THE
CIRCASSIAN CHIEF.

VOL. III.
THE CIRCASSIAN CHIEF.

A ROMANCE OF RUSSIA.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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Those savage cliffs and solitudes might seem
The chosen haunts where Freedom's foot might roam;
She loves to dwell by glen and torrent stream,
And make the rocky fastnesses her home.

MODERN GREECE.—MRS. HEMANS.

A ROMANTIC and chivalrous scene was presented to the eye, as a cavalcade of warriors wound their way along the richly clad mountains of Ghelendjik.

The fresh dews of the night still moistened the green herbage; the crystal drops sprinkling the grass, shone in the early sun-beams like the precious diamonds of Golconda; while the air which played round their heads, came laden with the fragrance of the mountain herbs and sweet scented flowers. The pure and elastic atmosphere seemed to sparkle with life and light: all
nature, rejoicing in the bright new-born day, breathed an air of contentment and happiness; how sadly belied by the scenes of devastation and misery the country was doomed to suffer!

The chiefs were clad in rich and polished armour; their spear-points and swords glittering in the sun-beams, and their gay banners fluttering in the breeze. At their head, on his noble black charger, rode Arslan Gherrei and the gallant Hadji Guz Beg, followed by many chiefs of note and consequence. In the centre came Ina, more fresh and lovely than the bright morn itself, followed by her damsels, and tended with the utmost care; on one side, by her brother Selem, who guided her palfrey over the uneven ground, while Thaddeus guarded her on the other, as she listened earnestly to the description of his own loved land, comparing it to the one in which he now was destined to live. Every now and then she would turn her eyes from her brother, stealing a glance at him, which was as quickly withdrawn.

Young Alp Beg, and other gallant youths, dressed in their gayest attire, on high mettled steeds, curvetted in every direction, in hopes of catching a glance from her bright eyes, or of hearing the sweet tones of her voice. Close to them
followed the young page Conrin, and, though rejoicing in his master's happiness, every now and then a deep shade of melancholy would steal across his features; nor would he, on these occasions, listen to the words of consolation which Javis vainly endeavoured to offer. The squires of the knights, their pages, and other attendants followed, bringing up the cortège.

As they rode on, they were shrouded by the thick autumnal-tinted foliage of the lofty trees; and the mountain's side, covered with flowering heaths, when trampled on by their horses' hoofs, gave out a sweet odour. In the vale below, flowed a blue sparkling stream, between rich pastures, bounded by sloping banks; while on the opposite side, rose jagged and fantastic cliffs, and in the extreme distance, a sea of azure-tinted and swelling hills.

Messengers had arrived on the previous evening from the warriors already encamped on the banks of the Ubin, a rapid stream falling into the Kouban; summoning the chiefs from all parts of Circassia to meet them there without delay. Some grand object was in contemplation, either to attack the Russians before they should retire into their winter quarters, or to prevent
them in their turn from making any inroad among their own mountain homes. The Hadji was all fire and eagerness to set forward, in the hopes of some engagement taking place; in which, under his guidance, his darling son might gain victorious laurels, he looked on the storming of the fort as an action of no note to try his mettle. Arslan Gherrei had also determined to proceed onward to the same destination, leaving Ina—who was now fully able to undertake the journey—with the family of a noble kinsman, the Chief of the Demorghoi, the venerable Prince Aitek Tcherei.

Their host, Shamiz Bey, with most of the warlike inhabitants of the neighbourhood, was compelled to remain to guard that part of the country threatened by the garrison of Ghelendjik, it being considered a point of honour for every district to protect itself against the foe, except from an overwhelming force.

A large body of horsemen were, however, collected, many chiefs having come to greet the renowned Hadji on his return from his pilgrimage, to congratulate Arslan Gherrei on the recovery of his long-lost son, and to welcome Selem to his native land.

Their journey was like a triumphant procession.
From every hamlet through which they passed, the inhabitants rushed out to congratulate the warriors on their victory; the fame of their exploit having already preceded them. The villagers made their admiring comments, not less on the dignified and noble Arslan Gherrei and his son, than on his lovely daughter; and the stranger Pole was hailed as another champion added to their country's cause. The minstrels struck their harps to strains of triumph, joined by the voices of the maidens. The wild youths, galloping on before, fired off salvos from their rifles, which were answered by others from the hamlets discharging theirs in return, as they threw themselves on their ready-saddled steeds, and flew to join the festive cortège. The green banks, sloping down from the villages, were covered with old men, women, and children, joining their voices to the general shout which welcomed the party, wherever they appeared. The Hadji's name sounding above all.

Sometimes the cavalcade would halt to salute some aged chieftain, unable longer to join in the hardships of war, who had caused himself to be carried out to meet them, and to hear from their own mouths, an account of their late exploit.
The eye of the now decrepid warrior would kindle, and his cheek burn with enthusiasm, as he listened to the tale; or his voice would tremble, and a tear of regret roll down his furrowed cheek, that he was no longer capable of participating in the glories and dangers of war. So often had they to stop, and so many questions had they to answer, that it was late in the day before they could reach their resting place for the night; and happy was the chief, whom they had chosen as their Tocav, to receive such distinguished guests.

Their route on the next day’s journey, lay along the base of the far-extended line of the black mountains; when towering high above his brethren, appeared the lofty Elborous, dark, rugged, and precipitous. The cavalcade traversed a savage glen, overhung by beetling cliffs, seeming ready to fall on their heads. The light was subdued and gloomy; and the air was moist and heavy from the water which trickled down over the moss-covered rocks. An oppressive feeling overcame all the party—a foreboding of coming evil. Dangers in unknown shapes seemed to threaten them. Even the Hadji’s joyful tone was quelled; a chill fell on his spirits.
He cast a fond and anxious glance at his son Alp, as, for a moment, the dangers to which he was about to expose him, crossed his mind.

"Why are you so silent, my sister?" said Selem, as he rode by Ina's side; "why does that shade of sadness steal over a face, but now so bright with smiles?"

"I scarce know, Selem, why I am sad," returned the fair girl; "but I thought of the dangers our noble father is constantly exposed to; that you, my newly found brother, may again be torn from me; that you must live a life of constant hardship and warfare. I thought of the miseries of our country—our homes and fields burned, our fathers and brothers slain, and that Allah should have created men wicked enough to do these things. Tell me, my brother, why do the Urus attack our country? why do they try to possess themselves of our humble cots and rocky mountains, when they have abundance of land covered with mighty cities?"

"The lust of power, of conquest, such as you can have no conception of," replied Selem. "They care little to possess our mountain-homes, and nothing for the noble hearts, whose blood they spill. What, to their deaf ears, are the
cries of the orphan, the moans of the bereaved widow? There are rich and fair lands beyond our's, in which they would set their grasp, could they reach them, to add to their already vast territories, peopled by slaves. But they fear to advance, leaving behind them one spot of unconquered ground, such as our own land, lest we might impede them on their return home, laden with booty. We are like a castle in a plain, overrun with marauders, which, as long as provisions last, may withstand a host of such foes; so shall we, as long as true and brave hearts beat in Circassia. But now, Ina, banish such sad thoughts; see, we have gained a bright and joyous scene."

As Selem spoke, they emerged from the dark ravine, into a broad and extensive valley; so broad, indeed, as almost to be called a plain. It was surrounded by mountains, rising gradually in slopes or bosomy swells, to form the sides of the vast amphitheatre. Green pastures and corn fields, interspersed with clumps of fine trees, enriched its surface, which was further adorned by cottages, surrounded by orchards, farm-yards, paddocks, and granaries.

"See, Ina," exclaimed her brother, enthusi-
astically; "let not your spirits sink with forebodings, for we have passed in safety through that savage glen: and now what a lovely scene has opened to our view! So may it be with our country. We yet may see bright and glorious days shine on Circassia, when freed from the dark wing of the Russian eagle."

The country through which they were passing, had the appearance of a magnificent park, or the estate of some rich noble of Frangistan; the fields were separated by high well clipped hedge-rows, and irrigated by canals filled from a stream, meandering through the centre. The hill sides were covered with flocks of sheep; and fine cattle fed in the fertile pastures.

Leaving the valley, the cavalcade mounted the sides of one of the hills, by which it is entirely encompassed, traversing the summit of a narrow ridge, looking down on each side into a deep ravine. Wherever the eye could reach, appeared a country impracticable to any foes, when guarded by even a handful of brave inhabitants.

The cavalcade did not keep in the same order as described in the commencement of the journey; sometimes, the chieftain Arslan Gherrei
would ride to his daughter's side, and address words of affection and encouragement to her; then he would enter into converse with his son, on subjects of deep interest and importance. But there was one who never left Ina's side. Each moment that Thaddeus passed in her company, he became more and more enchained, without being conscious of it.

As the mighty Elborous appeared in view, with numerous other wild and rugged mountains at its base, "Know you," said the Hadji to Selem, "that the brother of that traitor Besin Kaloret Khan has his dwelling among yonder rugged mountains, though they prove not so wild and barren, as at this distance they appear? He is rich in flocks, herds and noble horses, and many fierce followers are at his beck. I think he will prove a dire foe to you and your's, if he discovers that his traitor brother fell by your hand; or worse still, by that of your youthful page. But, Mashallah! fear him not. He knows himself in the wrong, and will dread to take vengeance."

Ina turned pale, as she heard this account. "Does, indeed, that dreadful Khan dwell so near us?" said she. "I always feared to look on him:
he seems so fierce, so cruel, so unlike our father or you. Oh, avoid him, for his presence can bring nothing but harm.”

“Fear him not, fear him not, maiden,” exclaimed the Hadji. “What harm can he do? His followers cannot compete with us. Till he washes out the stain of his brother’s dishonour in the blood of our foes, he cannot again appear in the company of the chiefs of Abasia.”

“I fear not for myself,” answered Ina; “but I fear him for the evil he may work to my father and brother: I know that to meet him in open fight they would have nought to dread; but he is subtle as well as fierce, and may seek secret means to injure them.”

“Do not let such thoughts alarm you for our father or for me, dear Ina,” said her brother. “The Khan could not harm us, if he wished.”

“Mashallah! if he were as cunning as the fox,” exclaimed the Hadji, “we would rout him out of his den, should he attempt any revenge for that young traitor’s just punishment.”

The travellers were now approaching the residence of the venerable Prince Aitek Tcherei, the kinsman of Arslan Gherrei, with whom Ina
was to remain during his and her brother's absence. The whole party, also, were invited to sojourn there that day, ere they proceeded to the camp of the allied princes and chiefs on the Ubin.

The party were descending a hill bounding another beautiful and romantic vale, on the side of which stood the residence of the aged chief, and had just arrived in sight of a grove of lofty trees surrounding the house, when being perceived from the watch-tower in the neighbourhood, a band of gaily caparisoned youths on horseback, galloped out to meet the chiefs, uttering loud shouts of welcome, and firing off their rifles and pistols as they came on at full speed. Halting at the moment they arrived abreast of the leaders of the party, they respectfully saluted them, exchanging greetings with their younger friends as they passed, and then joined the rear of the cortège.

A long avenue of fine trees led up to the gate of the house, where the aged Prince, clothed in a long robe and turban, (the garb of peace), was standing to receive them, attended by his squire, armed more for state than protection, and by his dependants and household serfs, who hastened to
take the horses of the chieftains, as they dismounted.

Folding Arslan Gherrei in his arms, "My noble kinsman," he said, "welcome are you to my home, for gladly do my old eyes once more look on you; and how did my heart beat with joy when I heard that you had recovered your long lost son. Allah is great, who has shielded him from so many perils in the land of the Giaour, to restore him once more to your bosom. Is yonder noble youth he? Worthy he seems to be a Circassian chief. Let me embrace him," he added, as Selem, dismounting from his horse, advanced towards the old man.

"Come hither, my son, and let your father's oldest friend embrace you. Ah! I see in his eye and bearing that he is worthy of you, Uzden. And your other child? your daughter? Come hither, Ina; let my old eyes gaze on thee, too. My own Zara will rejoice to see you. Go to her, Ina; she longs to embrace you, but she fears to quit her anderoon before so many strangers. Ah! my gallant friend, Hadji Guz Beg! rejoiced am I to see the Lion of the Attèghëi returned from his pilgrimage, to spread terror
among the hearts of the Urus. And you, Achmet Beg, and you, Alp, who will one day be a hero like your father; and you, chieftains, welcome all.”

Thus he addressed them, as each chief advanced to pay his respects to the old man. “My heart,” exclaimed he, “has not beat so joyfully since the cursed Urus slew the last prop of my age, my only son. Chieftains, I have ordered a banquet to be prepared to do honour to your coming, and it will soon be the hour for feasting.”

Saying which, the venerable noble led the way to a grove of lofty trees in the neighbourhood of the house, under which a fresh green arbour had been erected by his retainers, forming a grateful shade from the yet burning rays of the sun. Divans and carpets had been spread under the leafy bower, the front of which opened on a gentle slope, falling to a green plot of turf, surrounded by groups of trees. Thither the chiefs were ushered, and when all were seated, according to their rank, their venerable host took his place among them.

Many of the neighbouring nobles had assembled to do honour to the guests of their chief.
their numerous attendants forming groups with the villagers and retainers of the host collected before the arbour. The Dehli Khans, or young men, amusing themselves in the mean time, in various athletic sports.

Troops of servants soon appeared hastening to the arbour, bearing tables laden with various dishes of richly dressed meats and fruits, which might well vie in taste with the sumptuous fare of less primitive countries. Bowls of mead and boza were handed round to the guests; for even those professing the Mahomedan faith did not hesitate to drink of the former delicious beverage, nor were spirits and wine wanting, to add to the conviviality of those whose scruples did not prevent their indulging in them.

Minstrels, also, came from far and near to add to the festivity of the occasion; for what feast would be complete without the masters of song? The aged Hassein Shahin, the famed bard of the Attèghèi, he who sang of a hundred fights, which he had himself witnessed, and in some of which he had been engaged, now turned his lyre to a high and martial strain. All voices were silent, every ear intent to catch his words which were as follow:
From Liberty's harp are the strains you now hear;
    Men of Attêghêî rise at the call;
Hark! hark! to its sounds, for the foemen are near,
    It summons us warriors all
To fight for the land of our ancestors' graves,
Who died that their children might never be slaves.

The Russ marches onward with chains in his hand,
    To bind our free arms will he try.
His banner's dark eagle o'ershadows our land,
    But we've sworn or to conquer or die,
For we fight o'er the sod of our ancestors' graves,
Whose valiant hearts ne'er would have yielded to slaves.

'Tis Poland's enslaver with foul bloody hand,
    Remember her story of woe!
Her brave sons are captives, or fled their lov'd land,
    Beware, or her fate we may know!
Let us swear on the earth of our forefathers' graves,
That we ne'er will be conquered or yield to those slaves.

Remember we fight for our mountains so green,
    For our vales, for our streams' sparkling tide,
For those fields which our father's for ages have been,
    And where, ever unconquer'd, they died.
Then let not their bones be disturbed in their graves,
By the tread of a Muscovite army of slaves.

See the glorious banner of freedom unfurl'd,
    It waves o'er our lov'd native land.
Muster round it, and valiantly prove to the world,
That alone we are able to stand.
As our fathers who lie in their warrior graves,
Fighting died, that their children might never be slaves.

Then curs'd be the traitors who yield to the foe,
And curs'd be the cowards who fly!
May they ne'er while they live, peace or happiness know,
And hated, and scorn'd, may they die!
In lands far away may they rot in their graves,
And their children bear ever the foul mark of slaves!

Now sharpen our spears, well prove each tough bow,
And the swords of our forefathers wield.
Don the armour so often they wore 'gainst the foe,
Seize each rifle and glittering shield,
And their shadows yet hovering over their graves,
Will guard us from foes who would make us their slaves.

Then to arms, then to arms, and this harp shall proclaim
The proud deeds that your valour has done;
And the world shall resound with the praise of your name,
To be handed from sire to son;
And tell of the heroes who lie in their graves,
Who died that the Attèghèi ne’er should be slaves.

The warriors grasped their swords, their eyes kindled, their breasts heaved at the minstrel’s tones, the effect was such as would be difficult to understand from the above meagre translation,
without the accompaniment of the bard's rich and animated voice, and the high loud tones of his instrument.

Several other baras succeeded, taking various themes for their song. When describing the heroic deeds of their warriors, their tones were lofty and inspiring. When singing of their untimely deaths, cut off by the foe, their voices would sink to a low and plaintive wail. When picturing the beauty of some maiden more lovely still than her companions, the air would be soft, sweet, and melting.

When the banquet was concluded, the gallant Hadji and his brother, Achmet Beg, rose to depart, for their home was at no great distance, and the Hadji's wife was anxiously expecting the return of her lord, though the old warrior dreamed not of giving himself a day's rest, but had engaged to be ready on the following morning, to accompany the other chiefs to the banks of the Ubin.

When search was made for young Alp, he was nowhere to be found, for he had early stolen from the feast.

"Your gallant son has been a constant visitor here of late," said the venerable host to the
Hadji. "The youth loves to listen to my tales of our wars with the Urus. He will follow closely in your steps, noble Hadji, and I love him much. I know not if it is so; but I sometimes think he casts an eye of affection towards my Zara; and if it please you, my friend, he may have her."

"It is no time for the youth to take to himself a wife, when his thoughts ought to be alone of war," answered the Hadji; "but Mashallah! he would be happy to possess so sweet a partner."

The aged chieftain's suspicion was correct, for Alp was at last discovered, coming from the direction of the anderoon; and he set off with his father to their home.

The next morning a large band of warriors, amounting almost to a small army, assembled in the valley, prepared to set off for the camp on the Ubin. Headed by the aged chief, they repaired to a sacred grove in the neighbourhood, in which stood an ancient stone cross, a relic of the former religion of the country, round which the chieftains and their followers knelt, while supplications were addressed to the One all powerful being, to aid their arms in driving the Urus from their country. Each warrior bore a
chaplet in his hand, which he hung up as a votive offering to the Divinity—a heathen custom handed down from the remotest times.

This ceremony being performed, the chiefs mounted their war steeds, and commenced their journey; the aged chief raising his hands towards Heaven, bestowing blessings on them as they passed.

Selem had much difficulty in compelling young Conrin to remain behind; but at last he succeeded in drawing a reluctant promise from the boy that he would not quit the valley without permission, but would remain as the page of Ina, and obey her behests. He did not attempt to persuade Thaddeus to accompany him, and the young Pole had found attractions, stronger even than those of friendship, to detain him in the valley. It would also have been against the usual custom to allow one, who had so lately quitted the enemy, to appear in arms on the side of the patriots; a degree of suspicion existing among the chiefs against all strangers, until their fidelity to the cause had been proved. He therefore remained, with Karl as his attendant—a life the honest serf seemed wonderfully to enjoy.
CHAPTER II.

If it were now to die
T’were now to be most happy; for I fear
My soul hath her content so absolute,
That not another comfort like to this
Succeeds in unknown fate. 

DEEP was the grief of Ina when she saw her beloved father and brother depart for the scene of conflict, nor could her heart refrain from sad forebodings when she thought of the dangers to which they must be exposed. Too often had she been witness to the misery and heart-rending wailing of her countrywomen, when anxiously expecting a father, a husband, or a brother, as they met in lieu the mangled remains of the loved one brought home on a bloody bier by his comrades. Such grief she herself had never known; but she felt too clearly that horrors like
those might be in store, too, for her; nor could
the fierce blast of war, which raged round the
land, steel her heart.

Zara did all in her power to tranquilize and
cheer her friend under her affliction; but too
well could she also enter into and share her
fears, for she had seen her gallant father brought
home stiff and cold on his shield, slaughtered by
the foe in repelling an inroad into his country.
That father was the last prop of her grandsire's
declining years; and hopelessly for him had the
old man mourned, for he had now no warrior
descendant to succeed to his name and posses-
sions, and none to guard his child from danger.
At his death the disposal of Zara in marriage
would devolve on the eldest of his tribe, and
they would not inquire if her heart could be
given with her person. Her destiny, therefore,
might be a cruel one. A new chief would be
chosen to lead the clan to battle, and, in peace, to
preside at their councils, and poor Zara might be
neglected.

Such was the fair girl's account of herself; and
thus the two friends, by pouring their griefs into
each other's bosom, found mutual consolation.
She confessed, indeed, that there was one whom she hoped might win her, and whom she thought loved her; but he had no wealth, and as yet had little renown in arms. Yet she whispered to her friend's ear, that she fondly loved the gallant young Alp, though she had enjoyed but few opportunities of meeting him.

The aged Prince, Aitek Tcherei, having warmly embraced the tenets of Mahomet, the two maidens were more strictly secluded than Ina had been accustomed to; the old Ana, or nurse, who presided over the domestic arrangements of the anderoon, keeping a constant and vigilant watch upon them. Though the custom of the country would not allow of their being limited to the same strict seclusion as in a Turkish harem, the nurse was, nevertheless, horrified at the idea of Ina's appearing in public without her face being entirely shrouded by a thick veil, nor did she at all approve of her propensity to ramble through the groves, or amid the shadowy cliffs.

The old Kahija's ideas of female happiness did not extend beyond the acquisition of a new veil or robe, or, more than all, the enjoyment of
a gossip. What pleasure could the girls find in scrambling over the dirty mountains and damp grass? or why should they dance or sing, except to please their lords and masters, when other persons are paid to dance and sing to them?

Her parents had sold her, when young and promising great beauty, to a Turkish slave-merchant; and it was with unalloyed pleasure, in anticipation of the novelty and magnificence of the great Stamboul, that she leaped on board the vessel which was to convey her from her friends and country. At first she herself felt the irksomeness of constraint; but soon became reconciled to her self-chosen lot, and learned to approve of all the regulations of the harem to which she was consigned. Her notions, therefore, on her return, at the death of her master, to her own country, were much scandalized at the freedom and what she considered the levity of her young countrywomen; and she loved to expatiate on the superior manners and customs of the fair captives in the seclusions of Stamboul. Like other dames, who find that their charms can no longer captivate, her temper at times became rather cross and crabbed, though she
always tried to treat her young motherless charge with kindness.

Such was the old Ana, Kahija, who, wrapped in her feridji, now entered the anderoon to interrupt with her gossip the conversation of the two maidens. She delighted in gossiping—what old nurse does not? particularly a Turkish one. She now came out of breath, with her exertion of walking from a neighbouring cottage, to say with great eagerness, that the chief shepherd had just come in from the distant mountains, where he had seen the dark mountain khan, Khoros Kaloret, whose brother had turned traitor, and been killed by the young chief Selem, galloping by with a long train of savage followers, who were riding furiously in the direction of the Ubin.

"Oh, Allah, grant that he meet not my father or Selem there!" exclaimed Ina, in accents of terror.

"I know not what may happen, child," said the old nurse. "They say he is a fierce chief. I hear, too, that he sought your hand. Ma-shallah! but you might have been proud to wed so rich a Khan; and yet, Bosh! what is he even to a merchant of Stamboul?"

VOl. III.
"Why could you not love him?" asked Zara; "they say he is of gallant appearance."

"Ah, Zara! love him? you know not what love is, to ask such a question. Love him! No! I could only fear him, he looks so stern and fierce; so unlike the calm and grave features of my father," said Ina.

"What is all this stuff the girls are talking about love?" chimed in the old nurse. "Bosh! what nonsense is this? Love! What is love? it is nothing; it is worse than nothing; it is folly—it is Bosh! What should maidens know about love? Let them be married, and then it is time to love their lords and masters."

Ina and Zara were in despair; for it was hopeless to carry on any interesting conversation on their own feelings, with the constant observations and interruptions of old Kahija; who could be very entertaining at times, when she had the whole of the conversation to herself, with her wonderful stories about Turkey and Stamboul. They were relieved, however, from the dulness their constrained silence threw over them, by the entrance of Conrin, with a small packet from his master to Ina.

We have said that Arslan Gherrei had been
educated in Turkey, and held a high post in the army of the Sultan, where he acquired many accomplishments very unusual to the generality of his countrymen. In the calm retreat of his daughter's anderoon, when no strangers were by to witness his occupation, he had endeavoured to cultivate her youthful mind by the aid of the few books he had brought with him; and he had taught her not only to speak, but to read and write Turkish, accomplishments possessed probably by no other maiden in Circassia; for few were blessed with fathers equally heroic in war, and capable of enjoying the blessings of peace.

Zara, ignorant of her friend's accomplishments, looked with mute surprise when Ina, taking the note from the page's hand, hastily broke the thread which tied it, and read an account of the safety of her father and brother, as far as they had as yet proceeded in their warlike operations. The page was equally eager.

"Tell me, lady, tell me is my dear master in safety?" he said.

"Yes he is. Allah be praised! he and my father are well; and he tells me not to forget my care of you, Conrin."
"Heaven be praised that he is safe. That he remembers me, brings joy to my heart!" exclaimed the youth, clasping his hands.

The venerable Prince was kind and courteous in the extreme to his Polish guest; yet Thaddeus found, to his great disappointment, that the anderoon was, to him, forbidden ground; and instead of the constant communication he had delighted in the prospect of enjoying with Ina, he could never approach her, except to offer a few words of courtesy when she was taking the air. Those short sentences were understood by Kahija, who was scandalized that the young lady should be addressed, even in the ordinary terms of greeting; and more so on perceiving that Ina tolerated them. All his attempts at any further conversation were fruitless, owing to the constant vigilance of the old woman; and Ina's native modesty forbade her making any advances herself, however she might have received them on his part.

At last he betheought him of gaining the confidence of young Conrin; but the boy constantly avoided him, though he would now and then stop to listen if he began to speak of his master, and to make any observations in his praise. He
thus felt the time hang heavily during the absence of his friend; for he had few to converse with, except the old Prince, who spoke Turkish, and some of the Polish prisoners, or rather deserters, from the Russian army; his only satisfaction being the occasional glimpses he caught of Ina, and the delight of hearing the musical tones of her voice as she returned his salutations.

His great resource was the chase. With a light rifle in his hand, and attended by Karl and his former Polish servant, who enjoyed their life of freedom and independence, so different from the abject servitude to which they had hitherto been accustomed, he roamed the woods and mountains. In these excursions he was also accompanied by several of the youths of the valley, too young to go to war, who guided his steps along the precipices, and shewed him where game abounded. At other times he would mount a steed, appropriated to his use, galloping along the green valleys, and up the mountain's sides, and vying with the young mountaineers in their equestrian exercises, till he became as expert a horseman as they. He would often, with his rifle, bring down a bird on the
wing which they could not hit; thus winning their hearts by his proficiency in what they most admired.

He, however, began to regret not having accompanied his friend to the camp; and accused himself of want of friendship towards him.

We have said that Ina longed to breathe the free air of the mountains, unrestrained in her liberty by the slow-moving steps of old Kahija. Though she could not persuade the timid Zara to accompany her, she frequently asserted her independence by sallying forth attended only by her page. On her return, she listened, with composure, to the severe lectures she received for these transgressions of decorum; and still determined to renew them at every opportunity. How delighted she felt as, bounding like a young fawn, whose fleetness she rivalled, she flew through the shady groves. Then she would climb the mountain's brow, inhaling the fresh pure air, and almost forgetting, as she gazed over the fair land of mountain, vale, and stream, the miseries which threatened it.

Towards the end of one lovely day, she left the confines of the anderoon, attended by her page, who had now learned to love her, not more from
his affection for her brother than for her own endearing qualities; looking around from the open wicket and seeing none to impede her progress, she took her way through the grove towards a valley she had long wished to explore, at some distance from the house. It was a lovely place, originally formed from a fissure in the mountains, increased by the constant wear of winter floods. Under the summer heat, the torrent had dwindled into a tiny and clear rivulet, in one part leaping in a bright cascade, then flowing in a gentle current, and next rushing over a ledge of rocks, and falling into the larger valley, where it expanded into a tiny lake.

The lady and her attendant walked on by its side over the soft velvet herbage which the receding waters had left, and began to climb the rocky sides of the glen, the summits of which were now blooming with various sweet scented shrubs and herbs. A soft and mellow sky cast a soothing influence over the scene, and the air was laden with fragrant odours. Thoughtless of the difficulties they had passed, and fearless of the steep and rocky paths, they clambered on, leaping lightly from ledge to ledge, and holding by the shrubs and plants to aid
their steps, till at length they reached a platform, where they rested to view the broad and beautiful valley into which the little ravine opened.

Below them was the smiling village amid its groves of stately trees, its farm-yards, granaries, orchards, and cattle-pens. At a little distance, at the side of the stream, was the rustic and unpretending Mosque, from the platform of whose primitive minaret the Muezzin was calling all true believers to the evening prayer. Here were shepherds driving their flocks from the mountain's side to their pens, to shelter them from the wild beasts. The kine were lowing on their way to their sheds, while the village maidens carolled gaily as they milked their cows. The birds were singing from every rock and spray; and all living nature seemed calm and contented.

The page roused Ina from her contemplation of the scene.

"Lady," said he, "we ought ere this to have sought our homeward way: the path is steep and difficult, and the shades of evening will overtake us, ere we can reach the valley."

"Fear not, Conrin. There are no dangers
we need dread,” returned Ina. “Old Kahija’s scolding is the worst than can happen to us. We mountain maids are sure of foot, and fearless as you seem, on the edge of the steepest precipice. But, as you say, it is full time we should return home; for, as it is, we shall be missed from the anderoon, and old Kahija will think that we have fled for ever from her grave rule.”

But as they looked round, doubtful on what part of the steep cliff to begin their descent, they found that to return was not so easy an achievement as Ina had pronounced it to be; for so many turnings had they taken, that they could not discover the path by which they had attained the spot where they stood.

It was difficult to say how they could have reached their present position, as in vain they searched for the path. At length, Conrin hazarded a spring to a lower ledge, from which it appeared that practicable footing was to be found, when he was startled by a scream from above; and, gazing upward, he beheld the Lady Ina in the grasp of a ferocious, wild-looking man, who was endeavouring to drag her up the steep cliff, while she resisted with all her
power, calling her page to her assistance. Con-rin fruitlessly attempted to reach the upper ledge, for the slender shrubs and herbage gave way in his hands as he clutched them. Trembling with agitation, he fell back to the spot from which he was strenuously trying to climb.

