

PANTIKA:
OR,
TRADITIONS
OF THE
MOST ANCIENT TIMES.

BY WILLIAM HOWITT.

Ist nicht die ganze Erde des Herrn ein Wohnplatz der Menschheit? Wenn Aganippe, Arethuse, Derce und der Cephissus angenehm rauschen, warum sollte nicht dort auch der Jordan, der Kur, der Ganges labende Wellen treiben? Warum nicht auch ein Bach in der thebaischen Wüste?

HERDER.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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PREFACE.

AN excellent critic said lately, that the Germans regard productions of this kind as poems. That is exactly my idea of them. Poetry is not necessarily confined to verse—much less has it any thing to do with prose run mad : but in the soberest and freest diction, the highest qualities of poetry—imagination, sentiment, and feeling—may be developed.

A most absurd doctrine respecting works of imagination, has been broached of late years, and one that I have been surprised to see avowed in the criticisms of some, who ought to know better the principles of their own art. If it has been their lot to review a work which has been deficient in interest, they have thought it ample explanation of the cause of that deficiency to say,—the author has, unfortunately, laid the scene of his work beyond the range of our sympathies ; it is too distant in time or in country. Now, if this doctrine must be received as truth, then will follow one of the most singular and amazing deductions imaginable. What, indeed, becomes then of the historic interest of the early books of the Bible ? What becomes of Homer ? They are surely as distant in point of time, as any work written in the present day can be. Nay, what becomes of the most splendid productions of the ancients ? If distance

of time bounds our sympathies, then must they all be swept away together. The Greek and Roman Epics; the magnificent Dramas and Lyrics, which roused the ancient world with trumpet-tones; all are consigned to oblivion;—Æschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, and Pindar, are become empty names; their works—dreams, which have evaporated in the night of time, into vague shadows, and have ceased to stir the spirit and the blood of the living world.

But is it thus? We know it is not: but we may, perhaps, be told, that this doctrine does not apply to the works of the ancients, written on the active events, or built upon the living spirit of their own age; but to those of modern writers, who go now back into far centuries for their themes. The names of Milton and Shakspeare—of almost every truly great modern writer, falsify the assertion. If we admit this creed, we must give up the *Dion* and *Laodamia* of Wordsworth,—poems which the highest judges have ever pronounced amongst the noblest of his productions; we must give up *Thalaba* and the *Curse of Kehama*, for they are laid in countries with which we have few local sympathies—little, except the groundwork of human nature to excite us; and which, in fact, travel on into the worlds of pure imagination, and occupy themselves with airy creatures, far beyond the range of humanity. The same charge applies as well to *Lalla Rookh*, and the *Epicurean*, and to the splendid tales of *Salathiel* and *Valerius*. All these works must, on this theory,

be pronounced totally dull and uninteresting to the present generation—a confession, if once admitted, that must make this generation appear most dull and uninteresting itself.

But should it be said, that the early incidents of the Bible derive their interest from their influence on our present and eternal destinies,—that Milton's Epic is recommended by the same cause,—I deny the inference; for who does not know so much of his own feelings, as to perceive that while his imagination is occupied with the early narrations of Scripture, he thinks of nothing less than their religious influence? He is at first absorbed by their beauty,—he afterwards reflects on their importance. I assert their interest to arise, if not entirely, yet in a powerful and preponderating degree, from their own intrinsic beauty and conformity to the great principles of human nature, and to the quenchless thirst of the human mind after whatever is beautiful, pathetic, or sublime.

To put the matter to the severest test,—whence derive the Arabian Nights' Entertainments their intense interest? Not surely from time or place; not surely because they have aught to do with our destinies, or can gratify, for a moment, the feverish thirst for fashionable scandal, which confers its charm upon the novel of what is called High Life. These wild tales are laid in distant times,—in distant countries,—in which there exists for us no further cause of interest than in a hundred other

distant nations. They violate every probability a thousand ways. They abound with creatures that partake of no one human property; yet, spite of this, they are, and will be, till the world grow old, possessed of a mighty and absorbing interest.

In what, then, does this interest consist?—in what the true and lasting interest of every good work? Not so much of it is dependent on the times, and people, and manners, that are about us, as on their foundations being laid in human nature, and their superstructure raised in a true knowledge of that love of the marvellous, the beautiful, the new, the magnificent, and the tender, which for ever haunts the human soul; and as far as the range of human nature extends, — ay, farther, infinitively farther, into the illimitable and inexhaustible worlds of creative imagination—will a living and breathless interest follow the flight of genius.

It is easy, then, to demonstrate that almost all the really good works of ancient and modern times have succeeded, independent of the scene or time of their action; and on the other hand, we would ask, what bad work have such causes long buoyed up?—without them, what good work has failed? We ask in vain. A good work will succeed, in spite of time and place—a bad one will not succeed, with them, beyond that short and contemptible moment which the hankerers after personalities devote to the hurried act of devouring them.

If, therefore, a work comes before us, that fails to seize upon our attention, and to warm our hearts, let us be sure that it is not because it is laid in this or that time,—amid this or that people; but because it is not constructed in accordance with the great principles of human nature; or, if it do not violate these, it is because it is too feeble to compel the secret springs of the heart, or too heavy to climb up into the regions of the imagination. Let us be sure that a master hand can clothe the wildest dweller on the outskirts of the world with interest; nay, that he can throw an attractive glory over the imaginary habitants of the remotest regions of the universe;—over a shadow—a thought—a non-entity. It is therefore with the firmest confidence that I again ask, in the words of Herder, which I have taken for my motto, “Is not the whole of God’s earth the dwelling-place of man? If Aganippe, Arethusa, Dirce, and Cephissus, rush on pleasantly; why should not the Jordan, the Cyr, the Ganges, also pour refreshing waves?—why not even a brook in the Thebaic desert?”

And in this confidence, I have dared to travel back to the earliest days of the world for subjects of imagination. It is true that Milton, Gesner, Montgomery, and Byron, have been there before me in poetry, and have proved that in that delicious art, there is a power to draw glory and delight from those dim and partially revealed times; but it has long appeared to me, that those brief glimpses

into the fate and fashion of the primitive nations might be followed out, here and there, by the imagination, without at all interfering with the current of divine history, into prose stories of no trivial power and pathos. I have made the attempt; and if it be a failure, I seek no shelter from the plea of the antiquity of my theme; for, in truth, neither time nor space can afford such apology; the cause of success or failure, must be sought in the work itself. It is not the date, nor the scene of a fiction which must stamp its value, but the manner in which it is executed. It need not be asked where, or when the plot of a work is laid, but whether it is alive with the fervid energy of creative genius.

There is one recent work, which has been particularly pointed out to me, as an instance of the danger of laying a story too far from our own times,—“The Temple of Melekartha.” If this remarkable production has disappointed its anonymous, but highly gifted author, let any one look into it and he will see far other causes than the epoch it celebrates, to militate against its popularity. It has split upon a rock where many a fine spirit has been wrecked;—it has suffered in a vain attempt to combine into a harmonious whole, what never can be so combined to any extent—popular narrative and philosophical disquisition. A little narrative, it is true, may be mingled in a large quantity of grave argument with advantage, or a little grave argument in much narrative; but if

they bear any sort of equality of proportion, they destroy each other. Narrative is a stream;—if it be eloquent and impassioned, it is a rapid stream;—but disquisition is a rock;—he whose spirit is borne vehemently along the torrent of impetuous narrative, must avoid it, or be dashed to pieces. In the heated temper of our minds, in the glow and gush of our imaginations, we turn aside from anything like disquisition, not with indifference, but with abhorrence and contempt. Let any one recall the effect of the reading of Rousseau's "Nouvelle Heloise" upon him,—the unnatural and intolerable alternation of the rush of impetuous incident, and of pages of sentiment, which even its unequalled eloquence could not teach you to endure,—and then let him not wonder at the desolating effect of mingled narrative and disquisition. The "Temple of Melekartha" abounds with some of the most splendid instances of imaginative description in the language; it is also rich in pages on pages of deep and practical wisdom,—but it is the misfortune of these great things, to be compelled into an unpropitious union. In either department—in pure narrative, or in pure disquisition on the philosophy of government, and of human society, the author of "The Temple of Melekartha" could only shew himself, to be at once acknowledged a great master.*

* Since writing this, I have had every reason to believe that he has shewn himself such, by a series of works of the latter class well known to the public.

Another instance, that it is genius that consecrates a subject, has just occurred to me. The "Telemachus" of Fenelon, and the "Sethos" of the Abbé Terrasson, are parallel works. Both were written in the same age; both imbraced antique subjects; both were written with a similar purpose;—to develope in a fiction, a philosophical design. Fenelon has mingled so much didactic matter with his story, that he has rendered his work in places very heavy, yet he has imbued it with so much genius, that it is still read by the young with delight; Terrasson has deluged his narrative in the driest antiquarian details, and wanting, moreover, the genius of his prototype, his work never became popular, and exists now only an obscure treasure cell, whence modern adventurers may fetch much convertible matter, as Moore has freely done, in the marvellous ordeals of the Neophyte, in his "Epicurean."

It only remains for me to say, that these legends have been written three years, and that their publication has been delayed by causes beyond my control. One of the smallest has been published in the "Literary Souvenir" for 1830.

Nottingham, Jan. 1835.

THE PILGRIMAGE OF PANTIKA.

CHAPTER I.

I, Pantika, whom men call the venerable Pantika of Mount Taurus, have this day completed my hundred and twentieth year. By the blessing of God, I am full of health and peace. I could not, it is true, spring over the hills with the vigorous step which once was mine; I could not sustain the toils and privations of boundless travel, as once I did; but in my cave, I am unconscious of any decay. My heart beats strong and happily; the zest of life is unabated within me; my hand guides the pen steadily as of old; my spirit directs it with keen ardour along the unwearying line; a thousand glorious memories float undimmed from many years, from many lands, from the cogitations and conversations of many triumphant hours; and though my hair, which once curled short, dark, and thickly

around my head, now hangs in long and snowy locks upon my shoulders, my eye is sharp and percipient as ever. I can look round my cave, and cast a clear and rapturous glance upon the hoarded treasures of a long, long life,—not the sordid earth which feeble men call wealth, but the wisdom of the wise of many regions; the science, the records, and the experience of many famous states,—one day to enrich and emblazon my own;—and when I look abroad, God! what a transport is mine! Below me shine the roofs and fanes of my native Tarshish. I hear the hum of its busy streets and quays; I hear the songs and cheery voices of its bold and reckless mariners; I see its ships issuing forth and coming in from the great Lavant sea. I see its shores, green with luxuriant laurels and myrtles, as when I was a boy: and when I think that two generations have passed away, and a third is fast hurrying on,—that they who staid at home only to amass wealth, or went abroad only to discover it, are dead; and I, who, careless of life, yet greedy of knowledge, have dared all the perils of all the lands of the peopled earth, am here, as hale, as dauntless, as joyous as

ever—God ! I again exclaim, it is the most marvellous of all the marvellous things which the wide and wonderful earth has shewn me. And whereunto can I attribute it?—but that, whereas men when they commence the career of life, continually pray to the gods to grant them riches and honours, I most fervently prayed (boy as I was, and I now know whence the wisdom came), that my heart might be saved from those insatiable and universal passions ; that I might never for a moment care one iota for gold, or the homage of the vulgar multitude : but that it might be my lot to go through the broad and unknown earth ; to behold men of all countries ; to witness their various fortunes ; to glean up their choicest wisdom ; and, deeming that their destiny is one, since their nature is one, to draw from the whole of my experience, a clear and confident persuasion of what that destiny may be ; —and, oh God ! how hast thou enriched me ! That prayer and desire must have proceeded from thee, and therefore thou hast blessed them wonderfully.

When I was but a youth, and ranged the fields and mountains round my native city, with my comrades, lying in ambush for the coneys, as they

issued in troops from the clefts of the rocks, to sport or bask in the sunshine; climbing to the nest of the falcon, or vulture; or sending our arrows after the kid of the hills; the spirit of my life was so sweet to me, that I desired to possess it for ever. I shuddered at the thought of death, and I asked my fellows if this life in the heart, which was so strong and so pleasant, might not live on, though the heart itself died?—but they only laughed at my question, and said—“What mattered it? We were alive then,—and when we were dead, what mattered it?” I asked the old and the wise in the city, but they said they knew not; and went away to ask of the changes of the winds,—of the arrival of vessels,—of the success, or disasters of voyages; and as they walked along the streets, they said to one another, with solemn nods, and significant looks,—“Ah, ah! merchant Mardius has had good fortune; or merchant Dictanus has sped no worse than I predicted: the vessels are lost; the caravan has been assaulted and plundered; or this new country, which these speculators have sought, and of which we have heard such golden stories, turns out to be nothing.” But of my question, and of

the life within them, they seemed to care little beyond the present.

But I could not rest like them. I was desperate to keep, and to hold the life of my thoughts; and often, when I sate in the desert alone, beneath some great rock, or woke at midnight in my bed, the thought that I must one day utterly perish, wrung my spirit with indescribable agony. I rolled to and fro in a cold and convulsive pain; and with my forehead gushing with the dews of terrible anguish, I cried unto any god that would hear me, and tell me that I should live for ever. As I grew up, these terrible apprehensions sent into me, thoughts and feelings that seemed to be solely my own. I deemed that there must be truths and knowledge that my countrymen, ardently devoted to commerce, knew not; and I determined to seek them through the unknown earth. I have sought! I have found! oh, many are the evils, measureless the darkness, the vileness, the cruelty which I have seen in the abodes of men. How they wound, persecute, and destroy each other; how they pervert, or see not the blessings of fairest climates; how they are crushed,

and stupified, and debased, and disfigured into something worse than the apes of the forest, by the everlasting and unrelenting savageness of others. How they cling unto their bitter regions, like desert plants, because they sprung there; how others, restless in their own abundant places, pluck from the earth the iron which God concealed in it, that they might find it, and cultivate with it their rich soil; but they go forth, and with it smite to the dust the possessors of other lands, who are better than they; and how the destroyers of men, and the propagators of idolatrous fables, subdue and dominate over foolish nations, far and wide. These things have I seen; and have trodden many a thousand leagues, with a heart full of indignation and pity. But I have also seen better things. I have found the God of the World! I have found his people—the guardians of his oracles! These oracles are mine! There! there! are the blessed and holy scrolls for ever in my sight. Keenly as the Gryphons, who in the Scythian wilds are said to guard the gold from the thievish Arimaspians, do I watch them:—but my soul is at rest; I know that I shall live for ever!

Two generations are gone : I am dwelling with the third. The elders are dead ; my companions have followed them ; and from vast and repeated wanderings, I have returned to live amongst a race which is mine, and yet seem strangers. Yet amongst them I have not lacked either honour or love. Who is more happy than Pantika ? My cave aloft in the southern slope of the mountain, is spacious and dry. The noblest vines cling to the rock in front, and hang their long, pliant shoots, and heavy purple clusters down before my windows, on which the sun pours his cordial rays. I rise with the earliest dawn of summer, and still behold below me the city which gave me birth ; the hills around which my boyish feet have trod, all green, and shining with a dewy freshness ; and my heart leaps with gladness as I behold the sun rise from the eastern ocean, cast his ruddy flames over the flickering waters, that flash and blaze, and roll themselves far and wide, as with an immortality of beauty and power. I see him climb in his strength till all the ranges of the hills below, which rise one above another like giant steps, as they approach these mountains, gleam with the opal hues of morning. I see the mists

rising and melting from the intervening valleys; and the sky above them, all crimsoned with clouds, or filled with a pearly radiance. I see the herdsman drive forth his cattle to their pastures, and hear his ascending songs. I see the fair damsels speed to the mountain brook, and go carolling back, bearing the pitcher on their hand. I see the hunter mounting from steep to steep, vigorous as the roe which he hopes soon to discover in the upland thicket; and, from the far sea, a white sail, flashing at intervals, bears my spirit to distant lands. These do I witness, with the flight and cries of many brilliant birds, and the voice of many a creature rejoicing in the wild; and I am silent and glad.

During the sultry silence of the day, I repose in the shade of my cave, and unfold and trace many a precious scroll gathered in my wanderings; or pen down what I have seen and heard. As the coolness of evening approaches, I hear the measured tread of grave elders advancing to my cave, who love to listen to the laws and religions, the wealth and wars of other lands, and do not disdain to seek for my experienced guidance in the difficult moments of their own government. I hear the

light laughter and sportive voices of the young as they ascend merrily to my abode, to learn of the loves and adventures of strange and far-off people; and to pluck with jocund words the clusters, which they tell me, sadly encumber my vine. Blessings on them! I love the sight of their happy countenances,—the sound of their happy tongues. They cast a sunshine round the peaceful evening of my days; and I felicitate myself, that I have made the morning of theirs beautiful, by that knowledge which renders men triumphant over every mortal fear.

But Cydna! sweet Cydna! thou grand-child of an early playmate,—tenfold blessings upon thee! When I see thy light and lovely form in succinct and buskined array, and thy rattling quiver slung from thy fair shoulder; thy horned bow in thy hand, bounding with thy gallant brother, like fabled Dian, to the hills; or when I see thee in the simple elegance of evening; see thy laughing, beauteous face; hear thy frank and merry tongue, I think on many lovely creatures in many distant lands, but I find none so pleasant as thee. Come to day! Come as thou art wont! Make merry

with my cave,—with my cylindrical cases, stuffed with endless scrolls; and say, as thou hast often said, “Dear Pantika, when thou art gone, who will read all these musty books? They are very wise, I doubt not; but wisdom is little set by at Tarshish, so just write down a little thin roll, for my especial use; and let it be of those pleasant stories which thou hast told us young and giddy people, who love nothing wiser half so well. Write them down, good Pantika, and they shall last for ever!” Come Cydna, thou laughter-loving and irreverent maiden, and behold, this day—this memorable day of my hundred and twentieth year, thy wish about to be fulfilled. This day wilt thou find me already engaged in writing thy choice volume. Forty-five large tomes have I already indited of my travels; seven, of the precious maxims of the wise of all nations; twenty, of the laws; seventeen, of compressed and select histories; nine, of the origin and varieties of religions; and five on the philosophy of all these learned works, wherein I have recorded my own deductions and opinions, founded on a century of perambulatory observations, anxious scrutiny and reflection,—a

precious legacy to some future genius of my country.

In these might be found copious details of my travels; the strange deeds and curious manners of the people whom I have visited; my own perils and wonderous escapes. For I have crossed dreadful mountains, and more dreadful deserts; and have often been in imminent jeopardy from savage beasts, and more savage men; the blood-thirstiness of superstition; the suspicious cunning of fearful policy; the insolent outrage of proud and domineering warriors and chieftains. I have gasped in the desert sands, in the last stage of horrible exhaustion; frozen in the dark and dreary north; and shivered in midnight thickets and caves; but of these I now relate little, for I have already left them on record, and they who seek may find. As in my painful pilgrimages, I have passed over vast and various wildernesses in order to reach some small paradise, or the scene of some marvellous event, so shall I now pass over the ordinary wilderness of my life, and pause upon some few and choice histories, which I have gleaned up for thee Cydna, and hearts like thine. Whoever

would know more than I here give of the countries I mention, I again say, once for all, let him consult my forty-five volumes of travels, the seven of maxims, the twenty of laws, the seventeen of history, the nine on religions, or the five of general philosophical disquisitions and comments, as his particular inquiries may happen to direct him.

As I traversed immense and famous regions, and encountered some very remarkable passages in my first pilgrimage, I am disposed here to speak of them, because, as I am especially inditing these pages for the young, it may not be uninteresting to them to know something of my youth, which many affect to doubt of ever having been; and which, indeed, is a thing of other times;—because it is very pleasant to me to live again in those days,—and because, moreover, it made me acquainted with a people, and a knowledge, which will be transcendently conspicuous in these pages.

CHAPTER II.

I have already spoken of my boyhood, and the desires of a clearer knowledge of man and his destiny which early haunted me ; and of my resolve to traverse the world in quest of this knowledge. Well, strangers of many divers nations were collected continually in Tarshish. As the most ancient of maritime states, as the school of wisdom and elegant arts, and of adventurous commerce, notwithstanding the wayward speech of the jocular Cydna—that wisdom is little valued at Tarshish—the bold and the speculative, those desirous of acquiring science or wealth, were drawn hither, as at this day, from every known land. Tyre and Zidon, the flourishing daughters of our ancient city, sent their hardy sons, scorched with the heat and tinged with the darkening winds of every climate ; the far-trafficking people of Aramea and Madai, who cross with numerous caravans the immense, torrid, and dreadful deserts to the remote India, carrying thither

our wares, and bringing thence spices, gold, rare gems, vessels and fabrics of singular fashions and wondrous dyes: Ethiopians, Egyptians, natives of the western isles of Javan; and the traders, and swarthy wandering warriors and magians from the eastern plains of Cush, and Elam, and Havilah. These I sought after diligently; and with continual labour and insatiable avidity made myself familiar with their various tongues, and inquired after their different lands, customs, faiths, and traditions. A new world was opened to me. Each described his own country in such terms that, beautiful as Tarshish seemed to me, I began to imagine that it must be the meanest corner of the earth; and my spirit was on fire to visit realms so much more glorious. Much did I hear too of their histories and their gods; much that dazzled my imagination and stirred my desires, but at the same time confounded and perplexed me with inexplicable contradictions.

Yet amid all, I discovered traces of great events which had happened alike to all people; my eye was continually pointed backward to an ancient time, when all men dwelt together, and had one tongue, one abiding, and one God. I perpetually

heard of marvellous events which had occurred in the regions of the east—where all agreed the first human abode had been—the destruction and renovation of man. My soul was kindled to inexpressible fervency of desire. I longed to tread the very glades of Eden ;—to behold the mount once crowned with the ship of the Great Father—of that ancient and mysterious being known by the many names of Ilus, Cronus, Noe, Nu, Menu, Menes, Hu, Bodhu or Yatyavrata, when he escaped from the howling dales of the grievous waters. I longed to plunge into the far immensities of unknown lands, where I deemed that vast treasures of ancient knowledge yet lay concealed.

The distress that prayed upon my spirit when it first was roused to inquiry, had now given way to a far different feeling. I was filled with a triumphant ardour and buoyancy of heart, that led me to thirst for adventure, to despise all danger, and even, while I was overflowing with the luxurious consciousness of life, to reck little for life itself ; for a new spiritual horizon had spread its boundless circle around me. I found all the various people with whom I conversed, possessed of as various a belief

of a multitude of gods; but all uniting in some great, leading principles, that converged, in the shadowy distance of antiquity, as to a common centre; and that centre was the great Nous, or primeval, eternal, and infinite Mind, whence all, both gods and men, proceeded.

It was here that my soul flew, and clung as unto its most precious hope. It was this dimly known, yet universally accredited principle, which seemed alone to respond to that cry and agonising desire of my innermost being, after the source of its existence;—it was this alone which seemed to form a centre of sure dependence, for the continuance and inviolable safety of that life in the heart which vehemently craved still to be, and fought with tears and agonies against the apprehensions of annihilation. It was this which seemed to breathe, and develope itself in the harmonious unity of nature; in the one fair and crystal sky overarching all lands; in the eternal order of the seasons; in the rejoicing spirit which animated the vagrant winds,—the gladsome rolling or leaping waters,—in the sustenance and joy of all living creatures; and which the oneness of human nature, under all the modifications

of minor beliefs, of national customs, of soil and climate, seemed to claim as its only and common parent.

I had seized upon this great faith of the whole human family, as upon the precious charter of life—immortal life, and nothing could shake it from my soul; therefore was my bosom full of light and joy; and I confidently trusted, in the regions of the east, in the birth-place of man, to discover yet brighter and surer knowledge of what we are, and are to be.

I was of one of the wealthiest and most respected families of Tarshish; but I never enjoyed much parental love and cherishing. My parents both died in my infancy, and left me to the charge of my father's bosom friend, Podonius; and well had he justified that charge. In my childish years he had caressed and watched over me with the love which he had borne my father; and with the tears and tenderness with which his loss had left him for ever impressed. I was placed in the hands of the most discreet and affectionate females, and, as I grew, was transferred to the most renowned and grave philosophers for instruction. Under them, I had reaped all the knowledge which Tarshish, the

great school of science, could confer upon my years: and Podonius was elated with satisfaction in me, and with golden hopes for me in the future. He had seen the assiduity with which I had sought the society of the most distinguished and intelligent foreigners frequenting our city; the knowledge I had gathered of their tongues, countries, and institutions; and he regarded it with the highest satisfaction, as a foundation on which I should hereafter build a superstructure of vast wealth and mercantile distinction. He had seen the ardour with which I had likewise followed the chase with my comrades in the neighbouring mountains; and, so far from checking, had encouraged me in hardy and adventurous habits. They would, he said, fit me the better to sustain the character of a merchant of Tarshish, who should not merely be qualified to sit at home in his counting-house, and preserve the balance of his books; but should know how to estimate and sympathise with his crews and captains, in the toils and dangers of their various and arduous voyages: nay, should be able, on any emergency, to go forth himself, and lead the way to the execution of some necessary, but nice and diffi-

cult enterprise. It would provide me, moreover, with that stock of health and robust vigour, which the cares and anxieties of a merchant, who holds in his hand so many important and precarious interests, render so peculiarly desirable.

When, therefore, I was nearly arrived at manhood, the good old Podonius one day took me aside into his summer parlour, with an air of anxious, bustling gravity; and closing the door carefully behind him, without a word, pointed briskly to a place on the divan, where I might seat myself; took his seat also opposite, at some little distance; and fixing his eyes upon me with a solemn eagerness, remained some time in silence.

I was sensible that some important disclosure was at hand; but what, I knew not; and my brain began issuing to itself a host of queries, but to no purpose. I shall never forget that moment, nor its sensations. Bold as I am by nature, there is something in the solemn gravity of the aged, that has always awed and subdued me in a mysterious manner, as if the spirit of the divinity dwelt in them, and, turning its regards upon me, transfixed me with sensations of its high sanctity, and my own unworthiness.

Such were the feelings which then rushed over me, from the ceremonious air and proceeding of the good old man; and they have left impressed upon me, with the vividness of life, the minutest features and circumstances of the time and place. It was a fine summer evening. The ample windows looking into the venerable man's garden, were thrown wide; the rich azure and gold-bordered curtains flung back. Above, the sky shone in clear and tranquil splendour; below, the sunshine as tranquilly lay upon wall, and leaf, and flower; and lit up, with a variety of rainbow hues, the falling waters of the fountain that played in the lawn before us. By its side the two aged storks, which during my memory were tenants of that garden, reared, in slumbrous stillness, their perpendicular forms. The turtle-doves, which made their abode in the wide-spreading cedar in the centre of the garden, had come out, and lay basking on the broad, flat masses of dark foliage towards the west; and not a sound invaded the repose of the retired and enclosed garden, but the hum of the city, that poured murmuringly over its walls.

When the old man had gazed upon me for a

little time, he thus addressed me, with a sigh, and in a tone that seemed to augur some rather melancholy detail:—"My dear Pantika, thy form and face bring so strongly before me the remembrance of one, to me the pleasantest of men, that, joined to this day which is the anniversary of that on which he was lost to thee and me, they nearly overpower me, and may make my present business with thee seem something sad, whereas it ought to be much the contrary.

"I praise the gods that they have denied the prayer of my passion, and fulfilled the better one of my hope. I prayed to them, on the day that they took away the friend and brother of my soul, that they would take me also; but when I called to mind thy father's dying charge, and looked upon thy innocent helplessness, I prayed again that I might live to see thee what I once saw him. My better desire is fulfilled. I have watched thee, like a full and glad river, rolling through the plain of life. I have seen thee, like the bold ibex, bounding from cliff to cliff in the strength and joy of youth. I have heard thy praise from the lips of the wise around me, and my heart has been like

the roe, which in its fulness hides its head in the thicket, and is glad. But life flies fast, Pantika; thou hast enjoyed thy youth to the full: it is now fit that thou shouldest take up a little of that load of care which every good citizen must sustain. Thy father was an adventurous merchant: men saw and acknowledged his sure sagacity; and had not death cut him off too soon, he would have shone one of the noblest senators of Tarshish. That merchant,—that citizen,—that senator, be thou! To-morrow thou shalt begin a new era of life:—to-morrow thou shalt be a merchant of Tarshish!”

The old man's words had tendered my spirit; but surprised at the nature of the disclosure, when I expected something mysterious and melancholy, I did not sufficiently consider his feelings, and abruptly replied that I declined all idea of commerce.

As I spoke, the aged Podonius sprung like a youth, from the divan to his feet; fixed his eyes in flashing astonishment upon me, and exclaimed,—“Pantika! Pantika! art thou mad? Wilt thou break my heart? Dost thou design to imitate the foolish youths of this generation, that, instead of

emulating the grave reputation of their fathers, use their wealth, only to cover themselves with shame? —to spread their tables for the vain and profligate; open their halls to the dancer and courtesan; listen to the strains of those Ionian rhapsodists, that infect them with dreams of foolish renown? Wilt thou mount thy chariot glittering with chased gold, with carved imagery, and soft with purple cushions, —and with thy steeds, four a-breast, whirl through the astonished and indignant city? Shall I see thee, instead of sending forth thy stout-built ships, fraught with substantial merchandise, to a hundred ports,—trimming and spreading to the breeze, the silken sails of thy sumptuous pleasure-barge, and sailing along the shore, the admiration of fools? Wilt thou assume the garb and manners of every country but thy own; and look with contempt upon all those homely and sober modes and maxims, which have raised Tarshish from nothing, to renown?"

The old man sunk exhausted with his excitement, drew the curtain before his face, and wept aloud. I perceived my error. I threw myself at his feet, and hastened to explain that no such views

were mine ; but that I had set my heart upon travel, and trusted to gather knowledge, and return to benefit my country, more than by the wealth of a life of prosperous commerce. In an instant, though I saw that his soul was wounded to the quick, by the disappointment of his views, and by his fears for my safety in foreign travel, the good Podonius was laying plans, and writing letters on my behalf, to his numerous correspondents in the most distant corners of the world. When he found that my views tended towards the east, he immediately secured me friends in a caravan, about to commence its march ; and would have sent servants, camels, and stuff, sufficient to supply a caravan themselves ; had I not, again to his amaze, declared that I should take no creature but myself. I dared not, however, unfold to him my real views. I received on my head his blessings and his tears. I clasped the old man in an affectionate embrace, and departed from the city with the caravan. It was not long, however, before I turned aside from its course, and, with my bow in my hand, I bounded like a hunter to the hills.

CHAPTER III.

WHEN I had ascended the heights above my native city, and saw its roofs and fanes glittering below me; I stood for a moment, and bade it from my heart an affectionate farewell. "Adieu!" I exclaimed, "thou beloved spot, and all the beloved beings within thee. Though I fly thee, yet art thou to me the dearest spot on earth. I know not whether heaven has decreed my return to thee; but if I come not back, thou wilt never miss one solitary being from thy multitude. I see thy gallant ships, even now, stretching away from thy port, to those of every shore of the known world;—to Syria, to Egypt, to Cyrene, to Mauritania, to the isles, and the fair and far Atlantis of the west. In those voyages, many of thy sons will fall;—those that return, will return to pour wealth into thy bosom. If I fall, what matters it that it be in some yet unknown land; but if I return, it shall be with treasures that shall enrich thee for ever."

I cast one eager glance over all those beloved scenes, and darted away, seeking to drown reflection and emotion in the rapidity of flight. I directed my course to that wild and jagged gap in the mountains, through which flows the rapid stream of the Aratus. Above my head, frowned its dark and shattered rocks; at my feet rushed the resounding and impetuous torrent: here scarcely leaving me room to thread my way between the cliffs and itself; here fairly obliging me to brave its strong, clear waters, that threatened to bear me back to my native fields. Having issued from these defiles, I turned eastward, and traversed, with an exulting heart, the land of Aramea. Oh, that I could depict the joyousness of my soul as I went along! But who can tell the sublime passion of the eagle, as he soars from mountain to mountain, through the liquid ocean of heaven? Who can display the fiery heart of the wild white steed, as he scours with his fellows, the boundless Cuthean plains? I seemed to have cast behind me every earthly care and fear; and to have found, in the perfect communion with nature, the true secret of life. And verily, I was moving amid scenes where

nature appears in all her power and beauty. From day to day I advanced, as in a radiant dream, through the most luxuriant and delicious fields; by the swiftest and most living streams, which here wound brightly between banks overhung with flowers, and here came dashing down riotously from the hills. I trod through deep grass, and a wilderness of blooms; and my eyes wandered with unwearying delight, amongst forests, and upland fields, and far-winding vales, embossed with rustic dwellings of the natives; and, far on either hand, to the summits of mountains that clothed themselves, morning and evening, with every lovely and ever-varying hue of rose, and purple, and violet; and in the bright noon, with the radiance of sunshine flung from the mirror of their eternal snows. I rested at will, and conversed with the hospitable people; and beheld, with equal admiration, the riches with which nature has endowed them, and the active spirit with which those riches are enjoyed. Magnificent vines threw their pliant arms from tree to tree, and hung down to the admiring eyes, their heavy purple bunches. The fig, the olive, the pomegranate, and innumer-

able other fruits, solicited the hands; their bees murmured over the fields, and brought home plentiful sweets, and their indefatigable nature laid hold on this abundance, and prepared from it wealth and happiness. With their wines, their preserved fruits, their steeds, which ranged the rich pastures in thousands, — the careful Arameans daily set forth to distant lands, and brought back the sources of refined enjoyment and independence.

One eve I approached a fair, broad lake, in the centre of mountainous woods. The sky was cloudless,—the air was transparent as crystal; but still, as if nature slept. Not a breeze moved; not a leaf quivered on the trees; not a flower that stooped over the water, and was mirrored therein, bowed its beauteous head. All was still, balmy, and lovely. The broad face of the water was smooth and bright as the heavens above it. Not a fish, leaping from its depths, disturbed it with a momentary circle;—a blossom, falling from some overhanging tree, scarcely dimpled it. Save that the birds in the woody heights around, sung and called to each other with the shrill earnestness of life,—I should have deemed myself in some

splendid dream: as it was, I marvelled at the profound, slumbrous, beamy quietness of the spot, and hardly ventured to move lest I should break the spell of its sacred repose. A mingled odour of exquisite richness rose from the flowers at my feet; and my eyes fixed themselves in contemplative astonishment at the magnificent woods and cliffs, which, in a variety of light and shade, stood around, and mirrored themselves gloriously in the hushed water, and on the soft, beauteous colours that clad their summits.

As I stood, a girl issued from a shadowy glade, that opened itself between the mighty and mossed stems of aged trees, driving before her a troop of goats, with a large scarlet lily of many resplendent heads; and her flowing ringlets intertwined, in girlish phantasy, with blossomed twigs of myrtle and jasmine, and the bells of hyacinths. I asked, "where am I?" and she replied, "in Eden!" Eden! —the name fell upon my heart with a shock. Was I truly in Paradise, and gazing on its hallowed features! I seemed yet more wrapped in a dream than before. A glad perturbation filled my spirit. I moved to and fro in the restlessness of delight;

and wandered, again and again, in half-doubting, half-triumphant wonder over all the fairy scene. I flung myself on the margin of the lake, and my tears dropped into the flood. My soul wandered away into a thousand glorious traditions,—into a reverie of winged thoughts. Night fell over me. I slept; and my dreams brought before me our first radiant parents, and all the moving incidents of the opening world. When I woke in the morning, a change had passed over the scene. The dreamy charm of evening was gone. A breeze was shaking the boughs of the odoriferous forests, and waking their solemn voices to music. It curled the water into living waves, over which a thousand light-winged birds sported to and fro; a thousand glad cries of living things were heard around; and myriads of the fairest flowers trembled and bowed in the breeze, rejoicing in the general joy. I gazed with still deepening wonder, at the rich beauty of everything around me. The woods, here and there, threw their dark splendid masses of foliage over the water; gorgeous flowers, like cups of silver and gold, glowed amid their affluent boughs; and creeping plants, all interwoven with

aromatic blooms, flung themselves from tree to tree: here hanging in garlands and festoons from the lower branches; here twining in festive wreaths round the tall grey stems, or issuing to light on the summit of the loftiest tree in the forest, and crowning it with a tiara of glory; while below, the jasmine twined its starry blossoms through every odorous thicket.

I sat upon a large stone upon the shore: behind me rose those glorious scenes!—lilies, hyacinths, and a thousand floral creations glowed on the green banks; and violets, in legions, breathed from their hidden abodes, their sweetness upon me. The waves came curling and breaking at my feet, full of life and music; and far, far before me, creation smiled in warm and boundless beauty. I looked to the skies, and thanked the God of gods, that he had set me free from earthly cares and desires, and had given me to feel all the wild glory of his eternal works. I felt that he had already blessed me in my choice,—that gladness which clothes the bosom of creation like sunshine, was mine; and it mattered not, whither I carried, or where I laid down my life.

But why do I delay here? For days, for weeks, for months, I wandered on; borne by a spirit of delight, such as must possess the inhabitants of heaven. I beheld Ararat, the mountain of the ark. I gazed on its stupendous bulk; on its two summits, glittering with eternal ice, and clad in colours of the rose. I paced its wide and peopled plain; I lingered on the bosky shores of the great sea of Kasp; I traversed the sultry land of Havilah; I crossed the burning deserts, where nothing lives but the scorpion and the fierce ostrich, that in winged troops scour the torrid wilds; and, like spirits of evil, vent their rage in hissing and laughter, and fill the night with their groans and horrible complainings. I ascended into the mountains of Sephar.

CHAPTER IV.

COULD I consent to dwell in any other land than that which gave me birth; could I be content to lead a free and jocund life, untouched by the cares which, in civilized existence, consume and wither away being, in the anxiety to preserve and embellish it; could I abandon myself to the enjoyment of the amenities of earth and air, the beauty of nature's boldest scenes, the spontaneous luxury of its richest spots; the exulting transport of the chase; the society of the fairest women, and no mean intellectual delights, exempt from the restless fever of ambition,—in these mountains of Sephar would I have planted my abode. There, every variety of climate is known. Northward, the stupendous range of the Caucasus, hoary with perpetual winter, breathed its cool influence over a glorious region that exhibited the boldest features of mountain scenery, yet gradually declined in altitude to the very plains of torrid India. Within these limits what an endless

variety of landscape presented itself! Mountains of every character—the cold, the scathed, and ruinous—the forest-crowned, the green, and gently-swelling; dark precipices; wild, winding valleys—others, again, gentle and fair, and expanding their ample bosoms to the sun,—lakes, and woods, and undulating fields, and dwellings scattered through them in a diversity of groupings. Here some gloomy pine forest stood on a broad, airy height, between the lofty regions of lifeless winter, and the lower scenes of summer; where the hunter lay in ambush for the bear, and heard the wind sounding in the dark tops with a solemn sea-like roar. Here again were, lower down, wide mountainous fields, green as an emerald, scattered with light-waving flowers, fanned with cool fresh breezes, and beautified with scattered olives, tamarisks, and spreading forest trees. Again, lower down, were warm, luxurious valleys, huts of cane and palm leaves, and a beautiful people, living at ease amid beautiful scenes.

They were a branch of the great Cuthean race; possessing all their pride and untameable spirit; disdaining to labour the earth for their support; and nature seemed here to have indulged their disposi-

tion to the utmost. Pines, melons, the fruit of the vine and the date, of the palm and the pomegranate; nuts of many species; oranges and apples like gold; and a thousand luxurious and melting productions of tree, and shrub, and trailing plant, were presented to their hands. The men, in a cap, a light, close tunic, and buskins of the skins of beasts, prepared in the smoke of a fire of aromatic woods till they were as pliant as silk, and impregnated with a delightful odour; armed with a bow and arrows of cane, and a short javelin, mounted their fiery steeds, and went to war, or the chase, with equal gaiety; lurked in the thicket for the savage beast, or pursued, with steps of wonderful elasticity and speed, the flying antelope; and returned to their abodes to dance, to sing, and to enjoy the charms of love. The children, wandering through the airy fields, plucked the waving cotton from the tree, and the silken cones of the moth that hung in myriads in the mulberry groves; and the fair damsels wrought from them their elegant veils and vests, and dyed them with many a brilliant stain.

It was delightful to gaze on these lovely dames. A complexion of rich olive; large, dark, and ex-

pressive eyes ; a firm, yet graceful form, were set off by a tasteful simplicity of costume that could only accord with a happy climate. A silken veil, folded artfully round the head, leaving the locks full freedom to play upon the shoulders, and thrown back over them, constituted their head-dress. A pair of large pendant ear-rings glittering with gold and their own jewelled light ; bracelets of beaded pearls, and long chains of the same, hung from the neck over the silken bodice of purple, azure, or bright yellow, wrought richly with silver flowers and stars ; a full skirt that descended little lower than the knee, and anklets of twisted gold resting upon feet that touched the warm ground in naked beauty, completed their array.

As these fair creatures pursued their pleasant labours, sitting beneath the trees in front of their dwellings, the warriors would throw themselves on the green turf around, and join them in songs which had descended from the most ancient times.

They have no mode, or idea of recording their poetry, or history ; but, from age to age, a flood of stirring traditions, and poems bearing along with them the quaintness, fire, and simplicity of

antiquity, has flowed from mouth to mouth, and kept alive amongst them, a soaring and indomitable spirit. They love their country with a passionate love; yet do they tell of thousands, who have gone forth to fight, and to rule in other regions; and they themselves will pour forth spontaneously, such strains of living and glowing verse, as wonderfully agitate the spirit; and the women will take up those strains, and breathe, in the most melodious voices, tones, and sentiments, so thrilling and magical, that the soul is intoxicated with a strange extravagance, and is ready to arise and rush on danger to the death.

I accompanied the gallant mountaineers on a hunting expedition to the great sultry plains of the south; and beheld scenes of strange aspect. I saw the ponderous hippopotamus stalking through the towering reeds on the great river banks, and plunging sullenly in the waters; the gigantic elephant roamed the forests; stupendous serpents, and creatures as cruel, as lithe, and gliding as they; the brindled tigers, wound amongst the tall grass and canes—the hunter's terror. God of gods! these regions hast thou evidently appointed to be

the paradise of beasts. Thou hast crowned them with a terrible beauty ; thou hast made their life within them like a flaming fire, that, at a sound, a motion, kindles up into magnificent rage, and men tremble at their dreadfulness. To them are given the solitary places of the earth, and many a splendid, yet innocent creature, partakes their abode. I beheld troops of peacocks ranging over the sultry plains, spreading and shaking to the sun all the pageantry of their gorgeous, starry trains. Troop by troop, they swept by, like a sea of green and purple, and rainbow dyes ; while amongst the forest boughs, glanced glorious birds, scarlet, green, and azure, of strange, quick aspects, and wondrous cries.

But my object was not to linger amid pleasant abodes. I hastened on. I ascended the mighty northern mountains ; those dismal abodes of eternal cold, and for a time bade adieu to all life but my own. I advanced through regions of horrible solitude, where clouds and tempests were cast far below ; where the silence itself was dreadful ; where every object—the dark, gigantic crag, the glittering plains, the rent and pitch-dark chasms,

the icy path along the dizzy precipice, assumed features of dreary awfulness. Nature seemed to lift up the most terrific barriers to obstruct my progress, and each night came with the visage of sure destruction. I clambered through piercing cold and darkness, along the only path which offered, and that exhibited innumerable evidences of its own savage character. Steeds and men, who had, from year to year, sunk down and perished; nay, the very vultures which came to prey upon them, lay, fixed for ever, in crystal cerements of ice; and it seemed my fate to add one more to the number. I was in the midst of darkness: cold paralysed my weary limbs; and sounds full of fear and melancholy filled all the dolorous regions. The thunder of rocks, split by the power of frost from the mountain mass, ever and anon resounded through the night; and the wind, amid the chinks and chasms of the cliffs, wailed like sad, but malicious spirits. By marvellous good fortune, which has often attended me, I at length escaped from the terrible hills, and entered upon the great Cuthean plains.

A mighty change of scenery was now before me.

No longer a glowing climate ; mountains, fertile hills, and flowery fields : but boundless plains, white with saline incrustations ; brackish lakes, and streams margined with glittering salt. Behind me shone the great, snow-capped mountains ; before me, an endless level,—here bare, here scattered with a few saline plants, and here green with patches of wild liquorice. A cool, fresh air braced the frame, and filled the spirit with an elastic buoyancy that bore me fleetly on. Anon, I beheld a wide river winding through the desert, red as gold in the mists of morning ; and as these mists dispersed, I beheld the whole flat vale, clothed in verdure of vividest green, and filled with troops of wild, white horses. They descried me, and at once, the whole were in motion—in flight ! A shrill neigh rung around—a sound, as of thunder, arose from the earth, beaten with a thousand hoofs, and away dashed the strong, wild creatures, like a sea of impetuous billows,—their flying manes and tails, like snowy foam on its surface. Away ! away ! drove the powerful and triumphant animals—now wheeling and snorting in angry pride—now pausing with uplifted heads, vapour-breathing

nostrils, and bodies that quivered with the exuberance of their animal life and winged velocity, till lost in the dim, distant desert. Glorious creatures! who can behold them, nor long to partake of their strength of heart, to rush through the free wilderness like a meteor.

CHAPTER V.

BUT now a novel scene opened upon me. I found myself at once transported into the theatre of war. From the great southern mountains had descended the Indian king. Ambition, that blind and yet quick-sighted passion, blind to all it possesses, sharp to discern the possessions of others, suffered him not to rest in peace in his own immense territories; a tenth of which he had never seen. His palace, or his camp pavilion was his world, in which he had all that pampered man can desire; slaves, beauty, wealth, wine, and adulation. His slaves ruled him

with soft lies, and his provinces with hard steel and stripes. He was satiated with the immediate accomplishment of his wishes, yet he was not at rest; he heard of nations that were free, and he was indignant at the news; he heard of the wealthy mountains of the Cutheans, and he instantly resolved to possess them. Accordingly, his armies were put in motion; men, steeds, and elephants in thousands marched towards the northern hills. One would have thought that the passage of those dreadful mountains would have cooled his ardour; that his men and animals sinking by hundreds daily, cut down by excessive toils, by the rigorous cold to which their tender, sun-cherished bodies were totally strangers, by a variety of hardships and difficulties, would have softened his soul to pity, and have induced him to march back to ease and plenty; but ambition has no bowels of compassion. We talk of the universal gifts of nature, but it is certain that all her gifts are not universal; some men are born without consciences, and some without bowels of compassion: to martial monarchs, men are but so many targets, in which to fix their arrows when they please. For mountains, and ice, and snow,

and darkness, to cross the will of a great king, to whom millions of men bowed themselves to the dust, was enough to rouse the indignation of that human idol which men worship, as savages worship theirs—exactly in proportion as it is feeble and bloody. He commanded the obstacles to be swept away, and they were swept away; and with them the lives of some thousands of his followers. But what matters it? He saw it not; he felt it not; his tent was as warm; his couch as soft; his wine flowed as freely; his slaves bowed as low, and praised his tender mercies as much as ever;—so the miserable victims of his royal will, were left to bleach where they perished; and many steeds and elephants descended into the great Cuthean plains.

The mighty king, if he wished to possess the country, might easily do it, for he found in it neither men, beasts, nor abode. Before him, far as the eye could reach, were empty, solitary plains; and when he had made six days' march, he still beheld before him—vast, empty and solitary plains. They might still march on—but for what? There appeared no enemy to fight, no people to subdue, no emerald mountains to seize upon; and having

trusted to find a plentiful prey in the rich herds of the Cutheans, the army stores had been small, and now threatened famine.

The monarch was highly wroth on many accounts. He was wroth that nothing was brought to eat, when he commanded, except horse-flesh and the roots of wild liquorice; no, not even after he had kicked the slaves out of his tent, and ordered the head of the purveyor of his household to be struck off. He was angry at the scouts and foragers, because, instead of bringing tidings of flocks and herds, they still brought only tidings of great plains; and he was angry because there were men in the world who presumed to be free; and because nature mocked at his magnificent impotence. Back, therefore, rolled the Indian multitudes;—men, steeds, and elephants, towards the Caucasian hills. But now the scene changed! Behind them, on the distant horizon, suddenly appeared a black cloud, which poured down, not rain, but men. Like a hail, they came whirling along, battering, cutting down, and laying waste all before them. They harassed the rear of the Indian army terribly: and when it turned to oppose them, galled it not less

in front. The homeward march was kept up; for famine in the camp admitted of no pause; but when they caught sight of the Caucasian mountains, they saw also, at the same time, another hostile army, posted between themselves and the hills.

It was just at this crisis that I came upon the scene; and a new and most animated one it was. In the middle of the plain was seen the great Indian camp,—its thousands of tents glittering in the sun, with all their barbaric colours; in which red, yellow, and white predominated. Around were seen drawn out, its innumerable warriors, conspicuous by their dark forms, vests of cotton, and feathered tiaras;—here the elephants, shewing their gigantic bodies amongst them, covered with scarlet cloths, bordered with rich yellow fringe, and with bells and tassels of gold; and bearing on their backs, canopied cars filled with archers. Here rows of glittering war-chariots, files of cavalry; and all the vast intervals between them bristled with the spears of countless infantry. Beneath the mountains stood the battalions of the mountaineers; so posted, as evidently to shew their intention to defend the defiles, and prevent the return of the army.

North of the camp, shone the Cuthean chivalry, —a host of fine, active men, clad in close woollen vests; on their heads, brazen helmets; and mounted on impetuous white horses, that, as they pawed the ground in impatience, flashed to the sun their trappings and the breast-plates of brass, with which they were armed. Brass, either from partiality or necessity, appeared the common metal of the Cutheans,—of it were the heads of their arrows and javelins made.

The Indian army deemed it necessary to disperse these equestrian troops before it attacked the mountaineers, that they might not disturb its rear during the engagement. Therefore, at the sound of trumpet, kettledrum, and cymbal, forth spurred some thousands of Indian horse toward the Cutheans. These stood silent, as awaiting the onset, till the Indians came within javelin-throw; when suddenly they wheeled, as panic-struck, and fled northward before the enemy. The Indians raised a yell of triumph, and pursued with lightning speed. It was a glorious sight to see, that chase of innumerable numbers!—the white steeds that flew like the wind; the glittering brazen

appointments of the Cutheans; and the pursuing many-coloured Indian horsemen. Far over the plains they flew. The Indians were all on the stretch of eager curiosity. From the chariots, from the elephant-towers, protruded innumerable heads, following the flying pageant with devouring eyes of wonder and delight. But at once, when the horse were in the very horizon, suddenly was seen a pause—a stir—a confusion: suddenly it was discerned, that the Cuthean cavalry had wheeled right and left, with incredible velocity, and had thrown themselves into the rear of the Indian file. In a moment, these warriors found themselves, not in the rear of a flying enemy, but in the centre of furious troops, that poured in, on all sides, a tempest of blinding and destructive arrows. The white horses of the desert, with flying manes, distended nostrils, and red fiery eyes, rearing on the astonished Indians, struck them down, tore them from their seats with their terrible mouths, while their riders smote right and left with their brazen javelins. A little time, and the whole Indian squadron must be annihilated. The tumult was seen from the Indian camp; a salutary fear pos-

sessed the king, and fresh horsemen galloped forth to support the first, and these were followed by the chariots,—these by the infantry. But scarcely had they set forth, when a troop of Cuthean horse was seen careering towards them, from the eastern and western extremities of the battle. They came, shaking the ground with the thunder of their horses' hoofs. Immediately they were at hand; but, instead of closing with the advancing Indians, they scoured past, like a hurrying tempest; shot in their faces a shower of arrows, and were gone. The Indians, warned by what had before befallen their fellows, attempted not to pursue; but, gazing for a moment of confusion and wonder on the multitude of their slain, advanced towards the distant battle. But again came the careering Cutheans, and, by a second passing volley, committed equal havoc. The Indian horse, confounded and thrown into disorder, yet attempted to hold on; but now they saw, at once, a wonderful change in the scene of contest. That which the moment before, was like the dark and terrible cloud of a tempest,—now, like a tempest cloud, dispersed and was gone. The shouts,

the struggling, the clash and flash of arms was hushed, and the white horses of the Cutheans were seen vanishing on the horizon. The Indians knew not what to think of it: they paused and gazed for a few moments; then, advancing to the scene of action, beheld all their advanced detachment lying in one promiscuous heap of slaughter. The whole were destroyed,—the foe departed.

At this intelligence, terror and astonishment flew through the Indian camp; but the king was seized with a paroxysm of ungovernable rage. Day was declining; yet could he scarcely restrain himself from ordering a pursuit of the Cutheans. Reason would have said,—What avails pursuing so wild and fugitive a foe? what avails attempting the conquest of barren plains? Humanity would have said,—Look on the slain, and depart: evil enough is done: crime enough committed; return, and repent of the useless waste of human life;—but reason and humanity have nothing to do with great monarchs,—rage is more becoming; men are merely moving machines, made to be cut down—he ordered the march at break of day. Day came: the whole immense and unwieldy multitude again

set out: again they toiled slowly, heavily,—consumed with thirst, for the waters were saline,—faint with famine, through immeasurable plains. Again they were on the point of returning, for no foe, no habitation appeared:—when, behold! the gleam of brazen accoutrements! the white horses coming, like the billows of a stormy ocean, rushing, raging onwards. They were speedily at hand, dashing, with wild cries, along the Indian lines, pouring in millions of arrows. The whole Indian army was in confusion. Against such a foe, the chariots were useless; the infantry equally so; they wheeled here and there, now appearing to be gone,—now again returning, and charging with terrible destruction. Arrows mowed down the charioteers,—if horsemen advanced, the foe against whom they directed their charge, dispersed—fled—and again gathering, came from some other quarter—some sending arrows as they passed,—some with long, flying nooses, dragging the riders from their steeds, and dashing them to pieces with the hoofs of those furious white horses.

What could combat with such a foe avail? The king, enraged to madness, made many charges on

the foe, and beheld himself in all, baffled and confounded. His troops, unused to such volant antagonists, could give no effect to their arms. At once he commanded the army to retreat; and, followed by the Cuthean cavalry, like a determined swarm of demons, charged with all the fury and the weight of the whole army upon the mountaineers. They stood and fought like lions; but the Indian army bore down heavily; dreadful was the slaughter. The brave men were mowed, and crushed down by the ever-pressing host, that, with tremendous force drove the front on death, or deliverance. With dreadful fury the mountaineers, climbing on the ramparts of dead, fought, till some wounded elephants at length broke through them, sweeping them down by hundreds. They dispersed! and the Indian army, a horrible mass of terror and confusion, men and beasts crushing and treading down each other, escaped into the defile.

Scarcely had the Indians disappeared in the hills, when a new scene exhibited itself. A whole army of wagons, drawn by oxen, and followed by women and children, flocks and herds, came over the plains. The cavalry, dismounting, threw loose

their steeds to graze where they pleased ; embraced their wives, and proceeded to join them in stripping and burying the dead. In a day, what had been the seat of war, was a populous country. Fearing no return of the Indians, they again struck their tents, and quitting the plains polluted by slaughter, and trodden by the combatants, advanced to more fertile fields.

The Indian monarch proceeded through the mountains, sullen and wrathful : and now he came upon a part where he determined to let loose his struggling passions ; and satiate his soul with a mighty revenge. There was a beautiful valley in the midst of the mountains, inhabited by a pastoral, yet warlike nation. It was surrounded on all sides by hills ; and a single river, rising westward, watered it. The inhabitants had composed part of the army of brave mountaineers which had opposed the return of the Indians : therefore the king doomed them to destruction ; and, as their valley was of no great extent, he deemed his purpose easy of execution. He ordered his troops to take possession of all the passes in the surrounding heights ; and having done this, he marched the rest of his army right through

the valley, from end to end. He descended from the hills like an avalanche, which nothing can stop—which sweeps all before it. He passed through it with fire and sword. It was vain for the inhabitants, few in number, compared with his myriads, to stand against him; they fled to the hills. But here again the king's troops met them, and drove them back. They turned, and beheld the Indian army coming in the strength and exercise of that martial power which, if exerted by devils, would be called by its right name; but which constitutes the glory of kings; a race of beings, whom men have, at once, made their idols and their punishment. They beheld their pleasant groves stoop to the axe of the pioneers; their habitations kindled to flames by their hands; their fertile fields and gardens laid waste and trodden down by thousands, till all was one black and lifeless waste. The flocks and herds were collected and driven off; and they themselves, anticipating their fate, came forth from their hiding-places, and prepared to sell their lives as creatures driven to desperation do. But such was not the monarch's good pleasure. Having made the late beautiful valley a black desert, he

drew up with his troops into the hills, and sate down to watch the progress of his royal views. By degrees the inhabitants, urged by hunger, came forth. They looked around them—all was silence and desolation. They traversed the land, seeking carefully in every nook, amidst the ruins of yet-smoking houses, for some fragment of food to still the cries of clamorous children; to appease the sufferings of their languishing wives and daughters: but it was in vain. The human monsters had destroyed every thing capable of sustaining life with the most perfect exactness. They had completed their task in the most masterly manner, and, no doubt, would receive the highest praises of the historians of the war. The wretched creatures, on this discovery, were filled with the most fearful dismay. Female misery vented itself in cries, tears, and tremblings; that of men in silent despair. For a while they sate stern—still—and with their eyes on the ground: then raising them, and turning them on each other, a fury kindled in them that rose to a terrible height. They sprang up,—vowed the most dreadful vows; swore on each other's swords, tinctured with their own blood, to assail the enemy to the death; and,

once more, they bent their united force towards one of the mountain passes. They ascended; night favoured them; they fell upon the sentinels; slew them; and, for a moment, fortune seemed to second their enterprise. But speedily the enemy in endless numbers came swarming to the spot; innumerable fires blazed out upon the heights, shewing the desperate men to their foes, and exposing them to all their power. From above poured tempests of arrows; huge stones were hurled down, which whirling and bounding along the hollow where the mountaineers were assembled, cleared their way, dashing men to pieces by hundreds in their course; and rushed headlong, smoking to the valley. Yet did these desperate men strain towards the height, with the hearts and the visages of lions. Death was before them whichever way they turned; and death mingled with vengeance, seemed something even sweet. Therefore, in defiance of arrows, javelins, down-thundering rocks, and flaming trunks of trees which came whizzing and rebounding from above, they pressed on with flashing daggers, and fearful yells, and eyes that flung back the flames with a terrible expression. From the heights

around protruded tens of thousands of dark heads, seen amid the redness of the fires, gazing upon the scene with abundant satisfaction.

All night was the horrible and unequal contest maintained: when morning dawned, numbers of the unhappy mountaineers clogged the defile with their bodies: and the Indians, descending in a dense, continuous column from the heights, swept away the remaining combatants, as a flood would have swept them away. Most perished; the rest, yielding to the weakness of overtried nature, returned to the valley, or crawled into the neighbouring thickets and crevices of the rocks. The sun rose higher, and with it the tide of human suffering. Faint by the river brink sate the women, striving to alleviate the craving agonies of their children by cooling potations of water, themselves taking patient draughts of the same, to relieve their burning, parched throats. Fatal, yet not unhappy draughts! The sole river of their once happy valley was poisoned—poisoned at its source—poisoned with those virulent, sure, and enduring juices which the Indians are so well acquainted with.

Scarcely had they swallowed the infected water,

when both mothers and children shrieked with dreadful shrieks, and rolled on the ground in terrible agonies. They rolled and writhed to and fro; became covered with large, livid, or crimson spots, swelled hideously,—blackened and died. They who were about to taste of the fatal river, recoiled at the sight, and ran to a distance. But whither could they go? They beheld the remaining warriors return; they heard the doleful tidings, and filled the air with their wild lamentations. For some time they wandered about, filling the valley with the cries of despair; but nature gave way to her own temptations; the sight of the clear, gushing river was too alluring, even with the dreadful evidence of its effects before their eyes:—again they rushed towards it; sprang in—rolled in its waves, gazed on it with fearful, yet devouring eyes;—drank, and died.

From the heights, the Indian monarch beheld this scene of misery with singular satisfaction. He watched and waited like a vulture, while there remained the smallest symptom of life in the black and torrid vale; and, as the fumes of the putrifying carcasses began to taint the winds, and ascend

to his nostrils, he sounded his trumpets, and marched homewards, somewhat consoled for his defeat and disasters.

I had occupied a cleft in a rock, to behold this direful deed; to see what nature was capable of: and "Almighty Avenger!" I exclaimed, "canst thou behold and suffer this?" He did not! With the putrifying fumes, rose the pestilence; and striking into the path of the savage monarch, pursued him on his march. Fierce, terrible, wide-sweeping were its destructions; more fierce, more destroying than the arrows, the javelins, the precipitated rocks of the Indians. With its silent wings it hovered over the devoted army, that hurried fearfully on,—and spread all the mountains with its dead.

I have since heard, that it pursued the haughty king even into his own land, and spread through the provinces which he traversed; into his populous cities; and slew more in its course than he had destroyed by the strength of his cruelty. Fearful and indignant, the people rose, and drove forth into the wide, waste field, an army that brought back, instead of victory and wealth, such

a baleful gift. There they fell, in their lawless rage, on the flocks and herds of the countrymen, who turned in wrath upon them. There arose a dreadful and exterminating warfare. The peasants prevailed,—the soldiers, driven to despair, plunged their swords into each other's hearts, and they and their king perished together. Thus does God punish what foolish man praises to his own cost.

CHAPTER VI.

STRENGTHENED in heart by such a display of a watchful and retributive Providence, I went on. A plain of a different character now presented itself. It was sandy, and covered with a thin crop of pale yellow grass, tall as the knee, and so dry that it whistled and sighed in the wind. Above, the sun shone mildly; and fleecy clouds, driven swiftly across the sky, created on the plain rapidly-sweeping shadows. Here and there, ran along slight elevations; and a few scattered trees af-

forded pleasant objects to the eye, and shade to shepherds, who there watched large flocks.

At a distance, I beheld a thick and confused mass of building, closely intermingled with trees; and I sate down by a shepherd, and asked what the object was. "It is," he replied, "an ancient city,—a city whose name no man pronounces; but we call it the City of Fear. But a few generations ago, there dwelt a warlike and populous people, whose king, Huonnec, had subjugated the countries from the southern mountains far to the north, ay, even to the Gomerian land of darkness. Numerous nations poured into the city their tribute,—flocks and herds, steeds for their iron war-chariots and their horsemen, gold and jewels from the rich, Hyperborean hills; and the people became proud, luxurious, insolent, and cruel. The cries of oppression rose in many a province, but they could not penetrate the city,—they were drowned in the noise of perpetual revelry.

There came a prophet from some far land. He advanced towards the city; and as he went along, wrapped in his long robe, with his head and feet bare, the rural people did him reverence, and knelt

at his feet for a blessing. He reached the city; and at once, his voice, loud as the brazen trumpet of the king, rose above the hum of many idle and jocular voices in the thronged streets; and struck through all the airy gossipers a chill silence. He trod on with a lofty, but slow step, crying—"Repentance! or death!" Through street, through gay square, past palace and temple, he went on, crying that solemn cry. The people gathered about him,—gazed on him with fearful faces,—and followed, in thousands, at his heels. At length he came before the royal abode. The king sate in his brazen chariot, and saw his glittering troops perform their martial movements before him. He turned, looked sternly on the coming throng, and, at a motion from his hand, a soldier spurred his steed from his presence into the midst of the press, and ordered the stranger to approach the imperial throne. He advanced, but not as a suppliant; nor suffering himself to be touched by the soldier. He waved his hand with a majestic motion, and strode forward with an air that daunted the fiercest warriors, and made the monarch himself look on him with amaze. Again he lifted up his hand, and

cried—"Repentance! or death!" The king and his warriors stood mute and thoughtful; when, behold! the priests came hurrying on with wild and eager eyes; and, glaring on the stranger with ferocious glances, called upon the king to punish him as a vile impostor, that sought to blaspheme the gods, to disturb the people, and bring into contempt the victorious glory of the king. The potentate raised his eyes, and cried to the priests—"Be it as ye will!" They pounced on him, like vultures in their prey, and bore him off to the temple of Bal-Rama, followed by the shouting and changeful multitude. They smote him to death in the temple of their god; and all that day, and far into the night, loud were the sounds of festive rejoicing—the mingled din of cymbal, and tabor and horn; but in the morning, when the country people, who supplied the city with daily, rural necessities, entered the gates with their mules, all was still as midnight: and, anon, they returned, rushing from the gates, like men mad with some terrible vision. Their eyes glared aghast; every feature fixed in strong terror;—they ran,—and ran far over the plains as men run for their lives.

From that day, they approached not the city; no one approached it; no one dared to tell what had befallen within; but it stood silent—silent for ever; and has fallen gradually to decay. Who dare approach it? Terrible sounds, shrill cries, howlings as of evil spirits, are continually heard within it; and wings, as of harpies, are often seen flapping above its now weed-grown walls. Its very aspect, as thou seest, is baleful. We avoid it, and never approach nearer than this.”

“Dare ye not enter it?” I exclaimed; “then I will!” As I pronounced these words, the shepherd started, as from a basilisk; gazed upon me with superstitious terror; and when I advanced towards the ancient city, hastily collected his flocks, and drove them far over the plain. I approached the place, and truly its aspect was enough to inspire a superstitious awe. Its old and massy gates were sunk by age half into the ground. They leaned hither and thither, disrupted from the ponderous walls, between which and them gaped huge chasms. The walls themselves leaned variously; here, overhanging the plain; here, inclining to the city: and huge drifts of sand had, in others, fairly buried

them, forming an inclined plane, by which you might ascend, and look into the melancholy place.

I passed through the ruinous gates, and beheld before me a wood mingled with buildings. Trees had grown up throughout the city;—they had grown to colossal vastness; here, heaving up pavements and foundations by their huge roots and trunks; here, pushing down, by their extended arms, the strongest walls. Close within the gates, had stood two enormous statues. The one, a Titanian man, with a long and bushy beard, and holding in his right hand a serpent by way of a staff: the other, a female of equal height, holding in one hand a ring of stone; in the other, a small winged figure. The man, or god, stood erect and stern; the female was pushed back by a mighty branch of a tree, and leaned against the wall.

The pavement whereon I walked was overgrown with a matting of creeping plants, whose long, wiry runners, knit closely together, formed a damp and melancholy carpet. As I trode upon it, something long and cylindrical rolled beneath my feet, and made my progress unsteady. I turned aside the creepers, and beheld that they were bones;—

bones in millions strewed through the long, solitary streets,—the bones of men, shrouded alone by this green tapestry-work of nature; and in the skulls, and within the naked ribs, numberless reptiles had made their nests. I strode forward in shuddering horror. I reeled to and fro, over the loose remains of destroyed thousands. But other objects of fearful wonder called my attention. From the thickets and hollows of the broken walls darted forth, at my approach, the jackal; the long, gliding tiger glared upon me with fiery eyes,—grinned fiercely, and fled. The heavy bear growled hoarsely,—dashed through the crashing branches, clambered over the loose ruins, and disappeared. I found it was a dreadful place to abide in; but my curiosity lured me on.

As I neared the centre of the city, the bones beneath my feet became continually more thickly spread; till, in an open square, they covered the whole area in heaps, and the shrouding creepers could but partially cover them:—they gleamed by intervals in bleached whiteness. I advanced, and beheld the crumbled remains of a massy chariot, and upon it lay glittering—a sight of wonder—a

glorious jewelled diadem ! lay glittering on a heap of bones, which, as I touched them, crumbled into dust. Around were readily discernible, amid the heaps, the brazen heads of spears, swords, and harness of man and horse ; the skeletons of whole platoons of steeds and their riders ! Could there be a doubt of the place, and the event which occurred there ? It was the spot where some awful judgment had annihilated both king and people in the hour of their impious pride. I turned away, soul-struck at the terrible dispensations of heaven. Around me were the roofless walls of temples, palaces, and thousands of private abodes ; but trees stood in their innermost apartments, — bushes waved from their summits and crevices, and long creeping plants hung down from sculptured arches. I trod over heaps of ruins, and beheld amid them the gekko — the most hideous and venomous of reptiles—start forth at my feet. I saw its large lizard form,—its green clammy body, studded with ugly vermilion warts : I saw its throat inflated with its malignant poison ; and its claws, distilling as they went, a loathsome, yellow virus, so acrid that it blistered the very grass and leaves over which it

passed. Horrible creature ! I shuddered at its repeated cry—the sound of its own baleful name—and trod with hesitating steps through the confused place.

An ancient temple was before me. I knew it for the dome of Bal-Rama. On its walls were sculptured many an Arkite symbol;—the ship of Argha,—the fierce Typhonean serpent,—the flying dove,—the golden mundane egg, in which the Great Father floated in divine dreams over the universal waters,—the spirit-wings that bear the orbicular world through the ethereal wastes of eternity. I entered : it was gloomy and vast ; its roof of pyramidal stone had resisted the effects of time. Thick dust lay on the floor, in which the feet left their impressions, as in snow ; seeming as if it had not been disturbed for ages ; and a faint cadaverous odour pervaded the whole dusky fane. I looked up, and beheld enormous bats hanging by their lank legs from the roof ; and the round, green-fire eyes of owls, that opened and shut with a strange, demoniac effect. The skeletons of numerous small creatures lay on the floor, thin as bents of grass, and light as withered leaves : but a more striking object arrested my attention.

I beheld the pedestal where the great idol had stood; but it was unoccupied: and, behold! on the ground beneath it, lay a heap of dust. I could discern the colours of blue and vermillion which had once adorned the perished god, but at my touch they crumbled to powder; and the large, golden horns, alone lay fresh and glittering as ever. Around were numerous skeletons in a confused circle, and one in the midst, between whose ribs yet lay the green remains of a brazen poniard—the priests and their prophet-victim! A dark and trembling awe fell on me;—my limbs failed;—my eyes grew dim;—I dropped on my knees, and adored the unseen, but mighty Power, who had thus signally made known his being, and annihilated, at a stroke, a great people in the hour of their impious triumph. When I had gathered together a little of the force of mind and frame, I stole soberly out of the fallen city; and pursued my way, filled with a multitude of dark and bright thoughts. The shepherds, who beheld me return, fled as I attempted to approach them; holding me, doubtless, for some dubious, or unearthly being.

CHAPTER VII.

I had a great desire to see something of the Cuthean tribes in their peaceful habitations; I, therefore, now turned my steps northward, and went far into their lands. Of these I speak not now; I have already recorded these things. One circumstance only I cannot pass, for with it are connected the sweetest and bitterest events of my life. There I found a friend! Yes, there where I looked not for it, I found a soul which I could take to my soul, and love as my own; and go on, from day to day, rejoicing in the unity of our tastes, and the extensive exercise of our intellects. As I entered one evening a Cuthean tent, I beheld a youth of a garb and aspect different to that people. I looked at him, and deemed him the noblest youth I had ever seen. Tall, finely proportioned, full of vigour and activity, he appeared made to endure the fatigues, and enjoy the pleasures of the earth, and, unscathed by the one or the other, to still go on in gladness. I saw

that he also regarded me with looks of curiosity and interest; and, in the course of the eve, as we sate round the fire, and talked of many matters, and I had unfolded to the hospitable family somewhat of my wanderings and views, he suddenly leaped up, clasped me to his heart, and exclaimed, "I have found a spirit like my own!" I was much astonished, but I was much rejoiced; for I had regarded him with continually increasing admiration. He forthwith related his own story. He was a native of the city of Bahlk, in the southern hill-country. A like spirit to my own had disturbed him in his native place. He had gone through many lands in quest of knowledge. As we sate and compared our individual experience, our thoughts, adventures, and speculations on man and his destiny,—our joy continually grew higher and higher, and the good people of the tent sate and gazed on us in wonder. All night we sate and conversed, and in the earliest dawn, departed. Together we travelled far northward, and I daily found my heart bound up closer with that of Lodemmil. I found that the same desire of seeing men of many nations; the same belief in the existence of some

great original truth, possessed him as myself: but what constituted at once, the failing, and the crowning charm of his character, was an inexpressible indignation and contempt of the base and bloody arts of priest and rulers. What glowing and noble sentiments! what eloquent expositions of his faith and soaring desires have I heard him pour forth, as we trode, side by side, like two gods in our soul's joyful strength, through strange regions! Much ancient knowledge was preserved and cultivated in his native city, and he had made it all his own. It was to me a source of triumphant delight, that in far separate countries, in hidden and solitary places of the earth, the same aspiring thoughts and sensations were agitating the human heart. It declared to me that they sprung from one source,—the unseen soul of the power that made us.

We were now in the land of the northern Magogians—a people rude in aspect and in life. In winter, they wrapped themselves in sheepskins,—an uncouth and grotesque generation. In their short summers, they threw off their savage array, and appeared only in a short shirt of varied colours; their bodies painted with stars, serpents,

and strange beasts of blue and red; bearing in a belt of hide, a stone hatchet; and in their hands, a bow and arrows, whose barbs were also of stone. War and the chase, were their employments.

One night, as we passed along a tract of rugged hills, scattered with huge blocks of stone, over which the western wind drove the flying mists and clouds; and the moonlight, the moving shadows, and the moaning gale, gave the whole scene a sad wildness; we came upon one of those stupendous circles of great stones which are found in various regions, but especially in the north. Many had we seen, but this surpassed them all; we therefore turned in to contemplate it. To our astonishment, we saw a figure seated by the great central stone, that, amid all its wildness, still appeared human. As we approached, it arose, and we beheld a man naked, except that the hairy skin of a beast was bound round his loins by a dried serpent. His face was pale, his features prominent and ghastly,—his eyes hollow, yet lit with a strange wild fire; and his black haggard locks, hung matted about his neck. “Who art thou?” we cried. And he answered, “Who am I?—I am Baldoc, the

friend of the gods ! I have wandered over the earth to see whether the nations honour their shrines. I have gone far to the west, over the great mountains, through the great black forests, across the great waters, into the isles at the end of the world ; and in them all, the great god Hu is worshipped as he ought. Now am I bound to Ind ; for the world comes to an end. Yes, you smile ! So have I seen men smile, when I have proclaimed the same truth in the very hour of destruction. But you shall soon behold my words verified. What ! have I not lived—do we not all live, in one course of the world as in another ? Nature is fixed : the world dies and revives—but nothing can change. I have but lately seen the great, wailing Nath descend, as I have seen him descend in former worlds—with his woful countenance, black flying locks—his dark, funereal robe. I saw him go from land to land, from town to town, wringing his hands, dropping his tears on the earth, and crying, in the lamentable voice which sends into the hearts of all that hear him an incurable woe—“ The end ! the end is come ! ” Yes ! the end ! the end is come ! He will speedily absorb all things into his own

being—his wife, his sons, all living creatures, all seas, all forests, all lands; and, wrapped in the sleep of ages, he shall sail in his serpent bark on the endless waters. We cannot avoid it—the God cannot himself do otherwise; but we may strengthen and refresh our spirits for the mighty time!”

With that he arose with a wild and inspired air; and, in an erect and solemn attitude, marched through one of the doorways formed of the huge stones which surround the circle of Hela. Out he passed at one, in at another, crying with immense satisfaction, at every transit,—“ Oh divine! divine refreshment! It falls on my spirit like the dew of the sacred mount. Again, and again, am I regenerated, and purified, and filled with strength for my great trial!” With that he passed away in the gloom, and was gone.

“ Go; thou poor maniac-victim of dark superstitions!” exclaimed Lodemmil. “ Seest thou,” he said, “ the daily effects of the black arts of the priests?” We went on; and as day fully broke, we descried immense numbers of people all directing their course to an elevated part of the wilderness. It was a lofty plain, rising to a considerable height

in the centre, and commanding extensive views over a savage country. Vast masses of rock were thrown as by a giant hand, and lay in heaps on the heath, giving a most rude and chaotic aspect to the place. Here and there, great square blocks of it lay apart, half buried in the spongy moss and wild fern. On the top of a large, solid rock we beheld a stupendous stone, which appeared as balanced on a point, and moved to and fro with the breeze. Around this were assembled thousands of those wild people with looks of deepest awe. On it they fixed their eyes, fearfully and stedfastly; and at length, as if of its own accord, or moved by some invisible power, it began to rock to and fro violently, and with a sound as of low thunder, amid which might be heard the mutterings of a deep, unearthly voice. At once, the whole multitude fell upon their faces; and an aged figure with hoary, flowing beard, and long, loose robe, rose, as out of the ground, and lifting up his hands, cried,—“Honour the God with an acceptable gift!” Instantly the people sprang upon their feet, and gazed upon a dark crevice in the neighbouring rocks, whence soon appeared a band of those old and robed priests bearing

a young virgin bound. My heart sickened at the sight, for she was young, and tender, and fair; but the multitude began to dance; and in a low singing tone to cry, "Hu! Hu! Ewah!" I saw the maid extended, already apparently half dead with terror, on a large stone;—I saw the hand of the hoary priest, armed with a heavy stone poniard, raised to the sun, to which he seemed pouring out his orisons,—and I turned away, lest I should witness the murderous deed. As we went, we still heard the loud and melancholy song, "Hu! Hu! Ewah!" and it added wings to our speed.

Sick of blood and darkness, we hastened from the north. The light which we sought was not there; and, through a long period we sought it in lands where it was as little to be found: in the populous, but servile-spirited Tzin; in the pleasant islands of the great South Sea, where nature has constructed a thousand paradises in the midst of the crystal waters; where the people dwell amid fruits, and flowers, and richest spices, but are contented to feed their souls on the fragments of the far-spread Sabeian superstitions. At length, a trading ship of Ormuz landed us in the ancient India, and we looked

with anxious hope for some traces of the earliest knowledge.

Let my former tomes speak of the mighty cities; the marvellous caves; the wealth, the arts and manners of this ancient people: I am too sadly bound to one event. We hoped, I said, to find traces of the earliest knowledge; and we did so: but mixed in such a manner, with a thousand inventions of a wild and fabling imagination, that our spirits were confounded and perplexed. The multiplied deities of the Brahmists, their intermingling names and natures, their incarnations, their ludicrous adventures; the simple, the gentle, but irrational doctrine of the Budhists, filled not the crying void in our souls. We thirsted to descend to the lowest fountain of Truth; which gleamed indeed upon us, but so overgrown with the thick branches of an extravagant fancy, that it gleamed only to trouble and bewilder. We passed through the utmost ordeals of their vaunted mysteries; but in vain—around us were shadows, ever-growing shadows. We might have admired the ingenuity of the Brahmist, the humanity of the Budhist; but unfortunately we entered the temple of Jagan-Nath, and beheld the votaries of these

rival faiths bowing to that hideous god ; beholding the hateful and licentious orgies of his temple ; the bloody rites of his sacrifice. We saw the baleful monster, ugly as night, detestable in shape and aspect, as the deeds which are done in his shrine ; we saw him, on his towering car, borne into the open day. Amid the millions assembled to worship him, numbers of wild wretches immolated themselves beneath his ponderous wheels. We saw the wandering Baldoc,—he whom we had met in the circle of Hela,—with the same elated air, there terminate his career by flinging his life to the horrid god.

Oh, great Lord of the universe ! the memory of what now befel me, makes me weep, even in my old age. Didst thou there punish me because I too earnestly sought at so many heathen shrines for thee ? Or didst thou suffer my heart to be rent asunder by the most dreadful event, that thou mightest infix in it a terror of pagan creeds for ever, and make the light of thy own more fair and precious ?

Lodemmil and I were sitting in our temporary abode, conversing on the horrors we had seen at

the shrine of Jagan-Nath. My friend, with his wonted fire of spirit was warmly expressing (as indeed 'he had not hesitated to do publicly, to my alarm) his abhorrence of the detested god; and we were mutually lamenting the disappointment of our hopes in the religious lore of this ancient realm. "Pantika," he repeatedly said, "we are, I fear, seeking what is not to be found on earth. Perhaps our young and ardent spirits may have deluded us with hopes that may have no fulfilment. Perhaps it may be part of the folly of our nature,—for we see folly is the leading character of this nature,—to dream of truth, and beauty, and immortality, and follow them as shadows follow the sun. Such things there may be, and yet not given to men. For what men possess them? Think of the immense regions we have traversed,—and are they there? No! ignorance, cruelty, and selfishness—these abound everywhere—in all men,—and shall thou and I be unlike the universal race? Thou wilt say—whence then come these glorious desires? Oh! are they not the fragments of a once proud estate, which exists, and is destined to exist, no more? For though they prove that such a state

once was man's, they cannot prove that it shall again be his, any more than that the fragments of a broken vessel can gather themselves into their former unity. Are truth, and knowledge, and goodness, gone then for ever? If we answer from experience, we must despair—for where are they? And if they be destined for the possession of men at all, where can such brightness be hidden? I sigh as I ask the question;—here, at least, they are not;—let us hasten to quit this land!”

We resolved on the morrow to set out homewards. He had yielded to my solicitations to come and partake my lot here. On my first setting foot in India, I had hastened to assure Podonius, through the means of a caravan, of my existence and hopes of return at no distant period. That time now seemed hastening on; when, in the midst of our converse, entered some of the priests of Jagan-Nath, denounced Lodemmil as a despiser and blasphemer of the god, and seized on him as a victim to his vengeance. Stunned, but at the same time rendered wild by the horrible circumstance, I sprung upon the bloody emissaries of cruelty, and pierced several of them with my dagger: but

a blow on the head, with some heavy weapon, felled me; my consciousness departed; and when it returned, I found myself lying chill, stiff, and faint with the loss of blood, on the same spot. It was night;—at one instant, the recollection of the horrible event, and the sound of music, the glare of lights bursting from every aperture in the tower of Jagan-Nath,—the cries of maniac revelry,—broke into my soul, and bore it back into the darkness of insensibility.

Henceforward, a large period is to me a dreadful dream. I wandered through a land of dreams—of terrible heat—through seas of raging fire, in which the great serpent Typhon pursued me to devour me: thousands of fearful shapes lived and moved around me. Isis played on her sistrum: Osiris and Apis exchanged, and re-exchanged shapes; Vishnou floated in his snake-ship; the lotus bloomed,—Brahma sate in the expanded flower, and gazed over the waters, where the gloomy Siva pursued and cried to his perverse and obstinate Parvati. Baal now stood before me as the sun, now as the moon; Gad flew rapidly over the waters in his skeleton bark; and Nergal, with her

harnessed chanticleers, smiled on me as she came showering, from her half-shadowed car, the light of morning on the world. Endless fantastic shapes were busy around me; endless varieties of dismal cries. I heard the dogs of hell barking; I stumbled and groped in caverns of interminable darkness, where pale, gleaming phantoms, of every ghastly and unearthly character, glided thinly on the walls. I was in the land of wild phantasy, and idol-shapes of various nations on which I had so often gazed, haunted me to distraction. A sword, anointed with blood, stood out of the ground, and spoke oracles; an empty skull whispered to me of shuddering things; the three-headed gods declared themselves to be Lodemmil, and would accompany me on my travels.

