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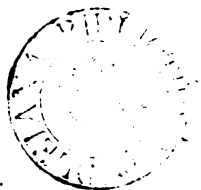
ROMANCE OF JEWISH HISTORY

BY

THE MISSES C. AND M. MOSS,

AUTHORSESSES OF "EARLY EFFORTS," &c., &c.

And where are they? and where art thou,
My country! On thy voiceless shore
The heroic lay is tuneless now—
The heroic bosom beats no more!
And must thy lyre, so long divine,
Degenerate into hands like mine!



BYRON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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DEDICATORY EPISTLE

TO

SIR E. L. BULWER, BARONET,

AUTHOR OF "PELHAM," "RIENZI," "ENGLAND AND THE
ENGLISH," ETC. ETC.

SIR EDWARD :

WE are fully aware that your name, so deservedly illustrious, reflects a portion of its own light on our crude productions; and our gratitude is commensurate to the advantages we enjoy in dedicating our work to one whom public opinion has placed at the head of the Literati of the day; we need scarcely refer to the emulation excited by the juxtaposition of our names.

We know we are subjecting ourselves to a

severe ordeal by appearing in our present characters.

We are aware, too, that at the present moment the attention of the whole civilized world is directed to our nation, and we feel there could scarcely be a more opportune period for the appearance of this work.

That we have Authors of some eminence and celebrity among our people, we believe is generally acknowledged ; but our men of genius have neglected the lighter branches of literature, directing their attention almost exclusively to theology, metaphysics, and philosophy.

Even those who have desired to tread the more flowery paths of romance, have been prevented from appearing before the public, from a fear that however much they might excel, the prejudice existing against us as a nation, might reflect an odium on their work, and consign it to immediate oblivion.

We have allowed no such feeling to deter us ; for we think otherwise.

The time is now arrived, or is rapidly approaching, when such narrow-mindedness, the

growth of a barbarous and priest-ridden age, will disappear.

Our yoke is lightened, and will be more so every day ; and though we wait with anxiety the result of this publication, we are not afraid that any prejudice on account of our religious tenets will bias our judges in their opinion.

The leniency shown us on a former occasion, assures us that at least we shall not be judged unfairly.

In conclusion, Sir Edward, we can only repeat our thanks for your kindness, and trust the following pages will on a candid and impartial perusal meet with your approbation.

We have the honour to remain,

SIR EDWARD,

Your grateful and obedient Servants,

CELIA AND MARION MOSS.

5, *Ordnance Row, Portsea*, 1840.

P R E F A C E.

WE are perfectly aware of the hazard of placing our humble talents in competition with those of a Ritchie or a Neale, in this attempt to follow the plan of the "Romance of History." We have endeavoured, however, by blending fiction with historical fact, to direct the attention of the reader to a branch of history too long neglected.

If we refer to the annals of our glorious ancestors, where shall we find greater instances of virtue, patriotism, and self-devotion? What hero of antiquity can compare with the brave and generous Jonathan, the son of Saul, the

friend of David, who, while others deluged kingdoms with blood for the possession of a crown, preserved, at the risk of his own, the life of the man he knew was destined to supplant him on his father's throne?

The five glorious Maccabees, and their noble father, are indeed characters whose virtues history may love to record. That elegant writer, Mr. Milman, has truly said of Judas Maccabeus: "Among those lofty spirits who have asserted the liberty of their native land, against wanton and cruel oppression, none have surpassed the ablest of the Maccabees in accomplishing a great end with inadequate means—none have ever united more generous valour in a better cause." *

We could cite many other instances, but the limits of a preface forbid the attempt; and we must again revert to the circumstances which have induced us to publish the present work; namely, the fact that the English people generally, although mixing with the Jews in their daily duties, are as unacquainted with their

* History of the Jews—Family Library, vol. ii., p. 59.

history, religion, and customs, as if they still dwelt in their own land, and were known to them but by name.

With this view, we have endeavoured to pourtray the Jews as they were while yet an independent people—to mark the most interesting events that took place after Judea became a kingdom—the decline of her splendour, and her final fall. We intended to trace the destinies of her children after they were scattered through every nation, and bring down the history to the present year. But our matter was too great for the limits of three octavo volumes; we have therefore concluded the series at the invasion of the Romans; and we intend, if this effort prove successful, to continue the subject under the title of “Tales from Jewish History.”

We do not intend this production to be considered in the light of a history; our wish is to call the attention of the reader to the records of our people; to awaken curiosity—not to satisfy it.

Claiming the indulgence of the critic for our errors, we trust our youth and inexperience will be considered sufficient extenuation for their frequency. It is almost needless to observe, that we have followed the Jewish historians in our chronology.

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HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION.

MOSES, the servant of God, having by divine appointment led the children of Israel forth from bondage in Egypt, conducted them by a stupendous miracle through the dividing waters of the Red Sea, to the region of Mount Sinai; where he was instructed to constitute for them a government and priesthood, and to give them a written law, which has been the admiration of all succeeding ages. He conducted them during a pilgrimage of forty years duration through the desert of Arabia, until all who had shared in the enervating servitude in Egypt had perished; and he found himself the head of a numerous nation of men trained in the desert to hardships and obedience. These he led through the countries east of the Dead Sea and the River Jordan, until having previously buried his bro-

ther Aaron, the High Priest, in Mount Hor, by divine command, he himself ascended to the top of Pisgah, an elevated mountain, from whence he was permitted to view the promised land ; but it was the desire of the Almighty that he should die without entering it. He died alone, and his burying place was concealed from knowledge, lest his followers might make his body an object of idolatrous worship. The military command had been previously entrusted by him to Joshua, who drove out the greater part of the idolatrous people of the land, and divided the country among his followers. After Joshua's decease, the Israelites were governed during a period of about eight hundred years, by leaders selected from no particular tribe, but each for some distinguished merit, generally of a military character. During this time they were frequently at war with the surrounding nations, by whom, when deserted by God on account of their falling into idolatry, they were conquered and oppressed ; but delivered again when they returned to the religion delivered to them by their great lawgiver.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

At length, in the time of the prophet Samuel, they petitioned to be governed by a King, after the manner of surrounding nations. The Almighty granted their request ; at the same time telling them by his prophet the miseries they might be subjected to under kingly government. Samuel then proceeded to anoint Saul, the son of Kish, a Benjamite, pointed out to him by the Almighty, as King over Israel.

SAUL.

A.M. 2665. The first act of this monarch's reign was the relief of Jabesh Gilead, a fortified town beyond Jordan, which was besieged by Nahash, King of Ammon. The proud King had refused to accept submission and tribute, unless they submitted to lose their right eyes. They, in despair, required seven days to consider, during which they sent to Saul ; who immediately proceeded to their relief, with an army of three hundred and thirty thousand men ; completely defeated the Ammonites, and cut them to pieces, almost to a man.

A.M. 2673. The Philistines having ravaged the frontiers, on the western boundary, Saul proceeded, with his son Jonathan, to subdue them, having first, contrary to the orders of Samuel, who desired him to wait for his return, offered up a burnt-offer-

ing, thus usurping the sacerdotal function; which he had scarcely done, when Samuel made his appearance, rebuked him for his disobedience, told him that the Lord had chosen another person to be king, and that none of his posterity should ever mount the throne. During the time the contending armies lay encamped opposite each other, Jonathan, accompanied by his armour bearer, scaled a rock which lay between the two camps, and killed the guard; which so terrified the enemy, that they fell upon each other, supposing that the Israelites had got possession of their camp. Saul heard the confusion, and missing his son, immediately proceeded to the enemy's camp, where he was joined by the Israelites who had been prisoners there, and by other fugitives, and an indiscriminate slaughter took place.

Saul, before leaving his camp, had adjured his army not to taste anything during the day, that they might utterly destroy their enemies; and threatened death to whoever should break the decree. Jonathan, who did not know this, ate some honey as he passed through a wood. Saul having discovered this, sentenced him to die. The people pleaded for him, and would not allow the execution to take place. This put an end to the pursuit of the fugitive Philistines.

A.M. 2681. Saul, by the command of God, through Samuel, assembled an army of two hundred and ten thousand men, and proceeded to destroy the Amalekites, a powerful nation, descended from Esau, inhabiting the mountain country, south of the Dead Sea, having first warned the Kenites, who were the descendants of Jethro, Moses's father-in-law, to separate from them. Contrary to God's command, Saul saved the life of Agag, and the best of the spoil. This so enraged Samuel, that he killed Agag at Gilgal, and would have left Saul, but that he entreated him to honor him still before the people. It was at this time that Samuel anointed David to be the future King of

Israel, although the latter, then very young, did not understand the high destiny marked out for him.

A.M. 2697. Saul proceeded against the Philistines, who had again raised an army, and commenced hostilities.

While the two armies were encamped near each other, Goliath of Gath, (one of the Philistine cities,) a man of gigantic stature, challenged any of the Israelites to single combat, offering to leave the issue of the war upon the chance : but no one in the Jewish army had courage sufficient to accept the challenge.

At this time, David, who was a youth, was sent by his father to the camp, with a present to the King, and himself offered to fight the giant.

Saul, with hesitation, accepted the offer—with a smooth stone, cast from a sling, David slew the giant, and brought his head to the Israelitish camp.

The Philistines fled, and the Jews immediately pursued them, and completely destroyed their army.

At this time commenced the friendship of David and Jonathan, which constitutes so interesting and poetical an incident in the Hebrew annals.

Saul, however, instead of being grateful to David, became so jealous of him, that he pursued him with the intention of taking away his life ; in which he failed, having during the pursuit been twice indebted to David for the preservation of his own.

A.M. 2699. Whilst Saul was pursuing David, the Philistines again invaded the frontier, but were immediately repulsed.

A.M. 2704. The Philistines again invaded the land, completely routed the army of Israel, and killed Jonathan and two more of Saul's sons. After the battle, Saul, being wounded, killed himself in despair.

The enemy cut off his head, and fastened his body, and those of his sons, to the wall of Bethshan. The inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead, at the hazard of their lives, removed them to their own city, where they burnt them, and buried the bones under a tree ; from whence they were afterwards removed by David, and buried in the sepulchre of their family.

THE STORMING OF THE ROCK.

CHAPTER I.

“They slew them, Miriam, the grey old man whose blood scarce tinged their swords, they slew them, Miriam, at the mother’s breast, the smiling infant, and the tender maid, the soft, the loving, and the chaste like thee. They slew them not until.

MILLMAN.

It was in the middle of the month Eyor, in the year of the world 2673, that an old man and a young maiden sat watching the bright wood fire that blazed on the hearth of their little apartment. “Thanks, my sweet Judith, for thy gentle strains,” said the old man, as he kissed the fair brow of the lovely girl, whose bright face was turned towards him, at the sound of his voice, to receive the accustomed reward of her performance.

Jacob had been a soldier in his youth, and fought valiantly in the wars against the Philistines. In his old age he had retired to a lonely spot, on the outskirts of Gibeah, where he built himself a house, and dwelt in peace and comfort. Judith was his only child, the memorial of a loved and lost one ; and in her was centered all the deep and fervent feelings of his heart. The only thought that had embittered his declining years was that he might leave her, lone and unprotected, to the mercy of the world ; but even this fear was removed when Judith confessed that she loved, and was beloved, by one she had known from her youth — Manassah, the favourite armour-bearer of Jonathan, the son of Saul. Yet in the midst of his dream of happiness, he received the appalling tidings that the Philistines had broken into the country, with an army countless as the sand by the sea-shore, and spread dismay and terror into every heart.

Jacob had heard that morning enough to fill his soul with unutterable agony ; and fervent was the prayer that he now breathed in its inmost recesses, that the storm that threatened in its blighting progress to destroy for ever the land of his fathers, might spare his fragile flower

in its destructive fury. Hopeless indeed appeared the fate of Israel at the period to which our date refers.

Jonathan began the war by attacking a garrison at Geba before his father was prepared with forces sufficient to oppose them. The panic-stricken Israelites fled on all sides; the few troops who obeyed the trumpet of Saul met at Gilgal. Here Saul, in direct violation of the Hebrew constitution, and against the express command of Samuel, offered sacrifice. Samuel denounced as the penalty, that the kingdom should pass away from his heirs for ever.

In the meantime the Philistines overrun the territories. Part of them turned southward to the valley near the Dead Sea; part to the mountainous country of Ephraim; another part toward the Jordan, as far as Ophra. They seized the arms, and carried away all the smiths of the country. Among other acts of oppression, they forced the inhabitants to go to their towns on the coast, in order to get all their large implements of husbandry ground.

Spring was rapidly advancing into summer; but instead of the husbandman pursuing his peaceful labours, the feet of armed men trampled

down the ripening corn, and rendered the fertile field a wilderness.

It was a wet, miserable night; and by the light of the fire, Judith watched almost with awe the changes that passed over the speaking face of her sire, until suddenly rising, he caught her in his arms, and strained her to his heart with passionate fondness.

A strange contrast did her slight and delicate form present to the noble looking veteran's still lofty stature and intellectual countenance.

"Dear father," said the maiden, gently releasing herself from his clasping arms, and seating herself at his feet, "thou art sad to-night. Come, I will sing to thee those songs thou usedst to love so, when Manassah accompanied my lute with his voice. Oh! we were so happy then!" Unconsciously the maiden sighed, as she passed her hand over the strings of her small brass instrument, and began to play. "Not now — not now, my child," said her father, hastily; "my heart is too sad with thinking of my poor country, to hear gay music. Hark, how the wind is howling through the trees, as if it mourned the impending fate of Israel! I fancy I hear the groans of her suffering children in every gust that shakes the casement. Judith,

God preserve thee, my child," he continued, as he brushed a tear from off his cheek. "But I have many, many fears," and again he caught her in his arms and kissed her now pale brow. While thus employed, in one of the pauses of the storm they distinctly heard the sound of approaching footsteps, and the clattering of armour. "My God! my God!" exclaimed Jacob, wringing his hands, "the Philistines are upon us!" He had scarcely spoken, when a loud knocking was heard at the door; when hastily obeying a sign from her parent, Judith retreated to the inner apartment, while he answered the impatient summons for admission. The party who entered were ill-calculated to allay the terrors of the fond father. The leader was a tall, athletic man, in the prime of life, and as he removed his helmet, and sat himself down by the blazing fire, Jacob stole a look at his features. His naturally swarthy complexion was blackened by the burning sun. His forehead was high and narrow, surrounded by thick locks of black hair sprinkled with grey. His brows, which were also black and bushy, met over his sharp pointed nose, and gave a sinister expression to his countenance. The mouth and chin were finely formed; and the teeth white and even. But

the sneer upon his upper lip destroyed the pleasing character of the features. Altogether it was a face on which some of the worst feelings of human nature were legibly engraved. That he was of high rank the Hebrew guessed by the richness of his armour, which was of steel, inlaid with gold; and the deference paid by those who followed. Short time, however, was allowed him to make these observations; for the chief of the intruders having settled himself to his own satisfaction, imperiously demanded if he had not wherewithal to appease their hunger and thirst. Jacob understood the language, and muttering a curse in Hebrew, he sat about performing the unwelcome command; for he trusted that, when the craving of hunger and thirst were satisfied, they would depart, and leave him in peace. Alas, he was mistaken. With the most agonizing fear for the safety of his child, he beheld the chief rise, and with the assistance of another, disencumber himself of his heavy armour, and dispose himself to sleep beside the hearth.

What were the maiden's feelings as the moments flew rapidly by? Terrible—too terrible for description. In darkness and solitude she listened to the din of voices, speaking in a

strange language, what, for aught she knew, might be threats against the life of her beloved father. For herself, she could not dare to think. She had heard tales of horror and perfidy which it chilled her soul to remember; but she took refuge in Him who alone could aid her; and she prayed long and fervently.

Meanwhile, as the slender stock of their unwilling host was entirely exhausted, murmurs had begun to rise among the Philistines. The chief had fallen into a heavy slumber, and most of the officers had followed his example; when a young man suddenly espied the small instrument which Judith had forgotten in her hasty departure, and snatching it up, exclaimed, "By Baal, a lute!—and where is the fair hand that should awake its melody?"

Jacob's whole soul trembled, as he hastily ejaculated, "God of Israel! have mercy on my child!" But vain was the unhappy parent's prayer. It was scarcely uttered ere a piercing scream told him she was in the power of a pitiless enemy. "Father, father!" exclaimed Judith, in an agony of terror, "let not these rude men touch me. I cannot bear their looks. Oh God! oh God! have mercy upon me!" "My child, my blessed one," said the almost heart-

broken parent, "thou art a dove in the talons of a vulture, and I cannot aid thee." With a desperate effort, she burst from the arms of him who held her, and sprang towards her father; but ere she reached him a powerful arm interposed between her and her place of refuge. It was the chief, who, aroused by her piercing shrieks, now held her prisoner; and a gleam of pleasure lighted up his dark cheek, as he fixed his eyes on the beautiful face of his captive. "Calm thy fears, gentle one," he said, as he kissed her throbbing brow; "none here shall molest thee; but thou shalt go with me to the camp, and I will give thee slaves to wait upon thee, and thy black tresses shall be wreathed with gems and flowers. Thy dress shall be cloth of gold; and thou shalt become queen of my harem, and of my heart." The maiden heard his words, but she knew not their import. Yet she felt herself in his power, and again the cottage rang with her cries for assistance. Finding his words produced no other effect upon her than that of heightening her terror, he attempted by force to silence her; when Jacob, maddened by the sufferings of his child, darted forward, and snatching a sword from a soldier near him, dashed furiously toward the chief ere

there had been time to parry his unexpected attack. Two of the enemy had fallen, although age had withered his strength and unnerved his arm. Numbers too were against him : but Amalek, with a voice of thunder, bade them stand back ; and with one blow of his powerful arm, laid the old man at his feet, never to rise again. Judith, who had been released during the temporary struggle, sank beside him. It was an awful sight ; and even those fierce barbarians, hardened as they were in deeds of blood, shrunk from interrupting the poor girl's agony. Her long hair had escaped from its confinement, and lay in thick black masses on her fair cheek, fearfully contrasting with its paleness ; while her thin white dress was stained with the blood of her fond, indulgent parent, as she madly tore it up to staunch the wound. " Come near, my child," he uttered feebly. " I would speak some words with thee." She bent her head until her dark locks mingled with his thin silver hair. He placed his withered hand upon her brow, as he murmured, " I must leave, leave thee, my darling, in the midst of fierce foes, without one arm to protect thee, one eye to watch over thee, save that of a merciful God. It is this that makes death bitter. Oh

how different was the fate I had pictured for thee ! Have I watched for thee night and day, have I cheered my hours of toil with visions of thine happiness, to behold thee thus at last ? Judith, my life is fleeting fast ; and thou, who hast been the sunshine of my existence—oh what a fate must be thine ! There is one way to escape it. Yes, my daughter, one way by which thou canst save thyself from infamy. Thou canst die, my blessed one !” His voice grew fainter, and he could only add, “ God bless thee !” ere the hand fell from her brow, and he breathed his last.

It was morning ; and the storm of the preceding night had given place to a day of splendour. The sun shone as brightly over the quiet landscape as if no scream of mortal agony had been borne on the night wind, no cry of helpless innocence had been raised in vain supplication. The cottage of Jacob stood in the midst of a grove of sycamores, which effectually concealed it from the view of the passing traveller. But, alas ! how vainly human ingenuity struggles against the decrees of destiny. The Philistines had sought the protection of the trees against the inclement showers, and thus discovered the humble roof of their owner.

Slowly emerging from among the trees, a young man approached the dwelling with the careless step of one well acquainted with the locality. In figure, the new comer was slightly formed; but there was a firmness in his light step, which showed that its grace and agility more than compensated for its want of strength. His features were finely formed; and the fresh breeze of morning had given an animation to his countenance, that completed its pleasant expressions. He could scarcely have numbered eighteen years; but there was a deep shade of sadness on his brow, that accorded ill with his youthful appearance.

He had now reached the door of the cottage, and was much astonished to find it open, with no sounds of life within. "Can Judith have gone forth?" said Manassah: "I will go round by the little garden, and surprise her by my unexpected appearance;" and in another moment he had leaped the slight fence, and stood in the garden. Its silence and solitude struck a chill to his heart; and, as he turned to quit it, an undefinable dread that all was not right took possession of him. When he again reached the door, he shouted aloud the name of Judith. The echo of his own voice was all that answer-

ed him ; unable longer to bear the maddening suspense, he rushed into the cottage, and fell over the dead body of Jacob.

It was some moments ere the unhappy youth became fully conscious of the horrible reality of the scene before him : but when he at length comprehended the truth, he called again and again on the name of his beloved—how vainly, need not be told. Madly did he now rush into the room beyond. It was empty. “ She is lost to me for ever !” he exclaimed, as he again turned to the corpse of Jacob, her venerable father. “ Alas ! old man, could not thy white hairs save thee ? My God ! my God ! they have scalped him—he whose hand was against no man. And thou, my fair, my beautiful ! oh ! what a fate will be thine ? I cannot think ! It will drive me utterly distracted. But if I could not save, I can at least avenge thee !”

With a heart of fire, and step of wind, did Manassah take his way through the streets of Gibeah, towards the royal palace, which was the present abode of Jonathan ; and, passing through the garden, proceeded at once to the apartment of his master. There were now no household officers, no regal state ; and, without meeting any opposition, he reached the chamber of the prince.

CHAPTER II.

Can this be he, whom late I saw,
When victory flushed his brow ?
The crimson cheeks, the eye of fire
Are dimmed and pallid now.

How changed was the son of Saul, since, sword in hand, he had cheered his men in the attack on Geba, one short month before. His majestic figure, though still clothed in the habiliments of war, no longer challenged the admiration of the beholder by the grace and vigour that characterized it. His eyes were partly closed, and his broad and noble forehead was relieved by the finely-arched brow, and the dark curls that clustered round it. The style of his countenance was strictly Hebrew, but it was now pale with watching and weariness ; and its languid appearance was rendered still more apparent by the jet black of his hair and beard. He partly turned his head, as Manassah opened the door ; but perceiving who it was, he resumed his former attitude, as he said, " I have waited for thee long, Manassah ; but the hours fly

swiftly when gladdened by the presence of those we love." The voice was sweet and low; and he smiled for a moment, as he continued, "Didst thou not bear my greeting to thy sweet Judith, and the brave old man, her father?" Manassah answered only by a sigh so deep, that the son of Saul fixed an alarmed and eager gaze upon the countenance of his faithful follower; and read there, not the sadness of a temporary parting, but an expression of deep and hopeless despair.

Jonathan asked no questions—he guessed too well what had befallen him; but pressing his hand, turned away, to hide the unmanly tears that started to his eyes. This expression of sympathy from his kind and generous master was gratifying to the feelings of the unfortunate young man, and his pent-up anguish found vent in a violent burst of tears.

Jonathan did not interrupt him, until the violence of his grief had expended itself, and then he endeavoured to learn the full extent of his misfortune. But when he heard all, the indignant blood rushed into the cheek of the young prince, as rising from his seat, he clasped his hands together, exclaiming, "God of Heaven! Is there no remedy for all this? Must we

still endure to see our aged men murdered, and our maidens dragged from us, while we sit mourning like women by our own fireside? Oh, no, no, no! It must not, shall not be. I have thought of these things, Manassah, until thought became madness. Now I will act, and think no longer." A change had come over Jonathan, even while he was yet speaking. Like a young war-horse, when the trumpet sounds, his stately figure was erect, and his proud eye flashed with reawakened ardour, as he gave utterance to the high and noble thoughts that were swelling in his bosom. "Thou art now, like myself, a desperate man, Manassah. Wilt thou join with me in the cry of death or victory?" "Oh, how willingly!" replied Manassah; "and death will be welcome to me as a bridal bed, if I can avenge my Judith. I am thy slave—do with me as thou wilt." "Not so, not so," replied the son of Saul, "our risk is equal; our condition shall be the same. No longer my servant, but my companion, my equal, and my friend." As he spoke, the generous youth affectionately embraced and kissed him, thus sealing the new connection between them; and when the overpowering emotions of both had somewhat subsided, Jonathan unfolded his wild and daring

scheme to his young confident. There stood a remarkable rock, with two faces, close to Gibeah, which formed the outposts of the Philistine army. Here the intrepid youth determined to make an attack, the success of which depended on the alarm which the suddenness of the assault might strike into an army composed of various nations, who, usually at war with each other, had only united to compass the destruction of a mutual enemy. But Jonathan knew that jealousy existed in the camp, and skirmishes were daily taking place amongst the followers of the various chieftains. There were besides a great number of Hebrew captives with them, who would gladly aid those who came to break their chains and set them free.

There was a silence of some moments, which was broken by Manassah. "I will go," he said, with a faltering tone, "to bury my dead, and then for vengeance." "I cannot go with thee," said Jonathan, mournfully; "since I dare not leave the city, lest they take advantage of my absence: but we meet again to-night. Till then farewell."

Manassah departed, and Jonathan, with the assistance of a slave, disencumbered himself of his armour, and took his way towards the

chamber of his young and lovely wife. Never, perhaps, did history, either sacred or profane, present a nobler or better character in every relation of life, public or private, than that of the son of Saul. He was one of the few, the very few persons, on whose lives we can look with unmingled esteem and admiration. Generous, brave, and faithful, he risked his own life to preserve one whom he knew was destined to occupy the throne of his father instead of himself, and with unparalleled generosity removed him from his machinations.

Upon Jonathan's entrance, a young female, who had been reclining on a pile of cushions, rose from her seat, and advanced towards him, her dove-like eyes beaming with pleasure. The young chief caught her in his arms, and kissed her fair forehead, as he said, "This is kind, my sweet Zaire; hast thou waited long for me?" Zaire did not answer, but she seated herself, and drew him down beside her. The morning meal, consisting of fine wheaten cake, fruit, and milk, was placed on a small ivory table near them; and with true fervour he asked a blessing on it, ere either of them tasted it. Zaire saw that something had occurred to awake her husband from the lethargy of despair, into

which he had plunged during the last few days ; and whatever had occasioned the change, she felt happier that it was so.

“Thou wonderest, my wife,” said the Prince, tenderly, “but I will give way to cowardly despair no longer. I will eat, that my strength fail not, and try to slumber, lest in the hour of need weariness should overtake me. Thy voice, beloved, shall soothe me to repose, with one of those sweet tales of our people which none can tell so well as thou.” With a smile, the young wife seated herself at his feet, and thus began :—

Reyna,

A TALE OF THE WAR WITH BENJAMIN.

There dwelt, in a city of Judah, many years ago, an old man named Caleb ; and he had many sons, young warriors, bold as lions, strong as bears, but withal excelling in manly beauty. The father looked upon them with pride and joy, but his love was for the fair virgin, who was his only daughter. The maiden was beautiful, and her sire was wealthy, therefore she had many suitors ; but her love was with none of them, and her father said, “Tarry yet,

my child; peradventure thou mayest behold one who will be a delight to thine eye, and a joy to thine heart. Until then, rest contented." And the maiden loved to wander among the green valleys that surrounded her native city, with only one faithful attendant. It came to pass, one day, she had wandered farther than usual, and she stopped to gather flowers in a beautiful vale, between two steep hills. It was a bright shining day; and the heart of Reyna was as bright as the sunshine.

Happy and innocent, the gay girl pursued her sweet occupation, when she heard the fearful roar of a beast of prey. Ere she was aware of her perilous situation, a tremendous lion leaped the hill, and stood beside her. Reyna attempted to fly, but her limbs were paralyzed with terror. The beast was about to make his fatal spring, when he uttered a deep growl, leaped up in the air, and the next moment fell dead at her feet. In another instant the huntsman was beside her—Reyna had fainted. Raising the senseless girl in his arms, with a trembling hand he removed her veil, and loosened her long tresses, while those who followed him brought water from a neighbouring spring, to sprinkle her throbbing temples. The maiden

blushed exceedingly, when, on her recovery, she found herself in the arms of a stranger; but his noble mien and soothing words quickly restored her, and he went with her to the house of her father. Days passed away, and still the stranger dwelt beneath the roof of Caleb, and in time became a suitor for the hand of his lovely daughter. Caleb consented, for he was rich and powerful Benjamite; and this time Reyna blushed and smiled, instead of saying she would remain beneath the roof of her father. There was rejoicing in the dwelling of Caleb, and the nuptials only waited the coming of the bride's brothers. But when did earthly happiness become lasting?—[As she uttered these words, the young wife looked in the face of her noble husband, and burst into tears. "Nay, nay, thy tale has been too much for thee," said Jonathan, tenderly; "thou shalt tell no more to-day. Yet I would fain hear what became of the fair maiden and her gallant lover." Zaire smiled through her tears, and drying her eyes, resumed her tale.]

Reyna's brothers had been anxiously expected; and one morning she saw a man, mounted on a fleet mule, take the path that led to her father's house. He was two hours with him, when her

lover was summoned to the conference. Reyna wondered, but supposing it to be a message from her brothers, though her heart beat quicker, she busied herself in twining the tendrils of a jessamine round her casement, and tried to think of other things; but it would not do, and quitting her employment, she leaned her head on her hand, and anxiously awaited a summons to her father. It came at last, and with a beating heart the fair girl hastened to his presence. He was alone; and Reyna threw herself on his bosom, and wept she scarce knew why. The old man mingled his tears with hers, as he said, "Strengthen thy soul, my Reyna, for a heavy affliction hath come upon thee, and upon us all. Thou must part, my child, part for ever from him whom thou hast looked upon as thy future husband. Henceforward there is a barrier between him and thee that cannot be broken. No daughter of Judah must wed a Benjamite, for Benjamin hath no a longer a name in Israel. One of his children has committed a fearful crime, the tribe hath sheltered the offender, and the men of Israel have assembled at Mizpeh. All the valiant men, and those who are capable of bearing arms, are to go forth against their guilty brethren. This day thy beloved goes to

his own land. I would fain have spared thee, my child, the agony of parting, but against my better reason I yielded to his passionate entreaties that he should behold thee once more."

Reyna pressed her father's hand, but her anguish was too great for words. Who shall describe the agony of that hopeless parting! Evening came—Abner went forth on his way; and she who was so happy when the morning sun arose, retired to her pillow with a breaking heart. Week after week passed away, and there came rumours of defeat to the tribes of Israel; and shortly afterwards, tidings that the eldest and bravest of her brothers was slain. Still the maiden wept not, for the fount of her tears was dried up within her. Yet she mourned deeply and sincerely. There came tidings of a second defeat, and the intelligence that three of her brothers had fallen; but none spake of her lover.

The old man clasped his hands, and said "God's will be done; yet I would they had died in the arms of victory." The week of mourning was past. Then came a third messenger, and Reyna listened with a throbbing heart, for he spake of the leader of the Benjamites, and oh! how it ached, when she found that it

was her lover that led the army that fought against her brother, the sole surviving one ; and it wanted but that to increase her misery.

At length they heard that Benjamin was totally defeated, her proud cities were laid low, her children slain mercilessly ; none were spared—the old men and the young maiden, the strong men and the babe at the mother's breast, all alike perished. Reyna heard the tale, and her pale cheek grew a shade paler ; but she gave no other sign of emotion, as she said in a low voice, " Did all perish ? " " All, lady," replied the messenger, " except six hundred desperate men, who retired to the rock of Rimmon ; whither the tribes have sent envoys, offering peace and security to them, if they will lay down their arms, and return to their own dwellings." " And who," asked Reyna, breathlessly ; but she checked herself, and said, " Know ye the names of the survivors ? " " I do not, fair maiden," was the reply. " I left ere it could be known."

Time again flew on rapid wings ; summer, the bright and beautiful, was fading into the gulf of the past, and the men of Benjamin had some of them found wives amongst the virgins saved from the destruction of Jabesh-Gilead ;

yet many wanted them, and the Israelites had sworn not to give their daughters to the offending tribe. The maidens of Israel were to meet at Shiloh, to celebrate a festival given by the elders to the young virgins of the eleven tribes, and the father of Reyna bade her prepare to join with them. "Alas," she replied, "what should I do, oh my father, amid the gay and happy? My heart is not with the light dance or merry song." "Nay, dear child," said the old man, gently, "thou hast sorrowed long enough for thy betrothed. Remember, thou art my only daughter, and thy beauty is spoken of by the young men; and if thou goest not to the festival, the people will say the old man grudged her jewels to deck her person, therefore she tarried at home, because she would not look little amongst the daughters of Judah." Many more arguments did Caleb use, until, wearied out, the maiden at length consented.

There was rejoicing in Shiloh, for many a lovely maiden had met there to spend the hours in feasting and merriment. There were bright and lovely creatures, with fairy figures and raven locks, and glancing eyes, that made the heart glad to gaze on. But there never was joy where sorrow came not: though Reyna's step

was as light as the lightest there, her heart was full with many a bitter feeling.

It was evening; one of those bright starlight ones, when the intense blue of the cloudless sky contrasts so beautifully with the glittering lights of heaven. Reyna sat watching them, while her gay companions continued their pastimes; when she fancied she perceived the shadows of men emerging from the neighbouring vineyard. Her first impulse was to cry out; but she checked herself, imagining that the lovers of some of her companions wished to create surprise and pleasure by their sudden appearance.

Little time, however, was given for reflection, ere a band of armed men rushed in amongst them, and many a bright cheek grew pale with terror. Then came loud cries of anguish, and vain calls on some loved name for assistance; but before many minutes had elapsed, the place was deserted, and each of the intruders bore a lovely maiden away on his mule before him. "But where was Reyna all this time?" asked Jonathan. "When she felt herself in the power of an armed man," continued Zaire, "her first thought was of her father, and the anguish he would suffer when he heard of her abduction; and in a voice of despair she entreated her

captor to release her, and return her to his arms." "What, wouldst thou again leave me to despair?" he replied, in a voice that thrilled to her very soul; "Fear not for thy father, dearest: though the men of Israel swore they would not give their daughters to the sons of Benjamin, they made no oath that they should not wed them." "Abner?" cried the wondering maiden, as she allowed him to press his lips to her cheek; "God of heaven, I thank thee!" and from that time, the fifteenth day of the month was known as Hamishsho O-sur-Boav, and kept as a festival throughout Israel.

CHAPTER III.

In terror, even to agony, she clings around the wondering chief.

MOORE.

It was evening, and the inmates of the Philistines' camp had begun their nightly revels. From the tent of the chieftains came shouts of boisterous laughter, and noisy exclamations, which shewed the wine had begun its work already. A little apart from the scene of one of these revels, stood a large tent, decked with rich purple hangings, festooned with cloth of gold. The interior was fitted up with oriental magnificence. The furniture was of richly carved ebony, and luxurious couches invited the weary limbs to repose. At that part of the tent farthest from the entrance, sat a young female; her dress was of the Hebrew fashion, but it was torn and soiled, and in many parts stained with blood. Her face was leaning upon her hand, so as entirely to conceal her features; but the hand and arm possessed exquisite

beauty. She neither moved nor spoke, but looked more like a statue than aught of mortal mould. She was not the only inmate of that gorgeous spot. Another was beside her, although the maiden was unconscious of his presence, until he laid his hand upon her shoulder, exclaiming, "Ha! my fair captive, are thy thoughts so pleasing, that they absorb thee wholly?"

The maiden started, and uttered a faint cry. Well might the gentle girl be terrified. It was the fierce Amalek. He had changed his armour for festive robes, but his appearance was not improved by the alteration. His dress consisted of a short red tunic, embroidered with gold. It was fastened at the waist by a girdle of deep blue, in which was stuck a short dagger, and from it hung a variety of human scalps. He wore a necklace of human teeth, curiously intermixed with gold ornaments, and a small circle of the same adorned his brow. Judith had not answered his address. Finding that she had resumed the attitude in which he found her, the fierce chief rudely raised her in his arms, and parting back her hair, gazed long and fixedly into her face. "By Baal thou art beautiful," he said at last; "and, Hebrew and slave as thou art,

thy beauty were a dower kings might envy. Nay, weep not, I love not sadness; joy and laughter are better suited to bright eyes like thine. 'Tis well that thou art here; for this night the fairest maiden amongst the Hebrew captives is to be sacrificed to Baal, and thou art fairest of them all." With a desperate effort the unhappy girl attempted to break from him, but in vain.

He held her with a grasp of iron, and only mocked her effort to get free. The curtain of the tent was now slowly drawn, and two men stood in the entrance. At the sight of them Amalek dropped his hold of Judith, and went forward to meet them.

One was a priest of Baal, long past the prime of life, with venerable white hair; and a beard of the same colour, which descended to his waist. In stature he was almost gigantic. Age had not diminished his lofty height, or dimmed the fire of his eye; and a fit minister of a bloody religion was he, before whom the barbarian chief now bowed with the deepest reverence. The other was a young man of about eighteen, richly attired, with a prepossessing countenance, and a clear blue eye, which betokened generosity and benevolence. Both started at the sight of the youthful maiden, who, springing past the brutal

chief, rushed like lightning to the door of the tent. But the priest, guessing her purpose, dragged her back by the hair, and with a despairing cry she threw herself into the arms of the young warrior, exclaiming : " Save, oh save me from him ! " " Save thee from what, trembler ? " answered the young chief, in her own language. " From him, " she replied with frantic agony, as she pointed to the dark and frowning Amalek—"from the murderer of my father—my beloved, indulgent father." " Give her to me, " said Amalek, fiercely, " and tell me what is thy errand here. " " We come from the King, " said the priest, haughtily. " He sent us to command thy presence at the banquet, and the sacrifice which takes place at midnight. " " It is well, " said Amalek ; " now, boy, give back my captive. " " Poor girl, " said Ethniel, " thou must go—I cannot protect thee. " " Canst thou not ? Oh, bethink thee ; hast thou no mother, no sister, whom thou lovest ? Oh ! 'twas but yesterday a father smiled upon me, while he blest me, and a fond lover hung upon my accents. To-day what am I ? What the chance of war may make thy dear ones ere another sun shall set on this poor country. Kill me, but do not, do not give me back unto that blood-stained monster. " †Amalek

now attempted to seize her ; but Ethniel withstood him, encumbered as he was with the helpless girl. The young chief, however, was no match for his ferocious opponent, and fearing that mischief might ensue, the priest interfered. Suddenly there came a cry of "the King, the King!" The words were scarcely uttered, before the monarch entered, accompanied by a glittering train. He stood for a moment gazing with mingled curiosity and wonder on the scene before him, his eye glancing alternately from his brother to the young chief, and the fair girl who clung convulsively to him, pale with exhaustion and terror. "What does this mean?" he said, at length, addressing the priest, who knelt before him. "Have we not quarrels enough in the camp already? Must I find tumult and bloodshed even in the tent of my brother?"

On the King's entrance, Amalek for the moment dropped his sword, still standing in a menacing attitude, as he said: "Listen, oh King, to the words of my complaint; and say, if you insolent deserves not chastisement?" "Come hither both," said the monarch, gravely, as he seated himself on an ivory throne, while his guard wheeled round him, "and I will judge

between thee. Do thou, Amalek, speak first." Throwing himself at the feet of his brother, the Philistine narrated the cause of his anger, making such comments as his indignation suggested. "It is enough," said Amilcar; "let Ethniel speak." Thus addressed, the young prince came forward and knelt, while his lovely companion knelt beside him. His tale was soon told; for he only pointed to that unhappy one, and said; "She sought protection from me, and I gave it; for she wept; and hard must that heart be that can resist a helpless woman's tears. Prince," he continued, turning to Amalek, "two of my fairest slaves will I give thee for this Hebrew girl, and such other ransom as the king may name." "That one will I have, and no other," said Amalek. There was a pause, and each looked anxiously into the face of the other; but when the king again spake, a chill fell on every heart. "Prince," he said, "listen: we are in an enemy's country. True, we have trampled upon it. She is low at our feet, and the morrow's sun may see her proudest and best in chains; but if we allow dissensions in our camp, and quarrels amongst our chieftains, the Hebrew, cunning in devices, will become inspired with the chance of success, and, uniting together, they will not only

tear from us the conquest we have gained, but cut off our retreat to our own land ; whilst the offended gods will leave us to our fate. Let the woman die," he continued, in a voice that rung through the tent. " Offer her as a propitiatory sacrifice to the offended deities, and all will be well." A dead silence followed the cruel speech. Every eye was turned upon the youthful victim.

Against the king's decree there was no appeal ; and it only remained for Ethniel to acquaint her with it. And Judith, how did she receive the tidings that doomed her to a fearful death ? Not with weeping—for what could tears avail her with those who knew no touch of human feeling ?

Rising from her kneeling attitude, she threw back her hair from her face, and gazed firmly upon her persecutors. She had prayed for death as a blessing ; and they had given it to her. " I can but die," she thought ; " what matters if this weak flesh endure a few more minutes of torture than I reckoned on ? He who cares for the meanest of his creatures, will give me strength to bear."

CHAPTER IV.

“The combat deepens. On, ye brave,
Who rush to glory or the grave.

CAMPBELL.

It was deep midnight, and silence hung over the city of Gibeah, when Jonathan and his companion left it, to pursue their desperate enterprise. They had climbed the steep hill that overlooked the country, and paused for a moment, to gaze, perhaps for the last time, on the scenes before them. At their feet lay the fortified city of Gibeah, with its noble palaces, with their flat roofs and terraced gardens, on which a bright and glorious stream of light from the full moon was shining. Far away on the right stretched the lofty mountains of Judea, and beneath them what had once been rich and fertile valleys, which now too plainly told of the ravages of the invading army. The country for miles around them all told the same fearful tale of barbarian warfare. Beneath the moonlight on the summit of that hill, they knelt

together, and prayed to Him who alone could aid them ; and with renewed enthusiasm pursued their way. They have reached the outposts, and they are seen. Hark at the gibes of the Philistine sentinel. They have heard his scornful words, and shouting aloud, "The Lord hath delivered them into our hands," Jonathan bounded up the rock with the speed of an antelope, followed by Manassah.

In a moment they were surrounded : but supernatural strength was in the arms of both ; and, fast as the grass beneath the scythe of the mower, fell the corpses of the Philistines around them. Yet still, as they fell, fresh foes succeeded. Jonathan and his faithful follower forced their way onward, until they found themselves in the heart of the camp, where we must leave them a moment, to return to Judith. Passively did the unhappy maiden yield herself into the hands of the Philistine girls, who came to deck her for the sacrifice. No means were omitted by them, to heighten her natural beauty. Her dress was of scarlet and gold, adorned with precious stones ; a coronet of gold was on her brow ; while her braided tresses were wreathed with gems of surpassing beauty.

Meanwhile the preparations for the sacrifice

were on a scale of magnificence almost unequalled. In the centre of the camp, an altar had been built to Dagon, the chief god of the Philistine, and a gigantic statue of the idol had been placed beside it. The inferior priests and devotees had already begun to assemble, and chaunt hymns in honour of their false gods; a huge pile had been lighted to consume the sacrifice; and the high priest, with a golden censer in his hand, stood beside the altar. Forth from the tent came the royal train, glittering in barbaric pomp and splendour; and then the fair victim was led forward. The lurid light of the fire gave an unearthly hue to her pale cheek, as they forced her to kneel beside it.

With frantic gestures, the devotees danced in a circle, round the figure of the idol. Then a wild cry from the people, and a woman darted through the crowd. There were two children in her arms: one was a fine healthy child, with bright eyes, and he laughed joyously at the pageant before him. The other was a sickly, deformed creature, and his feeble cry was distinctly heard amid the confusion around. The mother had reached the idol; and amid the plaudits of the wretches who beheld her, she hurled the sickly babe into the midst of the

flames. The music struck up harsh discordant notes, and the infant perished.

Judith beheld this, with feelings of the deepest horror, and passively resigned herself to the fate that awaited her. If any feeling possessed her, it was pity for the infatuated worshippers of a senseless idol.

The music again began to play. As she was borne up the steps of the altar, she exclaimed aloud: "Dear father, I have obeyed thee. I have chosen the only way to escape infamy, and I am about to die. God of mercy, receive my soul."

Whence comes that shout, "For God and Israel?" Why hath the priest released his victim? She knew not, though she heard the clashing of steel around her—the cries of the combatants, and the groans of the dying, and once—but it must have been delusion—she thought she heard the voice of Manassah. Meanwhile the tide of war was rolling onward. The altar was overturned, the statue thrown down, but her senses were deserting her. She heard, she saw no more.

Morning broke at length upon the scene of slaughter, discovering friend and foe mingled together in like confusion. Jonathan and his

friend were still unwounded, but gradually giving way, from exhaustion and weariness ; but the Philistines were flying in every direction, while fresh reinforcements of the Hebrews were coming up. Saul, seeing the confusion of the enemy's camp, caused immediate search to be made throughout the city, and discovering the absence of his son, gathered together some followers, and joined in pursuit. But ere he departed, he made an awful vow, which he had speedily cause to repent of.

CHAPTER V.

"The crowd in a speechless circle gather,
To see the son fall by the doom of his father."

BYRON.

"Is it a dream, beloved?" said Zaire, two days after the events we have just narrated took place; "and dost thou indeed sit beside me, alive and unharmed, from thy perilous adventure? Oh! Jonathan, hadst thou known all I felt during that dreadful night!" and tears gushed into her eyes at the remembrance. "Thou?" said her husband, tenderly; "how knewest thou that I had left the city?" "I will tell thee, Jonathan," she replied; "when my tale was done, thou slept, and all that day I sat watching and praying beside thee, and listening to thy voice, as in sleep thou murmuredst thy purposes aloud; keen are a woman's perceptions, when those she loves are in danger." "Thou knewest it all, then, and made no effort to detain me! Generous, noble hearted Zaire." "I knew," she continued, whilst a glow of pleasure at his

commendations lighted her face, "that the struggle would be greater, the parting more bitter; and I nerved my heart to bear, lest my woman's weakness should melt thy lofty purpose." Again did Jonathan press her to his heart, though he wanted words to tell her how much he thanked her generous forbearance.

Not less tender was the conference between Judith and Manassah; but as lovers' meetings are proverbially insipid, except to the parties concerned, we will spare the reader the detail of this particular one, and hasten to the conclusion of our tale.

It was a large wide plain. On one side there were multitudes of men, and on the other the monarch of Israel, and his heroic son. The lofty statures and noble countenances of Saul and Jonathan, were the only marks that distinguished them from the chieftains of the tribes. There was a murmur of applause, when the young warrior bowed to the people, and then a death-like silence followed—for one amongst those who stood beneath the blessed sunshine in the full enjoyment of life and health, would, ere he should set, become cold and senseless clay. Who could say on whom the doom might fall? The lots were drawn; each looks wildly on his fel-

low ; the result is told. It rests with Saul and Jonathan. The faces of the father and son are very pale ; and the lots are cast once more. There was a cry of dismay so long and loud, that the watchers within the walls heard it distinctly, and many an anxious wife and weeping mother fancied she heard in it the death shriek of her husband or child. It was Jonathan, the brave, the noble, and generous Jonathan, on whom the lot of death had fallen ; and when that cry was hushed, every eye was turned upon the young warrior.

While Saul addressed him, the cheek of the king was flushed ; but he gave no other sign of emotion as he said, in a voice that had lost none of its firmness, "Confess thy crime, my son, for as the Lord liveth thou must surely die." "I have committed no crime," replied the prince, solemnly ; "I did, unknowing of thy vow, taste a little wild honey, when following the Philistines, for my soul was faint within me. Now, if thou deemest me worthy of death, my lord and father, I am willing to abide by thy sentence."

"I have sworn it," cried Saul, in a voice in which the feelings of a father struggled with the sternness of a judge ; "and my oath cannot be broken." Jonathan did not reply, for the blood

was frozen in his veins. It was not that he feared death—he had braved it too often : but to die thus, by the hands of the executioner, guiltless even of the shadow of a crime—it was too much for human nature to bear; and he turned his head aside, to hide the feelings he could not control. “Why, why,” he murmured, “did I not die by the swords of the heathen? why did I escape the weapons of thousands of enemies, to perish by the hand of a father!” Meanwhile Saul, unwilling to trust himself with a glance, lest his resolution should be shaken, beckoned the minister of death to approach.

He came with a reluctance he had never before known in the execution of his revolting duty. In his hand he held the fatal instrument, known as the bow-string. He was a native of the desert—for no son of Israel would become an executioner. “So soon!” murmured the prince, almost unconsciously, as he felt the bow-string round his neck. “One brief moment—give me that.” Saul bowed his head, for he could not speak, and his son thus addressed the people.

“Men of Israel,” he said, “when years have passed away, and your children’s children are around ye, and they may say that Jonathan died

a felon's death, will ye not tell them he was innocent of all but involuntary error?" There was the sound of one weeping beside him; and when he turned, his faithful Manassah was in his arms. "Manassah," he said, in a low voice, "I would fain speak a few words with thee. Thou hast been to me a true and faithful friend; but the time has arrived when our companionship must be broken. The parting is at hand. Thou wilt be happy—I know thou wilt—with thy fair Judith. Leave these dangerous scenes of warfare, and become a peaceful husbandman. Manassah," he continued, as he unfastened his sword, "take this, and keep it till my boy becomes a man. Then give it to him, and bid him prize it for his father's sake. And thou, my sweet Zaire, my devoted wife, who shall tell this tale unto thee?" "Must thou, oh! must thou perish, my brave, my noble master? Cannot I die for thee?" "Nay," said Jonathan, while a melancholy smile played across his features, "that were, indeed, too great a sacrifice." They now separated, and the bow-string was again placed around his neck.

The executioner was about to do his work, when a large body of men interposed between him and his victim; while a voice from the

crowd, which he knew to be Manassah's, thus addressed the people: "Men of Israel, hear me! What are the crimes for which our law adjudges a man worthy of death? Ye all know. Which of these crimes hath Jonathan committed? All are silent—not one answer. Then I answer, Neither. But I will tell ye what he did; when the Philistines overrun your country, and plundered your dwellings, carrying away your wives and daughters, sprinkling your hearthstones with the blood of your little ones; and when ye were all at their mercy, he, by the help of God, slew the slayers in the midst of their triumph, and preserved Israel from ruin and desolation. And will ye suffer him, your deliverer, to perish by the hands of the executioner? Will ye suffer this disgrace to come upon Israel? Or will ye save him who saved you all, your wives, and little ones, from the spoiler? Must Jonathan die?" There were loud cries of "No, no! for the honour of Israel it cannot be!" When Saul heard this daring defiance of his authority, the feeling of the father struggled against the indignation of the monarch. Yet it lasted but a little while. Nature claimed her due.

"Men of Israel," he said, "ye have spoken, not me. Bear witness all; though the offender

was the pride of my heart, I would have performed the dictates of justice on him, as well as on the meanest of my subjects. Therefore, when this is spoken of hereafter, let no man say, 'Saul spared him, because he was his son!'" As he spoke, he pressed Jonathan to his heart, while the people shouted forth, "God bless Saul and his brave son, the saviour of Israel!"

HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

DAVID had just returned to Ziklag after a victory over the Amalekites, who had burnt it during his absence, and carried away captive the inhabitants, among whom were his two wives.

When he was informed of the death of Saul by an Amalekite, who brought his crown and bracelet, as proofs that he had killed him, (while in fact he died by his own hand,) no doubt expecting that the news would be acceptable to David, and that he should be rewarded, David ordered him to be executed by one of his attendants, for although Saul had been ungrateful to him, he still respected him as the anointed of the Lord. Ishboetheth, one of Saul's sons, disputed the throne with David, who was at first only recognised by his own tribe, Judah.

2712. After a struggle of eight years, Abner, the general of Ishbosheth, and uncle of Saul, having quarrelled with him, made proposals to David, which were immediately accepted.

Abner had scarcely left Hebron, when Joab, David's general, followed, and under pretence of speaking with him, stabbed him, in revenge for the death of his brother Asahel, whom Abner had killed while in pursuit of him. Ishboetheth was murdered by two of his officers, who took his head to David: but he immediately ordered them to be executed, and buried Ishboetheth with honour.

Immediately after the death of Ishbosheth, David was recognized as King by all the tribes at Hebron.

2713. David gained a signal victory over the Philistines; and defeated them a second time.

2717. He brought up the ark of the Lord to Jerusalem, from Jabesh, where it had remained since it was returned by the Philistines, who had captured it in the time of Eli, with great rejoicing.

2718. After a short cessation, David was again compelled to go to war with his troublesome neighbours. He subdued the Syrians on the north, Philistines on the west, and Moabites on the east, and placed garrisons in all the cities of Edom on the south.

2723. David sent Joab and his brother in command of an army to chastise the Ammonites, who had insulted his ambassadors, and joined themselves to the Syrians.

2725. Joab having beaten the enemy, besieged Rubbah, which David came to take possession of, and took the King's crown for his own use.

2726. Solomon, his son, was born to Bathsheba, his favourite queen.

2737. Absalom, David's favourite son, broke out in rebellion, and compelled him to fly from Jerusalem. David's army having defeated Absalom, the young prince was caught whilst making his escape, by his hair, which was very thick, in the boughs of an oak; which being told to Joab, he, having a quarrel to avenge on him, contrary to the orders of David, slew him while thus suspended.

David was immediately invited by the men of Judah to return. They came out to meet him; but the men of Israel, ashamed that they, being the larger body, should not have been consulted, quarrelled with them; and at length their anger became so great, that Sheba, the son of Bichri, a Benjamite, blew a trumpet and said, "We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse," and shout-

ing the ancient cry of rebellion, "To your tents, O Israel!" was immediately followed by all the men of the other tribes.

2738. The King corrected the disorders in his household, and sent Amasa to raise the men of Judah to the pursuit of Sheba; but Joab, who it appears was jealous, followed after, and taking hold of him, as if to kiss him, stabbed him with a sword which he had concealed, and immediately raising an army, followed Sheba to Abel of Bethmaachah, and besieged him there. But a woman persuaded some of the inhabitants to kill the traitor, and throw his head over the wall, and thus saved the city.

2742. The Philistines again commenced a war, but were beaten in three pitched battles; in the first of which David nearly lost his life, but was saved by Abishai. After this the army would not allow him any more to go out to battle.

2743. A pestilence of three days throughout the land occurred, as a punishment from God, for the King in a moment of pride having numbered the people.

THE SLAVE.

CHAPTER I.

Then is not youth, as fancy tells,
Life's summer prime of joy?—
Oh, no! for hopes too long delayed,
And feelings blasted or betrayed,
The fabled bliss destroy.

SOUTHEY.

It was a fine clear day in spring, and the birds were singing gaily in the branches of the trees, while the perfume of the flowers, and the murmurs of the fountain, gave a stillness and beauty to the scene, almost enchanting. Never, perhaps, did the sun smile upon a lovelier sight than the garden of Absalom presented at the time when our tale must open.

It was an extensive piece of ground, laid out with every variety of shrubs and flowers, while the fountains of white marble, forming artificial cascades, made the air deliciously cool and refreshing. On a small green plot, beneath one of these,

with her hands and lap full of roses, lay a beautiful child, about seven years old. A young gazelle was at her feet, and like its little mistress, was slumbering tranquilly. Her lips were parted, and a bright smile hovered around them. How beautiful is the repose of infancy !

But there was yet another figure to complete the picture ; a young female slave, with a fan of feathers in her hand, while a lute lay on the grass beside her. She could not have been more than fifteen years of age ; but sorrow had set his heavy hand on her young brow, and left its mark behind. "Happy child," she murmured, as she stooped, and kissed the fair forehead of the little Tamar. What a contrast does thy fate present to mine ! I never was young in feeling. My life has been one long night of sorrow." Abia spoke truly : the sunshine of her existence had been blighted by dark and threatening storms. Nearly related to the family of Saul, her father had held a confidential and lucrative situation in his household. On the death of that monarch, and the murder of Ishbosheth, his last descendant, he was reduced from affluence to the depth of penury.

Abia had been affianced in early childhood to the son of a wealthy citizen of Hebron ; but,

alas, human nature is the same in all ages and countries! When David removed to Jerusalem, Isaac, the father of her betrothed, followed him, and all intercourse was broken off between the families. As Isaac increased in prosperity, Jehoida, the father of Abia, who had also removed to the new city, was gradually sinking into the grave, leaving his widow helpless with four young children. At this juncture, after having lived in exile for several years, Absalom, the son of David, returned to the city, bringing with him a Syrian bride. One of the slaves who accompanied the princess from her own land, accidentally became acquainted with the widow. Abia was sent to the palace on an errand. Her beauty attracted the notice of Yemima, and she proposed to purchase the fair girl for a term of seven years from her mother. Oh! how bitter was the struggle this offer caused to the unfortunate parent; and when, through the persuasions of Abia herself, she at length consented, it was not until the last morsel of bread had been eaten, and she beheld her starving babes clinging in silent agony around her. The purchase money bought food for her other children; but the wretched mother never smiled again. Three years—long, weary years, they

were to the slave, for in them she had known bitter sufferings from the caprices and passions of her haughty mistress—passed away. Absalom was reconciled to his father. An artificial calmness overspread the political horizon—an unnatural calm, such as precedes the breaking forth of an earthquake. Although occasionally allowed to visit her mother, Abia had never seen her betrothed, or his young sister; but the fame of his beauty, and high favour at the court of the king, was often named in her presence.

Seizing the lute from the grass, impelled by a sudden feeling for which she could not account, Abia, while the tears started to her eyes, played and sung the following little song:—

They tell me that youth is the season of gladness,
And the hearts of the youthful should never know sadness;
But the hours that to others brought pastime and glee
Were heavy with anguish and suffering to me.

She had scarcely finished the last words when a rose fell upon her instrument, and looking up, she saw a young man gazing upon her with looks of admiration. She thought she had never seen a more noble looking countenance, or a finer figure. She checked her first impulse to cry out, and waited with a throbbing breast for him to address her. She did not wait long; for in a

voice of exquisite sweetness, he apologized for his intrusion, saying, "that he had entered in search of a tame dove," pointing to the bird which he held by a silken string in his hand. "I trust I did not alarm thee," he added; "I would not willingly occasion terror to one so lovely." There was something in the voice and manner of the stranger that brought back a dreaming remembrance of having met him in other places and happier times. To the mind of Abia, those rich full tones seemed familiar to her. But where, or how she had met him, she could not tell. The blood rushed to her cheek, and again to her heart, but she tried vainly to speak. The stranger saw her confusion, and pitied it: but he made no movement to depart, until Abia, fearing that she might be observed by some of the household, began to be seriously alarmed. "Thou hast found the bird," she said, kindly. "I have," he replied, "and thou wouldst have me leave thee now. Farewell, sweet one, then, until we meet again;" and kissing his hand to her, he was out of sight in a moment. It was an inexpressible relief to the slave, when she found herself again alone, for the little Tamar, Absalom's daughter, had awakened from her slumbers, and throwing her arms

around the neck of her kind nurse, inquired with a childish curiosity, "why she wept?" Abia answered only by kissing her, and accompanied by her little charge, turned towards the palace. Although the Jewish women were not secluded with the jealous care with which the Mussulmen of later times exclude the females of their family from every gaze but their own, enough of eastern custom prevailed amongst them, to prevent their mixing indiscriminately with the other sex: and, in the houses of the wealthy, separate apartments were assigned them. It was hither that Abia bent her steps, entering a lofty and richly furnished apartment, the air of which was fragrant with incense. On a small throne of ivory sat the proud Syrian wife of Absalom. Her dress was of the Tyrian purple, adorned with gold and gems. Around the hem of her garment were small ornaments of gold. Her long hair, which hung in thick braids down to her feet, was decked with natural flowers; and a string of pearls, of dazzling whiteness, formed a circle round her forehead. Her lofty stature harmonized well with the expression of her beautiful face, for pride and passion were legibly written in every look and movement. Around her thronged the Syrian slaves,

who had accompanied her from her own land. The females were engaged at the needle. Two little Hebrew girls, of exquisite beauty, were playing on the harp. Both had been weeping; while, at a little distance, others were dancing for the amusement of the princess. Close beside the wife of Absalom, on a lower seat, was his young and lovely sister, the unfortunate Tamar; and never was there a greater contrast, both in person and disposition, than they presented.

Tamar was slightly formed, and her sylph-like figure was so worn by sickness and sorrow, that it showed plainly to the beholder one destined for an early grave. Her hand was so transparent, that every blue vein might be distinctly seen beneath their fair covering. Her face was very pale, except one small bright hectic spot on either cheek, and the traces of grief were on her countenance. Not the light summer cloud, that passes over the heart of youth, like the storm that clears the sultry air, and leaves it brighter than before, from its momentary darkness; but the deep, heavy, enduring anguish, which cometh like lightning to the stately cedar, and finds it in the pride of youth and beauty, but leaves it scorched and withered, never more

to put forth the green bud of promise ; while her eyes, of deep hazel, told a tale of anguish, softened, not subdued. Her dress was of pure white, without ornament of any kind, while her forehead was pressed against her clasped hands, to still the throbbing of her temples. Gliding noiselessly in amongst her companions, whilst the child hastened to her mother, Abia resumed her seat at an embroidery frame, on which she had been occupied in the morning ; but her thoughts wandered from the gorgeous chamber, with its fragrant perfumes, its rich cushions, marble vases filled with choice flowers, and the gentle murmur of the fountains that cooled the air with refreshing showers, to the humble dwelling of her mother, in the suburbs of Jerusalem ; and oh ! how gladly would she have exchanged the splendour of her new abode for freedom and poverty. Oh, slavery ! Even in thy mildest form, thou art a bitter draught.

Meanwhile, the youth who had intruded on the solitude of Abia, slowly pursued his way through the streets of Jerusalem. It is scarcely necessary to say, that his thoughts were on the young girl whom he had so strangely encountered. Her youth and loveliness, combined with her situation, rendered her an object of interest

to one deeply imbued with the romance of the age and country in which he lived. During his solitary walk, her image alone occupied his mind; nor were these feelings diminished, when, on entering his own dwelling, he encountered his fair young sister, and recounted to her his morning adventure, giving her at the same time, the bird which he had that morning purchased. "Give me a description of this enchantress, my brother," said the laughing Rachel, after she had listened with unwearied patience to his rhapsodies; "that I may at least form my own judgment of her appearance." She who spoke, was herself a lovely creature: her rich chestnut hair fell in long ringlets beneath a small flat cap of scarlet cloth, with a tassel of gold; while her bright black eyes laughed out from her long dark lashes. Her clear olive complexion was tinged with a deep colour, and her dimpled mouth and pearly teeth completed its fine expression. Her brother greatly resembled her, except in height; and never were two beings more fondly attached than Judah and Rachel. They were the only children of wealthy parents; and on the death of their mother, the father had taken no other wife, but lavished all his affections upon them. Their mother's sister, herself a childless widow,

with large possessions, had taken up her residence with them, and watched over the ripening beauty and virtues of her niece. With deep and intense affection, to her the guileless girl confided every feeling of her young heart, without reserve.

At the court of the king, and in the army, Judah had already gained high renown, and the heart of his sister bounded with joy when she heard his praises spoken. "My father has been asking for thee, and I have not yet—" the remainder of her speech was interrupted by the entrance of another person, a man of about fifty years, with long sharp features. His hair was sprinkled with grey; a large shawl was twisted round his head; his person had been decked with great care, and perfumed with rich odours. Rachel turned, with the lightness and grace of a young fawn, to meet him. "Where hast thou lingered, my son?" said Isaac, for so was their father called. "The prince hath been at the palace to-day, and thy name was mentioned with much approbation by him. Of a surety, he is a wise and virtuous man." "What prince?" said Judah, with some astonishment; "surely my father cannot mean the proud Absalom?" "Thou art mistaken, my son;" said Isaac, mildly. "Ab-

salom is not proud, but generous and warm-hearted. He hath already done much good amongst the poor, since his restoration to the King's favour;—but Merab waits for us. Let us go in, my children.” While he led the way, the brother and sister lingered behind, to speak some words of kindness to a white-haired old man, who had entered the hall just as their father quitted it; and his eyes sparkled with pleasure, as he watched their retreating figures, and blessed them as they disappeared.

CHAPTER II.

Curse on the innovating hand attempts it ;
Remember him, the villain, righteous heaven !
In thy great day of vengeance—blast the traitor,
And his pernicious counsels, who for wealth,
For power, the pride of greatness, or revenge,
Would plunge his native land in civil wars.

ROWE.

“ Do you go to Absalom’s banquet ? ” inquired Jehuda, one of Judah’s young companions, as they passed together through the palace gates. “ It takes place three days before Shevuus.”* “ I have not heard of it,” replied Judah. “ Does the king attend it ? ” “ He does not ; but is it possible that you knew not of this projected feast ? All Jerusalem rings with it. Absalom is becoming very popular : but I like him not.” “ Neither do I,” responded Judah, with emphasis. “ Why these insidious efforts to force himself into favour with the people ? Remember his craft in getting his brother into his power, and his thirst for blood. God grant no evil comes of this.” Without further speech the young men strolled on to-

• Pentecost.

gether, until both paused, as by mutual consent, before the splendid dwelling of the prince of whom they had been speaking. A number of slaves were employed in a thick grove, marking the branches to be cut down in order to deck the banquet.

In the garden some young females were engaged in training, and tying up, the various plants and flowers that needed their fostering care. Among them Judah looked vainly for her whose image, for the last ten days, had occupied his fancy, sleeping or awake. She was at that moment tending with assiduous care the sick couch of the gentle Tamar. Within the palace, all was silence and solitude, except in the private chamber of the Princess Yemima.

In that chamber a consultation was taking place, which involved the fate of thousands. Yemima herself was flushed and much agitated, as she glanced her eye alternately from her husband to the other three persons assembled there to plan unnatural rebellion and bloodshed.

Most beautiful is the nature of woman when her soft hand smooths the couch of sickness, or her gentle voice speaks comfort to the wretched. In all the relations of society she can soften

man's rugged heart, and wake him to good and kindly feelings ; but when she forgets her proper sphere, and mingles with the ambitious, the blood-thirsty, the selfish and cold-hearted, the fallen angel becomes a demon. Thus it was with the wife of Absalom. The prince himself was very handsome ; but there was an effeminacy in his manners and appearance far from pleasing. The man who sat on the divan beside him was the reverse of this. It was Ahitophel, the crafty counsellor, whose name is so deservedly infamous in the annals of his country. Of the other two, Amasa, the future general of Absalom's army, was one ; and the other was a man still more deservedly infamous than Ahitophel. It was Jonadab, the base counsellor of Ammon. Ahitophel was the first to break the silence that unconsciously had fallen on them all ; for when there is a great stake in hand, there is generally hesitation and irresolution, ere anything is finally resolved on. " Thy plan, Jonadab, is a subtle one, and likely to succeed : therefore it behoves my lord, ere he ask leave to depart for Hebron, to sound the purposes of his followers, for which the banquet will afford ample opportunity. And now what is my lord's purpose regarding the king ?" Absalom started ; this was a ques-

tion he had never yet asked himself. Yet he knew he was about to violate the ties of nature, and deluge the kingdom with blood, by rebellion against his father. He had never paused to think that his father's death must be one of the first consequences of the crime; and he shuddered, as the conviction forced itself upon him. Yemima marked his agitation, and smiled at his weakness; while she said, in a voice fearfully distinct from the silence around, "He must die; for while life remains to David, the kingdom of Absalom will rest on a foundation of sand." The words were spoken; and none uttered dissent but Amasa. "He is an old man," he said, "and cannot live many years. Were it not better to banish him from Palestine, than stain our hands with murder? The people will look on such a crime with horror. All the good qualities of the king will be recalled when it is known that he hath perished. Those who are most eager in our cause will leave us, when the perpetration of such an enormous sin shall be revealed, and they will hate and detest us." "We will speak of this in Hebron," said Absalom, slowly; "we have other and mightier matters to discuss at present. It will be time enough when he is in our power to decide upon

his fate." There was truth in this remark; and consequently there could be no objection. After some further deliberation, the result of which will be detailed hereafter, the conspirators separated, leaving Yemima and her husband alone. Absalom did not speak; but snatching up a large goblet, he filled it to the brim, and quaffed off its contents in one deep draught.

Yemima placed her hand in his, and gently drew him towards the open casement. "Look," she said, as the cool breath of evening played with the tresses of his beautiful hair and fanned his burning temples, "how gloomily the sun is setting, after a day of splendour. So shall set the reign of king David; its glories are passing away for ever—for another and a better than he will soon fill the throne of Israel."

While she was yet speaking, the sun had set, and deep darkness overspread the face of the earth; for in the east the beautiful twilight of western lands is unknown. "Let us leave this room," said Absalom; "it is damp and chill." Passing down a few steps, as if by magic, the doors were thrown open, and they stood in a brilliantly lighted hall. On the tables, a rich banquet was spread, and slaves of both sexes, richly attired, were in attendance. Absalom drank deeply of

the wine-cup that night, and many a wild dream of future greatness and successful ambition mingled with the lighter thoughts which the revels called forth ; while Yemima watched the light step of the dancers, or listened to the strains of the musicians, and her imagination revelled in the delightful idea, that ere long, she would be the wife, as well as the daughter of a king.

“Music, music!” shouted Absalom, in one of the pauses of the dance. A young female darted forward ; a small golden lyre, wreathed with myrtle, was in her hand, and in a rich, sweet voice she sung the following—

Minstrel's Song.

Hush! Break not with a sound
 The spell that music casts around.
 There is a calm and holy feeling,
 O'er my troubled spirit stealing.
 Those gentle strains have soothed to rest
 Each wild emotion of my breast.
 Again, again, like zephyrs sighing
 Through the leaves, when day is dying
 Soft and low, in notes of woe.
 Now o'er the keys the fingers flying,
 Glad and joyous as the mirth
 To which a maiden's heart gives birth,
 When life's path seems full of flowers
 And love lends wings unto the hours.
 Now like trumpets breathing war's alarms,
 When warriors shout, “To arms! to arms!”
 Hark! now it sinks, like a dying moan,
 The spell is broken, the charm is gone.

A deep silence followed the song, until Yemima, beckoning forward another performer, bade her sing something light and pleasing. Seizing her companion's instrument, and keeping time to her performance by jingling the golden bells at the bottom of her robe, she thus began :—

'Tis pleasure, 'tis pleasure, that makes the hours fly,
That brings smiles to the cheek, that brings light to the eye.
Ambition's proud votaries, oh! what is your gain,
But years of inquietude, sorrow, and pain?
Then drown every care in the bright rosy bowl,
'Tis wine, generous wine, that brings joy to the soul.
When our hours are so few, we should never let sorrow
Embitter the present with thoughts of the morrow;
For 'tis pleasure, 'tis pleasure, that makes the hours fly,
That brings smiles to the cheeks, that brings light to the eye.

How different was the scene passing in the chamber of the Princess Tamar that evening. She had dismissed all her attendants, with the exception of Abia, who had been reading the Exodus to her. "Extinguish the lamp, Abia, and throw open the casement. I long to behold the bright moonlight, and feel the cool night air upon my brow." Abia obeyed; and, leaning on her arm, Tamar moved to the open window, and looked down on the still quiet scene before her.