The man's appearance was, in truth, ferocious. Of gigantic height, his face was almost covered with tangled dark locks hanging down from his head, on which he wore a cap of undyed brown and white goat-skin, the long hair of which, falling in front over his neck, added to the wildness of his features. His body was clothed in a tunic of the same material, and a long black cloak of goat's hair fell from his shoulders. Rough sandals of bark were on his feet, fastened to his ankles by thongs of leather. At his back hung a bow and quiver, and in one hand he grasped a thick spear or club and a round black shield of bull's hide; while in the other he held the slender form of Ina.

"Set me at freedom! How dare you thus insult me?" she cried. "I would seek my way homeward."

"Not so, fair maiden," answered the man with rough harsh tones, in a strange dialect,
though Ina could comprehend it sufficiently to understand the tenor of his words. "Not so; you are a prize of too much value to be allowed to escape so easily."

"Begone, barbarian, and loose your hold," cried Ina, though fearful and trembling in his rude grasp, yet retaining her native dignity. "Think you to escape the vengeance of my tribe, if you should wrong me?"

"Vengeance! say you?" exclaimed the man scornfully. "Think you I fear the vengeance of any?"

"You will have cause to fear it, if you do not release me," she answered. "Know you not what chieftain's child I am?"

"I know full well," said the savage. "You are the daughter of the chief who wronged my master; who slew my master's brother; and you are the timid maid who would not be his bride. But now you'll not again refuse to obey his will."

"I know not of whom you speak," cried Ina. "My father never slew a chief of Attèghèi."

"I know your father well," answered the ruffian. "He is the Chieftain Arslan Gherrei, and you refused to be the bride of the brave Khan, my master, Khoros Kaloret."
"Your master Kaloret Khan?" cried Ina, still more terrified than before, at the sound of that name. "Yet he would never dare to rob a noble Uzden of his daughter. Release me, ruffian!"

"My master fears not any chief of Attèghèi," answered the man, fiercely. "I'll waste no more speech; so cease your cries, and come willingly. My noble master waits your coming."

Ina shrieked with fear. "Oh, Allah, protect me!" she cried, as the savage endeavoured to drag her away. "Barbarian, release me, I pray you, let me go."

"No, no, girl, your prayers are useless," answered the man. "Let my master hear them. On me, they are thrown away."

"Haste, haste, Conrin," she cried, in Turkish; "fly to our home. Send messengers to Selem, to my father, and rouse the villagers."

As the barbarian saw the page hastening to obey, he said to Ina: "Stay that boy, till we are out of sight. If he moves hence, I'll send an arrow through his breast."

Conrin, who understood not his words—Ina being too terrified to interpret them—was hurrying from rock to rock, fearless of the peril which
a single false step might cause, or of the cruel death which threatened him; when the barbarian prepared to put his threat into execution. For an instant, he loosened his hold of Ina, unslinging his bow from his back, and drawing a shaft to its head, with a hand which never missed its aim. In vain, Ina shrieked to Conrin to stop, and implored the monster to hold his hand. Neither of them heard her voice.

The last moment of the poor boy's life seemed to have arrived, as the arrow flew from the string; but ere the hand which drew it reached the ear, it was struck by a violent blow, and the shaft wavering in its aim, flew high above the page's head. The fierce mountaineer, taking a second arrow, turned to his aggressor, when he found his arm held by a powerful and firm grasp.

Ina shrieked with fear for her preserver's life—for in him she beheld the stranger Thaddeus—as the follower of the Khan attempted to seize his heavy spear, and to fell him to the ground. But the young Pole, grappling with him, prevented his raising it high enough to strike. Though Thaddeus was strong and active, his fierce opponent was heavier and more powerful. Re-
leasing his arm with a sudden exertion, he sought his dagger in his girdle; but the Pole throwing himself upon him with his whole force, the two combatants fell to the ground.

"Fear not for me, dearest Ina," cried he; "save yourself. Hasten down the cliffs, and fly homewards. I will hold this robber, until you are safe."

Ina scarcely heard his words, or, if she did, thought not of following his advice; but trembling for his life, she watched the combat, so as, if possible, to lend her aid. For an instant, Thaddeus was uppermost; but endeavouring to grasp his opponent's throat, he was obliged to release one arm; when, drawing his dagger from his belt, the mountaineer, by a violent effort, threw himself round, grasping the fatal weapon in his hand, and bringing the unfortunate youth below him. He was about to stab the young Pole, when another, though a feeble hand, directed its aim, and it struck deeply into the earth, in a cleft of the rock.

Thaddeus seized the dagger; when his opponent, with tremendous exertion, arose and attempted to hurl him over the cliff; but as the mountaineer approached the edge, his foot
slipped. Seizing the fortunate moment, and mustering all his strength, Thaddeus struck the dagger deep into his breast. The huge barbarian fell heavily, still clasping Thaddeus in his arms, who, nevertheless, forced him to the edge of the platform, when the body rolled over to a jutting craig, some feet below where they stood.

Recovering himself, Thaddeus turned to Ina, Lady," he said, "I owe my life to your courage: your timely aid saved me."

"Oh, no," she cried; "it was you who saved my life, and more than life, for which you bravely risked your own. Allah be praised, who guarded yours, and brought you to my rescue! You also saved poor Conrin's life. But let us not stay here. The comrades of the man may come and revenge his death on you. Oh, let us hasten home."

"I will bear you safely down these steep cliffs, lady," said Thaddeus; "you are weak, and scarce able to walk from terror."

Lifting her gently (and Ina thought not of resisting his offer), with firm and fearless steps, he sought a path amid the craigs; and as he bore her slight form in his arms, he felt her hand un-
consciously press his. Her bright beaming eyes betrayed the ardent gratitude, which her lips feared to utter. She looked anxiously into his face, to learn if he felt oppressed by fatigue; but there she read alone his love and pride, at having saved her; nor could she bring herself to entreat him to set her down, till they reached in safety the bottom of the glen.

"I am stronger now, and will fatigue your arms no longer, noble Sir," she said. Thaddeus at last, unwillingly obeyed her repeated requests, though she still consented to lean on his arm, as he accompanied her home-ward.

"Whence came that robber, who so terrified you?" asked Thaddeus.

"Oh he was no robber," answered Ina. "But a follower of the fierce Khan, whose brother the young Conrin slew and who seeks to wed me."

"Wed you, lady? Can such as he be worthy of you?" exclaimed the young Pole with enthusiasm.

"I know not; but I never loved him," answered Ina; "and now I doubly fear his
vengeance for your sake. When he hears that you have slain his follower, he will not rest till he has had satisfaction for his blood. I would that you were safe beyond his reach!"

"I do not dread any injury he can do me," cried Thaddeus. "To have saved you from danger is so great a joy that I would die to gain it."

Ina felt her heart beat quickly as he spoke; for the tone of his voice said more even than the words themselves.

It was a moment of delight—of pure bliss to both those young beings; notwithstanding the wildness of the scene, the danger they had passed through and which might be still pursuing them. They knew that they mutually loved. They attempted not to speak; for they felt that words would not adequately convey their love. They looked into each other's eyes, and there they read all each could wish to know. Ina thought of her preserver, and the danger he was yet in; and, as she hastened through the glen, she cast many an anxious glance to see if any followed. She thought that she heard a footstep; it was but the rushing of the stream across a rock; she tried to increase her speed; again she turned
with fear—it was but the echo of their tread among the cliffs.

Thaddeus endeavoured to tranquillize her alarms; and partially succeeded, by assuring her that he had himself descended the ravine, and had encountered no one. As they emerged from the narrow gorge, loud shouts saluted their ears, and they met a band of villagers led on by Conrin, who, overcome by his exertions, sunk down at his mistress’s feet on seeing she was safe. Ina stooped over the poor boy with deep solicitude, endeavouring to unloose his vest; but he strenuously resisted her offers, declaring that he was fast recovering.

The party, composed of old and young, armed with weapons, shouted loudly for joy when they saw Ina in safety; she thanked them for their promptitude in coming to her rescue, and presented Thaddeus as her preserver. The villagers complimented him on his bravery and success, as with shouts and songs, they followed her homeward. The aged chief had left his house to encourage the people in their pursuit of the ravisher; but, when he saw his young kinswoman in safety, he felt a strong inclination to scold her for wandering. As, however, she
appeared overcome with fatigue, he forbore, and left her to the lectures he knew she would be certain to receive from the old Kahija.

Thaddeus would not quit her side until he had conducted her to the gate of the anderoon, to commit her to the gentle care of Zara who was anxiously awaiting her.
CHAPTER III.

They link'd their hands, they pledged their stainless faith
In the dread presence of attesting Heaven.
They bound their hearts to suffering and to death,
With the severe and solemn transport given
To bless such vows.

MRS. HEMANS.

The Circassian chieftains had chosen for
the encampment of their irregular but numerous
army, a picturesque spot, of which the beauty
was much encreased by the wild and warlike
bands now filling it. It was in a rich and
verdant valley watered by the streams of the
Aphibs and the Ubin.

By the banks of the latter river the greater
part of the tents were pitched beneath the lofty
trees; some growing in clumps and others
scattered over the meadows as in a highly
cultivated park. The ground rose in gentle
grassy undulations from the banks of the river, swelling into round hills covered with the richest verdure, on which fed numerous flocks and herds; while, further off, men, women, and children were employed in the agricultural labour of the fields, unimpeded by the presence of the warriors. In the far distance were seen the lofty pinnacles of the Black Mountains.

Each chief had selected some spot on which to pitch his tent, as his taste dictated, while their respective clansmen and followers were stationed around them.

Here some stalwart chief reposed on the turf in front of his tent, smoking the long chibouque, while looking at his followers engaged in every description of warlike exercise. Some selected a mark on a tree, and, retreating to a distance, fixed their hatchets in it with unerring aim; others hurled the heavy javelin; some the light dart; while numbers, with their bows in hand, were taking sure aim at a greater distance. Some, too, were practising wrestling and running.

In one place, the sound of the smith's anvil and hammer was heard repairing fire-arms for the coming fight. In the river the young men were engaged in teaching their horses to swim.
across rivers so as to be ready for any sudden excursion into the enemy's country. Here a troop of gallant young nobles, on their long-tailed swift steeds, were seen scouring along the valleys, and up the sides of the hills. The many coloured and richly-silvered trappings of their horses, and their own jewelled weapons and armour, shone brightly as they appeared amid the trees. It was, in truth, a brilliant, warlike, and exciting scene.

The chiefs and nobles were dressed in their complete war array; some in superbly embossed and ornamented armour, of polished steel; others in beautifully wrought chain armour fitting closely to the body, and being pliable to every movement, shewed off their graceful figures to advantage. The lofty plumes of their helms towered far above the heads of their followers, as they moved through the crowd; their jewelled poniards (the insignia of their rank) were placed in girdles richly worked in gold; and all their other arms were also highly ornamented. Some of the venerable elders appeared in turbans and long robes, the garb of peace; and a few nobles wore the simple and elegant tight-fitting coat, richly trimmed with silver lace, and embroidered belts to hold their arms.
The army was composed of people of many different tribes and races from all parts of the Caucasus, speaking various languages, having many different customs, with great variations in costume. First, in numbers and bravery, were the tribes of the Attèghèi, consisting of the Abzeki, Khapsoukhi, Nothakhaitze, the Demirghoi, and many others. Bands of the disciplined Lesghians had come from the far off plains bordering on the Caspian, to war with the oppressors of their own country, with whom they there could not venture to compete. There were bands, also, of the nomadic tribes, the short broad-faced Calmuck and the Nogai Tartars. Many warriors, also, had come from Georgia, Mingrelia, and Immeritia, which countries have succumbed to the Russian power, but still bear her the most deadly hatred. Some bands had descended from the wild Alpine retreats of the snowy mountains, wild as the regions they inhabited or the beasts they rode, a small, uncouth, though hardy and active race. These were dark-visaged men, with projecting jaws, and black shaggy beards, mostly clothed in skins, with fur caps, and garments of the roughest materials. Though addicted to roving
and predatory habits, they were now animated with the common feeling of hatred to the Urus.

There were the tribes of the Tubi and the Ubick; who fought on foot, owing to the inaccessible nature of their mountain homes, where no horse can find a safe footing, and none can venture but the nimble-footed inhabitants, and the active goats and chamois. They are mostly of gigantic height, with handsome countenances, but fierce in appearance even to wildness, which was not a little increased by their sheep skin turbans, the long white wool of which curled over their face and shoulders. They wore the tight-fitting tunic of the Circassians, over which was thrown a black mantle of goat and sheep skin hair, platted together; while their sandals were formed of the bark of the linden tree. Each man was armed with a hatchet and poniard in his belt, a light gun on his shoulder, while in his hand he carried a weighty and knotted club, furnished at the end with a long steel barb to assist him in crossing streams, or springing from cliff to cliff. It served also as a rest to his gun to take more deadly aim, and as a weapon in the chase, or in his hours of
amusement as a toy, to hurl with fearful exactness at a mark.

Besides these, came another tribe of foot warriors, of ferocious appearance, from the upper regions of the Black Mountains, bearing large, black, round shields made of wood, strengthened with bands of iron or yew, covered with the hide of the buffalo. These people were armed chiefly with the primitive bow and arrow, with which they can take the most certain aim.

There were also some of the fierce Tartar tribes, the most deadly foes to Russia, owing to her usurpation of their country. When driven as exiles and wanderers from their native land, they settled in the before uninhabited and almost inaccessible regions of the Caucasian range. They also wore jackets of skins and fur turbans, adding to the natural ferocity of their countenances. Their arms were broad curving scimitars, and long heavy Greek guns, with pistols and hatchets stuck in their belts, and embroidered with silver.

Even Europe furnished many warriors from ill-fated and ruined Poland, who had found refuge and sympathy among the generous mountaineers, to try their swords against the hated Moscov.
Among the infantry, the only bands which had any pretension to regular discipline were the Lesghians, who manoeuvre in compact bodies on their own plains, though their style of fighting is not well adapted to the mountain warfare of the Circassians.

The followers of the princes and nobles of the Attèghèi were habited much alike, in the tight fitting elegant tunic, without collar to confine the neck, which was left bare; large trowsers, ornamented girdles, embroidered slippers, or low boots of coloured leather, and the broad-crowned low cap, either of hair, or cloth, or leather, trimmed with fur. All had sabres by their sides and the cama in their belts; but many carried the bow and arrow without fire-arms. The greater number were provided with horses, which they had decked with all the ornaments they could collect.

The elders and judges, who had repaired to the camp to give their advice and counsel, wore large white turbans and long vests, and might be seen sedately seated beneath the shade of wide spreading trees, in circles, holding grave debates, their white beards flowing over their breasts, and giving them a grave and venerable appearance. Many of them, who had served in
Turkey, retained the costume of that country; adding to the picturesque variety of dress to be found among this congregation of brave warriors.

No regular arrangement had been preserved in the formation of the camp; the different bands pitching their tents, or building their leafy shelters where they pleased. Many of the warriors had been followed to the camp by their wives, to attend to their tents and to dress their food: their tall and graceful forms were dressed in flowing robes of varied tints, embroidered with gold and silver, and long white veils falling from their heads as they were seen gliding among the trees.

The camp was unfortified; but though a short distance only from the Russian posts, there was no chance of a surprise, as scouts and advanced parties were constantly watching their foes, who could not make the slightest movement without due notice being given. This was the principal camp of the Abasians; but there were others under experienced leaders, along their frontiers towards Anapa, watching the enemy's castles in that direction.

Such was the magnificent spectacle which
greeted Selem's eyes as, in company with his father and Hadji Guz Beg, they descended from a mountain-ridge into the valley of the Ubin, the refugence of the evening sun throwing a lustre over the animated and exciting scene. As their squires discharged their rifles, numerous chiefs hastened forth from their tents, or from among the thickets and trees, mounting their chargers and galloping to meet their brothers in arms. While they rode on, others came from all directions, greeting with warm congratulations the arrival of the Hadji and Arslan Gherrei; nor were the younger nobles less pleased to see young Alp, who was a favourite with all.

The chiefs cast inquiring looks at Selem, and when Arslan Gherrei proudly introduced him as his son, relating his romantic history and recent exploits, loud shouts hailed him as a chief of Circassia. His heart beat with pride at having acquired that glorious appellation, as his brother warriors came forward to grasp his hand in welcome.

Their followers assembled under a grove of lofty trees near the river; a few minutes only elapsed since their arrival at the spot, before
their tents were erected and every arrangement made for their accommodation.

Selem then accompanied his father through the encampment, to learn the proceedings and intentions of the leaders. Various plans of operations had been discussed; but, unfortunately, unanimity did not reign in their councils as to the best mode of proceeding.

The most sagacious were, however, for preventing the large Russian army, which threatened them, from advancing into the interior, without expending their strength in minor exploits: but others were for making excursions into the country of the Cossacks at unguarded posts, while the enemy were elsewhere engaged, and some were for at once storming the Russian forts. Selem saw with grief and pain the sad want of organization in an army capable, if well directed, of driving back their foes to their own bleak steppes. But they were destitute of artillery and ammunition; and he saw too clearly that no great object could be attained beyond the strict defence of their native mountains. Yet, without some object in view, that vast multitude, unaccustomed to any combined movement, would soon be weary of restraint, and might, in a few
hours, melt away like snow before the rays of the sun, and return to their own homes. They required some chief of superior talents, whom all would acknowledge as their commander, to lead them to war; and they would then become invincible. This want their invaders well knew, and reckoned on accordingly.

The next morning the sun rose with unclouded splendour over the beautiful valley of the Ubin, cheering the hearts of the assembled warriors with an omen of success. It was the day appointed for a solemn ceremony to take place, namely, the administering an oath, which all the princes, nobles, and leaders of Circassia had agreed to take, never to sheathe their swords, or make terms with the enemy, till he had retired from the neighbourhood of their country; and to sink in oblivion all ancient feuds and animosities among themselves. Many chiefs had already bound themselves by this agreement; but the majority had hitherto kept aloof from taking the oath, as it not only forbade them ever making terms with their foes, but involved the necessity of restoring all property unjustly retained from their countrymen.

Contiguous to the camp was a quiet and
sequestered dell, with green hills rising close around it, and filled by a grove of lofty and venerable trees: a spot looked upon as sacred from time immemorial. In an open glade, in the centre of the grove, stood the mouldering remains of a stone cross, near which, where the lofty trees threw their cool shadows, now assembled hundreds of noble warrior chiefs. One sentiment, one soul, animated the breasts of all—the most deadly hatred to their foes, and a determination to resist to the very last gasp. Every one of the various tribes and bands, which composed the patriot army, here sent a representative to swear in their name, and to confer on measures for the general advantage.

As the princes, nobles, and leaders arrived, they took their seats on the green turf, when, all being assembled, a chief arose from the circle, and advanced towards the centre. His white turban, his long robes, his hoary locks and flowing beard, bespoke his sacred character. In his hands he held a book, which he raised aloft, as he knelt before the cross, and offered up to the all-potent and all-omniscient Being, whom every one present worshipped—whatever their other differences of creed might be—a prayer
for the success of the sacred cause of liberty; and for the confusion of their tyrannical foes. Every warrior, bowing his head, reverently responded "Amen!" as the venerable sage ceased his prayer. Still holding the book before him, he rose, and, with a voice, yet deep and sonorous, though at times trembling with age, he exclaimed:

"Noble warriors, chiefs of Circassia—we have this day assembled for a great, for a righteous purpose. It is to bind ourselves, by a solemn compact, to exert all the energies of our souls and bodies to drive hence the fell invaders of our country. Never to sheathe our swords while a foe to Circassia exists near her borders; to sink all private feelings of animosity, and to offer the hand of love and fellowship to all who will join us in this sacred cause. I call on all present to come forward, and to swear on the sacred book I hold, to conquer or die for our country, and to shew the world, what a brave band of brothers, though few in numbers compared to the vast hordes of our opponents, can do for the cause of liberty."

As he finished his address, one of the most influential of the Princes of the Attèghèi ad-
vanced, and, reverently kneeling, kissed the book, and took the required oath. His example was followed by others, till the enthusiasm became general, and all rushed eagerly forward to sign the compact. As they took the oath, they formed in circles, grasping each other's hands, in token of their brotherhood. Those who had never before met, except with their hands on the hilts of their swords, now joined them in the pressure of love and fellowship; and the ardent wish of all, was to be led at once against the common foe.

Many, who had arrived too late for the opening of the ceremony, hastened forward from all directions to swear eternal enmity to the Russians. The aged judge again knelt, when all had subscribed the oath, to return thanks to heaven for the concord which reigned throughout the band of patriots; and, as the sacred ceremony concluded, loud shouts rent the air, from the vast concourse of warriors who covered the sides of the hills, and every woodland glade. Had any Russian spy been present, he might have warned his countrymen of the hopelessness of success, in their nefarious attempt to subjugate so resolute a people.
CHAPTER IV.

They came with heavy chains
For the race despised so long—
But amidst his Alp domains,
The herdsman’s arm is strong!

MRS. HEMANS.

Our hero and his friends had spent two days at the camp of the patriot army on the Ubin, without devising any plan of operation, or without any movement taking place among the Russians, when three horsemen were seen riding at headlong speed down the sides of the mountains, towards the camp. The energies of the horses seemed taxed beyond their power. One noble animal fell, throwing his rider stunned before him. The horse of the second came down with tremendous force, after giving three or four bounds, and making fruitless efforts to continue his course; but the third, not stopping
to see what had become of his companions, rode furiously on to the camp, whence many chieftains and warriors rushed out to hear the news he brought.

The messenger leaped from his steed as he came among them, the gallant beast trembling in every limb, and scarcely able to continue on his legs as he panted with exertion.

"Noble chieftains!" cried the messenger, "I bring you dire news from Ghelendjik. Three days ago, a numerous fleet of Russian ships was seen to approach our coasts, from which a mighty army disembarked. It is hoped they will remain some days within their fort to rest from their voyage; but, after that, there can be no doubt they will advance to ravage the country, if a stronger force than is there collected, is not opposed to them. The men of Ghelendjik will do their utmost to stop the invaders; but what can they hope to do against an overpowering force? Our Seraskier, therefore, sent us here with haste to summon some of his friends to join his army."

Among the foremost of the chiefs, who had hastened to meet the messenger, was the gallant Hadji. "Bismillah! not a moment is to

THE CIRCASSIAN CHIEF.
be lost then,” he cried, seizing his standard from before his tent, waving it aloft, and again plunging the staff into the ground. “I will hasten with joy to your chieftain’s aid, and we will stop these Urus on their march. Gallant nobles and warriors, whoever among you will bear me company to the aid of our hard-pressed countrymen, let them assemble round this banner within three minutes, and we will away; for, perhaps, before this the Russians may have begun their march. Let those who will, follow.”

Saying which, the brave old chief hastened to don his helmet, his squire leading forth his steed; and in less time than he had indicated, he was on horseback by the side of his banner. Alp soon galloped up, followed by Selem, who directly volunteered to accompany his venerable friend, after taking leave of his father, who was obliged to remain. Before the time for starting had arrived, numerous warriors came up from all directions; the news, that an expedition was on foot, having flown like lightning through the camp; so that, within five minutes of the arrival of the messenger, several hundred horsemen had assembled, fully equipped, to follow the Hadji. Again seizing his standard, the Hadji
waved it aloft as a signal to march; when giving a loud shout, the band of warriors set off at a quick speed, many others promising to follow.

The Hadji led on his followers as fast as they could proceed without exhausting their horses, stopping only at night to rest for a few hours; and before sun-rise they were again in their saddles. Their anxiety to hear some news of the enemy was extreme, for they were now approaching the neighbourhood of the Russian fort; though it was impossible to say in what part of the country they might sally out to commit their depredations.

They drew rein on the summit of a mountain, from which they obtained a far-off view of the sea, in the direction of Ghelendjik, and of the intervening hills and valleys, from which, with their glasses, they could perceive wreaths of smoke curling upwards to the clear sky in every direction. Alas! they told a sad tale of destruction going forward! As the Hadji gazed with an anxious eye to discover the cause,

"Curses on the fell Giaour!" he exclaimed. "Yonder flames and smoke are their hellish work! See how the burning cottages, and
farms, and ripe corn-fields of our countrymen, mark the course of our foes. See, they take the passes towards Anapa. Ha! we may yet be in time to stop them before they reach that castle. They will no doubt attempt the passage of the valley of the Zemes; and there the brave Seraskier Manjour Bey will be found in waiting for them. Onward, my friends, we will see what these Moscov are about."

Saying which, the whole party urged their horses down the dizzy mountain’s side, crossing valleys, streams, rocks and hills, in their eagerness to arrive at the scene of action. It was nearly sun-set when they came within hearing of distant and straggling shots; and, surmounting a hill, they perceived in the broad valley below them, the vast Russian force winding its way by the side of a clear stream, which protected one flank.

The long and close columns advanced in regular and steady order; their colours waving above their heads, their bands playing animating and lively airs, and their artillery guarding their van and rear. Trains of baggage and ammunition waggons were in the centre, furnished with all the "matériel" for war; while
troops of Cossacks scoured the fields on each side, to protect their flanks, and to guard them from a surprise. Here and there might be seen hovering around them, parties of the patriot horsemen, every now and then charging the Cossacks, grappling with their opponents, bearing them off, or cutting them down, ere the Russians could point their howitzers at the assailants.

A messenger now arrived who had been sent in search of the Hadji's party from the Seraskier, then commanding the main body of the Circassians assembled to impede the Russian's progress. He informed them that this chief had determined to hazard no engagement till the enemy had entered the valley of the Zemes, which they would probably do on the following morning; calling in all stragglers to form an ambuscade, except a few scouts to watch the movements of the foe. The Hadji and his party directly determined to obey the wishes of the General, as did most of the parties who had been engaged in harassing the enemy's advance; though a few still continued hovering on his flanks.

The Hadji and his followers, therefore,
turned their horses' heads in the direction of the spot where their friends were assembled; riding over the summit of the hills, which bounded the valley, till they arrived at the edge of the lofty cliffs forming the sides of the pass or glen of the Zemes. The Seraskier Manjour Bey came forward to welcome the friends who had so opportunely arrived; and led them round to the places where he had posted his men, who were to sleep that night on their arms ready for any sudden movement of the enemy, should they attempt to pass through the gorge under cover of the night; the Hadji placing his followers in other advantageous positions. Behind every rock and bush, on every projecting craig where footing was to be found, were to be seen the athletic forms of the highland warriors, their rifles and bows ready for action, and their ears intent to catch the first notes of the Russian horns in their advance. Many also, in places to which they could lead their horses, were crouching down by the side of the well-trained animals, hidden by the thick brushwood and broken rocks.

It was but a small body of mountaineers whom the Hadji and Selem found assembled;
they were entirely destitute of artillery, and there was a scarcity of ammunition. They could, therefore, depend alone on their sharp broad swords to contend with the well-trained bands of Europe supplied with all the "matériel" of war. The Hadji was deeply disappointed when he discovered the hopelessness of entirely annihilating the Russian army, as he at first expected; but he determined to gall them, as much as possible, in their march.

Here the brave patriot band continued the live-long night in eager expectation; not a word above a whisper being uttered to disturb the dead silence which reigned around. Young Alp remained by his father's side, as did Selem, for they well knew that where the fight was thickest, there would the gallant old warrior be found. Seated on the soft heather, on a bank rising but a little way above the bottom of the glen, they passed the night, listening to his long tales of war, and his adventures. Our hero, unaccustomed as yet to the night watch, and the bivouac, was worked up to the highest pitch of excitement and expectation; the night seemed interminably protracted; but to the other hardy warriors it was an affair of constant occurrence,
though they were, perhaps, no less eager for the issue of the approaching combat, which might be of such vital importance to the liberty of the province of Khapsoukhie.

At length, as reclined on the turf, he gazed up into the pure calm sky, dotted with myriads of stars, they seemed to grow fainter and fainter, until he could scarcely distinguish them, amid the blue void. He sprung to his feet; not a sound was heard; the first faint streaks of dawn appeared in the east, yet no one moved from the leafy shelter. The sun rose, a vast globe of living fire, glowing as if in anger at the scene of blood on which his beams were so soon to shine; now throwing a glowing red flame on the dew-besprinkled trees above their heads, soon to be followed by one of still deeper hue.

So calm and quiet was the scene, that a traveller might have passed through the glen, unconscious that he was surrounded by hundreds of warriors and their steeds. All were on the tiptoe of expectation; for every moment might bring up the Russian army; when the interest was increased tenfold as the scouts, breaking through the brushwood, spurred their horses up the sides of the glen.
"The Urus are advancing! The Urus are advancing!" they cried, as they passed to make their report to the Seraskier, and to take their station within the shelter of the thickets. All things wore again the silence of the grave; then the cheering sounds of drums and fifes came faintly on the breeze, through the windings of the valley; next, the firm tread of the approaching host might be heard; and then appeared the advance guard of the Russian army. Onward they came, regardless of danger. Each of the highland warriors held his breath with eagerness, and more firmly grasped his sword to spring forward on the foe; or kept his finger on the lock of his rifle, or drew his arrow to his ear, prepared for the word of command to commence the work of death.

Not a leaf moved, not a whisper was heard, when the advancing column of the Russian force appeared in sight. The leading file came directly below the ambuscade. At this moment, a terrific cry arose from the sides of the glen, reverberating from rock to rock, from craig to craig, down the whole extent of the savage pass.

"Come, my sons, now is the moment; we'll up and be at them. Follow, those who will.
Wa Allah! Allah! Allah!” cried the gallant Hadji, springing to his horse. His example was followed by Alp, Selem, and about twenty other warriors, who drew their scimectors as they rushed from the leafy cover; shrieking, rather than shouting their war cry, and dashing among the foremost ranks of the Russians, giving them not a moment to defend themselves.

It is necessary to go back a little in our narrative, and explain the cause of this sudden incursion on the part of the Russians. When the brig of war returned to Ghelendjik, bringing the remnant of the garrison, and an account of the loss of the fort, the rage of Baron Galetzoff knew no bounds; especially when he heard that our hero had been one of the most daring leaders, and that Lieutenant Stanisloff had escaped. Again, and again, he renewed his vows of wreaking vengeance on the Circassians, and expressed his determination to capture the two friends at all hazards. Count Erintoff confessed that he had, at first, the intention of putting the Baron’s warrant into execution himself, and dispatching Thaddeus in prison, with his own hands; but the surprise of the mountaineers had been so sudden, that he had barely
time to escape with his life. Some time after these events, a fleet arrived with fresh troops to garrison Ghelendjik; and the Baron received orders from the general-in-chief to proceed with a large body of troops by land, to Anapa, through the defiles of the Zemes, from thence to take up his position, and erect a new fort near the Kouban, at no great distance from the spot where the Ubin falls into that river.