When I emerged from these swarming visions, the hour when the thunderbolt of man's cruelty fell upon me, seemed far, far off; yet was the weight and anguish of my heart strong, and grievous as ever. I sickened at the light of day, and longed to pass away into that unknown region, whither the beloved of my soul had gone. A little, dark-yellow old woman was waiting upon

me ; and importuning me to eat of her boiled rice, as yellow as herself ;—but I desired rather to die. I lay for many days in an unbroken, yet sleepless dream, in which I wandered again over all the wide lands which we two joyous and united souls had traversed in our strength : again, I recalled all the stirring and delightful converse we had held ;—our hopes,—our soaring dreams and aspirations,—our troublesome doubtings—all now were precious, precious to my soul. In them I lived ; in them I desired only to live : I would gladly fail, and fade away, following my beloved friend into the unknown life. When I thought of the real world about me, of the wide distance between me and my own country, I turned, in the lassitude of terror, from the contemplation, and watered my couch with my tears. Lodemmil was no more !—Hope had lost its fascinations ;—and then—the terrible idea of his death,—that noble, generous, delightful soul, perishing in the hateful hands of the ministers of Jagan-Nath ; in that baleful shrine,—it was too much for the tortured and writhing imagination. But *that* idea gave me strength. I loathed the land where the deed was

perpetrated,—it seemed, in my eyes, swimming with blood. I longed for wings, that I might dart from it in a moment; and in that spirit of shuddering abhorrence I sprung up, and hastened to depart.

CHAPTER VIII.

I soon found a caravan setting out, and with it I commenced my homeward journey. Whoever examines my travels, will here find a broad vacuum; for of the countries through which I passed, I knew nothing—saw nothing. I journeyed in the midst of busy people—busy sounds; but I journeyed alone. The mists and the darkness of a mighty sorrow were around me. It was not till I was in the land of Media, that my attention was excited by external objects; and it was the voice of sorrow, that struck with its kindred tone on my heart, and startled me as to life.

We had encamped by the river Gozan, in a luxuriant vale. It was eve: and somewhat soothed by the amenity of the spot, I had wandered a little way from the camp, and thrown myself down beneath a tamarisk tree, by the water, when suddenly my heart was struck by the sound of female voices,—sweet, melancholy voices,—singing, in chorus, the following song:—

Low! low! in our darkness, low!
By the alien-river's side,
Where blow the weeping lilies,
Our tears how can we hide!

Father! how hast thou cast us
From thy loving arms away,
Where once, like happy infants,
All fearlessly we lay.

Father! how hast thou chang'd
Thy smile, that o'er us shone!
When the earth was all in darkness,
And peace beside was none!

Father! how hast thou hidden
Thy arm that once was bare,
When the giant nations trembled,
And melted in despair.

Thy banner then was o'er us;
Thy pillar, and thy light
Went on with us, thy children,
Rejoicing in thy sight.

Low! low! in our darkness, low!
By the alien-river's side,
Where blow the weeping lilies,
Our tears how can we hide!

In thy pleasant land all planted
Beneath the palm and vine,
Where the rocks o'erflowed with honey,
What race was like to thine!

But we knew not all our blessing;
Our feeble spirits fell!
We felt thy rod—we sorrowed—
And all again was well!

But now, thus peeled and banished,
The prophet-voice is o'er:
And thy love, and thy loving-kindness,
Return! return no more!

Low! low! in our darkness, low!
By the alien-river's side,
Where blow the weeping lilies,
Our tears how can we hide!

That woful song penetrated to my inmost soul. The very tone in which it was sung had a power, that no other sound ever had, over my spirit. Once I might have listened to it, and felt its pensive beauty, and have been impressed with tenderest pity for those who sung it so evidently with the vitality of sad experience; but now, my bruised, broken heart, had been baptized into the lowest

depths of human affliction, and could interpret its faintest breathing. *That* was its own living language; that was the lamenting music which had been sounding for months in its farthest recesses; and was here made vocal in other beings, and flung back upon it as a mournful, but sweet reflection.

But, besides this, it had a far more astonishing charm; for what did I hear? Words glowing with the very spirit which had sent me round the globe; words, which responded, with a startling thrill, to that great cry in my heart which I had held as the cry of universal nature: words which unfolded to me, even in their fewness and simplicity, a world of facts and ideas! I heard a people calling upon their God as their father,—as their living, fostering father, who had made himself clearly and familiarly known to them; in whose favour they had enjoyed glory, and power, and felicity; but this favour they had lost by their crimes. For this they were punished; outcast and hopeless. For their crimes! What a novel, and yet, to me, rational doctrine. What a novel doctrine as it regarded the practice and experience of all other nations. For where was the nation which

professed to have suffered the loss of the favour of their deities by their crimes? So that they duly paid them their homage and their sacrifices, their gods were, in their belief, contented. They went on with their self-indulgence, fearless of evil : nay, evil itself appeared the very essence of that worship by which most people soothed these strange deities. What nation had ever, as a nation, confessed that their gods had abandoned them for their evil deeds, and given them up to their enemies? Yet how conceivable to my heart and mind was it, that the true deity should do thus? How often had Lodemmil and myself exclaimed that the God, whoever he might be, who had stretched out the pure, heavenly concave,—had breathed on earth the pure enveloping air,—had filled the hollows of the globe with the pure and living waters, must be himself inconceivably pure ! How often had we said, as we stood at famous shrines, “ No, these are not the shrines of the true God; for here are blood and cruelty, here are ugliness and obscenity; but in this fair world, in our hearts which he has moulded, are nobility and gentleness, beauty and pure delight.” How often had we exclaimed, “ The true

God must be the father of his people, and can only smile upon them as they honour and obey the traces of his own nature. Alas ! no such people had we found ! yet here must they be !

I started up, and advanced towards the place whence the sound had proceeded. Immediately I beheld a beautiful sight. By the river side, in the deep rich herbage, sate four women, weaving light baskets of the broad river-grass ; and along the banks strolled a troop of children, cutting this grass with small hooks ; selecting from it the best. Others were lying in playful luxury amongst the flowers ; and others with long rods of willow attempting to draw towards them and secure large lilies, that, like cups of silver and gold, floated on the water. The women were fairer in complexion than any I had seen for a long time—fair as my own country-women ; but their eyes and beautiful hair, were as black as jet. They had a style and intelligence of countenance that surprised me. The contour of their faces was a rich oval ; their noses long, and rather aquiline ; their eyebrows thick, finely arched, and giving a strength of expression to the whole visage. Their mouths ex-

pressed a living character, as if they were accustomed to vary from the keenest sense of wit and satirical mirth, to tenderness and benevolence. One, a young mother, held her infant to her bosom; one, who appeared in the prime of womanhood, had a matronly dignity of air that could not be severed from the idea of superior rank. Yet how different from such ideas their present situation! She, and the other two young damsels, were busily plaiting baskets of grass. They had crowned themselves with a wreath of wild myrtle, mingled with the large lily flowers which the children had collected about them; and the matron wove a sort of little bark of bulrushes, and filling it with lilies, set it afloat, saying, "In such a vessel our great prophet once was committed to the waters of Egypt. Alas! no such prophet shall appear in this heathen land, to lead us back to our own lovely one!" At this I beheld the group stand watching the departing bark, which, after making several circuits with the eddies on the borders of the stream, shot rapidly away;—with looks of saddest expression, they watched it, and again they sung the melancholy chorus of

Low! low! in our darkness, low!

I advanced, and inquired whom they might be. They were Hebrews! Of that nation almost bordering on my own—yet so little known to us. Of that nation which had excited my curiosity, only to awake my aversion and disgust. I had heard that they were a singular and proud people, whose gods were mighty; and I had sought such of them as came to Tarshish to trade, and inquired of their laws and religion. They repelled me with sullen scorn; and I turned away from them with unutterable aversion.

But here they were in sorrow, and my heart opened to them; and I found these females, far from reserved or disagreeable. Unlike the generality of the women of the east, they shrank not from my presence, shrouded themselves not in their veils, but looked in my face with the kind yet modest familiarity of sisters; and answered all my eager inquiries, about their nation, with a perspicuous frankness, yet with sighs and tears. And what a wonderful history was now unfolded to me! From the very construction of the world to the present hour, was the whole laid open, as if the light of a new day was poured upon me.

“Come with us,” said these fair exiles,—“come with us to the city. There our husbands will converse better with thee upon these things. There thou shalt behold our ancient books!”

I went, I talked, I read. I was in an Elysian dream. I found thousands of these wonderful but unhappy people, planted by the Assyrian conqueror, in the cities of these regions. And when I looked upon the native inhabitants, sallow, and dwarfish, and heavy of countenance, I wondered not at the policy of the monarch, that had peopled this fair tract with so fine a race. Cities, fertile fields, and pleasant mountain ranges, with all their varieties, were theirs. The ruler was far distant,—they lived well-nigh as they would; but the memory of their native land was in their souls, and they were sad and despondent. For me, I began to love and honour them as my own people. Affliction had broken their haughtiness, which they freely confessed, had been strong in them,—regarding themselves as the favoured people of heaven. They were kind and communicative, and I ran through their treasured volumes, as I would through the valleys of God. My amaze at their

truth, their simplicity, their sublime doctrines every day increased,—every hour I marvelled that such precious knowledge had not broken forth like a flood, and overflowed the world. Their annals, unlike those of other nations, were free from shadows and perplexities; clear, continuous, simple, yet abounding with the most wondrous events. Their religion—the religion which had unfolded itself to my heart as something native to it, was one flood of pure and undazzling light,—the worship of one infinite God, at whose presence all other gods fade into nothing,—the Creator and Father of all the earth.

With what avidity did I dwell upon their touching pictures of the simple, ancient times: on the miracles God had wrought for them: on the prophets—those awful beings, whose words had proved themselves, in the events of their own and surrounding nations, to be the words of God himself: on the glorious strains of their royal poet: on the sapient maxims, the idylls, and philosophy of the magnificent Solomon. I was impatient to be gone into Judea itself, to possess myself of those inestimable treasures,—the treasures which I had sought

throughout the earth, and had found more splendid, more abundant than I had dreamed of “Oh thou dear, and lost Lodemmil!” I repeatedly exclaimed, “couldst thou, noble soul, couldst thou now behold the reality of our dreams—the fulfilment of our desires, how wouldst thou rejoice!” I was impatient, I say, to be gone; for here these writings were but rare, and were guarded and kept with far more care than life itself. But when I talked of departing for Judea, again I saw the cloud of grief darken in their faces. “Alas!” they said, “to what a land wilt thou go! Not to that lovely and peopled land which once it was: but to a frightful desert,—a waste of horror and desolation. Twelve years have we sojourned here; and now, even now, is the mighty Sennacherib gone up to bring away the last remnant of the nation;—Benjamin and Judah, the royal tribe;—the dwellers in the royal city, whence we have looked for the great Messiah to come. Yes! he is gone up now; and, in brief space, the trace of our ancient kingdom will be probably obliterated.”

While we talked on this subject, this very event seemed to have occurred. A fearful rumour spread.

through the land, that the king had seized Jerusalem, and had put all to the sword; plundered its holy shrine; razed the city to the ground; and was returning with the spoil. The tidings fell on their hearts like a thunderbolt. Through every city there was a deadly silence, as if life itself were stopped: and, day after day, the rumours grew, and spread, and came aggravated with fresh details of horror. At this confirmed and augmented news of the extirpation of their kindred, the whole people broke into the most bitter cries and lamentations. Nature could no longer contain itself. They exclaimed—"Now is the glory of Israel departed for ever. Now is hope ceased in Zion for ever! God has clean removed his rejected race. He will call—we shall return no more! In this far land we shall lay our bones. Here will our children, and our children's children grow; and as God has forgotten us, so, perhaps, will they forget the God of their fathers. Woe! woe to the once glorious race!"

They threw themselves on the ground—they rent their clothes—scattered ashes and dust upon their heads, and lay, day and night, moaning and

lamenting. The women cut, or rent away, without remorse, their beautiful dark locks; and careless of food, of the refreshments of bed and bath, they lay, and gave themselves up to despair. It was a fearful sight to behold a whole people cast into such utter misery; and I hastened to quit a scene where my condolence was unavailing, and my heart was wrung with the woe around me. I was in the very gates of the city, when I observed groups of the Hebrew people collected in eager and muttering knots; and a murmur passed around me, which seemed full of wonder. When I was about to inquire what was the cause, I beheld a man come running, with his loins closely girded, and with a short staff in his hand. He came speeding on, covered with dust; with wild eyes—parched, gasping lips, and frantic gestures, that seemed to strive to express some momentous thing, which his tongue was incapable of uttering. All rushed towards him. He stood, and gazed wildly around upon them for a moment; then his eyes turning upwards, and shewing only balls of ghastly whiteness, he stretched forth his arms, and fell prone upon the earth. Instantly the busy

multitude cut his girdle, scattered water upon him, and watched, with intense anxiety, the result. Soon he began to breathe in deep, convulsive sighs—his eyes rolled, his limbs quivered; and gazing vaguely around, he sat up, and made signs for water. It was given him; and instantly recovering much of his vigour and vivacity, he spoke in a loud, sibilant whisper, tidings that made the whole multitude stand fixed like so many statues of inexpressible wonder. He told, that so far from Jerusalem being destroyed, God had once more made bare his arm for its preservation; that the Assyrian monarch and all his army at eve triumphed in the prospect of the morrow's capture, and uttered great, swelling words against the boasted God of Israel. In the morning the whole army lay lifeless—destroyed—utterly destroyed! The king alone, with feeble and dismayed troops of his servants escaped, and was suffered to return full of shame to his own land.

At these awful tidings, the whole nation arose in troubled and restless excitement. Should it be true, who could contain their joy? If false—how cruel must be the ensuing darkness! All was agitation and disquiet, running to and fro, and insa-

tiate inquiry. But hour after hour, day after day, brought but additional confirmation of the terribly joyful event; and, leaving the exiled people to this new gleam of hope and happiness, I set forth to visit a country so wonderful, and so dread.

I passed on, and on, but everywhere around me were hurry, confusion, and discord. The vast empire seemed in one wide fever of anarchy. The destruction of the army—the unprotected weakness of the king, seemed to have set at liberty the spirit of a great unwieldy realm, smarting beneath the lash of his heavy military exactions; and sedition was actually at work. The Medes were aiming to fling off their unwilling allegiance: the sons of the king looked with the murderous eyes of royal ambition on their fallen father, and afterwards slew him with their own hands. Everywhere were flying couriers, careering cavalry, and strong encampments. I passed safely through all, and entered the land of Israel. Alas! how would its exiled children have wept, could they have seen it! Ruin and desolation were everywhere. The traces of former fertility and culture—cities, terraces, reservoirs, buried in blackness, trampled by passing armies—peopled

only by wandering hordes of Idumeans. I walked through the once lovely land in gloom of heart, till I beheld the lofty hills, the rock-built citadels, the glorious temple of Jerusalem, before me. Around, were terrific traces of the preceding siege; within, even through the temporary joy of this great deliverance, the sadness of a great people's decline was but too visible. Yet, to me, what a city of gladness and desire was that! There I wandered, over a thousand spots celebrated in their annals for the most marvellous and incontestible events. I conversed with the sages; I revelled in that lore which grasps the world in its embrace, from the first morning of creation to the last night of futurity; and which establishes the heart on the everlasting rock of spiritual life. I sung the glorious strains of David, as I trod his halls; I possessed myself of boundless treasures, and departed to my native land.

Blessed be God! I found the good Podonius alive! The old man fell on my neck, and wept like a child. He had hoarded up my wealth into a mountain. I rejoiced him with my presence; I soothed his latter days with the marvels of my wanderings; I laid him at peace in the tomb of his

fathers. Since then, I have built schools for the teaching of true knowledge—the knowledge of the Hebrews separated from their national customs and prejudices; and I have seen these schools grow into a renown far higher, because purer, than those of Egypt and Athens. There, one day, shall all my volumes be deposited.

But now, Cydna, I cease my narrative, and devote my pen to the record of a few of the many traditions that float amongst this ancient people of God.

NICHAR,
THE EXILE OF HEAVEN.

NICHAR, THE EXILE OF HEAVEN.

CHAPTER I.

AMONGST that joyful and illustrious troop of angels which accompanied the Almighty in his progress of creation, and beheld with exulting wonder the miracles of his power, few were more glorious, none more blessed, than Nichar. He had floated amid the eternal and uncreated splendours of the Divine Presence through the wilds of space; he had seen revolving systems suddenly burst upon the sight; the light of suns kindle with instantaneous, and, to all but a spirit's eye, intolerable radiance, and cast far and wide their beams into the bosom of darkness and vacuity. He had beheld comets sent flaming on their wild and mysterious career; and the gentler planets take their prescribed courses around their central orbs, like young, vast, and vigorous existences, beginning

their race full of harmony and rejoicing. He had seen the pure and pellucid air wrap each beautiful globe as with a spiritual garment; and the young winds, as if impatient to essay their strength, rush triumphantly abroad, over the face of yet nameless lands. He had seen the mighty deep spread out its majestic bosom to the newly created rays; roll proudly its host of waves from pole to pole; and send up to the throne of the Creator, the solemn murmurs of that voice, which, through its destined term of ages, should fill the world which it embraced, with alternate terror and sublime delight. He had seen mountains raise their glittering heads; valleys assume their gloom; rivers and cataracts commence their thundering leaps—their beneficent careers; forests in all their wild grandeur, stretch from hill to hill; a flowery verdure flush, with a sunny gleam of beauty, the face of each perfected world; and the countless tribes of animated things, at once fill creation with the gladness of their voices, and the vivacity of their restless forms.

He had heard the morning-stars burst into one wide triumphal pean, and had joined it with all

his soul, as the Paternal Spirit gave to his innumerable worlds their perfecting touch ; gave to those glorious habitations, the rational creatures which he had destined for each,—creatures with natures consonant to their abodes, capable of comprehending the majesty and felicity of life, and of adoring worthily the Universal Father. He had seen all this, progressing with that glad celestial company, from space to space, from world to world ; and had experienced in it a joy, equal to the amplitude of his own being. It was not merely the display of wisdom and of power ; it was not merely the measureless development of beauty and harmony which he witnessed, that affected him, great and glorious as they were, so much as the contemplation of the flood of life and immortality, which was opened in the universe ; which should daily, hourly—through all time, through all eternity, spread farther, wider, strike deeper into the profundities of boundless space ; yet should every day seem equally distant from its termination,—inasmuch as God and the universe are alike infinite. The human soul may glance into this awful flood of being and duration, till it shrink back, dazzled,

blasted with light, and bewildered with boundlessness: but his serene and capacious spirit looked fearlessly abroad over the shoreless ocean, and saw, not what the Omnipresent eye can see alone, but far, immeasurably far beyond the strongest faculties, the fleetest imagination of man, and contemplated the consequences of creative energy through, to us, incalculable ages;—saw the ever-springing and abounding fountains of intellectual life; saw the lights and glooms of mortal actions, the clouds and gleams of hopes and fears, of crime and virtue, of pleasure and pain, that swept over the ocean of existence; and the voices of innumerable multitudes of souls which yet were not, but which should inevitably be, seemed to fill his spirit with their sound.

Yet, as he stood upon the earth, in the radiant circle of heavenly spirits, and beheld God form from the dust the human pair, his heart questioned with itself, whether woman might not have been made a more perfect creature. Why should so lovely a being be made less vigorous in frame, less bold and excursive in intellect, than her companion? Why should she not be qualified for the

highest companionship, by the highest endowments of physical and mental force? Why should not a being, so splendidly gifted with beauty, be made at once perfect? That light form, be unwearied as it was agile—enduring as it was graceful—as full of majesty as man? That, ordained to be the inhabitant of a noble world—the companion of a noble being—the mother of a mighty and innumerable race,—she might rejoice like an immortal spirit in her abode; lead on her husband, like a fair and guiding star, in the race of life, rather than hang upon his labouring arm, a hindrance and a weight; and dwell amidst the love and the admiration of her posterity, to far distant generations?

Wrapped in this fascinating speculation, the amiable Nichar forgot, for a brief period, all the works of God's creative hand, all the marvels of God's consummate wisdom, which he had seen; the sublime prospects which they opened to his spirit were veiled as by a cloud, and the thought of the present, perfectly absorbed him. He stood amid the shadowy foliage of Paradise, by the very Tree of Life; and so concentrated was his spirit upon

its object, that he heard not the jubilant shout, and the song with which the heavenly troop hailed the newly created pair, walking in their beauty: he heard not the rush, saw not the flash of their thousand wings, as they rose and soared heaven-wards in the train of the Ineffable Splendour; but he stood, as if the same power which had given life and motion to the earthly pair, had fixed him for ever to the spot. The idea which his soul had conceived, was brighter to him than the external creation; the impulse which he had allowed to move him, became speedily strong as his own being. He turned aside into a desert-place, beyond the precincts of Eden; he stooped to the earth—he moulded a form—he breathed into it his own breath: it was the work of a moment; and it arose a living, glowing, reasoning creature—the radiant reality of his thought! He had seen the Almighty exert the spell of life, till it was familiar to his vision: he had never inquired whether this power resided in any other spirit; but he beheld the truth now evidenced in his own unconscious act, and he gazed in a transport of pride and joy, on the work of his hands. Her movement was to

him a dream of delicious wonder; the sound of her voice, was a trance of music to his ears; her thoughts came upon him more freshly than the breezes of heaven. "Yon garden," he exclaimed, "is for the pair who are doubtless destined to a confined and humble existence;—the world, the free, wide world be thy abode!" and he led her still farther from the boundaries of Paradise. For awhile he lingered to gaze upon her—to contemplate the perfection of her figure, the grace of her motion, the beauty of her countenance, the glowing purity of her complexion, the intelligence in her glance, the atmosphere of irresistible fascination which surrounded her; to drink in the tones of her thrilling voice; to admire the wondrous and harmonious power of thought alive within her; in a word, to experience the intoxicating rapture of a creator, who beholds for the first time the most glorious creature which he could shape in thought, set, by the act of his own will, livingly before him, splendid in intellect and perfect in form.

In another moment, awaking as from a trance, he beheld himself alone with his fair creation—the divine company had departed from the earth:—he

looked up, and beheld the last glimpse of its glory as it neared the threshold of heaven. He followed in the full speed of his spirit.

Already the blissful host had entered the heavenly abodes when he arrived. He was about to enter; but alas! he felt that his progress was arrested by that invisible bar, which expels from heaven every creature that is not all pure and holy; and that voice, which, without a sound, is heard through the infinite expanse, pronounced in his soul: "Nichar! art thou wiser than the Ancient of Days? Is thy work more perfect than that of him who made thee? Be thou the judge of thy own deeds!—go, and contemplate through ages the effects of a moment!"

At those words, he fell prostrate on the crystal threshold of heaven, as one dead. The enormity of his offence, which his spirit had before vainly attempted to conceal completely from itself, now rushed over him like a blaze of intolerable light; the sense of all that he had lost by his guilty presumption, pierced him with an agony such as only an immortal spirit can feel. Lost! lost for ever! for ever!—his birthright—his home—his native

home—the precious abode of numberless ages in heaven ! Oh ! that fair and ineffably bright land, where God alone is seen in all his glory and his goodness, face to face ! Where that eternal Effulgence—which, if revealed, would devour all its own works more utterly, more swiftly than the fiercest furnace would devour a blade of grass—moved abroad amidst his highest and purest children, softly and sweetly as a moonlight splendour amongst the children of earth, and smiled upon his wise and mighty archangels, and upon the slightest beings of that holy place, with a paternal love and beauty that filled every moment with ages of unspeakable gladness. That happy land, which stretched far, far through the vastness of eternity ; most glorious in feature, most delicious in climate ! Its mountains, its flowery vales, its broad, living waters, its groves, its perennial fields, basking in the blessedness of the imperishable light ; and everywhere through its fragrant quietudes, through its gorgeous and multitudinous cities, the heavenly people dwelling in knowledge and love, and in that elasticity of spirit, which, knowing no languor, no weariness, feels every moment the fulness of its

life, and looks onward through the interminable future with triumphant delight, unknown to the most glorious hope. What thousands of beautiful creatures were dwelling there, with whom his soul had entwined itself in tenderest and most animating bonds of love,—begun with life, and strengthened through the lapse of ennobling ages. That now—O misery of miseries, he had lost for ever !

For ever ! for ever !—a spirit alone knows the meaning of that word. For ever ! Cut off from all the glowing union of pure, splendid, and seraphic minds ; from that boundless alliance of rejoicing hearts, which heaven only knows ; banished from the shine of God's own presence—that Sun of suns, which warms the whole universe, but pours upon the children of heaven the infinitude of its glory. For ever was he thence expelled ; and,—horrible idea !—for ever cast out to the communion of the blasphemous and damned crew ! The thought passed through him like the two-edged sword of judgment, and he cried aloud in the intensity of his agony ; and, clinging to the sacred threshold, called vehemently on God for pardon. But no answer issued from the Holy Tabernacle ;

and in the madness of despair, he prayed for annihilation; but there came no reply—no winged shaft, which should, at a stroke, scatter his spirit into nothing. The blackness of condemnation was in his soul, making horrible the tempest of his tortured feelings; and the heavenly messengers, stopped for a moment as they went by in their lightning flight, gazed on him as he lay, exclaimed, "Is Nichar also fallen?" shuddered, trembled, and fled on. Crushed, agonized to the limits of his mighty nature, he lay prostrate on the sacred pavement; and if a spirit could die, he had then died. But alas! no such blessing was within his reach; and when he felt that he was irrecoverably lost, when no pardon came from the father and fountain of Love; when not even annihilation was vouchsafed to him, he sprang up, like a suddenly kindled meteor, and plunged from the crystal verge of heaven into the abyss of space.

Downward and desperately he precipitated himself headlong, in that wild fury of heart which would fain burst away from its own misery, when lo! he beheld himself near the earth, the scene of his fatal temptation, and it instantly occurred to

him to enter and destroy the cause of his ruin. It was the hardest sacrifice that pride could make to duty; but might there not be a ray of hope in the deed? When the cause of offence was removed, might not the offence be forgiven? Would God, so gracious, so full of loving-kindness to millions of beings, keep his wrath for ever, when that which caused it was no more? When the soul that had sinned, hastened to obliterate the sinful work; when the heart which had for ages partaken of his love, with the speediest and most unshrinking devotion, rushed to demolish its fondest idol, to lay itself once more prostrate at the footstool of that Goodness, which it had wounded rather by a momentary forgetfulness, than by premeditated evil—could there be no relenting? Oh! might this boon be won; were it only through centuries of painful penance, how gladly would he undergo it!

He entered the wilderness where he had left Lilith,* for so he had named the living work of his hands. He sought her with feelings that warred

* The Jews have preserved the name of this being in their traditions, but erroneously attribute her creation to God, and make her the first wife of Adam.

mightily in him. The tenderness, the far more than tenderness of a parent towards his child, drew him towards his beautiful creation, and filled him with bitter anguish; but the loss of God's favour, the anger of the beneficent framer of all happy spirits, penetrated him with far deeper feelings, and steeled him to the most desperate firmness. "She shall die!" he exclaimed, "she shall die! though she be more beautiful than Zumiela, the fairest shape of heaven; more spiritual than a seraph, more tender than a cherub, that daily dips its wings in the ancient fountain of love. And, oh God! blot out her memory with her life!" He beheld as he spoke, the object of his search before him. There was a deep valley. From a wild and desolate chaos of mountains, rushed down a roaring, foaming torrent, and, reaching the bottom of the dell, spread itself out into a fair lake. Rocks run at a little distance from its southern bank, and trees spread their arms from the crest of the cliffs towards the water, forming a living canopy to the green margin beneath. There Nihar beheld Lilith radiant in her beauty, and evidently pleased with the reflection of her image

in the lake ; but what was his astonishment to observe her surrounded by a troop of ministering spirits, busily employed in paying homage to her charms, crowning her with flowery garlands, and dancing around her with the most lively gestures, to the sound of the most voluptuous music.

He knew instantly that they were not celestial natures. God's children would not approach a being for whose creation a great Spirit was exiled from heaven ; and rapid as is the intelligence of immortal essences, he was sure that already the tidings of his deed and of his fall, were known in the farthest corners of the universe. He knew they could not be such, though they wore distantly their semblance, and as he drew near he saw through their assumed beauty and brightness, the scars and the tarnish of hell ; he saw on their plumes the indelible evidences of the indestructible fires ; he saw the air of that misery which no disguise can conceal, no bravery subdue, no affectation of mirth obliterate ; and he traced on their brows the brand of that malignancy, that burning bitterness of heart, which must for ever writhe under the memory of crushed ambition—shattered glory—lost felicity,

and seek to vent itself in maledictions on God, and in the perdition of his creatures. He gazed on them in astonishment and indignation : astonishment at their audacity, which had led them to invade thus early and fearlessly this newly-created world ; and indignation that they should presume to claim fellowship with a life which he had designed to be so perfect and glorious. But if they regarded not God, were they likely to reverence himself? He marched hastily towards them, to drive them from their prize ; to his astonishment they beheld him not with fear, but with joy. At once they raised a wild cry, clapped their hands in exultation, and advanced rapturously to receive him. " Welcome, Nichar ! welcome, mighty angel ! welcome, thou noble friend and benefactor ! " they exclaimed. " Thou hast opened to us a new and magnificent world, and hast placed in it a fair creature, worthy of our love and adoration. Welcome from the slavery of Heaven to the free hearts of the free rangers of creation ! Thou hast extended our regions ; thou hast boldly stretched out thy hand, and formed a new creature for our pleasure ; thou art worthy to be a prince and a leader amongst us.

Welcome, Nichar ! welcome, mighty angel ! to the world which we might have panted after in vain but for thee. Long had we watched its growth and progress to perfection ; long had we hovered round it, and yearned to alight upon it ; to cool our burning feet on its fresh bosom ; to bathe our tortured temples in its cool gales : but the spell of the starry tyrant was upon it, his invisible chain was around it, and we looked and longed in vain. Thou hast dared to shiver the chain ; to annihilate the ban, and we are here to welcome and follow thee !”

Had the God of heaven appeared before the confounded angel, and cast upon him some new sense of his anger, he could not have been more blasted and dismayed. He stood like a gigantic statue of exquisite form ; pale as the chiselled marble ; silent as death ; his large eyes fixed stonily ; his hand upon his brow, and his strong, angelic faculties plunged into the confused and whirling wildness of a delirious dream. Slowly his consciousness returned ; slowly he saw where he was ; recalled what he had seen and heard ; and felt in his spirit a gathering passion of amazement, agony, and re-

morse, than which hell itself could afford no more terrible commingling of pain. He saw the wide waste and ruin of his deed. He saw its awful and immeasurable consequences coming rapidly upon the world which he had marred. Never before, though he had beheld the monstrous war which had whirled chaos through the lovely realms of heaven, and had hung over the hideous gulph which swallowed up in its howling depths of struggling flame and darkness, the rebellious legions,—never before had the yawning and disastrous gates of death and destruction,—vice in its loathsomeness and fearfulness,—misery in its sickening vastness, stood open before him thus wide and terrible. He!—he! had set open their infernal portals! He! unhappy wretch! had thus scathed in its infancy the bright creation of God. He who had for ever shrunk back with abhorrence from the diabolical natures, had thus given to their swarming myriads free charter—had thrown open to them the full range of earth, and made all its coming generations the prey of their insatiate and indefatigable evil. Well, he thought, might the vengeance of God burn against him! justly the gates of mercy be im-

moveably closed ! He had thrown the brand of wickedness and rebellion upon earth, and it must be his destiny to see it shoot forth its fires in ten thousand terrible and devastating forms.

The overwhelming misery of Nichar's spirit nothing but such a spirit can know. He groaned, and sickened through the farthest depths of his soul, and turned to escape from the fiery scourge of his own thought ; but there was no hope—no peace—no escape ;—eternity was before—vengeance behind ; and pain, and evil, and remorse, moulded into the very vitality of his being.

But the rage of his agony gave him power. He rushed furiously upon the demonian troop, and attempted to snatch Lilith from among them. It was vain ! They closed fearlessly and firmly round her, and he beheld her smile upon them in cordial approbation. He had given her splendid gifts, he had clothed her with beauty like a star ; he had endowed her with smiles and words, whose fascinations had strange might even upon spirits, and with the sagacity of an angel ; but he had not given her, what in his seditious act was not his to bestow—the spirit of goodness. She was made to

be a glittering, but disastrous meteor. To scatter contagious fire amongst men; a radiant creature, whom to behold was to worship; and whose worship was intoxication, discord, and death. Nichar saw in a few moments most wounding and humiliating evidences of this. He called upon her to come forth from amongst those lost spirits to her own maker, but she smiled contemptuously on him, and said:—"Art thou my maker? If thou art, why do I not remember it? But I know it not. I am, and I have been as I am, to my thinking, for ever. I found myself as thou, and these—but who made us? Is it necessary that we should have been made? To my thought we are immortal as this fair world, and as the stars above us. But I seek thee not—why seekest thou me? Thou art stern, and dark, and furious—these are gentle, and kind, and happy. They love me—why should I leave them? If thou wilt join them, do me homage as they; but, if not, depart!—and if thou hast made me, what hinders that thou mayest make others like me for thy solace?"

She ceased, and looked round upon her worshippers with smiles that were expectant of applause—and she received it,—the whole company shouted

and clapped their hands for joy. But Nichar, burning with the agony of his tortured feelings, rushed once more forward to seize her. It was as vain as before. Hundreds were now around her. A host confronted him, blazing out in all their hideous aspects, and gigantic, native statures, and brandishing those meteor-swords which had been terrible in heaven. He rushed impetuously upon them, but felt at once that God was no longer with him; no longer that power which had enabled him to sweep down whole ranks before him, dwelt in his arm; he was hurled back as by the stroke of an arbalast, and amidst the hellish laughter of his foes, stood overwhelmed by grief and shame. At once, he beheld the infernal crew resuming their heavenly semblance, rise from the earth in a dense phalanx; a golden cloud instantly rolled itself into the midst of them, and, enthroning Lilith upon it, they sailed majestically away to the sound of triumphal music, which they had learned of old in the Happy Land, and which transfixed Nichar in this moment of sorrow and degradation, with the most melting and agonizing memories.

The forlorn angel stood, at that instant, the

most miserable of all created beings. The universe had nothing to shew in its darkest, or its direst regions, that could bear a comparison in wretchedness with him. The fierce pride and blasphemous rage of the damned, steeled them in degree to endurance, and even to a something resembling victory over their pains; but far was Nichar from such desperate consolations. An exile, a reluctant exile from heaven, where his heart and his memory only lingered, he was a creature utterly solitary in his crime, his doom, and his sorrows. There was no congenial nature to partake his destiny, to whisper words of pitying love and of encouragement; he had offended God, but every feeling of his soul refused to rebel against him; the fallen spirits offered for him no fellowship, they were in his eyes totally abhorrent, fearful, and disgusting; and the very being to whom he had given life, identified herself with these detested spirits, and appeared destined to fill him with perpetual and accumulating griefs. The evil ones had evidently seized upon her as the central object of their intrigues and delusions upon earth. From her, and consequently from him, were to be made to

flow all the vices and horrors with which they would afflict mankind. Already the world was in their possession, and the human pair—at the thought of them a sudden pang passed through him, and a fearful question of what might already be their fate. Had these ruinous and malicious beings succeeded in injuring or deluding them?—for nothing was more certain than that they would assail them by every art and power, and fearful was the chance of unsuspecting innocence, and inexperience, against the subtlest and cruelest enemies of the world—of happy and noble natures, against the vile and desperate. He trembled at the idea; and half forgetful of his sorrows, hastened towards Eden to learn how it went with them. A very little time shewed him the truth. He beheld afar off the cloudy and flaming terrors that surmounted the gates of Paradise; he saw the stern and fiery countenances, and flickering swords of the cherubims of judgment; and soon discovered the dejected parents of men in a situation, how different from their garden-home! They had taken up their abode in the open wilderness. By the margin of a river, beneath a spreading tree, Adam

was attempting to construct a sort of shed of reeds and boughs to protect them from the cold nightly dews which fell here, and from the scorching noon sun, which burned up the vegetation around. Eve was returning from the heath, laden with wild flowers, which she had rooted up from the desert turf, and was bringing homewards in a large lotus leaf. Their fine forms were disfigured by being wrapped in shaggy skins, and a shade had passed over that joyous beauty which was once theirs. Adam pursued his labour silently, and with a melancholy look; and Eve, as she planted her flowers around their dwelling, and strove to dispose them in the most tasteful order, evidently was thinking of the bowers, the glorious blossoms, the rich spontaneous fruits of the lost Eden, for as she stooped over her drooping plants, she watered them with her tears.

The scene was too much for Nichar—these were his works. To him they owed their toils and sorrows,—toil full of bitterness, sorrow full of fear of its future increase,—he fled.

CHAPTER II.

"OH! for some desolate region," Nichar exclaimed, inwardly, "where I might at least be spared the pain of witnessing what I long in vain to redress!" The bright summits of the distant mountains caught his eye, and he directed his course thitherward. They were regions desolate enough, even for his wish. High and higher, far and farther he ascended, amidst crags, chasms, and nodding precipices, till he beheld before him a wide ocean, as it were, of peaks stretched in every direction, and all wrapped in the whiteness of eternal winter. There was neither tree nor shrub, nor the voice of any bird, nor the foot-prints of any beast. Heavy rocks stooped here and there over narrow, frozen glens; in some places natural pyramids, and sharp taper obelisks shot up high into the clear, cold heavens; in others, stupendous precipices, reared themselves in opposition, till their foreheads nearly met in the gloom of their own deep shadows;

and dark rents, which seemed unfathomable, were horrid with dependent ice, and the sound of falling waters. In the calmest moments a wind sighed and moaned amongst the hills, and ever and anon came blustrous tempests, that filled the whole region as with thunder, and wrapped everything in a black chaos of clouds and fiercely-driving hail. By day, the sun shot down his naked rays fiercely, and the snows rushed in melted and resounding torrents down the dells and abysses; but night came, and frost, with a sudden and iron grasp, checked every stream, hushed every sound, and the moon and stars in resplendent beauty, sailed over realms as silent as their own. It was a region to have appalled and subdued the stoutest human spirit, and to have aroused a longing after human society in the soul of the saddest misanthrope, could human life have there existed; but Nichar had within him, a desolation which made all without dim and insensible. The spirit of self-accusation was in his soul like an undying fire,—baffled hopes clung round him like adamantine chains—and despair, with a dull and consuming weight, pressed upon his soul, and rendered him

feeble as a dying man. At times he would sit day and night, for the space of a moon, on some lofty crag, as if contemplating the scene below, but unconscious of its presence. At times he threw himself into a chill cavern which overlooked a horrible abyss, that swallowing a mighty torrent, sent up an eternal dissonance and vapour. Thus, in the deadly lassitude of demolished hope, or when his spirit awoke to some more lively perception of its energies, in vain dreams of all he once enjoyed, and an equally vain labour of his faculties to strike out some scheme to which hope might link itself and arouse him to his fondest object,—the destruction of Lilith,—days, weeks, months, and years passed away. At length he once more shook from his wings the lethargy that had so long oppressed them, and in the strength, not of exultation, but of despair, he bent his flight to the lower earth.

He speedily saw that striking changes had been wrought in the world, since he last gazed on it. Dense and shaggy forests had spread themselves over immense regions. The inferior animals had multiplied by thousands, and peopled air, water,

and field. The clang and cries of birds, the roar and bellowing of beasts, everywhere resounded. Many-coloured wings flitted amongst the tree-tops; the wild ass, the horse, and striped zebra, in untamed troops, scoured the hills and plains, and the lordly elephant moved in calm majesty through the woods. But evil! evil was amongst them! There was blood and oppression, the roar of devouring rage, the shriek of the suffering victim everywhere; and Nichar knew that the curse of his deed was going on in its strength.

He again beheld the human habitation. It had assumed a more cheerful and home-like aspect. Climbing plants had hidden the reeds, and overgrown them with beauty and blossoms. The more gentle creatures had congregated around it, as if they retained their primal allegiance to man. The milk-white dove, like an emblem of purity and domestic affection, basked upon its roof; the swallow made its nest there, and twittered as with the voice of contentment; beasts of various kinds reposed in the fields around; and, sporting with the kid and the lamb on the heath, he beheld the first two children of the race—creatures fair as the

cherubim of heaven. Could he have banished from his bosom all prescience and reflection, over these he would have wept tears of joy, and have lingered near them with a feeling of reviving happiness; but he knew too well, what woe and change hung over them! He knew how the leaven of darkness would mould their forms and natures into something widely different to what they then were. How from those soft and blooming germs, must spring stems of ruggedness—hardness that would inflict—or gentleness that must suffer evil; and he turned away in bitterness, that his deed could blast things lovely and happy as these.

He beheld Adam come forth to his morning sacrifice. Time had yet made no sensible change in his person, except conferring a deeper gravity of aspect; but in his fallen state, he still walked erect as the lord of the world; and his stately tread—his majestic frame and countenance—his locks, that shook their crisped gold upon his ample shoulders, were kingly. Eve followed, glowing in matronly beauty, and with looks of reverence and regard, that proved that the fall had not been able to alienate the first affections of the pair.

Nichar gazed on them with wonder and admiration. The father of men stood and raised his noble countenance to heaven; the universal mother knelt by the altar of turf,—her figure bending in the most graceful attitude, and her face hidden by her affluent locks, that fell in a cloud to the ground. The sun ascended the eastern sky and cast his freshest beams on them, on the dewy earth, and on the woods around, loud with the matin melodies of birds. It was a beautiful and an animating picture, and the silent angel was ready to exclaim—"Evil has yet achieved no important victory over these happy beings!" When, however, Adam lifted up his voice to God, the spirit of thankfulness and of fervent piety gave a solemn eloquence to his tongue, but these were soon lost in prayers for help and comfort; help against the indefatigable malice of the tempter—against the continual failings and feelings of his own corrupted nature! and for comfort to his spirit, assailed by bitter memories from the past, and fears and despondence from the future—by fears of death here, and of deluded hopes in the hereafter. While the first man uttered these melancholy

aspirations, and every moment grew more and more vehement in supplication, Nichar cast his eyes to the ground, and beheld Eve fallen prostrate at the foot of the altar, her hands wreathed wildly in her hair, and her whole frame trembling with the agitation of wretchedness.

It was here!—he beheld it! His work had not missed its effect. Misery had made man his certain prey. The light and glory of his life were gone—he was a creature of fear and mortal care. Calmness might assume its place on his brow, but it had no security, or permanent abode there: passion and pain soon hurled it from its station—the barb was still in the wounded heart, and would rankle for ever!

The weeping and self-accusing angel turned away. His woe admitted of no aggravation,—to have lost his own happiness, and have destroyed that of a world, were his crime and his doom; the only poor consolation yet left him, was to fly from the presence of the evil which he had awoke, but had no power to arrest,—he fled.

He pursued his flight indifferent to its direction; his thoughts were in the scene which he had wit-

nessed; but presently his attention was aroused by the appearance of an angel whom he beheld rapidly careering in the distance. Another and another followed. At the first view they appeared spirits of heaven, but he quickly recognised them as belonging to the fallen legions. He observed, too, that more every moment shewed themselves in the same track, issuing from or speeding to one point in the horizon. In that direction, he felt persuaded, lay the place of their resort—the place whither they had conveyed Lilith. An instant, an irresistible desire seized him to discover it. As his only means of effecting his design, he took the hated form and aspect of one of the accursed tribe—the assumed shape of heaven, which they were proud to wear, but which shewed through it the traces of internal ruin. He loathed the disguise,—he would fain have nought in common with the detested race; but could he effect through it the destruction of their pernicious prize—of Lilith, he deemed it cheaply won.

It was near sunset, when, as he reached the summit of a lofty chain of hills, he beheld, at once, below him, a mighty and most magnificent city.

It occupied the whole area of a wide, delicious valley, round which the hills on which he rested, ran in a fine but irregular sweep, leaving at the east an opening through which a great river, after having traversed the city in a multitude of separate streams, rolled its re-united waters. The walls, which glowed in the last rays of the west, like molten gold, were of a stupendous height, crowned at intervals with towers, and stretched along the feet of the hills in a sinuous circuit of twenty leagues. It was a city, calculated by its amplitude and splendour, for the capital of the world. Within, palaces and temples of glorious aspect and vast dimensions were seen, scattered amidst the most delightful gardens, groves, flowery fields, and gleaming waters; around it, the mountains sloped away in many wild and beautiful forms, exhibiting open, heathy tracts, deep glens, dark forests, and every feature that can attract the eye and the imagination; while the very heavens, as if emulous to do honour to so noble a city, glowed westward one wide flush of crimson; and its clouds, resting their extremities on the glittering peaks of the mountains, stretched through the blue concave in

vaulted lines and masses of tumultuous, billowy, and fretted gold, of the intensest lustre and of various hues, — a gorgeous and indescribable canopy!

As Nichar gazed upon it, in sad and boding wonder, a passing spirit alighted, and fixed upon him a regard full of surprise and curiosity. "Whence comest thou, melancholy spirit?" he said advancing, "for I recognise thee not. Yet, methinks thou art one of our race, and shouldst not therefore be all unknown."

"It matters little," Nichar replied, "who I am, it is enough that I am wretched. Canst thou give me rest?"

"Rest! Are not thine eyes, even now, on the city of rest?" he asked.

"I see a city," said Nichar, "but I know not whether rest be there—I know not even its name."

"Knowest thou not its name!" exclaimed the spirit in the highest surprise, "then again I say,—who art thou? Art thou from the Fiery Land, and hast thou not heard of Ukinim, the city of the bricks of gold? Hast thou trodden the burning soil of Tartarus, and sighed for ages to escape to

some more temperate clime, and didst not hear that triumphant acclaim which resounded through the dolorous regions,—that earth, the new, the fair, the delightful earth was ours? Didst thou not hear it? Didst thou not echo it, with a million of voices, that with one sudden and astounding shout, burst wide the gates of torture, and gave egress to ten thousand uncontrollable spirits, that with frantic avidity fled forth at the glorious tidings? Wast thou not one? Canst thou be but newly arrived? Hast thou wandered far into some obscure corner of the universe, and hast not heard; but what nook is so obscure, so distant, that the glad news has not reached? The wingless and unwieldy natures of the fiery deeps,—those vast monsters which are plunged into the molten floods of pain, to make torment more horrible,—lift up their dragon heads, and fill hell with their hideous cries, at the description of these delicious abodes. How, I ask thee again, art thou a stranger here?”

“I am not ignorant of this,” said Nichar,—“these tidings have not escaped me. I have heard too of Lilith; dwells she not here?”

“Yes,” said the spirit, “seest thou not the august fabric which crowns the central mount of the city? Seest thou not its glittering roof, its fair front, its long colonnades, its groves and gardens that stretch far down the slope?—that is her abode, her palace, and her temple. Thou hast not seen her? Thou shalt see her in all her beauty. The fairest thing that ever yet was formed! She was the work of an angel. Let the despot of heaven boast no more of his omnipotent skill! An angel has moulded the most glorious of created beings; and God—a jealous God, well doth he call himself—has expelled him from heaven. Thou shalt see her! There she dwells in her radiant loveliness. There also stands her image, fair as herself, though but a lifeless marble, ready to receive the homage of mankind—that one day shall pour in thousands through these gates. Yes! her charms, moulded in the similitude of their race, but infinitely transcending those of the woman, or those of all her daughters yet to be; shall lead the whole tribe captive. They are ours, yes, even before they are born! We shall be their gods! Already a thousand temples

are in Ukinim, each tenanted with the marble or molten image of our chiefs; each standing with open portals; and men shall enter and worship. Wouldst thou win a shrine? Be bold, and thou mayest. But come, let us enter, and see how fair Ukinim is."

At once they stretched their wings and descended. As they approached, Nichar was impressed with increasing astonishment. The walls were lofty, as though they would defy all but spiritual ingress, and massy as if built for eternity. The bricks, of solid and refulgent gold, were such as men with all their science could not raise. The gates were of sheeted adamant, set in a heavy frame-work of embossed gold, and imbedded in pondrous towers of the same precious metal. Their opening was like the removing of a mountain, but effected with the harmonious ease of the lightest wicket. But when they entered, how enchanting was the effect! Innumerable flowers, of wonderful forms and colours, filled the air with their balmy odour; the fig, the vine, the date, and palm, exhibited every where their luxuriant forms, and a thousand other beautiful trees showered their blossoms on the path,

and extended their fruits to the hand; fountains were seen scattering their silvery waters on fair lawns, and the most exquisite statues discovered themselves at every turn.

Round the whole city ran a broad terrace of white marble, so broad that a nation might walk there, leading on the one hand by flights of easy steps up to the towers on the wall, and on the other by similar ones down into the gardens and groves of the city, which from this elevation lay in one wide view of beauty and magnificence. Fountains and statuary adorned the terrace through its whole extent, and the softest breezes reached it with their inspiring freshness. It was a work on which the eye of Nichar, although accustomed to the architecture of heaven, rested with the deepest wonder.

But the wonder was increased when he turned to the city itself. It was a city of palaces! Vast chains of those splendid buildings stretched far as the eye could reach, overlooking the loveliest scenes; but the far greater number were situated each in the midst of its own paradise. Magnificent arcades, formed of columns of surprising loftiness and of the richest material and workmanship, formed

imposing approaches to many, keeping the spectator, as he advanced, in equal admiration of their own nobility, and of the varied openings which presented themselves on either hand into delicious gardens, lawns beautified by the choicest creations of the sculptor, and cool, shadowy labyrinths of wood and copse. The structures themselves were of various species of marble—the roofs uniformly of burnished gold; colonnades and peristyles whose towering columns were of pure sardonyx or sapphire, adorned their fronts, and bore pediments and freizes where the most animated groups were wrought in bas-relief. Within, the scene of luxurious splendour was marvellous. Halls of imperial amplitude presented on all sides paintings in which, to the truth and vivacity of life, were added the richness of imagination, and the intensest interest of extraordinary events. We gaze in enchantment on the works of our fellow men, and are ready to deify those whose hands have portrayed scenes in which we live a higher life than that of earth, and gather feelings and aspirations that lift us towards more intellectual worlds: but here the artists were amongst the highest intelligences of God's

formation ; they had seen, themselves, in the heaven of heavens, those mysterious shapes of loveliness and grandeur which enter only feebly into the dreams of men ; they had been themselves agents in the mighty events which they recorded, and limned them with the pencils of an immortal regret. They were the wars of heaven ;—faithful in their enchanting scenery, but ingeniously disposed so as to develope all the heroic strength and daring, but to conceal the defeat of those who fell. Nichar wandered from scene to scene in a dream of wonder and memory. At every step he encountered forms and features, which were now lost for ever to heaven ; fallen, darkened, and disfigured by woe and evil passions, or which still blooming in heaven, were for ever lost to him. Oh ! spirits of ancient friendship ! divine creatures of his everlasting attachment ! how his eye fixed itself on their celestial lineaments, beaming with benignity and bliss, and refused to withdraw till the sense of the gulf between them rushed upon him ; and he groaned bitterly, and passed on. When he turned his gaze from these, it was met on all sides by chiselled forms, which he recognised as wholly belonging to

the fallen race. There they stood, imaged in their primeval beauty, without one trace of the scathing thunder, or one withering stain. Nichar gazed in trembling amazement at the audacity of their presumption. One arch-rebel had even assumed the lightnings of the Most High; others had clothed themselves in the attributes of strength, wisdom, or benevolence; all bore the insignia of godhead and dominion; forms that in after ages won the worship of wisest nations, and spread their power and renown through the earth.

A strain of wild music suddenly awoke, and Nichar started from the reverie, into which these objects had thrown him, to behold a scene of the most magical fascination. A thousand brilliant lamps filled with splendour those superb halls, and cast their blaze, like stars, upon those transparent floors of ruby or amethyst; where he who trod beheld his reflection below him as in a mirror; around him numberless spirits, in glorious shapes, went to and fro, in sportive or eager converse, and through a lofty, open door, he saw various groups, dancing to the sound of that music which had startled him. Without, gleamed far and wide innumerable lights,

diffusing a fairy splendour over the gardens and bosky walks, where creatures, as apparently happy as they were beautiful, were enjoying the evening coolness, and the fresh flowery odours that belong to it. It was a spectacle to deceive all but a spirit—it deceived not Nichar; he saw in it the maniac mirth that laughs in the grasp of perdition, and wears only the semblance of happiness that it may destroy its reality in others. He felt a sense of guilt in lingering amongst them; but he thought of Lilith, and determined to proceed. He ascended the mount of her abode. He surveyed that abode with wonder still more excited;—it was the perfection of spiritual workmanship; and her image, placed in her voluptuous shrine, was so living a resemblance, that he was near rushing upon it to strike it to the ground for herself. But she!—who can describe the enchantments of her innermost pavilion, and of herself? There, amidst every miracle of art which the most subtle and ingenious spirits could execute—in an apartment furnished for luxurious ease, with every combination of silken softness and imperial grandeur which the loftiest and most refined beings could sigh for,

or command, sate that refulgent and voluptuous figure, worshipped in after ages at a thousand shrines with passionate devotion, as the goddess of Beauty and Love. Innumerable spirits thronged around, ready with unwearied zeal to spread before her the luxuries of every clime, and to solace her with music and the incense of flatteries and sighs. By night, they guarded the apartment of her repose with sleepless vigilance, and in forms of living fire; by day, when she issued abroad into her luxurious gardens, or trod majestically the cool pavement of some breezy colonnade, they attended her in various guises: some, as great and gallant spirits; some, as light and laughing nymphs; and others, sporting before her as winged and infantine cherubim; or mounting her gorgeous bark, to the sound of triumphal music, they spread their purple sails, and glided in dreaming luxury through the fair scenery which the great river commanded!

Such was this dazzling creature—such the mode of her existence. Even Nichar could not avoid the admiration which her presence excited, but it was fraught with no feeling of attachment or of homage. He had suffered too severely for her

sake ; he had seen too clearly the determined evil of her nature ; he beheld with too deep and indignant a sentiment, the ruinous lure which through her was spread for mankind. A fixed and deadly purpose possessed his soul, which these scenes only seemed to strengthen ; it was to strike at once, and for ever, this fair mischief from the earth. She was moulded of dust, and therefore partook of mortality,—but she was surrounded by watchful and unclosing eyes. Day and night he waited anxiously for some moment of incaution, but in vain. He mingled in the crowd that surrounded her, but he came not too near, for he disdained to bow his head before her ; he could launch an arrow from some shadowy nook, but numberless hands, with the speed of lightning, would dart forth to snatch it ere it reached her, and all hell would turn upon him, and overwhelm him with vengeance for his vainly attempted deed. Days, months, years, he followed his object with invincible patience and admirable art, but it brought him no nearer to his aim ; whilst it every day became more and more arduous. His melancholy aspect often caught the quick eyes of the

spirits of evil. It did not escape them, that he failed to adore their idol. Their suspicions were awoke, and many eyes were on him when he observed them not; yet he felt that he was an object of distrust, and knew not how soon they might penetrate his intention. It was necessary to be at once circumspect and resolved. His object was dear to his soul as heaven itself, but it must be speedily accomplished, or abandoned for ever. He was consumed by inexpressible anxiety. Still he watched, and waited, and hoped in vain. The same pageants were before him, the same eyes around; but not a moment came, in which he might dare his attempt with probability of success, though he himself were overwhelmed with the whole weight of infernal vengeance. At length, such an instant seemed his. Unexpectedly—suddenly it came upon him. As he entered a grotto in the gardens of Lilith, about noon, he saw a figure reposing in the shade. It was her's! in all her glowing beauty!—She lay, and slept!—He stood during a moment of suspicious wonder;—it was she! and no creature near—not one attendant spirit—not one living and vigilant eye! It was a

crisis not to be lost,—he darted towards her, and grasped her throat with the energy of unutterable hate. Her features darkened—they changed!—her wild eyes flashed open with a dreadful glare, and instead of Lilith's, the hideous visage of Mel-drec, the most cunning and malignant of the fiendish crew, was fixed on him with a sneer of triumphant scorn and rage. He recoiled from the detested vision! he relaxed his grasp,—and the fiend, starting up in his own stature and likeness, uttered a laugh, whose infernal horror woke a multitude of echoes diabolical as itself. "Traitor!" he exclaimed, "have I unmasked thee? And now thou shalt pay the price of thy temerity and deceit!" A moment, and the whole tribe would be upon him. At one bound, Nichar cleared the adjoining wall, shot from the city, and darted with all the velocity of his nature into the depths of space. Shame, disappointment, cruel and irremediable disappointment, stung him to madness, and gave impetus to his wing. Another moment, and a host of infuriated spirits swept like a dark cloud over the walls of Ukinim, and pursued him with the impetuosity of hate. The strife was keen, and

arduous, and uncertain. The most powerful passions, both in pursuers and pursued, urged them on. But Nichar recked little for their malice; fiercer tormentors than they, were in his bosom; he was a mighty angel, and perhaps, though he deemed himself adandoned, heaven might favour his flight:—he prevailed! His implacable foes returned to earth, and he, abjuring it in his soul for ever, pursued his solitary flight through space.

CHAPTER III.

It was a melancholy journey on which Nichar was bound. In the earth which he left, hope had abandoned him; in the ten thousand worlds which lay before him, it dwelt not for him. His spirit, perpetually mourning over its error, and its tremendous consequences, had exerted all its powers, called forth all its ingenuity, consumed all its prayers to quench the evil which it had elicited;

but it had now assumed a shape and vigour which mocked his individual efforts. It was not for him to cope with united hell; and God shrouded himself in inexorable silence. Earth therefore offered to him but despair and its worst agonies; and the wide world-peopled universe, what did it promise? the melancholy liberty of the restless spirit, which, wrung with its internal and ever-urging pain, "seeketh rest but findeth it not." He sped on—and as he winged his way across the mighty flood of eternity, and beheld his form imaged in its silent depths, he was struck with horror at the change which woe and despair had wrought in him. That high and glorious form which he wore in the glad land of heaven, now floated onward like a dim and waning meteor; and his grief-darkened countenance, changed as that of a spirit of evil, was the saddest sight in nature, since its expression was not that of malignancy, but woe. He involuntarily shrunk back from his course—that star, towards which he was advancing, though beaming at the distance of many million leagues, appeared already too near. On what light and happy coast would he dare to shew that melancholy

ruin of a form? What had he to do with sunshine, and the sounds of contented existence? No! some dismal globe, some chaos of death and silence, would be more welcome objects. He turned aside, pursued another course, and anon descried a faint orb glimmering before him. He approached. It was a dreary and lifeless object; a globe covered with an universal sea. No mountains broke its surface, no islands studded its watery bosom, no creatures were visible in its mighty depths,—it was a regular, but unanimated sphere. But Nichar saw that the presence of God was there; his spirit hovered over it, preparing it for the future abode of life. Anon it reeled, as with some mighty but unseen stroke; a low, hollow murmur came as from its heart. Its waters, one moment motionless as a mirror, the next were hurried to and fro, and became covered with a dark foam. Louder, more threatening sounds, like internal thunders, broke from the bosom of the labouring globe; it shuddered and staggered, as if its huge frame was rent with convulsive pangs. Its waves were thrown against the very heavens; louder and wilder became the internal

roar of wrath, till with one astounding explosion, rocks, flames, tempests of smoke and darkness, rushed up from the very depths of the waters into the sky, with the most horrible and indescribable combination of all furious and raging sounds. The whole frame of the planet seemed shattered at a stroke. The ocean recoiled with inconceivable precipitancy, leaving bare the torn and slimy ribs of the submarine rocks; but returning with instant and headlong force, its turbid waters plunged into the flaming gulph, and filled it with tenfold and horrible uproar. An once a howl, as of a million of spirits in pain, was heard; and immense columns of hissing, roaring, shrieking steam, tore wider the monstrous abyss, and flashed into the sky, mingled with the voracious flames. The thunderings, the lightnings, the rage of the tremendous, conflicting elements, the whirling volumes of clouds, the darkness, the flames, were confounded together in one scene of ineffable and chaotic horror. The angel looked on in silent awe; and marked that it was not in one spot only that the tumult had broke out, but that in a thousand places the afflicted globe was disrupted by its rebellious elements, and

poured forth deafening thunders, and torrents of liquid flames. As he gazed silently, he saw suddenly a still more marvellous spectacle. He saw the solid mass of the globe heave itself from the waters which had covered it, and lift itself here and there, in mountains and chains of mountains, to the very clouds. Like giants rising from the sleep in which they were created, these enormous masses of eternal rock raised themselves,—huge, dark, and silent, and stood where they should stand for countless ages,—the bulwarks and the wonder of future beings. By degrees the fiery evolutions abated, but the world was not at rest. Its whole surface, from hemisphere to hemisphere, heaved and undulated like heavy waters, and the most dolorous and melancholy sounds and wailings were heard throughout all its regions. But Nichar saw that the most astonishing changes had been effected. The ocean, which before had covered the whole world, had shrunk into half its former apparent size. It had retreated into the depths and hollows of the lacerated globe; and had left bare, vast continents and islands, and ridges of awful hills. It was a scene of the most terrific

desolation. The world appeared shattered to pieces, rent, and dislocated, and thrown back into primeval chaos. All was naked ruin, dreary and repulsive; but Nichar saw that a great and beneficent work was done. He saw that valleys, and hills, and the sources of a myriad streams were prepared; he saw that time would clothe their grim and ruinous regions with beauty and fertility; and that God would one day kindle there, the life which should rejoice in itself, and in him who gave it. He felt how wide was the space between him, who out of confusion produces harmony and happiness, and him, who in the midst of what is good, scatters crime and misery; and he wept, confessed his guilt, and went softly on his way.

It was not long ere he approached another and larger planet of the same system. It was already the abode of life—but what life? That of vast and bestial natures. It had passed, he discovered, through preparatory convulsions similar to those of the one he had just quitted. Its oceans and continents, its mountains and valleys, had assumed their places and characters, and were becoming daily more fitted for existence. The deep slime which

the displaced ocean had left upon its plains, was becoming gradually dry and solid ; and vegetation, with a wonderful luxuriance, had sprung up and covered them. There were, it was true, immense regions of dreary and impassable morasses ; and the streams not having yet worn for themselves well-defined channels, spread far and wide, and made vast tracts, unapproachable except to birds and amphibious creatures. The ocean abounded with life. Whales, almost numberless, sported unwieldily in wide, solitary waters, undisturbed by enemies ; and wonderful creatures, like large and living ships, furnished with paddles instead of feet, with long and finely tapered bodies, glittering with scales of every hue, and rearing aloft their arched, serpentine necks, darted to and fro on the waves with the speed of lightning. Their keen, sharp heads furnished with large resplendent eyes, plunged ever and anon into the deep, and brought up their never-failing prey. By the broad and abundant rivers, similar creatures basked with the ferocious crocodile amongst the floating lilies and lotus flowers, or lurked amid the lofty reeds and palm-like ferns. Throughout the vast plains, the mammoth,

the mastodon, the megalonix, the elephant, and other colossal animals ranged in lordly freedom and power, and filled the whole world with their belowings. They lay hidden in the rank and reed-like grass, that tall as a moderate tree, spread over the plains and concealed their gigantic bodies even as they walked;—they roamed through the thick, dark forests, or collecting on the open, bare eminences in infinite numbers, engaged in unwieldy gambols, or rushed to combats of tempestuous fury. A dreamy intelligence lit up their eyes, which fixed in heads of such gigantic proportions, gave them the appearance of spirits imprisoned in moving mountains of matter. They were the rulers of the world! but there was nothing of a smaller fabric to suffer from their oppressions, and nothing to resist their will, except serpents of equally monstrous bulk, that coiled round the forest tree, or moved across the immense savannahs, their crested and glittering heads seen gliding like gorgeous meteors above the ocean of waving grass; or flaming at the foot of a sunny cliff in their dazzling scales of green and gold and scarlet, warned the strong beasts with their brandished whispering tongues from

their haunts. It was a scene which filled Nichar with wonder. He watched the crimson-crested and winged dragons pursue from cliff to cliff the large birds of ocean ; he saw the ponderous hippopotamus and tapir, plunge sullenly in the river deeps as he approached ; he beheld the jocund and wind-winged unicorns scour the rocky hills, and great and wondrous brutes for which we have now no names, and he queried wherefore the divine Wisdom had created a world only to give it up to such monstrous and irrational natures. A moment's reflection, however, suggested to him, that it might be only produced by that benevolent spirit, which fills every portion of the universe with life and its attendant enjoyment, whilst it prepared the world for future and nobler existences ; to convert its rapid and rampant vegetation into soil, till another change should sweep them away ; and even now, while he pondered on their destiny, their time was come. The ocean rising with all its billows, rushed over the lands, and again retiring, left the huge carcasses of the bestial generation imbedded in its mud. The sun again speedily dried the reeking surface, green and tender herbage began to spring, trees to shoot

vigorously from the deep, soft earth to replace those which the torrents had laid prostrate; and Nichar beheld a world preparing itself speedily for its last and noblest family. Already he felt the approach of the divine presence, hastening to complete the work of ages, and he sped into the wilderness of space.

Whither he directed his flight, we know not. Like a mysterious comet, he passed beyond the boundaries of our system, and visited worlds and forms of being, of which we have no intelligence, and after which our flagging imagination pants in vain. At length—it was after the lapse of centuries—he stood once more upon the earth. As we know not the mysterious realms through which he passed in his long and unrevealed sojourn, neither do we know what he had suffered, not what had led him back again to the scene of his former sorrows. But it is probable, that the rest which he found not here, was undiscoverable in every other region of the universe; it is probable that his fate had bound him to our little planet; that his curiosity and anxiety drove him hitherward, to inquire once more into the consequences of his presumptuous act.

Perhaps too, he might hope that time had effected more than he himself had been able to do; that God, perhaps, had ere then arisen to rescue his creation from the infernal natures, and had expelled them from the earth. Whatever were the hopes or motives which had attracted him, he stood once more on our planet, and in a moment's glance comprehended an infinitude of pain and disappointment. The curse was still operating there, with tremendous, far-spread, and daily accelerating force. The demons were in power and multitude resistless. Man had multiplied in incredible numbers, and crime and toil had rolled over the earth like a vast and desolating torrent. The first-born man had killed his brother. Those two cherub-like creatures on which he had gazed with tears of affectionate and painful sympathy, had grown up, one to a murderer, the other to his victim! The race had been rent into two tribes; the one abandoning, the other abhorring its counterpart. Had not Nichar beheld the first parents still dwelling in their original station, and with numbers of their descendents still adhering humbly, but firmly to their faith and attachment to heaven, he would have suspected that

God had totally surrendered the world as a ruin to the rebellious powers. Yet how melancholy a sight was even the best which earth had to shew! The majesty of Adam, the peerless beauty of Eve, were sorely dimmed and wasted by time. Grey locks, stooping and trembling forms, announced that their earthly vigour was well nigh exhausted. Around them were scenes which must fill them with perpetual sighing and sadness; scenes of lawless evil, which must continually remind them of the curse-dispensing tree; countless numbers of their children gone over for ever to the agents of evil; and before them their last and great enemy,—Death!—never lost sight of—every day drawing nearer—and now standing grimly and triumphantly in their path, brandishing his dismal arms, and filling them with apprehension, perhaps even worse than his stroke. This was sad, but it rested not here. The evil spread through every dwelling, every bosom of their most pious children. They toiled beneath the sweltering curse, which clasped the earth, breathed in the air, and smote them in the sun and wind. They rolled in burning fevers, they sickened and died, leaving even their parents to weep and

lament over their graves, and the hearts which clung to them for comfort and support, to bleed with the sudden and rude rending of their affections. Abroad, they were often compelled to stand for their lives against the bloodthirsty sons of Cain, and to be perpetually on the watch against surprise, plunder, and death; and even on their domestic hearths, spite of all their prayers and efforts to suppress it, the evil leaven pervading and inflaming their passions, roused the cry of discord, and made wounds in the very heart of love.

A joyless scene was this for Nichar to contemplate; but it was a paradise to what awaited him in the cities of Cain. There evil had so perfectly triumphed, that human nature was no longer distinguishable from that which corrupted it—men from devils. Nichar gazed in astonishment at the determined and ingenious perversion of every understanding and faculty; every blessing woke, instead of its appropriate feeling, one hateful and revolting. He saw with wonder, how profusely God showered his gifts of strength and beauty upon the race,—such forms and countenances had scarcely their superiors in heaven; but in their

hearts, instead of thankfulness for these splendid gifts, arose a haughty pride, and a desire to compass by their means, objects most offensive to their giver. The strength of the men, instead of a means of good, was but an instrument of cruelty and oppression ; and female beauty, given to soothe and embellish social life, was a fatal and pernicious snare—a fountain of pitiful vanity—a prize for contention—an incentive to dark jealousies and bloodshed. Every crime and outrage on which the world, accustomed to thousands of years of evil, now looks with complacency and sometimes with applause, rose before the eyes of Nichar in its naked deformity, hideous, horrible, and devilish. The envious came by night, and bore away the possessions of his neighbour ; the daring and lawless fired the cottage of the sleeper, smote the shrieking family as they rushed from the flames, and plucked from the ashes the wealth which they coveted. The forest path, which by day echoed the songs of the happy bird, at night saw the desperate arm launched from the gloomy hiding-place, and the traveller fall weltering in his blood. The vain-glorious collected about them the indo-

lent and greedy, and falling upon the neighbouring lands or cities, slew the inhabitants, took possession of their homes, and instead of curses, were hailed with acclamations of praise. The wretch who had scraped together wealth, which he had not a soul to diffuse in happiness, piled it in secret vessels, and received homage for it, as if the contents of his pots had been virtues of the soul. The eye of merciless desire wandered abroad upon everything that was fair, and sought darkness, to perpetrate its unhallowed purposes. Mirth wore but the mask of joy; it was an effervescence of reckless licentiousness. The good things of Providence, raised not their eyes to heaven in gratitude, but turned them on the earth in callous and swollen pride. The poor was not regarded with sympathy, but contempt. All was evil: the sun revealed it; the night fostered it; it grew from day to day; it spread from land to land. The innocence of childhood speedily vanished in the turbulence of distempered passion: manhood hardened into malice, oppression and revenge; and terminated in blasphemy and despair. Such was human life!

The weeping angel wandered far and wide, but found only more terrible evidences of the full-grown and universal curse. He entered, in the guise of an old man, into city after city of the progeny of Cain. They were everywhere alike, full of beauty, prosperity and crime. The god of this world appeared conspicuously their god, and crowned them with his favours. The curse under which the earth lay, seemed almost annihilated on their behalf. The children of Seth dwelt in lowly huts of reed, or skin-covered tents, and tilled their ground, and preserved their flocks with pain; but for these, their children sprung in overflowing multitudes, grew into wonderful strength and beauty, and spread themselves through fertile lands and splendid cities—a rejoicing, affluent, and festive generation. For them, the earth gave up freely its riches; for them, the clouds dropped fatness. Nichar went on from city to city,—far to the east they stretched in a brilliant chain. Everywhere he beheld feasting, riot, and contempt of every moral law. Everywhere he asked for Cain, the father of the race, and was still pointed to the east.

At length he came into a wide wilderness—a wilderness of dry and burning plains. A few scattered rocks shewed themselves here and there; a solitary palm-tree lifted up its head at distant intervals; but all besides, was bare and torrid sterility. The air glowed and glimmered over the ocean of burning sands, like the atmosphere of a furnace; and nothing but a few stunted and prickly shrubs dared the inclement heat. Afar he beheld an object, which gradually assumed the appearance of unfinished buildings: as he drew near, he deemed it a city in progress—a city in this fiery region! When he came upon it, he beheld a wide circuit, inclosed with uncompleted walls of bricks shaped of a stupendous size, and baked in the sun's raging blaze. A few skeleton fabrics, a few scattered and unraised columns were seen within the area, and amongst them stood a rude tent, with work-tools thrown about on the ground; and at some distance, he descried a group of people busy at their labour. He drew near and gazed in increasing wonder, at the scanty numbers, so enormously disproportionate to the task before them. It was a circumstance which appeared to

him as strange as the choice of site for the city itself. Exposed in this sterile plain, to the burning beams of the sun, unbroken by a single tree; around, not smiling fields offering support and refreshment to both body and mind, but ferocious expanses, which threatened famine and exhaustion; which did not give birth to one scanty spring.

As he pondered on these singular facts, he beheld a man issue from the tent, and advance with a solemn, and, as it seemed to him, sad step towards the builders. He paused near him, leaning on a rugged and knotted staff, and gazed upon the labourers in silence. They also in silence pursued their toil. Nichar glanced at him for a moment—it was the first-born of men, Cain the fratricide! He gazed on him with a strange and fearful feeling. He ran with admiration over his tall and tower-like form,—built as for eternal dominion,—sinewed as for invincible strength and fleetness. He looked at his countenance;—but his eye recoiled, smitten as with the blinding flash of the Almighty. God! what a stamp hadst thou affixed on that brow! It was as if the thunder of Omnipotent Vengeance had launched itself full in the centre of that ample

forehead, shielding the life from its power, but leaving an everlasting and terrific scar. Sanguine in hue, and seared to adamantine hardness, deep-ploughed corrugations encircled it, meeting there as a fearful centre of lines drawn from every feature, and drawing thither the eye of the spectator, fall where it would, as by an irresistible spell. The first glimpse of that disastrous brow, produced in the beholder a sense of terror that not even an angel could escape; but that once past, it gave place to a feeling of commiseration, that again drew the eye, and enabled it to endure the baleful vision. Nichar again fixed his glance upon this awful man, and read with a pitying heart the traces of pain and cruel vengeance upon him. Time had not bowed, nor weakened him; but tempests from without and from within had grizzled his short clustering locks and crisped beard, and stamped on his countenance the hardness of invincible endurance. His eye was large, and apparently calm; but there came from its depth something mingled with the expression of his other features, which told that it was not the calmness of repose of which it testified, but that of stern sup-

pression of the heart's deathless bitterness. He stood like a fortress which besiegers have battered, and internal traitors have attempted to dismantle; and which, though it has stood through its own resistant strength, has not stood scathless.

"First-born of men," said Nichar, advancing to him with a grave salutation, "I would venture to ask thee what motive may have decided thy present choice of situation? I have traversed the regions peopled by thy children, and have admired the beauty of their cities, and the plenteous lands in which they are raised; what, then, leads thee here?"

"Stranger," replied Cain, still gazing stedfastly on his work-people, "thy query is not irrational. But hast thou traversed those regions, and inquired not who cultured them? Hast thou dwelt in those cities, and asked not who raised them? They are my works! Is this land barren?—So were they! Is this city poor and rude?—So were those in which thou hast sojourned! And wouldst thou dwell with us awhile, thou shouldst see this place become like those, in all things. The curse is not past!"

"But why," said Nichar, "shouldst thou toil, who art the father of mighty and affluent nations, while they, thy children, live in ease and festivity? Methinks it were better to dwell amongst them, at once the parent and the prince; to behold their prosperity, and receive their affectionate reverence."

"I tell thee," replied Cain, "the curse is not past! and where there is abundance, there it is in its strength. Hast thou not seen in those cities, what thou fain wouldst not have seen? Thou hast! I know it. I have seen the curse, creeping like a pestilence amongst the riches which my children have gathered—beneath the vines where they revel, round the couches where they repose. I have turned, and spurned it, and stamped upon it, and fought with it as with a dragon; but it was too strong for me, and I have fled from its presence. I tell thee, the barrenness and the fierce burning which thou seest here, exhibit not the invincible curse a thousandth part so hatefully, as do those shining halls and flowery gardens. He has cursed the ground, and so be it! I seek not to enjoy his gifts for nothing. I would have nought but what

I wring from this cursed soil. I would have nought but what I win with my weary and laborious hands."

"Oh, great patriarch!" exclaimed Nichar fearfully, as he heard the bitterness of his words, and saw the fierce light which flashed over his countenance, "say not so! God is good!—say not so!"

"If thou have found him so, it is well!" he replied. "For myself, I have not. I speak what I have learnt and know."

"Perhaps, thou hast offended."

"Perhaps!—Thou know'st I have," returned Cain vehemently. "All men know it:—it will be known while there are men,—even now it is a proverb. I know I have offended—and I have wept tears of blood for it! I have wept I say, and bowed myself to the dust, and prayed, and cried to heaven day and night; and what have I won?—silence, everlasting silence—inexorable contempt!"

"Nay! say not so!—say not so, Cain!" Nichar replied with sympathetic emphasis: "Let us not judge too hastily of Him. Let us not expect, since man has fallen, and wickedness abounds on earth, that God should send, as of old, his angels

to manifest his will; or should call from the darkness of his invisible sanctuary, to announce to us what it is. Let us rather seek that manifestation in his goodness that surrounds us. And has he not sent thee much good? Let this persuade thee of his forgiveness and acceptance. Has he not given thee children numerous as the stars, fair as the children of heaven, and planted them in prosperous habitations? Thou hast been the first to destroy life! It may be wise to mark the deed with disapprobation, that it be not imitated. But since that testimony of disapproval, hast thou not received from his hand continual and manifold good?"

"I have destroyed a life! Ah! a precious life! Precious to me, even in the memory of many hundred years. I have destroyed a life!—but I have given origin to thousands. Can there be no cancelling of the single evil? Can there be no compensation?" "Compensation!" said Nichar; "dost thou talk of compensation? Thou hast destroyed a life, thou sayest; but hast given origin to thousands. Dost thou forget that the one life destroyed was a *fountain of life* as prolific as thy own? that thine is the gift of the same divine being of

whom thou complainest Alas ! speak not of compensation, but of forgiveness. That is what man should ask of his Maker; and that surely may be, and is thine." "Tell me not of forgiveness ! I see it not ! I feel it not ! Is it in these burning plains ? in these perpetual labours ? Is it in this bosom more arid and desolate than these deserts ? in these haunting thoughts which will not rest ? in a progeny that revel with impunity in crimes, one of which was enough to brand me with this last and worst curse—this burning scar of infamy and despair. No ! if thy God be merciful—trust him ! For me—I ask him for nothing—I can yet endure !"

He turned, and re-entered his tent. Nichar, wrapped in a cloud of devouring thoughts, departed. He had attempted to pour comfort into the miserable soul, but his words had recoiled upon himself with terrible vehemence. If God forgive not Cain, he inly exclaimed, what hope for him through whom not only Cain sinned—but vice and woe have rushed like a flood upon earth ! It was bitter food for the cogitations of a wounded spirit ; and as he travelled through the wilderness, it piled upon his heart a fresh burden of despair.

CHAPTER IV.

NICHAR now directed his steps toward the hill-country of the Azims. These were of the celestial race; the children of the spirits of heaven and the daughters of earth. They were giants and men of renown. The singular fame of such a race had met him afar off, even amid the dwellings of Seth; and as he advanced across the territories of Cain, it continually increased. They were daughters of the Cainite family, who had won these spirits from their skies, and by such a triumph of beauty had cast a splendour on their generation of which they were in no small degree proud. The might, the stature, the spirit, and enterprise of these superhuman beings, were the theme of boast and wonder wherever he came. Their land was now before him. He advanced in his assumed form of an old man, and entered their regions. They were wild, but beautiful. Along the feet of the hills stretched a delightfully rude wilderness of

heaths, aromatic herbs, and odorous flowers of innumerable varieties, where troops of antelopes, goats, wild asses, and the shy ostrich, were occasionally seen between thickets of dates, myrtles, junipers, and fragrant balsam trees. Deep valleys ran up amongst precipitous ridges, watered by dashing streams, and here and there spreading themselves out into sloping lawns of brilliant verdure, shadowed by dark cypresses and pines,—scenes of rich and retired beauty, which might have inspired the hand of the painter or the heart of the poet, had they then existed. As Nichar ascended, broad tracts of mountain forest expanded before him,—here dense and dark, there scattering their mighty trees of oak and kingly cedar widely, shewing beneath their ample range of boughs, mossy turf, where the hunter or the shepherd might delight to lie, and send their gaze far around through scenes of solitary beauty and stirring grandeur; into nooks and retreats of silence and shadow, where quiet water trickled, or lay in profound repose; where the wild ferns and flowers nodded from the rocks, and some nimble and climbing animal amused itself with its own activity,

all unconscious of the solitude around ; then again, over some deep and rock-rent dell, where cataracts were heard but not seen, except by the ascending spray, where swift-winged birds darted to and fro, and the lordly eagle came soaring in solemn majesty, and ever and anon filled the desert with his clanging cry ; where the palm and the acacia lifted their graceful heads from their rocky stations, as if to look down into the awful depths below ; or again, up green and sunny slopes, where rich and velvet turf, sprinkled with bright and golden blossoms that trembled to the breeze, tempted the foot to approach it ; and finally, to the bare and azure summits of the mountains themselves.

Such were the scenes which the poet or painter, the hunter or shepherd might have found ; such were they which Nichar explored, as he ascended to the dwellings of the Azim chieftains. It was a land of unreclaimed and bold beauty. He saw no traces of cultivation, but in many a lovely valley scattered herds, and on the hills flocks of goats, and sheep as wild and active as the goats themselves. He beheld youths and damsels watching their flocks, and making the rocks echo to their

simple pipes. He passed, in sheltered hollows on the mountain sides, little clusters of rustic abodes. He met troops of children roaming through the upland fields, and hunters in ardent pursuit of their game. It was a land full of pastoral and mountain beauty; every creature that he met, seemed full of youth, and the strength and gladness of life. As he passed the lowest door, forth came to greet the stranger, dames of rich, but staid and matronly comeliness; and behind them glanced the bright inquisitive eyes of nymphs, whose exquisite forms and blooming, sunny countenances, have been fabled only of Arcadia or the age of gold: and Nichar inly persuaded himself, that innocence and happiness had lingered here; that the angelic parents of the race, had impressed upon their progeny as much of their felicitous taste, as of their beauty of form and feature. When he stood upon the summit of the mountains, most glorious and animating were the prospects spread around and beneath on every side. Everywhere the mountains were clothed with the same beautiful features, cloven by the same charming valleys, which stretched away into the wilderness of plains, bright

with gleaming rivers, dotted with palm-groves, crimsoned with ocean-like expanses of billowy roses, lilies, and amaranth; and terminated only by the failing powers of vision.

