find that others could occupy her attention, amuse her, at least divert her, and, after having asked myself many times whether I ought to confide my vexation to her, which humiliated me, and having decided that I must not complain, I told her all.

"Seest thou, daughter of my uncle," I cried one day, shedding burning tears, "my life is leaving me, and in a few days they will carry me to the cemetery! Thou dost converse with Hassan, thou dost speak with Kérym, thou dost laugh with Suleyman, and I am almost sure that thou didst pat Abdoullah! I know well that it is no harm, and that they are all thy cousins, like myself, and that thou art incapable of forgetting the oaths which thou hast sworn to me, to love me only, and that thou

dost not desire to give me pain! Nevertheless, I suffer, I expire, I die, I am dead, they have buried me, thou wilt see me no more! O Leïla! my friend! my heart! my treasure! have pity on thy slave, he is extremely unhappy!"

And, in pronouncing these words, I redoubled my tears, I burst into cries, I threw off my cap, I beat my head with my fists, and I rolled on the earth.

Leïla was very much affected at the sight of my despair. She threw herself on my neck, kissed my eyes, and replied:

"Pardon me, my light! I have been in the wrong; but I swear by all that is most sacred! by Aly! by the imams! by the Prophet! by Allah! by thy head! that I will do so no more! and the proof that I will keep my word is, that thou shalt go immediately to ask me in marriage from my father! I will have no master but thee, and I will be thine all the days of my life!"

And she began to kiss me more violently than before. As for me, I became very uneasy and troubled. No doubt I loved her, but I had never told her that I had any money, because I was afraid she would wish to have it, and would succeed in getting it away from me. To ask her in marriage from my uncle, was to be forced inevitably to confess to my father, to my mother, and to all my relations, as well as to her, the existence of my little treasure. Then what would become of me? I was a ruined, lost, assassinated man! On the other hand, I had a great desire to marry Leïla, which would crown me with the greatest happiness which can be imagined in this world or in the other. Moreover, I should have nothing more to fear from the attentions of Hassan, Kérym, Suleyman, and Abdoullah, who were torturing me by a slow fire. Nevertheless, I did not wish to surrender my money yet, and I found myself in so great a perplexity that my sobs redoubled, and I pressed Leïla in my arms, preyed upon by an inexpressible anguish.

She thought that it was she alone who caused these transports, and she said to me:

"My soul, why so much sorrow at the moment when thou knowest that thou wilt possess me?"

Her voice penetrated so sweetly to the bottom of my heart as she uttered these words that I began to lose my head, and I replied:

"It is because I am so poor that I am in debt for the very dress which I wear! I swear on thy head that I have not been in a condition to pay for it, although it is certainly not worth five *sahabgrans*. How, then, could I pay my uncle the dowry which he will demand of me? If he would be satisfied with a promise! Dost thou believe it would be impossible?"

"Oh, impossible! utterly impossible!" repeated Leïla, shaking her head. "How canst thou expect that my father will give as pretty a girl as I am for nothing? One must be reasonable."

As she said this she began to look at the water, and to gather with a heedless hand some small flowers growing in the grass along the bank; at the same time she made such a pretty little face that I felt beside myself. However, I replied, wisely:

"It is a very great misfortune! Alas! I possess nothing in the world."

"Truly?" said she, and she threw her arms around my neck, looking at me with such an air, and leaning her head on one side, that, without knowing how, and losing my mind completely, I murmured:

"I have thirty tomans in gold buried two paces from here."

And I showed her with my finger the trunk of a tree, at the foot of which I had buried my treasure.

She began to laugh, while a cold perspiration ran from my forehead.

"Liar!" cried she, giving me a kiss on the eyes. "How little thou lovest me! It is only by dint of prayers that I force the truth from thee! Now go and find my father, and ask me of him. Thou wilt promise him seven tomans, and thou wilt give

him five, swearing that thou wilt bring him the other two later. He will never see them. As for me, I shall know how to get back two, which I will bring to thee, and in that way I shall only have cost thee three tomans. Dost thou not see how much I love thee?"

I was charmed by this conclusion, and hastened to find my uncle. After two days of debates, which were mingled with many supplications, oaths, and tears, on my part, I ended by succeeding, and married my well-beloved Leïla. She was so charming, she had such a perfect art of accomplishing her wishes (I understood later how she went to work, and where she obtained such an irresistible power), that when, a few days after the wedding, Leïla persuaded me to establish myself with her at Zendjân, the capital of the province, she found the means of causing her father to present her with a superb ass, and moreover she carried away a fine carpet without asking his permission. The truth is, she was the pearl of women.

We were scarcely installed in our new dwelling—where, thanks to the twenty-five tomans which remained to me, we began to live joyously, because Leïla wished to amuse herself, and I was very willing—when we saw Kérym arrive, one of her cousins, of whom I had been jealous. At the first moment I had a feeble inclination to be so still, but my wife ridiculed me so that she made me laugh myself, and moreover Kérym was such a nice fellow! I struck up a great friendship with him, and, to tell the truth, he deserved it, for I have never seen so hearty a laugher. He always had stories to relate to us, which made me ready to die with laughing. We passed a good part of the nights together, drinking *raky*, and he ended by living in the house at my request.

Things went very well for three months. Then I became cross. There were things which displeased me—what I cannot say; but Leïla bored me, and I began to wonder why I had been so eager for her. I one day discovered the reason while

mending my cap, which had become ripped in the lining. There I found with amazement a little packet composed of silk threads of various colors, with which was mingled a mesh of hair of precisely the color of my wife's, and it was not difficult to recognize the talisman which held me enchanted. I hastened to remove these fatal objects, and when I replaced my cap on my head my thoughts had taken a totally different course: I cared no more for Leïla than for any one else. In return, I bitterly regretted my thirty tomans, of which nothing remained, and that made me pensive and morose. Leïla perceived it. She put on fascinating ways, to which I remained perfectly indifferent, as was natural, since her charms no longer acted on me; then she became angry; Kérym interfered; a quarrel followed. I do not know just what I said, or my cousin replied; but, drawing my *gâma,* I tried to give him a good blow across the body. He forestalled me, and with his, which he had elevated, he made a cut on my head, from which the blood began to flow. The neighbors rushed in at Leïla's terrible cries, and with them the police, and they had already seized the unfortunate Kérym to take him to prison, when I cried:

"In Allah! for Allah! and by Allah! do not touch him! He is my cousin, he is my aunt's son! He is my friend, and the light of my eyes! My blood is permitted to him."

I loved Kérym extremely, and infinitely more than I did Leïla, and I should have been in despair if any injury had happened to him on account of a wretched affair which we were at liberty, I think, to settle among ourselves. I spoke with so much eloquence that, though the blood streamed down my face, every one ended by becoming calm. They left us alone; Kérym bandaged my wound as well as Leïla; we all three embraced; I went to bed, and fell asleep.

The next day I was summoned by the *petkhoda,* or magistrate, of the quarter, who informed me that I had been registered among the men destined for soldiers. I might have

expected that, or something of the sort. No one knew me at Zendjân, where I was a stranger. I had no protector there. How was it possible for me not to fall into such a pit, into which all naturally exerted themselves to thrust me, in order to exempt themselves or their friends? I tried to cry and protest; but, without being otherwise affected, the *petkhoda* had me fastened to the *fèlekeh*. They threw me on my back; two ferrashes, seizing the ends of the pole, elevated my feet in the air; two executioners brandished each a handful of rods with a ferocious air, and they administered a succession of blows to the stick to which I was attached, for I had slipped a *sahabgran* into the palm of each as I fell.

It is none the less true that I understood very well from that moment what I had to expect if I endeavored to make any further opposition to my fate. Then I considered that I had not a penny; that I did not know to which saint to turn; that it was, perhaps, tiresome to turn to the right and to the left, and make those ridiculous movements which foot-soldiers are forced to execute; but that, on the whole, there might also be consolations and perquisites which I did not yet know of. Moreover, I reflected that I could not escape my destiny; and, as my destiny was to be a soldier, I must resign myself and put a good face on the matter.

When Leïla learned what had happened to me she uttered frightful cries, beat her face, and pulled something from her head. I comforted her to the best of my ability, and Kérym did not spare himself. She ended by allowing herself to be persuaded, and, perceiving her to be in a calmer frame of mind, I addressed the following discourse to her:

"Light of my eyes! all the prophets, the imams, the saints, the angels, and Allah himself, are my witnesses that I cannot live except beside thee; and, if I did not have thee, I swear on thy head that I should be as though I were dead, and much worse! In this sad state of affairs I have occupied myself only

with thy happiness; and, since I must go, what will become of thee? The wisest thing will be for thee to take back thy liberty, and to find a less unfortunate husband than myself!"

"Dear Aga," she replied, embracing me, "the infinite love which thou feelest for me I feel in my heart toward the dear and adored husband who belongs to me; and as women, by nature, are more devoted than men to that which they cherish, I am much more disposed than thou canst be to sacrifice myself; I think, therefore, whatever it may cost me, that it will be better to give thee back thy liberty. As for me, my fate is fixed; I shall remain here to weep until not a single tear remains in my poor body, and then I shall expire!"

At these sad words Leïla, Kérym, and I began to groan in concert. We might have been seen, all three, seated on the carpet facing each other, with a *baggaly* of *raky* between us and our three cups, wagging our heads, and uttering lamentable cries, interspersed with exclamations: "Ya Aly! Ya Hassan! Ya Houssein! Oh, my eyes! Oh, my life! I am dead!"

Then we embraced each other, and began to sob more violently than before. The truth is, that Leïla and I adored each other, and the all-powerful Allah has never created, and never can create, a more attached and faithful wife. Ah, yes! ah, yes! It is quite true, and I cannot refrain from weeping again when I think of it.

The next morning my dear wife and I betook ourselves betimes to the *moulla*, and had the act of divorce prepared; then she returned home, after having taken a tender farewell of me. As for me, I went directly to the bazaar, to the shop of an Armenian, a dealer in *raky*, where I was sure to meet Kérym. I had had an idea for three days, which even in the midst of my troubles did not cease to occupy my mind strongly.

"Kérym," said I to him, "I intend to present myself to-day to my *sultan*—that is to say, my captain. They tell me he is a punctilious man, who prides himself on neatness. If I go to

make my salute to him, in the torn and spotted coat which I wear, he will receive me very badly, and this disagreeable beginning may influence my military future disadvantageously. I beg thee, then, to lend me thy new *koulydjêh* for this important occasion."

"My poor Aga," replied Kérym, "I absolutely cannot grant what thou desirest. I have an important piece of business to-day; I am to be married, and it is absolutely necessary, for the sake of my standing in the eyes of my friends, that I shall be freshly dressed. Moreover, I think a great deal of my *koulydjêh;* it is made of yellow fulled-cloth from Hamadan, edged with a fine galloon of silk from Kandahar; it is the work of Baba-Taher, the tailor who works for the greatest lords of the province, and he has assured me himself that he has never made anything so perfect. Therefore I have decided to pawn my *koulydjêh* after the marriage-ceremony, for, as I have no money to-day, I shall have many debts to-morrow, and therefore thou must perceive that I cannot deprive myself of my only resource, even to do thee a favor."

"Then," I replied, abandoning myself to the most profound despair (for, truly, this *koulydjêh* charmed me, and I thought only of that), "I am a lost, ruined man, abandoned by the entire universe, and without any one who takes the least interest in my sorrows."

These cruel words moved my friend. He commenced to reason with me; he said every consoling thing he could imagine, continued to excuse himself on account of his marriage, his well-known poverty, and a thousand things besides; and, at last, seeing me in such despair, he was moved to pity, and uttered these consoling words:

"If I were sure that thou wouldst return my *koulydjêh* in an hour—"

"By what dost thou wish me to swear it?" I replied, with fire.

"Thou wilt return it?"

"Immediately! In less than an hour! Just the time to go and return! By thy head! by my eyes! by the life of Leïla! by my saint! May I be burned like an accursed dog through all eternity, if thou dost not receive thy coat even before thou hast wished for it!"

"Come, then."

He conducted me to his room, and I saw the magnificent garment. It was yellow! It was superb! I was charmed! I put it on quickly; Kérym exclaimed that such another coat was not to be seen, that the tailor was an admirable man, and that he would surely pay him some day out of gratitude.

"But," he added, "it is not possible without dishonor to wear such a coat with torn trousers of blue cloth. Come! Here are my new red-silk *shalvars*."

I drew them on quickly. I had the air of a prince, and I rushed out of the house. I promenaded for two hours through all the bazaars. The women all looked at me. I was at the height of bliss. Then I met two young fellows connected with the regiment like myself. We went together to a Jew's to refresh ourselves. They were to leave the same evening for Teheran to rejoin their company. I decided to go with them, and having borrowed some garments from one, and the rest from the other, I carefully folded my magnificent costume, and, while the Jew's back was turned, regained the door, then the street, then the entrance of the city, and, laughing heartily over all kinds of nonsense which we talked, we entered the desert and marched half the night.

Our journey was very gay, and I began to discover that a soldier's life suited me perfectly. One of my companions, Roustem-Beg, was *vékyl*, sergeant of a company. He proposed that I should place myself under his orders, and I accepted eagerly.

"Seest thou, brother," he said to me, "fools imagine that it

is very wretched to be a soldier. Do not fall into that error. No one is unhappy in the world but dolts. Thou art not one, nor am I, nor is Khourshyd there. Dost thou know a trade?"

"I am a hunter."

"That is not a resource at Teheran. Become a mason. Our friend Khourshyd is a blacksmith. I am a wool-carder. Thou wilt give me a quarter of thy pay; the *sultan* will have half, in his quality of captain; thou wilt make a little present from time to time to the *nayb*, or lieutenant, who is not very sharp, though he is not malicious either; the colonel naturally takes the rest; and thou wilt live like a king on thy earnings."

"Then the masons earn a great deal at Teheran?"

"They earn something. But there are, besides, numerous ways of rendering life agreeable, and I will teach them to thee."

He taught me one on the journey, and it was very amusing. As he had his commission of *vékyl* with him, we presented ourselves in villages as tax-collectors. The peasants were completely duped, and, after many discussions, they made us a little present, that we might consent not to raise the tax, and to give them a reprieve of fifteen days, which we willingly accorded, and parted, covered with blessings. After some other pleasantries of the same sort, which added to our profit, our amusement, and our glory, we at last entered the capital, by the gate of Shimiran, and one fine morning we presented ourselves to our *serheng*, Colonel Mehdy-Khan.

We saluted this great person profoundly, as he was traversing the court-yard of his house. The *vékyl*, who was already acquainted with him, presented us, Khourshyd and me, and in fine terms praised our valor, our submission, and our devotion to our chief. The colonel appeared charmed with us, and sent us to the barracks with some pleasant words. From that time I found myself incorporated with the Second Regiment of Khamsèh.

It must be confessed, however, that certain phases of military

life are not at all pleasing. It is nothing to lose one's pay, and, really, since the viziers despoil the generals, I confess that it seems natural to me that the latter should despoil the colonels, who in their turn live on the majors, these on the captains, and the captains on their lieutenants and the soldiers. It is the place of the latter to set their wits to work to find means of existence elsewhere, and, thank Allah, nobody prevents their doing so. But the difficulty is, that there are European instructors, and every one knows that there is nothing so brutal and awkward as these *Ferynghys*. They always have words of honesty and probity on their lips, and pretend to desire that the soldier's pay should be regularly disbursed. That, in itself, is not bad; but, in return, they wish to make beasts of burden of us, which would be detestable; and, to speak frankly, if they should succeed in their projects, we should be in such a pitiable condition that life would not be worth having. They would have us, for example, remain strictly in barracks, sleep there every night, and enter and go out at precisely the hours indicated by their watches. So that a man would become exactly like a machine, and could no longer breathe except in time, which Allah did not intend. Then they would have us all, without distinction, go on the parade-ground, under the sun of summer and the rain of winter—for what purpose? To raise and lower our legs, agitate our arms, turn our heads to the right or the left. Vallah! Billah! Tallah! There is not one of them who is capable of explaining what purpose these absurdities serve! I confess that, for myself, when I see one of those people pass, I keep out of the way, for one never knows what fit of madness is going to seize them. Happily, Heaven, in making them very brutal, also made them at least as stupid, so that generally one can persuade them of anything one desires. Glory to Allah, who has given this means of defense to the Mussulmans!

As for me, I saw directly what the European instructors were,

and kept as far from them as possible; as the *vékyl*, my friend, had taken care to recommend me to the *sultan*, I never went to what they call drill, and my existence was very endurable. Our regiment had replaced that of Souleymanyèh, which had been sent to Shiraz; so that I belonged to a detachment which occupied a post in the bazaar. These dogs of Europeans, whom Allah curse, maintained that the guards ought to be relieved every day, and the men sent back to the barracks. They can do nothing but invent modes of tormenting the poor soldier. Happily, the colonel did not care to be annoyed and disturbed constantly, so that, once in a guard-house, a soldier establishes himself there, makes himself at home, and lives there, not for four-and-twenty hours, but for two or three years sometimes—in short, during the whole time that the regiment is quartered in the city.

Our post was sufficiently agreeable. It was at the corner of two avenues of the bazaar. It was a building consisting of a chamber for the *nayb*, and a vast hall for the soldiers. There were no windows, but only a door, which opened on a wooden gallery skirting the street, and the whole raised three feet above the ground. Many shops offered their attractions in the vicinity of our edifice. First there was a fruit-merchant, who kept his raisins, melons, and water-melons, arranged in pyramids or festooned above the heads of his customers. In the corner of the establishment was a box of dried figs, from which the worthy merchant always permitted us to help ourselves when we went there evenings to talk over with him all sorts of interesting subjects. A little farther on was a butcher who sold us excellent mutton; but for one quarter that he received pay for, I verily believe that there were four whose disappearance was to him an unfathomable mystery. Each day he related to us, despairingly, the frauds of which he was a victim; and, as we brought to him from time to time a thief who acknowledged his guilt and restored the stolen property, he never had the

injustice to suspect us. I still recall with emotion a cook whose ovens exhaled perfumes worthy of paradise. He had a way of preparing *kébabs* which was absolutely inimitable. Each piece of meat was so perfectly broiled, and so well saturated with the juice of bay-leaves and thyme, that one would have believed that one had all the heavenly delights in one's mouth. But one of the greatest attractions of our neighborhood was a story-teller who lived in the court of a ruined house; he recited every day before an admiring and attentive audience histories of fairies, of genii, of princes, of princesses, of terrible heroes, all interspersed with such sweet verses that one left there half beside himself. I spent there many hours more delicious than I can express.

In short, it is quite true that life in a guard-house is charming. Our *nayb,* a handsome fellow, never appeared. He not only relinquished his entire pay to his superiors, but he also made them handsome presents, so that he was allowed to serve as a *valet de chambre* in a grand house, which was more profitable than his lieutenancy.

The *vékyl,* my friend, went out every morning. I see him now in his big pantaloons which had once been white, his red-cloth jacket out at the elbows, his belt of an uncertain color, his cap crushed in, and his big stick in his hand. He went out to work at wool-carding, and often did not return for eight days.

The rest of us who did not know where to sleep generally returned to the house between midnight and two o'clock in the morning; but we were usually all gone by eight or nine o'clock, except one or two, who consented to stay at home for one reason or another. It is well known that soldiers on guard serve no purpose whatever, except to present arms to the great persons who pass. This is what he did very regularly. As soon as a gentleman on horseback, surrounded by servants, made his appearance in the distance on one of the avenues

which met at our guard-house, all the shopkeepers gave us notice by loud cries. Our detachment, composed of a score of men, never had more than four or five representatives, who naturally employed themselves in conversation or sleep; often, indeed, there was no one at all. Then auxiliaries flew from all the shops, seized our guns from the corners where we had thrown them, ranged themselves in superb order; one of them played the *vékyl*, another the *nayb*, and all presented arms with the martial gravity of the most ferocious Europeans. The great person bowed condescendingly, and all was as it should be. I recall with pleasure this excellent guard, these good neighbors. I devoutly hope I may find a similar situation in my old age. Inshallah! Inshallah! I was not much more domestic than my comrades. In accordance with my *vékyl's* advice, I had become a mason, and I really earned some money; but what I succeeded better in was lending it. Kérym's magnificent coat, which I had sold immediately to a dealer in second-hand clothes, had furnished me with funds, and I began to make loans to my comrades or acquaintances, whom I shortly saw flock around me. I never granted any but very small loans, and I insisted on very prompt repayment. This prudence was absolutely necessary, and I succeeded moderately well. Nevertheless, it sometimes happened that I had to deal with debtors from whom I could obtain nothing. To counterbalance these inconveniences, I borrowed myself, and did not always repay; so that, after all, I do not think I ever suffered any great losses. In the mean time, I took care to render myself agreeable to my superiors. I sometimes presented myself to the colonel; I was very attentive to the major; I may venture to say that I was the *sultan's* friend; the *nayb* confided in me; I cultivated constantly the good-will of the *vékyl*, to whom I often made small presents; all this gave me the right never to put my foot inside the barracks; neither was I ever seen at drill, and I employed the rest of my time in business or

pleasure, without any one finding fault. I confess that I liked to frequent the public-houses kept by Armenians and Jews; but one day, as I was passing by the king's college, I took a fancy to enter, and I was present at a lesson given in the garden by Moulla-Aga-Téhérany. I was charmed with it. From this day forth I acquired a taste for metaphysics, and I was often seen among the auditors of this sublime professor.

There was assembled there, however, a good and numerous company: students, soldiers like me, wandering cavaliers, lords and tradesfolk. We discussed the nature of the soul and the connection between Allah and man. There was nothing more charming. I began then to cultivate the society of virtuous and learned men. I made the acquaintance of some taciturn personages who communicated to me certain doctrines of great import, and I began to find out, what I had never before suspected, that everything goes wrong in the world. It is indisputable that empires are governed by horrible knaves, and if one put a bullet through their heads it would only be doing them justice; but of what use would it be? those who succeeded them would be worse. Glory to Allah who has willed, for reasons which we canot know, that the wicked and the foolish should rule the universe!

I often thought of my dear Leïla and my beloved Kérym. Then I felt the tears in my eyes, but they did not last long. I returned to my debtors, to my creditors, to my mason-work, to my taverns, to my drinking companions, to the philosophy of Moulla-Aga-Téhérany, and I abandoned myself absolutely to the Supreme Power, who has arranged everything according to his views.

During a year everything went on in this way, that is to say, very well. I am an old soldier, and I can affirm that one has never seen anything ordered better.

One evening, after having been absent three days, I entered the guard-house about ten o'clock, and I was extremely as-

tonished to find there nearly all my comrades and the *nayb* himself. They were seated in a circle on the ground; a blue lamp illuminated them partially, and they all burst into tears. But the one who wept the most violently was the *nayb*.

"Health be on your excellency!" said I to him; "what is the matter?"

"Misfortune has fallen on the regiment," replied the officer, with a sob. "The august government has resolved to exterminate the Turkoman nation, and we have received orders to leave to-morrow for Meshed."

I felt my heart oppressed by this news, and I did like the rest: I sat down and wept.

The Turkomans are terrible people, as every one knows. They constantly make incursions, which they call *tjapaó*, in the provinces of Well-Guarded Iran which are near their frontiers, and they carry away the poor peasants by the hundred. They sell them to the Uzbecks of Khiva and Bokhara. I consider it natural that the government should have decided to destroy these robbers to the last man, but it was extremely perverse to send our regiment there. We passed part of the night in lamentations; however, as all this despair did no good, we ended by laughing, and we were in a very good humor when the men of the regiment of Damghan came to replace us at daybreak. We took our guns, and, after spending a good hour in saying farewell to our friends of the quarter, we left the city and rejoined the rest of the regiment, which was arranged in line of battle outside the Dooulèt gate. I then learned that the king himself was going to review us. There were four regiments there: each one ought to consist of a thousand men, but, in reality, none had more than three or four hundred. They were: our regiment, the Second of Khamsèh, a regiment from Ispahan, another from Goum, and the First from Ardébyl; two batteries of artillery and about a thousand cavalry from the Sylsoupours, the Kakevends, and the

Alavends. The sight was magnificent. Our red-and-white uniforms had a superb effect beside the white-and-blue ones of the other corps; our officers had narrow trousers with gold bands, and orange, sky-blue, or pink *koulydjêhs*. Then arrived successively the *myspendj*, general of division, with his retinue; *emir touman*, who commands twice as many, with a large troop of horsemen; *sypèh-salar*, still more numerously attended; and, at last, the King of kings himself, the ministers, all the pillars of the empire, and a crowd of servants—it was magnificent. The European music played in time, the drums rolled with a frightful noise, while the men, provided with extraordinary instruments, beat time, in order to keep together; the fifes and timbrels of the camel-artillery whistled and roared; the crowd of men, women, and children, who surrounded us on all sides, were mad with joy, and we shared with pride the universal satisfaction.

The king having placed himself on an eminence, with his great lords, the order was suddenly given for the officers of the *tamasha* to run from one side to the other. It is singular enough that the Europeans, whose languages are as absurd as their minds, should have the advantage of borrowing from us this word, which perfectly expresses the thing. Only, through their inability to pronounce well, these imbeciles say *"état-major"* (staff). *"Tamasha"* is, as every one knows, anything which makes a fine show, and it is the only useful thing which I have ever observed in European tactics. But it must be confessed that it is charming. Very handsome young men, dressed as finely as possible, mounted on beautiful horses, ride at full speed from all sides: they go, they come, they return; it is charming to behold. They are not allowed to go slowly, for that would destroy the pleasure. It is a very pretty invention—Allah be praised for it! When the king had amused himself for a while by observing this *tamasha*, they wished to show him how they were going to treat the Turkomans, and, for that purpose a mine

had been prepared which they sprung. Only, they did not wait until the soldiers in the vicinity had been warned to retire, so that three or four were killed; with the exception of this accident, everything went off very well, and they were much entertained. Then they sent away three battalions, which caused great applause; and at last the infantry, cavalry, and artillery, defiled before the king; and in the evening the order was received to set out on the march immediately, which was done two days afterward.