The Baron marched out of the fort with four or five thousand men under his command, well supplied with all the munitions of war, and was allowed to proceed unmolested through the broader valleys, where his cannon had range enough to play, leaving, as he advanced through the smiling vales, dotted with hamlets, and spread with verdant fields, a long track of ruin and desolation behind him. So suddenly, indeed, had the Russian army sallied out, that the inhabitants had scarce time to drive off their flocks and herds, and remove their valuables, as from a distance they mournfully beheld, but with a keen hope of vengeance, their habitations wantonly committed to the flames. The Russians continued to advance through the open valleys, and through the first part of the defiles of the
Zemes, without meeting a foe; the country throughout appearing to be some land of enchantment, so calm and beautiful did it look. They began to congratulate themselves on having awed the natives into peace, and on the hope of being allowed to perform their march without molestation. Towards the evening, indeed, a few Circassians appeared, attacking their flanks, at intervals, like hornets on some huge animal, and flying off, before there was time to send any of their own cavalry to pursue them. The General had ordered the Cossacks to scour the sides of the hills, to prevent the main body from being taken by surprise—a most hazardous service; for, one by one, those who took the outer range disappeared, and their comrades, who went in search of them, shared the same fate; but there was no time to make inquiries.

That night the army slept on their arms; before the sun arose on the following morning, they were again on their march. They advanced cautiously through many serpentine windings of a deep gorge; at their feet rushed the surge of a mountain torrent, in whose bright waters the soldiers eagerly slaked their thirst. Not a foe
had been seen as onward they marched, the cool morning air refreshing their cheeks, and a deep and solemn silence reigning through the glen.

In a moment that scene of quiet and repose was changed into one of carnage and confusion. The foremost ranks fell back, trembling at the sound of the war shout of the mountaineers, as from behind every craig, shrub, and tree, a destructive shower of bullets and arrows fell thick among them. At that instant, a troop of fierce horsemen leaped from amid the rocks, hewing down all who crossed their path; and, ere the cannon could be brought to bear, vanishing on the opposite side.

It was the daring band of Guz Beg.

"Ya Allah! well done, my sons!" cried the veteran. "My brave Alp, you will not disgrace your father. You cut down those vile Urus as a mower cuts corn with his sickle. Ask what you will of me, my son, and it shall be granted for that one charge. What say you, my friends, shall we be at them again?"

Saying which, before there was time to think of the great danger they ran, the Hadji's band were once more upon the amazed and
confused ranks of the foe, scarce recovered from their first panic. They were not this time so fortunate; one of their number fell by the fire which the Russians now opened upon them; and Selem was nearly suffering the same fate, for, as he swept by, he perceived the Count Erintoff in the advance, who spurred on his horse to meet him; but too many men intervened for them to exchange blows; and Selem was obliged to follow his friends, being the last Circassian horseman who reached the covert of the wood.

"That will do for the present," said the Hadji. "But, mashallah! I should like to be among them again. A few charges like that would annihilate their army."

Selem, however, urged him not to attempt the manoeuvre, which involved too great a risk, without advantage, to his valuable life. However, the Hadji and Selem were everywhere where to be seen dashing at the foe, then galloping up the steep sides of the glen.

The Russians, stunned with the terrific cries, knew not which way to turn. Where they least expected an attack, they found themselves grappled by the active mountaineers, who seemed.
to leap from the cliffs above their heads, dealing death around them with their sharp broad daggers, then rapidly disappearing among the rocks, leaping from craig to craig, where none could follow. Hundreds were shot down by the silent arrows of their invisible foe; nor, as they gazed with fear around, could they tell whence the shafts proceeded. The soldiers saw their comrades next to them sink down, struck by those winged messengers of death. Their ranks were thinning fast, nor could they defend themselves, nor attack their aggressors; but in these trying moments, the stern discipline, even of slaves, triumphed over their fears, and rescued them from the hands of the most daring and courageous warriors. The officers shewed courage worthy of a nobler and better cause: exerting themselves to the utmost, with calm voices, keeping up the men's spirits, closing their ranks, and leading them on in order.

But could it have been real courage which enabled the men to endure this terrific storm? It was rather a dull and heartless apathy. They saw their fellows fall; and knew that they were released from a life of privation and tyrannical suffering; and cared not if it should be their
fate to be the next victims. It mattered but little whether death should come by famine, the sword, or by pestilence; too certainly would they fall by one or the other.

The army, with thinned ranks, continued to advance, protected, as they defiled into more open ground, by their light howitzers carried on the backs of horses; every now and then keeping the slender force of their daring assailants at a distance, as they could bring their guns to bear on them. They marched as fast as they were capable of doing; but they were not yet secure; for the Seraskier of the Circassians, a brave, but a sagacious and cautious leader; though he would not allow his followers to attempt competing with the Russians on the plain; attacked their rear and flank incessantly, until, when near Anapa, he was joined by another larger body of the patriots.

The whole army of the enemy might now have been destroyed; had the mountaineers possessed artillery. As it was, they escaped destruction solely through the garrison of Anapa making a sortie to their rescue, with artillery and a strong body of Cossacks. The harassed remnant at length reached that fortress.

“Mashallah!” cried the old warrior, as he looked
angrily towards their retiring columns when they entered the fort; "We've repaid them for the surprise they attempted to give your noble father. They will not forget this day's work, for a long time to come. Allah! if we had some of their light guns, they would not have escaped as they have done. But fear not, my sons, we will meet them again before long."

There seemed every probability that the campaign in this part of the Caucasus would be soon finished for that year. The Hadji, therefore, with his followers, returned to the camp on the Ubin to wait further events.

The preceding is a faithful account of the style of warfare the Russians have to engage in with the mountaineers of the Caucasus, in which thousands of their soldiers annually fall victims. But what matters such a loss to the government of St. Petersburg? They have millions of slaves to replace those who fall; and they have resolved to subdue the barbarians in spite of the rivers of innocent blood which may flow. May Heaven grant that the bravery and patriotism of the high-minded and gallant Circassians may be completely triumphant over all the efforts of their slavish and despotic oppressors!
CHAPTER V.

Hear my soul speak:
The very instant that I saw you, did
My heart fly to your service; there resides,
To make me slave to it; and for your sake.

SHAKESPEARE.

Thaddeus Stanisloff was now perfectly happy. No longer did he hesitate to approach the anderoon, and no longer did Ina fear to meet him; her ear was ever intent to catch his approaching footstep, when, in spite of old Kahija’s frowns, she would start up, and hasten to the gate of the enclosure, for within those sacred precincts, no man dares venture to approach.

She did not, however, stop to analyze very clearly her own feelings; but they were so novel, so delightful, so pure, she could not help indulging in them. Thaddeus loved Ina, with the most ardent, tender attachment; and often did he
anticipate a life of happiness, passed in her society, amidst the vales and mountains of Circassia; when he would teach her the love, religion, and the customs of civilized Europe, and eagerly did she listen to these discourses of her gallant preserver.

Still they had not yet talked of love; yet, much did he long to speak in the language of confidence, unrestrained by the presence of the gentle Zara, or the young Conrin.

Early one morning, he met his mistress at the gate of the anderoon, fortunately before old Kahija had made her appearance; seizing the opportunity,

"Ina," said he, "I have much of deep and earnest import to communicate; and I would not, that other ears than yours, should listen. Will you deign to meet me then, and hear my words, for here I cannot speak them? Ere the sun has set this evening, will you meet me, Ina, in the sacred grove, near the ruins, over whose shattered fragments the Cross still rears its head triumphant?"

"Stranger," answered Ina, "you are my brother's trusted friend. I know too from your brave and generous nature, that you would not
seek aught from me, that is unbecoming a maiden's modesty."

"Believe me, you will do no wrong in trusting me. I'll wait until you can steal from old Kahija's vigilance. Your page can see you safe, and watch the while we speak, that none intrude. Do you consent, lady?"

"I will meet you, noble stranger," answered Ina, with timidity, and blushing as she spoke. "I know that you will guard me from danger."

"Thanks, Ina, thanks, for your confidence; my life shall answer for your safety!"

Thaddeus might, perhaps, at that time have found an opportunity of letting Ina fully understand his devoted love for her; when they were interrupted by the coming of the discreet old Kahija, who considered that the conversation had already endured beyond the bounds of decorum. He was most unwillingly, therefore, obliged to retire, and to pass away the hours in thinking of his mistress; until the old nurse should have gone to the Mosque for evening prayer, when Ina would meet him.

The spot Thaddeus had selected, was a beautiful grove situated a little way up the mountain side, which, from time immemorial, had been
looked on with veneration, by the inhabitants; because there, according to tradition, their ancestors had formerly worshipped the Great Spirit, and his Son who once visited earth. In his wanderings, Thaddeus had discovered the ruins he mentioned, which were those of a church of considerable size, as appeared by the fragments, still remaining scattered here and there, among the herbage; but many years must have passed since it was reduced to its present state, from the large trees growing amidst the stones.

The foot of the cross itself, formed from two large blocks, had been deeply imbedded in a rock, projecting from the mountain's side. Over the sacred emblem, the trees had formed a sheltering arbour, its existence there being a fit symbol of the Christian religion, standing on the rock amid the ruin and decay even of its own temples and rites.

To this spot resorted those, who would ask some special favour of the mighty spirit they worshipped; but, ignorant of him who had chosen it as his emblem, they would fall down in adoration before it; many believing that the spirit himself dwelt within it, and that the stone
retained hidden virtues. It was also considered as a sanctuary, which none would dare to violate. Any one followed by his most deadly enemy, who could reach it, might cling to its support and there be safe from vengeance. Even those professing Islamism still held it in veneration. Chaplets of flowers, the votive offerings of the worshippers, were hung on the surrounding trees until they withered away.

Thaddeus eagerly hastened to the spot, long ere the time he might expect the coming of his mistress; but he wished to be alone in that sacred place to commune with himself, to dwell upon the anticipation of his bliss should his hopes of her answer be fulfilled. He wandered round the ruins of the once sacred pile; sometimes he feared she could not really love him, and a moment afterwards he felt confident of winning her. Then he threw himself beneath the shade of some tree, and anxiously watched the lengthening shadows; and next he would rise and hasten through the grove, towards the direction whence his mistress should come; but he saw her not. The sun had not yet sunk low enough in the heavens, and he regretted that he had not persuaded her to come at an earlier
hour. He again returned, lest, perhaps, she might have passed some other way.

Inspired by the solemnity of the spot, he threw himself down before the cross, and offered up his thanksgiving to heaven for his own preservation, and his prayers for future blessings. Deeply absorbed in his devotions, he thought not of the lapse of time; and, as he rose and gazed eagerly around to see if Ina was near, the sun had reached the edge of the mountain, tinging its sides with a saffron hue, and throwing a deep shade at its base. The minutes now passed like hours; he feared something might have prevented her coming; some accident might have befallen her; he thought of the revenge of the Khan and trembled for her safety.

As despair was about taking possession of him, at length, his heart bounded as he caught sight of her, moving amid the trees like some benign spirit of the groves. At a little distance from her, followed Conrin, slowly and mournfully; who, on seeing Thaddeus, turned aside.

The young lover hastened forward to meet his mistress; he gently took her hand, which she did not withdraw, as he led her to a seat,
formed of a broken architrave, beneath the cross. For some minutes neither spoke, as they sat gazing on the rich and smiling valley below them, which was clothed with a soft mellow light; a serene and solemn silence reigned over the whole scene. The lovers felt perfect happiness; they feared to speak, lest a word might break the soft enchantment.

Thaddeus turned to Ina, and, gazing on her eyes, so liquid and tender, yet so lustrous, he saw an expression there which gave him courage to speak. "Ina," he said, "I came to this land a stranger among your people. All my hopes in life were blighted. I had been an imprisoned felon, condemned to death, every instant expecting to die by the hands of my comrades, but was rescued by your brother's bravery. To him I owe all I now possess: I owe him my life, and—more far more than life—the happiness of seeing you. From the moment I saw you, I loved you; from that moment your image has never been absent from my thoughts. In the ardour of the chase, in the solitude of the night, I have thought alone of you; and oh! the rapture, when I found you were saved from the ruffian who
would have torn you from me! Sweetest Ina, I love you!"

Ina gazed at him. A sweet smile irradiated her features; her eyes sparkled with animation. "Is it possible?" she said, with an inquiring look. "That you, Thaddeus, accustomed to the magnificence of the cities, and the accomplished beauties of Frangistan, can think of a mountain maid like me, who has never passed her native shores? Perhaps, you spoke but in sport; but no, you would not tamper thus with my heart."

"Ina, could words alone convince you how ardently I love you, I would speak them," answered Thaddeus; "but no language has fitting words to express my feelings. I would die to save you from harm. Dearest Ina, can you love me?"

"Love you? Blessed joy! oh yes! Perhaps, I do not love you as I ought; still I would not that any arm but yours should have saved me from him that would have torn me from you. Do you think I love you now?"

"Yes, dearest," said her lover, folding her in his arms as her head sank upon his neck. "Yes, Ina, by yonder cross I swear to guard you with my life; to love no other but you."
"Indeed 'tis bliss to hear you speak such words," answered the maid. "A short time ago I thought I loved but one—my honoured father; and then, my brother coming, shared my love; but now I feel my heart too small to hold the love I bear for you. The feelings which I bear for those dear ones I would tell to all the world; but what I feel for you is a treasured secret I would tell to none but you."

"Ina, you are my own," exclaimed Thaddeus. "Oh never deem that I could share my love for you with any other: the very thought were sacrilege. How ardently have I longed before to say this to you—to learn from your own sweet lips, if you could feel the same for me! But still I feared that I could not be worthy of such love as yours."

We must no longer attempt to describe the words with which the young Pole told the deep feelings of his heart to the pure and gentle Ina. Side by side they sat, nor thought how fast the hours sped. The sun had long gone down, the stars came out glittering in the dark clear blue sky, and the moon arose in pure and tranquil majesty to witness their guiltless love, throwing her silvery beams through the dark trees of the
grove. Yet still they lingered, pouring into each other's ears the words of soft endearment.

At length they rose from the spot hallowed for ever in their memory, when a gentle step approached, and young Conrin stood before them. Ina thought she heard a sob. He spoke at last in low and hurried tones,

"I came to warn you that night approaches," he said. "You'll be sought for anxiously in the hamlet, and great alarm will be felt when you are missed."

"Ah, is it indeed so late?" said Ina. "I thought we had passed but a few minutes here. We will hasten home."

"I will guard you to your home, dear Ina!" said Thaddeus, as he supported her steps.

Though both knew that they ought to hasten, yet neither felt any inclination to quicken their pace, as they passed through the sacred grove, and chose, they knew it not, the longest road to the village. They had yet much to say, when they found themselves at the gate of the anderoon. Young Conrin followed slowly, and again they heard that half-stifled sob; but he sought to avoid their observation.

They stopped at the gate to whisper many
more endearing words; and perhaps they might have spent another hour, fantasying it but a minute, had they not been startled by the harsh sounds of Kahija’s voice, who had bustled out in no sweet temper at the long absence of her young charge.

"Truly, these are pretty doings for a maiden, to be staying from home at this late hour. What would have been said, had any of the inmates of old Mustapha’s harem, at Stamboul, taken it into their silly heads to wander about in this way? They would soon have found themselves at the bottom of the Bosphorus, I warrant. That is the way young ladies are treated, who misbehave themselves in the only civilized country in the world—and a very proper way too. A pretty example you set my young lady, Zara. I suppose that she, who has always been so correct—thanks to my instructions—will take it into her head next, to go gadding about in the same way. But, I’ll take care she does no such thing I’ll promise her. I hope to see the free manners of the girls, of this country, reformed before I die. It’s quite dreadful, scandalous, to see them wandering about in this independent manner, with their veils thrown off their faces to let
everybody stare at them who likes. Come, Sir,” she said, turning to Thaddeus; “I wonder you stay here. I thought you knew that the anderoon was forbidden ground to any man but my lord. I should think you had enough of my lady’s company already.”

But Thaddeus felt no inclination to move without speaking a word more of farewell; and old Kahija, having vented some of her wrath; and not being, in reality, ill-natured; saw it was useless opposing an affair, which was, indeed, no business of hers. She therefore turned away for a few minutes, during which time Thaddeus snatched a parting embrace from his mistress, drawing a promise from her to meet him again on the next day.

When the old nurse returned, the intruder, much to her satisfaction, was gone. Ina then entered the anderoon, when Zara, throwing aside the embroidery she was engaged on, sprang forward to meet her.

“Dear Ina,” she exclaimed, “I feared some other danger had befallen you, that you returned not before.”

“No danger could happen to me where I went,” answered Ina; “I was safe from every
harm. So lovely an evening to wander out!” she added, with a little pardonable deceit. “I wonder you can bear to be so shut up.”

“I, too, should like to wander out to breathe the air of evening,” answered Zara; “but old Kahija will not hear of it.”

“What is that you say?” said the old nurse entering. “What! are you trying to teach Zara to follow your own wild customs? But you will not succeed; she is too good a girl to wish to do anything of the sort. When she marries young Alp Beg, she may do what she can; but she will be shut up close enough then; and so will you, Ina, if you marry a true believer, instead of one of these heathen countrymen of ours.”

Happy were the slumbers of Ina that night as she laid her face upon her pillow. She dreamed that again she trod the sacred grove with him she loved—that again she heard his voice speaking those magic words which changed her very being—she felt the pressure of his hand in hers—and she saw the moon rise amidst the trees, the witness of their love.
CHAPTER VI.

I see the blood-red future stain
    On the warrior's gorgeous crest;
And the bier amidst the bridal train
    When they come with roses drest.

MRS. HEMANS.

Perfect tranquillity reigned in the valley of Abran Bashi, far removed from the loud tocsin of war which hung round the borders, though news occasionally arrived of skirmishes with the Moscov, and sometimes a wounded warrior would come to be recovered by the care of his family.

At times, too, wailing and weeping was heard, when a family received intelligence of some dear relation having fallen in the fight; or a sad train would pass through the valley, accompanying the corpse of some noble, borne on his war-steed,
who had lost his life in one of the many useless attacks which were at that time made on the Russian lines; more for bravado, and for the sake of exhibiting bravery and fearlessness of consequences—the characteristic of the Circassian warrior—than for any advantage to be gained.

Notwithstanding the predictions of the old chief, Thaddeus began to hope that the Khan, Khoros Kaloret, had foregone all farther attempts to carry off Ina; and, being ignorant by what hand his clansman had fallen, he would be unable to fix his revenge on any one. Thus all dread of evil consequences left his mind; and even Ina no longer feared to renew her rambles under his protection beyond even her former limits, though sure of receiving a severe lecture from old Kahija after each transgression.

We have as yet given but a slight sketch of her beautiful friend, the young Zara: she was like a sweet rose-bud, fresh and blooming, ere the first rays of the morning sun have dissipated the crystal dew; a complete child of nature. Brought up in that secluded valley, she knew nought of the world beyond the lofty mountains that surrounded it. Within that spot all her thoughts and hopes had been con-
centrated; she loved her pure streams, her verdant fields, and her shady groves, and grateful to the kind nature who placed her there; she was happy and contented, and would have felt miserable at the idea of leaving them, undazzled even by old Kahija's descriptions of the gorgeous Stamboul. Her character was pure as her own sweet face; she seemed formed for love and tenderness alone, unfit to buffet with the cares and troubles of the world. Like a delicate plant, requiring some strong tree round which to entwine its slender tendrils, to gain strength and support from it. Her temper was sweet and amiable to all; and even old Kahija's lectures failed to ruffle her. Dutiful and obedient to her only remaining parent, she tended him in sickness with the most gentle and unremitting care; and dearly in return did the old chief love his little Zara.

Her features were soft and feminine as her character; she was beautifully fair; her delicate auburn locks hung over her swan-like neck in rich profusion, her large eyes of purest blue were shaded by dark lashes, adding to their tender and languishing glance, while a smile playing round her ruby lips, betokened a happy
and contented heart. Her figure, though equally graceful, was shorter and fuller than her friend's; but none could deem it otherwise than perfect.

Such seemed the fair young being who had bestowed all her pure and warm affections on the gallant and youthful warrior, Alp Beg, and truly did he prize the treasured girl he had won. He had been loved from his childhood by her grandfather for his courage and activity in all manly sports, and now gladly did the old chief accord his sanction to their union, which he had arranged with the Hadji before his departure for the camp. As yet the fair girl knew not that her hopes were to be fulfilled, for though Alp had found time to whisper his love, neither knew that their parents would give their sanction to their marriage; and often would sad forebodings for the future cross her otherwise tranquil mind, fears that their union might be forbid, or that he might be snatched from her by the cruel Urus.

The two fair girls were seated on an ottoman in the anderoon, while Ina worked a belt with golden thread, her first gift to Thaddeus. Zara struck the cords of her lute.
How sweet and thrilling was her voice, as she sang the following simple ballad:—

The sun shone like glittering gold on the lake,
While softly the breeze through the green forest play'd;
The birds sang their gay notes from rock and from brake,
And sweet odours sprung from each flowery glade;
There was heard too a fountain's light murmuring voice,
And nature in smiles seemed with glee to rejoice.

Though nature was smiling, yet sorrow was nigh,
For near a pure stream, 'neath a green willow's shade,
With her quick panting bosom, a bright weeping eye,
There stood, trembling with fear, a fair Attèghèi maid,
As a gallant youth, pressing her form in his arms,
Sought, with love's parting kisses, to calm her alarms.

Mid the clustering forest his charger stood near,
And, his streaming mane tossing, was stamping the ground;
His squire was holding his buckler and spear,
While from far off came booming the cannon's deep sound.
One more agonized pang, and he tore him away,
And mounted his war-steed to join the affray,

But as slowly he rode through the green leafy wood,
With a lingering pace he oft turned his fond gaze,
To cast one more glance where his lov'd maiden stood,
Till soon she was hid by the thick forest maze;
Then, spurring his charger with speed o'er the lee,
Soon with fear did the foemen his dancing crest see.
Like the willow which gracefully bent o'er the stream.
The maiden stood tremb'ling and drooping with grief,
Like the dew of the morn did those precious drops seem,
When the bright sun-beams play on the spark'ling green leaf.

Ah! cruel the war that could make her thus mourn!
Ah! sad 'twas to leave that sweet maiden forlorn!

Then rising, she clomb o'er the mountain so high,
And she look'd o'er the hill and she look'd down the vale;
Saw joyous in fancy his gay banner fly,
When her ear caught the sound of a funeral wail.

Through the glen, as advancing with mournful slow tread,
A train bore the bier of a warrior dead.

Then fearful and fleet as the chas'd deer she flew,
Down the steep mountain's side, over chasm and brake.
For well the bright arms of her hero she knew;
Not the whirlwind's swift course could her flight overtake.

Then she threw herself down her slain lover beside;
She sigh'd not, she wept not, but heart-broken died.

As she finished, tears stood in her eyes, and her voice trembled at the last lines.

"Why sing you that mournful ditty, dear Zara?" said her friend. "It is too sad for one, whose eye sorrow has not dimmed, to sing."

"I know not why I sing it," answered Zara; "but I could not help it, the words came flowing to my lips."
"Who taught you so sad an air?" asked Ina.

"A venerable bard who travelled once this way. His steps were feeble, and his locks were blanched with years, and, as he rested at our house he sang this air, gazing sorrowfully at my face, and made me learn these words, I know not why. He went his way, nor ever have I seen him since: but still, at times, a sadness comes upon me, and I sing this song."

A deep drawn sob was heard from the corner of the apartment where the young Conrin had thrown himself on a divan.

"Come hither, Conrin," said Ina, in tones of kindness. He had been weeping; for his eyes were red and his features wore an air of sadness.

"Why do you weep, dear Conrin? What makes you thus sorrowful?"

"Sad thoughts and feelings," answered the page. "I have much to make me weep: but it was that song overcame me. I wept for the sad forebodings that it brought upon my soul, for myself I care not, but for those I have learned to love."

"What causes have you for grief, dear boy?" said Ina. "Are you not happy here, where all so love you?"

"I cannot tell you, lady," answered the page.
"Why not tell me your grief? Perchance, confiding it to me, I may aid to mitigate it," said Ina.

"Oh no, it is impossible; my grief is too deep for consolation; it is a secret I shall never tell," answered the page.

"But, I may find a means to soothe it," urged Ina.

"Lady, pray deem me not ungrateful; but again, I beseech you, let me leave you," exclaimed Conrin. "I love you much; but yet, I love your noble brother more. The only balm you can give to soothe me is to let me go to him."

"But, why would you leave this calm retreat to hasten amidst scenes of war and bloodshed?" said Ina.

"I would go to my master, wherever he may be, lady," answered Conrin. "I fear some danger threatens him; I know not what, but dark forebodings steal across my soul. I cannot look upon the future as I used to do, hoping for days of brightness and joy; my heart no longer bounds as it was wont, with thoughts of happiness. Oh let me seek my master, that I may guard him from the threatened harm, if still I
may! I would too, gaze upon his loved features once again before I die, for too surely do I feel the troubled inward spirit preparing for its flight to quit this world. I feel that nothing can avert my death, come how it may."

"Boy, you speak of strange, mysterious things," exclaimed Ina, in an alarmed tone. "Why think you danger threatens my dear brother? and why these sad forebodings of your own fate?"

"Lady, I come of a race who oft see things hidden from duller eyes; and once, it is said, our ancestors could foretel either the death of mortals, or their destiny; but the power has passed away, as we have mixed our blood with other tribes. Yet, even now, we often see the shadow of a coming evil; and it is a curse upon our race, that we cannot guard against it when it threatens ourselves. For others yet we may, and thus I would attempt to guard my master."

"Conrin, you persuade me strongly to let you go; and for my dear brother's sake I will, though I should be loath to part from you. Oh,
shield him, if you can, from danger, and may Allah bless you!"

"Thanks, lady, thanks! Even now my spirits lighten of their load," exclaimed Conrin. "I would set off this day; another may be too late."

"You cannot journey alone, on that road, dear page," said Ina; "you shall accompany the first band of warriors who set forward for the camp."

"Oh, I would find my way alone, through every obstacle, to meet your noble brother," said the boy, eagerly.

"Conrin, that cannot be; you know not half the dangers which would beset you on the road. To-morrow, perhaps, some warriors may go forth. You said you had a secret that you would not tell; but let me hear it; for much do I love you, for the affection which you bear my brother; and much it pains my heart to think that yours must bleed without a sympathising friend, to soothe your pain. Ah! how blind I have been! a thought has opened now my eyes. Come hither; let me whisper to your ear."

The gentle Ina bent over her page's head. A
deep blush suffused the boy's cheeks; his eyes filled with tears.

"Ah! it is so? Let me weep with you," she cried. "But, be of good hope, all may yet be well. Such love as yours cannot go unrequited."

Old Kahija was certain to intrude when she was least wanted; and at that instant she made her appearance, hobbling in, for she was somewhat unwieldy in her gait. Her cheeks almost burst with impatience to communicate some important information.

"Here's news for you, young ladies, from the camp," she exclaimed. "Ah, Zara, my pretty maid, you'll not have to sigh much longer, I am thinking, for the young Alp. Now, girls, what would you give to have the information? Your best earrings, I warrant; but I am not cruel, and will keep you no longer in suspense," she added, as eager to communicate the news, as the fair inmates of the harem were to hear it.

"Know then, my pretty Zara, that our noble chief, your grandfather, has given his sanction for your marriage with young Alp Beg, and in a short time, he will be here to bear you from us."
"Speak you the words of truth, Kahija?" exclaimed Zara, blushing, but looking perfectly happy, as she threw herself upon Ina's neck. "Oh, say when he will come?"

"He has sent some one to deliver a message to you; therefore wrap your features closely in a veil, and go out to the gate of the anderoon. And that reminds me there is some one to see you, Conrin, from your master."

"Ah!" exclaimed the page, hastening to the door. "What joy to hear of him."

"A messenger from my brother!" cried Ina. "I too, must learn what news he brings."

At the gates of the anderoon, Conrin found Javis waiting his coming.

"I bring news from our master, for his sister," said the squire. "In a few days he will be here, and then I must quit his service, if I can return to Russia. I have fulfilled my oath, I have obeyed your wish; no mortal, with a spirit that could feel, would do more."

"Javis, I owe you much;" exclaimed the page. "I would repay you with my life; but the only reward you prize, alas! I cannot give."
“I ask for no reward,” answered Javis; “the only one I prize, alas! I cannot gain; and after that, death will be the most welcome. But I would see my people first, and breathe my spirit out amongst them. I have done your bidding. I vowed to do what you wished, nor stipulated for reward. I rescued the young chief from the power of the Russians; I have striven to wash away my thought of crime almost perpetrated; I saw him safely landed on his native shores; I have seen him take his place among his people, as a chieftain of Circassia: I even learned to love him for himself, but more I cannot do. I could not bear to see him again at your side; I must go even from you.”

The conversation was interrupted by the arrival of Ina and Zara.

“Say, when will my brother come?” exclaimed Ina. “Oh, ’twill be joy to see him.”

“In three days hence, if the Russians move not from their encampments,” answered Javis.

“Bring you any message for me?” said Zara, timidly addressing a young warrior, who respectfully saluted her at her approach.
"Yes, lady, I bear a message from my friend, the gallant Alp Beg. Before two days have passed, and ere the shade of yonder lofty tree has reached the stream which flows a short distance from its base, he will be here."

"You bring me grateful news, indeed. Oh, many thanks!" returned Zara. "Say, is your friend well?"

"Yes, lady, he is well; and bears himself bravely against the foe," answered the messenger.

"Come, come, maidens," exclaimed Kahija, bustling up. "It is very incorrect to stop chattering longer than is necessary at the gate of the anderoon. If you have received your messages, come into the house, and let the young men go their way."

Having no further excuse for remaining, the fair girls were obliged to do as desired, though they would fain have heard more of those so dear to them.
CHAPTER VII.

Hurrah! hurrah! avoid the way of the avenging Childe;
His horse is swift as sands that drift, an Arab of the wild;
His gown is twisted round his arm—a ghastly cheek he wears;
And in his hand, for deadly harm, a hunting knife he bears.

LOCKHART'S SPANISH BALLADS.

We must return again to take a glance at the patriot camp on the Ubin. Except the slight skirmishes already described, nothing of importance had been effected, and as the winter was now fast approaching, the Russians appeared to contemplate no further movement.