Along the airy heights of the hills, were built at considerable distances, twenty strong towers, each of princely extent, of massy architecture, of impregnable strength of fabric and position. Nichar entered them successively, and claimed the hospitality due from the happy possessor of a stationary home to the wanderer. In all, it was accorded with a free and cordial grace. He beheld halls and courts of great extent; but distinguished only for their massive simplicity. They were evidently the abodes of mighty hunters, of powerful chiefs; but chiefs unacquainted with, or despising the splendid luxuries of the rest of the race of Cain. A solitary stateliness reigned around their mountain ramparts, and in their ample courts, open to the silent heavens. The monarchs dwelt in unostentatious simplicity; they pursued the chase with ardour; they returned and feasted with zest on the produce of their toils. Few servants were seen passing to and fro in their halls, or attending on

their tables. They dwelt in a lordly solitude, and the harp poured around them the music of their heroic spirits. Nichar dwelt for a long period with these noble beings. His agitated heart found something like repose, in the contemplation of their high and simple lives; in their great and soaring aspirations. A thirst of glory and dominion burned vehemently in their souls; but they shrunk from the oppression and slaughter of men. They panted to extend their power over multitudes and realms; but they fain would achieve their views by righteous means, and they looked and waited for these in vain. In the meantime, a fair and happy race spread through the hills and valleys of their beautiful regions—the animating spirit of the chase, the kingly voice of music, and the charms of love filled their days. Nichar contemplated their noble forms with perpetual delight. Their stature was gigantic, but of the finest proportions. The grace and agility of youth; lineaments of divine mould, beaming with lofty sentiments, with candour and benevolence, gave them and their wives a glory and godlike beauty, such as none other on earth possessed. Their angelic

parents had impressed them with the highest and purest notions of the divine nature, and warned them to avoid the licentious idolatry, but too prevalent in the race of Cain. From time to time they appeared amongst them, to strengthen their spirits, and to guard them from some pressing evil or temptation. Nichar communed with them on the creation and destinies of man: he went back with them into regions of earlier and higher histories. The creation of angels in far-off ages; the happy realms, occupations, and blissful lives of spiritual natures; the dark temptations; the secret and widely-creeping seditions; the dreadful bursting forth of rebellion; the wars, the horrors, the sweeping destruction, which almost emptied the glorious land of its inhabitants; the realms of infinite torture; the unlocking of the penal gates; the escape of the blasted and malignant hosts to earth; their haughty and arrogant seizure of it; their audacious abode in the face of heaven itself, and all their arts and designs upon men; the crimes and miseries they spread wide amongst them,—were frequent themes of the Azims and the concealed angel. He heard more than once

his own history detailed; his crime and its consequences; the origin, the triumphant beauty, the splendid and idolized existence of Lilith, were related, not with the half-unconscious malice and innumerable variations of human narratives, but with the transparent and undeviating truth of celestial knowledge. The pain which these relations sent into his soul, was acute as the stroke of an archangel's sword of judgment; but he bowed himself in silence, and bore it; for with these noble intelligences, he enjoyed what the whole universe beside denied him, social and rational communion. He accompanied them in the chase; and, far in the solitudes of the mountains and the wilderness, themes of this nature filled the pauses of their pursuit, and tinged the caves of the desert with their enthusiastic hues. He sate with them at their table on their return, or walked with them in their open courts at night, when all the stars of heaven burned above them; and their minds were drawn, by a kindling spell, towards those open but unexplored and inaccessible regions, where their fathers dwelt. Their beautiful wives, who partook of their own celestial natures, would on such occasions cast

their ardent eyes upon the glittering, starry expanse, and dream and speculate, with the fond affection of the female bosom, on all the charms of the spirit-realm—on all the affectionate happiness of its fair inhabitants; and Nichar, filled with a languishing and inextinguishable regret, would give, by his words, such a colouring to their desires and imaginations, as diffused through them inexpressible sensations of astonishment and delight. Unsuspicious of his real nature, they regarded him as the highest and wisest of men; as one who had communed long and often with the celestial natures,—who was intrusted with the knowledge of mysteries, which even their fathers had not dared to open to their yet inexperienced youth. They looked on him with love and wonder. His words were full of a sad but irresistible eloquence, which disturbed them with its sound, but yet more—by its cessation. They listened to his solemn language, delivered in a gentle but penetrating tone, with a quiet and apparently composed manner; yet with a power, which roused them like the sound of a trumpet, and poured through their hearts the most restless and ineffable desires.

He saw the lofty and aspiring enthusiasm of their natures; he saw in them the elements of a vast but magnanimous ambition, working with daily increasing force, and wanting but a little time and some mighty object, to burst forth in deeds which should startle the world; and he founded upon it a hope most precious to his soul.

Wherever he had gone through the cities of Cain, he heard the fame of Ukinim. The splendours and enchantments which the demons had there raised to intoxicate mankind, had taken full effect. From all regions they flocked with avidity to behold the grandeur, to partake of the luxurious delights, of that famous city. Every where the name of Lilith resounded. Her beauty and fascinations were the theme of perpetual converse, of passionate admiration, of profound idolatry. Temples were raised to her honour in every city, groves and gardens planted; her image, wrought in Ukinim itself and purchased at infinite cost, was erected in each splendid shrine; rites were instituted; hymns of adoration composed; and the fairest creatures dedicated themselves to her service. With her worship spread that of all the

evil powers; their molten or graven images were seen in a thousand temples—towering in awful and soul-subduing majesty—they shone in miniature shapes in the secret recesses of palaces and halls, and were borne in the bosom, wrapped in the mantle-folds of innumerable votaries. The tide of demon-worship had rolled over the world, bearing with it every species of crime and vileness, and had assailed these delightful hills of the Azims themselves. Hitherto they had repelled the pestilential contagion, as their cliffs repelled the rolling vapours which arose from the rivers of the plain and undulated around their bases. But even this happy land, guarded by the vigilant eyes of its chiefs, strengthened by its own internal felicity, and the repeated appearance of the celestial parents with awful warnings and zealous denunciations of the spreading impiety, was beginning to fail. The minds of many of the youth began to be dazzled by the rumours of splendour and joy which perpetually came from Ukinim. Some had gone recently forth, but came not back; and others, weak and wavering, hence inferred that they had found a life too enchanting to be again abandoned. The Azim

princes saw with grief and indignation the spreading mischief. Day and night the imminent peril of their happy people haunted them. They watched, warned, and expostulated; but saw, with increasing anger, the faces of those amongst their hearers who heard in silence, but with eyes in which lived neither conviction nor content. Day after day brought the news of some fresh and sorrowful defection. Now some troop of youths suddenly arose, and calling on their companions to join them, marched forth amid the vain cries and prayers, and clinging arms of parents, friends, and betrothed maidens. Now secretly stole away some staid or distinguished man, on whom a thousand hopes and duties had rested, perhaps from the very presence and confidence of the chiefs themselves. The evil was become urgent and alarming; and there wanted but a word to rouse all the valour of the land into open warfare on the apostate race. That word hovered on the lips of Nichar. The cause was his. It involved the whole strength and deathless desires of his being: the sole hope—if hope it might be said to be—which could give that being a motive.

To rush down, followed by a powerful and zeal-

inspired nation, upon the accursed city—to extinguish the accursed life—the object of all his toils and cogitations through ages—to break up the strongholds of the demon-powers—to disperse and chase them from the earth—to throw down their images—to annihilate their temples and their worship—to break the insolence of their devotees—to put them to shame and confusion, for their foolish and grovelling idolatry—to restore the homage of the Most High, and to diffuse it through the earth with all its purity and light, and its unnumbered and everlasting blessings.—Oh! the thought was too much, for even the equanimity of an angel!

Nichar and the Azim chiefs sate one day in the mountain cave of the valley of Heph, by the mountain lake Zodarn. It was in the most naked and desolate tract of the hill-country of the Azims. It had neither tree, nor human abode. It bordered on the northern desert, and was itself a place unblest with a single trace of vegetation. Bare, red, rocky mountains enclosed a narrow vale of sand. The lake was a sheet of dark water, surrounded by high cliffs of sullen red, which

rose perpendicularly by the flood in an irregular and yet ungraceful wall, and terminating in heavy, broken and melancholy summits, seldom allowed the winds to visit the locked-up waters. The hunters had retired thither at noon, not from choice, but necessity. The heat of the day was unendurable; and they recollected the small spring which welled up in this desert cave. They had drunk of it, and lay down to repose; but repose was not there. The atmosphere was still and stifling; the sun glared fiercely upon the red crags; upon the lake, which lay like a sheet of hot and molten metal; furnace-like glimmerings flung from the burning, adamantine precipices around, presented the only visible motion—everything else was silent and still as death. They lay on the floor of the cave, which burned beneath them; thick perspiration covered them; and an oppressive languor, and a sense like despair, weighed upon their hearts. They felt as though they fain would rise, but had no power of frame or of will to enable them.

Yet at that crisis, in stalked 'Teleg, one of their number, who had been left at a league's distance.

He strode into the cave with a fierce and hasty step; a stern wildness was in his face, and blood was on his garments and his hand. In a moment the spell which seemed to bind them, was broken. They sprung up, and gazing eagerly at him, cried "What ails thee, Teleg? what hast thou done?"

"The curse is in the mountains," said Teleg; "The day is come! We must strike! We can pause no longer!—we have given it but too much peace already!—we have helped to cherish the pestilence by our supineness!" The Azims gazed on him in wonder, and would have spoken; but he waved his hand with impatience, and said, "Ye shall hear! I called to mind the little mountain hollow and fountain of Akeila; and turned aside thither. Its ever bubbling and translucent basin of water; its broad-spreading sycamores; its cluster of palm-thatched huts, came deliciously to my thoughts, and I pressed forward to share the sweet repose of its inhabitants. As I came to the opening of the rocks which shewed it before me, and felt the living breeze which for ever plays there, I heard the sound as of a rural festival. I drew near, and beheld a hideous sight. Beneath the

sycamore of the fountain, stood an image of marble—a small image of a woman! Truly it was fair as an angel!—but it was the image of a woman!—and around it kneeled, a circle of grovelling worshippers! I rushed forward, and seizing the worshipped form, dashed it against the tree. Its head flew against the rock, and dispersed in atoms. The throng stood pale and dismayed. But a fiendish yell arose near me; and Mogunn, once my chief herdsman—now dark and sallow, and with a countenance devilish with disturbing passions, darted towards me with fixed and grinding teeth, and smote at me with his dagger. With the fragment of his goddess yet in my hand, I beat him with a blow to the earth. The rest fled, shrieking to their huts.”

The Azims gazed for a space on each other, in awful amaze; Nichar stood and trembled. Anguish and remorse again seized him; but speedily indignation kindled upon his heart; and turning to his friends, he exclaimed, “Yes!—the time is come!—the demons have too long been permitted to spread their power,—to destroy human peace. Chieftains, will you wait till

idolatry and all mortal evils, its inseparable companions, overrun your land, and curse your people with all the curses of hell? You are formed for mighty deeds; and a mighty field is before you! That great Ukinim—the marvel and the misery of the earth, lies contiguous to your borders. There is a glorious seat of empire to be won!—a vast people to be subdued!—and God's fair creation to be rescued from the malignant hosts!—You must conquer, and be glorious! or tremble, and perish in the everlasting perdition of infamy!"

As he spoke, they pressed around—they gazed vehemently upon him—they reared their gigantic right-arms, each grasping aloft his ponderous hunting-spear; and as he ceased, with a simultaneous shout, vowed themselves to the extermination of the vile shrines.

In the whirlwind-impetuosity of their zeal, they rushed homeward. In the fortress of Teleg the day fled by unnoticed, in impassioned discussions of their projects. They dispatched messengers to assemble thither their wives, who came full of fearful anxiety at the tidings; but after a few tears of female weakness, rose rapidly into

the glowing spirit of their consorts, and added flame to their zeal.

They resolved to consult their celestial sires on their enterprise. This was a measure of terrible anxiety to Nichar. It was in fact to discover to those angels, and to the Azims, his real nature; and then, what fearful questions arose from that unveiling! Would those heavenly spirits associate themselves with *him* in any undertaking? Would his presence mar and dissipate the glorious design? Would it be pursued and accomplished without him? There was an immensity of anguish in these contemplations; but it must be endured. And he *had* endured despair and despairing remorse for ages. He had suffered all the pangs which the contempt and the rejection of the virtuous could inflict; and if even through these fiery means, Lilith should be destroyed, and human happiness triumph, it was worth the endurance. He shrouded his agony in his bosom, and awaited the trial.

Night descended. The Azims with their wives, glowing with the anticipation of mighty good achieved, of immortal renown won, ascended the

tower of Teleg. A golden cresset and a gigantic harp, were placed in the centre of the marble-paved roof. They stood round in a wide circle—such a circle of noble and beautiful forms, as earth has never since beheld. Phanul, the eldest of the tribe, distinguished for the mild dignity and generosity of his character, advanced to the cresset—Taleela, his queenly bride, to the harp. There was a pause of awful solemnity. Above them, the great arch of heaven displayed in its deep azure, its glittering, silent hosts; around them, all was obscurity; and the night-breeze which sighed amongst the low, massy pillars of the parapet, seem to wander up from depths of unfathomable gloom. All eyes were fixed upon Phanul. He flung into the cresset a fragrant powder from a golden box, the workmanship of Tubalcain, and immediately a bright flame burst forth;—a stream of blue and starry meteors rose into the heavens, and the most delectable odours floated around them. At the same moment, Taleela struck the towering harp with slow and solemn strokes, and gave life to a music, which fixed the soul in breathless wonder at its deep and mystery-breathing power.

At once appeared, as it were, a new constellation kindled in the heavens,—a cluster of stars more resplendent than all others of the nightly hosts; and every moment they became more and more brilliant. A mortal might have seen them, and wondered at the magnificent phenomenon; but Nichar knew its real nature; the Azims knew it, and stood with their faces fixed with immovable earnestness upon the glowing effulgence. In a moment they became distinct—a troop of careering angels,—in a moment they were at hand. They alit with a rush of mighty pinions, and in an atmosphere of their own brightness which made night roll back from the tower on whose top they stood,—a vision of glory and beauty inconceivable to our pale and far-off fancies. They were in number, nearly equal to the Azims themselves, — winged forms of heaven's own unapproachable grace and sublimity. Their plumed pinions were as of the sunshine itself, and quivered with a pearly radiance that varied at every motion. Their countenances—Oh! how unlike the earthly visage of man—dimmed and ploughed with fierce passions, darkened with crimes, and saddened with

care, warped and debased by pain, by cunning and the fleshly dominance! In the pure blossom of immortal youth and beauty, no scar, no scath of time,—no ruinous trace of the internal canker were there! Thought, which stamps on our brows shadow and deformity, shed on them the spirit of rejoicing; and the serene azure of their large, love-inspiring eyes, threw forth streaming rays of the felicity which filled all their being with an inexhaustible fulness. But alas for Nichar! it was a cruel moment for him. He beheld before him, creatures of his ancient love—souls to which his soul had clung through ages of immeasurable joy! The tones of heaven were again in his ears—the atmosphere of heaven around him, and he lost!—fallen! perhaps in the moment of recognition, doomed to feel another cruel evidence of his perdition. His anguish tempted him to plunge from the battlement where he stood, and to avoid the rencontre, but motives stronger than pain withheld him. He saw the sons of heaven clasp their children in their embraces,—he heard the blissful murmur of voices mutually exchanging words of love and congratulation; and he shrunk deeper

into the gloom of his own stripped and solitary being.

"But wherefore," said a majestic spirit, "wherefore have you called us hither? It is not alone that we may meet and rejoice in our love, that ye have raised the invoking sign; some cause of high import moved you to this act."

"We would break the pernicious spell of Ukinim," replied Phanul. "We would assert God's right upon earth, against the hosts of hell and of idolatry; and we seek your approval and support."

The angel-troop were silent. Sadness sate even on celestial brows. For awhile they communed with each other in rapid glances; and then the same great spirit replied: "My children, your attempt is high and noble,—worthy, oh! well worthy of your celestial birth,—but it is vast and fearful, and incalculable in its consequences. Know ye not that it is no other than to attack all the powers of hell? Those powers which dared to invade the very kingdom of the Highest, and have now spread their dominion over this lower world! It is a terrible enterprise; and we know

not its end. The Omniscient has not opened, on these heads, to us his awful will. With that will you may safely assault all the hosts of evil—against it, defeat and destruction await you. Alas! shall it be our lot to behold these fair and happy seats laid waste by your enemies; your people slaughtered, enslaved, or corrupted, and your own noble forms smitten to the dust? God grant you a far different fate! Yet, far be it from us to counsel you to an ignoble life. Dare nobly for God and for man,—if it accord not with God's design to crown your attempts in his cause with success, there is another world where his smile will await you; and so far as is permitted us, our warning and approving voice—our helping and defending hand, shall be with you!"

"Then success is ours!" exclaimed the Azims. "Courage and sanguine hope are ours—we want neither strength nor numbers; and this venerable sage—"

At once all eyes were turned upon Nichar. At once every celestial spirit in wonder, cried "Nichar!"—and Nichar, startled from his disguise, stood before them in his own form. It was a scene

of multiplied astonishment. The spirits marvelled to behold Nichar thus in their presence, and the Azims to discover in their guest that most unhappy soul. It was an agonizing moment. The angels gazed upon each other with questioning looks;—"Can we make common cause with this woful spirit?" said one. "Shall we forbid him to make cause with us?" said another. "Shall we crush the sorrowful? Shall we banish still farther the exile?" asked a third: and another replied, "Heaven is denied to him; but the earth is open; and shall he not, if so he willeth, serve God in it? Shall we bruise the broken reed? Shall we push the penitent heart from the footstool of the Eternal Mercy? Shall we, who have made alliance with earth, which God designed not, and yet have escaped condemnation, shall we judge him, who is already judged with a fearful severity?—No, we are not so commanded;—surely it will not be thus required!" "Nichar," they exclaimed, "our hearts have followed thee in thy unhappiness—we will not quench thy righteous desires. Indulge them, pursue them, and stand up zealously with these for God! But our time

is expired.—Prepare your forces. Draw cautiously towards the accursed city; and if God forbid not, we shall speedily hasten to your aid. Till then beware!—forget not for a moment that you have to deal with the subtlest of spirits!”

The glorious troop sprung forth like living lightnings towards heaven. The Azims turned and beheld Nichar, again shrouded in the form of age, kneeling on the floor, on which his tears fell like rain. He had heard words of kindly sympathy—precious words!—unheard through desolate ages—and his soul melted within him. They embraced him with affectionate joy—and they descended to their common enterprise.

CHAPTER V.

FROM mouth to mouth, through all the hills and vales of those fair regions, ran secret but startling words. No alarm-fires blazed upon the steeps; no trumpet's voice was heard; but a spirit had passed through the land, and become its one moving spirit. Every man left his threshold—every man directed his course through the defiles of the mountains, through the covert paths of the forests; not in bands nor in martial array, but in their hunter garbs, with their hunter weapons in their hands; and pursuing, as with individual aim, the beasts of the chase. Yet whatever seemed their object,—however various and oblique their courses might appear,—by evening the whole body of the people had advanced far in one direction; and that direction was towards Ukinim. On the second eve, thousands of the Azims were secretly congregated in the very hills that surrounded that famous city; and if a judgment could be drawn from

appearances, without their presence being suspected. Nichar sate upon the same eminence that he had occupied ages ago, and beheld the city lie below him in all its princely and paradisiacal beauty. Thousands and tens of thousands of dwellings had arisen in it since then. Myriads of lives swarmed within it; and the hum of peace, of secure rejoicing, came up to his seat. He beheld, too, the infernal spirits passing to and fro across the mountains, and marvelled that they appeared all unconscious of the ambushed enemies. He trusted God had smitten them with blindness preparatory to their confusion. Anxiously he awaited the coming of the heavenly spirits. Night came down. He descended into the camp, if camp that may be called, in which was neither tent nor enclosure, except such as thick-spreading trees, caverns, and towering crags presented. There he found the whole host of the Azim people, who had lain down in the ravines and woody sides of the mountains during the day, were equally impatient with himself, for the command of their leaders to cross the naked summits of the hills, and descend upon the town. The army occupied the whole

circle of hills which we have before described as surrounding Ukinim; and the different chiefs were at considerable distances from each other, each in the midst of his own tribe, ready at the word of the expected angel, to lead his people to the gate immediately below him. They presented the singular anomaly of an army with many leaders, but without a commander-in-chief. They confidently looked for the speedy presence of those who were, to them, more than the ablest general which earth could produce.

Nichar found posted nearest to him the youngest of the chiefs,—the glad-hearted Mochal. The youthful beauty of his large, yet not fully matured person, and his overflowing good-humour and pleasant wit, had been Mochal's chief distinguishing qualities. They had given him a brother's place in every heart that approached him. It seemed as if the superior being, from whom he derived so beautiful and buoyant a form, had also endowed him with a heart of perpetual gladness. He seemed to breathe an atmosphere of delight, and to pour out, with his breath, upon everything around him, pleasure, mirth, and love. At the

festal table, Mochal's radiant face and happy voice, kindled the countenances and the words of all others; and in the chase, that voice was heard where, far a-head, he dashed in reckless extravagance of physical power and spirits, sending its jubilant echoes through the wilderness. In the hours of social ease and retirement, there was Mochal as full of gambol as a child. All eyes sparkled at his approach; in every mouth, he was the happy Mochal,—the dear, good Mochal! a being that dreamed not of power, or dignity, or evil. He found life a joyous gift in his boyhood; and he was a boy still. Time had hitherto wrought no change in him; and who could tell how it would hereafter influence *him*. Nichar loved him. The frank gladness of his spirit, communicated its sunny contagion even to his darkened soul; and Mochal seemed to love and lean upon Nichar, as youth is apt to do upon aged wisdom that is clothed with kindness. Nichar now found him gay and careless of the future, as in his own native haunts. He was impatient, indeed, of the restraint of ambush; impatient of delay; impatient to rush down to the stir and conquest of Ukinim.

And behold! there came the expected paternal spirit,—not shining in his glory as on the former eve, but shrouded in a dim form, and full of anxious haste. “The spirits are descended,” he said; “each has sought his kindred chief,—each at this moment commences his march to the city, at the head of his host. Let us begone! Let us speed in cautious silence. Already the gates are loosed—the watchers laid to sleep. The moment we enter the city, the spirits will dart forward to the abode of Lilith. We must come upon her suddenly, or our quest is in vain! If she escape us, all is lost!—our enterprise is vain. Destroy her, and the spell is broken!—the tie which binds the demons to this spot, is severed! They may still linger upon earth; but their central attraction is gone! Let her escape! and vainly do you seek to hold Ukinim;—all hell will rise, and overwhelm you! Let us go!”

At once the signal was given by Mochal—it flew from man to man. At once a mighty host sprang up from cave, ravine, and thicket, and with swift, but silent steps, hastened over the hill-tops, and descended the hollow way towards the city.

At the same midnight hour, descended tens of thousands, each headed by its own gigantic chief, and by a mighty angel. Darkness and clouds favoured them. The city lay in profound gloom and silence. No light was visible—no sound—not even the solitary foot-fall of the watchman told of the presence of life. The hosts approached the walls: the angels pushed open the mighty gates before them. On twenty sides, at the same instant, the hosts entered the city. The spirits bade them haste onward, and were gone. The Azims beheld around them in the obscurity of night, the shadowy bulk of vast palaces. They passed by colossal statues—by fountains, dashing their waters sonorously on the night air—by groves and gardens, which breathed forth delicious fragrance; but all was gloomy and indistinct, and not a living being was abroad. So deep was the silence, that the hosts heard the regular tread of the counter-hosts across the city; they heard the river roaring over some distant cataract, alternately louder and fainter, with the variation of the breeze. The myriad inhabitants slumbered beneath the heavy spell of the invading angels, and even the watchers

lay stretched in sleep by the way-sides. Anxiously the hosts looked before them, expecting every moment some sign of contest—some sound of assault or victory; but little did they anticipate the scene that awaited them. The huge mount and palace of Lilith was before them; already they descried its monstrous gloom, when at once, a cry, such as might startle the globe on the night of judgment, rung forth; and a sudden, dazzling, blasting flame burst from the palace. The whole stupendous fabric was in an instantaneous glow of fire, that rushed through every apartment, wrapped it from end to end, from foundation to roof, in a clear, liquid, raging splendour, and roared up in terrible volumes to the sky. Higher and wider it spread! rushing and rolling in a fierce and voracious mass, that seemed not to be merely fed by the burning bulk of the palace and temple, but to gush up with inextinguishable vehemence from the central fountain of flame. Aloft it stood,—a vast trunk of angrily mingling red, yellow, blue, and the whiteness of the intensest furnace; throwing out immense volumes of sulphurous and fire-streaked smoke, that formed a terrible canopy to

the city, which glared on all sides like a wide congregation of spectral towers, and shewed thousands and tens of thousands of closely-pressed faces, upturned in ghastly pallor and silence. But aloft! aloft!—what a spectacle! There, in the midst of that up-rushing torrent of fire, was seen a host of spirits in fierce contention. They rose—they soared up into the loftiest waves of turbulent flame, furiously smiting at each other, as if unconscious of the devouring element. But it was speedily seen that the greater number of the combatants were infernal natures, who assaulted the few brighter beings with bitterest malice. It looked a far unequal contest. The heavenly spirits were at once surrounded by vast numbers, and seemed to be sorely oppressed by the terrible element, in which their dark opponents moved their forms, and expanded their huge wings, as totally untroubled by its hot embrace. But fierce and desperately each battling spirit struck. Their swords flashed, even amid the bright flood of fire, like lightnings; their waving and writhing forms were seen amid alternate smoke and light,—now linked convulsively together, now furiously grappling, and striving to

hurl each other downwards through the flame. Dreadful yells announced, ever and anon, the triumph or the torment of the malignant natures: the fair spirits, if they suffered, suffered in silence. Fearful and full of wonder, was the scene to those below; more fierce and dreadful it became every moment; while the burning palace, which now glowed like one clear, molten mass of the intensest heat, exploded, with thunderous sounds, red-hot stones into the air. Fragments of glowing columns were projected, hissing far and wide; and showers of molten gold, from liquescent roofs, scattered their fearful drops upon the gazing multitude, and raised shrieks of sudden agony. Aloft, unconscious of all around, fought the furious spirits. Their anger seemed to invest them with momentarily augmenting energy; their forms appeared to glow brighter than the element in which they contended, and to expand into a terrific vastness. But anon, it became apparent that the infernal natures quailed. Every stroke of their enemies' weapons was answered by groans and yells. Their forms, although accustomed to the power of fire, had lost the heavenly vigour which resisted and extin-

guished pain; while their foes, though smitten through and through, fortified by the celestial strength of felicity within, appeared unconscious of enduring harm. Fearful and more fearful, grew the fallen spirits of the celestial swords; shriek followed shriek, as they played through their writhing forms;—they turned, and with a howl of inconceivable agony, fled headlong.

Instantly the gloriously dreadful phenomenon vanished. The flames of the burning palace sunk, and left behind a black and reeking mass; the heavens shone clear, freed from the volumes of rolling, fiery vapours, and illumed by the pale beams of approaching day.

The Azims gazed around them in amazement. The whole appeared like a wondrous dream. The terrible vision had disappeared,—and around them lay the wide, magnificent city, with all its palaces and gardens; a scene of splendour such as they had never beheld. The inhabitants, roused by the burst of flame which threw over the whole city a sudden day—by the awful spectacle of the combustion of the palace of their queen—by the fiery contest above it, and the cries of the contending spirits,

beheld with astonishment little less, their streets occupied by a hostile army. They looked with wonder on so vast a multitude come upon them they knew not how; upon the singular aspect of a host of hunters; upon the Titanian and god-like stature of their leaders. The Azims, with equal surprise and curiosity, contemplated the soft, effeminate forms, the gay, luxurious dresses of the voluptuous city. Their eyes wandered over the vast assemblage of superb abodes, the sculptured fountains, the gardens, the airy grotts, and gorgeous pavilions scattered through them; the sunny waters and flowery fields every where spread before the charmed sight. It seemed a fit region for the abode of gods—a glorious prize, to be won for themselves and their posterity for ever. And won, it seemed already. The city tribes regarded them with awed hearts, as their conquerors; and their princes and senators, in silent procession advancing, laid at their feet the insignia of command, and bowed themselves to the dust before them. The Azim chiefs, accepting their homage, dismissed them with words of courtesy, and lifting up their eyes, gave command to their followers to occupy the gates,

the towers upon the walls, and every strong position of the city. At this moment the celestial spirits returned from the pursuit of their foes,—drew them into a neighbouring temple, and exclaimed,—“Haste, and withdraw from the city! We have failed—all is lost! Lilith has escaped! The demons, aware of our approach, have withdrawn her to some undiscovered recess. Nichar, furious with disappointment, seeks her far and wide; in the air, in the caverns of the earth beneath, in the mountains, and the depths of the river. But vain will be his inquest! she is in the hands of the subtlest of spirits. Burning with the shame of their defeat, hither will they return with all the powers of hell, and vainly should we resist. But we, alas! cannot even await their return. Our time is gone. God, whose decrees are wise, has not made them known to us; but ye know that he has commanded all the race of heaven not to shew themselves henceforth openly amid the people of the earth. He leaves men, now numerous as the stars, to achieve their own destinies. Man’s nature, now matured by time, must walk in its own strength. His decrees are right—his will is holy

and good—we worship and obey. Not till another moon can we seek again even the brief nocturnal interview which he vouchsafes to our parental love. High duties in the highest heavens will till then detain us. Haste, haste then from this place. Ye cannot hold it. To remain, is to perish. Ye have made a glorious attempt; ye have shewn yourselves possessors of a power which will free you from aggression—reserve yourselves, therefore, for some happier opportunity to accomplish that vow upon the Goddess of all seductive vanities, that cannot now be perfected. Haste, haste away. Egress is now yours—a few hours and it may be lost for ever. Away—and the blessings of God be with you!” They clasped their children in their arms, and were gone.

Alas! what is the strength of human nature? What is its wisdom in the noblest bosoms? The chiefs stood as in a fearful and bewildering dream. Could it indeed be the voice of their victorious parents which they heard? They had seen them assault, route, and pursue their foes; and did they come back to counsel them to flight?—to flight, now that with all their powers they were in possession

of that glorious city? "Shall we fly?" they exclaimed, "ere we have seen one cause for fear? while the whole city is ours? with our strength untried—its exertion yet uncalled for? shall we fly from the presence of this soft and peaceful people, who bend at our feet, and ask only their feeble lives at our hands? shall we depart ere we have sought and dragged from her concealment, that pernicious being whose fatal presence has drawn hither our angry arms? ere we have beheld the result of Nichar's quest?—Alas! it were to cover ourselves with shame—to become the wonder and the derision of the earth! Nay—let us at least behold the face of danger, and contend with it like men, before we flee—let us dispose our forces in full readiness to hold and to defend our glorious prize, and trust in God to purge this fair city of its evil things."

It was the voice and the spirit of all. Alas! how little did these noble creatures know themselves, or the work before them. Even now, while they talked of disposing their forces for the maintenance of their conquest, little did they know how far more potent was the influence of the place in which they were, upon their followers' hearts than

their own commands;—little did they know how deeply that influence was operating in their own bosoms. They had caught a glimpse of the splendours and amenities of the city; of every pomp and witchery that can enchain the human soul; and vain were all words of warning, from within or without. To assert the cause of God; and to leave to their children a fair heritage of rule and renown;—these were the brilliant motives which their spirits avowed and believed as the moving springs of their deeds and designs,—but, ah! how many subtle impulses lay beneath! Lost in that intoxication of heart, which many a noble nature has deemed the effect of lofty aspirations, and has followed to its cost, they shut from their bosoms the voice of their celestial guardians, and went, in the fond belief of their own purity of purpose, boldly on their way. They roamed with wondering eyes through all the various scenes of that metropolis of Pleasure; through its palaces, its gardens, its elysian fields; they beheld its comely people mirthful, and disposed to festivity even on the day of their subjection;—its flower-crowned daughters, beautiful as the children of heaven, and

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endowed with a grace of motion, and with smiles that sank like sunshine into the sternest bosom. Everything around them had the air of a dream—a dream of light, and loveliness, and music, that might be expected to melt suddenly as it came. The odours that floated profusely through the warm air, seemed charged with the spirit of delight; songs, whose tones thrilled through the breast with a power of delicious entrancement, were heard issuing ever and anon from some hidden bower, or the airy seclusion of a tent, spreading its blue and golden curtains by the river's brim, on some verdant and flowery lawn.

Through such scenes wandered the Azim lords, not untouched by their spells; but they everywhere entered the temples, and vindicated the honour of their high natures by prostrating the Pagan images, and dashing them to atoms in their indignant contempt.

The day waned. They beheld from the mount of the palace, which they had chosen for their abode, their guards and sentinels moving to and fro on their appointed posts. They beheld them slowly pacing the ramparts; they heard the hum of

the great peopled city sink into the quiet of night; and they lay down to repose in the elating consciousness of newly-acquired dominion. But short was their slumber. At midnight, startled by some cry, some piercing alarm, whose nature they comprehended not, yet felt in their inmost souls to be terrible, they sprang up, and beheld in their midst a spirit, whose flaming brand, and countenance burning with an ineffable expression of indignation and anxiety, filled them with overwhelming sensations of terror and amaze. "Fly, wretched men! fly while ye may!" he cried. "You have sent pain into the innermost heavens. Fly! the evil ones are at hand! Hell!—every vast and terrible demon—the mighty potentates of craft, and malice, and inextinguishable vengeance are at hand—Satan himself at their head! Away, if it be yet possible, and this extreme warning of your agonized parents be not vain as the first!" As he spoke, in rushed Nichar himself. His air was wild and frenzied. His form was black and disfigured, as by the scorching of the infernal fires. A host of contending passions seemed written in his face; but his words, which broke forth like impetuous light-

nings, were but an echo of the spirit's. "Fly, fly! the damned crew have borne away the cursed Lilith. Through height and depth, through every element which a spirit can inhabit, I have sought her in vain; and now the impious come, hot with implacable revenge for their routed fellows and insulted seat of empire. Away! or ye are lost!"

At once they rushed abroad, filled with a mighty terror. They bade the trumpets sound to arms, they flew from place to place to gather their troops into hasty array. But who might effect that now? Who might burst that slumbrous spell, which now the powers of evil had cast upon them, as heavily as the spirits of light had cast theirs before upon the people of Ukinim? Wherever they went, they beheld the terrible traces of a night in which they themselves had lain down to peaceful rest. They beheld the remains of riotous feasts. Tents, halls, vine-trellissed grots wide open to the night, and lit with a thousand glimmering lamps, displayed tables with the costly apparatus of the banquet — golden goblets still overflowing with wine, or overturned in floods of their own nectarous liquid; and strewed around lay promiscuous

thongs, of every age, sex and character, in deep and inebriate stupor. The farther they went, it was only to see spectacles which filled them with grief and rage;—spectacles which we cannot paint, but which displayed the deadly devastations of one licentious eve. They called upon their followers to arise, they shook them roughly in their sleep, but it was in vain;—they beheld with horror, that many were sleeping their last sleep. Amid the prostrate groups, there were some who were prostrate in death—amid the liquid which flowed around them, was some of a deeper purple than wine. Riot or treason had done fearful deeds.

Nichar, impelled by his solicitude, had also flown forth to rouse the Azim hosts to flight; he too had beheld with a sickening horror the destructive agency of insidious license, and was standing in despairing sorrow, when his eye was arrested by an ominous sight. A sullen redness rose around the whole city, like a dull fiery band, occupying the lower regions of the sky, and gleaming above the walls. It was not the light of morning; no morning ever yet rose with so spectral an aspect. He felt a sudden sense of horrible foreboding; and

behold! even then, he could discover figures moving to and fro on the city walls, which were not the figures of the Azim sentinels. They were the tall, gaunt, dusky shapes of hell; and dusky banners waved heavily from every tower. It was a withering sight. Dark tents pitched all around the city, occupied the whole space from its walls to the feet of the mountains. On the mountain sides themselves, he beheld martial groups, whose waving fiery javelins gleamed dimly through the dim, discoloured air. Eastward, before the chief gate, stood a lofty pavilion, whose gloomy splendour and dimensions, marked it as the station of the Infernal King. The feebleness of despair seemed to quench all Nichar's strength at once. Flight for himself, was dubious—for the Azims, impossible. But many moments were not left him to ruminate on the coming misery. Scarcely had he poised his floating form on the air, when a host of dark shapes shot from various parts of the wall, and encompassed him. To fly, was vain—to combat, hopeless; but he disdained to surrender, without a struggle. As these hated beings rushed upon him with harpy hands, and

eyes that glowed with the fires of triumphant hate, he dashed them from him, as a mighty rock hurls back a furious rush of waves. Again they closed—again he flung them off. He turned and turned, and gathering all the energies of his immortal being, swept them down headlong through the air. But it availed not! numbers grew upon numbers; they seized and bore him to the earth. They wrapped him in infernal chains, gave him to the custody of two strong spirits, and departed with lightning rapidity. Nichar found himself on the mount of Lilith, by the smoking ruins of her palace; but other circumstances suffered him not to contemplate that object. A sound as of a stormy ocean, ascended to his ears, and casting his eye over the city, what an excruciating spectacle was there! On all sides, far as vision could reach, the inhabitants of Ukinim had risen in murderous fury against the Azims. He beheld, as it were, an ocean of tossing heads, driven by contending impulses, swaying to and fro like mighty currents. Now this way, now that, he saw the rush and pressure of the rage of life and passion, and the mingled congregated sounds—the cries of fury

and desperation, of agony, vengeance and despair, rose awfully horrible. In the midst of the fierce tumult, he saw the bands of the Azims scattered here and there, contending vehemently, but in vain, against the swarming millions who pressed them on all sides; while over head, the demon-troop brandished their flaming darts, and excited the spirits of the men of Ukinim, with the venom of uncontrollable rage. Here and there, but far separate, appeared the lofty forms of the chieftains, battling and beating down thousands around them, as the mighty elephant crushes the lesser race of men in the anger and agony of his wounds. They fought—they exhorted their valiant followers—they did deeds worthy of everlasting renown; but the contest was hopeless—one by one they fell, and a rending shout of triumph proclaimed their fall. In one spot, Nichar beheld a touching scene. Four of these noble brothers stood back to back, and with vast and massy batons, cleared around them a dreadful field. But the arrows of the Infernals reached them,—they perished; and over them rushed the tide of frantic combatants. Again he beheld another colossal chief, heading a nume-

rous band, and cutting with irresistible strokes, a passage towards the northern gate. It was Teleg!—that mighty form could not be another's—that Sampsonian strength could be no man's but his. On he marched! before him the hosts inflamed with the rabid malice of hell, recoiled; but behind, pressed upon his dense phalanx of followers, the numberless infuriate foes. Now he turned and scattered them—now strode hastily forward to secure some important station. They reached the river,—they crossed the light and airy bridge which spanned it like a rainbow. Teleg lingering in the rear, with his single arm, repelled the whole host of assailants. Now they followed at his heels, like a swarm of hornets—he seized the crowded bridge with his mighty hands—it shook—it writhed like a huge, convulsive serpent;—it fell! and a dreadful yell arose from the perishing throng, which the waters speedily quenched. The foe recoiled from the river-banks in horrible astonishment. Teleg led on his host towards the gate. It was shut! Again the foe pressed upon his diminished numbers, who looked in dismay on the closed, massy gates; while from above, the malig-

nants assaulted them with burning arrows. The might of Teleg concentrated itself into one stupendous effort. He raised the colossal shaft of a column that lay near, and driving fiercely against the gate with a sound of thunder, it burst wide;—and the enfranchised band rushed through. Nichar felt a transport of joy at the sight: it was of short duration. Without the gates, arose the din of a terrible conflict; he could behold through the open portal, a partial view of fiercely struggling numbers:—then burst forth a shout of boundless triumph; and he beheld two of the enemy return, bearing into the city the head of Teleg, suspended from the staff of his ponderous spear, by its long and knotted locks. A crowd followed the grizzly trophy, singing a pean of victory. Alas! the noble Teleg! Nichar's eye recoiled from the sight with a dizzy wildness; but it was only to fall upon one still more painful. Every lofty chief had vanished from view. Many were fallen;—some few had escaped, and were fighting their way up the mountains, amidst swarms of vindictive and harassing pursuers. One alone he beheld, posted on a mount just within the wall—his

band stretched dead around him; and he, the only surviving Azim, defending his life from a million weapons. It was Mochal!—the young, the generous,—the joyous Mochal! At the sight, Nichar, forgetting everything but the peril of the precious youth, and writhing vehemently in his chains, called aloud—"Help! help!" as if his voice could reach the struggling remnant who now approached the mountain top. Oh, vain!—he heard but the hellish laugh of his grim guardians, and saw their fiery eyes flash with a vengeful joy. But Mochal, the hapless Mochal!—there he was alone! Every friendly soul had fallen, or was gone, and the rage of war, which had apparently subsided in all the other regions of the city, gathered only more fiercely around him. Like a lion at bay, he bore himself with wondrous and undaunted bravery. Here, there, he turned, and at every stroke his massy spear made havock. His godlike form, conspicuous afar, and his stupendous deeds, might have filled the fellest antagonist with a deathless admiration: but what mortal, however magnificently endowed, could cope with that tempest of rage? Below, millions of daggers aimed at his

single life;—from above showered millions of flaming darts. They smote him—he fell, but it was only on his knees to whelm the vigour of his gigantic arms upon his astonished foes. Struck—bleeding with numberless wounds and infixed barbs, he still knelt, battling with unquailing force; but a stone precipitated from the adjoining tower smote him, and he disappeared for ever.

CHAPTER VI.

SCARCELY had Nichar witnessed this last, and most lamentable catastrophe, when he heard the rush as of countless iron wings, and beheld the demon-hosts drawing near him. They came, darkening the air with their numbers, and alighting, formed round him an awful circle. It was a terrible moment. He beheld himself in the midst of those mighty powers of evil, whose very names were a

terror; whose dark renown filled the universe; and whose malignant strength had caused confusion in the very heart of heaven. He stood there, a solitary and friendless being. God had abandoned him; no spiritual natures had espoused his cause; the few mortals who had shewn him kindness were destroyed; and with the combined hatred of all the powers of cruelty against him, he had no hope to lean upon. It was a dreadful situation; and he felt all its horrors. When he lifted his eyes, and glanced round the grim circle that environed him, that horror sank tenfold more deeply into his being. Those forms, which he had once known glorious in majesty, and beautiful in brightness, he could still recognise,—the features and bearing of these pre-eminent spirits were never to be entirely changed; but a darkness had passed upon them, which but rendered what once constituted the prominence of their divine beauty, the exaggeration of their present terrific disfigurement. Sin, the violence of rancorous and rending passions, the fiery blasts and consuming ardour of their dolorous abodes, had rendered them hideous to look upon. Cruelty and revenge, the evil will, the

base and blasphemous desire, were written broadly in their faces. But more conspicuously had this woful metamorphosis demonized the King of Hell. Nichar beheld him posted over against him. He had chosen for his seat of judgment a massy projection of rock, and sate gazing upon the prisoner in gloomy silence. His gigantic form wore a terrible hue, as if centuries of habitation in his fiery climes, the immortality of despair and blasted ambition, had left their burning blackness upon him. That countenance, which had retained much of the glorious beauty which clothed the mightiest spirit of heaven, long after he had fallen to the monarchy of Hell, was now a horrible mien,—dark, repellent, and portentous. Evil, more devastating to a spiritual essence than withering age to mortals, had given a hideous deformity to those once sublime features; and a thousand demoniac influences, for ever operating on his stormy soul, stamped them with an expression too fiercely malignant to be long endured, even by the eye of his hardest followers. Yet his spectral figure, like some regal tower that has been scathed by the fire of beleaguering hosts, retained amid all its melancholy

ravages an infernal majesty of beauty. He sate like some mighty and impious being, whom the lightning of heaven has suddenly blasted, and left fixed on his seat—a warning spectacle for after tyrants; and in his right hand he held his ponderous spear, whose point blazed like a star.

He fixed his dreadful eyes long upon Nichar, as though he would annihilate in him, by their intolerable glare, every remaining sense of courage or virtuous power; but when he spoke, it was with a fiendish smile. “Thanks, Nichar!” he pronounced in a sarcastic tone; “thanks, good spirit, for thy obliging acts. Two good deeds hast thou done, for each of which thou well deservest my gratitude. Lilith hast thou made,—the fairest object on earth—the most potent rod of enchantment ever wrought by man or angel,—the most transcendant stay and extender of my empire upon earth. I could not have devised her inestimable existence, but I can thank thee for it now and for ever. There was a nation, too, that resisted my influence—a single race, that I could neither reduce nor subdue; and these hast thou led up like a flock, wholly and willingly to destruction—thou hast put them into

my hand—and they are gone. The earth is now mine! I were less than Satan to refuse thee thy choice of its pleasures and dominion. Take what thou wilt!”

As he listened to this mingled strain of taunt and invitation, the spirit of Nichar revived—it kindled—it refused, with hell and all its tortures before him, to be still. He answered with an indignant glance of fire, that feared not to fix itself upon the spirit-withering countenance of Satan with a bold unwavering regard. “Satan, I scorn alike thy gibes and thy specious goods!” As the words issued from his lips, the arch-fiend stooped the blazing point of his spear to the earth;—in the same moment a yawning chasm opened at his feet, through whose blackness a pale, blue vapour ascended; and the two strong guards of Nichar seizing upon him, plunged headlong down the abyss. Their descent was a long and spirit-winged rush, through a profound immensity, where the breath of life never came;—a flight in which years of human speed would be consumed—yet it was but a brief travel, and a sudden entrance into a hot and withering atmosphere. Nichar, with the

quick intelligence of a spirit, knew that they were in the regions of central flame, and his vision confirmed that instant judgment. Above them, glowed a concave, apparently vast as our upper sky; below were seas of molten matter, which rolled their igneous waves with a chaos of soul-confounding sounds. The terrible roof broke into many vast and irregular concavities; for ever dropped melted matter, like rain; and covered with curling, dusk-red flame, flung down a heat tenfold hotter than the intensest furnace, which the fiery ocean below reverberated; and burning blasts, armed with torture even for the hardest spirit, roared through the intermediate space. The heavy, molten seas, here rolled in huge swells—there leaped up furiously, and coiled in radiant rage against dark adamantine rocks; and a multitude of sounds rose from the dolorous abyss, full of varied and inconceivable horror. Cries, thrilling lamentations, as of feeble and tender souls; sudden shrieks, at which even the damned place, and all its uproar, seemed for a startled moment stilled; bestial barkings, and hoarse and bellowing yells, that seemed sent from iron lungs of vast and monstrous natures, that rose above the

general din, multiplied their dismal echoes in vaulted regions above, and died not but in the far-off distance.

Nichar's keepers hurried on towards a huge and gloomy fane, that occupied a broad rock in the centre of the Seas of Misery. The rock, bare and bleak, was surrounded by a chaos of projecting crags, rearing themselves in every wild and desolate shape, as if to repel all approach. The fabric, gloomy as night, seemed built of solid bronze. Above, its roof was lost in clouds of fire and smoke; below, vast and heavy arches opened it on all sides, and gave wide scene of the regions of torture and despair. Within, a floor of the same black but burning metal; and the same ponderous arches in rows, diverging from the centre to immense distances, and bearing the roof, which, as without, was lost in its lofty gloom, were the only visible objects, except the towering central throne of the infernal monarch. A flight of wide gigantic steps ascended to it; and on each extremity of every step, lay the crouching image of a chained dragon. On each hand of the penal throne, hung suspended by chains, a huge metallic sphere:

that on the right was silver ; that on the left was brass. Scarcely had Nichar time to contemplate this melancholy abode, when he heard the dashing of myriad iron pinions, and the hosts of the infernals rushed like a numberless flock of evil birds into the palace. Thousands on thousands alit, at once filling the place. Far as the eye could reach, on every side, the floor was crowded by dusky shapes, whose eyes, like burning lamps, flung back the sullen light of surrounding hell. Nichar looked towards the throne, and beheld on every dragon-shape, an infernal potentate ; and on his tribunal, the terrific Lucifer himself. He held in his right hand a heavy golden sceptre, and the assembled millions awaited his words, in silence profound as vacuity itself. He turned his eye upon Nichar, and thus addressed him : “Great spirit,—for we know thy original rank and power, as ours are not unknown to thee,—perhaps my words but lately heard, were not grave enough to declare my real meaning. I behold thee here my captive, in my own abode, subjected to my unquestioned will ; but I seek not, therefore, to abate one atom of the respect in which I hold thee. Thou hast done us good

service; I avow it in sincerity; and I say, as is worthy of thee and us—be free! Embrace these thine ancient brethren. Thou, like them, hast nobly asserted thy freedom: at once then—be free! Add to theirs thy mighty power, and make the day when the independent spirits shall prevail, nearer by that union. Behold thy throne! Thou hast well won it. As thou wert noble and potent in heaven, be thou noble and potent here. Millions of kindred spirits wait impatiently to embrace thee as a brother—to hail thee as a king!” He smote the silver sphere with his sceptre. A clear inspiring sound rung from it through all that nether space, which struck, with its eager note, the soul of life, activity, and daring courage in every living form. A million glad and clamouring voices burst forth at once; and “Welcome! welcome, Nichar!” rang, in animating acclaim, through all the air. Even Nichar himself could not resist the sharp, spirit-stirring spell of the wondrous sound; but he struggled with his assaulted heart, and answered not by look or voice the acclamation of millions. “Dost thou hesitate, Nichar?” exclaimed Satan,—“can it be possible?

What, I pray thee, is thy destiny, present or to come, that thou canst place it in the balance for a moment with the dominion, fellowship, and hope which I offer thee? Art thou not an outcast—a solitary outcast, scorned and expelled from thy native seats, by the good, the piteous spirits of heaven; unallied to any living thing? and wilt thou live on thus joyless, friendless, and hopeless, for ever? Shall this be the destiny of thy noble nature—of thy force and faculties, capable of achieving wonders for the oppressed and persecuted spirits? Dost thou hope for reconcilment with God? Oh, simple and unreflecting spirit! Look! look back through thy miserable ages of exile! Look through those which have beheld our places vacant in heaven! What seest thou? Mercy? forgiveness? aught like compassion towards what the self-styled Almighty—the Beneficent, terms the works of his hands? Dost thou see that love of which he boasteth himself the fountain, overleap its bounds for a moment, to shed one drop upon the millions of immortal creatures that he dooms to pain? Awake, Nihar, from thy dream! Cast from thee the blinding veil of a

lingering attachment to what thou hast once loved, and behold the truth ! He, he, with his obsequious satellites, lives in pomp, pleasure, and luxurious ease ; but millions of spirits weep and pine in regions of iron and despairing wrath ; and not for one instant does it disturb his sublime tranquillity. No, no, Nichar, hope it not ! Hast thou not wept, and prayed, and bowed thyself sorrowfully before him, and clung to his law, and made his foes thy foes ; and hath it won for thee one smile—one moment's mitigation of thy grief—one hope, however distant ? Arise, Nichar ! Cast off that cringing, suppliant air !—put on strength and dignity, which once were thine ; for hope, be thou assured, dwells but in thine own arm ! What hast *thou* done ? We who have warred and resisted, and still with heart and hate resist,—we may behold and wonder not at his inexorable nature ; but thou, who, in an idle moment, didst commit a venial offence,—if offence that may be called which no law forbade, and which gave to the earth the brightest of its inhabitants : thou, who hast nevertheless mourned thy deed, and sought through earth and air to expiate it,—thou art hopeless as

we! But we are *not* hopeless! Hope, a glorious hope is ours, and bears us through evil ages and unworthy scorn! We contend for power—power which will at length determine the empire of the universe; and blind must he be, who does not discover whither it is tending. Millions of new beings swell daily the great ocean of existence; and whose are they? To whom do they fly? To us!—they are ours! Time for ever augments—will for ever augment our host, and shews more clearly the feeble few who adhere to our haughty foe. Time will ultimately give us a weight of living power, boundless and irresistible. Wouldst thou then grasp a noble revenge? Wouldst thou be wise, and happy, and glorious? Behold the evident means! 'T is in that vacant throne!"

"Vain words, Satan!" indignantly replied Nichar—"vain words! vain boasts! while this pavement burns beneath my feet; while I see your hideous aspects, and these dolours are around! I scorn thy throne; I hate thy language; and though God forsake me, and yon burning ocean be my eternal bed, I bow alone to God, and declare him good, as thou and thine are base!"

At these words, a fierce murmur arose in the dense million; and Satan, writhing on his throne, his face became too horrible for the eye in the black deformity of rage. He smote the brazen sphere with a furious stroke, and a deep and bellowing din burst forth, that filled every breast with sensations of horrible and unutterable dismay. The damned spirits shrunk trembling at the sound, and Nichar felt in his inmost soul the overwhelming terrors of its deadly and unnerving power. "See then," cried the fierce demon, "whether thy God will save thee!" He bowed his sceptre, and the two strong spirits laid hands on Nichar; but at that moment, a flash of devouring brilliancy shot down through the gloomy dome, and smiting the iron pavement, burned with a terrible and blinding intensity for a moment; then diverged in a hundred vivid and voracious streams of flame through the dismal hall. Nichar knew the bolt of the Eternal, and prostrated himself on the floor. A confusion, as of tempests in the deeps of chaos, was around him, but the tumult in his soul rendered it unheard. When he raised his head, the innumerable host of demons had

disappeared—the wide dome was empty, save that on the steps of the throne the chiefs of hell lay prostrate on their faces. Satan alone erect, in a rigid and convulsive attitude of mingled terror, rage, and defiance, with his clenched right hand aloft, and dark and scowling eye, fixed on the quarter whence the lightning came, dared horribly the Almighty power.

But it was only for a moment that Nichar beheld this baleful sight; an irresistible influence buoyed him up, and bore him rapidly away. The rush was impetuous—at the fleetest spirit's speed;—it ceased, and he beheld himself with wonder on the same eminence whence he recently looked down upon Ukinim; and saw again the golden city, shining peacefully in the beams of the evening sun.

CHAPTER VII.

Who may describe the heart of Nichar at this moment? He appeared to have escaped from a horrible dream,—but one shining and triumphant fact shone full upon his mind with a precious certainty:—the arm of Omnipotence had been stretched to save him! He was not forsaken! not abandoned by God! Hope! hope! the most transporting hope was his once more. He, whose eye followed him to the lowest depths of flame,—whose hand was put forth to snatch him from the grasp of the Evil Ones, could not have cast him off for ever! His love, though unseen, hovered about him. He was tried, but not rejected! There was a brilliant prospect yet to open upon him. He repeated again those awful words which had rung in his ears incessantly, with a sound of unmingled despair: “Go, and contemplate through ages the effect of a moment!” and now they seemed to bear a more lenient interpretation. It

was not for ever ! For ages he had borne bitterly the contemplation of those terrible and boundless effects ; this day's dispensation whispered to him of a termination—perhaps an early one to his trials. He had discerned that the Divine love still, though invisible, surrounded him ; and it was enough. A new and buoyant life possessed him,—a tide of blissful feeling rushed over him. Air and earth were to his vision, wrapped in new and glorious hues ; and the heavens !—the sublime heavens above—again they smiled graciously upon him, with a tender and reconciled smile. He threw himself prostrate upon the rock, and poured out his soul in an ecstasy of uncontrollable happiness and thanksgiving. “ God ! God ! thou art yet with me. Thou hast beheld my sorrows,—the withering agonies of my spirit, the black despair which covered it like a funereal garment. Oh, God ! they were beheld by thee, when I deemed that thou hadst turned away from me for ever thy eternal and undeceivable eyes. Oh, Almighty Father ! it is enough ! it is enough ! I have erred foolishly—I have sinned presumptuously—I have borne thy inflictions impatiently ;—thou art

righteous, and wise, and good. It is enough—it is enough!—that thou still followest me with thy everlasting love. Lay on still thy just and retributive hand. Let my trials and my wanderings endure, while it shall seem good in those pure and serene eyes, which the mists of ignorance never approached, which passion never dimmed, and which the unfathomable life of thy Infinite spirit cannot even divert from the work of wisdom. Yes, let me still be a poor, despised, and tempest-buffeted outcast upon thy earth; let me share, as is meet, in the evil which I have contributed to sow largely in it; pour upon me the viol of that holy wrath, which consumeth but to revivify; but, oh! let not the assurance of thy love, let not the hope of a final restoration to thy glorious abode evermore be quenched within me; and let me, if it be accordant with thy sure designs, be permitted to arrest the march of that evil, which I have let loose so lamentably on thy creation!”

He arose like a new creature. The rosy atmosphere of heaven seemed once more around; its elastic gladness once more to clothe his spirit. For days and weeks he walked in this intoxication of

felicity; he saw not the world around him, for his vision was turned upon his heart; and there contemplated all the bright scenes which had once filled it with rejoicing, and which hope now whispered were about to return. But by degrees the force of his enthusiasm abated. The pale face of the earth, and its cold realities, became visible through the luminous exhalations of intemperate joy, and reflection and sighs broke together into the warm sanctuary of his heart. There, below him, was that Ukinim, the seat of his vain enterprise, shining in its peaceful glory as if nothing had interrupted its tranquillity. The traces of war were already obliterated. He beheld a new and lofty mount arisen in the centre of the city. It was called the Hill of Giants—for it contained the heaped bodies of his unfortunate friends; and upon that mount arose once more in augmented splendour the temple and palace of Lilith. As he gazed on it, many a piercing and melancholy reflection awoke;—the fair land of the Azims, how fared it now? He turned and directed his flight instantly there—it was a heart-rending scene! A few of the Azims had escaped the massacre of Ukinim. A few of the mighty chiefs

had cut their way through opposing thousands, and followed by the remnant of their people, had reached their own hills—harassed by swarms of vindictive pursuers. They reached their own hills, but it was not to enjoy peace. At their heels came pouring the fierce and triumphant swarms of Ukinim. They came streaming along those sweet valleys, up those beloved hills, like the countless armies of the locusts; and before them every thing fell into sorrow or destruction. The strong warriors fell beneath the sword; the weeping women and children beneath the yoke of captivity. With breaking hearts they passed, before the spears of their foes, from those beautiful and endeared scenes; and the Zam-zummims, a ferocious and gigantic tribe, armed with ponderous clubs, clad in the skins of beasts, and rude and bloody as the beasts themselves, came up and possessed themselves of the hill-country of the Azims. It was no longer the land of pastoral and romantic beauty; those massy towers no longer resounded to the kingly voice of the harp; no longer contained the fairest and the noblest creatures on earth; a savage and gloomy silence brooded over them, and lay like a fearful

spell upon the whole land. Nichar turned from the scene in speechless horror and prostration of heart. He reflected on his recent exultation as a species of madness. Yes! while he was pouring out his soul in thankful gladness, his friends were perishing; their families were the prey of the enslaver; their country desolated for ever. Whilst he flattered himself that God relented towards him, the direst punishment of his sin fell upon him; and the only race which adhered to the laws and the spirit of heaven, was rooted out from the earth. Oh! vain hopes of speedy success! where were they? The whole earth was now overwhelmed by the tide of sin. The tribe of Seth had by degrees fallen away and amalgamated with the race of Cain. There was not a single bright spot where the hope which Nichar had so fondly entertained, could linger,—it was one universal waste of crime and brutality.

Let us hasten on! There is nothing to retard our steps. It would be a joyless task to follow the again-despairing and downcast angel, through years of darkness. Yet such was his lot. At times he recollected his wondrous deliverance from the realms of dolor, and a faint hope revived that he was not

utterly abandoned—that he was more thoroughly to be tried; but without, there was nothing to sustain that belief for a moment.

Vice—lawless, bloody, sensual, and detestable, every where prevailed. The spirit of evil had grown gigantic and hideous in the extreme. Wherever he went, there were varied scenes; varied deeds, but their character was one—and that was diabolical. Here, noon-day revel and license; here conflict and individual violence; and here would come sudden invasion, quenching riot and contention in one grand and wholesale gush of blood.

It was Nichar's destiny to abide in such scenes for ages, loathing to witness them, yet bound as by a penal spell to their presence. At length a wondrous spectacle arose before him. He beheld one righteous family, busily employed in building a strange and immense vessel, or house of wood. He heard them talk of a coming deluge, which would sweep away mankind. He heard their neighbours jeering and mocking them as dreamers, but beheld them steadily toiling at the ark, with the earnestness of men who are convinced of the importance

and urgency of their labours. And it came! a dreadful and pitiless deluge. He beheld creatures of every kind, fly for protection to the ark,—all, save infatuated men. He saw the patriarch and his family ascend it; and the invisible hand of God shut them in; and, at once, earth and skies seemed wrapped together in tempestuous confusion; and waters gushed abroad, as if the earth would dissolve itself into an ocean. A gloomy and spectral shade covered the world; the sun was hidden by the deluging rains and heavy vapours; winds rushed furiously through the air, and howled amongst the mountains. The people fled precipitately from the plains. At first, they loaded themselves and their beasts with their treasures, and with every household article, however ponderous and worthless. But the tempest was too urgent—the waters rose too fast. Their labouring beasts struggled on in vain; and themselves were overwhelmed with their burdens, and their anxiety. They threw off their loads, reserving only their most precious things, and leaving their beasts to perish, rushed eagerly to the hills. Desperate as their situation was become, the desperateness of

their wickedness rose above it. They cast fierce glances at the ark, that now borne up by the waters, sailed solemnly away; and shouted with bitter mockery, "Oho! old man there, take us with thee, surely we are better company than what thou hast got!" Others cursed him and his ark, and predicted their common destruction, regardless of their own ruinous case: and a crowd of others wildly swimming to the ark, attempted to climb into it; but its doors were closed by an Almighty hand—it flung them off as it did the assaulting waves of that dread sea, and bore silently and gloomily on its course. The scene was now inexpressibly awful. The cries of children, the lamentations of women, the fierce rage of despairing and demoralized men, filled the mountains with an anarchy of horror. Faster, faster the flood pursued. Terror and despair gave strength and velocity to some, while it quenched it in others. All feelings were absorbed in self-preservation; every hour, thousands were swallowed up; and the higher the fugitives ascended, it was only to command a wider survey of their pitiless enemy's immensity and power. The last visible summits

of the mountains, exhibited a spectacle which repels all human description. There every fierce beast,—every venomous serpent and reptile were concentrated, rabid with terror, and repelled the further advance of men, desperate as themselves. It was a chaos of every horror and horrible sound, brute and human force, fierce and furious in blind exasperation, warring to the death.

But Nichar!—a spirit had seized him, scarcely less vehement. A hope had burst upon him, that kindled all his nature into a flame; and rendered him regardless of the immense misery around him. The flood would destroy all mortal things—Lilith would perish! Her doom was certain; for whither could she fly to escape it? Fired with the momentous hope, he posted himself on the hills above Ukinim, and watched the progress of the deluge with an intense avidity. He beheld the river, swelled by a thousand sudden torrents from the hills, speedily expand into a vast lake. He saw the outlet through the mountains, quickly choked with floating trees, and the ruins of demolished fabrics: and the waters rise above the guilty city, with a rapidity which left no chance of escape.

He saw mount after mount submerged, palace after palace disappear, till alone their golden vanes were visible above the waters. The palace of Lilith being the highest, was the last engulfed, and he gazed with trembling agitation, as the flood rose rapidly up its sides. "There! there!" he exclaimed, in irrepressible transport, "there! thy doom, detestible creature, is sealed. Where, now, are the arts of thy servile and zealous demons? Thou art gone! Omnipotence has reached thee at last!" What, then, was his amaze, as the billows dashed upon the roof, to behold a radiant car sustained on the shoulders of strong spirits, rise from the dome, and Lilith, glorious in apparent youth and beauty, as at the hour of her creation, sitting beneath a gorgeous canopy, was borne triumphantly away! At the sight, the spirit of a demon seemed to possess Nichar himself. He groaned and stamped with furious rage, and uttering words of hate and vengeance, pursued the pageant with impetuous speed. On, on it went: but whither should it go? The flood had swallowed up the mountains themselves; then, whither should it go? As Nichar followed it, and gazed

upon the illimitable expanse of ocean, a savage joy rushed over his heart, and with triumphant exultation, he exclaimed, "Ay, sail on, sail on! Those demon-slaves can bear thee far,—they will not tire, it is true; but can they sustain thee for days, perhaps for years? Where are the fruits and the wines, and the delicate food with which they have been wont to feast thee? They are perished—and perish thou too, speedily!" On, on they went; and Nichar still followed. It was still ocean—boundless, lifeless ocean. For days and nights, they still bore on. Every hour, Nichar rose in energy and hope, for now the Beautiful One began to languish and droop, and at length, sank as utterly exhausted. "Joy! joy! the fatal time is come!" he cried, "Blessed be these whelming waters. They have freed the world from its crowning curse!"

But what was that which darkened the horizon as the morning sun arose? Was it a cloud?—a deceptive vapour?—or could it be—a spot which the waves had not covered? It was!—a shout of triumph from the demons announced it, and now his own vision confirmed their acclaim. An

islet, rocky but fair, and covered with a variety of trees bending with golden fruit, was there. The demons alit, and pouring into the mouth of their exhausted charge, the expressed juice of the grape, Nichar beheld her arise refreshed, and smile in pleased wonder at her novel situation. He beheld the active spirits speedily construct for her a summer tabernacle, and bring from the different quarters of the island, various flowers and fruits, and lay them before her. Confounded and mortified at the sight, he looked around, and prayed that the waters might yet arise and bury this spot, which they had hitherto spared, in their bosom. But they rose not—they fell! He saw it, and murmured at the sight, and felt within him a desperate desire that he could heave the billows with his hand, and whelm the cursed creature in them. But his wishes were impotent—daily the waters fell—and fell; and Nichar turned away, tormented with the gnawing of defeated hopes, and marvelling at the ^{ill}inscrutable designs of God, who had destroyed mankind for their wickedness, yet suffered the grand spring of that wickedness to escape, as if purposely to subject the reviving race to her enchantments.

Disappointment and despair pursued him on his flight. Daily he discerned more and more of the re-appearing mountains. It was a scene void, slimy, and cheerless. The world, and his mind, seemed to wear one character—that of desolation. He beheld the Patriarch and his family descend from the ark; but he paused not to contemplate their motions; he hastened into the high mountainous regions beyond, and sate down in gloomy meditation on the events which had recently passed. The ways of God seemed to him darker and darker; his own existence hopeless and loathsome. He had long indulged these reflections, when he beheld seated near him, a silent spirit of venerable aspect. It was the Spirit of the Ages. He held upon his knees a stupendous volume, and slowly turned over, one by one, its huge stony pages. Nichar gazed on the book with wonder, for he saw there portrayed the figures of many strange and mighty creatures—creatures of precisely similar natures to those which he had beheld in a far distant planet. “Spirit,” he said, “what doest thou?” “I am about to lodge,” he replied, “the Book of the World in the archives of the earth.

Many changes has the all-directing hand wrought in this globe. They are now complete. Hereafter, many ages hence, when men are numerous in the earth, and are wise in their own eyes, they will ask of the origin of everything, and their hearts, puffed up with the vanity of much disjointed knowledge, shall answer them with many plausible theories. Much will they argue, and infer, and demonstrate to their own contentment; and shall deny the written records of these times. In their eyes they will be as vain fables, and vain fables as truth. But the earth, treasured in these her ancient archives, shall retain the impressions of all her primeval changes and wonderful creatures; and they shall see them, and wonder, and be confounded."

"Oh! happy spirit!" exclaimed Nichar, "thou art admitted to the councils of the Most High! For me, I wander in darkness and sorrow. Fierce desires torment me—vain hopes allure me—but disappointment and despair are the sure fruits of my toils. Oh! that I might for a moment pierce the veil of providence—then should I at once sit down in the stony arms of despair, or go on rejoicing and invincible!"

“Nichar!” replied the spirit, “hear the will of Heaven! That God has not forsaken thee, he has himself made known by plucking thee from the hands of the Evil Ones. Confide, then, and be strong. Thou hast sinned, and must abide in trial till the results of thy error are full. Thou and I are alike bound to the destinies of this world. It is mine to number its times and seasons. To overthrow the works of man; to spread through all things mildew and decay; not that man may labour in vain, but that he may be for ever excited to higher and more glorious efforts. And every succeeding age shall behold him ascending in the scale of existence. He shall achieve lofty and magnificent works. He shall no longer be left to renew, in objectless ease, those evils which have brought the flood upon the earth; but he shall perpetually project and execute something new, till the world is full of his works, and his mind has impressed upon matter many of its own marvels.

“But his career will not henceforth be pure and happy. A mighty contest is begun, which will not be terminated till ages on ages have rolled away. Evil is let loose, and will not soon be quenched.

Mighty powers are already in terrible contention. Good and Evil—Light and Darkness—Knowledge and Ignorance, are grappling with each other, and many direful centuries shall be devastated by their rage. I need not say which shall triumph;—whatever partakes of the nature of the Omnipotent is itself invincible;—late but glorious will be the victory. In the mean time wars shall rage, tyranny shall prevail; cunning and selfish priests shall pervert the holy name of Religion to a gainful engine, and the multitude, easily deceived by craft and avarice, shall be enslaved to the worst slavery—that of wreaking upon each other the vengeance which they ought to turn upon their deceiving oppressors. Yet out of the force, the conflicts, and the miseries of evil, shall arise the sublimity of human nature. Thy task it shall be, through all these years of destroying and bloody strife, to wander through the world, raising thy hand against evil power, and thy heart against evil knowledge. Men shall call thee by many names—the Good Angel,—Pity,—Mercy, and such gentle appellations. Where some fierce king breathes threats of war, thou shalt touch his heart, and turn it to

peace. Where the tide of war already rolls its crimson waves, there shalt thou be, strengthening the weak, soothing the terrified, and calming the agony of burning wounds. Where the strong man is ready to smite down the feeble, there shalt thou arrest his brutal arm. Where selfish men shall grind the widow and the fatherless, thou shalt rouse the soul of the feeble to a fiery indignation, that shall make the base, hard nature tremble in its own vileness, and shall raise a wall of defence around the sorrowful. Thou shalt be with the judge upon his tribunal, whispering gentle words of the prisoner before him;—with the pirate on the wild seas—the robber in his forest den—on the streets of a violated town. In every human extremity, it shall be thine—as evil was by thee let loose—there to arrest its progress; to break its power; to heal its ravages. A vast, a long, an incessant labour lies before thee, till the destined time shall arrive—and the Son of the Highest shall descend, to terminate the mighty conflict of Good and Evil; and Good, Knowledge, and Light, shall stretch their ample wings without a foe, and spread their splendid triumphs round the globe. I say a

long and arduous course is thine, but not without its reward. The human destinies and thine are bound together, and brightly shall your restoration finally arise !”

As Nichar heard this clear announcement of the will of Heaven, he knelt on the earth, his hands crossed upon his bosom, and his head bowed down. A celestial red diffused itself over his features, and his tears fell like rain. Where they fell, there immediately sprang the healing Balm. It put forth leaves and flowers, and breathed its animating odours round them. As the Spirit of the Ages ceased, Nichar arose, and plucking a branch from the tree, placed it in his bosom, and went on his way.

ITHRAN THE DEMONIAK.

ITHRAN THE DEMONIAK.

It was during the latter part of that remarkable period in the history of the world, when the Hebrews, passing from Egypt to Canaan, had encamped in the wilderness of Kadesh, that a young hunter went forth one morning from the borders of Mount Seir. He had pursued a herd of wild antelopes across one of the wide, sandy tracts of those regions, till he beheld them take refuge among some rocky hills at a considerable distance before him. When he reached this craggy solitude, a variety of narrow valleys that opened between the cliffs, distracted his attention, and, pausing to consider which he should pursue, he observed for the first time—what his enthusiasm had hitherto prevented him from noticing—that

the sun had nearly reached the mid-heaven, that the heat was intense, and that a burning thirst and a throbbing brow demanded the refreshments of shade and water. Added to this pressing necessity, he knew that to attempt to retrace those scorching sands till the heat of the day was past, was next to impossible; and beside, he hoped yet to surprise his game in some of the seclusions of these rocks. Selecting therefore, in preference to the others, a glen, which, by the dampness of the sand in its bottom, gave indication of water higher up, he followed its windings for a long time with great perseverance, and, at length, found his patience rewarded by the sight of one of those little, paradisiacal valleys often hidden in the bosom of these stony Oases. There the stream, which at his entrance was absorbed by the hot and ever-thirsty sand, came murmuring along with all the transparency and liveliness of a mountain rivulet; and, while all the tops of the eminences around were bare and burning peaks, its banks were brightened with the most green and flowery verdure; the large white lily, the globe amaranth, and abundance of other plants of the most splendid

hues, and of the richest aroma, bending over its margin; the aloe, here and there, spreading out its ample round of dark-green leaves, and lifting up its lofty blossomed stem; thickets of tamarind, rose-laurel, cotton, and a variety of aromatic shrubs, scattered about between the water and the feet of the dark granite rocks, aloft in whose interstices, the lovely rose of Jericho waved its glowing blooms, and acacias, dates, and various species of palm, cast at once shade and beauty.

After quenching his thirst, and cooling his feet repeatedly in the stream, he slowly wandered farther up the valley, and soon beheld, to his mortification, that it was terminated by lofty cliffs, down which the brook came scattering loudly its waters. One nook attracted his steps by the luxuriant, dependent foliage of a vast wild vine, and he was about to seat himself beneath it, when he started back on discovering that it concealed the entrance to a gloomy cavern. Instinctively he glanced upon the ground to discern, by foot-marks, what might be the nature of its inhabitants, if any; and he beheld, not the print of the wild-beast's paw, nor the sandal of man, but that of

a large naked human foot. He was about to retreat; but, on turning round, his eye fell upon the wildest figure it had ever yet encountered.

It was that of a tall and slightly-built man, whose only clothing was a long robe of goat and camel's hair, and whose locks and beard had grown to a wonderful extravagance. He reclined beneath a sycamore tree, on a large fragment of rock; and, observing more closely, the youth was struck with signs of sickness and exhaustion. His heart, at the view, lost at once its fear; he saw only before him an object of distress;—he advanced, and spoke.

The stranger lifted up his eyes, with a vague wildness for a moment; then, closing them again, the tears gushed silently down his cheeks. He was silent; but it was evidently the silence of emotion. At length, lifting up his hands, he grasped that of the youth fervently, and made signs for him to sit down. He obeyed,—but the stranger still continuing silent, he asked if he could render him any service. He replied, with a melancholy emphasis, "Thou mayest! but start not when thou knowest for whom. Knowest thou

for whom thou art interested? Knowest thou the "Demon of the Desert?" At that dreadful name the youth started to his feet with a shuddering groan; but he was rivetted to the spot,—and the stranger cried imploringly, "Nay!—fly not, fear not, my son! The time has been, when thy visit hither would have been death; but that time is past—I am not what I was.—I am dying. At this moment, the presence of a human soul is precious to me. Thou canst hear me—thou canst bury me."

The eyes of the youth attested the truth of what his fearful companion declared; and with a strange mixture of awe, curiosity, and sympathy, he listened to the following narrative.

"I am not what thy countrymen have deemed me—I am not originally, and altogether, a demon; but Ithran, an outcast of Israel. It is not entirely unknown to the nations among whom that people has now so long sojourned, that, although their dreadful God has kept them wholly by his might, making nature bend its ancient laws to their use, and surrounding them with terror as with a wall, they have been but imperfectly sensible

of the glory of their lot, and have often provoked the Lord to anger. But it has been, in these latter years, that this spirit of unbelief and ingratitude has grown to the most marvellous height. In vain were the overwhelming terrors of God displayed on the Mount;—in vain did blazing serpents spread death; and the burning bolts of Divine vengeance burst suddenly upon the heads of the rebellious, in ruin; in vain was the beautiful and majestic Miriam, who went out dancing before the virgins of Israel, and singing that triumphant song of victory over Pharaoh, cast, a leprous object, out of the camp before their eyes;—since their abode in Kadesh, the spirit of wickedness was become monstrous. God had refused to go up before them to the Promised Land; the Amalekites had discomfited them, and they were full of despondency. Add to this, famine was in the camp. Except the manna and the quails, food now universally loathed, there was nothing. The stock of cattle was exhausted; and the desert seemed to become, every day more fierce and inhospitable.

“But the day of Annual Expiation was at hand;

and hope awoke in all hearts. God had appointed, in his mercy, a way to free Israel from its sins. He had empowered the High Priest to lay all crimes on the head of a goat, which should bear them away into the wilderness. The day arrived;—all Israel was assembled before the sanctuary;—a breathless anxiety prevailed;—the various offerings were made;—the devoted goat was brought forth; the mysterious words which charged it with the whole sin of Israel, were pronounced; and a weight, and a gloom, seemed to pass from the hearts of the people. It only remained to send the goat away, by the hand of a *fit man*. And now a fearful and eager curiosity ran through the multitude, to know who this man should be. It was an important trust. The two victim-goats had been procured with much difficulty,—such was our poverty; and they had been guarded with much care, for such was the wickedness of the time, that some sons of Belial had attempted to break in, and carry them off; and it was expected that they would lie in wait to kill the scape-goat in the wilderness. I was a prophet, and the son of a prophet; and young as I was, my zeal in the cause

of God, and of Moses, had given me great favour in the eyes of the elders.—I was chosen as the *fit man*.

“It was deemed necessary that I should go two days’ journey into the wilderness. A great number of the most illustrious of the Hebrew youth accompanied me till the sun began to decline; then, with many blessings, I went on alone. As I saw the friendly band retracing their steps, a sensation of pride, such as I never felt before, arose in my heart, that I should be deemed most worthy of this most momentous trust. I marched lightly on;—the sun went down;—all night I pursued my way, unceasingly; so strongly did that exaltation of spirit bear me on. I never thought of food or sleep, till the next day as the sun became hot, when I sought the shade of a rock for rest and refreshment. When I looked for my scrip, it was gone;—during this state of self-gratulating excitement, it had slipped off, unperceived. I was stung with a sudden and unreasonable anger; and rising up, I smote the goat, and went on. The craving of hunger—the torture of thirst—the sense of my

loss, the consciousness that several days must elapse before I should regain the camp, angered and appalled me. My frame was already debilitated and rendered irritable, by the effects of the famine, and of the strict fast preparatory to the day of expiation: in vain I all day looked out for water, for a wild fig, a date, a melon;—there was nothing around me but burning sand. The goat, as well as myself, appeared exhausted. We went on and on;—the day seemed as though it would never end; and, to add to my anguish, the ground was now everywhere covered with a prickly plant, which lacerated my feet, and filled them with its spines. A suggestion arose in me, to return; but my pride instantly rejected it; and again I smote the goat, and we sped forward with increased exertion. The sun at length did set; and, to my joy, I saw some rocks before me:—but there was neither tree, nor herb, nor water. I tied the goat to a stone, and flung myself down in despair beneath the rocks. But if my body was spent, my mind was full of a bitter activity. A thousand troublous and depressing thoughts passed through me; the sense of my loss preyed on me; the vast

distance I imagined myself from men, terrified me; the goat lay and slept quietly before me. At that sight my perturbation was aggravated tenfold. It could forget its pains; but I, who suffered on its account, might not. I cursed the foolish pride which led me to undertake the enterprise. At this moment a thought arose—kill and eat. The horrible idea struck me like a thunder-clap;—I started up, and walked hastily away to escape from it; but it pursued me, and to evade it by action, I loosed the goat, and endeavoured to drive it away. But it was too much fatigued; it sank again on the ground. I had now, however, fulfilled my mission—I might return; but the view of the dreary boundlessness of the desert depressed my heart:—I despaired of ever recrossing it, and, with a fond fatality, lingered near the goat. I endeavoured to fill my mind with a vivid sense of the enormity of the suggested crime; but, in spite of myself, my sense of the guilt grew less, and less, and my appetite became furious. ‘What avails!’ I exclaimed, ‘at the price of my own existence, to spare a life which must soon be terminated!’ and drawing the knife from my girdle,

I rushed on the goat, and plunged it into its neck. The blood spouted freely ; I thought not of Moses or his laws ; to me it was the stream of life—and pressing my parched lips to the wound, I drank with ravenous avidity. I was instantly seized with a delirious joy. I waited not for the life to depart ; but kneeling down, I feasted on the flesh. A spirit of triumphant intoxication, a whirl of extravagant transport possessed me ;—my vigour seemed restored tenfold ;—I sat and laughed over my victim. But the wickedness of thousands,—the inspiration and madness of all crime and outrage, had passed into me from the dedicated animal, and I rushed away in its strength.

“ At length I fell, and slept—I know not how long ; but when I awoke the intoxication was past, and the darkness and despair of inexpiable guilt was upon me. The depth of my fall—its utterness—its hopelessness—my eternal separation from the house of Israel,—all rushed upon my soul, and my first impulse was that of self-destruction. For this purpose I arose and sought for the place of my crime ; for there were left the knife, and the cord which had bound the goat. The spot I found ;

but they and the remains of the animal were gone. The demoniac spirit which possessed me, now boiled up in furious anger. *Now* it was evident man was near—he had robbed me of my prey; and my murderous passion turned from myself upon him.

A fierce and malignant desire of human destruction fastened upon me; I stalked along with the ravenous heart of a beast of prey; and it was not long before I descried at the foot of a rocky range, a small Ishmaelitish encampment. Like the tiger, I lurked in the crevices of the crags till nightfall; and when I deemed sleep was upon the inhabitants, I rushed into the nearest tent. But the inmates were awake; at the sight of my wild visage, they fled shrieking; the alarm was communicated to the neighbouring tents, and I soon found myself in solitary possession of them all. At the sight of their soft couches, and various comforts, I was seized with envy and hatred intolerable. My first impulse was to set fire to the whole; but the wealth, the gold, the pearls, the rich robes,—treasures of these merchants, caught my eye, and a grasping avarice instantly took hold

of me. Thoughtless of danger—forgetting, for the time, my thirst after human life,—I immediately set about digging a pit at the foot of a rock to bury a kingly spoil, when the people recovering from their surprise, returned. At the sight of their numbers I fled—fled upwards to the rocks. They pursued me, accustomed as they were to follow the wild goat and the chamois;—but I too had, from my youth, scaled the cliffs of the desert; and now a spell was on me which gave me supernatural power and speed, that annihilated all fear:—they pursued me in vain. I leaped from point to point, I swung by the pliant tree from ledge to ledge, and was gone. From that hour the terrors of my name spread through the wilderness—a thousand marvellous acts were attributed to me round the evening fires, and I became known as the “Demon of the Desert.” For months I ranged from place to place, driven by the unquenchable spirit of the murderer, but unable to gratify my fiendish desires. My fame went before me, and I found myself for ever in solitude.