Nearly an hour passed away, and no word was spoken ; when, turning to speak with her young companion, she perceived that tears were streaming silently down her cheeks.

“Thou weepst, fair girl,” said Tamar ; “happy art thou that tears are left thee to shed, and they flow freely, freely ; but mine are all dried up, like a fountain beneath the scorching heat of summer : and I can only brood over the dark and gloomy past, and look forward to a gloomy future, until all is hushed in the deep silence of the grave. Thou thinkest that I am mad,” she continued, as she saw how pale was the face of Abia. “Would to God that I were so ! Oh ! if thou knewest how I have prayed to be so ; but it was all in vain. I am too sensible of what I have suffered, and have yet to suffer ; but, God’s will be done. I am selfish—the unhappy are mostly so ; but thou art too sweet and gentle for thy situation. How camest thou in the household of my brother’s wife ?” Thus addressed, Abia poured forth to the ears of the sympathising princess, her tale of blighted hopes and crushed aspirations, of hopeless poverty, and of the despair that had prompted her parent to barter her liberty for gold. That night the princess and the slave passed together ;

for Tamar had, at length, found a faithful and affectionate heart, in whom she could place confidence; and all her newly awakened fears were fearlessly reposed in the sympathising bosom of the young Abia. She had caught sight of the base Jonadab, and the subtle Ahitophel, in the private apartment of her sister; and a dreadful suspicion of their purpose took possession of her mind. She dared not remonstrate with her brother, for he was no longer the kind and sympathising being he had been to her. She saw him seldom. When they did meet, it was only in the presence of his haughty wife; and then his manner towards her was harsh and cold.

THE FESTIVAL.

Yet did the maids and matrons leave
Their veils at home, that brilliant eve;
And there were glancing eyes about,
And looks that did not dare shine out
In open day; but thought they might
Look lovely then, because 'twas night.

MOORE.

THE day looked forward to with such anxiety by the people of Jerusalem, came at last. Those who were not invited, busied themselves in conjecturing who would be present; and those who were, who would not. Among the guests were

Isaac, the father of Judah, and his fair sister Rachel. An invitation had been given to his father for the young man ; and it was only accepted in the hope he might once more behold the fair slave, whose beauty had taken such a strong hold of his imagination. Many a weighty consultation was held between Rachel and her aunt, before the important question was finally settled, as to what garments she should wear. That ended, various other considerations of equal importance prevented her leaving her chamber that day ; so that it was not till she was ready to step into the litter, that her brother could gain her ear for a moment.

In a gorgeous chamber, hung with rich purple hangings, and decorated with Syrian carpets, and couches of ivory cushioned with cloth of gold, sat the Princess Yemima. The light of exultation sparkled in her proud eye, as she looked upon the assemblage of the lovely and noble around, all ready to do homage to her will. Her dress was of scarlet, embroidered with flowers, and glittering with jewels. On her brow was a tiara of diamonds and rubies. Her seat was a throne of crimson, adorned with gold. Six fair young slaves stood on either side of her. Each held a small censer filled with perfume ;

and behind the throne, two Syrians held vases of rose-water, which they threw in refreshing showers over their mistress. The large fountain was filled with the same fragrant liquid ; and young orange and lemon trees in full blossom were placed on rosewood stands, near the open casement ; while young maidens might be seen dancing by the light of the moon on the smooth grass lawn fronting the house. From the gorgeous scene that everywhere met his eye, Judah turned with a sickening heart, for amidst all, Abia was not to be seen ; and he wandered forth into the garden.

The sound of gay young voices, mingled with light laughter and soft music, were borne on the night air towards him ; and he quickened his pace until he found himself in perfect solitude. Then throwing himself at the foot of a tree, he leaned his head on his hand, and gave way to pleasing melancholy. Who has not, at some period of their busy life, longed to leave the noise and bustle of the crowded throng, for some quiet and retired spot, where no prying eye can watch the workings of those intense feelings we would fain conceal from ourselves. There are times connected with the brightest moments of our existence, when a sad presentiment of

evil, which we cannot define, will steal upon us in spite of every effort, and poison the glad present with dim and shadowing fears for the future. And so it was with Judah. There is something of holy calm in the aspect of a moonlight sky, that sheds its sweet influence on every thing around it.

On the branch of a lofty tree, a nightingale was pouring forth her plaintive strains, and it was delicious after the noise, the pomp, and crowd within, for him to feel himself alone, with not a sound to break the stillness of the night, except the murmurs of the fountains, and the songs of the birds. But a voice sweeter than either suddenly broke upon his ear. It came from a small arbour, covered with jessamine, that stood at a little distance from the spot where he rested; and his heart bounded wildly, as he recognized those tones which had lingered on his ear through the silence of the night, and amidst the busy crowds of the morning. He had heard it but once; yet it was never, never to be forgotten. The young man's first impulse was to rise, and approach the arbour: but remembering the alarm his sudden appearance might cause, he restrained himself, and resumed his seat. What was his surprise when he recog-

nized the voice of his sister, in conversation with the fair slave. "It was unkind, it was worse than unkind, I tell thee; it was cruel, Abia," said Rachel, vehemently, "to doubt for a moment the strength of my affection. But thou art deceiving me," she continued, bursting into tears, "you are not, you cannot be a slave!" Abia's answer smote on the ear of the unobserved listener. "Oh, Rachel! it is but too true. I have felt it this day, and it has almost broken my heart. For an involuntary fault they scourged me, Rachel! Oh! that I should live to utter such words!—scourged me, until my streaming blood stained the garments of the proud princess, who stood by and mocked my agony." Rachel could only answer by her sobs: her friend continued, "Your brother—" her voice faltered, and she could scarcely proceed—"is now of an age to marry. The contract between us may perhaps prevent his choosing a bride more suited to his fortune. Tell him—tell your father, that I consider it null and void." Sobs choked her utterance; but suppressing them by a violent effort, she added: "This was to have been our wedding day. It is the fifteenth anniversary of my birth." Judah waited to hear no more. Pushing aside the

branches of the trees, he stood in the presence of his sister and betrothed bride. Rachel was the first to perceive him, for Abia's face was buried on her bosom, and she uttered a faint cry of surprise at his unexpected appearance. "Dear, noble-hearted girl," said the excited young man, "thou art not the only one who can be generous. Look up, Abia, my own, my only love. 'Tis thy affianced husband bids thee speak!" To him for one moment she raised her dove-like eyes, and sunk back, fainting, in the arms of his sister. When she awakened again to consciousness, Judah was chafing her temples, and Rachel weeping over her, and calling her "Dear, dear sister!" But a sense of the degrading situation in which she stood came over her; and releasing herself by a sudden effort, she darted from them with the speed of a young roe, and was out of sight. So astonished were both brother and sister at this unexpected flight, that neither could attempt pursuit, until it was too late for any chance of success. Rachel was the first to speak. Young, ardent, and generous herself, she would not suffer herself one moment to doubt that her father would hesitate to release Abia from her thralldom, and fulfil the contract he had proposed. But Judah,

though he loved his father, could not so easily blind himself to his faults. He knew him to be avaricious, proud, and ungenerous. But love will blind the clearest judgment—he hoped for the best. Filial affection, that sweetest of all human ties, is so interwoven with the very spirit of the Jewish religion, that Judah never once contemplated an act of disobedience; and though he shook his head at Rachel's reasoning, it inspired him with a hope in spite of himself. Fearing lest their absence should have been remarked, Rachel bathed her swollen eyes, and placing her arm within that of her brother, proceeded slowly towards the spot where she had left her young companions. But Rachel's heart was too sick to resume her place amid the dancers, and, at her request, Isaac quitted the gay scene, and they returned to their own dwelling. One by one, the company departed. But Judah still lingered, in the hope of again seeing Abia; but she came forth no more that night.

Two hours passed away; and that spot, lately a scene of light and life, was now still and silent as the grave. "Such," said Judah, as he slowly moved along the deserted terrace, "such is human life! How ardently do we look forward for that which when obtained, leaves disappoint-

ment, and perhaps despair behind. Of all the busy crowd, who looked forward to-day with expectations of unalloyed pleasure, there are few who will not find to-morrow how greatly mistaken they were, in supposing that mere human enjoyments can ever leave a lasting joy behind!" The train of his reflections was here interrupted by his suddenly perceiving some dark figures moving towards the gate that led to the street. Judah stood in the shade, and consequently was unperceived; although the light of the moon distinctly revealed their figures to him. They were the same persons previously introduced to the reader in the chamber of the princess. What was his astonishment at perceiving his own father in conversation with the prince! The first words that met his ear rivetted his attention, and rooted him to the spot. They were spoken by his father, immediately after Shevuous.—"My lord had better depart, for it will be unwise, as well as unsafe, to raise the standard of revolt in Jerusalem. Here the king is surrounded by men who have grown grey beside him in the field. The people love him; and ere we have time to organise our plans, the bowstring will be around our necks; for the priests are all in his favour, and the passions of

a multitude are easily excited. Let the first tidings of our intentions reach King David when an invading army is at his palace gates." They passed on, but Judah had heard enough to blast his hopes for ever. His father, then, was engaged in a deep and dangerous conspiracy against the throne and life of his anointed sovereign ! His first impulse was to hasten, as soon as morning broke, to the palace of the king, and acquaint him with the danger that threatened him : but what could he tell ? He was unacquainted with the details of the plot ; and how could he divulge what he had accidentally become acquainted with, unless in the words of his father ? He should place the bowstring around that father's neck. Uncertain what to do, he slowly pursued his way homeward, and retired, need it be said, to a sleepless couch.

THE FATHER AND SON.

Beyond love or friendship's sacred band,
Beyond myself, I prize my native land.

ROWE.

WHEN Judah awoke in the morning from a short and feverish slumber, he was greatly surprised to perceive his father bending over

him, with looks in which anxiety and affection were blended. At any other time, he would have felt unmixed joy at beholding him; but now all the painful thoughts the preceding night called forth, rushed upon him with redoubled force, and he could scarcely command his voice to return the morning salutation. "Thou lookest ill, my son," said Isaac, gently. "Lie still, for what I have to say can be spoken as well here as elsewhere. Thou art now a man, and of age to reason and to be reasoned with. I have ever found thee dutiful and affectionate, fulfilling my commands with ready obedience. Therefore I have chosen to repose great trust in thee." Here he paused, and fixed his eyes upon the young man's countenance, as if to read what was passing in his mind. Apparently satisfied with his scrutiny, and perceiving Judah did not attempt reply, he continued: "I am now about to put thy obedience to the test. See that it fail not at the trial." "Father, father!" exclaimed Judah, suddenly starting up, and throwing his arms around the old man's neck, "I know all, all the sinful schemes in which thou art engaged. Oh! abjure them, ere it be too late." "What meanest thou, rash boy?" said Isaac, throwing off the arms of his

son. "What knowest thou of my schemes? But this is folly;—the fumes of last night's debauch are in thy brain, and I pardon thee." "No, no, dear father, I am sober, perfectly sober." But he hesitated, when in a voice of thunder his father bade him proceed, and tell him all he knew. It was the first time Isaac had ever spoken harshly to his son, and he felt it more keenly from the knowledge that it was so. Tears filled his eyes, and it was some moments before he could command his voice. The sight of his emotion softened the old man's anger, and in a kinder tone he said, "Judah, what strange infatuation possesses thee, that thou shouldst raise my anger at the very time I am labouring for thine advancement? There is a great change to take place in the kingdom of Israel. The king is growing old, and impotent. Evil counsellors encompass the throne; and the people cry in vain for justice. They are oppressed beyond their power to bear, and a general revolt will be the consequence. The king will be driven with ignominy from the capital, and the sceptre given to a worthier hand. Absalom hath ever been the friend of the oppressed. He hath raised up the unfortunate, and protected the innocent. He is brave and valiant; and

who so fit as he to succeed to the crown ? His father is no longer capable of bearing it with honor to himself or to the nation he misgoverns. For thee, my son, the prince intends to make thee captain of his guard, and to bestow upon thee the hand of Ahitophel's fair daughter, with a fitting dower. To-day thou must go to the prince, and he will himself acquaint thee with such details as it is necessary thou shouldst be acquainted with ; but remember, on thy caution and secrecy depends the life of thy father." Judah's cheek had turned deadly pale, while his father had been speaking, and his agitation did not escape the keen eye of Isaac.

" This communication surprises thee, my son ?" " Oh no," said Judah. " I knew it all before ; and the knowledge has almost broken my heart." " How ?" exclaimed Isaac, his brow growing black as midnight, and his lip curling with rage and bitterness. " Thou hast not—no, thou wouldst not dare to pry into my proceedings ? But how long hast thou been possessed of this knowledge ?" " Last night," faltered Judah, " in the gardens of the prince I accidentally overheard a conversation between thyself and the prince, Ahitophel, and Amasa." " It is well," said the old man, with bitter scorn.

“And what soughtest thou in the garden of Absalom?—to watch my proceedings?—to pry into my secrets?” “Thou wrongest me, father; indeed thou dost,” said the young man. “Thou knowest I am incapable of such baseness.” “Then what sought thou, at that hour? When all others had departed, why shouldest thou linger later than the rest?” Judah was incapable of falsehood; but he felt this was an evil hour to urge his suit in, and he tried to evade further questions, by saying, “The fairness of the night might well tempt me to linger a few moments, to enjoy its beauty.” “Or perhaps the fairness of Absalom’s household,” said Isaac, sarcastically, “tempted thee to remain. But tell me the truth,” he continued with passionate vehemence, “or I will force it from thee.” Judah’s heart swelled at the threats thus held out to him, and his high spirit struggled for a moment with a sense of duty: but filial piety prevailed, and he replied meekly and submissively: “Look not thus harshly at me, for I have committed no wrong;” and in a few words he recounted his accidental meeting with Abia, her generous offer, and his own resolution to fulfil the contract made for him. “It is well,” said Isaac, calmly, when he had heard him to an end.

“Thou art a fool, and madman both. Only upon one condition will I overlook thine imprudence, which is, that thou goest instantly to the prince and acceptest his generous offer.”

“Never,” said Judah, calmly, but firmly. “That I love thee, O my father, all the actions of my past life can prove. I have never willingly offended thee, or given thee pain. But my duty to God is even greater than my duty to thee; and I cannot willingly commit a crime, even at thy bidding. And thou, my father, recede ere it be too late, from this cursed and unnatural enterprise. The detestation of all good and righteous men will follow this most monstrous of rebellions; and when the feverish desire for change hath abated in the minds of the multitude, they will view this deed of Absalom’s in its true light. Let not then the sophistry of evil counsellors blind thee to the real guilt of thy proceedings. For myself, I swear by the God of my fathers, never by act or deed to participate in the proceedings of this bloody-minded prince.” “Thus, then, do I tear thee from my heart for ever,” exclaimed Isaac; “this day will I rend my garments, and strew ashes on my head, and thou shalt no longer hold communion with me, nor mine; but I will hold thee

as cast out from my name and race for ever." He was about to depart, when Judah, springing from his couch, threw himself at his feet, and clasped his knees in speechless agony. But the father's heart was hardened ; and striking him a violent blow with his clenched fist, he pushed him from him, and rushed out of the room. Stunned by the blow, the unhappy young man fell backward ; and striking his head in his fall against a marble pedestal, the blood gushed from his nostrils, and he became insensible.

The sun was long past the meridian, when he awoke from the death-like stupor into which he had fallen. At first, he was totally unconscious of what had befallen him ; but, as the fatal truth burst slowly on his mind, tears of agony streamed down his pale cheek. He tried to rise, but his head was giddy, and it was some moments ere he could reach a seat.

After some fruitless attempts, he at length succeeded in throwing on his clothes, and moved slowly towards the door, with the purpose of seeking his father. But what was his horror at finding it firmly secured by bolts and bars from without !

" I am a prisoner," he exclaimed aloud, as he threw himself on his couch, and gave way to all

the bitterness of his soul. "O God—this is too much!" Hour after hour passed away. Night came: and yet not a footstep broke upon his solitude. The moon was going down, and it wanted only an hour to morning, when Judah thought he distinguished a sound as if the bars were drawn back with care and caution; but he was too sick, from loss of blood and want of food, to raise his head, although he heard a stealthy step approaching his bedside. It was quite dark; but who could visit him at that hour, and in that chamber? Summoning all his remaining strength, he murmured, "Father!" "Hast thou repented of thy disobedience?" said Isaac, in a deep harsh voice. "Remember! this is the last opportunity—for I swear by all that is holy, never more to hold thee as my child, shouldst thou refuse the condition I offer, that thou shalt go immediately to Absalom, and swear fealty to him." "Never, never!—yet in mercy do not cast me from thee!—as thou hopest for mercy at the hand of the Almighty, do not reject the prayers of thy child." "Reject them!" replied he, and laughed aloud until the chamber rung; "Listen unto thy father's prayer: May leprosy blight thee in thy youth, so that men shall call thee accursed. For thee may life become a

burthen, and none of the sweet ties of kindred ever bloom. When thou diest like a dog, without one friendly hand to close thine eyes, may thine unburied carcass become food for the birds of the air, and the beasts of the field, without one to say 'May he rest in peace.' But I want strength to curse thee as I ought."

Judah felt his hand upon his head, where it had been wont to rest when his father blessed him; and now it gave an awful solemnity to his curse. But he could utter no word of deprecation: and when all was over, he fell back, and again became insensible.

"I have been dreaming—surely this is all a dreadful phantasy!" exclaimed Judah, when consciousness returned; "it cannot, cannot be reality." But he was soon fatally convinced of its reality; for on attempting to raise himself, he found that heavy fetters prevented him from rising.

It was too dark to distinguish objects; but when he put out his hand, and felt around him, he found he was no longer in his own apartment, for he touched the damp walls of a dungeon. His lips were parched, and his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, as he prayed that the Almighty would not desert him

in his extremity. He could hear the sound of voices, and the tread of people passing through the street; and now and then the glad shouts of children broke upon his ear, and he felt not quite forsaken. But when the stillness of noon succeeded, and one by one every sound died away, the agony of his feelings was almost too great for indurance, and a new and horrible suspicion took possession of his mind. Was he to starve? But he tried to chase the thought away, for he thought his father could not be such a monster. His fears on this head, however, were quickly dispelled—for soon after, some one entered, bearing a light, the blaze of which was so painful, that he was obliged to close his eyes; and when he opened them again, he found the lamp remained, but the bearer was gone.

A bunch of dried grapes, some wheaten bread, and a pitcher of water, were placed on the ground beside him. Taking a little water in his hands, he threw it on his face, and then asked blessing on his meal, ere he tasted it. A second day passed in this manner. A lamp and food were again brought him. The bearer uttered not a word; but placing them on the floor immediately departed. The third day came, and Judah prayed that he might retain

his senses, in the dreadful trial to which he was doomed. Meanwhile his sister, deceived by a feigned tale of his having obtained permission to spend the the festival with a friend, was perfectly happy, although she marvelled that her father should at such a time permit him to quit Jerusalem ; and "It was not kind of Judah," she said, as she leaned her head upon the bosom of her indulgent aunt, "to leave us without a farewell."

To Merab, she had narrated the story of her meeting with her former friend, and was persuaded by her prudent aunt from mentioning it to her father at present.

But she promised Rachel that she would accompany her on a visit to the widow, on condition that it should be without the knowledge of Isaac. Accordingly, she set out, accompanied only by her aunt, and bearing a small ivory basket, filled with choice fruit, on her arm, as an offering to the mother of her friend. Passing through many dark, narrow streets, they at length stopped before the door of a small dingy-looking house. Rachel sighed, as she thought on the splendid dwelling she had just quitted, and remembered that the last time she beheld the person she was about to visit, it was in a dwelling as splendid as her own.

While these thoughts passed through the mind of Rachel, Merab had knocked at the door. It was opened by a bright-eyed boy, of about eight years, who led the way into a small apartment, and courteously asked the strangers to sit, while he called his mother.

Rachel cast her eyes curiously around. The room was small, and rudely built. The scanty furniture was scrupulously neat and clean. Some flowers stood in the window sill, in a porcelain vase, the relic of better days. Clean cloths were spread upon the rude tables, and freshly gathered rushes were strewed over the brick floor.

Rachel disengaged the basket from her arm, and placed it on the table. She had just resumed her seat, when the mother of Abia entered, accompanied by the boy they had first seen, and by two other children. The mother could not be more than thirty years of age, but the marks of premature decay were visible on her pale face and wrinkled brow.

She had been very beautiful; and the vestiges of it still remained. Her hair, grown grey with sorrow, was entirely confined by a close head-dress; and her garments were neat, and those of the children bore evident traces of her industry. She was evidently surprised at the

appearance of the strangers, for years and sorrow had entirely effaced the features of Rachel from her memory, and Merab she had never seen. "Thou forgettest me, then," said the former, as she threw herself into the arms of the wondering woman. "Thou forgettest thine own Rachel: but she has not forgotten thee." Rebecca pushed back the clustering curls from the fair girl's forehead, and gazed for a moment fixedly on her face, as if to recall her features, and bursting into a shout of hysterical laughter, she sank back in her seat, while the terrified children clung to her with looks of surprise and fear.

Tears started into Rachel's eyes; but with a sudden effort, the widow recovered her self-possession, and affectionately kissing her children, in order to soothe their alarm, she turned, and addressed her visitors. "Thou hast at last, then, deigned to visit my humble abode," she said, fixing her eye with a glance of scorn on Rachel; "yet it seems strange to see thy father's daughter here. But I suppose he has sent thee hither to obtain possession of a certain contract, which perchance he fears may be troublesome to him. My daughter was fifteen three days ago." "Speak not such cruel words," exclaimed

Rachel ; “ my father knows not of my coming, dear mother,” she said, using a term of endearment which had been familiar to her lips in times long past, in addressing the parent of her friend.

“ Cruel !” interrupted Rebecca, with a scornful laugh—“ a daughter of Isaac of Hebron, call Jehoida’s widow cruel ?—ha ! ha ! that is as it should be. *His* child, who allowed me to sell my darling, to save my little babes from starving ; who spurned me, when I clung to him, and asked for a trifle to procure us bread, with threats and reviling ! Cruel ! thou art right, go on, thou canst not better that.” “ Nay, nay,” said Rachel, weeping bitterly ; “ I have seen Abia.” “ And darest thou name her name ?” shrieked the almost frantic mother ; “ my pure and beautiful child ! Will they add insult as well as injury to thee ?” “ What, dear aunt, can I do ?” said Rachel ; “ what can I say, to calm her ?” “ I know not, dear child, what can be done,” answered her aunt. “ Perhaps it is better to let her passion exhaust itself.”

Rachel soon perceived the prudence of this advice, for violent hysterics followed, and then she sat down, and wept quietly. “ Listen to me, dear, dear mother,” said Rachel, falling on her knees. “ I knew not what you speak of. I knew

not even where thy dwelling was situate, until at Absalom's festival I saw Abia by accident, and there learnt all. But my brother, my dear brother, is all that is good and honourable; and for the contract you speak of, Judah is determined to fulfil it, for he loves thy sweet child, loves her for her own dear sake." "And thy father?" said Rebecca, harshly; "what says he to this?" "Alas," replied Rachel, sadly, "he knew it not. My brother waited for some favourable opportunity to inform him, for"—here she hesitated, and Rebecca finished the sentence for her. "He is proud, avaricious, and selfish; but time was, when all his passions would have been fully gratified by an union with my child. But that is past, and I will speak of it no more. For thee—thou wert ever a gentle, generous girl. But look at these poor children, Rachel. It is the misery they have suffered, has hardened my heart: and her—but I will not name her name—it maddens me to think of the fate that awaits my best and favorite child—perpetual slavery!"—and she rung her hands, and paced backwards and forwards, with unconcealed agony.

Rachel's heart was almost broken. She tried to speak, but sobs choked her utterance, and she took refuge in her aunt's bosom, and wept freely.

“Poor girl,” said Rebecca, kindly, as she stopped and gazed on her face; “thou art unused to scenes like this. The wind of heaven blows not on thee too roughly; and sorrow, real sorrow, is unknown, except by name. Thou art like a rose. The bush on which thou flourishest is covered with rude thorns; but thou, like the flower, art fragrant as beautiful.” “Come, dearest; it is time to depart,” whispered Merab; “we must linger no longer. Remember, thou must change thy garb, and bathe thy swollen eyes, before thou canst enter the presence of thy father.” Thus admonished, Rachel bestowed a hasty embrace on Rebecca and her children, and promising soon to return, departed. Both drew their thick veils over their faces, and without interruption returned to their dwelling.

The festival was over; and Absalom had obtained permission of his unsuspecting father to retire to Hebron, having pretended that while in exile at Geshur, in Syria, he had vowed to make an offering in that city. Everything seemed to prosper with the confederates. Meanwhile, Tamar was pining away, day by day, and wasting into a shadow; she had obtained permission of Yemina, that Abia should become her attendant, and her kindness made the unfortunate

slave less wretched. They were sitting together—for in her case, Tamar had dispensed with all ceremony; and the pale face of the princess rested upon the shoulder of her companion, when the door was suddenly thrown open, and Absalom entered.

The heart of Tamar beat wildly, and a slight flush for a moment tinged her delicate cheek, like the sunbeam upon snow, as he sat down beside her, and, with expressions of fondness, such as had seldom passed his lips of late, began playing with the tresses of her hair, and mingling them with his own. The light of the lamp was streaming full upon his features, and gave them an appearance of almost unearthly beauty. The bright smile upon his lip was for a moment banished, as he looked on her he came to seek; a flash of joy beamed from the eyes of Tamar, as she said, "O my brother, this is indeed unexpected pleasure — to see thee smile upon me once more, and gladden mine eyes with the sight of thy countenance, was more than I dared expect. But, I thank God thou art here." "My poor sister," said Absalom, as he took her fair hand in his own, "thou art sadly changed; but cheer thine heart—there are better days in store for thee."

“Yes, Absalom,” said the princess, with a deep sigh; “there are many feelings struggling in my heart, which I would fain utter to thee. Absalom,” and she fixed her eyes upon him, “I know all thy wicked plans—all the plots of thy base counsellors.” “Hold, Tamar,” said her brother; “I have gone too far to recede—therefore say no more this time. To-morrow we shall be on our way to Hebron; and when we return to Jerusalem—” “I shall never, never return,” said Tamar. “My days are numbered; and it matters little where the miserable remnant of them are spent: but for thyself, see that thou dost not lay up a bitter store for the future of self-reproach and misery.” Absalom rose, and in great agitation paced the apartment for a few moments; when suddenly stopping opposite his sister, he said, “Tamar, let us speak of this no more; farewell, I shall see thee again in Hebron;” and he rushed from the room. “What thinkest thou of this, Abia?” and the princess looked towards her confidant. “It is all true; all that I have feared and dreaded is come to pass at last, and what to do I know not.” She was prevented from saying more by the entrance of some of the Syrians, who informed them that they were to set off at day-light. They came by express

command of Yemima, to assist them in the necessary preparation for their journey.

Tamar turned an agonized glance towards the palace of her unsuspecting father—as she thought for the last time, and leaning back in her litter, tears for the first time for many years forced themselves into her eyes. They were a relief to her overcharged heart, and she gave free vent to them.

The journey to Hebron was productive of no incident, and they arrived there safely on the same day.

THE MINSTREL.

“OH ! colder than the wind that freezes
Founts that but now in sunshine played,
Is the congealing pang, that seizes
The trusting bosom, when betrayed.
He felt it deeply : felt, and stood,
As if the tale had frozen his blood.

MOORE.

It was a sultry noon ; and a stillness, almost of death, hung over Jerusalem. The inhabitants had retired to rest during the heat of midday, and the only person to be seen was a young man, or more properly speaking, a boy, about fifteen years of age. He was dressed in the garb of an itinerant minstrel, and a small harp was slung

across his shoulder. He seemed faint and weary, frequently pausing, as if to gain strength to proceed. He paused before a large gate leading into the garden of King David, and unslinging the harp from his shoulder, opened the gate and entered. Proceeding up a long avenue of trees, he stopped before a marble pavilion. Here it was supposed the king generally retired during the heat of noon. It was a lovely spot, almost embowered with trees, and pastures. Beautiful flowers filled the air with perfume ; but leaves and flowers drooped beneath the influence of the burning sun, and not a breath of wind moved the branches of the trees. The minstrel had wandered far that day, and he was glad to rest upon a garden seat, while his hands moved rapidly among the strings of his instrument, as he played a wild and touching melody. This produced the effect intended. The curtains of the pavilion were thrown back, and some one came forth. It was an old female slave, who beckoning the intruder forward, bade him play another air, adding significantly, " Use thy best skill—for thou hast a royal auditor." The minstrel played again with exquisite pathos the following :—

The Minstrel's Song.

I have sat by the dying bed,
And watched the fast glazing eye,
And looked on the corpse when the soul has fled,
While my heart thrilled with agony.
I have felt the pang of hopeless love ;
I have borne the slight and sneer
Of the cold and proud, till I feared 'twould prove
Too much for my spirit to bear.
But now I have a tale from the grave,
A more bitter task is mine—
A tale of fear for a monarch's ear,
And that ear, O King, is thine !

He raised his voice as he sung the last verse, and a thrill passed through the heart of David as he listened. Turning to his attendants, he bade some one bring the minstrel to him. He was obeyed, and half fainting from heat and fatigue, the minstrel threw himself at the feet of the monarch.

David was slight and delicately formed. He was now at that time of life when the strength of manhood is declining into the feebleness of age ; and his countenance showed that high station and renown cannot always ensure the possessors from the cares and sorrows of this mortal existence. He had known more of the vicissitudes of life than generally falls to the fate of one man. He had been a peaceful husband-

man, a successful warrior, a favoured courtier, and an anointed king. Yet he had been a wanderer and an exile from his country, amid that country's habitual enemies. Still retaining those fervent feelings of piety, that reliance on the mercies of the God who had destined him to become a mighty monarch, which is so beautifully shewn in his compositions. "Thou art a sweet musician," said the king, kindly; "but what ails thee, good youth?—thou seemest weary—hast thou travelled far to-day?" "I have travelled from Hebron on foot since before sunrise," said the minstrel, faintly; "and I have tasted no food since the morning, when a woman of Bethlehem gave me a bunch of grapes and a crust of bread, and I faint for lack of food." "Poor boy," exclaimed David; "bring refreshments instantly." The attendants all flew to obey his orders, and seizing the moment of their absence, the minstrel started to his feet, and whispered, "I have a message from the Princess Tamar—a message involving life and death." The cheek of the king grew pale, and his hand trembled, as he took the piece of vellum the minstrel offered him. A seal ring was attached to it by a silken string. David recognized it as one he had himself given to the princess, and opening

the letter, read as follows. "To my beloved father, greeting. This from my bed of death. Fly!—fly from Jerusalem; lose no time. Absalom hath forty thousand men in Hebron, ready to march upon the capital, to end thy life and reign together. She who bears this will tell thee more. She is true and faithful; cherish her, for the sake of—TAMAR." David stood silent and motionless, gazing on the scroll he held with a look of deep despair. Horror had taken from him the power to utter a word; and when his attendants entered they uttered a cry of terror on beholding his situation. The boy too lay at his feet, apparently lifeless. It was nearly an hour before the efforts of his attendants could restore the king to speech or motion; and during that time, Abia, whom doubtless the reader has already recognised, was removed to one of the couches, and there suffered to remain, unnoticed and unheeded, until David's enquiry brought her back to remembrance. Then, bidding her be cared for, and brought to the council chamber as soon as recovered, he returned to the palace, with a heart wrung with many sorrows. Here a council was summoned, and the alarming truth unfolded to his faithful

followers by the unfortunate king. All the information that Abia could afford was given clearly and distinctly, and immediate flight was resolved upon. But it was not to his councillors, brave and faithful as they were, that David told all the agony that overwhelmed him at the ingratitude of his rebellious son.

While the preparations for flight were making, he sought out the slave, to learn tidings of his daughter. He found her weeping bitterly, in a small room adjoining the council chamber; and it added a pang to all he felt when he marked her deep grief. He had rent his garments, and strewed ashes on his head; but his inward emotion was too powerful for utterance. Tears—bitter, blinding tears, fell over his aged cheeks.

Abia arose from her seat, and a deep blush dyed her face as she stood before him. "I sought thee, maiden," said the king, when he could command his voice to speak, "to ask if my unhappy child is yet numbered among the living?" "She died before I left Hebron," answered Abia, with a shudder; "and I left her ere the corpse was cold, to become the bearer of evil tidings; for I had promised to do so, and I have kept my word. She rejoiced that her hour was at hand, for what but misery had been

her portion for many years ; and what had she to look forward to?—misery !” “ It is true, most true,” said David, as he turned to leave her ; “ and what is to be done with thee ?” “ I am a runaway slave of Absalom, and dare not remain,” answered Abia ; “ but I have a mother in Jerusalem, and I would fain behold her once more, ere I leave it, perhaps for ever.”

The details of David’s flight belong to his history. Therefore we shall follow the humbler personages of our tale. Still retaining her minstrel garb, Abia pursued her way through the streets, which were crowded with people, loyal and disloyal—some to mourn the fate of their beloved king ; others to rejoice at the success of their vile and cruel schemes. Among the last was Isaac, the father of Judah and Rachel. When she reached the dwelling of her mother, Abia found them engaged in sowing seed in the little garden. They did not recognize her in her disguise ; and fearing to attract the attention of others, she solicited a seat inside the house in charity to a wayfarer. The request was instantly granted, and Abia followed her youngest brother into the sitting room, and awaited the entrance of her beloved mother with a throbbing heart. She had not been able to see her

before her departure for Hebron, and consequently was entirely ignorant of Rachel's visit. So deeply were her thoughts occupied, that she did not perceive the entrance of Rebecca; and great was the surprise of the widow to behold the stranger seated, with her elbow on her little table, and her eyes fixed on the ivory basket given by Rachel. "Art thou hungry, good youth?" said the widow, as she placed a plate of food before her daughter. "If so, eat freely; for thou art heartily welcome." "Mother!" said Abia, starting from her reverie, and rushing into the arms of Rebecca; "dost thou not recognise thy child?" Her voice and action were sufficient. With a cry of joy, the fond parent folded her darling to her heart. The sound of their mother's voice, apparently in distress, brought in her brothers and young sister, and great was their surprise at beholding the seeming youth in such a situation. But the mystery was soon solved; and each were loud in their expression of joy at their beloved sister's return. Little Hester enquired with infantine simplicity, whether the pretty lady, who came at Shevuous, and made her mother cry so, had told her to come? While Jacob brought her a bunch of his brightest flowers, and ga-

thered some fresh fruit, as a token of joy at her return. But her eldest brother, now in his twelfth year, although he loved his sister tenderly, sighed deeply, as he embraced and welcomed her home. "I stay but an hour," said Abia, in a low voice. "Dismiss the children, dear mother, for I have much to tell thee—much that will cause thee both astonishment and grief." The children made happy by being dismissed on some trifling errand, Abia seated herself between her mother and brother, and holding a hand of each, narrated what is already known to the reader. On her own sufferings she touched as lightly as possible, for she wished to spare her mother pain; but tears of indignation rolled down the cheeks of her brother, as he listened to the detail of her interview with the dethroned king. "Would that I were a man," he said, as he clenched his hands in rage; "oh, Abia! I loved thee before deeply and truly; but henceforward, next to my God will I worship thee." Rebecca, although she shared the indignation of her son towards Absalom, was nervously alive to the danger and peril that encompassed her child, and the mother's heart was wrung with agony at the idea of parting with her, perhaps for ever. But she

was somewhat comforted when she heard that she was to go into the household of Bathsheba, David's favourite wife ; and at length composed herself sufficiently to relate the visit of Rachel, and her promise to renew it as soon as possible. But although Abia lingered until the shadows of the evening began to fall, she felt that she was but deferring the evil moment, and the parting word must be spoken. At last, she had thrown herself for the third time on the bosom of her mother, and again, and again, tried to sob forth a farewell, while her little brother and sister clung to her and wept, they scarce knew why. A slight knock was heard at the door ; all was hurry and confusion ; in a moment the widow extinguished the lamp she had kindled, so that the visitor, whoever it was, should not perceive that she had been weeping ; and Abia retreated into a little room beyond, while her brother opened the door. The visitor paused a moment on the threshold, while Jael, with a trembling voice, announced Rachel, the daughter of Isaac. The door was closed, the lamp relighted, and Abia came forth from her concealment ; although she hesitated for a moment whether she should make herself known or not. Rachel was thickly veiled, and her dress soiled and devoid of

ornament. Merab was with her. "Dear mother," exclaimed Rachel, as, putting back her veil without perceiving Abia, she threw herself into Rebecca's arms: "dear mother, it is but ten days since I beheld thee, and then thou toldst me I had never known real sorrow. Oh! would that it was so now!" A violent fit of sobbing prevented her proceeding. Glad of an excuse to weep, the widow mingled tears with hers.

"Yes," resumed Rachel, as soon as she could find voice to speak; "yes, I have, in seven days, known more of sorrow than a long life can efface from my memory: my brother—my poor brother!" "What of him?" exclaimed Abia, coming forward, with a cheek pale as marble; "what hath chanced to him?" "Abia!" said Rachel, extending her hand; "in Jerusalem, and in that garb?" "It is Abia, Rachel; Abia the slave, Abia the runaway, who stands before thee." "It is well," said Rachel, making a strong effort to calm herself; "the more mourners the better." "Is he dead?" said Abia, in a deep hollow voice; "lost to me for ever?" "Thou hast said it," answered Rachel, with unnatural composure; "dead!" and she laughed bitterly. "Rachel, thou wilt kill me by this despair," cried her

weeping aunt. "Remember that thou art the only one left to comfort me; and if thou wert gone, think what a fate would be mine!" "What want ye, or wish ye?" she replied; "am I not very calm?—do I even shed a tear?—Oh no! he forbade me, as I valued his blessing, to weep for the loss, or even to mention his name; and I have obeyed him. Yes, Abia," she continued, turning to her sobbing friend, "he did not even name his burying place; and when I asked him for it he sternly chid me." "Rachel, dear Rachel," whispered Abia, as she rested her wet cheek on the shoulder of her friend. "Ah! weep, weep, sweet one; thou art not forbidden," was the reply. "It was a merry mourning; and when friends came to condole with us, they praised my fortitude. They knew not that my father's blessing depended on my restraining my tears. Oh! it was very dreadful." "This is indeed dreadful. Oh, Rachel, feel how my brain is burning!"

Merab put her niece's hand to her own forehead. "Yes, yes," answered Rachel, "I heard them shouting the name of Absalom in the streets, and who dost thou think joined in the cry?—my father: and he said it was a pity the king should be allowed to depart so easily, and

something more that I have forgotten." "She speaks truly, poor child," said Rebecca, with a sigh. "It is of thee," turning to Merab, "we must ask an explanation of this harrowing spectacle." "Alas, alas, seven days ago we were sitting together, planning some little schemes of pleasure, when my brother entered. There was a dark frown on his brow, but my darling sprung forward, and threw her arms around his neck, and with a sweet smile, asked when her brother would return? 'Never,' was the harsh reply. 'He is dead! he is dead!' she repeated, with a frantic shriek. 'Yes, and it was to tell thee so I came hither.' She spoke no more, but stood with her eyes and mouth wide open, and her frame was stiff and rigid. But he stayed not to look upon his work, for without casting a glance at her, he left the room. She suffered them to rend her garments, without uttering a word; but when her father sent for her, the long imprisoned tears burst forth, and she wept bitterly. Every one was sent forth—even I was not permitted to remain during the interview between the father and daughter. What passed I know not; but in the presence of her father she is calm and quiet; yet when she is with me, she utters such wild words as it

breaks my heart to listen to. Great God! what could occasion such a change in Isaac? My poor Judah was his pride and darling. I have seen his eyes filled with tears of joy, as he sat gazing on him; and now his name is forbidden in the household." "May not this be the effect of deep grief?" interrupted Rebecca. "Oh no, no! I would I could persuade myself to think so; but there is some deep mystery in all this, that I vainly strive to fathom. Sometimes a suspicion that he is not dead, rushes through my mind, and I would give all I possess to know the truth." "It is very strange," and the widow sighed, as she ventured a glance toward her child, to see how she bore the melancholy tidings. But Abia's face was hidden on Rachel's bosom; and it was only by the heaving of her heart that her mother could tell what she was suffering.

Oh Lenox, who would wish to rule
 This changing crowd, this common fool?
 Thou many headed monster, thing,
 Oh, who would wish to be thy king?

SCOTT.

THERE were shouts of joy in the streets of Jerusalem, and music was in her palaces. The people were crowding to the Bethlehem gate,

to welcome the traitors and usurper to the city of Zion ; the city which the exiled monarch had built and enriched with the spoils of the nations he had conquered.

Alas for human nature ! that the love of change is inherent in the breast of man, as is exemplified in the history of all nations, and so perhaps it will continue till the end of time.

A few adherents of King David had closed up their houses, and remained within them ; but many, who had been fed by his bounty, were the first to join in the cry of " Long live the King Absalom !" Yet history has recorded many touching instances of devoted attachment, which redeemed mankind from the dark stain of universal ingratitude.

David had quitted that morning, as a fugitive, the city which his son entered in triumph at sunset. Absalom's first step was to take possession of the palace of his father.

In his lonely dungeon, Judah heard the shouting in the streets, and he was for the moment at a loss to guess the cause. But the name of Absalom set his doubts at rest ; and he said, " The prince hath obtained his base purpose. Can the king be a prisoner ? " Heavily the hours wore away ; but the voices still continued until after midnight ; when, wearied out with anxiety

and illness, Judah sank into a slumber, and dreamed that his dungeon was suddenly illuminated with a soft light, and fragrant perfumes scented the air ; whilst music, like the breathing of angels' harps, ravished his senses, and a form of exquisite beauty was bending over him with looks of pity and affection ; when the scene changed to the gardens of Absalom, and Abia, with his sister, were standing before him. He stretched out his arms to embrace his beloved, when his father rudely pulled him back, and the shock awakened him. What was his astonishment, to perceive that his dungeon was indeed illuminated. His lamp had burned out before he fell asleep, but he suddenly remembered that his gaoler had not visited him during that day : and supposing that he had entered while he slept, he closed his eyes again, and strove to lose the painful thoughts in slumber. But the effort was vain. His limbs ached, and his frame was chilled by the damp. He tried to raise himself ; but the clanking of the fetters chilled his heart. Then covering his face with his hands, the tears slowly rolled down his cheek. He had tasted no food that day, and his mouth was parched with thirst ; but he felt so truly miserable and dejected, that it was some moments before he

could gain courage to unclothe his eyes and put out his hand for the vessel that contained his daily draught. When he did so, every pulse stood still, and his heart almost ceased to beat; for his father's eyes were bent upon his face, with a look of demoniac triumph. "Methinks those dainty limbs must find their couch somewhat of the hardest, and thy delicate palate can scarcely reconcile itself to such viands as the last eleven days have afforded thee; but time will do wonders, and necessity is the hardest of all teachers." Judah did not answer; but a cold shudder passed through his frame, and his head sunk back upon the straw pillow, as his vindictive father added: "The dimensions of the dwelling, methinks, suit ill with thine altered fortune, and a smaller dwelling will accommodate thee, in size six feet, instead of ten—ha, ha, ha!" "My God, my God, have mercy upon me!" murmured Judah, almost inaudibly. "God may have mercy upon thee; but man will have none," said Isaac, as he held the lamp to the altered face of Judah, and gazed long and fixedly upon it. "I had almost forgotten what I came for." "Move the light, dear father; I cannot bear the blaze. My eyes ache so dreadfully; but I remember my pain is nothing to thee. There

was a time—but it is over now, and my happiness is lost—lost for ever.”

There was something in his voice and manner, that, for a moment, touched the heart of the father; and he withdrew the lamp in silence. But the kindly feeling soon passed away, and left him sterner than before. Judah tried to thank him, but he could utter no distinct sound; and after a short pause, Isaac resumed his scornful tone. “I thought thou mightst be lonely, and would wish to know what was passing in this busy world of ours; so I have brought thee tidings. Listen.” He knelt down, until his lip touched the ear of his son. “Absalom is king of Israel! What! no answer, churl? Is this the reward for my efforts to amuse thee? Well, I will tell thee something that touches thee more nearly—to-morrow at noon, Isaac, of Hebron, weds the fair daughter of Ahitophel. Ah! have I touched thee now?” A deep groan was all that this intelligence elicited; and Isaac laughed aloud, as he said, “Good night, good night. I leave thee to thy repose.” He took up the lamp and departed.

The next morning Isaac summoned his daughter to his private apartment. Rachel was as yet entirely ignorant of her father’s intention of taking another wife; and she heard it with as-

tonishment. She offered no word of remonstrance. Yet, when he bade her deck herself in her costliest robes and richest jewels, she firmly and resolutely refused. Threats and entreaties were alike unavailing. Isaac went forth discontented and angry to the dwelling of his bride, while Rachel sought the counsel of Merab, and gave orders that none should disturb them. Merab sat at an embroidery frame; but though her eyes were fixed upon her work, many bitter thoughts were swelling in her bosom. She did not speak; but drawing a seat beside her aunt, loosened her long tresses, and shaking them over her face, leaned her head upon her hand. Merab feared to disturb her; but the tears blinded her eyes, and rolled slowly down her cheeks, as she thought upon the change a few days had wrought in that once joyous being. As these thoughts pressed upon her, she dropped her frame, and taking her neice's disengaged hand, softly uttered her name. Rachel started. "My child, my own darling, this is unkind. I cannot bear to see thee thus. Listen to me. I have consolation for thee. There is yet balm in Gilead for thee." "There is none," replied the fair girl, in a voice of despair, "unless thou canst restore my brother from the grave, and make my father the kind and generous being I thought

him last Shevuous. But that will never, never be. Yet I am wrong to indulge in this selfish grief, for thou at least art left to comfort me, and henceforward I will garner up all my hopes and affections on thee. We will comfort each other. I have caused thee much anguish lately ; but it came upon me so suddenly, that my brain could not bear it. My head is clearer now." Merab caught her in her arms, and pressed her to her bosom ; but the hearts of both were full, and they mingled tears together.

In a few moments, Rachel recovered fortitude sufficient to acquaint her aunt with her father's intention. A flush of indignation lighted up the eyes and tinged the cheek of Merab, as she said, " Rachel, thy father's house will not much longer be the abiding place of either me or thee. And now I have tidings for thee, which it will require all thy strength of mind to bear." " What fresh sorrow is in store for me ? " answered Rachel ; " but fear not, I can bear anything now." " There is joy, as well as sorrow, in my communication, beloved ; yet will it need all thy firmness to hear. Listen ! Last night, my Rachel, sorrow kept me waking ; and unable to bear the painful thoughts that rushed upon me, I rose from my couch, and arraying myself, stole

forth into thy chamber ; and sitting down by thy side, I watched thy slumbers. I had not sat long, when I heard a step descending. Thou knowest, Rachel, I am no coward ; but, fearing that some one had been taken ill suddenly, I threw open the door, and cautiously descending, what was my surprise and agitation, to discover thy father, with a lamp in his hand, going down the staircase, towards the vaults. Thou knowest, Rachel, when we removed hither, there was a wine cellar, which had been long disused, on account of the damp ; this thy father locked up, reserving it as a place of punishment for refractory slaves, but the kindness of Judah rendered this unnecessary. Fearing some unfortunate had encountered thy father's displeasure, I concealed myself, and beheld him unloose the door, and enter. For a time, I heard no sound, and the cold and dampness chilled my blood. But, oh, my God ! what a feeling of horror ran through my frame, when I thought I distinguished the voice of Judah." Rachel had sat with her hands clasped, and her face pale as death ; but she uttered not a word. When Merab paused, she motioned for her to proceed. " I listened, but the tones were too feeble for me to distinguish a word. My first impulse

was to rush in, and satisfy myself of the truth of my dreadful suspicion : but I checked it, and retired to my chamber, to spend the rest of the night in supplication to the Most High, for support and assistance. I have told thee all—what is best to be done ?” “ Pray with me, dear aunt, pray with me,” was the reply ; “ we will seek counsel of him who alone can give it. But oh ! take heed, lest thou deceive me—lest thou deceivest thyself, with a blessed illusion.” “ I heard his voice, my Rachel—heard it distinctly ; but there is a way of satisfying ourselves. The servants and household slaves will be busy, preparing for the bride. We will go down to the vault, and speak with him. There is no fear that our voices will be heard, except by him for whose ears our words are intended.” “ At once, then,” said Rachel, “ let us go at once.” “ We will pray first,” said Merab, gently, “ and then I am ready.” Fervent were the supplications of the aunt and niece, and when they were over, they hastily covered themselves with shawls, to protect themselves from the damp, and descended. Rachel clung close to the arm of Merab, and when they paused before the door of the dungeon, her heart beat almost audibly. Merab was scarcely less agitated.

Judah had suffered so much, since his incarceration, that hope was entirely banished, and he looked forward to an early death as his only escape. He would have given worlds, had he possessed them, to behold the blessed sunshine and the light of heaven once more. "I could cheerfully lie down and die," he said, "if I could feel once more the delight of beholding the sunny smile of my young sister, and the mild eyes of my beloved Abia, and my kind aunt, fixed upon me with glances of love and pity. But to die here, without one eye to weep for my sufferings! My father's curse is about to be fulfilled; but thou, oh my God, thou wilt not forsake me." As he uttered these words, he fancied he heard the tones of a voice familiar to him, uttering his name, in accents of pity and affection. He listened again—he heard it distinctly; it was not a delusion. The voice of his sister, his adored and gentle sister, mingled with the weeping tones of Merab. "Judah, Judah; beloved, answer, if it be but one word, to assure us we are not deceiving ourselves." "Judah, dear Judah, thou art not mistaken; it is I." The surprise, the joy, was too much for him; and before he could conclude the sentence, he became exhausted and insensible. Long and

anxiously did Rachel and her aunt listen for the conclusion, until the truth suggested itself to the minds of both. But they had heard enough to convince them; and fearing their absence might be observed, they returned to their chamber.

Only those who, like Rachel, have deemed the object of their affections possessed of every virtue, and awake from their dream to find them cold-hearted and base, can guess her feelings on the occurrences of the morning. She would have given much, even her life, to think of her father as she had thought of him on that fatal night when she had confidingly expressed to her unhappy brother her opinion of her father's generosity; nor could she avoid attributing to her brother's accidental meeting with Abia, his cruel imprisonment. All was explained: Judah had expressed his intention to make the slave his bride; and the words of Rebecca rushed upon her memory. Her father, the father so idolized, was then cold, avaricious, and cruel. Hence his prohibition concerning her brother, his neglect of herself, and last of all, his marriage. Meanwhile, the cause of all these bitter reflections was himself doomed to receive a bitter mortification; for when the bride was unveiled in the chamber

where the ceremony was performed, instead of the fair young creature he expected to behold, a woman of thirty, of diminutive stature, and deeply wrinkled visage, was presented to him as his wife. For a moment, Isaac was tempted to recede from the union he had proposed ; but a fear of exciting the powerful Ahitophel to become his enemy, and the remembrance of her dower, which he was to receive in gold and jewels when the ceremony was concluded, prevailed over his repugnance, and without a single remark, he suffered the rite to proceed. It was over: he was again a husband—but his disappointment was great, and he strove to hide it in the wine cup. Yet he did not so entirely succeed as to hide from the eyes of the newly-married woman, who was keenly alive to her deficiencies, that she was already an object of aversion. She returned the feeling with unmeasured hatred and scorn. Thus passed the wedding-night.

Merab and Rachel watched vainly for the old man's nightly visit to the dungeon. The morrow came, but they remained close within their own apartments; and the bride had the additional mortification to perceive that the household of her husband regarded her as an unau-

thorized intruder upon the rights of their beloved young mistress. Isaac, in no pleasant mood, hastened to the palace, where Absalom held a council, to which he had been summoned. The result of that council is well known. The specious advice of the brave and faithful Hushai, who had been authorised by David to feign an adherence to the cause of the usurper, prevailed over the more politic and crafty Ahitophel; and the latter was not slow in perceiving that his influence was on the decline. Yemima was present at this discussion. She had exercised all her power over Absalom, in favour of Ahitophel; but the princess's fate was decreed. Hushai was no sooner aware that his counsel would be followed, than he prepared to seek Zadock and Abiathar, the heads of the religious hierarchy, with the purpose of acquainting them with what had passed, in order that they might send messengers to David; while Ahitophel, finding his ambition wounded, by the preference given to Hushai, hastened to his own dwelling, and anticipated the office of the executioner on his own person. Isaac, moody and discontented, returned to his bride. No smiles greeted his coming—no arms were stretched forth to embrace him: and he missed

the light step and sunny smile of Rachel—and the warm and enthusiastic greeting of Judah : but the change had been his own work, and he would not suffer his thoughts to dwell upon it. Zeba, his wife, with her hands crossed upon her bosom, listened to a little slave who was reading some of David's psalms. She neither rose, nor changed her attitude, on the entrance of her husband ; but motioned to the slave to continue her employment. Enraged at her coldness, Isaac sat down, and ordered refreshments ; while he exclaimed, "Curse on my folly, to wed a cold, misshapen piece of clay. Had I not already enough of gold and power?" A glance of withering scorn was the only answer. Isaac fiercely bade the slave close the scroll. He was obeyed. Zeba neither wished nor dared to dispute orders so sternly given ; for in the East the sway of the husband is as despotic as that of the monarch. He felt that, like Jacob, he had been deceived. On the cause of his disappointment he determined to wreak his vengeance. The inmates of his dwelling were wrapped in slumber, with the exception of his sister and daughter, when Isaac prepared to visit his suffering son. Great had been the disappointment of Judah, when, on recovering, he found that

his voice was only answered by the echoes of his gloomy dwelling, making the succeeding silence more fearful. He had no means of reckoning the hours. To the captive, they always appear interminable. He heard the door open, and saw his father enter; but he moved not—for experience told him that he had little to hope from his presence. Yet it was a relief. It broke the gloomy solitude of his prison. It shewed that he was not utterly cut off from all communion with his fellow men. It was on the head of his devoted and helpless son that Isaac came to vent the wrath which the events of that day had occasioned to him. He knew from experience how deeply his sneers cut the heart of Judah. He said to him sneeringly, “Thou hast expected me anxiously, no doubt, my son. Thy kind, affectionate heart panted, as the flower scorched by the sun of noon-day, pants for the dew of even, for my presence—and I am here!” He shouted the last words into the ear of the victim. Hitherto, the harsh and cruel usage of his father had elicited no reply; but there is a point where endurance will stop.

Judah had borne much: but now his heart swelled with indignation, and he answered, “When thou struck me, and dragged me senseless from my own apartment to this miserable

abode, and loaded me with chains, I did not complain ; for I had disappointed thine expectations, and refused to comply with what my reason told me was unnatural treason. Yet could I make allowance for violent passions, excited almost to madness by my conscientious refusal. To save thee from pain, I would willingly have sacrificed life, and all that makes life dear, save my duty to God and my king ; but cold premeditated cruelty and scorn, I cannot—will not, endure.” “Will not?” laughed Isaac. “How canst thou evade it?” “By death!” was the solemn reply. “Yet, O my father, let not my blood be upon thine head. Release me from this worse than Egyptian bondage, and I will go forth from thy presence, where thou shalt never behold this hated form again. Will not poverty and despair be punishment sufficient for me? Must I lie here, and die before thy face?” “Fool!” replied Isaac.—“Have I not proclaimed unto the world, that thou art already dead? Have I not mourned for thee? Then how can I give myself the lie, and proclaim myself an unnatural monster? Would that thou wert truly dead; and then I could rest in peace.” “Is thine heart, indeed, so hardened to my sufferings?—but I might have known it,

and thy wish will soon be gratified!" He spoke no more; but as he turned his eyes from the face of his father, a thrill of delight ran through his frame, for he beheld his aunt and sister gazing upon him. Merab's finger was on her lips, in token of silence; and Rachel, pale as death, clung to her arms. It was a scene for a painter. The tall muscular figure of Isaac, with his dark eyes and scowling brow bent in rage upon the pale and handsome face of Judah, lighted up for a moment with surprise and joy; Rachel's beautiful countenance, pale with anguish and despair; and, above all, Merab. The latter had been beautiful, and was still lovely: but her figure had more of majesty than grace; and there was a look of stern command at the present moment in her flashing eye, that awed while it encouraged the timid girl who clung to her. "Have I silenced thee?—Farewell! To-morrow King Absalom goes with forty thousand men in pursuit of the fugitive monarch." He turned to depart, when a hand was laid on his arm, and a voice, that ran through the vaulted passage, bade him stay his steps. The door, which he had left open, was violently closed; and Merab's eyes were fixed upon him with a glance that penetrated to his very soul.

THE CAPTURE.

But man, proud man,
Drest in a little brief authority,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven,
As makes the angels weep.

SHAKSPEARE.

WE left Abia with Rachel, at her mother's, on the night of her return to Jerusalem. We shall pass over the two succeeding days, for the flight of David has been so pathetically described by sacred history, as to leave nothing for the pen of the novelist. Beneath some palm trees, in the desert, by the side of a small fountain, sat the exiled king. His principal followers stood around him; but dejection was visible in every countenance. He had endeavoured to hold a council concerning his present hopes and future prospects; but in the absence of tidings from Jerusalem, they could determine on nothing; and, after a short debate, they all sank into gloomy silence. Sad were the thoughts that occupied the mind of the king during that long silence. The past, the present, and the future, each held their share in the deep communion he held with himself.

Memory shadowed forth the wilderness of

Engedi; where, accompanied by wild and lawless adventurers, he had wandered as a hunted outlaw; but that was happiness, contrasted with his present fate. Then his heart had been light, and hope was young and fresh within it; but now age had withered the freshness of early feelings, and he who sought to deprive him of his crown and life, was a beloved but an ungrateful child, one whose transgressions he had pardoned, and again taken him to his bosom, to sting the heart that cherished him.

The king's painful reverie was suddenly disturbed. Abia, since she heard that her lover was dead, had grown reckless of existence. To serve the parent of her departed friend was now her vision by day, and her dream by night. She knew the king anxiously expected tidings from Jerusalem; and she determined, at any risk, to go back to the city.

It was Abia, arrayed in her minstrel garb, who stood before the king. He recognized her immediately, and listened in silence to the project of the enthusiastic girl. But when she concluded, he gravely dissented, alleging that, should she be recognized, and fall into the hands of Yemima, she could expect nothing less than death, or perpetual imprisonment, as the

consequence of her desertion. But when a woman's heart is resolved, but few men can resist their passionate pleading, more especially when it is in their own favour. David longed to hear tidings from Jerusalem. Abia was bent on going thither. At length the king gave consent, and she departed.

A crowd had assembled in one of the streets of Jerusalem, listening to the strains of a young minstrel, who was playing on the harp. Between the pauses of the music, various groups were commenting on the wonderful changes which had so lately agitated the holy city. On the very outskirts of the crowd, but watching the proceedings of the minstrel with a curious eye, stood a black eunuch, of almost giant stature. Those who were closest to this man, shrunk from him with demonstrations of terror and detestation. Unabashed by these unequivocal marks of dislike, the eunuch resolutely forced his way onward, until he stood close beside the performer. Abia (for it was she) felt her head grow giddy, as he fixed his large eyes upon her face, for she instantly recognized him as one of Yemima's most favoured and trusted domestics. His peculiar look convinced her she was recognized; and it re-

quired a great effort to keep herself from fainting. Saba, for such was his name, smiled malignantly as he marked the trepidation of his intended victim, who had bent down her head over her instrument, in order to conceal her features from his detested glance. Pressing close to her, but apparently only as a spectator, was her young brother Joel. Before she ventured into the streets, she had visited her mother. Rebecca, although connected with the house of Saul, was devotedly attached to David, and she never thought of blaming Abia for her rash enterprize.

It was nearly dark ; and when her daughter departed for the purpose of gaining intelligence, and ascertaining the state of the public opinion, for which her disguise afforded ample opportunity, Joel, by previous agreement, followed her, so that if she were recognized, he might bear what intelligence he could gain to the king. Fearing her voice might betray her, even if she were not already recognized, Abia ceased to sing, and turned to depart, when Saba, who had watched his moment, suddenly threw his arms around her. Abia uttered not a word ; but making a silent signal to her brother not to interfere, she struggled to release herself from

his firm grasp, and had nearly succeeded, when Saba exclaimed aloud, "I command thee to surrender, ungrateful runaway, in the name of the queen, thine injured mistress." "I have no mistress," said Abia, in as firm a voice as she could assume. "Good people, will ye abandon a helpless boy to the power of a ruffian like this?" The people, who from the first disliked the eunuch, now closed around them, and gave indications of their intention of taking part with the weakest; when the eunuch, seeing that if he were not resolute he should be deprived of his prize, and the splendid reward Yemima had offered for the recovery of her slave, now shouted aloud, "Off, off, at your peril, every one of you! This is no boy, but a female slave of the Queen Yemima. She hath run away from her mistress. Let her deny the truth if she can." Abia felt that the discovery of her sex had sealed her fate. Her courage deserted her, and she sunk senseless in the arms of Saba.

The sun had not set, when Joel passed the gates of Jerusalem. He crossed the Kedron, and was toiling up the Mount of Olives, on his way to the king, breathing as he went many a vow of vengeance against Absalom and his proud Syrian wife.

The chamber in which the queen Yemima received the homage of her new subjects was of cedar, and each pannel was inlaid with ivory, and spangled with silver. On the floor was a carpet, worked in various colours, with the spectacle of Jephtha sacrificing his daughter. At the farther end of the apartment was a throne of silver, the steps of which were carpeted with crimson cloth; and a rich canopy of the same, fringed with gold, was placed over it. Small round frames of ivory, cushioned in the same manner, like the canopy, were placed around it, at various distances. A fountain, fashioned like a serpent, was throwing its waters into a basin of white marble. The room, which was closed in on three sides, opened on the fourth to a sloping terrace, on which were placed aromatic shrubs and singing birds in golden cages. It was sunset; and a lamp of pure gold illuminated the apartment, shedding a soft light upon the beauties there assembled.

Yemima herself, glittering with gems, and arrayed in cloth of gold, sat beneath the canopy before described. A fan of peacock's feathers, mounted with ebony, lay beside her; and little Tamar sat at her feet, with her hand on the head of her gazelle. The child's eyes were closed,

and her long lashes rested on a cheek which was paler than usual. The wives of Absalom's principal officers had been invited to an evening banquet; dancing girls and musicians were grouped together, and some of the younger slaves were engaged in handing round refreshments. Yet in the midst of all this splendour, Yemima was not happy. Ambition, which had absorbed every gentle feeling in her bosom, continually tormented her. While David lived, and was at liberty, she could know no rest. The gloom upon her brow communicated itself to all around. The ladies sat silent, each watching with eager eyes the countenance of the queen—for so at present we must style her. "Saba!" said Yemima, clapping her hands impatiently. No answer was returned; and the princess angrily enquired why the eunuch had not answered her summons. Search was instantly made, and when they found he was absent, Yemima's anger increased to fury, and she commanded that he should be bound and brought before her immediately on his return. In consequence of this command, Saba was deprived of his prisoner, and in spite of his entreaties and exclamations, dragged into the presence of his mistress. This, however, made no change in the fate of Abia, for she was immediately recognized, and

secured until Yemima's pleasure should be known concerning her.

Saba, trembling and pale, prostrated himself before the throne. "Wretch!" she exclaimed, "how darest thou absent thyself without permission?" "Whose dog am I," replied Saba, abjectly, "that I should presume to explain to the light of the universe? Nevertheless, it was on the service of my royal mistress I ventured to incur her displeasure." "How!" said Yemima; "speak quickly, or thou diest." "As thy slave hopes for mercy," replied Saba, "I have found the runaway Abia, the Israelite slave." A cry of savage joy burst from the lips of the queen, as she bid them release the eunuch, and bring Abia before her. Then turning to Saba, with a smile the more gracious from her previous frown, she enquired where he had found her. The eunuch gave a concise account, and just as he had finished, Abia was brought in. She was very pale, but her countenance betrayed no sign of fear. For some moments Yemima fixed her eyes steadfastly upon her, but she shrunk not from the examination, and her coolness only exasperated the Syrian. "Slave! ungrateful slave!" she ejaculated, "what punishment does thy baseness and treachery merit? Answer!

lest with my own hand I cleave thee to the earth, miscreant as thou art!" "Why should I answer thee, princess," said Abia, and her sweet voice touched the hearts of all present; "when I know that I have everything to dread from thy vengeance and nothing to hope from thy mercy?" "Thou hast said it," exclaimed the Syrian. "Bring scourges, and scourge her till she die beneath the lash. Nothing to hope from my mercy!—thine own lips have pronounced thy doom." Tyranny is seldom at a loss for willing instruments. Abia's favour with the departed princess had produced her many enemies. It will always be so in households constituted like Absalom's, of persons differing, not only in manners and customs, but in religious opinions. Alas! that the best and holiest gift of the Deity should have become, amongst the wise, as well as the worldly and vicious, the most fruitful subject of contention and cruelty! But enough of this—the ages of bigotry are rapidly passing away for ever.

Without power to resist, the unhappy girl was seized and stripped, while the Hebrew matrons present covered their eyes with their hands, in order to avoid witnessing this scene of violence and cruelty. She had received

more than one blow, and the blood began to stream from her fair shoulders, when little Tamar, who loved Abia tenderly, rushed forward, terror depicted on her lovely countenance, her eyes streaming with tears, and with piercing cries threw her arms around her, calling on her mother to pardon her sweet nurse.— But the tiger had tasted blood: with her own hands she dragged the child away. Abia had not spoken a word; but with cheeks burning, and lips compressed, nerved her heart to endurance. But aid was at hand. Tamar had burst from the arms of her mother, and bounding with the speed of a gazelle across the terrace, reached the pavilion where Absalom and his chief officers, among others Hushai and Amasa, were banquetting, previous to his departure on the morrow in pursuit of David.

The appearance of the child, whom he passionately loved, alarmed the prince, for she was his only daughter. Urged by her eager entreaties he crossed the terrace, and stood gazing on the scene within, motioning the eunuch who kept guard before it to silence. He entered with noiseless step. Abia, exhausted and with closed eyes, leant against a marble statue, while her streaming blood stained the

rich carpet. The instruments of tyranny pursued their revolting duty with unabated vigour. All were so completely absorbed, that the entrance of Absalom was unnoticed, until in a voice of thunder he bade them desist; and, turning to his wife, enquired the cause of this brutality. At first she refused to answer a question so peremptorily asked, and bade some of her slaves take Abia into safe keeping; but Tamar clung to her, and refused to be separated. "Why do such scenes of cruelty disgrace my household?" asked Absalom, as he drew Yemima to a spot where no ear could listen but her own. "I know the girl to be a runaway; but she was the favourite of my departed sister—she is the favourite of my child." "Were she ten times the favourite of child or sister," vehemently interrupted Yemima, "she should die." "I tell thee, proud Syrian," said the now enraged Absalom, in a voice of command, such as he had seldom used towards her, "that she shall not only be released, but pardoned and freed. When I took thee as my wife, I made thee not my ruler." The blood rushed to the brow of Yemima, and a red spot tinged either cheek, as she gave back threat for threat, and answered in a voice of bitter scorn: "Prince of

Israel, when thou camest to Geshur, a proscribed felon, and a banished man, a spiller of blood—the blood of thy own brother—my father, a sovereign prince, opened his arms to receive thee; when thou wert houseless, he gave thee a home. Princes sought my hand, and kingdoms were laid low at my feet; but I spurned them all, and gave my dower and prized beauty to an out-cast. And shalt thou, whose soul is stained with the blood of a brother, whose hand is stretched forth against the life of a father, reproach me with cruelty, because I scourged an ungrateful slave?" It was then that Absalom felt the terrible consciousness of guilt. It took from him the power to reply; and his lips quivered with agony, as he averted his head to conceal it from the proud woman, who triumphed in her victory. But Yemima was artful as she was cruel, and without uttering another word she led him back to the banquet room.

On the morrow, Absalom departed from Jerusalem, leaving Abia still a prisoner. He was fated never to return: and the pitiless woman, who knew no mercy for others, was soon doomed to experience the worst of adversity.

The news of Ahitophel's death had spread dismay into the hearts of many—for the belief

in his wisdom was great amongst the people ; and they now foresaw that the power of Absalom was already tottering.

THE PRISON.

It is now time to return to Isaac, whom we left at the moment when he discovered that he was not the only visitor to the prison of his son. Astonishment gave way to rage. With bitter curses, he bade his daughter return to her chamber, and shaking off the hold of Merab, prepared to enforce his command.

But the time was past, when for her his slightest request was a law. He had himself broken the confidence that had subsisted between them. He had shown himself insensible to the calls of nature, or the dictates of mercy: and the sight of her brother's suffering, aroused her to resistance. "I cannot, will not go," she answered calmly, but firmly, "unless my brother accompanies me. Thou mayest do by me, as thou hast done by him—imprison me, and load me with chains; but at least we will suffer together." "Remember, girl," cried the enraged father, "that there is a power to compel thee to obedience. Come away, lest I take thee at thy word, and force thee to remain. And for thee,"

turning to Merab, whose dark eyes were fixed upon him in withering scorn, "for thee, hast thou no better employment than to teach my children to rebel against their only parent?" "Wretch," exclaimed Merab, with uncontrollable indignation, "shalt thou dare to complain? thou, whose pernicious counsels armed a base murderer against his father's life, and sent forth a virtuous monarch to exile, and perhaps to death?—thou, who hast assisted to plunge thy country into unnatural warfare, dare to complain that thy children resist thy tyrannical decree?"

Isaac's cheeks grew livid with uncontrollable rage, and it was some moments before his passion would permit him to reply. Then he did so not in words—but catching Rachel's slight figure in his arms, he tried to force her away: but she struggled violently, and Merab came to her assistance. "Unhand her, wretch; unhand her. She is too pure, too beautiful, to be thine. Thy very touch is pollution." Then, exerting all her strength, she rescued the terrified girl from his iron grasp.