A council of war was one day held in a grove, away from the din and bustle of the camp, at which were present, among many of the Princes and nobles of Circassia; Arslan Gherrei, his son and the Hadji, when shots were heard announcing the arrival of some other chief, and presently a band of wild horsemen were seen
approaching, dressed in skins and furs, of some of the mountain Tartar tribes.

At their head, rode the Khan Khoros Kaloret; who, after dismounting, singly approached the council ring. The chiefs stood up as he stepped boldly amongst them. His looks were fierce and angry, as his glance passed round on the assembled nobles, who could ill brook his haughty mien. At length, one of the most ancient addressed him,

"Why come you here, Khan, to interrupt our conference? Have you any tidings of importance to communicate?"

"Why come I here?" echoed the Khan, furiously. "Think you, I come for idle sport? No, I come to claim my brother's blood at your hands. Say, where he is, or I may not continue to be a friend to any here. Say, where is my brother?"

"We know not of your brother, Khan; we have spoken our answer."

"Does my brother, live? I ask you," said the Khan.

"We know not of your brother," answered the former speaker.

"To you then, Uzden Arslan Gherrei, I ap-
peal," said the Khan. "I sent him to you, to bring back your daughter as my bride; and since he left your house, none of my clansmen know aught of him. At your hands, I require him."

"Your brother, Khan, quitted my house free to go where he willed. I cannot tell you of him more," answered the chieftain.

The Khan glanced fiercely around him for a few seconds, without speaking; during which, the members of the council moved to a farther distance, and resumed their seats; leaving the enraged Khan, standing alone; a customary and sufficient signal, that his presence was not required. The Khan stood irresolute for a few minutes; then, against all rules of established ceremony, again approached them.

"Chieftain," he cried, addressing Arslan Gherrei; "again, I ask you, where is my brother? If dead, say who slew him, that I may know my enemy; or, if he fell before the foe, why brought you not away his corpse, and arms?"

"Khan," answered the chief; "is it not enough to say, that I cannot tell you of your brother? then ask me no more."
Saying which, the whole body returned to their former position, leaving the Khan alone. He again followed them, when the council slowly rising, the aged chief, who had before spoken, again addressed him:

"Twice have we warned you, Khan, not to question us of your brother. Now learn his fate; he died a traitor's death—fighting in our foe-men's ranks, he fell, attempting treachery. He lies now amongst a heap of cursed Urus; his name disgraced and blotted from our memories. Now go, and ask no more of him. His name is foul."

"Chieftain, whoever says my brother died a traitor's death, lies black as Eblis. Back in his mouth, I'll throw the calumny," cried the Khan. "My brother was ever a foe to Russia, and deeply will I avenge his slandered honour."

At these words, the chiefs half drew their swords; but, recollecting that he stood one among many, and having compassion upon him for his grief, and his brother's crime and death, they returned them to their scabbards, and spoke not.

"Uzden Arslan Gherrei, from henceforth know me as your deadly foe," cried the Khan;
“whatever death my brother died, 'twas you that caused it, and I will have revenge, if I die to gain it.”

Uttering which, with a fierce tone and aspect, he strode from the spot, mounting his war horse, rode furiously from the camp, followed by the troop of his wild clansmen, without waiting to salute any of the chiefs he met.

We must leave the Khan to pursue his headlong course, while we follow the movements of the Baron Galetzoff, and the small army under his command. After marching from Anapa, they proceeded to the newly erected fort, we have described on the south side of the Kouban, which was built on slightly elevated ground, at no great distance; though beyond gun shot of the range of mountains, which girt the territories to which the tribes of the Attèghèi are now confined. On the other side extended a broad plain, formed of the marshes of the Kouban, from which the heats of summer draw forth the noxious miasma, so prejudicial to the health of the soldiers; but the flat marshy nature of the country, added to the security of the position, lessens the chance of a surprise, and gives full scope for the deadly fire of grape and rockets.
The fort had been commenced under the protection of a large force; and the Baron was now employed in forming fresh entrenchments, and taking every means to strengthen his position; waiting in hopes of some opportunity occurring to revenge himself for the losses he had sustained. No houses had as yet been built; the troops living in wretched huts hastily constructed of mud and boughs, and the officers in their tents.

Towards the close of the day, the Baron was seated in his tent, when his aid-de-camp announced to him that one of the chiefs of the enemy, with a flag of truce, desired an audience immediately.

"Let him be admitted," said the General. "We may at length have awed some of these barbarians into subjection."

The Baron rose to receive his guest as the officer returned, ushering in a tall ferocious looking warrior, his heavy sword clashing against his armour, as with a fearless step he entered the tent. The General started when he saw him; for he thought of the young Khan to whose death he had been instrumental, and of his squire whom he had unjustly shot, as
gazing earnestly at the stranger, he almost fancied the dead stood before him. For a few moments neither spoke, as the civilized European commander confronted the wild warrior of the mountains, who returned his glance with a haughty and seemingly contemptuous stare. At length, banishing his superstitious fears, he spoke.

"Who are you, chief, that thus venture into the camp of the Russians?"

"I am Kaloret Khan," answered the chief in a fierce tone.

At the sound of that name the Baron started, laying his hand upon his sword to prepare himself for the expected attack.

"Fear not," said the Khan in a contemptuous tone, "I come not to do you harm. Did I wish to kill you, I could have done so ere this. See!" he added, pointing to the opening of the tent, before which one of his wild clansmen was holding his war-horse. "I could have struck you dead, and mounted my fleet steed, leaping your paltry entrenchments, before one of your slow moving soldiers could have stopped me. No, Russian, I come not to harm you."

"For what purpose do you come here? What ask you?" said the General.
"I come," answered the Khan, frowning darkly, and clenching his gauntleted hand, "I come to seek revenge."

"A goodly feeling, and one that should be encouraged by all brave men," answered the Baron. "And on whom do you seek it?"

"On those who have injured me. On a chieftain, Arslan Gherrei, who refused to let his daughter be my wife; and shall I tamely brook such an insult? I would bear the girl away, in spite of her refusal; I would revenge myself upon him for my brother's death; who is said to have come to ask your aid to carry off the chieftain's daughter, when he died by the hand of Selem, his newly found son."

"You have heard truly, Khan," answered the General. "Say, how can I assist you in your wishes, and I will gladly hold the hand of friendship forth to you."

"I would bring hither the daughter of the chieftain, for I must quit my mountain home, my flocks and herds, and come to join you with my followers."

"You speak wisely, Khan," said the Baron. "You shall be received with open arms; but you must also bring this son of Arslan Gherrei, and his youthful page, and also a Russian officer,
who lately escaped when under sentence of death. I will, in return, promise you lands, flocks, and herds to supply those you have left.”

“You speak of Selem Gherrei, Russian,” exclaimed the Khan. “It were easier far to entrap the savage boar, and bring him willingly along, than to bring alive before you any of the chiefs of the Attèghèi. But I will try; and, if I fail, it shall not be for want of hatred and revenge to prompt me.”

“Bring him alive, if possible; if not, bring me his corpse, and you will be welcome. There are others I would secure—his squire, and a slow, heavy slave, who is probably about his person.”

“I have already said I will do my best to please you,” said the Khan haughtily, “and now I must depart.”

“Farewell, until you return with your prisoners,” rejoined the Russian.

“Chieftain of Russia,” responded the Khan, “you will see me soon again. I tarry not in my revenge.”

Saying which Khoros Kaloret strode from the tent with the same haughty air with which he had entered, and, mounting his horse, galloped off.
"There goes a traitor," said the Baron, following him with his eye as he rode off; "and if there were a few more like him, we might soon rightly call the fair lands of Circassia our own. I think I can trust that barbarian, with revenge for his motive of action; and if he brings Arslan Gherrei's daughter, I shall have a hold upon him he cannot easily break through."

He then summoned Count Erintoff to his presence.

"Ah! Colonel," he said, as the Count entered, "I have at length a hope of punishing those who have hitherto escaped my vengeance."

"I am rejoiced to hear it, General," said the Count. "We owe it as a duty to our country to punish those vile deserters, not to mention the indulgence of a little private revenge. But how is it that you hope to succeed?"

"Why it appears that the fierce Khan, Khoros Khaloret, has taken umbrage that the Chief Arslan Gherrei refuses him his daughter—the same of whom we heard so much, and who so narrowly escaped us at the fords of the Mezi, when the Khan's brother led you into that desperate scrape. He now wishes to run off with the lady, and take refuge with us: so I
have made it a condition of his being well received, that he brings off those deserters, Ivan Galetzoff, his page, Lieutenant Stanisloff, and others. I fear he may not succeed in capturing Ivan Galetzoff, who, now I hear, bears the name of Selem Gherrei; indeed, I have no doubt he is the son of Arslan Gherrei, as I captured the boy myself, and well remember that was the name of the chief whose village I attacked and burned. I carried off his wife with this boy, who I knew not was her own son, little thinking what a viper I was cherishing. I intended him to prove a bitter enemy to this rebellious country, but I find this woman counteracted all my intentions, by instilling into his bosom an absurd love of country and liberty. I would give worlds to get him into my power; and though the Khan may not succeed in entrapping him, he may secure his page, whom he brought with him from Russia, and to whom it seems he is much attached. I propose to work upon the boy, either by kindness or threats of his life, to induce him to assist in some plot to betray his master. At all events I have hopes that this young Gherrei, when he finds we have possession of his sister and page,
will attempt to rescue them. We will be on the watch to ensure his capture, and I will promise a reward to whoever makes him a prisoner. What say you, Count, to my plans?"

"It is an excellent plot, and cannot fail," said his worthy officer; "but we must also endeavour to re-capture Lieutenant Stanisloff. I have a little private grudge against him, which I would fain indulge."

"Oh! there is but little chance of missing him," answered his superior; "he will probably accompany Selem Gherrei into the field, and fall into the same toil as his friend. You, Colonel, shall have the lady as your share."

"I cannot refuse so generous an offer," said the Count. "I suppose she must be beautiful, or she would not have inflamed the heart of the savage Khan. I require some fair mistress to drive the Gipsy Azila out of my head; for I could never gain any further trace of her after it was discovered that she was implicated in that miserable conspiracy."

"A great disappointment, Colonel; but I dare say this wild mountain beauty will recompense you for her loss," said the Baron.

"Perchance she may," answered the Count,
"for it is said these Circassian beauties may vie with the most lovely in the world. But we must be cautious. If we deprive the fiery Khan of the lady, he may give us some trouble. He does not appear a person who would quietly submit to have his mistress taken from him, after the risk and danger he must undergo to win her."

"That matters little," answered the Baron; "he will give us but slight trouble, for we must put him out of the way on the first convenient opportunity. I never contemplated allowing him to remain alive. I love not these intractable mountaineers; and can never trust them. We can let him fall into the hands of his countrymen, and they will take good care to ease us of any further thought concerning him."

"A very good idea, General," answered the Count. "I agree with you that these barbarians are equally troublesome whether as friends or enemies; and I confess I did not like the scowl he cast on me and all around, as he passed, bearing himself as proudly as if he were some conqueror riding amidst his slaves."

"They are a detested race," exclaimed the General, grinning through his thick-mustachoed lips; "but we will soon humble their pride, and
drag them in chains to St. Petersburg, where they shall be exhibited as a specimen of the 'knights of old;' and we may then build our château, and lay out our parks amidst these green hills and fertile valleys, without the fear of being molested."

"You are facetious, General, at the expense of the savages," said the Count. "But, according to my taste, this is rather too far from the capital to build a country house. I should like, however, to transfer a few of their fair beauties from these wilds to people my domain near Moscow; and as for the men who have given us so much trouble, I would shoot them all as traitors, or send them to work in the mines of Siberia. They are too fierce to be tamed; for, like hyænas, they would never be at rest, and would spring upon us when we least expected it. But, badinage aside, what do you, Baron, intend to do with the prisoners the Khan is to bring us? They deserve severe punishment."

"Shoot them as flagrant deserters taken in arms against the Emperor," answered the Baron, clenching his hand, and frowning darkly. "It is too mild a punishment for them."

"This page of Ivan Galetzoff, or Selem Gher-
rei, or whatever name he now goes by, deserves punishment richly for that affair of the Mezi,” said the Count. “I saw him fighting as furiously as the oldest hands among them. The fiery young villain shot the Khan’s brother and one of our own Cossacks, who was about to cut down his master. I fear we shall not succeed in getting much service out of him.”

“Then he must die. We must make an example of all deserters,” said the General, “or we shall find our ranks completely empty before long. What with the desertion of these rascally slaves we have sent there as soldiers, these cursed fevers which sweep off so many, and the atrocious daring of these barbarous mountaineers, we have lost more men already than we can spare. Had I my own way, I would overwhelm these Circassians at one fell swoop, and exterminate them from the face of the earth.”

“I agree with you, General, this is the only way to treat them,” answered the Count.
CHAPTER VIII.

Fling down the goblet, and draw the sword,
The groves are fill'd with a pirate horde!
Through the dim olives their sabres shine!
Now must the red blood stream for wine!

Mrs. Hemans.

With light and bounding heart, young Alp urged on his steed towards the smiling valley of Abran Bashi, as from the summit of the last mountain he espied amid the trees the habitation of his young and beloved Zara. He wore a Persian suit of the finest chain armour, a gift from his uncle, Achmet Beg, over which was thrown a cloak of blue cloth, trimmed with gold. A belt of Turkish leather, richly embroidered in gold, (the prized gift of his mistress, worked by her own fair hand), bound his waist, holding his jewelled dagger; and at his side hung a well tempered Damascus blade. Boots also of Turkish leather, and worked by the same loved one,
covered his feet. On his head, instead of the warlike helmet, he wore a cap of cloth, trimmed with a narrow border of dark fur, overshadowed by a plume of white feathers. He looked indeed a noble bridegroom, worthy of the love of Circassia's lovely daughters, the pride of his gallant old father.

By his side rode his tried and sworn friend, the son of the brave and sturdy chief, Ali Beg, his companion in many a wild and daring adventure, when they were boys together; and lately, in the sterner and sanguinary scenes of warfare. He too was in his most gallant array, his arms furbished to their utmost polish, his coat and steel almost concealed by a gay-coloured vest, and by the cloak which hung from his shoulders. He had been selected by his friend for the honourable and important post of bridesman, to escort the bride to the house of her destined lord.

In the meantime, young Zara was counting the hours, as they seemed to crawl by, ere he came; and in spite of all old Kahija's notions of propriety, stole often and furtively to the wicket of the enclosure surrounding the anderoon, to throw many a searching glance up the
valley to the summit of the hill, over which she knew her knight must pass. Then she would run back again, and pretend to be busily engaged in her work, her ear anxiously intent to catch the sounds of his horse's hoofs, as her eye was to search for his graceful figure. Then she would persuade herself and her friend that she had a head-ache, and that a little more fresh air would wonderfully benefit her; and she would seize Ina's arm, and hurry off. Her friend fully comprehended the reasons of her constant visits to the gate.

"Why comes he not, Ina?" at length she said. "What think you could have delayed him on the road? He said he would come ere the shadows of yonder tree had reached the waters of the rivulet, and see it already touches the edge of the bank. Oh, Allah! can any harm have befallen him? I never think of those dreadful Urus without shuddering, and Alp is always on some hazardous expedition against them; their very name frightens me."

"Nay," said Ina, "let not your thoughts dwell on such fears. See the shadow has not yet reached the water, and ere it does, perhaps Alp will be here."
"Tell me, Ina, how is it that some women of our country can be so courageous as to rush into battle, fearing not the Urus, and bear themselves as bravely as the men? For my part, I tremble at the report only of a rifle, and could not fire a pistol to defend my life," said Zara.

"Because, dearest," answered her friend, "you have been removed from the scenes of havoc and bloodshed, which steel their hearts from all feelings of compassion for our foes, and which nerve their arms, and inspire them with courage to avenge their wrongs."

"It is dreadful to think of it," exclaimed Zara, shuddering. "I would rather die at once than look on blood. The foe might kill me, but I could not fight."

"Oh, let us pray, Allah, that the dread foe may never come near this valley, and then you need have no cause to fear them," answered her friend.

"I almost wish that Alp was not so great a warrior; but yet I love to hear of his brave deeds. They say he will be equal to his father, and he is one of the bravest heroes of Attèghèi. Ina, I will tell you a secret. I have loved Alp for a very long time—ever since I first saw him—"
when he once came home, bringing two Russian prisoners. Hearing everybody praise so much, I ventured to look at him, and then I saw what a gallant and noble youth he was. Then he danced with me at the marriage of one of my grandfather’s followers. Oh, how my heart leaped as he pressed my hand, and led me out on the green. I did not care for all old Kahija’s frowns. And then the soft and sweet things he said to me! I never heard words like them, and when I looked at him again, I thought him one of the handomest of all the youths of the Attèghèi—not in the least like his father, as people said he was. I was always happy when he came, and used to play so many tricks to avoid old Kahija, who makes me so obedient at other times, though I never ventured away so far from the house as you do. Then, when he told me how much he loved me, and that he would die, or win me, I was so happy! I did not think he would have to die.”

“Yes, dear Zara, Alp is indeed a noble youth, well worthy a lady’s love,” answered Ina.

“Ah!” said Zara, clasping her friend’s arm tighter, “see, Ina, see, he comes! I see his glittering armour. I see his white plume. Ah, he hastens onward—he looks this way, to catch a
glimpse of me. Now he looks at the shadow of the tall tree, to see if he have kept his promised time. See the shadow scarcely yet touches the water! He flies faster than the sun. He will be here in a few minutes. Oh, Ina, how my heart beats! I must run away—I must hide. He will think I have been looking for him. I ought not to stay here. What will Kahija say?"

Whatever Zara ought to have done, she showed not the slightest inclination to move, but continued waiting the approach of Alp, who certainly proved himself to be no dilatory lover, by the rate he galloped on. So fast indeed did he approach, that she had not time to retire if she would, before, leaping from his horse, he clasped her in his arms, spite of her blushes, and the presence of Ina, whom he seemed to have quite overlooked. He, however, now made his courtesies to her in proper form.

"See, Zara," he said, "I sent word I would come ere the shadow of yon tall tree had reached the stream, and it but now touches the wet grass on its borders. I come, sweet one;" and he whispered a few magic words in her ear which made the roses glow more brightly in her cheeks.
"My father gives me but a few days ere he will call me back to the camp, so that we have but a short time. He will arrange all things with your grandfather, and to-morrow my home will await your coming."

We will not dwell any longer on the interview of the lovers; nor need we describe their words of tender endearment; for love, we believe, to be much the same in all parts of the globe, influencing in the same way the thoughts and feelings of all those, whose young hearts have not been blighted and seared by the world, which too soon works a woeful change in all that is tender, pure, and lovely. These mountain lovers might not perhaps have used the courtly phrases of the cities of Frangistan; but they spoke a language which both perfectly understood, and, looking into each other's eyes, they found words unnecessary.

They did not even perceive that Ina had long left them; and were somewhat startled in finding old Kahija standing in her place, after an interval whose duration they had not calculated. Her appearance drove many things, they were about to communicate to each other, out of their heads; and so pertinaciously did the nurse keep her ground, that Alp, who had never
fled before the Russian fire, was now obliged to beat a most unwilling retreat.

From far and near came guests to grace the bridal festival of the fair young Zara and the gallant Alp. From the mountain villages, and neighbouring dells, all assembled whom war had not called from their homes, and all ranks and classes were equally welcomed by the venerable and hospitable old chief. Parties of youths and maidens came in their gayest attire, streaming over the hills and down the valleys; their embroidered cloaks fluttering in the breeze, and glittering with silver fringe, singing, as they wended their way, songs in praise of the young couple. Here some noble gallant might be seen on his gaily caparisoned charger, scouring along the valley to join the throng; others came in attendance on their fair partners for the coming dance; their gallantry more sincere, and scarcely less refined than in the civilized countries of Europe.

The vests of the maidens were ornamented in front with silver studs, and closed by clasps of the same metal; while a jewelled broach confined the bands which bound their slender waists. White veils or scarfs, nearly reaching the ground, fell from amid their braided tresses,
confined at the ends by a silver cord. They wore muslin trowsers, fastened round their ankles; their petticoats reaching to the knee, and embroidered slippers encased their small feet. The lower ranks were dressed in less elegant attire, though of much the same fashion; but all had done their utmost to deck their persons to the best advantage, to add to the brilliancy of the scene.

The feast was held in the grove close to the habitation of the Prince, where arbours had been erected for the fairer portion of the guests. In the principal one Zara, with Ina and old Kahija, were stationed to receive them. Numerous bands of slaves were in attendance, bearing tables to the green glade, from which, through an opening in the trees, was seen the lower part of the valley; and here the old chief stood with Alp and his friends, to receive the male guests as they quickly assembled. The tables were spread in long rows on the grassy lawn; the chiefs, and those of higher rank, being seated round their venerable host, while those not of noble birth and the freemen, were placed at the other end.

In the neighbouring thicket were numerous fires, at each of which was suspended a nobly
charged spit, or a kettle tended by female slaves busily employed in preparing viands for the large party assembled. At a distance stood in eager and hungry expectation, the serfs and those not of rank sufficiently high to enjoy the privilege of sitting at table; but to whom the remainder of the banquet was to be served when the nobles had finished. There were minstrels also to chant forth the praise of the bridegroom and his fair Zara, one taking up the strain from the other, and each endeavouring to outdo the first in praise and delicacy of compliment.

In the meantime, Zara and her fair companions were entertained in the arbours, whence their light ringing laughter reached the spot where the nobles were seated. Though many of the party where Mahometans, the cup of sparkling wine often passed round to the sound of music; but they remained not long seated, for eager were the youths to join the dance, when they saw the troops of lovely maidens tripping gaily along the verdant glade, entwining round their graceful forms wreaths of bright flowers. The youths sprung quickly from the tables in pursuit of their fair partners; and vain were their laughing efforts to escape from the
quick footed, active mountaineers, who soon overtook them, leading them back no unwilling prisoners to the smoothest and most level spot for dancing.

Then did the musicians strike up their gayest airs; the dancers moving first to slow and measured time, in circles alternately of youths and maids, now lifting their arms in graceful undulations aloft and now joining their hands in the centre. Then, as the music quickened, pursuing each other round and round; the maids wreathing their flowers and circling the heads of the youth as they knelt at their feet. Then springing up, they pursued their giddy course.

Alp led forth his bride elect, the last time he could thus appear with her in public; Thaddeus, following his example with Ina; and many a closely veiled and hooded matron of high rank conducted to the dance their daughters to receive the hands of partners. Gracefully they moved through the forest glades. The minstrels exerted their talents to the utmost, and were joined, at times, by the sweet voices of the fair dancers; while, occasionally, laughter resounded on all sides. The elders and matrons, seated on divans and carpets in the arbours or beneath the
shade of the trees, looked on with approbation, applauding the graceful movements and activity of their children.

The time was now approaching when Zara must leave the gay scene to be attired in her thick veil in preparation for her journey, old Kahija being in waiting to carry her off to the house.

All present seemed full of happiness, except the young page, Conrin. The joyousness of the scene grated on his feelings; and forsaking the throng, he sought to calm his troubled thoughts at a distance in solitude and quiet. He earnestly longed to see his master again; he was disappointed at Selem's not arriving as he expected, and feared that the danger he fancied was approaching, might already have overtaken him. Javis, on perceiving his departure from the feast, followed at a distance, in hopes of offering consolation; but Conrin seemed to avoid him. At length, Javis came up with him.

"Have I done aught to offend you?" he said, "know you not, that I would die an hundred deaths for your sake? Then, why do you thus shun me?"

"Oh, speak not thus," answered Conrin.
"Yes, you are good, you are kind, you are brave; and grateful, deeply grateful, am I, for all that you have done for me; but I can give you no reward."

"I seek for no reward, but would comfort you," said Javis.

"You cannot comfort me. I have brought my misery upon myself; and on you, my kind friend, I have brought danger and hardship; nor know I how you may escape from them. For myself, I care not; my grief has no cure."

"Quit this vain hope. You still may have happiness with one, who loves you truly," answered Javis.

"While my life endures, never will I quit the country that holds the young chief Selem. Think you, I would leave him when a career of glory is opening out before him? I love to gaze upon his noble form, to hear his words, though spoken to others. If he fall, I shall not survive him. Now leave me, kind Javis, and forget the wrong I've done you. Hark, what loud shout is that?"

The revelry still continued with unabated ardour. The green was covered with gay and
happy dancers. Alp was to lead the last round with his sweet Zara, and then they must part, though soon to meet again. The song, the laugh, and the cheerful sounds of the musician’s strains, filling the forest glade, gladdened the hearts of all; when a shriek arose from the women, and a terrific yell like the cry of demons resounded through the woods. Before the youths could draw their swords, a fierce band of savage horsemen were upon them. Some of the affrighted maidens fled, shrieking through the groves; others stood paralyzed with fear, clinging to the arms of their protectors. The banqueting tables were overturned, as the pursued and the pursuers rushed across the glade; the bright sparkling wine flowed on the grass, mingled with the red blood of the combatants, as the young warriors bravely rallied to withstand the overpowering attack of the fierce followers of the Khan Khoros Kaloret; for he it was who led the band of marauders.

His eye had singled out one fair object for his prey, as he fought his way to the spot; she was struggling to escape from the grasp of one of his followers, who had seized her round the waist, to lift her on his horse; when
Thaddeus, escaping from those who had attacked him, rushed forward, cleaving the savage's shoulder to the arm. He had scarcely time to save his mistress from being crushed by the weight of the falling body, ere the Khan fiercely set on him, endeavouring to regain possession of his prize.

Alp had thrown himself before Zara, at the first onset of the foe, repelling all who attacked him. He bore her in safety towards a party of their friends, assembled round the aged chief, who were keeping the horsemen at a distance to protect the women. Leaving his bride under protection, he collected a few men, and hastened to assist a small party fiercely beset by the Tartars, on whom he set with such energy, that they were compelled to fly; but only to return with fresh fury to the attack.

In the mean time, the Khan, finding Ina snatched from his very grasp, threw himself on Thaddeus, with his whole force, hoping to bear him to the ground. Thaddeus eluded his first onset, placing Ina on his left side, and parrying with the greatest difficulty, the repeated and furious strokes aimed at him by the Khan. He retreated fighting, as he bore his mistress to a
place of safety; when a heavy blow from the Khan's sword brought him on his knee to the ground, though he saved his head by a timely guard. A second stroke from his opponent's sabre would have cut him down; but Ina threw herself before him, arresting the Khan's arm, ere his sword descended, giving Thaddeus time to recover his feet.

"Foolish maiden, you shall not save your lover a second time," exclaimed the Khan, attempting to seize her, though the movement was nearly fatal to himself; for so furious a blow did Thaddeus make at him, that he was obliged to relinquish his hold, to parry it.

"Fly, Ina, fly! now that you are safe," exclaimed her lover. "I will keep the savage chief at bay."

But Ina moved not from his side. At that moment, a fresh troop of Tartars galloped to their chief's assistance. Thaddeus began to fear that his defence had been futile; when Alp, with a few other youths, bravely threw themselves in their way.

In a different division of the grove, many of the festive party had been overthrown at the first surprise; but others, drawing their weapons, and placing themselves back to back,
fought so bravely, that they gave time to their fair partners to escape; and so well did they hold their ground, that they fully occupied the greater part of the Khan's followers; thus preventing them from going to their chief's assistance; pursuing them so actively whenever they attempted to answer his reiterated summons, that the Tartars were again obliged to turn and defend themselves.

Yet the youths, however brave, wearing only a light gala costume, and having no weapon of defence but their short swords, could scarcely withstand the furious attacks of their fully equipped enemies, for whom victory, at first wavering, was now about to declare, when the war-shout of the Attèghèï was heard; and a small body of fully-armed warriors broke through the grove, led on by Selem, who fiercely attacked the first body of Tartars he met, and drove them before him. His arrival turned the fortune of the day. Several of the young men flew to the house to seize their arms, and to mount their steeds tethered in the neighbouring thickets.

Selem, fighting his way up to the spot where Thaddeus was still defending Ina, compelled the Khan to retreat, foaming with rage.

The events we have here described took place
in a few minutes, ere the revellers, scattered in all directions, could assemble; when the old chief, having collected them, as also his serfs, and other retainers who panted with indignation at the audacious outrage committed on his territories, and at being unable to reach the perpetrators, led them against the enemy in so determined an array, that he compelled the Tartars to desist from the attack, and to seek their own safety in flight. At the same moment, a party of the young warriors returned on horseback, to fight on more equal terms; when the Khan, seeing that any further attempt to gain possession of those he hoped to capture was hopeless, called to his followers to retreat, leaving several of his band dead on the field; for so flagrant was this attack, that, as any fell, they were cut down without mercy by the Circassians.

The defeated Tartars, furious with their disappointment and disgrace, hastily retreated, hotly pursued by the active Circassian youths on foot, and by Selem and a few others, who were mounted; but it was hopeless for the pedestrians to overtake them, and the horsemen were too few in number to be able to retaliate with success. The horses of Selem and his followers
were fatigued; he, therefore, with Alp, urged their friends to return to arm completely, and mounting fresh steeds, to follow after the daring Khan, and take ample vengeance for the outrage he had committed.

A few, already mounted on fleet horses, now set off to follow at a distance, tracking his course to bring back word what route he had taken. When at a little distance, the scouts saw the Khan's party rein in their steeds for an instant, and seize two persons on foot, and carry them away. They were traced towards the Kouban, in the direction of the newly erected Russian fort; one of the scouts returning to give the information. The young warriors hastened to their homes to arm, and to follow Kaloret Khan. Alp, who was one of the first prepared, took a tender farewell of the weeping Zara, and instead of then making her his bride, was compelled to pursue the foe.

When Selem called for Javis, he was no where to be found; and as he passed Ina, now with the other women assembled together, and recovering from their terror, he also missed Conrin. No one had seen the boy. He called for him through the grove. He answered not.
"Oh my brother!" cried Ina, "Allah forbid that he has fallen among the slaughtered ones! For worlds I would not that poor boy should be slain."

They searched among the dead throughout the wood, expecting every moment to see his pallid features; but he was not to be found. There was wailing and weeping through the grove, which had late resounded with the sounds of merriment and song. The soft green turf, where the feet of the young and beautiful had a short time previously so joyously trodden in the dance, was now defiled with dark red pools of blood. Several youths had fallen, cut down by the Tartars on their first onset; and their female friends and relations were mourning with loud cries and lamentations over the loved ones so barbarously murdered by those whom they had ever looked upon as countrymen.