“Exasperated with fruitless endeavours, my

wrath turned from man to God: I became filled, at once, with a spirit of blasphemy and of idolatrous fear. I knelt to the sun at his rising, and kissed my hand to the moon and stars nightly;—to the Great Being who made them, I was full of hatred and defiance. In the vehemence of my impious rage, I traversed the deserts, and climbed by night to the lonely summits of Horeb and Sinai. There no longer rested the dark and threatening clouds; no thunders shook the hills to their foundations; above, the clear sky, and the myriad stars shone silently,—around, all was one waste sea of bare and splintered peaks. It is awful to think of the madness of impiety which there possessed me. I defied the Eternal on the very mountain of his power; and called on him, if he lived, to reveal himself once more in his thunders! I listened,—but a vast silence was around; the breeze only sighed carelessly on its way, as in mockery of my insignificance. I descended—my heart devoured with the most venomous feelings against God, and against Moses, whom I cursed as a juggling impostor.

“ But if the sacred hills were quiet, not so was

the earth beneath them. A sound of rushing wings swept by me; dark whispers were in my ears; shadowy shapes went to and fro, turning upon me their eyes gleaming with strange fires; and dusky forms arose out of the very ground before me. I had dared to challenge God; but I shrunk trembling from these dismal spirits! I fled to my cave for refuge; but where is the refuge for him who has surrendered the guardianship of the Author of Nature? Thunders shook the rocks over my head; crags fell crashing and echoing into the dell below; lightnings gleamed through the more than midnight darkness of my stronghold; and finally, a purple light issuing from the wall of solid granite, preceded the terrible Gods of the heathen, who passed slowly athwart the cavern. They gazed silently upon me, but spoke not; as if their only purpose were to receive my homage. I beheld the colossal majesty of Baal; the imperial form, and lofty, yet smiling countenance of Ashtaroth, the queen of heaven—diademed with the horned moon, and a constellation of intensely beaming stars floating around her. Her steps were followed by the soft, volup-

tuous figure of Semel, the queen of love; and by Pibeseth, the blushing and shame-faced goddess, with her eyes on the ground. Then came the hideous Dagon rolling on his fishy rear; followed by the aged and stony-featured Chiun; the stern and savage gloom of Moloch, enveloped in the furnace-glow of his own flames; and lastly, Nehushtan, the haughty serpent, walking rather than gliding on his undulating volumes; lifting aloft his crowned head and human countenance; and clad in vivid scales, of scarlet, blue, and yellow, from beneath which streamed the radiance of internal fires. They passed; but I was not the more alone. The bottom of the cave swarmed with the pigmy forms of the Gemedim; and from every nook and chink of wall and roof, gleamed down the green eyes and goatish visages of the Shoirim, grotesque but hideous.

“The idolatrous passion was extinguished. It was impossible to worship these fearful things;—it was terrible to be conscious of their presence. This vision rekindled my longing after human society, and human sympathies; but where were they to be found? Far around I was to the inha-

bitants what these beings were to me. I determined, therefore, to abandon the deserts; and travelling on, from night to night, I, at length found myself in a cultivated land, and at the gates of a city of stupendous walls and towers. It was Argob, the city of Og;—who has not heard of that last of the Anakims, and of his great bedstead of iron? I was surrounded by a band of fierce, shaggy, and monstrous men, who led me into his presence. He sate on a massy bench, beneath a sycamore, at the gate of his ponderous palace, and his sons, and his old warriors, a race of giants, stood around. I was overwhelmed, for a moment, by the sight of so huge and terrible a being; tall as I am, I reached not to his girdle. Hopeless of life—careless of death, which to me could not be worse than life itself,—I avowed myself a prophet of Israel. A lying and cunning spirit was upon me. I declared that I fled from the despotism of Moses, and would rather receive death at the hands of the king, than live in those of the tyrant of my people. The spirit of delusion seized the giant-monarch. The nations of the Anakims had fallen around him beneath the arms of the Israelites; he awaited daily

his own trial, and he grasped at the intelligence I might give, as a saving branch in the moment of his fall. I was received with favour and honour. I encouraged him—feigned to reveal to him the secret of the Hebrew strength, and assured him of victory. Kindled by my words, he determined not to expect, but to pour forth on his enemies. At once the whole land was in motion like a swarm of hornets. The din of arms, the tumult of processions and sacrifices, filled it from end to end. The giant sons of the king, like inflamed demons, flew from place to place;—the almost equally gigantic daughters, creatures of a fierce and superhuman beauty and stature, their proud necks loaded with strings of pearls, their hair flowing on their shoulders, glittering with gold and jewels, their arms and ancles bound with massy clasps of gold, and tinkling bells of silver, excited to madness the priests by their kindled charms, and their presents of embroidered hangings for the tabernacles of their polluted groves. Dreadful was the rage which boiled through the sanguinary multitudes—dreadful were the cries of human victims—thrilling the shrieks of tender infants cast into the flaming furnaces of Adrammelec.

“But in the midst of this tumultuous scene of guilt and terror, one beautiful and serene object shone like a solitary star upon a tempestuous ocean. It was the youngest daughter of the king, the daughter of a captive descendant of Esau. Of the ordinary stature of humanity, the richness of her beauty, and the gentleness of her spirit, presented only the image of her deceased mother. She was fair as the lily of the valley, but her eyes and flowing locks were dark as night. She had heard of the true God, and of his dealings with her ancestors, from her mother, in childhood; she looked on the savage natures of those with whom she dwelt, with horror and detestation; and my words roused in her soul the most intense and anxious interest. While all others were absorbed in the preparations for war, from day to day, she besought me with questions. In her presence my former tone of mind, my former happiness, seemed to return; a spirit of sacred inspiration was even permitted to me; and I displayed, with glowing enthusiasm, the true history of man—the dispensations of God to Israel—the speedy and utter annihilation of this people. When I ceased, I beheld her kneeling

upon the ground, her lovely face turned with a sublime and adoring expression towards heaven. She arose. 'I fear not to die,' she meekly said, 'but I fain would not die in the midst of this idolatrous people. Oh! that I was but the lowest handmaid in the tents of my mother's kindred!'

"Already deeply affected by her beauty, I was now aroused by her devotion. 'Fly,' I exclaimed. 'I know the deserts, and vow to become thy faithful conductor.'

"With much entreaty I prevailed;—but when I counselled her to bear away the teraphim of the king, she paused; her pure soul shrank from anything like theft; and those golden and jewelled teraphim, worth almost half his kingdom,—those household gods from which, morn and evening, he invoked prosperity,—it was too much. But my zeal—my character of a prophet—my solemn representations that it was a testimony against idolatry demanded by God, shook her spirit—she struggled long, but gave way. In a thicket, not far from the city, I concealed two swift dromedaries. At night, I awaited her at the foot of a tower upon the wall, whence, with the teraphim,

she descended in a basket. We had already reached the thicket, when her giant-brothers sprang forth with dreadful yells. I beheld her in their grasp—I heard her cries—I saw the sword red with her blood: resistance was vain—I fled! Darkness and my destiny favoured my flight; but the blood of that fair and gentle creature lay on my soul like fire. Remorse—pity—love—drove me on in desperation, I knew not whither. At length I was stopped by a range of rocks; I climbed to their top, and sate down in a state of dreamy torpor. From that height I beheld the armies of Israel in march; I saw the host of the Anakims come down like a foaming sea; anon, they were scattered like mist, and the Israelites pursued, slaying to the bounds of the vast horizon. I followed, and in a few days beheld all that monstrous nation utterly destroyed, and walked amongst the smoking ashes of their groves and idol-temples.

“But I saw a thing there more hateful than even the Anakims. I saw the Israelites dwelling at peace in the cities and in the fertile fields—in a plenteous possession, from which I was cut off for ever. I retired from the intolerable spectacle once

more to the desert. The tempestuous energy of those passions, which had successively visited me, seemed now exhausted. I was feeble and faint as a child; yet a burning envy consumed my heart, of the blessings of my brethren, and a malignant cruelty towards the weak and defenceless possessed me. I trod with vindictive malice on the beetle that crawled on the sand before me; and when the lizard ran up the sunny rock, and looked cheerfully in my face, I took up a stone and crushed it. Even this petty force of evil departed, and I was left a powerless prey to remorse—to a vain longing after reunion with my people—to overwhelming • terrors—terrors of God, of death, and of the powers of darkness.

“Oh, praise! boundless praise to Him, who, at length, drew back the arm of his wrath, and forgave. I lay at the mouth of this cave—I know not whether awake or in sleep, but I saw before me two angelic beings; and, by a closer contemplation of them, I recognized my parents. I heard my mother, as if addressing my father, say,—‘How long have we interceded for our unhappy son, that he might be made a partaker of the

annual benefit of the scape-goat, and, at length, it is granted. His latter career of crime has been but the career of a maniac—his real crime was the breach of his sacred trust—he has suffered as no man ever yet did, and he is forgiven.’ She scattered upon me drops, as of water, from a crystal vase, and a thrill of joy—a warm sensation of human love and tenderness, and hope, gushed upon my soul—tears came into my eyes, and I lay as in a soothing trance. During the space of a moon I have continued tranquil, breathing an atmosphere of love, and full of adoration. But I am now spent; and the last good gift of God is this—that he has sent thee to learn this awful lesson of unfaithful pride, and to save the bones of his repentant servant from the desert beast.”

Before the sun had risen on the morrow, the youth had buried the prophet in his cave, and returned to his tribe with a story destined to carry down fear and wonder to countless generations.

BEELTUTHMA,
THE DESOLATE AND THE FAITHFUL.

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CHAPTER I.

EVENING was closing over the wilderness of Judah, as a solitary female approached a tower which she had seen far across the plains. She was wrapped in a long cloak, and closely veiled in the eastern manner, leaving only her eyes visible. Her garb was of the hue and fashion worn by the peasant girls of the country; she seemed to walk wearily, yet with an air of grace, that combined with her tall, slender figure, would have anywhere turned upon her the glance of curious observation. The building she discerned, as she approached, to be of recent erection, and to have the aspect of the dwelling of some powerful chief. It was built of red stone; not very lofty, but of a great extent. It appeared to consist of a quadrangular range enclosing a spacious court, in the centre of which rose

a massy, circular tower of a height which considerably overlooked all the external erection. In the centre of every façade of the outer range appeared a large gateway, of plain, but beautifully executed workmanship; and every corner was defended by a ponderous turret. The walls, instead of being perpendicular, stretched out their feet to the plain like the sides of a tent, indicating, with bastions and buttresses of great bulk, the extraordinary strength of the place. It was again enclosed on all sides, at the distance of a furlong, by twelve towers, from one to the other of which ran a lofty battlemented wall, which was again rendered more difficult of access by a deep ditch.

The strange female stood and gazed for some time upon this place of solitary strength, as if half doubtful that it would admit one so lowly as herself; or, as if contemplating with wonder the simple beauty of its construction; for beautiful it was, not through abundance of ornament, for it was wrought in the plainest style, but through the proportion of the whole, and the clear and bold finish of every part. The large, round mouldings of its gateways; the projecting battlements, resting on a

heavy, swelling cornice; the whole surface of its ruddy walls, marked with its small, dark lines of joints; every portion was so boldly and perfectly finished, that the eye delighted to rest upon it. The clearness of every part made it like a new and admirable picture,—not a stain of the elements yet had touched it, and its strength seemed calculated to battle with them for a thousand years.

As the woman, however, ceased to gaze upon it, she advanced to the gate of the circumvallation, and it opened to her without any visible agency. She moved onward across the green belt of the surrounding land, to the opposite gateway of the building. She struck on the door with the iron mace which hung by it in its iron chain, and the porter putting forth his head through a small, sliding aperture, demanded who was there, and on what errand. The stranger, in a soft and melancholy voice, craved the hospitality of the night. A small door was thrown open, and she entered. There, in the centre of the court, she was again struck with the aspect of the majestic tower, and with the various groups which met her eye. In one place men were busy rubbing down their steeds, which

stood tied up to the wall, with smoking sides, as though they had just come in from some hasty travel; others were seated polishing their armour; while women, sitting opposite, or moving from one to another, were chatting in idle merriment. Children were playing here and there, and several large dogs paced heavily about, or lay and slept. It had all the air of a place of military strength, but she had little leisure to observe it: a man descended from a neighbouring stair, and bade her follow. He returned the way he came; and ascending after him, she soon found herself on the roof, in the presence of one whose air proclaimed him the lord of the abode. He was seated on a stone-seat near the battlement, where he could command, in the day, the view of the whole wilderness; and, although the shades of night were fast gathering on its brown bosom, he appeared still to have his eye fixed on the gloomy distance; but as she approached, and knelt distantly and with an air of profound respect, he turned slowly upon her his gaze in silence. He was a man of a large and iron frame, as if made entirely of bone and muscle; and although apparently in the prime of life, his short black hair was grizzled

as that of a warrior whose helm has pressed heavily and long on his brow. His features were bold, hard, and stern; they looked as though they had been accustomed to face the blasts of battle, and of the elements; his beard curled short and black around his chin; his lips were moulded as by the long habit of uttering high and absolute command; there was no trace of softness breaking down their stern decision, and betraying the occasional prevalence of tender feelings; and his eye flashed with a quick, dark glance, that denoted a prompt conception of his duty, and the most immoveable firmness of purpose.

“Who art thou?” said the stern chief, laying the accent on the last word. The stranger woman bowed her face reverently to the floor, and replied, “a weary wayfarer, who seeks only at the hand of my lord, protection for the night.”

“And whence?” said the same stern voice.

“From a far abode. Thine handmaid is not of the daughters of Israel.”

“Let me see thy face,” said the chief, his countenance moving not a muscle; yet touched with a deep shade of earnestness, as she declared herself an alien.

She removed the veil, and displayed a countenance of singular beauty, forming a wondrous contrast with that of her investigator, not more by its loveliness, than by the dove-like meekness and deep tenderness of its expression. Awe and weariness were traced on every feature; but through these the strength of her native character shone inextinguishably,—and it was that of a being born to a bright sphere of existence, and whose soul had grown up amid loving hearts, itself a full, overflowing fountain of rich affections. That fair and gentle aspect, and the soft, touching tones which she uttered, might have soothed the fiercest of the giants of old; but in the man before her, an expression of surprise only exhibited itself, as he instantly said,—“Oh! a woman of Ammon, and of the princely race! And wherefore,” he added, his countenance gathering a deep gloom, “art thou wandering in Israel? Art thou seeking to flee from thy captivity?”

“No! my lord! no! replied the fair woman, fixing her eyes on the floor, and evidently struggling with a strong emotion, that nearly overpowered her musical but melancholy voice—“no,

my lord ! amid all the calamities that I have been made to share with my unhappy country, that of captivity has not been yet added. I have seen the enemies of Israel lay waste my country ; I have seen her sons fall before them ; I have walked amid the silence and the ashes of those cities, where I once danced and sung with the glad daughters of my people,—and those people were destroyed, those daughters gone into captivity, and I remained free and alone ! Like the owl, I hid myself but too well in the day of terror, and came out only to wander and weep in the night of desolation. My feet were scorched with the yet glowing ashes of my native city—of my father's house—of the houses of my kindred ; but I felt it not, for my heart was deadened within me. I called aloud the names of those dear as my own soul ; and when I listened, I heard but the groans of some dying wretch. I ran on, to discover some surviving remnant of my race ; but I saw only bones calcined by the fire, and walls blackened by it. The burning beams of shattered palaces fell threatening to destroy me, and filled the dismal halls with awful thunders, and with streams of stars

that mounted towards the heavens, as with an indignant beauty. Wherever I turned, I beheld afar, vast abodes filled with flame, in which spirits of darkness seemed to pass to and fro; and the hollow, rushing roar of fire, rolling its forked volumes on the wind, filled my being with a horrible sense of a vast and universal desolation. I fled from the terrific scene, and would have quenched my thirst at the fountain of the suburbs; but it was choked with blood. I ran forward to the plains, and I traced the flight of my miserable people by the bodies of their dead, that blackened in the burning wilderness sand. Oh, mighty chief! my heart yearned after the captives; for with them was life, albeit bound up with sorrow, and love which, although embittered with bondage and scorn, was better than this terrible solitude. I have dared to follow them even into the land of our foes; and many have I seen, and have sate down and eaten my morsel with them in the tears of bitterness. But what shall satisfy the heart of a daughter? What shall stay the feet of a wife? I seek from day to day my father and my husband; and let it not, my lord, offend thee. I am told

that they live, and probably in this land; and all I ask is, to share with them their lot, be it mean and miserable as it may. Let me then, I pray thee, rest under the shadow of thy walls for the night, and in the morning I will go onward."

The chieftain continued during this piteous appeal, apparently as unmoved as the stone on which he sate; and as the fair, weeping suppliant concluded, he demanded,—“and what manner of man was thy father? and what device bore he in the field of battle?”

“He was a tall, robust man,” she replied, “on whom age sate, but could not bend him, though his hair was white as snow; and on his crest and in his shield, he bore a flying serpent.”

“And kept he not the tower of Dodekel?”

“He did! Thou hast seen him. Oh, my lord, by thy dreadful god, hide not his fate from thy handmaid!”

“And thy husband, what device bore he?”

“In his shield he carried a bounding ibex, for he was accustomed to leap the hills as a hunter; on his crest stooped an eagle; for like an eagle, he stooped on his foes in war.”

“Led he not the careering horsemen to the battle? Those horsemen that swept to and fro like the desert blast, as swift as it, and as deadly?”

“He did! he did!”

“Methinks,” said the warrior with a fearful smile, “I can tell thee somewhat of thy kinsmen.”

He clapped his hands, and one of his followers shewed his head above the stairs. “Have this woman,” he said, “to a chamber for the night; see that her wants are ministered to, and let a steed be ready for her at the dawn of day.” The fair stranger bowed her face to the floor, and thanked the chief with her lips, but her soul was full of a strange mingling of hope and dreadful apprehension, as she heard his words and saw his awful smile. She arose and followed with trembling steps, and a more trembling heart, to her chamber.

When Beeltuthma, for such was the name of the unhappy woman, found herself alone, she glanced round her small chamber, and beheld a bed, and on a small table, food and wine, and pure water to drink, and water also to wash her weary feet: but the anguish of her soul, notwithstanding her long travel and long fast, made her turn with loathing

from the sight of food : she drank of the water, and threw herself on the couch, in the desolate misery of her heart. She had heard, not tidings, but a mere chance of tidings, of the beloved ones whom she sought, and had sought for many painful months through a hostile land, bearing scorn, and suspicion, and rude ferocity of repulse, and dangers of the most fearful kind to her gentle and pure spirit : she had gone on from place to place,—she who had known till then, but home, love, and wide admiration ; who had trod, with golden sandals, the marble pavements of princely abodes, and reposed on the silken couch of ease and splendour, soothed with the wild music of her native land ; she had gone from place to place, now desolate and alone, seeking with a bleeding heart and timid eye, for the sole surviving two of her beloved kindred ; and had everywhere seen the prosperity of a great, hostile kingdom, and heard the songs and music of triumph over her own fallen and beloved country ; had everywhere seen her countrymen and countrywomen wearing the yoke of the haughty stranger, and doing his menial offices in dumb despair, and weeping in secret over the

destruction of Ammon. This she had past through, and now she caught a feeble glimpse of hope, that she was on the way to learn the fate of her relatives; but it was from such a man, and in such a manner, as made that glimpse like a fearful vision to her mind. Were they living? Were they dead? Were they in the very power of this chief? Perhaps their proud hands were employed in some sordid task, or their necks were heavy with the chains of his dungeon. Such were the questions that ran through her bosom, and imagination replied with a thousand horrors. But exhausted nature at length closed her eyes in sleep, and she was only awaked by the shrill blast of a trumpet, which startled her like the piercing of a sword;—she arose, and it was morning. The light of day streamed in through the narrow opening in the ponderous walls of her chamber; and glancing through it, she saw the brown wilderness stretching far, dark with the hues of autumn. She saw flocks and herds already driven from the folds, and spreading themselves over the distant plains, followed by their keepers with an air of peacefulness, that made her sigh over the remembrance of her

own desolated country. She saw various rustic dwellings scattered amongst the trees on the plains, shewing that the chief into whose hands she had fallen, was living a powerful lord in a great and wealthy domain. But she was recalled from her observations, by the entrance of a woman bringing a morning meal, and bidding her hasten to attend the chief. With a hurried hand she assumed her cloak and veil, which alone she had thrown off, and snatching a hasty repast, turned to descend. The woman led the way to the bottom of the stairs which opened into the inner court; where two armed men with drawn swords stood waiting, and instantly placed her upon a steed, and led her to the gate. When it was flung open, she started to behold a band of foot soldiers, of not less than five hundred, drawn up and ready to march;—their erect spears, and shields slung upon their backs, glittering in the rays of the morning sun. Her two guards mounted on steeds, and taking their stations, one on each side of her,—the trumpet spoke, and the band moved forward. She glanced along the marching troop in wonder at what this might mean, and beheld at their head a warrior

mounted on his strong war-horse, whom she instantly recognized by his size and port, to be the chief she had seen over night. His burnished helm flashed in the sunlight as he moved, and its plumes played proudly in the fresh autumnal breeze. A light corslet of imbricated steel, over which was tied by a broad belt, his heavy sword; short skirts of embroidered work, and buskins fastened half-way up his muscular legs with lion-headed clasps, constituted the sole, simple dress of this stern warrior. His followers were clad only in a plain woollen vest, which left the neck bare and descended to the middle of the thigh, with sandals of the simplest fashion, and were armed with a sword and a spear, and defended by a plain, unplumed helm, and a light shield. They were evidently equipped for some service that required fleetness and activity, rather than pitched battle. As they issued from the gate of the outworks, they turned eastward, and a train of laden mules fell into the rear.

Beeltuthma was full of wonder and inward dread. What was the object of this expedition, it was impossible for her to divine; yet she could not but

feel persuaded, that it had some connexion with herself, and her father and husband—Tartak and Lohi. But were they in a condition that required such a force? In that case, they could not be captives; and if not, where, and in what circumstances were they? With such fruitless but disturbing thoughts, she rode on in the rear of the armed troops and between her guard, from hour to hour. She could only wonder and be silent, for it was in vain to hope for explanation till time should give it. The haughty chief held on his way without once turning his head; the troop went lightly, talking in a low murmur amongst themselves, but she could not catch a syllable of their discourse; and her two guards rode on in unbroken silence, with drawn swords, and countenances of such fixed gravity that it was hopeless to attempt to extract from them any knowledge of the object of the march.

Thus they held on till noon, through the plains of the wilderness, varied only by occasional flocks of sheep and goats, or herds of cattle; by clumps of trees;—thickets in the many-coloured leaves of autumn; by the waving of the red fern; by a

solitary palm ; by slowly-pacing shepherds and herdsmen ; or by small patches of green cultivation, with their huts and people. At noon they reached a considerable lake,—the word was given to halt ; the whole band speedily ranged itself on the margin of the water ; food was produced from the stores in the rear ; they ate, and drank of the lake ; and stretching themselves on the sward, lay talking in that almost boyish gaiety of spirit, which in all countries and ages, characterises soldiers in such circumstances. The tone of mind of these light-hearted and thoughtless men, was in strange contrast with that of the silent woman, whose mind was full of the desolation of a kingdom, which she had suddenly seen broken to pieces like a fair dream, and of which she regarded herself one of the few solitary atoms scattered by the winds of ruin into strange lands. At one extremity of the troop, sate this forlorn creature ; at the other, the taciturn chief, who evinced no desire to approach Beeltuthma.

The trumpet sounded after a short hour of repose, and they resumed their march. They still held eastward till evening, when they halted : tents

of a peculiarly light and small description, calculated for hasty flight and easy carriage, which had been borne by the mules, were speedily pitched; fires lit around the camp to prevent, more than from any other cause, the approach of lions which abounded in this neighbourhood; and the soldiers, weary with their day's hasty march, soon dispatched their simple supper, and were stretched in sleep. Not a sound was to be heard, but the slow tread of the watchers, pacing from fire to fire. The tent of Beeltuthma was placed in the centre, and two sentinels stationed before it,—cautionary arrangements which, like those of the march, were at once equivocal in appearance and convincing in effect: towards a free person, they were attestations of regard and honour,—towards a prisoner, of suspicious vigilance. Beeltuthma sadly deemed herself the latter.

CHAPTER II.

EARLY in the morning they again struck their tents, and were on their way. They soon reached and crossed the ford of the Jordan, and thence bent their course northward. At first they passed through a fertile and delightful region; but anon, began to ascend long and dreary hills. At noon they halted on a high and naked plain, destitute of tree or bush, and covered only with a dingy yellow moss. Behind them was the fair region they had left—before them the peaks of distant mountains. The captain still preserved the same demeanour. In the march he rode steadily a-head; in the halt he sate apart in a stern silence; and whenever, on their way, people collected to gaze upon them, he would wave his hand with an authoritative motion, and they dispersed and were gone. Beeltuthma marked this circumstance, and felt that she was in the hands of some man mighty in his nation.

Once more, they arose and went on. They now descended again into deep and wide valleys; passing through dark woods, and winding through dreary morasses overgrown with gale and oleander, and willows, and wild with reeds and rank grass. They skirted the margin of black and deep waters that slumbered dismally in the eternal gloom of matted trees; and at evening encamped in weary silence, at the feet of the mountains they had seen at noon. With the first peep of dawn they began to ascend the hills, and passed through narrow defiles belted with dark pines, that were seen as they ascended, stretching their dreary blackness far and wide along the lower ranges. From these fastnesses they climbed into a still and dreary region. Bare and black rocks, shattered into various forms of wildness, reared themselves around them, and waters came with a thundering sound dashing from lofty precipices. As they reached here and there narrow plains as they ascended, the views they gave them were full of silence and desolation. Naked and dark mountains, the summits of some of which were clad in snow, shewed themselves above on every side. - Their way began to grow so steep and diffi-

cult that the horses were unable to keep their footing. Beeltuthma and the guards were placed on mules, and the horses were left in a cavern by the wayside with a guard. The captain too, dismounted and marched on foot. At noon they halted in a narrow opening between the rocks, and ere they proceeded, scouts were sent on before. It was some hours ere they returned; and when they came, whatever was the intelligence they brought, the whole troop was carefully removed from off the way by which they had ascended; watches were placed to keep a vigilant look-out, and the whole band stretched themselves on the ground in profound silence. It was not till night came that they arose, and with still and cautious steps pursued their way. After a slow and most wearisome progress, which appeared to be up an ascent steeper than any by which they had yet advanced, they again turned aside through an opening of the rocks, and with wondrous silence, pitched their tents in what appeared to be a considerable plain.

Beeltuthma, buried in her tent, and closely guarded by the two sentinels, who walked to and

fro before its door, could discern but little of what was going on; but from the nature of the recent proceedings, she had a strong feeling that they were in the immediate vicinity of the object of their expectations, whatever it was; and the persuasion of her soul that it involved the fate of Tartak and Lohi, filled her with an indescribable anxiety. Oh! was she now near those beloved beings? and were they the mark of this terrible chief's designs? Powerful as were the patience and gentleness of her character, they could not preserve her in quiet endurance: she threw herself on the ground, and called on the gods of her nation, though they had apparently abandoned the nation itself, to save these sole remaining objects of her affections. She continued to beseech their aid through the night. But through the night all was profound silence. As the morning, however, broke, a wild and fierce shout, whose fearful echo was flung from place to place amongst those desolate rocks, made her start from her place, and rush to the door of her tent. She could see that there was an eager passing to and fro of men, but she could learn no farther; her guards were at their post, and although moved by

her keenly excited mind, she asked them the meaning of that cry, they gave no answer. All day, however, not merely such wild cries, but sounds as of thunder, or of the falling of rocks and stones, mingled with the groans and shrieks of men, reached the camp; and, from time to time, she caught glimpses of bleeding and shattered men borne past her tent by their fellows. The silence of the camp was now broken by rapid steps running to and fro; eager words—bursts of fierce exclamation, as of threatening and vengeance. Every face, even those of the sentinels, had assumed an air of strange excitement. It was evident that the troop was engaged in some desperate contest, and was suffering severely. What it might be in those wild mountainous regions, she was at a loss to imagine; but the fearful conviction, that in it were engaged her father and husband, never forsook her. But many days this state of things continued. The rushing of troops—the sound as of hammers and battering rams—the dreadful occasional pause of death-like silence—the fresh outbreakings of shouts and yells, and roars as of triumph, carried her mind forcibly back to the siege of her native city, and

led her to believe that some such scene must be transacting here. But what city could exist in these desolate mountains? It must be some den, or stronghold to which desperate men had retired, and amongst these must be her kinsmen. The agony of her soul may be imagined. From day to day she knelt at the door of her tent, and implored the guards to unfold to her what was passing,—against whom they were contending,—saying that it could not alter or affect their proceedings, that a poor, weak, and captive woman should know them. The guards were often changed; but one spirit ruled them all,—the spirit of impenetrable silence, a silence that was interrupted alone by heavy groans, that now continually reached her ears from the neighbouring tents, as of many men enduring the utmost agonies of wounds, and mutilated frames. Once she beheld the chieftain pass by, and she recoiled at the dark and desperate ferocity of his countenance. Its expression, stern and terrible in his calmest moments, was now that of a man of fierce and impetuous passions checked in some momentous enterprise, and stung to the very life of his indignant heart, was wound up to the still, but

brooding and tempestuous strength of a lion when beset by his enemies, pierced by their arrows, yet retaining within all the vigour of his being, he gathers it gloomily up into his frame for one dreadful onset. The sight struck her to the earth in a stony horror. Her heart was overwhelmed with a sick and heavy coldness; and knowing nothing, but imagining a thousand things, she saw her husband and father cooped in some narrow hold by this terrible man, determined to sell their lives at an awful price, fighting madly and without hope.

While she sate on the ground in this lamentable state of terror, her guards were changed, and she saw in their place only a fair and gentle youth. Urged by her anxieties, she caught with avidity at this promising occurrence, and flinging herself on her knees just within the opening of her tent, she clasped her hands on her bosom, and with a look of anguish that made the very blood fade from the cheek of the youth as he turned his eye upon her, she implored him by all he loved on earth and feared in heaven, to reveal to her what was passing. The youth paused for a moment, as in doubt what he should do; then placing his finger on his lips,

as to impress upon her the necessity of her silence, and looking round with a careful glance, said:—"Fair Ammonitess, I pity thee from my soul. What I say to thee, I say at the risk of my life;—yet I will say it—for thou hast moved me to compassion;—if thou betray me—God reward thee accordingly. Joab attacks a fortress here, held by thy countrymen Tartak and Lohi, and some of their followers."

As Beeltuthma heard these words, her senses failed—and she sank as dead on the ground. The boy beheld the effect of his communication with a momentary glance of deepest pity; but, checking himself, he assumed a stern calmness of feature, and resumed his walk to and fro with a cool, and apparently careless step.

The soul of Beeltuthma, however, speedily returned, and as she recollected the intelligence she had just received, she inwardly exclaimed, "It is, then, as I suspected! These dear, dear men are here, beset by their enemies; and even worse than I deemed, by this most bloody and terrible of human creatures—by the dreadful and invincible Joab! Oh! thou dark and stern warrior, before

whom I have quailed and trembled; thou, then, art the scourge of my hapless country! it is thou who hast levelled its cities, laid waste its fields, overthrown its armies, slain its very maidens—its very babes; it is into thy awful and irresistible hands that I have fallen; and that the last living blood of my wasted house shall speedily fall!”

As she pronounced the last word, she again sprang to the door; and fixing her eye on the passing youth with an expression of unutterable thanks, she softly said, “Oh thou blessed youth, my soul thanks thee from its lowest depths, for thy words, dreadful as they are;—but more! canst thou not tell me more?”

Again the youth glanced round, and seeing all apparently safe, “Let not my weakness encourage thee,” he said, “to farther speaking. I can tell thee little more. We hoped to surprise the fortress, but failed; the attempt to force it has been desperately resisted,—the scenes have been dreadful; the tower is yet un——.” As the word was passing from his mouth, an arrow, which came as from the opening in the rocks by which they had entered, pierced his heart; he leaped suddenly

from the ground, and fell dead across the opening of the tent.

Beeltuthma gave a fearful shriek, and sprang towards the fallen youth, but a strong hand rudely thrust her back: two Hebrews raised the body and bore it away, and two others took the station of guards at the tent door; walking to and fro, as calmly as if nothing had occurred.

Struck with horror at the fate of this fair and unhappy youth -- a fate which she felt she had drawn upon him, Beeltuthma retired to the back part of the tent, and seating herself on the ground, gave herself up to the overwhelming anguish and dread of her soul. The day passed silently and sullenly away. The night came and past also; in the morning she was hastily summoned forth, and led by the guards to the outlet of the camp. As she reached it, and found herself in the path by which they had ascended, she raised her eyes, and beheld the object of attack. It was a fortress perched on the summit of a black and precipitous rock, that soared far above the surrounding peaks of the mountains. Its situation was such, as might well defy the most fierce and daring efforts of men;

the very brain of the beholder swimming dizzily as he gazed at it; and the walls, built of the same black and adamantine stone, appeared impenetrable to all human force. Here the crow-foot could not act—its crooked claws could not reach the summits of those lofty walls to drag them down, stone by stone; the battering-ram—the terrible balista, were equally useless. Could they have been conveyed up these narrow and precipitous mountains, where might they have been planted to bear their mighty concussions upon those air-hung bulwarks? Beeltuthma gazed in fear and admiration, and a strange intensity of tried affections on that lofty stronghold. On its walls she could see men moving ever and anon; and they were her own countrymen—perhaps two of them, her father and her husband! She could see, too, at a glance, the terrible deeds that must have been done before those walls. The gates were blackened with fire; but they were of iron, and stood unmoved; the very rock and stones were of a nature that defied the fiercest flames. She saw that the besiegers had erected a covered way of massy stones to the gate, beneath which they were even yet working with picks and ham-

mers, with an apparently hopeless, but an unwearied assiduity. She saw that whole rocks had been hurled down from the fortress to crush these works, and they who raised them. She saw arrows, and spears, and bloody stones scattered in a profuse and dread confusion around the feet of the rock on which the tower stood; and bodies of men, battered and shapeless, lay there also.

Her eye caught the view of a ladder formed of short staves of wood, driven at frequent intervals into the wall of the fortress, and ascending towards a small outlet, or window, which was protected from the view of the besieged above, by a large projecting tower. The ladder had nearly reached the outlet. A man was busily employed cutting out the hole for the last stave, in the joint of the wall; and others, with cautious steps, were ascending after him, ready to follow through the narrow window they had in view, should the first man succeed in gaining it. Beeltuthma's brain reeled, and her whole frame shook with terror for these daring men, though they were her enemies, as she saw them ascending by so frail a stair, at such a giddy height, to such a hazardous enter-

prise. As she gazed, she beheld the man at the top, drive in the last stave; she saw him plant his iron chisel to wrench open the wooden door, when, instantly, it flew open—a spear was protruded, and the unhappy wretch upon the ladder plunged down—down from that dreadful height, and fell, dashed to atoms on the rock, far, far below. A cry of horror arose from the besiegers, followed by a fierce shout of wrath and onset, and it was echoed by the wild acclaim of the besieged. In a moment a large stone was seen issuing from the outlet, and dashing on the next man on the ladder, bore him also to his terrible fate: yet the rest, instead of retreating from so appalling a scene, only rushed with more eager steps up the projecting staves, as if animated with a fury in which danger, life, everything but the destruction of their foes, were forgotten. Terrible was the spectacle that followed: as they reached the outlet, one by one, they were sent flying down through the air; yet the stream below staid not;—as one disappeared, another took his place; and now, one strong man reached the window, and instead of sharing the fate of his predecessors, suddenly

seizing the spear aimed at him, he plucked it from the hand which held it, and turning its point, darted it into the tower, and at a strong bound threw himself half within the outlet. There, for a moment, he was seen as if battling with the foes within, the lower extremities of his body only visible without, while his next fellow thrust him forward, to ensure his entrance into the tower, that he might himself follow, — when, at once, his frame was flung backwards as by a mighty power. He appeared to be launched into the air like his fellows; but again, he caught the sill of the outlet with his hands—he clung!—he wavered!—he fell!—and the loud groan of horror of the besieged, drowned the dash of his carcass on the rocky pavement. In the same instant, the white head of an old man appeared at the outlet;—he hurled forth the next assailant, as a stone is flung bounding from the precipitous brow of a hill, which it is descending in thunder; then, glancing down the ladder, he launched a piece of rock with such precision, that it cleared the fatal escalade to a fearful extent of its climbers, who fell like a flock of crows which the arrows of an army

have pierced, as they flew above it. The trumpet of the captain sounded a retreat, and in a few seconds, the staves were seen standing naked in the wall, that shone with streams of gore against the morning sun.

Beeltuthma, whose guards had halted at the sight of this most horrible spectacle, was found lying senseless on the ground—she had seen her father!

When she recovered her consciousness, she was hastily led up a winding narrow ascent in the rocks, which the assistance of her conductors alone enabled her to climb, and soon found herself on the summit of a lofty cliff, opposite the tower, and by her side—the fearful Joab.

The besieged, who had paused in entranced attention to the bloody contest which had been going on at the window, now re-appeared on the walls, and were preparing to send a flight of arrows at the persons who thus shewed themselves on the opposite cliff, when Joab causing a trumpet to be blown, and waving a small, white banner in his hand, called for Tartak and Lohi. Immediately the hostile preparations ceased, and the

two chiefs appeared. When Beeltuthma beheld the objects of her heart's whole affections, and of the long and sad pilgrimage thus before her, she raised her hands, as if forgetful of the great gulph between them, and uttered a piercing cry. Her guards instantly seized her, lest in her emotion she should leap from the cliff; and Joab, with a voice that seemed to emulate in strength the trumpet which had just spoken, cried, "Know ye this woman?" There was a deep and long silence; during which, even at that distance, the workings of the countenances of the Ammonitish chiefs, might be discerned. Curiosity, strange astonishment, agony of heart, and a settled gloom as of despair, passed athwart their features—at length they replied, solemnly, "We know her!" "It is well!" replied Joab. "And what now may be your determination? Will ye submit to our arms?" "These walls," they returned, "are yet unbroken—these towers are well replenished with food—why should we submit? If thou hast seized the last fair treasure of our country, the last precious stem of our house, whom we behold here as one from the dead—is it needful that

we should sacrifice our lives, and the lives of these men? Yet we would gladly one of us lay down a life for the redemption of that beloved one, could we be assured that it would suffice!" "Come down, then!" cried Joab, "I ask not life for life—I ask only that ye yield up the tower, and depart with this woman."

"Oh, come down! come down! blessed ones!" cried Beeltuthma, "accept the generous offer of this great chief—let us away together to our own dear country! Come down, that I may once more clasp you to my soul!"

"Let the mighty Joab retire from before these walls—let him evacuate these mountains," replied the aged Tartak—"let us see his armed train ascending the hills beyond the marsh, and we pledge ourselves to come down, and retire to our own land."

"Nay!" cried the stern Hebrew—"we will not retire!—we will wait, to enter in and possess the tower, but we swear to give free egress to you and yours."

"That we may be pursued and slaughtered in the plain!" cried the Ammonites. "We come

not down, then! Shall we put our lives into the hands of him, who spared not the babe in our houses—and gave those houses to the flame? Who slew the son of his own king? Who slew treacherously the captains of the king's host? Nay, we come not down till we see thee beyond the marsh!"

"Bear the woman to her tent!" said Joab; and her guards took hold on her to lead her away. She gave one wild, long look at her kindred—one heavy groan, and followed as they shewed the way.

We attempt not to describe the feelings of Beeltuthma, as she sate in her tent during the remainder of that day. Her heart was a region of many wild and woful thoughts, many fears, many speculations, which the next moment appeared impossibilities;—but the great wish of her soul was, that she were in the tower with her father and husband, that she might die with them: "but they will die," she said, "and I shall be borne away to a living death in captivity."

CHAPTER III.

DAY closed upon her sorrow. At midnight she was roused by a strange tumult. She started up, and beheld her husband in the entrance of her tent. "Follow ! follow quickly !" he cried ; but in the next moment there was the clash of arms, the shout of combatants, the flash of torches ; and she saw her husband and father, and their small band of followers, in deadly contest with their foes. It was evident that they had made a nocturnal sally from the fortress, in hope of carrying Beeltuthma off. The battle was furiously contested. She saw the white locks of her father flying ; she saw his sword flashing to and fro, and the active form of Lohi leaping upon his foes. But everywhere they were beset ; and everywhere the tall, iron frame of Joab, with grim countenance and desperate blows, seemed to meet them. She stood, and wrung her hands in mental agony, and called upon the gods for once to shew their power. But the battle

rolled towards the outlet in the rocks; in a few seconds it had passed from the camp; there only lay dead and dying men. The sound of the conflict was heard beyond the cliffs,—farther, farther it removed, till a faint shout seemed to announce some distant event, and then all was still. At length a few soldiers returned to guard the camp—the rest returned not. All night Beeltuthma stood and listened, with her whole soul alive to catch the smallest sound; but none came. In the earliest morning the tents were struck, and they began the descent of the mountains. A gleam of hope crossed Beeltuthma's soul, that her kinsmen had escaped. Had they been slain, some manifestations of triumph would have been exhibited; but now all was silent haste and diligence,—they must be engaged in pursuit. She cast one glance at the tower as she departed,—the gates were open,—the banner of Judah was waving on the walls!

Beeltuthma now cast eager looks onward. She fancied she could hear shouts, here and there, in the distance; she saw men running over the hills beyond the marsh; her whole soul was one living, fervent, unceasing prayer for the escape of her

kindred. At noon they reached the foot of the mountains beside the marsh, where they had encamped in coming; and here again the tents were pitched. During the afternoon, small parties kept coming in from the pursuit; but she heard no sounds of triumph—saw no evidences of the capture of her friends: her heart beat wildly with the hope of their deliverance.

At nightfall, fires were lit around the camp; a strong guard was set, and everything indicated the most active watchfulness. At midnight again Beeltuthma dreamed that her husband stood in the door of her tent; that again the tumult of assault broke out. She started up—all was darkness and silence. Her heart beat loudly with alarm. She sate and listened. She fancied she heard her name breathed softly from the back of the tent,—a thrill of strong surprise, like a sudden fear, passed through her. She deemed it the work of an excited fancy; yet she listened still. And again she heard her name uttered as by the voice of a scarce audible breeze. Again it came, and it was like the accents of Lohi. The back of her tent was against a rocky precipice;—could her husband in

his anxiety to rescue her, have ventured himself there? She sprung up trembling, but desperate at the thought, and approached the place. She paused a moment; she saw a star gleam through a gash in the side of the tent. She fixed upon it her eye; and in the next instant, saw a human face applied to the aperture; and heard her name again breathed, in a tone which she could not mistake. Compelled by the terror of Lohi's situation to suppress her feelings, she drew close to the spot and whispered—"Is it Lohi?" "Yes, my love, it is Lohi," was the reply, "be silent and come forth." In the same moment the sword of her husband opened the curtain of the tent to the ground, and she found herself in his arms. "Follow!" he whispered, and led the way. With steps silent as those of the doe on the velvet moss of the woodland, though with a beating and terrified heart, she pursued, led by his hand. He disappeared through a narrow cleft hidden by the bushes, and for some time they went on in silence. Anon, he began to ascend a narrow ravine between the dark crags, where to her, all was blindness. Onwards and upwards they went with active speed, now winding

this way, now that, till the free gale of heaven blew upon them, and its stars shone brightly above their heads. Here Lohi turned, and clasped his wife in a close embrace ;—they stood and wept in each other's arms. Beeltuthma had no words ; her soul was melted into love and gratitude before the gods. At length Lohi said,—“here for the moment we are safe ; and here would I ask thee, how it is that I clasp my own Beeltuthma once more ? We deemed thee dead—fallen with the rest of our friends and kindred in the burning city ; and reckless of our lives, we pursued the conquerors, and harassed them on their way. When they entered their land, we turned aside and climbed these mountains. We surprised this fortress, and awaited some opportunity to sell our lives in a burst of vengeance on the destroyers. But now life is precious,—let us fly and preserve it !”

“Yes ! yes ! let us fly,” said Beeltuthma, “but where shall we fly ? How shall we escape these dreadful men ? Even now I tremble lest they leap upon us.”

“Fear not,” said Lohi. “I have learned to know these mountains better than our pursuers. While

they sought us to day, I lay amongst the rocks, and looked down into their camp; and marked where they pitched thy tent. We will now hasten to thy father, who lies hidden beyond the lake,—and away to our own land. We may yet find a remnant to gather, and restore our kingdom!”

“Oh! to be once,” cried Beeltuthma, “in that sweet land! though it is lying in ashes and desolation—yet will it be blessed to dwell there with thee, and weep over our kindred that have perished!”

Lohi grasped her arm, and led her silently on their way. They proceeded by many paths known only to him. At length they entered a deep defile. “Anon,” said Lohi, “we shall issue forth by the lake near the hiding-place of thy father, who even now expects us.” They passed on with rapid steps, but, at once, the forms of men started up from the steep sides of the ravine;—before—behind, they appeared; their swords and shields gleamed faintly in the star-light, and many stern voices bade them stand. Lohi drew his sword, and fell furiously upon them; but, like locusts, they closed round him in numbers; and the terrified

Beeltuthma cried—"Fly! fly, for thy life!—me they will harm not!"

Lohi seemed to hear her not, but continued to smite vehemently at his enemies, crying, "Tartak! Tartak!" The stern Tartak and the Ammonites suddenly appeared behind, and like a band of lions roused to fury, overturned everything in their way; passing on like a whirlwind, and everywhere crying, "Beeltuthma! Beeltuthma!" She heard, and rushed forth, and sprung to the arms of Tartak, who clasped her to his bosom, and hurried away towards the wood on the border of the Black lake. But the tumult had reached the Hebrew soldiers, who were waiting to support, if needful, the ambush. They came pouring in on all sides, the dreadful Joab himself appearing between them and the water. He rushed furiously on them, and the little band was speedily surrounded by numbers. "Let us die like men!" cried Lohi; and the arms of himself and the aged Tartak struck down men on every side. But their little band of followers fell rapidly, and the mighty Joab, stalking like a giant in his wrath, now flickered his sword in their faces, and cut the spear of Tartak in twain.

In a moment, the two warriors were pressed to the earth by numbers, and bound beneath the eyes of the weeping Beeltuthma.

The trumpet sounded at dawn ;—the tents were struck, and they marched away to the fertile plains of Gilead.

Who may tell the weight of woe that lay on the soul of Beeltuthma, as they retraced their path towards Judea ;—the last hopes of her existence crushed,—the lives of her father and husband in the hands of Joab ! The stupor of affliction made her day like a dreary night, and the night like a wakeful horror. The next day they crossed the Jordan, and at nightfall encamped in the wilderness, on the very spot where they had halted on the first night of their going forth.

Beeltuthma sate on the ground in her tent, loaded with the full weight of affliction which can fall upon a human being. The climax was given to the long series of evil fortune which had visited her. From a princess in a great nation ; from the cherished daughter, the idolized wife, the beloved and admired woman, she had sunk to a fugitive amid burning cities, ravaged fields, and slaughtered

people ; to a disguised wanderer in a hostile land, seeking with a fearful heart, and feeble hope, the last small remnant of her beloved ones ; to a captive in the hands of the destroyer of her nation ; and now, the sole relics of her soul's wealth,—to her belief, the sole remains of the nobility of her people, were lying in that camp, in chains, uncomforted even by her presence, and awaiting some cruel and ignominious death in the view of their triumphant enemies. It was too much for woman's heart, and a heart so gentle, and warm, and soft as hers ; it seemed as though it had crushed it to a stone. A heavy and dark load lay on her soul like that of a mountain, which quenched all consciousness but that of pain and terror. She sat with her tearless eye fixed on one spot ; motionless as a statue ; and evinced neither by tear, nor sigh, nor groan, her feeling of her woe ;—it was too mighty for all expression—except that death-like expression, which is more terrible than death.

During the latter watches of the night, however, her consciousness evinced itself by a heavy sigh ; and, as one struck by some sudden idea, she sprang up abruptly, and moved to the door of the tent.

The stars were burning brightly in the clear, dark sky, and her gaze was fixed on them in a burning and stedfast intensity, till they seemed to wake in her some tender and melancholy feeling. Tears sprang into her large, dark eyes, and rolled down her pale and rigid cheeks. She turned from the sky, and looked abroad near the dark earth. It was a wild, autumnal night. The wind was vigorously careering over the wilderness, fluttering and swaying the tents as it passed; and singing in its opening with a melancholy music. She saw the dark hill sides illuminated with the watch-fires; and the trees, here and there as they roared in the blast, lit up with a silvery whiteness by the flames. The fires wavered to and fro in long and ruddy volumes, now pointing this way, now suddenly darting themselves in another direction, denoting that the wind was eddying and variable; and the smoke, as it rolled off in yellow clouds, was caught up by the gale with a hungry avidity, and disappeared in the distant darkness.

Beeltuthma contemplated this scene with a heavy and half-conscious perception; but as her eyes wandered among the dark forms of the watchers

around the fires, they were suddenly arrested by one that seemed to call her spirit forth as from a brooding dream. It was Joab himself. Like an unresting spirit, notwithstanding the vast fatigue of the last few days, there he was between the midnight and the morning, moving from outpost to outpost, although his foes were safe in his hands, and he was encamped in his own peaceful country. She saw him soon move apart to a fire where there was no one else, and stand resting one hand on the hilt of his heavy sword, gazing on the flames with the same stern and hard expression as he wore on the evening she first saw him. There was nothing triumphant nor despondent in his looks—it was the natural, or habitual look of austere, yet unconcerned gravity which belonged to his ordinary mood.

But what strange vision was that which then caught her eye? It was that of three mysterious figures, moving from the distant darkness towards him, with the silent steps of spirits and the dignity of gods. Could they be men? They had the figures and the motions of men, but their steps seemed soundless, and they moved not the heath beneath their tread. They came on with a digni-

fied, and yet a rapid pace. One was a nobly-built and nobly-featured man, clad in the peaceful habiliments of a leader amongst his people. His fine, large countenance had an air of dignity mingled with much kindness, and grave good sense; but it was bloodless as that of a spirit, though his eye had not merely the brightness, but the human expression of life. His cap was richly adorned with the feathers of the ostrich, which swayed gracefully over his shoulder; and in his hand he bore one of those light and golden-headed spears which are carried on occasions of peace, more for state than as instruments of defence.

The second was a youthful figure, moulded like a god. His graceful form, perfect in the shaping of every limb, and in the exquisite grace of every motion, was only to be equalled by the frank and manly, but somewhat dissipated and ambitious cast of a countenance of wonderful beauty. It was like the statue of Tammuz himself; and his hair, which rolled from his crown on every side in volumes of rich and heavy gold, was such as Beeltuthma had never seen amongst all the noble youths of her land, nor had imagined but in dreams. He wore no cover-

ing on his head, as if it was too glorious to be concealed by any earthly fabric, however princely. His vest was of rich purple, embroidered with gold. His outer garb was of the Tyrian dye, and was folded around him with a grace that none but some few highly-favoured mortals ever attained. His sandals were of gold, fastened by richly embroidered bands. But *his* face, like that of his fellows, was pale, and—marvellous sight!—the shafts of three darts were seen entering his breast in such a manner that their points must meet in his heart!—Yet he lived, and moved as if they inconvenienced him not.

The third was a man of an open, unsuspecting countenance; clad in a long, highly-embroidered military robe, on which was bound the empty scabbard of a sword. His sandals, and the skirts of his robe, were dusty as with travel; on his head he wore the helmet of a chief captain.

Beeltuthma gazed on these extraordinary figures with an intensity of interest that made her half forget the weight of her sorrows. Were they gods? If so, why so pale? Were they spirits of Joab's countrymen, who sought in him an avenger?—for Beeltuthma saw with wonder that the lower gar-

ments of them all were alike drenched with blood; all had the pallid hue of death; and the princely figure of the youth, those three mysterious, yet undestroying darts in his bosom. But if these, why those reproachful looks with which they drew near? Were they men who had fallen by his treacherous hand?—Her soul, and their aspects and manner, darkly inclined her to this conclusion. The stern man saw their approach, but he moved not. He fixed his eyes upon them with a look of strong, but subdued wonder, but there was no trace of fear on his bold, unblanching features. They came on, till they stood only a few yards from him. Each with one hand pointed to his own body, whence streams of blood seemed afresh to flow; and with the other, towards the camp. Beeltuthma started; for it struck her that the apparition bore some reference to her fate. Were they Hebrews, whom Tartak and Lohi had slain in battle? And did they come to cry for vengeance now those chiefs lay bound in his hands! The idea seemed filled with probability; and chilled her with a deadly horror. She gazed with straining and eager eyes at them, and with outstretched neck, longing to catch the import

of their words. But there was no voice audible at that distance. She saw their pale countenances charged with a mighty indignation, and their eyes were rivetted on the countenance of Joab with an expression of inextinguishable reproach, and, as she thought, of disdain.

Whatever were their words, their errand, or the meaning of their looks, the unshaken warrior seemed to regard them not; and so far, were they demanding vengeance against Tartak and Lohi, the inference was consoling. He maintained his position, leaning on his sword, and altered it not, except when they appeared to menace him in their communications, to raise his hand, and wave it with a motion of defiance, which his stern features fully seconded. The figures gave one commanding look, pointed once more eagerly towards the camp, and instantly kindling, as into an ethereal flame, grew brighter and brighter, till they became forms of intense and translucent radiance;—then gradually faded, dimmed, and disappeared.

The general stood alone, still leaning on his sword, but in a more thoughtful attitude, for some time; then turned, and walked slowly towards his tent.

CHAPTER IV.

THE morning broke upon Beeltuthma as she sate alternately turning her sorrowful mind from the situation of her kinsmen to this marvellous apparition. It appeared as a dream; and the regular movements of the camp seemed to her, evidence that no one partook of its consciousness with her. The tents were struck—the trumpet sounded to march; and she beheld herself seated on the same steed, between the same guards, in the same situation, in the rear of the troop; and Joab riding coldly on his war-horse at its head, as when they set out. The only circumstances of difference were, that the troop was much diminished in numbers, and in the rear came many wounded soldiers, borne on temporary litters, and a sight that wrung her with inexpressible agony,—Tartak and Lohi, strongly fettered and strongly guarded. Thus they marched; and thus they entered Joab's house in the wilderness.

Beeltuthma had not slept since the capture of Tartak and Lohi; and in the same small chamber where she had passed the night before the departure for the mountain fortress, she slept not now as she did then. She sate upon the bed, the same image of the torpidity of excessive affliction as in the camp. In the morning, she was summoned forth to the presence of Joab; and feeble and wasted with her consuming anguish, and filled with terrible apprehensions, she arose, and with unstable steps proceeded to the house-top. There she beheld the chief sitting on the same stone seat, with the same hard indifferent aspect as at the first interview. The faded and drooping form of Beeltuthma, her countenance thin and rigid, and death-pale with woe, might have touched a heart of the hardest texture, but it seemed not to touch him. She approached, and prostrated herself before him.

“Behold!” said he, “I have found that which thou soughtest! I have found thy kinsmen. Thou hast seen how they have caused the blood of the Lord’s people to flow like water; thou hast seen their pride and obstinacy; thou hast seen how they have refused the offer of freedom at my

hands; but have ceased not to pursue me with inextinguishable fury. Now shalt thou behold the judgment of the Lord!”

“Oh, my lord! mighty and irresistible!” cried Beeltuthma, laying her hand upon her head, “spare! spare these unhappy men! Thou hast done thy will upon our nation. Her cities, her fields, her sons and daughters, lie they not all prostrate in the dust at thy feet? and these two men, what can their lives avail against thee?—what good shall their deaths do thee? Surely! surely thy heart is satisfied with blood! Oh! do whatsoever seemeth thee good to thine handmaid, but spare, I beseech thee, these sorrowful men! Let me die,—but let them live! They are as but a drop in the bucket, my lord:—let them return, and feel in the silence of their fields, and the dust and ashes of their cities, the greatness of thy power;—the dead! the dead cannot acknowledge it!”

“Hast thou seen their cruel deeds,” sternly replied Joab, “to my followers?—Didst thou see how the sons of Jacob fell like dogs from the walls of their tower, and were dashed to atoms amidst their triumphant yells—and dost thou dare to plead for them?”

“Oh, my lord!” cried the feeble and trembling Beeltuthma, lifting up her head, and rising on one knee in the earnest wrestling of her spirit; “and what have they done, but as brave men, who would defend and avenge their country to the last drop of their blood? Would my lord see the enemies of Israel destroying her on every side, and resist them not, and avenge not his people’s wrongs till his eye grew dim with weariness, and his arm failed with the out-pouring of his life-blood? They are men,—brave men!—good men! As men they have fought, and as a man,—oh forgive! forgive!”

“Woman, thou knowest not that the Lord has given the command to destroy you as a wicked and idolatrous race!”

“Yea!” she replied, casting her eyes on the floor, “I know,—I feel that your God is mighty, far mightier than our gods!—I feel that our gods have abandoned us, or cannot defend us,—but it was not so in past days. Our people grew, and spread, and their arms won safety and honour;—but thy God is mighty and gracious to his people—forgive! my lord! forgive! and let us worship thy God with thee; and let us be the lowest of his children;—surely he will pity and receive us!”

The warrior cast a scornful smile at the sup-
plicating woman, and said—"Can a heathen dog
become a lion of Judah? No—no!—we ask not
the worshippers of stocks and stones to come into
the tabernacle of the Most High, bringing their
vile images beneath their garments, and seated in
their leprous souls, to defile his courts. Woman!
I called thee not to weep, and weary me with thy
words, but to see what God has decreed for every
rebellious idolater."

He waved his hand, and the heavy crimson
curtain, which Beeltuthma had not observed drawn
across the tower, was rolled back, and she beheld
her husband and father standing in their chains,
and on each hand an armed man. At the sight,
she leapt to her feet, and with clenched hands and
terror-fixed eyes, gazed upon them. Their coun-
tenances were pale with strong emotion; but they
stood firm, and untouched with fear; their eyes
turned on Beeltuthma with an expression of
boundless and eternal tenderness.

At a sign from Joab, forth flashed the swords of
their keepers;—at another, their swords were
raised, and waited but the permission to smite,

when Beeltuthma, starting as from a dream, sprang forwards to embrace them. Her steps were arrested by her guards; and once more flinging herself at Joab's feet, she cried frantically—"Kill me! kill me first! Let me not see the deaths of my kindred!"

She was startled in the midst of her agony of appeal by a voice behind her, and by the eye of Joab, which, with a troubled light, was directed towards the place whence the voice came. She arose, and beheld an aged man, whose countenance was fixed on that of Joab with the severity of an indignant judge. The old man was clad in a coarse woollen robe, bound with a broad leathern girdle, and leaned on his staff in the extremity of years. His hair and beard were white as snow, and his countenance was full of that spiritual dignity, that bows the mind of the beholder in profound veneration. At his back, stood two youths, in the strength and bloom of early manhood, and clad in the same simple garb as the aged stranger.

Beeltuthma saw that the guards had bowed their faces to the earth, and that even Joab's hard and

daring features betrayed the homage due to his visitor.

“Joab ! Joab !” exclaimed he, in a voice full of a solemn, mysterious command, “what is this which thou hast done ? When the word of the Lord revealed to me the retreat of these captives, said it not also that thou shouldst wait the judgment of the Lord ? And behold ! already the sword is raised to smite them !”

“Man of God !” said Joab, “has not the Lord said smite the heathen, and spare them not ? And knowest thou that these bloody men have scorned the offer of peace, and slain abundance of the Lord’s people ?”

“Man of a stubborn heart,” retorted the prophet, for such his words, and the words of Joab announced him, “shall not the Lord kill, and shall he not keep alive as it best pleaseth him ? And darest thou to question the command of the Almighty ? Who raised up thy kinsman to the throne—raised thee also with him, and gave thee might before thy enemies, and honour before thy people ; and has given thee possessions, and an everlasting name ?”

“And have I not been zealous,” interrupted the haughty chief, “for the kingdom?”

“Thou hast been zealous, and thy zeal has been approved, although it has not been tempered with mercy, nor obedience; yet it has been approved, or long ere this day thy life had been as the life of Korah in the wilderness, and as the life of Saul. Oh! man of blood!—thou hast smitten, and hast had no mercy; thou hast overturned and laid waste, and lamented not; thou hast also stretched out thy hand treacherously against thine own fellows. Who slew the righteous Abner, when he came to heal the divisions of Israel? Who smote the young man Absalom, when his father had said, smite him not? Who smote the unsuspecting Amasa, as he went on the way on the king’s business—smote him with a guileful look, and a jealous hand? Will thy soul never cease to thirst for blood? thy spirit never bow to God’s commands, though he send, as he sent but yesternight, the dead—the slain of thine own hand, to speak his warnings? Behold! doth the lion slay the dove that, pursued by the kite, flies into his den? Doth the wolf crush with his paw the lizard, that

sports amongst the bones of his lair? Yet hast thou no bowels of compassion on this meek, and broken-hearted woman, on whose ways, and the yearnings of whose spirit, the Lord hath looked down in tender compassion; and hast never called to mind how the Moabitess, Ruth, found favour in his eyes, for the love and the faith that was in her soul, so that he has made her the mother of kings, and engrafted her into the line which shall bring forth the Hope and the Blessing of all nations; and thou—even thou—art of her lineage! Herein, oh lover of battles! hast thou grievously offended; and thy deeds of cruelty will not pass from remembrance.

“I see a glorious monarch coming on in the path of years, to sit on the throne of Israel. I see him unsheath the sword of retribution against the offenders in his father’s days. I see the altar of God; and one who shewed no pity, and feared not to crush the feeble and the desolate, clings to its horns for safety—and finds none!

“Behold! thou bruised, but obedient and meek daughter of a chastised people, thy heart is approved, and thy person is accepted by the Lord

of the earth Go ! take the lives of thy kinsmen, and return to thine own land, and become the mother of future kings ! and forget not to tell thy children what thou hast seen—that the God of Israel is the only God !—the God whom thy fathers once knew, but from whom they have wandered. Let them hear this, that they may cast out from their houses and their hearts, the images of heathenism, which are an offence.

“ See now the work of the Lord ! ”

The prophet, who had become animated with the inspiration of the moment, till his weak and bending body rose into erectness and the power as of youth, now turned, and bade the guards bring forward the captives ; and when they came near, he put forth his hand, and touched their chains, which fell from them as they had melted at the touch of lightning. Tartak and Lohi fell prostrate in astonishment and awe ; and Beeltuthma, bathing the feet of the prophet with torrents of tears, cried, “ Oh ! holy man ! thy God is my God, and none besides—for he is a God of might, and also a God of compassion ! ”

“ Arise ! ” said the seer, “ and depart ! Your

way is open : rest, and food shall not fail you ; nor shall anything have power to hurt you, till ye come into your land !”

He turned towards the stairs of the tower,—exhibiting the marvellous doings of the Almighty, by which such wondrous power was made to reside in a frame, that seemed already tottering to the grave ; and, at one and the same time, might be seen this aged servant of God seated in his litter, and borne by two of the sons of the prophets, and followed by a little troop of others, ready to take their turns in bearing him, moving over the plains at a rapid pace ; while, in another direction, went the three ransomed ones, in tears of love and wonder, towards their own land.

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PANTIKA:
OR,
TRADITIONS
OF THE
MOST ANCIENT TIMES.

BY WILLIAM HOWITT.

Ist nicht die ganze Erde des Herrn ein Wohnplatz der Menschheit? Wenn Aganippe, Arethuse, Derce und der Cephissus angenehm rauschen, warum sollte nicht dort auch der Jordan, der Kur, der Ganges labende Wellen treiben? Warum nicht auch ein Bach in der thebaischen Wüste?

HERDER.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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THE AVENGER OF BLOOD.

CHAPTER I.

A blessed land was the land of Israel in its happiest period; and of that period, if we were to settle the crowning epoch, would it not be the opening of the reign of Solomon? It was a land in so fair a clime; so admirably diversified by every feature that can delight the eye,—elevate the spirit,—and contribute to the amenity of life;—mountains,—rushing waters,—valleys and wildernesses. Mountains here crowned with snow; here with wide and solemn forests, abounding with beasts of chase; here lifting up green hills of pasturage, wandered by innumerable flocks; valleys of wild, sweet aspect; and these divided from each other by wildernesses which were anything but what are commonly called by that name,—expanses of rich and summer beauty,—wide, liberty-breathing tracts,

not of sand, but of thick and aromatic herbage, where flocks and herds wandered, followed by their keepers; where a variety of wild game abounded; and desert plants saluted the passenger with their delicious, rural smells. There the heath spread its crimson blossoms; the fern waved to the wind; the nard exhaled its spicy odour; resplendent lilies, some glowing scarlet, some purely white, gleamed in the thickets; and the lovely roses of Jericho fluttered in thousands to the vagrant breeze. Oh! these were deserts where the herdsman, or the hunter; the citizen escaping from his daily cares; the traveller going on his daily track, might tread with exultation, and wish no fairer sojourn. The tall palm was, at a distance, their landmark; and seemed to lift up its fair head to welcome them to its solitary station; the clustering copses of oak and sycamore, and wild olive, invited them to their shades, forming pleasant contrasts to open, sunny and glowing tracts, where the bee hummed and the dragon-fly wheeled about them; where the gorgeous butterfly wavered before them in the warm light of noon, or alit on some azure blossom of the desert; and at every step the elastic carpet of turf breathed up its own wild aroma.

The people were, for the most part, a rural and pastoral people. Scattered through the varied scenery of those charming regions, each family on its paternal inheritance, they lived at ease, each man under his vine and his fig-tree. Wherever the eye turned, it beheld objects of delightful contemplation. Towns small, antique, and quiet; with their low, and varied gables; their more ample, cool dwellings with flat roofs, where the evening breeze might be enjoyed; their spacious courts; their fragrant and bowery gardens. Here, venerable age, sitting in the shade of their native sycamores; here groups of children at play; fair matrons, and fairer damsels, all exhibiting that full and graceful vigour of form, that beauty and hilarity of countenance, which mark a happy and contented people. And then, beyond the space allotted by the law to the common benefit, the fields displayed growing or ripened crops, or undulating pasturages of abundant flocks and herds. Throughout the valleys were scattered picturesque abodes; and along the steep hill-sides every spot was enriched and beautified by the hand of unwearied industry. Terraces of stone-work supported plots

of corn, of luxuriant and odoriferous trefoil: gardens, whence vines, melons, and cucumbers hung their long, green runners; whence came the smell of pines, citrons, oranges, and figs; whence the mulberry, the date, the quince, and olive shewed their lively and varied forms; all refreshed with streams of falling waters, and by pleasant reservoirs, which cast around their coolness, and were fair with lilies and pungent calamus.

Happy land! happy in a thousand conspiring circumstances, any one of which would have formed the boast of other nations. The people were a kindred people,—one family, whose father was God. Unlike the other nations, whose origins are lost in clouds and oblivion, or which had been assembled by the stress of circumstances, and compounded from the fragments or refugees of various races, they could look back and trace their rise to to the rise of the world. They could sit in their peaceful dwellings, or under the garden tree, and read in the beautiful history which God himself had dictated, how the world began. They could see man rise, as from the earth, before them; see how his sons spread and peopled all regions,—

those ancient families, whose monosyllabic names for men, and their lands and cities, Pul, and Lud, and Nod, and Ur, and No, bespeak the simplicity of their ideas and language: see the fortunes and disasters of the human colonies; see God select from the whole, their great ancestor; see his wisdom, his sublime faith, his growing renown and affluence; see how his children multiplied; how they went and dwelt in Egypt, only that God might magnify them in the eyes of all nations; that he might bring them up through the wilderness, and try and purify them, and spread the terror of their name before them. They could see them brought into this land, which was chosen by heaven for them, from all the fair regions of the earth;—long promised, and at length given to them, with all its cities, wealth, and cultured fields—a ready possession.

Unlike other people, they had not to wander in darkness,—to dream the wild dreams of idolatry; to shape and bow to bloody gods; to fear before, and torture themselves before them. God, the God of Heaven, had revealed himself to them in his majesty and his purity; he had framed for them a

righteous law, and breathed amongst them a clear and intellectual life; and held full in their vision of futurity, a Saviour,—a renovator of man, to arise from their own posterity. He was their king, their guardian; in his keeping they dwelt, in the midst of hostility, of envious and ferocious nations, and feared nothing. From its first planting, their kingdom had been gradually extending its boundaries, and progressing towards a higher power and glory. It is true, it had not been without its checks and reverses; but these had been temporary, like clouds passing athwart a sunny sky. They had been the direct and evident consequences of their defection from God; and had, even while they humbled, added to their glory, by shewing how much they were the objects of the Almighty's tenderness; for they had only to bewail their evil deeds—to call upon him for help, and they were instantly freed from their enemies.

The romantic character of their country—the romantic incidents in their most simple and living annals; their stirring contests with mighty nations; their miraculous victories over them; and the sublime hymns of triumph which glowed in the pages

of their history, all contributed to imbue them with a lofty and heroic spirit. Their enemies had fallen back on every side; many of the original inhabitants, which retained strong-holds in the country, had been rooted out; their population had increased; their towns become filled with substantial and cheerful dwellers; their country cultivated to an extraordinary degree of beauty and fruitfulness;—the land was lovely—its people prosperous and happy.

All these traits had been wonderfully heightened by the reign of David; one of the most accomplished monarchs that ever filled a throne. Born one of the people, he had drawn the hearts of the people after him. Personal beauty in his youth, when he followed his father's flock in the wilderness, was in him striking; yet was it the least of those qualities which gave him power over the popular spirit. Poetry seemed to have come upon him as the soul of the solitudes which he haunted: nature spread out to him her fairest features; he perused them with intense interest, and laid up in his soul exhaustless treasures of her beautiful imagery. He could, moreover, give utterance to

his kindling emotions in music. Such was his youth; how unlike the glittering barrenness, where nature is carefully rooted out and annihilated, of the youth of the ordinary race of princes—the idols and the tyrants of men! Such was his youth; and his manhood crowned these charms by a display of a martial spirit—by a feat of unparalleled valour—by the salvation of his nation from a taunting enemy. He clad himself in glory. God and man looked on him with approval, and destined him to reign. Till that period arrived, a series of the most romantic adventures augmented the popular admiration. He became king,—and under him Israel assumed a new and lofty character. The qualities which had distinguished his youth,—his poetry,—his music,—his valour,—all shone with tenfold brilliance in the palace, and covered his throne as with the blaze of a rainbow light. The songs which he poured to the harp—songs of honour and thanksgiving to God who had blessed him, of triumphs over his enemies, or laments over his own weaknesses—flew through the land, and glowed in the hearts of the people as fire from heaven. His victorious arms crushed his foes—

extended his empire far into the kingdoms of Ammon and Amalek, Moab and Edom. He rent Jerusalem from the heathen, and acquired a fitting capital for so noble a realm: he made himself lord of Damascus, with its delicious gardens, and famed streams of Abana and Pharphar: he made Israel dread and honourable in the eyes of surrounding nations. He sunk into years;—yet, ere his star faded on the horizon of the world, that of his son Solomon arose with still more glittering beams. Magnificent in his person—imperial in his habits—endowed with wisdom such as had never yet shed its honours on the head of age, and with talents that seemed more than human, he extended even his father's conquests, stretching his reign from the Euphrates to the river of Egypt—a glorious empire! But he extended his sway still farther; he extended it by commerce to the affluent East, and poured into his dominions the gold of Ophir, the spices and precious stones, the silks and singular and gorgeous creatures of India. He extended his dominion into the very dominions of Nature. He explored all her tracts and recesses; he described all her productions; beasts, birds, and fishes; all

her vegetable tribes. He descended into the heart of man, and developed her operations there. As the preacher of the sublime and melancholy truths of mortal life; the poet of love; the philosopher of morals; he grasped triple glory, still higher than the glory of his throne. He adorned his capital with the splendours of a new and kingly architecture; and through his friend Hiram, king of Tyre, he introduced banqueting vessels of most superb and exquisite fashion and workmanship;—the labours of the subtle Phœnicians, the most cunning artificers of the world. Above all, he reared to the God of Heaven a temple, the wonder of the earth: and consecrated it with an address to the Eternal, before which all other eloquence grows pale. It was, at once, more awfully sublime than the structure which it dedicated—the structure of years—the work of millions—the admiration of ages.

Such was Solomon in his youthful career; and truly, therefore, may the happiest period of the Hebrew history be pronounced to be the opening of his reign. The kingdom was advancing in its progress, on a scale, and with a rapidity calculated

to fill all men with wonder. Great as it had become, it appeared destined to be incalculably greater. The favour of heaven shone on it with full and unclouded splendour: it was glorious in the eyes of all nations; in itself filled, from end to end, with happiness. Not a symptom of decay had yet shewn itself amid its radiance—not a breath of evil fortune breathed upon it. The fall—rapid and dreary,—the fall, which commenced in this great monarch, and continued from reign to reign, fearful, calamitous, ruinous, was yet unknown—undreamed of. The wisest of men, the most powerful of monarchs, the most sublime and spiritual of worshippers, had not yet displayed to the astonished world the extremity of mortal feebleness. The kingdom was not yet rent asunder. That awful race of men—the prophets—might occasionally come forth from their abodes, and bearding the offending monarch in his palace, stand clad in the strength of the Almighty, and cry,—“thou art the man!” but they had not yet begun those portentous strains of wild and unexampled poetry, whose burden was desolation and destruction to this and to many nations;—strains which sounded

deeper and deeper, till the great monarchs of the East came up, and sealed their truth by fire and captivity; blackening with flames the very mount of God. Nothing of this had yet arrived; all was glory, and beauty, and peace; a nation such as the world has seen not, but at this golden epoch.

It was then that a venerable pair, Jathniel and Cutha, were dwelling in the borders of the wilderness of Tekoah. After leaving behind for some time the rocky heights of Bethlehem, the plains of Tekoah might be seen stretching eastward, to the black and shattered hills of Engeddi, bounding the Dead Sea. As you approached these desolate hills, you would behold before you the country breaking up into many pleasant ridges and intervening vales, with bosky slopes, and small, rapid streams hurrying to the Cedron. Not far from where this hasty torrent fell into the Asphaltic lake, the traveller would discern lying before him, as it were, an extensive forest, spread wide at the feet of the Engeddi hills, but terminating in a point westwards. At this westward point, as he drew near, he would descry an old and spacious mansion, surrounded by wide-spreading plane-

trees and sycamores; and, at some little distance, groups of thinly scattered palms. This was the abode of Jathniel and Cutha. It was a low, white building of square form, with a flat parapeted roof, which commanded a view of the surrounding country; and where the cool freshness of the eve and night might be enjoyed. A wide colonnade with pillars of unhewn cedar surrounded the whole building, furnished with seats where all the aspects and influences of the day and season might be luxuriously obtained. At some distance, in different directions, might be discerned, clumps of trees overshadowing the huts of the herdsmen and shepherds, who followed the numerous flocks of cattle, sheep, and goats, the property of Jathniel, which wandered on this wilderness and the neighbouring hills. Their wives and daughters, employed in their household affairs, might be seen going in and out, or seated in the shade of a tree, working the domestic mill for family bread, or spinning the wool and cotton for family attire; and the cries of the children playing on the heath, enlivened this wide solitude.

A happier family never inhabited a more beauti-

ful place. Jathniel was a venerable old man of three-score and ten. Of a powerful constitution and serene temper of mind,—he had gone through life as through the valley of peace. No heavy misfortune had darkened his home, and pulled down the fair fabric of his nature. No violent passions had wrinkled his spirit or his countenance. He was grave, yet occasionally jocose; calm, yet affectionate; wise by the experience of others, operating on his clear, contemplative mind. His wife who, by consanguinity, had been destined for him from a child, was exactly for a woman what he was for a man. She was tall, and had been very fair. A rather strong and prominent style of features; large, penetrating, yet placid eyes; and a matronly gravity of air, bespoke her what she was,—a quiet, yet active and discreet mother in Israel.

It was beautiful to behold the system of the daily life of this worthy pair. They rose early, and assembling at the breakfast table with their children, diffused by their happy cheerfulness, the same spirit through the house: offered up their thanksgiving to the God of their fathers, and dispersed to their different pursuits. Jathniel in his

broad hat, and copious rural robe, might be seen mounted on his large, white ass, a beautiful creature, full and sleek, yet grave and gentle as its master, slowly riding over the plains: visiting now his herdsmen, now his shepherds; surveying with undiminished interest their various charges. Hearing all their details of accidents from wild beasts, tempests, and other causes, and their propositions for future management; now proceeding to the labourers of his corn-fields, now to those of his vineyards.

Jathniel's possessions were princely; and they gave him full employment, of the kind exactly suited to his taste,—to expatiate in the quiet and freshness of nature; to watch and oversee her operations; to provide for the supply of corn, and wine, and oil; to make all his creatures comfortable—all his rational creatures contented and happy. Jathniel was beloved as the common father, and honoured as a king in his own domains. He was an old and valued friend of David. In his youth he had known him. He had seen him in Bethlehem. They had met with their flocks in the wilderness, and Jathniel had listened with wonder and delight to the poetry, the music, the aspirations after glory

of the embryo poet and monarch. When David fled from the presence of Saul, and wandered with his men in the neighbouring deserts, alternately hiding in the caves of Adullam and Engeddi, in the wastes of Ziph and Carmel; Jathniel was ever ready to extend to his friend his counsel, his corn, and wine. When David had mounted the throne, it was his delight often to steal away to the rural mansion of Tekoah; and many a time had the two friends been seen riding, side by side, over the fragrant heaths: often had this ancient roof resounded to the glorious music of the royal harp; often had the children been seated on the knee, and fondled in the arms of this famous king. Often too, would the youthful princes come to enliven Jathniel's dwelling, with their buoyant, rejoicing spirits. Solomon, who, at the period concerned in this history, had just begun to reign, had in particular during his boyhood, loved to visit this place,—to listen to Jathniel's affectionate recital of his father's adventures in that neighbourhood; to ride by his side through fields, forests, and hills, asking a thousand questions, of every object, bird, beast, or plant around them. Jathniel's only son,

Dalphon, was about his own age, and had been the companion of the young prince for days and weeks, as he followed his favourite pursuit of natural history, in the woods and plains around.

During the heat of noon, Jathniel returned home to enjoy his wonted repose. During the morning, Cutha had been superintending the household affairs;—as the heat of the day again abated, they all re-assembled to their evening meal; and afterwards enjoyed the awakening breezes on their house-top, and beheld thence the varying glories of dying day exhibiting themselves on the distant hills; beheld the flocks and herds driven by their keepers towards their different folds; or they wandered in the fragrant paradise of their almost boundless garden and garden-wilderness; giving themselves up to the talk of domestic affection—to the sound of the psaltery, or sackbut played by the younger branches of the family; or listened to the stirring annals of their glorious nation. The Life of David, written by Gad the prophet, and presented to Jathniel by the monarch himself, was an inexhaustible fund of delight; for they knew every spot of every romantic event; the scenes of

all his exploits, his stratagems, his escapes, his generous acts towards his persecutor;—and the songs of his noble and pious spirit, a similar gift, soothed them as they sank to repose.

Circumstances might vary, in some degree, this routine of life: the arrival of visitors from Bethlehem, or from the royal city; the excitement of seed-time, or harvest; of new moons and festivals; the great annual going up to Jerusalem, to the Passover;—but the main tenor of their existence was this of quiet felicity.

The house, I have said, was a large square building. It was built on three sides round a court, with covered galleries ascending to the upper stories, and a wide, cool colonnade below. In the centre was a noble and copious fountain; and the area was filled with a smooth, green turf. From this, on the south and eastern side of the square, which was open, descended a flight of easy steps into the garden;—a garden which nature itself seemed to have formed for the full gratification of those who loved her. From west to east, close past the walls of the house, ran the deep and rapid Cedron, through rocky and precipitous banks, and

at the distance of about four furlongs, issued through a wild defile in the Engeddi hills into the Dead Sea. This constituted one boundary of the garden. The other was formed by a sudden sinking of the ground, which left a range of precipices many yards high, and whose top was the common level of the country westward. This range of precipice stretched away southward for many furlongs till it met the mountains, and left a space of great extent below the house, which included in itself a little world of wild beauty and romantic delight. On the one side was the Cedron, with its rapidly rushing waters, and steep banks overhung with willows, tamarisks, and acacias; on the other, the wall of precipice, hollowed here and there into caverns, but for the most part covered with vines of richest burden, and a diversity of climbing plants; and along the crest of the cliffs ran a profusion of trees, that gave to the whole space the appearance of a forest, in the eye of the distant traveller. At the western extremity stood the house; at the eastern stretched the sublime, desolate mountains that enclose the Dead Sea. Thus was the whole surrounded by barriers of the most beautiful, or

awful description, which bid defiance to the inroads of evil beasts, and afforded a retreat of perfect security and retirement. Near the house, the whole was a bright and fragrant scene of flowery cultivation; but as you advanced farther, you gradually entered a wilderness where, whatever art had done, was done so much in obedience to the dictates of nature, that nature seemed alone to prevail, and to give free scope to the spirit of delight. Here stretched a wilderness of blossoming shrubs; here deep, forest-like solitudes; here again expanded to the sun, wide lawns, where flowers of every species that the clime produces waved in thousands to the gale, and filled the atmosphere as with the odours of heaven. In one place, rose high into the air some magnificent palm, whose scaly stem and crest of long waving leaves glittered in the sun; in another, a group of ancient oaks,—a wide-spreading plane, or dark, imperial cedar, beneath whose friendly shade seats of mossy turf might be discerned. Nor was this elysian place alone allotted to the inmates of the family; a variety of graceful and innoxious animals enjoyed its pleasantness. The light gazelle, the gay ante-

lope, ever and anon, were visible, passing with their own buoyant motion athwart the glades, or reposing in its sunny dales: the cony issued from the rocky cliff,—played its merry antics,—and again disappeared: and birds, great and small, flew from tree to tree, arose on whirring wings from the warm, deep grass, or were heard calling to each other from distant places; and when the nightingales, which haunted in great numbers this happy region, filled all the evening air with their peerless voices, well might the too-happy soul of youth forget that sorrow was in the world, or cease to feel the necessity of aspiring to a fairer existence.