Judah had looked on this scene with feelings too painful for description. Chained as he was, he had no power to interfere; but the cold perspiration oozed from his brow, in large drops of

agony. "Rachel, dear Rachel," he gasped forth, "go with him—leave me to my fate. It will soon be over, for the death damps are already on my brow—yet will it cheer my last moments, to think that I have looked on thy sweet face, and heard the music of thy voice once again, and know that his curse, his fearful curse, will not be quite fulfilled—that two kind hearts will grieve at my untimely fate—that two loved ones will weep over my lowly grave." "We will at least die together," sobbed Rachel, as she knelt down beside him, and laid her aching head upon his bosom. "And I will perish with ye, my children," said Merab, as she threw herself on the ground beside them. "We will leave the house clear for the new bride, and his desires will be gratified. But the time may come, and that too, not far distant, when he may wish that he had acted otherwise. Justice hath already overtaken one of his base associates. Ahitophel's fate may ere long be his—to die by his own hand." "A prophecy, a prophecy!" laughed Isaac; "if thou art so fond of thy nephew's company, I will leave thee with him," and he turned to depart. "Tiger," uttered Merab, "will nothing move thy hard heart to mercy? Wilt thou see both thy children perish

in their youth! Must ye die thus, my beautiful, my brave, both together?" "Leave me, leave me, Rachel, dear beloved Rachel; and thou, my more than mother, add not to my misery. Let me not see thee fade day after day, and pine for the fresh air and sunshine, until thy beauty is withered, and thy young heart broken, as mine has been, and know myself the cause of all." "Judah," they answered together, "our determination is taken, and we will abide by it."

It was past midnight; and Zeba, the daughter of Ahitophel, still sat brooding in her lonely chamber. She had dismissed her slaves, to indulge in the anguish that she carefully concealed from every eye. Zeba had been from her infancy a despised and neglected being; and while her fairer sisters became wives and mothers, she pined for happiness she was never doomed to share. But what she wanted in beauty, was compensated by a vigorous intellect, which had received more than usual cultivation. Yet she pined for a kind and sympathizing bosom, in which she could repose all the injuries that ate like fire into her heart, turning every feeling into gall and bitterness. By degrees she learned to look upon all mankind with indifference; and it was long before the commands of her father

could induce her to receive a proposal, which she only looked upon as a fresh insult heaped on her devoted head. She was unconscious of the deceit practised upon her suitor, until his conduct, when compelled to receive her as a wife, revealed the fatal truth; and his subsequent conduct served to confirm her dislike to him. She had extinguished her lamp, and sat watching the course of the moon, when a dark shadow interposed itself between her and the light. Looking up, she perceived a man standing before her. There was nothing in his appearance to create alarm, even in the most timid breast—for he was old and decrepid. With something of anger in her tone, she demanded what he wanted in her chamber, at that late hour. “Haste, dear lady, haste,”—was the reply, “if thou wouldst save them—so young so generous, they are indeed worthy of a better fate.” “What meanest thou?” interrupted Zeba, impatiently. “There is something hidden in thy words, which I cannot discover.” “Listen then, dear lady, for there is no time to lose,” and he acquainted Zeba with what had just taken place, to which he had been an unseen witness. He was the same person whom Judah and his sister had lingered to speak with, on the day we

introduced them to the reader. He had been taken into Isaac's service the day he brought the mother of Judah and Rachel home as a bride, and he loved them better than anything on earth. Zeba's resolution was soon taken. Bidding the old man awaken some of the male slaves who were devotedly attached to Judah, and then with them follow her, she descended with noiseless steps, and reached the prison just as the last words were uttered. Her entrance was unperceived by any one, and she stood by the side of Isaac. One glance served to interest every feeling of pity in the cause of those she came to serve. "Isaac!" she shouted, and he shrank from her terrible glances; "Isaac, what means this?" and she pointed, as she spoke, to the group before them. "Woman," answered he, and his voice actually trembled from excess of passion, "what brought thee hither?" She replied calmly and sternly, "Wretch, might I not rather ask, what brought thee hither?—and why in the dead of night thou leavest thy couch, to visit and torture an unhappy prisoner? My woman's curiosity brought me hither: but if there be a crime, why shouldst thou thyself play the jailor, unless the savage brutality of thy nature lead thee to revel in the sufferings of

others?" "Who art thou?" exclaimed Merab, as she raised her face toward the wife of Isaac, "who comest like an angel of mercy to speak comfort to the afflicted, and bring aid to the despairing?"

"Alas," replied Zeba, "I am, I fear, the unhappy cause of all thy sorrows. I am the wife of Isaac of Hebron, and the daughter of Ahitophel. That man," she continued, while she again fixed her eyes upon Isaac; "that man whose baseness even his child must condemn— But I waste the precious moments in idle words." As she spoke, she drew a small silver pipe from her bosom, and uttered a shrill sound, which was answered by a rush from without; and in a moment the prison was filled with armed men. All were the slaves and domestic servants of Isaac—men who had watched their young master's growth from infancy to manhood. They knew him dutiful, affectionate, generous and brave. Rachel's sweet disposition, too, had made her a general favorite; and great was the horror of all, when they beheld their situation. In spite of the threats of their enraged master, they immediately removed the hateful chains that bound Judah, but his eyes were closed, and he remained perfectly motionless. "He is

dead," murmured the old man, hoarsely, as he bent down his withered face, and kissed the marble cheek. "We are too late to save him." "Oh! no, no!" shrieked Merab, wildly, as she fixed her eyes upon him. "He moves—he breathes—his eyes are opening. O God of mercies, I thank thee." "This is folly," said Zeba, as she dashed a tear from her eye. "Bring him away! Attend to his sister." She was obeyed, and ere many minutes had elapsed, Judah was lying on a couch in Merab's chamber. Zeba's skill and kindness were invaluable to the anxious Merab. All that night the emaciated and almost inanimate Judah fluctuated between life and death: but as the day broke he fell into a tranquil and refreshing slumber.

Isaac's rage knew no bounds, when he found his authority disputed, his commands disobeyed, and his son at liberty, in spite of all his efforts; in the bitterness of his heart he cursed himself, and swore to be avenged.

Rest and kindness were all that Judah needed, and the blessed consciousness of freedom for a time banished every other feeling. From Rachel he learned all that had befallen Abia, and he determined as soon as his strength returned to join the army of king David.

A month passed away—an eventful month to the personages of our tale. Judah had succeeded in escaping, and joined the army under Joab, with whom he had formerly served. Vain was every attempt to ascertain the fate of Abia. From Joel he had learned the circumstances of her capture, and he became almost hopeless of ever beholding her again. Meanwhile she pined in a lonely prison, uncheered even by the hope of release.

It was the same chamber in which Abia had received her doom; but there was a change in the aspect of its mistress, and its magnificence only seemed to render the gloom that pervaded it more chilling and dreary. She sat silent and moody, while her slaves, pale and motionless, stood watching her countenance. Tamar sat silent and dejected at the feet of her mother, occasionally stealing a look at her countenance, and then averting her face, whilst a cold shudder passed through her little frame. “It is strange,” said Yemima, speaking rather to herself than to those around her, “that there are no tidings of Absalom. Perhaps he is already on his way, and will ere long enter in triumph the capital of his kingdom. Yet would I give half my wealth for certain intelligence of his coming.” She

was yet speaking, when the eunuch Saba entered, and prostrating himself, said, "There is a messenger from the army of my lord the king, who asks a private audience of the queen." "Let me see him instantly," was the reply, "and remain all of ye within call." She was obeyed, when pale, and trembling, the messenger prostrated himself before her. "Rise and speak, quickly," exclaimed the haughty princess; "where left ye my lord Absalom?" "Alas!" he replied, "all is lost—David has triumphed, and my lord Absalom is slain." "Wretch!" shouted Yemima, "it were better for thee that thou hadst never been born, than live to tell me such a tale. Slaves, bear him hence, and scourge him until the life-blood oozes from his dastard veins, in order that others may learn from his example to forbear trifling with the wrath of a queen." In vain did the unhappy messenger protest that he spoke truly. Her commands were obeyed; and he died beneath the lash.

The Hebrew domestics shuddered at this fearful violation of every law, human and divine; yet tidings came, one after another, of the total destruction of Absalom's party; but the terrible punishment inflicted on the unfortunate wretch who had already suffered, deterred every one

from the dangerous task of communicating them to the person most concerned. Consequently they were carefully concealed from the tyrannical princess. Her faithful Syrians would have urged upon her the necessity of flight from a place already in the possession of her enemies, but none were hardy enough to face the first outbreak of her anger. Although Yemima affected to treat the intelligence she received as a falsehood invented to torment, still her heart was ill at ease.

The crisis at length arrived. David had entered Jerusalem. With songs and with dance the people went forth to meet him. Gilded tapestry was hung across the streets, and the balconies were filled with orange trees, and fragrant flowers of all kinds. But the heart of the king was not with feasting or with pageantry; and although he grieved not the hearts of the people with vain complaints, while he prepared to return thanks to Him who had preserved him from danger and death, he mourned in anguish the death of him who had perished in the midst of his sin.

Yemima had arisen earlier than usual, and arrayed herself in the richest robes, and seated herself upon a balcony that looked into the street.

She heard the shouts of the people, the beating of drums, and the sound of trumpets. Her heart beat quick, and her cheek reddened, as she bade her slaves bring garlands of flowers and purses of gold, to bestow amongst the people who welcomed her beloved so joyously. The slaves looked significantly at each other, as they replied, "To hear is to obey." But they had scarcely quitted the room, when they entered again with faces pale as death, exclaiming that the palace was full of armed men. "Fools, cowards, as ye are," said the impatient princess, "what then? It is my husband returned triumphant to the city. I will go forth with song and with dance to meet him."

It was now too late for deception. Reckless of consequences, for he knew her power was at an end, and feared her no longer, Saba stepped forward and spoke: "Princess, thou art wilfully deceiving thyself. We knew yesterday that David was returning to Jerusalem, escorted by his repentant subjects. The tribe of Judah went forth to meet him, and welcome him back. His troops are already in the palace; and all that remains is to submit to fate." "Liar!" exclaimed the almost frantic princess; "it is false; it must not, shall not be. They could not look

upon him in his beauty, and plunge a steel into his heart. I will have thy detested tongue forced from thy mouth. Out of my sight, lest I myself become thy executioner." But those who had obeyed her in her day of power, were now in no haste to obey, since they knew that power was crushed for ever. She was about to repeat her command, when she was attracted by the entrance of her principal Hebrew attendant, with her robes rent, and ashes on her head. Though she uttered no word, Yemima saw at a glance that all was lost. She uttered a shriek, so loud and piercing that those who heard it turned pale and shuddered, while she tore the gems from her robe, and the diadem from her brow. With impotent passion, she trampled upon her jewels, rent her robes, and tore her beautiful hair, while the palace rung with her frantic cries. The Hebrew girl, the only one who remained beside her, shuddered at the fearful blasphemies she uttered, and strove to calm the outbreak of passions which she knew were terrible, by directing her attention to the necessity of consulting her personal safety by flight.

Her words were unavailing, until Tamar threw herself upon her bosom, exclaiming, "Mother, dear mother!" She said no more—that was enough.

Tears began to fall down the cheeks of Yemima. Oh! what a softener to the heart is sorrow! The proud and haughty Yemima was subdued, and burst into a passionate flood of tears, as she said, "Take her away; I cannot bear her questionings." But the softer mood lasted not. She became more savage than before. Shocked by her violence, the girl at length retreated, taking Tamar with her; and she was left alone. "Ingrates," she muttered between her closed teeth; "but let them go." Yet with a sophistry, by no means uncommon, she continued to deceive herself. In her prosperity, she had spurned and treated them as beings of an inferior mould. In her adversity there were no recollections of past kindness to attach them to her service. An idea of making her escape now crossed her mind; and, divesting herself of her splendid robes, she habited herself in the garb of a slave, while she concealed some rich jewels in her girdle. Then drawing her thick veil around her, she crossed the terrace, and mingled with a crowd at the garden gate, who were shouting, "Long live King David!" A deeper pang pierced the heart of the fugitive, as she recognised amongst them some of those whom she had deemed her most devoted adhe-

rents. Extricating herself from the crowd, she pursued her miserable way. She, the daughter and wife of a king, wandered on foot, and alone, from the city where she had enacted such scenes of cruelty.

Night had fallen when the unhappy princess found herself faint and weary in the valley of Jehosaphat, leaning against a tomb, which to this day retains the name of Absalom, and had been built by him as a memorial. She wept bitterly. To pray she dared not—for she had scoffed at the idolatrous religion of her forefathers, and neglected the pure one of her adopted country. She had not remained long beside the tomb, when she fancied she perceived some dark object moving towards her. She was not mistaken ; for ere long the figure of a man became distinctly visible, and Saba, the eunuch, stood close beside her. His hideous ugliness looked even more fearful, from the dimness of the objects around. She drew her veil still closer, trusting, that if he discovered her, he might take her for what she appeared to be, a household slave. “Oh ! pretty one,” shouted Saba, as he approached the princess ; “thou hast strangely chosen the time to visit the dead ;” and he tried to pull aside her veil, that he might look upon her features.

"Back, slave!" exclaimed the princess, thrown off her guard by his insolence. Saba started, and for a moment habit resumed its influence over him, and he was about to prostrate himself at her feet; but he checked the impulse as he remembered their relative positions, and replied, in a voice full as haughty as her own, "I am thy slave no longer, but a free man, and as great as thou art." "Insolent, quit my presence," said the princess. "Fallen as I am, I would crush thee beneath my feet with as little remorse as I would crush the puny insect that would strive to sting me." The answer was a laugh, which, echoed as it was by the rocks around, and breaking on the stillness of the night, sounded like the laugh of a demon. The horror-struck princess almost fancied that she beheld the embodiment of one of the wild legends of her own land in the being before her, mocking her fallen fortunes; but she instantly rallied her self-possession. "I waste words with thee, reptile," she said; "but thy presence shall pollute my sight no longer;" and she attempted to pass him. But it was not Saba's intention to let his prey escape so easily; and he prevented her passing. "No no, princess," he said; "I have a long reckoning to settle with thee before we part.

Tell me, didst thou bear nothing with thee in thy flight, of all the treasures that were lately thine? Hast thou not a single jewel remaining?" "Is that thy purpose, base wretch!" replied Yemima, as she drew a ruby from her finger. "There, take that, and begone. I would be alone." "Not yet," answered the eunuch, calmly; "thou hast other jewels." "Take them, take all;" and she threw the few jewels she yet possessed toward him: "and rid me of thine hateful presence." The eunuch concealed the trinkets he had forced from her, in his vest, and once more she impatiently bade him begone. "Not yet," he answered again, as calmly as before. "There is another debt to settle between me and thee, and when that is over, thou shalt be obeyed." For the first time, Yemima saw something glittering in his hands, and a horrible suspicion of his intentions crossed her mind, but she determined not to lose her life without a struggle. But ere she was well prepared, the eunuch sprang upon her with the ferocity of a tiger. Yemima stepped back, but uttered no cry, although she felt the steel in her bosom, and the blood gushed out over her white robes. With the strength of despair, she closed with him in a mortal struggle, and they came to

the earth together. Over each other they rolled, although no word was spoken. Both knew that life or death depended on their exertions. In the fall, Saba had dropped the dagger, and the great effort of each was to regain it. Yemima vainly tried to release her hands, but she succeeded in catching it between her teeth, and inflicted several deep wounds in his neck. Both were at length exhausted by loss of blood, and relaxed their efforts, as by mutual consent. It was but for a moment, for Saba, concentrating all his energies into one last desperate effort, threw off her hold; but in the act he fell back and died.

Yemima felt that she was free; but a faintness was gradually stealing over her, and as she attempted to rise, she sank back again. Her eye fell upon the hideous countenance of the eunuch, spotted with blood. At the sight, she burst into a loud and exulting laugh. It was the last effort of passion. Her frame, exhausted in the struggle, and enfeebled by loss of blood, had parted with the small remains of vitality.

THE CLOSING SCENE.

In the pavilion described in a former chapter,

as the one in which King David received the warning which enabled him to escape the snares laid for him, sat two young maidens, enjoying the sweet communing of kindred hearts, while their bright faces gave evidence of that peace and tranquillity which had so long been unknown to both. "Oh ! Rachel," and a tear glistened in the bright eye of the speaker, "hadst thou seen the joy of my dear mother, as she held the child, once more all her own, to her bosom, and wept tears of gratitude to heaven for my unexpected deliverance, thou would'st have felt like me, that long years of misery were more than compensated by those few blessed moments." "The children," asked Rachel, as she dashed away the intruding tear, and smiled joyously, "what said they to their new abode ?—what weeping, Abia ?—it is a sin and shame to do so now." Abia threw her arms around the neck of her friend, and wept, but not tears of bitterness. "Look, look," cried Rachel, as she drew her friend toward a shield of polished steel ; "Look, sweetest, at what I have been twining for thee." Abia looked, and saw that her light-hearted friend had placed a wreath of orange blossoms round her dark tresses, and she blushed deeply as she said, "Oh ! Rachel, this

is folly indeed." "Not so, not so, sage Abia," and she laughed again as she spoke; "but see what punishment I will give thee for thine insolence."

Before a word of remonstrance could be spoken, she bounded away, and left Abia alone. Alone, did I say? No; for another was beside her, pouring into her ear a tale of deep and passionate love. Few were the words spoken: but when, a few minutes after, Rachel intruded her laughing face through the silken curtain of the pavilion, her brother was pressing warm kisses on the brow, eye, and on the lips of her friend.

Isaac of Hebron refused not to the preserver and favorite of the king the consent he had refused to the daughter of the indigent Rebecca. Great was the joy of the widow, when she led her fair daughter beneath the bridal canopy—for David himself performed the office of father to the bride.

For the rest of our characters, can it be doubted that they were happy?—except Isaac, who did not long survive the disgrace his baseness had brought upon him. When Rachel wedded shortly afterwards, Zeba and Merab continued to reside with her. For the historical

personages of our tale, history has recorded their virtues and their vices; but no chronicler has yet recounted the patient sufferings, and untimely fate, of the gentle and unfortunate Tamar.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

2745. SOLOMON succeeded his father. One of the first acts of his reign was the execution of his brother Adonijah, and the banishment of Abiathar, the high priest. Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, had, at Adonijah's solicitation, requested Abishag the Shunamite, as a wife for him. Solomon feared this request indicated another attempt on the throne, to which Adonijah had before aspired. He punished it by death. Joab, the chief of the army, who had also conspired with Adonijah, was likewise put to death, as David had desired, for the murders treacherously in cold blood of Abner the uncle of Saul, after he had joined himself to David, and Amasa, captain of the host.

2748-55. The Temple of Jerusalem commenced and finished in seven years—a building which, as a work of art, was never equalled.

2768. The Queen of Sheba, the Arabia Felix of later times, visited Solomon, and brought him a magnificent present. Solomon shewed her all his treasures, and dismissed her with a present.

The reign of this monarch may be considered as the most brilliant era of the monarchy. After a continued war during many centuries with their neighbours, the Jews were at length in a state of profound peace; of which Solomon took advantage to cultivate the arts and sciences. The Temple may be taken as a specimen of the perfection to which he brought them. As a proof of his wisdom, may be mentioned the case of two wo-

men, one of whom having found her child dead, exchanged it for the child of the other. When the King was called upon to give judgment, he ordered both children to be divided in two, and each of them to have half of each child. One of them consented ; but the mother of the living child cried out rather to give it to her rival, than to let it be killed. Upon this, the King ordered it to be given to her, justly considering that a mother's love would sooner induce her to part with her child than to have it destroyed. Notwithstanding his wisdom, this monarch allowed his wives to lead him into idolatry in his old age. As a punishment for which, God told him he would rend ten of the tribes from the kingdom ; but his promise to David should be fulfilled — he would still leave a portion of the kingdom to his posterity.

2780. Solomon died, and left the kingdom to his son Rehoboam, by Neamah, an Amonitess. Immediately on his accession, he went to Shechem, to be proclaimed in the presence of all Israel ; but Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, (who having been raised to the throne by the artifices of the King of Egypt, whose daughter he had married, was anointed king over the ten tribes in Solomon's life-time, by the prophet Abijah,) addressed him in these words : "Thy father made our yoke grievous. Now, therefore, make thou the grievous service of thy father and his heavy yoke which he put upon us lighter, and we will serve thee." Rehoboam having demanded three days for consideration, consulted his father's counsellors, who advised him to speak mildly. But his youthful companions, whose advice he followed, persuaded him to answer the people thus : "My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins. And now, whereas my father did load you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions." Immediately all Israel, except Judah, cried out, "What por-

tion have we in David?—neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel!” Having sent Adoram, his treasurer, to bring back the people to obedience, they stoned him to death. Upon this, Rehoboam raised an army to chastise them; but he was restrained by a message from God. This monarch fell into idolatry, and was punished by an invasion by the King of Egypt, who took away part of the treasures of the Temple. Abijah succeeded his father. He marched against Jeroboam, King of Israel, with an army of four hundred thousand men. The enemy, consisting of double that number, took him in flank, while he was addressing them. The men of Judah, actuated by despair, cried unto God, while the priest sounded the trumpet, and immediately fell upon the Israelites, defeated them, and killed two-thirds of their army.

2805-15. Asa succeeded his father. The first act of his reign was the removal of all vestiges of idolatry. With an army of five hundred and eighty thousand men, he defeated the Ethiopians, whose army nearly doubled his. Asa made a league with Benhadad, King of Syria, against Baasha, King of Israel, who was building the city of Ramah, on the frontiers of Judah; and during the diversion which the Syrian monarch made, carried off the materials, and constructed two other cities with them.

2844. Jehoshaphat succeeded his father; and after a reign of twenty-five years, during which he had several wars with the Syrians, Amonites, and Moabites, was succeeded by his son Jehoram, whose first act was the murder of all his brothers, and several of the other princes of Judah. He married Athaliah, the daughter of the wicked Ahab, King of Israel. After a series of disastrous defeats, he died, and was succeeded by his son, Ahaziah, who was killed by an arrow shot by Jehu; who,

after killing all the house of Ahab, seated himself on 2876. the throne of Israel. He was succeeded by his mother, Athaliah, who murdered all the princes of the blood-royal, except Joash, who was preserved by a daughter of the late King Jehoram, who had married Jehoiada the priest. He was kept in the temple for nearly seven years. At the 2882. expiration of that time, Jehoiada, who had previously prepared the leaders of the people and the army, brought him out, and, having crowned him, and given him the testimony, the people clapped their hands, and cried out, "God save the King!" which Athaliah having heard, came to the temple, crying, "Treason!" She was immediately seized by the command of Jehoiada, dragged out to the horse gate, and put to death. The first act of Jehoiada's administration, under the youthful king, was the destruction of the idolatrous priests and images, and the repair of the temple, for which purpose a chest was placed in the gate of the temple, into which the people put their gifts. Immediately after the death of Jehoiada, the King fell into idolatry, and killed Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, who had rebuked him for it. He was immediately punished for it by an invasion of the King of Syria, who destroyed all the princes of the people. He was soon after murdered by two of his servants.

MALAH,

THE PROPHET'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER I.

The bride was young and lovely,
But her smile had nought of sweetness in it.
On her brow the characters of pride were written legibly.
Ambition, not love, kindled her nuptial torch ;
Love has no palace home.

MS. POEM.

THERE was rejoicing in the royal palace of Samaria, and all was bustle and preparation. It was to be a day of jubilee and festivity in honor of the arrival of Jehosaphat king of Judah, and his son Jehoram, to consummate the nuptials of that prince with Athaliah, princess of Israel. It was nearly noontide. The noise of preparation was hushed, and the streets were deserted, save by a few solitary wayfarers. The burning summer sun shone brightly in the clear blue sky, shedding down a flood of intense radiance.

The ceremony was not to take place until the cool hour of evening ; and the citizens were indulging in the luxury of the siesta, or the bath, those two grand resources in eastern nations, for passing away the sultry noontide. A stranger would have fancied the city to be depopulated. All was silence. It seemed more like a city of enchantment than the populous capital of a flourishing kingdom. There was no hum of business. No joyous children making the air ring with glad shouts and merry laughter.

The sun shone upon the marble buildings and deserted streets. The flowers hung drooping on their stalks ; the very air seem infected with the general stillness, so dreamy, so delicious, was the universal silence that pervaded the whole face of nature.

In a beautiful, but remote apartment of the palace, overlooking the royal gardens, on a couch of sandal wood, curiously inlaid with gold and carved into a strange fantastic shape, reclined a young female, attired in a loose robe of violet silk. She had just taken the bath, and two young slaves were fanning her, while on a cushion at her feet sat a third—a pale, interesting child, whose disconsolate and spirit-broken

look told she was a stranger to childish pleasure. She was singing in a sweet low voice, whose gentle intonations suited well with the stillness of the hour, one of those soft melancholy airs in which sorrow loves to pour its plainings. The room was partially darkened by the thick draperies, that excluded the heat, and gave a sort of twilight gloom to the imperfect light that streamed through them. The features of the principal of this little group were extremely—no, not lovely, for there was none of that gentle softness of expression which is the chief charm of a female face—but they were very handsome, nay, perfectly faultless. Her full ripe lips were of the hue of the damask rose. They were slightly curved, and parted. The teeth were beautifully white; but the lips were often curled with scorn, and the teeth ground together with passion. The forehead was high and expansive, and the brow exquisitely arched; but the large black eyes, despite of their white drooping lids and long black lashes, gleamed with the fierce and unquenchable light of the haughty spirit within; and the whole contour of the face and figure, with their proud voluptuousness, were calculated to excite dislike rather than love. She was not formed to

create any softer emotion than admiration. There was something repulsive in her countenance despite of its beauty ; and the features did not belie the disposition, for the fair princess Athaliah possessed in an eminent degree all the bad and evil feelings of her mother, the cruel and vindictive Jezebel, the Sidonian wife of Ahab, King of Israel.

“Go, Jamnia,” said the princess to the young songstress, “and bid Phenice come hither.” Jamnia rose from her seat, and obeyed, but soon returned, followed by the attendant she had been sent to summon. “Sit here,” said the princess, pointing to the seat which Jamnia had vacated. Phenice obeyed, and Athaliah, turning to the young slaves, bade them retire to the farther end of the room. She then entered into a whispered conversation with her favourite. “Hast thou seen him, Phenice ?” she said, in a low tone. “Princess,” replied the handmaiden, “I have seen him ; and he bade me tell thee, thou shouldst one day become a queen. ‘Aye,’ he said, ‘the daughter of kings, and the wife of a king, should one day herself wield a sceptre, even the sceptre of Judah.’” “I meant not the prophet ; I meant not Zedekiah, when I spoke,” said Athaliah. “Nevertheless his

words are grateful to my spirit," and a flush of pleasure crossed her features as she spoke. "It was of Jehoram, the prince of Judah, of whom I spoke; hast thou seen him, Phenice?" "I have seen him," was the reply. "Well?" said the princess, sharply. "He is worthy of thee," answered Phenice. "He is worthy of the hand of Athaliah. What more shall thy slave say?" Athaliah made no reply; but leaning back on the couch, seemed lost in meditation.

It was evening. The sun had set, and the clear moonlight slept on the streets of the city; but they were no longer silent—they were alive, literally alive with people. And now, indeed, might be heard the shouts of laughing children, who, closely secluded during the sultry heat of the day, had now, as Moore beautifully expresses it, "Waked to moonlight and to play."

The palace was one blaze of light, and it was filled with the guests invited to the royal nuptials. In an immense hall of porphyry, fitted up with the utmost magnificence, the guests were assembled. At the upper end of the hall, on a raised platform, stood three thrones of massive gold, wreathed round with flowers and myrtle leaves. The hangings of the

apartment were of scarlet cloth, embroidered in devices of different kinds. In one part was worked in threads of gold and silver, and many coloured silks, a lion-hunt among the hills; and the rest was filled up with flowers, trees, and animals. From the ceiling, which was inlaid in compartments of scarlet and gold, hung a chandelier of massive gold, wreathed with orange and jessamine blossoms. The couches were garlanded with the same pure and beautiful flowers. On the largest of the three thrones sat Ahab, arrayed in royal robes. On his head was a crown of gold, and in his hand he held his sceptre, wreathed with flowers. On the throne on the right was seated the King of Judah, who, though arrayed like his brother monarch in the insignia of royalty, yet displayed a complete contrast in appearance. The brow of Ahab was dark and contracted, and his features harsh, displaying the ravages which a vindictive spirit and debauched habits had produced. Yet there was a courtier-like blandness in his smile, and a softness in his tones, that won upon those he spoke to, and fascinated them. When he ceased, and you turned to look again, you wondered how you could have been pleased—nay, had almost liked him. The fascination was in the voice; you

liked it while the sound continued, but it left an unpleasant sensation behind.

The countenance of Jehosaphat, on the contrary, charmed not at the first glance. But the face was so open and candid, there was something so winning in the expressions of the delicate and almost feminine features, that you could not look on it twice without admiring. Nor could you hear the tones of his voice without loving the speaker. The monarchs were as different in person, as they were in disposition.

On the throne upon the left of Aliah, sat Jezebel. She was dressed in a flowing robe of Tyrian purple. Her girdle was fastened by a brooch of agate stone, set in virgin gold. Her brow was encircled by a splendid coronet of agates and diamonds ; and she wore a necklace and ear-rings of the same precious stones. Around were ranged the courtiers and ministers of state, with their wives, sons, and daughters, attired in robes of state, glittering with gems and flowers ; while the officers of Jehosaphat's suite, as if determined not to be outshone, were actually resplendent with jewels. In a side gallery, erected for the occasion, sat a band of musicians, dressed in fantastic costumes, with their instruments decked with orange and jessamine

flowers. The marriage contract was already signed, and it needed but the presence of the bride and bridegroom to complete the magnificence of that gorgeous scene. A dead silence reigned throughout the vast assembly, when the sound of solemn music was heard, announcing the approach of the young prince. The musicians in the gallery took up the solemn strains. The large folding doors were thrown back ; and the young bridegroom, attired in regal purple, and supported on either side by a youth of his own age, entered.

In the middle of the hall stood four young boys, all under twelve years of age, and of the most exquisite beauty, supporting a canopy of crimson velvet, on which was embroidered in gold threads a dove, with an olive branch in its mouth. The canopy was raised on four poles of burnished gold, richly wrought in emblematic and appropriate devices, and wreathed with festoons of myrtle. Beneath this canopy stood the priest, attired in sacerdotal vestments, and his noble countenance illumined by a benignant smile.

The two kings now descended from their thrones. The young friends of Jehoram fell back in their places among the other guests, and

the brother monarchs supported him under the canopy. Again the sound of music was heard, and sweet young voices, mingling with the instruments, sang soft bridal anthems. The folding doors were again thrown back, and the royal bride entered. She was preceded by four beautiful slaves, and followed by the same number, bearing up the train of her robe, which was composed of cloth of silver, trimmed with pearls, sprigs of jessamine, and orange blossoms. Her face was closely veiled, and her tall majestic figure contrasted in its queenly proportions with the slight and delicate girls on whom she leaned, or seemed to lean, for support. The queen descended from her throne as Athaliah entered, and taking the arm Phœnice resigned, the proud and still beautiful Sidonian, assisted on the other side by her younger daughter Mirah, led the bride three times round her destined husband, and then, according to custom, placed her on the right side of the young prince.

The priest then pronounced a blessing on all present, at the same time holding a cup of consecrated wine in his hand, which, when the prayers were concluded, was handed to the prince and princess, who both tasted it, as a token of

amity with all mankind; and then it was returned to the youthful cupbearer. Then, in a clear distinct voice, the Rabbi read the contract aloud. A cup of fine porcelain was filled with wine, a prayer offered up for the happiness of the royal pair, and again the wine was handed to, and tasted by both, as a token of their willingness to wed each other. A ring of pure gold was then given to the priest, while the bride extended her beautiful hand. Those who stood around looked at the ring, which he then examined himself, that he might be assured of the purity of the metal; after which he gave it to the impatient bridegroom, who taking the right hand of the bride, placed it on her forefinger;* while in a voice which though it trembled with agitation, was perfectly audible to all, the bridegroom pronounced the following words: "I wed thee, according to the laws of Israel, as by Moses commanded." The ring was left on the finger of the bride, and a porcelain cup placed upon the ground. The bridegroom raised his right foot, and shattered the

* Jewish women are always married with the ring on that finger, where the very religious always wear it. But others change it after the first week, in compliance with the custom of the country in which they happen to live.

brittle vessel into a thousand pieces—a token of the mutability of human life and human happiness.

“She is very beautiful,” whispered Sadoc, one of the young courtiers, to the son of the head chamberlain, as the bride was led past him in the way to her own apartments. “Who, Sadoc?” answered Naphtali, starting as from a dream. His thoughts had evidently wandered from the brilliant scene before him. “Who, Sadoc?” and he coloured deeply as he spoke. “Who!” said the young man, laughing; “who should I mean, truant, but the princess Merah?” But Naphtali heard not his words, for they were drowned by the musicians pouring forth a wild strain of music, as the doors closed on the princesses and their train. The guests shouted, “God bless and preserve the Princess Athaliah!—God bless and preserve Prince Jehoram!” The people without the palace took up the sound, and the city rëechoed with blessings on the heads of the newly-married pair. Who that had passed through the city at the silent hour of noon, would deem it now to be the same? The clear, full moon, made it as light as day, divested of day’s heat. The people were all abroad. Pieces of rich tapestry hung across the streets

fastened from the projecting balcony of one house to another. Bands of music paraded the city, followed by some of the principal officers of the households of the two monarchs, distributing purses of gold and silver to the people.

The morning sun again looked upon the deserted streets. The nuptial ceremonies were over—the bridal guests departed, and the band of friendship between Ahab king of Israel, and Jehosophat king of Judah, was sealed by the union of their children. Alas for Judah!

CHAPTER II.

But first, my father is a man
Outlawed, condemned, and under ban—
The price of blood is on his head—
With me 'twere infamy to wed.
What, not enough? Then know the truth,—
Fitz-James, there is a noble youth,

• • • • •
Thou hast the secret of my heart—
Forgive, be generous, and depart.

* * * * *
There shot no glance from Ellen's eye,
To give her steadfast speech the lie.
In maiden confidence she stood,
Though mantled to her cheek the blood,
And told her tale with such a sigh.

SCOTT.

“I TELL thee, maiden, that one kiss of thy coral lips were worth the diadems of Judah and Israel united on one brow.”

These words were addressed by an elegant young man of about twenty-two years, attired in the robes of a courtier, to a damsel who was drawing water from a well, in the neighbourhood of the city. The only reply the maiden gave, was by drawing the folds of her veil closer around her face. But in stooping forward to

raise her pitcher, it fell off, and dropped into the well. The poor girl tried in vain to recover it; and after many futile efforts, she abandoned the attempt; when, with a look of mortification, she took up the pitcher, and turned to depart. "Nay, pretty one, thou must not leave me thus," said the young man, with a gay smile, as he placed himself directly in the maiden's way to the city. She cast her eyes to the ground, with a look of distress; and attempted to avoid the impassioned glances of her tormentor, who kept his eye steadily fixed on her blushing, downcast face. Seldom did eyes look on a form more calculated to inspire love. Her features were not regularly beautiful. Indeed it would have been difficult to point out any one as faultless. No single feature was beautiful; but there was a fascination in the whole, that riveted attention. It was the expression of the smile that called up a thousand dimples round the fresh young mouth, the soul beaming in the eyes of dark fire, the drooping lids of which gave them a sleepy, perhaps I should say a dreamy loveliness, which, however, could be awakened into flashing light by any passing emotion, that constituted the charm of that young face. Her complexion was a rich olive brown; and the

intellectual and polished forehead gave an air of thoughtful dignity and repose to the whole countenance. Her hair, which was raven black, was combed smoothly from the brow, and confined at the back of the head with a rose-coloured ribbon, though here and there one long unmanageable ringlet had escaped from its silken bondage, and strayed carelessly over her neck and forehead, through which the rich blood might be traced in its windings. Her figure was slight and delicate, almost sylph-like; and even the coarse vestments in which she was arrayed added to rather than diminished her picturesque appearance. Her dress was composed of a vest of coarse brown linen, fitting tight to the bust, with a skirt of the same materials, fastened at the waist by a rose-coloured girdle: her trousers were of white linen. On her feet she wore sandals of sheep's skin, and the dress had been completed by the white linen veil. Yet, with all this feminine loveliness of face, with all this delicacy of figure, there was a degree of firmness at her heart, which could not easily be daunted—a moral courage to face danger, which few possess. If she now stood silent, it was not fear—at least, not that base feeling, as dishonourable to women

as to men, which is generally called fear, that kept her so. "One kiss, maiden," said the courtier; "I only ask for one, and then I will carry thy pitcher for thee whither soever thou wouldst wish it borne." "Many thanks for thy proffered kindness, stranger," replied the young damsel, in a voice whose every tone was music; "but my pitcher is light. I am used to carry it; and I need not thy assistance. Let me pass on to my father's dwelling, for I have already been absent too long." "Nay, that may not be either; since I have set my heart upon a pressure of those ruby lips, and thou must not escape without the forfeit. Fair Malah," said Sadoc—for that was the name of the bold youth—"Sadoc is not wont to be balked in that on which his heart is once set," and he smiled. The blood faded from the cheek of Malah, and curdled round her heart, as she heard the announcement of the name of him who had lately dodged her in all her walks, trying to discover her name, and causing her many misgivings, which now seemed about to be realised—for the very name of Sadoc, the Sidonian favourite of the proud queen, and no less so of Ahab, carried terror to her heart. With a tall and graceful figure, whose athletic proportions destroyed

none of its symmetry; a perfect countenance; and a tongue whose fascinations might have lured angels astray, he united a disposition proud, artful, and designing; quick in imagination, with a head to plan, and a heart and hand to execute aught on which he had once determined. Sadoc was a sensualist and a libertine; and he scrupled not to adopt any means by which his ends might be attained. He cared not whose domestic circle he invaded, whose heart he broke, or what became of the victims of his passions. It formed no part of his creed to care for aught beyond his own immediate pleasure and self-gratification. His name was seldom uttered unaccompanied by bitter execration, not the less deadly because it was only smothered. She felt all the difficulty of her situation, and the danger of exciting any evil passion in such a man; and she made no reply. "By the gods!" continued Sadoc, "that garb is unworthy of thy beauty; and those delicate hands were never intended for the menial employment of drawing water. Leave then such degrading occupations to those whose beauty entitles them to no higher station. Come with me, and thou shalt reign queen of my harem, and my heart. Instead of drawing water, thou shalt have slaves to wait on thee,

and obey thy slightest bidding, and the bowstring to those who dare question it. Those delicate limbs, instead of being clothed in coarse linen, and reposing on a hard couch, shall be attired in cloth of gold, and rest on silken down. Thou shalt have gold and jewels, instead of a simple ribbon, for thy hair, which should be strung with pearls, and hang thus." And dexterously unfastening the ribbon, he secured it in his vest; while the thick curls of black hair, loosened from their fastening, fell in long ringlets, almost reaching to her feet. "Nay," he said, as he marked the rapid changes of her speaking countenance; "thou shalt be to me, what woman has never been before, my wife, my friend, my confidant. Thou shalt share my secret counsels; and from the hour in which thou art mine, I swear unto thee, none other woman shall ever win a passing smile from Sadoc."

"Sadoc," said Malah, and she drew up her slight figure with that air of dignity which stamps the true nobility of nature, and which only virtue and purity can assume—nevertheless, though her proud bearing might have crushed the vain idea, the heart of the courtier fluttered at the thought of this new conquest over a woman's

heart and a woman's scruples—"Sadoc, I have listened to all thou hadst to say in patient silence. Now hear me patiently, and hear me to an end. I am not insensible to, nor ungrateful for the preference thou hast shown to me above all others of my sex. Who is thy slave that she should be raised to the station of Sadoc's wife? But I wish not for a dignity I could not support, of which I am unworthy. Nor wouldest thou wish it either, didst thou know me better. My father is one of the branded and proscribed race of the prophets of the true God; and the daughter of Micaiah, the prophet, is no fitting bride for the favourite of princes. Have I not said sufficient to deter thee?" "No," answered Sadoc, "for am not I powerful enough to protect thy father? I tell thee, maiden, what Sadoc says, that will he do; and the father of my bride shall be unto me as my own parent. Riches and honours will I give him; and he too shall be a sharer in my counsels." "If what I have said be not enough, listen yet again,"—and the cheek of the maiden crimsoned as she spoke. "I cannot be thy bride, Sidonian, for—" and again the blood rushed painfully back to her heart—"for I love another. Nay, do not interrupt me. I have been betrothed from my child-

hood to one who, though he may be inferior to thee in every thing, is still dear to me as my own heart's blood ; and I would not wrong his generous confiding affections for the world's diadem. I thank thee, warmly thank thee, for the honour thou wouldst confer on me and mine ; but thanks are all I have to give for the honour. Who would give up happiness for wealth, peace for splendour, and conscious rectitude for gilded infamy ? For is it not infamy to give the hand where the heart is not ? Think of this, Sidonian, and spare me all further importunity."

Sadoc gazed upon the face of the young damsel with a look of doubt and perplexity, as if he mistrusted the evidence of his own senses. That one so young, so inferior, should reject the splendid offers of the queen's favourite, and prefer the menial occupation of a drawer of water to becoming his wife, and all this for a scruple of conscience, was beyond his comprehension ; he could not enter into the fine feelings of a woman, a young and sensitive woman's heart, who, despite of the natural timidity of her sex, had the moral courage and noble highmindedness to throw off the yoke with which society, especially among orientals, fetters a woman's

actions, and drags down as with a chain of iron, all her highest aspirations, and confess her love to another. It was not maidenly, some will say. And why not? There are cases when adherence to prescribed rules is folly. It is not right, in most cases, for woman to confess her love to any beyond its object, and to the dear familiar ones of the family circle. But in a case like Malah's it were false delicacy to object. But to my tale. Sadoc had been used to success in all his overtures to woman. It was something new to him to be defeated, and that too by a maiden scarcely yet fifteen. For a moment he stood silent and irresolute. Then again he looked into that intelligent countenance. It was perfectly radiant with blushes, but there was nothing there to cause a doubt of what she had spoken. "And this," said Sadoc, in a low distinct tone, "is thine answer to what I have said? And thou wouldest prefer some low-born hind to Sadoc's love! Bethink thee, maiden, what it is thou rejectest—affluence and state for thyself, security and powerful protection for thy father. Thou wilt have the love of Sadoc, the homage of his dependants; thou wilt move at court, the desire of all hearts, the delight of all eyes. Even princes will account it a great re-

ward, if they win but a smile from thee in return for their homage. All this wilt thou have, if thou acceptest my offer. Now reverse the picture. If thou rejectest," and his face grew livid at the bare idea, "thou wilt have to bear with poverty and privation, instead of a powerful friend and protector—for thy father, thou wilt make towards him a deadly and implacable foe—one who, always detesting him, could never have loved him but for thy sake, and who will now have double cause to be his foe. Aye, one who will possess both will and power to work him bitter ill. And thy lover—O maiden, thou knowest not the strength of that hatred, whose birth-place is the grave of unrequited love. Recall thy words, and ere another sun set, thou shalt be my bride. Repeat them, and beware!" Again the blood forsook the maiden's cheek, and the colour faded from her lips, leaving both as pale and bloodless as marble. She dreaded the bold bad man who stood before her; for well she knew his threats might be too easily converted into realities. She knew the hatred of the king towards the true prophets, more especially towards her own father. She knew the cruelty of the queen's disposition, and her persecution of all who refused to worship in the

temple of Baal ; and worst of all, her word was Ahab's law. She knew all this, and her very soul trembled within her ; yet she wavered not for a moment in her choice between honour and dishonour. What highminded woman ever did ? She strove to avoid the fixed look of the Sidonian, whose gaze seemed as if it would read her innermost thoughts.

The sun was rapidly journeying westward. The whole eastern hemisphere was already dark. It would soon be night. She felt she was placed in a difficult situation. Silence she feared might be construed into consent ; and she resolved, whatever the consequence might be, not to yield to the Sidonian's suit—not even to compromise—but to dismiss it at once and for ever, by telling him instantly that her determination was immutable, and leave the rest to providence. These resolutions were the result of a moment's meditation ; and she promptly replied, “Sadoc, I prefer poverty and virtue to riches and vice ; the love of a tried and trusted heart, whose affection is based on years of esteem, to the passion born of an hour, and which, once gratified, may die as soon.”

“By Baal, thou art very bold to say so. But think not to escape me. If fair promises will not

tempt thee to become Sadoc's wife, we will try what a little salutary coercion will do; and ere long, proud girl, I will make thee glad to sue to be my slave, my meanest, my most degraded slave—for mine thou shalt be, that is determined on, let it be in what capacity it will: and I never yet planned, but what I executed: and when thou art kneeling at my feet, praying for mercy, I will reject thy prayers, even as thou hast rejected mine."

The maiden had scarcely time to raise a mental supplication for protection to the throne of mercy, ere she felt his arms encircling her slender waist. As he raised her from the ground, she struggled with the desperate strength of outraged and insulted virtue, but she struggled in vain to release herself from his grasp. Resistance was useless. "Now," he said, with the mocking laugh of a fiend, "there are none nigh to hear, or see thee either; for I doubt if thine own eyes, all beautiful as they are, could pierce this gloom." He spoke truly—for the sun had set. There is hardly five minutes twilight in those eastern lands, and all was as dark as midnight. "Since," he continued, "thou settest no value upon cloth of gold, and stately palaces, thou shalt have sackcloth for thy garments, and a dungeon for thy

dwelling-place. Since jewels may not grace that delicate form, nor homage win thy love, we will try the talismanic charm of fetters and stripes; and who shall say what wonders that may not work? Aye, by the gods, it will be a delight to mine eyes to see thee writhing under the scourge, and grateful as sweet music to mine ears, to hear thy screams for mercy; and then I will be inexorable, as thou art now. But thou shalt not call me ungenerous, nor weep away thy beauty in lonely pining, for it shall not be my fault if thou lackest company. Thou shalt have society to cheer thee—the society of thy father and lover. Thou shalt see them,” he continued, in the same tone of biting sarcasm, “but thou shalt not converse with them; for I will have their accursed tongues torn out before thine eyes. Aye, thou shalt see them; they shall share thy retreat: but thou shalt see them starving before thee. Thou shalt have plenty wherewith to satisfy the cravings of their hunger, and yet be unable to relieve their wants. Was there ever before such a glorious plan of revenge dreamed of! By Baal, it will immortalize me.”

Malah attempted not to reply to his taunts, for she knew his ability to fulfil his threats, at least toward her father, though with regard to her

lover, she doubted, as she had not even mentioned his name. This conviction did not, however, prevent her screaming for assistance. "Nay, thou mayest clamour as loudly as thou wilt,—I have told thee there are none to hear. Dost thou think I am bearing thee to the city? I tell thee, pretty fool, thou art mistaken in Sadoc. But why do I waste the precious minutes in words when they might be better employed. I remember thou refused me one pressure of thy lips. What is to prevent me now from taking what I sued for and was refused?" Thus saying, he printed his passionate and burning kisses upon the lips, neck and forehead of the shuddering girl. "Oh God! oh God!" she exclaimed aloud, as she raised her beautiful eyes, "are there none to assist me, none to save me from this terrible man!"

"That will I," said a voice, which Malah recognized at once as that of her lover; and her fainting spirit revived at the welcome sound. Again she struggled to release herself, while Sadoc, unwilling to meet with him who had promised to protect her, bearing her in his arms, pressed on his way; but the race was an unequal one—for slight as was the burthen which he bore, her endeavours to free herself

greatly impeded his progress, while his pursuer was unencumbered. With a fleet foot, the young hunter of the hills overtook the Sidonian, and with his sword drawn, stood confronting him. Sadoc placed the almost senseless form of Malah on a patch of green sward beside him, and unsheathing his sword, prepared to defend himself from the attack of his opponent. It was but a moment's strife—for, as Sadoc stepped back to avoid the thrust of the young Hebrew, his foot slipped over a loose stone in the path, and falling back with terrible force, he lay stunned on the ground, while the youth raised the inanimate form of Malah in his arms, and bore her rapidly towards the city.

CHAPTER III.

JOSEPH. Believe me, that their plans are mightier than you deem.
You must employ means not less to meet them,
Richelieu.

In policy,
We foil gigantic danger, not by giants,
But dwarfs. The statues of our stately fortunes
Are sculptured by the chisel, not the axe.

BULWER'S RICHELIEU.

It was a lowly and humble dwelling, in a miserable suburb, before which the youth paused with his lovely burthen, and, raising the latch with which the door was fastened, he entered. The interior of the dwelling bespoke poverty and privation in the occupant. On a table of rough unhewn wood, stood a small earthen lamp, but it was untrimmed. The evening meal of dried fruit, and cakes baked in the ashes of the hearth, was spread upon the board, but it was untasted. On a low stool, in one corner of the room, sat a man of about the middle age. His dress was coarse and homely in the extreme; yet, despite the poverty with which he was surrounded, there was a native

majesty on his high broad brow, which, though deeply furrowed, bespoke him of higher station than that to which misfortune had reduced him. His chin rested on his hand, while his elbow was supported by his knee. Large drops of agony stood out upon his forehead, and the big tears coursed each other down his sun-browned face. His features worked with the intensity of some powerful emotion. "Sha mang yis ro ile,"* he ejaculated, as the latch was raised. "What has become of my child, my beloved, my only one? Great God, protect thy servant!" "Father," said the youth, who had gained the middle of the chamber, ere its solitary inmate perceived him. "Father!—who calls me father now?" he exclaimed, in a hoarse voice; "where is my child, my sweet, innocent child? What hast thou done with her?—ha! Naphtali! is it thou, and my daughter, my Malah? Is she dead?—or wherefore hast thou brought her hither in thine arms, pale, senseless, and unveiled? O God! thou hast punished me severely for loving a created thing, as I loved that mass of clay that was my child. To die so young! and she the only thing that loved or claimed affinity with me. Every other creature that I

* Hear, oh Israel!

loved has been snatched from me, and I clung to her with the fondness of the bird from whose nest the younglings and their mother have been taken—all but one poor puny one, whom the spoiler deemed unworthy to be removed, and to this poor nestling the parent clings with the tenacity of sorrow. But thou, in thine infinite wisdom, hast seen fit to remove the lovely blossom from its stem;—thou hast lopped the green branch, and left the withered bough. But I bow submissive to the decree—thy will be done.” “She is senseless, but not dead, father,” said the youth, who had vainly endeavoured to interrupt the first ebullition of grief, “or I should not have brought her hither, knowing that a Couan* may not defile himself by touching a corpse.” “True,” said Micaiah, springing forward with a bound of joy; “thou speakest truly. Give her to me—give me my child.” “Nay,” replied Naphtali, “this is agitating thyself needlessly. Let us place her on her bed, and chafe her temples. She has been excited, terribly excited; but I cannot tell thee now—indeed I know not all myself. All that I know is, that while wandering on the hills, I heard a woman

* Couan, one of the priesthood, no member of which may approach a dead body without defilement.

scream for help. I flew to her assistance, and have brought her to thee." The prophet yielded to the young man, and preceded him to Malah's chamber. They chafed her temples and hands with water, and in a few minutes she unclosed her burning lids, and with a deep blush perceived the large earnest eyes of Naphtali gazing intently on her face. "My child," said Micaiah, and bending down, he kissed her glowing cheek. "Oh leave me, father, leave me now, and I will tell thee all to-morrow." Again the prophet kissed her fondly, and breathing a blessing on her head, and a thanksgiving to the Almighty for her safe return, quitted her chamber, followed by the young hunter.

"Naphtali," said the prophet, after a silence of many minutes, during which he had been indulging in a reverie. The young man started—for he too had been wrapt in his own thoughts, and from the expression of his countenance they were evidently of no very pleasant nature. "Naphtali, thou hast been long betrothed to my daughter, even from thy childhood. That the maiden is not indifferent to thee, I can believe; and I think I am not wrong in deeming thee willing to fulfil the contract thy father made for thee." "Oh how willingly would I fulfil it,"

interrupted Naphtali, with animation. "Be silent, young man, and hear me," said his companion, almost sternly. "Thou knowest the nature of the contract of which I have spoken, and that thou art pledged to wed Malah: but at the time that pledge was made, circumstances were different, and Micaiah, the son of Imlah, was rich in the world's goods, as thine own father. Nay, richer, wealthier, than he ever hoped to be. Years have rolled on since then, and all is changed. Thy father has increased in wealth and honor, and become high in the favor of his king. He has almost forgotten the existence of his early friend." A painful blush mantled over the young man's face, but he attempted not to interrupt; and the prophet proceeded; "While thy father has been increasing, I have been daily sinking lower in the scale of riches. Now, Naphtali, though Baashi would have been proud to obtain for his son the hand of the wealthy Imlah's grand-daughter, even had it been linked to the foulest deformity, he would gladly be rid of the contract that makes the beautiful but portionless daughter of the despised and hated prophet Micaiah, that son's wife. He said thus much, when, a few days since, I sought him out, and told him the time was at hand,

when it should be fulfilled. I reminded him of our early friendship, of the brotherhood we had vowed to each other in the days of our youth; and though, since the spirit of prophesy had fallen on me, and the favour of his earthly king, albeit a vicious and unworthy one, had fallen upon him, we had been strangers to each other, my affection for him was unalterable, and that I was ready to complete my engagement. What thinkest thou was his answer?" "Alas," replied the youth, who had listened in painful silence, and now spoke despondingly, "Alas, I know not." "Then I will tell thee. He told me when the contract was made, we were equals, and Malah was then a match for his son; that then there would have been honor in wedding her, but now it would be infamy; that his life would be in danger did any one suspect that he had conferred with the banned and proscribed Micaiah; that if I insisted on his fulfilling his contract, of course it must take place; but if thou didst wed my child, my gentle, unoffending child must be as an alien to him; aye, and to thee too—for thy love was not for her—that thou hadst already bestowed thine heart upon another, who fully requited thine affection, and that other was the princess Merah; and if Malah became thy

bride, she must learn to submit to the caprices of thy favorite." "By heaven," interrupted the young hunter, while his cheek changed from fiery red to livid paleness, and from paleness to red again; "this seems to me incredible. Surely my father must be struck with madness. The princess Merah—what has she that will bear comparison with my beloved, other than her high birth? I would sooner think of raising a hand against the mother who bore me, than of wronging my matchless Malah, by preferring another to her." "Thou hast said well, Naphtali; and as I expected of thee. But Malah shall never wed thee, unless thou hast thy father's sanction, and thy father's blessing." "Which he assuredly will not withhold," interrupted Naphtali, joyfully. "Young man," said Micaiah, gravely, "I would not damp the hopes of thy ardent nature; but I fear it is not so easy to obtain, as thou wouldst wish. Now go, Naphtali, for the night is far advanced, and I would fain obtain some slight repose." The young man rose, and bending his head, received the prophet's blessing, and departed.

It was morning, and the bright sunshine was smiling over the city; but there was no longer a sound of rejoicing within its walls. A messen-

ger had arrived during the preceding night, with the intelligence that a mighty army, under thirty-two Syrian kings, headed by Benhadad, king of Damascus, had crossed the Euphrates, and were in full march for the Israelitish territories. There were many messengers, to and fro, during the day; for Ahab had dispatched orders in all directions for the people to betake themselves to the cities and walled towns, as his forces were not sufficient to enable him to take the field against the powerful army of the Syrians. For himself he ordered the city of Samaria, in which he had resided since the stoning of Naboth at Jezreel, to be strongly garrisoned; and thus prepared, he awaited the coming of his foes.

It was on the fourth day after he had received the intelligence of the invasion of his dominions, that the Syrian army might be seen advancing rapidly toward the capital, and on the same night they encamped without the walls. With a heavy heart the King of Israel took his seat on the divan that day, for the Syrians had marched unopposed through his dominions, and were already close upon his capital. He was in the council hall, surrounded by his courtiers and the principal officers of state, when the slave

whose office it was to attend the door, hastily entered. "What means this hurried intrusion?" asked the monarch, in an angry tone. "Thy slave bows his head to the dust," he replied, with an obeisance so low that he literally fulfilled his words. "There is one without would speak with the king." "Let him be admitted to our presence, Soab." Again the slave bent his body, and retired; but the next moment he returned, ushering in the messenger. "Whence comest thou? and what news dost thou bring?" questioned Ahab, eagerly. "Thy slave came from the walls, with a message from the governor to my lord the king." "Speak," cried the monarch, "what says my faithful Apien?—Speak; be thy tidings good or evil, we are prepared." "Thy slave is not the bearer of evil, O king; but there is a herald from the Syrian camp, with a message from Benhadad, king of Damascus, the purport whereof is to know if the king of Israel would admit the ambassadors of the confederate kings of Syria." "Let the herald be answered, that Ahab, the king, will admit the representatives of his brother Benhadad."

The messenger departed, and Ahab sat silently gazing in the direction of the door, seemingly

watching for the appearance of some person who had not yet arrived; and this opinion would have been confirmed by perceiving the seat on his right hand unoccupied. At length the door was unclosed, and a tall form darkened the entrance. "Where hast thou tarried so long, Sadoc?" said Ahab, somewhat sharply. "Thou hast been an absentee of late, and trespassed almost too far on our love; but we would have thee know we like not loiterers." "Thy slave has erred, O king!" said Sadoc, in a tone whose hauteur belied the meekness of his words; "but by my mother's honor, nothing but illness made Sadoc play the truant to his gracious master. Yet who is he, that he should venture to think of himself, when Ahab requires his services." "Thou lookest but ill, my Sadoc, and we are satisfied with thine apology," returned the monarch, looking kindly into the pale face of the favorite, whose appearance was by no means improved by the effects of the stunning fall on the hill, though of course he did not mention this; and as both of the young courtiers were ignorant of who had opposed them, they continued to be intimate, and the whole affair remained a profound secret. "Sit," resumed Ahab, after a moment's pause, during

which the courtier continued standing. "And thou, Baashi," turning to the grand chamberlain, "hasten to Apion, and bid him conduct the Syrian ambassadors hither, immediately on their arrival." Sadoc obeyed the laconic command to sit, by placing himself in the vacant seat by Ahab's side, while Baashi rose to depart. He was a man who had evidently seen much of the world. His countenance was strongly marked; his forehead high, but contracted; his brows thick and bushy; and his eyes small and deep set, but black and sparkling, with an expression of pride and strong feeling. His nose was large and prominent; but the mouth fully redeemed the harshness of the upper part of his face. His lips were beautifully red, and contrasted with the white even teeth and curling black beard; and there was a winning sweetness in his smile, that gained upon the heart of the beholder. With a slight bend of the body he quitted the presence chamber, and Ahab again sank into silence. An air of gloom pervaded the apartment, for all seemed infected with the moody silence of the king. If a word was sometimes spoken, it was only to hazard some slight remark or vague opinion as to what might be the probable terms the Syrians would offer.

The sound of the herald's trumpet, announcing the approach of the ambassadors, banished the ominous silence, and the monarch, starting from his reverie, half rose from his seat ; but quickly recovering his self-possession, he resumed his seat on the divan, and with a calm brow awaited the coming of the embassy. A moment of anxious expectation ensued, and then Baashi ushered the officers of the Syrian monarchs into the presence of his sovereign.

The principal ambassador was a tall, athletic man, with a swarthy complexion, and supercilious smile. He was clothed in a style of barbaric magnificence. His dress was a corslet and breastplate of polished steel, richly embossed, and studded with precious stones. His helmet was surmounted by an egret's feathers, fastened to it by a diamond of immense size and value ; and a sword of extraordinary dimensions, the hilt of which was also gemmed with precious stones, hung suspended from his girdle ; and over his armour, he wore a mantle of crimson cloth, fringed with silk. The rest of the train were attired in the same style of splendour. They advanced to the very footstool of the king, and then, with the usual salute of the east, bowed down and kissed the hem of his robe.

“Rise,” said Ahab, in a firm voice; “what says our brother Benhadad through thy medium?” The Syrians rose, and Golon, the immediate representative of the king of Damascus, said, as he looked around him with a significant smile, “Perhaps the king would wish this to be a private conference, as my embassy relates to him alone.” “Follow me, Syrian,” said the king; and, rising from his seat, he led the way towards a recess, and removing the rich hangings unclosed a door which they concealed, and entered a little closet, into which not even the queen ever ventured to intrude. He threw himself on a couch, and without speaking, motioned to the Syrian to commence. Golon refused to avail himself of the seat to which Ahab pointed; but in a clear distinct manner delivered the message with which he was charged.

“Thus says Benhadad king of Damascus, unto Ahab king of Israel, that the wives, children, and treasures of Ahab, are all at his mercy; and if he will confess that he and his are at the disposal of the Damascene monarch, and quietly permit him to choose such as may appear to him worthy of his possession, he will raise the siege, and return to his own country

without further delay." Ahab's cheeks grew deadly pale. The cold dew stood in large drops on his brow ; he respired with difficulty, and his lips quivered with excessive emotion. It was the struggle between the monarch and the man—a cruel, tyrannous king, a wicked and impious man, but still not divested of the feelings of humanity. A prolonged silence ensued, during which he debated the subject with himself. If he complied with the conditions proposed, he sacrificed all his dearest ones, confessed himself the slave of the haughty Syrian, but freed his subjects from the yoke of a foreign tyrant. If he refused, the kingdom would be deluged in blood—for he could not even then bring an army into the field ; and even if he could, how could he hope successfully to oppose the forces of the enemy, so numerous and well-disciplined? If the city held out for a week or ten days, it was the utmost he could hope for. And then, when it yielded, as it must do at last, what would the consequence be? Grown furious by opposition, the enemy would enter the city, and marching over the bodies of his slaughtered subjects, make themselves masters of the palace. He would see his children slain, or bound together with his women, and sent as slaves to the

harem of their captors, while he himself would be reserved to grace the conqueror's triumphal return to his own capital, the butt for every ribald jest an idle multitude might please to point at him, while he was loaded with the curses of his own enslaved people. If, on the contrary, he yielded, he should at least have the prayers and blessings of his grateful subjects to counterbalance the odium and curses which his cruel injustice to Naboth of Jezreel had entailed on him, and to repay him for the loss of those he parted with for their sakes. The point then was decided. With a choaking sensation in his throat, that almost deprived him of the power of utterance, he turned to the Syrian, and with a powerful effort subduing his emotion, addressed him in a voice whose calm dignified tones betrayed no sign of the inward struggle he had endured, and the mastery he had obtained over his feelings. "Go," he said, "and tell thy master, that Ahab the king bade thee say, he submits to his terms, and confesses himself the slave of his brother—" Golon smiled at the term, but Ahab perceived not the meaning smile; or if he did, he noticed it not, but continued, in an unflinching tone—"of his brother Benhadad; and places his household, his harem, and his

treasure at his disposal. We have said: thou mayest depart; Baashi, conduct these noble Syrians to the governor. Bid him entertain them honourably, and dismiss them with presents. Sadoc, we would speak with thee."

The courtiers took this as a signal of departure, leaving Sadoc alone with the king. To the ear of the favourite, Ahab confided the message he had received from the Syrian kings. "And what said my noble master in reply to these insolent barbarians?" demanded Sadoc. "That I submitted to the terms they offered." "Dictated," muttered Sadoc; and then he continued aloud, "And what says Jezebel? What says the queen to this? Does she submit to trust to the chance of being chosen for a slave by Benhadad?—she who has shared the throne of Israel's king?" "She knows it not as yet; and it is in this delicate mission I would test thy loyalty. Thou must hasten to the queen, my Sadoc. Tell her of the proposals we have received, and the answer we have given. But bid her not despair—for by seeming to yield, we may draw the Syrians into a snare which shall prove their ruin. Go, my Sadoc, go, and the first request thou makest shall be complied with if thou executest thy charge as we would

have thee." "Sadoc is thy slave for ever, O king. What king can compete with thee in wisdom, mercy, justice, and generosity? I will to the queen instantly, proud of the high commission with which I am charged." Retiring from the presence of the monarch, he hastened towards the women's apartments, with the intent of informing Jezebel. "This is fortunate," he communed with himself, as he leisurely walked the long galleries by which the other parts of the palace communicated with the harem. "The gods are kind to Sadoc—the first, the very first request—what shall it be? Shall I desire the king's permission to carry off Malah, and thus securing the success of my scheme, make sure of my revenge? No; for that may be obtained another way. Besides, I must first discover who is the minion's lover, or it were but half completed. By Astarte, I have it. I will solicit the hand of the princess Merah, and though Eda may shriek, and play the fool, if she will not be satisfied there is a way of quieting her, so that she will trouble me no more. The bow-string makes all quiet and sure, and a princess's dowry is not to be despised. Courage, Sadoc, courage, and thou mayest compass all thy ends by the assistance of a witty tongue,

and a little caution and prudence. Thou hast won thy way, step by step, up the steep ladder of ambition, till thou art second to none but the king. Second! ha! ha! ha!—second? Why thou art as much superior to him as the mechanic is to the machine. He moves, and art thou not the director of this living machine? Thou art indeed, though he knows it not. For does not the queen rule him? and dost not thou rule her with an iron rule? By heavens! it makes me laugh, to think how some are cheated, even while they think they are cheating. Courage, Sadoe, I say again; thou hast never yet failed in a design thou hadst once formed; and who says Malah and Merah may not both be mine own." By the time he had arrived at this conclusion, he had reached the end of the gallery. "Who is without?—what slave dare venture here, when the queen has forbidden any to approach her apartments?" His meditations thus broken, he raised his head, and replied to the tall Nubian, who barred his farther progress—"No slave, Tseleg, no slave; but a messenger from my lord the king." "What proof have I of that?" asked the Nubian, surlily. "What!" said Sadoe, fiercely, "dost thou dare to doubt my word, and refuse me admittance to the queen—I, who have raised thee to what thou art?"

“Aye,” answered Tseleg, “thou hast been kind to me, and I would repay thy kindness if I could, but I will not venture to place my neck in the bowstring, even for thee;—for though the queen may pardon thee for the intrusion, she would never forgive me for permitting it.”

“There, slave,” said Sadoc, in a softened tone, “look at this: does it satisfy thee?” As he spoke, he drew a glittering ruby from his finger, curiously engraved in the Sidonian character. “Take this to the queen, and tell her Sadoc waits without.” The Nubian took the ring, and presented it to the queen. “How!” said Jezebel, “hast thou dared to refuse Sadoc admission to our presence? Go, slave,—go instantly, and bring him hither. Haste, or by the gods, I will have the skin scourged from thy back.” “Did not the queen bid me deny admission to all? and I thought—” “Thought!” shouted Jezebel, fiercely; “thy province is to obey, and not to think. Go, bring him hither.” The poor slave shrunk away, and returned to Sadoc. “Thou mayest enter,” he said, as he threw open the door of the chamber; “the queen awaits thy coming.” “Thou lookest discomfitted, Nubian,” said Sadoc, smiling; “but cheer thee, slave; I am so well pleased with the fortune the gods have given me, that I will re-

store thee to the favour of thy mistress, and there is a golden shekel to console thee for cross looks and angry words." "Now may the gods bless and prosper thee," exclaimed the grateful slave. "Tseleg will ever be ready to serve thee." "Thanks, Tseleg, for the blessing and thy proffered service," cried Sadoc, gaily, as he passed on; and entering the queen's chamber, he advanced to the pile of cushions on which sat the proud daughter of Ethbaal, king of Sidonia. Gracefully dropping upon one knee, he raised the hem of her garment to his lips. "Thou art grown humble and lowly, methinks," said Jezebel, with a gracious smile, as she extended her jewelled hand towards him. Sadoc took the extended hand, and pressing it to his lips, replied "O queen, were thy slave to lick the dust at thy feet, it would be an honour far surpassing his deserts. How much greater then must it be, when he is suffered to kiss a hand so beautiful. It were enough to transport him beyond the boundaries of sense." "Flatterer, be seated," and she pointed to a footstool beside her; "and now what brings thee hither? we are all impatient to know. Thou hast been a stranger of late; and we despaired of seeing thee again. Now the city is threatened with

invasion, we thought thou wert otherwise engaged." Sadoc thought there was something of derision in her tone, and the blood mounted to his dark brow, as he answered, "I came here with a message from my lord the king." "Why didst thou not tell me this before?" "Because," replied Sadoc, "because, O queen, there has not yet been time." "Tarry no longer, good Sadoc; to what does the message relate? Doubtless it is some important trifle. The king has grown exceeding wise of late; but be it what it may, let us hear. Whether we obey is another question."