The first week of our journey passed off well. The regiment advanced toward the northeast, keeping close to the foot of the mountains. We were to find our general, our colonel, the major, and the greater number of the captains, after a march of two months, at Meshed, or elsewhere. We were all common soldiers, with three or four *sultans*, the *nayb*, and our *vékyls*. We marched valiantly. We set out each morning about two o'clock, arrived toward noon at some place where there was water, and installed ourselves. The column advanced in small groups, each one joining his friends, according to his pleasure. If one was tired, one stopped on the road, slept as long as one pleased, then rejoined the others. According to the custom of all regiments, we had with us a long file of asses, carrying our baggage, the provisions of those who owned any, and our guns and cartridge-boxes, for no one was so foolish as to trouble himself with his arms on the road—what was the use? Some officers had ten or twelve asses to themselves, but two soldiers of our company possessed a score, which they had bought at Teheran at the instant of departure, and I joined them because they had had a fortunate idea.

These twenty asses were loaded with rice and butter. When we arrived at the *menzil*—that is to say, at the halting-place—we unpacked our rice, our butter, and even *tombéky*, and we sold them at quite a high price. But men bought, and our speculation turned out well, for they were obliged to have recourse

to us, otherwise they would have found themselves in great distress from the first days. Every one knows that there are very few villages in the large valleys of Iran—just the ones which the roads traverse; the peasants are not such fools as to establish themselves exactly on the route of soldiers. They would have no peace nor rest, and would end by dying of hunger, not to mention the unpleasant occurrences of every sort which would not fail to fall to their lot. On the contrary, they place themselves far from the roads, so that it is not always easy to get at them. But the soldiers are not unskillful either; on arriving at the *menzil* those of us who were acquainted with the country gave information; those who were least fatigued by the march went on a searching-expedition.

It was hard work sometimes to go three or four leagues; but the hope of increasing our stock of provisions sustained us. We had to take a village by surprise, which was not always easy to do. These peasants, cursed dogs, have so much cunning! When they saw us from afar, all of them, men, women, and children, fled, taking with them everything that belonged to them. Then we would find only the four walls of each house, and nothing to carry off, and we had to return to camp-rations with our fatigue to boot, and suffer the malicious jests of our comrades. When we were more lucky and could put our hands on the villages, by Allah! we beat them deaf, and we returned with wheat, rice, mutton, and poultry. But this was not often, for we sometimes met cruel and surly fellows, who, more numerous than we, fired their guns at us, and then we had to take to our heels, happy to return without any worse adventure. On such occasions he who did not have good legs was truly only a poor devil!

It would be wrong to conceal that the august government had announced to us that we should be very well nourished during the entire campaign. But no one had believed it. Those are things which all august governments say, but which

they are unable to carry out. The general-in-chief never amuses himself by spending money for provisions for the soldiers which he can keep in his pocket. The truth is, that at the end of a fortnight, having no longer any rice to sell, my two comrades and myself closed our shop; two bad loaves could not have been found in the regiment, and we began to eat the asses.

I have never seen fiercer peasants than those of Khorassan. They live in fortified villages; when a poor soldier approaches they shut their gates, mount their walls, and, if he does not take care to get away in a hurry, he receives a volley of balls which do not miss him. May the fathers and the grandfathers of these horrible assassins burn eternally in the depths of hell, and never find any ease! Inshallah! Inshallah! Inshallah!

We commenced then to eat the asses. I have forgotten to tell you that but few of the unfortunate beasts remained. Having nothing to eat themselves, they had died one after the other, and their carcasses strewed our route. The few that we had kept with infinite care were in poor flesh; we were obliged, on arriving at each camping-place, to bring grass for them from the distant mountains.

They were exhausted with fatigue. I know well that we began to unload them quite early, and to throw our guns and equipments away in the desert; but we had made a point of retaining our baggage as long as possible. The terrible point was the want of water. We had to pass half the day in making holes in the ground to obtain a little. When we were most favored we succeeded in bringing to light a brackish mud, which we strained as well as we could through rags. Many of our comrades did like the asses—they died. That did not prevent our singing; for, if it were necessary to deplore the evils inseparable from life, it would be better not to be in the world; and, moreover, with patience everything comes right,

and the proof of this is that the rest of the regiment succeeded in reaching Meshed.

In truth, we did not present a very fine appearance when we entered the holy city. The major came to meet us with some captains and a certain number of merchants of all kinds of provisions. We paid dear enough for what they gave us; we were so hungry that we did not take the trouble to beat them down much. No one who has not undergone such experiences knows what it is to suddenly see before one's eyes a boiled sheep's head which is offered to one. The good meal which we made restored joy to our hearts. The major called us sons of dogs because we had lost our guns; but he caused a certain number of others to be distributed among us, which had been borrowed from the regiment of Khosrova for this occasion; and, being assessed to make him a little present, harmony was restored between him and us. It was agreed that he should make a favorable report of our conduct to the colonel, for whom we also prepared a present, which amounted to ten tomans. These arrangements being made, our entrance into Meshed was fixed for the next day.

At the appointed hour the drums of the other regiments already arrived in the city came to place themselves at our head. This was indispensable, for we had thrown away our drums as well as our guns. A great troop of officers, mounted on any horses they had been able to find, placed themselves behind the drums; and then we advanced in as good order as possible. We might have been two or three hundred strong. The inhabitants of the city received us with a good deal of indifference, for within the last month they had been frequently regaled with similar spectacles, which possessed no very great attraction for them. Then we were assigned a place for camping; but, as the ground was swampy, we dispersed, each one hoping to find a shelter in the city and some means of support.

As for me, I went directly to the mosque of the Holy Imams. Devotion attracted me thither, but also the idea that I might be able to get possession of one of the doles of soup which are generally distributed to unfortunate people there; and I certainly had some right to pretend to be unfortunate.

The whole universe has nothing more beautiful than the venerable mosque of Meshed. Its great cupola, its sumptuous and magnificent entrance, the elegant bell-turrets with which it is flanked, covered from top to bottom with blue, yellow, and black enameled tiles, and its superb court with its great basin for ablutions, fill one with admiration. From morning to evening multitudes of pilgrims, coming from Iran, from Turkistan, from farther India, and the countries near Roumania, bring to the Imam Riza (may his name be glorified!) a never-ending tribute of genuflections, prayers, gifts, and alms. The holy space is always filled with a noisy crowd; bands of poor people come thither to get the food that the *moullas* daily prepare for them; they would almost kill themselves with joy for the privilege of the mosque.

I advanced with respect and emotion through the groups, and, as I was discreetly inquiring of one of the door-keepers, whose head was covered with a vast white turban, where I ought to go to obtain my share in the distribution, this worthy and respectable turban—or rather the head which was charged with it—showed me a surprised face, then a joyous one, and a large mouth opening in the midst of a vast black beard, while two eyes of jet shone with joy, and began to utter cries of satisfaction:

"Blessed be the holy imams! It is thou, it is thou thyself, Baba-Aga!"

"Myself!" I replied, looking fixedly at my interlocutor; and, after a moment of hesitation, recognized him perfectly. "Vallah! Billah! Tallah!" I cried; "it is thou, Cousin Suleyman!"

"Myself, my friend, my relative, light of my eyes! What hast thou done with our Leïla?"

"Alas!" said I, "she is dead."

"O Allah, what a misfortune!"

"She is dead," I continued, with an air of despair; "otherwise, should I be here? I am captain in the Second Regiment of Khamsèh, and very happy to see thee again."

It had occurred to me to tell Suleyman that Leïla was dead, because I did not care to talk to him about her, and I wished to pass to another subject of conversation as quickly as possible; but he would not do it.

"Pitiful Allah!" he cried, "dead, Leïla is dead! And thou hast allowed her to die, wretch that thou art! Dost thou not know that I love her only in all the world, and that she has never loved any one but me?"

"Oh, only thee!" I replied, angrily, "only thee! What thou sayest is rather bold! Why, in this case, didst thou not marry her?"

"Because I possessed absolutely nothing; but the very day of thy marriage she swore to me that she would get divorced from thee and come to me as soon as I could give her a suitable house! That is why I left, came here, and became one of the door-keepers of the mosque; and I was on the point of informing her of my present good-fortune, when, behold! thou overwhelmest me with this unexpected blow!"

Thereupon he began to cry and weep, rolling his head. I had a great mind to give him a good blow with my fist in the face, for I was not at all pleased with what he had just revealed to me. Fortunately, I all at once remembered that henceforth it concerned Kérym much more than it did me, and I contented myself by exclaiming:

"Poor Leïla! She loved us both well. Ah, what a misfortune that she is dead!"

Upon this Suleyman fell into my arms, and said:

"My friend, my cousin, we shall neither of us ever be consoled! Come to my house; I wish that thou shouldst be my guest, and, as long as thou art in Meshed, all that I possess is thine!"

I was profoundly touched by this kindness of the dear Suleyman, whom I had always loved from the bottom of my heart; and, perceiving him to be so afflicted, I shared his sorrow most sincerely, and mingled my tears with his. We went away across the court-yard, and on the way he introduced me to two *moullas* whom he met.

"Behold!" said he to them, "my cousin Aga-Khan, major in the regiment of Khamsèh, a hero of the ancient times! Neither Roustem nor Afrasyâb equaled him in valor! If you will come and take a cup of tea with us, you will confer a great honor on my poor house."

I passed a fortnight with Moulla-Suleyman. It was a moment, a very brief moment, of delight. During this time the remains of the regiment were got together, the majority of which were in no better condition than ours, which is easily conceivable after a long journey. They gave us—some of us, at least—shoes; they furnished us with guns—at least with instruments resembling guns. I shall speak of them hereafter. When we were nearly equipped, we learned one fine morning that the order for departure had been given, and that the regiment was to set off for Merv. I was not greatly pleased. This time it meant going into the midst of Turkoman hordes, and Allah knows what might happen! I passed a very sad evening with Moulla-Suleyman. He tried his best to comfort me, the good man; and he poured out for me a great deal of well-sugared tea. We also drank a little *raky*. He returned to the story of Leïla, and made me relate the particulars of the death of the poor child, for the tenth time, perhaps. I had some idea of undeceiving him; but, after having taken so much pains to narrate the circumstances always in one way, it seemed more natural to continue, and not throw him into

fresh perplexities. My poor friend! He had been so good to me that I took a melancholy pleasure in recalling numerous details, with which, on this occasion, I intermingled facts which I had forgotten until that moment; and the result was, that, before expiring, the dear child, whom we both regretted, had spoken of him with much affection. I cannot affirm that my tales were utterly untruthful; for I so strongly felt the need of becoming affected over myself and others that it was very easy for me to speak of sad and touching things; and, truly, I may say that I did it from fullness of heart. Suleyman and I mingled our tears, and, when I left him toward morning, I swore from the depths of my heart never to forget him; and it can be seen that I have kept my word. He embraced me with true affection. Then I rejoined my comrades; the regiment set out on the march, and I with it, in the ranks, beside my *vékyl*.

We were very numerous. I saw the cavalry pass; it was composed of men from the tribes of the south and west. They presented a very good appearance, better than we did; but their badly-fed horses were not good for much. The generals remained at Meshed. It seems to be absolutely necessary that it should be so, because they can direct better from a distance. The colonels imitated the generals—probably for the same reason. In short, we had very few officers above the rank of captain, and it was just as well, for officers are not made to fight, but to receive the soldiers' pay. Almost all the chiefs were nomadic horsemen; these had come with us; but it is well known that this kind of man is but little cultivated, gross, and thinks only of battle. The artillery had set out in advance.

We had been marching three days. It rained in torrents, and was very cold. We were marching with much difficulty over muddy ground, where those who did not slip sometimes sank to the middle of the leg; every instant we had to cross

trenches filled with slimy water; it was no small undertaking. I had already lost my shoes, and, like my companions, in consequence of falling in the mud, of going into the water up to my waist, and of climbing abrupt banks on all-fours, I was covered with mire, and so wet that I shivered. I had eaten nothing since the previous evening. Suddenly we heard the cannons. Our troops stopped promptly.

We heard the cannons. There were many discharges; then, all at once, we heard nothing more. There was an instant of silence; suddenly a train of cannoneers fell upon us, whipping their horses fiercely, and throwing themselves among us. Some men were crushed; those who could got out of the way. The cannons, jolting, jumping, stopping, fell, some in the mud, some in the water; the cannoneers cut the traces of the harnesses, and fled as swiftly as the wind. There was a hubbub, a whirlwind, a fight, a flash of lightning. We had not time to understand, and almost at the same moment those in the first rank perceived a cloud of cavalry, which was coming in our direction. A universal cry arose: "The Turkomans! The Turkomans! Fire!"

I distinguished absolutely nothing. I saw some men follow the cannoneers instead of lowering their arms. I was about to do the same, when the *vékyl*, detaining me by the arm, cried in my ear, in the midst of the uproar:

"Stand thy ground, Aga-Beg; those who run today are lost men!"

The brave *vékyl* was right, and my eyes immediately convinced me of it. I saw, as I see you, the mass of cavalry, which I have mentioned, divide as by magic into myriads of groups, who traversed the plain like people acquainted with the country, turned, surrounded, seized the fugitives, and overwhelmed them with blows, took away their arms, and made hundreds of prisoners.

"You see, you see, my children!" cried the *vékyl* again; "behold the fate which awaits us if we do not keep together! Come! Courage! Steady! Fire!"

There were about fifty of us there. The frightful spectacle before our eyes lent such force to the sergeant's exhortations that, when a number of these accursed robbers advanced toward us, our troops closed together quickly, and we fired and loaded again, and fired a second time, and a third, and a fourth. By the holy imams! we saw some of these accursed dogs, these heretics, these partisans of Abubekr, of Omar, of Osman, fall; may these monsters burn eternally in hell! I tell you we saw them fall, and this put us in such good spirits that, on the command of the *vékyl*, and without separating, we made a movement in advance to meet the enemy, who had halted and did not come toward us. After a moment's hesitation they turned and fled. We uttered cries of triumph: "Allah! Allah! ya Aly! ya Hassan! ya Houssein!" We were at the height of joy; we were delivered, and we feared nothing. In short, we were perfectly happy. Thirty out of our troop of about fifty had found their guns in a condition to use. I do not speak of mine: in the first place, it had no trigger; and, in the next place, the barrel was split. But it was a very good weapon, notwithstanding, as I proved in the end. I had fastened on the bayonet, which had no socket, with a strong cord; this bayonet held wonderfully well, and I only waited for an opportunity to use it.

I will tell you that our example had been followed. We perceived, at a little distance, three or four groups of soldiers firing, and the Turkomans did not dare to approach. Besides, a troop of three or four hundred horsemen, a little way off, had briskly charged the enemy, and had retaken some of the prisoners and a cannon. Unfortunately, we did not know what had become of our gunners nor of their caissons. We

threw the piece into a ditch. For an hour we saw the Turkomans, who, at a distance, continued to capture our men; then they disappeared on the horizon with their prisoners.

Our different groups came together, and we saw that in all we might perhaps number about seven or eight hundred. It was not many out of six or seven thousand who had set out from Meshed. But, considering what terrible lions we were, we did not for an instant doubt our ability to regain some territory where the Turkomans would not be able to catch us.

We were so happy that nothing seemed difficult to us.

Our chief was the *youz-bashy* of the cavalry. He was a Kurd, named Rézy-Khan, a large, handsome man, with a short beard, fiery eyes, and was magnificently mounted and equipped. He was so joyous that his happiness seemed to excite his very horse, and the man and the beast showed their mettle in every movement. There was also a certain Abdoulrahym, a *bakhtyary*, a jolly fellow with elephantine shoulders. He cried out to us: "My children! my children! You are the true Roustems and Iskenders! We will exterminate these rascally Turkomans to the last man!"

We began to sing. The infantry had two commanders—a lieutenant whom I did not know, and our *vékyl*. The brave man exclaimed:

"Now we need provisions and powder!"

He perceived that we were dying of hunger. There was a remedy, however. We began to pull the grass in the plain. A portion was reserved for the horses. With the rest it was decided to make soup. But the rain continued to fall in torrents, and, as there was no wood, it was still more difficult to light a fire. It could have been done with dry grass. There was plenty of dried grass, only it was swollen with water. So it was decided to eat the grass just as it was. It was not good, but the stomach was filled, and no longer complained. The question of powder was difficult. They had not given us any

on our departure from Meshed. The generals had sold it. Now, when it was necessary to procure it, it was hard work. We gathered some horns from the dead bodies. We had about three hundred guns in condition to use, and, all counted, we had three charges for each gun. Rézy-Khan strongly advised each man not to fire until he should give the command. But we were so pleased that some burned their charges that very evening to celebrate the victory. It did not matter; we had good bayonets.

By a lucky accident we discovered, in the vicinity, an entrenched camp, a construction of the old pagans, with four stone ramparts, and in the midst of a sort of pool. We shut ourselves up there, to pass the night. We did well; for at daybreak the Turkomans returned, and, as they were more numerous than we, if they had attacked us again in the open country, we might have had trouble.

We fired on the enemy from behind our walls, and we killed some of them. Enraged, they dismounted, and ascended our accumulated stones like ants. Then we fell on them with bayonets, and with Rézy-Khan at our head. We dealt so hardly with them that, after ten minutes of effort, they yielded and fled. Unfortunately, Rézy-Khan and the big *bakhtyary*, who fought like tigers, were both killed. As for me, I received a sword-blow on the arm; but Allah is great! It was only a scratch.

Now see what rascals these Turkomans are! They fled, but not far away.

They returned almost immediately, and began to ride around our walls. They had apparently observed that we did not fire much. They easily perceived now that we did not fire at all. There was a good reason: no more powder remained! not a grain! not an atom! Allah knows perfectly what he does! Our enemies then tried a new attack, and one part of them transformed themselves into infantry. They swarmed over the

slope of the fort like ants. The *vékyl* at our head, we made a sortie, and killed a dozen. They fled; the cavalry charged on us; we had only time to retreat into our hole; and we saw in the distance the *vékyl's* head on the point of a lance.

Ah! I must not forget to tell you that we were very cold in the night. There was not a dry thread on our poor bodies. The rain fell incessantly. A little wet grass in our stomachs did not support us very well. I suffered much, and sixty men died, without our being able to explain why or how. The great and merciful Allah had ordered it thus!

This night was also very bad. We had no remedy but to press close to each other, in order to faintly recall to our minds what warmth was like. But toward morning the sky became brighter. It was cold. We expected to be attacked. The lieutenant was found to be dead. Toward noon the Turkomans reappeared, but they kept at a distance; in the evening they became bolder and came within musket-range, rode around the intrenchment, then retired.

At night more of our people came in. There were more than four hundred of us, and we had no commander. But we knew what we ought to do, and, in case of attack, we could yet fall upon the infidels with the bayonet. However, we were all very weak.

It was about the hour of the prayer of Asr, and the sun was descending to the horizon, when in the distance we saw the Turkoman troops approaching in greater numbers than on the preceding day. Each man rose as well as he could, and took his gun. But, to our astonishment, the whole multitude halted at a great distance from us, and four or five horsemen only, detaching themselves from the body of their comrades, advanced toward us, making signs of friendship, and indicating as clearly as possible that they desired to speak to us. Several of us had a mind to go out quickly and cut off their heads; but what good would it do? I made this remark to my comrades, and, after

a short discussion, all agreed with me. We went to meet these sons of dogs, and, having saluted them profoundly, we conducted them into the inclosure. All sat down on the ground, so as to form a circle around the new arrivals, whom we invited to place themselves on the horses' coverings. Vallah! Billah! Tallah! there was a great difference between them and us! We had the appearance of phantoms rolled in the mud, and dripping with misery; they wore good clothes and furs, brilliant weapons, and magnificent caps. When they had taken their seats I addressed these accursed men, having been appointed the speaker.

"Health be on you!"

"And on you, health!" they replied.

"We hope," I continued, "that your excellencies' healths leave nothing to be desired, and may all your wishes be granted in this world and in the other!"

"The kindnesses of your excellencies are infinite," replied the oldest of the Turkomans. He was a large old man, with a flat nose, a face as round as a melon, hairs of a beard here and there, and eyes like a reversed crescent.

"What orders do your excellencies desire to transmit to us?" I continued.

"We come," said the old Turkoman, "to present a request to your highnesses. You know that we are the unhappy fathers of families, poor laborers, slaves of the King of kings, and servants of Well-Guarded Iran! For centuries we have endeavored, by every means in our power, to prove to the august government the excess of our affection. Unfortunately, we are very poor; our wives and children cry with hunger; the fields we till do not produce enough to nourish them, and if we did not have occasional opportunities of succeeding in a little slave-trade, which does no harm to any one, we should expire with misery, we and our families. Why persecute us?"

"All that your excellency has just explained to us is most

strictly true," I replied. "As for us, we are very humble soldiers; we do not know why they sent us here; and now, overwhelmed with the goodness of your excellencies, we venture to pray you to allow us to return to the holy city of Meshed, whence we came."

The Turkoman bowed in the most amiable manner, and answered:

"Would to Heaven that it were possible! My companions and myself are ready to offer you our horses, and to beg you to accept a thousand marks of our friendship. But judge our sad position for yourselves. The august government has attacked us without cause; we did no ill to any one, and, moreover, provisions are scarce. You have nothing to eat; we have hardly eaten for a week. Come with us. You shall be well treated. We will not sell you at Bokhara nor at Khiva. We will keep you with us, and if your friends desire to buy you back, we shall be ready to accept the most reasonable ransoms. Is it not better to await your deliverance peaceably under our tents, beside a good fire, than to die of misery on the road?"

The old Turkoman had the appearance of a good man. His companions began to talk to us of fresh bread, curds, and roast-mutton. There was great emotion among us. All at once every man threw away his gun, the ambassadors rose, and we followed them willingly.

When we arrived near the horsemen, we were well received; they placed us in the middle of the band, and as we walked, we conversed with our masters, who seemed to us to be fine men; from time to time, it is true, one of us received a good blow from a whip, but it was because he did not walk fast enough; otherwise, everything went well, except that, for people who were as fatigued as we were, it was a little hard to be forced to make a journey of eight hours' duration over heavy ground before reaching the encampment to which they led us. The women and the children had come out to meet us. This

was the most difficult moment. It appears that there were in this crowd newly-made widows whose husbands we had killed, and mothers who were mourning for what we had done to their sons. Women are bad in every country in the world; these were atrocious. The least that they would have done would have been to tear us to pieces with their nails, if they had been permitted to do so. The children asked nothing better than to treat us badly, and to begin with, they welcomed us with howls and a volley of stones. Fortunately, the men showed that they were not at all disposed to let us be injured, and half growling and half laughing, and giving occasional blows to these furies, they succeeded in getting us into the camp, and in putting our enemies and their little auxiliaries, if not out of the power of reviling us, which did not hurt us any, at least out of the way of shedding our blood. When we were all collected on the square, they counted us, and warned us that any one who should attempt to escape would be instantly killed. After this they distributed us among the different horsemen who had captured us, and we became their slaves. I was given to a very young fellow, who led me directly to his hut. My master was not poor; I perceived that on entering his hut. This hut was of the kind called *alatjyk*, made with walls and partitions of plaited osier covered with thick felt; the floor was of wood, and carpeted; there were three or four chests painted all sorts of colors, a large bed with cushions, and, in the middle of the hut, a stove which gave out an agreeable heat. In this charming habitation I perceived a young woman; she was nursing a child. I saluted her with respect; she was certainly my mistress, but she did not raise her eyes to me, and she scarcely glanced at her husband. I will tell you at once that the Turkoman women are not very interesting.

They are ugly enough to put the devil to flight: for example, take the young woman in the hut where I was brought, who I learned afterward was one of the beauties of the country; I

would not have doubted it at the first view. She resembled a street porter of Tabreez. She had large and flat shoulders, a big head, little eyes, prominent cheek-bones, a mouth like a baker's oven, a flat forehead, and upon her chest two mountains. I have seen yet worse-looking ones. The women there are stupid, bad, brutal, and do not know how to work, though they make them work like mules, and they are right. The master said to his wife, "Put the child down, and get supper for me."

The woman obeyed at once. She began to rattle the dishes, and she made me a sign to follow her out of the tent; I obeyed immediately, having conceived the idea of winning her by my zeal. She conducted me into a kind of hovel which served as a kitchen, where something was boiling in a saucepan. She made a sign to me which I did not understand rightly, and, without explaining anything, she took a stick and hit me over the head.

"This is," thinks I, "a kind of monster who will not give me a very easy life."

I deceived myself. She was a nice woman. She often beat me; she was particular, and wished everything done her own way; but she fed me well, and when she got accustomed to me, she spoke more, and I succeeded in deceiving her more than once, without her ever having perceived it. When she was in a good-humor, she said with bursts of laughter:

"Are not you people of Iran more stupid than our horses?"

"Yes, mistress," I replied, with humility; "it is very true; Allah has ordered it so!"

"The Turkomans," she continued, "rob you, steal you, carry you off and sell you to whom they will, and you can find no means of preventing them."

"It is true, mistress," I replied, again; "but it is because the Turkomans are brilliant people, and we are asses!"

Then she began again to laugh, and never observed that her milk and butter diminished to my profit. I have always no-

ticed that the strongest people are the least intelligent. Just observe the Europeans! One can deceive them as often as one pleases, and, wherever they go, they imagine that they are superior to us because they are the masters; they do not know, and never will appreciate, this truth, that mind is superior to matter. The Turkomans are just like them. They are brutes like them.

I was employed by my masters in splitting wood, carrying water, and in driving the sheep to pasture. When I had no work I walked in the fields. I made some friends, and I sang songs. I knew how to make snares to catch mice, and I taught some women to make Persian dishes which the men found admirable. They recompensed me by giving me tea, butter, and biscuits. They frequently had weddings and I danced at them, which caused much laughter among the company, who nevertheless were in very good-humor, and one can easily understand why. Our camp, the neighboring camps, and all the nation, were in a state of exultation over the victory. The prisoners surfeited themselves and looked forward to growing fat among them. After the first ill-feeling had passed off, all the widows were delighted with their situation, and it could not have been otherwise, for a Turkoman maiden is not worth five tomans in gold, and it is only under particular circumstances that they are ever sought in marriage. On the contrary, a widow is of much value, and she is often estimated very high. This depends upon the experience that she has had, upon her reputation for economy, and upon her skill for directing everything about her. Besides, one knows precisely whether she can or cannot give children to her husband. As to love, you can well understand that, with the looks of these women, there is no question of it: no one dreams of it, nor understands what it is. I once tried to relate to my mistress the beautiful and touching passion that Medjnoun evinced for Leïla, and which recalled to me my Leïla so vividly that I was thrown into the utmost grief. My

mistress beat me outrageously for having dared to weary her with such nonsense. She was yet quite young; but she had already had two husbands before the one she was then living with, and three children besides. So she enjoyed an immense popularity, and it was an honor for me, of which I was sensible, to belong to such a woman.