CHAPTER II.

A happier family, I said, never inhabited so beautiful a place. Jathniel and Cutha had three children—Dalphon, their son, and Hamutal and Iene, their daughters.

In person their children resembled themselves. They were noble specimens of a noble race; but in mind, there was in two of them a striking difference, which it would be in vain to attempt to account for on any probable ground, except it were that the circumstances of the times threw them into contact, in their early youth, with characters and events of a more stirring nature than had acted upon their parents.

Dalphon's mind and body appeared alike full of health and activity. He overflowed with an enthusiasm, that grasped with equal ardour the pleasures of nature, the excitements of the chase and of war, and the loftiest delights of intellectual inquiry. From boyhood he had ranged the woods

and fields, and made himself master of all the mysteries of the chase; and in these pleasures he had been accompanied by Ahlab, his near kinsman and perpetual companion, the possessions of whose father, Geber, the brother of Jathniel, adjoined theirs to the north. To pursue, on his fleet steed, accompanied by his friend, the swift antelope over the plains; to lie in wait, morning, noon, and night, for the shaggy bison; to beard the bear, the hyena, and the lion, in their lairs, were his delight; nor was it less so, to mingle with the labourers,—men who had been known to him from childhood, and many of whom were of his own kin, in the corn-fields, in the vineyards, and the olive hills; to laugh and joke; to labour for a merry hour with them, or to see them dancing on harvest eve or sheep-shearing, to the sound of his pipe. He had devoured the wonders of their annals as manna: he had hung over the stories of Gad, till every circumstance of David's fascinating life was as clearly impressed on his soul as the passages of his own existence; and he had sung the lofty strains of that monarch, in every spot made immortal by his adventures. He had followed Joab,

boy as he was, into the field against Ammon and Moab; and his spirit, yet unsatiated, longed to penetrate into the mysteries of surrounding nations. It was fearful.—Their customs, their gods, and dark traditions, were denounced in terrible language by the law; yet was there something so gloomily awful in their demon-worship, their sombre temples, and bloody rites, that, in his eyes, they were sublime, and highly worthy of inquiry, though not of worship and imitation.

Iene, the younger sister, was his exact counterpart;—a creature of enthusiasm. Hamutal, the elder, was of a loftier stature, of a fuller person, and possessed a grave and majestic beauty. They were both conspicuous for their lovely forms; for their dark, large eyes; their rich, raven locks, and for features which, although they struck the eye at once with their eminent loveliness, every moment impressed the gazer with increased wonder and delight, at the grace and perfection in which they were moulded. As we fix our eyes upon some masterpiece of antiquity, and continue to look, and look, till we are absorbed by a perfect unconsciousness of every other present object, by the

symmetry of form, the rich, pure, mingled air of human and divine, which the artist has cast over the countenance of his creation,—so, and far more than so, did the spectator dwell entranced on the aspects of the sisters. Every feature was chiselled with a precision and lofty grace, and stamped with an expression of purity, high intellect, and tender womanhood, that melted the sensitive heart to irresistible love, and filled the lively imagination with dreams of an intoxicating, and long-enduring sweetness. The eye that was turned upon the stately Hamutal, pronounced her perfect. Her whole air, stature, and bearing, were all that the highest soul could imagine or desire; her grave dignity was declared noble and befitting; but when the same eye diverged to the sweet Iene, it was entranced with such a vision of delight. Her figure, less tall, less ample, was moulded so exquisitely; so full of harmony were all her movements; and over her face played such mingled lights of a bright spirit,—of mirth, of wit, of a frank, sisterly kindness, that minds of all tastes and temperaments, were drawn by a delicious enchantment towards her, and pronounced her the most delightful of her sex.

Dalphon, although fondly attached to both his sisters, could not avoid giving, from his earliest years, a degree of preference to Iene. They were the two younger children; and their tastes and aspirations had grown remarkably together. I have given a brief sketch of the character of Dalphon;—such, only tempered by female habits, was that of Iene. She had all his enthusiasm;—his thirst for knowledge, even to the very bounds of the dark and forbidden: his desire to penetrate into the mysteries, manners, and worship of the neighbouring nations: his fervent love of song and music. In these latter, she excelled all of her sex and time; for she pursued them with an unappeasable and impetuous passion. Her sensitive spirit, excited by an inspiring subject, threw itself upon it with all its life and energy. Her heart kindled at once at an alluring topic, and became all fire. Her admiration of whatever was great and glorious in the mind, the history, or the prospects of men, was a fever. To behold her, when some noble piece of poetry had breathed its power upon her; or, when the splendid and touching events of their national history were

discussed; to see the flashing eye, the illumined features, the frame all possessed by the dominant spirit of her zeal and admiration, was to know that a being was before you, over which the varying chances of human life had a glorious, or a terrible power,—were capable of bearing her to the wildest extremes of felicity or woe. And in truth, happy as her youth was, and had been,—little as there had been to pain or darken her soul, it had become well known to her family that a word, an occurrence of the slightest character, — nay, a mere passing vision of the brain, would bear down that fine and soaring spirit, and cover it with a strange darkness. The very fervour and extravagance of the joy with which she would enter with Dalphon into the discussion of their favourite topics,—with which she would pour out the glowing feelings of her bosom in some lofty and solemn song, would leave her feeble and exhausted, and subject to melancholy and brooding terrors, which were observed by her family with anxious interest. Often would the sedate, yet affectionate Hamutal, interpose the steady coolness of her masculine understanding, to check the excursive comments of

Dalphon and Iene. Sometimes, gravely undertaking to point out their fallacy,—their vanity,—the fugacious colours in which they had arrayed the objects of their admiration; but oftener (for these sober arguments only tended, in general, to call forth on their part, more eager demonstrations of the truth of their views) leading them away from their too-engrossing theme, by smiles and sisterly raillery. Both Dalphon and Iene, while they charged Hamutal with a want of warmth of imagination, felt and rejoiced in the warmth of her affection, and regarded the soundness of her judgment, with a feeling little short of veneration. Had the gift of prophecy been conferred on Hamutal, she would have arisen another Deborah,—staid, revered, and commanding: the nation would have looked to her with confidence for the sagest counsels, the most daring and decided action. Had it fallen upon Iene, it would have been a fearful gift. Like a consuming fire, it would have kindled all her soul with a meteor light, that would have blazed through the land, and have astonished all men by its flashing and terrific gleams.

Such would they have been;—as it was, they were the glory and the delight of the wilderness of Tekoah. They filled their paternal home with music, beauty, and overflowing joy; they diffused amid all their kindred and dependent people, a sunshine of affectionate gaiety. Hamutal, it is true, was saluted with more respectful looks, but the people blessed her; and the children kissed her hand, or the skirt of her robe. Dalphon, and the frank and sportive Iene, they met, and followed with broad smiles of love and merriment.

Such was this happy family; but there was another, who might almost be reckoned a member of it, and that was Ahlab,—the friend of Dalphon—the nearest kinsman of the house—the long-betrothed of Hamutal. He was a graceful youth, whose distinguishing qualities were gentleness and amiability; one of those men who have in their natures, more love than energy. Who would, perhaps, never be found leading the way in enterprise, but who are the first to follow a noble example, and to second the effort of more stirring minds, steadily, and to the utmost.

Ahlab and Hamutal had been destined for each

other, from their infancy ; and had grown up with the perpetual consciousness, that they were so. Their passion, as might be expected, from the gentleness of Ahlab, on the one hand, and the staid gravity of Hamutal, on the other ; and from its having no adverse circumstances to encounter, had, apparently, more the air of brotherly and sisterly affection, than that of love. They walked and talked together, and regarded each other as a fond brother and sister might do ; and were so calmly happy, that the day of their union had never been fixed—seemed little thought of—less mentioned. Yet the same circumstances which gave equanimity to their feelings, had fixed them deeply in their souls. Like trees growing in a rich soil, beneath favouring suns, and by quiet waters, the roots of their affections had stricken deep, had spread themselves throughout their whole nature ; so much so, that they were moulded to the same tastes, wishes, and hopes, as one heart ; and were perhaps more indispensably necessary to each other's felicity, than souls of more tempestuous characters, which had met under other and more exciting circumstances.

And now, their marriage was determined on. Their parents were desirous to see them united, and they only waited the return of Dalphon and Ahlab from a military expedition, in which they had been engaged for some months. They returned; and with them a stranger—a new friend of Dalphon's.

This young friend was Talmai, an officer of the same rank as Dalphon. Their acquaintance had commenced in a casual, nocturnal meeting, as each visited the outposts of the camp next the enemy, to ascertain the vigilance of the sentinels under their separate commands. It was a glorious night; the moon shone brightly on the tents of the foe, and the hostile watchfires, around which they could discern dark figures moving, whom, on the morrow, they would probably meet in mortal combat. The anxiety of the coming battle, made them disinclined to sleep; the solemn crisis of their affairs, engaged them in eager discourse; and Dalphon was not more struck with the grace and gallant bearing of the young officer, than with the life and intelligence of his conversation. The stranger officer, appeared equally charmed

with Dalphon. They passed from topic to topic: they compared opinions and sentiments, and found a wonderful similarity. They inquired after each other's name, lineage, and abode; and before they separated, which was not till the day broke, and the voice of the trumpet, and the cries of the captains called to arms, they pledged a mutual friendship, and resolved to renew their intercourse on the following day, if the fate of the coming contest permitted. From that moment they became inseparable friends; and had Ahlab been of a jealous temperament, he might have deemed his own, hitherto exclusive, place in Dalphon's heart, was occupied by a new and more captivating attachment. But Ahlab was not of a nature to suspect any one of evil, or of slight towards him; he relied on Dalphon's tried affection, without one uneasy, or injurious thought; and the three friends were, when duty permitted them, for ever together. Together they were in the camp, in the field of battle; together they came into the wilderness of Tekoah.

In that quiet region, the return of Dalphon and Ahlab, spread their wonted joy; but the presence

of Talmai, at first startled, then charmed, then filled every one with gaiety and animation. He was, in person, eminently handsome; and shewed to advantage, even in that singularly fine family. In dress, he was apparently unstudied, yet princely and splendid; in manners, frank, gay, and gallant. Nature seemed to have made him in her prodigality, and fortune to have showered on him every gift which could render the favours of nature effective. The happy ease and freedom of his behaviour, could not be witnessed without producing a persuasion, that his birth had been in the lap of affluence; that he had known life only as accompanied with distinction; that no mean cares, no petty difficulties, no contemptuous looks of higher men had chilled its spirit, and cramped its free and generous action; and with his language, a new light seemed cast on everything around. His soul seemed formed in a freer and more vigorous mould, than those of other men. The hearer wondered at the poverty and sterile contraction of his own spirit, and of the spirits of the multitude with whom he ordinarily conversed. A freshness, a wealth, a beauty was

diffused by his overflowing and abounding mind on all nature, sensible and intellectual, that, at first, dazzled, then became communicated to the mind of the hearer, and made him wonder that he had not seen all things,—life, men, daily deeds, in the same wideness and clearness of vision; then seemed to unfold to him a precious secret,—that all minds were equally powerful, buoyant, and full of the riches of nature, which indolence only buried, and thus robbed most men of more than half the fairness and nobility of existence: till the deluded heart tried to expand itself into equal amplitude and gladness, and became suddenly and grievously sensible of its native inferiority,—became aware that some few favoured intellects, are endowed with a power of imbibing double life from the world in which they breathe,—of catching double portions of the essence and beauty of all things on which they gaze; and of pouring forth the bright and triumphant colours of their own innermost being upon the smallest, the most ordinary external object, and exalting it into an estimable, and even marvellous thing.

Of such a grade of intellect was Talmai; and it

may well be imagined what a sensation his coming caused in the family of Jathniel. Dalphon had repeatedly trumpeted forth the matchless merits and charms of his new friend; and Ahlab had, in his letters to Hamutal, not only confirmed, in his own gentle terms, the report, but had insinuated, that he clearly foresaw, in the visit of Talmai to Tekoah, the destiny of Iene. And Ahlab was right. The letters of Dalphon, the glowing affection he expressed for Talmai, had prepared every member of the family to receive him with open arms; and his presence, so far from disappointing their imaginations, surprised, delighted, intoxicated every individual. The arrival of such a guest, made all one scene of festivity. The venerable Jathniel and Cutha received him with the most cordial smiles and embraces. Their welcome of him differing only from that of their own son, as it was less familiar, and more markedly and ceremoniously expressed. Jathniel put to him a thousand questions of his birth-place, his early life, his connexions; told a multitude of anecdotes of David, and praised the rising glory of Solomon, with whom he found Talmai a favourite officer. He enjoined

his children to make him feel himself at home, and to point out to him the curiosities of the country. In these respects the young people were not wanting. Dalphon and Ahlab led him to the chase in the hills and forests; to the caves of Engeddi, and the desolate shores of the Dead Sea; or received him at home in the delicious retreats of the garden-wilderness, to song, music, and multifarious converse. Hamutal smiled on him, gave smiles of kindness and admiration; but Iene,—the bright, tender, poetic, and lovely Iene,—her whole soul acknowledged him as the being of her adoration. In him she saw a living image of manly beauty, such as her rich and winged imagination, in its most exalted moments, had not been able to surpass; in his faculties and endowments, in the graces and affluence of his spirit, all that her soaring and fervent mind panted to discover, and was made to cling to as its own life. It was indeed evident at a glance, that two creatures never were more apparently correspondent; that two such bright and gifted creatures could not meet in place and circumstances so favourable, without feeling the utmost power of each other's splendid attractions. The

old people saw it, and were fully contented; the young, and were delighted. In the prospect of so felicitous an alliance, Dalphon rejoiced doubly, that he had found so noble a friend, and had been the means of blessing his favourite Iene with a consort so admirably adapted to her high nature. It would have been, indeed, difficult to decide whether the brother or sister were most charmed with their new friend. One leaning on each arm of their handsome guest, they might be seen walking for hours in their wide gardens, or resting, an eager, happy group, beneath some great tree, engaged in interminable and intoxicating talk.

The world in all its shapes was familiar to Talmai. He had seen much of every class of society, from the gay courts of Solomon and many other kings, to the inhabitants of tents, and huts, and caves; and to those young and imaginative people, whose greater portion of existence had passed in those quiet, simple fields, his details were full of perpetual interest and novel surprise. He had visited many countries; had apparently been one of those fortunate beings that, impelled by the curiosity and ardent spirit of youth, throw them-

selves into dangers and distant enterprises without a fear, or a reflection; and pass on through various countries and adventures, ever unharmed and ever joyous. He had gone out with the Tyrian fleets into the boundless Erythrean sea; had seen Ophir and Sofala, which Solomon was even now preparing to visit with his ships, which were building at Elath and Ezion-gaber, for a share in their gold. He had trodden the most southern Ethiopia, the land of ivory and woolly-headed sable men; he had sojourned in the wide deserts, in the sweet valleys, amid the martial and roving hordes of Araby; the wider realms of ancient, sultry, and gorgeous India, and traversed Syria and all the neighbouring nations; prying into their manners and worships with a curious and insatiable eye; and picking up their tongues, till they became fluent and familiar as his own. Could there have been a more welcome guest to Dalphon and Iene, had he come in the shape of some rugged, hideous monster, some sallow, white-eyed dwarf? But in the mouth of the gay, the fascinating and accomplished Talmai, all the favourite themes of these enthusiasts shewed tenfold more alluring. On all that they had won-

dered and speculated upon, he could pour light and certainty; but such light as left them not satisfied, but more restless and inquisitive. It is in vain to paint to us the objects of our admiration with the view of appeasing our quest after them; the clearness of all descriptions, only excites to desire of more personal knowledge; and it is personal knowledge alone of any object of interest, whether it be men, their countries, arts, customs, or science, that leaves us at rest.

CHAPTER III.

MONTHS flew away, and still Talmai was at Tekoah, and still diffusing through the abode of Jathniel a new hilarity. It was in the glory of the spring; and nature and the souls of this happy family, seemed tuned to one spirit of rejoicing harmony. Happy as the dwelling of Jathniel had been, at no period, not even when David and his illustrious son

graced it with their presence, had it been so pervaded by a general gladness. Yet human life in its brightest hours, is not perfectly free from alloy; and it would be unfaithful to say that it was so here. Much as Jathniel was disposed to admire his intended son-in-law, there was just a little spot in his character,—a faint, very faint shadow on the disc of his sunny mind, that at times brought a slight pain into the bosom of the good old man. He feared that the intercourse of Talmi with heathen nations, had rendered him too tolerant of their superstitions, and had, in some degree, weakened his reverence for his own glorious religion—for the knowledge and solemn institutions of the true God. He had often listened to his rapid and enthusiastic details of the manners and gods of the pagans, till he was startled by the apparent latitude of Talmi's opinions—by his seeming praise of what filled himself with abhorrence. He feared the effect of these relations upon the minds of his children, and had often been compelled to interrupt the glowing torrent of Talmi's discourse, even when the eyes of his son and daughter were fixed on him in intensest interest; and to exclaim, in his quiet,

paternal manner,—“So! my young friend—so! Let not thy feelings or fancy, carry thee beyond the bounds of safety. Fear God! Remember! oh, remember continually, his terrible judgments in the eyes of our fathers! Remember the jealousy of his majesty! Remember that Uzzah put not forth his hand, even to touch the ark for its safety, but at the price of his life. Think on the wrath which he has denounced on the lovers of idols! Oh, be jealous of his honour! be careful to love nothing but what he loves! Let not those seductions which have been too often potent enough to draw aside our fathers from the bright sanctuary of the God and Father of the universe, prevail over thy vivid mind. Shall it ever again be said, that the chosen people of Jehovah, whom he has taken in his arms, and planted gloriously in the face of all nations—oh! shall it ever again be said, that they are base and brutal enough to prefer the vile fables and demon-gods of the heathen, to his loving-kindness—to the light of his law, and the immortality of his hope? Never! never let it be, or let my head ere then, be at peace in the dust!”

Such an appeal would instantly check the roving

language of Talmai, and cast a silent awe upon the hearts of all present. He would hasten to admit his error, while he deprecated for a moment the idea that he could fail to love and defend, with all the homage of his judgment, and all the fervour of his soul, the faith and law of his fathers; he would ask pardon for his indiscretion in terms, and in a manner that, without servility, put aside all gloom from the brow of Jathniel, lightly as the wind wafts a cloud from before the sun, and would even win the heart of the good old man to greater kindness, by the candour and grace of his acknowledgment.

Such causes of momentary pain became fewer and fewer, as if it cost Talmai no effort to accommodate his feelings to his respect for Jathniel; or, as if it was more probably a pleasure to be guided and benefited by the venerable man's sage piety: at the same time, that the gaiety and freedom of his behaviour, was not, in the least, diminished.

But while Jathniel's good opinion of Talmai was shaken in a slight degree, there was one circumstance that did not escape the keen, sober observation of Hamutal. The prudence of Talmai's

conversation was preserved in her father's presence; but in his absence, it vanished altogether. When alone with the younger part of the family, he often indulged in a wild extravagance of language and sentiment, which, though it pleased and communicated its contagion to Dalphon and Iene, startled and distressed herself. Knowing how prone her brother and sister were to topics which, in her mind, were full of danger; knowing with what difficulty she had, before their acquaintance with Talmai, restrained the vehemence and speculative boldness of their discussions; she was proportionably alarmed and grieved, when she found all the weight of Talmai's vast influence, of his rapid bewildering eloquence, and irresistible wit, enlisted on the same side; and felt how vain must be all her efforts, to check the united flame of three such vivacious and ardent spirits. Often had she interposed, when their dialogues had, in her eyes, led them upon interdicted ground, only to find herself beset with such a consentaneous burst of raillery, as, though not unkind in itself, left her no resource but tears. Then, indeed, would their discussions cease; and all clasping her in their eager embraces, would

promise no further to pain her with their foolish talk. And often Talmai, taking her kindly by the hand, would lead her through the bowery garden paths, and endeavour to explain to her the scope and aim of their discussions, in such a strain of ingenious and affectionate argument, as not even her strong intellect could resist; and she was fain at times to acknowledge that she could not answer him; at times, that she felt that she might have condemned them too hastily. "Perhaps," she would say, "it is I that am weak. Perhaps I am not made to look so far around me as you are; and am therefore terrified at what, to a clearer vision, would be no cause of terror. I know that you have souls lighter and more soaring than mine; and I treading only the common earth, am giddy at the contemplation of your flight. But, oh God, preserve you from evil! God grant that you may not offend his holy spirit!"

Such would be the sisterly tenderness of the moment. But when the dazzling colours of Talmai's language faded on the sense, and she calmly reviewed the nature and tendency of their topics, her strong judgment recalled all her fears; she felt

that she was justified in her dissatisfaction, and she was restless and melancholy.

But her's was not a nature to sink down in effortless despondency. Finding that she could effect nothing in argument with the enthusiastic three together, she reasoned with them apart, in her clear and love-breathing style, as opportunity afforded. With Dalphon she could effect little. His joyous and triumphant nature, fearing nothing, seeing no cause for fear; delighting in the examination of every moral and intellectual question—in the excursive exercise of his manly faculties, would gaily exclaim—"Trouble thyself not, dear Hamutal! trouble thyself not! I feel a good conscience within;—no sense of God's displeasure;—no indignation of a slighted internal monitor. And why should I? Is it not God who has given me a conscious, reasoning soul? And shall it not reason and inquire?" It was in vain to tell him, that the same God who had given him his rational faculties, had set clear and shining boundaries to their exercise, which could not be passed with impunity—he heard it not! In the buoyant gaiety of his heart, he had kissed her, and was gone.

In Talmai she had a more attentive hearer. He listened to her fears and warnings, and thanked her for them with such an air of evident good-humour, and of obliged kind consideration, as, spite of herself, half satisfied her sense of duty. But he stopped not here. He added so many splendid and specious reasons for whatever he had said, mingled with abundant eloquent and interesting matter, with such playful wit, and shew of affection to every creature of the family, that it failed not to weaken, for the time, the anxiety of Hamutal,—for he was a matchless master of conversational rhetoric.

Iene took her stand on totally different ground. “Dearest Hamutal,” she said, “I marvel at thy fears. Thinkest thou that Dalphon and Talmai are not good as we? And can we pretend to measure our understanding with theirs? Be sure, dearest Hamutal, be sure they will not violate the clear purity of their consciences. They seek only to know and understand what we are, and what are all things about us. Thus does our young and glorious king; and in him it is pronounced wisdom. To seek to know something too of the strange

people who dwell in other regions; to know what they have of good or great amid their darkness; to know whence their peculiar customs and traditions have flowed; in short, to feel an interest in those beyond our own borders, cannot be displeasing to him who has condescended to make them; and who every day feeds them from his bounteous hand. Cast away, dear sister, cast away thy needless fears, for we are all proud of our Hebrew birth; thankful for our pleasant heritage,—devoted to the worship of our own gracious God, as thou art;—if we seek greater knowledge than our fathers, it is because we have greater leisure.”

“But our father, Iene—our father! Has he not often felt the same alarms!—seen the same things in the same aspects as I do?”

“Yes, dearest Hamutal, and from him hast thou caught thy terrors. But our father is old; and age is apt to be over-prudent. Years may give too much timidity for sound wisdom; as our youth gives too much boldness. Perhaps we may, after all, be a little too daring; perhaps our father is a little too apprehensive: but fear not,—age will come; and we shall sit in our pillowed seats, and tremble, in turn, at the bold talk of our children.”

Hamutal gazed on the lovely and animated creature thus pouring forth the joyous fancies of her heart; and half forgot in the vision of sisterly beauty—in the glory of youth—the flush of happiness, full, tender, and overflowing, and unconscious of fear or evil, which thus glowed before her,—the earnestness of her own purpose. She beheld the happy creature casting all the confidence of her generous and sunny nature on the lover of her youth; and she would not breathe a word which might imply fear or blame of the chosen of her beloved sister's soul. But when she shortly afterwards found them again engaged in similar conversations, and heard them discussing many points of their national history in a spirit at which her devotional mind recoiled, she was roused to something like a jealous anger. She heard them debate the mysteries of man's creation—the primal state—the apple—the serpent—the first homicide—the union of the sons of God and the daughters of men—the flood; accompanied by remarks and queries which more than revived all her fears and anxieties. She heard them express much perplexity in the endeavour to reconcile with the clear conception of

God's impartial providence, the adoption of Jacob in preference to Esau, even before their birth; filling themselves with wonder that the unnatural duplicity of Jacob and his mother could be tolerated by Heaven, while the generous, but imprudent Esau was cast off as an alien. She heard them pitying, in no faint terms, the fate of Saul, to whose faults, in their eyes, little charity was extended; while those of David were visited with comparative lenity;—the one, for a single act of disobedience, sternly and for ever rejected, and left to the melancholy misery of remorse; the other, repeatedly reprov'd, but repeatedly pardoned, and advanced to higher favour.

To such things she listened for a time, as overcome by the weakness of surprise; but that weakness gave way to the power of virtuous indignation, and she exclaimed, in a tone of firm and expressive energy, and accompanied by an air of grieved dignity, that startled, and fixed them in deep attention.—“Whither! whither! misguided creatures, do you go? To what state of strange misery are you advancing? Dear to me, inexpressibly dear, as ye are, individually, I

can no longer listen to your impious!—yes! impious inquiries. I cannot hear them without horror. Oh! were you strange, and indifferent to me, as anything in the human shape can be indifferent, I should hear your words with terrible affright, and should fly from you as from the spirits of darkness. And can it be the souls precious to me as my life, that are uttering such fearful things? I will hear them no more! You know not your own spirit: you know not whither your own zeal, or the cunning of the eternal-enemy is bearing you. I have heard you, many a time, dwelling on the marvellous events of our annals; on the prominence of our national position; on the splendour, and spiritual grandeur of our poetry; and my heart has gone proudly with yours, and has throbbed with a kindred—a most happy feeling;—but of late, I know not what fatality has fallen upon you, — what spirit has seized you;—but I am sure it is not a good one: for, whatever may be your theme—wherever you may begin, by some strange, and melancholy tendency, you for ever come round to doubts and questionings of Providence, that are fatal to peace,

—fatal to the fair health and joy of the soul—fatal to all its everlasting prospects. Oh! precious creatures! open your eyes at my bidding, and see really that an evil influence has fallen upon you. Is there nothing in our past records, in our present national prosperity—in this fair country, in which we are placed as in another Eden, to dwell, every man under his own vine and his own fig-tree; unlike in knowledge, in purity of faith, in strength and felicity of hope, to all other people;—is there nothing in all these things to arrest your attention, and to fill your minds with thoughts and feelings more gladdening to yourselves, and more acceptable to your maker? God! God of Jacob, and of all his children, which are now, as thou didst promise, like the stars of heaven for multitude,” she exclaimed, turning her large, tearful eyes towards heaven:—“Oh! send not thy judgments on these dear transgressors; but impress their strong minds indelibly with the judgments thou hast so often executed. Oh! how is it,” she added, again addressing them, “that you should not bear more awfully in memory the many terrible judgments of the wilderness, on the doubters and

dissatisfied ones with Providence, of that day ? How is it that the fires—the yawning earth—the flaming serpents of vengeance—the blasting thunders—and the silent, but swift-footed plagues, which issued from God's dread sanctuary, to exterminate a generation whose spirit was too much like your own spirit—can be utterly forgotten ? But enough has been done. From this hour abandon your vain and useless speculations ; give to God's honour the noble faculties with which he has endowed you, if you mean not to bring to despair and death every soul that loves you !”

The vehemence of her feelings had carried her on in such a rapid and impassioned flood of speech—her whole alarmed, and indignant, yet love-o'erflowing soul, burned so brightly through her whole air, and gave to her countenance and figure so perfectly the character of the inspired prophetess, that her hearers gazed upon her in amazement and awe. Her words seemed to flash a light upon their hearts, that shewed them more there than they had dreamed of : and when she ceased, instead of those eager inquiries, and replies they had aforetime proffered, there was silence,

even to the loquacious Talmai. Iene sprang forward, as she saw Hamutal, evidently oppressed by her feelings, about to retire, and clasped her to her heart with a throbbing bosom, and with tear-brimmed eyes: the two youths followed her example, and they separated without a word.

When Hamutal was alone with Iene, that tender and sensitive creature again flew to her bosom, and wept upon her neck a flood of trembling tears. She gazed in Hamutal's eyes with the expression of thanks and blessings, which no tongue ever yet commanded: and when the tongue itself found utterance, it was in terms of admiration of Hamutal's eloquence and exalted beauty, that to Hamutal appeared wild and extravagant. Iene kissed her again and again, as with an unappeasable emotion, and avowed that her words had awoke in her a sense of danger and transgression that would never forsake her. Hamutal clasped her in her arms, fondly kissed her, and was happy; happy so as never heart was, but in the double feeling of the deepest love, and high duty done in its cause.

CHAPTER IV.

HAMUTAL had the satisfaction to see that her voice had effected all the change she desired in the conversation of her relatives. They were lively, and full of zeal as ever; but it seemed to have taken a new turn, or rather to have gone back to the laudable and healthful tone of former years. For a time she truly walked in the joy of her heart on this pleasant revolution; but, as the excitement of her spirits abated, and her mind calmly reviewed the circumstances that had passed, she found herself far from happy. She found that the entire confidence which she once felt in Talmai, was really shaken. It was true that Dalphon and Iene had, before his arrival, often pained her by the freedom of their discourse, on important and sacred subjects; but his voice and example had evidently carried them far, far beyond the impulse of their own natures, in the fearful path they had been treading; and had sown in their minds

doubts and dissatisfaction with the inscrutable doings of the Almighty, which bring with them present melancholy; and, like subtle venom, once infused into the blood, are too surely found working and creating internal distress, to the latest period of life; though better thoughts, better faith would fain contend with them, and cast them out. Hamutal, indeed, could not know what the experience of years could alone teach her,—all the bitterness and anguish of the evil leaven; could not know the detested and depressing influence of sceptical darkness. How it would come again and again, ay, even in the sweetest moments of existence; when the heart was rejoicing in the amenity of its being; when the parent was gazing on the happy faces of his children, and was ready to exult in their immortality; when the children, now grown to serious man and womanhood, were contemplating the feeble forms, and hoary, drooping heads of their aged parents, about to depart for ever from them, and were seeking solace in the idea, that they should soon meet again joyfully: and though the soul would call loudly upon heaven for help, for faith, for pure, substantial, childlike

faith; it could never, never more grasp it: but with longing desires, there would still be twined sickening uncertainty; in the crystal mirror of its immortal hope, there would still be visible the ruinous flaw. This misery, in its fulness, she could not comprehend;—time alone could teach it,—as it does and will teach the best and brightest natures, that have once tasted of the wine of unbelief. They may turn in nauseating heaviness to the unerring streams of their youth—to the dews of their early life; but will find even their sweetness lost, in the clinging, pervading bitterness of this tartarean draught. This she knew not; but her true and heavenly nature was full of the abhorrence of evil, though it had not experienced all its sorrowfulness.

She could not help, too, calling to mind the circumstance, that Talmi, while he seemed to abandon the license of his opinions at her father's reproof, preserved it undiminished in his absence, in the midst of his children; and she could not but see in this, a want of that honour and integrity of character, for which she once gave him full credit, and which she could not withdraw without her own

utter misery. Oh! to discern him capable of insincerity! to find the smallest of his virtues but assumed! Where, in such a case, was the happiness of Iene? She turned from the idea in horror, and would fain drive it from her; but it was not to be so driven; it was fixed deep, in the clear consciousness of her spirit. She called to the aid of her desires, all the force of her reason, and all the flatteries of her hope; she looked through the whole of Talmai's abode with them, and could see a bright array of attractions, of courtesies, of amiability, and what had till this moment appeared to her as genuine virtues. She could not charge him with any actual evil, with little indiscretion save of his tongue; and she fain would persuade herself, that she had given way to a groundless and injurious suspicion, and upbraided herself with unkindness. She saw her beloved Iene living without a fear, without a care, in the highest dependence on Talmai's affection,—happy, happy as human creature can be; and blooming in the triumphant flush and glow of beauty, with which the gladness of the heart, and the full flowing tide of rich affections can light up the fairest form in

the sweet spring of youth, rendering a lovely, rejoicing woman like a child of heaven. She saw this, and shuddered at the terrible consequences of deception on the part of Talmai. Death! death! she knew could be the only alternative in that vivid and tender spirit, with the full reality of her confiding hope. Could Talmai truly be aught but what he seemed? No! for her sister's sake she would not believe it; she would cast from her bosom any doubt of his truth. So said her wishes and affections; but her understanding accompanied not the resolve, and she continually glided back into doubt and misery.

Her strong and comprehensive mind suffered not, however, her fears and unhappiness to communicate themselves to a single soul. The thoughts which she could not annihilate, she could still shut firmly down in the depths of her own heart. She still acted with her wonted kindness to every individual of the house; and if her air was somewhat sadder, if her complexion was somewhat paler, it excited less attention, because she was habitually grave, and now shewed not a single sign of languor. She remitted not an atom of her accustomed

duties. She felt that a great and momentous matter was laid upon her. It was of vital importance to her sister's happiness, that she should ascertain whether the being upon whom she had conferred all her fervent heart, was worthy of that noble gift. If not—woe—woe and death were before her; and it mattered little whether it came in the shock of a discovery immediate and sudden, or the serpentine sting of an unfolding, slow, but not the less deadly. Better, indeed, the first than the last! But it was of the extremest consequence that Hamutal should not be mistaken; that she should not entertain, much less propagate an unjust and most sorrowful error. To avoid this, to fix her mind on the base of surest truth, whatever that might be, she made her resolve, and set instantly about it. In the first place, she postponed the day of her own marriage, because that was decided to be the marriage day also of Iene. This was a cause of much surprise to the whole family; but that surprise she anticipated, and she had only therefore to persist, in her cool and steady manner, to declare it the wish of both herself and Ahlab, whom she had indeed prevailed upon to acquiesce

in the measure, under the assurance of giving him hereafter abundant reason for it, in order to overcome the expostulations and wonder of her friends. She regretted, she said, that her wishes should delay the happiness of Talmai and Iene; but that, truly, at present, all were so happy under her father's roof, that a few months' postponement could matter little. Iene was greatly astonished; and the more so, as in pressing her sister, in private, for her reasons, she declined giving any, except it was her belief that it was for the best. On which she kissed her sister with a tender smile, and put off the subject. But Hamutal watched, with a careful eye, the conduct of Talmai. She was not in the least surprised at his evident impatience and chagrin;—they were natural: but she beheld in his eye an expression of bitterness, that she felt, with a shudder, was not inherent in a noble nature. She saw his dark, searching fixedness of gaze turned upon her, as if a suspicion had entered his soul that Hamutal's procrastination was aimed at him. She beheld these symptoms with a sad and sinking heart. They rivetted more firmly upon her the persuasion, that her gloomy doubts

were too well founded,—and she was wretched. Day and night, the fearfulness of her own thoughts tortured her. A melancholy conviction, that the felicity of their long-blessed house was over; that she must see the light of their life—the dear and gifted Iene — the victim of deluded hopes, and every individual of the family bowed with her to the dust, was perpetually with her. Like a strong man, on whom some dark disease has, for the first time seized, she would, ever and anon, rouse herself with a sighing effort, and endeavour to think that the oppression of her soul was a dream; but the tide of troubled and overwhelming conviction poured in again the next moment, and she sank down in still deeper sadness.

CHAPTER V.

FOR weeks, Hamutal bore her grief in secret; unable to fling off her besetting thoughts, yet advancing, by no single circumstance, to a sure elucidation of good, or evil. But now, a fact presented itself to her attention, which she wondered had not engaged it before.

Dalphon and Ahlab had each his favourite servant, who followed him to the camp, and attended him every where at home. They were, moreover, kinsmen, and admitted to a degree of familiarity of which modern times know nothing. Reu, the servant of Ahlab, was a slender, fair-haired youth of his own age, who had been his play-fellow when a boy, and still loved him as a brother. He was, like his master, gentle in his manners, simple and unsuspecting in his mind, and was distinguished for his adroitness and alacrity in his duty, and his unrivalled fleetness of foot. Shallum, the servant of Dalphon, was a very different person. He also

was a near kinsman of his master, but of twice his own age. He was of a middle stature; strongly built, and of a dark complexion. There was a shrewdness in his sharp features, and dark, keen eye, that marked him at once to an observer, as a discerning and subtle-spirited fellow. A dry and grotesque humour, and a fund of merry anecdote, picked up in his various journeys with his master, made him a favourite both with Dalphon, with the whole family, and with his fellows. He was one who saw everything, forgot nothing, and was seldom deceived in his estimate of whatever characters he had the opportunity of observing. To these qualities, he added the most faithful attachment to the whole house, and especially to Dalphon, whom he had carried in his arms when a child, and had since accompanied in many pleasant, and many dangerous days. This man, Hamutal had for some time observed, testified no symptom of liking towards Talmai. He was civil and respectful, but he was no more; while Talmai, on his part, from having taken much pains to testify his opinion of Shallum's cleverness and quaint wit; and from treating him with particular condescension, had, of

late, left him more and more to a contemptuous indifference.

Hamutal saw this, and wondered that she had not been led before to inquire what might be the cause. She might, indeed, have remarked, from the first, the secret dislike of Shallum towards Talmai, had not the same species of joyful intoxication which seized the whole family, been largely partaken of by her; but having now observed it well, she knew that it was no groundless antipathy—Shallum was but too sure a searcher of men's hearts. The circumstance at once filled her with a cold terror; but it was necessary to explore the mystery, and she steeled herself to the dreary task.

In those simple times, and in that country, the servant who followed his lord to the war, occupied himself during peace in various rural acts. Shallum was fond of gardening; and displayed in that ample region of shrubbery and wilderness at Tekoah, a happy ingenuity that was the cause of perpetual surprise and delight to the family. He had raised and collected an innumerable array of the choicest and most beautiful flowers: the walks and grassy lawns bore testimony to the exquisite neatness of

his indefatigable hands. Shady seats and odorous bowers were, ever and anon, rising at his touch with sudden reality to surprise his beloved kinsfolk and patrons; and he had for ever some nice contrivance for the hives and arrangement of bees; for the accommodation of the larger animals that frequented the groves, and lawns, and thickets. He watched over, and guarded against the casualties to which young fawns and other young animals were exposed; and might often be seen bringing on his arm, some helpless and deserted thing, to cherish at his own dwelling. Even for the birds he exercised a watchful care. He suspended gourds and pots to walls and trees, wherein to fix their nests: he scattered various seeds through the garden-wilderness, to grow and furnish food to their various tastes: and walked amongst all his benevolent schemes, one of the happiest of men.

It was in the garden that Hamutal, with a beating and foreboding heart, sought him; and she found him busy repairing the trellis-work of a bower-o'ershaded bath, on the banks of the Cedron. For some time she sate and talked with him of his work; inquired after the objects of his various

cares, and then led him gradually on to speak of the circumstances of the last campaign in which he had followed Dalphon. Shallum, happy in gratifying, at once, Hamutal's curiosity, and his own love of relating his adventures, became speedily and fluently afloat in his recital. Hamutal availing herself of a momentary pause, said abruptly,—“Well, Shallum, and what thinkest thou of our friend Talmai, whom you brought us? I have not yet heard how thou likest him!”

Shallum was stooping, in the act to drive a nail into his trellis-work: at the question, his hammer stood in his hand as arrested by magic, or instantaneous paralysis. It hung suspended over the nail, which his left hand held upon the spot where he would have driven it; but he raised not his body—turned not his head. A sudden thrill ran through the heart of Hamutal; but she roused the energy of her spirit, and again repeated her query. At that, Shallum slowly raised himself, and turning his eyes with a strange and indescribable expression, where a want of a clear indication of the internal feeling was more fearful than the display of some sudden or terrible knowledge could be, he

said in a low voice: — “Why, honoured kinswoman, at so late a period, ask such a question of me?”

“That is a very proper answer, Shallum, to my query, I admit; but the reason that I have not asked this before is, that we have been all too much occupied *with* one another, to think of asking questions *about* one another.”

“And is it so no longer?” asked Shallum.

Hamutal started at the interrogation. It flashed upon her a truth, which she felt the shrewd Shallum had at once laid bare to her; but she subdued her feelings, and rejoined:—

“Why truly, Shallum, we have lived long enough together now to be pretty familiarly acquainted with each other; and it is, therefore, in truth, but natural, that we should be not quite so much absorbed by each other’s conversation. — Having had time to form an opinion of our new friend, we would also now know what others think of him.”

“Dear damsel,” said Shallum, “why trouble yourselves about the opinions of others, if you are happy in your own?”

Hamutal again felt the truth of Shallum's remark; and she felt, too, how idle now were her conduct, if merely for a passing curiousness, she sought, on such a subject, the private opinion of a domestic: but Shallum's guarded replies told her too plainly that his opinion, whatever it might be, he was anxious to conceal. Waving, therefore, all further queries of a minor nature, she boldly added, "Shallum! I know the quick perception of thy mind; I have seen too that Talmai shares no great portion of thy esteem. I have a cause, an anxious one, to inquire from so close an observer, so faithful a servant, so tried a kinsman, what he knows of the real character of our guest. Shallum! let the fate of our dear Iene induce thee to be candid with me. If thou knowest aught evil of Talmai, I implore thee hide it not from me!"

With these emphatic words, Hamutal had risen from the rude seat she had chosen, and approaching Shallum, stood with pale and quivering lips, and fixed glance, steadily gazing on his countenance. For a moment he looked on her in silence, then hiding his face in his hands, sate down on the ground, and wept bitterly. Hamutal, at the sight,

stood chilled to a stone; till her emotion overpowering the strength of her nature, she sighed deeply, reeled aside, and clasped a tree for support.

Instantly Shallum sprung upon his feet; his tears were dried up; and, supporting Hamutal till he saw her reviving, he exclaimed with eagerness: "Let not, honoured kinswoman, vain fears overcome thee. I know little, but what I do know, thou shalt hear. It is true I love not Talmai; but my dislike is grounded on slight circumstances, and may be altogether unreasonable. And while all those who are most concerned admire and love him strongly, why should I, who am but an unworthy worm, disturb their esteem of Talmai with vain terrors?"

As he said this, he drew from his bosom a folded piece of figured linen, and unwrapping it, presented to Hamutal's astonished eyes a pair of Moabitish armlets of gold, studded alternately with diamonds and rubies.

"Thou seest these," said Shallum. "When my master, Dalphon, became acquainted with Talmai, many were the mutual queries which I heard them make of each other's friends and fortunes. Much

praise did I hear Dalphon express of thyself and Iene. I observed that the stranger Talmai listened with evident eagerness to the relation of your beauty—of thy betrothment to Ahlab—of Iene's yet unappropriated hand. From that moment, in my eyes, his friendship for Dalphon was amazingly quickened; and his condescending attentions to my humble self very remarkable. One eve, almost immediately before we left the camp, while Dalphon was absent, he entered our tent, and exhibiting these jewels, said to me, in a confidential tone:—"Behold these!—there is a fair damsel in thy master's house;—I would that she were mine. I know thy influence in thy master's family; help me to the hand of Iene as much as in thee lies, and these, and far more than these, although they are worth a wide estate, are thine!"

"Why temptest thou me?" I replied; putting back the bracelets. "Thinkest thou for these I would sell the love of the fair Iene, had I the power? But I have it not,—and why comest thou to me? Is not her brother thy friend? Is not her father's house open to thee to enter, and to ask as becomes a worthy man? I tell thee frankly, I shall aid thee not!"

At these words Dalphon entered. With a secret gesture Talmai signed to me to take up the jewels, and I took them, moved by a secret thought that they might enable me to deal fairly with the tempter."

"And didst thou tell this to Dalphon?"

"No," replied Shallum, "I would have told him: I even produced the jewels, and began—
"Talmai gave me these, and I would fain tell thee why." "Away with thee," he replied; "if Talmai has given them to thee, enough!—I want to hear no more." "But it concerns," I replied; "it concerns"—"Begone!" he said, hastily; "it concerns not me. Whatever Talmai does, is right." Thus he sent me away, and I dared not renew the subject; but I have kept the trinkets carefully to this day; saying, peradventure they will one day be of avail. If Talmai be a true man, and win Iene, these shall be hers;—if he be not a true man, they shall be continually before me, and tell me what to do!"

"And has Talmai said no more to thee on the subject?" said Hamutal.

"Yes," replied Shallum. "We had been returned some time; and he had won the love of

Iene; and all around him was nothing but kindness and admiring faces. He turned suddenly upon me one day in a narrow pass in the mountains; as we were out hunting; and with a bitter smile, said—"Shallum! I have done without thee! Return me the Moabitish bracelets thou hast not earned, and be silent—or"— Again the presence of my master, Dalphon, as led by his good angel, interposed; and we went on together on our way. From that hour I have altered not my conduct to Talmai; but Talmai has ceased his civility to me. This is all, honoured kinswoman, this is all that I know; and I pray thee, let it not cause thee to think evil of Talmai. Many a good man has won his way with gold and gifts, though I like not the plan myself; and if I deem unworthily of Talmai, let the evil dwell in my own bosom. Never! never shall I forgive myself, if I cause sorrow or division of souls in my master's family!"

"It is enough, Shallum," said Hamutal. "I know thy worth;—let these things be hidden with thee and me. Let us wait and see what further time will bring forth." She gave him many thanks for his relation, and returned to the house.

CHAPTER VI.

A dark house was the good old mansion of Tekoah now become to Hamutal. That place, so long in her eyes, the fairest, the happiest on earth, was now gloomy and full of melancholy. It had lost its air of peace;—it had no sound of comfort. She felt that its happiness was gone for ever; and that in her bosom was lodged the secret of a misery, that must come forth ere long, and blast and desolate everything around. The disclosure of Shalum was small, very small in its nature; it was the mere offer of a gift by Talmai to engage his goodwill,—and might be deemed, in most eyes, a thing of little concern. Such acts were done every day, by men who not only stood well with the good, but who, for those very acts, were praised as kind and generous. But in her view, as well as in Shalum's—especially when the extraordinary value of the gift was considered—it was the offer of a bribe unworthily and clandestinely to attempt to warp

the affections of a creature, in herself all candour, openness, and purity, by a person who might, had his nature been noble, have come fairly forward to win her heart with every chance of success, and of the approbation of her parents and friends. Combined with the previous observation of his character, it produced on her mind a persuasion of evil design; and such had been its effect on Shallum, in whose judgment she placed strong confidence. Insufficient, therefore, as her evidence might be deemed in the common judgment, to her it had strength enough to fix firm in her soul the belief that all was not right with Talmai: that the peace of Iene was, in truth, doomed to a speedy destruction; and with it, that of the whole house. Under these circumstances, her anguish of mind became almost insupportable. She saw herself compelled to carry in her heart, thoughts of overwhelming evil; or, with a word, and perhaps without producing general certainty, to scatter dissension and incurable distress.

To look upon her aged and unconscious parents, and feel what was coming upon them,—to behold the gay and happy Iene, and know that her peace,

her very existence depended upon the suppression of a few fatal syllables, — to see her walking on the very brink of the precipice, where she should be dashed to pieces, gathering flowers, carolling out her joyous fancies, totally unconscious of its proximity, was more than her nature could bear: her frame trembled and faded away beneath the influence of the hidden torture; her face confessed that there was something lamentably wrong within,—confessed it so plainly, that all eyes were now turned upon her in wondering anxiety. The three youths were absent at Jerusalem; and well as Hamutal knew the virtue of Ahlab, and of her brother, she could not help entertaining some strange, vague fears, from the bare circumstance of their being with Talmai, far removed from the influence of the eyes of Jathniel and his family. This added eminently to her solicitude; besides that she had not even the satisfaction of one soul, except Shallum, to whom to communicate her apprehensions, or from whom she could ask counsel. Many and anxious were the inquiries of her parents and Iene into the cause of her indisposition;—was it of the body, or the mind? What had thus

mysteriously shorn down her bloom and cheerfulness? Did sickness merely oppress the frame; or lay some hidden sorrow at her heart? With these fond and perplexing queries did these beloved creatures beset her; and she could not open her soul,—one word of the truth, would, like the Samiel of the desert, prostrate them in the dust. She therefore admitted that she was not well, and consented to see the physician from Bethlehem, who, good man, was not likely to penetrate far into the secret pains of the heart, however he might detect those of the frame; and who asked some few questions, gave some few remedies, spoke some few words of condolence, and mounting his ass, rode away soberly as he came. This afforded Hamutal a pause from the torturing queries of her parents, and partly appeased the solicitude of Iene; but so intimately had the souls of the sisters been accustomed to open themselves to each other, that the confidence which had grown up with them from their childhood, which had been to them uninterrupted and regular as their daily food, as the daily air, could not be in part withheld, even though the love in which it lived was

strong as ever, without being felt by both parties with a sense of strange unhappiness. Iene would sit for hours leaning on Hamutal's couch, gazing on her with eyes of intensest affection and care; and ever and anon, saying in a low, sweet, but emphatic tone, "Is there *nothing*, dearest Hamutal, that I can do for thee? Is there no thought, no hidden care that I can participate?" and then, as if fearful that she was pressing unwelcomely on Hamutal's will, she would be silent. These were trying moments to Hamutal. To withhold from the dear girl—the companion of her whole life, a single thought, was itself a hardship; but to know that the expression of that thought which now wore her away like an internal fire, was misery and death to the unsuspecting inquirer, was intolerable agony. Hourly her tried and suffering soul sent itself up in prayer to the Almighty; not that he would take her away from her distress, but that he would enable her to bear it, and to administer help to those dearer to her than her own life, whom she saw must soon be plunged into the furnace of an untried affliction. Hourly she prayed for the return of Ahlab, and he came.

CHAPTER VII.

AHLAB and Talmi returned without Dalphon. A refusal, they said, on the part of the Syrians to pay the annual tribute, had occasioned a sudden march of troops upon Damascus; and Dalphon had been appointed to a command in the expedition. Talmi had, on plea of his approaching nuptials, obtained leave of absence, although his division of the army was going on that service: and notwithstanding Dalphon had pressed him strongly to let him have the pleasure of his society; stating that the marriage could not, of course, take place while he, the sole brother of the bride, was absent, still Talmi persisted in his resolve. He had been thrown back, and back, he said, in his hopes; and he would never more move abroad, or engage in any active service, till his marriage was accomplished.

This statement considerably surprised the whole family; but much more so, that Ahlab,—the life-long companion of Dalphon, who had never,

hitherto, quitted his side, on any important occasion,—now that the conduct of Talmai could not have failed to grieve him, and to render his own society more necessary, could thus coldly permit him to depart alone. But the sad astonishment of Ahlab, at the state in which he found Hamutal, left no room for immediate explanation. He beheld for a time, in speechless amaze and anguish, the wasted being before him, scarcely capable of raising herself on the couch to meet his embrace, whom he had left so full of bloom and majesty. She threw her wan, feeble arms around his neck, laid her head on his bosom, and they both wept in silence.

It was not till some time had elapsed, that Ahlab could gain the command of his voice; when he broke forth with a multitude of anxious and affectionate inquiries. Hamutal, instead of reply, beckoned the rest to withdraw, and then, seeming to gather a sudden strength, she sate leaning on the cushions, and looking gravely at Ahlab, said, “My present sickness, dearest Ahlab, may soon be accounted for; but first tell me why thou hast suffered Dalphon to go alone? It is not like thee,

Ahlab!—it is not like thee! But all things are so changed! Surely, surely, thou hast not suffered Talmai to influence thee in this matter!”

“Talmai!” Ahlab replied, with an air of startled sorrow, “dost *thou* too suspect Talmai? Dost *thou* too think him capable of evil counsel?” A deadly paleness passed over the face of Ahlab, as he sate, gazing on the floor, as one occupied with a strong, inward thought; and Hamutal felt him, as he supported her on the couch, shake through his whole frame. She turned, and with a mighty effort, but with a statue-like stillness of form, and with a low and earnest voice, gave access to the long pent up thoughts of her bosom; and spread before him all that she felt and feared; all that had passed between herself and Shallum.

Ahlab listened to her relation, with an evident, and increasing agony, that made him writhe to and fro. Now he sate like a death-stricken man, ghastly, motionless, and leaning forward; now, flinging himself back, he seemed to give himself up to the overpowering violence of his emotions; and the dews of pain gathered on his brow in heavy drops. When she ceased, he started from

his seat, and walking to and fro, he exclaimed "Hamutal! Hamutal! thou art but too right in thy fears! My thoughts of Talmai are thine; and these thoughts have brought me hither at this moment. God is my witness what it has cost me, to suffer Dalphon to go on without me; but I could not suffer a serpent to glide back hither, without hastening to guard you from his venom. Oh God! oh God! what has not that gay and gilded cockatrice already done! The fairest hopes blasted!—the fairest happiness laid waste!—the fairest creatures made miserable!

"Hamutal! often have we marvelled at the brilliant talents of Talmai; but this wilderness was not the place where the half of his powers could display themselves. When we reached the city, he seemed to breathe a new atmosphere;—to become a new man! Dalphon was much engaged at court;—much occupied with the cares of the new charge and rank in the army, which the king has given him; and, therefore, Talmai devoted much of his time to myself. He was obligingly desirous to make me acquainted with the various scenes and society of the city; and truly his qualification for

the office he assumed, soon filled me with astonishment. His dress, which we here deemed splendid, became tenfold so; his manners took an immediate air of higher grace and gaiety; he appeared to know, and be known to all. In that countless, and ever-moving throng, where others but rarely met a familiar face, he appeared to see few that were strange. Where a glittering chariot rolled along,—where a troop of noble and richly-attired dames appeared,—or the gay and wealthy youth walked on the broad pavement, there was Talmai known, and received with smiles and acclamations. The whole city seemed opened to me by the wand of a magician, and shewn in aspects perfectly novel. Mansion after mansion, family after family, we entered; and in all, Talmai seemed familiar and welcome as at home. It was to me like a splendid piece of enchantment. I walked with wonder through the most lordly and gorgeous abodes. I gazed upon endless varieties of luxurious garniture,—tables, couches, curtains, mirrors, all enriched with the flowered silks of the Zidonians, and carved and fashioned with the exquisite skill of the Syrian artists. I sate at tables spread with

the fruits and produce of various countries; and wandered, with marvelling eyes, over forms of female beauty and princely youth, such as before I did not imagine adorned our capital. Mirth, gaiety, grace, seemed to have been hidden from me heretofore, but to have been in the path of Talmi, common as air and sunshine. I was surprised,—but not more at the elegance and affluence through which I moved, than at the spirit which everywhere prevailed. The tongue of Talmi seemed to possess a never-ceasing activity; and poured forth a merriment that feared not to touch on the most solemn and sacred subjects, with a daring and reckless brilliance that startled me; but seemed to startle no one else. Wherever he went, he was hailed with smiles, accosted with gay and tender words, and his eloquent trifling excited in all places laughter and delight.

“Talmi!” I frequently said, as we left some such sumptuous abode, where his words and those of his friends had shocked me, “is this the spirit and conversation of Jerusalem—the holy city—the city of God? The very birds are not allowed to alight on the holy Sanctuary lest they defile it,

yet your words go hither and thither, and touch where they will, as if God was not present, and had set no bounds to our bold fancies." At which he would smile, and reply—"Why Ahlab, for what purpose do I lead thee amongst the highest and gayest of our people? Those who live in ease and wealth; those who have no object in life, but to enjoy and command? Is it that I would wish thee to resemble them?—to imbibe their spirit? God forbid! But simply that thou mayest learn what is actually the state of things; may know what those people do who call themselves God's people; may know, in reality, what the ignorant deem the wise and happy. Corruption of manners and morals, follows inevitably national prosperity. I have seen their fruits in many a famous city; and I tell thee that here, they are purity itself compared to what they are grown to elsewhere. And assuredly in the simplest, the wisest, the most religious states, a wide difference will exist between the spirit of the capital and that of the country. In the one, the perpetual congregation of the affluent will produce splendour, luxury, grace, refinement of taste and mode; and with them,

much laxity of morals—what the luxurious will call, a more reasonable and liberal conscience : in the other, the influence of nature and solitary thought ; and, besides these, the continual eye of the labouring and simple-hearted people, who are scandalized at the smallest departure from their primitive standard of law and piety, keep up a more rigid rule of life, and perhaps, a more substantial happiness.

“ What I say to thee is—see with thy own eyes, form thy own judgment from observation of both sides of human existence, and then act as that perfected judgment dictates. Depend upon it, Ahlab, wisdom is not to be found by looking merely on the quiet loveliness of nature, and dwelling amongst the simplest and purest of our race. We must descend into the depths of the hidden and the dark ; we must ascend into the region of bright and false lustres ; we must know both what is above, and beneath and around us ; and instead of closing our eyes when objects of evil present themselves, we must gaze boldly on them, and learn what they truly are. If thou wouldst be ignorant and happy—happy in that small degree

that consists with ignorance, go to Tekoah—stir not from it all thy days; but if thou wouldst be truly wise, and truly useful, mix with thy fellow-men in all their haunts, in all their classes, at all their homes, and thou shalt see things that shall startle, disgust, confound, and horrify thee;—that shall, in truth, re-model thy whole judgment of human nature; but shall, as surely, leave thee a wiser and better man. Thou shalt not move along in thy inexperience, ready to be duped thyself by every artful knave, unconscious of the false shows of society; of the evil hourly designed—the misery hourly inflicted on thousands;—of the dauntless hardihood of spirit—the cunning pluming itself as the truest wisdom, which the habitual dwelling with sin can confer; but knowing really what thy fellow-creatures are, shalt be ever prepared to defend thyself and others—to repel mischief—to unveil guile in its subtlest guise. Thus thou shalt not waste thy goods on the fictitious sorrows of the worthless; nor be tempted to compare thy calm happiness repiningly with some specious brilliancy; but shalt continually call to mind the scenes thou hast witnessed; the crime,

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the terror, the remorse, that thou knowest are rife—ay, even in the envied places of the world; and shalt bless God with a more emphatic thankfulness, both for thy knowledge and the happiness that it enhances.”

“But Talmai,” I replied, “will not the loss be greater than the gain? Can I learn to know that men are evil, and become not evil myself? And what happiness can I look for purer, higher, more to be coveted, than to live with Hamutal in my own dear plains, and with her friends and mine?”

“Truly Ahlab,” Talmai replied with a smile, “thou dost somewhat put me to a strait for an answer; but thou art a fortunate fellow. Yet even that,—”

“Nay,” said I, “tell me, can I pass through scenes like these, without sullyng my own spirit?”

“Just,” he exclaimed, “as that splendid insect,” pointing to it as we passed, “that, worm-like, has made its way through the slimy mud of that broken fountain; and issuing forth in golden armour, and with glittering wings, flirts its broad, filmy pinions in the cheering sunshine—looks eagerly abroad, and darts off into the blue fields of air. Thinkest thou

that I am more reconciled to the frivolous, godless spirit of the pampered multitude, than thou art? Not a whit! I despise their silly pride; I abhor their impious mirth; but much more their deeds which thou hast yet seen not: and I look to the days when, blessed with that purest of lovely creatures, Iene, I shall sit down at Tekoah, with you good, gallant souls—the happiest of men! But come, let us observe a little of another class, and one that will probably please thee better.”

He led me then amid a different class indeed. Amid the old, the grave, the wise. We sought them in their dwellings; as unlike those gay and pompous abodes we had lately visited, as they themselves were dissimilar to the inhabitants of those wealthy houses. These were the most ancient and simple fabrics of the city; some low, massy, and gloomy, others spacious and venerable; but all the seats of solemn quietness. It was to me even more surprising to see Talmai received by aged, hoary men, whose countenances wore the traces of habitual gravity and thought, as they would have received a son, than it had been to witness his reception in the palaces of the children

of wealth and pleasure. I beheld with wonder the easy sobriety of Talmai's bearing—the evident delight of those grey-headed sages, in a being so totally different to themselves. But when they proceeded to conversation, I imagined I could readily discern the cause of their interest in him.

“Well,” said one with a paternal smile, “and when, my son, will thy heart have satiated itself with the fleeting pleasures of vanity? When shall those talents, and that knowledge with which God has so eminently crowned thee, be devoted to the service of him and his people? It cannot be long, Talmai, it cannot be long, or I shall deem that I have augured too well of thee, and fear lest my counsels have been lavished in vain.” “Welcome, noble youth,” exclaimed another, as we entered his domicile; “I hear thou art about to enter the worthy family of the good old Jathniel: soon, therefore, wilt thou begin to practise that profound knowledge of the law which thou hast gathered here. Soon wilt thou become a judge and a counsellor amongst thy people. I have continually said that such a spirit as thine, was not given but for some good purpose; and I hope, even at my

advanced years, to see that I have not spoken in vain."

It was evident, that the pride of their wisdom had no small share in their interest in Talmai ; but when I heard him, in a meek and deferential tone, seeking their aid to solve some knotty problem of law ; to clear some difficult point of history ; to decide some nice question of judicature ; my heart despised him as a base sycophant and dissembler. It was with angry indignation that I listened to his mild and subdued tones, as he held with these venerable people, various conversations, in which his manners, his sentiments, his professions were diametrically opposite to what he had exhibited in the haunts of the gay. Now, you would have deemed him some youth of transcendant endowments, who had run the course of folly ; had been devoured by doubt, and led far away by the impetuosity of passion ; but who desired nothing more than to return to peace ; to satisfy his scruples by the reasonings of the wise ; to strengthen his resolution by their eloquence and sublimer views ; to commence a course of determined and distinguished usefulness in the land. All this would a stranger

have believed, and would have listened to the youth's confessions and inquiries, and to the benevolent and sage replies of his ancient friends, with the deepest and most sympathetic interest: but to me, who had lately seen him acting in so diverse a character, uttering opinions so irreconcilable, it was a hateful scene. And it was not one scene, but many; and every time I wondered more and more, at the astonishing acuteness and inexhaustible intelligence of this strange being, and felt more restless aversion to his conduct.

"Talmi," I exclaimed when we were alone, "what impious mockery is this? Thou didst predict that I should like these people better than those I saw before,—and I like them well; but in seeing them and thee together, I like thee less. By what principle canst thou vindicate thy duplicity to these venerable men? Either now or heretofore, thou must have assumed a character and uttered sentiments that are not thine; and I see already exemplified, the effect of seeking good through the medium of evil. Thou hast wounded me deeply. I remember whose affections thou hast won, and one day she must despise thee as I despise thee now."

I was vehement, for I was exasperated and pierced to the heart. Talmai stood and looked at me for a moment; and replied with the air of one whose feelings are both startled and pained. "And is this, Ahlab, the reward of my intended kindness? I have undertaken to exhibit to thee some shades of human life which thou hast never yet seen; and hitherto thou hast accompanied me, not reluctantly. Why, then, this sudden cause of anger? Thou art displeased that I have assumed a character and language not my own? How otherwise was I to gain access to different and select classes? How to call forth their peculiar views? But didst thou deem that all which I spoke in the circles of gaiety, was my own sentiment? Surely not! And couldst thou tolerate a little disguise there; yet here, renounce both it, and myself for its assumption? I marvel at thy conduct.

"But perhaps it has done violence to thy feelings, that I should sport with these venerable men? And were they venerable as they seem, thou wert right. But here again, behold the necessity of some experience of men! Thou dost not see that they are hoary and selfish hypocrites; thou dost

not see that, under the shew of wisdom, they seek the honour of the multitude ; and from that honour, wealth and distinction. Thou dost not see that, at this moment, with a monarch famed for his knowledge and sagacity ; they are, each and all, hoping to climb into the higher honours of the priesthood ; into Levitical offices ; into the dispensation of the laws. Thou canst not see this, but I can shew thee ; and if I shew thee not to thy full conviction, forgive me not. Permit me thy presence to one further trial of humanity, and I ask no more ; and thou canst not well refuse me, or thou dost me mortal injury, and deniest me that justice, which is essential to my life and happiness !”

He said this with an air so warmed and so grieved, that I could not deny him. “Be it so, then,” I said, “and let this juggling cease, for I like not this assumption of unreal character.”

“Nor do I,” he added ; “and perhaps I cannot perfectly excuse it to thee or myself ; but let it weigh in my favour, that I desired knowledge—knowledge of many kinds, sought in many countries—perhaps too much so ; and in that search, the habit of accommodating myself to the people I

abode with, in order to approach my object, has grown insensibly. I confess, perhaps, not without some degree of evil."

The candour of this confession, and the tone of wounded sensibility, yet of irresistible friendliness in which it was made, disarmed my wrath, and touched me with a painful regret of my hasty accusation. Wonder not at my weakness, for thou knowest the power of Talmai!

CHAPTER VIII.

WE withdrew to our abode. It was already night. Talmai drew from his stores, two festal robes of singular fashion and transcendant beauty. They were of the richest Tyrian dye, lined with the most radiant and pearl-hued silk; bound about with a belt of woven gold, and fastened in front with a jewelled clasp. A flower-embroidered cape fell on the shoulders, and in length they flowed to the

feet. Wrapped in our cloaks, we issued into the street, and pursued our way in silence and darkness. At length, in a distant and poor part of the city, we stopped before a small door in a wretched and ruinous-looking house. At Talmai's knock it opened ; and to my surprise, admitted us into an obscure place, dimly lit with a feeble lamp. The door was instantly closed behind us, and secured with bolt and chain. My wonder was increased, by beholding before us an iron gate, guarded by two men in a savage dress, each holding a drawn sword, and demanding our pass-word. Talmai gave it instantly ; and instructed by him to follow his example in all things, I repeated it. The gate drew up to the roof ; we passed under ; and it again fell behind us. A stronger light now shewed us that we were in a long passage, or archway of massy masonry, without apparent opening of any description, and conveyed to the mind a dungeon sensation, fearful and oppressive. As we advanced, the lights became more frequent ; other passages crossed at right angles ; and various figures might be seen lightly passing to and fro in the dim distance. Soon a low, faint sound of

music became sensible, and, as we approached the end of the passage, it suddenly expanded into a kind of ante-room, where, on a broad, cool, marble slab, lay a number of garlands of roses, and other beautiful flowers, fresh from the garden, and filling the vaulted place with their delicious odours. Talmai threw off his cloak, placed a garland on his brows, and, motioning me to do the same, he knocked; and at once the massy door rolled back, and revealed a scene of wonder.

It was a wide banqueting hall. The guests numerous, and clad in the most splendid robes, were already assembled. From the lofty dome, hung massy golden lamps, casting their light upon that lordly, and to me, unexpected company. The hall was very spacious. At its farther end the festal table, forming a complete crescent, was crowned with a rich banquet, served up in vessels of the most costly and splendid description; and the whole was adorned by a profusion of flowers, flowering shrubs, and even trees, in sculptured vases, arranged in various tasteful positions along the whole board. The guests reclined on couches of most luxurious and imperial fashion, covered

with silken tapestry of scarlet and gold; and furnished with cushions of the same, heavy with golden tassels and fringe. In the centre of the apartment played a beautiful fountain, whose waters, catching a hundred different splendours from the suspended lamps, fell into a basin of white marble, on whose margin stood large silver vessels, in which were cooling, tall golden flagons of wine. Various odoriferous shrubs and trees stood also round the fountain, drooping their heavy clusters of flowers, as to catch the refreshment of the falling spray: and numerous servants, in close and brilliant habits, went to and fro, lightly and silently as spirits. The whole fair scene, the coolness, and the fresh, flowery odours that floated through the place, fell on the senses with delicious effect.

“ Talmai and myself were received with smiles and congratulations, and took our places at the feast. When I had time to collect my faculties into something like a steady observance, I noted that the whole company were arranged alternately a man and a woman; and the women were such to look upon as I had not deemed it possible for one

capital to produce—magnificent alike in stature and beauty of face! The men wore all a robe of similar fashion, but the women were arrayed in a strange diversity of garbs; and I recognised in some of them the costume, not of Israel, but of neighbouring people. They had also as varied styles of countenance; far, to my eyes, unlike anything I had witnessed in my own countrywomen; and yet they were lovely as you might imagine the angels of heaven;—such rich and swelling forms—such noble lineaments—such living and awful eyes. When I had observed this, much as I was charmed by the whole extraordinary scene, I was inly disturbed. I called to mind the poor and ruinous exterior of this building, so strangely contrasted with the airy beauty of this central hall, and with the dim and massy approach to it, and I felt a sudden fear that some species of evil was connected with it. But when I looked round me again, I recognised amongst the men, numbers whom I had seen holding the highest and most solemn places in society: yes! men, whose old white heads shone strangely, encircled by those gorgeous garlands. I saw not a few of the mi-

nisters and chief captains of the king, and therefore checked my fears as the foolish offspring of ignorance. I beheld all giving themselves up to the delights of a banquet, in which every delicious viand was spread before them; and I stretched forth my hand, and did likewise. I surveyed the dame who reclined beside me, and saw that she was dignified as a queen, and beautiful beyond description. I handed to her the best and fairest of the meats, the fruits, the wines, and was thanked with smiles and words which were full of the deepest enchantment. Blame me not, Hamutal, my heart never for a moment forgot thee; but thou wouldst have confessed, hadst thou beheld that strange one, that she was wondrous fair. I listened to her, and was amazed at the wisdom of her tongue. I looked up, and listened to the discourse that was going on around me; and truly it was such as would have delighted the sage monarch himself, had he been present. The brightest flashes of wit were mingled with the gravest words of wisdom. Knowledge gathered from the study of our own laws and history; from a hundred sources of foreign observation and intercourse; eloquent descriptions

of places and things which few of our nation have yet seen; and stories which, while they wonderfully seized the imagination, threw streams of light on the mind;—such was the converse that was circling from end to end of that superb table. Truly, I thought, it is only in great capitals, and amid the servants of great kings, that the human mind, freed from local shackles, and local ignorance, attains its full vigour, and revels in its perfect being. I gave way to the spirit that came powerfully upon me, to love my noble companions in their wise and elegant sociality—to admire—to enjoy! Truly, I said to myself, these are the choice spirits of the earth, that, desiring to taste the glory of an exalted existence without exciting the envy and unhappiness of the poor, shroud themselves carefully from their view.

The heavier viands were withdrawn; the grapes in large and purple clusters, the pine, and a profusion of golden and melting fruits, glowed along the table, and wine of a purer and more inspiring nature sparkled before us. We ate—we drank—a spirit of triumphant gladness grew amongst us, and covered us as with a radiant canopy, and at once

music, faint and unseen, awoke. It swelled and strengthened, and filled the hall with streams of mysterious sound. I gazed hither and thither, but could not discover whence it came. It was as if the children of heaven sang to us in their unknown tongue; and gave us, not words, but a spirit that thrilled through us, and haunted us with a hundred vague fancies and inexplicable emotions. I gazed along the table;—for a brief space, the most animated speakers continued their discourse amid the invisible music; but as it kindled into power, all became silent; and here and there, I beheld the guests arrested in the midst of some lively action—fixed as by enchantment, with an extended arm, or with a cup raised to the lips, devouring the ineffable sweetness with all their souls. Never till then had I seemed to know what music was. I heard a legion of spiritual natures pouring out from their invisible sphere their delicious voices;—some uttering some tender grief—some wailing in huge woe—some breathing the soul and wonder of deeds that could be done only in immense and far-off worlds—and some bursting into peans of mighty and inconceivable triumph. I listened, and lay as

in a heavenly trance; my whole frame was melted and subdued by the volume of celestial sound, and I floated away in a wild, deep flood of melodious feeling into nameless and eternal regions. I felt then, that to die—to pass away from the chains of compelling matter, and to become all spirit,—filled with all the knowledge—made capable of all the boundless sensations—the love—the joy—the triumphs of infinite regions, were a glorious boon indeed!

But I was recalled by sounds of sudden acclamation, and beheld with wonder a band of damsels of transcendant beauty, who had risen, as it were, by enchantment, from the floor, and were dancing to the sound of the music, which had now changed to joyous sprightliness—beyond the fountain. They were crowned, each with a flowery garland; they wore bracelets and anklets furnished with silver bells, whose shrill tinkle blended wildly with the strains of the unseen musicians; but their only dress was a thin and partial veil. I was startled with offended wonder at the view. I saw that the dames who reclined at the feast, turned their eyes to the ground; but the men clapped their hands in

applause; and again the music changed to a hurried dream of voluptuous bewilderment. A riotous mirth kindled along the whole table; and to my amazement, mouths that but recently were uttering wisdom, were now loud with sinful folly. I was about to turn and upbraid Talmai for bringing me hither, when a vivid light glared through the whole hall, like the livid brightness of sheeted lightning, and I saw, with wondering eyes, figures spring up, as it were, from the solid marble floor. They stood along the front of the whole semi-circular board—the gods of the heathen! In the same moment every arm was raised, and the splash of wine from a hundred beakers, was heard on the floor. I heard—"honour to Chemosh!—honour to Semel!—honour for ever to Baal!—to Ashtaroth!"—resound on every side from the lips of men and women;—and I leaped up, thrilled with a terrible amaze.

I sprang from the festal couch, and beholding a small, dark doorway behind me, I escaped through it with a dizzy brain, and with limbs that trembled and tottered beneath me. I heard behind me the roar of impious acclamation:—I saw not—I knew

not whither I fled. I was blinded and stupified with horror, and anger, and self-reproach; but I rushed forward. I imagine that I was in a passage similar to the one by which I had entered; but I know not—I only know that I drove desperately forward. Suddenly, I felt my arm grasped as I went; and I was about to turn and plunge my sword into the detainer, when I saw a figure shrouded in a cloak, and heard a female voice say, “Hither! for thy life!” The figure passed through a low, narrow opening in the wall;—I followed, and in the next moment found myself in a small, square room, and heard the door bolted behind me. A dim lamp shewed the place,—a place of massy walls—in which was only a mean couch, whereon the shrouded figure which I had followed, sate—and at its feet, a torn garland of flowers, such as had been worn in the banqueting room.

“What wouldst thou?” I exclaimed, addressing this unknown person, “for my time is precious!” Still the figure only shrouded itself more closely, and I discerned that it trembled exceedingly from head to foot. I was filled with wonder at this strange circumstance, and again said, “Who art

thou? Why tremblest thou? Why detainest thou me?" The figure started to its feet—the cloak was thrown back—and—Hamutal! Hamutal!—what did I behold? No other than Abital, the fair daughter of Shemshem, the shepherd! She, with whom thyself and Iene were wont to play—she who had become so conspicuous for her loveliness as she grew up—she who was supposed to be borne away by a troop of Ammonites, as she wandered among the neighbouring hills with her companions; and has been lamented in the dust by her parents, and by the whole plain of Tekoah, with tears and indignation. Yes! she stood before me, as one risen from the dead! I was smitten by violent surprise, as by a giant's hand; and as men by some sudden shock are often cured of intoxication, so was the whirl of my spirit at once gone from me. I forgot for the moment the place—the scene I had witnessed—my haste and my fear. "Abital!" I cried, "*thou* here!" She stood, evidently struggling for speech. Wild and strange expressions of desperate emotions hurried across her face. She was clad lightly as the dancers in the hall;—her bosom bare,—her hair loosened from its garland,

flowing in long, luxuriant volumes over her shoulders; her face, in which still much beauty was left, (but a beauty, how different from that of her home days!—that round and blooming softness of feature as of the ripening peach), now sharp, and lit up with a wild frenzy—an eye bright with an unnatural splendour; and upon her cheek vivid hues—but not the hues of health and peace. “Ahlab!” she said, “well mightest thou be astonished to behold me here—much am I astonished to behold thee! But time, as thou sayest, is precious.—Oh! far more precious than thou canst tell! I cannot therefore say all that I would; but I must say, knowest thou where thou art? Knowest thou with whom?”

“Where;” I replied, “I know not,—but with whom? With Talmai!” “Yes! yes!” she exclaimed, with a look that was even ferocious, and stamping on the ground, as in an agony of grief and anger, “with Talmai! with Talmai! With the most specious—the most brilliant—the most cruel of men! Oh! Ahlab! dear Ahlab!—for by the love of our childhood, I must call thee so—behold in me one—one only of his victims! It

is said that I was borne away by the Ammonites. This *he!* this, the cold, mocking miscreant himself has told me—but those Ammonites were his hired creatures—for him they bore me away.

“Yes! even while he wooed the lovely Iene, he found time and opportunity to whisper his flatteries to me. Oh fool! fool that I was, to listen. But while I would have abhorred treachery to Iene—while I thought only in playfulness to listen to a few of his words, and knew not the man,—I paid by innocence—by happiness—by life itself, for my folly. I had permitted him thus to stay me as I went to and fro, and to talk in such language as he only can talk, but I felt that it was evil, and at once determined to see him no more. Such demons, however, are not readily escaped;—I was besieged by his servant—vile as himself; and jewels, fit only for a queen, were laid at my feet. I spurned them—I threw them from me; but it was in vain. In the hour when I least suspected; when I deemed that I had conquered his impetuosity, and destroyed his passion, his slaves came upon me as I went to the olive hills with my fellow maidens, and, singling me out, they bore me away.

Oh ! I cannot ! I cannot tell all that has befallen me ! It is enough that I am destroyed for ever by that cruel and godless monster !—it is enough that I am here ! Ahlab !” she added, with a look of misery that pierced through my soul, “thou knowest not this house ! Thou hast seen a little—a very, very little !—and art thou desperate with that ? In this place, every wickedness,—every abomination that can, and that cannot be named, is perpetrated. Crime in every shade—idolatry in every shape—is come hither from all the surrounding nations. The women thou hast seen, are the daughters and princesses of many a pagan people. They have subdued the hearts of the king’s highest servants ; nay, at this moment, these treacherous servants are secretly striving to bring the young and ardent monarch into the same fatal snare ;—they propose to him many a strange and foreign alliance, such as were abominations in the eyes of our fathers. Oh God ! God ! where are thy thunders ?—where thy plagues—thy fires—thy earthquakes and deadly serpents that overtook and destroyed thy rebellious sons of old ? Are they spent—extinguished for ever ? or art thou wearied to everlasting endurance ?

It must, it must be so, or this dreadful place were ere now, a heap of ashes, smoking in the fire of thy indignation !”

“But Ahlab, let me effect thy escape ! Without me thou must perish ! The word by which you entered, is not the word by which thou canst gain egress : without that word, the guards at the gate would cut thee down. But I will teach it thee, and haste thou away.”

She gave me the word, and flinging herself at my feet, embraced them in an agony of soul, and bathed them with her tears ; then springing up, she seized me by the arm, and cried “fly ! fly ! make thy escape ; and oh ! for my sake, never, never pronounce my name—never reveal what thou hast seen !”

“No !” I exclaimed, “I will not depart without thee ! Thou, too, shalt go !”

“I !” she cried—“I ! alas, that cannot be ! No, never can I escape. Name it not, lest it raise in me a vain and delightful hope, that must be torn away from me by the dreadful certainty of my lot. No ! I know my doom. Thou hast seen my fellows in the hall—thou canst guess my destiny. A little

while shall I figure, a living, glittering misery in that detested pageant, and then !—beneath the very stone on which thou standest, I shall sleep ! Beauty here fades quickly—quickly ; long before youth ; and then—here are daggers that come as quickly. The world hears not the cries—knows not the deeds that pass in this monstrous tomb. A stone is raised, it is laid down again, and new victims come, and weep above the heads of those that weep no more !”

As I heard this—heard it in that thrilling and melancholy tone, in which despair breathes from a wronged and broken heart—I drew forth my sword, and swore never to quit the walls without her.

“But hark ! cried Abital with a countenance of terror, “the feast breaks up—the throng rush away at twenty different doors—let us go !”

She wrapped herself in her cloak—hurried me along a gloomy archway—in a moment we were at the gate—the word was given—in a crowd we issued through. I thought the pressure of Abital’s grasp was still upon mine arm—I thought I still held fast her cloak ; but when I turned to recognize her, it was another !—a reeling and inebriate man ! I

sought her with furious eagerness, but in vain. One by one, did the dark, cloaked figures pass away into the streets, and I was left alone. Had she remained in her despair in her terrible dungeon? Or had she, equally desirous of concealment, passed away in the crowd? I could not tell, and it was in vain to linger. Distracted with grief and indignant horror, I hasted away to my abode, resolved in the morning to throw myself at the feet of the king, and lay open to him the whole horrible scene. But I had staid by that hateful door so long, and now made my way so blindly, that the pale dawning of day was already upon me; and the watchmen, as they saw my tall figure crowned with my faded garland, and my pale and haggard countenance, essayed to seize me; but I bared my sword, and with a mien and a spirit but little short of his in whom some demon reigns, I drove on. I reached my abode—I entered, and fell senseless on the floor.

CHAPTER IX.

WHEN I recovered my consciousness, I beheld Talmai and Dalphon sitting by my bed. I was consumed with a burning fever, and my head throbbed and whirled in a dreadful manner; but the sight of that monster made me conquer the physical inaptitude of my nature. I started up, and commanded him to depart. He and Dalphon gazed at me apparently in equal amazement. "What means this, Ahlab?" said Dalphon; "in what has Talmai offended thee? Thou art not well. The strange garb and situation in which we found thee, shew that thou hast feasted overnight where the host's wine was not weak. Thou art not used to such riotous gaiety as some of the citizens of even this solemn city use; it has filled thy head with temporary delusions. Be still, and let us send for a physician; and till he has restored the wonted calmness of thy blood, Talmai, or any

other person whose presence offends thee, shall withdraw."

"Let him withdraw for ever!" I exclaimed: "too long have I tolerated his society. Let him not dare to shew his face with the followers of God!"

Dalphon stood and looked in still greater amazement; but Talmai, with an air of concern, yet in the most unhesitating manner, at once explained to him all that had passed on the preceding night. He renewed those arguments and professions which he had already detailed to myself; his desire to shew me the true nature and constitution of society; the blame he had thence received from me; and, the final experiment to prove the corruptions of social life, his introduction to that assembly in which I had beheld many of the highest officers of state. He told everything as it had occurred; he described all the splendour and transactions of that hidden place; protesting his abhorrence of the whole; and that nothing but his own desire of knowing man thoroughly, could have drawn him thither; nothing but his wish to open my eyes to my dangerous state of simplicity, could have caused him to lead me thither. That I had, unnoticed by

him, slipped away ; and that, anxious for my safety, he had hastened to my abode, and encountered Dalphon, arrived at the same moment, contemplating me prostrate and insensible on my threshold.