"The queen is pleased to jest with her slave," said Sadoc, sullenly. "Come, Sadoc, no black brows, and frowning looks. We like them not; and by Baal we will not bear with them. We are jesting no longer. Speak—what says the king?—to what does thy coming relate?" "To matters of state," answered Sadoc, in his most winning tone; for he perceived he had drawn the rein too tightly, and he liked not the appearances it had occasioned. "There has been an embassy from the Syrian kings, demanding king Ahab to confess himself their slave;" and he recounted what had passed. "And how answered the king this insolent embassy?"

she demanded. Sadoc related the fact. "What!" she exclaimed, rising from her seat, and drawing her tall figure up to its utmost height, while her dark eyes flashed with indignation; "submit! does he?—Aye, the slave of the Syrian?—By Baal this is too much. Submit to allow him to choose from among his wives and children!—And does he think that I will bear this degradation? What! am I a slave, to be bartered away, and passed from hand to hand? Must I stand here unveiled before a strange man, to be scouted and scoffed at—I, who am the daughter and the wife of a king, to be transferred to the harem of the exulting Syrian, as a bondwoman, a slave!—or to be passed by in scorn, while he selects the fairest of my handmaidens, perhaps of my children! By Diana, I would sooner see the kingdom in flames from end to end, or tear mine own heart from its casket, than yield to the vile touch of the accursed invader. And my own husband to propose it to me! He a king!—he a man! He disgraces the sceptre—a shame to manhood. By Astarte! I would have torn the base insulter who dared propose this thing in twain, and flung his corpse in the face of those who sent him, that they might learn how again they insulted a king. But

Ahab is an idiot!" She ceased, for want of breath to proceed, and sank down into her seat. Sadoc had not attempted to interrupt her, till the first outbreak of passion had subsided. The skilful seaman attempts not to put to sea, while the storm is in its first fury. He waits till its violence is abated, and thus preserves his bark; while the unskilful one, impatient of delay, consoling himself with the assurance that his vessel has escaped the storm before, puts forth, and is lost. Sadoc waited till the storm was over, and then said, in an unaltered tone, "Thou alarmest thyself unnecessarily, fair queen. Ahab seeks but to draw them on to their own undoing. Thinkest thou he would stand tamely by, and see his queen exposed to the rude gaze of the Syrian?—or thinkest thou thy faithful Sadoc, the slave whom thou hast raised from the dust, would see his royal mistress insulted? No, by the gods, I would drain the last drop of blood from my veins to protect thee." "Thanks, noble Sadoc; thy generous devotion shall not go unrewarded. Return to the king, thy master and mine, and tell him Jezebel is satisfied with his reply to the Syrian ambassadors, and she reposes with confidence on his wisdom and valour. And this for thyself, brave Sidonian, in

token of the gratitude of thy countrywoman and queen." Thus saying, she unclasped a magnificent bracelet of emeralds and pearls from her own white arm, and presented it to him. "'Tis a talisman," she said, "that will effectually protect thee from the machinations of thine enemies." "How shall thy slave ever repay this generous kindness?" said Sadoc. "By obeying my commands, and hastening to the king with the message I have given thee." Again he kissed the hem of her garment, and retired. "Now, Sadoc," he said to himself, as he retraced his way towards the private closet of the king, "thy fortune is in thine own hand. Use thine advantages like a skilful general, and the victory is thine. Thou hadst strained the chain almost to snapping to-day; but it is riveted now more firmly than ever: Merah and Malah will both be mine. Henceforth, fortune, I will adore thee. I will offer a pair of milk-white oxen at the shrine of Baal, as a token of gratitude." "Sadoc, what said the queen!" asked Ahab, as the favourite reentered. Sadoc recounted what had passed in his interview with the queen, taking care to expatiate on the warmth with which he had vindicated the measures of the king. "Thanks, Sadoc," said

Ahab ; “ thy services shall be fully rewarded. Take this ring ; and when thou wouldst claim a favour at our hands, present the ring, and it shall be granted.” While the king and the favourite were yet conversing, a slave entered, and prostrating himself, said : “ Baashi, the chamberlain, waits without. He comes straight from the walls, and would speak with my lord the king.” “ Bid him enter.” Baashi entered, and prostrated himself before the king. “ What means this untimely intrusion on the privacy of our chamber ?” sharply demanded Ahab. “ O king !” answered the chamberlain, “ the Syrian ambassadors are returned, and wait thy presence in the council hall.” “ The Syrian ambassadors!—what, are they already returned to demand the fulfilment of the terms ? By Baal, they are in haste !” He continued bitterly : “ I suppose we must submit to part with our wives, as quietly as may be.” “ There are not many who would not envy the king the ease with which he will be rid of his women,” muttered Baashi to himself. “ We had forgotten our good chamberlain was present,” said the monarch, with a smile ; but quickly recovering his gravity, he passed on to the council hall. “ If report speaks truly,” observed Baashi, with a

shrug, as he turned toward Sadoc, "Baashi is not the only one at court who submits to be governed by a woman." "Aye, that is true," replied his companion; "thou art not very far from right there, Baashi; but here comes Saab; a message from the king, I suppose, to summon us to the council board." Sadoc was not wrong in his conjecture; and the two courtiers hastened to the chamber where the King awaited them. As they entered, they perceived him pacing the apartment, whose limits seemed too narrow for him, with rapid strides. His cheeks were flushed, and a dark cloud had gathered on his brow. He had seen the ambassadors, and received the commands of the haughty Benhadad, couched in the most insolent and degrading terms. He still held the parchment on which they were written, and his eyes were fixed on it; but he saw not the characters traced there. On Sadoc approaching, the king saw him; and turning towards him, exclaimed, "It is well thou art here, my Sadoc; I would not that the prying eyes of all should see me thus moved." "I came not alone, O king; the chamberlain is here." "Ha! Baashi, come hither. Thou hast an older head, if not a wiser one than Sadoc, and years bring wisdom,

they say. Take this parchment, and read what it contains. Aye, aloud; I can bear it again. 'Tis the first flash of lightning that destroys the tree. It has done its worst. The after flashes are harmless; for there is nothing left to destroy." Baashi did as he was desired, and read it aloud: it ran thus:—"From Benhadad, the conqueror of Israel, to the slave, king Ahab, commanding him to allow the officers whom he shall select and send on the morrow, to choose from the household of himself, his kinsmen, nobles, and courtiers, whatsoever shall to them seem fitting and proper for the use or ornament of Benhadad the conqueror, his confederate kings, or themselves; whether it be the women from the harems, wives or children, male or female slaves, gold or jewels, or other property, leaving the rest for the use and emolument of the slave king. On condition of these commands being obeyed without delay, the conqueror will withdraw his victorious army to his own country."

"Thou seest," said the king, with a bitter smile, "they are playing the part of conquerors already—aye, and of tyrants too, since they mean to deprive us of every thing, even the poor privilege of murmuring at our fate,"

“And what said the king to this?” demanded Baashi. “By my father’s God, I have made no reply as yet. It was to debate what answer should be given, caused me to summon thee. Others of the council are also summoned, and look—they come. But they must not see me thus agitated.” Smoothing his ruffled brow, he resumed his seat, while Sadoc seated himself on the right, and Baashi on the left of the king. The counsellors now entered, and took their places. The king bade the scribe read the dispatch aloud. When he had concluded, the monarch rose from his seat, and thus addressed them: “My lords; this is the second embassy I have this day received from those who style themselves our conquerors. In the first, they demanded of me to yield up my wives, my children, and treasure, and they would then withdraw their forces. To this I consented to submit patiently; for I knew it was for the weal of my people that it should be so. Unsatisfied with this, you hear the insolence of the second message. I have summoned you to give counsel in this matter, as it is no longer one man yielding up for the benefit of the many—it is the sacrifice of all. In the first place they commanded me to give up my own

family, because they deemed me incapable of a generous action. Now they wish me to give up my people's liberties. 'Tis evident their object is not peace, but pillage; and we have nothing left us but to fight, to conquer or to die." "We will fight, then," was the unanimous answer; "and since they will not be content, we will at least struggle for our liberty." "Hear me all," said a grey-headed councillor, whose noble countenance and venerable beard told that many winters had left their snow upon his head: "Hear me, all of ye; since ye are resolved on throwing the fate of Israel in the doubtful scale of war. Nought but our possessions, or our lives, will satisfy the rapacity of the Syrians. Take the advice of an old man, and answer as if ye still treated for peace."

"And in what words wouldest thou have us answer these insolent invaders?" asked Ahab. "Speak; and if thy words are the words of wisdom, such as should be spoken by a venerable man like thee, they shall be attended to. Speak, oh Zimri!"

"Thus, then, would I reply, oh king!—That Ahab the king will fulfil the terms first agreed on, but for the households of his

kinsmen, nobles and courtiers, he cannot give what belongs not to himself." "Ha!" said the king, and the blood rushed into his face as he spoke. "Then thou wouldest have us yield up our own treasures, to secure thine. Is it so, old man? Thou hast more cunning than we thought for. Thou wouldest give up our flock to the wolves, in order to protect thine own." "The king mistakes the meaning of his servant," replied Zimri, calmly. "Who am I, that I should seek to destroy the happiness of my master? Five score and ten years have I lived in the fear of my God and my king. In my youth, I fought for my country, and now that age hath withered up my strength, and I can no longer assist her with my sword, I would fain serve her with my counsel. I have lived to see my children's grand-children snatched away from me. The last, the loveliest, the youngest, died in my arms; and three moons have passed away, since Zimri stood alone in the world. The roses of life are perished, and the thorns alone remain. The streams are dried up, and the source itself will soon be as dry as they. The figs are all gathered, and the barren trunk will put forth no more when the roots are withered. How shall the tree survive?—and why should I wish to pre-

serve the wretched remnant of a miserable life? Again I repeat, the king mistakes the meaning of his servant. I would but defer the evil hour, that we may be the more prepared to meet the storm of battle when it comes." "Forgive me, old man; thy words are such as suit thy hoary head, and we would not that a few hasty words spoken in a moment of heat, should deprive our council of the experience of thine age. If the counsel thou hast given be approved by all, it shall be followed."

Zimri looked at the wicked and abandoned monarch who thus addressed him, and he asked himself, "Can this be the man who caused the innocent Naboth to be stoned?" Alas! how specious is deceit! How truthful is its semblance. Zimri, the wise, the virtuous Zimri, could scarcely believe him guilty, and the tears started to the old man's eyes, as he answered, "How has thy servant merited this goodness? The blood of age is cooled, and not apt to take offence."

The old man's advice was taken, and the ambassadors, who had been lodged in a private apartment of the palace, during this debate, were now brought into the hall, to receive the king's reply, which was couched as nearly as possible in the words of Zimri.

They were still engaged in consultation, when the Syrians, who had been dismissed, returned with this message: "Benhadad, king of Damascus, sends to the slave king for the last time, and bids him prepare to meet the storm of his wrath."

"Oh king!" said Golon, "the mighty Benhadad, my master and thine, bade me say unto thee: "Thou valuest too highly, and reliest too confidently, on the height and strength of thy walls. But know, vain Israelite, he will raise such work around the city, as shall make their height no bar to his revenge. On these works he will make his army mount, and if each man throws down but one handful of earth, the stranger shall look in vain for the proud city of Samaria.'" "Tell thy master," replied Ahab, "that brave men battle with swords, and leave the ignoble war of words to priests and women, children and fools. We will not tamely yield up our rights to the invader. This is the only answer Ahab the king deigns to give to Benhadad the boaster. Baashi, reconduct these Syrians beyond the gates;" and without waiting for the fulfilment of his command, he arose and retired, and the council separated.

CHAPTER IV.

OH, had we never never met !
Or could this heart even now forget
How linked, how blest we might have been,
Had fate not frowned so dark between.

* * * * *

All, all is fearful ; even to see,
To gaze on those terrific things,
She now but blindly hears, would be
Relief to her imaginings ;

Since never yet was shape so dread,
But fancy, thus in darkness thrown,
And by such sounds of horror fed,
Could form more dreadful of her own.

MOORE.

“WELL, be it so, even as thou wilt, my son. 'Twas for thine own welfare I sought to dissuade thee,” said Baashi, after striving in vain to confute Naphtali’s arguments, in favor of the fulfilment of his contract with Malah. “I have nothing more to urge.” “Thanks, my father, for thus yielding thine own wishes to my gratification. Thou shalt not find me an ungrateful or undutiful son : I am ready to obey thy commands in all things, save in wedding the princess. I have

vowed to take no other wife than Malah." "I will test thy obedience, then, my child—for though I have consented to thy union, thou must defer it till the coming spring. I will no longer attempt to bias thine affections; but thou must not attempt to shake my resolution—for in this I am absolute. Now thou mayest go, my son. Thou knowest the counsel the king has received from the prophet; and thou, my son, must not absent thyself from this glorious enterprize—for thou hast been named by Ahab as the head of the young nobility who make the first attack."

"My sovereign and my sire are most kind and gracious," replied Naphtali. "At sunset I will rejoin thee; and trust me, my father, the confidence of my king is not misplaced. All that mortal arm can effect shall be done; and they need not fear whom God has promised to protect. Farewell for the present; I have much to think of, much to do, ere I venture into the heat of battle, for who shall say this sun may not be the last that shall ever dawn upon me?"

With a light heart, and a bounding step, Naphtali turned from the splendid abode of his father, to seek the humble roof of his beloved. He found her alone, in the outer room; that which we have already described. A small hand-

mill, such as were then in common use, was on the ground beside her. She had been engaged in grinding corn, to supply her father and self with their daily food; but she had ceased from her employment, and was seated on a wooden bench. Her beautiful arm, which was bare to the elbow, was leaned on the rude table, and supported her graceful head. The long clustering ringlets of her hair were unbound, and hung loosely over her fair face, the features of which were like marble. There was not the slightest tinge of colour, save on the ripe red lip; but the trace of tears on her pale cheek told she had been weeping.

Naphtali stood gazing in raptured silence on the sculpture-like figure before him. "Malah!" he said at last. The maiden started from her reverie, and a glow of pleasure, like a sudden sunbeam irradiating snow, mantled her cheek, as she recognized the well-known voice of her betrothed. But it faded away in a moment, leaving her pale cheek yet more pale, and she sunk into her seat again. "What ails thee, Malah?" said the youth, tenderly, as he approached, and took her hand; "Malah, my own Malah, why art thou so pale?" "O call me not thine," said the maiden, faintly; "call me not

thine, Naphtali. I am thine no longer;" and hastily withdrawing the hand he had taken, she shook her long hair over her face. "What means this coolness, Malah? I was not prepared for this. I who would sacrifice my life, nay more, my father's affections, for thy sake. But I see my presence is no longer needed here. Say but the word; tell me that I am irksome to thee; bid me depart at once, and you shall be obeyed. Tell me at once that you prefer the affections of another—for that will be more merciful than thus to trifle with my feelings. I knew not when I rescued thee yesternight from him whom I thought had wronged thee, that I was bearing thee away from the arms of a favoured and accepted lover. Not mine! aha!" and he laughed hysterically. "Was it for this I rejected the splendid alliance which might have been mine? Cruel, unkind girl! thus to spurn from thee the heart that could have worshipped thee with an idolatry almost heathen. Thou wert, after my God and my country, the dearest object of my soul. Oh, Malah! how hast thou deceived me!—where, where shall we look for truth, when falsehood wears a semblance so beautiful?" "Nay, it is thou art cruel and unkind," she replied, with a burst of uncontrollable tears. "Oh

Naphtali, how have I deserved the reproaches thou hast heaped upon me? Love another, didst thou say—an accepted, a favoured lover? Oh! thou knowest not all I have suffered, all I have yet to fear from Sadoc.” “What!” he interrupted, “was it indeed the fierce Sidonian from whom I rescued thee? By the God of Israel! had I known it, I would have dyed my sword to the hue of crimson in the last drop of his heart’s blood. This is not the first time he has crossed my path. Thou must be removed from hence to a more secure home. It were yielding the dove tamely into the talons of the eagle—the vulture, I should have said—for the eagle is too noble a bird to be compared to the wily Sadoc—were I to leave thee longer here. But where is thy father, Malah?” Her only reply was the tears that now flowed unrestrainedly down her pale face. “Ha!” he continued, “I had forgotten thou hadst bidden me call thee mine no longer. But since none other has supplanted me in thine affections, wherefore may I not use those endearing words?—wherefore now, when I had fancied every obstacle to our union overcome, art thou the one to cloud the bright sunshine of newly awakened hope? Wherefore dost thou bid me cease to call thee

mine, and damp the ardour of joy within my heart?" "Because," she answered, as she brushed away the tears from her long lashes, and shook back the dark curls from her face, now tinged with the flush of conscious pride; "because, Naphtali, thy father and mine have willed it so. Yesterday, I was a child, and listened to the sophistries of love, with all the warmth and eagerness of childhood; for I had not then awakened to the powerful influence of reason. It was but yesterday that I could have sacrificed myself, my father—nay," and she lowered her voice to a solemn whisper, "all but my God, for my love to thee. To-day I am a woman; and though I love thee still—oh, how fondly!—despise me not for the unmaidenly confession—to-day, I can sacrifice even my love to thy welfare. Baashi no longer considers me a fitting bride for thee; and Micah's daughter scorns to force herself into Naphtali's family. The prophet's daughter will not wed the chamberlain's son, to be carried to his home as a slave, not a bride. Turn not from me thus, Naphtali; but hear me to an end. Think not, that another shall ever claim the heart that has been—nay, I cannot conceal it, that is still all thine own. Yet seek not to

change my resolution, for it is unalterable. I have struggled, and how fearful has been the struggle between duty and affection ;—but it is past. Here, Naphtali, here is the contract that bound thee to me. I have read it. Now witness how a woman's judgment may conquer a woman's feeling." As she spoke, she tore the parchment into fragments, and opening the casement which looked into a small garden at the back of the house, she scattered them to the winds, and they were rapidly whirled away. "Thus thou art free. Go seek another bride. Be happy, and forget there is such a being as Malah in existence." "Forget thee, Malah, my own, my generous bride! Life must be a blot, the shadow of death must have fallen on me, ere I cease to remember—ere I cease to love thee. Nor think for a moment that the destruction of that deed has cancelled the bond between us. No! it has rather strengthened the affection I have ever cherished for thee, noble girl. I will never, never forsake thee." The maiden replied, "Naphtali, the words have been spoken, and may not be unsaid. Thy father—" "What if my father has consented; if his blessing hallowed our affection; wouldst thou still persist in thy cruel purpose?"

He has consented, Malah. He has given us his blessing, and I came to seek thy father's." Malah made no reply; but she did not withdraw the hand he had taken; and she suffered him to twine his fingers among her luxuriant tresses, as he sat beside her on the rude bench, pouring into her ear the passionate words of love. Again the rich blood had mounted to her cheek, and tinged it with a healthful glow. There they sat together, listening to the music of each other's vow. Oh! the delicious hours of pure, unalloyed happiness, that succeed the pouring forth of the young, warm heart! Precious secret of treasured love, when there is not a cloud to mar the bright summer sky of hope; when the very hours, as they fly, seem winged with delight. All is in the present moment. The past, the future, are but names. What has hope to do with the past, or love with futurity?

It was growing dark, but the prophet had not returned; and the lovers were still seated together, gazing upon each other's face, too happy for words to give utterance to their feelings. "The sun is setting, and my father is not yet returned," said the maiden, as she looked towards the dazzling west. "The sun setting! then I must leave thee, sweet one; for I pro-

mised to rejoin my father at this hour. Now farewell, Malah. Give me but one token of affection, ere I leave thee." The maiden half averted her glowing face, but she strove not to avoid the burning kisses he impressed upon it. "Wilt thou not give me one tress of thy raven hair, to guard me in the battle?" "Battle?" anxiously questioned Malah. "Aye, battle, Malah; a prophet of the true God has been with the king, and bade him go forth this night with the young nobles of the land—for the Lord of Hosts would be with the Israelites, and he would deliver the Syrians into their hands; and I—nay, start not, for is not the Lord with us?—I am to command this gallant band. If I return, it will be laden with the spoil of the Syrian hosts. If I fall, waste not thy young beauty in weeping for me; but forget me, Malah. Think of me as if I had never been. Thy youth, thy loveliness, will gain thee many admirers; but be cautious in thy choice. Remember thou art not choosing a partner for a day, or for a festival dance, whom thou canst change at will. Thy life-long happiness or misery will depend upon the choice. Let not beauty of form lead thy heart captive, or flowery words turn thy better judgment astray. Pro-

mise me this, Malah; and if I fall, I shall die happy."

The tears started again to Malah's beautiful eyes; but this time they fell not on her cheek. Severing one of the black ringlets from her head, she placed it in the hand of the youth, and said in a low but firm voice: "I cannot promise thee to wed another, Naphtali; for if thou diest in battle, I shall consider myself thy widow, and my heart will be buried in thy grave." "Nay, Malah, remember it is thy betrothed who asks it of thee. Perhaps it is the last time thou mayest ever look upon my face, or hear the sound of my voice. Promise me, Malah, dear Malah, that if I perish, my last moments may not be embittered by the painful reflection that I leave thee almost wholly unprovided for. Thy father is descending into the vale of years, and I shudder to think what may befall thee, should we both be taken from thee. Wilt thou not grant me, then, this last request? Do not hesitate: my father will be impatient for my coming." "I promise thee," said the maiden, faintly; and the next moment she stood on the projecting balcony, watching the retreating form of her lover, till an angle in the street hid him from her view. Then re-

treating into the house, she sat down on the bench, and resumed the attitude in which he had found her ; but oh ! what a change had a few short hours effected in her fate. Tears again coursed down her cheeks ; but they were no longer from the font of sadness. A light, the light of hope, dawned through the clouds of despair. Still there was enough of sorrow to give shadow to a picture which would otherwise have been all light. Anxiety for her father's return made the time drag slowly ; and she strove to beguile it by singing. Her voice was not powerful, but it was sweet, and its gentle tones uttered the following verses :—

Malah's Song.

The moonbeam sleeps on the mountain side,
 And the quiet stars shine out o'er the flood :
 But ere the morrow, the waves will be dyed
 By streams, red streams, of human blood.

The daughter of Israel sadly weeps,
 For the Syrian camp surrounds the wall :
 But the watchman of Israel nor slumbers nor sleeps ;
 And soon shall the bolt of vengeance fall.

On, gallant youth ! The Syrian hordes
 Sit at the banquet, unconscious of dread ;
 For they know not the avenging sword
 Hangs now suspended over each head.

It was nearly dark, when Naphtali reached his father's house. He found Baashi impatiently waiting his coming, which had been delayed. He hastily arrayed himself in his armour, and with rapid steps, and a burning flush on his countenance, joined the band of young nobles, who, already armed and equipped, waited his arrival. The gates were thrown open, and two hundred and thirty-two as gallant youths as ever brandished swords in the cause of their country issued forth. It was a moonlight night. The lovely planet shed her mild light over the Syrian camp; but the brilliant lights glittering within the tents rendered their inmates insensible of her beams, for Bendadad gave a banquet to the confederates, and the principal officers of the army. There was a sound of rejoicing throughout that vast army. They were already exulting in anticipation of the conquest they resolved to accomplish on the morrow. How vain are the resolves of man! Before that morrow dawned the host of the Syrian was scattered, and the camp given up to pillage. But we anticipate.

When Benhadad received intelligence that a body of Israelites were advancing from the city, he despatched a troop of horsemen, under the command of one of the captains of his host,

commanding them to bring the Jewish embassy, whether they came for peace or for war, bound hand and foot, before him. Exultingly the Syrians advanced, but the Jews were firm in their reliance on the aid of their God, who had promised not to desert them. They knew from experience that their dependence was based on a rock that could not be moved. The challenge of the Syrians to throw down their arms, and submit to be bound and borne into Benhadad's presence, was answered by the shrill war-cry of the Jews, as they rushed with irresistible fury on the advanced guard, and slew them to a man. The Syrians were panic struck. The idea of the Israelites venturing to attack them in their own camp seemed beyond the bounds of possibility; and it was not until the shrieks of the miserable wretches, whose debauch had rendered them incapable of resisting the impetuous onset of the little band, reached his ear, that Benhadad would be convinced it was true.

When Ahab saw the success of the young nobles, he followed with the rest of his small army. The slaughter was terrible. The Syrians fell by thousands, and chaos seemed to have resumed its reign on the earth. Still Naphtali

pressed forward to Benhadad's tent. He reached it, but it was deserted. The remnants of the banquet were there ; fragments of costly viands, and cups of gold and silver still sparkling with rosy wine ; but the tent that lately rang with the shouts and laughter of the revellers, was silent ; the luxurious couches were untenanted, while around him rolled the red tide of slaughter ; and far before him, on the moonlit hills, he saw the form of the flying monarch, who, heedless of the shrieks of his dying soldiers, still kept on his way. All was confusion. The stillness of the night was broken by the shrieks of the wounded, the wild cries and fierce execrations of the flying, and the loud thanksgiving of the pursuers. That night was devoted to pursuit. The swords of the Israelites were crimsoned to the hilts with blood of the foes who had threatened to destroy them. The morrow was spent in pillaging the camp. The emancipated citizens came forth in procession, with bands of music and shouts of rejoicing, to welcome the king and the army, and escort them back in triumph. Never did the sun shine out on a happier people than the inhabitants of Samaria ; but there was one sad heart amid the general joy—one, who sat in solitude and wept, while

all was pleasure around; and that one was Malah, the prophet's daughter. Many rumours were afloat, as there always are upon any great public occasion. One said, that the brave Naphtali, the son of the king's chamberlain, was slain; another, that he had been carried away by the Syrians, borne along in their flight; and a third, that his valour had raised him so high in the king's favor that he bore him through the city in his own chariot, and bestowed the hand of the princess Merah upon him as a reward. Poor Malah! A thousand doubts and fears agitated her. She dared not venture forth to ascertain the truth, for her fears of Sadoc kept her a close prisoner within her own dwelling. Her father was absent, she knew not whither. She had none in whom she could confide. The neighbours, who had contributed to her misery by making her acquainted with these vague reports, could afford her no certain information. On the tormenting rack of uncertainty she passed the day that was spent in public festivity by others—but to her it was a day of intense anxiety. “And is he dead!” she muttered.—“He who stood here yestereven, glowing with health? Is the fire of that eye quenched for ever? Does that noble countenance wear the hueless pallor of death?”

Can it be possible? Is that manly brow and graceful form now food for the worm? Or does he groan in fetters?" The big drops of agony started to her brow, as she strove to control the wild throbbings of her heart. Yet, strange as it may seem, she could contemplate his death or captivity with comparative calmness, to the idea of his deserting her for the arms of another. The bare thought seemed fraught with madness; and she who, a day before, had voluntarily resigned all pretensions to his love, now shuddered at the possibility of losing it. Such is woman: warm, generous, and devoted, she can yield up all the world affords of happiness, friends, kindred, home, and country, for the object of her affections. She can school herself to bear scorn, contumely, and poverty, for his sake; but let him desert her for another—let him (for the love of man is variable as wind or wave) lavish on another the caresses that formed the delight of her existence,—the deep current of her affection is chilled in its onward flow, and the gushing fount of love is poisoned at its source by the rankling stream of hate. Oh how enduring is the lifelong hatred of the heart that is scorned and slighted! Let him beware, who dares excite it —for

“ Woman's love, and woman's hate,
Are fixed as the decrees of fate.”

It was growing dark, and Malah was still alone. A feeling of terror was creeping over her, a nervousness she could not account for. The silence, the solitude, was intolerable; when a loud knocking at the door roused her from her melancholy thought, if that chaos of the brain caused by conflicting feelings, is entitled to the name of thought. She rose, and withdrawing the bar that secured the entrance, unclosed the door. In the next moment the encircling arms of Naphtali were around her. “Sweet one,” he exclaimed, as he drew her closer to his bosom, “God has not abandoned his chosen people to the hand of the spoiler. This tress from thy precious locks, if I believed in talismans, I should say had been my safeguard through the hour of danger.” She answered him not; but, as her face reclined upon his shoulder, he felt the warm tears falling upon his neck. “What mean these tears?” said the youth. “Why dost thou not answer me, Malah? Hast thou not one smile left, with which to welcome me back?” She raised her glowing face, and dashing away the tears, replied,

“Naphtali, I am too, too happy! If thou couldest have seen the anguish of my heart throughout this long day of misery and fear, couldest thou have seen the bitter drops I have shed, thou wouldest not be surprised at these tears, which are tears of joy. My heart is like the overstrung bow, that if not slackened will break. It is like the phial that has been filled too full, and must overflow or burst.” “Wherefore has this day been a day of sorrow to thee? Methinks when even mourners put on a smile, thine should not have been the only sad heart. Thou too shouldest have rejoiced, as I should have done in the veriest trifle that gave thee pleasure.” There was something like reproach in his tone. “Oh! blame me not,” she replied in a faltering voice, “for they told me thou wert dead or—” “Or what, Malah? Why dost thou blush and hesitate?” She went on—“Or that thou wert wedded to the princess Merah.” “And didst thou believe them, Malah?” “Oh! no—no—no—I thought thou mightest have been slain, or captured; but never for a moment did I believe thee capable of deserting me—for there would have been madness in the thought.” “Well, Malah, we will speak of this no more. Let us forget it, dearest. How I shall long for

the sweet spring, with its birds and its flowers—
for thou wilt be mine, mine own till death, and I
may press those dear lips thus and thus in the
warmth of true affection, and thou mayest repose
thy head upon my bosom without a blush; and
yet life will never afford me a moment of more
pure, unalloyed happiness than this.”

CHAPTER V.

'Tis done! But yesterday a king,
And armed with kings to strive,
And now thou art a nameless thing,
So object—yet alive.
Is this the man of thousand thrones,
Who strewed our hearth with hostile bones?
And can he thus survive?

BYRON.

THE winter was passed by Ahab in raising an army to meet the Syrians, whom the prophet had foretold would take the field again on the following spring. The rich spoil taken from the enemy's camp, consisting of gold, silver, jewels, chariots, horses, and armour, contributed in no slight degree towards the equipment of the Hebrew troops. Naphtali had received a high command in the army. He impatiently longed for the hour that was to unite him to his beloved Malah.

Meanwhile the Syrian monarch was not idle. By the advice of the principal general, he dismissed the confederate kings, but retained their forces. "We will battle them now on the plains," said they; "for the God of the Israelites is the God

of the hills, and we will not venture among mountains so guarded. We will not again brave the wrath of their national deity." Accordingly Benhadad drew up his army, and encamped in a great plain over against the city of Apheca. It was with feelings of bitter sorrow that Naphtali received orders to join the army ere the day appointed for his nuptials had arrived. In vain he besought his father's permission for their solemnization previous to the campaign. Baashi turned a deaf ear to his prayers and entreaties; and when his son urged that he might be slain in the battle, he replied, that if he had no other reason for his denial, that one would be sufficient to deter him from yielding. "Urge me no farther, Naphtali," he said; "but remember thy promise on the day I consented to thy union with the prophet's daughter, and the conditions annexed to that consent." "I do remember it," replied the youth, bitterly; "I do remember, O my father! and thou shalt be obeyed."

With a sad heart he hastened to take his leave of his beloved. It was a mournful parting; and as the youth placed in her hand a brooch of onyx as a love token, he turned away to conceal the tears that, in spite of his manhood, started to his eyes. He thought of the almost

destitute situation in which he left her. Her father was too much rapt in his prophetic visions to be a fit protector for his beautiful daughter ; and he dreaded to leave her to the menial and almost servile occupations to which the narrow circumstances of Micaiah reduced her.

There was but one solace, though that was a great one. She would not be exposed to the insult and violence of the Sidonian. He too would be absent, and might be slain in the battle. With straining eyes Malah gazed after the retreating form of Naphtali, and frequent were her supplications to her God, to protect and preserve him through the chances of the battle.

With hearts elate with the certainty of conquest, the Syrians saw the Israelites pitch their camp over against their own, on the extensive plain before Apheca. For six days both armies lay inactive, each seemingly unwilling to commence hostilities ; and it was not until the seventh morning that the battle was begun. Both armies were confident of success. The Syrians relying on their superior numbers—their forces exceeding Ahab's by more than one half ; and yet relying more strongly on the superstitious belief, that the Israelites' God being

the God of the mountains, could not extend his protection to them in the valleys. This belief proved their destruction.

The Israelites were equally firm in their reliance on their God; for he had, through the medium of his prophets, promised to render their arms successful. The trumpets sounded the charge. The drums and other martial music sounded cheerfully on the morning breeze. On rushed the mighty hosts to the deadly strife. The rush of the conflict—the shrill war-cries of the opposing armies—the yells of the wounded—the clang of arms, and the neigh of war horses, mingled together in one wild chorus, while flights of darts and javelins darkened the air. For a short time the victory was doubtful.

The Syrians fought boldly, giving arrow for arrow—their dense thousands, as has been already stated, in number more than doubling the Jews; but soon they gave ground before them: for notwithstanding their inferiority in numbers, nothing could repel the tremendous shock of the Hebrews' advance. They rushed into battle with an impetuosity at once irresistible and overwhelming. Valour has been in all ages one of the distinguishing national character-

ristics of the Jewish people ; but, in this case, it seemed a passion perfectly uncontrollable. In spite of the desperate odds against them, had the king ordered retreat at that moment, none would have heeded, none would have obeyed. They bore down all before them ; and soon the regular battle was changed into disorder and flight on one side, and pursuit and slaughter on the other. The Syrians fell by thousands, and the Israelites literally waded through a sea of blood. The remains of the Syrian army, with the king at their head, or rather borne along in the confused flight, took refuge in Apherca, the only place where they could now seek it. But the hand of the Almighty, as well as human vengeance, seemed to pursue them ; for the walls of the city fell down with a mighty crash, overwhelming twenty-seven thousand beneath their weight ; and, ere the sun went down, there was scarcely a remnant left of that mighty army which had threatened to destroy Israel. A hundred thousand lay dead on the field, beside those who were crushed to death. It was not until night had closed in, and universal darkness hung over the earth, that the Israelites ceased from their slaughter, and retired to their tents ; and there was not an arm in the camp that night but

ached from the work of the fearful day. The carnage was terrible—the booty immense; and those who rose that morning in fear and trembling for the event, at night lay down victorious; while the discomfited Benhadad, with the loss of his army and treasure, weary, wounded, and without resources, was a fugitive in an enemy's country. It was then he remembered the insolent messages he had sent to Ahab on a former occasion. Would he, whom he had stigmatized as a slave, show any mercy towards the man who had thus insulted him? He could not—he did not expect it. Miserable and dejected, he sat in the cave* where he had taken refuge, surrounded by those officers who had escaped with him from the perils of that bloody field. “Tiglath,” he said, turning towards his favorite general, who stood gazing upon the pale countenance of the dejected monarch, “we have lost all; and there is no hope, no refuge for us, save in the arms of death. The gods have been unpropitious, and the Israelitish king, flushed with success, will scarcely spare us the pang of gracing his triumphal entry into his capital. It will be too fair an opportunity of pageant for his

* Dr. Southwell, in his Bible, translates the Hebrew words into an *inner chamber*; but Josephus calls it a *cave*.

subjects. At least we should have thought so, had the case been reversed. Yet," he continued, musingly, "there is one way of eluding the disgrace—Benhadad can die." "Speak not of death, O king!" replied Tiglath; "the Israelites are a merciful and forgiving people. Let us throw ourselves upon their mercy, and I will answer for their not refusing our appeal. Even were they a blood-thirsty race, there is enough blood on yonder plain to sate the appetite of a whole nation." "And who will venture first into the camp of our enemies?" "That will I," replied Tiglath. "I fear them not; I have braved death too often to fear him now; and if I must die, O king! why should I dread to fall by the hand of an Israelite, when I would not hesitate for a moment to plunge a dagger in my own heart?" "Nobly spoken, brave Tiglath," was responded by all. "And now," said Tiglath, "let us seek a little refreshment and repose." Then throwing himself on the ground, with a shield for his pillow, the hardy warrior was soon wrapt in the arms of forgetfulness. The rest followed his example.

It was long before Benhadad closed his weary eyes in sleep. He thought of the past, but the retrospect was a bitter one. He turned to the

future : there was scarcely a spot for hope to rest upon. That morning he had been one of the mighty monarchs of the earth ; his army had nearly covered the immense plain before the city ; and it seemed but to need his command in order to crush the puny foe, whose efforts at freedom resembled more the effects of desperation than real valour. Yet they conquered him. He was now a king without subjects, a general without an army, a fugitive hemmed in on every side by the Israelitish troops. If the retrospect was disagreeable, the prospect was equally so. Toward morning, however, he fell into a lethargic slumber.

It was late ere the stir of life was again visible in Ahab's camp ; but the king had scarcely concluded the morning meal, when the curtain of the pavilion was put aside, and some of the principal officers entered. " Welcome to all of ye," said the monarch ; " more especially to thee, brave Naphtali ;" and he beckoned the noble youth to his side. Naphtali's check crimsoned with gratified pride, as he took the seat of honour to which Ahab pointed. " Baashi, Sadoc, ye have both acted nobly : but I see by thine eager countenance, Baashi, thou hast something important to say." " My gracious king," replied

the chamberlain, glancing triumphantly toward his son, "there are messengers from Benhadad, and they will deliver their embassy to none save to the king." "Let them be admitted," said Ahab, whose usually savage nature was somewhat softened by the recent victory.

The ambassadors—if they could be so called, who came, not as the commissioned officers of a king, to treat on terms of equality with a brother king, but as suppliants for the life of a fugitive to one whom, in the days of his prosperity, he had wantonly insulted—the embassy consisted of Tiglath, Golon, and a few others. They were no longer attired in the profusion of magnificence, which had distinguished them in their former embassies; but clothed in sackcloth; their girdles were twisted ropes, and instead of rich chains of gold, they wore halters about their necks. Golon could not help drawing a contrast between the time when he stood before Ahab, and bearded him in his own palace with the degrading title of the slave king, with the present humiliating moment, when he prostrated himself on the ground before him.

"Syrians," said the monarch, after a moment's pause; "what seek ye of me?" "O mighty king," replied Tiglath, obeying Ahab's signal to

rise, "we come from Benhadad; he who was lately king of Damascus, confesses himself thy slave, and throws himself on thy mercy. In his name, we entreat thee, O king, to spare the life of our master, who, however fallen in fortune, is still a king."

All looked anxiously in Ahab's face, to ascertain, if possible, the workings of his dark spirit. It was a moment of general suspense—that pause between the delivery of the Syrian's speech and the king's answer, while a look of unmixed pleasure spread itself over his countenance; but whether it was the savage gratification of a vengeful spirit, brooding in anticipation over the tortures it intends to inflict on a fallen enemy—or whether it was an intended act of mercy, however misplaced, that spread its exhilarating glow over those dark features, Naphtali, who narrowly watched their expression, would form no decided judgment. At length the irksome silence was broken by the voice of the king, who, turning to Tiglath, said, "I am well pleased at the intelligence thou bringest;" the Syrians drew in their breath, glad that he had escaped the perils of yesterday's slaughter; "go, tell him that Ahab will welcome him, even as a brother." Tiglath drew a long

gasping breath, as if a heavy weight had been suddenly removed from his chest, and withdrew, followed by his companions.

The courtiers of Ahab exchanged glances of surprise at this unlooked-for result, and Naph-tali, although he loved mercy, could not help thinking that the king was rather too profuse in his expressions of friendship to the fugitive Syrians. Ahab hath sworn to Tiglath, that Benhadad's life should be saved; and now, turning towards Obadiah, the master of his horse,* he bade him order his chariot. "To night," he said, "we break up our camp, and return to Samaria; and thou, Sadoc, strike thy tent, and go at once to apprise the queen of our coming." The chariot was brought; but Ahab had moved but a little way from the tent, when he perceived Benhadad approaching, accompanied by the wreck of his once formidable army. As he came near, and made the humble obeisance befitting his fallen fortune, Ahab leaned forward, and extending his right hand toward him, assisted him into his own chariot, and saluting him on either cheek, bade him con-

* The same who preserved a hundred prophets in a cave, at the imminent risk of being put to death, should he by any chance be discovered.

sider himself as his brother. "O king," replied the Syrian, "henceforward be the past buried in oblivion; thou hast bound me to thee by the strongest tie—the tie of gratitude: I will restore unto thee all the cities my father took from thy father, and thou shalt make thyself streets in Damascus, even as he made himself streets in Samaria." "It shall be a covenant between us, O my brother," replied Ahab; and the two kings returned to the Israelitish camp, where the day was passed in feasting and preparations for a speedy return to the capital, whither Sadoc was already journeying rapidly.

The covenants between the two monarchs were made in due form.* Benhadad, laden with presents, was dismissed with an escort to his own country; the camp was broken up that night, and Ahab's fate was sealed. By this last act of idolatry, after the manifold mercies of the Lord, he sealed his own fate; for it was evident no chastisement, however great, or mercy, however manifest, could move one so perversely idolatrous.

* It was contrary to the law of God to make any covenants or alliance with heathens; and the reason was, that it could not be done without joining in sacrifice; so that the divine power of the heathen idols was acknowledged.

CHAPTER VI.

Silent was night, but more silent the cot

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The muleteer called, but no voice met his ear ;
He looked for his love, but no woman was near ;
A flash of despair through his brain wildly flew,
And he wept o'er the ruins of all that he knew.

MILITARY SKETCH BOOK.

WITH the buoyant elasticity of youth and hope, Naphtali passed the march to Samaria in joyous anticipation of his again meeting with Malah. It wanted but two days to the time appointed for their nuptials, and he eagerly counted the hours that intervened between him and his happiness. Alas! poor human nature!—it is well that futurity is veiled from thee, or how wouldest thou be able to bear the many sorrows that await thee in this world of suffering and trial: for even when the cup of bliss is nearest to our lips, some envious hand dashes down the draught, and replaces it with the bitter stream of disappointment. Thus it was with Naphtali: the

nearer he seemed approaching to happiness, the further the delusive vision fled from his grasp.

The king entered the city in all the pomp and pride of triumph. Sadoc had arrived on the preceding evening, and immediately informed the queen of his success. The whole city was again a scene of public rejoicing. As Ahab neared the palace he perceived a man approaching, with his head bound up. The king strove to avoid him; but the wounded man threw himself directly in the monarch's path. "Why dost thou impede our way?" sternly inquired Ahab. "Listen, oh king! and grant me a patient hearing." "Be quick," said the king; "for in the time of rejoicing, we would not be troubled with idle complainings." "King," replied the intruder, calmly, "the ear of a sovereign should never be closed; in rejoicing or in sorrowing, it should ever be open to the prayers of his subjects, when they seek protection at his hands." "If thou hast complaints to make, we will hear them, for our word's sake; but we seek not to learn our duty at thy hands. Proceed." "I am a soldier," he resumed, as if heedless of the rebuke of the king—"to whom my captain confided the charge of a prisoner of rank, and bade me look well to his safe keeping. The prisoner

escaped, and, fearing my master would put me to death in his vengeance, I fled." "And well wouldest thy careless conduct have deserved the death thou fearedst," said the king. Scarcely had these words escaped his lips, when the man unbound his head, and Ahab recognised the calm, stern features of the prophet Micaiah. "Oh king," he said in a tone of fervour, "oh king, if by letting a prisoner of trifling rank escape, thy servant was judged worthy of death, what thinkest thou must be the anger of an offended God? That God denounces vengeance against thee, for hast thou not allowed the blasphemous Syrian, whom he hath delivered bound into thine hand, to escape unscathed? King! thou hast spoken thine own doom; and it will be worked out by him, whom, contrary to the will of the true God, thou hast treated as thy brother."

A dark frown, black as the cloud that precedes the bursting of the thunder storm, gathered on Ahab's brow during the prophet's speech; and now, in a voice which rage had rendered almost inarticulate, he exclaimed, as he turned towards Apion, the governor of the city, "See to his safe keeping, Apion, and let him learn in a dungeon his duty to his sovereign." "Oh king!" returned Micaiah, calmly, "I have per-

formed the commission of the most high God, to whom earthly kings are as the clods of the valley, and I fear not thy wrath." At that moment his eye encountered that of Naphtali, and with a look of appeal that the young man could not mistake, he seemed to commit his child to his charge. Naphtali answered the expressive look with a glance so fraught with intelligence, that volumes could not have conveyed his meaning more eloquently to the father's heart, who, pinioned and closely guarded, was borne away, while Ahab, despite of the ridicule with which he chose to treat the prophecy, returned to his palace with a heavy heart.

No sooner was Naphtali released from his attendance on Ahab, than he hastened to pay his duty to his mother; and having discharged this duty, which for the first time in his life he found irksome—no, it was not the act of obedience that was irksome, it was that she detained him longer than he thought necessary, while he was uneasy, and longed to depart. What is that strange mysterious feeling that we call presentiment, which like a cloud remains rolled in one part of the sky, while all the expanse around is blue and cloudless as ever? We turn to the

clear sky, and admire its loveliness, and marvel whence came the cloud that mars its beauty, and which we know will soon envelope the whole, and burst in thunder. So when the heart is full of happiness, comes that sickening foreboding, scarcely acknowledged to ourselves, but causing a restless excitement that we can neither shake off nor account for. At length he succeeded in releasing himself from his mother, and he flew to that quarter of the city which contained his soul's treasure.

It was quite dark: heavy clouds had been gathering in the sky during the whole day, and the rain now began to fall in torrents. The suburb in which Malah dwelt never wore an air of comfort to the child of luxury, and Naphtali had been nurtured in its lap. Now, it wore an air of peculiar cheerlessness and discomfort. There was not a single star visible, nor a lamp to guide him on his way. The splash of his own footsteps on the wet and muddy street, was the only sound that fell on his ear. He reached the humble abode of the prophet, and knocked loudly for admittance. The hollow reverberation of the sound was his only answer. "Can she be gone forth to seek her father?" thought Naphtali; "yet surely she

would not venture her delicate frame in such a night as this, when even the watch-dog is housed." Again he rapped impatiently ; this time the door, which had only been partially closed, yielded to the blow, and he crossed the threshold. The room was nearly dark—the only light in it proceeded from a small lamp, lighted with oil, which stood on an earthen tripod in a remote corner, and he perceived at once that it was the memorial lamp for the deceased mother of his betrothed.

It is customary to kindle an oil lamp as a remembrance on every anniversary of the death of a parent, and this is called Yahr Tsyte, or memorial lamp. It was now four years since she had first performed this painful duty, and he never remembered her absenting herself from her home on the anniversary of her mother's death ; yet she was not there. As he advanced farther into the room, he found it in the same order as usual, excepting that the lamp that generally stood on the table had been overturned. He called her name aloud, for he fancied she might have retired into the inner chamber ; but receiving no reply, he seized on a splinter of pine wood, that lay on the hearth, and stooping

down, he blew the nearly extinguished embers into a flame, at which he lighted it as a torch,* and then entered the other room. That also was deserted. The deathlike silence oppressed him. He could in no way account for Malah's strange absence, and he returned to the outer apartment: but as he did so, he dropped the tress of hair she had given him, and on stooping to recover the precious gift, he thought he saw other footprints than his own marked in the soil which lay on the rushes, with which the brick floor was thickly strewn. He held down the light to convince himself of the truth. Yes—there were the footprints marked distinctly; he was not deceived. A maddening suspicion shot through his brain. Had Malah voluntarily quitted her father's roof during his absence? No, there were evident proofs that it was not so. Who had overturned the lamp?—why was the evening meal spread upon the board, and clean rushes strewed on the floor?—why, if not in expectation of her father's return? She had been torn away, then, from the arms of her father and lover, at the very moment when her brightest

* Some readers will perhaps be surprised at his not lighting his torch at the lamp; but no flame, for any purpose whatsoever, unless on an emergency involving human life, is ever kindled from this mournful memorial of the dead.

visions were on the point of realization. Who had committed this outrage?—where was she?—was she living or dead? were the questions that rapidly suggested themselves to his mind; to all of which but one answer occurred to him—she was in the power of Sadoc the Sidonian. “Merciful God, preserve my senses!” exclaimed the unhappy youth, dashing the torch to the ground, and darting into the street. Much need had he of that prayer, for his senses seemed to be deserting him. He flew down the street, regardless of the rain, that fell as if the heavens had opened their storehouses, and were pouring down an exhaustless cataract, that seemed as if it would drown the earth in another deluge, while the thunder roared awfully over head, and the lightning flashed forth at momentary intervals, with a startling vividness, such as the inhabitants of colder climes can form no conception of. For the moment, the heavens seemed one livid sheet of liquid flame, and the rain drops resembled globules of falling fire. Still Naphtali kept on his way, guided more by instinct than by any fixed purpose, to the large square, in which stood his father’s dwelling. He paused as he reached the corner of the square, and clasping his hands on his

brow, stood gazing—upon what?—vacancy. What cared he for the fury of the warring elements? Let them rage as they would, they could not equal the storm raging in his own bosom. Had oceans emptied their watery depths on his head that night, they could not have quenched the burning in his brain. If the noonday sun had shone forth in the brightest resplendence, it could not have dispelled the midnight blackness of despair that overwhelmed his soul. “Why should I live?” he said at length, unconsciously giving utterance to his thoughts; “what more have I to do with life?—one blow would separate the spirit from its burdensome load of clay.” He drew a dagger from his girdle; the precious stones that ornamented the hilt glittered brightly even through the pitchy blackness of night. “My God,” he ejaculated, “forgive me!” He raised the dagger, and was about to commit the horrible crime of suicide, when a hand stayed his uplifted arm, and snatched the dagger from his hold. “Rash youth,” said a voice which sounded not unfamiliar to his ear, “what wouldst thou do?” “Die,” replied Naphtali, in a firm unshrinking tone; for in the excitement he had forgotten the magnitude of the crime he had so nearly perpetrated. “Poor boy!” said

the same gentle voice ; “ so young, and so eager to throw off the burden of existence ! Live, Naphtali ; bow down to the hand that hath chastened thee, and there may yet be many bright hours in store for thee. Live, and repent of the deed thou wouldst have done.” Naphtali started when he heard his own name pronounced. “ Who art thou,” he said, “ who art abroad in a night like this ? By thy voice I know thou art aged, and the grey head and shivering limbs of age should not be exposed to such a storm.” “ I am one,” answered his unseen monitor, “ who, having lived beyond the age allotted to frail mortality, and survived all that makes life valuable, have now nought to do with it, but to benefit my fellow men with the dear-bought experience of years and a long chequered life—one who is ready, as far as man can ever be, at any hour, to bless God and die.”

Naphtali turned toward this strange being, and another fearful lightning flash revealed to his earnest gaze the time-worn and benevolent countenance of Zimri.

“ Old man,” he began, but paused, horror-stricken ; for the flash that had revealed him, attracted by the steel of the dagger, which the

old man had taken from him, and still grasped, had struck him dead; and in one moment a shrivelled and blackened corpse lay on the spot where Zimri stood. The words, "Bless God, and die," were the last he had ever uttered.

A cold shivering passed through the frame of the youth, as he gazed upon what a moment before was a man like himself; and staggering to his father's house, he knocked at the door for admittance, and sank senseless into the arms of the slave that opened it.

Morning dawned, and Naphtali had not yet revived from his swoon; but some passers-by had discovered the stiff and blackened corpse of old Zimri, and conveyed it into the nearest dwelling, where it was washed and shrouded, previous to interment; and ere the sun went down, he who had lived to see four generations, who had cradled his grandchildren's grandchildren on his knee, was laid in the grave by the hands of strangers, without one kindred eye to drop a tear on the sod that covered him. And yet he died not unlamented, for the prayers and blessings of the poor and distressed, whom he had advised and relieved, rose like fragrant incense over the corpse of the good old man. He who had been a general benefactor to his

kind, could not pass away without leaving a void in the great scale of creation, that could not easily be filled up. He was laid in the mausoleum of his family, with the customary rites; although there were none to rend their robes, sit in sackcloth and ashes, or say the *Kod-deesh** for him, yet were there many sincere mourners for his loss.

A week, a long week of suffering to the chamberlain and his wife, passed away. Their son, their only son, lay on a sick bed, weak and helpless as an infant, his limbs fevered, his eyes glazed; and worse than all, he knew not that it was his parents' hands that ministered to his wants—his parents' eyes that watched his short and troubled intervals of broken sleep. They trusted to no hired watchers. They were unwearied in their attendance on his sick couch. Even the matrimonial quarrels, for which they were proverbial, were merged in their all-engrossing anxiety for him. The only point on which they had ever agreed since their wedding day, was their devoted attachment to this sole

* An ejaculatory prayer, said morning and evening. Eleven months of the twelve appointed as mourning for a parent during the whole year, music and all other pleasures are rigidly abstained from, this being justly considered the greatest calamity in life, every other social tie being capable of renewal.

object of their care. Heaven had never blessed their union with another; and all their store of love was lavished on him. Baashi had never taken another wife; for, in despite of her contentious qualities, he was tenderly attached to Leah. Perhaps it was the fear of those very qualities prevented him. Besides, as long as Leah was permitted to govern, she was a most exemplary wife; her personal charms were considerable. Added to all this, it had grown so habitual to Baashi to hear the clang of her never-ceasing tongue, that it is a question whether he would have attempted to silence it, even had his natural indolence of disposition allowed him to exert himself in the attempt. As she sat by the bedside of her son, he forgot her foibles, and only saw in her the attached and tender mother.

It was the eighth morning of his illness, and his father had just retired from his weary vigil, leaving Leah watching at the side of the couch. She bent her head over the wan but handsome countenance of the sleeping invalid. Even as she gazed, her eyes filled with tears; and warm drops, flowing from the pure fountain of maternal tenderness, fell on the sleeper's altered cheek. They awakened him from his slumber.

With a look of returning consciousness, he gazed on his mother's face, and slowly passing his hand across his still fevered forehead, to assure himself he was not still benighted by delirium, he gently murmured forth the simple word, "Mother." Leah's first impulse, and with her every impulse was action, was to throw her arms around his neck. Tears gushed up to the young man's eyes; and, leaning his head on his mother's bosom, he gave vent to an irresistible burst of emotion, too powerful to be checked; and the tears of the mother and son flowed together. But while Naphtali's were the overflowings of irrepressible sorrow, Leah's were those of unalloyed happiness; for she looked on him as one redeemed from the grave.

From that day he rapidly regained his bodily health, but his mind was shattered, and his spirit broken. A deep shade of melancholy settled on his brow. The lightness and buoyancy of youth and hope were gone. He was no longer what he had been. A cloud, apparently a lasting one, had gathered over his dreams of happiness. He was pensive and silent. His very step was changed—it was no longer the buoyant tread of gladness. He would pass hours in solitary musings. In the

midst of crowds, he seemed alone; and if addressed at such moments, his replies were vague and wandering. A modern physician would have pronounced these to be symptoms of incipient madness; but those around him deemed them the natural effects of his late severe indisposition, combined with, if not caused by, the abduction of his betrothed bride.

In the first moment of the discovery of his loss, Naphtali's suspicions had naturally fallen on the Sidonian; and he determined at once to confirm or annul his suspicion. This determination induced him to resume his attendance at court. Ahab marked the alteration in the young man's countenance with real regret; for he regarded with as much kindness as a nature like his could feel the young Hebrew, who had acted so nobly on the battle-field; and he was indeed only second to Sadoc in the royal favour.

"Poor youth," said the monarch, kindly, "thou lookest sadly pale after thy long confinement to a sick chamber, and the loss of thy betrothed, who, though we have not seen her, we doubt not is passing fair. Console thyself. We would gladly aid thee in discovering him who wronged thee: but though thy noble father informed us of the cause for sorrow, he told us

not the name or station of the damsel thou wert betrothed to. But though thou didst doubtless love, and hast mourned for her with all truth and sincerity, we wail for the dead but for a certain time; and then once more turn to the living for comfort and consolation. And though thou hast lost one, there are as many lovely maidens in the land, who would willingly supply her place."

Naphtali's lip quivered, and every word tortured his aching heart; yet he kept his eye steadily fixed on the countenance of Sadoc. He winced not beneath the glance of those searching eyes; and the only emotion he suffered to appear was that of deep commiseration. Naphtali silently acquitted him of the wrong with which he had charged him. "Fool, fool! how short sighted is the wisdom of man," said Naphtali, in the warmth of his generous nature. He blamed himself for the suspicion he had harboured. He forgot that the favourite was ignorant of the name of Malah's lover. But when Ahab spoke of another's supplying her place in his affections, he clasped his hands together, exclaiming with passionate energy, "Never, oh never!" Ahab shook his head gravely, but only said, addressing Sadoc rather than Naphtali: "Well!

time will show ;” and Naphtali quitted the royal presence with a heart wrung with the torture Ahab had inflicted under the name of what the world generally—but, oh! how mistakingly the victim that writhes under its inflictions can tell—calls consolation. Consolation, indeed!—can the voice stay the raging of the angry elements—can it still the roar of the wind—or can it restore the dark and foaming waters of the troubled sea to peace and tranquillity? How then should it restore the heart from which joy and hope had been suddenly and violently uprooted, to happiness? How can it teach that heart to forget all that it has lost? Surely not by reverting to the virtues and beauty of the lost one. Oh no! for the knowledge that others appreciated them almost as much as we did ourselves, only increases the bitter poignancy of our anguish. It is by gradually leading the mind away from the contemplation of its overwhelming grief, to look on other objects, by weaning it back by degrees to the common duties, and teaching it to bear with patience, if not with relish, the converse of those around, that we afford the only true consolation to a wounded spirit. And how rarely do we find man capable of administering comfort to his fellow man: for he

who can listen patiently to the gentle voice of woman, who can freely give vent to tears as her sweet and soothing tones fall on his ear, would be ashamed to give way to this most natural source of relief to wounded feelings, fearful perhaps that it would disgrace his manhood. Man is the fit associate of man's revels, and the sharer of his pleasures; but woman is the soother of his woes, and the partaker of his sorrows. Poor Naphtali returned to his own abode more dispirited, more weary of life, than ever. He knew not where to turn for aid. In his search, he knew not where to seek his betrothed. Now that he deemed Sadoc guiltless, he scarcely dared trust himself to think on what might be her fate. For her father, too, he felt deeply. Who would communicate to him the tidings of his child's mysterious disappearance? Perhaps his gaoler, in the harsh and dissonant tones, not only of unsympathising carelessness, but of scorn and contempt. "No," said Naphtali to himself, as, with his head leaning on his hand, he held communion with his own sad heart; "no, that must not be. I myself must be the bearer of evil tidings. But how shall I obtain admittance to his dungeon? Should the knowledge of my having done so reach the king's

ears, I know not what might be the consequences to my father and myself. But I have no more to do with selfish feelings. My life, for the future, must be, like old Zimri's—may his soul rest in peace!—passed in benefiting my kind. Thank God, all the dark and terrible feelings that have lately agitated me are past, and henceforth my whole energies must be devoted to one object. A bribe will procure me admittance to the dungeon.”

CHAPTER VII.

“ IAC. FOS.—No light, save yon faint gleam,
Which shows me walls
Which never echoed but to sorrow's sounds.
The site of long imprisonment, the step
Of feet on which the iron clank'd, the groan
Of death, the imprecation of despair.

BYRON.

WITH Naphtali, to plan and to act bore almost the same signification. No sooner had he determined on the course he would pursue, than he rose, and washing away the traces of emotion from his face, he closely enveloped his form in the ample folds of a large mantle, and, securing a purse of gold in his girdle, he sallied forth into the street, and with rapid steps wended his way to the governor's house. He was not detained long in the antichamber; for the slave who admitted him bade him follow into Apion's private apartment. We shall not dwell on what passed between them. Suffice it to say, that when Naphtali followed the mute, the well filled purse with which he had provided himself was lightened of three-fourths of its load, and he

said, as he passed on, the simple word "Remember." Apion smiled as he replied, "The waters of oblivion shall sweep over it without farther comment." The youth followed his mute guide through the corridors of the palace, and down a long flight of steps into the vaults. He felt his breath come thicker, as the damp air of the lower atmosphere struck chilly through the veins where fever had lately wantoned so riotously, weakening the strength and enervating the frame of the sufferer. They passed on for some moments more, only lighted by the dim torch carried by the slave. At length they paused before a low arched doorway, deeply set in the wall. Naphtali saw there were many such, as he cast a shuddering look around; while the slave, with the habitual indifference of his vocation, selected one from a huge bunch of rusty iron keys that hung at his girdle, and applied it to the keyhole, and in the next moment the youth stood within the prophet's cell. It was a noisome dungeon. The damp and wet lay thick on the walls and roof. For a moment the noxious vapour over-powered him, and a sudden faintness came over his senses.

On a heap of straw (which together with a rude stone couch and table, on which stood an

ill-fashioned lamp of red clay, formed the only furniture of the vault), reclined the form of the prisoner. A collar of iron was round his neck, to which one end of a chain was rivetted, the length of which allowed him to traverse the whole space of the dungeon, such as it was, while the other end was secured to a staple in the wall, just above his sleeping place. He could not be called the sole occupant even of this miserable abode—for it was tenanted by the loathsome reptiles who usually dwell in such places. Naphtali shook off the momentary faintness, and taking the dim lamp from the table, on which were also a pitcher of water and a crust of black mouldy bread, approached the heap of straw, and looked down on the recumbent figure that occupied it. At first he fancied that the prisoner slept, but another glance undeceived him. The features of the prophet were calm and composed; his lips were slightly compressed, and there was a look of wrapt meditation on the pale, lofty, and thoughtful brow; and saving a pallid hue of the face, the countenance of Micaiah was but little altered since the last time he had seen him. Finding the lamp he held failed to arouse him, he called on his name. "Who disturbs me now?" said the prophet, starting. "I thought thou hadst done tormenting

me, for this day at least. What new torture comest thou to inflict?"

"Father!" The word seemed to have acted with electric power—for he now fully raised himself, and gazing earnestly into the face that bent over him, he extended his hand, and murmured in a low tone, "Naphtali, is it thou?" The youth pressed the extended hand of the prisoner. "Why comest thou hither? This is a kindness I was not prepared for; but there is sorrow in thy young face, and thine eyes are dim. I thank thee for thy visit: but the dungeon damp agrees ill with thy delicate frame. Why comest thou hither?" "Thy daughter," said the distressed youth. "Well; what of her?" eagerly interrupted the anxious father. "Thy daughter—" again said Naphtali. Again he paused, for he knew not how to communicate his sorrowful tidings. He knew that his intended father-in-law was a prisoner; but he had been unable to conceive the misery, the utter destitution of every thing that makes life palatable, to which he was subjected. How could he, whose dwelling was in the gilded halls of a palace, whose bidding was obeyed almost before it was expressed, how could he form any conception of a dungeon, many feet below the surface of the earth, where the cheerful light

and warmth of day never came? Now that he saw it, in all its loathsome deformity, he felt the difficulty of his painful task increased tenfold. "For mercy's sake, keep me not thus on the torturing rack of suspense. Tell me, Naphtali, has thy father again withdrawn his consent to—?" "Oh no." "Is she dead, then?" said the agonised father. Naphtali again murmured forth a negative. "What has become of her then? Why dost thou not answer me? Why wound me with this maddening hesitation?" Thus abjured, he related the condition in which he had found the cottage on the night of his return from Samaria.

Micaiah clenched his hands forcibly together as he listened to the recital, his lips quivering, his nostrils distended, and every muscle in his face working with intense agony. When he had heard all, he started to his feet, and paced the confined dimensions of his narrow cell. "And this is all thou knowest?" he said at length, as he paused in front of the youth, who had sunk down exhausted on the seat: he looked into his pale face, and continued in a tremulous voice; "dost thou know naught more of her fate?" "No," was the reply, in a tone scarcely less tremulous than that of the father. "I know nothing farther. But perhaps thou mayest be

able to form some idea as to who is the destroyer of our happiness." "I can," said Micaiah, after a moment's deep thought. "Who?" eagerly enquired Naphtali. "Name him, and I will pursue him to the world's end but I will make him yield up the jewel of which he has plundered me." "It can be none other," replied his companion, speaking through his closed teeth, "than that profligate Sadoc." The youth started at the strange coincidence between the prophet's and his own first suspicion; but ere they had time to interchange another word, the mute, who had retired during the conference, returned, and gave Naphtali an open slip of papyrus, on which was written, in the governor's own hand, "The time has expired." He wrung the prophet's hand in both his own, and bowed his head in silence. Micaiah fully understood his meaning, and placing his fettered hand upon his head, blessed him, and printing a fervent kiss on his brow, whispered, "Thou wilt not forget her?" "Never," was the reply, and the next moment he was again alone.

It was hours ere the prophet could collect his scattered ideas, and think calmly over that eventful interview. How often, in the bitterness of his heart, had he accused her of unkind-

ness, who perhaps had more to suffer than himself. It was nearly morning when he fell asleep. But what was morning to him? Night and day were the same in that dark dungeon; and all that marked the difference was the diurnal visit of a slave, who regularly fed his lamp and brought him a pitcher of water, and the portion of black bread that was to last him till the next visit. He could not have slept long, at least so he judged from the unrefreshed state of his aching limbs, when he was awakened by a shake of the shoulder, and his eyes fell upon the form of the black slave, who hitherto had never interchanged a word with the unfortunate prisoner. "Arise, and follow me," said the slave. Micaiah raised his weary limbs, and found, although the iron collar was still about his neck, the other part of the chain had been unlocked from the staple, and was now in the hands of the slave; who, taking the lamp from the table, left the dungeon, followed by the wondering prophet. They moved on through the vaulted passages; but when they emerged from the noxious region of damp and darkness, Micaiah could hardly bear the light of the sun. As he once more beheld the glorious orb of day, he clasped his hands together in the delight of

comparative freedom, and fervently ejaculated, "Oh God, I thank thee!" "Silence!" said the slave, sternly, "unless thou wishest to return to thy cell." He made no reply; but as they walked rapidly along, he perceived there was none present save themselves. He wondered what might be the cause of his removal, but he did not venture to ask a question. At last, after various windings and turnings, the slave unloosed a door at the farther end of a long corridor. The appearance of the chamber which they entered would have been comfortless enough to any one else; but to one just released from a damp dungeon, it seemed positive splendour. It was about twelve feet square. In one corner of the room stood a bed. There were two seats and a table, on which lay copies of the Law, the Psalms, and the Proverbs. The slave fastened the chain to a staple in the wall at the head of the bed place. The table was within reach. The window was small indeed, but it admitted the light; and he could look out without being perceived by those in the square paved court below, around which the palace was erected. Besides the scrolls, there was on the table a basket of dried fruit, a skin of wine, and some bread, which, though coarse and

hard, was luxuriously white and delicate compared to what he had before been doomed to eat. Besides, there was a change of raiment, and an ewer of pure water, with a bason and towel, for him to perform his customary ablutions. With a feeling nearly allied to happiness, he threw himself on the bed. This change of circumstances he could attribute to none save Naphtali, and in this supposition he was not mistaken.

CHAPTER VIII.

* * * * *

Upon her shuddering brow she feels
A viewless hand, that promptly ties
A bandage round her burning eyes ;
While the rude litter where she lies,
Uplifted by the warrior throng,
O'er the steep rocks is borne along.

MOORE.

WE must now return to Malah. After the departure of Naphtali with the royal army, she closely confined herself to her own dwelling, filling up the long hours that intervened between his departure and return with her usual occupations ; and conjuring up, with the ingenuity of a true woman, the most terrifying images of horror. It is wonderful how many hours the busy imagination will pass in tormenting the heart. It was on the evening of Ahab's return that Micaiah, as we have seen, sallied forth on his prophetic mission, leaving his daughter occupied with her household duties. When Malah had finished her labours, she seated herself by the window, and watched the sun fading

into twilight. The busy hum of the people afar off, mellowed by the distance, came on her ear like a lullaby, soothing every feeling of inquietude or fear into repose. She had spread the evening meal upon the table, in readiness against her father's return; and leaning her head upon the window sill, she gave way to the unconquerable drowsiness that oppressed her, and fell asleep. It was the repose of both mind and body; and if one might judge from the sweet smile that sparkled round her mouth, her dreams were of a pleasant nature; when suddenly a heavy weight seemed placed upon her chest. She respired with the utmost difficulty, and a feeling as of suffocation awakened her. She heard voices speaking in a whispering tone. She strove to scream, but a scarf was bound tightly over her mouth, and deprived her of the power of utterance. She tried to raise her hands, in order to remove the bandage; but in this too she failed—for they were secured by a silken cord, drawn so tightly round the wrists that her efforts to liberate herself made them swell to a frightful degree of agony. The lamp on the earthen tripod was the only one in the room, and by its faint light she discovered two or three men; but it was too indistinct to allow

her to distinguish the features of either of them. In a few moments a fourth came from her sleeping chamber, and advancing to the tallest of the other three, said, in a low tone, "It is locked, my lord, and I cannot find the key." "Regard it not," replied the other, in a tone which, had not her senses been strained to a degree of acuteness that no ordinary circumstances could have awakened, would have been inaudible. "I told thee there was nothing of value there, save that some clue might have been found, that would have led to the discovery of the turtle of this tender dove, who is herself the richest prize. Raise her gently. I would not have her awakened, if it can be avoided." "I have found something," said the other, in the deferential tone of an inferior. "What?" "An onyx brooch, set in pure gold, and without doubt, a love token." "Give it to me. Now lift her into the litter." Malah felt a cold shuddering creep through her frame, as the men approached her; and though she knew resistance, even had she been unfettered, might have been worse than useless, she could not check the impulse that induced her to attempt it. She struggled—how vainly need not be told—to release herself. She was raised in the arms of three powerful men,

and placed in a litter; and, as they laid her down on the cushions, a voice close to her ear said, in a low hissing whisper, "I have clipped thy wings now, pretty bird, and it will be long ere thy noisy chirp shall bring thy mate to aid thee." Malah could not doubt whose voice it was; but even had she been capable of replying, she would not have deigned to do so.

The bearers of her litter had but just quitted the street in which she resided, as Naphtali reached the house. So that, if he had deferred his visit of duty, she would have been saved. All night she was borne along, without once pausing for refreshment. Faint and weary, she prayed for death with all the fervency of despair.

It was the second hour after dawn, when the litter was at length carried into the hall of a dwelling; but what kind of building it was she could not see, as the curtains were closely drawn. For a moment the bearers rested their burthen, and then raising it again, carried it up a flight of steps. Malah felt no more. A faintness came over her senses, and insensibility succeeded the harassing fatigue of the previous night. It was broad noon when she recovered from her swoon; but the light came softened through the thick draperies that curtained the windows. The

whole scene presented to her eyes was strange and unfamiliar ; and she fancied the utter prostration of strength she felt caused her to see through a distorted vision ; but the delusion could not last—it was all real.

The bandage was removed from her mouth, and her hands were unbound. The bed on which she lay was of the softest down, and the whole chamber was furnished and adorned in a style of splendour such as Malah had not looked upon from her infancy ; but her attention was called from admiring the chamber, by perceiving a young female, elegantly attired, seated on the other side of the bed. On a small ivory table beside her stood bottles of various scents and costly essences, with some of which she had been bathing Malah's fevered brow. If for a moment she had fancied it a dream, the painful ridge of black and swollen flesh around her wrists, convinced her of the fearful reality of her last night's adventure. She wished to question the fair female who sat beside her ; but she felt too faint. She had tasted no food since the noon of the preceding day ; and yet she half resolved, should her suspicion prove well grounded, to starve, rather than submit to a loss of honour.

While she was yet revolving this important

question, the door was softly opened, and some one entered, and said in a low voice, "Well, Azah, how fares thy patient?" "But ill, my lord. Though I have been unremitting in my attention, she has not yet recovered." It was evident then that her attendant was not aware of her recovery, and she resolved to lay quietly back, and closing her eyes, to listen. But though they conversed long, they spoke so low that she heard nothing for some time but a few sentences, too disjointed for her to distinguish their meaning. At last she heard the voice of him who had entered, exclaim, in an angry tone, "Beware how thou provokest mine anger." The closing of the door at the same moment, and the rapid tread of some one descending, convinced her that the visitor was gone.

Azah resumed her seat by the bedside, when Malah again raised her eyes. She perceived something glittering in Azah's hand. It was a dagger, and her eyes were intensely fixed on its shining blade. A thrill of horror shook her frame, as she overheard the voice of Azah, who unconsciously thought aloud: "What is to prevent me?" she said; "he will not be here till night. What is to prevent me? There would, there could be no harm in this—for she would not feel it. It would be but one blow, and she would

be at rest for ever, and I rid of my rival. It is at least worthy of a trial. But stay, is there no other means? The blood would tell tales; and it would be unwise to leave such an evidence, when a small pressure on the mouth, such as he gave her last night, and a hand laid upon the nostril, would do as well. What could be more easy? She never recovered from the swoon—it was the sleep of death; and who would then dare say I did it? This scarf—he gave it me—aye, this will do, and——” “For mercy’s sake, forbear! In what have I injured thee, that thou shouldst seek my life?”

Azah started from the icy fingers that were laid on her arm, and turning, she saw the young Hebrew girl—her face as pale as marble, but her dark eyes fixed upon her, with a look of unutterable terror—standing by her side. The hot blood mantled to her brow, and she quailed beneath the eye of her intended victim, with the downcast look of detected guilt.

Malah saw, by her confusion, that she had abandoned the deadly design, at least for the present, and she retreated toward the bed; while Azah, dashing the dagger to the ground, threw herself on the seat, and covering her face with her hands, burst into a violent flood of tears.