I had been living there peacefully for three months, when, one morning as I was walking idly about the camp, I was accosted by two other slaves—Persians like myself—who told me that they knew for certain, and swore it on their heads, that we were to be delivered in the course of the day and sent back to Meshed. This rumor had circulated so often, and had so often turned out false, that I laughed, and advised my comrades not to trust too implicitly to what had been announced to them. Still, in quitting them, I was much troubled and moved each time that I heard such news. I know well that many bad things happen in Iran, and that much evil exists there: nevertheless, it is Iran, and it is the best and the holiest country on earth. In no part of the world can you experience so much pleasure and so much joy. When you have lived there, you wish to return there; and when you are there, you want to die there. I did not believe all that my two companions had told me; but, for all that, my heart beat and I felt sad, and so sad that, instead of continuing my walk, I returned to my master's tent. He had just dismounted his horse, and I saw him talking to his wife.

"Aga," he said to me, "thou art no longer my slave; thou hast been bought back; thou art my guest, and art about to depart to Meshed!"

I was so overcome on hearing these words that I believe I was upon the point of suffocating, and I seemed to see the tent turning round about me.

"Is it true?" I cried.

"How stupid these Iranians are!" said his wife, laughing.

"What is there extraordinary about it? Thy government has redeemed its soldiers at ten tomans a head; they might have been sold less cheaply, but, since the folly is committed, and we have received our money, go to thy home, and do not be a fool!"

I scarcely heard this creature. I was free! It passed like a vision before my eyes. I saw, yes, I saw the beautiful valley of Khamsèh, where I was born; I saw distinctly the brook, the willows, the tufted grass, the flowers, the tree at whose foot I had buried my money, my beautiful, my adored Leïla in my arms, my huntings, my gazelles, my tigers, my dear Kérym, my excellent Suleyman, my very brave Abdoullah, all my cousins, the bazaar of Teheran, the grocers' and the cooks' shops, the faces of people whom I knew; yes, yes, yes, my whole life passed before me in a minute, and a voice cried unto me, "You are about to live it over again!" I felt myself intoxicated with joy. I wanted to sing, to dance, to weep, to embrace all those who had come before my mind in this moment of supreme felicity, and I began to utter agonizing cries. "Fool!" said the woman to me, "you drank *raky* last night, and perhaps this morning. If I ever catch you at it again—"

The husband burst out laughing.

"You will never catch him at it again, for he leaves here today; and from this very moment—I repeat it to you, Aga, you are free!"

I rushed out of the tent, and directed my hasty steps to the large square in the midst of the camp. My poor comrades, as exultant as myself, poured out of all the houses. We embraced each other, and we did not fail to thank Allah and the imams; we exclaimed with all our hearts: "Iran! dear Iran! light of my eyes!" And then I learned, little by little, how it happened that we suddenly emerged from darkness into so beautiful a light.

It seems that many things had happened since the loss of our

army and the beginning of our captivity. The King of kings, on learning what had occurred, had fallen into a great rage against his generals, and had accused them of having left his poor soldiers to march alone against the enemy without accompanying them; he had also accused them of having sold the provisions, powder, arms, and clothing, which were intended for them; and at last he had announced his determination to have the heads of all the culprits cut off.

He would have done well, perhaps, in carrying out this threat. But, after all, what is the use? After these generals there would have been others just like them—it is the way of the world. Nothing can be changed in it. So that his majesty acted much more wisely in calming his wrath. The only result was that the ministers and pillars of the empire received a great many presents from the accused; they suspended two or three for a few months; the king received magnificent gifts, and it was decided that the chiefs should buy back the soldiers imprisoned by the Turkomans, and should buy them back at their own expense, since they were the cause of the misfortune which had happened to the poor fellows.

The question being thus settled, the generals naturally took the colonels and majors aside who had done precisely like themselves. They threatened to have them bastinadoed, to cashier them, and even to cut off their heads, and managed so well that at last they arrived at an understanding. The colonels and majors made presents to their superiors, and the latter got back in this manner a portion of the expense which care for their safety had just cost them at Teheran.

In the meantime they had sent emissaries among the Turkoman tribes, to treat of the purchase of the captives. There had been some difficulty in coming to an agreement. However, they had arranged it; and in this way, after having suffered incredible agitation, a sort of ecstasy of happiness, and after having taken leave of our old masters and old Turkoman

friends, we set out for Meshed, marching, I can assure you, like a bird about to fly away.

The weather was superb: at night the stars shone in the heavens like diamonds; by day a beautiful, bright sun covered heaven and earth with gold. The entire universe smiled upon us poor, unfortunate soldiers, the most wretched, the most abandoned, the most ill-treated of beings, who had come out of the depths of misery and recovered hope again; and we marched cheerfully, and sang with joyous throats, and thus we arrived at two hours' journey from Meshed. We saw clearly outlined before us on the blue sky the domes, the minarets, and the enameled walls of the holy mosque, and the innumerable lines of houses of the city; and, as we were thinking of the good which we were about to find in this celestial apparition, we found ourselves suddenly arrested by two regiments ranged across the road, and before whom was a troop of officers. We halted, and made profound salutations.

A *moulla* stepped out from the group of officers, and advanced toward our troop. When he was within speaking-distance, he elevated his two hands in the air, and addressed the following discourse to us:

"My children! Glory to Allah, the powerful and merciful Lord of the worlds, who liberated the prophet Younès from the belly of the whale, and you from the hands of the ferocious Turkomans!"

"Amen!" cried our whole troop.

"You must render thanks to him by entering humbly into Meshed—humbly, I tell you, and as becomes unhappy prisoners!"

"We are ready!—we are ready!"

"Then, my children, you will put chains on your hands, like pious men and faithful Mussulmans, and the whole population, touched by this proof of your misfortunes, will overwhelm you with benedictions and alms."

We considered this an excellent idea, and were charmed with it. Then soldiers left the ranks of the two regiments, and approached us. They put iron collars on our necks, and manacles on our hands, and thus they formed bands of eight or ten of us chained together. We laughed excessively at this, and were very well satisfied, though the weight of the metal was rather overpowering; but the question was only of carrying it a few hours, and it was a trifle.

When our toilet was completed, the drums, music, officers, and one regiment, set out in advance; we came next, in our lamentable outfit, very happily, and on our heels marched the other regiment. We soon perceived the crowd of Meshedys coming to meet us. We saluted them, and had the pleasure of hearing ourselves covered with benedictions. Meanwhile, the drums rattled, the music played, and several pieces of ordnance fired salvos in our honor.

Once arrived in the city, they separated us; some took one street, some another, and the soldiers escorted us. They conducted me and the seven comrades chained together in the same band, with fetters on our wrists and collars on our necks, to a guard-house, and permitted us to seat ourselves on the platform. There the sergeant who commanded our escort ordered us to solicit charity of the passers-by. This was an excellent idea; we instantly put it into execution, with marvelous success. Then women and children brought us our fill of rice, meat, and even delicacies; they gave us but little money. I think the good people who succored us did not have a great deal themselves.

In the evening an officer arrived. We begged him to have us set at liberty, and to allow us each to attend to our business. My only thought was to pass a good night, which I greatly needed, with my friend and relative, Moulla-Suleyman. The officer said to us:

"My children, you must be reasonable. You have been de-

livered by the incomparable and superhuman generosity of my uncle, General Aly-Khan. He paid ten tomans for each of you to your masters. Would it be just for him to lose so large a sum? No! it would not be just, you acknowledge it. On the other hand, if he were to let you go, although you are all very honest, and incapable of repudiating your debts, still, unfortunately, you have no means. Where would poor soldiers find money? For this reason my uncle, who is goodness itself, is going to make you find some. By leaving the chains on your necks, until each one of you shall have collected fifteen tomans, which you will transmit faithfully to him, he furnishes you with the means of touching the Mussulmans' hearts, and exercising the charity of the public. Do not despair. Relate your misfortunes; continue to beg of those who approach you; call all these good people who pass by! They will come. You see that they feed you very well. Gradually pity will affect them still further, and their purses will open. I do not deceive you. In the course of a few days, when no hope remains of collecting anything more here, you will be sent away. Thus you will return to Teheran, thence to Ispahan, to Shiraz, to Kermanshah, to all the cities of Well-Guarded Iran, and you will end by paying this debt."

The officer became silent, but we became angry: despair seized us; we began to call him "son of a dog"; and we were in a fair way to spare neither his uncle, nor the wives, nor the mother, nor the daughters of his uncle (perhaps he had none), when, at a sign from our executioner, our keepers fell upon us, beat us, threw us on the ground, and trod on us. One of my sides was nearly crushed in, and my head was all swollen with two great lumps. So we had to make the best of it. Each one submitted; and, after having wept in a corner for a good half-hour, I became resigned, and began, in a lamentable voice, to solicit alms again of the passers-by.

Charitable people were not wanting, and every one knows

that, thanks be rendered to Almighty God! the people of Islam are very willing to help the unfortunate. The women, particularly, crowded around us in great numbers: they gazed at us, they wept, they asked the story of our misfortunes. They were great, and, as can readily be believed, we did not try to underrate them; on the contrary, we never failed to add to our stories—that our wives, our five, six, seven, eight little children of tender years, were waiting for us at home and dying of hunger. Thus we collected a great deal of small money, and sometimes a few pieces of silver. Moreover, some of us were more lucky than the others.

It is well known that our regiments are recruited among the poor, who, having neither friends nor protectors, cannot escape a military life. When soldiers are wanted, they pick up, in the streets and wine-shops of the cities, and in the houses of the villages, all those who cannot offer resistance. Thus, on one chain there were grown men, children of fifteen, and old men of seventy; for, when a man once becomes a soldier, it is for life, unless he can find some means of getting exempted or escaping.

The youngest were those who received the most alms. One handsome boy of sixteen, born at Zendjân, was delivered at the end of a fortnight, to such an extent was he favored on all sides. It is true that he had the face of an angel. I succeeded in informing Moulla-Suleyman of my sad fate. The good man hastened to me, threw himself on my neck, and, in the name of our dear Leïla, gave me a toman. I thanked him heartily. Perhaps I should have obtained more from him; but the next day they sent us off from Meshed to Teheran.

My comrades and I composed a song, which recounted our misfortunes, and we regaled the peasants on our road with it. This always brought us in something. Moreover, the charity of the Mussulmans fed us better than it had ever fed the king's soldiers in former days, and our keepers profited by it as well as we. But each of us was obliged to take great care of his small

gains, for, either by a natural or a soldier's instinct, we thought only of obtaining possession of what did not belong to us. I kept my money tied up in a piece of blue cotton; I showed it to no one, and had it fastened by a cord under my clothes. When we arrived in the capital, I may confess that I possessed, counting the gold toman given me by my cousin, some sahabgrans of silver, and a good many copper shahys, about three tomans and a half. I was sure that some of my comrades were richer than I, but others were poorer; for an old cannoneer, called Ibrahim, my neighbor on the chain, never got anything, he was so very ugly.

On arriving in Ṭeheran, they led us to my old guard-house, and put us on exhibition on the platform. The people of the quarter, recognizing me, thronged around; I related our misfortunes, and they were in a fair way to give us a great deal, when a veritable miracle took place. Allah be praised! May the holy imams be blessed, and their sacred names be exalted! Amen! amen! Glory to Allah, the Lord of the worlds! Glory to Allah! glory to Allah!

A miracle happened, I say, and it was this: As usual, a great many women were assembled around us. They crowded each other, and pushed forward to the best of their ability to get a good view of us, so that I, while relating our misfortunes, had before me a wall of white and blue veils. I had reached this phrase, which I frequently repeated, with unction and despair:

"O Mussulmans! O Mussulmans! Islam no longer exists! Religion is lost! I am from Khamsèh! Alas! alas! I am from the vicinity of Zendjân! I have a poor blind mother, my father's two sisters are lame, my wife is paralytic, and my eight children are dying in misery! Alas, Mussulmans! if your charity does not make haste to deliver me, they will all die of hunger, and I—I shall die of despair!"

At this moment I heard a piercing cry beside me; and a

voice which I instantly recognized, and which penetrated my heart like a fiery dart, exclaimed:

"In Allah! by Allah! for Allah! *It is Aga!*"

I did not hesitate a second.

"Leïla!" I cried.

Although she was covered by her thick veil, her face shone before my eyes! I was transported by joy to the height of the seventh heaven

"Be at ease," said she. "Thou shalt be delivered to-day, or to-morrow at the latest."

Thereupon she turned away and disappeared, with two other women who accompanied her, and in the evening, as I was dying with impatience, an officer arrived with a *vékyl*. They broke my chain, and the officer said to me:

"Go where thou wilt; thou art free!"

As he pronounced these words I found myself pressed—yes, pressed—in whose arms? My cousin Abdoullah's!

Allah! I was charmed to see him.

"Ah, my friend, my brother, my well-beloved," said he to me, "what happiness! what a reunion! When I learned from our cousin Kérym that thou hadst been carried off by the troops, I know not to what excess of grief I was on the point of abandoning myself!"

"Good Kérym!" I exclaimed, "we have always loved each other tenderly! Although I confess that I sometimes preferred Suleyman to him—and, by-the-way, dost thou know that Suleyman—"

Thereupon I told him what had become of our worthy cousin, and that he was in a fair way to become a very learned *moulla* and a great personage at Meshed. This tale charmed Abdoullah.

"I regret," said he, "that our other relative, Kérym, has not earned so fair a destiny. It is his own fault. Thou knowest that he had the deplorable habit of loving cold tea to excess."

The expression "cold tea" indicates, as every one knows, among people who respect themselves, the horrible liquor called *raky*. I shook my head with an air of despair and indignation at the same time.

"Kérym," I replied, "did drink cold tea, I know it only too well; for a long time I made extraordinary efforts to break him of this shameful habit; I never succeeded."

"Nevertheless," continued Abdoullah, "his situation might be worse. I employ him as a muleteer, and he conducts my merchandise on the road from Tabreez to Trebizond. He earns his living well."

"What do I hear? Hast thou become a merchant?"

"Yes, my brother," replied Abdoullah, with a modest air. "I have acquired some property, which enabled me to-day to come to thy assistance when my wife revealed to me thy unhappy situation."

"Thy wife!"

I was at the height of amazement.

"Without doubt; Kérym, not possessing the means of supporting that adorable creature as she deserved, consented to a divorce, and I married her."

I was not too well pleased. But what could I do? Submit to my destiny. One never escapes it.

I have often had occasion to recognize this truth. It struck me once more, and, I confess, in a manner which touched me nearly. I did not utter a word. But I followed Abdoullah. When we had arrived near the New Gate, he led me into a very pretty house, and conducted me to the *enderoon*.

There I found Leïla seated on the carpet. She received me very well. To my sorrow, I found her prettier than ever, and more charming, and my heart swelled with tears. She perceived it, and when Abdoullah left us, on business, after tea, she said:

"My poor Aga, I see that thou art unhappy."

"I am very unhappy," I replied, bowing my head.

"Thou must be reasonable," she continued, "and I will conceal nothing from thee. I confess that I loved thee extremely, and that I still love thee; but I have not been insensible to the good qualities of Suleyman; the gayety and animation of Kérym charmed me; and I have great esteem and affection for Abdoullah's merits. If I were asked to say which of my four cousins I prefer, I should ask to have all four made into a single man, and I am sure that I should love that man passionately and forever. But is this possible? I ask thee. Do not weep. Be persuaded that thou wilt always live in my heart. I could not marry Suleyman, for he had nothing. Thou hast been rather flighty, but I forgive thee; I know that thou hast loved me tenderly. Kérym was reducing me to misery; Abdoullah has made me rich. I must be wise in my turn, and I shall remain faithful to him until death, always thinking of you three, however . . . In short, I have said enough to thee. Abdoullah is thy cousin; love him; serve him; all will be possible to thee. Thou canst imagine that I shall not interfere."

She said many more affectionate words, which, for the first moment, caused me double sadness. However, as there was no remedy, and I knew it but too well, I became resigned to being nothing more to Leïla than her uncle's son.

Abdoullah, in his character of merchant, often had to do with great people. He rendered them services, and had influence with them. Thanks to him, I was made *sultan* in the Regiment of Khamsèh, or the Private one, which always remains at Teheran, in the palace; mounts guard, carries water, splits wood, and works on the masonry. Behold me captain; and I began to devour the soldiers, as I had been devoured, which gave me a very honorable position, of which I do not complain.

We are the king's guards; they have often talked of giving us a magnificent uniform, and they still talk of it continually. I believe they will talk of it to the end of the world. Some-

times they propose to dress us like the men who watch over the Emperor of Russia, who are, it appears, green, with gold-lace and embroideries. At other times they want to dress us in red, with lace, embroideries, and fringes of gold. But if soldiers were dressed in this way, how could they make themselves useful? And who would pay for the fine costumes? Until they have found the means, our people will have only torn trousers, and, frequently, no hats.

When I became an officer I wished to live with my equals, and made many acquaintances. But among them I attached myself particularly to one *sultan*, a fellow of an excellent character. He lived a long time among the Ferynghys, where he had been sent to be educated. He has told me very curious things. One evening when he had drunk a little more cold tea than usual, he expressed opinions which I considered perfectly reasonable.

"Seest thou, my brother," he said to me, "all the Iranians are brutes, and the Europeans are fools. But I was educated among them. At first I was sent to college, and then as I had learned what was necessary to pass the examination as well as those accursed ones, I entered their military school, which they call Saint-Cyr. I staid there two years, as they all do; then, having become an officer, I returned here. They wished to employ me; they asked me what ought to be done. I told them; they ridiculed me; they took a dislike to me; they have treated me as an infidel and an impertinent fellow; they have had me bastinadoed. At the first moment I wished to die, because the Europeans regard such an accident as a dishonor!"

"The fools!" I exclaimed, emptying my glass.

"Yes, they are fools; they do not understand that everything —our habits, manners, interests, climate, air, earth, our past, our future—renders that radically impossible to us which is perfectly simple to them. When I saw that my death would do no good at all, I made my education over again. I ceased to

entertain opinions, to desire to reform, to blame, to contradict, and I became like all the rest of you! I kissed the hands of the Pillars of Power, and I said, 'Yes! yes, certainly!' to the greatest absurdities. Then they gradually ceased to persecute me, but, as they still distrust me, I shall never be anything more than a captain. We both know generals of fifteen, and marshals who are eighteen years old. We also are acquainted with brave warriors who do not know how to load a gun: I am over fifty, and I shall die in poverty, and under the weight of an incurable suspicion, because I know how to lead troops, and to make an end of the Turkomans on the frontier in three months. Cursed be those wretches of Europeans, who are the cause of all my misfortunes! Pass me the *raky!*"

We drank so much that night that I could not rise from the carpet on which I had fallen, until the evening of the next day, and I left my comrade there.

Thanks to the protection of Abdoullah, I think I shall become a major this year, unless they make me a colonel. Inshallah! Inshallah!

THE ILLUSTRIOUS MAGICIAN

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THE following story was related one day by the dervish Bagher, upon the authority of Abdy-Khan, who himself had learned it of Loutfoullah Hindy, who had had it from Riza-Bey, of Kirmanshah, all of whom are well-known people and truthful beyond suspicion:

There lived a few years ago in Damghan a young man named Mirza-Kassem, an excellent Mussulman, recently married to a charming young wife, with whom he lived very happily. He drank neither wine nor any strong drink, so the neighbors never heard any noise near his house—which circumstance, it may here be observed, is not so common as it might be among the people lightened by the light of Islam. But Allah arranges things according to his own good pleasure. Mirza-Kassem made no parade of luxury or lavish expenditure, but disposed in a very becoming manner of his income, proceeding from some property he owned in two villages and the interest on a pretty round sum placed in the hands of respectable merchants. He followed no profession, and, having no ambition to become a personage of note, he had constantly refused to be a servant; though, thanks to his well-known good disposition, the most seductive proposals had on several occasions been made to him.

Having thus resolved not to become prime-minister, and inasmuch as it behooves all men to have an occupation of some kind, he began to busy himself about matters concerning the mind. After leaving school, he had, while still young, studied

theology at the fine new college of Kashan, and noted down a number of divergent opinions from the best expounders of the Holy Book. He had likewise paid some attention to jurisprudence; yet all these branches of knowledge, in spite of their indisputable merit in his eyes, afforded him no real satisfaction. Thus, after having pursued for a season, and with a moderate degree of pleasure, the study of such questions as this, "Is the Imam Mehdy self-conscient in the world or not?" he had gradually abandoned the delights of meditation, and was threatened with a relapse into listless inactivity, when chance brought him into contact with an individual who exercised a decided influence over him.

It was upon an evening in Ramadan. Unfortunately, the faithful are rarely very scrupulous in the observance of this Mohammedan Lent, though, sooth to say, few there are who do not wish to be supposed to be so, for appearances' sake, if from no other motive. Indeed, the very men who are so devoid of conscience as to eat their morning *pillau* in some secluded nook at the accustomed breakfast-hour are the first, on the approach of eventide, to complain of a hunger which does not bite them, and of a faintness which has not overtaken them, and the most eager in their supplications for the sun to descend below the horizon. It is our duty to thank Allah and his Prophet for the abundant instances of this edifying spectacle to be found in every city throughout Iran during the holy season.

One evening, then, Mirza-Kassem and a dozen or so of his friends were crouched in a cluster under a fruiterer's awning, waiting till the sun's disk, which had already gained the edge of the horizon, should do them the favor to disappear altogether. At least one-half of those regular and conscientious personages, whose florid visages were not calculated to remind one of austere habits, held their *kalioons*, already lighted, in their hands, awaiting the absorption of the luminary in the first shades of

twilight, to plunge the end of the tube into their mouths and envelop themselves in a cloud of smoke.

"Go down! go down!" murmured Ghoulam-Aly, as he hugged the mouth-piece of the darling instrument within an inch of his lips. "Get down there! and may your unholy dog of a father be burned for prolonging our suffering in this manner!"

"O Hassan! O Hussein! holy imams! I swear that the sun has been down for one long hour," said Kouly-Aly, the cloth-merchant, in a tone of lamentation. "I do not know what sort of blind moles we are, not to see that it is night!"

If night it was, as the good Mussulman affirmed, it was surely still light enough to see it. The jocose hint failed to produce the desired effect.

As for Mirza-Kassem, he was patient and said nothing. Nevertheless, he was engaged in complacent contemplation of two hard-boiled eggs placed before him, when all at once the great gun at the citadel was heard. This was the official announcement of the sun's disappearance; every *kalioon* was lit; the little shop was literally plundered of its store of melons, hard-boiled eggs, and cucumbers; the venders of tea poured out the boiling beverage, which was immediately seized by the eager crowd; the cups were no sooner taken than they were emptied, and no sooner emptied than replenished; and then there was singing, and shouting, and laughter, and a general pushing and rushing, and other signs of boisterous merry-making.

Just then a tall dervish, lank and lean, burned as brown as a badger by a thousand suns, clad in blue cotton pantaloons and nothing more, bareheaded, with a forest of unkempt black hair, glaring eyes, and a wild, savage countenance, stood within a few feet of Mirza-Kassem. He carried upon his shoulder a brazen wand, around the upper extremity of which were serpents entwined; and hanging by his side was the cocoanut, called *kooskool*, peculiar to the members of his brotherhood.

The appearance of the man was so strange, even for a dervish, that Mirza-Kassem's eyes were involuntarily riveted upon him; nor could he, in spite of all his efforts, turn them in any other direction. The stranger in turn fixed his gaze upon the person who made him the object of such close inspection.

"Greetings to you!" said he, in a sweet, melodious voice, quite unexpected from such a being.

"And to you greetings and benedictions!" courteously rejoined Mirza-Kassem.

"I am," pursued the dervish, "as your excellency may observe, a poor wretch, less than a shadow, devoted to the service of Allah and the imams. I have just come to this place, and if you will grant me lodging to-night on your terrace, in your stable, or wherever you may see fit, I shall feel grateful."

"You overwhelm me with so great a favor," replied Mirza-Kassem. "If you will deign to follow your slave, he will lead the way."

The dervish motioned acquiescence by raising his hand to his forehead, and set out with his guide. They threaded their way together through many tortuous streets, where the dogs from the bazaar had already begun to assemble; the few shops last to shut were closing; colored lanterns hung at the doors of a certain number of low houses; and the night-watchmen chatted with the good-wives of the neighborhood busied in washing their clothes in the stream in the middle of the street, causing most painful surprises to the legs of unwary pedestrians in the dark. The two new friends, however, had not very far to walk, for in about a quarter of an hour Mirza-Kassem halted before an arched wicket, knocked three times with the iron knocker, and, a black slave having opened the gate, he ushered the dervish into his house, with expressions of the most cordial welcome.

He led him through a brick-paved yard, in the centre of which stood a basin of azure-blue enameled tiles, full of clear,

cool water refreshing to behold; while blooming rose-bushes all around added to the beauty of the place. After ascending some steps, the dervish entered a saloon of moderate size opening in front of the rose-bushes. The walls were tastefully painted in red and blue, relieved with gold and silver lines; Chinese vases containing hyacinths and anemones occupied the corners; a Kurdish carpet covered the floor; and white-muslin cushions with scarlet stripes decorated the low-seated sofa, or *takhteh,* on which Mirza-Kassem invited his guest to repose. The dervish declined with the usual forms required by good-breeding, declaring himself, besides, unworthy of the proffered honor. "I am," he repeated over and over again, "but a very wretched dervish, a dog, less than dust before your excellency's eyes. How should I have the audacity thus to impose on your bounty?"

Such were his words; yet, as he spoke, there was in his whole mien an air of distinction, and, so to speak, dignity, so evident that Mirza-Kassem felt intimidated, and queried within himself whether he ought not humbly to ask pardon of such a man for having had the audacity to bring him to his house. "Who can this dervish be?" he inquired inwardly. "His bearing resembles that of a king; and he seems more fitted to command an army than to lead the life of a wanderer by the highway!"

The dervish in the mean time had taken his place. Tea was brought in by the little negro slave; but the dervish would only drink the half of a glass of water. The *kalioon* was likewise served; but the dervish refused, declaring that his principles were in opposition to the use of such superfluities; so Mirza-Kassem, though he would fain have solaced himself with a few odorous whiffs, deemed it proper to praise the zeal of the saintly personage, and dismiss the tempting pipe, affirming at the same time that, for his part, neither was he in the habit of using it. Heaven alone knows how much of the statement was true! Amen.