As Selem and Thaddeus were prepared to start, one of the scouts returned and reported what he had seen.

"It must have been Conrin then," cried Ina. "His sad forebodings have been fulfilled, and both he and Javis have been carried off by the Khan. Oh haste, Selem, haste, my brother! Follow
that cruel chief, for he bears away one who loves you more than life itself, who has sacrificed all for you. I may not say more; but for your own sake recover poor Conrin at all risks."

"Fear not, dear Ina. We will overtake the Khan, and wreak our vengeance on him," answered Selem.

Several other horsemen now coming up, he and Thaddeus took a fond, but hasty, farewell of Ina, and set off in pursuit of the Khan. Though some of their horses were of good blood and speed, yet every one of the Khan's were picked from the fleetest he possessed, having fully calculated on the necessity of a rapid flight; so that he kept a head of his pursuers. None of the villagers of the hamlets, through which he passed, were prepared to offer him any impediment, ignorant also of his errand. Furiously and desperately he rode along, for he well knew that he had not the remotest hope of mercy should any party of the Circassians, outnumbering his own, succeed in overtaking him, and with equal eagerness was he pursued.

Nothing stopped his savage band in their course; they swam their horses across the most rapid streams, leaped terrific chasms, galloped
down the steepest hills, and urged their steeds up almost precipitous rocks. All the remainder of that day, did they continue their headlong course. The night stopped them not; for a few minutes, they sought repose for their horses; but the sound of their pursuer's feet struck their ears. Again they urged on their almost falling steeds; blood streamed from their flanks; foam covered their mouths; their eye balls started wildly; but still on they went. It was death to tarry.

Their pursuers caught sight of them—it was a race for life and death, captivity, perhaps, death; or freedom for the poor page. They gained the forest which clothed the mountain, looking down upon the Russian fort; they dashed through it, they flew along the plain; and, as Selem and his friends gained the brow of the hill, they saw the traitor and his band enter the gates, at which they were received as friends.

"Alas, my poor page and faithful follower," exclaimed Selem; "captivity or death, will be your lot, if we cannot rescue you; but that we will do, or perish in the attempt. What say you, Thaddeus? Will yonder Russians attempt to inflict any injury on my two followers? They cannot be such barbarians."
"I fear they will," answered Thaddeus. "Remember the fate I so narrowly escaped; I know well the Baron seeks to make some terrible example of all whom he can claim as deserters."

"But he cannot surely call those youths, deserters, who have never born arms for Russia," answered Selem.

"He will call them whatever he pleases, now that they are in his power," said Thaddeus.  
"We must, at all hazards, endeavour to recover them," exclaimed Selem.  "I know not scarcely how, but that young boy has so entwined himself round my heart, that I would not lose him for worlds.  He is a truly noble youth, full of warm and ardent feelings.  Should his strength of body prove equal to his spirit, he will one day shew himself capable of great deeds; but one will wear out the other, I fear.  The subtle essence will overcome the grosser matter."

Anxiously did the small band of warriors look down upon the Russian fort, but it would have been worse than madness to attack it with their fatigued party.  Keeping, therefore, within shelter of the trees, they watched until the lights twinkled in the camp, and the watch fires blazed around.  Some proposed making an attack, endeavouring to take the enemy by surprise, and so to carry off
the prisoners in the confusion; but, though Alp was eager to lead it, even Selem opposed the plan as too rash. The only feasible scheme seemed to be to hasten to the camp on the Ubin, and there raise a sufficient force to attack the fort with some chance of success.

Without waiting to consult further, the young warriors turned the heads of their weary horses towards the Ubin, where, on their arrival, they excited the indignation of the assembled chiefs at the atrocious outrage committed by the Khan. The Hadji, on seeing his son, embraced him.

“What, my brave Alp, have you left your pretty Zara, ere you made her your bride to assist your friends, and for the chance of a little fighting? Mashallah! you are well worthy of her, and she will love you all the better for it. I am proud of you, my boy.”

The old warrior was himself delighted at an excuse for attacking the enemy, as he had begun to fear that there would be no more fighting that year; and he eagerly exerted himself in gaining volunteers for the enterprise. Arslan Gherrei, for his son’s sake, persuaded many knights to join him, besides his own immediate followers. Nor was Alp idle in collecting his
friends among the wild sons of the chiefs, always ready for any daring exploit; so that, in a few hours, more than two thousand horsemen were ready to depart. Selem strongly urged that no delay should take place, for fear of the cruelty which the Russian general might inflict on his prisoners.

Procuring fresh horses, therefore, the band of gallant cavaliers set out for their exploit; one that it would have been madness to attempt, except for the known incomplete state of the fortifications, which gave them hope, by a sudden onset, of leaping the unfinished trenches, and taking the garrison by surprise.
CHAPTER IX.

Else could I tell of woman's faith,
Defying danger, scorn, and death.
Firm was that faith,—as diamond stone
Pure and unflaw'd,—her love unknown,
And unrequited;—firm and pure,
Her stainless faith could all endure;
From clime to clime, from place to place,
Through want, and danger, and disgrace,
A wanderer's wayward steps could trace.

HAROLD THR DAUNTLESS—SCOTT.

THREE days had passed since the Baron Galetzoff had received the visit from the treacherous Khan Khoros Kaloret; and he was now eagerly expecting his return, with his clansmen and prisoners, when he began to suspect that the chief had played him falsely. As each successive hour passed by without his coming, his anger proportionably arose. He was also under constant dread of an attack from the mountaineers,
though, as yet, he had seen few signs of them.

The troops were busily employed in digging trenches, throwing up embankments, and finishing the fortifications. Oxen were dragging in cart loads of provisions, or fodder for their horses. Officers were riding about, and superintending the men. A strong detachment were sent out, flanked with cannon, and a body of Cossacks to cut down timber for the palisadoes. Others also were employed in cutting grass, and bringing in wood for fuel. Sentinels were posted in every direction, advanced guards were sent out, and the soldiers worked at all times with their arms by their sides, for they knew not at what moment the dreaded mountaineers might break through the covert of the wooded height, and, with a cloud of cavalry, might come sweeping by them like a whirlwind, ere they had time to form their ranks. Their heavy artillery, loaded to the muzzles with grape shot, were pointed in every direction; and many an anxious eye was cast towards the mountains, in expectation of seeing the glittering arms of the foes about to rush down upon them.

Towards the close of the day, as the sun was
sinking low on the marshes of the Kouban, throwing a bright warm gleam of light on the rich brown-tinted foliage of the trees, the outer guards rushed in with the intelligence, that the enemy were upon them. The drums beat, the bugles sounded, and the whole force flew to arms, as the sun-beams glittered on the armour and swords of a band of mountaineers, who were seen issuing from the woods, and galloping at full speed towards them. They were about to receive the new comers with a shower of grape, when Count Erintoff stopped them, as the band seemed to consist of but a small number.

"They are friends," he cried; "harm them not." And as he saw the Khan, he galloped out to meet him. Before him on his horse, the Khan bore a light form, wrapped in a cloak; when the Count, eagerly expecting to behold the beautiful features of the Circassian maid, was much disappointed, and enraged to find only the young page, Conrin.

"How comes this, Khan?" he exclaimed; "why, you have left your chief prize behind! Where are the other prisoners you promised to bring with you? The General will have but little cause to thank you for your zeal."

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"I could bring only these," answered the Khan fiercely. "I have been baffled and defeated in all my attempts, but I will yet have my revenge. Take these two prisoners; they are Giaours, by their looks. Kill them if you will, but ask me no questions."

"We must be content then with the prize you bring us; and may soon find more occupation for you," replied the Count. "But how did you not succeed in bringing off the lady?"

"I have before said, ask me no questions," replied the Khan, angrily. "Take these prisoners, and kill them if you will."

"We are not likely to disappoint you, Khan, for if we do not get their master by their means into our power, they will be shot to-morrow;" said the Count.

"I care not. Their friends have given me trouble enough; and had not your General insisted on having them, I should have killed them myself, as I did many others," replied the Khan.

The Baron being informed of the Khan's arrival, was expecting him in his tent. The barbarian was therefore at once conducted thither by the Count.
"Where are the prisoners you promised to bring?" said the Baron, looking sternly at him.

"I have brought but two, who are in the hands of my followers;" answered the Khan.

"Who are they?" asked the Baron, eagerly.

"The page, and a Frank follower of Selem Gherrei," answered the Khan.

"Ah, I must see them immediately," exclaimed the General. "Khan, you have not fulfilled my expectations; but you shall be welcome. You and your followers shall be cared for here at present, until I can assign you lands in whatever part of the neighbouring country you may choose."

With a haughty salutation, and a discontented look, the Khan left the tent.

"Let that proud chief be well watched," continued the Baron, as he departed. "See, that none of his followers quit the camp. I do not trust him, even now. Had he brought off the chieftain's daughter, we should have had a hold upon him; but he may now again escape us. Colonel Erintoff, you have lost your mistress."

"I owe the barbarian a grudge for the disappointment," answered the Count.
"You may soon have an opportunity of revenging yourself on him," said the Baron. "But, now to business. Let the prisoners be brought in, and I will see what I can make of them. Stay, and assist me."

In a few minutes, a file of soldiers conducted Javis and the young Conrin to the door of the tent, with their arms bound. The Baron ordered them to be brought in, when the soldiers retired. Javis looked round him with a firm and determined air, fearless of the presence in which he stood.

The poor page was wearied, and bruised with his rapid journey, and attempts at escape; but a fire glowed in his eyes, as he gazed at the Baron and the Count Erintoff, while a smile of scorn and defiance played round his lips.

"Stand forward, boy," said the Baron, addressing him sternly. "What induced you to leave your native land, and join the hordes of these barbarians?"

"My own good pleasure," answered Conrin.

"Know you not, mad boy, that, by so doing you have broken your allegiance to the Emperor, and are guilty of treason?" said the Baron.

"I owe allegiance to no man," returned
Conrin, firmly and proudly. "I have full right to go where I will."

"You are a subject of the Emperor, boy; and as such, I find you living among his enemies," said the Baron. "Know you not, that I have power to treat you as a traitor?"

"I am a subject of no ruler under Heaven," answered the page; "but full well do I know your power."

"You speak foolishly; but I pity your youth, and would be lenient with you," answered the Baron.

"If you would be merciful, then," said Conrin, still with a curl on his lip, and in a slight tone of irony, "let me go free. I am but a youth, and what harm can I do to the mighty power of Russia?"

"What say you, Count, shall I let this innocent boy go free?" said the Baron, sneeringly. "Well you seem to agree with me! Now, listen, boy; you shall be at liberty to go where you will, even to return to the mountains, if you wish; but on one condition. You follow a master, it seems, who led you among those barbarous hordes of savages, for which you need owe him but little gratitude, as he has been the
means of placing you in your present danger. I will not conceal from you, that your master is an arch-villain and traitor to Russia; and that I am anxious to get him into my power. Now, boy, you may be instrumental in forwarding my views; and if you will undertake to obey my orders, you yourself shall not only be pardoned, but shall be richly rewarded. What say you to my proposition? Do you consent?"

It was difficult at first to determine what emotions filled the boy's heart, at hearing this proposition. The brightness of his eyes increased, and a bitter smile played over his features. For a minute he stood confronting the General, and appearing to seek for words to give expression to his feelings."

"Man," said he, "Commander of thousands! go seek, among the slaves who obey you, one who has betrayed his master, and send him to me, that I may learn a lesson from him, and know, in future, how to mark the features of a villain. Compare his with mine, and see if they are alike; and then say if I am likely to accept your noble offer, if such is to be the price of my liberty. It is useless speaking more."

"Boy, you are foolish," said the Baron, en-
deavouring to soften his rough voice to a tone of kindness, and to bend his features into a look of benignity. "What I ask of you, hundreds in like position would be found to do for slight reward. It is not a difficult task that I wish you to perform; and if you do it not, others will be found who will, and your master cannot escape me. All I desire of you is to entice this young Selem Gherrei near the fort, where I will place an ambush to capture him. Think you I would injure him? No!—it will be but for his own benefit, as it will rescue him from those barbarians, and restore him to civilized life. And for yourself, I promise you a rich reward. You may stay and join the army, or I will find you a safe conveyance to your own country and home. Think well upon the offer which I make you."

Young Conrin threw a look of scorn at the General, turning his eyes slowly towards the Count, and with almost a laugh of derision, he answered,

"A noble offer, truly; could you but read my heart, you would see how great is the chance that I should accept it. Think you that to gain wealth, all people would become villains? that all
men have a price, to be bought and sold? I pity the wretch with such philosophy. None but those with bad hearts could think so. No, no; such base offers are thrown away if made to me. Give me but liberty, and I shall be grateful."

"Once again, boy, I make an offer such as is not my wont," said the Baron. "I know not how it is, but I feel compassion for your youth, and would not harm you if you would obey my wishes. You shall go free, free as the air we breathe; on this condition, you must persuade your master to come, and I will promise you he shall receive no harm; for, in spite of all his offences, I would wean him from the cause he advocates, and bring him over to the side of Russia."

"No!" answered the page firmly. "Were you to offer boundless riches, honours—such honours as you can bestow—were it even to place him on a throne propped up by tyranny, I would not draw him from the path of glory he follows now, fighting for his country's cause, though his home is but a humble cot on the mountain's side."

"But suppose, boy, I offer to gain for him
rank and fortune, and to restore him to a civilized life far from these scenes of war and bloodshed. Will not that promise tempt you?"

The page seemed to penetrate to the inmost recess of the Baron's mind, so piercing a glance did he cast at him, as with scorn, still dwelling on his lip, he answered, "No; I have said before, my master values such things less, far less than honour. Did I think he would accept your offer—and well I know he will not—I could not trust you, General! You would impose upon my youth and innocence; but you are mistaken."

The Baron's brow grew dark as night; his voice almost trembled with rage as he became convinced that his attempts to persuade the youth to obey his wishes would be fruitless. "Hear me, mad boy!" he exclaimed. "You ask for liberty. Do you hope to gain it? Never! Obey my orders, or death and torture alone await you. You talk of leading a peaceful life; Count Erintoff, before whom you stand, observed you at the Mezi, following your master in the strife. Twice were you seen to slay the Emperor's soldiers; you fought in the ranks of the rebels. That is enough alone to condemn..."
you to death as a traitor to Russia. Think not to escape by a specious tale of innocence, nor hope for pardon on account of your youth. You were old enough to wield your weapons well. You will be condemned to die to-morrow."

"I have said before that I would not do the deed you ask; no, not for all the riches of the East," answered Conrin firmly. "And for my life, I do not value that so much but that I can laugh your threats to scorn. Then do your worst upon me; I am prepared to meet your vengeance."

"Mad obstinate boy!" cried the Baron furiously, "your doom is sealed. I will examine the other prisoner. Remove the youth."

At these words Javis, who had stood with a stern glance regarding the Baron, sprang forward in spite of his fettered hands. "Stay, General," he cried earnestly; "you know not what you do. Be not thus cruel. This seeming page is"—

Javis!" exclaimed Conrin, "speak not a word of me, I charge you. Swear to me that you will not, for I can soon escape their tyranny. I would die unknown to all, but to you, my true and faithful friend. As I have lived, I am prepared to die. Swear that you will not betray me
to mortal soul;” he hesitated. “I command you swear, or, even now, as you well know, I have the means; you shall see me this moment die at your feet.”

“I swear to obey your wishes; but oh, save yourself. A word would do it,” cried Javis.

“Never! I fear not death half, half as much as life within the power of these men,” exclaimed Conrin.

“Boy, I give you still another chance. Let not sleep o’ercome you till you have weighed the offer I have made, or it may prove your last,” said the Baron, as Conrin was led off.

As may be supposed, the General could not elicit a word of information from Javis, who evaded every question which was asked of him, until the Baron grew furious. The same tempting offers were made to him as to Conrin, but he repelled them indignantly.

“I will not turn a traitor to my master,” he said; “but I will serve you faithfully if you will save that boy’s life; or if you will take mine, I will give it joyfully for his. You know not whom you kill.”

“If you will obey my wishes,” said the Baron, “not only will I pardon the boy, but I will load
you with wealth, such as you never thought before to have."

"Oh mighty spirit of my fathers, guard my heart!" ejaculated Javis. "No, it cannot be; not all the offers that you make me can cause my purpose to alter. Yet you cannot be so base, so cruel a tyrant, as to slay that young and harmless boy."

"Slave, do you speak thus to me?" exclaimed the Baron. "Think you that you have any hopes of escaping death? If so, you are deceived. You, too, shall die. Think well upon my words, and mark me. The boy dies first while you are standing by. To the last moment, his life shall be in your hands. If you would save him, consent to obey my wishes. Ere mid-day comes to-morrow he shall die, and your death shall follow. Think well on what I say. Obey me, or never hope again to see the sun go down. Lead him away," he cried to the guards without, "and keep him separate from the other prisoner. Well, Count," he said, turning to that officer, "how think you I have managed with these traitors?"

"Admirably, Baron," answered Count Erinstoff. "Yet I never saw so much obstinacy
displayed. I think you have worked upon them to comply with your wishes; and, by their aid, I still have hopes of capturing young Selem Gherrei.”

"I know not," said the Baron; "there was a fierce stubborn look in that boy's eye I scarce could have expected from one so young; but perhaps the Gipsy, who seems to have a most romantic affection for him, may, for the sake of saving him, obey my wishes. But if he does not, I swear no power shall save them. Tomorrow morning early, they must be tried: we know the verdict. Go, Count, and make arrangements for their trial. I would be alone."

We must hope, for the sake of human nature, that the General would, in his cooler moments, have altered the determination he had expressed; though the atrocious barbarities which that man was guilty of towards his Circassian prisoners, when any, faint or senseless from their wounds, fell into his hands, would repress any charitable construction of his motives, and ensure only our hatred.

Conrin was removed to a rough small hut of logs, which had lately been erected to serve the purpose of a prison; but it had, as yet, no occupants, owing to the constant employment of the
soldiers which kept them from committing any faults. The ground was unbeaten, ends of branches projecting from the sides, and a log being left at one end to serve the purpose of a couch or seat for the prisoners; but as yet it was not even hewn smooth. Conrin was thrust in by his guards, and then left to his solitary meditations, with some black bread and almost stagnant water; not worse fare, perhaps, than the soldiers themselves were obliged to submit to. He threw himself on the rough log, deep sobs breaking at times from his breast; while, with hands clasped in agony, he turned his eyes towards Heaven, as if imploring aid.

"No! no! hopeless is my lot! I am forsaken by the mighty Spirit! and thus to die without the slightest chance of one fond look on him for whom I have sacrificed all on earth! Then the bitter anguish to feel he knows me not; or, if he knew, perchance would spurn my love. Death—annihilation would be better far. No, he shall never learn the truth. And yet I would that he should know how true and firm a heart mine was; and then, when I am reduced to the ashes from whence I sprung, perchance he would cast some fond regret upon my
memory. Oh! did I think that he would love me, the very joy would make me laugh at death. But thus to die!” The sobs of the supposed page were renewed. He started, and strove to suppress his agitation, for he heard steps approaching.

It was now midnight—that time when the feelings are the acutest, the nerves most easily excited; when the thoughts strive to wander o’er the regions of boundless space to search out things mysterious and inscrutable; when the spirit often seems to quit the bonds of this our living mortal frame, to visit ideal regions. It is not the spirits of the dead, which long have flown to other realms we wot not of, which mortals fancy oft they see, but their own yet earthly souls are worked into fever by some potent and subtle influence when the vivifying power of the sun has been withdrawn.

Conrin listened earnestly.

“Ah! well I know that foot-fall! Oh! mine enemy, hast thou found me? Even now I feel his baneful influence, like that dark spirit who roves about to seek for prey. The bigot fools need not have decked him with other attributes
than those of mortal man, when foul passions gain the mastery over him.”

"Who goes there?" shouted the sentry at the door of the hut.

"Your Colonel," answered the deep tones of Count Erintoff's voice. "Stand there, and turn not till I call you."

After which words, Conrin heard the door of his prison open, and, by the light which faintly streamed in, he beheld the tall form of the Count, who, closing the door, placed a lanthorn he carried in his hand on the ground, so as to throw its rays on the features of the prisoner. The page rose not, spoke not, but remained in the attitude in which he had been sitting, with his hands clasped together, and his head bent down.

The visitor surveyed him earnestly ere he addressed him, meditating apparently on what he should say.

"I am come to give you liberty and life, instead of the death you so madly seem to seek. Think you I know you not? When yon dull sottish bear, the General, was questioning you, I knew you by the glance of those expressive features, that haughty brow, that lip curling in proud disdain. Think you a boy would have
stood undaunted before the furious rage of yonder overbearing Baron, or would have returned him word for word and glance for glance? You played your part but ill just now, whatever you may have done before to deceive (if so you have) the youth you followed to Circassia. Can he be so dull, so hard of heart, as not to recognize the maid who loves him? By Heavens, I do believe his wits so dull, his heart so careless of those charms which drove me near distracted at their loss, that he has not yet discovered you; and loves you not, basking, as you humbly look on in the servile character of a page, in the bright smiles of some of those mountain beauties."

With an hysterical cry, the girl, finding further disguise was useless, exclaimed,

"Begone, base villain. What demon prompts you to come hither to torment me?"

"Nay, nay, my pretty page," said the Count, approaching her, "I would not wound your feelings for the universe. I merely spoke what I know to be most true. I ask you why, for one who loves you not, you would sacrifice your life, and throw away all the bright offers that I have made you, and which I would fulfil? Oh! it would be a cruel thing to let those charms,
which have enchained my heart, mingle with the dust, to leave this bright and joyous world so full of pleasures, (to those who have the sense to find them) to go you know not where. I do not ask you to betray the man you loved. I am not fool enough to think you would do so, until you should be convinced that he despises you; though I believe that haughty rebel, young Selem Gherrei, as he is called, cares not for you. But fly hence with me, and I can easily deceive this brutish General. I offer you wealth and happiness, a bright and glorious future, where such charms as yours will far eclipse the proudest beauties of the capital. Believe me, I am not so dull a fool as not to appreciate that bright and soaring spirit—that proud undaunted soul—which raises you above your sex. I am not scrupulous as fools would be. I love you more myself, now that I know your heart is capable of so much feeling; and I would make it all my own. Then come, loved girl. This instant you shall be free. A few days more will see you on your road to Russia, where wealth, luxury, and happiness, await you.”

The Count approached yet nearer, and attempted to take the girl’s hand.
"Man!" she exclaimed—"if you are not rather the incarnation of the evil one, begone. Come not to torment my heart, already almost broken. Know, then, that luxury and wealth are things I despise almost as much as him who offers them; and as for happiness, I never in this world shall know it again, nor have you the power to give it me. Begone, and leave me to myself. You stir not. Then if you will not obey my commands, but still have a soul that can be influenced by prayer, oh! hear my earnest supplication, and leave me to myself."

"What madness makes you utter words like these?" said the Count. "Think well of what you throw away, and of the dark fate which awaits you. The Baron vows—and well I know he keeps his oaths when prompted by cruelty and revenge—that you must die tomorrow; and no mortal power but mine can save you. A word from me would rescue you. Fly with me. Ah! If you refuse, think not the man you love will benefit by your sacrifice; for here I swear that I will pursue him with the utmost rancour to avenge your death, of which he has been the cause. He has crossed my path before, and ere long I trust to see him in my power."
"You move me not by fear of any harm you can do him," answered the girl calmly. "He is above your malice, and would despise your vows of vengeance."

"If not for his sake then, save yourself for your own," exclaimed the Count. "Think how you will die, disgraced, unknown till after you have ceased to breathe; and then you will be a thing for savage soldiers to pass their brutal jest upon. Oh, why this madness? Let me save you from yourself, and fly with me."

The proud Count knelt at her feet, and again endeavoured to take her hand. "See," he exclaimed, "I kneel to you to beseech that you will let me save you from cruel death and contumely."

The girl then shrinking back, "Begone, I say, again," she cried. "Believe me, I despise you far too much even to seek your pity."

The Count sprang to his feet. "Know then, wilful girl," he exclaimed, "that nothing shall save you. Your cruelty will change my love to hate; and though I still might save your life, I shall not rest until I see you die. None shall know that Count Erintoff has humbled himself in vain. There are yet some hours to dawn."
Think on my vows, and promise to obey my wishes. A word of yours would win my love again; else, before the sun mounts highest in the sky, you will have become a cold and senseless clod. I leave you now."

The girl answered not, but looked disdainfully on the Count as he retired. Then, sinking on the hard log, she placed her hands before her eyes—to shut out something dreadful from her sight. A terrific struggle seemed to take place in that tender, that loving, bosom, as if the agitated spirit were about to burst its tabernacle; but it passed, and she was calm—so calm that it seemed she slept.
CHAPTER X.

Hush'd were his Gertrude's lips! but still their bland
And beautiful expression seem'd to melt,
With love that could not die! and still his hand
She presses to the heart no more that felt.

CAMPBELL.

The morning came, the glorious sun rose undimmed by clouds, and nature wore a face of gladness; the birds sung sweetly from their leavy coverts, the refreshing dew which sprinkled the herbage, and the autumnal tinted leaves, sparkled brightly. A light mist, rising from the lowlands, faded away, and left the landscape more clear and lovely from the contrast.

The prisoners were led forth from their places of confinement. Their trial commenced. Undauntedly they stood before all the highest officers of the garrison.

Several soldiers declared that they had seen them fighting on the side of the enemy. Neither of
the prisoners would answer a word to the interrogations made to them. Their sentence was passed. Death was recorded. Their guilt was clear, nor did they deign to sue for pardon. As their sentence was pronounced, Javis sprang forward with an imploring look towards the president, and was again about to utter some exclamation; but a glance from the supposed page stopped him, and, dejectedly he stepped back, turning a troubled and anxious eye towards his companion, though he seemed perfectly resigned to his own fate. The Baron hurried over the proceedings with brutal haste; and the prisoners were ordered forthwith to be led from the camp and shot as traitors to Russia.

They were conducted from the tent where the court martial was held, between a file of soldiers, walking as firmly and composed as if they had forgotten that a few minutes more were to be their last.

The fort, as we have before said, was erected on some elevated ground, at a short distance from the mountains, rising like an island from the plains and marshes of the Kouban. The intervening space between the fort and the mountain, was one uninterrupted meadow, un-
broken by rocks or inclosures. The spot selected for the cruel execution, was on a green slope reaching from the entrenchments to the plain facing the mountains; and here a body of the troops were now drawn up while the remainder continued at their labours digging the entrenchments, and erecting the requisite buildings for barracks and store houses, in preparation for the coming winter.

"At a short distance from the fort, a foraging party in compact order, accompanied by artillery and cavalry were seen marching along the plain, from the direction of the Kouban, unaware of the execution about to take place.

The Baron had sternly commanded the Count Erintoff to lead the troops destined for the execution, though it seemed that he would willingly have escaped the office; but he was compelled to obey: and he now stood at the head of his regiment, drawn up in line on the green slope we have described, the firing party a little in advance of the other troops. The General himself stood at some distance on the newly raised embankments of the fort, pacing to and fro, with a dark frown on his brow, and his eyes glancing restlessly around. As the young
prisoners were led out from the fort, they passed the spot where he stood. He commanded the party who guarded them to halt, and bring them before him.

The disguised page wore the same stern look as on the previous day; but a brighter almost supernatural fire burned in her eye as she met that of the General. Javis advanced boldly with a firm tread and perfect composure; but as he turned his looks towards his companion, his features would become convulsed as if some pang of agony passed through his frame.

"Prisoners," said the Baron, "you have but a few short moments to live; but, even now, I give you a chance of escape. Obey my orders, and I promise to pardon you. To you, boy, I speak first. Will you do as I wish?"

"Never!" answered the page in a deep firm voice. "I am prepared to die."

"Then lead him on," cried the Baron furiously. "You, perchance, may have more wisdom," he continued, addressing Javis, "than yonder obstinate boy, who brings his own fate on himself. Will you save, not only your own life, but his?"

"I would save his life on any terms," ex-
claimed Javis; "but he would be the first to blame me. For my own, I value it not. But, Oh! spare him, General, spare him for his youth alone. Ask him not to do that to which he cannot consent. You know not what you do in slaying him. Spare him, as you hope for mercy!"

"Lead off the audacious rebel," cried the Baron furiously. "Let the boy be shot first," he added, addressing an officer who waited his commands. "I can gain nought from him; and let his companion witness his fate: perchance it will bring him to reason."

There was not an officer in the camp who would not, if he could, have saved the lives of those youths at this moment; but none dared speak; even the dull soldiers felt tears spring to their eyes. The wild Khan, who was on horseback in company with a troop of cavalry, looked on with astonishment; and, as he witnessed the noble bearing and bravery of the prisoners, even he repented that he had brought this untimely fate upon them, until he remembered that it was by the hand of one of them that his brother fell. But of all the party the Count Erintoff seemed the most affected. His counte-
nance was as pale as death; he dared not turn his eye towards the prisoners. He felt himself to be a wretch cursed by heaven; a cold-blooded murderer, instigated by the basest, the blackest revenge. The prisoners had reached the fatal spot, and the youngest was placed upon the ground, while Javis was led aside: they exchanged glances, but neither spoke. The supposed page heaved a deep-drawn sigh as she saw the glance of agony which the faithful Javis—of whose death she was too truly the cause—cast towards her.

A soldier advanced to bind her eyes.

"No," she cried, putting the handkerchief aside. "I would look my last upon the bright blue heavens, to which my spirit so soon must fly. I can face death as fearlessly as the oldest soldier present. Let my eyes at least be at liberty, to the last."

The soldier looked towards his officer, who ordered him to follow the prisoner's wishes, and he returned to the ranks.

All was prepared. The girl stood undaunted; but her eyes wandered towards the mountains with an anxious glance. What does she see there? Is it the sun which sparkles on the
shining leaves of the forest? She stands entranced, regardless of her executioners; for a band of steel-clad warriors, their swords flashing in the sun like a foaming torrent, sweep downward from the mountain's brow. The wood is full of them. On every side they pour forth from amid the trees. At their head rides one urging on his steed at its utmost speed, and waving aloft his sabre. The eye of love distinguishes him from afar, before the Russians, intent on the scene of execution, have perceived their danger. The prisoner uttered a cry of joy. "Thank thee, Great Spirit, that I see that loved one ere I die!" she exclaimed. "Yes! yes! I'll join you, in spite of these tyrants!"