For some time Malah watched her in silence. There was something in the air and manner of the stranger that excited her curiosity, and enlisted her sympathy in her behalf. Her features were exquisitely beautiful, and her figure slight. Her attire was costly; and her hair, of a rich chesnut brown, hung in thick clusters of ringlets down her neck, round which was twisted a thick chain of gold. There was something so melancholy, so touchingly beautiful, in her liquid hazel eyes, shaded by their long black lashes, that won its way to the heart. She was about eighteen; but there was an expression of premature sorrow on her lofty brow, that made her look older; and now, as she wiped the moisture from her eyes, Malah thought she had never looked on anything half so lovely.

She approached the bed, and said in a low tone, "Thou art faint and weary, maiden; but perhaps thou wilt fear to take food from the hand of her who so lately threatened thy life." Malah smiled faintly, while she continued: "Perhaps at another time, when thou hast ceased to think of me as a murderess—yes, that is the word, I will not attempt to disguise it even to myself—thou wilt learn to pity me as a victim." Malah wrung the hand of Azah, as she falteringly replied, "I fear thee no longer."

A night of rest restored her strength; but with the morrow came the fearful idea of being forced to confront the hateful being who had torn her from her home. She thought too of the pale girl, whose look of settled melancholy, contrasted with the naturally sparkling beauty of her countenance, had awakened a powerful interest in her bosom; and her own terrible situation was almost merged in the painful curiosity she felt. She had scarcely finished the morning meal, ere the object of her meditation entered. Her face was very pale; but her eyes were red and swollen; and it was evident she had been weeping. Malah rose, and extended her hand toward the poor girl, who took it in both her own, and pressing it to her lips, said, in a voice broken by emotion, "Thou must prepare thyself, maiden—" and there was a slight degree of bitterness in her tone—"to receive thy lover. Ere the sun goes down, Sadoc will be here: Sadoc, aye, Sadoc. Why dost thou start, and turn pale? Is there aught so terrible in the name of thy lover?" "God protect me from his hateful love! Oh! lady, whoever thou art, save me, save me, from this man." Sinking on her knees she gazed earnestly up into her face. "What," said Azah, "dost thou not love him, then?" "Oh!

no, no, no! Tell me, is there no way of escape, no way to elude his visits?" "Alas! I fear not; but listen to me. Though this visit must be received, thou art not forced to receive his love. Sadoc never woos but once. His anger may be inflamed. He may use harshness—he may confine thee. But fear not. Yield not. Answer his love with scorn, and leave the rest to me. Thou doubttest me—I know thou dost. Thou hast cause. But rise from that position—it becomes thee not. Listen to my tale, and perhaps thou wilt acquit me." Malah rose, and seating herself on the couch opposite to Azah, prepared to listen to her tale, which she thus commenced:—

The Syrian's Tale.

"I am a Syrian by birth. I was the only daughter; but I had many brothers, young, noble, generous; and oh! how fondly they loved, they watched, they guarded over me. I repaid their love with all the affections of a young, warm spirit. I grew up from childhood to womanhood, and as I grew in years (why should I blush to own it?) I grew in beauty too. My parents were noble and wealthy; and I had many offers of marriage; but I refused them all,

for none had ever won my young affections. It is but one year, one little year, since Benhadad laid siege to Samaria. It is useless dwelling on the detail of that siege. To thee, perhaps, its event gave cause for rejoicing—for it freed thy country from the yoke of a foreign invader. To me it brought misery and desolation. My father and my seven noble brothers followed that king; and I, who had lost my mother, entreated them not to leave me in a home which would be dreary and desolate without them. For a while my father strove to dissuade me, by representing the impropriety of a beautiful and motherless maiden venturing into the precincts of a camp; and when I overruled this objection, he reminded me of the inconveniences that must attend on such a step. To all his arguments I only replied by throwing my arms round his neck, and weeping on his bosom. I implored him by the memory of my mother, not to leave me. She had always been his favourite wife; and melting at her name, he yielded to my prayer; and with only one faithful slave, who had nursed me from my birth, to attend on me, I accompanied my father and brothers to the camp.

“It was delightful to a disposition imaginative and enthusiastic as mine, to gaze on the fair

scenes of a strange land. I was naturally full of light-hearted gaiety; but there was a tinge of romance and melancholy, that softened down the wild buoyancy of my fanciful spirit. It was on the night of Benhadad's banquet—the night previous to the intended assault of the city: we were confident of success. How could we be otherwise, after the answers Ahab had given to our ambassadors? But my father and brothers excused themselves from joining the festivities in the king's tent.

“It was nearly midnight, and the shouts of the revellers were growing louder, when suddenly, wild shrieks of agony mingled with those sounds. Death had entered our camp.

“The revels ceased, for the sword dispelled the fumes of wine; his guests were slain, and the king fled. I had risen from my couch, alarmed by the confused noises that met my ear, and hastily attired myself. I rushed into the outer tent: oh Baal! what a sight met my eyes! Would they had closed that very hour in the darkness of death! My father—my kind, my generous, my noble, brave, and tender father,—lay a headless and ghastly corpse upon the ground; his head had rolled away to the other side of the tent. The rich hangings were dis-

tained with blood—his blood; and the wretch who had slain him stood by with his battle-axe in his hand. Around the body stood three of my gallant brothers; the other four had already joined their father in the shades. Why, why do I dwell on this terrible picture?" Then, leaning her head upon the arm of the couch, she sobbed convulsively. Malah wept too, for she remembered all she had suffered on that very night, and the recollections that crowded on her mind were not calculated to allay the emotions the Syrian had excited.

After a few moments, Azah resumed: "They slew them all—I saw them, one by one, fall beneath the murderous swords of their enemies. I threw myself on the trunk of my father, and embraced the gory clay—I besought the gods to release me from my sorrows; but they were deaf to my prayers. In vain my poor old slave Seram strove to drag me away, and entreated me to fly from the wrath of the Israelites, and return to my own land. I heard her not—I heeded her not—what cared I for home, country, or the sunny beauty of my own lovely dwelling? Who had I to care for? The king was a fugitive; my father, my brothers, the guardians of my happiness, were taken from me. I had

risen from my couch that morning a happy and contented daughter, blessed in the love of a parent who adored me; secure in the affections of my brothers who worshipped me. What was I now? An orphan, and brotherless. I was like a vine, from which the trees that supported it had been felled—I was like a solitary blossom left on the bush that was lately covered with flowers—I was like a single star in the blue sky; and refusing to listen to her attempts at consolation, I made the air ring with my lamentations.

“I was not left long to the indulgence of my sorrow, for some persons entered the tent, probably attracted by my wild cries. They stripped the tent of everything worth taking. What was it to me? My all of worldly worth was centered in those dear inanimate bodies; but when they had taken all, one of them approached and raised the head of my eldest brother, attracted by a glittering clasp of diamonds in the shawl around it—it was a love token; they endeavoured to remove it. Then it was that I became perfectly frantic; with mingled rage and grief I flew on the miscreant, and snatching the clasp, placed it in my bosom. I flew on him with the fury of outraged feeling—life itself

would not have satisfied my burning thirst for revenge ; but my strength was inadequate to support me : the last words I heard were, 'Take the gold and jewels among ye, and leave the maiden to me—she is mine—I will be satisfied with her as my share of the spoil.'

“My brain whirled round ; my eyes felt like burning brands—a confused murmur sounded on my ears ; and then all became silent and dark. When I recovered from my fainting fit, I found myself on the bed in this very room. My faithful Seram was by my side ; but though she was overjoyed at my recovery, for many days she would scarcely suffer me to speak ; but she constantly filled my ears with the tales of the generosity of him who saved me. She told me of his noble bearing, and expatiated on his delicate forbearance in abstaining from visiting my chamber ; and though at first I chided her, for intruding on my sorrow with such topics, by degrees I longed to see something of him whose name was ever upon the lips of my aged attendant ; and when, in the humblest terms, he craved to be admitted to my presence, how could I refuse ? He came ; he condoled with me on my irreparable losses. For a week, he daily repeated his visits ; and at the expira-

tion of that time, when my faithful nurse pronounced me capable of enjoying the open air, he joined me in my walks on the terrace. At first, Seram accompanied me ; but in a little time we walked out alone. We passed many happy hours in each other's society, and I grew restless and impatient when he was not with me. My whole time was occupied with him : the time before he came was spent in wishing for his presence ; after he was gone, I consumed it in conjecturing when he would return ; and all my life seemed condensed into the few hours passed in his society.

“ I could have listened for ever to that voice as he told me tales, and sang me songs of love, glowing with passionate description. At last, the heart that had so long resisted the approach of love, yielded to his soft persuasive eloquence. Yes ! I loved at last—fondly, madly loved. I was his captive, in a strange land, without kindred, without friends. What wonder, that a nature all enthusiasm, and formed for the softer emotions, like mine, deprived of all former objects of its love, clung with more than woman's weakness to a being so calculated to fill up the aching void of my heart ? I became the bride of Sadoc. Soon, too soon, I learned to know

all the dark intricate windings of that black heart; yet, guilty as I know him to be—cruel and changeable as he is, and much as I have borne, I never fully felt the pang of jealousy until yesterday, when he placed thee under my care; for though he has often left me for another, he soon returned, repentant and tender as ever. But when he bade me regard thee as one whom he meant to take to wife, who was to be the idol of his heart, the mistress of his house, to fill the place I had filled so long, while I was degraded without a cause, and bidden to content myself with the privilege of attending thy bidding, dost thou marvel that I hated thee? And when I thought on the wrongs thy people had inflicted on me—when I thought on my brave father, and my young gallant brothers, all slain by thy countrymen—and placed all the wrongs I had borne in one scale; it scared my heart, and dried up the stream of human kindness in my bosom. I turned and looked upon thy face, pale indeed, but still beautiful; and thought how lovely it must be when the eyes, the fountains of light and the source of beauty, were no longer veiled in darkness. I resolved to slay thee; for, despite of the wrongs he has heaped upon me, with the strange perversity of

a woman's heart, I love him passionately—love him still.”

She ceased, and gazed earnestly up into the pale face of Malah, and read there a look of commiseration and pity. The young Hebrew girl had wept for her sorrows ; and she could not forbear pitying the weakness of a nature, whose passions were under no stronger control than its own ardent feelings ; while she almost despised her for still loving aught so detestable as

CHAPTER IX.

THOU hast wronged me, and the wrong is unforgot ;
Once more I tell thee, fiend, I love thee not.

M.S. POEMS.

To run away
From this world's ills, that at the very worst
Will soon blow over, thinking to mend ourselves
By boldly venturing on a world unknown,
And plunging headlong in the dark !—'tis mad :
No frenzy half so desperate as this.

BLAIR'S SUICIDE.

IMPATIENT, and labouring under that terrible feeling called nervous irritability, a feeling she had never experienced before, Malah waited the coming of Sadoc ; while the Syrian, with a pleasure she could neither repress or conceal, heard her steady refusal to array herself in the costly robes and splendid jewels which the slaves brought, as presents from him. But attiring herself in her own humble garments, she folded her hair in smooth bands over her brow, and gathered it into a knot, low down on her head, and fastened her girdle with the onyx brooch, which she had seized on with avidity, when she

discovered it among the trinkets he had sent. Having finished her simple toilet, she offered up a supplication for protection to the fountain of all mercy, and sat down to await his coming. Morning brightened into noon, noon waned into evening, and evening into night, and yet he came not. There was a feeling of fluttering anxiety at her heart, a choking sensation in her throat. There is a step on the stairs—he is coming—her lips move—she is praying for strength in the coming trial. His hand is on the door—he enters—no, it was only a slave, who came to conduct her from the chamber to the saloon where he waits her. He guided her through a long suite of apartments, and at length threw open the folding doors of the saloon. As he did so, a scene of splendour and dazzling brilliancy burst upon her sight. It was a lofty apartment; and from the ceiling, which was inlaid in compartments of blue and silver, hung an immense chandelier, and the light was reflected back from the silver mouldings and cornices. The walls were hung with blue silk, bordered with a deep silver fringe; and the whole of one side was occupied with a large silver mirror. The luxurious couches, of the softest down, were covered with blue, richly embroidered with

silver threads. Yet she heeded not the splendour and magnificence of the scene, for her heart was heavy; and as she leaned her head against the wall for support, the perfume from the flowers in their porphyry vases, and the odorous woods, burning in silver censers, almost overpowered her senses. A little female slave, about ten years of age, dressed in a tunic and trousers of blue silk, with a garland of roses on her head, and a small harp slung round her neck by a broad blue ribbon, and wreathed with roses, knelt on an ottoman by the side of one of the couches. The table was spread with costly viands and rich wines, as if for a banquet. "What! standing, my queen? Are not these couches tempting enough to induce thee to sit?" Malah started, and turning, beheld the dark features of the Sidonian. She shrank from the glance of those large bright eyes; but, ere she had power to avoid it, he wound his arm around her waist, and placing her on the couch, at the foot of which knelt the young slave, exclaimed: "Said I not truly, when I told thee thou shouldst have a palace home?" She partook not of the banquet. It was quickly removed; when the little slave struck a symphony upon her harp, and sang in sweet voice, the following love song—

Song.

LADY, the west wind is sighing
Through the leafy summer bower,
Where the jessamine is vying
With the perfumed orange flower.
The tuneful night-birds warble
Their love songs to the roses;
And a stream of yellow moonlight
On the bubbling wave reposes.

Oh! Lady, come away;
Leave the gay crowd behind—
Such scenes are but for day—
Hark to the western wind.
Thy love should be to thee
Far dearer than the throng;
And his voice's melody,
Excel the night bird's song.

“We want not music now; go, little one,” said Sadoc, impatiently. The fair child rose from her graceful attitude, and turning her brilliant eyes upon the pale face of the lovely but miserable Malah, with a wondering look, quitted the apartment, and she was alone with the dreaded Sidonian. A cold tremor crept through her frame, but the moment's pause that succeeded restored her presence of mind. “Maiden,” said he, and a dark and meaning smile passed over his face—“maiden, dost thou remember

the night when we stood together by the fountain near Samaria? I told thee then how I loved thee—I proffered thee my hand, my heart. Then thou wert free; and how didst thou answer me? With scorn:—yet again I proffer thee this hand, when thou art no longer free, but a prisoner in my power, to do with thee as I will. What is thine answer?” “Now, now as then, Sidonian, I answer thee, no! never! Dost thou think, by recalling the wrong thou hast done me is the way to alter my determination? If thou dost, again I tell thee, no! never!”

There was a look of proud defiance on her brow, and a calm self-possession in her tone and manner, as she spoke, that defies description. We have said that she possessed a fund of moral courage; and it did not desert her in her need, but nerved her spirit to withstand the glance that shot from beneath the bent brows of Sadoc, as he exclaimed, in a voice almost stifled with rage, “Beware how thou temptest me. There is a bound beyond which human patience cannot go. I told thee once before, that love the most tender, may be changed to hate the most deadly. Again I say, beware. Remember, there are none to aid thee now, shriek as loudly as thou wilt. Where now shalt thou seek for succour? Where

now shalt thou fly for assistance?" "To God, —the God of my forefathers. Here, under the roof of thee, my bitterest, my only enemy, I tell thee I am betrothed to another; and even were I free, I would never, never be thine. Sidonian, I fear thee not. The God that delivered Sarah out of the hand of the Egyptian king, will not desert me now. No; he will deliver me out of the snare thou hast laid for me." "Call upon thy God, then, and see if he will answer thee, will save thee. I tell thee thou art mine, all mine. There is nought can rescue thee; and if thou wilt not be my wife, thou shalt be my slave. Come, I think thou canst not refuse to repay the hospitality of my house with one little kiss." Then seizing on the shrieking girl, he covered her face and neck with his loathsome kisses. Quickly releasing herself from his hold, she stood confronting him: "Beware," she said, gazing upward, "beware of the wrath of God; for heavy as the thunder bolt, it shall yet fall on thy head." "Ha!" said the Sidonian, in a tone of derision, while his scornful laugh rang through the room, "has thy father's mantle of prophecy fallen upon thee? I knew not thou wert in possession of a gift so valuable. But come, my gentle soothsayer, since thine eye can pierce

the veil of futurity, thou shalt give me a cast of thy divining rod. Perhaps thou canst tell me when and how I shall be called upon to resign the world, and its manifold delights." For a moment her face grew deadly pale, and her lip quivered with excessive emotion; but the next, the blood rushed back, dyeing her neck, face and brows with crimson, like the glow of a summer sunset, and her eyes lighted up with prophetic fire, as she replied, "Scoffer, heathen, thy death shall be as the death of a dog, but caused by an animal nobler than thyself." "Well, and how much longer have I left to enjoy the good things of this life?" And again his mocking laugh sent the blood curdling through her veins, while she answered, "Thy days are numbered. This is the first night of the new moon. When next the new moon rises, it will shine on the corpse of Sadoc." "Is it so?—then, by Baal, it were well to enjoy the brief space yet left me. Remember, I told thee once, that the scourge produced sweet music from refractory slaves. So, pause, ere thou provokest me too far. This night should be devoted to rejoicing, even if death himself should preside at the board." And again once more he strove to embrace her; but with a look of uncontrollable hatred and

disgust, she eluded him. "Touch her not; pollute her not!—or by my father's God!" cried a voice with which he seemed familiar. "Woman!" furiously shouted the Sidonian, as he turned towards the speaker, and discovered the form of his wife, her long hair dishevelled and hanging almost to her feet, her flashing eyes contrasting their unnatural brilliancy with the deadly whiteness of her face; "Woman! then it is thy counsel that has induced her to reject my suit!—but little thou knowest Sadoc the Sidonian, if thou thinkest he is to be foiled by a woman's plotting. Thou dost not like this fair Jewess to be thy superior. She has yielded, like a child as she is, to thy prayers, and refused me. What, then, dost thou deem there are none who would willingly become the bride of Sadoc? The princess Merah shall be mine. And dost thou think the daughter of Jezebel will be a tenderer wife or a gentler mistress than yon pale trembler? Prepare to receive her as the princess of Israel, as the chief wife of Sadoc ought to be received into her husband's home." "Sidonian," replied Azah; calmly and deliberately she spoke, for even out of the greatness of her sorrow she gathered strength; "I have heard thee—now hear me. Thou hast resolved

upon taking another wife : do as thou wilt, Sadoc. I have loved thee with a passion so pure and intense, that my very heart has been absorbed ; and when I heard the music of thy voice, I could have listened for ever. Thou wert home, kindred, country—all to me. I had none other on whom to lavish the yearning affection of a soul formed only for love. As the sun to the sunflower wert thou to me ; and every other feeling of my heart merged into that one wild passion. And dost thou think that I, a princess, the daughter of princes, in whose veins flows the blood of a thousand generations, can bear to see another in the place that I have occupied ? I cannot bear to see another reign paramount in the heart that I once believed all mine own. I am thy wife ; and dost thou think I can stoop to be thy wife's slave ? Sadoc, when I left the beautiful home of my fathers for the land of the foe and the stranger, I came not unprepared with a guard against insult." As she spoke, she drew forth a dagger from her breast, and throwing the golden sheath to a distance, ere he could prevent the execution of her deadly purpose, the crimson stream of life was ebbing away, and streaming down her white garments dyed them with a ruddy stain.

Malah flew to support the sinking form of the dying Syrian ; but Sadoc, suddenly springing past her, caught her in his arms, and clasped her to his heart, with the eagerness of a child, who, when about to lose some toy which it has previously slighted, first discovers its value. "Azah, my Azah!" he shrieked, with that strange revulsion of feeling which all have felt at some moment of their lives, but which none have ever analysed; "live, live! for the sake of Sadoc, who loves thee now more fondly, more madly than ever! Oh, do not—do not die! Accursed infatuation! how could I ever prefer that pale baby face to thine? Hebrew, thou shalt deeply rue the beauty that has been a fatal gift to thee." "Thou hast invoked death to preside at thy board this night, and lo, blasphemer, he comes!" answered Malah, as she stood gazing in awe on the rapid changes that passed over Azah's face. The Sidonian shuddered at her words, and his limbs shook; but Azah's voice addressed him, and he listened to her words. "Sadoc!"—and the words came gurgling out with the blood which he vainly endeavoured to staunch,—"there is so much of happiness in dying on thy bosom. It is so sweet to lean my head on thy shoulder, and feel thy breath on my cheek, that I would not

live, if it were possible, to forget, in the bitterness of that cup of sorrow which I have already drained to the dregs, the extatic bliss of this last moment of happiness." Even as she spoke, the spirit passed away. Sadoc pressed a feverish kiss on the clayey cheek, and then placing her on the couch, the blue covering of which was soon dyed red by the gushing life tide, he rushed out, and Malah was alone in the room with the dead. A thrill of awe crept through her frame, as she gazed on the features lately so agitated with strong passion, now so cold and fixed, locked in the stern rigidity of death; and the eyes so lately flashing with the excitement of violent feelings, where now was their light? Extinguished for ever. With a sickening feeling, that she could not control, she looked into those dull glazed eyes, whose fixed and passionless inanity fearfully contrasted with the restless light that so recently animated them. Malah had heard of death—she had lost a beloved mother; but she had never before stood face to face confronting the grim king of terrors. Yet it was awe, not fear, that blanched her cheek. The hush and calm of death had something awfully imposing, compared with the strife that had lately raged in that now silent chamber.

She closed her eyes to shut out the fearful sight, and the tears coursed silently down her cheeks, as she reflected on the uncertainty of human life, and the fearful vicissitudes which she had seen who now lay there, a cold and bloody corpse, destroyed by her own hand, thus adding another unit to the hundreds who have fallen victims to man's infidelity, and their own violent passions. She thanked the God who had given her a blessed religion, whose dictates taught her to control her passions.

CHAPTER X.

The veil of death falls o'er life's blotted page.

M. Moss.

* * * * *

In her dark eye one tear of feeling gushes ;
The sudden sunbeam of a smile succeeds ;
And then a radiant host of burning blushes
O'erspread her face and brow. Her doubts are past ;
Love crowns her truth and tenderness at last.

It was the sound of the hunter's bugle that awoke the echoes of early morning. The hunting train were nearly all assembled, in the courtyard of the royal palace of Samaria.

There were the chamberlain and his son ; yes, Naphtali was there—for his father's entreaties for him to be present at the royal hunt, had triumphed over his wish to indulge his sorrows in secret. There were the master of the horse, and the chief huntsman, with a train of nobles and attendants. The horses were neighing and snuffing the air ; the dogs, held in leash by their keepers, whined impatiently ; and the hunters themselves were growing eager for the coming of the king and queen. Hark ! that is the sound of martial music, heralding the approach of majesty. Ahab, dressed in a complete hunting suit, his page bearing his bow and quivers, and followed by his armour bearer and

the rest of the royal train, rides into the courtyard. He was mounted on a superb steed of a sable hue ; but in no way distinguished from his nobles, save that he wore a small coronet of diamonds over his hunting cap. Another flourish of trumpets, and the queen, accompanied by the princess Merah and a long train of noble ladies, rode into the midst of the circle. The sun never shone on a more brilliant assemblage of gallant nobles and lovely ladies, than that which surrounded the king and queen of Israel ; but far above all, towered the majestic form of Jezebel—not more distinguished by her rank than her lofty beauty and conspicuous dress. She was attired as Diana, the fabled goddess of sylvan sports. She wore a short robe of green silk, trimmed round with silver, and reaching to her knee ; her vest, of the same material, fitted tight to the bust, and was made with large sleeves, which were gathered up and fastened with a silver button, leaving the arm bare from the shoulder. Her hair, which was long, black, and luxuriant, was gathered up under a little hunting cap of deep green. She carried her bow in her hand, and a quiver of arrows at her back. A small silver-mounted hunting knife was stuck in her girdle ; and her dress was completed by the deerskin buskins which she wore. She was mounted on a milk-white Arabian

courser, whose long flowing mane, proud arching neck, and pink nostril, bespoke its high blood, while its graceful head was thrown back in the haughty consciousness of superior beauty. Merah, attired as an attendant wood nymph, was mounted, like her mother, on a white steed. It was a spirit-stirring sight, that gallant train; and early as was the hour, crowds of curious citizens were gathered together, and groups of beautiful women stood on the balconies and roofs of the houses, to witness their departure, all curious to look upon royalty. Human nature ever has, is, and will be the same in all ages; and in every country a pageant is sure to dazzle the eyes of the multitude, and put them in good humour with themselves, and as a natural consequence, with their rulers. We are never either vexed or pleased with ourselves, without the vexation or pleasure extending themselves to all who are within the magic circle of our influence. But in truth it was a sight to excite admiration in a less excitable and enthusiastic people than the Jews, whose imaginative and inflammable natures gave a colouring of romance to the most common events of every day life. The early part of the day was passed by our hunting party in chasing the gazelle; but towards noon, the huntsmen, who had been scattered among the

hills, started a tremendous lion, and the whole party immediately left the chase of the meaner animal, to join in pursuit of the nobler prey. Even Naphtali, who, pale and dispirited, had taken but little part in the morning's sport, felt invigorated, and the bracing air of the spring among the beautiful and wooded mountains of Samaria gave a more healthful tone to his nerves, and exhilarated his spirits. For a moment the noble animal, who had been roused from his lair, stood as if measuring the strength and number of his foes, and then bounded off among the mountains. The whole train followed over the hills, now tearing up an acclivity, now dashing down the declivities, through the thickets and steep rocks. Onward sped the lion, and onward sped his pursuers. The roar of the noble beast, the shrill notes of the horn, the neigh of the horses, the whine of the hounds, and the cries of the huntsmen cheering them on, mingled together in wild but beautiful chorus. Foremost of all rode Sadoc ; while scarcely a yard behind, and considerably distancing the rest of the train, came Ahab. The king drew his bow to his shoulder, and the twanging arrow cut through the air, and struck the lion in the right shoulder. The blood came gushing out, while he stopt short, and roaring with rage and pain turned upon his pursuers.

The gallant charger of Ahab bore him past Sadoc, who was now only a few paces in advance, and the majestic monarch of the forest and the king of Israel stood confronting each other. The half-maddened beast, by far the nobler animal of the two, stood with his head and mane erect, the fire flashing from his eyes, his nostrils distended, and his under-jaw dropped and covered with foam. Ahab was heated by the chase; the noble charger that he rode snorted proudly, as his rider urged him on, but drew back as the lion raised himself on his hind legs, ready for a spring. Ahab drew his long hunting knife, and prepared to receive his foe; but an arrow from Sadoc's bow struck him in the eye, when, half-blinded by pain, he turned aside from the king, and with a tremendous bound sprang upon the Sidonian, who had just raised his bow a second time. The arrow flew wide of the mark, for his affrighted steed, struck with terror, shrank back, and missing his footing, fell over the side of the steep hill. Horse and rider were seen rolling together over the precipice. Down, down, down, they went, from rock to rock. The shrill neigh of the horse mingled with the agonized shriek of the rider; while the lion, disappointed of his prey, once more turned upon the king; but by this time the train, headed by the queen, rode up. With

unerring aim, Jezebel drew her bow, and the arrow pierced the heart of the noble animal, who, leaping into the air, gave a roar that shook the hills and forests round, and then sank down lifeless. "A little water," said the king, dismounting and leaning on his bridle. Naphtali brought him some in a hollow stone, from a tiny stream, that, welling up from the rock, went dancing on its narrow course, until a small natural bason received the mimic fountain. Ahab drank a long draught of the cooling liquid, and bathing his brow with the rest, returned the primitive vessel to the young courtier. "Where is Sadoc?" said the monarch, looking round. "Go, some of ye; go, Naphtali, and find the brave Sidonian. We saw him plunged headlong over these topling cliffs, and hark! that wild shriek from yonder glen!" Naphtali staid to hear no more; but giving his horse the rein, spurred down the hill, and paused not until he reached the spot from whence he fancied the shriek had issued. The scene was singularly striking; around on every side rose huge rocks, covered with trees, forming a natural amphitheatre, and at the bottom was a small valley or glen. The rocks were savagely wild, but nature seemed to have been prodigal of her gifts in that small valley. The turf was short, soft as velvet, and gemmed with wild

flowers. In the midst grew four large cedars, and the wild vine hung its graceful festoons from bough to bough, forming a natural bower ; while a stream of sparkling water ran through the valley, looking, in the sun, which shone with a softened light through the branches of the trees, like a sheet of silver. The banks were covered with weeping willows and fig-trees. It was indeed a lovely spot ; but the taint of man was there, and blood was upon those flowers, that naught heavier than the foot of the antelope had ever pressed before. The mangled form of the Sidonian lay on the green sward ; and the steed who had borne him lay dead by his side. Naphtali tore down some of the fig-leaves, and dipping them in the brook, washed the blood and dirt from his brow. Revived by the cool fluid, Sadoc unclosed his eyes, and looked eagerly into the face that bent over him. "Who art thou ?" he asked, feebly ; "what is the day of the moon ?" "The last," replied Naphtali. "The last night of the moon !— Let me be taken to my home. Oh Baal ! the prophecy is fulfilled, and another day will never rise for Sadoc. Oh, Malah, Malah ! thy words are indeed the words of truth." "Malah !" said Naphtali, gasping for breath, "knowest thou aught of her ?" "Raise my head a little, for I am very faint." Naphtali raised his head upon his

knee, and looked into the altered countenance of the Sidonian, which was fast fixing in death. "My God! my God! why dost thou not speak? Where is Malah?" "Ha!" said Sadoc, "dost thou know her, then? I know the cause of my rejection now. I know why thou hast shunned me." "Waste not the precious moments in idle words; but tell me, where is Malah?" "There," answered Sadoc, pointing to a castle that stood on the brow of one of the hills. "Wretch," said Naphtali, "then thou art he who has robbed me of that priceless gem, my betrothed bride." "Thy bride!" said the dying fiend, and he laughed aloud; "she is mine, mine, all mine. A month she has been in yonder dwelling." The young Hebrew clasped his hands together, but spoke not, though his frame shook with terrible emotion. "Thine?" continued the Sidonian; "she never can, she never shall be thine."

By this time the royal party arrived, and some of the attendants having formed a litter of twisted boughs, they placed the wounded man upon it. "Naphtali," said Ahab, "we will leave thee to take care of our Sadoc;" and ere he had power to remonstrate, the royal train was returning to the city, and the attendants of Sadoc were bearing him towards his home. For many minutes, Naphtali stood watching

them in silence, and then leading his horse by the bridle, he slowly followed.

It was nearly night ; but Naphtali passed unquestioned, for the whole household were in confusion. He fastened his horse by the bridle in the courtyard, and hurried through a long suite of apartments; and directed by the sound of many voices, he entered the saloon we have before described. The room was crowded by the women and household slaves, and there, on the very couch where only one short month before he had laid the lifeless form of Azah, lay the corpse of the Sidonian. By the side of the couch stood a young female, her white robe stained with his blood, and her eyes intently fixed on his ashen face. It was the second time she had seen death—a death of violence, in that room, and the tears fell from her eyes on the brow of the no longer terrible Sadoc. Naphtali pressed on to the spot where lay the destroyer of his happiness. He saw that fair young girl, and gazing upon her face, recognized the beautiful and well-known features of his beloved Malah. “Malah! my own, my best beloved; this is no scene for thee.” She cast a shuddering look on the ghastly face of the dead, and springing forward, rushed into his arms, and hid her blushing face on his bosom. He led her forth upon the terrace. A few words of expla-

nation sufficed, and both wept freely. Their tears flowed not long; yet they stood for hours in the pure moonlight, without speaking. There is a silence more eloquent than words; and such silence was theirs. What heeded they that death was in the house?—he had not cared for them; he would have blighted their young hearts without a moment's regret. Then why should they weep for him, the setting of whose sun was the dawn of their happiness?

Four years after the events narrated above, in a calm autumn evening, on the terrace of a beautiful rustic dwelling, watching the gathering in of the vintage, sat a lovely young female, with one babe on her knee, and another playing beside her. On one side, gazing with looks of tender affection alternately on her and the rosy boy at her feet, sat her husband. On the other side, sat a venerable old man, apparently absorbed in thought. That young lovely mother—that proud, happy wife, was Malah, the prophet's daughter. The event of the battle of Ramoth-Gilead, in which Ahab was slain by the forces of Benhadad the Syrian, although he had disguised himself to avoid discovery, had accomplished his prophecy, and freed Micaiah from bondage; and he it was who sat on the other side of his blest and beautiful child.

END OF VOL. I.

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THE
ROMANCE OF JEWISH HISTORY

BY
THE MISSES C. AND M. MOSS,
AUTHORESSES OF "EARLY EFFORTS," &c., &c.

And where are they ? and where art thou,
My country ! On thy voiceless shore
The heroic lay is tuneless now—
The heroic bosom beats no more !
And must thy lyre, so long divine,
Degenerate into hands like mine ?

BYRON.



IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE
ROMANCE OF JEWISH HISTORY.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

2921. JOASH, king of Judah, was succeeded by his son Amaziah; who, as soon as he felt himself secure on the throne, killed the persons who had murdered his father in revenge for his having ungratefully slain in wrath the son of the prophet Jehoiada, who had warned him of the error of his ways. Soon afterwards, having hired one hundred thousand Israelites, in addition to his own army of three hundred thousand men, he marched against the Edomites who occupied the mountains south of Judah, and whom he completely routed; but having by the command of God separated the Israelites from his own army, on the eve of the battle, they, in revenge for the supposed slight, destroyed several of the cities of Judah, and carried away their spoil. In revenge for this, Amaziah sent a challenge to Jehoahaz, king of Israel, who sent him this laconic reply; "The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, 'Give thy daughter

to my son to wife ;' and there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trod down the thistle. Abide now at home, lest thou shouldst fall like the thistle—thou, and Judah with thee." This served to inflame the monarch's anger. Their hostile armies met in Bethshemeth, where the men of Judah were completely routed, and Amaziah taken prisoner. The king of Israel pushed on, and, after pillaging the temple and the palace, broke down four hundred cubits of the wall of the city, and returned with hostages to Samaria. Amaziah was soon afterwards killed at Lachish, whither he had fled for safety, by some conspirators, as a punishment from God 2950. for his idolatry. He was succeeded by Uzziah, who was struck with leprosy for burning incense in the temple, contrary to the Levitical law. After a long reign of fifty-3002. two years, he was succeeded by his son Jotham, who had acted as regent during his father's life time, whose leprosy incapacitated him. He compelled the Ammonites to pay him tribute. The latter part of this monarch's reign was disturbed by Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel. After a reign of fifteen years he died, and was succeeded by his son Ahaz.

3018. Rezin and Pekah besieged Jerusalem, which Ahaz 3019. defended, and compelled them to raise the siege. They besieged Jerusalem again ; and, having taken the city, carried two hundred thousand men, women, and children, captive; but the heads of the children of Ephraim refused to keep them ; and having clothed and fed them, sent them back again. The Edomites and Philistines also invaded a great many of the cities of Judah, and carried away their inhabitants captive.

Ahaz relapsed into idolatry, and despoiled the temple, 3034. and after a disastrous reign of sixteen years, was succeeded by his son, Hezekiah. The first act of this monarch was the restoration of the temple, which his father

had despoiled. He then invited all Israel to Jerusalem, to attend the passover, which was kept for fourteen days. It was to this king that the prophet Isaiah gave the sign of the shadow on the sun-dial going back ten degrees, thereby assuring him that he should recover from illness, and that fifteen years should be added to his life.

Sennacherib, king of Assyria, invaded Judah, but Heze-
3048. kiah purchased a peace. Sennacherib again invaded

Judah, at the same time sending insulting messages to Hezekiah, and blaspheming God. In the midst of his boastings, the Almighty cut off one hundred and eighty-five thousand of his men in one night. Sennacherib immediately retreated to Nineveh, where, in the act of sacrificing to his idol, he was assassinated by his own sons. In the reign of Hezekiah, the prophets Isaiah, Micah, and Hosea, flourished.

3063. Mannaseh succeeded his father Hezekiah: he followed idolatry of every description; sacrificed his children to idols, and set up an idol in the temple. He was carried away captive to Babylon; when, having repented of his crimes, the Almighty restored him to his kingdom.

3118. He reigned fifty-five years. He was succeeded by his son Amon; who, after a short and wicked reign of two years, was killed by some of his servants, who had conspired against him. The mass of the people, however, being faithful,

killed the conspirators, and proclaimed his son Josiah, at
3120. the age of eight years. In the twelfth year of Josiah's
3131. reign, he ordered all the idolatrous places of worship to
be broken down, and the idols to be burnt. In the

3137. eighteenth year of his reign, he ordered Hilkiah, the high priest, to deliver the money which had been collected for the repairs of the temple to Shaphan Hasseiah and Joha, whom he had ordered to superintend the work. Hilkiah, in emptying the coffers of the temple for that purpose,

discovered a book, which proved to be the original copy of the Mosaical law. But so little of its real contents was known until that time, that the king, struck with its awful denunciations, ordered it to be read in public, and himself and the people proceeded to renew their solemn covenant with Jehovah. Josiah, who had now, by the authority of the Assyrian monarch, established his sway over all Israel, proceeded in a solemn manner to celebrate the feast of the passover, which had so long been neglected. Necho, king of Egypt, having invaded Assyria, Josiah, out of gratitude to the king of Assyria, raised an army to stop his progress; and although Necho sent ambassadors to him disclaiming any intention of invading Judea, he would not listen to him, but commenced hostilities; and after a severe battle, in which he lost his life, 3150. his army was totally defeated. Jehoahaz, his son, after a short and wicked reign of three months, was carried captive by Pharaoh Necho into Egypt, where he died. Necho exacted a tribute, and placed Eliakim, brother of the late king, upon the throne, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. This prince reigned eleven years, during three of which he was tributary to the king of Babylon, rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar the sovereign's authority, who seized him, and carried him and his people into captivity.

3161. Jehoiakim, his son, ascended the throne: he was a wicked king, and reigned only three months, when he was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar, who pillaged the temple and palace; and placing his uncle Mattaniah, whose name he changed to Zedekiah, on the throne, carried him and his mother and all the nobility to Babylon, where he imprisoned him.

3169. In the ninth year of his reign, Zedekiah endeavoured to throw off the yoke, but was besieged in Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, who after a slight cessation of the siege,

during which he defeated the Egyptian army, took 3170. it, on the ninth day of the month Ab, burnt the temple and rased the city to the ground. Zedekiah, who was taken in an ineffectual attempt to escape, had his children slaughtered before his face. The conqueror having put out his eyes, carried him away to Babylon, leaving the miserable remnant of the people under the rule of Gedaliah at Mizpeh. Gedaliah was assassinated by Ishmael, one of the royal family, who took refuge with the Ammonites. Johanan made an ineffectual attempt to revenge his death; fearing the vengeance of the conqueror, he fled with the rest of the Jews to Egypt, taking with them the prophet Jeremiah, who is supposed to have died there.

THE OLD MAN'S TALE.

“ The Assyrian came down, like a wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming with purple and gold ;
And the sheen of their spears shone like stars on the sea,
Where the blue waves roll nightly o'er deep Galilee.

BYRON.

“ THOU wert lovely in thy day of pride, land of my forefathers ! When the worshipper adored in the temple unmolested, and peace and plenty smiled upon thy children.” It was a Jubilee year ; and universal gladness reigned throughout Judea.

Beneath the mild sway of the good Hezekiah, the people were happy. It was the second day of the feast of tabernacles ; the temple service was over, and the people of Jerusalem were enjoying the cool of the evening in their tabernacles or on the courts and terraces of their dwellings. It was pleasant to see groups of gaily dressed people parading to and fro, and to hear the joyous laugh of the young, and the cheerful

conversation of the old. In a tabernacle, built in the midst of a large garden, a family party were assembled, consisting of about twelve persons, who were listening earnestly to the conversation of an old man, whose place of honour; venerable figure, and hoary hair, proclaimed him patriarch of the group. Reverence and attention were visible upon the countenances of his auditors—for the rabbi was narrating to his children and grandchildren some of the most remarkable events in the history of his country; but more especially those of the previous reign—a reign rendered more hateful to the true worshippers of God by its contrast to the present.

“Yes, my children,” said Rabbi Hilkiah, as he continued his narrative, “we have seen the idolator usurping the dominions of our forefathers. We have beheld the sanctuary violated, and our monarch bending his knee to a graven idol. The loveliest spots in the land were polluted by the presence of Baal’s altars; and our groves and high places were profaned by a degrading worship. Jerusalem was no longer the Holy City. The pious fled affrighted from its unholy precincts. As the sun, casting aside the clouds that obscure his noonday splendour, came Hezekiah, the Good, to redeem his abandoned

country. He cast off the bands which the heathen had woven around us, and once more restored the blessed religion which God had given to his chosen people. But I wander from my narrative. It was my fortune to be in the household of Ahaz, king of Judea; and companion, I may say friend, to his eldest son. I am an old man now; my step is become feeble; but then it was light as a young antelope's, and the raven's wing was not blacker than my hair. My strength was as the strength of the young lion. I had purchased a vineyard,* and built a new dwelling—for I was about to wed a daughter of the house of Ahaz. It was summer—the gay summer, the season for young and happy hearts. The merry laugh of the reapers rung out from the corn fields; the harvest was plentiful; and the people looked forward to a year of peace and plenty. But this fair prospect was suddenly clouded. There were rumours of a second confederacy between Pekah king of Israel, and Rezin king of Syria, against Judea. Dismay was in the hearts of the people; and they cried aloud to the God of their forefathers for succour. A desperate struggle was expected.

* By law, a person who had just married, built a house, or planted a vineyard, was exempted from bearing arms for a year.

“By law, I was exempted from bearing arms ; but who would shield himself when his country was in danger ? The tidings were but too true ; for the enemy burst into our land, even as the river of Egypt bursts its banks at the time of its overflowing. They came like a hurricane, bearing down all in their fury. We resisted, and were for a time successful ; but our force was as the stream of Jordan to the wide and boundless ocean. Ahaz—the weak and wicked Ahaz—refused the suggestions of wiser men, and determined to risk a battle. It was with the utmost dismay that the young prince heard the intelligence, and communicated it to me.

“It was a brilliant sight which the morning sun rose upon, but it set upon a field of blood. It rose upon white tents and glittering armour ; upon young bold spirits, confident in their strength and valour : it set upon broken armour, upon scattered tents, and hearts which had beat wildly as they rushed into battle, now cold and stiff in death.”

The rabbi's voice faltered, and he brushed a tear from his eye, as he proceeded. “I sought the tent of the prince. His armour was on, and his war plume waved in the breeze ; but his cheek was pale. A young and lovely woman

knelt beside him. The tears of parting were visible on her long lashes, and the warm breath of her husband yet glowed on her cheek. I fought by his side all day; but in the evening the horses of the foe trampled on the breathless corpse of the brave warrior, and his fair wife was a captive and a widow. Like the sand of the desert, when the simoom sweeps over it, came the Syrians and Israelites to our devoted army. We fought desperately, but the Almighty Lord was not with us. Our gallant men fell like autumn leaves around; and when it was known that the prince was slain by the hand of Zichri, the most valiant gave way. A hundred and twenty thousand men, the bravest of Judea, lay dead upon the battle field. Night closed in. O God! what a night of horror! The king of Israel marched towards Samaria with two hundred thousand captives, among whom were my relatives, myself, and my destined bride. With hearts full of bitterness, and streaming eyes, we looked, as we supposed for the last time, on the holy city. A merciful God had otherwise decreed it. Oh that long, dreary march! The fainting and weary women,—the helpless and suffering children! Even now the remembrance chills me with horror. At length

we came in sight of Samaria. To that city from Jerusalem is a long day's march; and night had set in when we reached the walls, although the full moon made it as light as noon. The Israelites came forth with song and with dance, to welcome back their victorious army. While they were yet rejoicing, we saw a small company leave the principal gate. They were not above twenty in number, but they seemed to be the chief men of the city. Amidst them was one dressed in long black robes. He wore no outward mark of consideration; but his mild and benevolent countenance, and striking figure, seemed formed to excite esteem and admiration. He no sooner bent his eyes upon the miserable captives, than he rent his robes, and cast ashes upon his head, like one who mourns for a near relative. Raising his voice, the prophet Oded burst forth—for it was a holy man of God who spoke—and said: 'Hearken unto my words, O men of Israel! Behold! because Jehovah, the God of your fathers, was wroth with Judea, he hath delivered them into your hands, and ye have slain him with a rage that reacheth up to heaven; and now ye propose to keep the children of Judah and Jerusalem for bondmen and bondwomen unto you. But

are there not with you—even with you—sins against Jehovah, your God? Now hear me, therefore, and deliver the captives again which ye have taken of your brethren; for the fierce wrath of Jehovah is upon you.’ His speech was listened to with profound silence; all rejoicing ceased; the beautiful and kindly feelings of brotherhood for a time resumed their influence; and the princes of Ephraim came forward, and insisted on the slaves and spoil being delivered up immediately, in order that they might be restored to their own country and people, saying, ‘We were all children of one parent.’ They gave us food and raiment; and mounting the feeble and sickly on asses, they escorted us on the morrow as far as Jericho, on our way to Jerusalem, and then returned to Samaria. This,” continued the old man, “was a bright spot amid the darkness that overshadowed the kingdom of Judea during the reign of Ahaz. *”

* 2nd Chronicles, chapter xxviii, verse 9th.

“We can scarcely find a parallel to this act of humanity in the history of the wars which savage man has carried on against his fellows from the foundation of the world.”

DR. ADAM CLARKE.

THE PRIEST'S ADOPTED.

CHAPTER I.

The roofless cot, decayed and rent,
Will scarce delay the passer by ;

• • • • •
And pale, but lovely with maternal grief,
She clasps a babe, to whom her breast yields no relief.

BYRON.

‘SHE mong yes ro Ile ! * — Is this a human habitation ?’ “It is,” answered a woman, sadly, as she unfastened the door, and bade the priest enter. He passed through the opening. She closed it after him, and then approached what he conceived to be a bundle of rags, and knelt down beside it. Well might the priest ask if human beings dwelt beneath that roof; for the place in which he stood was a clay hovel, scarcely ten feet square, and lighted only by a hole in the roof. There was no furniture of any kind, except the heap by which the nurse was kneeling. In a moment she came towards him, bearing in her arms a pale, sickly-looking babe, about a month old. The mantle

* A common exclamation expressive of surprise or grief.

in which it was wrapped contrasted strangely with the squalid poverty betrayed by the hut. It was of scarlet silk, richly worked with gold, and fastened by a diamond clasp, such as he had seen worn by the royal family only. "Poor infant," said the nurse, as she placed him in the priest's arms, "not such a home as this did thy parents anticipate for their offspring!" "Let the holy man come hither, Rachel," said a feeble voice; and Zechariah followed the woman to the bedside from which the sound came. In it lay, or rather sat—for she had partly raised herself—a young female. She had been very lovely, but care and famine had sharpened her features, and hollowed her temples. Her voice, although scarcely audible, was mournfully sweet, and almost brought tears to his eyes. "Boruch Adonai," (Blessed be God) "thou art here," she said, "for I am dying; and my last earthly hope rests on thee. I have heard that thou art kind to those who need help. I am alone in the world, my life fast ebbing; and my babe, the grandson of a king, without a friend, save that kind creature who has shared my evil fortune. Wilt thou," she continued, energetically, "take my destitute offspring, and supply to him the place of his parents, and

cheer my few remaining hours of life by the knowledge that he has a protector?" Her voice failed, and her head drooped; while, as the nurse raised it, she said, "No food has passed her lips since yesterday noon, and I have none to give her." "Has the child no father?" asked the priest. "Alas, no!" was the reply. "He was murdered with the other princes, by Nebuchadnezzar. They had been wedded but seven months; but see, she is reviving. Wilt thou refuse her prayer?" "Oh, no! no!—I have a child of my own; and he shall be to it as a brother. Tomorrow, at the redemption, give him to me, and he shall henceforth share with my own what God has given me. I go now to procure some support and assistance for thy unfortunate mistress, for she may yet recover." The nurse shook her head; and as she stood with him on the threshold, she said: "She will never leave this hut with life." "Farewell, then; God's will be done," said the priest, as he departed.

The sunbeams were shining through the broken roof upon the ten men, * who stood around a table, on which lay the babe of the

* Ten men form a congregation; and this number is necessary in almost all religious rites.

dying Adna. By its side was placed a plate of coins, furnished by the priest himself the day before, for Adna possessed none. At the head of the table stood the unfortunate mother; * and her heart beat audibly, as she answered the questions of the priest; and her eyes were full of tears; for she was thinking of him who should have been beside her in that hour. When the ceremony was over, and she knew that her

* The first-born child, if male, of every tribe except that of Levi, belongs to the Lord, in memory of the passing over of the destroying-angel, when the Egyptians were slain. But he could be redeemed by the payment of five shekels to the temple. The ceremony is as follows: On the thirtieth day from its birth, a priest of Aaron's race is sent for, and by him the child is laid out in the same way as we lay out the dead, and a vessel full of coins is placed beside it. The priest then asks the mother aloud, if it is her first-born? She answers, "Yes." He then asks again if she has had any other child, male or female; to which she answers, "No." Then he claims the child as belonging to him. He then tells the father, if he desires his son, he must redeem him. The father tells him the coin is for that purpose. He then turns to the company, and says, "This child, as the first-born, is therefore mine, according to the law which declares 'those that are to be redeemed from a month old, shalt thou redeem, according to thy estimation, for the money of five shekels;' but I am content with this in exchange;" he then takes two coins, and restores the infant. If, by accident or design, the father (or mother if the father be dead or absent), takes the money instead of the child, the priest is bound to keep it; and the parents can compel him so to do. But if, on the contrary, they are unwilling to part with it, the law compels *them* to do so. This ceremony is never dispensed with.

child belonged to another, her agony became almost too great for endurance. Yet, even in her despair, there was a gleam of thankfulness. He who had taken her offspring, had sworn to protect it as his own; and she had heard much of his kindness to the destitute. "But who," she asked herself, "could so love and cherish her babe as she would have loved and cherished it?" And she clasped him to her heart with convulsive fondness, as if she feared it would be the last embrace. In the morning, when Zechariah came to the village, a woman put the babe in his arms, saying: "Enter not—it is the house of the dead!"

CHAPTER II.

“Sigh not that heaven hath refused thee children. Life is too short to waste in idle grief; but take this gentle orphan to thy heart and cherish him; for he is poor and lowly.”

C. M.

SADLY the priest took his homeward way, concealing the orphan boy beneath his cloak; for the mountain breeze blew fresh, and unconscious of its loss, the child slept sweetly on the breast that sheltered it. It was a lovely summer day, and the soft green foliage of the olive shone fair amid surrounding desolation. In a village, half way up the mountain of Olivet, stood the hovel of Adna. Still farther up was the priest's own dwelling. It had been built by his great grandfather. It was a sweet retreat, embosomed in groves of trees, and around it were scattered the little cottages of the dependants, overgrown by fragrant creepers; and near the dwelling, but detached from it, in the midst of a lovely garden, stood a small synagogue. The priest had been taken captive, and the dwelling plundered; but its owner had been fortunate enough by his skill

to save the life of a favorite slave of Nebuchadnezzar, and in consequence the conqueror gave him back his own dwelling and effects, with permission to take up his residence there, together with his domestics, under the protection of the Babylonians. As the priest ascended, he frequently paused, to survey the landscape at his feet. How different to what he had known it ! The country bore traces of the recent invasion of Nebuchadnezzar ; an invasion which had subjected the people of Palestine to a long and weary captivity, and laid her fair cities in ruins. With a sigh he turned from the sad contemplation to his own habitation. It was a long low building, with an open court in front, in the centre of which stood a plain marble fountain, overshadowed by an immense sycamore. All around the roof of the house was a broad terrace ; and the roof itself was flat, and planted, like a garden, with fruit trees and choice flowers ; in the midst of which was a fountain, like the one below. A flight of marble steps led up to it from the court yard. The lower part of the house was sheltered by trees from the burning sun. It was a refreshing sight, that white house, with its gardens and vineyards, and rustic cottages perched like bird's-nests beneath the

highest peak of that lofty mountain. Passing up the flight of steps, the priest entered the garden above. Beneath a balcony of trellis work, sat two females. One of them had a child in her arms: she had the rich dark eye, the sunny complexion, and the full rounded figure, which belong to oriental beauty. Gladness was in her eye, and on her cheek; and the babe had all her glowing loveliness. The other was slight and fair, but her cheek and lip were alike colourless. She seemed ill, but it was from sickness of the heart; and there was a restless fire in her eye, as she glanced towards her smiling companion, which betrayed something of envy at her superior attractions. Both arose, as soon as they perceived Zechariah; but he merely stooped to bestow a caress upon the child. Bidding the mother sit, he took a seat by the side of his other wife, still keeping the babe concealed beneath his cloak. "Thou art unhappy, sweet one," he said, as he kissed her polished brow; "unhappy, because it is the will of the Almighty that thou shalt not become a mother. I have reproved thee for this sin more than once. While the love of thy husband continues towards thee, why shouldst thou grieve?" She answered only by tears. As he rose to kiss them

away, his cloak flew open, and revealed to the astonishment of both the sleeping babe. "Cherish it," he said, as he laid it in her arms, "and God will reward thee, for it is an helpless orphan. Its mother died this morning."

Both the females listened with interest and sympathy to his pathetic tale ; but Esther, when her first feeling of pity subsided, turned with something like loathing from the sickly child, so different from her rival's blooming son, who was five months older, and she suffered him to lie on her lap unheeded. But Eva was herself a mother, and snatching the little stranger to her bosom, she gave it the nourishment of which it stood in need. A few days after Adna's burial, Rachael, the old nurse, took up her abode in the priest's house, and to her care the sickly boy was consigned, although Eva allowed it to share with her own son the support it needed.

CHAPTER III.

For other, brighter blooms, are round,
And they attract the eye;
They seem the sunny favourites
Of summer, earth, and sky.

L. E. L.

YEARS flew by, which, however stormy to Judea, had brought nought but peace to the priest's family. Even Esther smiled joyously, for she had become the mother of a lovely daughter. It was the time of the barley harvest, just before the Passover; and in a field adjoining the house were three young children; two of them, a boy and a girl, were flinging at each other, in the lightness of their hearts, handfuls of grain, straw, and wild flowers. Ever and anon their joyous laugh broke out like a strain of glad music, on the still air of the evening. The third, a boy, was seated on a stool at a little distance, his head leaning upon his thin hand, watching their sports with a moistened eye. An old woman was beside him. The snows of many winters had gathered on her head; yet was her spirit less weary than that pale boy's.

Alas for those to whom the joys of childhood are but dreams ; who hear the light laugh, and see the bounding step, yet cannot partake of its glee or activity. Such was the lot of poor Asher. He, the priest's adopted, had been such : for, as he grew up, he was both weak and deformed. The gay and active disposition of Ada and Isaac, his sister and brother, made him painfully aware of this : for they loved to climb the steep points of the mountains to gather wild flowers for Ada's brow ; or sometimes Isaac would spend hours in planting snares for young kids or fawns to tame for his beloved sister. And in his lonely hours Asher found a solace in the study of music. The priest himself was his instructor. To a voice of extraordinary sweetness, he added a taste for music and poetry, which enabled him soon to surpass his master ; and often, when the evening sun went down, and the quiet stars shone out, his deep rich voice sounded amid the stillness more like the breathing of a seraph's strains, than aught pertaining to earth. Yet there were times when even harp and song were neglected, and the unhappy boy would sit for hours and weep with a sadness beyond his years. There are sorrows in this world which the fortunate reckon not of—sorrows, which eat into the

heart, and rob the eyes of their light, the cheeks of their bloom, and the pillow of its rest, and which only those who have endured can comprehend—sorrows the hardest to bear, because they seldom excite other than the light jest, the bitter scoff, or the careless and unfeeling remark. Of this class, are personal deformity and mental aberration. Few remember, when speaking of the deformed, the dumb, or the impotent, that God hath the power to afflict others as well as the one before them. Hence it is, that in the hearts of the sufferers, feelings of bitterness are engendered against the more fortunate, that the brow becomes gloomy, the temper sullen and irritable. Hence the hate and contempt of their species usually to be found in the hearts of the deformed. Poor Asher was no exception to the general rule. Ardent and affectionate by nature, he soon felt the chill which throws the feelings back upon themselves, and makes the heart feel desolate. He quickly perceived the disgust his appearance inspired, the half-uttered exclamations, the shrinking away from his embrace, which usually followed his offered endearments, when he approached either of the priest's wives to share their caresses ; until at length he ceased to solicit them, and, retiring altogether from

notice, chose the remotest corner, the least noticed spots, when he was obliged to confine himself within doors. But it was when Ada would sit for hours by her other brother, and press her lips to his, and hang upon his accents in undisguised fondness, that he felt all the yearnings of an affectionate heart to inspire, at least in her, a spark of affection for himself, but all in vain. She was never unkind; but when her lip just touched his brow, and he heard her cold calm words, he wished himself in the grave.

Isaac was naturally warm-hearted, but something like contempt mingled in his feelings towards Asher. Possessing strength, courage, and vigour, he, like others of his disposition, despised those soft but pleasing employments for which his temper was unsuited. He valued his own advantages at too high a rate to form an adequate opinion of others. Yet, from infancy, he had treated him with unwearied kindness. His hand gathered the clusters of ripe grapes for his sickly brother. The finest dates, the most luscious figs, the ripest pomegranates, were selected for Asher. His hand had bent down the branches of the trees, in order to form a bower where he could feel the freshness of the breeze without inconvenience from the summer

sun ; and, as he advanced in years, he spent whole days amid the ruins of Jerusalem, searching for curious relics or manuscripts for him.

But there was another—she who sat beside him—whose tenderness had never pained him by appearing to notice that which embittered his existence ; one who loved to kiss his pale cheek and brow, and rest his throbbing head upon her shoulder. This was his mother's nurse—Rachel. She it was who poured into his eager ears the tales of past power and splendour of Judca ; and, assisting his feeble steps to ascend the mountain, would point out all that remained of the glorious city where his grand-sire held sway. Then she would speak to him of his ill-fated parents, and of the good priest whose kindness cheered his mother's dying hours—who had been a father to her child:

CHAPTER IV.

She had more loveliness than beauty. Hers
Was that enchantment which the heart prefers ;
A mouth, sweet from its smile ; a large dark eye,
That had o'er all expression mastery ;
Laughing the orb ; and yet the long lash made
Somewhat of sadness in its twilight shade.

MISS LONDON.

Alas ! this is vain. Fond and false,
Thy heart is not with me ;
And knowing this, how can I waste
My very soul on thee ?

IBID.

AGAIN time passed on. The boy became a man, but still the passions of boyhood grew with him ; and deep in his inmost heart was buried his love for Ada. Ada's accents, Ada's smiles, made the sunshine of his existence, the day dream of his young spirits ; and in her presence he forgot alike joys and sorrows, if unconnected with her. She now no longer accompanied Isaac in his wild expeditions ; but when the young hunter returned from the chase, with his sylvan spoils, Asher played on his harp, while they danced on the green sward beneath the moonlight. The death of the good priest was

their first real sorrow. Asher's nurse and Ada's mother soon followed him to the tomb ; but when the year of mourning was over, and the green corn and spring flowers began to beautify fields and valleys, they resumed their old habits. The death of both her parents had somewhat saddened Ada's gay spirit ; and she would now sit whole days listening to the harp and voice of Asher, yet little dreaming of the passion she had inspired. Ada was not beautiful—at least a common observer would not have termed her so. Her features were irregular and faulty, but the eye and smile more than compensated for their defects : for there was a light in the one, and a sweetness in the other, worth ten thousand inanimate charms ; and her light and graceful figure, as she sat by his side, engaged at some slight feminine employment, bending forward to catch the slightest sound, was perfect as sculptor ever fashioned.

It was a lovely summer eve, and Ada had prevailed upon Asher to accompany her half way down the mountain side, to meet her brother. They had not proceeded far, when they perceived the young hunter, his bow and arrows slung across his shoulder, and a stranger, bleeding, and apparently almost exhausted, leaning

on his arm. He was richly dressed, but his garb was stained with blood. "Thanks, my sweet sister and kind brother," said Isaac. "But thou, Ada, art swift of foot; wilt thou speed back to the house, and summon assistance; and thou, dear Asher, take this poor youth's other arm—for we get on but slowly."

For three weeks Ezra, for such was the stranger's name, continued at the house, confined by fever and delirium; but at the end of that time he began slowly to recover, and at length was enabled to join the family circle. When Isaac found that his guest was sufficiently recovered to enter the garden, and sit in the bowers and summer houses, he resumed the chase, leaving Ada and Asher during the day, to contribute to his guest's amusement. Now it was that Asher discovered how madly he loved the priest's daughter. Every smile she bestowed upon the stranger inflicted a pang upon his heart; and he spent whole days watching, with the keen eye of jealousy, the progress he was making in the affections of the maiden, with such feelings as only those who have seen the object of their fondest affection neglect them for another, can ever know. He came almost to hate the cause of his humiliation: for Ada be-

came impatient at his constantly intruding himself into her presence whenever she sat with Ezra, and at his taking every opportunity of contradicting, nay, almost of insulting the stranger.

Delicacy had prevented any of the priest's family from questioning Ezra as to the cause of his visit to the ruins of the Holy City, and he had never by any chance alluded to it. The two slaves who had accompanied him, were equally silent as their master.

Distrust and suspicion, heightened by jealousy, took possession of Asher's mind. Stung almost to madness, he determined to hear from Ada's lips his doom; and, if she rejected his love, to bid adieu to Judea for ever, and seek another home. The opportunity he sought for was not long delayed. Ezra, whose strength was almost restored, had been with Ada all the morning; and Asher met him coming forth from the apartment where she and her handmaiden sat, with flushed cheek and dancing eye. When Isaac returned from the chase that day, he found Asher in his apartment, pacing to and fro, with feverish brow and uncertain steps. He had told his treasured passion, and been rejected—insulted, as he conceived, by her in whom he

had garnered all his hopes of happiness. The dreams of his life had been crushed by one blow. In a few words he acquainted Isaac with his determination of proceeding to Babylon in a few days, bidding him, at the same time, beware how he risked his sister's happiness with a stranger. The succeeding days were spent by the wretched orphan in making trifling preparations for his journey, and visiting the graves of those beloved beings, whose repose, in the bitterness of his spirit, he longed to share. The hour of parting came. Eva wept, as she laid her hand on his head and blessed him; but Ada turned her bright eyes coldly upon him. He would have given all his earthly hopes, nay, he would gladly have laid down and died, had he seen her eyes dimmed with one tear—had her lips moved with one word of kindness. But no; her farewell was cold and careless; and he departed. Isaac accompanied him part of his way; and even then he prayed him to return and share his father's home with him, but vainly: he would even have refused the gold he forced upon him, but he knew the pain he should inflict by so doing; and he would not further wring that generous heart. Isaac turned upon his way homeward, and Asher paced onwards upon his destined road.

CHAPTER V.

I stood within the crowded streets,
Unknowing and unknown ;
'Mid all that busy multitude,
A solitary one.
In vain I watched the passer by,
For one kind glance of sympathy.

“ THIS then is Babylon,” said Asher, as on a summer’s eve he entered the mighty city, the queen of nations, the mistress of the east. “ I am at my journey’s end, without a friend to receive me—my sole companion the instrument which has hitherto solaced my weary way.” A rude push from a passer by, admonished him that he was in a crowded city. Multitudes were pouring forth from the temple of Belus, and he sought protection from the crowd beneath a porch, while he watched the people proceeding to their homes. Alas ! he had no home. He passed his hands across his eyes ; for amid the clang and the crowd, he felt an overpowering sense of loneliness—such loneliness as all must feel in their first sojourn in a great metropolis, when the crowds that pass by are ab-

sorbed in their own occupations. The unfamiliar passers by, if they cast a passing glance at the stranger, are heedless if he be hungry or weary. We never feel our own insignificance so much, as when we know there are none to whom our hopes, fears, joys, or sorrows, are objects of interest. Poor Asher felt of how little consequence was the fate of the sickly hunchback to any human being. He had come to a strange land, to seek a new home, new ties, with a seared and bursting heart. At length, however, the streets grew silent; the darkness of midnight fell upon the earth, and wearied out, Asher fell asleep. "Out of the way, hunchback," exclaimed a loud voice, and a hand was at the same time employed to awaken the sleeper. Asher arose, and cast a withering look upon the slave who had addressed him; but he passed on, and was followed by several others.

Lastly, came one in the prime of youth, his dress betokening him of high, nay, of royal birth. He wore a long flowing robe of royal purple, and over it a vest and girdle of scarlet, edged with narrow gold braid. His long glossy hair had been elaborately dressed, and parted on his forehead, giving a soft, almost a feminine expression to his handsome countenance. His

arms consisted of a long scymetar, with a hilt of gold, studded with gems, and a short dagger stuck in his girdle. There was something ludicrous in the fierce glance of the young Hebrew; and Merodach, as he passed him, burst into a peal of laughter. A sudden faintness came over Asher—he reeled, and would have fallen to the earth; but one of the slaves sprung forward, and caught him as he fell. For a moment he recoiled from the touch of his preserver; but the prince, who had stayed his steps, spoke to him, and there was a music in his voice, and an unaffected sympathy in his tone, that touched the better feelings of the desolate youth, and he burst into tears.

“Hast thou no friend in Babylon?” said Merodach; “for I perceive by thy garb thou art an Hebrew and a stranger.” “None, save the God of my fathers,” answered Asher, bitterly. “What brought thee hither, then? Hadst thou no home, no parents?” “Parents!” exclaimed the young man, passionately; “alas! alas! I never knew their love: but why weary me with thy questionings? Let me lie down and die—earth is no place for a wretch like me.” As he spoke, he flung himself upon the ground, and burying his face in his hands, was silent.

“It is the prince Merodach, the heir of the kingdom, who speaks to thee,” whispered the slave; “what way didst thou propose to thyself for gaining a subsistence? If thou canst do aught for thyself, the prince will befriend thee.” “I am a musician,” said Asher, once more arousing himself, and the slave communicated the intelligence he had gained to his master. “Thy countrymen are skilled in such arts—try thy skill, and perchance the purpose of thy coming may be gained.” Asher rose, and seizing his instrument, awoke a strain of such melody, that the prince stood like one arrested by a sudden spell, while he broke forth into a wild lamentation from the elegies of Jeremiah, on the downfall of his native country. At first the strain was loud and passionate, but gradually it died away into a low murmur, and the singer, exhausted, leaned upon the friendly slave.

Asher was that day enrolled in the household of Merodach, and made instructor to his favourite mistress. A month passed away, and his fair pupil did credit to the skill of her master. “The prince gives a festival to-morrow,” said the fair Luna, as she took her usual seat, and placed her lute upon her knee; “and thou art to be one of the contributors to the entertain-

ment: the king hath heard of thy wondrous powers, and the sweetness of thy voice, and he would fain test them." But slight was the attention paid that morning to the damsel. Ambition had partly filled the void in the breast of Asher, and he longed for the morrow. Oh! that magic morrow—so sweet to the imagination of youth, so often looked forward to, yet so seldom prized when it becomes to-day, and brings with it disappointment, like the days that have gone before.

CHAPTER VI.

There came an eve of festal hours;
Gay music filled the garden bowers;
Lamps, that from flowering branches hung,
On sparks of dew soft colours flung;
And light forms glanced, a fairy show,
Under the blossoms to and fro.

MRS. HEMANS.

“ Amid the fairest blossom lurks a canker. Madness or death can find us mid the gayest scenes. Who shall say, ‘ I will do this to-morrow ? ’ On the morrow he may be nought save earth.”

THE preparations for the banquet were rather tasteful than magnificent. Slaves of all nations, each arrayed in the costume of his own country, attended the commands of the monarch. An open tent had been erected in the luxurious gardens, hung with Tyrian purple, edged with gold; and the space in front was covered with soft, sweet grass, and gemmed with flowers of surpassing beauty. Lamps of crystal were suspended from the roofs by chains of silver. A throne of mother-of-pearl had been erected for Nebuchadnezzar, glittering with a thousand varied colours; over it was a canopy, supported

by an eagle with outstretched wings. The eyes of the bird were immense diamonds. The rest of the tent was lined with couches of the same hue as the hangings. But the king himself was perhaps the most striking object in the whole. In stature Nebuchadnezzar was of the middle height, and inclined to corpulence. His countenance was rather fierce than handsome. Still there was something majestic in the fiery eye, the massive forehead, and finely cut mouth. His under garment was of white silk, and over it he wore a vest and mantle of scarlet, both covered with precious stones; and on his head he wore a fillet of gold, surrounded by stars of diamonds. On the steps of the throne sat the prince and his wife, the famous Nitocris; while Luna stood in the midst of a group of women, distinguished from all by her surpassing loveliness. Her bright eyes were turned towards one spot, where Asher stood leaning on the harp she herself had given him. A brilliant colour burnt upon his cheek, and a mixture of impatience and timidity were expressed in his countenance; while his eyes, which were of that deep blue only seen on starlight nights in a wintry sky, flashed with the proud consciousness of genius and anticipated triumph. Frequently

he cast them towards his mistress, and then as quickly averted them, as if he deemed it presumptuous to look upon her loveliness; and strange it was, that she valued the admiration expressed in those stolen glances more than all the homage of her princely lover. At length he was summoned to approach, when kneeling by the throne, he passed his hand across the strings of his harp. There was a deep silence, and his heart beat almost to breaking: but he soon gained confidence; his voice grew louder and louder, thrilling the souls of the listeners. His song was of war and empire, the glory of kingdoms, the might of kings. His tones were animated, and the harp rang with sounds of triumph, the shouts of the exulting victor, the hymns of rejoicing. Anon the voice and music sank in low and mournful murmurs, as he pourtrayed the misery of the vanquished, the groans of the captives, and the ruins of nations, by the ruthless hands of bloodthirsty conquerors. Lastly, he told of the curses heaped upon lawless and grasping ambition, the justice of an avenging God. The king sprang up, his eye lighted, and a smile was on his lips, as he listened to the first part of the song; but as it proceeded, his face grew pale as death, his under jaw dropped,

and he fell back senseless. It was some moments ere he recovered, and the first thing that met his eyes on opening them, was the musician still kneeling, his fair forehead pressed against the frame of the instrument, and his eyes resting upon the now silent harp. "Take him away!" shouted the monarch; "who shall speak of ruin and of sorrow in my presence? Is not this the great Babylon which I have built for the house of my kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" The words were scarcely uttered, ere a film came over his eyes, and, exclaiming in a lower but still distinct tone, "O God, the glory and the power alone are thine, not mine;" he again fell back like one dead.