Then the dervish began as follows:

"Your excellency has deigned to overwhelm me with favors; and I am in duty bound to tell you who I am. The kingdom of Deccan, which you have assuredly heard of, is one of the most powerful states in India; there I first saw the light. For many years I was the minister and favorite of our sovereign; by which you will understand that I was abundantly provided with all the useless things of life. I know what a source of annoyance a well-filled harem may become, and can tell of the vexations attendant upon riches; my eyes beheld the dazzle of too many gems for me to have long cherished a passion for them; and, as for the prince's favor, of all that philosophers have said upon that score there is not a word the truth and weight of which are not known to me, and better than to most of themselves. So you see what value I set upon it!

"I did not linger, then, many long years in a situation so false, but withdrew, and gave myself wholly up to study.

"This, in turn, I was induced, by the result of my researches, to abandon, as being too irksome, and leading to too many unworthy digressions. I gave up everything; and, having lived ever since alone and contented with my *kooskool* and blue cotton pantaloons, I can, I think, tell you a great truth which you will not believe, but which is none the less real for that, namely, that this poor devil, who has nothing, and is now sitting before you, owns the world!"

While uttering these words the dervish looked Mirza-Kassem full in the face, and with an expression of so much majesty and authority as left him quite abashed. The latter had barely time to pronounce the forms usual on such occasions: "Glory to Allah! blessed be his name!"

"No!" pursued the dervish, whose mien grew more and more impressive and commanding as he proceeded—"no, my son, you do not believe me! Pomp and pageant are to you the inseparable accompaniments of power, nor can any one appear to be

invested with it who is not splendidly arrayed in silk and velvet, and cashmere, and gauze embroidered with silver and gold; sitting upon a horse whose trappings glitter with pearls and emeralds, and surrounded by a numerous *cortége* of armed followers whose turbulence and insolent airs proclaim the dignity of their master. And there you think like the rest of the world. But you have been kind to me: without knowing me, or suspecting in the least who I am, you have taken me under your roof and treated me like a king; and I will prove my gratitude by freeing you of a false mode of thinking which should no longer inthrall the mind of a man of your stamp. Know, then, that many things impossible to ordinary men are to me simple and easily performed. And of this you shall forthwith behold the proof. Here, take my hand, and hold the fingers in such a manner as to perceive the throbbings of the artery. Well, what do you observe?"

"The artery," replied Mirza-Kassem, somewhat astonished, "beats with due regularity."

"Wait, then!" rejoined the dervish, bowing his head, and lowering the tone of his voice as if he would concentrate his whole faculties upon what he meant to perform—"wait, and the pulse will gradually cease to beat."

"What is that you say?" cried Mirza-Kassem, now surprised beyond measure. "That is something which no man can do!"

"Yet I can!" said the dervish, smiling. Accordingly, the pulse grew slower by degrees, until Mirza-Kassem's finger could scarcely discover it, and finally stopped altogether. Mirza-Kassem stood looking on, dismayed.

"The motion will begin anew when you command it to do so," said the dervish.

"Let it, then, begin anew!"

A few seconds elapsed, and a slight quiver indicated the return of movement, which soon grew more apparent, and at

last recovered its wonted vigor. Mirza-Kassem, divided between two emotions—admiration and affright—kept his eyes riveted on the dervish.

"I have just shown you," said the singular personage who thus held him spellbound, "what power I have over myself: I shall next show you my power over the material world. Let a chafing-dish be brought."

Mirza-Kassem ordered the little negro slave to bring what the dervish desired; and a chafing-dish brimful of sparkling embers was set upon the table before him who was about to make use of it for the purpose of demonstrating his unlimited power over the elements.

The curious demonstration was accordingly performed. The dervish seemed to place himself under violent strain; he pressed together his mouth till his lips appeared as if welded together; his already sunken eyes shrank still deeper within their orbits; large drops of sweat formed on his brow; and his bronzed cheeks, distended almost to bursting, assumed a livid hue. All at once, as if moved by a spring, he stretched out his arm immediately over the chafing-dish, and plunged his shut hand into the very heart of the fire. A shriek of horror escaped from Mirza-Kassem; but the miracle-worker still kept his hand buried in the live coals. When two or three minutes had expired, he withdrew it, and showed it to his host, free from burn or wound.

"That is not all," said the dervish. "You are aware of what I can do to bring my own body under subjection, and to cause the elements to obey my caprices, though ever so contrary to their nature. See now what I can do with men—all men, humanity at large!" The tone in which these words were uttered was so expressive of scorn, and sounded so like invective, as to heighten the abashment of Miraz-Kassem. But the dervish, heedless of that, said, "Pray let a piece of lead or iron be brought."

A dozen leaden bullets were handed to him, and he laid them on the chafing-dish, blowing upon the coals to increase the heat. As soon as the lead was melted, he took from the black cotton girdle that supported his pantaloons a small tin box which was observed by Mirza-Kassem to contain a reddish-colored powder. The dervish took a pinch of the powder and threw it upon the molten mass; and after the lapse of a few seconds he bent over the chafing-dish, and said, calmly, "That will do!" He then laid upon the sofa an ingot of a pale-yellow color, which Mirza-Kassem inspected and recognized to be gold.

"There," exclaimed the dervish, "is an instance of my power over the elements. Is it not enough? Have I any need for splendor, and magnificence, and luxury, and insolence? And you, my son, learn henceforth to know that, contrary to the belief of the vulgar, power does not consist in ostentation, but has its stronghold only in vigorous minds!"

"Alas! father," replied Mirza-Kassem, whose voice was tremulous with emotion, "it is not enough to be endowed with a vigorous mind in order to enjoy such sublime prerogatives. To find these out and secure their possession, knowledge is required."

"And more than that," rejoined the dervish. "It is necessary to add self-denial, suffering, the absolute submission of body to mind, and perfect purity of heart; and these are not virtues to be obtained without toil or effort. But enough of this."

"Oh! no, no!" exclaimed Mirza-Kassem, fixing at the same time his eager eyes upon his guest—"no! since I have the happiness to lie prostrate at your feet, do not deprive me of your teachings so soon. Do not shut up the spring of which I have as yet hardly tasted! Speak, father! instruct me! teach me! I shall then know what to do, and I will do it! I will no longer drag through the world the aimless, empty existence which has hitherto been mine."

The most dangerous of all species of covetousness had taken possession of his breast—covetousness for knowledge. His instincts, dormant until now, had been aroused, and would henceforth not allow him a moment's repose. The dervish began to talk to him in a subdued whisper, and doubtless he told him of many strange things. Kassem's countenance betokened the utmost distraction, and at each moment changed its expression, passing rapidly from that of admiration to one of ecstatic awe. For a time, judging from his humid eye and vacant stare, as if in search of a something hidden and inscrutable, he seemed on the verge of swooning away, so completely was he overcome by the most august and captivating of revelations. But joy suddenly gave place to horror. Kassem's features became distorted, as he stood with open mouth and fixed gaze. He had the appearance of one looking over the edge of a yawning abyss, at the risk of losing his balance and being hurled into the depths below. And thus he spent the whole night listening to the discourses which brought about great and terrible revolutions in his mind, and scattered his thoughts in such confusion. At last the day dawned, whitening the summits of the terrace, and the dervish, who several times already, though in vain, had entreated his host to retire for repose, now resolutely insisted upon his doing so, assuring him that he would talk no more, nor make any further revelations.

Kassem, worn out and breathless, obeyed. Leaving the dervish reclining on the *takhteh*, he went off, with anxious air and trembling step, through narrow halls, now descending, now ascending steps, till, having reached a sliding-door, he lifted it and entered the *enderoon*. The little negro lay sleeping on a straw mat in the outer chamber, where the first gray light of morning struggled feebly against the reddish, smoky glare of a small earthenware lamp which still tinged the objects immediately around it, while all the rest remained enveloped in almost total darkness. Thence he proceeded to the chamber

where his wife reposed in peaceful slumber on a vast bed, with rich silk coverlets, variegated with carnation, green, and yellow colors, and here and there disclosing portions of a gray muslin sheet, set off with flowers of varied hues. Pillows, which were numerous and of many forms and sizes—triangular, square, round—yielded beneath the head or supported the arms of the fair sleeper, or were scattered at hazard over the couch.

Kassem paused a moment in contemplation of the beautiful Amyneh; then, heaving a deep sigh, he retired, gloomy and musing, into a distant corner, and there remained.

Still firmly clutched in his hand was the ingot of gold, which he had never once laid down from the first. At intervals he would view it and review it, and each separate glance seemed to afford him real delight—a proof that the thought which agitated his brain did not wander upon dreams, but tangible realities. As he gloated upon the golden ingot, his eyes would close, and, dropping into a sort of half-slumber, he would then think he felt the piece of metal swell within his palm, and breathe, and become an animated being. Starting up in a state of indescribable anguish, he would turn his eyes once more upon the marvelous thing of which he had become possessor, and beholding it motionless, as a piece of metal should be, he would close his lids again and relapse into slumber in the midst of a whirlpool of thought. But fatigue finally triumphed over meditation, and Mirza-Kassem fell into a deep sleep.

He was waked by a kiss upon his forehead. He looked up. Amyneh, kneeling by his side and clasping him in her arms, said: "Are you sick, my life? Why did you not come to bed last night?—O holy imams, he is ill!—Tell me what it is, my love! Will you not speak to your slave?"

Kassem saw it was broad day, and, returning his wife's kiss, he answered:

"Blessings be upon you! I am not sick, thanks to Allah!"

"Thanks to Allah!" exclaimed Amyneh.

"No, I am not sick."

"But what were you doing last evening with the dervish? Did you, contrary to your custom, drink strong drink, or partake of melon-seeds to excite your thirst?"

"Allah forbid!" replied Kassem. "Nothing of that sort took place. We only talked, until very late, of journeys— Where is my guest? I must rejoin him at once." So saying, Kassem rose to his feet; but Amyneh interposed: "The day is far spent, and the sun had not yet risen when our negro, Booloor, saw the dervish crouched beside the basin in the yard, saying his prayers and performing his ablutions. Soon after he cooked some rice in a brazen cup, and, shaking a pinch of salt upon it, ate it, and set out."

"How, set out?" exclaimed Kassem, with evident consternation. "Impossible! He had a great many things of moment to tell me yet. He cannot possibly be gone."

"He is assuredly gone," replied Amyneh, somewhat astonished at her husband's agitation. "But, tell me, what business had you with that man?"

Kassem did not answer, but, apparently in a gloomy mood, went out of the room, and left the house. Still holding the golden ingot in his hand, he hastily repaired to the bazaar, and entered the shop of a jeweler with whom he was acquainted. "Greetings to you, Master Abd-er-Rahman," said he.

"And to you greetings, Mirza," returned the merchant.

"Do me the favor to tell me the value of this metal."

Master Abd-er-Rahman adjusted his huge spectacles on his nose, and then took the ingot, examined and tested it, and calmly answered: "It is right good gold, free of all alloy, and is worth a hundred tomans or so. If you wish, I will ascertain the exact weight, and give you the price, deducting a very small sum for my profit."

"I thank you," replied Kassem; "but just at present I am

not anxious to dispose of it. I shall see you again about it in due season."

"Whenever it may please you," rejoined the merchant. And he saluted Kassem, who then took leave and departed.

Off he set at a round pace, brushing past the shops and stalls. But the playful remarks of the women, who take all sorts of liberties behind their veils (as everybody knows but too well), the hailings and compliments of his acquaintances, the abrupt apostrophes of muleteers and camel-drivers to get out of the way of their beasts, followed each other in interminable rows, and tied together by their tails—all these things, usually a source of mirth to him, now irritated him beyond measure. He felt the imperious necessity of being alone, and giving himself up to the world of ideas which tyrannized over him as if it would absorb his whole energies. He quitted the town, and repaired to a part of the desert where there is a group of vast sepulchres, left to ruin and decay. There, beneath one of the crumbling cupolas, he seated himself in a shady corner, and abandoned himself to the host of all-absorbing thoughts by which he was assailed as by a flock of birds of prey.

In every street of our Iranian towns and cities there is a well. Our streets are narrow, and the well is situated in the very middle. As it has never occurred to anybody to build curbs around the mouths of these wells, they open much more conveniently on a level with the streets themselves. When it happens that a well becomes dried up, nobody is silly enough to fill it in, an operation at once tedious and irksome; but it is simply covered over with a few planks, on which an accumulation of earth is formed in process of time. In the natural course of things the planks rot, and give way under the pressure of an awkward foot, and in any other country save ours nothing would be more common than to see a man, a child, or some animal, tumble into the pit, and break his neck in the fall. But this

seldom happens among us, inasmuch as the good and most merciful Allah, who spares us the trouble of reflection in numberless cases, takes care to save us from the evil consequences that might attend our confidence in Him. Nevertheless, it would scarcely be safe to affirm that some one does not some time or other disappear suddenly into some of the yawning pits referred to. Now, Kassem had a pit of this kind in a corner of his brain, but he himself was unaware of it, and he had just tumbled into it, and there he lay sprawling and floundering at the bottom, without any likelihood of his getting out.

Indeed, he did not give the matter a moment's thought. Seized and held fast by the influence which had taken possession of his mind and exercised absolute sway over all his faculties, he had no idea of resisting it; and not only did he give way to it willingly, but he experienced a sort of rapturous sensation in allowing himself to be thus swallowed up. In fine, he was ruled by one sole idea—to march on resolutely in the way pointed out by his guide.

What availed the world in the midst of which he had lived hitherto? Nothing, absolutely nothing: mire in a physical as well as in a moral point of view—in a word, nonentity. He wished to rise to greater heights and soar above this universe, and penetrate the secret of the forces by which all things move—this universe itself and many others greater, grander, and more august. He knew that the primitive matter could be procured, overcome, and transformed; the dervish had accomplished it, and that very moment he himself had the proof of it in his hand. Yes, he, Kassem, held the tangible proof thereof in his hand, and he, too, would accomplish it! He knew there was a power capable of seizing and directing all the motive and creative forces, even those most unsubdued, even the most sublime; and he longed to possess that power. He knew it was possible not to die. Doubtless no being dies! But he knew that this present life could be retained in its present form, and

with the present consciousness of individuality. Here was the great end he purposed to attain. Then, in an outburst of indescribable enthusiasm, as he looked forward to what he, Kassem, was shortly to be, he exclaimed: "And I—I, who am indeed I—is it, then, so hard for me to enter into what is henceforth to be my sphere of action, that I still clasp with my fingers this bit of gold, as if it had the same value in my eyes now as yesterday?" He looked at it a moment, and cast it scornfully away among the ruins. But there was one reflection which caused him much anxiety—namely, that nothing can be acquired save at a price proportionate to its merit. He had just been meditating upon this condition, and, truth to say, it had struck him as being rather hard. However, he did not struggle against what at first had been in him a passion, and was now transformed into a duty. So, having stifled his last lingering regrets, he retraced his steps homeward, and was soon by the side of his wife.

Amyneh arose to meet him as he entered, with her usual sprightliness and tender greeting. But observing her husband's gloomy countenance and contracted brow—a spectacle she was little accustomed to—her heart was suddenly oppressed, and the poor creature sank silently upon a seat close by his side.

"Amyneh," said Kassem, "you know how I love you, and that no two were ever united by a stronger affection than ours. The affection of my heart for yours is incomparable. And that heart bleeds, for it is going to grieve its companion."

"How, then? Oh, tell me what it is!" said Amyneh, taking a hand that was not offered.

"I say that every man has a certain lot in life—his *kismet;* and that lot is set apart for him long before he is born. It is all ready when he comes into the world, and, willingly or otherwise, he is constrained to accept it and accommodate himself to it."

"Of that there is no doubt," rejoined Amyneh in a tone of

decision. "But your lot is not such a bad one after all, nor do I see anything in it to cause you to frown so. I am your lot, and you have assured me before now more than once—yes, very often—that you could not wish for a better."

Spite of his sombre moodiness, Kassem could not suppress a smile at this charming sally from his wife; observing which she sought to follow up the victory by resolutely placing her elbows on her husband's knees and looking straight into his eyes Often before had she owed a complete triumph to this manœuvre, obliging the enemy to surrender at discretion; this time, however, it proved unsuccessful.

"Amyneh," said he, "my lot, my *kismet,* is to go away this very day and leave you forever!"

"Forever? Leave me? Go away? I will not submit to it!"

"It is not my will; but it is my *kismet,* and there is no help for it! The dervish has opened my eyes; I now know the mission Heaven calls me to fulfill, and I must go."

"Where? O Allah! I shall be crazed!" and poor Amyneh wrung her hands in despair, and a torrent of tears gushed from her gentle eyes. Then seizing Kassem's arm, she entreated him to answer: "Speak! do speak! where are you going?"

"I am going to rejoin the dervish."

"Where is he?"

"He is on his way to Khorassan, and he will pass through Meshed, Herat, and Cabul; I shall overtake him at farthest in the mountains of Bamyan."

"What need have you of him?"

"I have need of him, and he has need of me. So I had better tell you all."

"Doubtless you had better tell me all. Ah! Allah! my Allah! I am crazed! Speak, my love, my child, my life! Speak!"

Kassem, melted by grief, tenderness, and pity, took Amyneh's hand and held it clasped in his own throughout the following recital: "The dervish is all-powerful in the world! He gave

me the proof last night! He is all-powerful, save in one single thing, and that thing he can never overcome without a companion, a helper. For several years past he has been seeking that companion; he has looked for him all through Persia, Arabia, and Turkey; he pursued his search through Egypt, and has even extended his journey far beyond, into the Maghreb country, traversing the regions occupied by those Feringhis called *Franses*.[1] Wherever he went, he only fell in with narrow-minded and lukewarm people. Most of them listened to him attentively while he talked of the means for making gold, but as soon as he attempted to elevate their minds, all interest vanished, and the most zealous of them grew cold. Yet the dervish did not lose courage. He was certain that the man necessary for the accomplishment of his purposes existed in the world; the operations of the Raml, and the casting and combinations of points on the table of sand, had shown it to him clearly by means of infallible reckonings. Still, he could not tell the spot where that friend of his heart was to be found; so he was going to make search for him in Turkistan, when he happened to come to this town yesterday. He spoke with me and unfolded the mysteries of his heart. Mine was enlightened: I am the man he required; I am the helper-elect; I alone can solve the mystery. Behold me! I am ready! I must away! I am off! Living or dead, I must help the dervish to wrest the final, the ultimate secret!"

Kassem spoke with such enthusiasm, and his last words bore the impress of such deep conviction and unswerving resolution, that Amyneh hung her head as if completely subdued. But the destruction of all her happiness appeared imminent, and she would not yet give up. She asked with a firm voice, "And what is to become of me?"

"You—you! oh, yes! What is to become of you! I love you more than aught in the world; yet, what I must do I can-

[1] French.

not prevent. Spite of the love I have for you, I am impelled by a force more terrible than you can conceive. I must obey—obey I do! You will go back to your relatives. . . . If I return . . . then . . . but, shall I return? What will become of me? who can tell? Should I have any other desire than the accomplishment of my task? Yet, if I should return—"

"If you come back, will you be mine?"

"Entirely!" replied Kassem, with so much tenderness and sincerity as plainly showed that his love was not yet extinguished by his new passion—"yes, entirely! forever! I shall think of you alone; shall wish for none but you! Yet—hearken! There is so little probability of my return! In what I have to do, all is obscurity. Perhaps it would be more advisable for you—if you will agree to it, let us be divorced—you will take another husband—you will have children." Here Kassem melted into tears and wept bitterly.

Amyneh, in the depth of her grief, felt a slight thrill of joy, and even caught a ray of hope. "No," she replied, "I will not consent to a divorce; I will await your return for one year, two years, three years, ten years—until death! Until death, you hear? and that will come much sooner should you die. I will not go back to my relatives, either. I know them too well. They would think I was unhappy, not by reason of your absence, but for being alone; and they would do all in their power to induce me to marry again. I shall go and live with your sister, and there you must come back to join me as soon as you can."

Kassem wiped his eyes, and, after kissing Amyneh, reclined his head for some time upon the faithful bosom from which he was so soon to separate, and their voices were lost in sighs. At length Amyneh asked in a low tone, "When do you set out?"

"This evening," replied Kassem.

"No! stay with me yet this night; to-morrow you will go.

I shall now go over to apprise your sister of your determination. To-morrow you will help me to have everything moved to her house; and when you see me fairly settled, then you may leave me. But I desire that you should have me fixed in your memory as there, so that, when far away, you can in your thoughts see me, and my garments, and my chamber and everything around me."

She began to weep again, but this time less bitterly than before; then, remembering that she had but little time to spare, she arose from her husband's side, drew on the capacious pantaloons commonly worn by women on going out, and so made as to cover the feet; wrapped herself in her ample *hyader*, or blue cotton cloak which covers the head and the rest of the person; and, with a couple of golden pins in the form of doves and incrusted with garnets, fastened on her *roobend*, or veil of cambric, furnished with minute trellis-work openings for the eyes. Thus accoutred, Amyneh, observing Kassem to be still quite downcast, clasped his hand once more with a gentle pressure, and went out.

Once in the street, her heart became oppressed, and she felt herself so wretched and forlorn that she could scarcely refrain from raising her voice in cries to implore the pity of the people passing by. Had she done so, it is likely she would have found numerous sympathizers; however, on reaching the mosque, she changed her mind. She entered the temple and began to pray, reciting a round number of *rikaats* with impassioned volubility, and devoutly repeating the ninety names of the merciful Allah, while she told over the beads of her rosary at least ten or a dozen times. By good-fortune there were some other women present in the sanctuary, one in particular whose child, three years old, lay, as she said, at the point of death. So all three afflicted matrons labored earnestly to comfort each other and united in fervent prayer.

After having spent a good hour in these exercises, Amyneh

went away; and seeing a number of poor invalids gathered round the fountain at the door, she made a liberal distribution of alms among them, and received in return a shower of benedictions. Such phrases as these: "May salvation be yours! May Allah grant you perfect happiness! May you ever be loaded with good things, both you and yours!" and others of like nature, could not fail to sound melodiously in the poor, heart-sick woman's ear; and she said to herself as she went along, "Who knows but Allah may have pity upon me?" She met some horsemen escorting a grave personage mounted on a gorgeous steed, and, a sudden thought striking her, she went up and asked them for alms. It was easy to perceive by the fine texture of her *hyader*, her brilliant white *roobend*, and tiny green morocco slippers, that it was not want which impelled her thus to hold out her hand, and that she did so rather for the purpose of humbling herself before Allah in the hope of obtaining some special favor. So deemed the men on horseback, nor did a single one of them hesitate to drop a small piece of money into the outstretched hand, which the chaste suppliant had modestly folded in a corner of her *hyader*, each and all accompanying the offering with a deferential bow of the head and the expression of some propitiatory formula. Having now done everything in her power to conciliate the divine bounty and indulgence, she hurried her steps in the direction of her sister-in-law's house, and reached it in a short time.

This sister-in-law was no ordinary character, and is deserving of the trouble of a brief description. Her name was Zemrood-Khanoom; and she was at least ten years the senior of Kassem, to whom she had stood instead of a mother. Accordingly, Kassem was imbued with profound esteem and respect for his sister, mingled perhaps with a tincture of fear, in which last sentiment Aziz-Khan, the dame's husband, participated in an eminent degree. Candor compels us to state that Zemrood-Khanoom, when once a conviction had taken deep root in her

mind, was not a woman to yield or depart an iota from it. When wedded to her spouse, the general, having come under his roof as second wife, she spent six whole months in bringing about the dismissal of the first, but she succeeded. Thenceforward, spite of Aziz-Khan's repeated endeavors to make her understand that it was hurtful to the reputation of a man of his rank and fortune to have but one sacred person within the precincts of his *enderoon*—in other words, to have a sole and only wife, like any petty shopkeeper—she never would hear of any such innovation. This, and the vigorous cuffs she distributed among the servants of both sexes, when she did not choose to beat them with a *kalioon* tube, furnished Aziz-Khan with abundant food for reflection. This gentleman avoided compromising his beard and his dignity in discussions the termination of which he could not foresee; hence, in his moments of ill-humor, he took good care not to make any outcry at home, but sauntered off and took a turn round the bazaar. Thus Zemrood-Khanoom, absolute mistress of her household, feared and venerated by all, and surrounded by a troop of eight children, the eldest of whom was a lad of fifteen, and all of whom she had trained to a laudable system of order, silence, and respect, was, on the whole, an excellent woman. Prompt to anger, but readily accessible to conciliation, her voice when in rage was by far the shrillest in the neighborhood, but it was beyond comparison the mildest when employed to console affliction or soothe suffering. She was as generous as a sultan, and as charitable as a prophet; and, besides having once been uncommonly pretty, she still retained some traces of beauty at full forty years of age. She was likewise very witty, and could make charming verses; and she played on the *târ* with so much perfection that her husband, Aziz-Khan, when she deigned to play for him, would sit dangling his head to and fro for a quarter of an hour or so, and then set to murmuring with ecstasy, "Excellent! excellent! excellent!" and would wind

up by shedding tears and striking his head against the wall.

When Amyneh entered her sister-in-law's saloon, she found some visitors there, whose presence, however, had been hinted to her by a couple of pairs of slippers, exactly like her own, lying outside the door. The ladies just then seated upon the cushions were no less personages than Bulbul-Khanoom, third wife of the governor of the town, and Looloo-Khanoom, only wife of the chief of the clergy, the youthful and amiable Moulla-Sàdek, the most enlightened lover of pastry in all Damghan. Both these dames were very pretty, extremely elegant, and very fond of laughing; and as Zemrood-Khanoom herself was not given to melancholy, unless when forced into it by contrariety, the conversation was running at its highest, turning mainly upon recent fashions, the health of the children, the eccentricities of husbands, and even the unruly tempers of these gentlemen, as being the surest road to appreciation of one's own exquisite merits; and then scandal, scandal, scandal! which constitutes at once the salt and pepper and the *ne plus ultra* of social delights; in fine, everything that may be said, and a great many things which might well be kept silent—and the scene was one of uninterrupted laughter.