Forgetful of her situation, forgetful of all but that he whom she loved was approaching to her rescue, she lifted up her arms to rush to meet him. It was the signal of her death; and Javis, breaking from his guards, sprang forward and threw himself before her.

At that moment the foraging party reached the fort, when a soldier rushed forward from the ranks to where the Baron stood.

"Hold! hold!" he cried with fierce excitement. "Stay the execution. Barbarous chief!
you know not what you do! Stay, or you will murder your own daughter, who was carried off from you by the dwarf Ladislau; she was placed in my hands for her mother's sake, a daughter of my tribe. Know me as the Gipsy Conrad."

The Baron seemed as one who heard him not; he was astounded, and gazed wildly at the speaker. His faculties were paralysed; his limbs trembled. The precious moments flew by. He lifted his arm.

"Stay the execution!" he shrieked. But ere the words were uttered, the rattle of musketry was heard. The smoke hung like a funeral pall over the spot, as, rushing towards it, the fierce Baron fell senseless near the slaughtered form of his daughter, the Gipsy girl, Azila; and by her side lay the body of her humble, devoted, and despised lover, Javis.

The alarm was given that the enemy were upon them. There was no time to retreat to their entrenchments. Fast and furious came the mountain horsemen. The drums beat to arms, the soldiers rushed to man the guns, and to seize their weapons. The troops drawn up outside wheeled to receive the shock from the furious charge of the foe, the cavalry advanced
to meet them; but they were like reeds bent beneath the tiger's spring. Men and horses trembled at the wild war shriek. None could withstand that desperate onset; and the first, the foremost who fell, was the traitor Khan, cut down by the sword of Thaddeus.

"A well-timed blow, brave Pole," cried the Hadji, as he swept by to charge the Russians. "Thus die all traitors to Circassia!"

Close to him was Selem, encountering the sword of Count Erintoff, who shouted, "Ah! we have met at length? Traitor to Russia, yield!"

"Heaven defend the right!" cried Selem, parrying his blow. Their swords flashed quickly round, and in a moment the Count fell mortally wounded from his horse.

The Hadji, Alp, and many other chiefs, and their followers rushed on the bayonets of the infantry. "Ah! Allah!" shouted the old warrior, "we'll cut through that wall of steel. Onward, men of Attèghèi!" So terrific was the onset that the two foremost ranks of the Russians trembled, wavered, and fell back on the rear, as the dauntless warriors approached them, driving the others in hopeless confusion,
cut down by the Circassian sabres, and trampled under foot by their war steeds.

"Ah! Allah!" again shouted the Hadji. "Follow me, my son, and we shall soon be within their trenches!" and attacking those who alone stood their ground, followed by a dense cloud of horsemen, sweeping over their prostrate foes.

The remnant of the Russian cavalry had turned, and fled towards the entrance of their fort; but none succeeded in reaching it: the drawbridge was drawn up, the gates were closed.

Why does Selem stay in his career of victory, his cheek blanched even amid the excitement of the combat? On the ground weltering in blood, he sees the slaughtered form of his faithful, loving page; he bends low from his horse, and lifts it in his arms.

Onward, onward rushed the mountaineers towards their hoped for prize; but as they mingled among the confused mass of flying infantry close to the trenches, a tremendous discharge of cannon saluted them. On friend and foe fell alike the crashing showers of deadly grape; and the ramparts were lined with bristling rows of bayonets. Many of the gallant
patriots fell beneath the devastating fire in their career of victory.

"Turn, turn, my noble friends!" cried the brave Chief Arslan Gherrei. "It is madness to be exposed to this iron storm. We can never take the fort on horseback."

At the word, the dense troop swept round. A horseman, in the uniform of Russia, seized Selem’s rein, and urged on his horse, while Thaddeus, on the other side, joined the retreating Circassians. Before the guns could be reloaded, they were beyond their range.

The mountaineers halted in the confines of the forest. Selem sprang to the ground, endeavouring to staunch the blood which flowed from many wounds in the breast of his page. He tore open his vest; his heart turned sick with horror and grief as he discovered a woman’s form. He leant over it with deep grief. The veil which so long had obscured them was torn from his eyes. He knew the features of Azila. In a moment he read the history of her deep unswerving love, constant to the last through trials, hardships, and neglect. He felt her heart to discover if it yet beat. He tried to persuade himself that her yet warm breath fanned his
cheeks; but it was in vain. A faint smile still lingered on her features; but no throb answered to his touch. The dark blood flowed slowly from the wounds; her heroic, her loving, spirit had fled; Azila was dead!

None of the chiefs, not even Selem's father, approached him. They had witnessed the scene, and read the sad story at a glance. Long did he bend, in deep agony, over that inanimate form.

He was aroused by the Russian deserter.

"Think you not, young chief, that I, too, have cause for grief? Remember you not how I loved that fair and noble girl? Do you not know me?"

"Yes, yes, I know you now, my friend," answered Selem, recognising in the stranger the Gipsy chief who had aided his escape from Russia, the reputed father of Azila. "You have, indeed, deep cause to grieve for your daughter."

"Except that she sprung from my race, she is not my daughter, though I loved her more than one. See, two of my race I have lost to-day most cruelly murdered;" and he pointed to the body of Javis, which he had also brought off
on the horse of one of the slain troopers. "She, too, murdered by her own father, though he knew it not till too late, when madness seized his brain; and yon poor youth, he also deserves our pity, for I know his deep, yet hopeless, love for Azila, for whose sake he followed you."

"What say you, my old friend?" said Selem, rising from the ground whereon he had been kneeling. "By what strange fortune came you to learn so horrid a tale? and what wonderful chance conducted you hither at this moment?"

"It may seem extraordinary that I am here; and yet such was the decree of fate, when first we met beneath my tent in Russia. You were the unconscious instrument of bringing me hither; and yet, from the remotest period of time, this event was destined. The latest cause was this: It was discovered that I had aided in your escape from Russia, when I and all my tribe, who could be found, were seized and condemned to serve in the ranks of the Russian army of the Caucasus. Azila's history, I alone, with the dwarf Ladislau, have known from her birth. He was another cause of these events. As you remember well, the Baron always made him his butt, treating him with contumely, little thinking what
deep feelings of hatred and revenge rankled in
the bosom of the diminutive being. A lovely
girl of our race, whose sweet voice enraptured
the proudest nobles of Moscow, won the haughty
Baron’s heart; and, dazzled by his rank and
wealth, she consented, at an unhappy moment,
to exchange her liberty to become the slavish
wife of a tyrannical master. She soon pined for
her freedom, regretting the miserable lot she had
madly chosen; and, as her husband’s admiration
of her charms wore away, he treated her with
cruelty and neglect. Yet jealous feelings, at the
same time, possessed the tyrant’s breast; and he
began to look with an eye of suspicion on an
innocent daughter she had just borne him.

“The broken-hearted wife of the Baron died;
and Ladislau, to revenge himself on his tyrant,
brought away his child, and delivered her to me,
making me swear never to reveal her history till
his death, and that I heard of ere I left Russia.
To rescue her from a life of thralldom and ne-
glect, I determined to keep her as my own
daughter, bringing her up with all the accom-
plishments I could well find means to bestow.
She became all I could wish in mind and person,
wreathing herself round my heart as much as
any child of my own could do; and when she once visited my tents, she seemed so to enjoy the wild freedom of our lives, that I could not again part from her, intending, however, on Ladislau's death, to make her father recognise her, and restore her to her proper rank and fortune. When you came to my tents, knowing that you were not her brother, I hoped in some way, through your means, to accomplish my purpose; little thinking how deep was the love which had sprung up in the sweet girl's bosom for you."

"Blind and dull have I been!" exclaimed Selem in a tone of anguish, "not to have seen through her disguise before; for now, when lost to me for ever, I feel how fondly I could have returned her love."

He knelt again over her, and took her cold lifeless hand: — "My true Azila, faithful to death! A hundred fold has your murder added to the debt of retribution I owe our tyrannical invaders. Yes, sweet one, I again swear to avenge your death on every one of that cursed race who sets foot on the shores of Circassia. Bear witness, my friend, I sign my vow before as fair an image as nature ever formed! Let this
be the token! Where the battle is thickest, there will I bear this silken lock."

He kissed her pallid brow, and severed with his dagger one of her long black tresses, which he entwined through the links of his chain armour. He knelt over the bleeding form for some moments more in silence: he then rose, and extended his hand to the Gipsy chief.

"Welcome, my friend, to the land I call my own. I may now hope to repay your hospitality."

"If my services will be accepted, I have come to offer my hand and heart to the cause of the patriots. I should have remained a good subject of Russia, if she had allowed me; but she will now find me and my tribe her mortal enemies; for I doubt not that all my people will take the first opportunity of escaping, when they hear that I am on the side of the Circassians; and heartily will they all join in avenging that poor girl's death."

"It was a barbarous deed," cried Selem, casting an agonized glance on the pale features of Azila, beautiful, even in death.

Arslan Gherrei now approached his son; "Let not sorrow take possession of your soul, my
son, for the loss of that faithful girl. I, I too well can share your feelings; but shew yourself stern as a warrior among our countrymen. Think not of grief, while we have swords in our hands to avenge our friends. That poor maiden shall have a befitting funeral, she shall be consigned to the care of Ina, who, with her friends, will mourn over their lost sister.”

“You speak truly, my father,” exclaimed Selem, “no one henceforth shall see me shed a tear of joy or grief, till every hallowed spot of our loved country shall be freed from the defiling tread of the Russian foot, or till the death-wound comes to send me to a warrior’s grave.”

“My son, your words make your father’s heart beat proudly,” said the chieftain; “and worthy are you of our royal race. See, is not yonder sight enough to rejoice the breast of every foe to Russia?”

Selem turned his eyes in the direction his father indicated, where the ground, in front of the Russian entrenchments, was strewn with the slain; so rapidly and surely had the Circassian sabres done their work among the panic-stricken ranks. Few, if any, had reached the gates of the fort; for of those who escaped the first fierce
onset, most had been mowed down by the showers of grape and rockets fired by their own country-men. Many of the Circassians had fallen; but not one had been left on the field; every horseman seizing his comrade as he was wounded or slain, and bearing him on his steed from the ground.

The band of warriors, assembled in the forest overlooking the fort, kept the garrison in a constant state of alarm; their swords and armour being seen amid the trees, when any of them approached the skirts of the wood.

A council of war was now held. The Hadji proposed attacking the fort again at once, rushing from their concealments, without a moment's warning to the enemy, and leaping the trenches on their chargers, in spite of the shower of grape they might expect.

"Mashallah!" he cried, "they should soon learn how little use their big guns would be, when we got at their tails, for they cannot kick as well as bite."

Even Selem, generally cautious, as well as bold, eagerly seconded his old friend's proposition; and Alp was employed in persuading most of his companions to accompany him. But the
proposition was overruled by Arslan Gherrei, and the more prudent leaders, who considered the attempt would be madness; as, to their cost, they had already found the fort so strongly guarded with cannon; not one of their warriors having fallen, except by the destructive fire from the guns. It was at last agreed to storm the fort at a future day, when the garrison would be unprepared to receive them.

Selem, rousing himself from his grief, introduced the Gipsy chief as the foster father of the slaughtered maiden, explaining to them his history. As there was now no further cause for delay, the band of warriors prepared to leave the scene of their exploit; the Dehli Khans rushing forward, and waving their swords as a parting salute of defiance to their foes.

Selem stood by the side of Azila's corpse. The Gipsy approached him.

"Let me take the office of bearing those remains," he said; "to you it would be too severe a task."

Selem offered no resistance, as the Gipsy enveloped the body in his horseman's cloak, and placed it before him on his saddle. A follower of Arslan Gherrei carried the body of Javis, in
like manner; while Thaddeus rode by Selem's side, offering vain consolation to a heart so deeply wounded.

After riding some distance, the party separated; some to return to the camp, and a few, among whom was Alp, to accompany Selem to the valley of Abran Bashi.
CHAPTER XI.

Touch'd by the music and the melting scene,
Was scarce one tearless eye amidst the crowd:
Stern warriors, resting on their swords, were seen
To veil their eyes, as pass'd each much lov'd shroud,
While woman's softer soul in woe dissolv'd aloud.

Campbell.

It was a sad and mournful train which returned to the valley of Abran Bashi, the scene but a few days before of the bridal festival and of joy. Selem had sent to announce his return to his sister, with an account of the sad catastrophe which had occurred. As the cortège approached the house of the chief, she, her woman, and the other females of the hamlet, came out to meet them; and into their hands the remains of the slaughtered Azila were committed.

The Gipsy approached Selem, who, after em-
bracing his sister, had sauntered through the
grove to indulge in his grief unseen.

"Young chief," he said, "where shall my
poor child be buried?"

How sadly, how harshly did those words grate
on Selem's ears! How many unutterable
thoughts of anguish and regret do they summon
to the mind of all! The closing for ever of some
loved object from our view—the sad reality of
death, before only looked on as a remote ob-
ject!

"Would she not wish to lie in some secluded
spot, where her spirit, that had been sorely
troubled in this life, might be at rest?"

"My friend," answered Selem, "there is near
here a grove sacred to the one Great Spirit we
all adore, whatever may be our religious creeds.
None approach that spot with irreverent or light
feelings, and there shall Azila rest."

"Such would have been the spot she would
have chosen," answered the Gipsy. "And by
her side we will place poor Javis. He well de-
serves to be near her, for he might yet be alive,
had he not thrown himself before her to receive
the shot."
"He was truly faithful to the last," said Selem.
"And yet it was a happier fate for him to die. But, my friend, speak no more on the subject. We must soon again haste to the exciting scenes of war, which, as men, befit us most. Know you where the people of your tribe are stationed, that we may endeavour to assist them in escaping from the foe? They will be received by my countrymen with open arms, and you may resume your former habits of independence, and your free mode of life. You will find here no tyrannical laws to restrict you, if you conform to the simple habits and customs of my people; and you may again become the chief of your tribe."

"That can never be," answered the Gipsy. "My tribe are broken and dispersed; though the few who may escape from Russian thraldom, will obey me as of yore. But where are our women and children? Where our cattle and our tents? I and my people will serve under you. Where you go, we will go; and we will be faithful and true to you, until death."

"I could not wish for a more faithful follower than poor Javis proved," answered Selem.
"And I fear not but you will be equally true to me. Thus, gladly do I agree to the compact you propose."

After walking some way, side by side, a low and plaintive melody, wafted through the grove, reached their ears, and, returning, they found a group of veiled maidens standing round an open bier, on which lay, as if reposing in a calm sleep, the body of Azila. Once more, ere the earth closed over her for ever, she was clothed in the garments of her sex. A white veil was fastened to her hair, and lay on each side of her pale face that looked like some beautiful piece of sculptured marble. Her hands were joined on her breast, on which a rose was placed; a white robe enveloped her form, while flowers, fresh picked from the groves and meadows, strewed the bier.

The maidens, with Ina weeping at their head, bore the body along, singing, in plaintive tones, a low dirge; while an aged minstrel, who preceded the train, chaunted, at intervals, to the sound of his wild harp, an account of her death. A band of young men followed, carrying the body of Javis, wrapped in his winding-sheet, on an open bier; and at the end of each verse, they
joined their voices in chorus to those of the females. Next followed Selem, Thaddeus, and many others of the youths and maidens of the village, who had the day before been performing the same sad office to those who had fallen in the conflict with the Khan.

When the mourning train reached the sacred grove, where the graves had been already dug, they found the most venerable elder of the valley waiting their arrival; and, as the bodies of the two young beings were placed in their last resting-place, he offered up prayers to the Great Spirit for a quick translation of their souls to the realms of bliss, and a happy immortality; in which pious supplication the assembly all reverently joined.

The graves of the deceased were placed side by side beneath the shelter of an overhanging rock that projected from the steep slope of the mountain. Two trees bent over the spot, entwining their boughs above. A small slab of stone was placed at the head of each grave; and on the trees the maidens hung chaplets of wild flowers.

The stranger girl sleeps calmly in her early and bloody grave; nor has her name departed
from the memory of the mountaineers. Her romantic history and sad fate are recorded in their songs, and chaunted among their many wild and melancholy ballads, for which, alas! they have but too many subjects.

Those who came to perform the funeral ceremony were gone, and our hero remained. He thought alone, by the grave-side of her who had so deeply adored him, and whom he, too late, had learned to love. He heard a gentle sob; he looked up, his sister was beside him; he took her hand, but did not speak. The last time he had attended a funeral was when their mother was buried; and her dying injunctions recurred to him more forcibly now that his heart was softened with sorrow.

Selem hitherto had felt that he was wanting in one of the great requisites, enthusiasm in the cause of religion. He had never indeed thought deeply on the subject; and how could he, when engaged in a bloody and revengeful war, be a follower of a creed which indicated peace and good-will towards all men? Had he not sworn never to sheathe his sword while a Russian remained in arms near them? How could he indeed hold up to the example of his country-
men a religion professed by foes, who were engaged in openly breaking every precept it commanded, by the unjust and exterminating war on the liberties of their country? He knew that they would laugh his lessons to scorn, when he had no better reasons to give them than those he could advance; and that they would despise him for his infatuation in proposing a creed which allowed its professors to act as their enemies did towards them.

He felt, however, that his sister would not be swayed by these considerations, when she heard that it was the faith in which their mother died; and that it had been the last wish of her heart, that her daughter should adopt it; so that he had strong hopes, with such a foundation, of convincing her of its truth and beauty. He knew not, indeed, how powerful an advocate of his cause he had in Thaddeus. His only hope, with regard to his countrymen at large, rested on the fact that Christianity had been at some period, however remote, the faith of their forefathers; that its emblem still remained venerated by them in the land, and that they were imbued universally with a strong feeling of respect for their ancient customs. Its great opponent,
Islamism, had gained but a weak footing in their minds; and they were more likely to adopt a faith which they would consider better founded, if they could be convinced that it was the belief of their ancestors, and that its very symbols still existed among them.

Selem took Ina's hand, and walked some way in silence. At length he said,

"I have much to communicate to you, and may have but a short time for the purpose; for I know not how soon I may be called upon to offer up my blood as a sacrifice to the liberties of our country; and gladly would I suffer death if one so dear as you were to be benefited by it."

"Oh! talk not of death, dear Selem; the very thought breaks my heart," cried Ina.

"Have I but just found you to lose you? The noble spirit of our father would sink beneath so great a blow."

"Do not grieve, dear sister! Thoughts of death will not bring the dreaded tyrant nearer; nor, if we persuade ourselves that he cannot reach us, will the vain hope shield us more securely from his unfailing dart. I spoke but as every warrior must feel, when he sees each day his friends cut down at his side; but it
makes him not the less brave or daring, though he knows that it may be his turn to fall the next. But I wish not to die; and for your sake, my sister, may Heaven grant me a long life, and reserve my humble efforts for our country's cause! But, Ina, the subject on which I would speak to you is not of death, but of life. I bring you a message from our lost mother, which I have too long delayed delivering. You, her unknown babe, whom she confided to my care, if I could succeed in discovering you, were in her thoughts to the last."

They had reached the cross before described, in the grove towards which Selem now pointed.

"Know you, Ina, why, and by whom, yon cross was placed there?"

"I have scarce thought why," she answered. "Perchance by our fathers, before Allah and his prophet were known in our land."

"Yes, it was placed there by our fathers, doubtlessly," answered Selem; "but as a symbol of a pure and holy faith, from which their children have widely departed. It is the symbol of a faith in which our mother died, in which I was nurtured, and in which she charged me to instruct you."
“What!” cried Ina. “Are there more faiths than that which, a short time ago, all in the land believed and the faith of Mahomet—by which I thought we could alone gain Paradise?”

“Indeed, Ina, there are many strange creeds in the world,” answered Selem; “but one only is pure and true. It was established long before Mahomet promulgated his doctrines; and far, far different are its tenets from his. He, indeed, took truth for the foundation of his religion, acknowledging the great, the immutable, all-powerful, all-seeing Being, whom our countrymen also worship with a belief in a hereafter. But on that foundation, he built up a superstructure, composed of falsehoods as gross as they were improbable, forming his tenets to please the wild hordes over whom he sought to gain power. His aim was conquest. He promised a quick translation to the realms of bliss, to those who fell fighting for him; and his Paradise he pictured as the utmost enjoyment of sensual pleasures, such as his followers most prized on earth, awarding to you, the fairer portion of the human race, the same place of abject subjection which he would make you submit to in this world. To forward his great aim, personal aggrandize-
ment, he preached extermination to all who would not embrace his faith, or, in other words, obey his rule. He found that women did not assist him in his aims; and he, therefore, pretended that they were formed to be the abject slaves of man's will.

"This, dear sister, is the religion which the Turks have sought to introduce into our country; and already have its baneful effects been felt. Now mark the difference of the religion of the cross. It inculcates peace and love to all men. It pictures a heaven of bliss, unutterable, free from all the base and sensual passions of this life, pure, eternal. It makes woman man's helpmate, his companion, his adviser, his equal. It gives birth to all the nobler feelings of our nature. It purifies love, it sanctifies marriage, it exalts courage, and it produces friendship unselfish and firm."

"Ah! what a beautiful religion must that be, my brother!" cried Ina, her eyes beaming with fervour, and the colour of her cheeks heightening with animation. "I have often wondered that a Great Spirit, whom men call just and good, should have formed one half of his people to be the slaves of the other; but now I see
that it is not that He is unjust, but that man has become usurping and bad. Oh! I can never again believe that Mahomet was a true prophet!"

"Ina, your words delight me," cried her brother. "I find my task almost accomplished when you speak thus. Man is, indeed, wicked; and the Great Spirit, seeing this, sent one from heaven to teach him a pure and holy code of morals. Christ so loved mankind, and grieved for their sins, that, notwithstanding his power, he allowed himself to be slain on the cross, by those whose wicked customs he came to overthrow. His worshippers have, therefore, made use of that sign to remind them of Him who died for their sake; and in this very grove, on the spot on which we now stand, have our fathers bowed the knee in adoration of that benignant Being."

"Oh, my brother," said Ina. "How I love to hear you speak thus, for I feel and know that your words are those of truth!"

"I believe them," answered Selem. "And much I wish that not only you, but that all our countrymen, would adopt the same creed. It would prove a surer and more trusty bulwark
against our foes than all foreign aid. Knowing our cause to be just, they would have a firmer trust in the God of justice. It would make them cease from inflicting injuries on each other; for it teaches us to treat others as we would ourselves be treated. It will enlighten and add firmness to their minds, for it will banish superstition or dread of evil omens. It will give combination and strength to their councils, for they will have confidence in each other, being bound together in one brotherhood as they would be. It will enable them to bear reverses with fortitude; for they will consider them as inflections kindly sent from above as a punishment for their sins; and it will temper victory with moderation, as a boon granted from heaven to be received with thanksgivings and praise to the great Giver.”

Ina was thoughtful for a few minutes. “But tell me, Selem,” she said at length, “how is it that the cruel Urus, from whom you have learnt this religion, act as they do? How is it that they attack our country, murdering and destroying those who have never done them any harm?”

“You have urged an objection, which I anticipated,” replied Selem; “but it does not follow that a religion is false, because its mere
professors do not act according to its injunctions. It has a far, very far, different influence on its true believers. The religion of the cross is not the less true, because men, calling themselves its followers, are wicked. Among the Russians it has been so debased and altered, so overwhelmed with superstition and priestcraft, that it has sunk into a contemptible and absurd idolatry. The gospel inculcates a simple, pure, and moral rule of life, easy to be understood and followed. Such, Ina, is the religion I would teach you, and in which I was myself instructed by a good and enlightened man, who had kept his own mind free from the gross errors and superstition of those who surrounded him. The injustice of this war, which the Russians are waging against us, is indeed no argument against the religion I speak of; for it has too frequently happened, that men in power act in direct opposition to its tenets. They send armies to ravage countries, destroy cities, and commit atrocities of every kind, without the slightest compunction; nor think themselves at all the worse worshippers of a mild and forgiving faith; each individual holding himself irresponsible for the acts of the whole. Thus a people, who
consider themselves the most civilized and religious in the world, may be guilty of crimes to be equalled only by those perpetrated by the wildest hordes of barbarism when their interests or passions are excited."

In that calm retreat did the young Circassian Chief unfold to his fair sister the truths of his religion; and, as her artless mind began to comprehend them, she clasped her hands with gratitude, that so beautiful an institution had been formed for the benefit of the human race.

"Oh my brother," she exclaimed, "little did I think, when my heart beat with joy at your return, that you would also bring me so precious a gift. What a new, what an extended view of happiness, you have opened to my thoughts! Oh, do not leave me, Selem, till you have taught me all I can learn, as I would not, for worlds, now lose that religion. It seems like some valued jewel of price, which, till secured to me, I should every moment be in fear of having snatched from my grasp. And does Thaddeus, does your friend also believe in this religion?"

"Indeed, I trust he does, dearest," answered
Slem. "But it is long since I have spoken to him on the subject. Ah! here he comes to answer for himself, I see him wandering through the grove, lost in meditation."

The growing darkness prevented the speaker from seeing the deep blush which this announcement called up on his sister's cheek. Thaddeus started with pleasure, as he beheld his friend approaching, and saw by whom he was accompanied. "Here, my friend," said Slem to him, "I have begun a task, in which I trust you will aid me (avoiding all the intricate and foolishly disputed points) by teaching our faith to my sister."

"Gladly I accept the office, and deeply interested I am in the success of my instruction," replied Thaddeus. "But, my friend, I have been longing to unbosom myself to you of a secret, lest you should accuse me of deceit or treachery."

Ina felt her heart beat quickly, from guessing the words which would follow.

"Speak, Thaddeus, what is it you would say," said Slem, taking his sister's hand.

"Slem, my friend," replied Thaddeus, "to
you I owe my life and all I now possess; but, though deeply grateful, I would ask still more of you. I have your sister's leave to speak." Selem felt Ina's hand press his. "From the first moment I saw her, I felt I would die rather than cease to love, or learn that she no longer loves me. Will you sanction and aid us in our hopes? or, if not, deliver me again into the hands of the Russians, from whom you rescued me."

"My friend! my brother! your words give me joy indeed," exclaimed Selem. "Believe me, that I will aid to the utmost the wishes of the two beings most dear to me on earth. But, remember, we have a father to consult; though he, I doubt not, will give his daughter to one, without whose aid he would have lost her entirely."

"Oh, I know he will," cried Ina. "For he dearly loves me."

"Our father, Ina, is as good as he is brave; and it shall be my grateful charge to plead your cause with him. I will tell him, that my friend is of a noble and princely race, who were chiefs in their own country before Russian swords
overwhelmed them. As for wealth, we want it not here. We have abundance for all."

Thus conversing, those three young beings sat beneath the trees of the sacred grove, till the rising moon warned them to return home.

In the fervid climes of the East, smiles and laughter succeed tears and grief, as rapidly as sunshine follows the showers of spring. Life is more full of excitement and danger; the pulse beats quicker; the passions are more easily aroused, whether of sorrow or pleasure. There is, perhaps, more to enjoy in life; but it is held by even a more frail tenure than in the colder regions of the north.

On the following morning the inhabitants of the anderoon were in a state of great agitation, while old Kahija bustled about to array Zara in her bridal vestments; for her betrothed was anxiously waiting her arrival at his father's house. The old nurse, with tears streaming from her eyes, was busily employed in enveloping her in a long white robe, fastened at her head; which, when drawn round, completely concealed her figure.

"My dear Ina," said the blushing girl, "Alp yesterday evening was persuading me to leave
you. He says that he must soon return to that horrid warfare, and that his mother is anxiously waiting me at his home. He will be alarmed if I do not come; he used many other arguments, till I consented at last, in spite of all my kind nurse’s persuasions to the contrary."

"It will make me sad to lose you, dear one; but it would be wrong to disappoint your brave Alp’s mother," said Ina, smiling and kissing her cheek. "So you must yield to your fate: a dreadful one, indeed, to become the wife of so wild and handsome a youth as Alp!"

"I wonder when young Ali Bey will be here. Alp said that he would come early; but I dread that terrible gallop to his home."

"We will go to the gate and see if he is coming," said Ina. "Are you ready, dear one?"

Zara signified that she was prepared for the worst that could happen; so the two maidens sallied forth followed by old Kahija. They had not long to wait when the young bridegroom galloped up, attired in his bravest suit, followed by a gay and gallant train. They reined in their steeds at a short distance; when, all dismounting, he alone respectfully advanced, and courteously saluted the two fair girls, drawing
his sword as he knelt at Zara's feet, and swearing solemnly to protect her, for his friend's sake, with his life. Then, after she had bestowed an affectionate kiss on Ina and on old Kahija, he lifted her, with the tenderest care, before him on his steed, and galloped off towards the domain of Hadji Guz Beg.

"Ah me! she is a sweet flower," sighed old Kahija; "I shall long mourn her loss. But what makes me most sad is the thought of the interruption to the marriage feast. It is a bad omen, and I like it not. Ah me! ah me! I never knew good come of such things. And so melancholy a funeral but yesterday! And then the brave youths who were killed at the wedding feast by the fierce Khan and his followers! Mark me, there is something more dreadful coming still;" and she retired into the anderoon to indulge in a flood of tears.

Perhaps Ina might have followed her, had she not promised to meet Thaddeus and her brother, about that time, and she trusted soon to enjoy the same happiness which she hoped would be Zara's lot.
CHAPTER XII.

Hark! through the silence of the cold, dull, night,
The hum of armies gathering rank on rank.
Lo! dusky masses steal in dubious sight
Along the leaguered wall and bristling bank
Of the armed river, while with straggling light
The stars peep through the vapours dim and dank
Which curl in curious wreaths. How soon the smoke
Of Hell shall pall them in a deeper cloak?

BYRON.

The vast concourse, which we have described as assembled on the banks of the Ubin, had long since dispersed to their homes, disappointed at having performed no great exploit, though they had made several daring attacks on the Russian troops, with severe loss on both sides.