All was now confusion. In the midst of it Asher felt himself suddenly seized upon, and a cloak thrown over his head, thus depriving him of sight; but he felt that he was rapidly leaving the open air. What his feelings were, at this sudden transition from light and splendour to darkness and gloom, he scarcely knew, so lost in wonder was he at the change; and when at length his conductors thrust him into a dungeon, and left him alone, the agony of his feelings was almost too great for endurance. Never was more

of anguish and despair crowded into so brief a space of existence. Meanwhile Nebuchadnezzar had recovered from his swoon; but he was found to be in a state of madness. Helpless and speechless he lay that night in strong convulsions; and then it was that many of the satraps and princes remembered the very remarkable vision which had occurred to the king not long before, and the interpretation that had been given to it by Daniel, one of the captive princes of Judah.

CHAPTER VII.

“She leaves her own familiar place,
The friends that were her own;
The love to which she trusts herself,
Is yet a thing unknown.
Though at one name her cheek turn red,
Though sweet it be to hear;
Yet for that name she must resign
So much that hath been dear.
She passeth from her father’s house,
Unto another’s care;
And who may tell what troubled hours,
What sorrows wait her there?”

“AND this,” dearest Ada, “is thy determination? I must go back to my home, and see thee no more. Is this a fitting return for my fond devotion?” “No, no, Ezra,” answered the priest’s daughter, sadly; “thy judgment is harsh. Heaven is my witness that I have done more than an Hebrew maiden should have done in granting this interview. It is but for a year, one little year; and then, if thou art faithful, and returnest with the consent of thy parents, Isaac will no longer look coolly upon thee, but will give his full consent to our union.” “And thou callest it a little year! Oh, Ada! twelve

long moons, to count the minutes, the hours that separate us, and spend the live-long day in wishing—oh, how vainly!—to give wings to time, and then return to find thee changed or wedded. Nay, frown not ; didst thou feel as I feel, thou couldst not speak so calmly of our parting.” “ I thought thy jealousy had fled with poor Asher,” and Ada burst into tears. “ My Ada, I ask thee but to wed me ere I depart ; and, if thou wilt not go with me to my home, I will but go to tell my parents of my determination, and then return to thine, and live with thee in these green recesses, asking nought save the blessing of thy love.” Ada shook her head mournfully as she answered, “ I tell thee, Isaac would never consent to our wedding upon such terms : why then pain me by thus resolutely urging that which thou knowest I cannot grant ?” “ Ada,” said Isaac, reproachfully, as, accompanied by his mother, he reached the spot where the youth and maiden stood, “ is this thy promised openness and truth ? Hast thou so soon forgotten all thy protestations, or has this smooth-tongued stranger succeeded in effacing the love of years by a passion of yesterday ?” Ada hung her head ; while her brother drew her arm within his own, and moved towards the house.

“And thou wilt leave me, Ada?—thou wilt suffer thyself to be torn from me, and I shall behold thee no more! Better that the hunchback Asher had possessed thine hand, than that thou shouldst so depart! Farewell, farewell, for ever!” “Not so, not so,” said Ada; and suddenly releasing herself from her brother’s hold, she sprang to the side of Ezra, exclaiming, “In life or in death we will not be separated.” “Sayest thou so?” and he drew a ring from his finger. “Thus, then, I defy thy brother;” and placing it on hers, he rapidly repeated over the marriage service.* So unexpected had been this conduct, that Isaac stood gazing, as if rooted to the earth; while Ada, overcome by her feelings, fainted in the arms of her husband. “See, Levite,” he shouted triumphantly, “she is mine; and the consent you withheld was not needed.” Then raising her, he placed her in a litter upon one of the mules, which had been waiting ready for his departure, and mounting, he took his way, without opposition, down the mountain side.

* This kind of marriage, which is called “*Ma Kadesh*,” is valid in the eye of the law; but like Gretna Green marriages in the northern regions, it was considered disgraceful, and seldom resorted to, unless from necessity. It is still occasionally resorted to.

Isaac watched them descend into the valley ; and when they were no longer visible, he threw himself upon the ground, and wept bitterly. " Arise, my son," said Eva, gently, " and let us return to our abode. She has forsaken willingly those who have loved and cherished her ; therefore must she abide by her choice. I loved her as a daughter ; but since she is gone, do not make my old age desolate." " Mother," said the young priest, slowly, as he arose, " mother, my heart is almost broken. Of all the happy ones that once smiled in my father's house, thou and I only are left. To think that she should leave us thus, to go forth with a stranger ! Alas, his very presence brought discord into our happy circle. Till then — although Judea lay desolate, although her sons were slaves, and her daughters in a strange land—we had our peaceful vineyards, our fruitful cornfields, and we were happy. If our tears flowed, they flowed for them—for ourselves we had no need to shed them. My father's death was our first sorrow, but even then we had consolation. Ada's mother followed him—but in thee she had still a parent ; and when the first anguish had abated, I could still chase the wild roe with

unabated speed—still hunt the fierce lion and savage bear ; for Ada's smiles, and thine, welcomed my return, and we could dance in the soft moonlight to the sound of Asher's harp. He, too, was happy in beholding us so ; and thou, dear mother, would watch our gambols with a joyous look. When I found that stranger, wounded by the lion's paw, and saved his life by slaying his assailant, I left him not to perish, but bound up his wounds, and brought him to our house. Would that I had left him to die in the ruins, since he has thus repaid me !” Again the young man covered his eyes, and wept. Ada had been the idol of his heart from the hour when he first held her in his little arms. His hand had supported her feeble steps in childhood. Her joys, her sorrows, had been his ; for her he had found the most shaded spot, gathered the loveliest blossoms ; and as the fair girl grew up into womanhood, and her form and face grew fairer, he had exulted in the hope that she would wed, and remain near him, that that he might behold her happy, and share in that happiness. From the moment when it became apparent to him that she loved his guest, this bright dream vanished, leaving,

in its stead, distrust and anxiety. Himself pious, and sincere, he disliked the light tone in which Ezra spoke of their blessed religion. In the seclusion of his mountain home, Isaac had heard from the pilgrims he had met at various times on mount Moriah, and whom he had invited to partake of whatever his humble home afforded, of the wickedness and corruption of Babylon; and he feared his guest had deeply imbibed its pernicious customs. When they had stood on the mountain's brow, and looking down upon the beautiful scene below, tinged with the glories of the setting sun, he would point out to the stranger the ruins of Jerusalem, with Sion and Moriah stripped of the buildings which had made them so glorious; but still possessing a melancholy claim upon all who bore affinity to the race of Abraham. He in return would tell of the glories of Babylon, of her broad rivers, her towers, her shrines, her wondrous gardens, and majestic palaces; extolling the power and might of her monarch, and the wisdom of his government. While Ada had listened with a glistening eye and beating heart, Asher had been accustomed to take up the conversation by repeating the prophecies against the destroyer

of nations, reminding the stranger that Judah was captive, her temple destroyed, and her children slaves; and that it was not for the Hebrew to heap praises upon the conqueror. Asher was now an exile, and Ada had left her girlhood home—perhaps for ever.

CHAPTER VIII.

In the pale cheek, so furrowed and wet,
The story of anguish is spoken.
The sun of his hope it is set,
The wing of his spirit is broken.

DR. BIRD.

Misdoubting corsair, I have bribed the guard,
Ripe for revolt, and greedy for reward.

BYRON.

TIME pursued its flight. The monarch of Babylon's malady became confirmed, and Mero-dach had assumed the reins of government as regent. Meanwhile Asher had been left in his lonely prison, under the imputation of having taken away the king's senses by magic. A crust of bread daily, and a pitcher of water, were his sole sustenance. His spirits sunk into apathy; and as he reviewed the events of his life, he prayed for death as a blessing and relief. But still he found a solace for his woes, for the inmates of the dungeon—and they were many—and the soldiers who guarded them, heard the sounds of unearthly music break the gloom and stillness, and marvelled whence came notes of

such sweetness and melody; yet as the tedious days passed on, he deemed himself forgotten. He was mistaken — there was one who had unceasingly endeavoured to discover the place of his confinement, in the hope of rescuing him from thralldom. This was his lovely pupil Luna. A thousand times she asked herself, why she took such an interest in the fate of an obscure Hebrew; for even to herself she would not acknowledge that she loved him. She vainly strove, by thinking of his deformity, to banish the remembrance of his sad and beautiful countenance, his deep blue eyes, and above all, his charmed voice; and she said to herself, “It is not the poor and deformed Hebrew that I love, but the wondrous musician; whose strains had power to unsettle the reason of the greatest monarch on earth;” for in common with others, she believed that it was indeed poor Asher’s song that had worked the change. Their blind belief never once suffered them to ask if he who possessed such power could not have exerted it in order to free himself. The horror with which she heard that a grand sacrifice to be offered for the king’s recovery, in the temple of Belus, the Hebrew was to be one of the victims, may be easily conceived. She determined at once

to rescue him from so cruel a fate, and fly with him far from Babylon. It is useless to detail the means she used to achieve her purpose. At midnight, she stood in the prison of Asher, holding a lamp in her hand. She bent over the straw heap that formed his bed. He was sleeping ; his countenance bore the careworn and grief-stricken expression, so peculiar to the deformed, but yet the features were beautiful. The broad forehead, the finely arched and pencilled brow, the blue-veined eyelid, and the long black lashes, each claimed in turn her admiration ; and she thought within her heart that the sallow skin, the parched and fevered lip, and pallid cheek, were only evidences of the sufferings he had endured from his long confinement. He still wore the rich garb in which he had appeared at the festival, and it appeared strangely unsuited to his present abode. "He is dreaming," she said, printing a kiss upon his damp brow. "He speaks too." His lips were indeed moving, and he slowly uttered the name of Ada. A pang shot through the heart of Luna, as she said, "He loves another, then." At the sound of her voice, the youth started, and partly raised himself. As he unclosed his eyes, he fixed them in amazement upon the radiant

countenance of his visitor. She was habited in a long loose robe of white, gathered in at the waist by a girdle of pale pink ; while her long dark hair, bound by a fillet of the same colour as her girdle, floated to her feet, and over it she had carelessly thrown a white veil.

Asher at once recognized her, but astonishment kept him silent. "Thou marvellest that I am here, Hebrew," she said, "but know that I came to give thee freedom." "Has the king repented of his cruelty?—and yet methinks, if it were so, thou wouldest not be the messenger ; unless, indeed, the princes of Babylon always send their favorites on such missions of mercy." "Nay," said Luna, casting down her eyes, while a deep blush overspread her cheek, "I came not from the prince. A bribe procured me admission. To-morrow, Hebrew, they have doomed thee to be sacrificed to Bel." At this announcement, at once so unexpected and horrible, Asher fell back almost senseless. The Babylonian saw her advantage ; "There is but one way," she continued hesitatingly, "of escaping from this dreadful doom, and that is in thine own power." Asher raised his eyes to her face enquiringly, but still he spoke not. "Methinks,"—and there was a slight degree of

bitterness in her tone; "thou art strangely apathetic. Know"—and her voice faltered, and her lips quivered, "that at the risk of my life I gained access to thy prison, to save thee from a violent and cruel death: but mark me, Hebrew, I had a motive, else had I not deemed the lives of a million of slaves worth the venture. Hebrew, I love thee."

Had an adder stung him, Asher could not have started with more abhorrence than he did from the hand that touched his, as he replied: "Love me!—Lady, art thou mad?—Dost thou forget thou art the property of another?" "Yes," she answered, vehemently, "I forget all, every thing, except thy voice of melody. It haunts me sleeping—it thrills upon mine ear when waking—it hath filled me with an absorbing love—it hath taught me to forget all, save thy peril—to save thee, I would risk all I hold dear. I only ask in return to accompany thee, if it be to the uttermost corners of the earth—to listen to thy song and harp, until my spirit melts away in extacy."

"Away, syren, away!" said the young Hebrew, "I could not accept life upon such terms; leave me to my fate." "Never, never!—the path is open, and thou canst not prefer death to a

living bride, whose beauty has laid the proudest of Babylon at her feet. Poets have sung, painters immortalized my beauty—hundreds would gladly lay down their lives for a smile of mine. Thou, thou alone spurnest the heart which scorned all others, and is only thine.” “This is to thee useless degradation. But no,”—a sudden thought passed through his brain, and he added: “Perchance thou art come hither to rack me, to make sport in thine idle hours at the presumption of the deformed slave, who durst to think that he could inspire affection in so fair a breast; but even if it be not so, and if I read thine earnest look aright, know, that he to whom thou offerest thy love, has no heart to bestow; that he madly, hopelessly adores another. Go back then to thy princely lover, and forget the unworthy object, who, having nought left but his innocence, would not part with that for the treasures of the world.” “And for this, thou misshapen lump of clay,” she exclaimed, in accents of fury, “for this I forgot my high birth, my lofty station, and meanly stooped to ask for the affections of a thing like thee?” But even she was startled by the change in the appearance of Asher. While she was speaking, his figure seemed to expand, his eyeballs glared

like a tiger's when about to make his fatal spring; while the paleness of his face was succeeded by a fiery glow, as he said, in the deep concentrated tones of hate, "Woman, were the knife of the murderer at my throat, and thou alone hadst power to release me, I would push back the proffered hand, and perish, ere I accepted aid from thee."

His words, even his scorn, only heightened the passion that burnt within her, and she was about to throw herself at his feet, with words of abject entreaty, when she felt a strong grasp laid upon her arm; and as she raised her eyes, they encountered the furious glance of Merodach. She uttered no cry, as he buried his poniard in her heart; but as she fell, her last words were, "He is innocent—I alone am guilty."

For some moments, Merodach stood gazing upon the work of his hands, and as the last trace of life faded from her convulsed, but still beautiful features, the glance of hate and contempt passed away; and stifling a sigh to the memory of the past, he addressed the horror-struck prisoner, whose eyes were fixed upon the victim. "Behold, how the Babylonians revenge treachery," he said, sternly; "she has

received the fate she merited : but do thou follow me.”

Asher arose ; but as he passed the still warm remains of Luna, he half sighed, as he glanced upon them. Merodach's eyes followed him, and when they reached the door of the prison, he bade the guard toss that carrion into the Euphrates. As they emerged into the open air, Asher felt chill, and almost fainting. It was a clear starlight night, and for a moment he forgot the peril of his situation, to gaze upon the striking and magnificent scene. The prince also paused, as if to look in that silent hour upon the glorious inheritance which would one day be his. Before them was the broad Euphrates, reflecting the stars in its clear mirror-like expanse ; while on its banks were palaces, gardens, dwellings, and towers. Far above all, rose the colossal temple of Belus, containing tower above tower, until it seemed to reach the sky—it was a pleasant sight. “Beautiful!” burst from the lips of both. While they were speaking, a deep plunge was heard in the water ; it was the body of the unfortunate Luna, descending to its last resting place. The sound struck upon the ear of Asher ; his feeble limbs no longer supported him, and he fell heavily to the ground. When

Asher recovered from his deathlike trance, the setting sun was shining in through a gilded lattice, and a priest of Baal was standing beside his couch, holding one of his feverish hands. "Is my death hour nigh?" he asked. "Nay, my son," answered the priest, "it was to save thy life, not to prepare thee for death, I was summoned hither."

CHAPTER IX.

THE feverish glow of his brow was gone,
And his heart sank so still that it felt like stone,
As he looked on the face and beheld its hue,
So deeply changed from what he knew.

BYRON.

It is not that my lot is low,
That bids the silent tear to flow.
It is not grief that makes me moan,
It is that I am all alone.

H. K. WHITE.

“AND thou art dying! oh my mother—the last one left to cheer my loneliness! Vainly for thee the fruits of autumn will ripen; the clusters of the vine, or the soft green olive, will delight thee no more; and when thou art gone, I must sit by the lonely hearth. Who then will speak comfort to this withered heart?” “God, my son, answered his mother, “will give unto thee a friend and companion. Thou must wed, Isaac, my son, and seek in new ties oblivion of those that pass away. The young bird leaves its nest, when it no longer requires assistance; and buildeth a habitation of its own, that it may in turn perform the tender duties of a mother. The wild beast quits the lair where it was brought forth; the flowers fade, and leave the stems,

that others may spring up. Thus one generation passeth away, and another cometh. All must fulfil the duties assigned them. Thou too, my son, wilt have to perform thy destined part. Lay up, then, for thyself, not a store of this world's wealth, but the prayers of the poor, the blessings of the righteous. Pass not thy days in useless lamentation: because a blight hath once destroyed the produce of the vineyard, shall the sower neglect it evermore? Thou art young; when I am gone take a wife from among the daughters of Israel—one who will be content to pass her life amid these solitudes. Let not beauty attract thine eye—it is a pernicious gift. Choose rather one of a kind and gentle temper, who will make thy home happy, and find pleasure in her husband's smiles. If ye find such an one, give her no rival."

The dying parent's efforts had almost exhausted the remains of her strength; and, as she blessed him, he knew that the hour of parting was nigh. Before the sun went down, death was once more in the priest's dwelling. When the week of mourning was over, the orphan sought his mother's grave, and prayed that he might soon rest beside her. The words were spoken aloud, as he threw earth upon his head, and wept.

“Retract thy impious prayer, rash boy,” uttered a feeble voice beside him, “lest God, in his anger, grant thy supplication.” Abashed at his own impiety, Isaac arose and stood before his monitor. The person who had addressed him was on the very verge of the grave, for the staff upon which he leaned could scarcely support his faltering steps. He was clothed in a long robe of sackcloth, girded by a piece of rope. His hair and beard were of snowy whiteness—the latter descended to his waist, and the former was surmounted by a black turban, consisting of a single fold. One hand was clasped in that of a lad, apparently about thirteen years old, and the eyes of Isaac wandered from the old man to his youthful companion. His dress was plain, but tasteful, and a profusion of long ringlets fell from beneath his turban. The face and neck upon which they rested were darkened by exposure to the burning sun; but the downy cheek and ruby lip harmonized beautifully with a sunny complexion and snow-white teeth. Isaac felt the rebuke conveyed in the look of reprehension the old man had cast upon him; and he said, “Forgive, me, father, for my frantic grief. I have sinned: but I am penitent.” “Ask forgiveness of thy Maker,” was the solemn answer. He alone can grant it.”

For a moment there was silence, while the young priest breathed a short prayer, and then the lad said, in a voice inaudible to his companion, "For whom mourn ye? Perchance, for the love of thy youth—she who should have been the sharer of thy joys and cares. If so, I pity thee—for I have known such sorrow." "Thou?" said Isaac, in a tone of wonder. "Thou art young to have loved already." The lad blushed, and bent his eyes upon the ground; but they were filled with tears. While the young priest stood looking at him, a tame gazelle, which had been his gift to Ada, and since her departure had been fed by his mother's hand, bounded up and pressed its beautiful head against him, as if asking a caress. At the sight, tears once more gushed into his eyes, and again he flung himself upon the turf. The boy gently approached the animal, and laid his hands upon its collar. On it was graven the name of Ada. "Ada! it is a sweet name," he murmured.

Meanwhile, the old man had seated himself upon the grass, and apparently fallen asleep. For the first time it struck the hospitable priest, that the wayfarers might be hungry and weary. Rousing himself, he inquired if the lad thought the aged man could reach his house?" "My

grandsire is very faint," said the lad, sadly; "we have travelled from the banks of the Tigris, in order that he might look once more upon the ruins of Zion; and we have spent two days amidst them, fasting and praying. Yesterday, a returning pilgrim told us, that there was a dwelling upon Olivet, where we might obtain a little food and rest—for since we entered the precincts of the Holy City, we have lived upon the fruit of the wild vine, or fig tree." "And I," said Isaac, blushing, "have been so absorbed in my selfish grief, that I have neglected to perform the rites of hospitality." The boy replied, "My father sleeps now." He looked fondly into his parent's face; then in a moment shrieked, "Hear, oh Israel!—he is dead." It was too true; his spirit had departed. Isaac, as a member of the priestly family of Aaron, dared not approach the dead, but he turned to the living. The boy was senseless, and throwing a cloak over the old man, he raised his grandson in his arms, and bore him toward his home with a swift step—for the being he now held in his arms seemed even more friendless and desolate than himself. From that moment, he determined, if the young stranger were willing, he would supply the place of the beloved parent he had

lost, and be to him as a brother. While his domestic servants went to seek the corpse, Isaac was left alone with his charge. When the youth at length unclosed his eyes, his first search was for his parent; but when the remembrance of his loss came vividly before him, he burst into tears. Isaac thought of his mother, and strove not to stay him. "Shall I never see him again?" exclaimed the lad, suddenly starting up.—"My father, my more than father, my last dependence upon earth! Who will now love and guard thine orphan child?" Isaac took one of his hands in both of his own, and, gazing earnestly into his face, said, "I will strive to supply to thee the place of thy parent, for I too am alone upon earth. Thou shalt share my dwelling and my heart, and together we will mourn over the departed." A deep flush mantled over the cheek and brow of the stranger, and he seemed striving to give utterance to some feeling within his bosom; but the effort was vain. Deep sobs were all the answer he could give, save a silent pressure of the hand. At midnight the old man was buried; and as he left no relative to keep the shiva, a memorial light was kindled for him in the synagogue.

CHAPTER X.

I deemed that time, I deemed that pride,
Had quenched at length my boyish flame :
Nor knew, till seated by thy side,
My heart in all, save hope, the same.

BYRON.

But the vial is emptied at last ;
The shafts have been shot from the quiver ;
And the future has buried the past
With the tears of the captive for ever.

DR. BIRD.

IN a light summer pavilion, on the banks of the Euphrates, about a mile from Babylon, sat Asher, the musician. He was simply attired ; but the lute he held in his hand was of gold, and richly carved. His fingers were on the strings, but it was silent. Another sacrifice had been substituted, and he had resumed his place in the household of the prince. Merodach heaped favours upon him ; and Nitocris his wife, so celebrated in history, delighted to listen to his strains. But he was still unhappy : in the midst of the most brilliant triumphs his thoughts would revert to the little fountain and the rustic arbour,

where, on summer evenings, he used to sit and play to Ada and her brother. Amid the proud beauties of Babylon, there were none to him so lovely as her, who had been the day-star of his soul. Often he would wonder if she still dwelt on the green mountain; or if she had listened to the honeyed accents of Ezra, and left her father's house. When he sat in solitude, as now, he would feel that sick longing which the exile only can know, for a return to the haunts of childhood, whose every glade and flower would recall to him his first bright dream. Oh! what awaking had he known! Little did they deem, who hung upon the minstrel's impassioned strains, that the hopeless love he sung with such skill and pathos dwelt deep within his heart, to be brooded over in silence. "Thou weeping willow," he said, as he broke a branch from a tree which overshadowed a marble basin, filled with water, "thou art happy, for thy dwelling is by the stream that gives thee nourishment, and in return, thy branches shade it from the burning sun, thus giving mutual shelter, mutual protection; but I am alone—there are none to shelter me from the glare of sunshine, which shines to destroy. Yet why do I murmur? It is the will of providence. But hark!

there are footsteps approaching—now I must deck my lip in smiles, while my heart—but no matter !” And he turned to meet those who had disturbed his solitude. It was a female, attended by a slave from the palace. She wore the Hebrew garb ; but this occasioned him no surprise, for many of his countrymen were in the train of the princess. Indeed her singers were nearly all Israelites. Passionately fond of music, she prided herself upon their excellence.

The slave’s message was short,—the Hebrew had that morning been presented to her, and, as she had already considerable skill, Nitocris wished the musician to give her some lessons, as, on the morrow, the princess intended giving a concert to her husband. Asher readily promised to exert his utmost power ; for he felt an esteem for the wise and virtuous wife of Mero-dach, which he could not feel for her cruel and capricious husband.

The Hebrew had remained standing, her veil down, and her arms folded on her breast. Asher looked upon her. Indignation swelled in his bosom, that a daughter of Judea should stand before him in the degrading position of a slave. There was sadness on his brow, and in his tone, as he requested the stranger to remove

the veil. With trembling hand she threw it aside, and discovered to the astonished minstrel the features of his own beloved Ada, still lovely, but oh, how changed!—the bloom was gone from her cheek, and the lustre from her eye. Her bright smile was faded; and although her figure still retained its grace and lightness, the roundness of her limbs was gone. She looked careworn and wretched. “Ada!” he shrieked, extending his arms towards her; “thou! thou a slave in Babylon? Great God! this is indeed misery. Where are Isaac and Eva—are they too captives?”

There are some griefs too great for tears; and Ada, although her bosom swelled almost to bursting, shed none. She felt all the bitterness of her situation; but that Asher should see her thus, was the worst pang of all—he, whose unrequited love had blighted his happiness, and made his life like a rosebush in winter, bearing nothing but thorns. “Thou art indeed my sister,” he said, as he took her hand, “for by that name I may still call thee. Tell me, oh Ada, by our childhood’s sweet and holy affection—by the memory of our dead parents, I conjure thee, how camest thou here?”

“Asher,” she answered, in a low voice;

“Asher, my husband sold me as a slave; and to thee,” she continued, clasping her hands, “to thee, whom in my day of pride I scorned and insulted, I must tell this bitter tale. Oh God! I am rightly punished. Yes, thy rival, my husband—he took me from my happy home—from my brother’s arms; brought me to a strange land, and then, when I had given him my whole soul, I found he had already a wife. Yet that I could have borne, although her jealous taunts often provoked my tears. But six weeks after my arrival at Babylon, he brought home a third wife, one whose immense dowry and surpassing loveliness, soon made him forget the portionless Ada. He degraded me into the slave of his bride; and when I reproached him for thus abusing my trustfulness, and taking me from my home, the answer was a blow, and a threat to make me what I am. He has kept his word.” “Wretch!” muttered Asher, between his closed teeth; “and for this, Ada, thou hast—but no matter, I will not reproach thee.” “Our affections are not our own, Asher,” she said; “else why has thy love for me been so unchanged?” “True,” he replied, mournfully, and he caught her sinking form in his arms. She had fainted. His heart throbbed,

and his brain burned, as he laid her head upon his breast, and parting back the hair from her white brow, pressed his lips convulsively upon it. Since last he had gazed upon that face, care had laid its heavy finger upon its features, and its ravages were plainly visible. Whilst thus employed, he heard voices and footsteps approaching, and a pang of mortal fear passed through his frame, as he remembered that instant death might be the consequence of his being found in such a situation. He who had prayed for death as a blessing, now shuddered at its immediate prospect. Uncertain how to act, he tried to rouse his senseless companion. He was, however, quickly released from his uncertainty, for the door was thrown back, and the princess herself stood upon the threshold. Anger flashed from her eyes. "Wretch!" she exclaimed, as she advanced, followed by her train, to within a foot of the musician. "Wretch! is it thus thou abusest my confidence? This is not the lesson I bade thee teach thy pupil!" "Pardon, dread princess!" he answered, "my involuntary fault—she is my sister." "Thy sister!" said the furious princess; "beware how thou taintest thy soul with falsehood. Confess thy crime, as

thou hopest for pardon. Take her away," she continued, to some of her women, "we will examine them apart."

Still lifeless, Ada was borne away, while he threw himself at the feet of Nitocris, and implored her to listen. "Rise," she replied, more calmly, as she seated herself, and he knelt beside her; while in those tones she had so often admired, he commenced the story of his life, from his adoption by the priest, until the present hour. Her anger turned to pity, as she listened; and at the conclusion she extended her hand towards him, and bade him rise. At a sign from her, Ada was again brought in. She was very pale, and obliged to lean on her conductors. The princess bade her sit on the cushions at her feet, and motioned her train to withdraw, with the exception of one favourite attendant. Asher was suffered to remain. "I sent for thee," she said, gently, "to hear thy sad tale; and if it correspond with thy lover's thou hast nought to fear."

Ada's voice trembled, and her cheeks grew flushed, as she narrated the incidents of her life, her sudden marriage, and ingratitude to her brother; and at the conclusion, for the first time, she burst into tears. The princess arose,

and gently took her hand, as she said, "If thou art released from the fetters that bind thee to thy unworthy husband, thinkest thou that thou couldst be happy with him who has loved thee so long and truly?" Ada smiled through her tears, as she said, "If Asher can forgive my past unkindness, how gladly would I devote my future life to repay his former sufferings." "Approach," said Nitocris, turning to the young man, "and receive from my hands thy future bride."

CHAPTER XI.

Oh! dear to the heart, when our wanderings are o'er,
One smile giving welcome from those we adore.
And sweet after absence, the scenes of our youth,
Like dreams of a summer night waking in truth.
There's no dream in this vale, with its streamlets and bowers,
For Jessy's my own, and the pride of its flowers.

SONG.

Two months past away, and Isaac, except at meals, saw little of the young stranger; and he grew sadder and sadder—for his affectionate heart panted for something on which to lavish its tenderness. The vintage had begun, and the husbandmen were now gathering in the grapes. Ahaz—for so the youth called himself—sat in the garden, twisting a collar for the gazelle, which had become as much attached to him as to its former mistress, when Isaac approached, bearing a ripe cluster of grapes in his hand. “I have gathered them for thee, Ahaz,” he said, as he sat down beside him; “they were the only ones on Asher’s vine this year. The vintage is almost gathered, and two days from this is the new year.” Tears gushed into his eyes, as he

continued, "It is in times like this that we miss the absent and the dead." "Come with me," said the boy, sadly, "and see the flowers I have planted over the grave of thy beloved—" he hesitated, and then added, "thy beloved wife." "My wife!" exclaimed Isaac, in astonishment; "I have not—I never had a wife. It is my mother." "Thy mother!" cried the youth, in accents of surprise; "who then is Ada?" "My sister," replied Isaac, astonished at the question. "But why didst thou enquire?" "Because"—and he burst into a passionate flood of tears,— "because I have deceived my generous protector. I am not what I seem." "Explain thyself," said the agitated priest; and casting down her eyes, she narrated her simple story. Her parents had been among the fugitives who fled after the murder of Gedaliah (to whom her grandsire was brother,) to Babylon. Neither of them had survived above four years after her birth; and as she grew into womanhood, she was betrothed to a young kinsman; but the day that should have seen her a bride, her destined husband was laid in the grave. From that hour her health and spirits faded, and some pilgrims having returned from Mount Moriah, inspired the old man with an ardent desire to revisit the

land of his ancestors, and the hill where Abraham had proved his faith, and Solomon built his temple. In compliance with her eager entreaties, he had at last consented that she should accompany him, but only on condition that she would disguise her sex. "Did no fear of his sudden death ever obtrude itself?" said Isaac. "Yes," she answered; "from the time he entered Palestine, his strength began to fail, and then all the desolation of my situation forced itself upon me, and I feared he would not live to complete his pilgrimage. I prayed to God to protect and strengthen us, and he granted my prayer—for my parent stood upon the hill of the temple, and wept amid the ruins of David's city."

We need not add what more passed at that interview. Suffice it, that when the feast of Tabernacles arrived, there was again a mistress in the priest's dwelling. The month Tishri was over, and Heshvon more than half gone, when Isaac and Edna sat together on one of the green slopes of the mountain. Their hands were locked in each other's, and he was gazing into her pale face, and speaking of Ada and Asher. At her feet lay the gazelle, and by her was an empty basket. It had lately been filled with nourishment for a sick woman in the hamlet, and it was

on their return from their blessed errand, they had sat down to rest and enjoy the coolness of evening. "Surely that was a woman's voice," said Edna; "it came from yonder clump of olives. Perchance it is a stranger, or some weary pilgrim seeking the rest and shelter of our dwelling." While she was yet speaking, the strangers emerged from the shelter of the trees, and a young and lovely woman bounded forward, and sprung into the arms of Isaac, while a young man rushed eagerly to his side. It was Ada and Asher, returned to dwell in the house of their childhood and the land of their fathers.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

3222. THE Jews had sojourned fifty-two years in Babylon, during which time they seemed to have been considered as denizens, rather than as slaves, owing to the protection of Daniel, who had been raised to eminence in the state, together with many of his countrymen. They continued in power when the city was taken and destroyed by Darius the Mede, and are supposed to have been in concert with the conqueror. Darius retained Daniel, as one of his chief counsellors; yet, during the reign of this monarch, the prophet was thrown into the lions' den, the customary place of punishment, for worshipping Jehovah, his own God, and not bowing down to the idols of the nation. By divine providence he was miraculously preserved, and retained in the favour of the sovereign.

3224. At the end of fifty-four years from the destruction of Jerusalem, Cyrus, the son and successor of Darius, under the title of King of Persia, issued an edict commanding the restoration of the Jews to their native land. Numbers of them immediately assembled under Zerubbabel, the lineal descendant of David, and Jeshua the hereditary high priest, and returned to the Holy City; where they were welcomed by the remnant of the nation, who had continued to dwell there during the captivity. Their first object was to restore the ancient worship, which they never afterwards willingly abandoned.

3225. The first stone of the second temple was laid in the month Eyor, amid demonstrations of universal joy. The work was long retarded by the enmity and malice of the Samaritans,

whom the Jews had refused to allow to assist in raising the sacred structure, they not being descendants of Israel, but of foreigners, to whom the Assyrian kings had given their territory after the inhabitants were carried into captivity, and who, in revenge, misrepresented them to the Persian government.

3245. At length the building was finished, and dedicated on the fourth of the month Adar, A. M. 3245, seventy-five years after its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar.

3256. Esther, a Jewish captive, who had been raised to the dignity of Queen of Persia, by her influence with the king saved her countrymen (the Jews) from a general massacre, contrived by his favourite Haman, a descendant of Agag, king of Amalek, in revenge against Mordecai, Esther's uncle, who refused to pay him the customary honours.

3315. Nehemiah, with the sanction of Artaxerxes, king of Persia, to whom he was cupbearer, proceeded to Jerusalem, in order to repair the walls and fortifications; which was finished in the incredibly short space of fifty-two days; the people being compelled, from the enmity of the Arabians, Samaritans, and Ammorites, to labour day and night with defensive weapons in their hands. Nehemiah hastened back to Persia, to obtain a renewal of his commission. On his return, he reestablished the Jewish law, which had been collected and transcribed by Ezra, on its original basis.

3338. Nehemiah having banished Manasseh, the high priest, for marrying the daughter of Sanballat the Haronite, governor of Samaria, contrary to law, Sanballat built a rival temple on Mount Gerizim, and made Manasseh high priest.

3351. Nehemiah died, having governed the Jews thirty-six years.

THE PROMISE,

A TALE OF THE RESTORATION.

CHAPTER I.

HOME of my youth! land of my birth!
I tread thy soil again—
To me the loveliest spot of earth.
My prayers have not been vain.
Thou art not what thou wert of yore—
Perchance thou ne'er wilt be;
But sad and ruined as thou art,
Thou'rt beautiful to me.

M.S.

Talk not of happy feelings—
Alas! they are not mine;
Nor tell of joy's revealings,
I every bliss resign.
Once—once I loved; and never more
Can love my soul delight:
Nought can a beam of joy restore—
All, all is cloudy night.

CHARLES SLOMAN.

“BEAUTIFUL! beautiful art thou, even in thy
ruins, oh my country! Thou hast been wi-
dowed and despoiled; thy high places laid low,

and thy fertile vallies made desolate. Thy vineyards are untended, thy cornfields lie waste; but worse than all, thy children have been captives in a foreign land. The yoke of the heathen has been heavy; the vials of wrath have been poured forth; but the Lord has relented towards his repentant people. We shall return to thee, O land of our fathers! Again we will build up a temple to our God. Again the vine and olive shall grow upon thy hills, the peaceful husbandmen till the earth, and the rich harvest repay their toil. Again shalt thou lift up thy head, O daughter of Zion! and more lovely from thy afflictions, reign a queen amongst the nations of the earth. I forsook thee not in my youth, O Jehovah! and in mine age thou hast not deserted me—even in the extreme of mine age thou hast brought me back to the land of my birth.

“Look, my children, we are in the land of our fathers! Come, join with me in thanksgiving unto the Lord of Hosts, for his mercy endureth for ever.”

And the old man, the tears of joy glistening in his eyes, sat down under the shade of a wide-spreading palm, beneath which he had pitched his tent.

For some time, David sat absorbed in meditation, but the present was absent from his thoughts—he was busied with the past and the future.

He was a venerable old man. The snow of a hundred winters was white upon his head, and his silver beard reached below his waist. Although his tall majestic figure was slightly bent, and his ample forehead furrowed by age and trouble, it was evident time had not quenched the fire of his eye, nor chased the calm smile of content from his benevolent features.

There was nothing singular in his history. He was one of the many, who having witnessed the sacking and destruction of the temple, was carried away captive to Babylon, where he dwelt in the fear and worship of God, abstaining from all forbidden things. He did not select a wife from amongst the heathen, but from the daughters of his own people. He saw the utter fruitlessness of rebelling against the judgment of an already incensed and justly offended God; and resolving patiently to abide the termination of the captivity, he built himself a house in the land of the stranger, and dwelt in peace. He saw his children and grandchildren, like olive branches, grow up around him, and

his chief pleasure consisted in instructing them in the pure and beautiful religion of their fathers, and in teaching them the history of their own people.

At length, the royal edict was issued, permitting, nay, encouraging the Hebrews to return to Judea, and rebuild their temple.

Aged as he was, David quitted the home where he had sojourned so long, and with his wives, his children, his grandchildren, his servants, his flocks and herds, journeyed towards his own land. The flowers were springing up in wild freshness, and gemming the soft green turf of the beautiful valley in which the old man and his family had pitched their tents. The wild fig tree grew in luxuriant beauty around them.

“Come hither, my children,” resumed David, after a moment’s pause, “and join in thanksgiving unto the giver of all good.” His family flocked around him; he looked upon them with an eye of parental affection, blended with parental pride, from his first-born, a man whose hair was as white as his own, to his youngest grandchildren, a rosy boy and girl of three years old, who sat gathering the wild flowers at

their grandsire's feet, and making the valley resound with their musical laughter.

But there seemed to be one wanting to complete the group, for he looked around him with a glance of enquiry, and said, "Where is Ramah? why is she absent? Go, Samuel, and bring her hither—yet stay, I will go myself;" and rising from his seat, he entered the women's tent. In the farthest corner of the tent reclined a young female; her dress was entirely devoid of ornament, but the fineness of the texture bespoke the rank of the wearer. Her hair was arranged in the most simple manner at the back of the head, for this was the only part visible; and if one might judge from the outline of her figure, she was beautiful.

The low, half-suppressed sob, and the rapid rise and fall of her shoulders, told she was weeping.

"What! still in tears! For shame, Ramah!" said David, half tenderly, half reproachfully; "it is unmaidenly—nay, it is worse, it is criminal. If Ephraim loved thee not well enough to leave the land of the stranger, and return to his own for thy sake, why shouldst thou waste thy young life in vain and useless regrets? Look up, my child, and be comforted. There

are many as worthy — nay, worthier than Ephraim, who would be proud of my Ramah's love. Come forth with me, and join in thanksgiving unto the Lord, for restoring us to our own blessed land."

Ramah raised her beautiful head, and passing her small white hand across her pale forehead, she strove to rise.

"Sorrow has already commenced its work," continued the father, as he looked mournfully into her colourless face, and caressed her fair young cheek with his withered hand. "Come forth with me, my darling; perchance the evening breeze may restore the rose to thy cheek. We must have no more weeping;" and he kissed away the tears which were still trembling upon her beautiful and loving black eyes.

Ramah was a being made for love: her figure was slight and delicate in the extreme; her face was oval, and the features small, but eminently beautiful; her eyebrows were arched; her nose was perfectly Jewish; her lips resembled a half-blown rose, and were made for smiles and dimples, though now they were somewhat pale; her complexion was pure and clear, but almost too fair for a daughter of the east; her forehead was high and intellectual, and perhaps it looked

whiter from its contrast to the sable hair that was braided around it. She was the very poetry of love—such a creature as we sometimes see bodied forth by the sculptor, the painter, or the poet, or imagine to ourselves of the angel forms with which the fanciful and enthusiastic love to people the celestial worlds, but which we seldom if ever meet with in real life. Yet it was not the perfect regularity of the features that gave them such a witching power; it was the intellectuality of their expression—it was the mind shining through, that gave the finishing touch to the whole. Added to this loveliness of form, Ramah was literally the child of David's old age, the only one of a beloved and lost wife; and what wonder that the father loved this youngest-born blossom of his affections with more than ordinary love?—what wonder that he doated on a creature whose rare personal beauty was only to be equalled by the sweetness of her gentle disposition, and the rich natural endowments of her gifted and sensitive mind.

As she leaned on the old man's arm for support, a painter could not have wished for two fairer personifications of hoary-headed winter, with his sublime and awful majesty, and timid, graceful spring.

When David again took his seat amid the group, the sun was setting like a globe of fire, and the vaulted canopy of heaven was tinged with the most beautiful colours. There could not have been an hour or a spot better chosen to excite devotional feelings. The heads of the tall granite rocks that encircled the valley were illumined, while the dark shadow at their base was relieved by the white tents, and the flocks and herds browsing in the distance. For a moment all was silent; but immediately every voice joined in the hymn of thanksgiving; even the two young children ceased their play, and their soft voices mingled in the sacred song, whose swelling notes arose to heaven, wafted by the incense of warm and grateful hearts. When they had finished their devotions in this magnificent temple of God's own architecture, they separated. The different branches of the family retired to their tents, but Ramah besought her father to tarry a little longer in the pure air.

“Even as thou wilt, my child; I would do anything to restore the bloom to thy cheek, and it only grieves me to see thee waste thy health and beauty upon one who knew not how to value thee. Had he truly loved thee, he would not have suffered thee to depart from Babylon without even seeking to bid thee farewell.”

“Spare me, father ! spare me,” said Ramah, timidly, as she threw her arms around his neck, and hid her blushing head upon his shoulder. “Let us not judge Ephraim harshly. Remember he is the child of thine early friend, and though heaven knows”—and here her voice faltered, “that I have not deserved unkindness at his hands, I would not wrong him in thought.—Nay, reproach me not, dear father, that I am weeping. I will not give thee cause to chide again, and my maiden pride shall teach me to conquer this folly. Hitherto, dear father, thou hast seen me only as a meek and timid girl—henceforward, thou shalt find I can be something better. I will repay thy generous forbearance, and even if I perish in the struggle, I will forget Ephraim.”

And who was Ephraim? He was Ramah’s lover, her accepted lover, and every way worthy of the gentle and beautiful girl who had given him her affections. Ephraim belonged to the order of the priesthood. He was possessed of a noble exterior, a gentle and winning disposition, and a mind highly cultivated and stored with the traditionary lore, not only of his own country, but of that in which it had pleased God he should sojourn. He was also deeply versed in

law and religion ; and his pure and exalted principles had never yielded to the temptations that surrounded him.

The father of Ephraim had been the bosom friend of David ere they were carried away captive to Babylon ; but at that period, they lost sight of each other for many years. They met again by chance, when David went up from his dwelling by the banks of the Euphrates to negotiate for a wife for his youngest son. They recognized each other, and their mutual affection being unchanged, they saluted. Influenced by the affectionate and eager freedom of long tried and sincere friendship, David questioned the priest concerning his house, his family, and his prospects. Jonadab seemed embarrassed, and endeavoured to evade the questions of his friend. David ceased to importune when he found the conversation distressing ; but before they parted, the priest promised to visit his friend, with his only son, who was in delicate health.

Jonadab fulfilled his promise, but remained a very short time, because his sphere of duty lay elsewhere. He departed, leaving his son behind.

We have said that Ephraim was handsome ; and his natural beauty was increased by the delicate

languor which long sickness imparts to the countenance. Ramah was kind and attentive to the young stranger, because he was the child of her father's friend, and because he was her father's guest. The gentle girl, who approached him at first with the graceful timidity of a half-tamed fawn, by degrees learned to prefer his society. Ephraim was high-minded, enthusiastic and romantic—so was Ramah. Added to his other accomplishments, he excelled in music; and Ramah was a passionate admirer of this sublime science. She would sit for hours listening to the breathings of his harp, as he sang the songs of Zion in a strange land. They would weep together over the utter desolation of their fatherland.

O that beautiful word! whose every letter is poetry. Even as I write, I could weep and turn with the passionate yearning of the expatriated to the far-off home, beyond the blue Mediterranean. Vain yearning! futile dreams!—the inheritance of Israel is again in the hand of the stranger, and the time has not arrived for the wandering exiles to return.

And as they sat together, he would tell her how glorious and great was their country, how prosperous and happy were her children, while

they worshipped their God with the true worship and the upright heart, and obeyed the ordinances of their blessed and holy religion. His cheek would flush, and his eye lighten up with enthusiasm, as he spoke of the greatness of David, and the wisdom and glory of Solomon. He told her—and the flush died away, and the light faded from his eye—how they had fallen back from the worship of their God, wedding strange wives, violating every law, and worshipping strange gods of wood and stone, made by their own hands, according to the custom of the heathen. He wept as he spoke of the prostration of Zion, how she had fallen into the hands of the enemy as a punishment for her iniquities; and he told her how degraded and miserable were the few who still lingered around the ruins of the once mighty but now fallen city.

Thus months flew by. The gentle spring, whose emblem is hope, gave place to glorious summer; and summer in its turn made way for the gorgeous and many-tinted autumn, whose past is hope, whose present is fruition and beauty, and whose future is the grave. Even autumn was fading into that sepulchre of buried years, winter; and still the young man lingered in the dwelling of his father's friend.

Winter, clothed in its fleecy shroud, stole on, but the heart of the maiden was no longer her own. Unmasked, and unconscious, she had given it to another. Ephraim loved too—the spell was upon him, although he would not admit it even to himself. The two whom it most concerned, were the only parties ignorant of the deep interest they had excited in, and felt for each other.

And how felt David, when he discovered this growing attachment, between his gentle daughter and a man of whom he knew nothing, save that he was the child of an early friend? He rejoiced in it, because the character and manner of the young priest challenged respect from all men, and he only sorrowed to think that Ephraim delayed revealing his love. However, he waited patiently for the event, quite convinced that he would one day ask him for his child.

CHAPTER II.

Oh love! what is it in this world of ours
Which makes it fatal to be loved? Ah! why
With cypress branches hast thou wreathed thy bowers,
And made thy best interpreter a sigh?
As those who dote on odours pluck the flowers,
And place them on their breast—but place to die—
Thus the frail beings we would fondly cherish,
Are laid within our bosoms but to perish.

BYRON.

THINGS were still in this state, when one cold rainy morning, as Ramah was sitting at work, and Ephraim playing upon his harp as usual, and singing one of the sublime and beautiful psalms of David, a single horseman rode into the court-yard of the dwelling; and in a few moments, although covered by the soil of travel, was ushered into the chamber. Ramah hastily seized her veil, and flung it over her head; however, the stranger's business was not with her, but with her companion.

The young priest arose, and conducted him to his own chamber. They were closeted together but a few moments; and then, without staying for refreshment or repose, he mounted

his weary and jaded horse, and struck into the road that led back to the city. Ephraim remained but to see his visitor depart, and then returned to Ramah.

His face was deadly pale, and a cold dew stood upon his brow; it was evident something serious had transpired. The maid looked inquiringly into his face, and the tears started into her eyes, when he said he must leave her, and return to Babylon.

Ephraim failed not to mark the tears; and sitting down upon the couch beside her, he took her hand, and whispered something in her ear so low, that, had another been present, the words could not have been heard, though the import might have been guessed. Ramah blushed and smiled; the tears that had been gathering in her eyes, rolled down her face; but they were such happy tears, that no one could mistake their meaning; and when he took the rose from her bosom, and placed it on his own, she did not chide him, though she blushed till her features became as crimson as the flower.

Ephraim's father was ill, and he was obliged to depart; but he promised to return soon, very soon, and ask her father for her hand—and thus

they parted. The young priest bade a hasty adieu to his kind host and the rest of the family, mounted his mule, and rode homeward.

We have said it was a cold rainy morning ; and though Ephraim had recovered his health, he was naturally delicate. The cold winter's wind, sweeping in moaning gusts through the trees, while their bare boughs swayed to and fro, like discontented spirits, made his heart sink within him.

There are moments in life, when, yielding to some mysterious impulse, whose secret sway we neither pause to analyse, nor possess power to control, induces us to utter words, and commit actions, which our calmer judgment condemns, and which we would give all we possess to recall. Yet I know not why it should be so ; for there are events in life when reason, the great governing principle of mankind—aye, and let the cynical philosopher say what he will, of womankind, too—loses its power over us, and we appeal to her in vain. It is during such moments, after suggesting a thousand schemes and modes of action, which reason still rejects, that some sudden impulse comes to our aid—we waver no longer, but, taking it for our guide, leave the calculations of the goddess to those

who are cool enough to require a reason for everything they say or do. Not that I would condemn the free and constant exercise of that noble faculty which raises us above the brute creation, —but I pity those who are too frigid or world-worn, even to yield to one generous impulse.

However this may be, it is certain that some such momentary impulse induced Ephraim to confess his love; and equally certain it is, that every step he took nearer home, caused him to repent his declaration more and more. As his excited feelings calmed down, reason sternly disapproved of the step he had taken.

At length he arrived at his father's house. It was situated in a narrow crowded street, in one of the suburbs of the city. As Ephraim entered the humble abode, and contrasted it with the splendour of the one where he lately dwelt, he felt how immeasurable was the distance between him and Ramah. The slave who admitted him, having seen to the mule, hastened to inform his father of his arrival. After a few moment's absence, he returned, and informed Ephraim, who by this time had changed his dress, that his father was prepared to receive him. Ephraim looked into the face of the slave, the only one, with the exception of a

female, the reduced circumstances of Jonadab enabled him to retain, and read there the confirmation of his fears. Without waiting to question him, he hastened to his father's chamber. The room was darkened, and the faint light that found its way through the closely-curtained and narrow casements, only seemed to make the gloom more oppressive. There was no fire upon the hearth, although it was so cold that Ephraim shivered. The apartment was scrupulously clean; yet it would be almost impossible to imagine a more dreary and cheerless aspect than the sick room presented.

Emaciated and worn by sickness, the priest reclined upon the bed; his features were calm and composed, though ever and anon he cast an anxious glance towards the door; and as Ephraim entered, his eye fell upon him. The young man started, and his already pale face grew cadaverous; for, although he was prepared to find his father ill, he had not expected to find him so near death. There were men in the chamber, chaunting the prayers for the dying; and though his voice was inaudible, the lips of the invalid moved, and it was evident he was praying. When he saw his son, he motioned him to his side; and in a feeble voice, begged

the men to withdraw into an inner chamber—they remonstrated, but Jonadab insisted, and was obeyed.

“Come hither, my son,” he said, when they were alone. “Nay,” he continued, tenderly, “do not weep;” for, despite of his efforts, the tears were rapidly coursing down Ephraim’s face, as he knelt down by the bedside, and took the wasted hand of his father. The burning heat of that dry, fevered hand, explained why there was no fire in the room.

“Do not weep,” continued Jonadab; “for though I feel I am dying, let not that thought unman thee, for thou hast need of fortitude. I sent for thee that I might speak to thee, ere the power of utterance had forsaken me. What I leave of this world’s treasures is little indeed; yet I know it will suffice thee, for thou art not covetous. But thou hast a sister, Ephraim; a poor, weak, motherless girl, who will be wholly dependant on thee—one who will always be a burden to thee, requiring thine utmost care and affection. Her mother was tender and beautiful, and I loved her almost as well as thine—but that is past,—promise me, my son, that thou wilt never, never desert thy poor idiot sister.”

“I promise thee, father,” he replied in a low, broken voice.

“One thing more, Ephraim:—if it should please God that thy worldly means may ever increase, so as to enable thee to take a wife, dost thou think that though thou shouldst see one among the daughters of thine own people, whose beauty and virtues might teach thee to love, dost thou think thou couldst resist the temptation, for the sake of one poor idiot girl?”

Ephraim’s frame shook with violent agitation, and his brain throbbed with a burning pain; but still he answered in a voice which, though hollow and broken, was sufficiently distinct: “I do.” The old man placed his hands upon the head of his kneeling child, and breathed a blessing.

“There is a God above us,” he said, in a solemn tone, “and he will judge thee;” and then he impressed a fervent kiss upon his brow. The men in the next room heard a deep groan, followed by a heavy fall, and rushed in, expecting to find the old man dead; but it was only Ephraim, who had fainted. They carried him from the chamber; and leaving him in charge of the slave, returned to his father.

Another day had dawned before Ephraim

awoke to consciousness : it was morning to him, but the night of death had sealed the eyes of his father. Drearly wore away the first week of mourning. A month passed, and Ephraim had not summoned courage to see the helpless girl confided to his charge. He despised himself for the weakness which prompted him to delay that which was inevitable. Day after day, when he arose, he resolved to delay the meeting no longer; and night after night, as he lay tossing on his couch, he reproached himself for his want of firmness; and thus a month elapsed without an interview. At last, after a night passed in resolving on the course he intended to pursue, he arose, resolved to carry his determination into force at once; and as a preliminary step, he drew the withered rose from his bosom, where he had constantly carried it since his last interview with Ramah, and cast it into the fire. "I will see her no more," he murmured, as he descended the stairs: "young, beautiful, and admired, she will soon forget me, and I will try to forget her."

But even as he made this mental promise, he felt how futile would be the attempt, and overpowered by a withering sense of wretchedness, he paused at the door of his sister's chamber. "I cannot see her now," he said; "yet why

should I defer? I must see her at last, and why not now? Good God! is she not my father's child—my own sister—the only living thing I have, or ever shall have to care for? No mother ever watched over and guarded her first-born with more devoted tenderness than I will love my poor Hagar.”

He paused not another moment—his hand was on the latch, the frail fastening yielded to his touch, and he entered. Despite of the mental blindness of its possessor, the room displayed some signs of woman's taste—there were so many little ornaments and pretty trifles, to decorate it. Beautiful shells and flowers, stones of curious shapes and colours, and many other lovely and graceful things, gave an air of lightness and adornment to the simple chamber. But the loveliest and most graceful object was the owner. Ephraim paused to look around him: on a couch in a little recess, reclined the figure of the afflicted girl; she was busied (in thought I had well nigh said); but she had not mind enough to think, though now and then a glimmer of reason would shine on the benighted one, resembling not the sunbeam that dispels the darkness, but the lightning flash, that only serves to make the succeeding blackness more terribly

palpable. She was not thinking then, but dreaming—dreaming of sunshine, birds and flowers. She was beautiful ; for nature, as if desirous to make atonement for the deficiency of mind, had lavished on her the gift of personal loveliness in no ordinary degree. Her exquisite figure was arrayed in a loose drapery of sky blue, whose graceful folds left the neck and throat entirely exposed ; the open hanging sleeves displayed the perfect symmetry of her rounded and dazzling white arms ; and her beautiful hands, with their long taper fingers, were locked in each other, and folded on her swelling bosom. Her raven hair descended in luxuriant ringlets below her bust. There was not a tinge of red on her pure complexion ; if there had been, it would have destroyed the harmony of the whole. Her eyes, those large dark orbs, swimming in their sea of blue, needed but the light of intellectual fire to make her too dazzlingly bright for a habitant of earth. She was, in the words of that splendid and unrivalled genius, Lord Byron,

“ So coldly sweet, so deadly fair,
We start, for soul is wanting there.”

Ephraim approached, and bending over the re-

cumbent figure of his sister, murmured in a low voice the simple word—Hagar! She started, and looking in his face, with a vacant smile, sang in a voice whose every tone was sweet as the note of the wood-robin—

“ The birds wing their flight through the azure sky,
And no cloud in its sunny blue depth lowers ;
The flowers rejoice, and why should not I
Be happy, as well as the birds and flowers ?
I will hie to the woodlands, why should I not ?
They are green and fresh, and—”

She paused, and looking into his face, while a sudden gleam of light animated her eyes, exclaimed, “ I am sixteen to-day—am I not ?” The abrupt question startled him almost as much as the look which accompanied it, and he replied in a hesitating tone, “ I believe so—I don’t know.”

“ Don’t know ?” said the idiot, vacantly echoing his words, as if the sound had pleased her. “ Don’t know !” and after repeating it about a dozen times, she burst into a shout of boisterous laughter. Oh! that mockery of mirth,—that soulless unmeaning laughter—it jarred upon his nerves, and made his soul sicken within him. He could not forbear drawing a comparison between her and the beautiful and intellectual

being he had resigned for her sake. But he strove to banish these thoughts, for they threatened to overcome his fortitude—and again turning towards the helpless Hagar, he smoothed down the silken ringlets, and kissing her white forehead, exclaimed, with a violent effort to restrain his tears, “Poor girl! poor girl!”

“You pity me, then,” cried Hagar, starting up; and throwing her arms around his neck, she leaned her face upon his shoulder, and wept.

Ephraim wept too—the tears had been gathering a long while, and he was glad of an excuse to shed them. At last the arms relaxed from their close embrace; he laid her back upon the couch—she was sleeping. Long did he bend over and gaze upon her chiselled face—so lovely, that it might have belonged to an angel; for when she slept, and the eye was veiled beneath the snowy lid, and the long black lashes wet with tears swept the marble cheek, the countenance lost that blank vacancy which made it so painful to look upon. He knelt down by her side; and by degrees the gaze became less fixed, the eyes closed, the head dropped upon the pillow by the side of his sister’s, and he too slept.

Then indeed might the change in his appearance be traced—the brow was pale and haggard,

and the features sharp and thin, though they still retained their beauty of outline. The struggle between body and mind had been severe; and though the mind had conquered, it threatened to destroy the body. Mental strength often triumphs over corporeal weakness; but the conquest is of short duration, for the frail clay tenement is not strong enough to prison the mighty spirit, and it fails and dies in the contest.

But Ephraim had a higher motive than selfish feelings to support him,—it was the recollection of the solemn promise to his dying father, and the idea that if he died, that fair being would be left a destitute orphan in a strange land.

And how felt Ramah, who had no such resources to bear her through the trial? For a few days after his departure she looked lovelier and felt happier than ever. But as time rolled on, and no tidings came from Ephraim, she grew sad and pale, and her father became alarmed. In vain did he listen for the bounding step and the joyous laugh, whose sounds were as music to him. A blight had fallen upon her young spirit; it was that inward pining mildew that wears the heart away.

As she was sitting alone in her own chamber, her head leaning on her hand, and the tears

-streaming down her face, for she was very miserable, and had retired to weep unseen, her father entered. "Ramah!" She started, and turning, perceived her father. "My sweet child!" and seating himself beside her, he took her burning hands between his own, "what ails thee; why art thou weeping? It breaks my heart to look into thy face, and see thee so changed—it is not like thee, my Ramah, to conceal the cause of sorrow from thy father."

Ramah drew her hands away, and throwing herself into his arms, wept bitterly. David allowed her to vent her sorrow without interruption; and when the passion of tears was over, she raised her face suffused with crimson, and with the sweet ingenuousness of youth confided her secret to her father's keeping. "He shall have thee, sweet one—thou shalt be his bride, but thou must promise me to weep no more; thou shalt sleep now. Good night—God guard over and bless thee, my child;" and kissing her with playful tenderness he left her.

That night Ramah pressed her pillow with a lighter heart. Confidence is the sweetest tie of social life: when the heart loses its first young freshness, it ceases to confide its joys and sorrows to those around—it loses that open candour

which forms one of the chief and loveliest characteristics of youth; and looking with the suspicious eye of worldly wisdom, learned from bitter experience, it locks its feelings in its own recesses, and loses half the pleasure of life, for want of that sympathy which is only excited by confidence. To experience deception is a bitter thing—it chills the warm affections of the soul, and turns the finest feelings into gall; but better submit to be deluded and betrayed twenty times, than lose the sympathy of one true friend. I trust it will never be my lot to be dead to its soothing influence.

The next morning, as soon as the sun had dried up the dew, a man might be seen mounted on a mule, riding towards Babylon. The rich caparisons of the mule, as well as his own dress, bespoke the rider to be of some consideration. He rode on till he reached the very heart of the city, and pausing in one of the principal squares, he drew up his mule before a large mansion, and riding into the court yard, enquired for the High Priest. One of the slaves took the mule from its master, who had dismounted; and the latter, turning to another slave, bade him tell his master, that David the Benjamite, whose dwelling was on the banks of the Euphrates, would

speak with him. The slave obeyed, and in a few minutes he was conducted to the presence of Jeshua, the hereditary High Priest.

“Sholam alechem,” said the priest, rising to receive his venerable guest. “Alechem sholam,”* replied David, taking the seat which Jeshua offered, and partaking of the refreshment. They entered into conversation upon the prevailing topics of the day; but David had only one object in his visit to the priest, and he soon turned the conversation, by inquiring where he might find Jonadab the priest. “Shamong yes ro ile!” ejaculated Jeshua; “he is dead these two moons past.”

David turned deadly pale; the communication was so sudden, so wholly unexpected, that he almost fainted. Jeshua flew to assist him, but the old man quickly recovered, at least sufficiently to speak; though the tears rolled unrestrainedly down his time-worn face, as he asked the High Priest, “If he knew where he might find Ephraim?” “Rest thyself awhile, good David; he will be here before noon; and I pledge myself that thou shall see him.” At

* A common mode of salutation, on two persons meeting; the first exclaims, “Sholam alechem”—peace be with you: which the other reverses, replying, “With you be peace.”

that moment a slave entered, and informed the priest that his presence was required. "Go; I will see him presently," he replied; and apologizing to his guest, he rose and retired.

David was not sorry to be alone, because it allowed him time to recover his self-possession, and compose his feelings, previous to his interview with Ephraim. Nearly two hours elapsed—it was an hour after noon, and the old man waxed impatient; aye, and if the truth must be told, somewhat wroth at the delay: at last he heard the sound of an approaching step. The door was slowly opened, as if the person without accomplished his task, slight as it was, with considerable difficulty; and Ephraim entered. The blood rushed painfully to his brow, when he discovered who was the occupant of the chamber; and he would have retired, but David prevented him, and rising, he seized the young man's hand, and led him to a seat. "Perhaps thou thinkest it strange, Ephraim, that I should seek this interview; and were it not a peculiar case, it would be so—I came to speak to thee of Ramah." Ephraim tried to murmur something, but his voice failed him, and he remained silent.

David proceeded; "Nay, there needs no apology: Ramah has told me all, and (with a doubt-

ful smile,) thy looks confirm the tale." David endeavoured to speak firmly, but his voice faltered; yet there was a deep solemnity in his manner, as the unbidden tear stole down his furrowed cheek. "Ephraim, do not trifle with the happiness of my child: her heart was formed to be fed with the gentle warmth of love, and it will break with unkindness. If thou canst keep her, take her, and God's blessing be upon you both; she is a precious gift, and I would not bestow her lightly, for her happiness is dearer to me than my own. Remember, I shall expect thee soon."

Ephraim made no reply; the power of utterance had deserted him. He felt as if every drop of blood had flowed back upon his heart, and there lay congealed—he sat as motionless as if he had been suddenly transformed to marble: no sculpture ever looked more statue-like than did the young priest, who, still in the possession of life, felt as if all life's faculties had forsaken him. But David did not wait for an answer; he fancied all things settled, and already looked upon Ephraim as his son; if he had not, how much pain would have been spared to all parties!

Ramah blushed and wept, when she under-

stood the purport of her father's visit to Babylon ; but of what consequence were the showers, when they were succeeded by such brilliant sunshine ? All was again expectation ; but the days rolled by, and Ephraim came not. The health-giving hues of hope were again overshadowed by the sickly languor of despair. David rejoiced, for more than one reason, when the edict of Cyrus was published. He parted with his beautiful domain by the banks of the Euphrates, and journeyed towards Jerusalem. He fancied change of air and scene would exercise a beneficial influence upon Ramah's health and spirits ; but as many another, we will not say a better man, has done, he found himself mistaken. Every mile they journeyed from Babylon seemed to increase rather than diminish the load of sorrow that oppressed her, and David saw with regret, that instead of forgetting, Ramah scarcely struggled against the power that threatened to consign her to an early grave ; but from the night on which she promised to forget Ephraim, he found her in tears no more.

CHAPTER III.

Oh ! say not woman's false as fair.

- SONG.

And well do vanished frowns enhance
The charm of every brightened glance,
And sweeter seems each dawning smile
For having lost its light awhile ;
And happier now for all her sighs,
As on his arm her head reposes,
She whispers him with laughing eyes—
Remember, love, the feast of roses.

MOORE.

THE next morning they resumed their journey towards Jerusalem ; and upon their arrival took up their residence in the beautiful, but half-ruined palace, in which David dwelt prior to the captivity.

The sunny summer months passed away ; and though Ramah's cheek had lost the rose which formerly tinged it with such rich colouring, she was still very beautiful, and for her father's sake she endeavoured to forget the past. Although her delicate frame did not completely sink under the conflict, the shadow darkened her brow, and tinged the young spirit with a thoughtful melancholy, more becoming to age than youth.

She performed her duties with an automaton regularity, which proved the mind was otherwise engaged: it was no longer a pleasure, but a duty to tend her flowers and deck her garden-bower—a duty she owed the kind parent whose tender affection had done so much for her. For his sake she endeavoured to conceal those feelings which time had proved her utter inability to conquer. By tacit consent the name of Ephraim was never mentioned by any member of the family in Ramah's presence.

Thus time rolled on. The altar was reared in its ancient place, and the ceremony of the continued burnt-offering was renewed. Two years glided away, and the beautiful spring was dressing the earth with flowers, and clothing the trees with foliage. The early part of the day had been dark and lowering, but the balmy freshness of evening amply repaid for the storm. The sun had just sunk below the horizon, causing the sky to be beautifully variegated with crimson, purple and gold—

“ It was one of those ambrosial eves
A day of storm so often leaves.”

On a small rustic bench, under the shade of a magnificent palm, sat Ramah. Her father was

by her side. The features of the young maiden were pale, but working with excessive agitation. The old man's face was flushed, and there was something like anger in his tone, as he fixed his eye upon her with sternness, and exclaimed, "This is folly, Ramah, the worst of folly. Hadst thou been wedded to Ephraim, thou couldst not have done more than devote thyself to perpetual widowhood. I have yielded too long—to do so longer, would be sinful. It is not right for thee to encroach on that kindness. Twice twelve moons hast thou mourned, wasting health and life in vain regret, and I have never once chided thee. I would not ask thee to wed another, while there was the shadow of a chance that thou couldst become his wife. Ramah, Ramah! do not let me think that I have been preserved beyond the age of man, to be cursed with a disobedient child—only name a definite time—only say that there shall be an end to this—Levi will wait patiently."

Ramah buried her face in her hands. Lately she had been persecuted by the love of a young man, a friend of her brother's, and his suit was favoured by her father, who was pleased with his personal attractions and mental endowments. Even Ramah was obliged to confess,

that if her heart had not been preoccupied, she would willingly have yielded to Levi's love.

"I shall never, never be happy!" exclaimed Ramah, as she leaned upon her father's shoulder. She, however, could no longer resist David's importunity; and after a moment's pause, she raised her face, and said, in a voice of forced calmness, "You shall be obeyed, my father, even at the expense of life; I will marry Levi—I will be his wife; but, believe me, the bridal robes I wear at morn will be changed for a shroud at night, and my bridal bed will be the grave."

David shuddered at her unnatural calmness; tears and reproaches—nay, even entreaties he was ready to combat, but he was not prepared for this; and dashing the tears from his eyes, he drew her to his bosom, and said, in a voice of tender affection, "I will urge thee no more, my darling child: thou shalt not have to curse me and say, when I am gathered to my fathers, 'I might have been happy but for my father.' No!" he continued, in a voice of passionate energy; "no, blessed one! thou shalt not say this of me. Come, lay thy head on my bosom, as thou didst when thou wert yet a child, and thou shalt find sympathy and indulgence. I will

tell Levi of thy determination, and bid him think of thee no more ; but in return I ask of thee one favour—thou wilt witness the ceremony of the foundation of the new temple—thou wilt see the first stone of the house of the Lord laid down—thou wilt not refuse me this ?”

Ramah would have excused herself, but the generous forbearance of her father, with regard to the disposal of her hand, prevented her ; and raising her beautiful eyes, now swimming in tears, she replied, “ I will be there, my father.” They sat conversing together for some time, and when Ramah returned to the house, a feeling of happiness, that had long been foreign to her bosom, stole into it again.

I have already confessed myself a believer in forebodings, whether for good or evil ; and I once more aver, however mysterious and indefinable they may appear, they are not the less truly warnings of Providence. If this be superstition, then am I superstitious.

It was a beautiful morning in the delightful month of Av. No cloud obscured the blue depths of the sunny sky,—a fresh breeze swept over the flowers, and made the balmy air more fragrant with its stolen sweets—the waters of the Cedron laughed in the sun—the birds sang

gaily—young and old were wreathed in smiles, and grateful hearts rejoiced, for the first stone of the new Temple was to be laid. It was the anniversary of the destruction of the Temple. Exactly fifty-five years had elapsed since that beautiful building was reduced to ashes. For fifty-five years had Jerusalem laid desolate, and her children remained captives in a foreign land.

It was yet early in the day, but thousands might be seen wending their way towards the sacred mount. Even the women carried their young children in their arms, that they might be able to tell another generation they had witnessed the foundation of the Temple. Ramah, crushed and spiritless as she had lately been, was comparatively happy; for who could be otherwise on this great national festival? She attired herself with more than her accustomed care;—again, the light foot and the bounding step responded to the notes of music—again, the red rose struggled with the white for mastery in that beautiful face—again, the luxuriant hair was braided around the polished forehead, and adorned with fresh spring flowers. Thus glowing with youth and beauty, she went forth with her father and his wives to witness the ceremony. It was nearly noon; the bright sun shone radi-

antly over her head, as if the heavens smiled upon the ceremony about to be performed.

A breathless silence reigned over the whole of the vast multitude that crowded Moriah and the neighbouring heights. Suddenly the hushed stillness was broken by the trumpets of the priests and the voices of the singers. Oh! surely if anything can increase the devotional feelings and excite the enthusiasm of a multitude, it is music—sacred music, with its low thrilling tones, that seem to overpower all gross and earthly feelings, and elevate the soul. If anything can exalt our notions of the Deity, it must be such a scene as this, where thousands mingle together to praise his name—where the voices of youth and age, infancy and maturity, are lifted up in prayer, not under the gilded roof of a temple reared by human hands—but beneath that glorious canopy, that smiles alike over the children of the burning east and the inhabitants of the frozen north—that glows with equal beauty over the freeman and the slave, the tyrant and the victim, the monarch and the beggar.

Those sounds of sweet music, oh! how deliciously they floated upon the gentle noontide breeze. The crowd opened and fell back, and the eyes of eager thousands were turned toward

the spot whence proceeded the sound of coming feet. First, came the masons with their tools; then came Zerubbabel, the prince of the captivity, and the lineal descendant of David: he was attired in robes of state, but oh how different from the splendour wont to mark the princes of the house of Judah! Then came Jeshua the hereditary high priest, in full pontificals; and then the priests with their trumpets, and the Levites, with the children of the house of Asaph, with cymbals. When the workmen had finished, and the foundation was laid, they sang praises unto the Lord, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel.