Three serving-women—two Belooches and an African—arrayed in silk and cashmere, were in the act of serving gold-enameled *kalioons* garnished with rich gems, and the ladies were smoking to their hearts' content when Amyneh, with a heavy heart, made her appearance. In general she was not an unworthy participant in such conferences; on the contrary, her inexhaustible fund of mirth and hearty laugh had been made the subject of songs, and *Amyneh's laugh* was familiar to every ear. Alas! Amyneh's laugh was entirely out of question now! The poor creature let fall her mantle and veil, kissed her sister-in-law's hand, allowing the latter to kiss her on the eye, and then sat down, after having addressed friendly greetings to the other two ladies present.

"Good Heavens! What on earth is the matter with you, my poor girl?" was the first exclamation of Zemrood-Khanoom. "Swollen eyes! Have you been crying, by any chance? Is Kassem the cause of your trouble? If he is, just send him to me, and I will bring him to his senses. These horrid men! The very thing we were talking about! But, come, do not be sad! You must not spoil your pretty eyes!"

"Spoil one's eyes on a husband's account!" said Looloo, the elegant wife of the ecclesiastical dignitary. "What folly! O Amyneh, my dear, my soul, light of my eyes, can you tell us the particulars of what was going on yesterday between Gulnare-Khanoom and her husband? It seems they had a frightful quarrel!"

"I have not heard of it at all," replied Amyneh, wiping her eyes and suppressing a sigh.

"I know the whole story on my finger-ends," broke in the governor's wife, with long, black, almond-shaped eyes, and plenty of *surmeth* on her lashes, which lent a superhuman lustre to her visage. "It appears that, in some of his tender moments, Sèyd-Housseyn took the liberty of looking at his wife's ears."

"Oh, horrors!" simultaneously ejaculated Zemrood and Looloo.

"Unheard-of grossness!" pursued Bulbul, with a shrug of her shoulders and a tone of incomparable prudery. "But the fact is that he did it; and although Gulnare defended herself lustily, he succeeded in disarranging her *tjargât* and getting a peep at her right ear, from which hung a pair of gold and sapphire ear-rings that he does not remember having given her! The hubbub that followed, you can readily imagine."

"The fact is, Gulnare is altogether too imprudent," said Looloo, in a tone of declamation. "The idea of wearing such ear-rings without being sure of your husband's morality! I can tell you, mine would never dare—"

"Gulnare considered herself out of danger," continued

Bulbul, "for she had on the other ear-rings, as usual, the inoffensive ones, not in her ears, but fastened to her *tjargât*, just as we have ours."

"While we are talking of fashions—" interrupted Looloo.

Here fresh *kalioons* and more tea were brought in, and Amyneh presumed, not without reason, that as soon as the one should be smoked and the other drunk, the visitors would take their leave. Each of the fair prattlers being duly provided with her cup, Looloo continued: "While we are upon the subject of fashions, I say, have you seen the new style of basque brought from Teheran by the Armenians? The women all appear to be delighted with it, for it is the garment worn by the European men under their coats, and they call it *yiletkeh*. I have ordered three for myself."

"And I only two," rejoined Bulbul; "one of gold cloth and the other of silver cloth, with scarlet flowers. It is very convenient for nursing."

The chatting rolled on for some time longer in the same strain, and at length the two ladies took leave, kissing Zemrood and Amyneh, and withdrew, followed by their ladies'-maids, *kaliares*, and men-servants, in the midst of a general clatter and clamor and din, as became people of such high quality.

Amyneh was now at liberty to unbosom herself to her sister-in-law, and she began with a vehemence worthy of the occasion. When she had ended, Zemrood, in a transport of rage and indignation, mingled with curiosity and apprehension, said, as she took up her mantle and *roobend:* "Stay here, my girl; I will go over and see Kassem, and I promise you— Well, you just remain where you are, and wait till I come back; and, above all things, do not despond or lose spirit. Although this blade is my brother, I look upon him rather as a son, for it was I who reared him and got him married. Your father acted most generously with him, for the two hundred *tomans* which Kassem gave for you (one-half of which, by-the-way, was

borrowed from my husband) he spent, and more besides, on your bridal presents. Vallah! Billah! Tallah! We shall see what Master Kassem has to say for himself! So do not grieve, and be assured all will turn out well."

Thereupon Zemrood, armed for warfare, and unattended by maid or man servant, set out with a violent rush, to be compared only to lightning furrowing a stormy sky, and heralding majestic horror.

Amyneh remained seated on the carpet, plunged in deep despair, and scarcely lending an ear to the consoling voice which labored still to awaken an echo in her breast. After two long hours of suspense, Zemrood returned, and, divesting herself of her veil, disclosed a pale and troubled countenance, bearing evident signs that the strong woman had been brought to tears. She seated herself by Amyneh, and, taking her by the hand, drew her close to her bosom, and covering her with kisses, but lacking courage to raise her eyes from the ground, she said, in a barely audible voice, "How much we are to be pitied!"

And so, indeed, they were deserving of pity. Kassem had received his sister with mildness and deference, but declared his fixed resolution to set out on his journey on the following morning, adding that he had only consented to put off his departure so long for the love he bore to Amyneh, but that if he were to be subjected to the torture of new lamentations, which his own grief rendered intolerable, he would start that very evening. Nor could Zamrood obtain anything more from him, spite of supplications, and reasoning, and reproaches, barbed with the keenest taunts.

"He is bewitched, my dear child," said Zemrood, finishing her account of her unsuccessful expedition, "bewitched by that awful magician. People of that kind are always possessed of irresistible power, and when they command there is no evading their authority. This one has Kassem completely in his

power. Yet, it is to be hoped, it is even to be believed, that it is for his good; for, judging from all he told me, the dervish's intentions are extremely friendly and sincere. He is a pious man, incapable of doing wrong. I myself have known several magicians, and they were all venerable men and prodigies of learning. So I tell you once more that you may banish all anxiety from your mind. After all, it is better to have Kassem accomplish great and noble things, under the dervish's guidance, than that he should go to war, for instance, where even the favor of the shah (may his greatness never grow less!) could not shield him from an unlucky blow."

Whatever may have been the efficacy of this kind of consolation, it little matters now. Zemrood had no other at hand just then, but, such as it was, it is but fair to say that she made the most of it, presenting it in every imaginable shape, and concluding with the assurance that Kassem would, at all events, not be absent more than a year, and that on his return it was natural to suppose he would be the possessor of a fortune sufficient to enable him and his to satisfy all their desires. After having patiently heard her sister-in-law to the end, Amyneh, who had by this time partially subdued her emotion, took an affectionate leave of Zemrood-Khanoom, and went home. She found Kassem in a state little better than her own. As the time approached when he should quit wife and home, habits, happiness, and love, his enthusiasm lost much of its fire. Yet his resolution remained unshaken, nor could he banish from his mind the ideas which had given birth to it; he was no longer master of his will, and his heart was filled with anguish and despair. In a word, Kassem was as miserable as any man could be, when placed between duty and inclination, and feeling himself bound to choose the former. It were useless to inquire into the import of that word—*duty*. Kassem had made up his mind that *his* duty was to follow after and rejoin the magician. And he must submit! With that instinct,

so exquisite, so tender, so divine, which belongs exclusively to woman in every nation and in every clime, and which would suffice alone to make her the celestial being of creation, Amyneh perceived the struggle that oppressed her husband's soul, and avoided whatever might tend to enhance the poignancy of his pangs.

"Doubtless," said she, inwardly, "I might succeed in delaying his departure a week, a month at most. But what suffering it would be for him! And after all, he would still be bent upon going!" So she offered no further resistance, but assumed an air of complete resignation, and said: "You will come back again, will you not?"

"Come back again? Yes! yes! I will come back, my Amyneh! Oh, how could I live away from you? Be assured that, were I to know I should never see you again—that very—"

This best of women here placed her hand upon his mouth, and said with a voice rendered unfaltering by conviction: "I shall see you again! Assuredly I shall! Think of me, will you not?"

"Yes, I will think of you; I will think of you often. No! not often, but always. O Amyneh! my own Amyneh! my beloved one! how could I refrain from keeping you ever in my mind? Just think what you are to me! I never knew it well till now! I had never thought what I should lose in you—lose you!—can that day ever come?"

"No, you shall not lose me! I shall be there in peace and quiet at your sister's. I shall be very patient, very courageous. I feel sure no evil will betide you, Kassem. Here, lay your head once more upon my knees."

Thus they spent the night, between poignant despair and tender caresses, consoling each other in turn. Indeed, of the two it was Amyneh that evinced the larger share of fortitude under their present affliction. When day broke, it was she

that called the servants and ordered them to take up the carpets, and pack everything in trunks and chests; and, when all was in readiness, she sent and hired mules, and had the whole of her effects carried to her sister-in-law's house. The neighbors, roused from their sleep by the unusual racket, swarmed in the street, some seated by their doors, others huddled in groups under the awnings of the shops, and still others perched on the house-tops. As soon as Amyneh saw that the house was entirely empty, she enveloped herself in her veils and sallied forth. Kassem followed her, but returned an hour later, with no other attendant than the little slave. They both remained in the house for a while, then the little slave came out and kindled an immense fire in the middle of the largest square in that quarter of the town, where Kassem came and joined him when the blaze began to rise.

The only covering on his body was a pair of white linen drawers. In his hand he held the garments he had worn the day before—pantaloons of scarlet silk; *koolydjeh* of a gray German stuff, ornamented with black braid; *djubetz* of scarlet woolen cloth, embroidered with flowers; and bonnet of finest Astrakhan. He approached the blazing fire and cast them into the flames, and they were consumed before his eyes. Such is the usual manner of making the vow of poverty and asceticism. The multitude looked on with emotion, for Kassem was generally beloved; nor was this to be wondered at: these very people had known him from his childhood. Then, he was young and handsome, and had ever been courteous and affable to all and charitable toward such as were needy. The women wept bitterly; some of them expressed their grief by casting their arms about wildly in the air and crying, or rather howling, "What a pity! what a pity!" The scene, on the whole, was extremely edifying. In the eyes of those persons to whom Kassem's servants had explained the matter, he was the de-

voted slave of science, and a model of self-denial, and what could be more beautiful than that?

When the ceremony was ended, the new dervish, as is customary with his brethren, shouted in a loud, shrill voice, "Hou!" —that is to say, "Him!" the Great Being who holds the universe in his hands— Allah himself. Benedictions were showered upon him from every mouth: "May Allah preserve him! May the holy imams watch over him! O Allah! O Allah! preserve him! May all the prophets accompany him!"

Kassem returned thanks with an inclination of the head, and withdrew from the square. On reaching the street that leads out of the city, he was met by an aged *bakkal,* or grocer, who presented him with a small brazen cup and begged him to accept it in remembrance of him; and a few yards farther on the joiner's son, a bright little urchin of five years, came dragging along behind him a huge traveling-staff, sent as a present by his father. Kassem took both gifts; but at the second, his fortitude gave way, and, melting to tears, he snatched up the child convulsively, and pressed him tenderly to his bosom.

As soon as his emotion had subsided, he quitted the town, and, taking an easterly direction, shaped his way toward Khorassan, where he felt persuaded the dervish would be waiting for him.

When fairly in the desert, walking courageously on, and striking with the end of his staff the pebbles on the way, he began to feel himself alone in the wide, wide world, and his breast experienced a momentary calm. Before long, however, his mind was suddenly seized with a feverish excitement, and, in thought, he already saw himself master, absolute master of the glorious secrets, the revelation of which had been announced and promised to him by the magician. His enthusiasm was untainted by baseness or cupidity. What he wished for was not might and dominion to crush mankind beneath the weight of

overwhelming prestige, or the attainment of universal riches by the transmutation of metals, but wisdom and the ability to penetrate Nature's most august mysteries. Already did he behold himself transformed and elevated above desires and wants; he saw himself as an ascetic, abundantly possessed of moral riches and intellectual perfections, and, by his science, and his absolute disdain for worldly concerns, placed in the very bosom of Divinity, and hence a co-participant of felicity without bounds. To reach that point, he had anticipated great combats and terrible struggles with his worldly affections. But none had he encountered. Indeed, he was now astonished at the facility with which he had parted from Amyneh, whom, till the very day before, he had loved and idolized; and feeling his heart thus light and free, and almost indifferent to the sacrifice which he had willfully imposed on himself, he began to appreciate and admire the profound wisdom of the magician. The latter, as Kassem dwelt on the impossibility of leaving his wife, had absolutely predicted what would occur, including the feeling of indifference which had now taken possession of our new-made dervish's breast.

"The human passions" (such had been the words of the sage) "are by no means either so strong or so hard to break as the vulgar imagine. Inexhaustible in their essence, they have but the semblance of strength, and, when once violently subdued, they groan at first, then become silent, and, like shadows as they are, are soon resolved into air before the inexorable will. Who can doubt this? Only weak souls. But we, who are made to subdue the world, other men, and, most of all, ourselves, we know it to be true. Quit your house, depart, and your mind, once disembarrassed of useless cares, will no sooner find itself in an atmosphere of freedom than you will wonder at the phantom fears which now haunt you, but will then not dare to assail you."

And thus had it turned out. Kassem thought only of

Amyneh as of a distant dream which has no longer full possession of the mind; and, wholly devoted to the review of his vast ideas, it appeared to him that he was floating in mid-air as on wings, and he felt himself calm and happy.

Eight days passed in this manner. Each evening he entered a village and seated himself under a large tree that shaded the centre of the principal square. There he was joined by the elder inhabitants, the mollah, now and then one or more dervishes and stray travelers like himself, and a part of the night was spent in converse upon various topics. Some related the stories of their travels, others told of battles. At times those rustic philosophers would introduce abstruse metaphysical questions, as is customary throughout the East, and Kassem was attentively heard by all, for they perceived that he was a man of learning. As for the necessary things of life, wherever he went he readily procured a mat to lie upon and *pillau* in abundance. He made frequent inquiries concerning the person whom it was the object of his journey to overtake, and learned that he had been seen passing; from which he presumed that the magician was but a short way before him, and that he could easily rejoin him.

On the ninth day, while advancing with his usual joyous step, and viewing, without the slightest sensation of tedium or fatigue, the infinite extent of stony, undulating desert before him, intersected at intervals by ravines and rocks, and bounded at the far-distant horizon by two lines of magnificent mountains, glistening in the sun like gems of varied hue. he felt his soul sink, as it were, beneath an unexpected weight—a sudden and painful emotion—a call. His soul, turning about, so to speak, whispered to him, "Amyneh!" The voice, though gentle, was heard by him and by his heart; and with his heart, every fibre of his being, every echo in his memory, in his reason, in his fancy, in his thought—all were aroused and united in one impassioned exclamation, "Amyneh!"—a cry such as that of

children calling for their mother—such as that of the hapless ones submerged in the waters of the deluge must have been, when, with arms uplifted to heaven, and tearful eyes, they cried out, "Help—save us!"

Greatly surprised was Kassem. He had thought that the whole past was wiped out forever; but not so; the past was visible before him, turbulent, overbearing, claiming its own, its prey—him, Kassem—and he heard as it were a menacing murmur: "What wouldst thou do with science? What wouldst thou with sovereign power? How can magic and the ruling of worlds concern thee? Thou belongest to Love! Thou art Love's slave! Fugitive slave of Love, return to thy master!"

As Kassem pursued his way, with drooping head, the almost inseparable companion of deep-rooted love, its avenging companion, overtook him, and a feeling of irresistible sadness took possession of him, as darkness invades the earth at the fall of day. Vainly he strove to free himself; the impression was too strong to be shaken off. He had thought it was nothing to love Amyneh and then leave her; but love had made sport of him. Often had he repeated to himself: "What is love? Look it straight in the face, and it will vanish!"

He did look it straight in the face, yet it did not vanish; it mastered him. And it was he who felt himself yielding, yielding, yielding, and he who prostrated himself before it. He endeavored to drive it away; but who was master within him—he or Love? Love! And Love repeated unceasingly, "Amyneh!" And Kassem's whole being again responded, "Amyneh!"

And that voice, and those suppliant, irritated, willful, all-powerful voices ceased not; and Kassem no longer heard aught within him save the words, "Amyneh! my Amyneh!"

What was he to do? That which he did. He held out, and pursued his way. He kept his onward course; but all his ardor and enthusiasm had subsided; all his hopes had fallen

to the ground; even the relish of these had fled, and left him a prey to the deep grief that had overtaken him. He felt that each step removed him farther, not from his happiness, but from the source of his life; existence seemed to him more burdensome, more oppressive, more toilsome, and less precious, and rendered him less desirous of preserving it. Yet the poor, love-sick man marched on.

"Yet, I cannot turn back," he soliloquized. "I have made a vow; my promise is given to rejoin the magician. And, besides, how can I bring myself to relinquish the pursuit—toilsome and full of hardships though it be—of the grand secrets the hope of obtaining which has caused me to leave my home, my wife—all that was most dear to me on earth? No, I cannot turn back! O Amyneh! my dearly-beloved Amyneh!"

It is much to be regretted that men of great minds and great hearts should not be limited by Fate to the pursuit of a single idea at a time. How well all things would go with them! How freely, how unreservedly, and with how little anxiety would they devote themselves to the sole object of their attention! But, unfortunately, Fate always requires of them the performance of a variety of tasks. Doubtless, because they see more and better than other men, they allow their thoughts to enter into a great many places; they like this, and are fond of that. Like Kassem, they long for the possession of ineffable secrets, and, like him, too, they love women and science at the same time, and they cannot love moderately and calmly—which would enable them to avoid all evil results. No, for their misfortune, people of Kassem's turn of mind are condemned never to know how to leave anything half-done; they can never stop short of the absolute in many respects; and it almost invariably happens that they are rendered profoundly miserable by their inability to grasp everything at once.

Had Kassem even had that confidence with which his sister Zemrood had sought to inspire Amyneh—his return after the

lapse of a year, or two years—but no, he could not admit the possibility of such a consolation. He knew that, once in the magician's hands, his motto would thenceforward be, "Life is short and art is long." Hence it was all over with those images of the past; his happiness was at an end.

"I shall in the end grow old," thought he; "I shall forget Amyneh."

That idea gave him more pain than all the rest together. He preferred to suffer on; he would rather bear the tortures of grief until death. He did not wish to forget. To forget would be to renounce his own being; to annihilate himself, and give place to another Kassem, at once unknown to and profoundly hated by him.

He sought to bring calm to his breast by the thought of the fine things he was shortly to learn, and the marvels which it would each day be his to contemplate, and which (he reflected with a pleasing sense of conviction) far surpass in magnificence the most beauteous things of the earth, even Amyneh's beauty.

This suggestion which proceeded from his mind, and filled him with horror, was answered by a shrill voice from within his breast: "Is there in the highest heaven aught that surpasses Amyneh's tender love?"

Kassem was at that moment as miserable, as sad and dejected as man can be. He prayed earnestly that he might meet the dervish as soon as possible; for now and then he felt so completely discouraged as to allow himself to sink to the earth and give way to a prolonged fit of sobbing.

"When he is with me," soliloquized Kassem, "I shall be diverted; my mind will be occupied with what he says. He will carry me back to the august contemplation of the truth. Happy I shall not be, but I shall regain courage, for courage I must have. My lot it is to serve the great purposes of my master; and I submit to Fate."

Indeed, he had now nothing more in the world to bind him

to it. Divided between two passions, such were his sufferings that his only remaining desire was to have a brief period of repose, to learn what it was to experience a feeling of tranquillity and enjoy the sweets of peace. As days passed he gradually arrived at such a state that he no longer knew what could render him happy in the world, and it seemed to him that his mind wandered to none but impossible things. Amyneh! She was so far away! Each day took him farther and farther from her! He had lost her; the idolized image was drowned in his tears; he could no longer distinguish it perfectly. He had so long pined for it, wished for, called for, wept for it, and all to no purpose, that it seemed to him no longer to exist in the same world as he, and to have lost its reality upon earth; he no longer dared to believe in the possibility of recovering it; and as for the love of science—the primary and sole cause of his grief—he was not quite sure that he still possessed it.

On that score, however, he was mistaken. The keen curiosity excited in his breast by the dervish's words held him fast bound, and more securely than he thought. He could not well make out why, in his present isolated and forsaken condition, love, though irritated and suffering, did not lighten his affliction; and yet he should have reflected that love, though sufficiently powerful to inflict torture, was nevertheless not absolutely victorious; for, after all, and in spite of all, Kassem, goaded by its sting, did not retrace his steps. Onward he marched, but not toward Amyneh; he pursued his forward course to meet the dervish, and seemed to be led on by a chain fastened to his neck. That chain was his *kismet*, his lot, his destiny. He had dragged himself wearily along thus far, in spite of his feelings, desires, heart, passion, all; and still he journeyed on, nor could he, strange to say, bring himself to turn back.

But something stranger yet was his complete ignorance of the very thing he was seeking and still more so of what he wished

to obtain. The magician had done nothing more than to give Kassem the proof of his own power, and assure him that his help was necessary to the accomplishment of the dervish's purposes. His own excited brain and fevered imagination had done the rest. He desired to see, and to lend his aid; he caught a faint glimpse of the eminences and the depths to which vertigo alternately rose and sank; he felt irresistibly impelled to cling to that vertigo, that gigantic *génie* whose glances fascinated his soul; and once launched into that terrible midst, he knew not what would follow, neither did he seek to foresee it.

I know not whether passionate love can at any time admit another passion as a rival worthy of itself; but if there be one to which it is disposed to grant, or rather which it would be likely to allow to assume, the title of rival, it would seem to be the very one which now held Kassem in its convulsive embrace. If he must have one of these two species of enthusiasm, one of these two kinds of frenzy, there is as much self-denial, as much clear-sightedness, as much blindness, on one side as on the other; and while love may boast of elevating above the commonplace things of earth the souls which it transports to the azure plains of desire, its rival, the passion which possessed Kassem's soul simultaneously with love, has the right to affirm, in reply, that the power exercised by her is not directed to ends any less sublime. Thus the unfortunate love-stricken man journeyed through stony wilds, parched by an inexorable sun, and void of all semblance of vegetation, with the same distant horizon ever before his view. He advanced, suffering and weeping and heart-sick, and yet he marched on.

But all his wayfaring was to no purpose, for it did not help him to overtake his master. For the last fifteen days he had lost all trace of him; he inquired of villagers and travelers, but none of them had seen the magician, he was known to none.

Doubtless Kassem had at some time turned in a wrong direction—no very difficult task in a region without any regular roads or paths; yet he could not help attributing it to the power of his *kismet*.

"Had I fallen in with my master in the first days of this grief of mine, I should in all probability not have had the strength to conceal it from him, and I should only have had a stern rebuke and constant upbraidings for my pains, and who knows but—but what?—most certainly a degree of mistrust which, without restoring me to Amyneh's side, would beyond doubt have held me for years far distant from the sanctuary of Science, as unworthy to enter it. As it is, I am no longer master of myself; although much more unhappy, and plunged to the depths of misery, I do not even think of ever extricating myself. No; I shall not impart a word of all this to the dervish; I shall not disclose my secret to him. He could not understand it, with his unsympathetic soul inaccessible to all save the sublime things which are the object of his search. He is already a god almost, and I—alas! what am I? alas! what am I?"

Many countries did Kassem pass through, many desert wilds and many inhabited places, in some of which he met with a cordial welcome, and was ill received in others. He came to many cities on his way, traversed the streets of Herat, and then those of Cabool, but he was quite indifferent to all he saw there. In reality, he could scarcely he said to live. The twofold enthusiasm which filled and rent his breast would not allow him to descend for a moment to the level of common matters. He moved as it were in a dream, and saw naught save the creatures of his dreams. The wonder was that his feet touched the earth, for he himself was by no means on the earth. When he reached Cabool, his first and only preoccupation was to hasten his departure, without stopping to see any of the curious things of that famous city, which, as every-

body knows, contains stone houses of several stories. A few days more and he found himself among the caves of Bamyan, where he was certain to find the dervish. Accordingly, after examining two or three of the grottos, he entered another which had particularly attracted his attention; and there he saw his master, seated on a stone, and busied in tracing with the end of his staff in the sand certain lines, the profound combination of which announced a work of divination.

The magician did not raise his eyes, but, with that melodious voice which had so charmed Kassem at first, said: "Blessed be the Most High! He hath ordained that his servants shall never be taken by surprise. Approach, my son. This is the spot and this the very hour at which I was to meet you. You have come—here you are. I thank you for your zeal, of the immense purity of which I am now assured; my calculations point thereto; I cannot doubt it. From you I can only expect all that is good, and virtuous, and useful as a helper; and yet incomprehensible obstacles arise, I know not how, to interfere with the accomplishment of our task!"

Kassem modestly stepped forward and kissed the wise man's hand. The magician, wholly absorbed in his reflections, did not turn his eyes from the combinations of lines on which they were fixed in steady gaze, and in which he made from time to time such changes as his reflections suggested. The young man looked on with a sort of melancholy delight. He no longer felt lonely; he was near a being who loved him (though in a strange fashion), and made much of him, one in whose eyes he was something, and who relied upon him. Willingly would he have embraced the dervish, he would have flung his arms around his neck and pressed him to his aching heart. But nothing of that kind seemed possible; Kassem set aside such ideas, and felt almost tempted to laugh at his own simplicity; so he contented himself with silent and affectionate contemplation of his master, without making any attempt to disturb

the latter's meditations, which he did not comprehend, but the profundity of which he admired. Finally, however, the magician raised his eyes, and, fixing them upon his companion, said:

"The hour has come, and we are at the appointed place. We shall now begin our work. Let us hope for all, whatever may come!"

"What are you seeking?" asked Kassem. "What do you expect? What do you wish?"

"I know not," replied the magician. "What I wish for is unknown to me. What I know is immense; but I require what is beyond that, to the very uttermost limits of possibility. When once I have grasped that, I will share with you, and without having traveled and toiled as I have traveled and toiled, you shall have all, without the hardships, without the anguish which I have suffered, and without my disappointments, and my doubts, and my despair. Do you comprehend? Are you happy?"

Kassem shuddered.

"Without despair?" thought he. "And can that be? Shall I not have to pay as dearly as he?"

Meanwhile, he felt his drooping spirits revive under the inspiring words of his master. His heart bounded within his breast; and he hoped once more, and his hope seemed more real than before.

"Come!" he exclaimed, enthusiastically. "Forward—I will follow! I am ready!"

"You are not daunted?" murmured the dervish.

"By no means! I fear nothing in the world!" rejoined Kassem. In reality, life was, of all things, the one which gave him least concern, and on which he set least value.