The short, but rigorous, winter had now thrown its hoary mantle over the northern pro-
vinces of Abasia: the plains of the Kouban appeared one vast sheet of dazzling whiteness, here and there dotted, in the far distance, by the dark forts of the Russians. The trees, so lately covered with the rich and varied leaves of autumn, now seemed like some fabled grove of silver, in a scene of enchantment, decked with strange and fantastic splendour, crystalized by the frost. A deep and solemn silence reigned on the wooded heights which overlooked the plain. Not a bird was heard to sing in the groves. Here and there might be seen the footmarks of some beasts of prey, as they crossed the mountains to seek for food in the marshes. The Kouban, whose waters in summer afforded the chief defence of the Russians against the well-provoked aggressions of the mountaineers, had now become an even and clear sheet of ice, every day, gaining consistency and strength.

The invading army, suffering from the inclemency of the weather, had retired into their winter quarters; and the Circassians, trusting also to the imprisonment of their enemies by the cold, had withdrawn the greater number of their guards and scouts. They had determined not
to be the aggressors, but to endeavour to convince their enemies that they fought only for liberty and peace. A general calm seemed to pervade the whole country, which had so lately been startled by the fierce storm of war. The warriors enjoyed their short repose till the returning spring should again let loose the swarms of their now pent-up foes. They passed their time among their families, in tending their farms, or in the invigorating sports of the chase.

Selem was enjoying some days of relaxation from the toils of war, at the house of his aged kinsman, in company with Thaddeus and his sister. He was delighted more and more with the unsophisticated, but quick and varied powers of her pure mind, which every day was enlightened by the conversation of her lover. How delightful was the task to the young Pole, to instruct the fair creature he soon hoped to call his own!

Many of the inhabitants of the valley, indeed, wondered that two such gallant and daring warriors as Selem and his friend had proved themselves, could find pleasure in passing their
time with a mere girl. "Allah!" they exclaimed, "what odd customs they must have learned among the Giaours!"

They were interrupted from their studies by the entrance of the little slave, Buda, announcing the arrival of the Hadji Guz Beg. Hastening to the guest-room, they found the old warrior, clothed in complete warlike costume, and attended by his son Alp, who had torn himself from the arms of Zara, to accompany his father.

"Rouse up, my son," he cried. "Gird on your sword, and let your heart rejoice, for we have in hand work that may be worthy of us. Those cursed Urus are not content with our remaining quiet, but they must enter the country, and burn and destroy our villages. Mashallah! we will repay them with a vengeance. I have messengers from many chiefs, who are assembling their followers, and now that the ice affords us a bridge, which the enemy cannot easily destroy, we will make a foray into their territories, which will give them a lesson to respect ours."

"Wherever you lead, my friend, I am ready to follow," answered Selem.
"Mashallah!" I doubted you not," cried the Hadji; "for see, we have no child's work on hand now. There will be no drawing back this time."

"What do you propose doing, then?" asked Selem.

"No less than an attack on the town of Kislavosk," rubbing his hands with the glee of a youth at the thought of a foray. "These Russians, we hear, have collected whole herds of cattle in the neighbourhood, for provisioning their fortresses along the Valdi Caucasse, and think that they have them secure enough; but we will deprive them of their dinners, if I mistake not."

"I would rather have some more noble work than merely carrying off a few head of cattle," said our hero.

"Ah, when you have lived longer among us, you will not despise such work," cried the Hadji. "What do armies in general fight for? To get gold and silver! Are not cattle, to hungry people, of much more value, and more difficult to carry off? Men are too fond of making absurd distinctions where none exist. The Russians call us robbers, because we take a
gallop into the country they have usurped, and carry off all we can meet; and they affirm that they themselves are engaged in lawful warfare when they burn and destroy our villages and fields, because they possess a regular army, with cannon and ammunition, while we have only our good steeds and sharp swords. Such ideas are absurd. The Giaours will some day become more enlightened and civilized. We shall, however, have fighting enough to please you, my young friend, for think not that these Urus will lose their food quietly. No, no, they will fight hard enough for that; but we will be too quick for them. And, my friends, we have no time to expend in talking.”

“I will soon be ready to attend you,” answered Selem, taking his arms from the walls, and ordering Karl to prepare his horse for the expedition. Thaddeus followed his example, though much loath to leave his mistress; but he had so completely leagued himself with his Circassian friends, that he had no further excuse for holding back. He himself was also excited by the prospect of gaining the further applause and confidence of those, in the success of whose cause he had become so deeply interested.
Alp was in the most extravagant spirits, notwithstanding his regret at leaving Zara at the thoughts of a foray, on a more extended scale than any in which he had hitherto been engaged. The prospect of the renown he should acquire under his father, and also the hope of gaining wealth for his fair bride, were further incitements.

Mashallah!" cried the Hadji; "we shall carry off cattle enough to supply the whole of Abasia for a year to come."

Ina trembled with alarm when she heard that her brother and her lover were to leave her, on so hazardous an expedition; having cherished the fond hope that they would remain in safety all the winter. But she remembered that she was a Circassian maiden; and, recommending them to the care of Heaven, she parted from them with a tearful smile, and a prayer for their speedy and victorious return. They repaired, before they set out, to pay their adieus to their old host, who had, for some time, been confined to his couch through age and infirmities.

"Farewell, my son," he said, addressing Selem. "Before you return, I may be gathered to my fathers; for I feel that I have not long
to remain among my people, though I had hoped to have seen my country restored to peace ere I died. But I commend to your guidance a body of my choicest youths, whom I have ordered to be ready to attend you. I am now alone the last chief of my race; my sons have offered up their spirits as martyrs to their country's cause. I, too, would have thanked Allah for the glorious privilege of dying on the field of battle as becomes a warrior-chieftain; but that blessing I can now never hope for. When I am gone, you, my son Alp, will be chosen by the elders of my people, as the husband of my only child, to succeed me as their leader; that is, when you have gained sufficient age and experience. Till then, the noble chief, Arslan Gherrei, will lead them to battle; and you, Selem, as a son of our race, I charge to watch over and guard their interests; for on you, next to Alp, would have devolved my possessions. Rule them justly and firmly, and they will faithfully obey you."

The young men promised religiously to obey the old chief's injunctions.

"Farewell, my sons," he said; "I feel that you will not betray the trust. And now my
only hope is, that I may live long enough to see you return victorious from this expedition; and may Allah guard you in it!"

As the chief had promised, our hero found, on leaving the house, a gallant troop of fifty young and hardy horsemen, fully equipped, ready to obey his commands. Every man carried provisions at his saddle-bow, sufficient for several days, considering their abstemious habits when engaged in warfare. They were clothed in coats and caps of skin, wearing over their shoulders thick large cloaks, impenetrable to wet or cold. Their rifles and pistols were well protected from the rain at their back, and they had daggers and long sabres at the waist. Both the Hadji and Alp were clothed much in the same manner over their chain armour, and with Selem and Thaddeus, who were also arrayed in their winter gear, they set forward at the head of the troop.

The appointed place of meeting was in a valley within the last ridge of mountains before the Caucasian range descends into the plains, near where the Kara River, rushing through a narrow and rocky defile, finds its way into the Kouban. In that direction they turned their
horses' heads, proceeding steadily and slowly forward, so as not to fatigue their steeds, and to keep them in the finest possible condition for the exploit. At the end of each day's journey, they received a warm and cordial welcome at the house of some chief. Through every village and hamlet they passed, their band was increased by numerous volunteers, all eager to share the promised spoils of the foe.

On reaching the heights, commanding the valley appointed for their place of rendezvous, a warlike spectacle broke on their sight. From every quarter, bands of warriors were seen emerging from the forests, troop after troop following each other in gallant array, winding in long lines, amid the rocks and trees, down the steep sides of the mountain, and uniting in the valley in a close body. Their banners gaily fluttered in the breeze; their weapons shone brilliantly in the rays of the sun, and increased in lustre as they were reflected in the snow; their loud and joyous shouts resounded through the air.

As the Hadji and his party rode to the ground, he was received with loud acclamations of welcome, and his standard was planted as one of the chief leaders. Other bands, during the re-
mainder of the day, continued to pour in on all sides; and soon after, Arslan Gherrei, at the head of a fine and warlike troop, arrived in the valley, and Selem hastened to greet his father. As the champion rode up, mounted on a superb and powerful black charger, he was welcomed on all sides by enthusiastic acclamations, most of the independent bands arraying themselves under his especial banner.

The Hadji seldom aspired to the entire command of an army; preferring his own desultory and impetuous style of fighting to the responsible and arduous duties of a general. He prided himself most as a leader of bands engaged in a kind of guerilla warfare.

The Seraskier, or Commander-in-Chief, who had been chosen as the leader of this republican army, was a chieftain far advanced in years, though still retaining all the vigour and activity of youth. Of renowned courage and sagacious conduct, and trained to arms in Egypt from his boyhood, he had, since the commencement of hostilities, been engaged in constant warfare with the enemy, by whom he was much dreaded. He was of commanding height and sinewy frame nerved by violent and unremitting exer-
cise; his features were bronzed by exposure on the burning sands of Africa, his white locks escaped from beneath his plumed helm. He rode in the midst of a group of chieftains, who eagerly gathered round him for instruction and advice. It was with a glance of proud satisfaction, that the veteran leader looked round on the bands of warriors drawn up in the valley, who had so promptly obeyed his summons, issued only a few days previously, and thus so nobly answered. It was, in truth, a fine sight, as the aged hero reined up his steed, waving his hand to request silence. Surrounded by all the chiefs and leaders of this little army, he thus addressed them,

"My noble friends, chieftains of the Attèghèi, we have this day again assembled in arms, roused by the reiterated, and unprovoked attacks of the Urus. Seeking alone to enjoy peace and the undisturbed possession of our country and of our liberties, we have refrained from acting as the aggressors on those territories claimed by our foes, though unjustly wrenched from our hands. Who, among us here, has not suffered innumerable wrongs and unbearable injuries at their hands, since their dark eagles first hovered
over the confines of our lands? They have burned our hamlets—they have cut down our corn—they have trampled over our rich pastures—they have carried off our cattle; and yet those are injuries which may be replaced. But how many of our bravest warriors have fallen in defence of our country and our liberty! Who, among us here assembled, but has lost a father, a brother, or a son? Still do the cries of our women ring in our ears for their loss. Where can we replace them? Can our enemies restore the lost ones? How often have those among us, whose homes are in the neighbouring lands, been aroused in the darkness of night by the roar of their cannon, and, with scarcely time to save their lives, and those still dearer to them, have been driven to the mountain fastnesses, whence they have seen their habitations and their goods committed to the flames! What redress have we but deep, deep revenge? Are we slaves, are we Armenian Kaffirs, to submit to these insults? No, my countrymen, we are gallant warriors, descended from a long line of Princes, and of nobles; who have never bowed their necks to the yoke of slavery, who were chiefs and conquerors long ere the wolf-like flocks of the
Urus broke through the regions of the north, to seize the rich and smiling lands which surround us. Shall we then allow them for a moment to suppose, that weary with our protracted struggle, we also are prepared to swell their list of conquests? Shall we act like the weak and effeminate Georgians, and tamely submit to be dragged in chains to the foot-stool of their Czar? Shall we consent to see our children led to slaughter, among the slavish ranks of their army? Shall we see our wives and daughters carried off as worse than slaves? Shall castles and towers be built on every mountain's brow, throughout the country, to awe the people into subjection; for thus only could they hold the lands of the Attèghèi? We have set them lately an example of moderation, but they would not profit by it. Let us now give them a lesson, that may not easily escape their memory. Let us remind them that we have not forgotten how to offer a severe retaliation for injuries; and let us shew them that we are a nation of warriors, who fear not their force, mighty as it might be, and that we despise their innumerable hosts of slaves. Then onward, my countrymen, onward men of Attèghèi, and may Allah prosper our arms!"
This oration of their veteran leader was received with sincere expressions of approbation by the chiefs, and with acclamations of applause by the dense mass of their followers who formed an outer circle round the orator.

"Remember, my countrymen," he resumed; "that the Urus call us uncivilized barbarians and robbers. Let us shew them that we have more humanity than they; that we know 'the native rights man claims from man;' and that never will we defile our arms with cruelty. Let us treat their women, as hitherto, with courtesy and kindness, to shew them that we war not against them. Let us not stop to plunder the defenceless inhabitants of their stores except their cattle which we will drive away to deprive them of the means of remaining in our neighbourhood. Let us confine our further efforts to capturing their cannon, their arms, and ammunition; for it is those we alone require to make our country impregnable to their attacks. Follow these rules, strictly obey your commandeurs, and victory will be ours. I have done. By to-morrow's dawn, we will begin our march; and before the Russians awake from their slumbers, we will be beyond their forts."
Again repeated shouts arose, and all promised to obey his injunctions.

The Seraskier then explained to the chiefs his proposed plan of operations. First, that the infantry who were composed chiefly of the peasants of the hamlets, nearest the Kouban—sturdy fellows inured to border warfare—should be left on the further bank of that river to cover their retreat, if hard pressed, and to secure the herds of cattle they might capture. That they should advance as far as the town of Kislavosk, take it by surprise, with the greater number of the cavalry; or, at all events, endeavour to give full occupation to the Russian troops, while the rest might drive off the cattle from the neighbouring country; and then, if victorious, and not pursued on their return, make a wide extended sweep, clearing everything before them.

The sagacious General himself, as well as Arslan Gherrei, and a few others, would have preferred confining their efforts entirely to taking the Russian forts, and endeavouring to carry off their cannon and powder; but they knew too well, that many of their followers would not exert themselves to the utmost without their holding out some prospect of a rich booty; and we must
remember, that every man in the host fought without pay of any sort, finding his own arms, ammunition, and food; so that it was but natural they should wish for some recompense for leaving their occupations and farms at that inclement season of the year, besides the mere satisfaction of annoying the enemy. They all understood the necessity of defending their own territories when attacked; but to make a forage into the enemy's country without carrying off booty was in their ideas a folly: with the prospect of booty, all were ready to fight.

Upwards of six thousand horsemen were now collected, chiefly from one province alone; but among that vast concourse of wild warriors, at this exciting moment, the utmost order and decorum prevailed, owing to the courtesy of the chiefs, and the habitual sedateness of the men; though there was an entire absence of discipline and subordination throughout the whole host.

Having received the directions and advice of the Seraskier, the chiefs separated to put themselves at the head of their respective followers; to advance towards the Kouban; and, bivouacing close to its banks, to give time
to other fresh reinforcements of cavalry from the further points to assemble; while the infantry were to advance at once to the station they were to occupy, and be in readiness to assist the cavalry in the morning.

At a given signal, the whole body then advanced a few miles towards the place they had agreed on for a bivouac; entirely dispensing with tents or covering of any sort, except their thick cloaks. As each troop arrived, they piquetted their horses to the low shrubs which grew about the plain, lighting their watch fires, which blazed up in the darkness of night. For a long time fresh bands continued to arrive every instant, increasing the widely extended circle of flames, until the plain seemed dotted with fires as from some volcanic ground. The hardy warriors, wrapt in their cloaks, assembled round them listening to the songs of their minstrels, who never on such occasions failed to join their bands, and cheer their spirits.

Round one fire, wrapped in thick horse-cloaks, sat the champion, Arslan Gherrei, with Selem, Thaddeus, the Hadji, and several other chiefs.
"Now, my son," said the old warrior, Hadji, "to-morrow you will have a field worthy of your bravery, and honour your father by your deeds. Where the thickest of the fight is, there let your sword be waving amid the ranks of the foe. By example alone, can we expect our followers to be brave; and those nations quickly become slaves to their neighbours, whose chiefs hang back in the combat. It is only by being ready to sacrifice our own lives, that we can secure the liberty of our country; and how much better is it to be sent to the realms of paradise, than to eke out a few more years of existence, with the galling chains of the slave! But I fear not for you, my son."

Alp rose and took his father's hand. The act was unpremeditated, and scarce consciously performed; he knelt by his side. "Father your son shall not disgrace you."

The words were simple, but there was a deep tone of feeling, which showed that he would keep his word. He took no oath, nor called the gods to witness his words; and his father was satisfied.

At length, one by one, the party sought a few hours' repose, wrapped in their cloaks with
their feet towards the fire, and their heads pillowed on their saddles. The clear sky was densely spangled with myriads of brilliant stars. Ere Selem slept he looked round on the scene. Far as the eye could reach, the wide heath was covered with the recumbent figures of the warriors; yet a moment would call them all into fierce activity, should the Russians draw nigh. Yet though they seemed so calm to the eye, who could know the fiery thoughts and passions working in the brain of the sleeping thousands? Even now, many in imagination were engaging in the onslaught of the morrow.

Oft did the image of Ina return to Thaddeus, as he slept. His thoughts then flew to his far distant home, the abode of his childhood, the proud castle of his fathers, now laid low by the hands of his country’s oppressors. He saw the Eagle of Russia hovering over the slaughtered bodies of his countrymen, while captives knelt in chains, bound to the staff of her standard. In the midst of them appeared a warrior of majestic front and noble bearing, one who had never bent the knee to despotism. As he waved his sword, the chains fell from
the captives' necks, the dead arose, and the Eagles fled shrieking from the land before the resuscitated band. Again the scene changed. He stood once more before his paternal castle, with Ina by his side. His faithful dependants welcomed him with shouts of joy. He brought them glorious news. Russia had been stopped in her headlong career of victory. She had retreated before the gallantry of a mountain nation. Poland might again be free!
CHAPTER XIII.

Yes it is ours!—the field is won,
A dark and evil field!
Lift from the ground my noble son,
And bear him homewards on his bloody shield.

THE CHIEFTAIN'S SONG—MRS. HEMANS.

"To horse! to horse!" was shouted about two hours before dawn, and, in the course of a few minutes, all the warriors of that little army were in their saddles, formed in close array under their respective leaders, and advancing steadily forward. The ground over which they rode was broken and rough, offering many impediments to their progress; as in darkness and silence they crossed the Kou-ban.

"Onward, men of Attèghèi," cried the Seraskier, waving his sword; and at the signal the whole band dashed down the steep, passing
a broad belt of lofty reeds ere they emerged on the now smooth and hard surface of the stream. The infantry, who were already posted on the other side among the thick cover of reeds, reported that none of the enemy had appeared, or seemed at all prepared for their approach. The cavalry, in condensed bodies, then rode boldly forward at a quick trot, encountering for a long distance merely a few peasants with their cattle, who were quickly sent to the rear, some light bodies being thrown out on each side to see that none escaped and to give notice of their approach to the enemy.

The hearts of all beat high, and their eyes flashed with excitement and pleasure, as the walls and houses of Kislavosk, seen by the pale light of dawn, met their view. A cry of joy escaped them, as they urged on their steeds at full gallop towards the devoted town. The outer picquets had no time to give the alarm, ere they were cut down; and onward dashed the band through the streets, the guards at the entrance making but a feeble resistance to their furious onset. The inhabitants, roused from their slumbers, looked amazed and trembling at the wild horsemen. On all sides the Russian
troops were called to arms; but before they could assemble in sufficient numbers to repel the assault, the cattle, which the Circassians found assembled in great numbers, were driven off, and a magazine of powder and arms was stormed and ransacked. Then, like a whirlwind, the whole force again swept through the town. The inhabitants were spared; but little mercy was shewn to the soldiers who attempted to form their ranks.

The town, which a few minutes before was wrapped in fancied security, was now a scene of tumult and bloodshed, as the mountaineers fought their way through the broad streets, affording slight shelter to the Russians, who, ere they could bring their guns to bear, found their assailants beyond their reach; though they saluted them with a heavy fire from the fortifications.

As the Circassian rear-guard were emerging from the town, the Russian infantry formed and charged them in line; but the horsemen, wheeling on a sudden, rushed on them, sabre in hand, with such fury that they were glad to retreat, losing many of their number on the field. The Circassians, also, lost several men;
but, as they were struck, they were lifted on their comrades' horses and carried away.

The town might have been theirs, but they knew that they could not keep it for any length of time; and all the lower ranks of the Circassian army were eager to advance for greater booty, notwithstanding the counsel of the coolest and most sagacious chiefs. However, they encountered no cavalry in the town from whom to fear pursuit; and they had nothing to dread from the infantry. Onward pushed the band of mountaineers, passing through several villages, and sweeping all before them.

Their Seraskier then urged them to return; as now, that the Russians were alarmed, they might collect an almost overwhelming force from the neighbouring fortified towns to impede their progress; for, carried away with the ardour of the foray, the greater number thought of nothing less than pillaging every Russian settlement on the borders. Very unwillingly, therefore, they wheeled to make a circuit towards that part of the Kouban they had already passed.

Alp Beg had, during the day, constantly accompanied our hero and his friend, at the head
of his troop, making, with them, several desperate charges on the Russian lines as they had formed, and never failing in breaking them with his furious onset. At their return, as the main body, with whom at the time were Selem and Alp, were passing at some little distance from Kislavosk, the Hadji, who brought up the rear to the left nearer the town, heard from some peasants that they had missed securing several head of cattle, which were still at a short distance outside the walls.

"Mashallah! what say you, my friends?" cried the old warrior. "Shall we let the Giaours still have any beef for their dinners? Let us shew them that they must not cheat us in this way. What say you, my friends; shall we pay them another visit? It will take us but few minutes."

The proposition was too much to the taste of all parties not to be warmly seconded. Sending, therefore, to the Seraskier to intimate his purpose, and being followed by about five hundred horse, he made a headlong dash at the place the peasants indicated. The Russians saluted them as they advanced with showers of shot and grape, while the troops sallied out to
meet them; but nothing could stop the impetuosity of their onset, and they quickly liberated the cattle, driving them off at a greater speed than the animals had ever before accomplished.

"Well done, my friends," cried the Hadji. "I told you we would spoil these unbelievers' dinners; and now, Bismillah! let us charge them again," he added, as a large body of infantry met them.

Uttering loud cries, they charged the Russians, driving the cattle among their ranks. The troops gave way, when they were again saluted with a tremendous flanking fire of grape; and, ere they had got clear from the range of the guns, a large body of Cossack horse, who had that moment arrived from the neighbouring towns, met them at full charge. Already had many of their number fallen under the fire from the town; but the old warrior Hadji, undaunted by the overwhelming force of their new opponents, shouting his war-cry, called to his followers to charge them.

Tremendous was the shock of the two fierce bodies of hostile cavalry, animated with the most bitter hatred, and excited by the fiercest rage; but the superior skill, agility, and courage
of the Circassians compensated partly for their inferiority in numbers. The Cossacks were arrested in their course; while the mountaineers literally hewed themselves a road through their ranks. They discovered, however, when too late, that they had committed a dreadful error in so doing; for a fresh body of Cossacks arriving from the same direction, they found themselves completely surrounded. The ground they fought on was a broad open heath, in front of the town, which gave full scope for the larger body of their assailants to bring their whole force against them.

The main body of the Circassians, with whom was Alp and Selem, on receiving the Hadji's message, and on hearing the firing, wheeled to support him. The first of the band was the brave young Alp, eager to join the affray, and assist his father.

The Hadji, with scarcely three hundred followers, was bravely defending himself against several thousand Cossacks, shouting his war cry, cheering on his men to the attack, who wheeled and charged in every direction, keeping a complete circle in the midst of their foes, and placing their horses back to back in such close order that
few of the enemy could get within the brave troop; or if they did, they were cut down by the inner ranks. At length, however, the Cossacks seemed ashamed at being held at bay by so small a body, and charged them with renewed vigour, hoping to destroy them before the main body came up. Great numbers of the Circassians fell beneath this fresh attack; though the remainder fought on with yet undaunted courage. But even their gallant old leader looked out anxiously for the succour of their friends. They made many fresh, desperate, but unavailing, attempts to cut their way through, still the Hadji fought on, shouting to his brave companions, and never for a moment thinking of yielding.

"Ah! Allah! well done, my sons!" he cried. "Well done, men of Attèghëi! See, the vile Cossacks are thinning fast around us. We shall soon have a hill of their bodies to ride over. Fight on, my men! our friends will be here anon; and then we shall see how fast these Giaours can fly. Charge, my sons! charge! Ah! Allah! here comes my noble son, my own Alp. I knew that he would be the first to rescue his father."
While shouting these cries, the old warrior had made such desperate charges with one or two followers, that the Cossacks, partly opening their ranks, again closed before the rest could get up to them, thus completely hemming him in. His enemies, who recognized him as one of the most daring chiefs, pressed hard upon him, endeavouring either to make him prisoner, or to cut him down on the spot; when Alp, the foremost of the advanced guard of the main body of the Circassians, beheld his father's imminent danger.

Not waiting even to see who followed, the young warrior shouted his war cry, and dashed boldly at the foe, the foremost of whom gave way as they saw the gallant youth approaching. But a young Cossack officer, seeing him advance unsupported, spurred on his charger, and fired his light rifle at the same time. For this movement Alp was prepared; and throwing himself on his horse's side, the ball passed over him. In a moment his own gun was in his hand; he fired, but the Cossack imitating his manoeuvre, escaped his aim. Urging on their steeds their swords met, fast whirling round their heads as they were wheeling and backing.
their horses. Alp, seeing an opportunity, threw up the Cossack's guard, endeavouring to seize him and plunge his dagger in his heart; but ere he could effect his purpose, a ball from his antagonist's pistol entered his horse's neck, and the noble animal fell mortally wounded to the ground. But Alp was not overcome; disengaging himself from his horse in a moment, he sprung like a tiger on his opponent; and, striking him with his dagger, hurled him to the ground. Then springing on his steed's back, and waving his sword, he stayed not an instant to cast a parting glance at his conquered foe, but led on his friends who had just come up.

The father and son recognized each other amid the turmoil of the fight; when, again shouting loudly his war cry, Alp urged on his steed amidst the thickest of the foe, followed by the few who owned the fastest horses, and fought his way up to his father's side, shielding him from the many blows aimed at him, and regardless of those he himself received. Desperately did he strive to keep his foes at bay until his friends could come to his relief.

The old chief was saved; but at what a sacrifice! The blood flowed from Alp's side; his
eyes grew dim; his head giddy; he could not see longer to guard off the blows of his enemies.

Selem, at the head of his brave troop, as he saw the predicament of his friends, charged the foe furiously, cutting down all who opposed him, or drove them off till he reached the Hadji, who shouted his thanks as the last Cossack disappeared between him and his rescuers. But why does Alp not advance? Oh! Allah! where is he? Alas! behold him now weltering in his blood beneath his horse's hoofs. Gasping out his last breath, he thanks Allah that he has saved his father. He pronounced, too, his loved Zara's name. He is lifted on his horse; but his pulse has ceased to beat. The young warrior is no more. The old Hadji seems like some aged oak scathed by lightning. He hears not the shouts of the combatants. His own voice is stilled. He knows not where they lead him. One thing alone he sees—his noble, gallant boy a corpse by his side. He mourns that he yet lives while the young and the brave have fallen.

The main body of the Circassians, now arriv-
ing, set furiously on the Cossacks, whom they drove before them; but, pursuing them too eagerly, they again found themselves exposed to the deadly fire from the town, showers of grape falling among them, and cutting through their ranks with deadly effect. Thus once more they were compelled to retreat. The Russian infantry then marched out to support the cavalry, now again following the Circassians, who, whenever the Russians approached near enough, would suddenly wheel and charge them, thinning their ranks, and driving them to a distance.

In this hazardous style of fighting, Thaddeus had much distinguished himself, as well as in the principal charge, which he had made by the side of Selem to the rescue of the Hadji. As they approached the Kouban, their own infantry coming up, the Cossacks took to flight, and were pursued with considerable slaughter; but though it had been a day of victory, it had been a disastrous and dearly bought one to the Circassians; many of their chiefs, and a great number of their followers having fallen by the destructive fire of grape, which had played on them from the batteries; though, in comparison, they had lost but
few men in their encounter with the Cossacks; so superior are they in horsemanship and the use of their arms.

Arslan Gherrei rode up to the side of his brother chieftain and old friend, to endeavour to offer some consolation.

"Nay, nay, my friend," said the veteran warrior, "I mourn not for my son. Allah is merciful, and has sent him to Paradise in the midst of victory. And what nobler fate could I wish for him? I would that I too had died with him! For what was he born? For what have I bred him up a warrior, but to die for his country? There will be weeping and wailing enough among the women when he is brought home. Alas! for his bride! her heart will break. And his mother! It is a sad day for them. But I!—no, I cannot mourn! My heart's feelings have long since been dried up. I grieve not for his loss."

The low husky voice, the contracted brow, and expanded, but tearless eye of the old chief, sadly belied his words. He spoke no more as he rode on, except to issue some short orders to those of his followers who remained alive. His thoughts were hidden in his own breast; but
there was an expression of concentrated agony in his stern features, which shewed too well that a father's feelings were working strongly within him. Near him rode his squire, guiding the horse which bore the young warrior's body and arms; and every now and then the father would cast a glance full of deep meaning towards it.

The army encamped that night on the same spot they had occupied on the previous one; stationing, however, picquets to give timely warning in case their enemies should attempt to follow. The Russians, however, had received that day a sufficient lesson to learn that the Circassians were foes not to be trifled with.

That night, no minstrels tuned their harps round the watch-fires; nor did the warriors indulge in tales of their exploits; but, as soon as the horses were sheltered and fed, and they had partaken of their own frugal fare, wrapping themselves in their cloaks, they snatched a few hours' repose after the fatigues of the day.

As Selem, who took his place at the fire near which the Hadji had thrown himself on the ground, watched the old warrior, he saw many a convulsive throb pass over his frame. Then he
would start up, and sit gazing on the burning embers, his thoughts doubtlessly resting on his slaughtered son, his white hair streaming over his stern and wrinkled brow, with mouth firmly set, and his hands clutching his snowy and flowing beard. He might have been compared to some aged oak, whose trunk had been scorched and riven by the lightning's forked flash, yet refusing to bend beneath the tempest's power. A true patriot's motto is, "I may break, but bend not."
CHAPTER XIV.

She could no more. Invincible despair
Suppress'd all utt'rense . . . .

. . . . . . . . . . . On the gory breach,
Whence life had issu'd by the fatal blow,
Mute for a space, and motionless she gazed.

GLOVER'S LEONIDAS.

The next morning, as soon as the first streaks of light appeared in the east, the whole assemblage were on foot, all anxious to return to their homes. The division of the booty, an important affair, was first adjusted; the leaders of the different bands shared according to the number of their followers, among whom it was again to be divided; and, as the cattle were driven off by those to whom they were awarded, by degrees the whole of the force melted away.
A curious spectacle was presented, as the different bands wended their way in warlike guise in every direction along the valleys, and up the mountain's sides, driving the untractable cattle before them.

To some, also, were awarded arms and powder, according to their necessities. The various other objects of booty, (and among them, a few Cossack prisoners, who were destined for slaves), had been thrown into the common stock, to be equally distributed.