The aged men, who remembered the magnificent Temple of Solomon, wept to see the glory of his house departed; but the people shouted for joy, and they praised the Lord, glorifying his name, and singing psalms, till the hills reëchoed with their songs of thanksgivings. It was a scene to awaken the highest and noblest emotions of the soul—a scene, the memory of which should ever be dear to the sons and daughters of Israel.

David was amongst the weepers, though he too joined in the hymns of praise; for even in his old age he saw the captives set free, and the

streaming down her face, for she was very miserable, and had retired to weep unseen, her father entered. "Ramah!" She started, and turning, perceived her father. "My sweet child!" and seating himself beside her, he took her burning hands between his own, "what ails thee; why art thou weeping? It breaks my heart to look into thy face, and see thee so changed—it is not like thee, my Ramah, to conceal the cause of sorrow from thy father."

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The next morning, as soon as the sun had dried up the dew, a man might be seen mounted on a mule, riding towards Babylon. The rich caparisons of the mule, as well as his own dress, bespoke the rider to be of some consideration. He rode on till he reached the very heart of the city, and pausing in one of the principal squares, he drew up his mule before a large mansion, and riding into the court yard, enquired for the High Priest. One of the slaves took the mule from its master, who had dismounted; and the latter, turning to another slave, bade him tell his master, that David the Benjamite, whose dwelling was on the banks of the Euphrates, would

speak with him. The slave obeyed, and in a few minutes he was conducted to the presence of Jeshua, the hereditary High Priest.

“Sholam alechem,” said the priest, rising to receive his venerable guest. “Alechem sholam,”* replied David, taking the seat which Jeshua offered, and partaking of the refreshment. They entered into conversation upon the prevailing topics of the day; but David had only one object in his visit to the priest, and he soon turned the conversation, by inquiring where he might find Jonadab the priest. “Shamong yes ro ile!” ejaculated Jeshua; “he is dead these two moons past.”

David turned deadly pale; the communication was so sudden, so wholly unexpected, that he almost fainted. Jeshua flew to assist him, but the old man quickly recovered, at least sufficiently to speak; though the tears rolled unrestrainedly down his time-worn face, as he asked the High Priest, “If he knew where he might find Ephraim?” “Rest thyself awhile, good David; he will be here before noon; and I pledge myself that thou shall see him.” At

* A common mode of salutation, on two persons meeting; the first exclaims, “Sholam alechem”—peace be with you: which the other reverses, replying, “With you be peace.”

that moment a slave entered, and informed the priest that his presence was required. "Go; I will see him presently," he replied; and apologizing to his guest, he rose and retired.

David was not sorry to be alone, because it allowed him time to recover his self-possession, and compose his feelings, previous to his interview with Ephraim. Nearly two hours elapsed—it was an hour after noon, and the old man waxed impatient; aye, and if the truth must be told, somewhat wroth at the delay: at last he heard the sound of an approaching step. The door was slowly opened, as if the person without accomplished his task, slight as it was, with considerable difficulty; and Ephraim entered. The blood rushed painfully to his brow, when he discovered who was the occupant of the chamber; and he would have retired, but David prevented him, and rising, he seized the young man's hand, and led him to a seat. "Perhaps thou thinkest it strange, Ephraim, that I should seek this interview; and were it not a peculiar case, it would be so—I came to speak to thee of Ramah." Ephraim tried to murmur something, but his voice failed him, and he remained silent.

David proceeded; "Nay, there needs no apology: Ramah has told me all, and (with a doubt-

ful smile,) thy looks confirm the tale." David endeavoured to speak firmly, but his voice faltered; yet there was a deep solemnity in his manner, as the unbidden tear stole down his furrowed cheek. "Ephraim, do not trifle with the happiness of my child: her heart was formed to be fed with the gentle warmth of love, and it will break with unkindness. If thou canst keep her, take her, and God's blessing be upon you both; she is a precious gift, and I would not bestow her lightly, for her happiness is dearer to me than my own. Remember, I shall expect thee soon."

Ephraim made no reply; the power of utterance had deserted him. He felt as if every drop of blood had flowed back upon his heart, and there lay congealed—he sat as motionless as if he had been suddenly transformed to marble: no sculpture ever looked more statue-like than did the young priest, who, still in the possession of life, felt as if all life's faculties had forsaken him. But David did not wait for an answer; he fancied all things settled, and already looked upon Ephraim as his son; if he had not, how much pain would have been spared to all parties!

Ramah blushed and wept, when she under-

stood the purport of her father's visit to Babylon ; but of what consequence were the showers, when they were succeeded by such brilliant sunshine ? All was again expectation ; but the days rolled by, and Ephraim came not. The health-giving hues of hope were again overshadowed by the sickly languor of despair. David rejoiced, for more than one reason, when the edict of Cyrus was published. He parted with his beautiful domain by the banks of the Euphrates, and journeyed towards Jerusalem. He fancied change of air and scene would exercise a beneficial influence upon Ramah's health and spirits ; but as many another, we will not say a better man, has done, he found himself mistaken. Every mile they journeyed from Babylon seemed to increase rather than diminish the load of sorrow that oppressed her, and David saw with regret, that instead of forgetting, Ramah scarcely struggled against the power that threatened to consign her to an early grave ; but from the night on which she promised to forget Ephraim, he found her in tears no more.

CHAPTER III.

Oh! say not woman's false as fair.

SONG.

And well do vanished frowns enhance
The charm of every brightened glance,
And sweeter seems each dawning smile
For having lost its light awhile;
And happier now for all her sighs,
As on his arm her head reposes,
She whispers him with laughing eyes—
Remember, love, the feast of roses.

MOORE.

THE next morning they resumed their journey towards Jerusalem; and upon their arrival took up their residence in the beautiful, but half-ruined palace, in which David dwelt prior to the captivity.

The sunny summer months passed away; and though Ramah's cheek had lost the rose which formerly tinged it with such rich colouring, she was still very beautiful, and for her father's sake she endeavoured to forget the past. Although her delicate frame did not completely sink under the conflict, the shadow darkened her brow, and tinged the young spirit with a thoughtful melancholy, more becoming to age than youth.

She performed her duties with an automaton regularity, which proved the mind was otherwise engaged: it was no longer a pleasure, but a duty to tend her flowers and deck her garden-bower—a duty she owed the kind parent whose tender affection had done so much for her. For his sake she endeavoured to conceal those feelings which time had proved her utter inability to conquer. By tacit consent the name of Ephraim was never mentioned by any member of the family in Ramah's presence.

Thus time rolled on. The altar was reared in its ancient place, and the ceremony of the continued burnt-offering was renewed. Two years glided away, and the beautiful spring was dressing the earth with flowers, and clothing the trees with foliage. The early part of the day had been dark and lowering, but the balmy freshness of evening amply repaid for the storm. The sun had just sunk below the horizon, causing the sky to be beautifully variegated with crimson, purple and gold—

“ It was one of those ambrosial eves
A day of storm so often leaves.”

On a small rustic bench, under the shade of a magnificent palm, sat Ramah. Her father was

by her side. The features of the young maiden were pale, but working with excessive agitation. The old man's face was flushed, and there was something like anger in his tone, as he fixed his eye upon her with sternness, and exclaimed, "This is folly, Ramah, the worst of folly. Hadst thou been wedded to Ephraim, thou couldst not have done more than devote thyself to perpetual widowhood. I have yielded too long—to do so longer, would be sinful. It is not right for thee to encroach on that kindness. Twice twelve moons hast thou mourned, wasting health and life in vain regret, and I have never once chided thee. I would not ask thee to wed another, while there was the shadow of a chance that thou couldst become his wife. Ramah, Ramah! do not let me think that I have been preserved beyond the age of man, to be cursed with a disobedient child—only name a definite time—only say that there shall be an end to this—Levi will wait patiently."

Ramah buried her face in her hands. Lately she had been persecuted by the love of a young man, a friend of her brother's, and his suit was favoured by her father, who was pleased with his personal attractions and mental endowments. Even Ramah was obliged to confess,

that if her heart had not been preoccupied, she would willingly have yielded to Levi's love.

"I shall never, never be happy!" exclaimed Ramah, as she leaned upon her father's shoulder. She, however, could no longer resist David's importunity; and after a moment's pause, she raised her face, and said, in a voice of forced calmness, "You shall be obeyed, my father, even at the expense of life; I will marry Levi—I will be his wife; but, believe me, the bridal robes I wear at morn will be changed for a shroud at night, and my bridal bed will be the grave."

David shuddered at her unnatural calmness; tears and reproaches—nay, even entreaties he was ready to combat, but he was not prepared for this; and dashing the tears from his eyes, he drew her to his bosom, and said, in a voice of tender affection, "I will urge thee no more, my darling child: thou shalt not have to curse me and say, when I am gathered to my fathers, 'I might have been happy but for my father.' No!" he continued, in a voice of passionate energy; "no, blessed one! thou shalt not say this of me. Come, lay thy head on my bosom, as thou didst when thou wert yet a child, and thou shalt find sympathy and indulgence. I will

tell Levi of thy determination, and bid him think of thee no more; but in return I ask of thee one favour—thou wilt witness the ceremony of the foundation of the new temple—thou wilt see the first stone of the house of the Lord laid down—thou wilt not refuse me this?"

Ramah would have excused herself, but the generous forbearance of her father, with regard to the disposal of her hand, prevented her; and raising her beautiful eyes, now swimming in tears, she replied, "I will be there, my father." They sat conversing together for some time, and when Ramah returned to the house, a feeling of happiness, that had long been foreign to her bosom, stole into it again.

I have already confessed myself a believer in forebodings, whether for good or evil; and I once more aver, however mysterious and indefinable they may appear, they are not the less truly warnings of Providence. If this be superstition, then am I superstitious.

It was a beautiful morning in the delightful month of Av. No cloud obscured the blue depths of the sunny sky,—a fresh breeze swept over the flowers, and made the balmy air more fragrant with its stolen sweets—the waters of the Cedron laughed in the sun—the birds sang

gaily—young and old were wreathed in smiles, and grateful hearts rejoiced, for the first stone of the new Temple was to be laid. It was the anniversary of the destruction of the Temple. Exactly fifty-five years had elapsed since that beautiful building was reduced to ashes. For fifty-five years had Jerusalem laid desolate, and her children remained captives in a foreign land.

It was yet early in the day, but thousands might be seen wending their way towards the sacred mount. Even the women carried their young children in their arms, that they might be able to tell another generation they had witnessed the foundation of the Temple. Ramah, crushed and spiritless as she had lately been, was comparatively happy; for who could be otherwise on this great national festival? She attired herself with more than her accustomed care;—again, the light foot and the bounding step responded to the notes of music—again, the red rose struggled with the white for mastery in that beautiful face—again, the luxuriant hair was braided around the polished forehead, and adorned with fresh spring flowers. Thus glowing with youth and beauty, she went forth with her father and his wives to witness the ceremony. It was nearly noon; the bright sun shone radi-

antly over her head, as if the heavens smiled upon the ceremony about to be performed.

A breathless silence reigned over the whole of the vast multitude that crowded Moriah and the neighbouring heights. Suddenly the hushed stillness was broken by the trumpets of the priests and the voices of the singers. Oh! surely if anything can increase the devotional feelings and excite the enthusiasm of a multitude, it is music—sacred music, with its low thrilling tones, that seem to overpower all gross and earthly feelings, and elevate the soul. If anything can exalt our notions of the Deity, it must be such a scene as this, where thousands mingle together to praise his name—where the voices of youth and age, infancy and maturity, are lifted up in prayer, not under the gilded roof of a temple reared by human hands—but beneath that glorious canopy, that smiles alike over the children of the burning east and the inhabitants of the frozen north—that glows with equal beauty over the freeman and the slave, the tyrant and the victim, the monarch and the beggar.

Those sounds of sweet music, oh! how deliciously they floated upon the gentle noontide breeze. The crowd opened and fell back, and the eyes of eager thousands were turned toward

the spot whence proceeded the sound of coming feet. First, came the masons with their tools; then came Zerubbabel, the prince of the captivity, and the lineal descendant of David: he was attired in robes of state, but oh how different from the splendour wont to mark the princes of the house of Judah! Then came Jeshua the hereditary high priest, in full pontificals; and then the priests with their trumpets, and the Levites, with the children of the house of Asaph, with cymbals. When the workmen had finished, and the foundation was laid, they sang praises unto the Lord, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel.

The aged men, who remembered the magnificent Temple of Solomon, wept to see the glory of his house departed; but the people shouted for joy, and they praised the Lord, glorifying his name, and singing psalms, till the hills reëchoed with their songs of thanksgivings. It was a scene to awaken the highest and noblest emotions of the soul—a scene, the memory of which should ever be dear to the sons and daughters of Israel.

David was amongst the weepers, though he too joined in the hymns of praise; for even in his old age he saw the captives set free, and the

chosen people of God worshipping Him in their own land. He pressed the hand of Ramah, and spoke to her of the wonderful beauty of the structure Solomon had raised, and which Nebuchadnezzar had overthrown ; but though she had often listened with pleasure to these recitals, she heeded them not now. David watched the direction of her eyes, and wiping away the tears that nearly blinded his own, turned them in the same direction. " Good God ! I cannot be mistaken," he murmured ; " that voice, that face, that figure, are Ephraim's."

The young priest suddenly turned pale, dropped the silver trumpet from his hands, staggered, and fell into the arms of the Levite who was by his side. His eye had caught the fixed glance of Ramah. There was a youth by her side ; but Ephraim was not aware it was her brother's son. A sudden pain darted through his brain ; he fell, and was carried senseless to his home. Ramah saw him fall, though she knew not the cause ; and uttering a faint scream, she sank motionless into her father's arms.

It was evening ; and the hues of sunset were chequering the blue expanse of heaven. Ephraim was sitting in his lonely dwelling, brooding over the bitter past and the blighted future. " Life is

yet young," he said, "and I may be happy; I will see her again—once more." As he spoke, he looked down, and encountered the glance of a pair of large dark eyes, that were, or seemed to be, intently perusing his face; while the tears were slowly trickling down the upturned countenance of his idiot sister.

"God preserve me!" exclaimed the young priest, pressing both hands upon his breast to check the rapid pulsations of his heart, while every drop of blood in his fevered veins burned like streams of liquid fire;—"why should I see her more? Was there not one by her side this morning, who I doubt not is her husband? Oh Ramah! Ramah! thrice blessed art thou, who, turning to the beautiful present, and the bright future, hast ceased to think of the past. I have now a double motive to forget her, and yet my happiness consists in dreaming of what we might have been to each other."

Ephraim had never even heard of Ramah from the day he parted from her father in the house of Jeshua. Upon that occasion, as soon as he recovered from the state of stupefaction in which David left him, he bade a hasty adieu to the high priest, and returned home, resolving to seek David, and inform him of the circumstances

in which he was placed—the promise he had given his dying father, and thus resign all pretensions to his daughter's hand. With this determination he ordered the slave to saddle his mule in readiness for the next morning; but ere the next morning arrived, he was more helpless than an infant. The delirium of fever succeeded to the excitement. For six long months he lay hovering between life and death, never for one moment quitting his sick couch. However, at last, he became so far convalescent, that he was capable of undertaking the ride; but he found that the beautiful dwelling of David had passed into the hands of a stranger. The only intelligence he could gain of the family was, that they had returned to their own land. Ephraim's resolution was soon taken; he disposed of the little property he possessed, and with a single slave, and a female attendant for his poor sister, he returned to his father's land, where he lived in humble obscurity, unconscious that the one dear object who still occupied his whole soul, was a denizen of the same city, until that day when he fancied he saw her as the bride of another.

The moon had risen, and was shedding a flood of silver radiance over the silent streets of Jeru-

salem, when Ephraim wandered forth from his dwelling, to seek forgetfulness in the beauties of nature. He sat himself down by the brook of Siloam, and watched the pure moonlight playing upon the waters, till the holy quiet of the scene tranquillised the feverish throbbings of his brain. Long did he sit there, rapt in soft meditations—there was nothing to disturb the sweet silence, save the light breeze gently stirring the branches of the trees, and making little eddies on the clear waters of the brook, which, catching the gleams of the moonlight, shone forth for a moment like living globes of liquid silver, and then melted away for ever. Suddenly he heard footsteps approaching, and turning round, beheld the figure of a venerable old man supporting a young female.

“Ephraim!” The priest started to his feet, and gazed intently into the face of the speaker. It was David—he had led Ramah forth in the calm beauty of the evening, to speak comfort to her, though experience had taught him it was in vain.

Ramah wept herself to sleep that night; but oh! they were such blessed tears, like the rain following a long drought; such pearly drops of happiness, that who could blame the father for

kneeling by her side, and weeping for joy? Strange that tears, the general heralds of sorrow—the harbingers of woe—the outpourings of the saddened spirit—should also be the precursors of joy—the sweet overflowings of a gladdened heart.

There were songs of joy in the palace hall of David. The guests were assembling for a marriage feast. The young bride, dressed in a robe of pure white, sat in her bower, awaiting the coming of the bridegroom—her arms were round her father's neck, and her glowing face, covered with tears and blushes, was hidden in his bosom; but she did not now say, as she had on that evening when they sat together in the same attitude, beneath the shade of the palm in the valley where they had pitched their tent, "I will, I will forget Ephraim."

An aged relative of the young priest had died, and bequeathed to him a beautiful dwelling and a fruitful vineyard, which enabled him to wed the lovely daughter of David, and yet redeem his PROMISE.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

3428. AFTER the death of Nehemiah, the Jews enjoyed an interval of profound peace, until the invasion of Tyre by Alexander the Great in the course of his Asiatic conquests. While laying siege to that city, he sent to demand the submission of Jerusalem. The high priest refused, alleging as an excuse, his oath of allegiance to Darius the Persian monarch. Incensed at this answer, immediately after the surrender of Tyre and Gaza, the conqueror marched against Jerusalem.

He was met by Jaddua the high priest, in full pontificals, attended by a solemn procession of priests and Levites. When Alexander met him, he fell down and adored the holy name written upon the gold plate upon his forehead.

Parmenio, one of Alexander's generals, demanded why he whom all the world worshipped, should bow down to the Jewish Priest ?

"I worship," replied the monarch, "not the high priest, but his God. In a vision at Dios, in Macedonia, that figure, attired in the very dress he now wears, appeared to me, and exhorted me to come into Asia, and achieve the conquest of Persia." Alexander granted to the Jews many privileges and valuable immunities, and permitted them to retain their independence.

On the death of Alexander, and the subsequent division of his empire among his generals, Judea, divided and torn by

factions, became alternately a prey to the Egyptians and Syrians, until Antiochus Epiphanes, King of Syria, obtained possession of Jerusalem. He put forty thousand of the
 3592. inhabitants to death, and sold as many more for slaves.

He pillaged the city and temple, and caused a sow to be sacrificed upon the altar of burnt offerings, and, having boiled part of the flesh, ordered the liquor to be sprinkled over every part of the sacred edifice. Not satisfied with this, he compelled the people to profane the sabbath, forbade circumcision, on pain of death; suppressed all the rites of the Jewish
 3593. religion, substituting bacchanalian orgies for the feast of tabernacles; and compelled the indignant and oppressed Jews to bear a part in the disgusting ceremony. Judas Maccabeus, son of Mattathias the Asmonean, an aged priest at Molin, assisted by his brothers John, Simon, Eleazar, and Jonathan, instigated by a love of country and the wise counsels of his father, revolted, and after a series of splendid victories over the generals of Antiochus, obtained possession of the city and temple; and having repaired and cleansed the sacred
 3595. edifice, built a new altar, and held the feast of dedication for eight days, commencing on the twenty-fifth day of the month Chislew. This festival is commemorated by the Jews to the present day.

Judas, in his turn, began to act upon the offensive. Having defeated the Idumeans and Ammonites, he removed the Jews from the provinces east of the Jordan to the more defensible country of Judea. Meantime Antiochus, consumed by an incurable ulcer, and fired with remorse for his barbarities, died in a small town among the mountains of Paratacene, in Persia.

Judas having marched to relieve Bethsura, which was besieged by Lysias, on the part of Antiochus Eupatar, son of the late monarch, his brother Eleazar was crushed to death by the

fall of an elephant, which in a moment of heroic self-devotion he had stabbed in the belly, knowing that its fall must crush him. Bethsura capitulating on honourable terms, Judas fell back on Jerusalem, which was quickly invested by Lysias.

3596. The Syrians beginning to suffer from want of provisions, and the state of affairs requiring their presence elsewhere, concluded a treaty, and Antiochus was admitted into the city ; but, in direct violation of the terms agreed on, he threw down the walls, and dismantled the fortifications.

3597. Bacchides, a Syrian general, raised Alcimus to the high priesthood, and by his means obtained possession of Jerusalem. Alcimus having, under pretence of coming to an amicable understanding, allured many of the leaders to him, treacherously slew sixty of them.

3598. Soon as Bacchides had withdrawn his troops, Judas flew to arms again, defeated Nicanor in two battles, and slew him. He proposed to enter into alliance with the Roman senate, which they willingly consented to, and recognised the independence of Judea. Before the treaty was published, Judas was slain in an engagement with Alcimus and Bacchides ; abandoned by all his army, with the exception of eight hundred men, and disdaining to retreat, the gallant Maccabee fell nobly, having first defeated one wing of the enemy's army. John, the eldest of the Asmonean brothers, was killed about the same time by the Arabians, while escorting some of their effects to the friendly Nabatheans.

3599. His brother Jonathan, who lay concealed in the wilderness of Tekoah with a small force, revenged his death, by falling on his murderers while they were celebrating a splendid marriage feast, and put them all to the sword.

Jonathan, who had been hovering about the camp of Bacchides, while his brother Simon defended the strong post of Bethsasi, at length compelled him to grant an honourable peace.

Jonathan took advantage of this peace, to make himself master of Judea; although Jerusalem, and the stronger towns occupied by Syrians and apostate Jews, still held out against him.

3606. Jonathan availed himself of the division created by a revolution in Syria, to seize on Jerusalem. He allied himself to the cause of Alexander Balas, one of the candidates for the Syrian throne, and thus secured his assistance. He obtained, by this means, the office of high priest, and in his person commenced the reign of the Asmonean princes.

3614. Jonathan took advantage of another revolution in Syria, to lay siege to the citadel of Jerusalem, and, leaving his troops to press the siege, went in person to the court at Antioch, whither the besieged had sent for succour. He concluded an advantageous treaty with Demetrius, who then filled the Syrian throne. Shortly after, on some misunderstanding with Demetrius, the Asmonean espoused the cause of Antiochus Theos, who aspired to the throne; and in conjunction with Tryphon, an officer of Antiochus, twice defeated Demetrius, and compelled him to relinquish the throne. He strengthened many of the fortresses in Judea, and renewed the treaty with Rome.

3615. Jonathan being afterwards at war with the party to whom Tryphon adhered, was allured into the city of Ptolemais by him, and there treacherously put to death. Tryphon returning to Syria, assassinated Antiochus, and endeavoured to seize on the throne. Simon, the last of the race of Mattathias who was invested with supreme command, recovered the body of his brother, and having interred him at Modin with great state, and erected a sepulchre with seven pillars for his father, mother, brothers, and self, openly espoused the party of Demetrius, who immediately granted him a full recognition of the independence of his country. He immedi-

3618.

ately renewed the treaty with Rome, reduced all the fortified towns to obedience, and having taken the fortress of Jerusalem, built by Antiochus Epiphanes, with incredible labour levelled the hill on which it stood, that it might no longer command the hill of the temple.

3624. Simon, the last of the Maccabees, and his eldest son Judah, were assassinated at a banquet in Jericho, by his son-in-law Ptolemy, who had formed a conspiracy with Antiochus, king of Syria, to usurp the sovereignty, and at the same time endeavoured to surprise Simon's younger son, John Hyrcanus, in Gazara; but John, eluding the danger, appeared in Jerusalem, and was unanimously proclaimed high priest and ruler of the nation.

Hyrcanus besieged Ptolemy in Jericho; but he, having John's mother and brothers prisoners, shut himself up in a fortress, and exposing his captives on the walls, scourged them, and threatened to put them to death, unless the siege was raised. With the generous and lofty spirit of the Maccabees, the noble Jewess besought her son to revenge the murder of his father, and not to consider her danger. Hyrcanus, however, hesitated, and his filial love induced him to raise the siege. Although the rapid movements of the Asmonean had disconcerted the confederacy, he was at length besieged in Jerusalem, and reduced by famine to the last extremity. Antiochus generously conceded a week's truce during the feast of tabernacles, and supplied the besieged with victims for sacrifice; and finally concluding a peace, dismantled Jerusalem, and compelled Hyrcanus to pay tribute,

3628. Hyrcanus seized the opportunity of the defeat and death of Antiochus, to throw off the Syrian yoke, and entering the territories of Samega, Medaba, and Shechem, razed the temple on Mount Gerizim to the ground.

THE ASMONEANS.

CHAPTER I.

“LIVE,” said the conqu’ror; “live to share
The trophies and the crowns I bear.”
Silent that youthful warrior stood ;
Silent he pointed to the flood,
All crimson with his country’s blood ;
Then sent his last remaining dart
For answer to th’ invader’s heart.”

MOORE.

“WRETCHED, wretched country!—unhappy lost Judea!” exclaimed the venerable Mattathias, as he dashed an indignant tear from his eye. “Thy religion trampled, thy liberty crushed, thy sons butchered and degraded. Great God! must this be endured?”

“Of what spakest thou, my beloved father?” said a manly voice beside him, as a hand was laid lightly on his arm. Mattathias turned, and gazed earnestly at the young and noble countenance of the speaker. It was a face on which a father might indeed be proud to gaze; for truth, honour, candour and bravery, were plainly

written on the open brow and in the flashing eye, qualities which the after career of Judas Maccabeus fully developed.

“Of what could I speak, my son?” answered the old man, mournfully, “but of the fate of our poor, unhappy, abandoned country.” “Alas, alas,” said Judas, “that it should be so.” “Behold, my children,” continued Mattathias; and at his words four other young men came forward and stood beside their brother. “Behold what the Syrian tyrant hath sent us!” As he spoke, he drew from his girdle a scroll of vellum, written in the Syrian character, and gave it into the hands of John, his eldest son. The young man bowed his head respectfully, as he took it, and in a clear distinct voice, read its contents aloud. An uninterested observer, who looked upon those gallant men—five in the freshness of youth and beauty, and the sixth with hair and beard white as the snow of Lebanon, but a form unbent by age, and an eye in which the fire of intellect shone as brightly as in those of the younger men, undimmed by sorrow, unobscured by care—must have acknowledged that the sculptor in his happiest mood could scarcely have fashioned a group more perfect, as, motionless, with every sense seemingly absorbed in the fa-

culty of hearing, they listened to the words of the letter wherein the base Antiochus offered all that could tempt the cupidity, or arouse the ambition of an unprincipled man, to induce Mattathias to forsake his religion, and acknowledge the title of the usurper to the kingdom of Judea; but threatening, in case of a refusal, to make him feel the full weight of his displeasure. A flash of indignation brightened the dark face of Judas, as he heard the concluding words, and his hand was upon his dagger's hilt; but he spoke not, until the opinion of his father should be expressed. "Insult to injury," said the Asmonean, slowly, as he marked the anxious looks of his children; "but, no matter! I have foreseen this for years, and have awaited firmly the hour in which I should be called upon as an actor in the great tragedy that is now deluging my native land with blood. That time has arrived, and I have determined what course to pursue. But for you, my children, I have trained you up in the paths of religion and truth. I have taught you to practise virtue and honour. It now remains for you to choose. You have all heard the missive of the tyrant—of him whose ministers slew forty thousand of your unoffending countrymen, on the sabbath day, when they peacefully worshipped in the temple the God of

their fathers, and carried away their wives and children captives. Say, will ye become apostates from the faith for which they suffered? Will ye become wealthy, powerful and great? Will ye aid the oppressor against the oppressed, and bend beneath the sway of the bloody Antiochus? Or will ye draw the sword of retribution, and casting aside all worldly thoughts, all worldly feelings, devote yourselves to the cause of religion and liberty? Ye are free to declare your determinations." The brothers looked at each other for a moment, and then each drew his shining blade as he threw himself at the feet of his father, and cried aloud, "For God and Israel!" "Enough, enough," answered the gratified parent, as he raised and embraced each in turn. "It is thus I knew that thou wouldst act. Tomorrow our answer shall be given. Now to seek the women."

The household of Mattathias consisted, beside the five sons already mentioned, of one daughter, still almost a child, and two orphan females, daughters of an only brother; the eldest of whom had already become the wife of his second son, that Simon, whose name is so famous in Jewish history.

Several years before the commencement of this tale, Mattathias had lost his beloved partner,

the mother of his children, whom he had loved too well ever to place another in the station she had occupied. Although of high rank, and priestly descent, the brave Asmonean had purposely avoided mingling in those base and bloody struggles, which had laid his native land at the mercy of the invader ; and amid the blessed calm of domestic life he had hitherto lived in the peaceful obscurity of his native city, loving and beloved. Occasionally the impetuous and warlike spirit of Judas led him to mingle in the warfare of which the times were so prolific ; and he always returned to his father's dwelling with a reputation for courage and skill far beyond his years.

Such was the family in which the letter of Antiochus was destined to produce an effect which shook his power to the centre, and finally reduced his successors to seek aid of that very people amongst whom his usurpation produced such terrible effects. "Listen, dear father," said Judas, as they approached the women's apartment ; "it is the voice of Berenice, and the lute of Imla. 'Twere almost a pity to interrupt such heavenly strains." They paused before the door, and listened until the music ceased and the voice was hushed. Mattathias gently unclosed the door, and entered, followed by the

others. Near the open casement sat two young females, with their hands clasped in each other's, while a third stood at a little distance, gazing upon them with looks of pride and affection. But the cheek of the young matron flushed with pleasure, when, as she turned her head, she encountered the admiring glances of her husband, bent on her speaking countenance. "Imla! dear Imla!" said the father, as he approached, and gently took the hand of his child. At the sound of his voice, Imla arose, and threw herself into his arms, twining hers around his neck in affectionate eagerness. "My sweet child," he said, as he stooped and kissed her fair smooth brow and full pouting lips, "thy mother's spirit smiles in thy bright eyes; and oh!" he added, in a sadder tone, "may thy life be as sinless, as peaceful as hers." She to whom he spoke had scarcely seen thirteen summers, and her fair form seemed even more childlike from its fairy proportions. Her eyes were rich, full and dark; and the clear blood that mantled on her delicate cheek, gave a tinge of crimson that contrasted with its extreme whiteness. Beautiful, most beautiful was that slight girl, and all unfit she seemed to brave the storms of the rude world; but a lofty spirit animated her mind. "Come hither, my daugh-

ter," said Mattathias, solemnly. "I have words of no slight import for thine ears—words that must neither be lightly spoken nor lightly listened to. I have instructed thee in all the truths of our blessed religion. I have taught thee to revere the will of the Almighty, and honour his laws, by Moses delivered. But the time has arrived," and he struck his clenched hand against his forehead, "when in our own land, the land he gave to our fathers, we are forbidden to adore his name. Yes, my children, they have put up an idol in his sanctuary; they have polluted his holy altar. Babes have they hung around their mother's necks, and slain them both together. I would not shock your gentle natures, by recounting tales so horrible, were it not that they have brought it home to our very threshold—were it not that they have given us but one choice, to apostatise or die! Israel is like a flock of sheep forsaken by the shepherd; and the wolf fattens upon her fairest and best. To-day the delegates of the heathen entered Modin; they have converted the synagogue into a temple, and placed a statue of Bacchus therein; and to-morrow they keep a festival in honour of their drunken god, and our miserable fellow-citizens must worship or perish. On the other hand, for the renegades, splendid rewards are

offered. Me, amongst the rest, have they dared to insult by their hateful proposals ; and to-morrow," he bitterly continued, " I will answer them in blood." And now his voice assumed a softer tone, and a tear glistened in his eye, as he added, " Wilt thou remain in Modin, and bow the knee to an heathen idol ? Wilt thou, I say, live in peace and plenty ; and, perchance, for thou art lovely to look upon, become the bride of some Syrian noble ?—or wilt thou go forth to the wilderness, and brave hardships, dangers, and perhaps death ? Decide fearlessly, for forced compliance is not good in the eyes of the Lord. These are strange times, when a father asks such a question." " Canst thou doubt me ?" said Imla, as she raised her eyes, and then suffered the lids to fall over them, while a tear glistened on her long lashes, as she rested her head on his bosom. But her companion was silent. Mattathias cast a look upon her, while he said, " For Salome there needs no question ; but thou, Berenice—" still she answered not, but gliding across the room with a swift step, placed her hand in the willing clasp of Judas ; and his eyes met her smiles with a glance more eloquent than a thousand words, while the tell-tale blood diffused itself o'er cheek, brow, and neck, in deep blushes.

CHAPTER II.

" She came arrayed in all the charms of youth,
Her young heart all fondness, her pure soul all truth.
She came; but not from him she loved to part,
But share his exiles as she shared his heart.

* * * * *

Whatever destiny be thine,
Or good or ill, thy fate is mine."

THE OUTLAW.

WHEN they were again alone, Salome raised her pallid cheek to the faces of her companions, as she said, "Is not this terrible? Alas! what will become of us? It is not for myself I fear, but for my husband, brothers, father. Oh, what may not the morrow bring to them!" "The worst that can befall them," answered Berenice, "is to die. But will not that death be glorious, Salome? Will it not, Imla? It is better to perish in a good cause, than to triumph in a bad one. Nay, look not so reproachfully upon me, are they not as dear to me as to thee?" "Thou art not a wife, sister," said Salome; "thou hast yet to learn the love of woman for her bosom's lord." Berenice's breast heaved quickly, and she laid her burning cheek upon her sis-

ter's, as she answered, "Oh! my heart is no longer mine own; and this night, Salome, must see me a bride; although to-morrow's eve should find me a widow." "Art thou mad!" exclaimed Salome; "what mean those wild words?" "They mean," she answered, as she raised her face, animated by contending emotions, "that these are no times for coy scruples, and timid affectations. Sister, I have never been deemed a forward maiden. My troth has long been plighted to Judas; and now is the time to prove my truth and love. Should he fall to-morrow, Salome, I will have a widow's right to mourn him." "And who will tell him this?" "That will I, Salome; and I trust he will not love me less, because for his sake I cast aside all forms and ceremonies, and dare to offer that, which in other circumstances should be humbly sued for."

And ere her sister could utter a word, with a swift step, as if she feared to trust her own resolution, she quitted the apartment. Passing through a long corridor, she threw open the door of a large room, built of white marble, and entered. It was the armory of the palace; and on the walls were hung weapons of every kind then in use. With his head leaned on his hand, gazing pensively through the open case-

ment, she beheld him whom she sought. The moon, which had just arisen, was struggling through dense clouds, breaking forth for a moment, and then becoming dark again. Berenice laid her hand lightly upon his arm. Turning towards her, he uttered her name in accents of surprise and joy. He felt the hand tremble that he caught in his own, and said: "Beloved, what brought thee hither?" It was fortunate for her purpose that the darkness concealed her agitation from his view, as she answered, "I came to seek thee, Judas. Nay, do not interrupt me, lest my courage falter, and I leave unuttered what I came to say. Yes, Judas, I came to tell thee the deep devotion of a heart that hath long been wholly thine—to tell thee that the hand that now rests in thine shall be pledged to thee this night at the altar; if indeed thou dost not scorn and despise the love so freely given. Oh! Judas—couldst thou read my heart, thou wouldst see how pure it is from every thought of evil; although thus forgetting the modesty of my sex, and sueing where I should be sued." As she uttered the last word, her voice faltered; and she would have fallen, but for his supporting arm, while he whispered: "Berenice! how little dost thou know me, if thou deemest me capable of taking advantage

of thy generosity, thy confidence, thy true love.”

“ I do know thee, Judas,” she answered, “ and therefore I trusted thee.” “ And I, Berenice, were the basest of mankind, did I suffer thee, good and beautiful as thou art, to link thyself with one already doomed. No, no ! it must not be, Berenice. I am sworn to risk all, and if need be, to lose all, in the cause of religion and liberty. I must tear each gentler feeling from my heart, and live or die but for my country.”

“ And am not I a Jewish maiden ? Am not I an Asmonean ? And thinkest thou my woman’s heart could not bear—aye, firmly bear—as much as thine ? Try me—I will not shrink, I will not falter ; but cast aside the weakness of my sex, and show myself worthy to be the wife of Judas.” While she was yet speaking, the moon suddenly broke forth in cloudless splendour, distinctly revealing the figure of her who had thus shaken off every weakness of her sex, and stood there in her queen-like beauty, præminent in virtue and in loveliness. She was pale as the marble column against which she stood. And now she shrunk not from the glance he fixed upon her ; for that glance told more of love and admiration than many words could have spoken. One moment, it was but a moment, he stood gazing upon her noble face.

The next she was in his arms, and the blood rushed from her heart to her cheek, while a thrill of delight passed through her whole frame, as he said, in low and tremulous accents, "When, oh! when shall Judas be worthy of thee?" That moment was the sweetest of a life chequered by many vicissitudes, and its recollection cheered Berenice through many a year of sorrows. So absorbed were the lovers in the bliss of the present, that neither heard the sound of approaching footsteps; and Mattathias and his sons had been for several minutes sternly gazing upon them, ere Judas raised his eyes, and encountered the frowning glance of his father. The exclamation he uttered, caused Berenice to raise her head also; but deeply blushing, she laid it again on the shoulder of her lover, while, in a voice of deep displeasure, the Asmoncan demanded an explanation of the scene before him. Judas answered by detailing the generous purpose of Berenice. There was a bridal at midnight in the dwelling of Mattathias; and the wedding guests were the household of the Asmoncan. There was neither feasting nor music, to cheer the heart of the bride; but the high-minded girl suffered not such circumstances to depress her, although her nuptials resembled a funeral rite.

CHAPTER III.

“ Her fanes, where Mithra once had burned,
To Moslem shrines, oh shame! were turned;
Where slaves, converted by the sword,
Their mean apostate worship poured,
And cursed the faith their sires adored.
Yet hath she hearts 'mid all this ill,
O'er all this wreck high buoyant still.
* * * * *

And swords she hath, nor weak, nor slow,
To second all such hearts can dare,
As he shall know, well dearly know,
Who sleeps in moonlight luxury there.”

MOORE.

THE morrow dawned at last, cold, wet, and gloomy. Mattathias and his sons had concealed armour beneath their festal robes, for the Hebrews had been bidden to the festival not as willing guests, but as forced assistants, in the ceremonials. Each of the Asmonean's household bore myrtle boughs, instead of the sacred ivy. Mattathias bade them keep close together. The parting with the females was short though painful. It was Berenice who girded the sword to her husband's side, and fastened the myrtle branch

to its hilt; and bade him go forth, firm in a reliance on the Great One of Israel. It was she who stood in the balcony, waving her hand, until the warriors were no longer visible. But then, and not till then, she threw herself on a couch, and burst into womanly tears. But these she quickly checked, and wiping away the traces of her weakness, sought her sisters.

As Mattathias and his sons passed through the city, the wretched people gave way on every side; but misery and dejection were plainly written on every face. As they approached the synagogue, the young men could scarcely refrain from openly expressing their indignant sorrow at its pollution and disgrace. But respect for their father's injunctions restrained them; and in gloomy silence they passed through the open court and entered the edifice. On the steps of the altar stood Apelles the Syrian governor, surrounded by his principal officers, each with a wreath of ivy round his temples, and branches in their hands. Mattathias perceived with a swelling heart, many of his fellow-citizens amongst the worshippers; but without speaking, he passed through the crowd, who gave way at his approach, and stood with his sons opposite the governor, prepared to take

his part in the awful business of that day—a day so pregnant with great events for Judea. “Welcome, noble chief,” said the governor, extending his hand; “it will gladden the heart of our illustrious king, to learn that age hath brought wisdom to thine heart. Thou hast but to ask, and obtain any favour, how great so ever, at his hand.” The courtiers looked at each other in admiration and astonishment at the brilliant fortune that seemed to wait him. But the noble Asmonean quickly undeceived them. “No! Syrian, no!” he exclaimed, energetically, as he pushed back the proffered hand of Apelles; “my hand must never join in amity with thee or thine. I come not hither to brand my name with eternal infamy—to entail on my children’s children the black stain of apostacy. But I came to declare my unalienable resolution to abide by the laws given us by Jehovah, through his appointed minister—to fight, and if it be his will, to die for them; and thus I keep my word!” As he spoke he drew his sabre. An apostate Israelite was at that moment engaged in offering sacrifice. With one blow, Mattathias felled him to the earth. His blood sprinkled the priest, the altar, the idol, and the temple floor; a fit libation for such a shrine.

Before the governor and his attendants could recover from their astonishment, the Asmoneans leaped in amongst them. The old man's sword, in another instant, was in the heart of Apelles. He was nobly seconded by his gallant sons. A terrible scene of carnage and bloodshed ensued. It was a sacrifice none had expected. Yet to the Israelities it was not the less welcome.

With a firm step, but a throbbing heart, Berenice reached the women's apartment. Salome threw herself around her neck and wept: but to her great surprise, she beheld Imla sitting at an embroidery frame, plying her task with diligence, and apparently lending all her energies to its completion, not even raising her head on the entrance of her new sister. But when she released herself from Salome's embrace, and approached, her surprise ceased: for on a square piece of white silk, with a border of gold, she was working the initial letters, from which came the surname of the Maccabees, "*Macomo Ka.*" "Baalim Jehovah." "Who is like unto thee amongst the Gods, oh Jehovah!" words that for long years brought terror to the enemies of Judea, and confidence to her friends. "Thou art worthily employed, my Imla." "Yes!" she replied, with a faint smile; "it is for a bridal gift

to thee, sweet sister. Thou wilt know where to bestow it!" A loud shriek from Salome, who had stationed herself at the lattice, prevented the thanks she was about to utter. Imla turned pale and trembled, while Berenice rushed to her sister's side. She saw an immense concourse of people, variously armed, and two of them, dressed in priestly garments, carrying between them a ghastly corpse. Over the rich robes of the dead man the dark blood was streaming. Salome pressed her hands upon her brow, to exclude the dreadful sight, but Berenice bent forward to gain a view of the features. A sick shudder passed through her frame, and she drew a long breath, when she saw they were unknown to her: but blood had been shed, and busy fancy began to paint a thousand horrors, with torturing ingenuity. Where was Judas? Where was the venerable Mattathias? Where were they all?—and what share, she asked herself, had they in the violent death of him who had just been borne past her? Might they not already be cold and motionless as he? It was a terrible idea; but Salome clung convulsively to her arm, and claimed all her attention. "It was a stranger," she said, as she supported her sinking form to a couch; "they are safe." "Poor Salome," said

Imla, with a deep sigh, "thou wert formed for better and happier times; but we must all submit to the will of Providence;" and she resumed her task, while Berenice flew once more to the lattice.

It was evident that some great commotion had taken place; for men were hurrying to and fro in every direction; some with wild glances of despair, others with looks of joy and exultation. But amongst them all she saw no familiar countenance, that could bring a gleam of hope to her saddened heart. Suddenly there came a shout that rent the air, of "Glory to Jehovah! Glory to the Lord of Hosts!" and she rushed into the balcony, her long veil streaming in the wind. Every casement, every terrace, was filled with women and children. "Oh God! it is enough; they are unharmed!" she cried aloud; and Imla was beside her without turban or veil, exposed to the gaze of the multitude. But she saw nothing, felt nothing, save that her father and brothers were living and free. "Now, dear sister—now," she exclaimed, "the first blow is struck—we shall be free."

It was evening; and Judas stood by the litter that bore the bride of a day and her sisters from the home where they had been reared in luxury and splendour, from the city en-

deared by so many sweet associations, to seek a refuge in the bleak and barren desert. And what felt that brave old man, about to leave the place of his birth, the home of his youth, the scene of his domestic happiness, and the burial-place of his beloved partner? Mattathias thought of the massacre of Jerusalem, the barbarities daily exercised in that unhappy city, of the people about to follow him to exile; and he stifled the ready sob that struggled in his breast, as he turned to gaze in the bright starlight on his beloved home; and many an anxious glance was turned, like his, for a farewell look at the fair city they were abandoning, perhaps for ever. It was an awful sight to witness the agony of the exiles, who were going forth in affliction to seek new dwelling places in the far wilderness; and occasionally a deep curse was breathed upon the heads of their oppressors, as they proceeded in their melancholy journey.

* * * * *

On the following Sabbath, as if to give them deeper motives for action, Philip the Phrygian, governor of Jerusalem, attacked them while engaged in offering their devotions to Jehovah.

Mattathias had encamped higher up the mountain, but sufficiently near to this scene of blood

to hear the cries of the wounded, and the vain supplications for mercy, mingled with the shouts and curses of the brutal soldiery; and he and his followers threw themselves on the ground, beating their breasts, and breathing imprecations on the heads of their ruthless enemies. Instead of rejoicing for the Sabbath, they sung the prayers for the dying. When these were concluded, Mattathias rose up in the midst, and spoke, while tears of irrepressible agony rolled down his furrowed checks. "Brethren," he said, "like a lion in the toils is Israel, and the meaner beasts prey upon her. As a desolate widow is the daughter of Zion, who mourneth not only for her husband, but her children. She is despoiled of her ornaments, and sitteth in sackcloth and ashes, weeping for her beloved. But hath not Zion before been as greatly straitened? Hath not the heathen and the stranger slain her valiant men, and carried away her strong men captive? And hath not the same God who delivered her then, the power to deliver her now? Humble yourselves, then, O men of Israel, and ask help of Him who gave it to our fathers; of Him who alone can aid. Henceforth we must pray with our swords in our hands, rather than see our wives and children butchered."

CHAPTER IV.

“ How beautiful is death, when earned by virtue !
Who would not be that youth ? What pity is it,
That we can die but once to serve our country.
Why sits this sadness on your brows, my friends ? ”

CATO.

“ 'Tis better to weep o'er the warrior's grave,
Than the apostate's living tomb.”

ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES was once more in Jerusalem, accompanied by the black traitor, Mene-laus. He came like a tiger, thirsting for blood, determined to revenge himself for the revolt of Mattathias, on the miserable people. It was a cold, wet morning; and the Syrian monarch was in a mood of irritation by no means uncommon with him. The courtiers looked at each other uneasily; for Antiochus in his fits of passion was a terrible being, and none knew on whom its effects might fall. At his feet knelt Philip the Phrygian, and the eyes of the king were bent upon him with looks of

withering anger. "I tell thee, slave," exclaimed the monarch, impetuously, "that it was but on the last evening, while traversing the streets to see with my own eyes, since others prove so faithless, the state of this rebellious city, my ears were saluted by the strains of some accursed Hebrews." "Does my lord the king know from whence the voices came, or if they were men's or women's?" "It was a ruined house, close by the prison gate," said Epiphanes, somewhat softened by the humble tone of the governor; "and a woman's voice mingled with the deep tones of young men, and the shrill notes of an old one. I had entered then, but as Bagoas was my only companion, I would not place myself at the mercy of desperate ruffians. But thine head shall answer it unless thou discover it, and bring these people before me ere the day be an hour older." Philip arose, and laying his hand on his head, departed with a heavy heart, accompanied by his guards. He betook his way through the city. At his approach the people shut themselves up in their houses; the very children retreated to their homes in terror, at the sight of his dreaded guards. Grinding his teeth at this unequivocal expression of fear and hatred, he pursued his way. He stopped

before the gate of what had once been a splendid palace ; but now ruin and desolation sat enthroned within the dwelling, and there was no sign or token of its being inhabited, save by the presence of a solitary slave, who had answered the impatient summons of the governor. Bidding some of his guards secure the slave, the Phrygian passed onward through many a marble gallery and stately apartment, the latter strewn with fragments of rich furniture, and bearing evidence of violence and plunder recently committed in that ruined abode. But he paused not a moment, until the sound of a voice, at some distance, arrested his steps, and he stood still to listen. Following the direction from whence it proceeded, he noiselessly opened the door of a small room, and stood on the threshold, surveying its inhabitants. It was scantily furnished, containing only a mean couch and a table of unpolished wood, on which a vellum scroll was placed. It was open, and on the couch sat a venerable man, engaged in reading a portion of it aloud. By his side stood a lovely boy, and six noble-looking youths were ranged around him, listening in wrapt attention to the words he uttered ; and at his feet sat a majestic matron, whose still beautiful face gave evidence of deep and settled

sorrow. The governor stood gazing, as if in doubt how to proceed: but the pause of mercy or irresolution lasted not long. At the sound of his step, as he advanced, all looked up; and the youngest uttered a cry of surprise and terror, as, snatching the scroll of the law from the table, he trampled it beneath his feet and spat upon the sacred record. As soon as they perceived the stranger, the old man and the matron had arisen, while the latter drew her veil over her face, and with her arms folded on her breast, calmly awaited the event. At Philip's signal, the guards, who had followed him, secured the prisoners, and ten minutes afterward they were on their way to the merciless Antiochus. A gleam of savage joy brightened the dark features of the king as Philip prostrated himself, and pointed to his captives; and he bade them bring the woman forward. "Remove thy veil," he said sternly, addressing her. "I am a Jewish matron," she answered, firmly, "and unused to expose myself to the gaze of strangers." Antiochus laughed aloud, and bade some one to remove it by force. Ever ready to seize an opportunity of ingratiating himself, Menclaus tore it off; but he shrunk back abashed, when he met the look of withering scorn that shot from the eyes that encountered

his ; while she turned and calmly met the eyes of the brutal king. "Take her away," said Antiochus, shrinking almost unconsciously from her searching scrutiny ; "we will deal with her by and bye. Bring the old man forward." He was a scribe, famed for his learning and piety. Ninety summers had whitened his hair, and ninety winters bent his form. In the cottages of the poor and the palaces of the rich, Eleazar had ever been a welcome guest ; and, during his long and blameless life, the old man had never possessed an enemy. Struck by his venerable appearance, the tyrant addressed him in a tone of unusual kindness and commiseration, endeavouring by specious arguments to persuade him to abjure his religion, and partake of the forbidden meat, and threatening him, at the same time, with horrible torments, in case of a refusal. Something like a smile played around the mouth of the scribe, as he answered, "Death has terrors only for the tyrant and the man of blood, O king ! For four score and ten years has my soul inhabited this frail tenement ; and as far as in me lay, I have striven to fulfil God's holy ordinances, expecting each hour to yield up my life to him who gave it ; and shall I stain the remnant of my days by foul idolatry, and,

for the sake of living a week, a month, perchance a year longer, in this sinful world, deliver my soul to destruction?" He ceased, and a low murmur ran round the room, while the king bade some of his attendants take him from his presence, and try by persuasion to remove his obstinacy. Such was the term he gave the old man's noble fortitude. But threats and persuasions were alike in vain. Some of the wavering amongst his own faith, strove to reconcile him to the idea of deceiving the king; but he firmly refused, and said, "If I use subterfuge to deceive the king, must I not also deceive my people? And when the youthful and the timid shall hear that Eleazar, the scribe, on the verge of the grave, partook of that which was forbidden, in order to save the remnant of a worthless life, will they not follow my example, and prefer expediency to virtue?" His refusal was told to the king, who ordered him instantly to be executed. He perished, in the midst of excruciating torments; but he continued firm to the last, glorying in his sufferings.

The matron and her children were committed to prison for the night; and the evening of the day in which that dark tragedy was enacted, was spent by Antiochus in wild revelry. The mor-

row brought fresh intelligence of the resistance offered by the Maccabees to the royal decrees. Issuing forth from the mountains, they spread terror and destruction in their path, defeating all who were hardy enough to resist them, and escaping again unharmed to their wild fastnesses.

The king gnashed his teeth at the intelligence, and said: "They shall find no woman's heart dwells in the breast of Epiphanes!" While he was speaking, Philip approached, and said something in a low voice. "Say you so?" said the king, and a gleam of pleasure shot athwart his dark countenance. "This is a triumph indeed. Let the prisoners be brought to the temple; we will judge them there." The intelligence which had given such pleasure to the king was, that the prisoners he was about to sit in judgment upon, were the sister and nephews of the greatest Jewish leader.

Esther had arrayed herself in robes of white, and twined a jasmine chaplet for her brow; for she said, as she turned to her children, "Am I not going forth to a bridal?—yea, a holy bridal, greater than any earthly festival!" "And I, mother," answered the eldest son, as he bent his head to receive her blessing, "am not I

also a bidden guest?—and I will show myself worthy of the honour. Bless me, mother, dear mother, I will not say for the last time, but it may be the last time on earth.” She lay one hand on his head, and with the other parted the dark curls from his brow, and gazed into his noble countenance with the yearning of a mother’s heart. He was her first-born; and memory recalled all the sweet recollections of his infancy and boyhood, whilst sadly she turned from him to another equally brave, equally beautiful; and thus she blessed them by turns, until she came at last to her fairest, her youngest born. He was yet a child—for he had scarcely seen twelve summers; and fancy, in her wildest dream, could not shadow forth more of perfect loveliness than that slight boy presented; the cheek so fair, that you might see each blue vein beneath; the eyes mildly shaded by their long silken lashes when in repose, yet so expressive when strong emotion called forth their latent fire; the clear open brow, where thought seemed painfully impressed for one so young; the look of settled melancholy around the beautiful mouth—each told a tale of early and enduring sorrow: and what wonder if the mother’s heart throbbed wildly, as she clasped his tender

form in her arms, and doubted his power to bear all that awaited him. He divined her thoughts; for he felt her hand tremble, and heard her voice falter, as she pronounced a blessing on his head; and he said, in a voice of confidence and love: "Mother, my form is slight, but my spirit is strong. The flesh may quiver, but the heart will be firm. Fear not for me." It was too much for human endurance, to hear those words so calmly and gently spoken. Unnerved, in spite of every effort, the tears gushed forth; and they fell thick and warm upon his pale cheek. In the struggle between natural affection and acquired fortitude, human passions had claimed their due; and now she felt as if the last tie that bound her to earth had been broken; and when she had released the boy from her embraces, the bitterness of death was past. The young men had embraced each other; but still they lingered to look again upon that beloved one, and shuddered not for themselves but him, as each in succession caught him to his heart.

When the officers of Antiochus entered, all traces of emotion vanished from the brow of Esther; and in her own language she addressed her children. Few were the words she uttered;

but they sank deep into their hearts: "My sons, remember Eleazar." An indignant pang passed through the hearts of the victims, when they found it was in the temple, the glorious temple that their ancestors, returning from a long and painful captivity, had erected in honour of the God of Israel—the only true and living God—they were to suffer for keeping his holy commandments. But, oh! how changed was that temple since the voice of the supplicant had arisen to the Great One of Israel in his sanctuary! A heathen idol stood in the shrine of the Eternal, and the idol-worshipper bowed his knee in the dwelling of Jehovah.

The tyrant felt his heart throb with admiration, as he looked upon his youthful prisoners and their still beautiful mother, and he bade the guards remove the heavy chains with which they had been loaded, and to bring them nearer; when smiling as tyrants can smile, for their own base purposes, he thus addressed the eldest. "Thou art young," he said, in his gentlest tones, "and doubtless brave. Wilt thou, who art formed to shine amid the toils, the glorious toils of warfare; thou who mayest gain wealth, honour, and power; wilt thou, I say, in the freshness of health and vigour, lose all that life offers thee, and pre-

for a death of torture, for the sake of a religious scruple?" "King of Syria," he answered, and how did the mother's heart throb, as she listened to his words, "that which thou callest a religious scruple is to me more than all thou canst offer. What is life? Canst thou, with all thy power, ensure it for a single day? If the voice of the Lord went forth against thee, could thy state, thy wealth, thy chariots, or thine horsemen save thee? No, no. Why then should I swerve from the faith of my forefathers, and draw down the curse of the good upon my head, when in the very act of denying my God, the grave with which thou threatenest me, may yawn to receive the blasphemer? And where then would be thy boasted powers to save?" The face of the tyrant grew livid with rage as the young man concluded his bold speech, and in a voice choked with passion he replied, "We will put thy boasted courage to the proof. Seize and strip him!" Unmoved, the fearless youth suffered the bloody ministers of revenge to strip him. They scourged him, and bound him to the wheel; but, like the Grecian painter, we must draw a veil over that which we feel ourselves incapable of portraying—for the tortures inflicted were too horrible for description. Our learned historian, Josephus, has narrated them

with terrible minuteness. But still, amidst all his agony, he besought his brethren to follow his example, and breathing hope and confidence in a merciful Creator, he expired, as is fabled of the swan, amid the death notes his own voice had raised. Thus perished six faithful followers of Moses, the man of God, each rejecting with the same firmness as their brother the renewed offers of the bloody Antiochus.

Still the pious mother looked on, and gloried in her children, cheering their dying moments with words of hope and consolation. But one yet remained, and a sad misgiving crossed her mind. Would he, so young and gentle, find fortitude to bear a fate so dreadful? She feared otherwise; but she wronged him. Even he, that blood-stained monster, trembled as he looked upon that fair child, whose slight frame bent beneath the weight of fetters which had been placed upon him. "Thou art young," said Antiochus, as the child approached, "too young to die." "Never too young," promptly replied that generous child. "When the storms of winter are coming, is it too soon for the summer flowers to wither?" "So youthful yet so wise," said the king; "and wilt thou leave this bright earth, and all it offers thee? Look

at those delicate limbs, that slender form—thinkest thou they could bear the wrenching agony of the wheel—the brand of the searing iron? Look at thy mother: six sons hath she seen perish this day by a violent death; spare, spare her the agony of beholding the seventh suffer.” The intrepid boy answered, “Should the seventh swerve from the faith for which the six so nobly died?” “Nay, by Hercules!” answered the Syrian, “thou shalt have all that can make life beautiful; thou shalt be my favourite, the favourite of a monarch, and I will make thy fortune such as kings might envy.” The youth shook his head; and fancying that he saw some signs of wavering, he beckoned Esther to approach; and thus addressed her. “Woman!” said the monarch, “thou hast suffered much to-day, and I would fain spare thee more sorrow. There is thy youngest-born, the child of thy love; speak to him—tell him, for thy sake, if not for his own, to accept my proffered mercy.” A smile, which those who looked upon it never forgot, a smile that Antiochus remembered to his dying day, and that served to embitter his latest moments, curled the lip of the Hebrew matron, as she turned to her child and thus addressed him, in her own

native tongue. "Manasseh, thou art my last, my only son. Let me not have cause to curse the hour of thy birth, and wish that thou hadst never existed. Shame not those who have gone before in the glorious race of martyrdom, by embracing offers which they rejected; but show thyself worthy of thy brethren, that none of my offspring be excluded from a glorious reunion beyond the grave." As she concluded, a smile of heavenly fortitude lighted up his beautiful countenance, and he cast a glance of deep and passionate affection upon his adored mother, who now felt that she had nought to fear for him. The child now looked toward the fire which burnt on the altar, the fire where he had seen his brothers consumed. "Unbind me," he said solemnly; "I will not answer while my limbs are fettered." At a sign from the king the chains were removed, and he stood erect, the brilliant sunshine playing on his fair young face, and his dark eyes flashing with unusual brightness, while, with an unfaltering voice, he thus addressed Epiphanes. "What is it ye require of me? If I do not obey the wishes of the king, it is because I owe allegiance to one who is greater—yca, even to the King of kings; and as for thee, from whom all our calamities

flow, tremble ; for thou canst not escape the vengeance of the Lord. He hath afflicted us for a little while, because the sins of my people were many ; but he is merciful as well as just ; and what will avail earthly honours, earthly glory—for thou, even thou, when suffering beneath his avenging hand, shalt acknowledge the power of the Omnipotent ; and now behold how, in a good cause, even a child can die !” Ere one hand could be put forth to stay him, he leaped into the flames and expired. “ Hallelujah ! hallelujah ! Glory to the Lord !” exclaimed Esther, as she sprung after him, and embracing her beloved child, perished with him. A deep cry echoed through the temple, like the howl of a wild beast when it springs upon its prey : but those who uttered it could no where be discovered.

CHAPTER V.

“ Stretched in the desert round their evening fire.”

ROGERS.

* * * * *

“ How sleep the brave, who sink to rest,
By all their country's wishes blest !
When spring, with dewy fingers cold,
Returns to deck the hallow'd mould,
She then shall deck a sweeter sod
Than fancy's feet have ever trod.”

COLLINS.

THE sabbath lamp burned brightly in the tent of Mattathias, and his family were assembled around the social board ; but there was sadness on the brow of Judas. Berenice watched his countenance with the anxiety of affection. Oh, how beautiful is the love of woman!—trusting, generous, and devoted woman ! With what interest she marks the progress of each varying feeling. How does she soothe each violent passion, each evil tendency ; and cheer the pangs of affliction with her gentle voice !

Judas had been absent many days on a secret mission, and returned only in time to celebrate the sabbath, so that Berenice had no opportunity

of seeing him alone. Alas! he brought bitter tidings; but he would not sully the peaceful sabbath by his narrative, for he knew it would wring the hearts of those he loved, to hear it. The conversation dwelt upon the past—the peaceful happy past; and they suffered no thought of the future to mingle with the sweet recollections that memory presented of their cherished and distant home. At length there was a pause, and silence reigned unbroken. When the heart is full it seldom finds vent in words. None had courage to break the pause. Oh that silence, how eloquent it is! The minutes flew by unheeded. A spell seemed upon the inmates of that tent, until the roll of the drum, and the voice of the watch, proclaimed midnight.

Neither Judas nor his wife felt inclined for slumber, and they strolled along beneath the soft light of the moon, until they had left the dwellings of man far behind. Beyond the ken of human eye, they sat down beneath a stunted tree.

“Look,” said Berenice, turning her beaming eyes upon her husband, “how sweetly the stars shine forth to-night. Here, in the dearth of all that is bright and beautiful, is it not re-

freshing to turn from the eternal mountains and burning sand of the desert, and behold the lights of heaven gilding this rude spot gloriously, as they would gild the loveliest landscape of Judea? When we were in our beloved home, my Judas, and I used to wander forth on a night like this, and sit beneath the orange trees, listening to the murmurs of the fountain, I have felt a holy calm steal into my soul; while my glad spirit shadowed forth many a bright dream, many a glorious thought for the future; but now, dearest, now, when I stand gazing in the starlight, not upon marble fountains and fragrant flowers, but upon the rude tents that form our dwelling, and the bleak and barren wilderness around, my thoughts take a higher tone; a new light breaks in upon my soul, and my spirit seems to throw off the weight of earth, and soar away to heaven." "My own Berenice," said Judas, pressing her hand; "never in my eyes hast thou looked so lovely, save on the night that made thee mine." A tear glistened in his eyes; he could not proceed; and as the moonlight played around his fine features she saw they were pale as those of a corpse. Berenice's nature was too truly noble to suffer her to ask confidence, when not freely given. But now her fears

were aroused, and she said, "Thou art sad, my Judas." "Did they tell thee whither I had bent my steps?" he inquired, mournfully. "No; perhaps they feared to trust so important a secret to a woman's keeping. With an ordinary woman they would be right; but thou, dearest—what would I not confide to thee? Thou art not, Berenice, the cold-hearted, selfish, frivolous thing whose highest thought is for the fashioning of garments and the braiding of the hair." Their eyes met; she felt that he loved her as she deserved to be loved. How beautiful is the feeling of confidence in two hearts bound by the holiest ties of affection. Without confidence love can never be lasting. Judas had been to Jerusalem, and a witness of the horrible death of the brave scribe, the noble mother and her heroic sons; and Berenice listened to his narrative with feelings of deepest horror; but when he told her of that fair young boy—his gentle beauty, his heroic fortitude, his generous constancy—tears of deep agony forced themselves into her eyes, and she wept bitterly. "And you, Judas," she said, "you looked on, and saw all this?" "I did look on," he answered, with bitter emphasis, "to measure by his cruelty my just revenge. You may embalm their memory with tears—I will wash

out my sorrow in the blood of their murderers." He rose, and paced to and fro, in violent agitation. She rose also and approached him. "Our father, our poor father! how will he bear such tidings?" "As a man who has merged all private feelings, all private ties, in pure, lofty, unalloyed patriotism; as thou, my Berenice, wouldst bear the intelligence that he whom thou deemedst worthy of thy virgin hand had preferred a glorious death to an inglorious life. Which wouldst thou look upon as the blackest tidings,—that I was slain upon the battle field; or, that forfeiting truth, honor, and religion, I lived a pampered and apostate slave of the monster Antiochus?" She promptly replied, "Wert thou dead, Judas, I should mourn thee: didst thou consent to live upon such terms, I should hate, nay worse, despise thee." "Enough! enough!" replied the hero—"thou art indeed a daughter of Israel!"

The sufferings of their countrymen continued to engross every feeling of their beating hearts, until the morning light found them still seated beneath the stunted tree in the wilderness.

The year, so eventful to Palestine, was drawing to a close, when the little city of Modin was once more wakened into life and activity. Since

the night that witnessed the departure of the Asmoneans, it had remained deserted and solitary; the grass had grown up in her streets, and the spider's web had been woven in her stately palaces. But now, that calm and silent city, with the blue Mediterranean smiling at her feet, resounded to the stirring sound of martial music, the clang of arms, and the joyous shout of glad exiles, returning, after cheerless absence, to beloved homes. What art thou, beautiful and mysterious feeling, that can draw the heart, through all chances and changes, towards its early home? The stern man, the tender woman, and the aged, who have outlived almost every other affection, yield alike to thy powerful spell. Is not thine influence to be traced to the bright associations of childhood, the tender recollections of infancy, and the lofty aspirations of youth? Fame, honor, glory, the things in which we place our hopes of earthly happiness, are but baubles when obtained; and gladly we turn away our weary eyes from that which, when gained, has no charm, to the refreshing remembrance of years and dreams gone by. When the future delights no longer, it is sweet to turn to the past; and at the sound of the magic word, "Home," the loved, the lost, the changed, rise

up before us in all the freshness and beauty which marked them when youth and hope gave a charm to all the bright visions formed by fancy. Alas! alas! for their realization! It was some such memory of the past that influenced Mattathias to turn and gaze for the last time on the calm sea that lay stretched out before him, reflecting every object in its bosom. Then would his eyes turn to the long winding streets that led to the upper town. There were the white dwellings, with their beautiful gardens, and near them the humble homes of the poor; the palace of his forefathers, where he had come to lay his aged head and die—but it was solitary, all solitary; the features of the landscape were the same, but life was wanting.

The palaces were closed, the cottages were tenantless, and the luxurious tendrils of the vine covered them with its foliage. All was wild and waste—lovely, but uncultivated. Every thing told of injury, desolation, and death; and the patriot chief that his career was over. He passed into his dwelling, and looked around him. He was in the same apartment in which he had received the letter that decided the destinies of his house and country. In the brief year that had passed since, how much had been

done in the great cause to which he had devoted himself! His sand of life was nearly run; but he cheered its close by the remembrance that he should leave behind him younger and stronger arms, and hearts equally true, to finish the work he had so gloriously begun.

It was midnight; the sons and daughters of Mattathias were grouped around the couch of their dying father, listening to the last words from that loved voice. It was a solemn scene, that still dark chamber, and its sorrowing inmates. But more solemn were the words that came from the lips of him whose spirit was about to wing its way to the presence of its Creator. His last thoughts were not upon himself, not upon his children; but upon his trampled religion, and his wretched people.

He spoke words of advice, of hope and piety, that sank deep into the hearts of his sons. No feeling of jealousy, no sense of rivalry, polluted the bosoms of the brothers; all was pure, holy, and disinterested. No selfish passions mingled with their love for each other. Mattathias's voice was fast failing, as, one by one, he blessed them, and bade them farewell; but his hand lingered upon the head of Imla, and his dimmed

eyes rested on her face, as if he sought once again to read those lovely lineaments ; and in a low voice he said : “ Imla, I am going from thee ; but thou hast brothers, kind and brave, to guard thee, my lovely blossom. Yet, should they be cut off ere a husband claims thy love, let Berenice’s counsel guide thee. Do thou listen to her words, as thou wouldst to a mother’s. Salome is kind and good, but she wants the firmness of her sister ; and young as thou art, thou wilt need a firm and wise companion. And now, dearest, farewell ; there is a God above, and to his charge will I confidently commit ye all.” He ceased ; life was fast ebbing, and with heavy hearts they withdrew into the adjoining chamber ; while the Israelites, who had been summoned to attend the dying, entered. They heard them singing the prayers for the dying. But clear and distinct above all, rose the voice of Mattathias. It sank into their hearts ; but it grew fainter and fainter, until it ceased entirely, and those loved tones were hushed for ever. Then, and not till then, did the long-concealed agony break forth more violently from its long suppression, and then, too, came the voice of strangers, whispering words of consolation. They said he was old, and had

lived his appointed time ; and they strove, by offering the customary suggestions, to heal the deep wound under which they were suffering. But do we prize a thing the less because it hath been our familiar companion for years ? It obtains more value in our eyes, from that very circumstance ; and what may prove a balm in after years, serves but to irritate the first burst of anguish. The mourners longed to be alone, where nought but the eye of God could look upon their sorrow.

They were once more in that chamber, with all the awful paraphernalia of death around them. The bed was vacant ; and they came, in the stillness of midnight, to look for the last time on the dead, and perform the melancholy rite over the bier that contained the inanimate remains. A dim light burned at the head of the table, on which the body rested. Where was the mighty spirit that had so lately tenanted that mass of clay ? Did it linger round its earthly habitation, to watch over and guard the steps of his children ?

That rending of the garments, that tearing away of the last link that binds us to the dead, those who have felt alone can tell its bitterness. As they approached Imla, to perform the rite, she threw herself with frantic agony upon the

bier : she tore her hair, and beat her breast, uttering heart-rending shrieks, and resisted with almost supernatural strength every effort to tear her away, until she sank down almost as lifeless as him she mourned.

They laid the noble Asmonean in the grave; and a grateful people embalmed his memory with tears, the noblest tribute ever paid to mortal. The week of mourning passed away. The first familiar face had vanished from the circle; the only one of those valiant men who died peacefully on his bed, with his kindred near him.

CHAPTER VI.

Ere I had sadly changed these guileless joys,
With health, and mirth, and freedom in their train,
For crowns and sceptres, idler, emptier toys,
With serpents twined, and linked with many a chain.

AUTHOR OF SELWYN.

My love, stern Syeds; Oh no! no!—not my love.

BYRON.