The dervish arose and led the way through the grotto, followed by Kassem. They walked far and long; at length the daylight began to dwindle, and still they advanced through

a sort of twilight, which finally gave place to complete darkness. All at once they came to a stand-still: a wall of solid rock seemed to obstruct the way, and it was impossibe for them to proceed. The dervish sighed until he became exhausted, and, taking breath, he began to sigh again. Kassem, unable to see the cause of his master's agitation, presumed he was endeavoring to remove the rocky mass before him. Presently the young man's wrist was seized in the iron grasp of the magician, who dragged him violently back in the direction whence they had come, and stopped at a spot faintly illuminated by a tenuous ray of light.

"There is something in you," said the magician, "which hinders our succcess. I see it now, I know it, I am sure of it! You are upright, devoted, kind, and faithful; yet there is something lurking within you. I know not what it is. You are not given up *entirely* to the holy work! Speak! confess!"

"It is true," replied Kassem, trembling—"it is true. Pardon me. I am not as I ought to be."

"What is it, then?" cried the dervish, with clinched teeth. "Hide nothing from me, my son: I must know all in order to be able to remedy the evil. Speak! Fear not!"

Kassem hesitated a moment. He was extremely pale; yet he was sensible of the necessity of determination. He was not now in the presence of the world, but of the great, the awful infinite.

"I love!" he said.

"What?"

"Amyneh!"

"Unhappy man!"

The dervish wrung his hands, and seemed overcome by violent grief—so violent as for a while to deprive him of speech. By-and-by he made an effort.

"You can be of but little use to me," said he. "Your will is paralyzed. What I require here is a soul, a mind entirely

free and unshackled. Yours is not so. And yet you are exempt from evil. You may yet do something. As for me, I will not turn back—I shall have all—you shall have nothing. The fault is not mine, but your own. Ah, a woman!—a woman! Accursed be women! They are ruin! They are the irresistible scourge! They are perdition!—But, forward! Let us advance once more. A quarter of an hour hence it would be too late!"

As he uttered the last words, a voice from the mouth of the cave cried:

"Come, Kassem, come!"

Kassem trembled in every limb. He thought he knew the voice; but the dervish dragged him forcibly on, exclaiming:

"Listen not, or all is lost!"

Again the voice resounded through the cave:

"Come, Kassem, come!"

Kassem's agitation was extreme. He now recognized the voice completely; but to stop was impossible: the iron hand of his master pulled him along with overwhelming force.

"Do not look behind! listen not! Follow me! I know I am about to die! But, in dying, let me at least have found—"

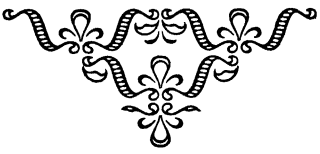
Kassem made no resistance. They were soon at the rocky wall again.

"Stand you over there," said the magician, pushing Kassem into a sort of crevice or hollow. "There! there! It is well! You will there be in less danger. . . . And now, I know, I feel, I am about to know all!"

The same sighing and agitation as before were now renewed; and Kassem's hair began to stand on end as he heard the magician uttering, in an absolutely unknown language, some guttural, cabalistic expressions, the power of which was certainly irresistible. These were followed by a mighty crash; the rocks were rent asunder; the earth trembled beneath Kassem's feet; and the light of day burst upon his astonished eyes in all its splendor. Kassem looked around him, but nowhere

was the dervish to be seen; but at the spot which he knew to be that by which he and his master had entered the cave he beheld Amyneh, pale and breathless, stretching out her arms toward him. He ran to her side, and they clasped each other in a long and tender embrace. She, too, had felt her courage abandoning her, and she could not await her Kassem's return. So she set out on foot over the desert, she followed him, she found him—and she kept him.

THE LOVERS OF KANDAHAR



THE LOVERS OF KANDAHAR

You ask if he was beautiful? Beautiful as an angel. His complexion was a little tawny, not with that dull, cadaverous shade which is the sure result of a mongrel origin; it was richly tawny like a fruit ripened by the sun. His black locks curled in a wealth of ringlets round the compact folds of his blue turban striped with red; a silken, sweeping, and rather long mustache caressed the delicate outline of his upper lip, which was cleanly cut, mobile, proud, and breathing of life and passion. His eyes, tender and deep, flashed readily. He was tall, strong, slender, broad-shouldered and straight-flanked. No one would ever dream of asking his race; it was evident that the purest Afghan blood coursed through his veins, and that looking at him one saw the veritable descendant of those ancient Parthians, Arsacians, Orodians, under whose tread the Roman world groaned in righteous terror. His mother, at his birth, foreseeing what he would become, had named him Mohsèn, the beautiful, and rightly so.

Unfortunately, accomplished to this pitch as he was in respect to external advantages, not less perfect with regard to qualities of soul, and dignified by the most illustrious lineage, he lacked too much: he was poor. He had just been fitted out, for he was on the verge of seventeen; and this had been no easy matter. His father had supplied the sabre and shield; an old uncle had given the gun, which was but an indifferent weapon. Mohsèn contemplated it only with vexation, and al-

most with shame; the wretched musket was a flintlock; and several of his companions of the young nobility possessed admirable English guns of the newest design. However, such an old-fashioned stick was better than nothing. By the kindness of a cousin he carried an excellent knife, three feet long and four inches broad, pointed like a needle, and of such weight that a well-struck blow would be sufficient to sever a limb. Mohsèn had fastened this redoubtable weapon to his girdle and was ambitious, if he should die for it, to have a pair of pistols. But he by no means knew when and by what miracle he could ever become possessed of such a treasure; for, again, he needed money most cruelly.

However, although he knew it not, he had, when thus armed, the bearing of a prince. His father, when he appeared before him, surveyed him from head to foot without any abatement of his cold and severe manner; but from the way in which he stroked his beard it was clear that the old man experienced an inner emotion of powerful pride. His mother felt her eyes swimming with tears, and passionately kissed her child. He was an only son. He kissed the hands of his parents, and went forth with the fixed intention of effecting three designs, the accomplishment of which appeared necessary to insure him a worthy entrance upon life.

The family of Mohsèn, as might be expected from the rank it occupied, had two well-founded feuds and pursued two *vendettas*. It was a branch of the Ahmedzyys, and for three generations at enmity with the Mouradzyys. The dissension had its origin in a horsewhipping administered by one of the latter to a vassal of the Ahmedzyys. Now, these vassals, who, not being of Afghan blood, live under the dominion of the nobility, cultivate the earth and follow trades, can easily be maltreated by their rightful lords, without its being any one's business; but, should any other than their master raise a hand to them, the offense is unpardonable, and honor demands that their

master should take as terrible a vengeance as though the blow given or the injury inflicted had fallen on a member of the owner's family itself. The offending Mouradzyy had consequently been stabbed to death by the grandfather of Mohsèn. Since then, eight murders had taken place between the two houses, and the latest victims had been an uncle and a cousin-german of the hero of this story. The Mouradzyys were powerful and rich; there was imminent danger of seeing the family become entirely extinct through the rage of these terrible foes, and Mohsèn conceived no less a design than to attack at once Abdallah Mouradzyy himself, who was one of the Prince of Kandahar's lieutenants, and slay him, a deed which would proclaim at the outset the magnitude of his courage, and could not fail to render his name redoubtable. Nevertheless this was not the most pressing matter.

His father, Mohammed-Beg, had a younger brother named Osman, and this Osman, the father of three sons and one daughter, had acquired some fortune in the English service, having been for long *subahdar*, or captain, in an infantry regiment at Bengal. His retiring pension, regularly paid through the medium of a Hindoo banker, gave him, together with considerable comfort, a certain vanity; moreover, he had fixed opinions respecting the art of war, very superior, in his estimation, to those of his elder brother Mohammed. The latter only set a value on personal bravery. Several very animated disputes had taken place between the two brothers; and the elder, whether rightly or wrongly, had found the respect due to his seniority but scantily observed. Their relations accordingly were pretty bad, when one day Osman-Beg, on receiving a visit from Mohammed, did not rise on his entrance into the room. At sight of this enormity, Mohsèn, who accompanied his father, could not contain his indignation, and, not daring to lay the blame directly on his uncle, he applied a vigorous box on the ear to the youngest of his cousins, Elèm. This occurrence was

the more to be deplored as up to this time Mohsèn and Elèm had entertained the strongest affection for each other; they were never done saying so, and it was between those two children that the dreams of vengeance were perpetually being woven which should restore to their family the splendor of honor, tarnished by the Mouradzyys in such a lamentable way. Elèm, enraged at his cousin's action, had drawn his poniard, and made a movement to spring on him; but the old men interposed in time, and had separated the belligerents. Next day a bullet was lodged in the right sleeve of Mohsèn's clothing. No one was in doubt concerning it: this bullet came from Elèm's gun. Six months passed, and an ominous calm brooded over the two dwellings, which adjoined, and which could mutually watch each other. The women only had encounters at times—they insulted one another; the men seemed to avoid each other. Mohsèn, eight days before, had made up his mind to penetrate into his uncle's house and slay Elèm; his plans were laid accordingly. Such was the second design he was anxious to execute. As for his third idea, it was as follows: After having killed Elèm and Abdallah-Mouradzyy, he would go and present himself to the Prince of Kandahar, and ask him to give him a place among his followers. He did not doubt but that a warrior such as he was about to show himself would be treated with respect, and received with acclamation.

It would be wronging him, nevertheless, to attribute to this double action, which so fully occupied his mind, a motive of unworthy interest. It would be erroneous if we should think that to put his cousin Elèm to death seemed to him a trivial act, and did not cost anything. He had loved, he still loved, his childhood's companion; twenty times in each twenty-four hours, when his thought, pursuing his dreams, would strike on one more brilliant than the rest, there would pass, as a flame, before his soul the image of his cousin Elèm, and he would say to himself: "I shall tell it to him! What will he think of it?"

Then of a sudden he would find himself amid realities, and, without allowing himself a sigh, he would banish from his heart the old thought which should no longer live there. Honor spoke: it was needful that honor, and honor only, should be heard. The Hindoos and the Persians can freely abandon themselves to the leadings of their friendships, to the promptings of their preferences; but an Afghan! what he owes to himself transcends everything. Neither affection nor pity avails to stay his arm when duty speaks. Mohsèn knew this—it was enough. It was requisite that he should be deemed a man of spirit and courage; he desired that never should the shadow of a reproach, never the suspicion of a weakness, come near his name. Persistence in such a lofty sentiment costs something; an enviable reputation is not gained without trouble. Is it too dear at any price? No, thought Mohsèn, and the glowing pride which beamed on his handsome face was the reflection of the exactions of his soul.

However, once avenged, not of his personal wrongs—what were they? who had ever sought to offend him?—but avenged of the stains inflicted on his kindred, general estimation and the justice of the prince would promptly assign to him rank and endowments—the fit wages of bravery; nothing was more natural, and it was not a defect, a wrong, an error, a blamable covetousness in him to aspire to this right.

The day was not yet sufficiently advanced for him to set to work. He needed the first hour of evening, the moment when the shadows begin to descend on the town. In order to abide the time, he set out, walking with a calm step, toward the bazaar, preserving in his bearing that chilling dignity suitable to a young man of good lineage.

Kandahar is a magnificent and large town. It is inclosed by a battlemented wall, flanked by towers where bullets are often caught. In a corner rises the citadel, the dwelling-place of the prince, the stormy theatre of many revolutions, which the

gleam of sabres, the sound of firing, the display of decapitated heads fixed to the posts of the gates, neither astonishes nor grieves. In the midst of a group of houses, many of which are of several stories, there radiate like arteries in that great body vast labyrinthine passages, where set in line are the stalls of the dealers who sit smoking and answer their customers from the elevation of little platforms, on which are displayed the stuffs of India, Persia, and Europe, while all along the tortuous, unpaved, uneven way, sometimes narrow, sometimes wide, streams the crowd of Banians, Uzbecks, Kurds, Kizzilsbashes, crowding on one another, buying, selling, hurrying, and standing in groups. Lines of camels follow one another amid the shouts of their drivers. Here and there a richly-clad chief passes on horseback, surrounded by his men, who, with shouldered guns and shields on their backs, roughly disperse the passers-by and clear a way. Elsewhere a foreign dervish howls a mystical expression, recites prayers, and asks alms. Farther off a story-teller, seated on his heels in a big wooden chair, holds around him an excited auditory, while the soldier, the follower of a prince or a nobleman, or simply a seeker of fortune, like Mohsèn, passes by in silence, casting a scornful glance on these nobodies, and timidly avoided by them. Life is widely different for them and for him. They can laugh; nothing save blows or wounds can affect them; unless some mischance befalls, they will be long-lived. They are free to gain a livelihood in a thousand ways; all things are good to them; no one exacts anything from them.

The Afghan, on the other hand, in order to be what he ought to be, passes his existence in watching himself and others, and, ever suspicious, keeping his honor before him, excessively susceptible and jealous of a shadow, he knows beforehand how few his days will be. It is rare to find men of this race who have not, ere they are forty, received their death-blow, for having struck or threatened others.

At length day disappeared behind the horizon, and the first shadows lengthened in the streets; the upper terraces alone were yet gilded by the sun. The muezzins all at once began, from the summit of mosques great and small, to proclaim the hour of prayer in sonorous and prolonged tones. It was, as is customary, the universal cry, which echoes through the air affirming that Allah alone is God, and that Mahomet is his prophet. Mohsèn was aware that every day at this hour his uncle and his sons were in the habit of repairing to their evening duty—all his sons without a single exception; but this time there would be one such; Elèm, stricken by fever, had been sick and laid up for two days. Mohsèn was certain to find him in his bed, in a deserted house, for the women, in their turn, would be at the fountain. Since the beginning of the week he had been on the watch, and knew the details point by point.

While walking along he shook the long knife at his belt in order to make sure that the blade did not adhere to the scabbard. When he reached the door of his uncle's house he entered. He pushed back the sides of the door behind him; he secured them with the bar; he turned the key in the lock. He wished to be neither surprised nor hindered. What a shame it would have been had he failed in his first enterprise! He traversed the dark corridor leading into the narrow court, and this court itself, leaping over the fountain which formed its centre. Then he ascended three steps and turned toward Elèm's room. All of a sudden he found himself face to face with his female cousin, who, standing in the middle of the corridor, barred his way. She was fifteen years of age, and was called Djemylèh, "the Charming."

"Salvation be upon you, son of my uncle!" said she; "you came to kill Elèm."

Mohsèn was dazzled, and his eyes swam. He had not seen his cousin for five years. How the child, now become a woman, had changed! She stood before him in the full perfection of

a beauty he had never conceived of, ravishing in herself, adorable in her robe of red gauze with its gold flowers, her beautiful hair surrounded, he knew not how, with blue transparent silver-embroidered veils.

His heart beat, his soul was intoxicated, he could not answer a single word. She continued in a clear, penetrating, sweet, irresistible tone:

"Do not slay him! He is my favorite; the one of my brothers whom I love most. I love you more; take me for ransom! Take me, son of my uncle! I will be your wife, I will follow you, I will become yours; do you desire me?"

She bent tenderly toward him. He lost his head; without understanding what was happening or what he was doing, he fell on his knees and gazed, entranced, on the adorable apparition who leaned over him. Heaven opened to his eyes. He had never dreamed of anything like it. He gazed, he gazed, he was happy, he suffered, he did not think, he felt, he loved, and, as he was absolutely lost in this infinite and mute contemplation, Djemylèh, with a charming movement, falling back a little, leaning against the wall and twining her two arms behind her head, completed his bewitchment by letting fall on him, from the altitude of her lovely eyes, divine beams by which he was enveloped, overcome by their warmth and magic. He bent his forehead so low, so low that, his mouth approaching a skirt of her purple robe, he seized the hem of it tenderly and bore it to his lips. Then, Djemylèh, lifting up her little bare foot, placed it on the shoulder of him who, without speaking, so thoroughly confessed himself her slave.

This was an electric shock; this magic touch was omnipotent over him; the proud temper of the young man, already much shaken, shattered like a crystal under this almost impalpable pressure; and a nameless happiness, a limitless felicity, a joy of unequaled intensity, penetrated the entire being of the Afghan. Love demands of each the gift of what he holds most

dear. That is what one must yield, and if he loves it is precisely what he wishes to give. Mohsèn gave his vengeance, gave the conception he had of his honor, gave his liberty, gave himself, and instinctively sought still in the deepest abysses of his being to see if he could not give more. What he had hitherto esteemed above heaven seemed to him pitiful in comparison to what he would have desired to lavish on his idol, and he found himself in arrears before the excess of his adoration.

On his knees thus, the little foot resting on his shoulder, and he himself bowed to the earth, he raised his head sideways, and Djemylèh, looking at him also, tremulous but serious, said to him:

"I am wholly yours! Now, be off! Come this way lest my relations should meet you, for they are just coming in again. You must not die; you are my life."

She withdrew her foot, took Mohsèn's hand and lifted him up. He was passive. She drew him into the interior of the house, led him toward a back-door and listened whether any dangerous sound was audible. Truly death surrounded them. Before opening the way to him, she looked at him again, threw herself into his arms, kissed him, and said:

"You depart; alas, you depart! Yes, I am wholly yours!—forever, do you hear?"

Foot-falls resounded in the house. Djemylèh quickly opened the door.

"Be off!" she murmured. She pushed the young man out, and the latter found himself in a deserted lane. The door was shut behind him.

Solitude did not soothe him; on the contrary, the delirium which had mastered him at sight of his cousin and borne him, at least so it seemed, to its highest pinnacle, took another direction, another form, and did not decrease. It appeared to him that he had always loved Djemylèh, that the few minutes

just passed away comprised his life, his entire life. Hitherto he had in no wise lived; he only recollected vaguely that he had wished, sought, contrived, approached, blamed, an hour before. Djemylèh was everything, filled the universe, animated his being; without her he was nothing, could do nothing, knew nothing. Above all, without her he would have been horrified, if he could have been, to desire or hope for anything.

"What have I done?" said he, bitterly to himself, "I have gone away! what a coward! I have been afraid! have I been afraid? Why have I gone away? Where is she? To see her again, oh, to see her again! Only to see her once more! But when? never! I shall never see her again! I have not asked it of her. I have not even had the courage to tell her I loved her. She despises me! What can she think of a wretch like me? She—she! Djemylèh! There should be at her feet—under her feet, a sultan, a master of the world! What am I? A dog. She will never love me!"

He hid his face in his hands and wept in bitterness. Then the remembrance of a heavenly music revived in his soul.

"She said to me, 'I am wholly yours!' Has she said so? has she really said so? How did she say it? 'I am yours!' Why? always? Perhaps she did not think as I believe. I give a meaning to it which she did not intend. She only desired to make me listen there.—Ah! how I suffer, and how I would like to die! She wished to save her brother, nothing more! She wished to distract me—to amuse herself with me. Women are false. Well, she is amused, she distracts me, she tortures me! If that pleases her, who can prevent it? Is it I? No, truly, I am her property, I am her plaything, the dust of her feet, whatever she may desire. If she shatters me she will do well! What she wishes is well! Ah! Djemylèh—Djemylèh!"

He reëntered his own house pale and sick; his mother perceived it. She took him in her arms; he laid his head in her lap and remained a part of the night without sleep or speech.

Fever preyed upon him. On the morrow he was quite ill, and remained prostrate on his bed. From the strange weakness which pervaded him and relaxed his limbs, it seemed to him that his end was near, and he was satisfied so. An almost perpetual hallucination showed him Djemylèh. Sometimes she pronounced, in the same tone that he remembered so well, those words which henceforth formed his very existence, "I am wholly yours!" Sometimes, and oftenest, she let fall on him that disdainful look which he had not seen, but which he was sure he deserved too well. Then he longed to have done with an existence barren of happiness.

It occurred to him, further, to devise means of seeing again his uncle's daughter. But immediately his imagination was checked by the impossibility of the thing. He had been able once, on one sole occasion, by braving everything, to penetrate the interior of the hostile house. We know what he was going to do there. Did he wish, then, to risk the loss of her whom he loved?

What would she think, besides, at seeing him again? Did she desire it? Did she ask for him? Undoubtedly it would be only joy to him to die in the place where she lived, to fall on the same floor trodden by her dear feet, to expire in the sacred air that she breathed. No, that would be nothing else than supreme good; but at the instant when he was closing his eyes beneath the cruel bite of steel or bullet, to meet the look of Djemylèh and experience icy indifference—what? Scornful hate, that would be too much. No, he must not go to die in that house.

Mohsèn was certain, convinced but of one thing—that he was not loved. Why did he believe so? Because he was too much in love. The madness of fondness had seized him unaware, suddenly, rudely, completely! he had understood nothing of what was happening to him. He constantly recalled what Djemylèh had said to him. Alas! the words, one by one, were

treasured like pearls in his heart; but by dint of hearing them, repeating them, of hearing them again, of dwelling on them, he no longer understood them, and he only knew that he had been unable to answer a single, solitary word: he was exceedingly wretched.

His mother saw him pining. The poor child's breast was being choked up; a torrid heat consumed him. He was passing away. All the neighboring households knew his condition, and, as nothing could explain so sudden a sickness, it was generally agreed that a sorcery had been cast on him, and the question was, whence came the blow? Some pretended to show that the Mouradzyys had ordered it; others stealthily accused old Osman of being the murderer, and of having hired a Jewish doctor to effect the magic assassination.

It was evening, and tolerably late. For two days the young man had not uttered a single word. His head was turned to the wall, his arms hung listless on the bed; his mother, after having disposed charms around him, and entertaining no further hope, was waiting to see him expire, and watching him with eager eyes, when suddenly, to the great surprise—almost to the terror—of the poor woman, Mohsèn abruptly turned his head toward the door; and, the expression of his countenance changing, a gleam of life illumined it. He listened. His mother heard nothing. He raised himself, and in a confident tone pronounced these words:

"She is leaving her house and coming here."

"Who, my son, who is coming here?"

"Herself. Mother, she is coming. Open the door for her!" replied Mohsèn in a piercing voice. He was beside himself; a thousand flames sparkled in his eyes. The old woman, without knowing herself what she was doing, obeyed this imperious order, and at the touch of her trembling hand the door opened wide. She saw no one. She listened, but heard nothing. She

looked in the corridor; all was gloomy; she saw nothing. One minute, two minutes passed in this waiting, full of anxiety for her, full of assured faith for him. Then a light noise sounded; the door of the house opened; a furtive, quick step flitted over the stone flagging; a form, at first indistinct, detached itself from the shadows; a woman disclosed herself, arrived at the threshold of the chamber; a veil fell, Djemylèh threw herself toward the bed, and Mohsèn uttering a cry of joy received her in his arms.

"You are here, it is yourself. You love me?"

"Above all things!"

"Unhappy child," cried the mother; "this, then, is what was killing you!"

The two lovers remained locked in each other's arms, and did not speak; they stammered; they were drowned in tears; they gazed on one another with an inextinguishable passion. and, as an almost exhausted lamp into which oil is poured, Mohsèn's soul revived, and his body recovered itself.

"What does this mean?" said the old woman. "Have you resolved on your own ruin and ours? Do you think your uncle will not perceive Djemylèh's flight? What will happen? What calamities are about to fall on us! Are we not sufficiently tried? Child of misfortune, return to your home! Leave us!"

"Never!" cried Mohsèn. He got up forthwith, tied his robe, tightened his belt, stretched out his hand to the wall, took down his arms, adjusted them, and renewed the priming of his gun, all in a second. The last trace of prostration had disappeared. If he had fever, it was the fever of action. Enthusiasm shone in his face. Djemylèh helped him to buckle his sabre-belt. Feelings akin to those of the young man animated her charming features. At this moment, old Mohammed, followed by two of his men, entered the room. Seeing his niece, who flung

herself at his feet and kissed his hand, he was momentarily surprised, and was unable to conceal a sort of emotion. His stern and haughty features contracted.

"They love each other," said his wife, indicating the two children. Mohammed smiled, and stroked his mustache.

"Shame be on my brother and on his house!" he muttered.

For an instant he thought of casting Djemylèh from the door, and then of at once saying everywhere that she was a lost girl. His hatred would have been fully satisfied by the evil which he would have done. But he loved his son, he looked at him; he understood that it would be difficult to manage things so, and contented himself with the amount of vengeance possible.

"Close the doors," said he. "We shall be attacked at once, doubtless; and you women load the guns."

Djemylèh had not left her father's house a quarter of an hour before her absence was noticed. She could not be at the fountain; it was too late: nor at the house of any friend; her mother would have been aware of it. Where was she? They suspected some mischance. For several days they had noticed her gloomy and agitated. What had she done? Her father, her brothers, her mother, went out into the quarter. The street was deserted; no sound was any longer heard. Osman, guided by a sort of instinct, drew near the house of Mohammed with a wolf's step, and heard, by standing close against the wall of the court, that they were speaking inside the house. He listened. They were piling stones against the door; they were getting ready their weapons, they were preparing to repulse an attack.

"What attack?" said Osman to himself. "If it concerned the Mouradzyys, my brother would have advised me; for on that question we understand one another. He knows that well. I would assist him. If it be not about that he is concerned, it is about me."

He listened with increased attention, and by mishap heard the following words interchanged:

"Djemylèh, give me the carbine."

"Here it is."

It was the voice of his daughter. A trembling seized his body, from the ends of his hair to the soles of his feet. He understood all. When, during these last days, he and his sons had smilingly reported that Mohsèn was at the point of death, Djemylèh had not said a single word, had not expressed any joy, and he even recollected his having reproached her for it. Now everything was explained. The unfortunate girl loved her cousin; and, what was horrible to think of, she had just carried this frenzy to the extent of betraying her family—her father, her mother, her brothers, their dislikes, their hatred—in order to throw herself, across the ruin of her reputation, into the arms of a wretch! Never had Osman dreamed that so fearful an outrage could have overtaken him. He remained as though prostrated on the spot where the sound of voices, an imperceptible vibration of the air came to deal him a blow—to open a wound more cruel and painful than lead or steel could ever have made.