The Seraskier, though still treated with the deepest respect by all, was now left without an army, except of his own immediate followers, every man who had composed it considering himself perfectly at liberty to take his departure when he wished, though equally ready to return, for any fresh expedition.

The chiefs parted from their leader with a respectful and affectionate farewell; he returning to his cottage and his farm, like another Cincinnatus, to till his land with his own hands.

A considerable share of the spoils was awarded to Thaddeus, much to his surprise and satisfaction; and the partition being arranged, he, with
Selem, and Arslan Gherrei, prepared to accompany the Hadji in his mournful procession towards his home. Their sad journey was, of necessity, as rapid as possible, waiting only at night, to snatch a few hours' repose, and borrowing fresh horses to proceed. The Hadji's nature seemed changed by the blow he had sustained; before lively, and full of anecdote and conversation, he now spoke not, nor smiled, and seemed to be dreading the burst of grief and agony, which his arrival with the dead body of his son, would cause among those most dear to him.

As they approached his grounds, the body was taken from the horse, and laid out on a bier, formed of branches cut from the neighbouring trees, over which a cloak was thrown, and the arms of the deceased placed by his side. No sooner did the cavalcade appear at a distance, slowly winding their way down the valley, than the women rushed out to meet and welcome them on their return from victory. Among the foremost came Zara, eager to clasp her young hero to her arms. The chaplet she had woven to crown him fell from her hands; a sad foreboding seized her, and as she saw at a distance,
that they bore a bier, her eye wandered anxiously round for Alp. She missed him from among the horsemen. She sprang wildly forward.

"Where is he?" she cried. "Where is my Alp? Why comes he not with you, warriors?" She caught sight of the bier. "Do you bear him there wounded? Oh, speak! Tell me, is he there?"

"Daughter," said the Hadji, "Allah has taken my son."

She seemed to hear him not, as she rushed forward. She lifted the cloak from the face, before any one could prevent her. She shrieked not; she did not swoon; but, with a fixed gaze of despair, she stood like a monumental statue, bending over the corpse of her slaughtered husband, as cold and inanimate as he.

At length, she seized a hand; it fell heavily down. She pressed her lips to those cold and lifeless ones, as if to find that breath still animated them. She seemed scarcely conscious what death was. It was long ere she was convinced of the reality; yet no tear escaped her eye, no sob, her heart. Her soft and gentle nature was fearfully changing.

"Who did this?" she cried. "The savage
Urus! well I know their work! Alp, you shall be avenged!” Again she stood silently over the corpse, rigid and immovable. None could find it in their hearts to disturb her, until the mother of the slain youth arrived to bewail, with frantic grief, her loss, joined by the other women of their household. Their cries and shrieks rent the air.

“My son! my son!” cried the distracted mother, “why hast thou been torn from me? Could not some more aged warrior have satisfied our foes? Why hast thou been cut off in the prime of thy youth? Wai! wai! wai! Was it for this that thou wast reared, the boldest, the bravest, the most beautiful? No more shall I hear thy joyous laugh resounding through the groves, or see thy graceful form bounding on thy steed, across the green meadows. My son! my son! Curses on the foes who have slain thee! May they, like me, be made childless! Can they give me another son like thee? Bear him along,” she cried to the attendants, “bear my son to our home, that I may mourn over him. Wai! wai!”

The followers of the Hadji carried the bier of their young lord as ordered; the women leading
Zara, who seemed like one in a trance, her eye resting alone on the bier; yet she faltered not in her steps, nor did a word escape her. Her grief was too deep for words or cries. Her heart was not broken; gentle and soft, as she seemed, it was of too tough a texture for that; though none, not even she herself, would have deemed it so.

We know not of what nature we are, until we are tried. She would have thought that she could not have borne the sight of blood, or the slightest misery, without sinking beneath the blow: but now, alas! she knew herself. Her heart, in a moment, was seared and blighted, as by the breath of the dark simoon, in an instant, the traveller is overwhelmed and scorched. Her breast was now hardened to feelings of pity, and burnt with vengeance against those who had deprived her of her loved one.

Such are the cursed effects of war. Let the victorious conqueror look around beyond the dazzling scene, and the gorgeous pageant which attends his triumph, and he would shudder, were he to see the agony, the hopeless despair, of one alone out of the thousands, of whose misery he is the cause. The heaps of slain are
as nothing; the eye soon grows accustomed to gaze on them: the feelings become familiarised with the sight of blood, which first sickened at the thought. The slain have played their game of life, and are at rest; but it is those who watch anxiously for their return, who suffer: the fond parents, the doting wife, or mistress, the affectionate sister—it is their loving hearts which are wrung with anguish—it is their curses which blast the laurel-crowned brow of ambition!

The Hadji accompanied his son’s body to the door of his home, where he saw it committed to the charge of the youth’s weeping mother; ushering his friends into the guest-house, he insisted on performing the duties of hospitality. After these had been accomplished, he called for his horse, and rode hastily away into the neighbouring forest. There, unseen by the eye of any, he gave way to the grief and torment of his breast. “The boy died for me! Oh! Allah! that I might have been in his place!” he cried, in a burst of agony.

Selem with his father and several other chiefs remained to pay the last sad respects to the gallant young hero. The funeral cry sounded
through the woods with a deep and thrilling solemnity; all the women of the neighbouring hamlet assembling to increase the melancholy wail.

In about two hours before the sun sunk low, the Hadji returned; the body of Alp was then brought out from the house, round which a large concourse of people had assembled, to accompany it to its last resting place.

The cemetery was on a terrace, on the side of the hill; a beautiful spot, where grew the cyprus and the plane-tree, shading the tombs of the brave warriors who there lay at rest. A venerable bard, with sightless orbs, was led up by his attendants, at the moment the bier, borne by six youths, the companions of the deceased, was brought out. He took his station at the head of the procession. His mother and other women followed weeping; and Zara, in a trance-like state, neither weeping nor speaking, walked on mechanically; her eye not for an instant withdrawn from the body of her betrothed. The Hadji next followed, with a firm step and erect posture; a slight movement of the mouth, and a contracted brow, alone betokening his mental agony. Arslan Gherrei and the other chiefs
supported him on either side, followed by the inhabitants of the hamlet.

As the procession moved slowly on, the aged minstrel tuned his lyre to a low and plaintive strain, his voice trembling as he sung: at the end of each verse, the mourners joining in chorus with a melancholy cadence. As they approached the place of sepulture the words were to the following effect, continuing to be haunted as the mourners stood round the grave:

Mourn, children of Attêghêî, mourn for the brave,
Whose heart with true glory beat high.
Weep, weep, as ye lower him into his grave,
No more to the charge will he cry.
His father to rescue, amid the thick foe,
He flew as they hemmed him around;
When a treacherous shot from afar laid him low,
And bleeding he fell to the ground.

Weep, weep, for the hero, the pride of our land,
Who ne'er from the foemen would fly,
As he fought 'mid a host who outnumber'd his band,
His falchion was waving on high.
And his battle cry raising, he charged them so well,
As the dastardly foe pressed around,
His sword drank their blood, and e'er bravely he fell,
Full many had bitten the ground.
Lay the hero to rest who so bravely hath died.

'Mid the clust'ring ranks of the foe,

"And his glittering falchion part not from his side,
   As calmly he slumbers below."*

He was found where he fell, 'mid the heaps of the slain,

His weapon still grasp'd in his hand,
Which faithfully serv'd him, and there shall remain,
   For who is more worthy that brand?

Weep, weep, for the hero who rests in his grave,
   And ever be sacred the ground,
Nor let it be trod by the foot of a slave,
   While his spirit still wanders around.
And fondly shall ever be cherished his name,
   As his deeds by our minstrels are sung,
With the martyrs who won the bright chaplet of fame,
   O'er his fate shall a halo be flung.

The warrior maidens of Attèghèi mourn.
   Ah sad was the grief of his bride!
When home on his war-steed from fight he was borne,
   As fainting she fell by his side.
Wreathe fair chaplets of flowers to hang round his tomb,
   Weep, weep, for the youth's early fate,
And when to bewail him, as yearly you come,
   The deeds of the hero relate.

   There was a deep and solemn silence as all
   that remained of the young, the brave, and the

* Vide Poems by T. Moore.
truly-loving Alp was lowered into the narrow grave yawning to receive him. As the body reached its final resting place, this silence was broken by the sobs which burst from his mother's breast and from the women who accompanied her. Even hardy warriors, who never thought or dreamed of fear, and seemed steeled to all the softer sympathies of our nature, were moved to tears. As the first handful of earth was thrown on the uncoffined body, all present knelt down circling the grave; and the aged bard, his hands raised on high, offered up prayers for the soul of the deceased young warrior. Then, joining their voices, the assembly petitioned heaven for its quick passage to the realms of bliss. The venerable sire now arose from his knees, and in a deep and solemn tone thus addressed the company:

"Men of Attèghèi, another victim has been offered up to the enmity of our hated foes; a sacrifice well worthy of the altars of Liberty; for who more brave, who more noble than he? Gentle as a lamb in peace, daring as a lion in war, loved by his friends, dreaded by his foe, who is here that loved him not? Who would not have been
ready to shelter his life with his own? Why then was he taken from us, cut off in the flower of his youth? Why, my countrymen? Because the most noble altar demands the noblest sacrifice; and what altar is more noble than that of Liberty, and where a fitter victim than he for whom we mourn?

"His fate is glorious and happy. Even now his spirit is ascending to the realms of bliss, while we, still loaded with our mortal chains, mourn his loss. Yet still, many, many more sacrifices must be made, before our country can be free from our detested foes; but think not that our warriors will die in vain. Even now I see dimly and indistinctly, an era approaching, when our enemies shall be driven from the confines of our territories, far back to the barren lands whence they came; and our country, freed from oppression, shall rise above her former state and take her place among the nations of the earth."

The oration being concluded, again they knelt in prayer, while the earth hid the heroic Alp for ever from the sight of those who loved him. A slab of stone was placed on his grave, over
which was erected a light building of wood, sufficiently large to shelter those who would come on the anniversary of his death to offer up prayers, and to commemorate the gallant actions of the young warrior.

The bereaved Zara was led to her home; and, for many live-long days, she sat, motionless, regardless of all around her. Stunned and bewildered by her grief, she constantly brooded over her loss.

The Hadji appeared to have recovered from the shock sooner than the rest of his family; but many observed that the elastic spirits of the old man had flown for ever. A change had come over him. His whole thoughts and attention were given to forming plans for defeating the Russians, and defending the country against their attacks in the coming spring.

So different is man's grief, for a loved lost object, to that of a woman! He has resources whereupon to employ his mind and his energies. The fierce excitement of war, the ardour of the chase, the banquet, the council, and a hundred other objects offer opportunities to distract his thoughts; while she has alone the remem-
brance of her loss. If she applies herself to her domestic duties, still the thought of her bereave-
ment will intrude; and oft will she stop amid her occupations, a convulsive sob bursting from her heart, as the image of the lost one appears to her mind, and she thinks of that which was, but which now no longer exists.
CHAPTER XV.

And she whom once the semblance of a scar
Appalled, an owlet's larum chilled with dread,
Now views the column scattering bay'net jar,
The falchion flash; and o'er the yet warm dead,
Stalks with Minerva's step, where Mars might quake
to tread,

BYRON.

Our life is full of sunshine and clouds, smiles and tears; and it is as foolish to expect at all times to possess the one, as it is to repine that our lot in life must be sprinkled with the other. Thus, how great a contrast did the reception awaiting the warriors in the valley of Abran Bashi form to that which they had experienced in the vale of Gazlan; when Ina, blooming as the roses of Gul, flew across the lawn, as she caught sight of her father's gallant train winding down the vale. She was now followed by all the wives
and maidens of the hamlet, eager to welcome the return of their husbands, their fathers, and brothers, and to recompense them for the toils of war, and the dangers they had incurred for their sakes.

Throwing himself from his horse, Arslan Gherrei folded his daughter in his arms, as she flew to meet him; tears, how precious, of pure joy filling her bright eyes, that he was again restored to her in safety. We will not attempt to describe the meeting of Thaddeus and his fair mistress; but well did he feel himself recompensed for having espoused the cause of her country.

Death had not been idle in the valley since their absence. The forebodings of the venerable Prince, Aitek Tcherei, had been fulfilled; full of years and honour, he had been gathered to his fathers the day after their departure. He had been buried with all the ceremonies prescribed by custom; and his clansmen were now about to select one as a successor worthy to lead them to war, or to preside at their councils in time of peace. By the aged chieftain's dying will, delivered to the elders of his tribe, Alp was to suc-
ceed to his possessions; or, failing him, they were to descend to Selem, so that, by the sad death of his friend, our hero found himself possessed of considerable wealth.

The elders and principal men of the tribe assembled to discuss the important subject, when the eyes of all were turned on Selem. His bravery in the field and his courteous manners had won even their hearts; and by choosing him, they would not only have a gallant and sagacious chief to command them, but it would prevent any of those jealous feelings which would too probably spring up, should they elect any one of those actually living among them. Without a dissentient voice, therefore, Selem Gherrej was elected to command their brave and numerous tribe. Our hero was now, in every sense of the word, a Circassian Chief; and a truly brave and noble one did he prove himself.

We must now draw rapidly to the conclusion of our story.

The trees once again put forth their leaves; the fields were enamelled with flowers; the birds sang in the groves; and all nature wore an air of renewed life and activity. The winter
had passed away. The Circassian husbandmen on the borders, girded on their swords, and slung their rifles on their backs, as they toiled in their fields—prepared at a moment’s notice to resist any inroad of their foes—to sow corn, although ’twas doubtful whether they might ever reap the harvest. Bands of warriors were moving towards the frontiers, to be in readiness to repulse the Russians, at whatever quarter they should make their first attack; and in every direction, messengers were galloping across the country, to carry information from one chief to another of their own plans, or of the enemy’s movements. Great stir had been observed among the troops on the Kouban, and the number of all the Russian garrisons was increased; but it was impossible to say what were their intentions.

The early spring also saw the happiness of Ina and Thaddeus completed; the chieftain no longer withholding his consent, on Selem’s making over to his friend sufficient property to maintain his bride as became her rank. A Polish priest also was found to perform the ceremony, according to the rules of the Christian church; this exile with many of his coun-
trymen had lately made their way to Circassia, where they were certain of a friendly welcome from those who could so well appreciate their wrongs and sufferings.

Selem therefore had the satisfaction of seeing his sister married according to the forms he considered essential, when he committed her into the hands of his friend. The religion of Arslan Gherrei was too tolerant to object to his daughter embracing that of her husband, particularly when Selem undertook to explain to him the sacred bonds it enforced, and in how superior a state it placed her, than would have been her lot had she become the wife of one of the native chiefs. The chieftain much admired this in theory, though he confessed it was what his countrymen in general would not approve; for it gave far too much power into the hands of those whom they looked upon in the light of property, and which their lords and masters would lose, should the fair sex once learn to consider themselves as having equal liberty and rights.

The youthful couple enjoyed, for a short time, the utmost felicity which is allowed to the most fortunate on earth. They were truly happy in
themselves, and their present lot; for they did not—they would not—think of what change the future might bring forth. Each day they thought that they had discovered some new charm in each other, something more to love. On their marriage, they had returned to the house near the sea, where we first introduced Ina to our readers; and often would they wander together down the valley, to the very edge of the deep blue main, which lay calm and lovely at their feet. As they gazed on its translucent wave, they little thought that its treacherous surface might bring whole hordes of their foes upon them.

Selem, whenever he could tear himself away from his important occupations, came to be witness of their happiness; but he was mostly occupied in accompanying his father in excursions through every part of the country to rouse the lagging, to animate the weak-hearted, and to induce all to take the oath of amity to the patriots, and eternal enmity to their foes. Where ever they moved, they were accompanied by other influential chiefs and elders, and were received with respect by all.
Those, who formerly thought themselves free from the danger of attacks by the Russians, were roused to join their countrymen in more exposed districts; and others, who might have been induced by despair to sue for peace with their overwhelming foes, were excited to renewed exertions, to defend their country to the last. Many made voluntary promises to muster under the standard of Arslan Gherrei, the moment it should be raised for whatever expedition he should think advisable.

Hadji Guz Beg constantly accompanied his friends in these expeditions; his enthusiastic exhortations adding considerably to the excitement of the people. At his own home, he scarcely ever remained, for he could not bear to hear the loud and constant repinings of his wife for her lost son; nor to look on the grief stricken Zara.

She, poor girl, continued incapable of exertion, and unexcited by aught around her; her thoughts dwelling alone on her lost Alp. It was at length thought, that change of scene, the novelty of the
sea, near which she had never been, and the affectionate embraces of her early friend, might arouse her from her stupor. Ina received the youthful widow with an affectionate greeting, but could not refrain from tears as she contrasted the time they parted, when she was borne away from her a joyous bride, with the melancholy of the present; her young hopes blighted, and he, whom she loved, lying in his early and ensanguined grave.

The tender endeavours of Ina, could scarcely rouse her from her apathetic indifference to all terrestrial affairs; Zara could only return her kindness with a faint smile of thanks.

Arslan Gherrei was now less reluctant to be absent from home, knowing that he left his daughter with one able to protect her; and, at this time, Selem had just arrived to pay his sister and friend a visit, before they moved to a habitation further inland; for, as the spring advanced, it was feared the Russians might attempt a landing on the coast. The numerical strength of the tribe beneath the sway of Arslan Gherrei had been dreadfully reduced by war and plague, so that when he led forth his warriors to
battle, scarcely enough remained to protect his territory; on which account, the preceding year, he had removed his daughter to the house of his kinsman, the late Prince Aitek Tcherei.
CHAPTER XVI.

We drove away
The strangers from our land: profuse of life
The warriors rushed to battle; and the sun
Saw from his noontide fields their manly strife.

MADOC.

A lovely and bright spring morning had induced Selem and his friend to seize their guns and sally forth at dawn of day, in search of game. They had wandered long over the sweet scented heathery hills, fresh and pure with the sparkling dew; when they heard loud shouts behind them, and saw Karl running to overtake them.

With a face of consternation, he said that he had just seen from the highest mountain in the neighbourhood, where he had been to cut wood, a large fleet standing towards the coast, which...
his fears told him, must be that of his much dreaded countrymen.

"It will be a day of fighting, my friends," exclaimed Selem, as with Thaddeus he flew rapidly towards the house. "We must die, rather than let our foes set foot upon our strand, where, if they once get footing, it will cost us dear to drive them off."

They did not even venture to enter the ande- room; but, seizing their arms, and summoning as many warriors as they could collect on the moment, they rushed to the shore, thoughtless of the overwhelming force of the foe, and determined to defend it to the last gasp. As they emerged from the valley to the sands, a sight met their view, sufficient to appal the stoutest heart among the brave mountaineers. As far as the eye could reach, the smooth sparkling sea appeared covered with the lofty and wide spreading canvas of the Russian ships of war and transports, advancing slowly and proudly towards the devoted coast.

The Circassians gazed with deep anxiety at the hostile flotilla, feeling how small was their chance of successfully opposing the landing of
their foes with the small force they had collected. Selem, however, sword in hand, flew amongst the small band, encouraging and urging them boldly to withstand their enemies.

"My countrymen, my brave friends," he cried, "if we allow our foes to land, our destruction, and that of all those dear to us, will be certain. Let us, then, heap our dead bodies, to impede their progress, until our countrymen can assemble to fill our places; and let us rejoice that we can make an offering of our blood for the liberty of Circassia."

"We will follow you to the death, noble chief. Wherever you go we will go. Allah will protect the right!" was exclaimed on all sides by men, who, as they drew their sabres, swore never to yield.

The fleet approached in a crescent form. The smaller vessels, leading and running in, anchored as close to the land as the depth of the water would allow, presenting the frowning battery of their broadsides to shore. The largest ships followed, while the transports formed in line outside; and, no sooner were the sails furled, than hundreds of boats issued from among
them, advancing steadily forward in close line.

Even the heroic Selem felt that it was an act almost of madness to oppose so overwhelming a force; and, for a moment, he hesitated to sacrifice his people's lives in so hopeless an attempt. But his resolution returned, and he determined to risk all, rather than fly.

At that instant shouts were heard in the woods above them; and a band of chiefs—on their journey to the north, at the head of whom came the Hadji and his brother—were seen galloping towards them. There was scarcely time to exchange the warriors' brief greeting with their welcome friends—the number of the whole amounting to a few hundreds only, while the approaching boats contained several thousands—ere the fierce combat commenced.

The band of Circassians, mostly chiefs and renowned warriors, remained sheltered behind the trees, until the boats came near enough to enable them to take certain aim, when they opened a rapid and deadly fire from their rifles, taking the Russians by surprise, and throwing them into some disorder; but, notwithstanding numbers
fell wounded in the boats, they soon rallied and again advanced. As the keel of the headmost boat grated on the beach, Selem and the Hadji, calling to their comrades, drew their sabres, and, with a furious onset, rushed towards the enemy. Before the first Russian had time to set his foot on dry land, he was hurled bleeding into the sea.

As each of the headmost boats came on, they were received with the same desperate valour; and as, with their lifeless crews, they were thrown on shore, they served as ramparts to the defenders to shelter themselves from the fire of the aftermost ones. Still the enemy advanced in constant succession, like wave upon wave, towards the beach; but with such heroic bravery did Selem and his friends meet them, that the first part of the detachment was completely destroyed, the rest keeping off until more boats should arrive from the ships.

For the Circassians, however, it was a fearful struggle, to oppose their small band to so overwhelming a force; and more so, when those on board the ships of war, seeing the powerful opposition offered, commenced firing on friends.
and foes alike. Yet, though several of the patriots had fallen, they fought on undaunted. In a short time, however, all the boats came up, extending their line, when a body of troops effected a landing before they could be opposed.

As the Hadji caught sight of them, "Allah! Allah!" he cried, "down with the foes of Circassia. None such may place foot here. Allah! Allah!" And, calling to several of his companions, he furiously charged them; but, notwithstanding his utmost bravery, he and his followers were again driven back to the chief scene of conflict, closely pressed by the enemy. In the mean time also, on the other side, another body of troops had landed. The Circassians found themselves almost hemmed in; but they did not give much time for their enemies to form; for a party attacked them with almost despairing fury, and kept them from approaching to aid the disembarkation of the other boats.

The patriot band was thinning fast; the most determined spirits among them, hoping only to sell their lives dearly; the strand was already
strewed with their bodies; a dark red line of human gore fringing the pure ocean. Still in desperation they fought on. They thought of their wives, and of their children, and they strove not to die unavenged.

The image of his young wife presented itself to Thaddeus; and, commending her to the care of heaven, he bravely fought with renewed courage by the side of her brother. Yet now all hope had fled, when a shout was heard from the mountains rising high above the rattle of the musketry, the roar of cannon, and the clash of steel. Issuing from the grove, a numerous party was seen rushing with speed to the spot, headed by a female, brandishing in her hand a glittering sabre. It was the widowed Zara leading on her band of peasants against the Russians, who retreated before the fury of the onset, her followers hewing down their foes on all sides. Her life seemed charmed; for she guarded not herself, as she rushed into the thickest of the desperate fight, shouting to her followers, and with her slender arm dealing death-bearing blows around her.

For a considerable distance along the coast,
many separate engagements took place wherever any boats attempted to throw the troops on shore; those who were left, while the boats returned for reinforcements, were cut to pieces; for the defenders were too few to attempt making prisoners. Seeing that affairs were in this desperate state, the Russians sent every boat they could launch from their ships of war and transports, filled with troops, to the assistance of those already engaged; the brigs at the same time running so close in, that their keels touched the ground. These vessels opened a galling fire, aiming over the heads of their own people, at the defenders of the soil. But the Circassians were by far too eager to allow the manoeuvre to be of much avail. Closing and grappling with their enemies the moment they came on, and fighting up to their waists in the sea, as they rushed forward to meet them, the shot from the ships, made equal havoc among both parties.

The Russians now saw that it would have been better policy to wait, until all their foes had collected on the beach, before they commenced firing; when, after playing on the
crowds of Circassians, they might under cover of their guns, have sent in their boats without molestation. As it was they had been dreadfully cut up without making good their landing. They now attempted to repair their error at the sacrifice of their own people; but that signified nothing if they could ultimately be successful.

Selem, the moment he could turn his eyes to see what was going forward, after defeating those directly opposed to him, observed Zara amid the thickest of the fight, encouraging, and leading on her followers to the attack; he hastened towards her, fearful for her safety, and endeavoured to withdraw her from the bloody scene.

"Think you that the life of my husband does not require some sacrifice at my hands?" she cried. "The blood of all these base slaves would not repay one drop of that which flowed in his veins. Who is more bound to avenge his death, than his wife? I have nothing to fear. Hinder me not from the holy work."

Breaking from him, she rushed again towards the enemy. Karl, however, who had followed
her, and who did not like to fight against his own countrymen, remained by her side, merely warding off the blows aimed at her; till at length, his choler rising, he returned the blows himself, with interest. Selem saw that it was hopeless to hinder her; and the utmost energies of all were now required to repel the fresh attack. As the boats pulled rapidly towards the shore, the enemy’s soldiers, urged to desperation by the fate of their comrades, and by the instigation of their officers, threw themselves into the water with bayonets ready fixed, and charged the Circassians. But, as before, the active mountaineers grappled with them, leaping between their bayonets, and stabbing them with their short swords.

The termination of the contest, however, still remained doubtful, for at one spot, less obstinately defended, several boats made a dash at once, and succeeded in throwing their troops on shore, where, forming, they charged the Circassians on their flank with so much courage, that Selem began to fear their heroic defence would have been of no avail. At this critical moment, a loud shout was again raised behind
them; and, turning, Selem beheld his father, at the head of a band of warriors, breaking through the wood, and galloping over the sand. A fresh and desperate charge was now made against the Russians, who were driven with great loss, to their boats.

The boats that were already afloat pulled off, the most desperate fighting now ensuing; the Russians, attempting to shove off their boats, while the Circassians, surrounding them, hauled their crews into the water, cutting down the soldiers who offered further resistance; but the foemen, at length when they found themselves left to their fate, ceased fighting, and sued for mercy.

A great number of prisoners were taken, the Russians losing more than half the number of troops they attempted to land. Many of their boats were also left wrecked on the shore. No sooner did those from the ships see that their troops were completely defeated, than they again commenced a tremendous cannonade on the Circassians, who, collecting their dead and wounded, retired within shelter of the woods,
where they could watch the enemy with less exposure of their lives.

Selem looked round anxiously for Zara. She had escaped unscathed. Her sword—it had been Alp's—was grasped in her hands, yet reeking with the blood of the enemy, as slowly she retired, unheeding the shot then falling thick around and laying many low in the hour of victory.

The patriots watched their enemies with lynx eyed vigilance, lest they might make a second attempt at landing. A constant firing was kept up from the wood, in all directions, at the retiring boats, and on the vessels, which they could reach with their rifles, making them glad to get beyond their deadly aim. The enemy had learned a sufficient lesson. In a short time, the boats were hoisted in, and that vast flotilla, which seemed capable of overwhelming the Circassian territories, stood out to sea, defeated and discomfited, by a mere handful of determined mountaineers. So truly will patriotic courage withstand tyranny and injustice!

Loud shouts arose from the gallant victors as the dark eagles were seen flying far out to sea;
and all that part of the country was, for the present, relieved from the baneful shadow of their wings. But, like the destroying angel of the Egyptians, wherever they had passed, they left grief and mourning in their track, for many of the brave patriots had fallen.

Selem, with a party of the most humane, as soon as the ships had got under weigh, repaired to the beach, where he found, mingled with the wounded Circassians, several of his late opponents still lingering. Deep was the gratitude of the poor fellows, when they heard themselves addressed in their own tongue; and when he ordered them to be conveyed to the hamlet, and tended with care.

None of our friends among the chiefs had fallen; but Thaddeus had received a wound sufficiently severe to require the whole of Ina's attention and fond care. Many months elapsed before he could again take the field; and Ina might be excused if she scarcely regretted his confinement. He has since proved himself a true champion of his adopted country; and we trust that his gallant sons may, in a few years, follow his noble example.
No sooner had the tumult of the fight ceased, than Zara's excitement also vanished; and, overcome by the unnatural exertion she had undergone, she sank to the ground, her hand relaxing the grasp of her weapon, which she would not before quit. In this state she was borne to the house of Arslan Gherrei. She recovered; and sank no more into her apathetic state. But her nature, her very appearance had changed; though her eye was even brighter than ever. A hectic flush—one crimson spot—grew on her thin and wan cheek: her lip was pale, and her voice lost its soft, sweet melody. Like the warlike brides of her ancestors, wherever the foe approached, there was the bereaved young widow to be seen amid the thickest of the fight, her heroic courage animating her countrymen, and spreading terror among the ranks of the Urus. Where the carnage has been most dreadful, blood flowing, like water from the pent up fountains of winter when let loose by the warmth of spring, there has oft the young Amazon been seen rushing on amid the slain unscathed, unhurt; bearing, it seems, a charmed life; and, if she would
forget her griefs in death, she cannot; the leaden showers fall thick, the sharp steel flashes around her in vain.

Many follow her as an inspired being sent from heaven to lead them to victory; and the foes, as they hear the war-shout of her followers, and see her approaching, fly, terror-stricken before her. The fire of revenge for her slaughtered love still burns unquenched within her bosom. Death—death alone can ever extinguish its consuming flame.

That noble champion of his country, Arslan Gherrei, still leads his followers to war; and may he be spared to enjoy the blessings of peace, which he so well deserves, and the happiness of his country, for which his heart so yearns.

Even now also is the war-shout of the fierce Hadji heard in the thickest of the battle; and though his tread has lost its elasticity, his arm somewhat of its nerve, still well does he deal his blows amid the enemies of his country. May just Heaven shield the good and brave old man from the weapons of an invading enemy!

And Selem, our hero—yet does the image of the loving, the murdered Azila, dwell within his
bosom. He has not forgotten his vow. Terrible does he fulfil it. But the end is not yet accomplished. His only bride, his earthly love, is his country; and what more exalted or holy feeling could possess his breast? Still does he energetically strive for Circassia's welfare; and never for a moment, does he regret that he exchanged wealth, rank, and heartless dissipation, gilding the chains of despotism, for his humble cot, and liberty!

May every philanthropist join us in earnest hope and prayer, that Circassia may not share the fate of Poland.

THE END.
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