Dalphon listened to his narrative with evident disturbance, and replied :—" At all events, Talmi, thou hast done foolishly. I like not the matter in any shape ; I would not seek, far less lead others to such knowledge, at such a perilous price, through such an awful medium ; but, believing as I would wish to believe, that thy motives were generous, though ill-calculated ; to say the least, it was foolish—most foolish. Ahlab from his boyhood has known, and has sought to know, nothing but what is strictly pure and simple. It was enough for him to enjoy the quietness and beauty of the life which his fathers led for generations ; and the society of those simple, yet noble and pious friends, whom Providence has so happily given him. How, then, could he do otherwise, than revolt at scenes, customs, and persons, far less criminal than those amid whom thou hast conducted him ? This surely thou mightest have known : nor can I perceive at all, the value, to a person like Ahlab, of that know-

ledge which thou hast been so solicitous to bestow upon him ;—a knowledge that does not enlighten, does not ennoble ; but at once grieves the heart, quenches the confidence of man in man, and makes the path of life more cold, and gloomy, and selfish than it was before. Better were it, in my opinion, to suffer somewhat from the evil and the cunning—better to be occasionally deluded—our tender charities to be wasted on the worthless, than to be taught the fathomless depths of the wickedness of our nature ; and in that teaching, to forego some of the warmth and brightness of our spirits. It is foolish, Talmai, yet I wish not to blame thee farther than for thy folly ; and I trust that Ahlab, when he regains his serenity, will cease to blame thee too. In the meantime, let us withdraw.”

They went ; and Dalphon speedily returned with a physician, whose remedies soon abated the fever of my frame. When he was gone, I declared to Dalphon that never more should I love Talmai. That I had seen him an idolater in the hidden conclave of idolaters ; that I had seen what I should not then declare, but what had caused me to abhor and fear him. I dared not

however relate to Dalphon the fate of Abital; for I knew that he would, in his irrepressible indignation, immediately upbraid Talmai with his villany; and I feared, in case Abital were still in her dungeon, that it would bring down upon her instant and fearful death. My words had not, therefore, that full effect which I would fain have given them; and Dalphon, though he was evidently and sorely grieved, appeared not convinced, but still with a sad, yet earnest countenance, pleaded his cause.

His military duties, however, called him away; and fain would he have drawn me to accompany him, when he saw me a little recovered—but I dared not! I dared not! while Talmai, like a serpent at large, was ready to glide back hither in our absence, and to work unutterable evil. So Dalphon took his leave, fervently imploring us to be reconciled, but in vain. The moment he departed, I prepared to leave Jerusalem, and Talmai displayed equal haste. Doubtless we were actuated by a similar impulse;—he wished to reach Tekoah first, to anticipate my statement—I to prevent his evil. Both, therefore, hastened away on the same

day, and nearly at the same hour—with the first gleam of dawn. We rode rapidly—sometimes one first—sometimes the other; and as we passed each other, Talmai would look at me with a friendly and conciliating air; and, in a tone which, had I not known the fate of Abital, might have melted me, would say—"Is there no forgiveness, Ahlab, with the good? Shall we go and destroy the union of a family so united—so blest? My heart acquits me of all intention but to shew thee men as they really are;—Dalphon acquits me. I may have been unwise, but I have not been ungenerous;—will Ahlab be so?"

I burned to pronounce the name of Abital; but my fears for her restrained me, and, with a heart swelling to almost suffocation, I held on in silence.

And now, Hamutal, a mighty task is before us—a duty upon us, which we cannot evade—cannot postpone. This man must be expelled from these walls—expelled for ever! No longer must he be suffered to lurk like an asp in the bosom of this precious family, till it shall please him to arise and sting one or all to the death. But alas! he has already wrought too surely. I see sorrow and

death hanging like a cloud ready to burst on this house, yet bearing in their blackness a necessity that we must obey. Let what will come, Talmai must be expelled !

“He must ! he must !” exclaimed Hamutal, who had listened to Ahlab’s recital in appearance more like a corpse than a living creature. “Oh, Iene ! dear, dear sister of my soul ! Oh, ye dear and aged parents, whose days have hitherto flown like the balmy dream of the summer-noon shade, what woe is coming upon you ! God ! thou wise and mighty spirit, strengthen us and them for the terrible trial !”

This she said, rising from the couch where she had lain as in the extremity of weakness ; and then, assuming an air so firm, so wild, so motionless, yet so evidently full of the passion and energies of a despairing, and yet all-determined nature, that Ahlab looked on in fear and wonder. “Yes !” she said, “it must be accomplished. Ruin may, and will follow on this house ! Our very act will probably scatter us like an earthquake, and lay us dead, or more miserable than the dead : but the desolation must come ; the evil is wrought—it is

amongst us—and the evil-worker must be cast out! Oh! we cannot! we cannot have the wolf amongst the sheep; we cannot suffer Satan to dwell amid the children of God! But Ahlab, we must do this awful work as quietly as we can—as much removed from the observation of the family. Let the sinner go forth before his departure be even known; that when the tidings are revealed, his presence may be one evil less in our number.

“There is a ruinous sheepcote in the wilderness, at about an hour’s ride hence, on the way to Bethlehem. Thither invite Talmai, to meet thee at dawn to-morrow. He will hope it is for secret explanation and reconciliation. There thou shalt await him, and with thee, myself and Shallum. There will we dismiss him from these plains.”

Ahlab would fain have undertaken the office himself, supported by a few servants; and pleaded the impossibility of Hamutal, in her present debilitated state, going through so much fatigue and excitement; but with her usual decision, she replied, “Hinder me not, Ahlab! it is not a time to consult our wills or convenience. Of what good is our life now, but to fulfil our bitter duties? I

have cause for desiring it, and even now the night grows late—let us act!”

The message was sent to Talmai; he immediately accepted the invitation; and before the sun arose, Ahlab, Hamutal, and Shallum, had mounted their asses, and reached the appointed spot.

It was a place which had sometime been raised by the shepherds as a shelter from the noon-day sun, where they might drive their sheep to the shade of the sycamore trees which grew around; and themselves take their sleep. It had been constructed of turfs, which had fallen partly to decay, and partly were overgrown with brambles and other hanging plants. Whatever roof it once had was gone, but its place was supplied by the thick boughs of trees, that met in a dense mass above it. The owl and the swallow had made it their resort; and various shining lizards shewed themselves from the recesses of its thickets and earthen walls. A bank of turf gave a sort of seat: and there the three, Shallum having tied the asses in the neighbouring bushes, sate awaiting Talmai in profound silence. The day dawned—the pale light grew stronger and stronger, shewing the sorrowful

creatures to each other, a wan and melancholy company. The sun arose in the east, pencilling the clouds with his many-coloured glories, and flinging over the dewy desert and green trees, that seemed to wave their boughs as in welcome of him, his cheerful beams; and the sight brought over Hamutal's heart the memory of all their past happiness. How they were wont to arise, and gaze on the opening pageantry of a summer morning with souls glad as creation itself; and now it was like a dismal dream. By the wickedness of one man, their hearts were rent from the joyous union with nature; *it* was still bright, and beautiful, and triumphant as ever,—and they could behold it only with sighs and groans.

Anon they heard the sounding hoofs of Talmal's steed,—anon he entered; but on seeing not only Ahlab, but Hamutal and Shallum, he involuntarily stepped backward, and contemplated them in silence. A pale gleam passed over his countenance, leaving his features fixed, and expressive of a suspicion of evil. The three simultaneously arose as he entered;—and recovering from his momentary hesitation, he asked what could be the

motive for so strange a meeting, at so strange an hour, and in so strange a place.

Hamutal, with a countenance pale with grief and sickness, wearing a solemn and severe dignity, that would have sent a feeling of awe into the most callous or reckless bosom, threw back the cloak in which she had wrapped herself, and replied in a firm, but melancholy voice: "Talmi! it has been the lot of my father's house, and of all that were connected with its fortunes for many years, to know nothing but a peace and happiness, such as are said to be rarely the portion of men. Why hast thou troubled our serenity? But it is perhaps the will of God that we should experience the extremes of good and evil. We have admitted to our house and hearts, a stranger—a stranger who came in a shining disguise, like one of those angels that were wont to visit our fathers in their pastoral tents; but he has proved himself far different,—the worker of deadly sin!—the denier of the God who made him! Would to God that we had penetrated the folds of his radiant mantle of sin, before he had blighted the noblest, the tenderest, the dearest heart that beats on the earth! But no! God has

not so willed it. The evil is achieved—the misery has taken deep root; and yet we ask only of the author of our sorrow, to depart! Depart in peace, Talmai, if peace can dwell with the wicked!”

As Talmai listened to Hamutal, he felt, or affected the profoundest astonishment; yet even the duplicity of his nature did not enable him to conceal the whole of that rage which kindled in his soul. A ghastly paleness was in his countenance; his lips, firmly pressed together, were livid as those of death; but his eyes rolled to and fro, now fixing on Ahlab, now on Shallum. As Hamutal ceased, he exclaimed, — “What strange notions possess you? What is the mighty crime I have committed? Ahlab, is thy weakness so great as to treat me thus for what I have shewn thee? For what else have I done? Is not my love for Iene strong as ever? Has it ever varied? Can it vary? In the name of God, what is my crime?”—

“Ask thy own heart!” said Hamutal. “It can tell thee; and we wish not to hold long discourse with thee. We wish only to assure thee that it is necessary to depart—to depart for ever! Too long has thy presence polluted the hospitable mansion

of Jathniel: let not thy present conduct add violence and confusion to the woe thou hast left on that once blest abode. Go! thou knowest we demand it not without sufficient cause. Go!—at once, and for ever!”

“My heart tells me not,” again said Talmai, “that I have committed any offence, any evil, against any soul of Jathniel’s family. If I must be thus ignominiously expelled, let me at least know wherefore?”

“Shall I tell thee,” said Hamutal—“tell thee what is already so strongly written on thy own soul? Shall I lay before thee thy own evil deeds? But no! Ahlab knows them—Shallum knows them.”

“Yes! wretch!” Talmai cried, drawing his sword, and rushing on Shallum furiously, “it is thou who hast poisoned the minds of those who love me, with thy lies. It is thou who hast sacrificed to thy baseness, the richest hopes and affections; and God acknowledge me not, if I deal not with thee as thou deservest!”

He took a bound like the Indian tiger; his sword glittered above the head of Shallum; and

another moment would have been his last: but Ahlab smote the uplifted arm with his clenched hand, and the shining blade flung backward, stuck, and quivered in the earthen wall. Shallum and Ahlab instantly drew their weapons, and stood on the defensive; while Hamutal, undaunted by the fearful scene, said sternly—"Son of Belial! dost thou plead thy innocence by attempting to kill? Go! we know thee well. We would see no further unveiling of thy evil nature!"

"Wretch!" said Shallum, "well deemest thou that I love thee not. Could I have prevailed from the day that I first beheld thy Moabitish bracelets, thou hadst never come hither, to sow sorrow where it never grew till thy arrival. But that I hate thee not without a cause—listen! In Zebulon there dwells a woful woman. She dwells—I have seen her—with her two children, in a little booth by the wayside; and weeps, as she works with her hands many a curious work of the needle, for her daily bread. When she is asked, whose are these little children, she says—'Tal-mai's.' When she is asked, where is Talmai? she replies—'If there be a spot of earth fairer than

the rest, Talmai is there. If there be some woman fairer and more gentle than her sex—Talmai is there, to deceive and to destroy.’ When she is asked where is Talmai’s heritage? she says, —‘Talmai has sold it!’ Where is her own?—‘Talmai has sold it also.’ She is full of trouble and toil, which her fair and delicate frame knew not till she knew Talmai, but which has now no end: and when a stranger praises the beauty of her boys, she prays God that he will make them strong as the ostrich of the desert, that labour may not weary them; for by labour must they live, till the year of Jubilee restore to them their estate: and that they may be grave and uncomely as the owl, that they may not be cruel and deceitful like Talmai.”

“Wretch!” cried Talmai, gnashing his teeth, and again attempting to fly upon Shallum, “is it by such ill-coined tales thou wouldst destroy me? Oh Ahlab! Oh Hamutal! can you indeed listen to such clumsy fables, knowing the long-cherished malice of this fellow against me; and forget for a moment, that the blow which crushes me, crushes Iene also?”

"Nay!" said Shallum, "I deal not in feigned tales—see! When I was but a few days ago in Jerusalem, a noble and most queen-like dame—not like the woman of Zebulon in a little booth by the wayside; but in a wide, fair house, clad in scarlet, and shining with jewels; and in whose ample halls, troops of men-servants and women-servants went to and fro. This great woman also, called herself the wife of Talmai; and behold the letter which she sends thee." He handed Talmai the letter, who opened, and read—

"To the noble Talmai.

"Thou didst well to say, let our nuptials be known only to thee and me for a little while, till I come again from the camp with spoil and glory; but thy camp, and the spoil and glory which thou art gathering, are, it seemeth, at Tekoah. There be silly women, who would rise in wrath, and say—return! or I will fetch thee home with the force of my household train from thy new love; but such speech I never learned. What I say to thee is—come not hither, lest thy blood should smoke on my threshold. Thanks to the secresy of our contract,—it hath left me free.

"TAMAR."

As Talmi read this epistle, his countenance fell. He said in a low and muttered tone—"Fellow, thou hast prevailed. It is vain longer to strive with bosoms into which thou hast plunged wounds like these. The curse of God light on thee, for thou hast cut asunder loving souls!"

He rent the scroll in pieces, and strewing it on the ground, turned and went out. In another moment, the galloping of his steed was heard; and looking forth, they saw him taking the way to Bethlehem.

CHAPTER X.

THE three returned to Tekoah. They had achieved their object; but they went not back as they who have won a victory;—theirs was a melancholy triumph. They had banished the author of their sorrow, but the sorrow itself remained;—nay, had yet to break forth in its greatness. They went

back in the saddest, profoundest silence; not a word was spoken during the way. They had yet the hardest part of their duty to perform; but they knew that duty—it needed not—it admitted not of words.

The disclosures which they had to make, plunged the aged pair into an astonishment of grief, which seemed to deprive them of their faculties. They sate and looked on the ground in a long and dreamy stupor. At times they would be seen lost in tears; at times would they utter a few ejaculations of helpless sorrow, and again relapse into silence. A few days seemed to exhibit on their countenances and forms, the weight of anguish which pressed upon the heart, by a change as of ten years of trouble.

But to open the matter to Iene—the gay, the tender, the sensitive Iene; who still, in all the unsuspecting cheerfulness of her nature, was living totally unconscious of her terrible delusion—this was arduous—this was fearful. It was impossible to impart to her the smallest iota of the truth, till it was time to act decisively upon it; the least blame of Talmai would have called forth all the

warmth of her soul; there must have been premature examination; and, as a probable consequence, inextricable confusion and protracted evil. Thus by a fatal necessity was the whole weight suspended, to fall with a sudden shock upon her soul.

We must touch lightly here. The eye that could witness that agonizing scene—the hand that could portray it, must be a harder or more powerful one than mine. We must pass it as we would the appalling spectacle of a murdered man, with inward horror, but with few words.

When Hamutal first breathed into her mind a fear that all was not right with Talmai, she sprung up as if an arrow had suddenly pierced her to the heart; and with a faint shriek, fell back into her seat. An insensibility of a moment seemed not to spend itself, but to be flung off with the vehemence of frenzy, and, with a flashing eye, a burning, crimson countenance, she called for Talmai with a shrill, wild voice, which pierced through the heart like the voice of a ghost. But when she learnt that Talmai was not at Tekoah,—that he was gone, perhaps for ever, she seemed to rise into the atmosphere of madness. She demanded

again and again to see him,—to hear from himself his own justification. She could not at once, after so long a time of trusting, reposing love, bring herself to believe that he was base, or unworthy. “Let me see Talmai! Let me see and hear himself! Oh! never can I believe that noble,—that splendid mind can be unfaithful, or unjust. No, no! there must be some cruel mistake; some wicked design against him. I cannot tell what, or with whom it rests; but I must see him, and hear himself confess his sin, ere my heart can receive its shadow.”

It was beyond words excruciating, to hear her perpetually thus calling for Talmai; and nothing but the wondrous firmness of a woman like Hamutal, bearing down, subduing to the utmost, all her own nature, besides all her boundless love to Iene, could have enabled her to calmly wait, and expostulate, and bring to the proof, every weapon of reason and affection, till she could induce the wounded and almost frantic spirit of her sister to listen. But when at length she did; when she laid before her all the experience of Shallum,—all her own—the strange recital of Ahlab—the restlessness

with which she first attended, gradually gave way to a deep and settled anguish; and when she told the fate of Abital, the unhappy maiden lifted her hands and eyes in a feeble effort of amaze, gave a wild, shuddering sigh, and lay senseless on the couch. The mightiness of her spirit's pain seemed to have nearly annihilated the life of her body; she lay for days, breathing, but unconscious; while Hamutal, Ahlab, and the old, sorrow-stricken parents hung over her, expecting every moment would terminate her being. But as they contemplated her fair and pallid form, in silent watching for approaching death, at once she moved with a convulsive motion,—her eyes flashed open, and she sprung up with the wild and terrible laugh which announces the presence of frenzy. The powers which had slumbered, now awoke to action with a desperation that required strong hands to guard the unhappy being from herself.

Her mind in its appalling vivacity and confusion, presented the images most dear to her in strange connexion, and she for ever called for Talmai, for Abital—for her parents and sister; and yet, when these last presented themselves, she warned them away as fiends and enemies.

It was the solemn, serene season of full autumn. The sun lay with a steady splendour on the hills and plains. The wilderness was scorched into universal brownness; the people were busy with the latter harvest in the corn-fields and in the vineyards. But at Tekoah there was no festivity. In the field and in the vineyard, the labours went forward amid sighs and gloom; and around that beloved and hospitable mansion, rested a death-like silence.

The afflicted family, unable to give relief, waited in anxiety and many prayers the will of God: the domestics went to and fro with sorrowful faces, and with noiseless tread: and through the wide stillness of that ample abode, yes, even to its farthest rooms, still echoed the shrill, ringing voice of Iene, calling perpetually for those objects of affection that might not re-appear, or that appearing she could not recognize.

At length this most grievous desperation of passion,—this awful excitement of the springs of life and soul, seemed to have exhausted itself, and she once more sank into a state of passive unconsciousness. The tried and heart-broken creature

lay like a wasted, though lovely corpse; but yet she died not. As her weeping relatives stood around her, they perceived her gently sigh;—they perceived tears stealing from beneath the long, dark fringes of her closed eyes; and as Hamutal stooped over her face in breathless anxiety, those eyes slowly opened, full of her own gentle and tender spirit; and lifting her feeble arms, she clasped her sister in a faint but fond embrace. Who could tell the sad, but dear rejoicing over that precious being! The paroxysm of outraged passions was past: the fire and vehemence of their anguish had spent themselves;—the barb was still in the soul—the immedicable woe was there—but it was passive. The balance of her brilliant mind was restored, not by healing, nor by hope, but by the strong, internal persuasion, that all was over on this side the grave—that she had nothing to do but to love, and to die. And in truth, all the splendid powers, all the quivering sensibility, all the lofty hopes and speculations of her gifted spirit, blended themselves into one deep, pure, and fervent emotion, that filled—a sun-bright ocean—all the capacious depths of her being—love to every

living thing, but especially to her own precious family, and to God. She lamented the fall of a mind like that of Talmai; she prayed daily, hourly, that it might be renewed and restored—but she did not for a moment doubt, that he was the fallen creature that Hamutal represented him—she wished not to see him any more.

To breathe out her youthful soul in the arms of those with whom she had lived in joy and affection all her days, was all she desired in this world; and to enter the land of spirits—one of God's freed and immortal children—oh! that had for her ardent mind ineffable charms. There, all her doubts would be cleared—her inquiries answered; and the boundless desires of her soul for knowledge, and for love, would be satisfied to the full. Thus lay that divine and lovely creature,—cut down at one cruel stroke, in the glory of her youthful existence,—feeble as a child, yet full of radiance as an angel; an object of sorrow and tears to her weeping kin, yet an object of mournful joy.

CHAPTER XI.

WHILE these transactions had been taking place, Dalphon had been fulfilling his military duties at Damascus. They had found it no difficult matter to reduce the insurgents, and to restore all things to apparent order. Yet it was necessary to maintain a stronger garrison; and that Dalphon should continue for some time his presence there. Yet how gladly would he have returned to Tekoah. The circumstances under which he had parted from Ahlab and Talmai, continually haunted his mind. Not all the charms of that delicious place—its wide-spread gardens, filled with every variety of flower and fruit, and watered with its numerous and transparent streams; the gaiety and affability of its inhabitants; the balmy influence of its luxurious climate, could soothe him to contentment. He continually reverted to the situation of his friends; and to the woful consequences to his favourite sister, of any moral defect in Talmai.

He was unable to account for the pertinacious abhorrence of Ahlab, whose nature was generally so gentle, so yielding, even by all that he had seen in Talmai; and the more he contemplated the circumstances which Talmai himself had detailed, the less he liked them. Had he continued with Talmai, it is probable that these feelings would have worn off. There is something so persuasive—which so undermines, and dissipates, little by little, your suspicions, or your dissatisfactions, in the society of one who wears well a friendly face, speaks in a friendly tone, that with these qualifications,—and no man possessed them so eminently as Talmai,—it is almost impossible to be truly convinced that a man is a villain. But let him be absent for a moment, and reason, freed from the slavery of a too facile imagination, begins to exert her power, and to bring out traits and deeds in new lights. So it was with Dalphon. Every day of his absence rendered him less confident of Talmai's perfect integrity, and filled him with a thousand vague fears.

It was therefore with a very vivid satisfaction that he obtained leave to return home, towards which

he instantly directed his course. Day and night he rode, scarcely allowing himself or steed rest or refreshment, till he beheld the well-known hills arise before him; when he checked his speed, and felt his heart so full of foreboding heaviness, that he was fain to linger. He proceeded slowly till he reached the pass in the mountains leading to his native wilderness, and saw its brown expanse spread like a sea, on which long flowing ridges of dark heath, seemed its mighty waves rolling onward to immensity.

His heart leapt with a sudden and painful bound as he beheld a man seated beneath a stunted oak, with his dark and melancholy aspect fixed on the sky, where the sun, sinking fast into the west, intensely illuminated the upper edge of a dense grey cloud, and filled with glory one of pale and wavy gold that floated higher and more apart—a cloud for bright and spiritual beauty as belonging to the firmament of heaven. It was Shallum that was gazing upon it; and so deeply was he absorbed in thought, that Dalphon was already at hand ere he was aroused from his reverie. He started as Dalphon accosted him, and turned upon his master

a countenance so changed and dejected, that he, in his turn, was struck with a painful surprise.

“What aileth thee, Shallum? and how fareth it at Tekoah?” said Dalphon.

“We fare alike,” Shallum replied sadly; “we have one common sorrow—the nearest only having the most.” A sudden chill went through the heart of Dalphon, and he faintly, but eagerly asked, “What! what has befallen you?”

“Talmi has fulfilled his course at Tekoah,” replied the faithful man; “in a word, he has shewn himself,—what I fear he has been his whole life,—a hypocrite—a shining, godless hypocrite.”

At Shallum’s speech, Dalphon dropped from his steed as one falling asleep. Gently he slipped to the ground, and lay for a time as one dead; then raising himself, he sate and gazed on the turf before him as one in a dream. At length he turned to Shallum, and bade him relate all the sorrowful particulars. When he had heard them, he sprung up, remounted his steed without a word, and rode rapidly towards his father’s house.

His reception there formed a striking contrast to what it had been in all former times. The mansion

was hushed, and gloomy; there was no joyful sal-
lying forth of people—no arch and happy counte-
nances of his sisters, with nods and smiles saluting
him from the upper windows, and then running
down to clasp him in a warm embrace. The very
servant who came forth to take his horse, spoke
not; but turning his head as if to hide his emotion,
led the animal silently away. He entered, and
beheld his parents changed as by the flight of many
years. They received him with open arms, with a
sadly ejaculated, “my son!” and wept on his neck
as they embraced him. Hamutal came forth, and
sprung to his bosom with an emphasis of affection
that told what her tongue could not. She led him
away, that she might explain to him something of
what had occurred; but he interrupted her by say-
ing, “I know it, dear Hamutal—I know it. I
have met Shallum—he has told me all.”

She led him by the hand to the room of Iene,
who was aware of his arrival, and impatient to
behold him. He saw, raised on her couch, propped
with cushions, a shadow—a pale and spirit-like
form—what he had left the buoyant, the beautiful
Iene. And beautiful she was still; but it was a

beauty so frail, so touched and exalted by woe ; so sweet, yet wild and unearthly, that his only refuge from desperation at the sight, was to rush forward and clasp her to his heart. Like a fluttering leaf, ready to fall at the blast of autumn—like a wan flower seen dimly in the summer twilight, lay in his arms she whom he last saw gay, and vigorous as the ibex of the hills. The tears fell warmly on his bosom, but the agitation of the meeting was too powerful for her full heart and enfeebled frame ;—she sank down like a wreath of snow in the sun. Dalphon locked her in his arms, kissed her with a tender solemnity, and burst into a flood of passionate tears. There was a long and weeping silence ;—the aged parents, Hamutal, Ahlab,—all stood around, and wept.

Dalphon sate and gazed on the ruins of his once radiant sister, and as he gazed, his tears dried up ; his countenance gradually grew from the expression of pallid sorrow to a sanguine glow of earnest thought. In a little while Iene recovered her overwhelmed powers, and clasping her thin arms about his neck, looked in his face, and smiled sweetly and cheerfully on him. She welcomed

him home with her old expressions of delight; she bade him not look thus grave and concerned; he would soon, she said,—soon see her revive; his presence, his beloved society, would give her back all her vivacity. She inquired of his fortunes since their parting; congratulated him on his advancement in the king's favour, and told many little circumstances of home occurrence which touched not on her own case. As she spoke, somewhat of her wonted bloom, much of her wonted animation kindled in her countenance, and even her friends caught the happy infection, and smiled. "Yes," said Dalphon, "we will rejoice together once more. Thou shalt be thyself again, thus restoring us to ourselves also. I must away,—ay, even at the peep of dawn,—to Jerusalem: I have commissions of much importance to discharge; but I will hasten back to witness thy reviving looks, thy recovering strength; and the hope of it will gladden me while I am away.

This intelligence cast a shade over the spirits of his friends; but they knew the imperative nature of public duties, and opposed not his intention, further than by saying, "Must it be so soon—

quite so soon as the morning?" He replied, "It must;" and turning from all sorrowful matter,—which indeed no one had dared to enter upon,—they sate, and conversed on numerous subjects of mutual and domestic interest, far into the night; and a spirit of better tone and augury, seemed to have come home with Dalphon.

But in his own soul it was not so. He could not bring himself for a moment to believe, that Iene could ever regain her first strength and happiness. He knew her nature too well—he knew her sensibility—her high and passionate temperament. That it was not for her spirit, to cast itself with all its hopes and affections upon another, and then to be suddenly torn from its object, without leaving with it the power and interest of her own life. He knew that she would smile, and smile to the last; that her nature, all love, would breathe nothing but its essence upon those around her, till it melted away into heaven—the region of its birth and eternal abode. And when he called to mind what she had been—what she might have been—and what she was, an indignation rose in his soul against the author of her unhappiness, that refused

to be controlled. He thought to himself—this is my work ; it was I who led hither this dissembling fiend. But for me, blind fool and dupe that I was !—all had still been peace and happiness in this beloved mansion. Now, this joyous, and joy-diffusing creature destroyed—these dear and venerable heads bowed down—blasted with sorrow, as with the fires of heaven—and the eternal gloom that will rest on this abode !

He retired to his own room, that he might not delay the repose of the family ; but he sought not, he was incapable of repose himself. Through the few remaining hours of darkness, he paced to and fro in his chamber, filled with the haunting thoughts of the woe and evil that his acquaintance with Talmai had brought upon those he loved.

With the first trace of dawn he called Shallum, and bade him prepare for the journey. A parting embrace—a promise of a speedy return—and they were on the way. Dalphon rode rapidly on till they were beyond sight of the house, when he suddenly turned and accosted his follower. “ Shallum ! I think I know thee well. Thou knowest Talmai ;—thou knowest his deeds. He shall die !

I will pursue him to the death.—If thou wilt follow me, it is well—if not, return and be silent. But for me, there is no peace—no life while Talmai lives! Shall the godless wretch dare to practise here his hellish arts? To mark out me, as the dupe of his hypocrisy?—to blast with his wickedness, these dear and unoffending beings—beings far higher in the scale of creation than himself—shall he do this, and live? No! if the God of vengeance yet lives—he shall taste of vengeance—and by my hand!”

Shallum listened gravely to his passionate speech, and then, drawing from his bosom the Moabitish bracelets which he had exhibited to Hamutal—“These,” said he, “I once shewed thee. I say it not now to upbraid, but to answer thee. Upon these I have sworn, that wherever Talmai goes, will I follow him. Though he fly to the ends of the earth—though he close himself in the heart of mountains, or hide in the caverns of the sea, I will pursue him till I see the drops of his blood stand red on my dagger, as the rubies of these clasps. If my friends forsake me—these shall be my friends. If I become weary, these shall refresh me: naked,

—they shall clothe me ! They shall be my cloak—my bed—my sandals—and my strength ; for I will part with them only bit by bit—gem by gem—that they may enable me to pursue him, till he or I perish !”

“ It is enough,” said Dalphon. “ In this wilderness at least, there are hearts that will not deceive ; and cursed be they who injure them !”

They rode on, not as master and servant, but as friend with friend. They had one heart—one design—one compact. They were bound together for life and death ; and as they dwelt on their sole theme, they became wrapped in it beyond all other thoughts or desires.

They were speedily at Jerusalem ; but they tarried not. “ He is not here,” said Shallum—“ he is far to the north. My spirit has pursued him even to Zidon.”

A glorious track was before them—one which, at another time, under other circumstances, they would have traversed with exulting enthusiasm ; but now, the impenetrable mists of sorrow and vengeance hovered round them, and dimmed in their eyes all those magnificent and stirring scenes.

They passed Gibeon, Bethel, and Ai, places sanctified by mighty events in their history; by Shiloh, where the ark had so long rested; by Ebal and Gerizim, the mounts ordained of God before their fathers came into the land, for the pronouncing of the curses on sin, and the blessings on obedience: and where Joshua had gathered all Israel together to witness that awful spectacle. They traversed the wide plain of Jezreel, glowing and perfumed with its luxuriant growth of all beautiful autumnal flowers; Endor, renowned as the abode of the sorceress that called up the prophet, from the dead to the living, that he might summon the living monarch to the dead, they saw before them; and to the right, the fatal hills of Gilboah. They discerned from far, the lofty conical height of Tabor, on which Barak marshalled his ten thousand, to descend in ruin upon Sisera. These they passed, but passed not to notice; nor gave they scarce a glance to the fair hills of Zebulon on the left, or those of Galilee on the right, that shone in the distance. They communed not with men nor nature: their souls sympathised only with each other, because both glowed with one great and

absorbing object. A draught from their wine-skin, or from the mountain brook, as they sate and allowed their steeds to crop the wild turf, or repose upon it, and a handful of parched corn from Shallum's bag, were all the refreshment they sought.

The gallant captain who, at the head of his troops had ridden to victory in his shining armour, and purple vest flying to the gales of Syria, was little to be distinguished in dust and haggard looks, and untrimmed hair, from his follower; and both might have passed for den-dwelling robbers,—such was the change which seven days of sanguine pursuit of their object, over mountains, across morasses and rivers, along deserts and paths terrible with huge stones and jutting rocks, had made upon them; for the highways of that quiet and pastoral land, were not calculated for speedy travellers. But now the snow-clad heights of Hermon and Lebanon gleamed before them on the right; they entered the pass of Rehob, and descended the hills towards Zidon. On the tenth day, as evening approached, they entered that ancient and famous city. In that mighty emporium of commerce, their wild and travel-worn

aspects excited no attention. Every day, hundreds of objects of every variety of costume and appearance passed its gates; often beneath the most miserable exterior, bringing the most enormous wealth. They sought out obscure lodgings in a densely populated portion of the city, and threw themselves on their couches to such repose as their spirits could taste.

CHAPTER XII.

THEY rose early, and assuming the garb of Aramean merchants, went forth. Possessed, solely possessed as their hearts were, with the accomplishment of their object, yet so new, so impressive were the scenes around them—they could not help walking through them with wonder and admiration. The city rose eastward, steep above steep, terrace above terrace, covering a vast extent of receding hills, and shewing, the higher it reached, more

ample and splendid abodes, gardens, and temples. Below, a dense and vast mass of houses exhibited a population numerous as the locusts of the desert. Long ranges of bazaars and warehouses stretched from street to street, in which were displayed the fabrics, the jewels, the works and wealth of all nations: and above them, innumerable artizans, men, women, and children, plied their various crafts. The shuttle flew, the hammer rung, and every busy and discordant sound of file and saw, tinkling bell, and whirring wheel was heard. On the roofs sate women under light linen awnings, at their frames of embroidered work, propelling their shining needles with incredible rapidity. The furnace, and the noisy, roaring forge, as they past, cast their hot breath upon them; and the narrow streets were thronged with a heterogeneous multitude of every nation, making an eternal hum and confusion of shuffling sandals and voices.

As they approached the quays, wide cellars and store-rooms received and gave out ponderous bales and casks, urged to and fro, and raised by men of stature and bulk, gigantic in comparison with the rest of the population, as if a remnant of the chil-

dren of the Anakim had been preserved for this labour; and the quays themselves struck them with silent astonishment. Far westward they saw the mighty sea rolling onward, its billows heaving and swelling beneath the bright sun, as if only to send thither wealth from the whole world. They saw ships going out and coming in, and innumerable small vessels glancing to and fro on every side; while along the tall and massy sides of the harbour, built of ponderous stones, as for everlasting endurance, were drawn up, as it appeared to them, the fleets of the universe. Endless masts reared themselves far as the eye could reach; and every fashion and size of vessel lay before them: some savagely showy, with their uncouth gods, or animals which symbolized them, at their prows; their sides and sterns painted with vermilion, blue, and black, and glittering with gold. Some flapping their light pennons to the breeze, extending their ranks of oars like wings of many plumes; and looking, with their decks covered with Egyptian carpet, as fitted to sail on the seas of heaven: while others, heavy and vast, and dark, seemed like the slaves of the ocean, made to go soberly from shore to shore,

with laborious crews and ponderous freightage. Here they beheld some crowded with, or disembarking, bands of those mercenary troops—swart Ethiopians, to whom the Zidonians committed the defence of their city, or those grotesque and malicious Nubian pigmies, who acted as archers on the walls. Here sate grave captains and merchants, watching with placid eyes the labours of their people; and in others, huge, black, and shining Africans, with white skirts and jewelled ears, basking in the sun, still as statues, and as if they could not drink in enow of those beams in which they had been nurtured. All around floated strange odours, and incessant cries; and along those wide pavements, they moved amid heaps of merchandise of every description. Those cedar chests wreathed round with cords, which contained the precious silks of the East;—jars of wine; stores of wheat from their own hills, going forth to far countries; myrrh, aloes, bundles of cinnamon, and other costly spices from Indian shores and islands; with gold, and brass, and curious woods for the cunning artificers of the place; horses, cattle, and bleating sheep; apes and peacocks; birds of Africa and

Paradise ; the tusks of the elephant in huge piles, and all the wondrous and glittering works of Zidonian and Tyrian toil ; knives and swords, arms and armour, countless utensils for domestic use, and baubles for the luxurious and gay. Every step shewed them these, and more ; and besides, such a congregation of strange people as they had never witnessed. Every nation had there of its children ; Arameans, Mesopotamians, Syrians and Assyrians, Edomites, Philistines, Egyptians, the sons of Tarshish and of the isles of Chittim. It was a multitude endless in its varieties of costume, stature, complexion ; clad in every mode, and in every colour under heaven. Some with faces dark as the fiercest suns could dye them, with eyes flashing like their own jewels, as they turned in the sun ; others yellow ; others, especially the natives of the west, fair ; and with countenances of such a lively nobility, that the two strangers beheld them not without admiration.

But as they advanced, a new world seemed to open upon them. The sounds, and sights, and attributes of commerce ceased ; they found themselves on a wide terrace overlooking the sea, where

a variety of superb and richly painted galleys and barges swung at anchor. On the other hand, the terrace was bounded by a colonnade of marble, whose pillars were of stupendous height, and which seemed to extend to the very horizon. The noble frieze of the colonnade presented an endless series of grouped figures in bas-relief; and statues of exquisite workmanship adorned its roof. Fountains played on the terrace; and throngs of people in splendid costume, walked there to and fro, or reclined beneath painted canopies, gazing on the sea, and inhaling its fresh breezes. It appeared truly a city of princes. Inexhaustible wealth alone could have raised those structures—have arrayed that multitude, and have given that air of dignity and grace, which a total exemption from the common cares of earth—a total command of all its riches and enjoyments only can confer.

They went on in silent wonder; but it was only to find themselves in wide, magnificent streets,—in ample squares waving with trees, and beautified with fountains and statuary; amid noble palaces and temples of their gods—Dagon, Baal, and Astarte; into which crowds of votaries were enter-

ing, whilst others issued thence. They lost themselves in luxurious gardens which ran up the hills, and the valleys between them; and whose sylvan arcades afforded immense views of the ocean; and in which, music, wines, fruits, and ices, were everywhere at command.

Every hour as they roamed about, filled them with increasing wonder at the stupendous wealth which commerce had heaped on a community whose territory was but as a hand-breadth; but as they crossed the centre of the city towards evening, they were struck with the approach of a dense, great crowd. As it drew near, they observed that every one bowed his head to the ground, or hastened aside. It was the time of new moon, and the car of Astarte was drawn through the city by two milk-white heifers. They stepped into a shadowy porch, that they might not pollute themselves by mixing with the idolaters, and saw it go by.

The sound of the multitude, moving as one body, was as the sound of the neighbouring seas. They saw the richly gilded car, chased and engraven with numerous figures. They saw its azure curtains thrown back, revealing to the gaze of the

adoring throng, the sitting figure of the goddess. She was imaged as a fair, and large woman, crowned with ample, upright horns of gold; her hair spangled with glittering stars; and in her hand she held a silver cross. Behind, came a vast train of open chariots, in which rode the lords and noble dames of the city—a superb assembly;—and the following host of citizens, closed them in like a flood. The shrill blast of the trumpet, the sound and clash of tabors and cymbals, accompanied her; and a band of Ethiopian horsemen followed with their upright spears.

Dalphon and Shallum had, however, scarcely turned their eyes upon the pageant, when they beheld an object that swept every other from their brain. In the front ranks of the procession;—in a splendid chariot, and accompanied by a dame of ample form, and haughty beauty, they beheld Talmāi riding, as if idolatry had been his birth-right, and as if he had wrought in his day no sin, no sorrow.

At the sight, Dalphon turned and traced his way to his obscure abode. A darkness fell upon his brain; a sickness seized upon his heart; he threw

himself upon his bed, and yielded himself up to the trembling weakness of his confounded spirit. It was a wretch like this, he thought, that could go from place to place, evidently fearing not God, caring not for man,—evidently caring not for the evil he produced—the misery he inflicted, so that, like the locust, or the palmerworm, he might alight on what was green, and devour what was pleasant:—it was a wretch like this, that he had taken to his bosom—to his home;—that he had permitted to win the pure affection of his sister;—whom he had defended with the zeal of a devoted friendship. Shame, grief, and vengeance were upon him like a mighty disease: they sate upon his soul like spirits of evil; and he lay and groaned and bled beneath them.

It was not till late in the night that he looked up, and saw Shallum sitting by his bed.

“Thou seest, Shallum,” he said, rising up, “the man with whom we have to do. Let us concert the plan by which we soonest may make this daring idolater feel that he is not beyond the reach of punishment;—let us search out his abode.”

“It is done,” said Shallum. “I followed the

procession; and joining now one, now another of the spectators, I learned that Talmi has married Bealoth, a princess of mighty wealth and influence amongst this people; a priestess also of the goddess Astarte. I saw them conduct the idol's car to the temple; I saw her image borne into a grove hard by,—an ancient grove, pillared with the trunks, shadowy with the boughs, of immense trees. I saw them place the image on a shrine in the midst of the grove, which was ascended on four sides by many steps of white marble. It was in the midst of a green, smooth-shaven lawn, on the brink of a fair lake. There were fountains playing, lamps suspended from the trees, and a table spread in the shape of the crescent moon, at which the lords and noble dames sate down to feast: and before they sate down, every one went up, and bowed to the goddess seven times; and laid upon the shrine a little cake of honey and flour,—others wine—others, sweet incenses, which burning in golden censers on the altar, diffused a delectable odour through the whole grove. Then sate they down to feast; while the people, in crowds, still went up to pay their offerings to the goddess;—

and, anon, the clash of cymbals, the sound of tabors and pipes were heard, and a troop of damsels, fair as angels, came forth from the covert of the trees, and danced before the banqueters. Oh! they were beautiful; but their beauty was too much exposed to the eyes of men. Then I heard the chiefs clap their hands, and applaud the beauty of the dancers; and cry, "honour and triumph to Astarte, and to her worship for ever!" And I saw Talmai, gay and jocund, and full of his shining words—ay, as if he had been born amid these idolaters. These things I saw, and more, that warned me to haste away.

I have seen Talmai's abode in this city. Thou and I have passed it, and marvelled at its grandeur; but about an hour's ride hence, lies his favourite dwelling. This is it which shall aid our desires. We may strike him in the city, and be hewn in pieces in a moment; and although I would rather die ten deaths, than the wretch should escape, yet why should we sell our lives for this base idolater, if we can save them? Let us up, and mark where we may best lie in wait for him. Daily he goes to and fro; we shall not tarry long for his coming."

They arose, mounted their steeds, and went out of the city. They took the way towards Talmai's rural palace; and as they went they noted well the ground on either side of the road, to discover a place of ambush. Not far from his house they observed a little valley, hemmed in between high rocks, and filled with a dark mass of trees. "This is the spot," cried Shallum, "here we may wait in safety." They turned in, and found a place damp and obscure, and choked with tall rampant plants. It was a spot fitted to their purpose. They tied their horses to the trees; and ascending the broken sides of the rocks, gained a little ledge, where amid the leafy branches they could look out and see, on the one hand, Talmai's abode,—on the other, far along the road toward the city. Yet the sun went down, and Talmai passed not; yes, four days, and they watched in vain; returning to the city with nightfall, and issuing forth with the opening of the gates in the morning. At length, they saw two horsemen issue from Talmai's ground. They saw the air of the first, and by that, and by his rapid riding, knew that it was Talmai: and hastening down, they issued

forth to meet him. He came on with the same vehement speed, the same bold and joyous bearing as he was wont; and Dalphon, calling on God in his heart to give him to execute his law upon the traitor—the idolater—dashed furiously on, and baring his head, that he might at once be known, cried, “Wretch! thou art met!”

At the words, Talmai reining in his horse, gazed for a moment with an inquiring look, then exclaimed, “What, Dalphon, is it thou?”

“It is I!” cried Dalphon, springing forward with his drawn sword, “it is I; come to chastise thee for thy crimes. Perish, heartless idolater as thou art!” He thrust at him with all his might; but Talmai, drawing his sword, with a motion like lightning, warded the blow. Cool as a powerful man who, in sport with a child, holds him at bay with a slender wand, so sate Talmai on his horse, in an attitude of confident, easy defence; and, with a countenance in which the exulting laughter of a fiend played with a dreadful smilingness—said slowly, “Has the sensible—the magnanimous Dalphon then, really come so far to play the fool? Could it not suffice thee, that Talmai,

having amused his leisure with the simple creatures of Tekoah, at length withdrew peaceably, and without committing the ravage that was in his power? Many a vain fool has paid tribute to the experienced sagacity of Talmai, yet Dalphon escaped,—many a noble woman has fallen into the pleasant snares which he loves to lay for them, yet I have left thy pretty sister much as I found her; thanks to her insipidity and to my own meritorious forbearance. What then aileth thee? Return whilst thou mayest—return with that black shadow of thine—that lover of Moabish bracelets—that stealer of jewels;—return and be great in Israel—and glorious in Tekoah: there thou art some-one—here, are men who love to live and laugh at the solemn follies of heaven-dreaming, prophesying Hebrews—and who will laugh now tenfold, that simple Israelitish youths can go to the ends of the earth in quest of men who will suffer themselves to be killed by hands not able to ruffle a hair in the mane of their antagonist's horse. Go! I would not hurt thee—I only say to thee, as thy sister Hamutal said to me—depart in peace!—and let me pursue my way to the city.”

While Talmai said this, Dalphon replied not, but by smiting at him with all his might; and at length, seeming to espy an auspicious moment, he broke in upon him with a stroke, that had it succeeded, would have cleft his head in twain; but Talmai avoided it by a quick sideward movement of his horse. In the same instant, Dalphon saw Shallum rush against Talmai, and assail him with his dagger. Then Talmai changing the expression of his countenance, from the bitter playfulness of hate, to its darkest and most deadly scowl of rage, began to fight in earnest, his follower taking his place at his side; and terrible and desperate was the conflict.

Talmai was brave and active to a miracle; and so fiercely and rapidly did he deal his blows, that blood soon stained, in various places, the vests of both Dalphon and Shallum; and it appeared a dubious combat in which they had engaged. The past offences of Talmai, his present taunts, fired the soul of Dalphon to an anguish of desperation; he fought with the bitter fury of a man that would cast away a thousand lives in the ardour of his unspeakable hate; but his anguish was heightened to despair,

by perceiving how little he prevailed against his insolent enemy. Is it thus, he thought, that God prospers the wicked; and he began, in his soul, to accuse Providence: he ran over in the lightning rapidity of an excited mind, all the evils of failure—the triumph of this base traitor—the dreadful distress of his family. At this moment Shallum, giving a yell as of anger and despair—as if the same feelings, the same thoughts had been working in and torturing him, reared his enraged steed against Talmai, and aimed his dagger with a look of furious madness at his side. Talmai shunned the stroke by another dexterous movement of his horse; but his follower, in the act to rush on Dalphon, received it in his heart. He fell; and Talmai, awaiting not the unequal contest, pushed on his horse, and fled toward the city. His enraged enemies pursued with frenzied velocity—their hopes now rested on the speed of their horses—on the fate of a few moments. They pursued, smiting their horses with fury, hanging forward over their foaming, blood-discoloured heads, and longing in their souls for a javelin or arrow to send after the detested caitiff. It was a hot and

critical chase. Near, nearer the two avengers drew upon their foe ; but the gates of the city appeared in view. A moment—and all would be over ! They made one desperate, headlong effort to reach him ; but he drew near—he dashed through the gates ! They checked their careering steeds, and wheeled round for flight.

CHAPTER XIII.

“AWAY !” cried Shallum, “this chance is lost !—let us preserve ourselves for another.” They hurried onwards towards the country ; but in a few minutes a troop of horsemen issued at full speed from the gates, and gave them chase. “On ! on !” cried Shallum, “let us not die like dogs. To the mountains ! To the mountains !” They darted away at the full stretch of their coursers’ speed. Fortunately these were of the prime race of the desert ; while their pursuers were mounted on

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heavy Aramean horses; and the Hebrews soon flew far before them. Yet was it a fearful chase; the mountains were distant; and their enemies knew well the country:—faint, therefore, appeared their hope of escape through the pursuit of a day. Yet they ceased not to fly; and still they found themselves far before; though seldom beyond the view of their pursuers. Their steeds too, put to most violent exertion in the pursuit of Talmai, began to fail. They were covered with dust and foam; their nostrils sent out short, quick blasts of hot, steamy breath; and as they flagged more and more, higher and higher ground presented itself. “Let us halt here,” cried Dalphon ever and anon, “and sell our lives as we may. It avails not to fly thus!” “To the mountains! to the mountains!” replied Shallum; “and see! they are at hand!” They flew onward, ascending through woods, vineyards, and scattered fields; and as they passed, the inhabitants in wonder gazed on their flight; and some, seeing their approaching antagonists, joined in the pursuit, others sent after them flights of arrows.

But now they approached the regions of naked-

ness. High, black crags,—lofty, bare mountains were around them; the roads were impeded by large stones, and fallen trees, and at length vanished altogether. “Let us gain these heights,” said Shallum, urging his fainting and staggering horse onward with impatient obstinacy, “and we are safe.” Dalphon followed, but unwillingly, and often looked back with an air of discontent, as though he would await the foe, who came on with curses and halloos that rose and rung amid the high cliffs with an infernal wildness, and with many a hollow echo.

But now they stood on a lofty elevation. All around was a naked scene of chaotic wildness; black and splintered rocks rearing themselves in every imaginable shape of hideous savageness. They looked below—the foe still followed, but evidently urging their horses with difficulty amid the fallen crags, over the beds of jagged, stony torrents that impeded the way—and they were more distant than ever. The two now dismounted, leading their exhausted steeds, well as they might, through the intricacies of that stony wilderness. At length they stood on the brink of a deep and dark fissure.

"Here," said Shallum, "let our steeds take their rest. They are useless;—we cannot take them further with advantage; if we leave them here, they will betray our dismounted condition to the enemy. But if they find them not, they will still go onward in pursuit of us—and in such tracts only as they will suppose a steed can travel." He alit, and plunging his dagger into the side of his steed, rolled him into the gulph, and bounding across it with the alacrity of youth, cried "hither! hither only is safety!" Dalphon stood not to calculate: he trusted to the tried sagacity of Shallum, and dismounted; slew his steed, though with an aching heart; rolled him into the gulph, which appeared unfathomable; and scattering sand on the gore, he leaped over the abyss, and followed his trusty guide. In a moment they disappeared amongst the rocks, taking a sideward course, and following the stony windings of the hills till they had reached a distant eminence, where a few stunted and shattered pines were the last traces of vegetation. Here they paused, to try if they could discern any traces of their pursuers; and they did not wait long for evidence. On various heights

they beheld men gazing as to discover some common object; and soon they heard cries, though far off, as of people calling to each other.

“We must move on,” said Shallum; “but we may proceed with safety, for they will still look for us in tracks where our steeds might go, since they cannot find them.” They pursued their way silently, and swiftly as the nature of the place allowed, still ascending and ascending. They found themselves now in the solitary heights of Lebanon. Above them shone its bright ranges and peaks, covered with eternal snows. The wind blew around them as with the voice of winter; the torrents that fell impetuously from their elevated beds, sounded awfully in those silent, aerial deserts. A lonely eagle might be seen soaring afar off; a single ibex cropping the lichens of the rocks, and bounding away at the most distant glimpse of them,—all besides was a lifeless expanse of vast, towering hills, long winding vales of bare stone, and deep, unapproachable precipices. Night was coming down. They sate down, therefore, under a hollow, at the foot of a tall, impending cliff, so shallow, that it merited not the name of

a cave. Shallum had not forgotten, amidst all his enmity to Talmai, the chances of a flight, nor provision for it. His wine-bottle and his bag of parched corn, hung at his belt; and were now produced to good purpose.

They attempted not to sleep: they sate and consulted on the course to pursue. Dalphon proposed to return to Zidon; to assume another garb; and to wait for a better opportunity of executing vengeance on Talmai.

Shallum smiled. "Dost thou yet know Talmai no better?" he said. "Be sure we need not seek Talmai;—he will seek us. And why should we go to Zidon?—he is not there. In these hills will he pursue us; and to the farthest limits of Israel will he pursue us, if we escape so far. But no! we have shed blood; and for blood shall we be sought after. We must hasten to Kedesh, the northern City of Refuge. Take what way we will, we shall find the emissaries of Talmai ready to fall upon us:—there is no safety but in Kedesh, and thither let us flee, and seek justice at the hand of God's appointed judges."

"What!" said Dalphon, "wouldst thou flee to

certain destruction? Will not Talmai appear, and swear that thou hast slain his follower, a kinsman, and a Hebrew,—and what then can save thee or me? Says not the law, that if a man slay another with a weapon of iron; or with a stone; or with a weapon of wood—he is a murderer—he shall surely die;—the Avenger of Blood himself shall slay the murderer? Saith it not—if he flee to one of these Cities of Refuge, the elders of the city shall send and fetch him thence; and deliver him up to the Avenger of Blood, who shall put him to death? Is not this to throw ourselves wilfully into the snare—into the hands of Talmai—to fall meanly and unresistingly by his hand—his hated and triumphant hand? No! let us wage war with him in the great city—or in the desert, and on the mountain; let our lives be spent to extinguish his life; let us endure all the buffetings of the elements, all toils, all watchings, all pains and anxieties; but let it be in the hand of God, not in the hand of men!”

“Yet,” said Shallum, “it is our only chance. Everywhere besides will our implacable foe be upon us, and not alone by himself, but by his

hirelings. We shall be but as two to ten, or as two to a hundred. There will be no peace, no security;—in the midst of our fields—on our own hearths, the hirelings will rush on us and shed our blood. No; let us trust to the justice of God's appointed judges. And I fear no evil. Thinkest thou God sways not the judge's heart, as he sways the elements of nature? I fear no evil. Moses says—thou shalt not put a man to death by one witness :—and what more has Talmi? and, moreover, thou shalt not suffer an idolater to live. Whoever meets him, shall slay him! What need we more? To Kedesh! to Kedesh we must escape! But we must hold right on, over these heights, and over those of Hermon: we must touch not on the pass of Hamath, nor on that of Rehob, for there, be sure, Talmi's people await us. To-morrow let us pass these heights; the next, traverse the mountain valleys; and the third, cross Hermon, and descend to Kedesh."

It appeared the only feasible plan of action; and with the first dawn of day the melancholy travellers continued their course. They wound slowly and with toil up the mountain, covered with snow,

slippery with ice, and it was noon before they reached the summit. A glorious prospect was spread around them. Tyre, Zidon, and numbers of other towns lay full in view; far to the west rolled the mighty sea; eastward, and southward, rose still higher peaks of Lebanon and Hermon; to the north, the hills of Syria; to the south, those of their own dear land. Below them lay the dark and renowned forests of Lebanon. They descended into the woody and wide vale, and passing through scenes, of forest grandeur, crossing many a rapid mountain stream, they again began to ascend the second range of hills. They reached a place of many caverns, abrupt, shattered, and desolate, and overhung with wild masses of trees. They entered one vast antre; and, seeking out the darkest nook, lay down for a brief rest. But as their eyes were about to close in much-needed sleep, they were startled with the cry of hounds, and hastening to the mouth of the cave, beheld a band of men, led by dogs, in full cry, winding up to the very place of their retreat. "God be our refuge!" cried the fugitives, and fled into the depth of the cave. It opened on, and on, before

them, till it became dark as midnight; and waters were heard roaring in the hidden distance. In a moment of safety, the very sound of those dark and unseen waters would have chilled the soul with fear; but man, in his vengeance, is still more terrible than the most appalling works of nature; and pride, that shrinks at the very thought of giving a triumph to a foe, makes men leap rather to destruction, in the jaws of elemental horror, than fall into the hands of a sneering antagonist.

The fugitives explored with cautious haste their way, till they stood on the brink of the dark, roaring stream, when Shallum plunged in, and pronounced that its bottom could not be felt. He had not, however, time to say more, for the impetuous, subterranean flood began to bear him away; and putting forth all his strength, he attempted, for he was an active swimmer, to reach its farther shore. It was not long ere Dalphon heard him calling in tones that echoed with a deep, sepulchral sound from the distant darkness, for him to plunge in and follow him. He obeyed, and soon found himself borne away by a power of rushing water that seemed irresistible. But the

example of Shallum, and his voice continually calling upon him, excited him to put forth all his strength: yet he felt himself still borne away, and heard below him a sullen roar, as if the stream was shot down some tremendous gulph. The terrible idea almost disabled him. He stretched and struggled onward, and, like a man in a dream, seemed still borne away. In an agony of despair he battled with the cold, Lethean stream, yet the sound of Shallum's voice only grew more and more distant; when, at once, he struck against the rock, and clinging to it, raised himself from the flood, and found himself on the solid pavement of the other side. He had been borne down by the flood, while Shallum had kept stationary at the place of his own landing; thus had Dalphon seemed to get farther and farther from his call.

Faint, and benumbed with the extreme cold of the river, they went on, exploring their way through the pitchy obscurity; and soon beheld a point of light, small, but intense as a star, far above them. They followed, and discerned an ascending path to the day. Fearful, however, to emerge to the light, they still lingered in the

depth of the gloom, to ascertain who were their pursuers. Nor did they wait long. The hounds in full cry, entered the cave; and coming to the brink of the water, stood and howled, filling the cavern halls with the most fearful, reverberated yells. At their heels came a troop of eager men, with arms and torches in their hands; and at their head, Talmai himself, all on fire with the hotness of pursuit. The fugitives, placed behind a natural column of rock, watched with intensest anxiety, their proceedings; and heard Talmai exclaim, "Here I had looked to seize the caitiff assassins; but where are they? Have they escaped through this solid roof of mountain? Have these floods swallowed them up?" He urged the hounds to assay the stream, but they would not; and some of his followers, who appeared to be hunters, said, "If they have entered these waters, they are lost. Never mortal passed this impetuous torrent; he would be swept away, and dashed to atoms in the abyss below." "Let us away then!" exclaimed Talmai—"again they have escaped us; but if it be necessary to trace every height, every cave and nook of these mountains;—if years be

consumed;—if it cost my life to overtake and destroy them;—that time, toil, money, and hatred, shall not be wanting.”

They searched then, all the gloomy turnings and hollows of these dark caverns with their torches that flung their red light dismally into the upper glooms; while the perpetual yellings of the dogs, and the hollow roar of the river, reverberated to and fro, made no faint resemblance of the horror and confusion of hell.

In a little time, the fugitives ascended the steep track to the upper aperture; and issuing to daylight, amid a clump of ancient trees, glanced carefully to and fro; and at length discerned their foes hastening down the valley westward. Upward, and upward, therefore, they took their laborious way; and again passing the night as before, on the following day discerned Kedesh lying in the distance below them. They descended the woody steeps carefully towards it; for they knew that Talmai or his creatures would lie in wait, especially on the highway near the city. They kept therefore aloof of it, descending from ledge to ledge, by the most rough and tangled paths; and care-

fully avoiding even the notice of the shepherds, as they approached the lower slopes.

It was night as they drew near the walls of Kedesh; but they dared not present themselves at any of the gates, lest their foes should fall upon them, but started even at the sight of those guide-posts erected by the crossway sides, pointing towards the city, with the word "REFUGE" painted in large characters upon them, to direct the flight of fugitives. They approached the walls in a wilderness spot, where jutting rocks projected from the steep, opposing slope; and discovering a light in a dwelling upon it, they called to the inhabitants. The window was soon thrown open by an aged man, to whom they declared their situation; and claimed the protection of the place. Scarcely had they made the request, when they saw a large basket descending by a rope, and entering, one by one, were drawn up.

They found themselves in a simple dwelling, in the presence of an ancient Levite, his wife, and daughter, — a gentle, compassionate-looking damsel.

"I see," said the host, "by your exhausted

looks, your torn and sullied raiment, that you have experienced the miseries of those who fly from the avenger. I ask not what is your misfortune, or your crime: to-morrow you must answer that to the judges. For the present, such hospitality as the law requires of us and the place, is yours. Ye might, perhaps, marvel at the speed with which your request of access was granted; but the daily necessities of a place of refuge have taught all the measures and contrivances which are needful. Along the circuit of these walls, frequent are the basket and the pulley; for, frequent are the cries of miserable fugitives for entrance, who dare not approach the gates, nor trust themselves on the highways."

This he said; then brought water to wash their feet; and placed on the board before them, bread and wine, dried figs, and olives. After their repast, he shewed them to their couch, and withdrew.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE fugitives were deeply in need of rest. For many weeks they had lived in a continual state of anxiety and exertion; for the last, in violent, unremitted watching and flight: and Shallum, stretched on his couch, was soon in deep sleep; but not so Dalphon. The excitement of their rapid and singular retreat from Zidon through the mountains, had in some degree, prevented the full exercise of reflection; but now it came upon him like a flood, and he felt himself oppressed with a heart-subduing melancholy. He looked back with lively grief at the signal failure of their enterprise; he regretted that another, and perhaps an innocent man, had been its victim; he was mortified at the triumph they had given to Talmai; and their present situation, to him so perfectly novel a one, filled him with most gloomy feelings. Accustomed all his life to live in freedom, and amidst friendship and distinction, it was in his eyes ignominious and

humiliating in the extreme, to be under the necessity of flying for his life; to be cooped up in a distant town, in the character of a prisoner, and about to be brought before the judges, to be tried for assassination. He was moved to agony at the idea; he rose and paced restlessly to and fro in the most exquisite mental torture. A few hours, and he must be led forth as a criminal, to the gaze of the multitude—to the stern, cold eyes of the judge, perhaps to death! He knew the summary nature of the proceedings in these cities; and, all unused to stand in the situation of a culprit, he had no experience, and therefore no confidence in the strength of the pleas which he must set up. He thought on the evil that Talmai had brought upon his family—on the added shame of his attempt to punish him;—he saw in imagination that base and cruel monster ready to pounce upon him at the judgment-seat—to claim him as his lawful prey, and to lead him away to plunge his dagger into his heart at the city gate—a spectacle to the crowd. Oh! what tidings would these be to reach Tekoah, where, even his present absence must be adding unspeakably to the sorrow already there; or if

tidings not quite so terrible as these ; yet the very news of his captivity and danger, would be enough to send that heart-broken maiden, already hovering on the verge of death—the hoary heads of his parents—to the grave. He groaned deeply at the picture presented by his own mind ; the perspiration rolled heavily from his brows ; he gasped for air and liberty. He sought to fling open the casement of the room, but he found it firmly secured with lock and iron-bars, and his heart sunk at the discovery. Ready admittance they could find to this awful city ; but there was no egress, it seemed, but through the court of judgment. It appeared like a trap or a pit, into which they had wilfully thrown themselves ; and deeply did he blame himself, for having adopted the advice of Shallum, who, apparently careless of consequences, slept soundly.

He gazed with wonder on him, and half impatient of his slumber under such circumstances—half impatient of his own unpartaken thoughts, he was ready to awake him ; but he looked again at the sunken and haggard cheeks—the wild, and fast-fading locks of the faithful man, and his soul was touched with a quick sense of love and com-

passion for him. He remembered all his unceasing zeal, all the dangers and toil he had shared in his cause, and he permitted him to sleep on.

As morning began to dawn, Shallum suddenly lifted up his head, and seeing Dalphon sitting, resting his forehead upon his knees, he started up, and anxiously asked what ailed him.

"Canst thou ask that Shallum, in this place?" he replied. "It is well that thou canst sleep in the face of disgrace and death. I envy, but cannot imitate thee."

"Oh! my honoured master!" Shallum cried, with a look full of pity, "and hast thou been tormenting thyself through the night with these fearful imaginations? Put them away, I pray thee, for be sure they are utterly vain. Have I not told thee, that the law says, thou shalt not suffer an idolater to live? Upon this rock we stand—and upon this we are safe. Thinkest thou that Talmai shall triumph? I tell thee, nay!—but if he dare come hither to accuse us—here will the judge execute upon him all we desire."

"But, Shallum, shall we conceal our chief motive, and say alone that we pursued Talmai as

an idolater? No! we cannot do that, we must declare the truth."

"But why?" replied Shallum, "why criminate ourselves? We will declare the truth,—that Talmai is an idolater; and demand the execution of the law upon him. What need of more?"

"But the judges, Shallum, will demand our motives for the deed; our entire motives; we cannot escape the truth. We cannot, Shallum! we cannot! we must stand by the truth, and put our trust in God!"

"Yes!" said Shallum, "we will put our trust in God, indeed! and thinkest thou that God will forsake his zealous followers, and suffer the apostate to triumph? Thou shalt see God's wonders! Thou shalt see the signal doings of his hand! The oppressor has dug a pit, and shall fall into it; his wickedness shall come down upon his own pate."

Shallum could not bring Dalphon to agree for a moment to suppress one iota of truth. He disdained every approach to duplicity, though it might honour itself with the name of wisdom; but Shallum's tone of confidence in the laws, and in the

providence of God, cheered and elevated his spirit. He felt refreshed, and as day grew in the sky, he strengthened himself to encounter the coming trial.

At an early hour the host brought in a simple meal, and inquired whether they would choose to surrender themselves to the judges, or would send to inquire of the President of the Court whether any one had accused them? They preferred the latter mode, and gave in their names. He went, and speedily returned with the message that Talmai, the son of Shaphan, of the tribe of Zebulon, accused Dalphon, the son of Jathniel, and Shallum, the son of Penuel, of the tribe of Judah, of the murder of his kinsman Lod, the son of Doeg,—and demanded them at the hands of the judges! They found that guards were already stationed at the door of their host Gedaliah, and the good old man requested them to give up to him their weapons of offence; according to the law which required that no weapon should be worn, except by the guards, nor even made in the City of Refuge, lest the hostile parties should fall on each other, and violate the sanctuary of Israel. They were soon sum-

moned to the tribunal; and descending to the door, were received by the guards, who carried swords and heavy spears; and who conducted them to the gate of the city.

The court of justice, in those times, consisted only of a broad piazza, close to the city gate; the city wall itself forming its back, and its open front looking upon a wide space within the city, where the people might stand and witness the proceedings. A door, at the end of the piazza, connected it with the lodge over the gate, where the judges could retire to consult on any secret or difficult question.

They found the Shophetim and Soterim, the judges and their recorders, already assembled. The seven judges, seated on a semi-circular tribunal beneath the piazza; the scribes on low seats at their feet, with their books open, recording the evidence and judgment given in causes then going on. Numbers of spectators were collected; whom the people passing in and out of the city, occasionally joined; and other persons stood ready to receive their trials.

Dalphon and Shallum soon beheld a scene cal-

culated for filling them with terrible forebodings. A man was accused for the murder of another, and in a few minutes declared guilty of the charge, and handed over to the avenger to be conducted to the place appointed, beyond the gates, for the execution and burial of malefactors. They heard the cries of the unhappy man,—they saw him kneel, with agonized features and gestures of despair, imploring mercy of the judges, who, with an almost imperceptible motion of the hand, dismissed his plea; and he was borne away to death.

As he disappeared, Talmai stepped from the crowd, and with an air and manner of assumed gravity, ill concealing his fiendish exultation, called for punishment on Dalphon, the son of Jathniel, and Shallum, the son of Pennel. The guard placed them, in the same moment, in front of the tribunal. For a moment the judges and scribes gazed upon them with stern and silent countenances; then bade the accuser declare his cause. With that ready eloquence, that show of truth, that air of lofty sincerity so eminently at his command, and which might impose on the shrewdest and most experienced minds, Talmai stated that,

for cause or causes unknown to himself, these persons had pursued him with implacable hatred ; yes, even as far as Zidon : had lain wait by the way, and fallen upon him ; had put him in imminent peril of his life, and slain his kinsman."

The judges demanded whether it were so ; and what was their motive ?

Dalphon, brave as he was, often as he had faced danger and death, yet was he so stricken with the perfect newness of his situation—with the summary and terrible fate of the last prisoner—with the idea that flashed strongly on him, that in a few moments he might be sent by the hand of his mortal enemy into eternity (for he saw how swiftly and mechanically the dreadful work went on ; it was only a motion of the judge's hand, and he was no more), that he felt for an instant his whole frame chilled, and struck with trembling ; his bosom heaved for breath, and his tongue cleaved with dryness to his palate. But at the sight of Talmai's mien—the sound of his smooth, deceitful tongue, his blood bounded to his cheek—he felt his heart filled with instantaneous courage ; and burning with indignation, he stepped forward, bowed reve-

rently to the judges, and declared, with unhesitating boldness, that he had followed Talmai with a strong and holy determination to punish him for his crimes and injuries to his family; and, moreover, to execute the law on him as an idolater, whom every one was commanded to destroy; that he had slain no one, and therefore was amenable to no law; nor was his follower, Shallum, guilty of murder; for he had slain a man by accident, not by design. Talmai, with fierce indignation, repelled the charge of idolatry, and treated it as the poor and base refuge of defeated malice.

The chief judge waved his hand, and addressed the prisoners:—"Ye have openly confessed the charge against you; your plea cannot be admitted, or every one accused of slaying his fellow will rise up with similar accusations against his complainant. Ye are proven guilty by the law."

"Nay!" said Shallum, "I have not admitted the deed. A man was slain; but it remains to be proved by whom; and this upon good evidence, and also from what motive. Let it be proved that I have slain this man; and I demand that the accuser shall prove it by more than one witness;

for Moses says, 'Thou shalt put no man to death by one witness.' I demand time, moreover, to bring up our evidence."

Vehemently Talmai opposed the demand of delay, offering to produce his witnesses; and the judges appeared ready to grant his desire.

"Then," cried Dalphon, "we appeal from this tribunal, to be judged in our own city. Ye cannot resist the law!"

At this the countenance of Talmai fell. The judges looked gravely on each other; and Shallum added:—"Yes! we demand time, or to be judged in our own city. And beware, ye judges of God's people, what ye do; for this is not a common matter. It is a cause between the king's officers, and will not be passed by lightly, but will sound from end to end of Israel. Think ye that Dalphon, the son of Jathniel, the friend of David, the friend of Solomon, can be put to death as ye would put to death a dog?"

As Shallum said this, a murmur ran through the people; there was a simultaneous pressing forward to gaze on Dalphon; for the fame of his valour, of his rising favour with the king, of his generous

nature, had gone through the land. The judges spoke eagerly with each other, and said, "What time require ye?" They replied, "The space of a moon; for our abode is far off; and it may be needful to tarry for those who cannot come speedily."

"Then be it so," replied the chief judge; "we grant you the space of a moon; but dwell ye in the city: go not out of it, or your blood be upon your own heads."

He waved his hand, and the guard removed them to the dwelling of Gedaliah,—the people following in eager crowds.

"And now, my sons," said the good old man, "I see that ye are engaged in a righteous cause;—ye are jealous for God and the commonwealth of Israel; I see that ye are of a good and faithful lineage; and may the Lord give you safe deliverance out of the hands of this strong son of Belial; for I know that he is strong, and very deceitful! But in the city ye are safe; and ye may choose your own abode. Bread and wine, and the covering of a roof, the law provides for all fugitives claiming the protection and justice of the place;

but he that is able, is at liberty to provide himself as he liketh best."

"Then," said Dalphon, "let us abide under thy roof; for we like it well; and we will requite thee for it. And we would, moreover, avail ourselves of thy experienced counsel. I pray thee find us a swift and sure messenger, to bear our letters to our kindred, and bring back their replies."

"Hasten ye to write," said Gedaliah; "I will bring a trusty messenger."

These matters were speedily arranged; and the two stood and watched from the roof their courier, on his fleet steed, push up the winding road of the southern ascent, and disappear. When he was lost sight of, Dalphon sate down, and gave way to melancholy thoughts. He had sent forth to his already afflicted family, tidings that would fill it with astounding dismay. He saw the hoary locks of his father shake, as he bowed his head in unspeakable grief; he saw his mother's—his sister's silent despair;—he saw Iene—if she yet lived—overwhelmed with this last stroke of evil; and his heart trembled within him. He had addressed his letters to Ahlab, and Shallum had added others;—one to his wife, and one to Reu.

CHAPTER XV.

THEY had now full time to observe the character of this place, and contemplated it with a sad interest. It was but a small city, but it was inclosed with high and strong walls. It was surrounded by hills of considerable elevation; and to the north and west, the heights of Hermon rose grandly and boldly to the view. Little trade or manufacture of any species of goods appeared in the place: the revenues of lands devoted to public justice, and the money drawn from the maintenance of the fugitives, seemed to constitute the chief wealth of the inhabitants; part of whom, accustomed to the melancholy scenes perpetually passing, went to and fro, and looked upon flight and fear, and the shedding of blood, with eyes of unobservant apathy; while another portion passed their time in attending the tribunal, watching the events, listening to the extraordinary details of the daily trials. Some circumstance was for ever occurring

to gratify the thirst of novelty; to soothe their unappeasable love of seeing and telling striking or singular things. And truly strange and fearful were the things daily seen and done. Dreadful the guilt, the passion, the vengeance, that were compelled to flee, and abide their judgment here.

Within the city, strong guards paraded the streets, surrounded the tribunal, and were posted at the doors of prisoners previous to trial; while some with dark and savage countenances, with souls on fire for vengeance, walked sullenly up and down, with fiercely rolling eyes, impatient of the day of trial which should give their victims to their hands. Others, who had been acquitted of the charge of murder, but found guilty of manslaughter, and therefore doomed here to spend their lives till the death of the high-priest—a period probably equivalent to their own existence—sauntered about or sate in the sun, objects of the most pitiable dejection; watching with vague, dreamy eyes, the clouds, or the people in the streets, or the very sparrows that chattered and fought in the dust before them. It was fearful to know that you were daily amongst murderers, and men in whom the excess of passion and guilt, had slain all the

peace and hopes of life. Yet every precaution was taken, which could prevent injury to the fugitives from their pursuers, or from their own hands, often more to be dreaded: every one entering the city was examined, and their weapons of offence taken away; and daily were families coming, some from the distant parts of Israel, to take up their abode with the father, the brother, the husband, who was doomed here to dwell. Many a curious, many a moving scene did they present. Women with their children, might be continually seen coming down the hills, with their ass laden with all their little worldly wealth—weary, yet persevering wayfarers, leaving all their old abodes and old familiar friends, to cheer the one unfortunate heart, imprisoned in the city of crime and sorrow. Often too, might the laden wagon—the gay chariot of the wealthy, be seen coming on the same errand.

Such were the scenes which Dalphon and Shallum witnessed. Now they would attend the tribunal, and behold those instances of human passion—the terrors of speedy death—the frantic joy of unexpected deliverance, which fearfully impress the spectator; and listen to relations full of won-

der and curious developments of man's heart. Now they would sit on the house-top, and perhaps discern some unhappy being, flying towards the city for his life—on foot or on steed; alone, or guarded by a troop of friends; and perhaps as he neared the gate, see his enemies already before him, start from their ambush, and slay him on the spot.

It was a terrible circumstance, that every highway to the city, notwithstanding the precautions of the law—decreeing the width, the goodness, the clearness of the road, and the erection of bridges, to facilitate the chance of escape, was beset with eyes that watched for blood. The nooks and hollows, the little openings between the hills, were tenanted by liers-in-wait, who there erected rude booths of boughs and turf, and were ready at any sound of approach to peep forth. The flying wretch, who traversed these roads with his life in his hands, and beheld the guide-posts with the large words REFUGE! REFUGE! upon them, like voices of ominous warning sounding into his soul, saw to his inexpressible terror, as he drew near the city, wild, ferocious countenances put forth—fierce glaring eyes gleam, from the black and smoky huts of many a hidden hollow.

The wretch who had borne the tedium of many years in the city, smitten at length with a quenchless desire of liberty and home, and hoping, perhaps, that the flight of time, so burthensome to himself, had conquered the vengeful spirit of his adversary, would suddenly sally forth, and find that hatred was stronger than the fear of death. Here would his unweariable foe descry him, spring upon him, and stretch him in his blood.

They would observe some woe-begone man, seated on the city wall for days and weeks, gazing fixedly, intensely, on some point in the distant horizon, for in that direction should the friend, the succour come, to save him by a certain day : and as the day drew nearer, more eagerly and wildly would he look and look. In the earliest dawn of morning, amid the latest gleam of eve, would he be discerned ; and after it came not, perhaps some eye that had noted him, day by day, on his station, would miss him—and he would be found a battered mass, at the rocky foot of the wall.

Oh ! how fair did the country look, even to Dalphon : how fresh seemed the free breeze that wandered over those hills : how did he gaze on the

dark forested sides, on the high, snow-capped summits of Hermon, and think, even the days when they fled through its wild tracts with vengeance behind them—happy! What then was the soul of him who had borne the weight—the joyless silence of a long life in that prison-house, entering in the strength and bounding blood of youth, and sitting, perhaps, now a tottering and decrepid old man, on some forlorn door-sill, refusing to call it his home, though he had ceased to have another in the earth!

Dalphon devoted many of the weary moments of waiting, to talking with his host Gedaliah, who had passed all his days here, and whose mind was a treasury of the most stirring and dark passages of human life. He loved likewise to listen to Mehalath, Gedaliah's gentle daughter. When he first entered their abode, he noticed in her nothing but her compassionate air. As he further contemplated her, he was struck with her extreme and peculiar beauty. Her figure was of middle stature, and slender; her face fair, and even pale. She was like a chiseled image for symmetry and complexion; but the striking character of her form

was gentleness—of her face, pensive, nay even melancholy tenderness. Her voice was sweet, deeply sweet; full of affection, but full also of a sorrow that startled and thrilled the hearer, and made him wonder what grief it was that had given it that soft and pathetic tone. But it was no sorrow of her own; it was the sorrow amid which she dwelt, that had subdued and pervaded her naturally cheerful heart. Her father, who felt it the great duty of his life to go amongst the wretched who fled thither, and to alleviate as much as possible, both physical and moral evil, was not sad, but he was grave. His daughter, who, from early childhood, had occasionally caught glimpses of the terrors of human passion—had heard the cry of horror—had seen the gush of blood suddenly shed—had become shrinkingly fearful of the contact of misery: yet when her father brought home tales of distress, her spirit would be roused to a pitch of sympathy that drowned her own feelings in those of others, and she would follow, from one sad place to another, the gleam of Gedaliah's lantern in the dark, wild winter nights.

Two scenes which she had witnessed, seemed to

dwelt upon her memory with peculiar vividness. One was the death of a fearful-spirited man;—a man of a naturally feeble, timid disposition, who, however, excited by jealousy, and finding his rival asleep in the field, suddenly smote him on the temples with a stone—and fled. The moment he had done the murderous act, all the terrors of conscience and of punishment came upon him. He flew on the wings of affright to Kedesh; but even there, though no pursuer appeared, his apprehensions kept him in a frenzy of continual horror. He could not eat, nor drink, nor sleep, nor rest in one place; but roamed to and fro, moaning to himself; ready to fly from every one that approached; starting at every blast of wind.

At length an accuser came, and brought him to judgment. Then, terrible and shrill were his cries for mercy to his judges—to his pursuer. He was led away, still crying for mercy; and when they came to the place of death, so fierce were his terrors, that his piercing shrieks and lamentable beseechings were heard through the city, and he fell dead ere the stroke of the avenger reached him.

The other was the fate of a woman who had fled from her home with a seducer. The enraged husband pursued and overtook them in Lebanon; but instead of slaying his injurer, was slain by him. She saw her husband fall; and fled with his murderer to Kedesh. Here he was soon pursued by the kinsmen of the dead, and put to death. She followed him to the place of execution—saw him fall—saw the ready pit receive his warm corse—the earth cover it; and, without a cry, a tear, walked away from the city; treading back the very way they had come; turning not to one side or the other, but went onward toward the north—with the air of one blasted with excessive woe.

Gedaliah recounted the circumstance by his fire, and his daughter cried—"Oh, and would no one fetch her back? Would no one pity her?" "No!" said Gedaliah, "she has sinned a deadly sin, and has brought death upon others,—let her go with all the curse of her crime upon her head!"

Yet the pitying words of his daughter sounded in his soul, and worked, and worked as he sate upon his hearth, till he at length arose, saying—"We are all but weak, sinful creatures; we all

need compassion ;” and with Mehalath flew towards the desert to see what had chanced to her.

They followed her fleetly, and, ere night, discerned her in the forest. But she went onward, turning not her head. They called to her, but she heard not. Night came, and with it a tempest. They fled to a forester’s dwelling for shelter. All night the tempest raged and howled; the great winds roared and groaned amid the ancient trees of the forest—the lightning blazed—the thunder bellowed horribly—the rains dashed in furious torrents, that seemed destined to drown every exposed creature. On the forester’s hearth they sate by his fire of logs, and thought, and talked sadly of that wretched woman. All day, all night again the rains poured; they prayed to God to shew his mercy even to so sinful a creature, and guide her to some place of protection. The next day they went on, for the rains had ceased; they beheld the ravages of the merciless tempest. Torrents red and muddy, rushed down a hundred steeps; the ground here and there seemed ploughed up with lightning; the great trees were split, their enormous branches rent down, themselves in

many places hurled to the earth; the ground was soft and miserable with wet; yet they went on, and on, but saw no traces of the sinful woman. At length they discerned some living thing beneath the shade of a great cedar; they approached; it was a vulture that rose up, and alit upon the tree; they came near, and beheld torn and drenched raiment—a horrible and disfigured corpse; as if the God of vengeance had taken the miserable woman out of the hand of man, and led her up to judgment by his own right arm. She had reached the very spot where her husband was slain. There the sword by which he was pierced, lay black with the rain, corroded by rust; his bones gnawed by the desert beast, were still there, and there, already visited by the vulture—torn by the chacal, lay the woman—a fearful object of divine retribution.

These things had touched the spirit of Mehalath deeply; they had tinged even the sound of those lofty hymns, which she sung to the harp of Gedaliah in the still evening. Dalphon and Shallum loved to listen to these passages of high but pensive melody, as they sate at day's decline on the roof, and watched the fading splendours retire from the summits of Hermon, and leave all still, hushed,

and dim around them ; and once they heard words which they deemed Mehalath herself had dictated.

Oh ! that the eagle's wings were mine,
I would not dwell where wretches pine !
The gush of blood—the shriek of fear,
My far-off rest should come not near ;
My soul should take a blither tone,
Nor think of strife in places lone :
Nor think of all sad woman's woe,
Who shuns the crime, yet bears the blow.

When, Lord of glory and of love,
Comes thy Redeemer from above !
That King of victory, who shall stand,—
On Hermon wave his conquering hand ;
From Zion's fortress speak the word,
By men, by fiends, through nature heard ;—
And vengeful souls, and hands of gore,
Through Israel shall be known no more !

Thy land—it is a glorious land,
How fair the eternal mountains stand !
With solemn woods, and ancient rocks ;
With fertile fields, and wandering flocks ;
With glittering streams, and cheerful towns,
Thy favour Israel's portion crowns ;
And brighter days shall still appear—
Yet all be dark and joyless here !

Oh ! that the eagle's wings were mine !
I would not dwell where wretches pine ;
Or rather, rather let me be
A Hebrew damsel glad and free,
In some fair city, that is blest
With loving souls, and lasting rest.
For hence shall blood, nor death depart,
Till Shiloh change man's fiery heart !

CHAPTER XVI.