During the first moments the pain was so intense, the suffering so poignant, the humiliation so complete and profound, that he did not even think of what he ought to determine on. The idea of vengeance did not present itself to him. But this paralysis did not last long. His blood resumed its course, his head grew clear, his heart began to beat again. He made up his mind quickly, shook himself, and reëntered his own house. He said to his wife and sons:

"Djemylèh is a monster! She loves Mohsèn, and has fled to the house of that dog Mohammed. I have just heard her voice in those people's court. You, Kérym, with three of my men, will go and knock at the door of these bandits. You will

say to them that you want your sister at once. You will make plenty of noise, and as they will parley you will listen; you will answer, and allow the affair to be prolonged.—You, Serbâz, and you, Elèm, with our five remaining soldiers, will take mattocks and shovels and follow me. We will noiselessly attack the wall of these infamous wretches on the side of the lane, and when we have made a hole large enough we will enter. Now, hear me well and what I am going to tell you repeat to your men, and make them obey it. In this alcove here, at the head of my bed—you see it there?—to-morrow morning I shall have three heads—Mohammed's, Mohsèn's, and Djemylèh's. Now, in the name of Allah, to work!"

The inmates of Mohammed's house had barely finished their preparations for defense when there came a knocking at the door.

"It is the beginning!" muttered the head of the family. He placed himself at the head of his people in the corridor leading to the entrance of the dwelling. Behind him was his wife, carrying a spare gun; next her was Mohsèn, with his musket; next to Mohsèn, quite close to him, was Djemylèh, holding her lover's pike; behind them were the three followers armed with daggers. The garrison had neither an excellence nor an abundance of weapons, but it was determined. No one trembled there. The most courageous sentiments that can animate the heart reigned there undivided. No pitiful feeling held sway so far as they were concerned. To love, to hate, and that in an atmosphere of heroic boldness, with the most absolute forgetfulness of the benefits of life and the supposed bitterness of death, nothing else ever entered into their heads.

No answer had been given to the first summons of the besiegers. A fresh avalanche of blows of the butt-ends of guns and kicks gave the door a second shock which resounded through the house.

"Who knocks thus?" said Mohammed, in a rough tone.

"It is we, my uncle," replied Kérym. "Djemylèh is with you; send her out."

"Djemylèh is not here," returned the old Afghan. "It is late; leave me in peace."

"We will break in your planks, and then you know what will happen!"

"Of course; your heads will be broken, and nothing more."

There was a moment's silence. Then Djemylèh, leaning toward Mohsèn, said to him in a low tone:

"I hear a noise on the other side of the wall. Let me go into the court to find out what is going on."

"Go," said Mohsèn.

The young girl advanced toward the place she had designated, and listened for an instant. Then, without emotion, she returned and said:

"They are digging, and have just made a breach."

Mohsèn reflected. He knew the wall was only of clay; pretty thick, it is true, but in the end a weak defense. Kérym had resumed the conversation by lengthy and confused threats, to which Mohammed replied. His son interrupted him, and communicated what he had just learned.

"Let us mount on the terrace," said he, in conclusion. "We shall fire from above, and it will be hard to take us."

"Yes, but in the end we shall be taken, and we shall not be avenged. Go up on the terrace; thence leap with Djemylèh on the neighboring terrace; fly, gain the end of the street; thence descend, and run without stopping to the other end of the town—to the house of our kinsman, Yousèf. He will hide you. Djemylèh will be lost to her family. Days will pass before it can be known where you are and where you have put her. The face of our enemies will be black with shame."

Without answering, Mohsèn slung his gun on his back, informed the young girl what must be done, kissed the hand

of his mother, and the two lovers hastily climbed the narrow and uneven staircase, which led to the platform overlooking the house; they leaped a wall, crossed a terrace, two, three, four terraces in succession, Mohsèn sustaining, with boundless tenderness, the companion of his flight, and they reached the cleft, at the bottom of which the narrow street undulated. He leaped down and received her whom he loved in his arms, for she did not hesitate a second to imitate him. Then they departed. They were hidden in the shadowy windings of their way.

Meanwhile Mohammed, pretending to be deceived, continued to exchange with the assailants, located on the other side of the door, insults and shouts, of which he henceforth thoroughly understood the object. The door, incessantly shaken by fresh assaults, yielded, the boards separated, the mass of planks fell in with a loud noise. Mohammed and his followers did not, however, fire. Almost at the same moment a sufficiently large opening yawned in the wall, and thus the inhabitants of the house found themselves between two bands of adversaries, who took them as in a vise.

Mohammed cried out: "I will not draw on my brother nor on my brother's sons. Allah preserve me from such a crime! But, by the salvation and blessing of the Prophet, what is wrong with you? What is this madness? Why do you speak of Djemylèh? If she is here, look for her! Take her away! Why do you come in the middle of the night to disturb peaceful people who are your relatives?"

This plaintive language, so little in accordance with the characteristics of the master of the dwelling, astonished those to whom it was addressed. Besides, they were assured that Djemylèh was not there. Had they been deceived? Indecision moderated them a little. Their anger cooled down. Osman cried loudly:

"If Djemylèh is not here, where is she?"

"Am I her father?" retorted Mohammed. "What would she be doing in my house?"

"Let us seek," cried Osman to his followers.

They scattered through the rooms, lifted up hangings, opened chests, examined nooks, and, as we know, they could find nothing. This discomfiture and the air of profound ignorance affected by Mohammed and his men increased their confusion.

"Son of my father," said Mohammed in an affectionate tone, "it seems to me that a great trouble overwhelms you, and I share in it. What has happened to you?"

"My daughter has fled," replied Osman, "or else she has been taken away from me. In any case she has disgraced me."

"I share in it," repeated Mohammed, "for I am your elder brother and her uncle."

This remark made some impression on Osman, and, rather ashamed of the useless disturbance he had just made, he took leave of his brother almost amicably, and withdrew his people. Old Mohammed, when he found himself alone, began to laugh: not only had he struck the heart of his enemy, he had also deceived and baffled him. As for Osman, completely discouraged, not knowing which way to turn, and abandoned to a transport of rage which his impotency increased, he reëntered his house with his sons and his men, not to retire, not to sleep, but to sit down in a corner of his room, with his two closed hands pressed on his forehead, in order to seek, in the recesses of his reason, a plan of procedure to recover traces of his daughter. Early dawn found him still in this attitude.

Just then one of his men, his lieutenant, his *nayb*, entered the room and saluted him.

"I have found your daughter," said he.

"You have found her!"

"At least I do not think I am deceived; and, in any case, if the woman I take for her is not she, I have found Mohsèn-Beg."

A sudden light broke in on Osman's mind. He perceived for the first time that, when he had entered his brother's house, he had actually not seen his nephew; but he had been so beside himself and so much occupied in calming himself at the time that he had scarcely been able to account for the most necessary facts. He was secretly indignant at himself for his blindness, but, with an imperious gesture, he ordered his *nayb* to continue his recital. The latter, in order to assert properly his equality of rank to which his birth entitled him, sat down and resumed his speech in the following terms:

"When we entered Mohammed-Beg's house I looked at all his companions. That serves to inform us with whom we have to deal. Mohsèn-Beg was not present. I was astonished at this. I did not consider it natural that, during a night when firing would probably be interchanged, such a brave young man should have absented himself. This strange circumstance having set me considering, I did not return to our dwelling with you, but went away by the bazaar, turning round your brother's dwelling. I asked the police guard if they had noticed a young man, whom I described to them, either alone or followed by a woman. No one had remarked anything of the kind, until I questioned one who not only satisfied my demand with an affirmative, but added further that the person whom he had just seen pass, accompanied as I described, was no other than Mohsèn-Beg, son of Mohammed-Beg, of the Ahmedzyys; he pointed in the direction pursued by the two fugitives, and told me the hour at which he had perceived them; it was just when we were beginning to break in your brother's door. I continued my search, being confident from that time that it was worth the trouble, and, after several hours spent in following one road, leaving it, taking another, questioning night-watchmen, making blunders, and, recovering the track, I chanced at length to discover at a distance the two fugitives whom I was seeking.

"It was in a deserted quarter in the midst of ruined houses. Mohsèn was sustaining the steps of his companion, who was, to all appearance, overcome by fatigue, and was casting uneasy and suspicious glances around him. I concealed myself from his sight behind a part of a wall, and thence carefully observed what he did. He was evidently looking for a shelter, with the intention of finding some rest. He got what he desired. He descended into a half-dug cave, and caused her whom he led to enter. At the expiration of a few moments he ascended alone, carefully noted the surroundings, and, believing himself to have been unperceived—for I concealed myself with extreme care—he disposed some large stones so as to disguise the place of his retreat, and rejoined the woman in the cavern. I remained some minutes, in order to convince myself that he was not going to come out. He did not stir. Dawn was beginning to redden the sky. I inform you, and now take such steps as seem wisest to you."

Osman had not interrupted his *nayb's* story. When the latter ceased speaking he rose, and ordered him to awaken his sons and men. When all were afoot, the avenging band took the field, under the conduct of him who had just revealed the retreat of the lovers, and no one doubted but that at this hour they were deep in slumber, believing themselves in perfect security.

Finding them so reduced to the asylum of jackals and dogs, it is evident that an unforeseen accident had deprived them of the protection which they were confident of finding when they set out from the besieged dwelling of Mohammed. In fact, the unhappy children had had no luck. They had, in truth, arrived without mischance at the house of their relative, Yousèf, which was far distant from that which they had left. Djemylèh, little accustomed to long walks, as well as being frail and delicate, experienced extreme fatigue, which she did not confess to. She solaced herself with the happiness of being

near Mohsèn, and with the hope of soon finding herself in security with him. But the latter had been vainly shaking the door by blows of his gun-stock. After having knocked a long time in a more modest manner, he did not succeed in having it opened; and, just as he was thinking seriously of breaking down the obstacle, a neighbor called to him that a fortnight ago Yousèf-Beg and all his household had departed for Peshawèr, and would certainly not return during the year.

This was a thunderbolt on the head of the fugitives. During all the journey Mohsèn had walked behind Djemylèh, with his hand on the trigger of his musket, expecting every moment to hear the steps of the foe. He had no idea how long his father would succeed in holding out. He was certainly aware, on the other hand, that the house must eventually be broken into. Concerning what would happen then he did not question himself, and his courage and gayety were sustained by the certainty of having an assured refuge, where, during weeks, he could remain hidden with his treasure without the latter's running any risk

But when he saw that his uncle failed him, and that he was in the street, that he knew not where to go, that he had not a place on earth—no, not a place in the whole universe—where Djemylèh could be sheltered from harm and death; when, on the contrary, he felt, with shivering of body and anguish of soul, that injury and death were pursuing the passion of his life, the charming girl whom he had carried off, and by whom he was so tenderly beloved, whom he himself loved even to death, and that injury and death were about to overtake this sacred marvel on the instant, perhaps ere a minute passed, that they were turning, it might be at the very moment, the corner of the street where he was with her, not knowing what would become of them, then he felt his courage failing him. No, he did not feel that, but he noticed that his courage drooped, was at a loss, resisted; and, as for his gayety, it disappeared.

With Djemylèh it was different. She looked at her lover, and seeing him pale—

"What is wrong with you?" said she to him. "Am not I with you? Is my life not in yours? If one of us should die, will not the other immediately die? Who shall separate us?"

"No one," replied Mohsèn. "But you, you, you, to become wretched! You to be killed!"

At this thought he hid his face in his hands, and began to weep bitterly. She gently withdrew his fingers, wet with the tears which bedewed the forehead and cheeks she loved, and throwing her arms round Mohsèn's neck—

"No! oh, no, no!" she continued. "Do not think only of me; think of us both, and so long as we are together all is well! Let us hide! What can I do? Let us gain time! Do not let us be taken!"

"But what is to be done?" cried Mohsèn, stamping his foot. "There is no resource, and your father is surely following us this moment. He will find us—he is on the point of finding us. Where shall we go? What is to become of us?"

"Yes; where shall we go?" went on Djemylèh. "As for me, I know not; but you will find out, I am certain! You are going to devise in your head at once, since you are brave, and do not tremble before any danger, my dear, dear Mohsèn, and you will save your wife!"

All the time she infolded him, only her right hand was withdrawn from the neck of the young man, and caressed his eyes, assuaging his tears. Whether it was the reaction from the attack of weakness which he had just experienced, or whether it was the effect of that magnetic influence which Love exerts over those whose master he is, Mohsèn all at once recovered himself, his head became clear again, and, gently disengaging himself from the darling embrace which confined him, he looked at Djemylèh calmly, and, becoming another man, said steadily:

"This quarter is absolutely deserted, and contains many ruins. Let us seek a temporary shelter—a cave if it can be found. You can rest and sleep there. It is improbable that we should be discovered there. During the day I shall endeavor to go out, with all possible precautions, and get something to eat. In any event, we can bear hunger until evening; and, thus having twelve or fifteen hours before us, perhaps a happy idea will occur to us, and we shall discover how to employ the approaching night for our safety."

Djemylèh approved of the plan which her young protector had just explained, and they set out. They soon began to enter among the ruins. They leaped over several walls. Some serpents and venomous beasts fled here and there before them, but they were not alarmed. They had a vague feeling of distrust, and looked around them, but they did not suspect that they were discovered, and did not feel the eyes of the spy upon them.

They arrived in this fashion as far as the cavern where Osman's *nayb* had seen them enter. Almost immediately Djemylèh, who had laid her head on Mohsèn's knees, fell into a profound slumber, the natural result of her youth, and of the tax on her strength; and during a few moments her lover yielded to the same influence. But all of a sudden he became thoroughly awake. An indefinable uneasiness banished, so far as he was concerned, even the semblance of weariness. His blood coursed wildly through his veins and boiled; he felt a danger; he had too much to lose; he could not watch too well—could not hold himself too ready for everything. He surveyed the sleeper with a tenderness, a passion, an emotion of devoted attachment, which permeated all the fibres of his being; and then, having gently raised Djemylèh's adored head, he placed it on a bunch of grasses, and went out to survey his surroundings.

He perceived nothing. Day was rapidly wearing on. On the blue horizon the terraces of several houses and some tufted

trees which ornamented neighboring courts were defined like a golden and green silhouette. He lay down on the ground, in order to be the better concealed, and for a considerable time —probably for an hour—remained so, environed by an absolute quietude. At length, he distinctly heard numerous steps. He listened, and caught sound of whisperings.

"Here they are," thought he, quickly. Nothing akin to fear assailed his courage, which was firm as steel.

He raised himself on one knee, and drew his long knife, which he grasped boldly in his hand; and scarcely was he so prepared, when a man leaped over the wall behind which he was. It was the *nayb* of Osman-Beg. He was acting as guide to the foe. Mohsèn rose suddenly, and, almost before the *nayb* even perceived him, he dealt the latter a furious blow on the head; clove his turban of bright blue cloth, striped with red, and stretched him dead on the spot. Then he threw himself on another assailant, who appeared beside the *nayb*. It was one of his cousins, the eldest. He felled him with a powerful cut, and faced his uncle himself. The latter had scarcely sufficient time to draw his sabre. Then the most unequal of all conflicts began between Mohsèn and the band which pursued him.

But, without his being aware of it, he had two advantages over his adversaries: First, the rapidity, the violence, the success of his attack had thrown them on the defensive, and they were so stunned that they never asked themselves whether Mohsèn were really alone. Furthermore, Osman-Beg had given orders that he should be taken alive. They could not strike him, therefore; and, while blows were dealt by him, and dealt in a lively fashion, they contented themselves with parrying him, not trusting themselves too near him, and only relied on fatigue overcoming him. He was as yet far from that extremity; his vigor seemed to increase with each blow dealt right and left. However, the calculation of Osman-Beg would

in the long-run be found correct. Exhaustion would have come upon the brave combatant. By good-fortune, an event which no one foresaw happened to alter the appearance of matters. Mohsèn, while killing the *nayb*, wounding his cousin, and lustily attacking the others, had driven all his assailants before him, and the latter, puzzled to hold their ground, continued to retreat to such an extent that, without wishing or foreseeing it, they altogether issued from the ruins, and found themselves on the edge of the street. The populace assembled to witness the fighting, with the extreme interest that an affair of this kind excites in every country, but especially among nations as warlike as are the Afghans. A very decided interest was manifested in the crowd for the handsome and brave youth, abused after so rough a fashion, and having against his single arm such a number of foes. They were not exactly shocked at seeing his enemies assail him with disproportionate forces. Niceties of this sort belong neither to all times nor to all places, and, as a general thing, one recognizes the utility of killing his enemy as he can; but Mohsèn was courageous they saw, and rejoiced in it. Each of his bold blows excited a murmur of enthusiasm and sympathy; nevertheless they did nothing to draw him from danger, save to utter wishes aloud, of which the women who were on the high part of the terraces were especially prodigal. At this juncture a young man on horseback appeared.

His blue turban striped with red was of fine silk, and the fringe fell gracefully on his shoulder. He had a short Cashmere tunic, tightened at the waist by a belt ornamented with precious stones, from which hung a magnificent sabre, and his trousers were of red *cendal*. As for the accoutrements of his charger—a true white Turkoman of pure race—they glittered with gold, turquoises, pearls, and enamelings. Before this horseman marched twelve military serfs, armed with shields, sabres, poniards, pistols, and shouldered guns. He stopped

abruptly with his men, to see what was going on, and the sight displeased him. He frowned, his face assumed a haughty and terrible expression, and he cried out in a loud voice:

"Who are these men?"

"The Ahmedzyys!" answered a voice from the crowd.

"And why Osman-Beg Ahmedzyy desires to shed the blood of this young man, who has been defending himself there for a quarter of an hour, Allah knows. But I do not know, and it seems too insolent that an accursed family should seek to assassinate people in a quarter which is not its own, but mine.—What, ho! Osman-Beg, yield, retire, leave your prey, be off, or, I swear by the tombs of all the saints, you shall not go from here alive!"

And, as if these words had not been sufficiently peremptory, the horseman grasped his sabre in his hand, made his horse spring into the midst of the combatants, and his servants, seizing their shields and drawing their sabres, hustled Osman-Beg's men, and, being much more numerous, drove them away from Mohsèn, who found himself on a sudden protected by a living rampart—living assuredly and ready to take the life of those who menaced his. Osman-Beg at once took in the situation. He understood the impossibility of the struggle, and, scorning all upbraiding, he curtly gave the signal to his followers, rallied them, and departed, not without having fronted his new adversary with a look full of hatred, of defiance, and of vengeful menace.

Then Mohsèn recovered himself. Unexpectedly freed from the toils of so unequal a struggle, and possessed by the thought of her whom he loved, he was forthwith instinctively moved to return quickly to the place where he had hidden her; but she was beside him, and handed him his gun, which he had left in the cave. This action of a devoted and submissive wife carrying to the midst of a fight her husband's weapon, pleased the assembled crowd, and appeared to impress yet more favor-

ably the young horseman who had taken the part of the weak.

He saluted Mohsèn with grave courtesy, and said to him, "Thanks be to Allah, who enabled me to arrive opportunely!" And, pointing with his finger to the body of the expiring *nayb:* "You have a strong arm for your age!"

Mohsèn smiled coolly; this compliment enchanted him; he put his foot on the breast of his foe with the same affected indifference that he would have shown for some crushed reptile, and without further noticing it replied:

"What is the illustrious name of your excellency, in order that I may thank you as I ought?"

"My name," replied the horseman, "is Akbar-Khan, and I am of the tribe of the Mouradzyys."

It was to the implacable adversary of his race that at this moment Mohsèn owed his life, and this adversary added, raising his voice:

"My father is Abdoullah-Khan, and you know, doubtless, that he is the favorite lieutenant and all-powerful minister of his highness, whom Allah preserve!"

Thus it was not only a man of a race hereditarily hostile, it was the very son of the most cruel of the persecutors of his house, who had of a truth just saved Mohsèn and Djemylèh, but who, as a matter of fact, held them between his hands as tight as the sparrow can be held in the clutches of the goshawk.

The son of Mohammed-Beg had believed himself saved, at least for some time, and his quick imagination had just presented to him in a delicious picture Djemylèh, rested, peaceful, and happy. The picture was brutally effaced from his imagination, and in its place the odious reality painted itself in black hues. Behind the lovers his uncle and his murderous band threatened; if by concealing their names, and by the help of some falsehoods, they could succeed in freeing themselves of Akbar-Khan, they would in a few minutes, at most in a few hours, fall again into the peril which certainly awaited them.

It was full day. They could no longer dream of hiding themselves. Not knowing where to find a refuge, they would be captured and lost. To put themselves under the protection of Akbar-Khan, of course, by means of some deception, and by making themselves pass for other than they were, was to perish by a sure way. Osman-Beg would probably not delay to denounce them and make them known, and then not only would Akbar effect their death, but he would treat them as cowards, and reproach them, not without apparent reason, for having been afraid of him; then what would become of Djemylèh?

In his agony Mohsèn looked at her; a proud smile shone on the young girl's face. A strange inspiration was in her lovely eyes. She did not say a word; he understood her.

"I do not know your father," said he to Akbar; "but who has not heard his name? Will you be pleased not to withdraw the hand you have stretched over my head? Then take me near it, and I shall inform you concerning us two."

The young chief made a motion of assent. Mohsèn placed himself by the side of his horse; Djemylèh walked behind him; the soldiers took the lead, and all the Mouradzyys, with the two Ahmedzyys in their midst, protected by them and unknown to all, crossed the bazaars, crossed the great square, arrived before the citadel, passed its gate, crowded by soldiers, servants, and dignitaries, and, having traversed two narrow lanes, came to the palace occupied by Abdoullah-Khan, into which the whole company entered.

Akbar had said two words to a Beloutje slave, who had hastened before them into the interior of the court. Just as the chief descended from his horse this slave returned, accompanied by a servant, who, addressing herself respectfully to Djemylèh, invited her to follow her into the harem, where she was about to lead her. No proposition could be more proper and polite, and Akbar, in reserving this reception for his guest's wife, whom he had not even seemed to notice, had

conducted himself as might be expected from a man of his condition.

Mohsèn, by a gesture of his left hand, seemed to instruct her to accept the invitation, and Djemylèh proceeded toward the low door leading to the women's apartment. Scarcely had she entered the narrow passage, when all at once, by a rapid movement, Mohsèn followed her, reached her at the moment when the servant lifted the inner curtain, took her by the hand, drew her in, and setting off at a run with her, roughly throwing aside the two servants who strove to stay him, he rushed into a little garden filled with flowers, in the midst of which was a white marble basin with a fountain, and, mounting three steps that he saw leading to a silken entrance, latticed with deep red, he pulled aside the curtain, entered a large room, where seeing, seated on the carpet in a corner, three ladies, one of whom was aged, and the others very young, he prostrated himself before the eldest, with Djemylèh at his side, and, taking in his hand the border of the robe of her whom he supposed to be the mistress of the house, he cried:

"Protection!"

Stupefaction was depicted on the features of her whom he thus besought and on those of her two companions. Their glances rested alternately on the rash invader of the holy place and on her who accompanied him, but if they were surprised they expressed no hostility. The charming face of Mohsèn did not betoken a madman, still less an insolent fellow; and Djemylèh, who had just removed her veil, was so pretty, so dignified, so noble in every feature, that a feeling of compassion, of sympathy, and of affection, began to take birth in the eyes of those whose help was implored, and who had not yet been able to say a single word, when, by two doors, Abdoullah-Khan and Akbar entered the chamber.

The first, an old man with a gloomy and preoccupied air, came by chance. He entered his wife's room, and was coming

to see his daughter, and daughter-in-law. The other, at first confounded by Mohsèn's unheard-of act, was pursuing him, with the resolve of chastising what he had some cause to deem outrageous conduct. Seeing his father standing before the door, and Mohsèn prostrate there on the carpet before his mother, he stopped.

"What is this?" demanded Abdoullah-Khan.

"Madame," said Mohsèn, still holding the robe of his protectress with both hands—"madame, I am an Afghan. I am noble, I love this woman who is beside me; she loves me, her father is the foe of mine, we have fled; they desire to kill us. I am willing to die, but not that she should die, or be ill used, or persecuted. Madame, we are pursued, we are watched; your noble son has just now saved us."

The lady answered nothing, but looked at her husband in a beseeching manner, and the two young women did likewise, one toward her father and her brother, the other toward her husband. But Abdoullah-Khan frowned, and, sitting down in a corner of the room, uttered these bitter words:

"What do these mad freaks mean, eh? Since when has an Afghan, a noble, become so disordered by fear that he should not believe in his perfect security when he is in my dwelling? From the moment in which my son protects you what have you to implore further? Who would dare to touch you?"

"You," retorted Mohsèn, looking him between the eyes.

"I?" cried the old chief; he shook his head scornfully and continued: "You are mad! but, as thoughtlessness cannot serve as an excuse for foolhardiness like yours, you shall be chastised."

And Abdoullah-Khan made a motion to clap his hands in order to summon his attendants. But Mohsèn, again addressing the aged woman, said to her:

"Your husband shall not touch me! He will neither have me chastised nor insulted; you will protect me from him,

madame. I am Mohsèn, son of Mohammed, an Ahmedzyy, and this is my cousin, the daughter of my uncle Osman; your people have caused the death of two of my kinsmen not more than three years ago; behold me, behold her; you can kill us without any difficulty; will you do so?"

While uttering these last words, Mohsèn raised himself erect, and Djemylèh along with him. They took each other by the hand, and surveyed Abdoullah intently.

The latter was forcibly grasping the hilt of his knife, and his hollow eyes foreboded no good, when the old lady said to him:

"My lord, listen to the truth! If you touch these children who have implored my support, holding the skirt of my robe, you will lose your honor before men, and in their eyes your countenace, which is resplendent like silver, will become black!"

Abdoullah did not appear convinced. It was clear that the most vindictive sentiments burned in his heart, surly, ferocious, and greedy for the prey which had dropped at their door; and that, if other considerations did not arise and restrain them, these could scarcely be resisted, and at any moment might sway him.

According to the usages of this warlike, fierce, and bloody, but strangely romantic Afghan nation, a mortal foe can no longer be attacked from the moment he has rushed into his adversary's harem and gained the protection of the women. Honor wills that the suppliant should become from that instant sacred. No one can touch him without covering himself with infamy, and illustrious examples can be cited of the dominion exercised by this custom over spirits exceedingly difficult to soften. But honor extends still further its exactions, if that be possible, and demands that, when fugitive lovers implore the support of the man most alien to their cause, this man, if he prides himself on his valor and generosity, cannot refuse his aid, and must become the prop of those who have thought so highly of him as to select him as their champion. Moreover,

in this case, anterior enmity does not alter the obligation; it should cease, it should be forgotten for a time at least, and the greater are the dangers in embracing the quarrel of the hunted lovers, the more binding is the obligation to brave everything. It is known in India, in Persia, and in the country of Cabool, Kandahar, and Herat, that the greater portion of the disputes and encounters between Afghan families and tribes, and frequently of terribly sanguinary hereditary feuds, have had no other origin than the help extended and secured to unfortunate lovers.

All this is very certain. Nevertheless, to spare what one abominates when once he has hold of it, to succor what one hates, to pardon by force of honor, are not easy things, and when they must be submitted to one hesitates. Silence reigned for some time in the great room of Abdoullah-Khan's harem. He himself felt a thousand serpents gnawing his heart, and when finally he saw the necessity of tearing them away he could hardly do it.

Akbar would willingly have poniarded Mohsèn, but it was not hard for him to abstain from so doing; the affection and esteem which he had conceived for him in the deserted quarter, when he saw him holding his own so valiantly against so many people furious for the youth's destruction, remained before his eyes, and he had without difficulty listened to his mother's voice, understood and respected the glances of his sister and his wife, so that it accorded with his honor that to touch the tip of the two Ahmedzyy's fingers with the intention of destroying them would be a shame from which his house could never be redeemed. But it was a small thing for him to be convinced of this, so long as his father was not; he had no voice in the matter.

Abdoullah regarded Mohsèn and Djemylèh intently, and they both returned his gaze. They did not supplicate, they did not ask anything. They had a claim on him, and they exercised

it. This claim, it is true, was one of those which noble souls alone suffer to weigh with them; mean souls know nothing of them. This is exactly what the eyes of the two captives said to Abdoullah. At least, he understood it so. He rose, walked directly to them and said, "You are my children!" And he kissed them on the forehead. They kissed his hands respectfully, and were about to pay the same duty to the chief's wife, by kneeling down before her; but the two young women took Djemylèh passionately in their arms, and Akbar was the first to salute Mohsèn in that unrestrained and grand fashion which is the privilege of men of rank in his nation. The young Ahmedzyy greeted him with deference as an elder brother, and went out with him, after having bowed before the dwellers in the harem, where the strictest proprieties did not permit him to remain from the moment he had obtained what he desired.

Akbar immediately led his new friend into one of the chambers of the palace where he had *kaliâns* and tea carried, and told Mohsèn that he was to consider himself in his own dwelling, and to make free use of what was around him. But the very ceremony to which the young Mouradzyy conformed with a kind of precision and parade showed plainly that he was fulfilling a duty, and was priding himself upon fulfilling it to the letter, rather than obeying a spontaneous impulse. Mohsèn not only understood this, but, inasmuch as he entered into his host's feelings in this respect, it was not hard for him to respond to such advances by signs of acknowledgment haughtily expressed, and to make him thoroughly feel in his turn that only the most pressing necessity had forced him to solicit a support which he would never have sought for himself alone. Thus the protector and the protected, amid a very solemn profession of mutual devotion, maintained intact the imprescriptible rights of ancient animosity, and both acknowledged them. However, they began to chat with generous freedom, and Mohsèn gave a full account of what had befallen him

since the day before. He passed over in silence what had a direct connection with his love, and only mentioned Djemylèh by calling her "my family;" and Akbar on his part avoided with the greatest care, in his questions and remarks, all allusion to the young girl, the more so that in reality she was the only subject of this long conversation.

Meanwhile a priest had presented himself at the palace, and desired to speak with Abdoullah-Khan. He had been ushered into the presence of the chief, who, having respectfully saluted him, begged him to be seated and assigned him the most distinguished place. After greetings, and when the tea had been served and taken away, the priest appeared to reflect a moment and then addressed himself to the task of explaining the object of his visit. He was a man of fifty, with a fine face and a benevolent appearance, and his white turban set off his slightly olive complexion.

"Your excellency," said this person, "my name is Moulla-Nour-Eddyn, and I am a native of Ferrah. My profession sufficiently explains to you that I seek above all things peace and good-will, and that is why I have accepted a mission to you from Osman-Beg Ahmedzyy. If it should succeed, the probable consequences of a vexatious misunderstanding can be averted."

"Moulla," replied Abdoullah-Khan, "I myself am a peaceful man, and ask nothing better than to live on friendly terms with the noble whose name you have just pronounced. Unhappily, there exists more than one difficulty between his family and ours, and I would like to know which one it is with which you are at present concerned."

"With the last occasion," answered Moulla-Nour-Eddyn. "An unprincipled man has found the means of penetrating into the holy chambers of Osman-Beg's house, and of carrying thence one of its chief ornaments. In the well-known generosity of your soul you are sheltering this evil-doer; and Osman-

Beg, in acquainting you with the unworthiness of his adversary, who is certainly unknown to you, does not doubt for an instant but that you will deliver the culprit up to him, in order that he may receive a just punishment."

"Really," replied Abdoullah-Khan, coldly, "the details that your reverence is pleased to give me are altogether new; and, indeed, you open my eyes. I have been impudently lied to. I believed that Mohsèn-Beg was the veritable nephew of his excellency Osman-Beg, and did not understand why an alliance could not be effected between two such close branches of the same family. I ask pardon for my error, Moulla."

"You excellency is unaware, then, that the two brothers, Osman and Mohammed, do not live on good terms?"

"I do not recollect, especially, if I was unaware of it," replied Abdoullah, with a contemptuous expression; "the Ahmedzyys are usually troublesome people, and it would be endless to enumerate their feuds. At present, after what you have told me, Osman detests his brother Mohammed and the latter's son; he does not desire a union between the two families, pursues his nephew in order to cut his throat, his daughter in order to assassinate her; and Mohsèn flies to my house and demands a refuge of the Mouradzyys. You will admit, Moulla, that those people are well worthy of interest."

Here Abdoullah shook his head, enchanted with the fine prospect, and with the scorn with which he was going to overwhelm his hereditary foes. But Moulla did not let himself be awed by his sarcastic tone, and coldly replied as follows:

"There is not the slightest doubt the young girl will die, and her accomplice along with her. That is not the matter in question. Osman-Beg only wishes to learn whether you consent to deliver up his fugitive slaves to him, or purpose to defend them. This is all that I come to ask of you."

"Let us suppose," said Abdoullah, leaning toward the priest in a confidential manner, "that I may not be indisposed to

gratify you, how would it result to my advantage? Can I question you on this point, Moulla?"

"Certainly. If your excellency consents to restore the culprits to me, I can promise that Osman-Beg's entire family will forswear their ancient feelings against the Mouradzyys. The sons will enter your establishment, and you will give them pay; and, as for the father, he knows that you are looking for an instructor to teach your military slaves European discipline; he will be that instructor, and night and day you can count on him. I need not assure you that Osman-Beg is prepared to take all the oaths possible on the holy book, if you exact this guarantee of his good faith."

"I highly value such proposals, and they are very advantageous to me," cried Abdoullah-Khan; "but still let us grant that I reject them: what would happen to me?"

"I could explain this to you in a very precise way," answered Moulla, "but you are about to have a visit, and you are on the point of learning, before a minute passes, what course you will take; you are going to know, I say, after a fashion much more complete and fitter to convince you than if a poor man like me should continue to talk."

Just at this moment there entered the court, amid a retinue of servants, and in all the pomp of a magnificent deportment, the physician-in-chief of the Prince of Kandahar, a personage distinguished by the favor he enjoyed from his master. He was not Afghan by race, but only what is called a Kizzilbash, descended from Persian colonists, something analogous to a citizen. The birth of such people is not valued, but their riches, and occasionally their talents, are held in esteem. This man was called Goulâm-Aly, and he was received with the distinction which his position at the court warranted. He was, in addition, a friend of Abdoullah-Khan.

"Well," said the latter to him, after the requirements of etiquette had been satisfied, and compliments had been ex-

hausted, "if I am to believe Moulla, you come here to give me your advice."

"Allah preserve me from it!" cried the doctor. "How could such an impertinence be possible in the presence of one so much wiser than I? Is it true that you have received into your house a certain criminal called Mohsèn?"

"Mohsèn-Beg, an Ahmedzyy, is in my house. Is it to him that your excellency desires to speak?"

"Exactly. You know that his highness the prince (may Allah make his days eternal!) is a mirror of justice?"

"Of justice and generosity! Who doubts it?"

"No one. But the prince has sworn just now that he who should hinder Osman-Beg from punishing his daughter and his nephew should himself be put to death, his house pillaged, and his goods confiscated."

"The prince has sworn such an oath?"

"I swear it to you by my head!"

"Why take so hasty a resolution?"

"You are about to learn. The prince has a child sick in the harem. He made a vow yesterday evening in order to obtain the recovery of the beloved being, and to soothe the mother, that he would grant this morning the first petition that the first person he met should make to him. Fate has decided that this first person should be Osman-Beg. You are not ignorant that the prince holds by his promises?"

"Above all things he does that!" murmured Abdoullah-Khan, in dismay.

He looked at Moulla, he looked at the doctor, and felt very much embarrassed. The Prince of Kandahar was neither wicked nor tyrannical; but he tenderly loved his wives and children, and, when he had made a vow in order to banish sickness from his harem, he would certainly not be willing to break his word for anything in the world. Besides, Abdoullah-Khan was thoroughly aware of the magnificence of his own

palace, the beauty of his hangings and carpets, the known fullness of his coffers; and he did not imagine that this splendor would constitute an extenuating circumstance in his favor, if by any inopportune rebellion it fell under the ban of confiscation. The more he reflected the more perplexed he became, and his two interlocutors left him, by their silence, quite at liberty to pursue a meditation which they deemed salutary, and from which they anticipated the best results. At length Abdoullah-Khan raised his head, and called in a tone of command:

"Let my son Akbar come here!"

At the expiration of a moment, Akbar entered, saluted, and remained standing near the door.

"My son," said Abdoullah-Khan, in a drawling and rather humble tone, very different from his usual voice, "it pleases the prince (may the virtues of his highness be rewarded on earth and in heaven!)—it pleases the illustrious prince to command to me Mohsèn's expulsion. This vagabond must be given up to his uncle, who is going to treat him as he seems to deserve, as well as the other culprit. Everything that the prince commands is good. I am about to repair immediately to his highness, in order to receive his orders and obtain from his sovereign kindness a means of effecting matters without blackening my face. As for you, guard the house well during my short absence. See to it that the two wretches who have entered it do not escape from it! Watch that carefully, my son. You can easily understand what a frightful misfortune their flight would be. If they reached the country, we might never, perhaps, succeed in overtaking them. You have perfectly understood me, my son?"

Akbar bowed, and crossed his two arms on his chest.

Abdoullah continued his remarks, addressing himself to Moulla and the doctor.

"Do not be surprised at the definite instructions I have just

given. Youth is not over-wise, it is thoughtless. I would not for anything in the world that a man condemned by his highness should escape his merited chastisement, and, above all, by any negligence whatever on my part."

The two allies, equally delighted and edified by what they saw and heard, wished to take leave of Abdoullah-Khan, but the latter detained them.

"No," said he to them; "it does not suit me that you should leave me. It might be said later that I have secretly spoken to Mohsèn—many things might be said. Innocence even and fidelity should not expose themselves to suspicion. Be good enough both of you to accompany me to the prince."

This request was readily granted, and the three worthies, having issued from the court together, being mounted on their parade-horses, and surrounded by their respective suites, soon arrived at the palace, and were introduced into the presence of the prince.

The latter received his lieutenant with his customary kindness. But, while the interview was taking place—and it was long, because Abdoullah employed all his efforts, all his mind, all the resources of his intellect, to render it interminable—events happened at his house of which you are about to read.

Akbar, when he returned to the room where Mohsèn was, said to him:

"The prince orders that you be given up to your enemies. My father cannot openly defy him—his highness has too much strength—but he will protect you by stratagem. We will get on horseback, and, without loss of time, leave the town; we will reach the country. To-morrow will be to-morrow, and we will then see what must be done."

"Let us go," responded Mohsèn, rising. But his heart was heavy. For an hour or more he had accustomed himself to believe that Djemylèh was beyond all trials. He chatted with his host, and preserved externally the cool appearance from

which a warrior cannot depart; but, behind this delusive aspect of his look and bearing, he was in a dream. All the flames of joy, all the flames of love, possessed his being. When one loves, he does nothing but love. Despite everything, above everything, he loves, and this golden woof forms the invariable ground on which all actual thoughts are embroidered. What is said outside of this is mere verbiage. One cares nothing about it, it is not of you, and if you take any interest in it, it is because, secretly, it has something to do with the love that pervades you. Outside of love what is there? what can there be? Oh, what joy! what transport! to abandon one's self wholly, without any reservation whatever, in favor of anything that is foreign to it! Projects, hopes, desires, fears, profound terrors, sudden acts of bravery, infinite certainty, yearning toward hell, endless flowery perspectives scintillating with sunlight that reach up to paradise—all is love; and in the being who is loved, all worlds are included. Beyond this there is nothingness, less than nothing, and, as a veil over all, there is the most profound contempt. This was what Mohsèn felt.

But at this time it behooved him to pass from light to darkness, into that darkness in which he had walked since the previous evening, and from which he had issued for some moments during which the intensest happiness had invaded and possessed his being. This period of felicity was already passed. He must begin again to climb in the darkness the path so stony, and beset with perils. What he felt, however, was always love—love spurred by very grief; more lofty, perhaps, more intense, more proud, and drawing into its energy the certainty of deathlessness, nourishing itself in bitterness, but preferring this evil to all good. And, besides, it must be admitted, he had not that keenest, hardest pain, the most pitiless of all in the destiny it imposes; there was no question, at least, of separation or absence.

It was not easy to make the ladies of the harem accept the

imminent necessity. Khadidjèh, Akbar's mother, his sister, and Alyèh, his wife, uttered cries, and began to weep, but time was passing; the very affection that the mistresses of the dwelling had conceived for Djemylèh helped to make them comprehend how precious the minutes were; and, in spite of their sobs and cries, they allowed the young outlaw to tear herself from their arms, and follow Akbar, who brought her to her lover.

The horses had been equipped, and brought round with the greatest haste. Akbar, Mohsèn, and Djemylèh mounted them; a dozen soldiers did likewise, and the calvalcade, turning into a retired street, reached at a walk one of the gates of the citadel, which opened on the country, fully resolved to pass over the bodies of the guards, if the latter should seek to stop them; but they did not dream of doing so, and, once outside, Akbar put his steed to a gallop, and his companions followed his example.

For two hours the pace did not slacken an instant to let the horses breathe, but they were of good northern breed, and their long stride and the steadiness with which they sustained it made them cover a good part of the way. Naturally, no one spoke; meanwhile Akbar—judging that they were pretty far away, and that pursuit was no longer possible, as no one in the town could know the direction they had taken—slackened to a walk, and considerately kept at a sufficiently great distance from the two lovers to allow them full liberty of conversation. He acted as guide. The horsemen were part at his side, part as a rear-guard, part scattered on the outskirts, all watching the horizon around them as they proceeded; and thus Mohsèn and Djemylèh found themselves almost alone.

"Do you not repent?" said the young man.

"Of what?"

"Of having loved, of having sought, of having followed me?"

"You would be dead if I had not come. You were going to die."

"It would have been, perhaps, all over now; you would be seated calmly in your home, near your mother, surrounded by your family."

"And you would be dead!" continued Djemylèh. "I should have seen you all the days that I myself would have lived. I should have seen you under my eyes, in my heart, unable even, by dint of remorse and sorrow, to revive you for a single second; and as for myself, I should be covered with shame in my own eyes, cowardly, false, hateful to whomsoever could guess my crime, murderess of my love, traitress to the master of my soul. Of what are you talking to me? And can you think of anything better for me than what I have?—Mohsèn, my life, my eyes, my sole thought! Do you believe, then, that I have not been happy since yesterday evening? But think so, then. I have not left you. I have not ceased to be with you—to be yours. Every one knows that I am yours! I can only be yours. Danger is spoken of. But immediately I am there, with you, beside you, close to you! And the greater the danger, the less distant am I; the more I approach, the more I become a part of you. Do not tremble, therefore; if I were not here, you would fear nothing! Why do you wish to cast from your being this portion which belongs to it, which is I, and which can neither live nor die without you?"

Loveliness is beautiful; passion and absolute love are more beautiful and more adorable still. The statue, be it never so perfect, which the artist has conceived or executed, does not approach in its perfection a face on which devoted affection sheds this wholly divine inspiration. Mohsèn was intoxicated listening to Djemylèh as she uttered such things, and watching her as she said them. She transported him along with herself into that burning sphere wherein, before actual sensation, the

future and the past are alike annihilated. And thus these children, whom a strange protection engirt, whom direct, active, furious hatred pursued, whom chance had just betrayed, and who, by a miracle alone, could escape now the narrow inclosure in which their doom confined them, into which they were turning—yes, these lovers soared together into an atmosphere of the most absolute happiness that the most fortunate man can ever breathe.

They experienced one of those moments when the soul acquires from the very effects of the happiness which supports it an activity, a power of perception, superior to that which it commonly possesses. Then, all absorbed as one is in what he holds dearest, nothing passes unperceived, nothing appears which does not leave its impress on the heart, and, through it, on the memory. The glance does not fall on a flint the form and color of which do not forever remain fixed in the remembrance; and the swallow which flashes through space at the moment when an adored word resounds in your ear, you will see always, evermore, even till the last moment of your life, passing rapidly into the skies which you have then beheld, and never forgotten. No! Mohsèn could nevermore lose the impression of this sun which was setting on his right behind a clump of trees; and when Djemylèh said to him, in the tenderest tone—

"Why do you look at me so?"—

What he replied was—

"Because I adore you!"

And she added, with a bewildering movement of her head—

"Do you believe it?"

At this juncture Mohsèn perceived that Djemylèh's sleeve had a blue reflection, and this impression remained as though imprinted with fire on his memory in the midst of his delight.

Meanwhile, in the palace of Kandahar, in Abdoullah-Khan's house, in the dwelling of Mohammed-Beg, and in that of Os-

man, all was bewilderment in reference to the two lovers. The two brothers, each followed by his people, had met in the bazaar, and Mohammed, exasperated by the ignorance in which he lay as to the fate of his son, had attacked the former. Some passers-by had joined in, shots and sabre-cuts had been exchanged on both sides; the traders, as is their custom, and especially the Hindoo traders, had burst out with cries of distress, and it might have been thought from the noise of the fire-arms, from the clashing of swords, and, above all, from the shrill outcries that were uttered, that the town was being sacked. No one, however, had been slain; and when the followers of the police-judge had succeeded in separating the combatants, and sending them each his way, it was found that the two parties had barely given each other a few scratches. Nevertheless, this collision was not without consequences. It divulged the foundation of the affiair. It was known to all the town that Mohsèn Ahmedzyy had carried off Djemylèh, his cousin, and that the Mouradzyys had given them an asylum, but that the prince had commanded that the culprits should be given up to the offended father. On the subject there was great difference of opinion. Some came to offer their services to Mohammed, from the conviction that a man of honor should always assist and protect lovers; others were of opinion that at bottom this was only a continuation of the feud between the Ahmedzyys and Mouradzyys, and, since Mohammed and his son had leagued themselves with these latter, they were betraying their family. For this reason, these logicians embraced the cause of the true and faithful Ahmedzyy, Osman-Beg. Others, again, while indifferent to the question itself, were extremely indignant at the interference of the prince. They considered that the latter had by no means the right to mix himself up with a dispute which did not concern him, and still less to order a noble Afghan to deliver up his guests. On this account, they

sided with Mohammed. But a considerable number arrayed themselves on Osman's side, solely to have the pleasure of fighting. To sum up, the majority was of this latter party. The town became suddenly in consequence a prey to a great commotion: Hindoos, Persians, Jews, peaceful people, and traders, began to lock their stalls, and flock in the courts of the mosques, uttering lamentable groans, and asserting that trade was ruined forever; the wives of the commonalty ascended to their terraces, where they might be heard bewailing and deploring beforehand the certain misery of their small families; the priests repaired gravely to the aristocratic dwellings to preach peace and inculcate moderation, extolling the advantages of docility—a state of mind of which no one in the country had ever had the least understanding—and that is the way matters went on among the peaceful. At the same time groups more or less compact, troops more or less strong, footmen and horsemen, with blue turbans striped with red, tightly bound to the brows, with belt properly adjusted, with shield on arm, gun on shoulder, roving eye and fierce beard, crossed each other in the bazaars, jostling the passers-by, and ready to spring at their throats. However, nothing of that sort was done. They were waiting to be organized, to receive direction; uncertainty hovered around; they were determined to fight, and anticipated pleasure and honor from it; but they must have recognized chiefs and a plan of operations. This state of affairs lasted two or three days. Finally, everything exploded.

The prince was engaged in a friendly conference with Abdoullah-Khan, the priest Moulla-Nour-Eddyn, and Doctor Goulâm-Aly, when the police judge of the town, with a scared demeanor, came to inform his highness of what was going on. The priest and the doctor were inwardly satisfied at seeing things take this turn, considering that the rapid conclusion of the affair was thus at hand. As for Abdoullah-Khan, he was amazed. It was more than he had foreseen; any sort of in-

surrection did not suit him just then, and, seeing that the prince let himself be impressed by the recital of the head of police, he foresaw that, if the two lovers were not found at his house, the anger of the sovereign would be excited very differently from the way in which it would have been without this riot. He had made a calculation slightly complicated, but still rational enough. In giving shelter to Mohsèn and his companion, he had gained a fine reputation for generosity; in addition he had the pleasure of dealing a rude blow to a part, if not to the whole, of the Ahmedzyys, in facilitating the flight of his *protégés;* he did not intend ever to avow the part which he had taken in that, and his son Akbar alone would be compromised. For several days the prince would be out of temper; then a gift would mollify him, and Akbar would remain in favor. But these plots miscarried; Abdoullah-Khan had in front of him an affair of state; the prince, when he wanted to know the truth, was a man to be feared. It was necessary to take a side. Abdoullah-Khan took one on the spot.

Until then he had never called in question the surrender of the two children; he had only contested and split hairs as to the manner in which the surrender should take place, putting forward incessantly the interests of his position, and showing himself so scrupulous that, in the midst of the discussion, two long hours were lost. As the prince met with no opposition on the part of his favorite, and as the conversation, besides, pushed at times into the domain of pleasantry, afforded him an agreeable distraction, he was not impatient. It was perfectly indifferent to him whether Mohsèn and Djemylèh fell into the hands of their judge half an hour sooner or later. Finally, however, it was agreed that Abdoullah-Khan should solely and simply place the culprits in the hands of the prince without informing them of what his highness purposed doing, and he would even be allowed to place them under his august protection, inferring by these words that, according to his inmost

conviction, they would be altogether at peace and in safety there. A messenger had then been sent to the dwelling of the favorite. He returned at the moment when the chief of police was concluding his relation of what was passing in the town, to announce that every one had fled—Akbar, Mohsèn, and Djemylèh—and that no one knew where they had gone.

Abdoullah-Khan did not allow his master time to get angry. He spoke gravely:

"Of a surety my insolent wretch of a son (may the curse of Allah be on him!) has foolishly dreaded the dishonor of his house, and, without waiting for the issue of your highness's goodness, has carried off these two wretches with him. Luckily, I know where to capture them. They are in my tower of Roudbâr, four hours' journey from here, in the mountains."

Then, drawing his ring from his finger, and handing it to the chief of police:

"Send immediately," said he, "some messengers with my equerry, whom you will find below. Let the ring be given to my son Akbar, and I am about to write the order to deliver the prisoners to your people. In this way the evil will be remedied, and the town will resume its tranquillity."

Abdoullah-Khan spoke in such a clear and decisive tone that there was no ground for any outburst of indignation. No one ventured to question the perfect good faith of a personage who was, indeed, at this juncture, only too sincere. He was fully resolved to betray, to deliver up the young people; he would have preferred not to yield this point, but state reasons and policy demanded that he should silence the scruples of his pride, and he did so. A man who, to any extent whatever, bears the interests of others, necessarily loses a large part of his delicacy of heart when he does not lose it all. A courtier lives amid concessions, delays, and mediums of all kinds. He never does as well as he could desire when he desires it, and even when he reaches the complete culmination of his kind of existence he

no longer desires it at all. Abdoullah-Khan hardly concerned himself more or less about the two victims; but he had made up his mind to injure the Ahmedzyys. That could not be done on this occasion without grave inconveniences. He therefore abandoned his intention. As for the question of honor, he assured himself that he would repair its loss by an increase of haughtiness. He consoled himself especially by the reflection that no one was powerful enough to try to make him blush without his avenging himself that very hour.

We are approaching the period where this story ends. The envoys of the chief of police, having made all speed, arrived at the fortress about the middle of the night. They perceived by the beams of the moon, then at the full, a square and rather low building with a narrow gate and several suspicious-looking port-holes, located on a projecting rock half-way up a barren escarpment. Nothing could be more sombre and tragical.

The messengers dismounted from their horses, and the leader of the band knocked loudly for admittance. Every one was asleep. A soldier of the garrison appeared at the entrance. He raised the iron bars which closely secured it. The signet and letter were shown to him. He made no remark, yielded without hesitation, and called his comrades, who did not show themselves more difficult to manage than he. However, the parleying, the goings and comings, had awakened Akbar. The young chief appeared on the landing of an inner staircase, the ascent of which was steep. Akbar overlooked the heads of those whom he roughly addressed.

"What means this noise? And you, my men, why do you let strangers enter?"

"They are persons sent by his highness. They bear a letter, and your father's ring. The prisoners must be given up."

Akbar demanded:

"Is it my father who has given this order?"

"Himself! Here is his ring, I tell you, and here is his letter."

"Then is Abdoullah-Khan a dog, and I have no father!"

So saying, he discharged his two pistols at the men mustered before him. One of them fell, and he was answered by a discharge which missed him. He grasped his sabre in his hand. At the same moment Mohsèn and Djemylèh appeared at the young man's side.

"Ahmedzyy," said he, earnestly, "you shall see that the men of my tribe are not cowards!"

He seized his gun and fired. The aggressors uttered a cry of rage, and dashed to the attack. Mohsèn fired in his turn. Djemylèh had already hold of Akbar's gun, and was loading it. Then she did the same for that of her husband, and for a quarter of an hour she performed this duty without flinching. All of a sudden she put her hand on her heart and staggered—a bullet had just entered her breast! At the same instant Akbar rolled at her feet mortally wounded in the temple.

Mohsèn flung himself on Djemylèh, raised her up, and kissed her; their lips clove together. They both smiled and both fell over, for a fresh discharge struck the youth, and their enraptured souls soared together.