TEN days had passed since the courier departed, when one day, as Dalphon and Shallum were seated on their wonted station, the house-top, they beheld two horsemen descending the southern slope. They watched their progress to the gate, when they were hidden from their view; but in a few minutes they heard their horses advancing up the street. They started as they heard them stop at Gedaliah's door; and in the next instant, Ahlab sprung up the stairs to the roof, and clasped Dalphon to his heart. Who can describe—who cannot imagine the meeting of such friends, under such circumstances? Those rapturous and all-forgetting emotions—the speedy reflux of thought, bringing back record of facts and feelings, only made more perspicuously melancholy by the sunlight of joy cast momentarily upon the heart?

They learned that Iene, still living, but weak and much worn away, seemed to have been bound

to existence by anxiety about Dalphon, more than by the bonds of her own nature; that after his departure, suspicions of his purpose came strongly upon her spirit; his protracted absence and silence confirmed those suspicions; and that all her own sorrows and feebleness, seemed forgotten in the daily solicitude on his behalf. But when the fearful tidings of his detention and impending trial at Kesh arrived, she had seemed to acquire a wondrous accession of strength; and implored that they might instantly set out to join her brother in the place of his captivity.

The aged parents, stunned as it were, for a moment, by this sore addition to their calamities, were also speedily aroused to a keen desire to set out for that distant city. "My son! my son!" old Jathniel exclaimed, "the God of thy fathers protect thee!" The whole soul of the mourning parents was bent on instant departure. They staid not to sleep—not even to eat or to drink—ere they undertook their journey; but hastily taking money and raiment for their need, ascended their ancient chariot, and were on their way; travelling rather with a speed dictated by their love and their fears,

than by their own infirmities, and the feebleness of Iene. She, indeed, seemed to experience no inconvenience, but the slowness of the progress,—still looking forward with upraised head and anxious countenance, and longing for accelerated speed.

Ahlab had accompanied the sorrowful family to Jerusalem, where Jathniel had hastened, to throw himself at the feet of the king to beg the life of his son. Ahlab had accompanied him to the palace. It was the old palace of David, for Solomon had not yet built his own, in which Jathniel had many a time visited that great monarch; and he was deeply affected by many recollections which crowded upon him as he slowly ascended the steps of the portico, and advanced along the hall to the distant apartment of the king. The house was itself the same, but all besides was changed. New faces of young people, new and more splendid dresses of officers and servants, everywhere met him. A multitude of costly articles of foreign manufacture, and, to him, of surprising magnificence, had displaced the old and simple furniture; and a style of splendour and increased ceremony, announced the higher sense of royalty which reigned in the new

monarch. Jathniel used only to shew his face at the gate, in order to be received with smiles and reverence, and to be hastened with assiduous zeal into the presence of the king, who received him with open arms, a cordial salute, and a blessing uttered in the frank and loving spirit of the great warrior and bard of Israel. Now he was not known—not even his name—his aged and venerable aspect gained him respectful attention, but he was requested to wait in the hall till his name had been borne to the king. The messenger speedily returned, and with stately silence led the way before him. They passed on through many rooms filled with joyous and superb companies—the royal attendants—the officers of the household and state—till they were ushered into an ample, but retired apartment looking into the inner garden. Here they found the youthful monarch all alone, and surrounded by those objects that marked his tastes and projects.

In his garden were a variety of airy tenements erected, in which many curious animals, many singular birds, plants, and trees of innumerable species, were collected in their living beauty. Two

damsels, of marvellous loveliness, were walking amongst them; and, ever and anon, stopping to survey some fierce creature in his abode, with looks of fearful curiosity; or to speak in cheerful tones to the painted parrots of the East, which hopped from tree to tree above their heads, and called to them in quaint voices. Suddenly these fair creatures came to the window of the room, with countenances all radiant with youth and smiles; but observing the king occupied with strangers, they blushed, dropped their veils over their beautiful features, and disappeared amongst the trees.

The gorgeous peacock paraded before the windows, and spread its ample, quivering train on the roof of a small pavilion; and the pelican of the wilderness stood and slept by a fountain, or, opening its huge beak drowsily, uttered its discordant cry. The harp of his father David stood in its wonted place; and many instruments of foreign aspect were lying here and there. On a table before the king, which appeared one mass of richly carved gold, of most exquisite workmanship, lay plans of vast and imperial buildings; and fair, large tomes, in which the king was writing

those histories of the works of nature, those songs, and maxims of wisdom, which made his name known far beyond the bounds of Israel, as the sagest of monarchs.

At the sight of Jathniel, he arose, and coming forward with a frank dignity, clasped the old man in his arms; expressed his joy to see him once more, and inquired after the welfare of his family. At these words the old man sunk down before him on his knees, and, hiding his face in his robe, wept bitterly. Then lifting up his aged countenance, covered with paleness, and wet with tears, he declared the situation of his son, and implored the exertion of his royal goodness on his behalf. It would have formed a beautiful picture, had such things been permitted in Israel—the bowed and trembling figure—the hoary, flowing locks, the eloquent, beseeching countenance of the aged Hebrew, and the stately beauty of the young, illustrious monarch, who stood and gazed on the venerable man's distress with wonder, that every moment deepened to anxious concern. Jathniel besought him by the memory of his father,—by his own knowledge of him and his family,—by his own

noble nature, to grant him the assurance that his son's life and honour should be spared to his last years in safety. He explained all the villany of Talmai,—the failing, drooping existence of his daughter.

The tears started into the eyes of the king, as he listened to the fervent appeal of the afflicted father. He raised him tenderly, and placing him on the couch beside him, declared that whatever his power would effect should be done for him, as he would do it for his own revered father, if he were alive. But he reminded him of the awful responsibility of his exalted office; he was not at liberty to rule just, as he would, but by the fixed and righteous laws of God. To those laws he himself was subject; he could not violate, he could not sway them aside, however little, were it to gratify the purest and highest feelings of his nature, without injury to Israel, and offence to God.

“Yet, good and faithful friend of my father,” he added, “beloved friend of my own early years, trust in me as thou wouldst trust in the Almighty, that all which can be effected, accordant with our sacred institutions, shall be done.” He comforted

the old man, bade him be of good cheer, and put his trust in God; pressed him to eat and drink in his presence: but filled with anxiety for his son, Jathniel hasted to thank the king, and to depart. He was more anxious now than before his arrival. The words of the king had been comfortable to him, yet they had shewn him so deeply the awful situation of him who becomes amenable to the laws under a righteous and God-fearing monarch, that he trembled for his son. "It is right! it is right!" he inly ejaculated; "the Lord's Anointed rules not for himself alone—not alone for his friends, but for the commonwealth of Jacob;" and yet something at the bottom of his soul would rise up, and whisper—"yet had but David been alive!" He kissed the hem of the king's robe, blessed the youthful prince, prayed that the prosperous favour of the King of kings might attend all his designs; and thanking him for his kindness, rose up to depart. The king caught him in his arms, kissed his aged cheek, and again with consoling, yet not perfectly assuring words, committed him to the care of his servants, who conducted him to his chariot.

"And now," said Ahlab to Dalphon, "prepare

for the reception of our friends; I must hasten back, to meet and conduct them hither."

They embraced, and parted. Dalphon and Shallum soon sought out an abode suitable for the residence of his family; for besides that the house of Gedaliah was not large enough, he would have no one to be witness of the affliction of his friends. They awaited with daily watching and sorrowful anxiety for their arrival; and it was not many days ere they beheld the melancholy company appear. Who shall describe the sad but tender meeting of such hearts under such circumstances? Who shall enter the sacred abode, where for days and weeks, the once happy, but now sorely tried family, awaited, with mutual words of love, but with continually increasing anxiety, the awful time of trial? They sate together, by the couch of Iene, who, faded to a frail and fleeting shadow of what she once was, yet filled Dalphon with hourly admiration at the undiminished vigour of her soul; at the life of her countenance, that expressed the continual working of an interest in her brother's safety, that bore her above all sense of her own griefs, and seemed to endow her with a boundless mastery over the laws and weakness of her own nature.

Jathniel and Cutha, humbled and bowed as to the dust by the calamities which had thus come upon them as a flood, yet supported by their long-exercised trust in the Almighty, and strengthened by the words of Gedaliah, who, with his gentle daughter, often visited them, endured with suffering, yet patient hearts, the coming of the awful time; while Hamutal, sad, yet firm, and full of love to all, was like a wise and invigorating spirit of heaven amongst them.

For Dalphon, it required all the solace and the strengthening ministration of his friends to enable him to endure his own reflections,—to restrain the vehemence and impetuosity of his nature. He regarded himself as the cause of all this evil,—he revolved with shame and bitter mortification the failure of his attempt upon Talmai; and that base wretch, now joined by his Zidonian dame, and casting off all the disguise of his vile nature, dwelt in the city with a splendour only suited to a prince; and, day by day, paraded in his gilded chariot, drawn by four fiery steeds, before the house where he knew the fair victim of his dissembled affection was languishing in the last stage of that heart-

wreck which he had occasioned; and where all those who had received him with open arms and hearts were suffering from his villany and revenge.

Dalphon's indignation at this spectacle was hard enough to bear; but when he permitted himself to glance forward, and to suppose for a moment that even this might be terminated by the triumph of this traitor—by the overwhelming of all he loved in the agony of his own destruction—he was wrung and tortured by an excess of anguish, that seemed to have no refuge but in death or madness. He was not a little anxious too, on account of Ahlab, who, with Reu, was perpetually passing in and out of the city, making preparations for the approaching trial: and knowing how much that faithful friend had excited the malice of Talmai, he had a thousand apprehensions of treachery and bloodshed.

CHAPTER XVII.

BUT the great and decisive day at length arrived; and the whole city, roused by the interest of the case, by the rank and influence of the parties, was drawn to the tribunal. Before the break of day, hundreds had taken their stations to command a near view of the proceedings; and, as the morning advanced, thousands came pouring in through the gates from the surrounding country. Dense crowds were also collected before the abodes of Dalphon and Talmai, watching with eager anxiety every window, every motion of life about the dwellings; and when the judges issued from their houses to proceed to the tribunal, they were followed by multitudes, pressing regardlessly on each other, which must have convinced them of the momentous decision they had that day to give. It was not without difficulty they passed through the crushing mass around the judgment-seat; and when the parties at issue themselves appeared, there was a

murmur, a rush, a tumultuous thronging, that required all the patient, yet strenuous efforts of the guards, to command an opening for their respective charges.

Talmi appeared seated in his blazing chariot, which was drawn up as near as possible to the area occupied by the scribes, his Zidonian dame seated beside him; her own splendid and queen-like person adorned with drapery of the richest gold-embroidered satin, and with a profusion of jewels that filled the gazing people with wonder. All eyes were fixed on the triumphant and magnificent array of this princely pair, who, surrounded by a troop of their friends and retainers, sate beneath a broad azure canopy, which was held over them by a gigantic Ethiopian, — its heavy, golden fringe blazing in the sunlight. The crowd gazed on them, but they gazed only on the judges.

Dalphon and Shallum, accompanied only by Ahlab and Reu, took their station in front of the tribunal. A sort of moveable tent, somewhat similar to what were used at times to convey a bride to the house of the bridegroom, was brought, and placed just behind them. This was understood

to contain friends or evidence for the party accused, but no one knew what.

The chief judge called upon Talmai, as before, to state his charge; on which he dismounted from his chariot, and advancing with the most low and graceful obeisance to the tribunal, again declared his ignorance of the cause which had induced the prisoners to pursue him with the most deadly hate. He declared that nothing, at one time, did he so much desire, as an alliance with the family of Dalphon;—no one had he so deeply loved. That he had been introduced by him to his family,—offered the hand of his sister, and was on the point of marriage, when, for some cause which they had refused to declare, he had been rudely and ignominiously driven from their house, and pursued with a blood-thirsty hatred. It might be said,—and it had been said, and was the only accusation he had received from the family,—that he had already another wife. But was that any new thing in Israel? And designing, as his affection prompted him, and as her extraordinary beauty and talents justified, to place Iene in his bosom as its especial jewel, he was at a loss to conceive whence had

arisen their sudden and furious malice. But it *had* arisen; and not contented to let him depart, and dwell peaceably in a far city, he had been followed by them, had been furiously assaulted; and although he had himself escaped their murderous hands, his follower and near kinsman had been slain by them. For this he demanded the just vengeance of the laws, which called upon him to pursue, and take blood for blood: he called upon the judges to deliver up to him Dalphon and Shallum; and he did this less with a vengeful feeling, than from a sense of public duty; for without enforcing against them this salutary law of Moses, he felt that there was no security for his own future existence; and what was of higher consequence, the example of such ill-judged lenity would operate to destroy the security of the life of every member of the state.

The grace and beauty of the man—the tone of affectionate interest in which he stated his former desires of friendship with his pursuers—the flowing and manly eloquence of his address—made a deep and evident impression on the crowd; nor was this at all lessened by the aspect of Dalphon. The same sentiments which oppressed him on his former

appearance, again fell upon him. All the critical awfulness of his situation,—all the disastrous consequences of a failure, presented themselves; and he felt a melancholy and mortified sense of desertion, in that no further testimony of the influence or care of the king had appeared. He heard on all hands of the magnificent plans of the monarch. Of the temple, and the palaces that he was projecting; and of the mighty preparations already in progress for their execution. Ahlab spoke of the many thousands of men that he had seen marching from Jerusalem to the northern forests, with wagons and tents, and all sylvan implements. Reu, in his visits to the forest, which he had often frequented, to bring home game for his friends during their abode in Kedesh, told of the three-score and ten thousand bearers of burthens, and the four-score thousand hewers in the mountains—their captains and overseers, who were felling the choicest cedars, and conveying them on sledges to the sea, whence the Tyrian floats carried them to the point of the coast nearest to Jerusalem. These things he daily heard; and he concluded that his own insignificant person and cause were gone from the memory of

the king, who was so intensely bent on his own glory, and the glory of his kingdom. He was, therefore, depressed with a sickness of the heart that made him wish for death, could he die without bringing desolation on his family: and his dejected countenance only confirmed, in the eyes of the multitude, the brilliancy of Talmai's speech.

The chief judge called upon Talmai to prove the murder of his kinsman by the prisoners, upon the evidence of at least two persons, without which the law of Moses allowed no man to be put to death. Instantly three young men advanced, and swore that they saw the prisoners fighting with Talmai and his follower, near the city of Zidon, and saw Lod his servant and kinsman fall.

The judges declared the deed proved according to the law, and called upon the prisoners to say if they had aught to advance in vindication.

Dalphon again avowed his pursuit of Talmai, to avenge upon him the injuries of his family; his deceitful cruelty to his sister, whom he had addressed as having no wife,—whereas he had at least two; one of whom he had basely and barbarously deserted. Was it to be permitted, that

a man with his personal and intellectual recommendations, with his power of captivating the highest and most gifted hearts, should go about in a feigned character, concealing his real circumstances—his real connexions—his real views,—and thus creeping into the bosom of the happiest families, there to scatter ruin and woe? Worse than the assassin, he struck the dagger of incurable misery into the heart of whole families at once, and that in the very moment that they were receiving him as a friend, and treating him as a brother: worse than the thief, he stole away peace, health, affection, all that constitutes the worth and the substance of existence, while he professed to be devoting himself in person, mind, and estate, by all that dignifies and ennobles, by all that endears and sanctifies a man in the eyes of the loving and the virtuous: worse than the slanderer, he took not away manly reputation, but all that reputation was built upon, and from which its value was derived. To him the wild beast was a tame and generous creature, for it never assumed a false and smiling shape; but came in its own rugged terrors to devour openly;—to him the locust

was a harmless thing, for it devoured but the greenness of the earth, which might spring again—he devastated the freshness, the vitality of the heart, which revived no more. Made to act the part of an angel; to be a shining messenger of delight and of good in the world; to scatter joy, to reap admiration wherever he went—he converted himself into a glittering demon, on whom men might look, and bless him for his beauty; but if they trust him, they die,—if they breathe with him the same air, they are smitten with the invisible but unquenchable flame in which he lives; and wither and shrivel up like a scorched plant, and perish, perish perhaps slowly, but surely, and with inexpressible, lingering, consuming pains. Such a man was that Talmai before them,—such a victim was his dear, his most loveable, most injured sister at this moment. It might, perhaps, be said he had broken no specific law; but he had in fact broken the whole law, for the law was built upon the principle of justice, and upon love. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. This was the command to every Israelite—and this, Talmai, and men like him set at naught; heaping

upon the head of their neighbour the sharpest injuries, in wantonness, or in snakish guile. If they avoided the fracture of any specific law, the more ought every member of the house of Israel to be alive to their cowardly villany, the more indignantly prompt it became every one who loved his neighbour as himself to be, in punishing these detestable disturbers of the general peace. Who would not crush a serpent that had stung his friend?

But Talmai, moreover, was an idolater; and the idolater they were bound to destroy. Had he therefore slain Talmai, he should then claim not pardon, but commendation for the act. But he had not slain Talmai, he had not slain even his follower; he owed, therefore, nothing to the law, but his general obedience; no debt, no punishment. Lod, it was true, had been slain by Shallum, but not by design; by mere accident, without the slightest impulse of malice: therefore the law judged him only for manslaughter; but Lod, it appeared, was also an idolater—therefore was Shallum also justified by the law.

Beyond all this too, he declared that the three

witnesses who had been brought forward to swear to the killing of Lod, were perjured,—for no one save themselves, Talmai and Lod, were present.

“Let that be proved,” said the judge. But how were they to prove it? They two were alone, and strangers in the place; the cause seemed hopeless. The multitude stood around, silent as a multitude of stone, listening whether the prisoners would advance anything further, and evidently expecting the sentence of the judge. But Shallum, seeing the jeopardy of the cause, cried aloud, “Judges of Israel, beware how ye shed innocent blood, through the mouths of perjured sons of Belial. Before the God of heaven, who sees all our hearts, and who will assuredly punish the wicked, I swear, that these are false witnesses. I swear also that Talmai is an idolater, and therefore not allowed by the law of Moses to live, much less to bear witness against the faithful sons of Jacob. Is he not here this day, before the face of this assembly of God’s people, bringing with him his Zidonian harlot, a shameless idolater with an idolatress? Beware how ye move in this matter: I swear before the Almighty Lord of

heaven, that Talmi is an idolater, and that I saw him worshipping Ashtaroth the goddess of the Zidonians, in a grove in that city. Let him die as the enemy of Israel; and let him not stand to shed the blood of those who are better than he."

As he cried aloud in these words, the chief judge arose, and with a fierce and flushed brow said,—“Thou murderer, and slanderer of the just avenger of thy evil deeds, thinkest thou that thy words can weigh for a moment in thy favour? Thy open malice be thy own judge; by full evidence ye are justly doomed to death, and ye bring nothing but your own words—words of no credit, against that evidence—what need of delay?”

As he pronounced these words, Ahlab stood and stared upon him as if he had seen a spirit suddenly arise before him. He saw in him, one whose face was conspicuous amongst the idolaters in the secret banqueting-house in Jerusalem. He saw that a cursed conspiracy between Talmi and him was about to destroy for ever his friend, and with him his own peace, and all that life had of good and precious. He saw all this, and he assayed to spring forward and to speak; but his limbs refused

to move, his tongue to utter a sound. He was as one frozen to stone by the spells of some mighty enchanter, and yet with all his life and consciousness within him; and while he stood thus, agonized but impotent, suddenly there arose a sound as of the sea; suddenly there came a shout from without the walls, and the heads of the whole multitude turned towards the gate in fixed and intense inquiry. The sound, as of roaring waters, drew near; the shout became louder and louder, and he deemed that he discerned the crack of many thongs, the sound of the thunder of many steeds; and again, he thought he heard a distant cry of "the king!" but it was drowned in the confused tumult. But a moment more, and the city gates were wedged thick with a compact mass of people, who with eager eyes and struggling limbs, strove to burst into the city, but were prevented by their own desperate compression. And now the cry arose clear and full, and spread round the whole city like a flash of lightning—"the king! the king!" and the whole mass of life, impelled forward by the intense eagerness of their own spirits, but overpowered by the mighty, coming multitude,

and the rushing of the guards, were swayed backward ; and in another moment, the royal attendants were seen making their way through the mass of hot and impetuous life, and the royal chariot shewed itself in the gate. Then burst forth a strong shout, which seemed to shake the city to its foundations, followed by a silence deep as death.

Soon the chariot of the king drew near the tribunal ; soon the crimson curtains were drawn back, and the monarch stepped forth to the admiring multitude,—a person of majesty and manly beauty, equal to the fame of his transcendent talents. His countenance large, finely formed—wore an air of grace and kingly dignity ; yet was it benign in its expression. His large, dark eyes ; his flowing, dark auburn locks ; his tall, well-proportioned frame and regal step, filled the hushed throng with delightful astonishment. His golden sceptre was in his hand, his golden crown upon his head ; and seven youths of shining beauty, and clad in vests of blue, bore the train of his purple robe. His tunic was of rich orange satin of Zidon, wrought with silver flowers ; and the skirts of his vest were of the colour of sapphire, figured with

flowers of gold. His loins were bound by a broad belt of golden embroidery, and clasped in front with a mighty diamond clasp; and from his neck hung many chains of pearls and precious stones. As he drew near the tribunal, the scribes and judges bowed themselves to the cedarn floor; and the chief judge immediately made way, that the king might sit in his seat;—he himself arose and stood behind.

Then Solomon desired that the evidence might be read; and when he had heard it, he commanded that the three witnesses of Talmal should be taken; that two of them should be kept asunder at sufficient distance from the tribunal, and that the third should be brought before him. The witness appeared; but he came not now with the confident air of his former delivery, but pale, trembling, and more resembling a culprit than an evidence. The terrors of the king's majesty seemed to overpower him. Then Solomon demanded of him, whether he and the other witnesses were in company when they saw the murder committed. He replied, "they were." "And where were ye?" inquired the king. "Were ye with Talmal?" "No!" he

replied, "we were together in the field near the road, at our work, and hearing a noise, we looked, and saw the battle, and the man fall."

"It is enough," said the king, "take him away and bring up another."

"And where sawest thou this deed done?" he asked the second. "I am a merchant of Zidon," the man said, and was riding to the city, when I saw the fight, and the man fall."

"Alone, or in company didst thou ride?" "In company with my friends, the other witnesses; for we are all merchants of Zidon."

"It is enough," said Solomon, "let the third appear."

"And who art thou?" the king asked; and he replied, "I am a servant of Talmai, and followed him at a distance, when I saw the two men fall upon my master and Lod, and Lod was slain." "And why camest thou not to the aid of thy master?" "Ere I could come, the battle was over, and the men fled, and my master pursued them; and as they passed me, I also joined in the pursuit."

"Did they fly directly to the country, or

sought they the city?" "They fled directly to the country."

"It is enough," said the king, "take him hence; and let the three die the death of the false-witness."

As he said this, the man cried out, "Oh king! pardon! and I will tell thee all!" but the king waved his hand, and he was borne away.

Then said Solomon, "Dalphon, son of Jathniel, and Shallum, son of Penuel, ye are free. The charge against you cannot be proved by the evidence required by the law. God and your own hearts be your judges!"

The multitude was about to raise a shout of acclamation, but the king waved his hand, and silence returned.

"Talmi, son of Shaphan," said the king, gravely, "is charged with the sin of idolatry. Let him stand at the tribunal: and let his accusers appear. The evidence of Shallum, the son of Penuel, is already recorded against him; but let there be, at least, two other evidences produced, that there be no shadow of injustice in Israel."

There was a pause; and it seemed for a little

time, as if no accuser would appear; when Ahlab started forth, and cried, "Oh king! I am evidence against Talmi. I have seen him commit idolatry in a company of idolaters in the very city of thy kingdom — Jerusalem. Yes! before the God of our fathers, I swear that there Talmi worshipped the gods of the heathen; and there did the judge, who now stands behind thee, worship those gods also!"

At this charge, a shock as that of an earthquake, seemed to pass through the multitude; and Solomon turned and gazed with a dark countenance upon the judge, who bowed his face to the floor.

"It is a grave and a fearful charge, young man, which thou hast made," the king said: "is there any other evidence of this thing—a thing touching the honour of the Lord's judgment-seat—besides thee?"

"There is," said Ahlab; and entering the tent, he came forth with the figure of a female, veiled from the head to the feet.

"Who art thou," said the king, "that comest to give evidence of a most heinous sin, against Talmi, and against Hiram, the Lord's judge?"

But the figure trembled exceedingly, and was silent. The multitude, as silent as that unknown person, gazed in curious wonder; and the monarch, as in indulgence of the trembling evidence, waited a little, and then added, "Speak, thou veiled trembler; who art thou?" But the figure only trembled the more; and the king commanded that the veil should be withdrawn. As one of the guards loosened the veil, there was a cry as of horror, or surprise; and an aged man sprung from the crowd, and clasped to his heart the unveiled damsel. It was Shemshem, the shepherd of Jathniel, who had hither followed his master; and who beheld as one arisen from the dead, his daughter Abital! The king, the court, the vast assembly, looked in wonder; and when they saw a fair, but trembling damsel dropping insensibly into the arms of that old man, who clasped her with wild looks, and cried, "my daughter! my lost, dead daughter!" they comprehended enough of the matter, though they knew neither of the persons, to weep at the sight. The king himself wept.

It was with difficulty that Abital could be roused sufficiently to give her evidence; but when she

did, she unveiled such a scene of horror and crime ; she threw open to the gaze such a prison-house of woe, that the whole multitude groaned with indignation, and turned upon Talmai and Hiram looks of fierce detestation.

“ Bind the monstrous man !— bind also that corrupt judge,” said Solomon ; “ let them die the death of the idolater ; lest the thunders of the Lord descend, and destroy them and us ! ”

Already the unhappy man seemed seized with the agonies of death. His countenance was dark and livid ; his eyes stared wild and motionless ; and his frame rigid, and yet unable to support him, leaned against his chariot wheel. His wife, hearing the dreadful sentence, sprung to the feet of the king, and, tearing her golden locks, lay on the ground, and cried — “ Pardon ! pardon, mighty king !—pardon ! Let him live ! He is no longer a member of Israel—but a subject of Hiram. Wilt thou slay a subject of thy friend ? And behold ! all that I have here !—all that I have in Zidon, are thine for his life ! ”

She threw, in the passion of her grief, a casket of jewels on the ground, which bursting open,

rolled wide its flashing treasure to the astonished eyes of the multitude. But the king deigned not to look upon it. "Woman!" he said, "I pity thy woe—but I cannot help thee. By the judgment of God—not by me, is Talmai slain. A stranger may become one of the house of Israel, but an Israelite cannot become a stranger, without becoming also an apostate, and thereby incurring death. He is born with the commandments of God upon his head, and he cannot cast them away but at the price of his life and his soul—they are an eternal obligation. And if Talmai has ceased to be a Hebrew, why persecutes he Hebrews? Why follow them to the tribunal of Israel? Hither he has come for judgment—here let him receive it. And thinkest thou that the lives of God's people can be bought or sold, by all the treasures of the earth?"

"Yet pardon—oh, mighty and wise king!—pardon this once!" cried a shrill, feeble voice; and a woman clad in the weeds of widowhood sprung forth, and threw herself at the side of the proud but frantic dame of Zidon—like a languid rose that waves at the foot of a stately palm-tree.

“Pardon!” she cried, and lifted up a face thin and wan as the face of a spirit—“not for my sake! not for the sake of his little children!—but that he may have time to reconcile his soul to God!”

It was the woman of Zebulon! the poor, forsaken wife of Talmai. When the king saw her and her sorrows, he was mightily troubled; and hiding his face in his robe, he made a sign that both suppliants and criminals should be removed from his presence.

It was done;—and descending from the tribunal, he entered the tent where Jathniel had awaited the trial, and was now weeping in the arms of his son. The whole impassioned company knelt at the feet of the king, and bathed them in tears: but he bade them arise, and saying to Dalphon—“Henceforth follow not the dictates of youthful blood—take not the redress of thy wrongs into thy own hand—trust in the king—trust in the laws of God!” and embracing Jathniel, he blessed him, and went out. There was a sound of wheels—a rending shout, and they knew that the king was gone. Dalphon flew to apprise his family of the happy issue of the trial; but the news had already

reached them, and with it the news of Talmai's doom also. As he entered, he beheld Iene raised on her couch, her hair flowing loose around her shoulders, and her countenance wild with an expression of frantic agony. "Save him! save him!" she cried, as she saw Dalphon, who in a moment catching the idea that it was Talmai whom she meant, and struck with a horror of his fate, turned to obey the double dictate of his own heart, and of his sister's, without reflecting that, if it were not already too late, it was a thing utterly beyond his power;—nothing could save him from being stoned to death—not the king's whole influence. But Shallum met him ere he could pass the door, and said in a low voice, suspecting his design, "Nay!—it is past! All that I told thee would come to pass, is accomplished!"

Dalphon turned and glanced at Iene;—she had sunk upon the couch: and, springing to her side, he beheld her a beautiful but lifeless thing. Her sensitive soul seemed to have lingered in her frail and fading body, bound by the chords of her anxiety—this last shock had broken them—she was gone for ever!

Thus had Dalphon to experience in one day a triumph, and a deadly wound:—the aged pair in one day to save a son, and lose a daughter. The feeling of joy was soon swallowed up in that of woe: and the crowd who came back from the stoning of Talmai, as they drew near the abode of Jathniel, learned the melancholy news and stole silently away.

The woe-stricken family continued in that sad city seven days: to mourn together in silence; and to allow time for the body of their beloved dead to be wrapped in spices, according to the custom of their nation, and consigned to her cedarn coffin. Then, with heart-broken grief, they ascended their ancient chariot, and pursued slowly their journey; the corpse of Iene laid on its curtained bier, and drawn by four milk-white heifers, moving on before. From day to day did they thus progress from town to town, sunk in the silence of their own bereaved hearts; without train, save of the few faithful and weeping domestics who had accompanied them to Kedesh; without ceremony, save of the slow and stately journeying which sorrow itself dictates. But wherever they went, the fame

of their misfortunes had gone before them; and the inhabitants of field and town came forth and stood solemnly around their path, and scattered flowers upon the bier, and around the track of that once bright maiden; and with those long, lugubrious pipes, which breath into the soul of sorrow yet deeper sadness, and into the coldest stander-by, a tender spirit of sympathy, they received them to their nightly place, and preceded them a little on their morning way.

In Dalphon, all consciousness of surrounding objects seemed gone. He sate in the shaded corner of the chariot, living, yet buried in the depths of his bleeding heart. He spoke not, he wept not, nor sighed; and when they descended to their nightly sojourn, or ascended their chariot in the morning, he moved to and fro as one in a dreary and impenetrable dream. But when they, at length, caught sight of the hills of Tekoah,—when they saw its wide plains open to receive them, the tide of past feelings—the remembrance of past happiness—of her who was now lost for ever—came rushing over his soul with such a tender and subduing power, that the dark torpor of his

bosom broke before it; and torrents of gushing tears gave back his heart to the living-sympathies and conscious sorrows of men. Together the returning family—returning in circumstances, oh! how unlike all past returnings—mingled their sobs and tears. The sight of that beloved place conjured up a thousand living and precious memories of her whose unconscious corpse now heralded their way. All the bright days of youth—all the times of rejoicing mirth—all the rich sallies of that glad and affectionate spirit, rose, and rose in a continual stream over their hearts, and filled them with those unspeakable regrets—those earnest longings for the reunion of the future life, which shall restore the dear, the lost, brighter than in their youth, and immortal as their desires.

But when the old and sacred mansion appeared, and throngs of their lamenting people, old and young, with wild locks and rent garments, and all the woful gestures, the clapping hands, the loud and wailing cries of women, who restrain not their feelings, met them, who shall describe the sadness of that welcome home?

The young damsels, with red and weeping eyes,

scattered around clouds of those beautiful flowers, which appear in those plains with the very earliest spring, as then it was, immediately after what they call the Early Rains, and which Iene had been the first to gather in her happy years. These they scattered on the bier of the lamented dead, with branches of the blossomed almond, and sung in thrilling tones:—

She is dead! she is dead!
She who was wont to tread
With bounding feet the early-blossomed field;
When with the early rain
Flowers sprang upon the plain,—
She is dead! she is dead!
The early rains are o'er,
But she returns no more!
Oh! see the violets! see the lilies tall!
The pale narcissus nods around;
And the sweet hyacinth is found,
With roses white and red.—
She is dead! she is dead!
The loveliest maid!—the fairest flower of all!

She is dead! she is dead!
Oh, tell us where hath fled
That pure, that gentle, that rejoicing soul!
Jehovah! thou hast made
A mighty land of shade
For the dead! for the dead!
The Rephaim old—the brood
That perished in the flood;

Stern conquerors, who shook earth with their tread.
There all the drowned legions lie,—
There all the slain in battle hie!
'Neath the sea's foundations deep,—
'Neath the mountains do they sleep;
Each on his sword and buckler rests his head.

But where? Almighty! where?
In thy deep realms of air,
Shall dwell the lovely and the pure with thee?
We know that thou wilt save
Thy bright ones from the grave;
But where? oh Father, where?
Oh send the long-desired,—
The King in strength attired—
And he shall tell us where the loved are gone.
For we, thy children of the dust,
Walk weeping, though we walk in trust: •
For our spirits yearn to know
Where all the lovely go,
When from the earth they perish, one by one,

She is dead! she is dead!
The flower shall raise its head,
Mid the rejoicing of a thousand springs;
But with the early rain
She will not awake again:
She is dead! she is dead!

He who recorded these mournful events, gathered them as he passed, many years afterwards, through the wilderness of Tekoah. Jathniel and Cutha were gone to rest with their generation. The aged Shallum he beheld sitting at his door, in the sunshine,

in the last feeble stage of mortal being. Ahlab and Hamutal were dwelling in Ahlab's ancestral house, with a troop of their own fair children; and Dalphon, now lord of the mansion and domains of Jathniel,—a sober and sedate man,—for the memory of this calamity never passed from him, nor the shadow of its gloom from his countenance,—Dalphon was judge in the land—honoured for the nobility of his nature—feared for his grave virtue,—beloved for the unquenchable kindness of his heart. In his native home, he remembered the tender Mehalath, the daughter of Gedaliah; and there, as the beloved wife of his bosom, as the mother of all that district, her gentle spirit, in the language of her own hymn, “took a blither tone;”—a soul all love, and tenderness, and serene delight.

Another Dalphon, another Hamutal, another Iene had sprung up, in whose young hearts the memory of their father's beloved sister lived with a sorrowful fondness. They regarded her story even as one of those penned by the ancient patriarchs; and around her tomb they had planted

every flower which Dalphon and Hamutal had said that she loved. To them it was a sacred temple, where their hearts grew sober and wise; and where the love they cherished for her seemed to grow, and become stronger and tenderer for each other.

THE SOOTHSAYER OF NO.

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“ALAS! master!” cried Zeeb, the servant of the prophet Harosheth, coming hastily before the holy man, as he sate on the stone seat by the door of his house in Ziklag of Simeon, in the first dawn of a spring morning,—“Alas! master! the mule is gone! Some son of Belial has dared in the night to lead away from his stall the favourite beast of a seer!”

The prophet was sitting in a posture of calm contemplation, such as the time and the scene before him might well be supposed to inspire in a person of his sacred character. The sun had not yet climbed above the horizon, and fields, and woods and waters lay before him, softly veiled in that fine haze which hovers over the vernal landscape at early dawn; and the blue hills in the distance, above which the eastern sky was brightening with

that pure, cheering, opal transparency that precedes the sun, wore an aspect of profound repose, that communicates itself to every fitting spectator. All around him breathed of dewy freshness; and you would have looked with inward satisfaction on the old man, feeling sure that he was offering up his orisons to the Author of so blessed a creation. But whatever were Harosheth's meditations, they were abruptly broken by this news; and turning upon Zeeb a countenance of overwhelming wrath, he cried,—“Dog of untimely dreams! is it thus thou sleepest and sufferest the cream-coloured mule-beast, the king's gift, the prophet's delight, the grace of Ziklag to be stolen? Away! such an animal cannot be long concealed.—Away! and see my face no more till thou comest with the mule!”

Zeeb drew back, and disappeared with the fleetness of one that runs for his life. If his hope of finding the mule with the facility the prophet seemed to promise, was not so strong as the words of a prophet ought to have produced, his fear of his master's anger was the fruit of sure experience. The seer, though he had reached the good age of three-score and ten, and had a countenance of the

most benign serenity, was nevertheless tried with a most irascible temper, that neither years, nor the prophetic function, nor the judgments he had witnessed or pronounced, had been able to eradicate. He had been married in his youth, and had soon lost his wife. . From that time he had dwelt alone in his small house, with no one but Zeeb, a dwarfish, ill-shapen, weak-headed creature, yet who was faithful and affectionate to his master as a dog,—whose name, by way of reward, he often got. Perhaps Harosheth's early loss of his wife soured his temper; perhaps his long, solitary life, with nobody but Zeeb to receive his commands and obey his whims, had fostered a hasty and arbitrary mood; perhaps, not having the benefit of a female help-mate's gentleness and affectionate acquiescence to sooth and smooth away his bursts of spleen, or that of her contagious excitement and retaliation in which to mirror the ugliness of ill-humour, had been his misfortune; but, whatever was the cause, he was of a most igneous and explosive temperament. Like Balaam, he would have smitten his beast with fury, though it had been the cream-coloured mule itself, had it ground his leg against

a wall: like Jonah, he would have angered hotly at the perishing of a gourd: and would have seen a hundred thousand people perish rather than his denunciations should fail; yet he was a prophet whom the patience of the Eternal Wisdom had borne with, and honoured with many a testimony of power.

On the present occasion, he went to and fro, overflowing with vexation, and fulminating his threats of vengeance on the unknown criminal with so much fury that his neighbours shrunk into their houses, and feared to approach him. All day he burned in the fervour of his wrath, and issued not less than a hundred times from his house, and sought the brow of the hill to discern the return of Zeeb. But neither Zeeb nor mule appeared, and Harosheth betook himself at length to bed: and in his wrath, which blinded his understanding, feared not to intreat the Infinite Majesty for the recovery of a four-footed beast. No reply was heard; but at midnight he beheld in a vision, a lion which came and stood on a rock in the midst of a stormy sea, and said—"Arise, and get thee down to the ancient and populous No!—No, in the midst of the waters!"

The prophet woke in terror, and his heart died within him, for he knew the voice was the sure voice of spiritual command; and No—the ancient No, was a far city—the journey of half a moon. To a man of his years, it was an awful thing: but though Harosheth was irascible, he was not rebellious; he bowed to the dispensation laid upon him; arose in the morning, saddled his ass, and set forth. He told to no one whither he went; he gave no charge over his house, for he trusted, notwithstanding the disappearance of his mule, that as the seer's abode, it would not be violated; and Zeeb, who on all similar occasions had received his invariable injunctions,—“look well to the mule,” or the ass, as it might be, “and see that Sampson's foxes come not near the dwelling:” meaning—beware of fire,—Zeeb had not returned to take his usual farewell.

We may imagine, but need not describe the seer's journey: enough, that he reached No in safety; and having taken up his abode at an inn, awaited with as much patience as he possessed, the prophetic unfolding of his mission. But for seven days, he went to and fro in that mighty and thickly

peopled place, beholding the thousands around, all busied with some object or other ; but himself led, as it were by an invisible clue, and left suddenly at its end without further guidance. At the end of that time, his constitutional impatience grew strong upon him, and he said testily to himself,—“ Why wander I like a camel, whose rider has perished in the desert? When shall I see wherefore I am sent?” Suddenly it occurred to him, that it might be to recover his mule that he had been sent hither ; and incontinently he began to traverse the city from day to day and from hour to hour, fixing his eyes on every beast that he beheld ; but nothing like his cream-coloured mule was to be seen in the streets of No. He inquired of the people of the inn, if any mule of such colour and eminent beauty, had lately met their view. “ There are many,” was the reply, “ in No ; but if thou wantest a beast to carry thy goods through the desert, get thee a camel.” Harosheth turned in disdain from the proud stupidity of these people, and accosted some old men who sate daily on a bench beneath a warm southern wall, looking on the throngs that passed. “ Seekest thou a mule in the multitude of No?”

said they, in contemptuous surprise—"get thee to Noph the soothsayer." The pride of Harosheth was pricked to the very core. A prophet of the Hebrews to seek the responses of a heathen soothsayer! Could it be, that his anger for the loss of his mule was to be punished by bringing him thus far, to be the mock of the base heathen? A secret sense of failing, and of the ludicrous nature of his inquiry, even made his anger the greater,—he went on in silence. As he passed an ancient house in the outskirts of the city, he beheld many people waiting at its gates. "Why wait these people here?" he inquired of a passer-by. "It is the house of Noph," he replied,—“they seek the aid of his knowledge.”

The mind of Harosheth was impressed with the circumstance. "What knoweth this Gentile?" he said within himself; "by what power doth he reveal hidden things? I will visit this expounder of riddles for myself, that I may learn the source of his power."

Many times, many days, from sunrise to sunset, did he pass the gates of Noph; but a crowd was for ever before it, and the prophet's wonder rose higher and higher.

It was on the tenth day at even, that he first observed the gate of Noph free from visitors. He drew near, and went in. The dwelling was of one low, but very spacious room, and around it stood the images of the gods of many countries. Harosheth looked upon them with horror and anger; and fearful of having sinned by entering this unhallowed place, was about to withdraw, when a sharp, shrill voice from behind a curtain at the farther extremity of the room, said—"Prophet of Israel, comest thou to the counsellor of the gods?"

Harosheth stood penetrated with astonishment. "By what power," he thought, "can he recognise me, a stranger in this populous place;" but the voice added quickly—"Come forward, man of God, come forward!" He went on,—at his approach the curtain was lifted up, and he beheld a small, lean figure, seated cross-legged on the ground. It was Noph, the soothsayer. A large grizzled beard, a bushy head of grizzly hair, made the summit of the man appear much too large for the rest of his frame, which was light and meagre, as if supported by only the most absolutely neces-

sary quantity of food, and yet appeared strong and elastic as the body of a tiger. From the midst of his wild mass of hair, protruded features of strange prominence and razor sharpness; a nose like the beak of an eagle, and eyes like eagle's eyes, dark and piercing. He made a sign to Harosheth to sit down, and then asked in a confidential tone, what he would learn?

"Thinkest thou," replied Harosheth with haughty indignation, "that a servant of the Most High, seeketh help from a worshipper of stocks and stones? Thinkest thou there is no God in Israel?"

"I have gone through Israel," replied Noph, rapidly, and with an air of gaiety, "and I saw none. In Syria, in India, in Egypt, and the Elishan Isles, are beheld everywhere the images of the gods of the country; but in Israel, what see we? A single temple; and in that temple a mystery—a sanctum that may only be entered by one priest—a mystery that covers nothing!"

"Blasphemous pagan!" exclaimed Harosheth, with eyes of fire, "dost thou dare to insult the Most High?"

"I have not inquired of this high and invisible

God, of the fate of a mule !” retorted Noph, with a sneer that lit up his countenance with a daring and triumphant blaze of gratified malice.

Harosheth shrunk into himself.

“Why deceivest thou the people?” said Harosheth, with more calmness.

“If I deceive them,” replied the alert soothsayer, springing up, and placing before the prophet a number of boxes, which he flung open, and shewed full of golden coin,—“if I deceive them, is it for nought? But why sayest thou I deceive them? Hast thou demanded a single exertion of my power? Behold the forms which I have collected from every land but thine : thinkest thou these have no greater power than that, which is unseen, and to all but your nation, unknown? Ask what thou wilt, in the name of any one of these dreadful divinities !”

“God forbid !” exclaimed Harosheth, starting up with vehemence. “The curse of the only living God be on thee and on thy idols ! Let them be thy punishment till I return !” He turned and went forth.

Noph looked after the departing prophet with a triumphant sneer. “Go thy way,” he said,

“simple one! Hast thou lost a mule, and canst not find it by thy divination? Dost thou wonder at the knowledge which I have of thee and of thy concerns?—and dost not comprehend that it is my business to learn, by the multitude of my hired spies, the entrance of every stranger, and the affairs of every dweller in the city? These are the true divinities,” said the triumphant soothsayer, as he clapped to the lids of his money-chests with self-complacent activity, and replaced them in their hidden recess; “with these, are not all the power and the pleasures of the whole world mine? Without these, what is Bel or Serapis? what is Brahme or Jehovah? Go thy way—be poor and proud; and like the beggar by the way-side, return thanks for thy poverty a hundred times a day. What harm can thy curse do me?”

The self-gratulating soothsayer bolted his door, and retook himself to his bed; but what was his astonishment as he awoke in the morning, to behold the congregation of his imaged divinities assembled round him. For a moment he lay in a silent amazement, but in the next instant a terrible idea flashed across his mind. “Thieves! thieves!”

he cried, "alas! my gold! my gold!" He sprung up to ascertain the extent of the mischief done by the wicked ones, who, he surmised, had in their wantonness thus drawn his statues round his bed; but as he arose, astounding was his horror and astonishment, as he felt the huge hand of Baal fling him back upon his bed. He lay like a man in the paws of a lion, whom he expects every moment to crush his bones;—helpless he lies in power, but turning his staring eyes wildly on his terrible enemy. The images stood silent and motionless as before; and he began to imagine that in his haste he had rushed against the image, and had been repelled by his own impetus. Once more, therefore, he rose, but slowly, and keeping a curious eye on Baal. To his horror, as he himself rose up, he beheld the arm of wood move with a motion proportioned to his own, and prepare to strike him down; at the same time, glancing round the awful circle, he beheld the eyes of the whole group glow with a ghastly and malicious joy. He fell in his benumbing fear upon his bed, and groaned as he called to mind the words of the prophet, and felt that his curse was upon him. Long

lay the miserable Noph in paralyzing horror—praying to his long serviceable servants, but now dreadful lords: praying to the God of Israel, but in vain—all was silence around—motionless silence, except that the repeated knocking at his door announced the call of applicants for aid: and his wonder was not small, as he observed a little crouching figure, a lar, brought from a distant country, act as janitor, open the door, and send the visitors away, wondering at the creature's round staring features and erect ears.

All day Noph lay, the captive of these strange sentinels. At night he looked round, and beheld Ashtaroth cast a moony gleam through the apartment; and the bulk of Moloch glow with a sullen red, invisible by day. In the morning, Noph, whose hunger was become ravenous, would fain have persuaded himself that the movement of Baal was but a dream, or a delusion of his brain. With a desperate spring he leaped up, and fell stunned, not only by a blow from the same huge hand, but also from a thrust with the trident of Siva, who sate cross-legged on his lotus-flower at the feet of the bed. A horrible din of mingled sounds assailed

him; Apis bellowed; Anubis barked; Mahadeo twanged his bow-strings; Cali menaced him with shrill cries; the infernal Dian waved her torch, and brandished her poniard with a rushing sound; and the clamour of deified dogs, cats, and crocodiles, was intolerable. Cneph, the winged serpent, flew hissing above his head; the sacred scarabæus boomed vengefully in his face, and the eyes of the gentlest shapes gleamed fiery around him. Noph lay expecting some immediate destruction; but his miseries were not so soon to be ended. The din ceased, and he beheld the dwarfish Gemedim busily employed in making him a cake, which they kneaded with oil from his large jar, and baked at a fire which they kindled in the air, and blew into brightness with their igneous breath.

Days, weeks, months, lay the soothsayer in this weary thralldom, in the power of these strange and inexorable shapes; but what tormented his heart more than all besides, was to see the still, gliding, close-veiled Isis, day by day, fill her modius from his coffers with his gold, and bear it away. He heard her say in accents sweet and musical, and far different to the harsh, stony, or metallic tones

of the rest:—"This has the deceiver drawn from my people—to them will I restore it."

Thus it went on, month after month. There he lay in still endurance: still also were his keepers; except that the Gemedim became every day more lively, and full of sport and antics; and amused themselves with rolling about the largest coins, or riding on the shaggy backs of the Shoirim; galloping round and round with ringing laughter. Over and over the bed, without regard to the body, limbs, eyes, or skull of Noph;—over the bed—up the walls, and along the ceilings they went; heads upward or heads downward, it mattered not; and every day their sport became more boisterous, and their laughter more loud and hideous.

But six months had dragged themselves away, and the captive soothsayer still lay as helpless, and ten times more miserable than ever. Meagre as he was before, he was now but a mere skin-covered skeleton; and he cursed his gods: he cursed the day he had brought them hither; he cursed the people who came in crowds to seek his aid, but came not to rescue him; and he cursed the prophet who had laid him under this terrible spell. He

heard with a soul-rending fury, Isis declare that the coffers were empty; and the Gemedim replied,—the flour cask is exhausted, the oil is all gone. “What shall be done?” said the laughing voice of a Gemid. “The lamp! the lamp!” said the fishy Dagon. “Oh, the lamp! the lamp!” cried the dwarfish Gemedim, with delighted screams; and into the parched mouth of the perishing Noph they dripped, drop by drop, the oil. His hunger was ravenous as that of a famishing lion—his thirst was a burning, gnawing torment; but the drops of oil, that for many a month had been pent in his brazen lamp, were like drops of fire, and their flavour was a flavour of death. They burned, and pierced, and filled him with torment, as drops from the eternal molten lakes, and with thoughts of corruption as they were the dew of mummies, or the seethed marrow of a thousand-years-buried man. He was in a deadly strife, between the rage for food and the torments of this infernal aliment; but the malicious and obstreperous creatures sprung upon him with glee, and forcing open his mouth, day by day, dribbled the scalding potion upon his tongue. He had lost all powers but to feel and to

suffer; he cried mightily upon Siva and Cali, and the infernal Dian, to dispatch him; they heeded him not; days and weeks, and months went on. He saw with astonishment that his house was becoming the haunt of all manner of reptiles, as a place uninhabited. The frog hopped flabbily on the damp floor—the death-beetle ticked and drummed in the timber of his bed—the spiders came and wove their webs in the very hand of Baal that had smote him down, and, from time to time, even walked with their crooked legs, and trailed their tickling threads across his own face. The lizard came, with shining eyes, peeping through a crevice of the wall; rats and mice ran thickly below; and the bats, descending down his fireless chimney, ascended, and flew round and round beneath the ceiling, uttering their shrill, harsh whistles. The whole group of images had resumed their silence and inaction—the sports and laughter of the Gemidim and the Shoirim ceased—all seemed sinking into a state of eternal torpidity—of eternal decay. One solitary Gemid sat on his breast, holding the lamp in his hand—he nodded as overcome with sleep, and only roused himself once a day, to tor-

ment the soothsayer with his potion of pestiferous, life-retaining, death-prolonging oil. The soul of Noph was overcome with a horror of doubt. He imagined himself doomed thus to lie like a mummy in a tomb, with all his consciousness within him, for ever and ever, suffering a living death, the accumulating horrors of which vividly presented themselves to his groaning and weary soul:—to be every day surrounded by increasing numbers of loathsome and venomous things—perhaps to be gnawed and devoured by them piecemeal—perhaps to be buried beneath the smouldering, humid heap of the ruins of his house.

Twelve moons had thus elapsed—Noph was suffering living-death, when there went strange rumours through the city. The soothsayer's house stood gloomy and closed:—no one came there: strange shapes had been seen by those who went to the door; strange noises had been heard; a veiled figure had been passing to and fro—the place was deemed to have become the haunt of evil natures. The superstitious fears of the people kept them aloof—the house stood as in a desert. But there came a new and curious disease in the

place : the people were seized as they went along the streets with sudden madness, and ran furiously along till they fell and died. The fears of death overcame the fears of superstition—the evil was attributed to the mystery concealed in the house of Noph. The whole city ran together to destroy it.

At this crisis, Harosheth appeared in the city. He beheld the furious crowd rushing to the house of Noph, and smote them with blindness. They reeled to and fro, and pressed upon each other. The torches which many of them bore, were rudely thrust against their neighbours, and the cries of pain and horror became inconceivable. The city was in danger of destruction : but Harosheth passed calmly through the living chaos ; entered the dwelling of Noph, who had heard with surprise the tumult without, and seen at the same time, the images around him shrink back to their former stations. Harosheth said solemnly—“ Arise, Noph ! and come forth ! ” and the terrified and wondering man sprang up with instant vigour, and fell at the prophet’s feet. “ Mighty servant of a mighty Lord,” said Noph, “ let me find favour with thee ;—teach me the knowledge of this dread-

ful God, who thus rules despotically over gods and men!" "Follow," said the seer; and turning, went forth.

Noph beheld the groping and bewildered crowd, but the seer passed rapidly along, and he followed silently and without question. When they had reached the outskirts of the city, Harosheth turned, and cried—"Power of the Lord! cease thy work!" They discerned the distant tumult suddenly subside—the crowd stood still, as people who had suddenly received sight, and were overcome with wonder; but the prophet and his follower went on. They proceeded without a word, from day to day, for the space of nine days. They left the regions of fertility, and entered a desert, which sustained no vegetation;—the sand burned beneath their feet;—the air burned around them; and the only living things which they beheld were scorpions, which threatened them with their death-armed tails.

"Master!" at length said Noph, "whither goest thou? Why seekest thou this great and terrible wilderness?"

"Thou hast seen the Lord's power in the city," replied Harosheth—"thou shalt see it where no

man lives except by it. Dost thou now pass through a land of fire? a land, where nothing lives but these deadly reptiles? dost thou not pass through these, and live? Remember now, and call to mind—who despised the Invisible One? This land was once fertile as Egypt, but the people despised the Invisible One—and now, where are they? To the end of the world, shall fire, and solitude, and barrenness dwell here. No man shall pass through, except the Lord shall send him, and support him in it.”

Again he went on. Noph pursued in silent awe. Every night they lay down on the sand, fearless of the scorpions, and the purple wind of death; and every morning they found, each at his head, bread, and water in a gourd. On the fourteenth day, they entered a mountainous region, and a city, the dwellings of which were chiefly hewn in the rocks, which rose on each side of a delightful vale. The place was delicious with fresh flowing waters, green luxurious meads, and abundance of corn, and vines, and date-gardens of vast extent, whence Egypt was freely supplied: but a heavy calamity had fallen on the people,

which threatened famine. A pestilence was in the corn. The straw was flecked with black and orange-coloured spots, and whoever eat of the grain, died. The harvest had been abundant—the barns were full of wheat, and yet the people pined for bread. Harosheth bade them bring out their grain to the open air, and taking some of the straw, he called upon God, and burned it before the people. The smoke rose, and spread itself through the whole air with a pungent fume. Then the prophet said, take the grain on which the smoke has passed, and eat it with safety—and he took of it first and eat it, and received no harm. Then rose there a wonderful gladness amongst all the people; and when Harosheth would depart, they came running in crowds, and would have thrust money upon him; but he refused it, and went away.

Noph had been amazed at the healing of the corn; but far greater was his amazement at the refusal of the money. “Master!” he cried, eagerly, “why refused thou this coin? It will do thee good, and thou hast well earned it. Let us take it, I pray thee?” But Harosheth turned

and looked on him, and said, "Noph, thou art but a base heathen yet. Thou art far from comprehending the nature of God. Can he give me power to do this; and can he not give me all I need?" Noph was silent, and they journeyed forward. They now entered another town. It was a time of festivity. They celebrated the feast of Baal-Shalishah; and when they beheld the strangers, they would draw them to their temple to worship, and to feast with them; but when Harosheth refused, and denounced their god as a false and impotent deity—they haled him and Noph away to the top of a rock, and would have plunged them down, but flames burst from the rock, and pursued the multitude with their fierce and smoky volumes, leaving the strangers untouched. When the prophet beheld himself and follower at liberty, he descended, and went quietly away; but Noph cried out, "dost thou quit this place thus peaceably? Wilt thou not avenge thyself? Wilt thou not smite them even with blindness, as thou didst the people of No? Or curse them with the curse of the corn, loosed from off the last city?"

"Noph!" replied the seer, "thou art yet far from God—the spirit of thy cruel demons is yet in thee. Has the Omnipotent borne for ages, with this evil race, and shall I not bear with it?"

Noph was again silent, and they went on. They now entered on a desert region of black and stony mountains; and as they journeyed day by day, Noph was weary, and ready to faint. "Master!" he said, "why dwellest thou so much in deserts? Why are we blasted with toil and hunger, and fatigue?"

"Art thou humble and patient?" he replied. "Hast thou learned to know thy own weakness, and the strength and goodness of the Infinite? Dost thou yet despise God, because he is invisible? He that would be the servant of the Most High, must be pure, and patient, and ready to lay down his life at the command of God."

As he said this, a most delicious odour breathed upon them. Noph sprang forward, and stood gazing in ecstasy at a beautiful melon, that grew beneath the shade of a rock. As he would have stooped to gather it, a spectre-like creature came forth from the rocks, and cried in a feeble and

hoarse voice, "help ! help ! or I perish with famine !" Harosheth took up the melon, and gave it to the wasted stranger ; who devoured it with voracity. "Haste," said the seer, "in the strength of this, and eastward wilt thou soon reach a city." The skeleton-like man fell down at the feet of Harosheth, and kissed them ; tears even came into his burning and hollow eyes, and with a gesture of his arm, expressive of infinite gratitude, he went away.

But as Harosheth turned his eyes on Noph, he beheld him standing grinding his teeth, in rage ; his sharp features were lit up with a flame of fury, and he cried, "is it thus thou treatest thy friend ? Hast thou not tormented me enough ? Wilt thou kill me here ? What hadst thou to do with my melon, that thou shouldst take it from me, and give it to thou knowest not whom ? "

Harosheth looked calmly upon him, and said, "Noph, art thou a man, and hast no feeling for thy brother ? Dost thou desire to serve God, and wouldst not save his creature from perishing, though it were at the price of thy own life ? Thou hast seen the power of God in the city, and the

desert; thou hast seen his goodness, and his vengeance; thou hast learned that he is in all places present, and hears the voice of his servants; and couldst thou not trust him a little longer? The worshipper of the Invisible, must learn to feel that he is all-powerful—and he himself all-passive to his power; but I see thou art yet in the gall of bitterness, and the bonds of iniquity.” Then, casting his eyes towards heaven, he said, “Almighty God! let this man be full of love, as thou art full of love: let him be patient as becomes a creature of clay; enduring, as becomes a creature of immortality.”

As he uttered the words, a strong light flashed upon his own mind, and he stood abashed, and humbled, for his own impatience and anger stared him in the face; and he felt that while he had taught the erring pagan, he had taught him in pride. He prostrated himself in the dust, and acknowledged the just judgments of the Omniscient. When he arose, he beheld Noph sitting on the ground, in tears. “Master,” said the old man, “now do I know that thy God is a God indeed, for he is come into my soul with power;

I am full of vigour and peace, and love and gladness." He sprung up, and embraced Harosheth with transport. "I will return," he said, "to my native city, and declare what I have been taught; and whether I live, or whether I die, I have not lived in vain, and I shall die rejoicing."

They embraced again, and parted, each returning to his own place. Of Noph, no further record remains; but when Harosheth re-appeared at Ziklag, his friends came hastily together; and first of all, his brother came and fell on his neck, and wept, and said, "Forgive, my brother, forgive! A long and weary journey hast thou had, in quest of thy mule, and behold! I had taken it away. Tidings came from my son, who dwells at Ain, that he was seized with a sore affliction. The tidings came in the night, and I hastened to borrow thy mule for the journey. I knocked loudly at thy door, but could not awake thee—therefore I took the mule and went. But when I returned, and heard of thy great anger, I hid him in my house, and said,—'Let be, till the wrath is a little gone by,'—when lo! I heard that thou hadst arisen, and wast gone! See! it is safe in its stall; and I have watched daily and anxiously for thee!"

“Brother,” said Harosheth, “thou art more righteous than I. God is just, and has taught me wisdom. I went forth in great anger, for a very small cause—and he has made me to pass through great and numerous evils; and has shewn me in the darkness of heathen lands, the pleasantness of his own heritage; and praise be to God—if I lost my mule, for the time, I have lost also a temper more mulish than that of any beast, and moreover, I have found and saved many erring souls.”

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THE VALLEY OF ANGELS.

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CHAPTER I.

A tribe of Antediluvians had pitched their tents in the plain of Kedem. From these tents issued, at evening, a young damsel, who, after looking silently for some time, first on the peaceful encampment, and then on the equally peaceful pastoral scenery around; on the children playing to and fro beneath the neighbouring trees, and on the numerous flocks and herds scattered in different parts of the landscape, beneath the care of their keepers, went on leisurely towards the west. She appeared to have scarcely reached the maturity of her youth; and her form was like that of one of those celestial spirits, which were wont in the first ages of the world to visit it,—a form of beautiful proportion, evidently full of bounding elasticity and vigour. She was clad merely in a cymar of white

cotton, which reached a little lower than the knee; left bare her neck and part of her bosom; and was confined at the waist with a belt of the same material, fastened in front with a clasp of gold. Her feet were shod with sandals; and her dark hair floated in rich volumes on her polished shoulders. Such was the simple array of the times and the country; and thus in her free and shining beauty, the fair maid went on,—now, with a calm and serene air, as if charmed with the cool freshness of evening, and the delicious odours which the hour called forth: now springing gaily forward to pluck from the surrounding thickets, some transcendantly lovely rose, some splendid lily, or some flowering branch of the spicy carnation-tree. Again, she walked forward with a quicker pace, and apparently led by some object of greater importance; for her countenance would, at the same time, assume a solemn expression of tender and anxious thought, or would turn to the gorgeous sky, kindling into an animation, such as the pure soul and bright imaginings of youth, can alone send into a mien like hers. It was a mien of angel-like beauty. Dark eyes, that changed rapidly

from the melting and penetrating beam of affection to the triumphant and concentrated lustre of a star; dark eyebrows in union with a complexion of the most delicate and transparent clearness; and every other feature so purely, so expressively lovely, that her soul seemed not only to exhibit all its depth and stirrings of passion and affection, of joy and sadness, brightly and instantaneously upon them, but to shew itself as one of the most gentle and glorious spirits which ever issued from the hands of the Creator. The varying developments of her delight, curiosity, and gratified sense of harmony and fragrance, as she went on gathering many a flower, gazing on its beauty, and inhaling its odour, shewed all the heart of youth in which the quickness and freshness of life yet dwells; and which, feeling happy and full of hope, naturally expands itself to the charms of nature, as a flower to the sun; and when she cast her eyes on the heavens above, and her rich and elevated features glowed with the divine sentiment of a worshipping admiration, you might have deemed that you were gazing on the countenance of a seraph, which had shone amid the eternal glory of the Divinity.

The scene which she was traversing was a wide champaign, scattered in some places with tall palms, in others, with lower trees covered with profuse blossom, and in others, with thickets, where the wild vine trailed its branches, and disclosed its purple bunches at the feet of the passer-by. The whole plain was covered with the tall bents of grass which the noon sun of that fervid climate had withered to dryness, and tinged with a faint hue of rose, perceptible through the whole landscape; while a tender and luxuriant pasturage springing up everywhere amongst it, gladdened the eye of the spectator in its immediate neighbourhood, and trod like velvet beneath the foot. A variety of rare flowers sprang up in the thickets, diffusing their glad aroma through the air, and, as I have said, attracting the eye and the hands of this fair damsel. To her right and left, and all before her, shewed vast forests which had probably never been tracked by man. Beyond the trees in front, she discerned the tops of mountains, which seemed to draw her gaze with a peculiar interest.

Her tribe had but recently encamped in this

neighbourhood; and, charmed with its beauty and fertility, proposed to build here a city, and lay the foundation of a future kingdom. But before they finally decided on this important measure, they judged it necessary to explore the country which lay still beyond it, to ascertain whether it was an inhabited land;—if so, what neighbours they were like to find; and if not, whether its natural advantages might not even tempt them to rove still farther, and occupy it. They had now been gone nine days; and during the latter half of that time, every day Zea gazed anxiously from the door of her tent for the re-appearance of the troop; and every evening had she gone forth to see if she could not catch a distant glimpse of the returning wanderers, amongst whom her father was a leader. He was an aged man of his tribe; a counsellor, a judge, a patriarch amongst them: she was the child, the sole child of his age; and the death of her mother, which had occurred some years ago, had left her the stay and solace of his declining years; and, in his absence, the solitary inhabitant of his tent. Zea wanted not for companions. Amongst the damsels of the tribe, there were

more than one whom she took to her heart and her confidence, with all the open and glowing affection of youth; and many with whom she lived in the daily intercourse of pleasant words, and kindly, cheerful deeds; in the fancies, the spirits, and the speculations of youth. Zea was of no unsocial temperament. She might be seen seated in the early morning by the well, or the rivulet, amongst a circle of bright young maidens, the beautiful forms, the beautiful, buoyant spirits of the fresh, early world, with a face lit with the radiance of happiness, overflowing good nature, and a shining intellect, that untasked to great efforts, and half unconscious of its possession, threw forth its wealth in sallies of wit, arch humour, and sportive female eloquence. There might she be seen, loveliest where all were very lovely, a vigorous and unblemished race of Nature's eldest-born daughters: there might her voice be heard, in the laughter that sprung from the plentitude of a rejoicing heart, and feared neither to offend the feelings of her companions, nor the forms of society which have oppressed a later day: and the song which celebrated some

now unknown deed of nobility, some tale of now forgotten love and sorrow, the effusion of some poet, who threw it forth without an effort, and never dreamed of renown, yet had the living love of the hearts which he filled with a tender sweetness. And in the dance, in which agile and exquisite forms traced with fairy feet the mysterious movements of the planetary train, already made known to men by the discoveries of the early and marvellous astronomy, which was not all quenched in the Flood, Zea was conspicuous: and in the merry troop who sallied forth to plunge into the clear river, shaded by the wide o'er-arching boughs of the primeval forest,—or to gather for the table the grape, the pine, the golden orange, the date, the rich fig, on whose delicate surface a violet mist seemed to have condensed itself; and flowers from the field, the wood-side, and the river, —roses, amaranths, and lotuses, to fill with grace and fragrance their simple abodes;—there was Zea to be seen, bounding along with the gaiety of a child, and the beauty of a creature of heaven.

Zea was a being whose heart clung to her species, and in her gayer moments to the gayest portion

of those youthful females with whom she had grown up ; and therefore she was social, and kind, and beloved. But her spirit had other moods, which resulted from its high intellectual nature ; it passed from the bright merriment of society to solitude, and it sank into a depth of thoughts and feelings which were solemn, often sad, sometimes even to tears, whose source she did not fully comprehend. Yet there was a mystery and a luxury in this tone of mind, which she loved ; and therefore she delighted to steal away at times into the thicket of the near forest. There was something in the presence of nature which soothed, and yet cherished this spirit. The solitude, and the shadow of the wood,—the voice of the wind whispering, or rushing solemnly and sonorously vocal through its branches,—the sound of bright, hurrying waters, and the fair, wide arch of heaven above her, all flung upon her heart a sense of something in their nature, or made expressive in their aspects, which startled it with mysterious feelings of vastness ; and hopes and fears which, inherent in her own nature, woke into consciousness at their silent appeal. It seemed as if the

voice of God, which was heard amid the shades of Eden by the first parents of men, still lived along the unforsaken earth, in the forest, in the water, in the winged and enveloping air, and cried to the listening soul—"Where art thou?" She gazed on the firm ground beneath her feet, and bowed in an adoring sense that seemed flashed upon her heart, of the wonder of its creation, in its vastness and solidity,—starting from nothing at the voice of God. She fixed her eyes on the shape of some regal flower, rising in peerless grace on its beautifully proportioned stem, spreading out its finely ramified branches, and leaves and leaflets in nicest development, and bearing to the eye of heaven, its flowers wrought in burnished gold, bright as the sun's own lustre, wrought as by the chisel of some divine spirit, in which grace and glory lived with such an exuberant plentitude, that they cast themselves without measure or care upon millions of fragile creations, which bloomed in solitude, or were trodden beneath the feet of men and beasts, till she exclaimed in her heart—"The very finger of the Deity has been here! God himself shaped the first flower of this kind; his eternal mind

planned this individual form,—made it beautiful in itself, and differing from every other of his countless productions; and his unseen spirit here preserves the identity of this its fair descendant.” She stood up, and felt in the wind that breathed upon her, a mighty and mysterious element, which the same hand had cast around, and made the invisible and yet perceptible breath of her existence. She raised her eyes to heaven, and in its deep blue distance, seemed to glance towards the abode of his more acknowledged presence. These thoughts often came upon her with a power which seemed to affect none of her race besides; and they raised in her many dreams of the past; many imaginations of the future; many queries on her own wondrous nature, and on those far and unknown worlds, in which the God of her fathers lived with the angels and the dead.

She was young; and her spirit rejoiced in the fair creation in which she found herself; in the fair beings of her own nature: but that spirit was endued with a fine and delicate consciousness; it was glowing as the sunbeam, transparent as the water, and pure and fluent as the air she breathed.

It was alive to the faintest appulse of every exterior thing; and its own clear depths were revealed to itself in such profound and marvellous amplitude, that she was awed by the intellectual dignity, and the eternity of her own being.

She was, without being aware of it, of a high order of beings: one of that class whom later times have recognized as touched by the Divinity with a subtle spiritual essence, which they have failed to define—and have therefore been content to name it GENIUS—and wonder at its workings for good or for evil. The aspects of heaven and earth; of day and night; of the varying seasons; the beauty of stars, of mountains, and deep woods, and mighty waters, and all the more magnificent features and agitations of the world: the influences of fear, and hope, and despair; the passions of hatred and love; of all the lovely and alluring—the dark and terrible phenomena of the human mind; the terror or magnanimous splendour of human deeds—war, and triumph, and defeat; the dimness of eternity; domestic sorrows, decay, and death, pulling man to the dust; and affections wrestling with them in strength and devotedness so sublime, that it seemed

to make him in nature, if not in perpetuity, a god. These fell upon her, not as they fell upon those around her; but with a quicker feeling, a more startling and lasting effect, and with a vividness that raised in her mind images that became eternal as its own existence. She had tastes, and fancies, and pursuits in common with her fellows; but she had something beyond all these; something which she could not define, which she had not yet learned to communicate, and which she kept in the secret of her soul as a part of it, sacred, and even awful to herself.

Her father was a man who had seen many years and much experience; and had gathered up many recollections of the past, and much of the serene, practical wisdom of old age. Zea was wont to sit and listen to his conversation, as he told of many wonderful events which passed before her birth; many dealings of God and his angels with men; many of the noble deeds of his ancestors; and as he spoke, the same feelings which came upon her in solitude, and amid the sublimity of nature, arose in her heart, and the image of the early world, with all its golden days of angel communion, its errors, its

falling away from heaven, and its consequent sins and sorrows, were spread wide in her mind as one great and indestructible picture.

The love which existed in the hearts of the old man and his daughter towards each other, was strengthened beyond the interest of ordinary life, by the common and sacred sorrow which they cherished for her lost mother; by solitary communings in their tent, in which the old man eased his heart of his multifarious knowledge, and filled that of his daughter with images of indescribable beauty and wonder.

Every day had she therefore now, for some time, looked out anxiously for the return of her father; and every evening wandered forth towards the western forest, in hope of hailing his appearance afar off. But hitherto her quest and solicitude had been in vain.

CHAPTER II.

THIS evening she went on, filled with this affectionate hope, and with the transcendant beauty of the scene. Beyond the forest, the sun was descending the sky like a mighty ruby. His broad disc, on which the eye might now rest steadily and unpained, was of the richest hue of that precious stone; and a crimson flush was flung from his liquid orb, which filled the whole western hemisphere, and tinged with a softened glory the mountain tops, and the dark forests below. Through this warm and roseate glow, the sky itself might be seen, brightened by a thin layer of pearly clouds, that burned in a paler, and yet intense radiance, as it were the canopy of God's celestial throne.

The delighted maid went on, gazing on the glorious scene, and filled with an absorbing admiration. The sun hastened down the sky with a velocity apparently quickened, and, in fact, ren-

dered strikingly visible by the fixedness of the scenes below ; and, ever and anon, she beheld his broad and sanguine orb between the opening boughs of the forest, hung, as it were, for a moment's solemn farewell, above the horizon ere he descended into another region of inconceivable warmth and beauty. The far glance over the solitary land—the silence around—the gloom already creeping over the east—the dream-like repose of approaching night—the shadows of the forest, and that departing spectacle of majestic and serene glory, filled her with an awe, and at the same time elevated her spirit into that region of entranced thoughts that float away into infinity. She forgot herself in this imposing pageant, one of the most magnificent which the hand of Omnipotence has spread before his creature man, and spread it too, at that hour of retreating light and sound—of coming dimness and subdued tone of spirit, when the heart is, if ever, easily touched with the display of the divine hand-writing on the wall, and disposed to adore and love :—she started at length, to find herself alone in the forest. The last ruddy beams of the sun burned behind her on

the boles of the ancient trees like fire; and when she looked around her, the wild beauty of the place at once terrified and charmed her.

Trees of stupendous size, and evidently amazing age, reared their giant trunks to a vast height, and stretched their huge and hoary branches wide above a turf of deep elastic moss. The voices of birds amongst their boughs, as if aware of a human presence, or stirred by a passing breeze, might be occasionally heard in short under-notes, indicative of yet unsettled repose; and here and there some small animal might be seen moving in the gloom. She looked down at her feet, and could discern that she was in a path which had evidently been before trodden by men or beasts. She felt alarmed, and turned to retrace her steps, when a gale which breathed as from some open champaign, and the sight of the evening radiance yet lingering on the mountain tops, tempted her to move forward yet a few steps; she obeyed the impulse, and in a moment found herself standing on a lofty height which terminated the forest, and below her expanded a valley of wonderful beauty, through which rolled a broad river. She stood

in silent and admiring wonder. Was so glorious a scene in the immediate vicinity of their camp, and had no one yet discovered it? On the other side of the valley the mountains she had seen, arose—their heads bright with the last beams of the sun, their feet stretching out in extreme shade; and yet in the obscurity of evening, presenting to the eye such wildness of varied fronts, such intervening vales and glens, and such picturesque array of wild woods, as revealed them to the imagination of the beholder as belonging to a scene of sublime enchantment.

But what astonished her exceedingly, was to behold scattered all through that Elysian vale, as it were, dwellings and temples, whose roofs and fanes reared themselves in majestic splendour. They were evidently rich abodes, as of some wealthy race, who had gathered around them all the amenities of nature and the charms of art. They stood in the midst of gardens and groves, where lofty palms, and cypresses, and cedars, shewed themselves above the other masses of foliage, and the breath of whose fragrance was wafted to where she stood. Far as the dimness

of evening permitted her to discern, these abodes and fair scenes seemed to stretch; and an atmosphere, as of contagious gladness, to rest upon them; and to fill her, as she breathed it, with a sense of serene joy.

But what bright city, she asked herself, could it be, which thus displayed its unknown and unsuspected presence? Had they drawn near, without knowing it, that far-famed Ukinim, of whose enchantments so many rumours had spread through the earth; and which the yet unsophisticated people of her tribe would have fled from, as from the city of the Evil One itself? As she pondered thus in her mind, she heard a slight rustling behind her; and turning, started to behold a youth in the habit of a hunter, who stood gazing intently upon her.

“Fair Sepharvite,” the youth said, with an air and tone at once expressive of kindness and regret, “hast thou then discovered this hidden place? and hast thou crossed the forest alone?”

“Alone,” replied Zea, “I have come, and I am about to return alone; but, fair youth, tell me ere I depart, the name of this city which I so unexpectedly behold?”

“Thou canst not regain the camp of the Sepharvites to night; it is three hours’ journey, and the forest abounds with beasts of prey. I fain would lead thee down into our valley; and yet will it not fulfil the doom predicted? Thou seest the Valley of Angels; the last visible abode on the unhappy earth, of those heavenly hosts which once walked amongst men, their friends, their guides, and defenders. Of all these glorious beings, we alone linger here, to delay as much as in us lies, the growing curse of earth; and even now we are commanded to depart, when the feet of man enter the vale.

“Shall I hasten this crisis? Wilt thou banish from the afflicted globe the angelic bands by thy presence? And yet, where shall I convey thee? Where shall I shelter thee for the night? Let me reconduct thee to the camp?”

Zea stood trembling with awful astonishment. To feel herself in the presence of a creature of another and a higher nature, to behold herself on the very verge of a city of angels, startled and shook her frame with those fearful sensations, which for some wise but undiscovered purpose, interpose

themselves between us and the spiritual world—the very world to which we are eventually bound! She felt herself as in a strange and beautiful, but overwhelming dream; and would have rejoiced with an effort to break it, and to find herself once more in her tent. But she glanced down the vale, the shining city still was there!—she turned her eyes upon the form before her, it still remained; and its benign regard somewhat soothed her agitated feelings; and when she contemplated his glorious face, and called to mind the burning longings of her heart, which these divine beings could appease, she felt her confidence revive, and with it a glowing desire to draw near to them, and hold communion with the children of heaven, as her fathers had done.

“And sayest thou, fair Spirit,” she said, “that the foot of man is forbidden your valley? Do ye linger on earth to befriend mankind, and yet do ye shrink from their contact?”

“No! mortal maid,” replied the angel,—“we fear not to enter their most crowded places of abode; day and night do we pass amongst them—to comfort, to strengthen, to defend them; but to

hold visible intercourse with them is forbidden. Hast thou heard of the past ages, and canst thou not comprehend why the Omniscient has given us this law?"

"And sayest thou," rejoined Zea, "that ye must for ever depart when the foot of man treads your soil? Alas! not long, I fear me, will your sojourn then upon earth be! Oh good spirit! fain would I know many things which are doubtless revealed to you—fain would I dwell awhile with you—fain hold much converse with you, that I may hear of the past days—of the dealings of the Almighty; which may strengthen me to fear him more deeply, to love him more worthily, and to make his laws and his presence more livingly felt around me. And shall this holy desire be vain? Shall my presence, like an evil spell, only banish you for ever?"

"No, Zea!" exclaimed a soft voice which made her start, as at a well-known sound; and in the same instant she beheld another shape also standing before her. "No, Zea! it is not thus! Thou shalt descend with us for the night into the valley!" added the second Spirit; and as he spoke, Zea

stood in confused wonder at the familiar tones of his voice. It seemed as if she long and often had heard them, but she endeavoured vainly to recollect when or where. She gazed on the face of the youth: it was new to her; yet there was somewhat in its expression, and in his friendly eyes, with which her heart claimed instantaneous kindred; the terrors of his mysterious nature vanished from her imagination, and she felt that she could confide in him as a brother, and could dare to walk with him through realms of untried existences.

“Spirit! whence is it,” she cried, “that I look on thee as on one that I have known? Whence is it that thy voice sounds in my soul as a note of music that has long murmured around me? Whence is it that thou art a stranger, and yet familiar to me as my own people;—that I know thee, and yet know thee not? Is it the spirituality of your nature that thus confounds my senses?”

The youth smiled:—“Well mayst thou wonder, Zea; thou knowest me, and yet hast seen me not! Thee I have long watched in my invisibility, and have loved thee for the high purity of thy nature. I know thy life and thy desires,—thy thoughts and

feelings,—thy longings after the hidden natures of the universe. It has been my delight to mark the influence of that spirit of poetry, which has found thee in the woods and wildernesses; and it shall yet be mine, to conduct thee whither all those glorious images that float in thy young mind are the realities of eternity. Come! let us descend! Thou art pure as the angels;—the interdict regards not thee;—the words of God are—‘When the feet of men enter your valley, depart.’ Descend fearlessly! I know thy secret thoughts, and tell thee that thy father is well, but returns not yet. Be therefore at peace.”

He turned aside a bough of the kafal tree, heavy with blossoms, the stirring of which awoke a gush of fragrance in the dewy evening air; a narrow path discovered itself, and Zea followed, with a beating heart, the Spirits down the descent. As they went forward, her amazement every moment augmented: she beheld the angelic natures walking to and fro in their shining beauty, amidst the twilight fragrance of their gardens. The sound of falling fountains broke at intervals upon her ear; mighty trees stood around, in their solemn shadows;

and a subtle and delicious odour breathed through the balmy air, inspiring her soul with a new life and joy. Her senses seemed endued with an immediate accession of pleasurable acuteness: her faculties to acquire a felicitous amplitude; and the tones of the nightingale, that came from many a shadowy recess of foliage, touched her bosom with a spirit of tenderness, and a winged exultation, such as she had never before experienced. She gazed on many a fabric, as she passed, and admired, in speechless enthusiasm, their celestial beauty and grandeur. Their material seemed to be as of crystal and gold, and their architecture such only as the spirit of the poet has created in the sunset clouds, or the inspired saint has conceived in his visions of heaven.

At length the first-seen Spirit bade them adieu, and entered one of those regal abodes: the friendly Spirit went on. Anon he turned aside, and Zea following, found herself in the light of a fair hall of inconceivable construction and loveliness; and in the presence of several angelic forms, who, the moment they gazed upon her, exclaimed with one voice,—“Zea!”

For a moment, a shade passed over their faces, as they said to their conductor,—“Kadmiel, is this well?” “It is well,” replied the youth; “the entrance of this damsel affects not our sojourn; the words of God have another object. Ye see—our abodes attest not by their instant dissolution, the operating spell of the Almighty.” With that, these amiable beings sprang forward with one accord, and clasping Zea to their bosom, welcomed her with transport to the Valley of Angels. Zea, trembling with various overpowering emotions, was silent; her eyes wandered over the marvels of that fair pavilion, and on the faces of its angelic inmates. It was to her a beautiful, but soul-consuming vision. “Am I really, then, in the midst of the children of heaven!” she often exclaimed to herself;—her life seemed to burn within her with a swift and meteor flame; all around her were objects that filled her with the most vivid and ineffable sensations. The walls appeared as of pure emerald, and were adorned with paintings, in which scenes of transcendent beauty, and figures of awful majesty, doing deeds of wonder and mysterious terror, were rather living than portrayed. Flowers

were blooming in different parts of the room; instruments of music, wrought of some light and ethereal substance of a peculiar lustre and beauty, leaned at the feet of pillars, which appeared of the onyx stone; and a pure and grateful splendour, which had no visible source, filled the apartment.

The beings themselves were four—four forms of surpassing grace, bearing to each other a strong similitude, and with countenances in which soft and overflowing love, quenched the errors of a flame-like intellect.

“Behold!” said Kadmiel, “my parents! behold my sisters, Zillah and Kuthielah!”

Once more they welcomed Zea to their home; and the sisters embraced her with many smiles and affectionate words. Zea again looked on them with wonder; youth seemed in all these noble beings alike; she could only distinguish the parent from the children by an air of maturer dignity. “Welcome,” said they all to the wandering maid; “thou art no stranger to us, Zea. We have known thee long; we know the aspirations of thy soul;—here, then, let it be satisfied with knowledge, the springs of which have rarely been opened to man, and soon

will be closed for ever. Thy sojourn here must necessarily be brief; thy silence as it regards us, while we remain on earth, profound: one day we shall meet again in higher scenes, and in a more enduring union."

"But," said Zea, her wonder breaking the bonds of awe and emotion, "but do the same endearing relations exist amongst you, as amongst us? Have you all the varied, but precious ties of parent and child, brother and sister? and this, without fear of death, or sorrow, or separation; without fear of the coldnesses and mistrusts which the passions and purblind perceptions of men occasion often amongst the most closely united;—without fear of that moral corruption of character, which cuts off hopes and friendships the most blooming, and sears the hearts of the faithful with a woe that never heals? Oh happy! happy race!"

"Thou seest it is so," they replied. "While we dwell on earth, the laws of our existence are strongly assimilated to those of human life.—Our natures are capable of conforming to the nature of the world in which we dwell, and of drawing continual refreshment and delight there—

from. We are here subjected to night and day; therefore we rise and lie down with them. We have gathered around us the charms of agreeable abodes; and the fruits of the earth cover our table with no unwelcome plenty. The day will come,—and is now not far off,—when we shall cast off all these things at a single note of the eternal trumpet, and quit the planet and its influences, as thou wouldst cast thy garment from thee. Till then, we partake the good of men, without the evil. This, to us, is impossible: we have not merely heard with man that God is good; we have seen his goodness through boundless worlds and innumerable ages; we know the whole career of evil—its false beginning,—its tumultuous progress,—its terrible end. We have breathed in the regions where passion cannot come to blind the intellect; it burns there, clear as the stars of God themselves; and the demonstrations of eternity, vast, awful, but triumphantly animating, stand for ever before the eyes of the dwellers of heaven, and annihilate every root of evil, by the most glorious and immortal convictions. But thou needest rest! Come to repose;—to-morrow thou shalt learn more!”

The sisters led her to a fair chamber; bade the peace and joy of God be with her, and withdrew. A strain of music, soft and soothing, now awoke. As she listened, her spirit, at first roused into wonder, into love to God and man, poured itself forth in a warm tide of silent tears; then sank and floated away in the stream of harmonious sound—she slept.

CHAPTER III.

IN the morning she awoke, and starting from her couch, she beheld the light upon the mountains, and stood entranced in admiration at the sublime beauty of those peerless hills. The recollections of the evening came back upon her; the reality, yet the dream-like reality of her situation; and she gazed on the whole scene of enchantment, with a swimming and unsteady vision. Below, the Elysian valley expanded itself in ineffable beauty. The great river was rolling on its way, glittering

and flashing in the rays of the morning sun. The trees and flowers around that fair abode, waved in the fresh gale, and shook to the ground their fragrant dews.

Far and wide, she saw the heavenly inhabitants in their radiant loveliness, moving in blissful groups, or singing as they trod alone the paradisaical gardens of that fairy region.

“Oh!” exclaimed Zea, “and has earth yet a spot peopled with inhabitants like these! giving up to their hands her richest blessings, instead of having them reluctantly wrung from her by a hard and selfish race that prey upon each other. Happy! happy creatures! and such might we have been but for the fall! Then death—then sorrow; but above all—sin; the curse, the canker, the destruction of our being, had not been!”

The angelic sisters appeared, and with a heart-warm salutation, led her again to the presence of their parents and brother. A breakfast of various beautiful fruits awaited them, which they partook in a spirit of cheerful love, that obliterated in Zea’s heart the remains of her internal awe of their spiritual natures; and then Kadmiel and his sisters

arose to shew her the city. They went out into the garden which overlooked the whole valley, and seating themselves on a projecting rock beneath a spreading cassia tree, pointed out, with affectionate assiduity, the various lovely features of the place. Zea's eyes followed from point to point, and saw with increasing marvel, the numerous inhabitants actively engaged in different pursuits. Some in light skiffs floated on the river; some tended their flowers, and bound up the beautiful plants of their gardens: others might be seen walking in the distant meads, purple with bloom as in the height of spring; and others, seated around their fountains in their gardens, were engaged in conversation evidently full of happiness and interest, by the brightness of their countenances; while their songs came in the wind at intervals, softer and richer than the tones of human instruments.

"But what is this!" cried Zea in astonishment, which I see? I behold forms suddenly appear on spots where I did not note their approach. I see a group in conversation; in a moment one, two, three, are gone—vanished, I know not how; and as instantaneously are the numbers of others increased."

The angels smiled. "What thou seest is but one of the many phenomena of our nature. Thou beholdest us as apparently solid forms as thyself; thou findest us substantial to thy grasp; we are no shadows; yet can we dissolve from human vision at will: and when we desire to depart to any distant place, it is but to exercise an act of volition, and we are there! Thou canst transport thy thoughts through the infinitude of space;—we can travel as fleetly as thy thought. But we are forbidden to appear to the eyes of men, therefore when we pass the bounds of this place, we pass invisibly. Thou seest spirits appear and disappear; thou seest them occupied in earnest converse,—they have passed to and fro between this and other worlds, and bring tidings of the deepest interest to their fellows. Things which thou canst not yet comprehend, and which the feebleness of thy mortal nature could not bear, are the subjects of their discourse. We dwell here: but here are we not confined. Our intercourse with heaven, and all the worlds of the empyreum, is open, or we were miserable!"

"Worlds!" said Zea—"speak ye of more worlds than this, and heaven, and the land of terror?"

“Zea!” replied Kuthielah, “hast thou beheld the host of stars shining in the night above thy head? Every twinkling gem is a world! the centre of worlds; and not only they, but millions of others sown through the boundlessness of space. Thinkest thou the Eternal so circumscribed in his power, or so niggard of his beneficence, as to have made only this little planet?”

Zea heard the words of the angel, and fell upon her face on the ground. She lay silent as one dead, and the three shining ones stood around, and looked upon her with compassionate love. At length she raised herself; but her countenance was pale as that of a lifeless creature, and her spirit seemed fainting within her. She raised her eyes wildly to the sky, then cast them upon the ground; her breath came heavily and at long intervals: and her limbs were cold and rigid. In a few moments she murmured—“Oh, mighty and incomprehensible God! and have I dared to look up to thee as to a father! Have I dared to send up my thoughts, which are as a contemptible vapour, with hope and a fearful familiarity towards thee! and knew not that I am nothing!—less than nothing!—that

this earth is nothing, in the numberless multitude of thy creations. Henceforth all hope faileth!—all aspiration is cut off! Let me perish and forget myself, for I am a miserable and contemptible atom. Wilt thou remember *me*! Wilt thou preserve *me*! Wilt thou draw *me*, a worm of the dust, to thy everlasting habitation! Vain hope! bitter, inconceivably bitter conviction!

“Nay, nay, fair child of Earth!” cried Kadmiel, “accuse not God of forgetfulness; cast not down those hopes which he himself has planted in thy heart. Let not the weakness of thy nature overcome thee. And this torturing abandonment of soul is but the effect of that weakness. It is thus, and thus it will for ever be, with the heart of man—that in the very moment that he discovers the wondrousness of the Almighty’s greatness, he is led to deny the infinity of his goodness. The astounding vastness of one attribute fills, overflows the soul; and leaves no room for the comprehension of another—the infinity of his love. The faculties of man are prostrated, and dashed as it were to pieces, by the sudden and tremendous in-rush of the terrible knowledge of God’s illimitable power

and nature; and it is only by degrees that the wounded spirit can gather up its strength, and proceed to form some just notion of his equally unfathomable wealth of love. Well for thee it is, Zea, that thou hast learnt this awful truth, while they are at hand who can re-assure thy fallen heart; and re-conduct thy thoughts into the channel of felicity. This will not always be the lot of men. Higher natures depart from them. They will arrive at this knowledge, by the active inquiries of their own science, and will feel all its overwhelming weight;—hence shall arise the singular and fatal spectacle, of men who, having discovered more of the works of the Almighty than their fellows, shall believe less in his existence than they. The best spirits,—they who have long clung in faith to the Author of their being, will be smitten and oppressed with a sense of their insignificance; which the living emanation of God in their own hearts—the crying voice of an immortality, heard through all lands and all times, shall alone enable them to surmount. But many will strive with infinite things in the darkness of their souls; and seeing the stupendous range and mag-

nificance of the universe, and their own littleness and evanescent forms; and not being able to comprehend the mysterious truth, that One Mind can live through countless worlds, and support and cherish them to eternity by his own power—they will deny the existence of that mind, and lose themselves in vain doctrines of necessity—innate laws of matter—and the eternity of nature. Woe to them! The belief in and dependence on God once gone—the hope of immortality is extinguished—that extinguished, the nobility of the soul is quenched,—that quenched, love, generosity—the sympathies of family and species—the noble sacrifice of life, even to the good of country and of man, of which the spirit inspired with the consciousness of its perpetuity is capable—expire; and men become selfish, and ravenous, and cruel. So fatal to virtue and happiness is this self-abasing idea, that the Son of God himself—the Lord and Creator of infinite worlds, shall one day tread this earth; and it will not be the least of his labours, to knit up again the failing cord of man's faith in the Divine power. He shall proclaim to men, their value in the eyes of the Eternal: he shall teach

them to call him Father; he shall shew them that his care is exerted for the smallest creatures. And can there be a more living proof of God's estimation of men, than the sending of his Son to assert it?

“Behold his angels! They have descended into the deep arcana of his truth;—they know the immensity of his might and his works, and they are happy!

“Behold this insect, which has constructed its nest in this convolved leaf. It has constructed its works with a science as wondrous and exact as that of man; in its small and transparent body exist passions, and desires, and propensities, as strong as those which agitate the largest power which walks the earth. It lives in his being;—it is quickened and preserved, and, as it were, inspired by his life;—he forgets it not;—can he forget his higher creatures? What he has deemed it important to form, is it possible he can despise? Let thy confidence revive, thou sensitive child of earth, and remember that thy fate stands not alone in thy own individual being;—it is bound up indissolubly with thy whole species. What happens

to the whole, must happen to every separate existence in it. Is the species destined to immortality?—then is immortality incontestably thine. Thou canst not separate thyself from the fortunes of thy kind;—your lot is one. If this globe then, with all its inhabitants, be a noble object in the eyes of its creator, every rational being of which that whole is composed, has its proportionate value in the prolific mind. But thou art a part of the great family of this globe;—this globe itself is a part of the whole universe;—part is linked to part;—of parts is the whole constituted; and without those parts, would there be no whole; and although the distance between the Creator and the created is infinite, not so is the difference between the highest and the lowest of his creatures. Wilt thou fear, therefore, for the safety and dignity of thy being, in the endless multitude of created spirits? lift up—expand thy heart, and rejoice rather that the tide of life and happiness is boundless as the spirit of God.”

The heart of Zea rose from its agonizing despondency, which the sudden discovery of the terrible vastness of the Eternal energy had cast

upon it; and she thanked the affectionate Kadmiel for his consolatory language. "It is true," she said, "you have beheld the terrors of the Divine nature, and yet are full of rejoicing. Let me learn to confide and adore."

"But let us now," said the sisters, "shew thee something more of our kindred." They clasped the maiden in their arms. She felt a sudden sense of rapid motion;—a swimming—a failing of sense and vision; and, again recovering them, she beheld the three standing, smiling beside her; but the scene was altogether different. They were on the banks of the great river. A mead, deep with verdure, and brilliant and odorous with thousands of glorious flowers, was before them; and trees of a mighty growth, and exceeding woodland beauty, grew around, and hung their blossomed and fruit-laden boughs towards the ground. They beheld a troop of children playing amongst them, full of the agility and the happy fancies of infancy. Some gathered flowers; others sate in a ring on the turf, weaving them into garlands, which they placed upon their sunny locks; and others soaring without aid of wings, played in the tree-tops, and threw

down, with merry cries and laughter, the heavy fruit of the cocoa, the golden plantain, the glowing orange, and the delicious mangusteen. Anon, another troop came hand-in-hand from amongst the trees, and as they came they sung—

Children of Heaven's love !

Children of light !

Lo ! where the sun above

Travels in night.

Away, and away,

Where the forest boughs play :

Where the bright river flows ;

Where the dew-drops repose ;

Where the wild birds are waking,

The wild beasts betaking

Themselves to their wood-caves ;—

Away ! and away !

Stars that behold us,

Nightly afar,

Our sires have told us,

How lovely ye are !

The earth where we dwell,

Oh we love it right well,

With its woods and its mountains,

Its flowers and its fountains ;

Yet soon will we trace

The ocean of space,

And speed to your star-lands ;

Away ! and away !

But now to the hill-crest,

Glittering free !

Now to the forest,—

Now to the sea !

Let us plunge in the brine :
Let us bask in the shine ;
Let us climb up in wonder,
To regions of thunder ;
Let us sit in a ring,
By some sea-cave and sing ;
Then back to this sweet vale :
Away ! and away !

At once the whole merry band sprang up ; there was a shrill cry of delight,—a clapping of hands,—and they were gone !

“ Beautiful and blessed creatures ! ” Zea exclaimed. “ Yet why does their beauty make me sad ? What is there in appearance to distinguish them from the children of my own race, except that their ethereal frames can soar from earth at will ? They are lovely and glorious to look on ;—but I have seen children even of my mortal race as beautiful and rejoicing as they. But these are immortal and scathless ;—they shall never know disease, nor evil, nor death : while alas ! the children of men must experience them all. I have seen a band of our children playing like these, with as much of loveliness in their forms, as much of heaven in their hearts. I have seen some one pre-eminent amongst them for his childish beauty,

his arch playfulness, and overflowing spirit of joy. I have seen him soon after laid on his mother's lap, shrunk into dry and pallid feebleness, like a plant bitten by the canker-worm; or rolling in the hot agony of fever, till he died, and the earth was cast upon him. But I have seen what is far worse than this;—I have seen those innocent and happy creatures growing up, and becoming rapidly transformed into monsters of selfishness and crime. When I hear the merry voice of childhood, my heart often leaps with a sudden foreboding terror. When I see its artless purity and simplicity of spirit, I become melancholy; for the knowledge of what they may soon become, has fallen upon me. Surely, surely in this sad existence, there is nothing so sorrowful as the metamorphosis from a simple, loving child, into a hard, coarse, malignant being,—from whose nature every tender and good thing seems to have fallen, as blossoms from a growing tree; and to have left nothing but selfishness, savageness, and exulting, greedy ferocity. Yet it is a change that is daily, hourly, and continually going on. Oh! that we could but learn to preserve the tender heart, the pure simplicity of the child till manhood;

then would the world be blessed, and its curse overcome !”

“But to do that,” replied Zillah, “the whole fabric of human nature must be renewed ; and that can only one accomplish, and in a distant age. Man’s spirit must indeed pass through a fiery discipline. The curse is on the earth ; and the principle of evil is active and untiring !—it must spread wide, and with all its dragon folds surround his path : but bear up, Zea—God is mighty ;—he will cause the soul of man to triumph ;—and will not eternity be able to make him forget the sorrows, but not the lessons of time ?”

CHAPTER IV.

“BEHOLD yon mountain vales!—Are they not lovely! Let us pass thither for a moment.” Again they clasped her in their arms, and in the next instant, she found herself and them in a lofty glen of the mountains—a beautiful and refreshing place. The ground was covered with a mossy turf, and scattered with azure and purple, and golden flowers, whose delicate petals trembled in the fresh gale. Here and there arose rocks, fringed with bushes; and trees in picturesque wildness hung above the vale. As they walked on, they beheld that the solitary spot was not totally unoccupied. A tent was pitched on the sunny slope, beneath some pine trees, and a group of radiant shapes were there, reposing and singing in concert—

Hail to thee, Lord of living might!
Ancient of Days—all hail!
Dweller amidst the central light,
That flows, and shall not fail!
Here duly morning comes and goes;
Here darkness spreads its veil;—
No ebb, no change thy glory knows—
Spirit of Life, all hail!

Here on thy last-created star
Thy angel-watch we keep ;
We see thy wondrous acts afar,
Then homeward turn, and weep.
We weep—but do we then repine ?
Never,—oh never ! Lo !
These creatures, Lord of Heaven, are thine—
How can we let them go ?

Oh ! full of wonder are thy ways !
Man, formed by thee the last,
Dwells where each pleasant thing decays—
Where life itself flies fast,
His spirit clings unto the ground,
Yet holds it by a breath ;
Fain would he loose his hold—but round
Stand Terror, Pain, and Death !

Sorrow has sealed him with a spell
That draws us to his lot :
Guilty and desperate to rebel,
We mourn, but leave him not.
Yet must we leave him,—for we hear
The bloody steps draw nigh,
That bid the angels disappear
For ever in the sky.

Woe to the earth ! 't is sad to be
Even now its weeping guest ;
Shades of a dim antiquity
Are falling on its breast.
We wander through the woods, where grew
The trees of Nature's birth :
Alas ! their mighty branches strew
The unlamenting earth.

Woe to the earth !—the past is cold ;
But who shall turn his eye
Where dark and dreadful shades unrolled,
Far down the future lie.
Open thy gates, thou city fair,
Built mid the crystal spheres ;
None but the Almighty eye may dare
To trace earth's latter years.

All hail to thee, the Lord of Might !
Ancient of Days, all hail !
Still shall thine arm uphold the right ;
Thy glorious peace prevail !
Hail to thee Lord of countless souls,
Back to thy rest we fly ;
And earth through deepening darkness rolls,
Till the Pure and Meek-one die !

They stood and listened ; and the tears of Zea flowed at the melancholy song. “ Yes,” she said, “ human life is wretched. You hear, even angelic natures are touched with sorrow at its contemplation. How then shall I not lament it ? ”

“ Yes,” replied Kadmiel, “ human life is wretched, and angels weep for it. It is impossible to behold the progress of evil, and not mourn over the misery it occasions ; but we mourn as those who doubt not—who despair not. We see the past and the end ; and never for a moment let go our confidence in the Almighty. Hold fast that confidence, Zea,

and all is well—let it go, and all is darkness. It is the sure thread by which alone man may pass through the labyrinth of the world; this once broken, he wanders for ever in inextricable errors. Doubts and complainings, like hungry dogs, pursue him from depth to depth, and urge him on to blasphemy and despair.

“Whoever would unravel the intricacies of the divine rule, let him hold fast by this confidence in divine Goodness. Man’s is an active spirit. He is not required to believe blindly—without inquiry, and without sufficient evidence. But let him stand firm upon this confidence; and in the world, amid all its perplexities and dark riddles of prevailing evil, he will find proofs enow of heaven’s goodness around him. Is He not good, who has made the heavens and the earth fair, and filled the latter with abundant pleasant and refreshing things; and has made even man’s body—his prison and his chain—beautiful, and full of strength and comfort; and has created hope to cheer him on his way, and affections to strengthen, and faith that swells up in his soul in the very face of evil; and lofty aspirations, that contend against temptations without and

weakness within? Is He not good who has made these things; and must not his design be good also? Let these two great truths likewise be the signal-lights of thy way; the ennobling, joy-inspiring effect of a virtuous heart; the deadening and corrupting influence of doubt. Who are the happy? In every age and situation—by the consensive voice of all kinds of men—the good! Who are the wretched or the base?—They who despair of Providence. Let thy heart be thine oracle; in the path of faith it will go on with gladness; in that of doubt, it will for ever struggle with a despairing reason; and if it struggle in vain, its affections will perish; it will become cold and selfish, and filled with bitterness and sorrow, and remain a blasted memorial of the destroying influence of a rebellion to the law of immortal hope in the human soul.

“Oh! terrible are the days that are to come upon the earth! They will be days when men have multiplied to overflowing; the vast cities and vast kingdoms will overflow and pour out their millions into new regions, and yet be pressed with their own numbers; till the wise of the world will

doubt of the wisdom of heaven, and will even upbraid the Omniscient with the errors of his laws. Dreadful will be the wickedness, the hardness, and blindness of heart of those days. Kings and mighty warriors will sweep away human lives, as things of no value. The powerful will grind the poor, till they turn with fiendish eyes of vengeance upon them: and horrible crimes,—crimes of new conception and strange names, shall break forth like a pestilence, and fill the hearts of the astonished listeners with inconceivable horror.

“ Yet, through all this, and above all this, shall the spirit of the Infinite Goodness operate; and shall bring forth the human soul as from a furnace ten times heated—pure, and prepared to Eternal Life. The narrow views of men shall not comprehend;—the bigot heart shall set bounds even to the designs and mercies of God;—but praise be to him, he is mighty and wise, and good; and knows, and will execute to the utmost, his own beneficent views.

“ For thee, Zea, there come days of trial,—of hard and sharp trial; but they shall be short—therefore be strong. It is for this, that I have

desired to bring thee into this valley; that thy soul, well assured of its nature, its origin, and its end, may be prepared to endure its proving to the victory. Remember therefore my words—be strong in the trust, and for the honour of God!”

Zea heard the angel's words applied to herself with a natural terror; and besought him earnestly and sorrowfully to unfold to her the nature of those trials, that she might be better armed to meet them. Her affections directed her fears towards that which she most valued; and she exclaimed, “My father! is he dead? do thy words concern him?”

“Time, Zea,” replied Kadmiel, “will soon unfold them. I may not disclose more than what may give thy heart rest, respecting thy father;—these trials concern not him; and as to meeting them properly, confide in God, and in that voice in the heart, which never fails his faithful servants.”

They arose, and conducting her by that same rapid and mysterious mode they had before employed, were immediately at their home. The angel parents received them with affectionate joy, but with a solemnity mingled therewith, that struck

in Zea's heart a deeper awe, from the effect which Kadmiel's words had already produced there. The lofty and impressive nature of the paintings which adorned the walls, and on which Zea's eyes again turned, seemed to sink still deeper this feeling. The affectionate Spirits, as if willing to draw Zea's attention from the care which they saw had settled on her soul, turned to these sublime representations, and opened to her, histories of things so marvellous and stupendous, as, for the time, wholly absorbed her faculties in terror and devouring interest; or melted her in sorrows and kind affections so sad and thrilling, that once known, their memory could never perish from the human soul.

In these relations, they sate and marked not that much time had gone by, that it was far in the night. The angels then, with solemn countenances, in which love and an intense sorrowful interest were blended, embraced Zea with ardent enthusiasm and with tears, and said, "We must now, dear maid, bid thee farewell for the night, and perhaps not for the night only, but for a longer period,—perhaps to meet no more on the earth."

Zea's countenance grew deadly pale; she shook .

with a sudden terror and agony of heart; but the commanding gravity of the paternal angel subdued her to silence, and he went on. "The time of our sojourn on earth is accomplished; by indubitable signs we perceive the approaching feet of mortal men; the fierce, the lawless, the bloody conquerors and destroyers. Ere the morning dawns, they may enter this valley; and it will behold us no more. We have witnessed the beginning and the spreading of men; our thoughts and acts have been continually employed in their behalf; to and fro have we gone in the earth, guiding, restraining: soothing the sorrowful; strengthening the feeble-hearted; whispering to the shaper of evil designs, terror, and forebodings of evil, but to the good, yet despairing soul, hope and confidence in the right. Our labours have not been in vain; some piety, some sense of right, and feeling of happiness, have been thence derived; but evil has had greater charms for men, and will have a dreadful retribution. Sad are the days that come; but thou wilt not see the whole evil. If the day dawns upon us in this valley, we shall desire to hasten thy return to thy friends; but

if it happen otherwise, seek thyself the camp, and whatever befall thee, be pure—be firm—trust in God!”

Again, and again they embraced the weeping and speechless maid, with that warmth and tender abandonment of heart, which they who love and part in circumstances of sadness and uncertainty too well know; and Zillah and Kuthielah again led her to repose. As the door closed on their retreat, she threw herself upon her bed and wept bitterly. Earth seemed now to her imagination cold and undesirable. Fain would she call her father from the society of erring and selfish men, and casting off the bondage of flesh, depart with those pure and lofty creatures to their everlasting lands of beauty and peace. But it could not be:—the passage through the valley of the shadow of death was yet to be trod, and between her and that awful transit were some unknown but mighty terrors. Her agitated spirit, long tossed in these tumultuous thoughts, at length sunk into sleep, from which she was again roused by the shrill wail of a trumpet. She sprung up, but still imagined herself in a dream. Instead of that luxurious

couch on which she had lain down, she found herself occupying the naked hill-side; instead of that beauteous roof above her, were the wide, open heavens, pale with the faint gleam of approaching morning, through which a few stars shone feebly. The wind breathed chill and gustily upon her,—she gazed around in bewildering amazement;—the valley was there, with all its shadowy trees, its fair meads, its broad river; but not a dwelling, nor a trace of those delicious gardens which had so recently filled it;—all had vanished as fabrics of air, or things of the imagination. As Zea stood confounded, and filled with a desolate sense of misery, she heard a wild strain of music, which seemed to descend from the upper regions of air; and looking up, beheld a spectacle of sad wonder. Southward floated away the angelic legions,—troop beyond troop of their radiant forms sailed onward and upward, ascending, as it were, in an inclined plane of roseate light that seemed to extend into eternity. She beheld their countenances reverted, as with a last and lingering regret, towards the valley which they had so long made beautiful by their presence. She beheld the infantine forms of

young Spirits, whose birth had been upon earth, but who were about to enter the regions of glory, which their parents had delighted to describe to them as their own father-land; and, ever and anon, a faint, wild note of music struck her ear, and descended into her heart with a feeling of ineffable regret. Farther and farther they bore away, while her eyes were fixed on their fading forms with intense abstraction;—farther and farther they receded—grew dimmer, and disappeared, leaving in the direction of their track a soft dilute flush of rose, like that which tints the evening sky after the sun has gone down, and which, like that, soon died away, and left the mortal atmosphere to its own cold grey. She turned her eyes to earth—they were dimmed with that vision of passing glory—and she stood for a time in a state of unconsciousness of all around.

CHAPTER V.

A trumpet note from below, aroused her to a sense of her danger. She recollected that the angels had passed away, only because men of violence were near. She gazed keenly down the valley, and discerned an armed band, whose spear-heads, swaying like the tall reeds by a forest river, glittered in the rays of the morning sun. She saw also horsemen riding proudly at their side: she saw that they were actually on this side the river; and to her horror she discerned two men on fiery steeds, advancing up the steep towards where she stood. At the fearful discovery, she bounded away like a roe, and plunged into the depths of the forest. She flew on, blind, and almost breathless with terror, perceiving not whither she was going; yet soon she heard the cries of her pursuers; soon the thundering of their horses' hoofs; soon their fierce, hard respiration, and the crashing of the branches close behind her. Escape was impossible:

exhausted by her speed and her terror, she sunk to the earth. In a moment her pursuers were upon her. One leaped from his panting steed, and lifting up the conscious, but helpless maid, placed her before his companion, and they returned as they came, at full speed. They soon emerged from the trees, and began to descend into the vale:—how different this entrance to her former one!—she cast one wild glance at the armed band, and again groaning at the sight, closed her eyes. She called to mind the words of the angels, and she felt that her trials were coming upon her in truth speedily. She called to mind also their admonition, to trust in God and be strong: but despair seemed to dash even a prayer for help from her lips, and for a moment she gave up herself to the misery of her situation. Yet the very weakness of her mortal and overtried nature, which this instant refused hope, in the next, flung itself with all its passionate vehemence, its wild terror and torture, upon the sole but invisible source of help: and she cried bitterly in her heart—"God! God! save me!" They flew on, and now rapidly approached this unknown band. They were now

in its very throng. It was a scene of confusion. Already were the main part of them busied in pitching their tents: some unrolling them; some erecting the poles; some stretching out the cords, and securing them with hooked stakes to the ground. Around lay scattered weapons, heaps of garments, once spoils of war. There was a hurried running to and fro, and many loud voices calling to each other; and steeds, stripped of their caparison, were secured by cords to trees and stakes, and were feeding in those beautiful meads, and filling the valley with their shrill neighings.

The bustling soldiers looked up as the captive was carried past, and with faces, on which sate broad laughter and jests which marked the savageness of their habits and characters, saluted the captor. They stopped in the centre of the group, and Zea was set down in the presence of a gigantic man, whose heavy mace of studded gold, and countenance of fierce command, marked him as the monarch of the tribe. Zea knelt, pale and trembling before him. "And art *thou* the sorceress," said the stern chief, "who hast mocked my eyes with the scenes which they beheld? Hast *thou*

power to create illusions thus splendid, and canst thou not save thyself? and thou tremblest like an abele tree, and art pale with fear, as the corpse with death! I beheld, as I entered this valley, palaces and domes, as of the gods; in a moment they melted away,—I ask thee, where are they?”

“Oh king!” said Zea, bowing in deepest obeisance, thine handmaid has no part in these wonders. What thou hast seen, is the work of a higher power—even of the God of heaven. These abodes were the dwellings of angels: it was decreed that at the approach of men, they should depart. They are gone, as thou seest—and I, a casual guest, entreat thee by all that is sacred, to permit me to hasten to my own people!”

“It is well,” said the fierce king, with a smile of incredulous scorn; “thou art but a poor maiden, who holdest converse with angels,—with angels that flee at the presence of the greatest of earth’s monarchs as from a pollution. It is well, we will question thee again of these things.”

He waved his hand, and his followers conveyed her into the interior of the royal tent, which was now erected; and putting her in a small separate

apartment formed by a division of curtain, set a watch over her, and departed.

There the miserable Zea threw herself on the ground, and cried mightily to God, from hour to hour, to preserve her from the dangers which threatened her, though it were by death,—death ! death, in any shape, so that she departed pure and unpolluted from the hands of these terrible barbarians. Hour after hour rolled on ; she heard the sounds of the camp ; her own small retreat was silent and unvisited. She heard the noise of cymbal, and tabor, and trumpet, and the frequent tread of people entering the royal tent. Anon she heard the sounds of feasting and revelry ; the odour of viands and of wine floated strongly around, and the clamour of mingled song and debate grew keen and riotous ; anon, it sunk and died utterly away. Day had fled, night was far advanced, when she was summoned from her small abiding place ; she obeyed with a dizzy brain, and trembling limbs, calling again in her soul upon the God of her fathers for his present protection. She found herself in the presence of the king ; he had thrown aside his arms, and, clad in a princely

robe, reclined at his ease on his couch. Flagons and beakers of gold, stood scatteredly on the table; arms and pieces of armour, lay here and there about the tent; the couches were covered with skins of the lion and the panther, everything indicated the abode of a wealthy and warlike prince. His shield and spear, each of beautiful workmanship, attesting the progress of the art of Tubal-Cain, leaned against a tall tripod near him. He surveyed the approaching maid with a calm look of inquiry as she knelt just within the curtain of the tent. "Tell me now truly, fair maid," he said, with a more subdued and gentle tone, "tell me truly what thou art, and what is the nature of the vision I have seen; remember, thou art in the hands of the mighty Pygarg; my power is supreme on earth—no one says to me, 'what doest thou?' Life and death issue from my mouth; they appear in the moment I pronounce their names. There is no escaping from my hand; tell me, therefore, truly what I ask thee."

"Oh, mighty king!" replied the trembling Zea, for the name he had uttered shook her soul with terror, and blackened it with despair, for it was

a name heard with dismay through the habitable earth ; " oh, mighty king ! I have spoken to thee the simple truth ; why should I deceive thee ? and my presence here may surely attest my veracity, for were such powers mine, would I remain voluntarily a captive ? "

" Art thou then no sorceress ? Art thou merely what thou seemest—a fair and guileless maiden ? "

" What I have said, prince," she replied, " is the truth, the truth before God ! "

" By the gods ! " he exclaimed, gazing at her with increasing interest, as if a false light had passed from his eyes, " by the gods ! thou art beautiful, more beautiful than any damsel these eyes have yet seen. Through my own realms—through the realms I have conquered, I have seen no creature like thee. The gods have surely sent thee hither, and be their gift honoured as it deserves. Be thou the chief jewel of my kingdom ; on my throne shalt thou sit with me ! thou shalt be honoured, ay worshipped, through twenty realms." He arose, and would have seated her on the couch by him ; but Zea, trembling with increased fears, threw herself at his feet in an

agony of emotion, and cried, "Oh, gracious monarch! mock not thy handmaid, let me, let me depart to my people! let me return to my aged father, whose life is wrapped up in mine!"

"Thy father shall be a king! we will call him to honour and rule. He shall govern many states. What is there which is not easy to her on whom the king's heart is set? Is thy father's life wrapped up in thine? so, I tell thee, is mine also. Nay, believe it not, thou art mine—thou departest from me no more! What I desire, I have; and who shall say to me, nay? But I urge thee not—thou shalt see a little of my glory, and then wilt thou comprehend the felicity of thy lot. Art thou no sorceress, sayest thou? Yet to me mayest thou become the most powerful of wonder-workers. My host have seen the strange visions of this valley, they shall believe that they originated in thee; they shall believe that thou art able to disperse armies by a word, to make towers and cities vanish into air. My arms have yet found no resistance; twenty kingdoms have I subdued, and over them I reign; but in the faith of thy spells we shall henceforth conquer with infinitely greater

ease. Retire till the morning, then will we depart for the great city of my kingdom."

In the early dawn, the trumpet sounded: the host was instantly in commotion — the tents vanished from the vale, as a mist is curled up and disappears before the sun. At the king's command, rafts of timber were ready on the river;— the army passed, and marched westward towards Azbek, the royal city of Pygarg. Zea, clad in a gorgeous robe, with a diadem upon her head, glittering with gold and precious stones, the spoils of some realm overthrown, was placed in the chariot of the king, and rode beside him at the head of the army, which rung with plaudits at the sight of a queen.

But the soul of Zea was sad, sad even unto death. In God alone was her hope, who holds in his hands the hearts of the mightiest kings; and to him she made continual prayer. From day to day they rode on through fair and fertile provinces, and through populous towns, where the people came and bowed their heads to the dust in thousands, as the chariot of the king passed by. On the seventh day they beheld in the great plain,

the massy, and wide-extended towers of Azbek before them. They seemed to extend to each extremity of the horizon, and to be huge and ponderous as they were wide.

The king rode with a gracious air, addressing himself to Zea, and endeavouring to inspire her with confidence. He pointed out the great features of his kingdom, and the scenes of former battles. He unfolded to her the beginning, the growth, and the triumph of his power,—from the day when he was a hunter in the wilds, till he became the head of a band,—the successful leader of an army,—the king of a people;—how he laid the foundations of Azbek, and raised it with the spoils of many nations,—and made his people famed far and wide; destroying armies, bringing home kings captive, till, without experience of the evil of defeat, he had placed beneath his feet twenty realms.

Zea heard and trembled. His words, which were intended to inspire admiration and love, produced only a stunning terror. Hers were not the views, nor the mind that sought for happiness in the midst of the blaze of another's renown, much

less when that renown was the growth of violence and blood. But she was in his power—she was attentive, and outwardly appeared resigned.

As they passed over the vast plain in which the city stood, she beheld around them numberless people employed in various rural labours—digging the ground, sowing seed, preparing tanks and water-courses, clearing growing corn of weeds, gathering roses, jasmines, and other odorous flowers that bloomed in wide and waving expanses, to yield perfumes for the luxurious dames of the city, or fruits for the table. Zea could not behold without wonder these indications of a vast population, and of a wealthy, and well-ordered state, deeply as her soul was bowed down by grief and fear; but as she looked narrowly at the labourers, she observed that they worked beneath the care of taskmasters, that they were of many kinds of aspects and garb, and in most of them the left arm wore a chain, whose other extremity was secured to the left foot.

“Great king!” exclaimed Zea, in a surprise that overcame her self-thoughts; “are thy people all slaves? What mean these chains?”

“Fair maid,” replied the affable monarch, “they are all prisoners of war. The royal tribe disdains to engage in menial toils: the exploits of war, and the offices of religion and government are alone worthy of them. All these have been subdued and captured in battle, and have purchased their lives at the price of their lives’ labour.”

“But why,” said Zea, “why add to their calamity the weight and the shame of chains? Should man ever forget when he deals with man, that he deals with a brother?—that he exercises his power on a creature of God? Surely the bonds of kindness and gratitude are the best bonds for things made of clay, subject to many pains and evils, and doomed to death;—surely they are bonds stronger than those of iron!”

“Thou art right, noble damsel,” said the monarch, glancing on her with surprise and pleasure; “they shall be free.” He halted his chariot, and a chief appeared at his side—“Proclaim,” said the monarch, “the liberty of those tillers of the ground. Let them continue to cultivate the earth, but let their labours and their wages be those of free men.”

Scarcely had the words issued from his mouth, when the chief bowed, and at a trumpet-blast summoned a number of others to his presence, and repeated the royal words; and in the next instant, the messengers, turning their steeds, sped away in fifty directions with the glad-tidings. The chariot of the king went on, but faster went the winged cry of liberty to thousands of weary souls. It was a dangerous moment to Zea. All mortal splendour, all might, and dominion, and wealth she could despise, for her soul had tasted of that which lays bare in all earthly things their earthly taste; but to every symptom and emotion of nobility of heart, she was vividly alive. She beheld in the monarch a good, a greatness she had not dreamt of, and she gazed on him with a look that plainly told her soul's feeling. Some voice in her bosom awoke, and cried, "Zea, what mayest thou not perform? This great and mighty monarch, this great and invincible people, who now wander in error, and in blind strength commit terrible evils—it may be thy glorious work to recall to purity and true grandeur. What an immortality of good! To convert the powers of oppression and destruc-

tion to powers of human beneficence. Think wherefore God has brought thee hither !”

It was an exciting and bewildering moment to a quick spirit like hers, and she felt its influence.

But now they were approaching the city. Its walls, massy, and huge, and square, struck her with increasing awe and astonishment. It appeared a city built by giants, and calculated to stand for ever. As they drew near, she beheld banners waving from those vast walls, and multitudes of people thronging them, to descry their returning king. From the mighty gates which they approached, came a countless crowd; on horses, on foot, in shining chariots, and in canopied cars borne by men. They came on with flapping banners, with the sounds of mingled music. They inclosed the royal chariot like a flood, through whose yielding waves it slowly made its way; and when the innumerable people beheld that beautiful and crowned queen by the monarch's side, they sent up a shout which rent the air, and died away only in the murmurs of a long-protracted thunder.

The soul of Zea was in a whirling dream. Amongst the innumerable proud dames of that

great people, not one perhaps but would have willingly sacrificed years of life on earth, nay, even the hopes of a future being, to grasp the glory which was thus offered to her—to be the bride of that mighty king and conqueror. But she soon beheld a circumstance which arrested in her bosom every sliding propensity, and recalled with renewed force the warnings of the angels: she beheld the servile multitude prostrate themselves when the king passed by, as to a God, and the priests in flowing robes, bear smoking censers before him. Her soul rose with an unconquerable feeling of anger and contempt at the base exhibition which she had witnessed, perhaps the first ever witnessed in the world, of worship rendered by man to his perishing fellow.

They passed the gates, and the great city opened on Zea's marvelling eyes. It was built on a scale of amplitude and magnificence corresponding with the fame of the monarch, and the extent of his dominion. Its wide waters, noble groves, flowery gardens, fair open spaces of great extent, were intermingled with the fine and endless buildings; and the air of universal prosperity, the

music, the shouting throngs of people, awed her spirit into a silence of even painful wonder. How different was this scene to the simple and rustic tents of her tribe ! how different that great and awful palace at which the procession stayed ; and up whose long ascent of steps Zea was borne in a splendid litter, by a cluster of obsequious attendants. She was here placed in a hall of strange magnificence, as the mistress of a palace, the queen of the greatest earthly empire, and served with silent homage, approaching to adoration, by a numerous suite. Well might it be to her like a dream, but it was a painful one, a heart-consuming dream. In the dwellings of the angels she had wondered and admired—for there everything was spiritual and ethereal—and there she felt herself in the security of goodness—but here the splendour, the greatness, the vastness oppressed her, for she felt their total unfitness for her simple nature, and she saw in their end perdition. But the monarch surprised her by a magnanimity in his behaviour more seducing than his splendour, and dangerous than his power ;—he urged not his wishes—he exerted no compulsion for their completion. He

felt she was completely at his command, and he seemed to desire to conquer woman's love by kindness as he had conquered men by force. He led Zea from day to day through the many apartments of his palace, and opened to her astonished view the vastness of his wealth. She beheld the treasured arms and armour of various nations—she passed through rooms filled with brazen-headed spears—with shields and helms of the richest workmanship—she saw standards and drooping banners won in many battles; piles of gold and precious stones that appeared inexhaustible; she gazed with admiration on the glorious vessels of his banqueting hall; on his stores of robes and furred skins of beasts, and his heaped corn—the food of armies. He led her through his gardens and groves, by the pleasant sun-lit waters, and conversed with her in cheerful gaiety. But Zea felt that these blandishments were those of the lion, that in a moment may be lost in rage and followed by destruction. Her heart was in the tents of her kindred;—her soul was knit unto her faith;—her ears rung with the warnings of the angels;—her desires yearned after their pure and

eternal existence. And what was all this cumbersome splendour, this regal captivity, even to one unrestrained walk through the wild woods of nature—all the influences of heaven and earth stirring in her bosom!

“Is not this a fair lot?” said the monarch, as they sate beneath a spreading cedar by a garden fountain; “is it not a goodly lot to be queen of a realm and a people like this? Thou wilt soon forget the people thou hast left; thou wilt learn to rejoice in thy splendid being, and then will we celebrate our nuptials without a cloud. I would not that thou shouldst be called to marriage rejoicings, while thy heart yet broods unweaned from its home-ties.”

“Oh, noble prince,” said Zea, casting herself at his feet, “pardon me, pardon me! I am a simple maid of a pastoral tribe—I am all unfit for this greatness. I feel the nobility, I estimate the honour of thy offer; but my desires, my habits, my God, are not as thine. Let me, I pray, return to my own humble home once more;—why concernest thou thyself for one so poor and low? Let some far nobler maiden share with thee the glory so far above all other mortals!”

The king rose in wrath:—"Is it even so?—dost thou even yet despise me?" His countenance grew dark and disfigured; he stood as though he would have spoken further; but no words came;—and while he paused, a trumpet-blast was heard, at which he started, and hastened to the palace. It was, perhaps, well for Zea, that the news of a momentous revolt in a recently subdued province, even then reached him. He summoned her not to his presence till the next day—his features again wore their calmness. "I hasten," he said, "to chastise a rebel people;—thou shalt accompany me. Thou wilt see how I reward those who chose hate rather than love. Let thee and me return in peace."

In a few minutes she was placed in a covered chariot, and the army was on its march. When she looked forth from her chariot, and saw the prodigious array of men, the trains of steeds, the richly caparisoned elephants, the glittering forests of spears, the fluttering banners, and lordly standards; and heard the strains of martial music that cheered their way, and the shouts of the multitude that bid them good speed, she was filled with astounding amaze at the power of this mighty

Pygarg; and thought, with a sighing soul, why troubleth he himself with me?"

As they proceeded on their way, he again sent for her to his chariot; again accosted her with affable words, and pointed out the great objects of the kingdom through which they went. On the third day, they entered a tract of desolate hills.—“These,” he said, “are the hills whence the gold of Azbek is drawn.” In two days more, they beheld before them a wide land of fertile fields and peopled cities. “This,” said Pygarg, “is the land of rebellion;” and soon they descried the hostile host stretched in a wide line before them. At the word of Pygarg, the trumpet spoke—the hosts rushed to battle; and what this moment seemed so fair a scene of warlike men and gleaming arms, in the next was one of flight and confusion. They went on from field to field, from town to town: before the face of Pygarg, the hosts of the enemy melted away like mist, and the citizens opened their gates to his armies. Thus they went through the plain-country, and again approached the hills. Here a small band of men, on fleet steeds, suddenly issued from them; and riding towards

the royal chariot, sent a cloud of arrows at the king. The danger was imminent. The little band came rushing on, in spite of the efforts of the king's attendants; and a tall, youthful figure, of most bold and noble bearing, already approached near enough to launch a dart, and wound the shoulder of Pygarg. In the next instant, the little adventurous troop was cut to pieces, the leader secured, and brought before the king.

"Prince," said Pygarg, "is it thus thou requitest my former clemency?" "It is thus," replied the youth haughtily, "that I seek to rid the world of a tyrant!" As he spoke, the king, rising in his chariot with ungovernable rage, smote him to the earth with his mace. The trumpet sounded—the troops returned from the pursuit, and encamped at the foot of the hills, by a noble river. The wound of the king was examined, and found trivial; and as he sate cooling his brow, unhelmed, by the water, and refreshing himself from the wave, he looked up, and said to Zea,—“Behold the very scene in which I found thee!” She looked round, and saw with wonder, the deserted Valley of Angels. “All rebels,” said the monarch, “save thee, are

subdued; here shall that wish be accomplished." Zea, struck with a cold and foreboding terror, retired to the small apartment of the royal tent, which she had occupied on the first day of her captivity. All the bitterness of that scene came back upon her. Again, as on that day, she lay on the ground, and called on heaven for help—help which had been so wonderfully given her during her captivity—the mighty being, held as a lion in a chain. Again she heard the sound of revelry, and the voice of the king, loud as with a spirit of wrathful vengeance, amid his wine. Again all was silent; and long after midnight, Pygarg entered her retreat. The place seemed to have revived in him all its former impressions. He came flushed with his carouse—his glowing features strongly shewn by the flame of the torch which he bore, and cried, in tones of a sneering and inebriate triumph,—“Where art thou, sorceress? Where art thou, at whose nod cities vanish? Where art thou, who thinkest to deceive with thy crafty wiles even me—the king!”

Zea, who had started to her feet at his approach, had drawn back as far as the tent would allow, and

stood rigid as a statue, with her pale countenance and mild eyes fixed immoveably on the king.

As he beheld her, he advanced without a word, and holding the torch full in her face, gazed upon her with a grave countenance of subtle mockery for a considerable time. Zea's tongue was chained by the strong power of terror; the giant-king was silent also, as though he would urge her evident alarm to the extremity of her ability to suffer it, or enjoyed the spectacle without a thought of its consequences. At length a broad demoniac smile lit up his sanguine features, and stretching forth his arm as though he would encircle her, he said in a tone that thrilled through her with ten times the keenness of his fiercer words,—“Why tremblest thou, silly maid?—Thou shalt see that even the lion can take the lamb to his bosom!” As his hand touched the shoulder of Zea, a shrill and piercing shriek burst from her,—her frame, before chilled as it were to a statue, suddenly felt the fiercest vigour of desperation; she sprung at the monarch with a maniac's fury. She snatched the dagger from his girdle, and with a countenance pale and fixed, yet with flashing eyes, she bran-

dished it before his astonished sight. In the next moment, however, the fiendish smile relit his features,—he put away her hand as he would that of an infant; and Zea, exhausted by the violent paroxysm, sunk back against the side of the tent. In the same moment, as she gave herself up for lost, she beheld a tall, light form, stand beside the monarch;—there was the flash of a weapon—the huge man rolled with a heavy groan to the earth; and with a strong arm she felt herself encircled, and borne from the tent.

The sudden appearance of the figure; the instant destruction of the monarch; the manner of her conveyance from the place, impressed an immediate conviction on the bewildered mind of Zea, that her rescuer was a supernatural being, and she felt strongly disposed to believe that being Kadmiel. Whoever he was, he was a deliverer from present misery, and could scarcely therefore be other than a benevolent spirit. It was an opinion that induced her to give herself up to his guidance without anxiety. Onward, upward they went; they plunged into the deep shades of the forest. Onward and onward they flew. The beams of morn-

ing were beginning faintly to illumine the obscurity of the forest, when the Spirit ceased its flight, and set down the wondering maid at the foot of a tree. She turned with a glance of palpitating interest toward him, and in the dim twilight recognized the form and features of Kadmiel. She fell at his feet, and bathed them with the gushing tears of gratitude and exultant joy :—words she had none, save one faintly uttered name—“Kadmiel !”

“Yes,” said the spirit, “thou art right ; it is Kadmiel. Thou seest I have not forgotten thee in thy need. But we must yet hasten. Thy tribe, alarmed by the news of this invading army, brought by thy father and his fellow-explorators, have quitted their encampment, and retreated to the far plains of Denduela,—there thy father sits in his solitary tent, and weeps over thee as lost.”

Zea sprung up at those words, and exclaimed—
“Oh ! let us hasten, blessed Kadmiel !—let us hasten on ! But alas ! what do I behold ? It is Kadmiel !—the good and gracious Kadmiel : but oh ! how dimmed ! how sorrowful ! Whence is this, Kadmiel ? Whence is it that thy features, thy hair, thy very form seems as though they had

been blasted by lightning—singcd, scorched by eternal fires? Oh whence, blest Spirit—whence is this!”

Kadmiel seemed for a moment, to shrink from the impassioned gaze of the maid; he looked down on the ground, as in silent sorrow: then said, “Why pausest thou, Zea, to mark my person in a moment like this? On the one hand, the grief of thy father calls thee; on the other, the terrible revenge of lawless enemies, warns thee to speed away. We have slain the great warrior-king; his host have, ere this, discovered his death, and will scour the country on all sides, to descry thee, his supposed destroyer. With furious denunciations will they rush forth; their vengeance will be horrible if they overtake thee; till we cross the distant mountains thou art not secure. Let us go. What thou seest in me is but the penalty of re-appearing on the earth. Since we are bade to vacate it—no one can appear to mortal eye but with a shattered glory. But fear not for me, I shall regain my splendour; and were it not so, could I leave thee to worse than death? But let us go!—let us go!”

CHAPTER VI.

As Zea heard his words, her heart swelled with bursting fulness; an inexpressible anguish fell upon her, that Kadmiel should have thus suffered and been shorn of his angelic grace; perhaps endured in some degree, the displeasure of the Eternal Ruler on her account. But he had turned, and was speeding fleetly on. She followed with sorrowful heart and weeping eyes, lamenting that for her he should thus be changed—thus punished. Kadmiel seemed little disposed to enter into conversation; he passed on at a rapid rate, and she followed in silence, weeping as she went. Their way was still through dark and ancient forests. When the sun had risen above the horizon, the voices of many birds filled those before silent shades with the cheerful music of early morning. She saw the dew lie sparkling all around; she saw numbers of beautiful flowers blooming on the greensward of the open track along which they went, and their

delightful fragrance came softly upon her senses. But one object dimmed and deadened all this in her eyes, and filled her soul with an ever-deepening pain,—it was the form of Kadmiel still travelling before her, dark as with the thunder-traces of Divine vengeance, and wrapped in his sorrowful silence. She beheld him now stop at intervals, and gather the choicest flowers as he went: suddenly he turned, and said with a tender tone, which yet had in it a sound of woe,—“Zea, gather of these flowers; we shall need them.” Zea gathered them without question and without reply. They went on. The ancient and hoary trees grew now farther apart, and left a fair opening, in which stood, as it were, an altar of turf, which some ancient patriarch had raised in long-past days, and which, by the hand of nature, had been covered with green verdure and abundant flowers, which hung from its sides in heavy wreathes and masses, and ever threw their blossoming tresses far around in the grass. “Behold! a beautiful object!” exclaimed the Spirit, “let us cast our tribute of flowers upon this ancient altar, in honour of the power which has thus adorned it!”

He scattered upon it those which he had gathered, and signed to Zea to do the same. She threw forth the fragrant burthen of her hands, and immediately they appeared to glow and kindle as it were in a subtle flame of beauty, and their aroma arising with an exquisite and most intoxicating fragrance, filled the air around.

The heart of Zea smote her. "What is this which we have done?" she said—"the Power which has thus adorned this ancient altar, I deemed to be God. But God is not wont to shew his acceptance of such slight offering by such immediate signs. Surely Kadmiel there is in this no sin?"

"No sin assuredly," replied the Spirit—"Zea, would I lead thee into sin? What we have here paid, is but a passing homage to the power which resides and is honoured here—the Queen-spirit of all flowers."

Zea's heart again smote her, and she looked on Kadmiel with an anxious and scrutinizing gaze." "Of what power talkest thou, Kadmiel? Who is the Queen-spirit of flowers? He who made and preserves them is God. And is it thou, Kadmiel,

who teachest me to pay homage to other powers than God? Oh! were it not for the love thou hast shewn me, in rescuing me from shame and death, now should I doubt thee; but I cannot doubt thee, therefore must I think that thou art willing to try my faith. Thou wouldst know whether I be weak enough to be drawn by high example, to worship ought beside God! I tell thee then, to God alone is my homage paid—I own no other object of worship.”

“I know not,” replied the Spirit, “what may have been thy thoughts, but thy act, which alone is the evidence for or against man, has been that of worship to the Queen-mother of flowers. And here let me unfold to thee a knowledge which thou hast not yet learned, and much and awful knowledge for thy acquirement lies beyond the boundaries of this planet. Above all spirits and all powers, is God. But throughout his infinite creations, there are other powers and spirits who work; and their works are worthy of them. From God do they derive originally all their creative energy, but that energy do they possess, and have possessed for infinite ages; and numberless are

their works in the great deep of space. Many even are the stars which they have created; and thinkest thou this world was made by God's own hand? I tell thee nay—but by the great Demiurgus—a spiritual power of vast and unfathomed energies,—a mighty, and all but eternal mystery. A band of angels wandering through these regions of space, beheld a floating mass of dark and unshapen matter. They began and toiled long upon it, to mould it to a world, but their progress was slow and unsatisfactory. The Demiurgic power came floating past, wrapped in the dreams of many coming ages;—pondering intensely on the countless images of yet uncreated forms which move and glow in the fathomless depths of his awful mind. They called upon him for help, and at one stretching forth of his hand, the world assumed its orbicular shape; the angels propelled it into its place in the great system, where it would be cherished by the sun. Beneath the plastic influence of the Demiurge, and of his ministering spirits, arose, beauty and order—living things of countless forms and natures: trees and flowers, and waters, and precious stones, were shaped from the models of

the prolific Demiurgic mind;—the earth became what it is; and God from his central throne has shined upon it. Many therefore are the spiritual powers which have here established their abodes; they delight to dwell amid the works of their hands; and why should we fear to grant to each his peculiar share of homage?"

"Kadmiel," replied Zea, "my heart is sad. This is doctrine which neither our fathers have heard, nor we: nor hast thou or thy kindred angels hitherto opened of it, one glimpse to my mind. I would fain believe in, and trust in thee; but my heart goes not with thee in these matters, as it has heretofore gone with thee. My soul rebels against this homage; and didst thou not say to me, make thy heart thy sure oracle? I cannot Kadmiel! I cannot bow, except to God; and I deem that thou dost but prove me!"

"What I say to thee," replied the spirit, "is true as the heavens are eternal! I prove thee not!—I deceive thee not!—but I open to thee yet wider views than have been given to thee and thy race. I lament to find thy soul is not capacious enough to receive them."

“Pardon my weakness, Kadmiel—I know I am weak; and permit to me in my present trouble, to hold only my ancient faith, in its simplicity. My spirit is broken and cast down;—it is not in that inquiring and insatiable temper, which it has felt in the days of its ease and youthful ignorance; when it longed and would have dared to look into the central splendour of God’s abode, though it had been blinded or annihilated for its rashness. It is not thus now—it feels upon it the load of mere mortal sorrows heavy enough, too heavy for its strength. It desires to be in passive and untempted, undisquieted rest. Let me worship God, and God alone! It is what I have received into my innermost being, as I have received into my body my daily sustenance—and in it I cannot go far wrong.”

“Then why should I thus trouble myself in vain? I would deliver thee to thy father in safety, ere I quit the earth for ever: but we cannot choose our path;—we cannot do according to our own pleasure. I know the dangers on the right hand, and on the left;—there is but one way of escape, and that lies through the dominion of Powers, who will have homage, or will have vengeance!”

"Let me die then!" cried Zea, with earnest tears; "I can die! but I cannot, will not, bow my knee to what I do not know!"

"Dost thou know God!—that God whom thou so implicitly worshippest? Didst thou not bow at the feet of the warrior-king?—a man?—a wicked man! And wilt thou not, to ensure thy safety—thy father's happiness in his last days, do the same to far higher and more worthy natures?"

"I can bow to man, Kadmiel, and yield him the homage of a man; because I know his nature, and the nature of the obeisance demanded; but I cannot bow to spiritual things, whose natures I do not know—do not comprehend the extent of worship which my act may signify."

"But cannot my example satisfy thee? I know the nature of these powers, and can testify to thee, that blamelessly as it regards the Almighty, mayest thou yield them the homage due to them for their benefits wrought in the earth. But, come, our time is precious."

The Spirit sped forward, and Zea silently pursued; but her soul was ill at ease, and her heart more and more sundered itself from its confidence

in Kadmiel. She continually called to mind his words, "Thy trials come,—they will be sharp; but trust in God!" These, she inwardly said, are assuredly my trials; but can Kadmiel indeed become himself a tempter to me? A terrible idea presented itself—what, and if it be not Kadmiel? If it be a fallen spirit, in his guise? She was astounded with the dreadful suspicion, and for a moment stood still, smitten as with a conviction of its truth. His scathed and dismal aspect—the repugnance of her own spirit,—the total dissimilitude in sentiment—in all things but likeness of features and tone of voice—they flashed upon her fiercely the persuasion, it is not he! it is a Spirit of darkness! Yet, had he not rescued her? Was he not conducting her to her father's tent? Was he? was he conducting her thither? How knew she this? Again her terrors rose up with tenfold force; and she resolved to fly. But whither could she fly? How escape from a spirit? If he had evil views, she was entirely in his power; and were it indeed Kadmiel—what a sorrowful return of his signal love in suspicion and flight? She strengthened herself, and went on. She called on God

for aid; and in his trust, determined to live or die. It was now noon. The sun rode high above the forest; the flowers drooped at her feet on the sward; every voice of living creature was still; and the trees stood unruffled by a breeze, and scarcely casting a shadow. Those trees too, appeared of the most remarkable size and age. Many a vast bough they stretched wide which would of themselves have been noble trees; many a huge branch lay mouldering on the ground; and the stupendous trunks, rugged and gashed and hoary, were rifted and hollow as with the decay of centuries. The Spirit had paused before one of an immense and gloomy amplitude. He stood as in wonder at its majesty. Zea drew near; he raised his arm, and pointing to the centre of the tree, where its giant branches separated and stretched away from its trunk, she beheld with amaze a monstrous serpent. Its body, of many cubits in length, and of an enormous bulk, was coiled around the trunk, and round the lower region of the branches, in many an awful fold; and its countenance, in form that of a man, with eyes of a serene, but dreamy gravity, was fixed

upon her. "Behold!" said the Spirit, "the great Agathodaimon, the king of serpents—the lord of all creeping things! Here has he dwelt since the creation of the world;—let us pay him the homage which age, wisdom, and benevolence demand." The Spirit bowed his face to the earth three times, and turned towards Zea. She stood trembling, but her heart refused to bow to serpent deity; and she cast on the angel a look of inexpressible reproach. "Bow, foolish maid," he exclaimed, "or thou perishest!" She stood firm, and said, in a low tone, "I bow only to God!"

At once the body of the serpent was seen to roll in convulsive waves; the dry friction of its gliding mass was heard upon the tree, exciting a sensation of nameless horror;—it kindled as with a many-coloured fire; its furious visage was protruded towards the terrified maid, with a wonderful power of extension, as to devour her. But a sudden lightning flashed through the air, ignited instantaneously the mighty tree, and the huge serpent consumed by its scorching agonies, raised high its terrible head, writhed in many a rapid motion of excruciating torture, hissed fiercely, and fell dead in the flames.

"Once more, mortal maid," said the Spirit, in an offended tone, "once more have I saved thee. I have sacrificed this ancient and venerable power to thy security, or thou hadst paid with death, the refusal of a trivial homage."

Zea made no reply. This last act had entirely expelled every lingering belief that it might be Kadmiel. It is an evil and lying spirit," she said within herself, who has assumed the form of Kadmiel, and is permitted to try me. In God, in God who has even now shewn his presence, and defeated his designs, will I trust. I cannot flee from him;—I will follow him, in faith that God will overrule his designs, and bring me at last out of his hands."

They went on; the forest ceased; a wide and hoary wilderness spread before them, and a lofty range of wild mountains rose afar. It was evening when they reached their feet and began to ascend. The Spirit led the way with rapid and unwearying tread; and Zea still followed with unabating speed, but with a fatigued body, and a heart full of uneasy thoughts; they went onward, and upward; the mountain became steeper and steeper. She looked

up, and beheld peaks that seemed to stretch into the sky; brightly on their summits lay the white and glittering snows. It seemed as if they were bound to scale those lofty pinnacles, for the Spirit still ascended, and to the right or the left appeared no other way. Night fell; they still clomb higher and higher. All was silent—the solitary stars came out in the clear blue sky above with a keen lustre, around was nothing but savage stillness and benumbing cold.

At length a bird of immense size arose from a hollow before them; the rush and tumult of his wings in that profound quiet, was like the sudden coming of a tempest; where he had sate appeared a dark chasm in the side of the mountain. “This is our way,” said the Spirit; “through this chasm we must seek the other side of the mountain; the path is gloomy, but what feareth the heart that trusts in God?” Zea beheld on his face a sneer as of triumphant scorn; she saw his eyes gleam with a sudden light like that which rests sometimes in the night on the root of a decaying tree—or which plays on the midnight waves of the ocean; she shuddered as he spoke, and would fain have

drawn back: but she again called to mind that there was no alternative,—she called on the name of God, and went in.

It was a dark and blind path; the eye could discern nothing but the palpable, pitchy gloom. The Spirit held her by the hand, and went on as with a foot familiar with its road. In a little time her vision began to catch faint hold of objects in the shadow. They grew more perceptible; and she seemed to behold colossal figures, whether living, or hewn from the rock she could not discern; but they appeared to bear, in various attitudes, the massy incumbent roof of mountain. Through the deep twilight of that subterranean course, they shewed in terrible vastness; some stooping their huge backs to the burden, while their straining muscles and distorted countenances betrayed the agony of intolerable oppression: others sustained their portion of the rock on their heads; others with mighty, upstretched arms, meeting from the opposite sides of that dark adytus; while others sate at intervals between, in profound repose. They went on between those enormous figures, far into the interior of the mountain, when, at once, a vast

area opened before them, feebly lit by a sanguine light, burning in the centre of what appeared a natural dome of immense height. Zea started, and shrunk back—for she beheld an immense circle of dusky and winged figures, a circle wide as the place itself, stooping with their faces to the floor. There went up from them a low murmur, as of muttered words of adoration. But what worshipped they? Her eyes wandered inquiringly around, till they were suddenly riveted, as by an awful, an irresistible spell, on a darkness deeper than tenfold midnight,—a darkness which seemed instinct with life, yet without comprehensible form, in the centre of that great circle of prostrate worshippers. Voices as of spiritual essences, ever and anon, raised a short wild chant, that died away again abruptly, and the wail of a dreamy trumpet passed through the listening circle.

“Behold!” said the Spirit, “the centre of the great and holy mountain of Hemacout, the dwelling of the ancient Demiurgus. At his voice this great earth with all its seas and mountains, assumed its habitable form, and here has he chosen to abide, in the midst of his works, and of the homage of

lesser spirits, who assisted in the toil of creation. Wide over the face of the world abound the lives of his formation, high in the air extend the traces of his dominion; and deep beneath this mountain spreads the cavernous gloom, out of which the mountain itself was heaved from the lower regions of the earth. There, inhabit vast creatures of terror, which can live only in the airless wilds of subterranean darkness. The angels of God have now left the world—the Demiurgus remains sole lord below. Let us pay our homage and pass on. Think not to escape from this mighty Power as from the serpent.” He seized her arm with a sudden grasp, and with a violence which she was unable to withstand, placed her in the circle of worshippers; he himself bowed his face to the floor, and a trumpet-note of triumph was heard. A shadowy shape appeared on each side of the dizzy maid, saying, “give honour to the mighty Demiurgic lord!” The trumpet-tone changed from triumph to anger and vengeance. The Spirit sprung up, and darting on Zea, who stood pale but unbending, her soul fixed on the God of heaven for rescue or death, a glance of fire, whispered “thou art lost!”

In a moment, that which had been the blackness of darkness, became a living, and intolerable brightness; a burning and destroying fire. The whole atmosphere of the cavern flashed into a quivering flame. Zea felt a sharp, consuming pang, as of the inhaling of liquid flame, she gave one wild, thrilling cry, and passed as into the insensibility of death.

CHAPTER VII.

SHE woke as from a dream; the cavern and its awful images, its stooping worshippers, its fiery atmosphere were gone. She lay at the southern foot of the mountain, the cool air of morning was upon her, but near her stood the same dark Spirit; and upon her hair and her garment were the traces and the smell of fire.

The indignant maid arose and cried, "Avaunt! false Spirit! is it for this, that thou hast assumed the form of one of heaven's noblest children? Hast

thou secured me from the tyranny of man, to deliver me over to the far worse tyranny of demons? The curse of that God whom thou hast abjured, light on thee. But leave me; I will seek my own place as I may!"

The Spirit listened to the indignant words with a patient but sorrowful aspect, and then firmly but with the tone of one who feels himself unjustly suspected and accused, replied, "Zea, I pardon thy anger, I will bear thy injurious accusations. Passions noble in their nature, but causelessly excited, have blinded thy better judgment. There will come a time, when calm reflection will have its effect—till then farewell. When serene days shall permit thee to see the love which I have shewn, the deliverance I have wrought for thee from powers of dreadful influence, then wilt thou believe in Kadmiel and his truth."

"I do, I do!" replied Zea, "but thou art not Kadmiel; depart I beseech thee from me."

"There," said the Spirit, "are the tents of thy tribe; go thou on. I will follow at a distance: I desire not to intrude on thy presence, I desire only to see thee safe in thy father's abode."

The maid looked up, and beheld at a distance, a number of white tents ; but all around her was scenery unknown. The assertion that those were the tents of her tribe, might be but another of the delusions of the evil spirit ; but at all events, they were the tents of men : and it were better to trust in the hope that, if they were not of her kindred, they were just men, than to abide in the company of a demon. The Spirit had told her that her people had fled from the invaders ; but that could not assure her that these were they ;—yet it was enough that they were men ;—she replied not, but bounded away in an eager, but trembling hope. She ran with fleet steps ; her feelings, kindling as she went, gave her every minute, augmenting velocity : the champaign was soon half overpast. She cast one look behind,—she no longer beheld the Spirit ;—she turned again her eyes upon the tents—she almost deemed that she could recognise them as those of her own people. She ran—she stopped ; she ran, and stopped again, gazing in eager inquiry. The persuasion that they were the Sepharvite tents, grew forcibly upon her ; she saw people passing to and fro ; she thought she

could surely pronounce them her own people. The sounds that came from the encampment,—a voice calling to some distant person,—a song casually bursting forth,—children laughing and clamouring in their play,—the very lowing of the cattle,—the bleating of sheep and goats, came upon her ear as familiar sounds. Hope ! hope of deliverance, and regained home ; all the gushing, melting affections of such a situation, stirred in her soul, and gave energy to her feet. She flew rather than ran. But now, a dimness,—a growing vapour,—a thick cloud fell upon the plain. Was it that her eyes,—her spirit failed her, from the excess of past fatigues and troubles, and present expectation ? No ; it was a real, external gloom. It deepened—it spread around her. At once came the sound, as of many feet, many voices ;—the Spirit stood once more at her side !

“Thy enemies are upon thee, mortal maid ! Thou wilt not suffer me to defend thee ; but at least, take this dagger, and sell thy life rather than thy honour !”

Zea snatched the weapon in her sudden alarm, which overtook her with more subduing effect in

this moment of re-awakened hope. The voices—the trampling drew near! She ran, in what appeared an opposite direction, with all the speed of terror. At once, she saw a tall figure before her; his arms were extended to seize her; and through the misty vapour, his features and bulk shewed gigantic. She bounded forward with frantic agitation;—she raised the weapon in a frenzy of despair, and prepared to strike it into the heart of her foe. The vapour was dispersed, as by a miraculous influence;—and God of heaven!—what a thrilling display! It was her aged father, whom she would have slain! He had seen her approaching across the plain, as he sate at the door of his tent, and recognised her. His cries had brought together many of his neighbours, and with one accord they ran to meet her.

The Spirit of Evil was gone; his last demoniacal purpose had been frustrated by a higher power;—the astonished maiden fell unconsciously into the old man's arms. Scarcely knowing whether his feelings partook more of joy, or grief, or wonder, he and his friends bore her to the camp. He had found his lost daughter; but in such circumstances

as seemed to proclaim the aberration of her intellect, or the existence of fearful events connected with her absence and singular return, of which they could form no probable conception; and for a knowledge of which they must await the returning hour of consciousness. Many had been the marvellings of the whole community at her sudden disappearance: and when they were compelled to make a hasty flight at the news of the approaching invaders; for in this the spirit had declared the truth, they had set out with aching hearts, deeming that they should see her no more. Her father, in particular, seemed utterly crushed by this unlooked-for and inexplicable misery. Through the whole flight, he had lingered in the rear, continually gazing backward, in the hope, faint, yet not to be plucked from his soul but by the most absolute certainty, that she might yet appear. Day and night he sate at the door of his tent, which he had caused to be pitched at a distance from the rest, that he might command a view of the whole plain, silent and motionless as a statue; with a despairing, and yet not despairing, but rather maniac hope, that he might yet descry her beloved form appear-

ing in some quarter of the vast horizon. The whole community partook of his grief with scarcely less intensity of feeling. The beauty—the bright spirit—the affectionate, rejoicing disposition of Zea, had made her as the sister and daughter of the whole tribe; and her disappearance filled them with endless, but fruitless wonderings. It was not unknown that she was fond of wandering into the neighbouring forest alone; and the most general conclusion was, that some calamity had befallen her there; but what it might be, their hasty flight precluded all hope of discovering: and whether she had fallen into the power of evil beast, or evil men, it seemed eternity alone could reveal. But when, after all hope had failed, she came, and came thus wild and exhausted, again wonder and curiosity were raised to the highest pitch, and a throng of eager inquirers crowded round the hut. The old man begged them to depart in peace, promising a solution of the mystery as soon as it could safely be obtained.

In the meantime, Zea lay in a state of living death; breathing, but unconscious, or unobservant. Her father, seated in silence by her bed, from time

to time, moistened her lips with water, and watched with profoundest attention, every motion of her frame and countenance. It was long ere she manifested any symptom of returning power of mind or body; and when at length she opened her eyes, and beheld her father's face stooped to hers, and his gaze fixed anxiously upon her, she clasped his neck, and wept long and silently. Yet days passed before the old man encouraged her to unfold the causes of her absence — days which he employed in soothing and restoring her exhausted spirit and frame, to strength and equanimity; and from day to day, he dismissed the host of inquirers, with the sole words:—"patience! patience, my children!"

But at length as Zea awoke from a refreshing sleep, she beheld her father seated, with a sorrowful and thoughtful air, in the middle of the tent; and she raised herself, and said,—“What aileth thee, father?”

The old man looked up; and arising, he came and seated himself by the bed, and said,—“My child, I am troubled. I have been but in trouble since the day that I came hither; but I would not

add to the affliction and weakness that were upon thee. But now, methinks, thou mayst perhaps bear to learn what concerns thy people; and to tell me what concerns thyself. We must depart, my daughter, from this place. We fled suddenly from our last encampment in the plain of Kedem, because of the approach of a desperate army. Here we set up our temporary abode; and hence should we have gone elsewhere, had not thy absence and strange return delayed our steps. But now, my child, I trust thou wilt be able to journey onward with us slowly—and we will arise, and depart; for it is an evil generation that we are fallen amongst; an evil—a mischievous and idolatrous generation.”

Not far hence, there stands a dark grove, and in the midst of that grove a temple, in which they have placed an idol, and named it the Great Mother: and to it all pay their wicked devotion. Not contented with their own evil, they seek hourly to draw aside our people. Some, who have been seduced to enter that unhallowed abode, tell that the image is of monstrous height and form. Its head and arms are those of a woman; its general figure is intended for that of a woman; but

it is graven so as to represent a woman in the whole, but in parts a pile-work of almost every animal that lives upon the earth. The heads of oxen, rams, lions, dogs, stags, and of men, enclose the form; the head is crowned with a triple tower, the neck is adorned with heavy strings of pearls: her manifold bosom offers nourishment to innumerable children. Thus have their perverted imaginations attempted to depict all-prolific nature, and their blinded hearts have bowed down to a miserable representation of the visible world, and lost sight of Him who made it. Could it have been believed that men could become so base and stupid?—but oh, my child, could it have been believed, that any of our people could be seduced into so vile an idolatry? Yet it is so. The priests of the goddess, if they be not rather demons in the shape of men, come to and fro with smiling faces and pernicious tongues: the contagion begins to spread—and one! one daughter is lost!”

“Who? who?” exclaimed Zea, springing up in the bed with an emotion that startled and alarmed the old man.

“Be calm, my child, be calm,” he said, laying

his hand on her shoulder, "and yet how can I say to thee be calm on such an occasion? But be firm, and bear what thou must hear. Sephiroth,—the warm, the eager-spirited damsel, who has often been thy companion; she whose soaring heart has often been ready to rise from the earth,—whose words were as arrows of fire flung from a soul that longed to overleap the bounds of human existence, that she might comprehend its mysteries;—she have the apostates seduced from her faith,—she is a priestess in that detested fane! This I have even now learned as I went out into the camp during thy sleep, and it is this which troubles me. But strengthen thee, my child, we will in the morning hasten to depart."

"But," cried Zea, kindling with irrepressible zeal; "but you will not depart, and leave Sephiroth to perdition? You will not depart without one effort to win her back? She must be saved, my father; she must be saved! She cannot be left to everlasting ruin. You will not depart without arming in the name of God, and attempting to check the growth, if not to annihilate, the existence of this pestilential idolatry! Oh hasten! hasten,

father! Let us go forth to the people. I have somewhat to tell them of these things."

The old man, struck with a silent astonishment, stood still and gazed upon her for a short space; but he offered no resistance to the desire of his daughter, who arose from the couch, made haste with feeble limbs and trembling hands to array herself; and leaning upon her father's arm, they went out.

The old man led her to a green mound beneath a stately palm-tree, where she sate down while he went and called the people. They came hurrying in numbers at the summons, and gathered round the maid in wonder, not less at what this could mean, than at the pale and wasted form of the lost and found one. The greater part of the whole camp had speedily gathered about her, and Zea in a feeble voice began to relate to them the wonders she had seen, the trials and temptations she had passed through. As she went on, seeming to gather strength from her narrative, the whole multitude stood in the profoundest silence of curiosity and amaze; but when she suggested that the same evil spirit which had so sorely beset her, was one

who haunted this temple, and stimulated this besotted people to pagan abominations, there was a murmur and a motion amongst them, as when the wind passes lightly over the leaves of the forest; and when she asked them if they would suffer their God thus to be despised; their people to be tempted to their everlasting undoing; their deluded daughter, Sephiroth, to be left amongst them to utter perdition;—it was as if a storm had succeeded to the wind, and the boughs of the forest were tossed and crashed, and made to howl and roar in its fury. A spirit of sacred wrath and vengeance went forth from the noble maid, who in the fervour of her words had risen erect, casting off, as by miracle, her weakness, and her face flushing with the roseate glow of beauty and the fire of holy indignation—a spirit of vengeance for the insulted honour of God. The whole tribe was in eager debate. They called upon, they stirred up each other to an insatiable and unquenchable ardour. They cried, “we will destroy the accursed thing—the earliest morning shall behold us in arms against the idol fane!”

The old man stood at the foot of the mound—

weeping as he stood. When he heard the words of Zea; when he saw the virtuous wrath of his people; when he beheld them thronging round his daughter, young and old, with tears and embraces and blessings, he could no longer contain himself. Much the good man wept over the evils that had assailed his child—much, but with tears of joy, over the firmness and nobility of her faith. “Thou hast done well, my child,” he said,—“thou art a worthy daughter of the ancient line of Seth. Few have in these days, stood so nobly for the God of the whole earth.”

He led her back amidst the affectionate pressure and overflowing souls of his neighbours to his tent. All night he and Zea, full of the spirit of agitation which she had thus scattered like fire amongst the whole people, sate and conversed on these absorbing concerns, and scarcely had the day given its first warning in the east, when they heard the commotion in the camp, and the old man prepared to go forth. Even then they heard the sound of gathering multitudes. They rushed out, and beheld the whole people passing to the assault. They were led by a youth—a stranger youth,

whose form and face were full of a noble indignation that kindled contagious feelings through the crowd; and whose words fell on them as drops of spiritual fire, rousing them to a trembling enthusiasm of desire,—to a zeal bordering on frenzy, to rush upon the accursed place.

“Who is that noble youth?” exclaimed the old man; and he himself, borne on by the same enthusiasm, plunged in the same moment into the crowd. Zea’s eye fell on the youth—she knew him well! It was Kadmiel!—the real, the unquestionable Kadmiel, with all the grace and energy of his character upon him. The host rushed on like a tempestuous cloud that flies across the desert, charged with thunder and lightning, and destroying hail; and, forgetful of herself, Zea also ran on.

As they approached the idol temple, a fierce throng rushed from its door, and raised a wild yell, which was echoed by the Sepharvites. Zea stood rooted to the ground at an object which met her eye;—the idolaters were led by the dark spirit of her temptations,—the false Kadmiel. A fire of mingled infernal rage and joy lightened in his

eyes: he roused by his fiendish eloquence his followers to madness, and with dreadful cries the combatants rushed together. There was instantly a scene of universal fury and confusion,—men struggling with men—men striking at the lives of men. Amongst the trees of the grove were groups fighting desperately; bodies, living and dead, plunged into the waters of a silent lake that slept, overshadowed by the gloom of the grove, and the tinge of blood rose strongly from its sullen depths. The cries of pursuers and pursued rung on all sides, but about the temple itself the battle concentrated. There all was clamour, and terrible fury. The edifice was built of cedar, with pillars of chittim wood;—its large portal was the only place of entrance, and that was defended by a knot of desperate men, who appeared as immoveable as the fabric itself. But what power could defend it against such an excited host as assailed it? They hewed at its timber walls with bars and axes; numbers climbed up its pillars, and swarmed upon its roof, attempting to rend away its covering of shingles, and to gain admittance there; but presently there came blazing arrows

from the crowd; they stuck here and there, and the flames fastening on the sun-scorched timber, quickly arose in circling columns on all sides. A wild cry of triumph announced the event; the assailants dropped quickly from the roof; the surrounding throng fell back, watching the progress of the destructive element with eyes of flashing delight, and repeated cheers; till the defenders of the temple, driven by the flames, sallied in a desperate band, and attempted to cut their way through their enemies. Then again arose the yells of assailing rage; the whole mass was once more mingled in the struggle and agitation of mortal wrath. On the one side success, on the other despair, steeled and strengthened the combatants, and blood flowed in torrents that only quickened the thirst of slaughter.

While Zea stood beholding this terrible spectacle, - another, a more strange one presented itself. The deluded, the lost Sephiroth ran through the confused and shouting multitude, her head bound with a garland that had kindled and encircled her temples with flame, which her own velocity fanned into vivid brightness. As she drew near Zea, the

folds of her garments were seen also bordered with curling flame. Zea, bursting from the torpidity of terror, sprang forward to clasp the terrified fugitive, and to extinguish the fire, when a dark form rose suddenly from the earth between them, and touching the forehead of Sephiroth, exclaimed—"thou art mine!" At that touch, the ill-fated damsel gave one convulsive start, and fell a blackened corpse upon the earth. The exulting fiend turned towards Zea, who stood gazing in powerless astonishment at the scene, and cried—"thou, too, art mine! The Queen-mother of flowers claims thee as her votary:" and as he touched her forehead, a sharp and fiery pang passed through her, and she felt her soul fainting from her frame.

"She is mine!" exclaimed another, and a familiar voice. One arm supported the sinking maid—a cool hand passed across her brow, and the dying creature looked up, and beheld the eyes of Kadmiel fixed on her in tender admiration. "She is mine, wretched Spirit," he added, striking the dark form which yet lingered near; and at his touch, the evil-spirit rolled away at his feet like a black cloud, in which his fiendish eyes flashed like passing lightnings, and disappeared.

“Noble maid!” said Kadmiel to the dying Zea, “well hast thou trusted in the power and the love of God. Let us away now to the realms of his presence. The souls that so lately welcomed thee to the Valley of Angels, now affectionately await thee in scenes still fairer, and where no time will bring the necessity to depart.”

He disappeared, and the maid sunk calmly to the earth, and expired; and the people returning from the demolished temple, and dispersed idolaters, found her beautiful corse, and the blackened one of the lost Sephiroth. The latter they committed in silence to the earth where it lay, but the remains of Zea they bore to her father’s tent, singing as they went on:

CHORUS OF YOUTHS.

Sister, thou art fled!
Sister, in a goodly time,
Thou hast sought a better clime;
Ere thy evil days were come,
Thou hast hastened home.

Sister, blest art thou!
Blest are they who take their flight,
While life’s dews yet sparkle bright;
While the bloom is on the tree,—
Blest who pass like thee!

Happy, happy doom !
Loved below, desired above ;
In life, in death enshrined in love :
Bright on earth, and brighter where
Every soul is fair.

Sister, sister, joy !
On the wings of youth upborne,
Through the regions of the morn ;
Gladness, glory go with thee ;
To eternity !

CHORUS OF OLD MEN.

Daughter, thou art fled ;
But we linger, faint and old,
Till the bright earth waxeth cold ;
Till the dew is all exhaled ;
Till the bloom hath failed.

Daughter, blest art thou !
Where the earth's first bright ones trod,
There we find the burial sod :
The dwellings of the patriarchs stand
In a desert land !

Happy is thy doom !
Ours is, here to stand and mark
How the lights of life grow dark ;
How the loved ones drop away—
And feel the soul decay.

Daughter, daughter, joy !
None of all these ills are thine,
Thou shalt not in tears repine ;
Spent in frame, and spent in heart,
And unwept depart !

GENERAL CHORUS.

Maiden, maiden, joy !
On the wings of youth upborne,
Through the regions of the morn ;
Gladness, glory go with thee,
To eternity !

The old man followed in a speechless stupor of woe the remains of his sole child, his sole delight on earth, to the place chosen by the common voice of the young, for its repose, a fair and favourite group of blooming trees near the camp—where she and they had been often wont to meet in the happiness of youth. The design of departing was abandoned—and years afterwards the old man lingered near the spot, a silent but unrepining expectant of death; and the youthful still delighted to draw around him, and listen to the short but singular history of that damsel who entered the Valley of Angels, a history which not only interested those of her day and generation, but has triumphed over the floods, both of water and of time.

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