ANTIOCHUS was at Daphne, celebrating games in imitation of the Romans, when intelligence was brought that Judas Maccabeus, at the head of a band of devoted warriors, arrayed under the national banner, was bearing down everything before him, and nearly all Judea was in a state of insurrection. In the first impulse of his blind rage, he ordered the messenger to be put to death. Appollonius, governor of Samaria, in this emergency, offered his services, to cut off the insurgents. The offer was readily accepted.

On a couch, with the marks of recent dissipation visible on his countenance, reclined the luxurious monarch of Syria.

By his side, a fair slave was seated, whose faultless features and graceful figure proclaimed

her Grecian origin. Her hair, which was of that rich brown which shades into golden threads in the light, was combed smoothly from off her forehead, and gathered into a knot behind; while jewels, whose value might have formed a monarch's ransom, adorned her pale brow. Pearls, of inestimable value, decked her swan-like neck. The garb, formed of materials combining elegance with lightness, displayed to advantage the exquisite symmetry of her figure. But her deep and lustrous eyes were bent upon the ground, with a look of such anguish, they plainly told that although the cage was gilded, the captive was not happy. Hapless Laodice! She would gladly have exchanged her splendid misery for the humble cottage home she had left, in sunny Greece, to inhabit a palace in Syria.

The caresses of her royal lover only brought back to remembrance the plight she had pledged to another—the youth whose fond heart her absence had almost broken. An Indian bird was perched upon her jewelled wrist. It was silent; and she gazed wistfully upon it. Like its mistress, it drooped in captivity; and as she stooped to caress it, a tear fell upon its little head; when rising, as by a sudden impulse, she

unfastened its chain, and approaching the case-ment, with a deep sigh, she relaxed her hold upon it. The bird stretched its wings, and whirling round in the air, flew away with the speed of light. She longed to follow it, but the wish was vain. With a suppressed sigh, she returned to her seat.

A few minutes had elapsed, when she heard the rustling of wings, and felt something touch her. It was the bird, which had perched upon her shoulder, and nestled its head in her bosom. This evidence of the bird's attachment,—the only thing that really loved the unfortunate exile—affected her so much, that, covering her eyes with her hands, she wept bitterly. “Laodice! Laodice! why art thou silent?” exclaimed Antiochus, raising his head. The slave quickly brushed away a tear, (in a palace it is a sin to weep,) and took up a golden lute wreathed with myrtle, that lay by her side; but she could not sing. Then passing her taper fingers over the strings, she played one of the sweet airs of her native land. “Thy voice, thy voice,” said the king, impatiently; “what is music without it?” The Grecian shuddered, and tried to sing; but in spite of every effort, the gushing tears burst forth, and sobs choked her utterance. “What

ails thee, pretty fool?" asked Antiochus, scornfully; "are thy jewels too poor, or thy apparel too mean for thee? Cheer thine heart, and smooth thy brow; thou shalt have all thou requirest." "I need nothing," she said, almost passionately, as she turned away her head, "nothing, but happiness; and that can never be mine." The entrance of the dark priest, Mene-laus, prevented the king's reply.

Gladly obeying a sign to depart, she sought her own chamber, to weep; she reached it, and went forth to the balcony, where, beneath the shadow of a Grecian myrtle, she sat down, and gave free vent to the anguish that oppressed her heart. She had not been seated long, when a voice—a voice of sorrow, like her own, struck upon her ear. It was low, and sweet; but the language was unfamiliar, and sounded harshly to one accustomed to consider every tongue but her own barbarous. But she listened intently to accents, the softest she had ever heard, even in her own land of music.

The Greek arose, and putting aside the branches that obscured her sight, looked down into the garden. Two females stood beneath the balcony. One was an old Hebrew slave belonging to the harem: but the other—Laodice had seen much

of loveliness, in the harem of Antiochus ; some of the fairest women of the east were inmates—but that fair young maiden outshone them all. She was slight, even to fragility ; but her countenance was so delicately beautiful, that, although her features wanted the regularity and exquisite grace of her own, the Greek saw that she was not inferior in personal attractions. She was unhappy too ; perhaps, like herself, she had been torn from home, and country, and love. That thought awoke every generous feeling of her nature. She determined, if possible, to save her from the sufferings she herself had known ; and, impelled by this generous resolution, she descended from her chamber, and sought the garden.

CHAPTER VII.

Never were horde of tyrants met
With bloodier welcome : never yet
In liberty's blessed cause, the sword
More terrible libation poured.

MOORE.

JUDAS and his devoted comrades were successful. The victory was won. His followers had the memory of many a bloody deed, many an unrevenged wrong, to strengthen their arms, and animate their hearts with a stern resolution to conquer or die. They did conquer : for, with such leaders and such motives, how could they fail. But it was only the first step. When the whole army had offered sacrifice, Judas turned to his own tent, with a bounding step, and a heart filled with gratitude and joy.

Berenice was alone ; and he saw that her eyes were intently fixed upon some object, over which she was bending. He approached with a noiseless step, and stood beside her. It was a cradled infant on which she was gazing—the child of her adored Judas.

“Berenice!” She flew into his arms, exclaiming, “Are they safe? All safe?” “All,” was the reply, as he kissed first her, and then the little sleeper. “Thank God! thank God!” she ejaculated; “He is merciful indeed! Oh, Judas! I have stood by our babe all the time the battle lasted, and prayed that the Lord would give victory to thy banner.” “Thanks! my beloved; behold the trophy I have brought thee;” and he drew a sword from its sheath, and laid it beside her. “It is the sword of the Syrian general, Berenice; and his corpse whitens on yonder field. Dost thou remember,” he continued, “the night we spent in the wilderness—and the words there spoken? The first battle is won; and Esther and her children are already half avenged.”

“Hast thou seen Imla, my sister?” said Salome, as she entered. “Not since the battle commenced,” was the reply; and without uttering another word, the wife of Simon rushed out.

They had so much to speak of, so much to think of, that neither noticed the singular manner of Salome. An hour passed. It seemed scarcely more than a minute to them, when Jonathan and Eleazar rushed in, with wild disor-

dered looks, exclaiming, "Judas! our sister, our sweet Imla, is nowhere to be found. We have searched every spot ineffectually. Spite of Salome's remonstrances, she would go forth to behold the battle; and has not been seen since."

Alas! Imla was already on the road to Daphne. A fugitive Syrian had seized upon her, and bore her away, as a propitiatory offering to the monarch of Syria. Short was the time left to mourn the loss of Imla; for the foe were again upon them. Seron, the governor of Celc Syria, having heard that reinforcements were flocking in on every side to Judas, determined at once to cut off the victorious leader; and assembling a large force, went forth to give him battle. Judas retreated to Bethoron, a fortified village, and with a firm confidence in the assistance of the Almighty, awaited the event. It was now Hallel, or the latter end of August; and the vine-clad hills of Judea were rich with the purple clusters of the grape, ripening beneath the influence of the autumnal sun. Judas sat on the terrace roof of the dwelling where he had taken up his abode, gazing on the fair prospect around him, with a saddened heart. Yesterday, hope had beamed in his eye; but he had that morning heard murmurs, cowardly murmurs, amongst his little army. Spite of their recent

victory, they feared the superior force of Seron. Berenice was by his side, and her child rested on her knee, smiling sweetly in the face of its mother. But that mother's cheek was pale—for she fully shared in the anxiety of its father.

The elevated spot on which they stood commanded a bird's-eye view of the country, for miles around, and presented a scene rarely equalled in beauty. Mountain and river, hill and valley, mingled together in the lovely and varied prospect.

Suddenly the sound of martial music came upon the ear. Berenice started, and gazed upon the quarter whence the sound proceeded. The fading light of the sun displayed the glittering **armour**, waving plumes, and flying banners, of an approaching army; while the royal standard of Syria, supported by a pole of solid gold, gave forth its ample folds to the passing breeze. "It is the Syrian army!" exclaimed Judas, his eye flashing with reawakened ardour. "By heaven, they are in battle array. The work will be begun to-night. Farewell, dearest," said he, tenderly embracing her, and blessing his child. "I go to arm for the battle." "Nay, Judas; no hand but mine shall perform that task: since first thy sword was drawn in the good cause, I have done it, and I will not now

shrink. Am I not thy bride, the chosen of thine heart? A warrior's wife should never know of fear. The remembrance of thy wife and child will strengthen thy heart in the conflict; and if victory sit not on thine helm, fear not, Judas; a heathen shall never, never call the wife of Judas prisoner—shall never insult his offspring. Here on this spot will I watch the event, and pray fervently for the success of Israel."

Seron halted for the night within two miles of Bethoron.

Both armies were astir before the sun rose; but Judas had the mortification to perceive, that the feeble murmurs of yesterday had now grown into high remonstrances. In presence of his little band was a well-disciplined force, the sight of whose formidable numbers added greatly to their disaffection. But the mind of the Jewish leader was equal to every emergency. He proceeded from rank to rank, urging them to be true to their country and their God.

The sun had arisen in clear and cloudless majesty, and shed its bright rays over the majestic figure and glittering armour of the Maccabee, as he stood on an eminence, in sight of both armies, and waving the white banner in his hand, thus addressed the people; "Hear, O ye

men of Israel!—your enemies are many; but the sword of the Lord can slay the many as well as the few. Were not the hosts of Egypt countless?—but they fell before the avenging hand of God. Was the army of Senacharib invincible to the sword of the destroying angel? Why then should ye fear? Look round, and behold the fertile valleys and vine-clad hills of your native land. Did ye plant the vine that strangers should take the produce? Did the clusters ripen, that strangers should pluck them? Bethink ye, O men of Israel; if we are defeated, our wives and our children will be at the mercy of a ruthless invader. What that mercy is, we all know. True, their numbers are greater than ours; yet they fight but for gain; they venture life and liberty for hire; but ye strive for your homes and your altar, your aged parents and your helpless children. The strength of one man, in such a cause, is as the strength of fifty whose sole motives are worldly gains and worldly honour.” He ceased; and on the instant the priests sounded a charge, and with an impetuosity nothing could resist, the Israelites rushed into battle.

They fought; they conquered. Scron was doomed to the same fate as his predecessor Apollonius.

CHAPTER VIII.

The king was on his throne,
The satraps thronged the hall ;
A thousand bright lamps shone,
O'er that high festival.
A thousand cups of gold,
In Judah deemed divine,
Jehovah's vessels hold
The godless heathen's wine.

BYRON.

Two young females sat together in a chamber of the palace at Daphne; both apparently engaged in deep and painful reverie. One was the fair Greek, introduced in a previous chapter; the other the young girl in whose behalf her interest had been so powerfully excited, and whom the reader must have already recognised as Imla the Asmonean. The earnest and mournful gaze which Laodice was bending on her young companion, told how her thoughts were occupied; but Imla's eyes were glistening with a tear, given perchance to her absent kindred and her distant home. Was it the youth and beauty of the Hebrew girl that attracted the Grecian towards her?—or was it not

rather the slave's sympathy for the slave so recently snatched from all she held dear, so unfit to bear the bitterness and degradation of her new lot;—the impulse of a young, warm heart, which, knowing and feeling misery, wished to spare to another similar anguish ?

Laodice was rewarded by the confiding love and gentleness of her protégée. It soothed the bitterness of her regrets, when escaping from the hateful love of Antiochus, she found a solace in the sweet caresses of Imla for all her sorrows. It is a pleasing thing to know ourselves beloved, to feel there is an eye that will be dimmed when we are sad, a lip that will smile when we are gay. Without seeing the girt the fugitive had brought him, Antiochus had presented her to his lovely favourite ; and Laodice kept her carefully excluded from his sight. In a palace containing three hundred women, this was no difficult task. But there was yet another link between them. From the lips of the Asmonean she had learned the knowledge of the true God; and while listening to the sweet voice of Imla, making more musical the language of distant Greece by her rich tones, she turned from the worship of the created, to the worship of the Creator.

There was within the chamber in which they sat, a small oratory, formerly dedicated to Apollo; but Laodice had removed the idol, and here the gentle teacher and her beautiful proselyte daily offered up prayers to the living God. Little did the Syrian monarch deem that the rites of the religion he detested were regularly performed beneath the roof of his own dwelling. "Of what art thou dreaming, Imla?" said Laodice, at length breaking silence. "Of home," was the simple and touching reply.

The Greek spoke no more, but she put her hands before her eyes, to hide the gushing tears. It is soothing to feel that we shall be missed from the accustomed spot. Alas! were she free, she had none to rejoice at her release from slavery—none to welcome her to the scene of early happiness. Yes, there was one; but did he still linger around the beloved spot? or was he not rather to be found amid the gay and the happy?—perchance with another, a fairer by his side.

The thought was too painful; and she rushed abruptly from the chamber, to seek in employment a refuge from busy memory. Left to her-

self, Imla slowly arose, and descended by a flight of marble steps into the garden below. Carelessly she wandered on, amid the fragrant flowers and the shadowy trees, their foliage dyed with the many tints of autumn, occasionally pausing to admire some exquisite piece of sculpture, or to gather some favourite blossom : there was a listlessness in her look and manner, which showed that her thoughts dwelt not with the scene before her.

A stranger entering that spot, might have deemed her the impersonation of some ideal nymph, some sylvan goddess, such as the poets of Greece delighted to place in every garden, grove, and field.

Through many a winding path and fairy temple did she pursue her way, until she reached a small pavilion, built of cedar wood, inlaid with gold. Art had lavished her utmost skill upon that lovely little pleasure-house. The curtain that veiled the entrance was of purple velvet, worked with flowers in their natural hue, with corresponding foliage ; and near it ran a small stream of clear water, in which some gold and silver fish were sporting ; and trees and plants of rare beauty grew around the banks. Imla was wearied. She longed for repose, and drawing

aside the curtain, she entered the favourite retreat of Laodice. The interior corresponded with the exterior in elegance and beauty. The walls were hung with the masterpieces of Grecian paintings, taken from the mythology and Homer's poetry ; jasper vases, filled with flowers, were placed on stands of ivory, attracting crowds of glittering insects by their perfume. Shells from India, and singing birds, suspended in cages of gold, each added to the ornaments of that charmed spot, rendering it an earthly paradise. But to the young Hebrew it brought sadness and tears ; its very loveliness served to remind her that she was far from those who loved her, that they were ignorant of her fate, and perchance mourned her as dead. When, oh ! when should she see them again ? That question brought tears to her eyes, and she wept freely ; but who can weep long in the sunshine ? Not the young and hopeful. There was stillness in the air—a quiet repose, only broken by the buzz of the insects, as they hovered from flower to flower, which produced a calm in her spirit.

Throwing herself upon a couch, she gradually sank into a tranquil slumber. An hour passed on in repose, when the curtain was drawn aside, and a man, richly attired, entered.

He paused a moment on the threshold, and put his hand to his brow as he looked upon that calm and silent scene. Alas! what a contrast it presented to the storm within his breast.

He seemed faint, and had evidently sought the pavilion for the purpose of repose, and he slowly passed onward. Still Imla slept, her head reclining on her arm, and a tear glistened on the long lashes that rested on her bright cheek. Her dreams seemed happy; for a smile dimpled her mouth, and her ruby lips were slightly parted, revealing the pearly teeth within, while her dark hair, agitated by the passing breeze, played in a thousand graceful ringlets around her ivory throat and bosom.

The intruder started back, with a gesture of surprise and delight, on beholding the unexpected occupant of the couch; and kneeling by the sleeper, raised her hand, and pressed it to his lips. The salute awakened Imla, who, rising, shook the hair from her brow, and gazed with a look of horror on him who knelt beside her—for she at once recognized the dark lineaments of the Syrian monarch. Then bitterly she reproached herself for wandering so far, without her protectress. “What brought thee hither, sweet maiden?” said the king; “if in-

deed aught mortal can bear so heavenly a form?" She answered not. His words had inspired her with a sudden hope. He doubted if she were mortal. Might she not take advantage of that doubt? Behind the bower was a thick grove; if she were once within its recesses, she would be safe. With Imla to think and to act were one thing; and while he yet waited a reply, she bounded past him and was gone. Antiochus was superstitious; and after a short and fruitless search, he conjectured he had surprised some wood nymph in her haunt, and vowed to offer two milk-white doves on the shrine of Diana, as an expiation for his involuntary offence.

Meanwhile Laodice sat in her chamber, with her brow leaned on her hand. She mused, poor girl, of home and Greece, and early love—of the hours when she was innocent and happy. Imla suddenly entered, pale, trembling, and exhausted; and sunk upon her bosom, exclaiming, "I have seen him, Laodice; I have seen him!" "Whom, trembler?" "Antiochus, the king—Antiochus the murderer!" Imla then related his unexpected appearance, and the stratagem she had used to escape from him.

The Greek clasped her hands together, and remained for some moments silent. At length she said, in a voice which faltered from deep emotion, "Imla, the hour so dreaded has arrived. At last thou must know all my misery, all my degradation. Thou wilt then learn to despise and scorn me; yet, oh! in pity do not tell me so." "Say not such words, my friend and preserver," answered Imla, embracing her tenderly. But Laodice gently removed her arms, as she said, "Alas, alas! thou knowest not all. I was born in a sunny vale of Attica, the youngest, aye, and the loveliest of many children. O beauty! thou wert a fatal gift to me. While my brothers and sisters laboured—for my parents were poor—I was reared with the tenderest care: my sole employment to wander amongst the hills, and pluck wild flowers to form a wreath for my brow. In these rambles I was not alone; a youth, some two years older than myself, was my companion. He was of lordly descent—I a poor cottager's daughter. But children as we were, what was difference of rank to us? The glad present was ours; we recked not of the future. When the skies were overcast, and I could not go forth, he came to my abode, and spent the whole day

in teaching me music. He was an orphan boy, and his indulgent guardian heeded not how he passed his time so long as he was happy. We spent the summer days in singing to his flute, or reciting the glowing fictions of the poets. Sometimes he sung verses, composed by himself, in praise of my beauty. Oh! those were happy hours. I returned one evening to my father's dwelling, and found a stranger there. He was richly attired. Such a guest seldom honoured my father's humble roof. I liked not the look he cast upon me, and would have left the room again, but my father desired me to approach them. As I passed my mother, I saw she had been weeping, and a fearful anticipation of evil thrilled through my brain. Would that I had not outlived that moment. "Behold," said my parent, "this is my daughter; I have not deceived thee." The stranger rose, and gazed upon me rudely. But why should I dwell on this painful scene? I saw the gold paid down for my purchase. My parents sold me, with less compunction than they would have parted from a domestic animal which had grown familiar to them. But, oh! the words in which they announced my doom! It was for this they had nurtured me so tenderly—for this they had cherished the child, whose sale was to enrich

them. Little cared they what my after fate would be. My brothers and sisters never loved me; they envied my exemption from the toils they shared in. They dreamed not, Imla, how dearly was that exemption purchased. Madly I rushed out into the moonlight. They did not follow. I sought him, Imla—my friend, my companion. He listened to my tale, and in the anguish of that moment, he poured his tale of love to my willing ear. The mist fell from my eyes, I was no longer a child; deeper feelings were awakened in my heart. I discovered I had loved for years—I rushed into his arms—I heard his passionate words—I did not move—I could not speak; but my father's voice dissolved the spell. From that night I saw my lover no more. Antiochus purchased me. My beauty made me a favourite—I became his mistress. Nay, start not from me—I have told all; and if thou canst not love, pity, oh pity me still!" "I do, indeed," replied the weeping girl; "but for thy generous interference, oh! what should I have been? But cannot we fly, Laodice? Is there no hope of escape?" "There is," answered the Greek, thoughtfully; "and now thou knowest me as I am, I will tell thee, that, with heaven's aid, to-morrow morn we shall be far

from Daphne. To-night the king holds a festival, and I have laid a plan to secure his signet-ring, which, if obtained, will smooth all difficulties. So hold thyself in readiness for a sudden journey. Nay, nay, no tears," she continued, drying up her own; "to-day we have need of all our energies; to-morrow we may sigh or smile in safety."

Laodice lingered over her toilet with unusual care; and when it was finished, and she surveyed her form in a full length mirror, she sighed, as she softly murmured to herself, "Oh that he could behold me now!" She had scarcely uttered the wish, ere her favourite slave entered to inform her the king was already in the banquet room, impatient at her non-appearance; and charging Imla to see that all was prepared, she went forth, accompanied by her female attendants, to the festal hall. All that imagination can picture of eastern magnificence was realized in that splendid apartment. Everything rare and costly, that could be procured by the magic power of gold, was assembled there, to grace the festival. The fairest women of the east dazzled the beholders by their loveliness, while the voices of musicians ravished the senses. But a taint was over all—

the taint of slavery and despotism. Why will such dark things obtrude into such lovely scenes? On the table of gold, near which the king sat, was the splendid candlestick which he had taken from the temple of Jerusalem, from which the table itself had likewise been stolen; and the lights in the branches shed a brilliant glow over the features of the Greek, as she sat by the side of Antiochus. There was a shade of care on her brow, but it was unnoticed, she so seldom smiled.

Song and dance succeeded each other; and the wine cup circulated freely. It was past midnight. Laodice grew uneasy. At length the king turned to her. "No song," said he, "hath passed thy lips to-night, beloved; and to the ear of Antiochus no voice is so sweet as thine." She took the instrument he offered, and to its melodious tones, chaunted forth with plaintive accents these simple strains.

Song.

"Be still, poor heart, a little while;
Ere long thy sufferings will cease;
For thou art breaking, and I smile
To think how soon thou wilt know peace.
The festive scene I fain would shun,
O'er former hopes and joys to brood.
My spirit pants to be alone,
Where none may break its solitude.

Alas! alas! I must not leave
The glittering hall; but strive to feign
A joy I cannot feel, and grieve
For peace and silence, but in vain."

"Such mournful strains suit not a festival," said the king, smiling; and waving his hand, bade the musicians strike up gayer notes; and thus the hours passed, until, one by one, the revellers departed, and the monarch and the Grecian were alone. Laodice arose, as the last attendant left the apartment, and approaching the table, took from it a cup of gold set with precious gems, and filled it to the brim with wine. "Will not the light of the universe," she said, gracefully kneeling and presenting the cup, "deign to pledge his poor slave?" He took it with a smile, and kissed the hand that offered it, while he quaffed off its contents in one deep draught. Laodice fixed her eyes steadily on his face as he drank, while her cheek flushed, and her whole frame trembled. Antiochus noted her agitation, as he gave back the cup, but he attributed it to fatigue. Meanwhile, the wine took a rapid effect. He had already partaken deeply of the contents of the bowl; his brain felt dizzy, objects swam round before him, and he sank back insensible. The

Greek arose, and softly approaching the door, bade the guard without keep watch that the slumbers of the king were not disturbed. Then, closing the door, she drew a massive bar across it, returned to Antiochus, and kneeling on a cushion at his feet, looked once more on his motionless features. Was it possible, she asked herself, as she gazed, that he who lay before her, hushed and powerless as an infant on its mother's breast, could be the ruthless fiend, the blood spiller, whose ambition had filled so many lands with misery and death?—he who had so wantonly trampled beneath his feet the religion, liberties, and lives of an unoffending people? Yes; the shadow of cruelty rested on his brow, and a dark thought took possession of her mind. Should she perform an act of justice—of mercy? There were none to stay her hand. A small diamond-hilted dagger glistened in his girdle; she drew it forth, and looked upon its shining blade, while the memory of his many black deeds rose up, like accusing witnesses, in her soul. The life of the mighty monarch of Syria, the oppressor of Judea, lay at the mercy of a woman. Sternly, fiercely, she bent over him—her hand was raised to strike the blow, when she caught the reflexion of her own features in

the opposite mirror, and with a start and a cry that had almost betrayed her, she dropped the dagger, and burst into tears: a voice seemed whispering in her ear, "Thou shalt do no murder!" A burning weight was upon her temples; and turning slowly away from him, who had so nearly been her victim, she passed through a private door and reached her own apartment. All was now hushed in the banquet hall; of the busy revellers but one remained; the flowers were faded, the lights burned dimly in the sockets; and he who so lately presided at the festival, the monarch of millions, he whose power was mighty to save or to destroy, owed his life to the benign influence of that holy law he impiously tried to extirpate.

Imla, when rejoined by her friend, was startled by her agitated manner. Laodice, however, quickly recovered herself, and smiled when she perceived that her faithful slave had made every preparation necessary for instant departure. There was no time to lose; the moon was already waning; and throwing a dark cloak over her splendid apparel, she twined her glittering tresses beneath a helmet, and bidding her chosen attendants follow and be silent, she led the way from the palace. The king's signet,

which she had stolen, was warrant sufficient, and with it they passed the guard unquestioned. We will not detail minutely the circumstances of the flight. Ere morning dawned, they reached the shores of the blue Mediterranean.

CHAPTER IX.

It is not that my lot is low,
That bids the silent tear to flow ;
It is not grief that makes me moan,
It is that I am all alone.

KIRKE WHITE.

ON the sea beach at Modin, stood Salome and Berenice ; the former gathering small white shells, which had been thrown up by the sea ; the latter watching the tiny wavelets, as they rippled beneath every breath of wind that kissed them, and musing on the loveliness of the Almighty's gifts. There was that pensive shade upon her lovely features, which habits of deep thought almost always leave ; and it suited admirably with the intellectual character of her beauty, and the high wrought enthusiasm of her feelings.

To a contemplative mind, the sea has always a charm—there is such a contrast between the calm sunlit waters, sparkling in beauty and brightness, to the dark surges that sweep away whole navies on their bosoms. What a type of a worldly mind is the changeable ocean, fair and smiling in appearance, but how deceitful in reality!

“Look, sister, look!” exclaimed Salome, pointing to a speck, like a sea-bird’s wing, on the distant waters. “Yonder is a sail, making directly for the harbour; what should a stranger do here?” Berenice gazed in the direction pointed out, as she said, with a smile, “One little vessel cannot bring danger, dearest Salome; thou wert not formed to be a soldier’s wife.” While they were speaking, the bark, impelled by a favourable breeze, and the exertions of twelve stout rowers, approached rapidly, and they now discovered that it was a pleasure galley, with gilded prow and white silk sails, evidently making for the beach. Five minutes elapsed. They could distinguish the figures of those on board. Beneath a canopy of sky blue, sat two females. They could not see their faces. The galley was moored to the beach. The passengers stepped on shore, and a veiled female rushed into the arms of Salome; while another, with folded arms and beating heart, stood at a little distance. Who can paint the joy of meeting, after a long and almost hopeless separation? The heart may imagine, but the lip cannot utter, the pen cannot trace the delight an affectionate bosom feels at a réunion with a beloved object. They only are wretched who have none to mourn for their

absence, nor to rejoice at their return. Such was Laodice's exclamation, as she beheld the affectionate caresses lavished by the sisters on their recovered treasure. There were none to welcome her. She was in the land of the stranger, and what availed her recovered liberty, since she was still alone? Tears filled her eyes; for there was not a being in the wide world who cared for her. Imla had found earlier and dearer friends, and in her delight of again beholding her home, the stranger was forgotten. She turned from the contemplation of happiness she could not share. The waves gleamed brightly before her, calm and untroubled. "Why, oh! why," she exclaimed aloud, "should I not find rest within their peaceful bosoms? What have I to live for?" "Is there no hereafter?" said Imla, as she pressed her lip to the Grecian's cheek. "Forgive me, sweet Laodice, for my selfish forgetfulness. Come, let me present thee to my sisters." "Nay, nay," murmured the Greck, "I am unworthy of their companionship." But without heeding her words, Imla drew her forward. Salome and her sister warmly embraced and welcomed her. The whole party sought the palace, and there, in the well remembered abode of her infancy, Imla told her own and her companion's tale, and many a tear

was given to the unhappy Greek's pathetic narrative. "And my brothers," said Imla, cagerly, "when will they return?" "We expect them hourly," was the reply. "Hark! even now I hear the tramp of steeds in the court-yard. They come, they come!"—and Salome bounded forward to convey the glad tidings of their sister's return to the young warriors. Imla grew pale and faint, while Berenice, who with all the generous warmth of her nature, had already opened her arms and heart to the desolate stranger, flew to her side, and whispered words of hope and tenderness in her ear. The door opened. Imla's heart beat violently. She flew towards it. She was in the arms of her youngest brother, Jonathan. The other four followed. Two embraced her with warm affection; but Judas and Simon stood aloof, deep anguish in their looks, gazing upon their sister, as if they sought to read her very soul. At length Judas spoke. His voice sounded hollow, from the very effort to make it seem firm, as he said, "Thou hast been a captive, sister; where? and to whom?" Berenice divined the reason of his question, and bending over him, said something in a low voice. The cloud passed from his brow, leaving in its place a gleam of unmixed joy. In the next moment,

Imla was strained close to his heart, while he uttered a fervent thanksgiving to God for all his mercies. Simon now claimed his share of affection, and resigning her to his care, Judas turned to his wife. He saw her eyes were fixed upon some object. His followed hers, until they rested on the beautiful figure of the Greek, as she leaned out through the open casement, in an attitude that told of sadness, the deeper felt from its silence.

CHAPTER X.

Whither, oh ! whither ?—hath the world a home,
The wide cold world, for heart as sad as mine ?

“WELL, here we are in Jerusalem, Cleomenes. Thus far have I followed thee from pure friendship. Now I go no farther, unless I know thy purpose in wandering in a distant country, when thou couldst find so much that is lovely and beautiful in Greece or Syria. Why then leave the service of Antiochus ?” “Because,” answered his companion, sadly, “the things thou namest have no charms for me. To this bruised and blighted heart the loving and the beautiful bring back but recollections of my loss ; and for Antiochus, I am weary, thoroughly weary of his debaucheries, his cruelty and his tyranny. Everywhere the groans of an oppressed people salute my ears. I am a Greek—a freeborn Greek—and cannot, will not aid in strengthening the strong arm of despotism. I tell thee, Dion, this noble Judas and his brave devoted followers, are worth a million Antiochuses. Nay, start

not, my friend, but listen. I have myself become a proselyte to his faith. I mean to proffer a strong arm and a firm heart, in the cause of freedom, religion, and Judea. What sayest thou, Dion? wilt thou join with me in this glorious enterprise?" "Cleomenes, we have been friends in arms for many years—your hand has saved me more than once from death—your purse has ministered more than once to my necessities—your sorrows have been poured forth into my bosom; and we will not now be parted."

"Thanks, generous Dion," said his friend, embracing him. "I expected no less from thee."

Antiochus had left Syria for Persia, whither a revolt had called him, leaving Lysias, his near relation, governor in his absence, with the charge of his son; commanding him, at the same time, to prosecute the war in Palestine with the utmost rigour. "Listen," said Cleomenes, as he grasped the arm of Dion; "how mournfully sweet, in the distance, are those strains, offered up by a sorrowing people, at the shrine of The Eternal. And this is Mizpeh, the place where in times past the thousands of Israel assembled. Oh! how the contrast must strike upon the hearts of Judas and his countrymen, to be so

near the Holy City, yet not enabled to enter it—to know that the foot of the heathen profanes the Holy of Holies, while the descendants of Aaron are forbidden to enter it! What wonder is it, that these people are so successful, having such recollections before their eyes?”

At a distance, the Greeks viewed the ceremonies, performed in the open air, of the people they came to serve; and the touching solemnity of the rites, and heartfelt supplications for aid to heaven, affected even the heart of Dion. During that day no man in the Asmonean's small army tasted of food. When the sun went down, Cleomenes and his friend sought the tent of the Hebrew leader; for they had tidings of importance for the ear of Judas. When introduced to his presence, they found him, seated with his brothers, apparently engaged in earnest conversation: but he rose on the entrance of the Greeks, and advanced to greet them. “Whence come ye, and what seek ye?” said the Maccabee, quickly, while he suffered his eagle eye to rest for a moment on the young strangers. “Ye say your tidings are of importance; if so, it is best to lose no time in telling.” Cleomenes was somewhat startled by the abruptness of the General's manners; but a

moment's reflection served to convince him that in his situation it was natural to suspect every stranger. He knew the Syrians to be capable of any cruelty or treachery; and within two hours march was an army of forty-six thousand men. He answered, while he bent his knee, "Peril besets thee on every side—to morrow, Georgias is to leave the camp with five thousand picked men, to seek thee in the mountains. Slave merchants are in the camp of Nicanor, and already they have bargained for the remnant of thy unfortunate people." "They may find themselves like the bear-hunter in fable," said Judas, bitterly. "They have sold the skin before the beast is taken. Thy countryman was wise, Grecian; but what more hast thou to tell?" Cleomenes now entered into various details that would be of little importance to the reader. When he had concluded, Judas paced to and fro, in painful thought; and when he paused again he cast a scrutinizing glance on Cleomenes, and asked, "What were thy motives for leaving the Syrian camp, and coming hither?" "Behold!" and Cleomenes drew from his bosom a garment of white silk, edged with sky blue, and kissed it: "Maccabee! the fame of thy valour brought me from sunny Greece. I came to

enter into the service of thy enemies : but I saw the constancy with which thy people rejected every offer of wealth or favour ; how unshrinkingly they bore torture, imprisonment, and death. I saw the aged, whose life was almost gone, the tender woman, and the young, in the freshness of their feelings, when human passions have their greatest strength, when they have seen only the sunny side of existence, and none of its darkness and gloom, perish in lingering agony, rather than accept the splendid offers of a king, who only required them to give up their religion in return for all the favours he would have heaped upon them ; and I said to myself, ‘ How glorious must that religion be, that can thus strengthen its votaries ! ’ Then I sought and found one of the teachers of thy faith, and I asked him of his creed. But I weary thee,—I became a proselyte. I am here to shed my blood in the noble cause for which thou hast taken up arms.”

During this short narrative, the keen eye of the Maccabee had watched his countenance ; but candour and truth were written on his broad, clear brow, and the fire of generous ardour was in his glance. Without hesitation, Judas opened his arms and cordially embraced the

noble youth. Cleomenes cast an anxious glance towards his friend. Judas saw it, and turning to Dion, said, "Is thy purpose the same as thy companion's?" "Else what thinkest thou was my motive for following him hither?" "Enough," answered Judas, somewhat displeased at the manner in which the reply was spoken. "You, Eleazar and Jonathan, must take charge of these young friends; and now," he continued, speaking in a low voice to Simon, "what is to be done? We shall lose many men by the proclamation of to-morrow; but the law must be obeyed. We have but one plan to pursue, my brother. If we remain here, we shall inevitably perish. We must march upon the enemy immediately, surprise his camp, and trust to God for the result." "If such be the case, were it not better to proceed at once?" said Simon. "Let us draw out the men instantly; do all that the law requires; and then on to victory or death!" "Be it so!" Then turning to his brothers, he bade them follow him, and the Greeks were left for a short time alone. "Didst thou mark him, Dion?" asked Cleomenes; "his martial bearing, his lofty figure, his eagle eye? Sawest thou ever a nobler warrior?" "No; by the gods, victory seems perched upon his forehead. Mars him-

self could scarce desire a fitter representative, nor would I wish to serve a braver leader than Judas Maccabeus. But methinks 'twere well to mark the customs of the people with whom our fate is so closely linked; and if I mistake not, something peculiar to themselves is now taking place in the open air." They left the tent, and in the space before it observed a ceremony which appeared as wise as it was humane. They were in the shadow; but the rays of the moon fell upon the extended columns of the Jewish army. At the head of them stood the Maccabee brothers, conspicuous from their uncommon height, and the white plumes that adorned their helmets. Two venerable Levites stood in front of the army, with silver trumpets in their hands, and the white moonlight streaming down upon their whiter hair; while they blew upon their instruments seven times, proclaiming that all who had married wives, built houses, planted vineyards within the year, or were fearful, might depart. "By Jupiter, they are moving off by hundreds!" exclaimed Dion. "Look how they fly like herds of startled deer! Why this is madness and folly indeed." The Athenian spoke truly. Half of Judas's force had availed themselves of the offer to lay down

arms, and return to their homes. But those who remained, were the bravest and best men, prepared at any time to lay down their lives for their country. There is not, perhaps, in the whole code of human laws, one at once so generous and politic, as the Jewish law-giver's decree. How can that man be a good soldier, whose thoughts are perpetually recurring to the bright things he has been forced to leave? And how often is a brave army lost by the cowardice of a few? Timidity is infectious, and a panic more easily excited than removed.

Cleomenes and Dion returned to the tent. They were followed shortly after by Judas. "We leave Mizpeh in an hour," he said, addressing Cleomenes. "By sunrise we must be in the camp of the enemy. Thou wilt need refreshment; for the way is long, and it is our custom to eat bread and salt with the strangers who sojourn amongst us; but ere the irrevocable pledge is given, I will act fairly with thee. Since the sun went down, we have lost three thousand men. Our present force consists of the same number, opposed to forty-seven thousand, commanded by some of the best and bravest of Syria. Our chance, thou knowest, is desperate; but we have sworn either to leave our bodies on the field, or to conquer our foes.

The ties that bind us to such a cause are many and dear. But thou, young and wealthy, noble, and of another land, hast none of these. Thou art free to depart as thou camest. Thy proffered kindness will long retain its place in the memory of Judas. Why shouldst thou link thyself in a desperate cause?" "My choice is made, and I abide by it, noble Hebrew," answered the Greek, as he took the hand extended to him. "My friend must speak for himself." "I am not a girl," said Dion, proudly, "to change my purpose with each passing moment. General, my determination hath been already spoken." The light of the waning moon served to guide the Jewish army on their way; and no sound broke the stillness of the night, save the measured tread of the armed men. Cleomenes marched by the side of the general. To a mind deeply imbued with poetry, that night presented a beautiful picture. It was early spring, and the air was impregnated with the fragrance of the flowers and blossoms. The short fresh grass glistened with the dew, shining like gems amid the moonlight; and there was a stillness and repose in nature which was strangely contrasted with the mission of blood and death on which he was speeding. To him that hour always brought tender recollections. It was

beneath the moonlight he had first whispered vows of love, first given words to his feelings. Few years had since passed, but that night had made him a lonely, hopeless being. Life had no blossoms, no flowers for him.

The first faint beams of morning had begun to appear in the sky, when they approached the enemy's camp. The village still lay hushed in the calm and silence of early dawn, and even the watchmen slept upon their posts: for how could that mighty host fear the reduced and desperate Jews?

The Syrian general rested in a luxurious pavilion; in one of those delicious, dreamy reveries, more pleasing than the sweetest slumber. The measured step of the sentinel, as he paced before the curtained entrance, and the scarcely audible sound of a musical instrument, played by an unseen musician, were all that broke the silence.

A black slave knelt beside the couch, motionless as a marble statue, to guard his master's slumbers from intrusion.

Suddenly there came a cry upon the stillness of morning, breaking on the ear of the Syrian like a withering spell. It was the war-cry of the Maccabce, mingled with the gathering-word

of Israel: "Who is like unto thee among the Gods, oh Jehovah! Hear, O Israel!" Nicanor sprang instantly to his feet, and sought his sword. "Surely that is the chorus of the damned!" he exclaimed, as the shouts of the victor, the strain of the trumpet, and the clatter of the armour, mingled with the shrieks of the vanquished, the groans of the dying, and the deep exclamations of the flying, smote upon his ear. "My armour! quick!" and even while he spoke, he partly raised the silken curtain of the tent, and looked out. The space before him was filled with the dying and the dead; while, forcing his way towards it, through crowds of fugitives, might be seen the towering form of Judas Maccabeus, uttering that cry, which it froze his heart to hear.

In the front of battle, at the head of the army, Nicanor was a brave man: but the attack, so sudden, so unexpected, paralyzed every feeling but fear; and writhing beneath its influence, he wrung his hands, and wept. "Quick! quick! my lord; fly!" exclaimed the slave, as he laid his hand upon him. "Whither, oh, whither?" asked the general. "In this dress I shall be a mark for every sword, a target for every arrow." "My lord," replied the Nubian, "thou hast

been a kind and generous master, and thy slave is not ungrateful. Change garbs with me; our height is the same, and thou mayest pass undiscovered." Almost passively, the general suffered the slave to effect the exchange. The faithful slave, concealing his face in the vizor, went forth into the midst of the combatants, and true to his assumed character, perished, pierced by a thousand darts, while his dastard master, availing himself of his unworthy disguise, fled away unnoticed.

The Hebrews were triumphant, but the work was not finished. With consummate skill, Judas drew his men from the plunder of the camp, by reminding them that they still had a force double their own to encounter, composed of picked men, the flower of the Syrian army. It was morning, but dark and hazy, when Georgias, weary with seeking for the enemy, returned to the village.

The sight of a bright flame, which lit up the hills and valley, oppressed his mind with a fearful misgiving. But ere he had time to assure himself of its truth, the Jews were mingled with his troops.

A second time the forces of Judas were victorious; and when the sun at length broke

forth in unclouded majesty, not an enemy was to be seen, save the captive and the dead. The next day was the sabbath; and as Cleomenes wandered on alone—for Dion was too busy with the realities of life to share in his feelings—he paused at times to survey the scene of the late contest, awful from its very stillness and repose. The sky was of a deep and intense blue, unrelieved by a single spot; and the sunbeams shone, as if in mockery, over the faces of the dead, rendering their ghastliness still more hideous to behold. “And these,” said Cleomenes, as he turned sickening from the scene of slaughter, “two days ago, were dreaming perchance of a speedy return to their homes and families, rich with the plunder of their defenceless enemy. They remind me of that Persian who brought marble to build a monument for a victory not yet won. It is not for man to say, ‘I will do,’ for he is powerless even in his utmost might.” He passed into a calm and shady grove, and sat down to meditate on the littleness of human greatness, when the current of his thoughts was suddenly disturbed by a burst of low and musical laughter. Rising, he bent towards the spot whence it proceeded; and looking through

the trees, perceived a small plot of grass, sprinkled with flowers, in the centre of which sat Judas. His younger brothers were on each side of him, and an arm rested on the neck of each. At a little distance were John and Simon, gazing on the group with looks of fond affection. From Eleazar and Jonathan came that shout of laughter; oh! what a pure and beautiful feeling is brotherly love. The brow of Judas was no longer thoughtful. The whole scene was of absorbing interest to the Grecian, who loved to mark such unveiled displays of the kindly feelings of the human heart.

CHAPTER XI.

IT is the past that maketh my despair—
The dark, the sad, the irrevocable past.

MISS LONDON.

Near, and more near,
They bent with pale enquiry, and close ear;
Her eyes were shut—no motion—not a breath.
The gentle sufferer was at peace in death.

LEIGH HUNT.

THE sunshine was streaming in through the gilded lattice of the women's apartment, and the Greek sat beside it, in deep thought. Glad tidings had reached the palace that day; its inmates hourly expected the return of those they loved. Their very joy made her feel more lonely. She had no sympathy with the happy; she only longed to behold the lover of her youth once more, and yield up her weary spirit into the hands of its Creator. They are in error, who say that the grief of youth is slight. It is when the feelings of the heart are newly awakened, and the passions retain their pristine freshness, before the storm gust of sorrow has extinguished the light of hope, that the blight is most fatal. The young sometimes die of a broken heart—the

aged never. The lightning that falls when the harvest is ungathered, always brings devastation in its path. The storms of summer are more terrible, because more unexpected than those of winter; at least Laodice felt them so. But she was not the only mourner in that room. Imla and Salome were gaily conversing together; but Berenice sat silently, watching the feverish slumber of her boy, with such anxiety as only a mother can feel. His little cheek was bright with an unnatural colour, the hectic of disease; and as she bent over, its hot breath fanned her brow like the burning blast of the sirocco. She felt convinced the babe was dying; but Salome laughed at her fears when she said so. Affection is slow to believe in the danger of a beloved object. "How beautiful, how very beautiful," murmured Laodice, as she left the casement, and kneeling by the child, kissed its brow. The young mother smiled gratefully; but the smile gave place to a tear as she saw the child's lips writhe with convulsions, and beheld its fixed and glassy eye.

She put her hand to his forehead, and cried, "Come hither, Salome; only feel his brow, how damp and cold it is. Tell me, sister, in mercy, tell me, is it the dew of death?" "Nay," an-

swered Salome, kindly ; “ thou needlessly alarmest thyself : and oh ! what will Judas think if thou greetest his coming with so sad a look ? He will think thou lovest him no longer : come, wipe away those tears, and be thyself again. Thou dost not usually give way to such weak fears.” “ Sisters, Salome, Berenice, here they are at last,” exclaimed Imla. “ Come, let us welcome our returning heroes !” And without waiting for a reply, she bounded on with the lightness of an unbroken spirit, and threw herself into the embrace of her eldest brother. In the joyful agitation of that moment, Imla knew not that a stranger was gazing on her unveiled loveliness, and drinking deep draughts of love from her rich and sparkling eyes. Salome had followed ; but Berenice still remained by her suffering babe, and Judas looked anxiously for the one whose voice had hitherto been the first to speak a welcome, to rejoice at his safe return. A sudden fear chilled his frame ; and darting past his happy brothers, he entered the chamber. Two females were there—the first he looked upon was young and lovely—but what were youth and beauty to him, if they belonged not to Berenice ? She was there—but she moved not ; she did not glance upward, although she knew he was by her side. “ Berenice, my love,

my life, look up. Great God! she cares not—she hears not—she is senseless!” But even while he spake, a shriek broke forth from her lips, so wild and heart-rending, that Judas staggered, and would have fallen, but for Laodice. Rousing himself by a great effort, he looked down upon the stiffening features of his dead child. Aroused by that unearthly shriek, the party without rushed in, but stood transfixed with horror at the sight which met their view. Berenice sat pale, motionless, and rigid as marble. On her knees lay the dead child, a smile upon its fair young face, and its eyes but partially closed; while Judas, with his eyes almost starting from their sockets, and the veins in his forehead swollen nearly to bursting, kept his glance fixed upon the lifeless clay. “Berenice, dearest, best beloved, speak to me,” exclaimed Salome, when they had taken the corpse from her knee, and borne her to her own chamber. “Speak, if it be but one word, for mercy’s sake, lest my heart break with gazing upon thee.” She answered not, and Salome laid her hand upon her bosom—it was cold as clay.

During that night, she continued in a state of torpor more fearful than the most violent grief. In vain they lavished upon her the most affec-

tionate caresses. Her feelings seemed locked in ice. There is something appalling in the silence of despair. But what avails it to paint the agony of the bereaved parents, or the affectionate sympathy of their relatives? The long, long week of mourning was nearly passed, and they longed to meet once more, to share each other's sorrow, and soothe each other's despair.

“Thou art sad, Dion,” said Cleomenes, as they stood on the sea-shore, gazing on the white waves stirring beneath the influence of the rushing wind; “whither are thy gay spirits flown? Hath the blind God, whose power thou hast so often mocked, at last avenged himself, by throwing a dart at thee?” “Banter sits heavily upon thee,” was the reply; “thou, who hast groaned so often beneath the power of that same mischievous urchin; and yet,” he continued, in a graver tone, “thy guess was not wrong. Didst thou mark the fair sister of our general?” “A child, a mere child. I grant a lovely one, yet still unsuited to thee.” “Why?” answered Dion, somewhat impatiently. “Am not I the descendant of one of the noblest houses of Attica? I, whom the best and fairest of Greece and Syria have deemed a fitting match—am I not equal to any whom the ambition of the Maccabees may seek as a bride-

groom for their sister?" "I said not otherwise, my friend; yet these Hebrews intermarry only with those of their own faith. Therefore thou, professing another creed, belonging to another land, couldst scarcely hope to obtain the hand of the fair Asmonean." "Speak not to me of creeds or countries," said Dion, fiercely; "I tell thee, Cleomenes, I love this Hebrew maiden, and if I live, I will obtain her." "Renounce then the errors of the heathen, and worship at the shrine of the true God, then perchance thine homage may be accepted. What are birth, wealth or power to the Maccabee? Hath he not renounced tenfold what thou hast offered him, in rejecting the proffers of the Syrian monarch? Then beware how thou cherishest a flame in thy breast, which circumstances render so hopeless." "Thou canst preach, but thou canst not practise. Thy life belies thy doctrine—hast thou ceased to cherish thy love for Laodice, because she is lost to thee beyond recovery? No, thy conscious look betrayed thee. Her memory is fondly adored yet." "It is," answered Cleomenes, struggling to repress the emotion which the mention of her name called forth. "But oh! how different was my love for her to the passion of a day, Dion. We were thrown together from

childhood. Year after year, I watched her mind expand. I knew each thought and feeling of her breast. She was nature's child, and poetry was in her soul. Oh! how many hours we have stood together, watching the bright landscape, and the sunny sky! Each hope, each wish, was mutual; the present was ours, and we never thought of the future. And when at length the bright dream of my youth vanished, leaving but a dark and stern reality behind, each finer thread of existence seemed torn away—the dark and bitter sense of hopeless misery alone remained. Since then, the smiles of women have had no charms for me—none resembled Laodice.” “And if ye met again,” said Dion, gazing pityingly on his agitated countenance, “could she be aught to you?”

“It is a subject on which I dare not think,” said Cleomenes, and he turned abruptly away. Dion did not follow.

CHAPTER XIII.

Only those who've known can guess
Slighted love's lone bitterness.

BUCKSTONE.

One sole desire, one passion now remains
To keep life's fever still within his veins.

BYRON.

DION turned his steps towards the palace garden, and passing on through the shady walks and beds, rich with the produce of spring, entered a small summer house, and sat down to brood over the new feeling which had so entirely absorbed all others in his bosom. Dion was an only child ; his infancy had been one of uncontrolled indulgence ; for his father in age had married a young and lovely wife—married her, because she was a homeless and desolate orphan, without friend or protector ; and she repaid his kindness by years of devoted affection. When at length the grave closed over him, he marked his sense of her gratitude by leaving his immense wealth between her and her child, with the sole guardianship of the latter. She never

wedded again ; but alas ! her mistaken love laid the foundation of future misery, both to herself and her offspring. The dissipation and ingratitude of her son brought his mother to an untimely grave ; and for some time he bitterly mourned her. At this period, he became acquainted with Cleomenes. The melancholy that distinguished him harmonized with his present feeling. His extravagance had made him incur a debt. His friend was wealthy ; he generously released him from all difficulties, and never reverted to the subject again. Dion's passions were naturally strong : they only required a powerful motive to rouse them into fury. He would have dared much in the cause of virtue, provided it interfered with no interest of his own. But he would unshrinkingly have exerted his energies in the worst cause, if it were in any way identified with his purpose.

The great error of his character was selfishness, and that was the fruitful nurse of many others ; though perhaps he owed it as much to his education as to his natural disposition. The spoiled, the indulged child, ever becomes a selfish man. Hitherto his passions had slept. He had nought of sufficient strength to awaken them. Now the master passion had been aroused, and

its influence was doomed to darken all his future life. Dion had sat nearly half an hour in that lovely, but solitary spot, when he heard a light step along the path, followed by another at some distance. The first was slow, like the step of one the lightness of whose heart was gone, and who no longer sped gaily on her path; but the other was the gay bounding step of youth in its sunshine and gladness, ere the hand of care has withered the blossoms of hope, or sorrows blighted the dreams of girlhood. The Athenian started as he beheld the pale but surpassingly lovely countenance of her who came first. The exquisitely shaped and statue-like limbs spake to him of his own land. Yes, the form and features were evidently Grecian. It seemed as if the fairest work of the sculptor had become animated with the spirit of life. She looked too perfect for humanity. She passed on silently. Dion's heart bounded with delight, when he beheld the graceful Inla about to enter the very place in which he sat. A blush dyed her cheek, as, looking up, she beheld the passionate glance of the Greek fixed upon her. She was about hastily to retreat, but he threw himself before her, exclaiming, "Stay, oh stay one moment, maiden, I implore thee!" Terrified and be-

wildered, Imla scarcely heard his words, and in a faltering voice said, "Let me go, I entreat thee. Those whom I came to seek are not here." "But I sought only thee, fairest," he exclaimed with vehemence, as he knelt at her feet, and caught her hand. "Thou seest before thee one who hath never knelt at woman's feet till now—one who scoffed at the power of love, until he looked upon thee. Since the hour when, warmed by affection, I beheld thee spring forth to meet thy brother, thine image has never been absent from my heart, and I have loved thee with all the strength of a first passion. Then say, only say that thou wilt be mine, and I am thy slave, thy adorer for ever." "Let me pass," exclaimed Imla, gathering strength from indignation—for she now fully comprehended his words. "These are no speeches for the ears of an Hebrew maiden. Greck, thine unholy passion is an insult to one who bears in her veins the blood of an Asmonean. Let me begone, I command thee—away!" Dion replied, "Blame me not thus hastily—my breast burns but with one passion—that passion is love for thee. I am young, nobly born, and wealthy. Accept my homage, and I will bear thee away from this barbarous and distracted country to Athens, glorious Athens—

the mother of the arts and sciences, the land of sunshine and song, the abode of Apollo and the Muses, a fitting home for a fair and delicate flower like thee. "My own land," answered Imla, "bleak and barbarous as thou deemest it, is dearer to me than any thou couldst offer. I seek, I wish for no other; and I tell thee once more, Greek, that an idolater and an alien can never hope to obtain the hand of Mattathias's daughter." Again she attempted to pass him, but he stayed her flight. "One moment, one little moment longer, and here at thy feet will I cast away religion, country, and fortune. Henceforward my sword shall be for Judea, and my love for Imla." "It may not be," said the Hebrew maiden, with dignity. "If thou couldst renounce faith, country, and kindred, for the passion of a day, what security should I have that he who became an apostate, from such base motives, would not again become a renegade, when stronger interest tempted? Away, away! Before, I pitied thee; now I scorn and despise thee." Many more entreaties did he use, but cold and scornful glances were all that answered him; till almost maddened by her cold and calm rejection of his love, he started upon his feet, and fixed his eyes upon her face with the gaze

of a basilisk. He put his lips close to her ear, exclaiming, in a voice hoarse with passion, "Woman, love scorned and despised may be turned to hate, hate the most intense—and such a feeling is mine. Thy brothers have brave hearts and strong arms; but the time may come when the scorn of the sister shall be washed out in the blood of the brothers. Henceforth, Dion the Athenian, shall be to thee a terrible name."

"Idolater, I despise thy threats," exclaimed Imla, her spirit roused by his taunts. "I defy thine utmost malice; one word from me, and thy black soul were hurled to perdition. Spite of thy mighty words thou art in my power." "Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the Greek; when suddenly a blow from a powerful arm felled him to the earth, and Jonathan, the Maccabee, was bending over him. Long years after that blow was terribly avenged. Stunned by the fall, the Greek lay motionless. Turning from his prostrate foe, the young Asmonean raised his sister in his arms, and bore her away. He returned in a few moments, and to his great surprise found that the Greek was gone; but a slip of papyrus, newly written, lay upon the seat. He took it up, and read as follows, "A Greek never forgets an insult, nor forgives a blow. Let the Asmo-

nean beware of Dion, the Athenian." "Dog!" exclaimed Jonathan, as he trampled it beneath his feet; and in a few days the Greek was almost forgotten, except by Cleomenes. The conduct of Dion grieved him, for long companionship had rendered him dear, and he now felt doubly unhappy. The sound of Salome's gentle voice, and Berenice's sad yet tender smiles, recalled to his mind the image of Laodice. He pitied Dion too, for he knew the agony of hopeless love.

CHAPTER XIII.

Never was pause so full of dread,
Till Hafed, with a trembling hand,
Took hers, and bending o'er her, said
"Hinda!" That word was all he spoke,
And 'twas enough:—the shriek that broke
From her full bosom, told the rest.
Panting with terror, joy, surprise,
The maid just lifts her wondering eyes,
To hide them on her Gheber's breast.

MOORE.

"Now I am alone—alone indeed," said Cleomenes; "for these noble Hebrews, engrossed by the affairs of their country, and the enjoyment of domestic happiness, when chance affords them a short respite, have no feeling in common with this scared and bleeding heart, except a love of religion and glory. Why does my memory dwell so tenaciously upon the past, when, perchance, she whom I mourn has forgotten even the existence of her early love. All nature is smiling around—I only am gloomy and wretched."

He had scarcely ceased his soliloquy, when a sound of female voices met his ear, and the

rich, deep tones of one especially sounded distinctly amidst the rest. It seemed familiar to him; he had heard a voice like that before. Pale, almost senseless, he leaned against a tree and listened. It was silent for a moment, and then it came again, accompanied by the tones of an instrument, and a low sweet song in his own language. Oh God!—they were his own composition. He had given them, long years since, to the unforgotten one; he could not be mistaken—the voice, the song! They had met at last in the land of the stranger. Regardless of everything but that blessed thought, he rushed abruptly into the midst of a group of females. A young and lovely woman was bending over her instrument, and tears were falling fast upon its strings. It was Laodice! A cry of joy broke from his lips. She raised her eyes—they met his—and she fell back senseless in the arms that had cradled her so often in the thoughtless days of childhood. “Met, only to part,” he exclaimed, as he bent over her lifeless form. “Heavens! I have killed her! Laodice, dearest, best beloved!—are we doomed eternally to be severed?” “No!” said Imla, kindly; for she at once comprehended the truth, and had beckoned her attendants immediately away.

“She is not dead: surprise and joy have been too much for her; but she is even now reviving.”

“Bless thee, gentle one, for thy words,” answered the Greek; “to lose her now would be maddening indeed.” While he was speaking, Laodice unclosed her eyes, and gazed wildly around. She feared that she was the sport of some mocking dream—the bliss seemed too great to be real. But she felt his kisses, his tears upon her cheek. The dream of years, the cherished hope of her breast, was fulfilled. She beheld him once more, unchanged in his love for her, and she was almost happy.

Imla glided away, as soon as she saw her friend recovered. Their interview she thought too sacred for the intrusion of another human being. “And thou art mine once more, my only love!—met again, after years of sorrowing, beneath another sky, in the land I have adopted as my own. When I left for ever the shores of Attica, and forsook the creed of my fathers, I knew not that each step I took from my native clime brought me nearer to happiness and to thee,” said Cleomenes. “My prayers have been heard, and I shall die blessed,” replied Laodice, “since Cleomenes has enrolled himself amongst the followers of the true God. Oh! how little

did I dream, when they told me that a Greek had embraced the cause of the oppressed, and become an Israelite from true conviction, that he whom the noble Judas extolled so highly was my own Cleomenes." "Why shouldst thou speak of dying?" he said, anxiously; "why dash the cup of happiness from my lips, still untasted? It is cruel, cruel in thee." A flush of deep carnation tinged her cheek, and she answered, in a tone of such agony that it wrung his very heart, "Cleomenes, we can never, never, be aught to each other more than we are now. I am a wretched, guilty, injured woman; but never, even in thought, has my affection wandered from thee. Yet I am unworthy; yes, unworthy of thy love. The mistress of Antiochus cannot hope to be the wife of Cleomenes. I could not, would not deceive thee; and here I render back thy plight. Henceforth thou art free." He heard her to the end, but he staggered like a man beneath the weight of a heavy blow. Pity, sorrow, and love, struggled in his breast. Had he not known, for years, that if ever they met she would be either the wife or mistress of another? Was the parting now to be eternal, when it seemed as if an especial providence had brought them again

together? The very idea was too dreadful for endurance. "How," he asked himself, "could she avoid sinning as she had sinned! Was she not a slave? Had not her parents sold her to degradation? Why then should she suffer for that which she could not avoid?" Love whispered, "Take her to thy bosom." Need it be said that love was triumphant? But oh! the horror she endured during those moments of suspense, as, with burning cheek and tear-dimmed eyes, she watched the changes of his countenance. His generous nature allowed her not long to suffer, for he whispered, while he pressed her to his heart, "Thine still, thine now, as ever." What were her years of sorrow to Laodice? Those words repaid them all. Hours flew by unheeded, for they had much to speak of—past events, thoughts and feelings. And when darkness surprised them, they found that the principal part was yet unsaid. Slowly they turned towards the house. They found their friends anxiously awaiting them. That night was the happiest Laodice had ever known. Explanations were given, with blushes and tears on her part, and unmixed exultation on that of Cleomenes. Even Berenice forgot her sorrows, and smiled for the first time since the death of her only child.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Alla illa alla!" the glad shout renew,
"Alla Akbar!" the caliph's in Merou;
Hang out your gilded tapestry in the streets,
And light your shrines, and chaunt your zeneleets:
The swords of God have triumphed; on his throne
Your caliph sits, and the veiled chief hath flown.

* * * * *

And how felt he, the wretched man,
Reclining there, while memory ran
O'er many a year of guilt and strife;
Flew o'er the dark flood of his life,
Nor found one sunny resting place,
Nor brought him back one branch of grace.

MOORE.

TIME flew on rapid wings. Again Judas was a conqueror. Lysias had retired in disgrace to Antioch, and the Asmoneans were on their way to Salem. Few events had taken place in the family. Laodice and Cleomenes, or rather Sarah and Isaac—for Jewish converts never retain their original names—were wedded; and Imla had learned to think that one voice was sweeter than all others, and a word spoken by that voice could make her heart bound, and her cheek crimson. The young Asmonean loved. A

youth from Alexandria, the son of her mother's brother, had left his father's land to assist in the struggle of right against might. The youth was handsome, brave and accomplished; he had by his worth gained the confidence of Judas, and Imla often felt her heart beat high as she listened to the praises bestowed on him. Nor was Onias slow to discover that his young cousin had bright eyes, and a brighter smile; and Judas promised that when he returned to his own country, Imla should accompany him as his bride.

It was winter; but the troops of Judas felt not the winter's cold. The snow rested upon the mountain tops, but spring was in their hearts—for they were approaching as conquerors the gates of Jerusalem, their own beloved but ruined capital. Gaily they carolled the Psalms of David, to cheer their onward way. Oh! how joyously beat the heart of Judas, as he rode by the side of the open litter that contained his noble-minded wife! But as they entered the desolate city, sadder thoughts mingled with his exultation. He remembered the true blood spilt when last he stood within the sanctuary. The scene rose before him in all its horrors. He had then vowed in his inmost heart, that if he lived

that blood should be atoned for, and he would perpetrate a mighty deed of vengeance. He had redeemed his vow—for every drop of innocent blood there shed, a Syrian's life had answered; and he stood in the Holy City, under God, the deliverer of his suffering people. While these thoughts had passed through his mind, the hymns of triumph had changed to a low wailing sound. The hill of the temple was in sight, and the wintry sun gilded the ruins of that glorious edifice, whose beauty had astonished the world. Deserted and desecrated, the sacrifice suspended, the priests fled away, the altars polluted, and the veil rent from the Holy of Holies, how desolate was the house of Jehovah! Shrubs and long grass had grown up in its empty courts. But if the temple was lonely, the city had not escaped. The houses of the wealthy were in ruins; her proud palaces had fallen; the market place was shut up. Solitude reigned triumphant in the capital of David. But the depression the sight of this produced upon the people lasted not long. They joyed that the hour of darkness was passing away. They felt that God had permitted them to triumph: and again the voices of the multitude, the clashing of cymbals, and the sweet

notes of harp and dulcimer, awoke the echoes with their glad music; and the Syrians in their fastness—for they still held the tower of Acra—answered with execrations. “And this, then, is Jerusalem,” said Laodice, (for so we shall still call her) as she leaned on the arm of her happy husband, and gazed down from the terrace on which she stood upon the sleeping city. It was a clear and beautiful day, and the sun cast a purple shadow upon the snow-capped peaks of Mount Olivet, while the brook Kedron calmly pursued its course in the valley at its feet. “How lovely must this spot have been in its glory, when the bountiful and wealthy Solomon enriched it with the produce of almost every nation of the earth. It is indeed a rich and fertile country. What pity the foot of the invader should ever trample upon its sweetness.” “Pity, indeed,” said Imla, who had joined them while her friend was speaking.

Again the streets of Jerusalem were thronged with people—again the daughter of Zion lifted up her head, and her spirit bounded with gladness. “To the temple! to the temple!” was the universal cry; “the temple of the Lord!” Mothers clasped their children to their hearts, and breathed a blessing on the heads of the

Maccabees ; while, rejoicing over their safety, Judas had ordered the siege of the fortress to be vigorously pressed. But he himself assisted in the repairs of the sacred edifice. The polluted altar was removed, and another of unhewn stone substituted in its place. With his own and his brethren's share of plunder, he provided a new table of shewbread, an altar of incense, and a candlestick of pure gold. The veils were worked by the hands of his wife and sisters ; and following the example of their glorious leader, the people daily brought offerings for the service, and worked night and day to build up the ruins, and remove the rubbish. In an almost incredible space of time the repairs were completed, and the twenty-fifth day of Kislov appointed for a solemn dedication—a day which will ever be held sacred while one Jew survives the wreck of his nation. Three years before, on that very day, the people had witnessed the profanation of the sacred edifice, and its dedication to Jupiter, by the commands of the base and cruel Antiochus ; and now one of the trampled and oppressed people, whom he had sworn to extinguish from the face of the earth, had laid low his mighty power, and scorned at the scorner. God had avenged his insulted name

by the hand of the brave Maccabee ; and they stood within the temple, the hallowed dwelling of the Holy One. The venerable priest was beside the altar—the priest who had stood by and prayed to God in the wilderness, who had cheered their hearts at Mizpeh, who fulfilled his duty, even in the darkest hour. The lights burned brightly in the golden candlesticks, and the blood of the sacrifice sprinkled the altar. When the priests and scribes joined their voices to those of the people, and sung “ Holy, holy, holy, hallelujah, glory to the Lord ! ” every heart among the worshippers glowed with gratitude to the God who had pardoned their transgression, and suffered them again to raise the hymns of praise in the sacred city. For eight days, in Jerusalem, nothing was heard but sounds of festivity. Lights were in every balcony, and the festival was termed “ Choniker, or the Feast of Lights ; ” for the light of religion once more shone upon Israel.

But we must now conduct our readers to a different scene—a scene that must always inspire horror—the death-bed of the guilty ! When death comes to the young, the lovely, and the innocent, although the pang be bitter,

it brings with it no images of terror—the melancholy mingles not with the horrible in our sensations. Our hope and trust for them is in the world beyond the tomb. Flowers and sunshine are associated, in our imaginations, with the early grave. But horrible, most horrible, are the struggles that mark the exit of him whose dark page of life has been blotted by a thousand crimes; to whom existence is a burden, and eternity a dread; who cannot live, yet fears to die.

In the mountains of Paratacene, Antiochus, the proud Antiochus, the oppressor, lay, a prey to the most horrible disease, in a state of mind beyond description; without one sweet and gentle voice to soothe his sufferings; without one tender hand to smoothe his pillow, or cheer his loneliness. Yes, even he, whose lightest word was a law, whose step was followed by thousands, was left to die almost alone. It is only the strong heart of affection that can bear unwearyingly the querulous impatience, the loathsome smells, the sufferings and confinement, of the sick room. Antiochus's reign had caused fear, not love. The cruel and selfish seldom excite lasting attachment; and they who shared in his pleasures, and ministered to his tyranny, turned

sickening from the spectacle of corruption which the mighty Epiphanes presented. It seemed as if the worms had anticipated their feast—for they already preyed on the limbs of the still living king. What could his reflections be, as hour after hour he lay brooding over the past? Amid the unbroken solitude, did the image of that fair young child never rise up before him, or the brave mother and gallant sons? Did the white hairs of the scribe never call upon his guilty soul to tremble? Oh yes! and that it was, that made death so fearful. In vain he strove to chase away the remembrances which peopled his chamber with so many awful visions. The effort availed him not. It was a cold, wet night, and mournfully the wind howled in the recesses of the mountain, like the groans of the dying, or the shrieks of the damned, sounding, to the excited fancy of the monarch, like the rejoicing of fiends over his sufferings. One solitary slave, a boy of sixteen or seventeen, sat by his couch, shuddering at his wild ravings. He was a Hebrew; and as the king, writhing in agony, alternately called upon the gods to pity him, or cursed them for their cruelty, he prayed to the Almighty to soften his heart, and to give him to know how

vain was the worship he offered. "Defeated, disgraced, and dying!" he exclaimed at length, attempting to raise himself. "Curses, curses, curses on the whole human race! Would that I could crush them, as I have done before. That accursed Judas—but I will baffle him yet. Forward, my brave Syrians!—charge, charge on the Hebrew dogs! Hark! how they howl for mercy. It is their Sabbath, they say: ha! ha! ha! They will be the fitter for heaven. Down with them!—Ha! what is this? Off, woman! I did not kill thy child. Her hands are on my neck. They tighten! I choak! Oh! see how her eyes glare upon me. Have mercy, mercy! What dost thou here? Do not look at me thus! Thy pretty one leaped into the flames. I would fain have saved him.—The furies haunt me. Avaunt, Alectro! My hour has not yet come. Oh Jupiter! save, oh save me from their fangs!" "Pray to Him who can assist thee," said the youth. "The idol thou hast worshipped has no power. The gulph of Hades is already yawning for the unrepentant sinner; the blood of the guiltless weighs heavy on thy soul. Repent, repent of thy sin, ere thou diest." Antiochus answered, "Yes, yes! I feel it here. Away! away! away!—look at that grey-haired old man—he is mocking

—ah! by the gods! he laughs at my sufferings. But I will have revenge—revenge! Jerusalem shall be the burying place of his nation. I will blot out their very names from the records of the earth!” “Thou canst not,” answered the slave, mildly, as the king sank back, exhausted by his ravings. “God hath decreed it otherwise; and man cannot alter the laws of the Eternal.” “What sayest thou, slave?—of whom speakest thou?” “Of the God of Israel, the God whom thou hast blasphemed and rejected; but whose hand is heavy upon thee now.” “Speak on, boy,” said the king, in a softened tone. Warmed by enthusiasm, the youth proceeded. He told of the glories of Jehovah, the wonderful deliverances he had wrought for his people, of his infinite power, his justice, and mercy; and the king listened with a saddened brow to the unstudied eloquence of his youthful teacher, until, moved by a sudden impulse, he desired that his officers might be summoned. They entered, but the hand of death was strong upon him; and there, in the presence of those who had been witnesses and partners in his guilt, he acknowledged the avenging God, and died, leaving his disputed crown to his son, whose short possession lost

him his life ; when Syria, in her turn, became a prey to war and bloodshed, in requital for the measure she had meted out to unhappy Judea. Syria continued distracted by the competitors for her throne, until all-devouring Rome swallowed it up in her vast dominions. But we must not anticipate.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

Before my scythe, like burning flax,
Man and his marvels pass away;
And changing empires wane and wax
Are founded, flourished, and decay.

WALTER SCOTT.

So we grew together, like to a double cherry,
Seeming parted.

SHAKSPEARE.

WE must now pass over a space of twenty-one years. Of the gallant Maccabees two alone remained—Jonathan, now high priest, and prince of Judea, and Simon, his eldest brother. Many changes had taken place in Palestine since the death of Antiochus. Syria in the interval had suffered deeply. Five kings had swayed her sceptre, and occupied the throne. Three had perished by violent deaths; the fourth was an exile; and the fifth the tool of a crafty and designing villain, who was determined

to be rid of him as soon as his own base purpose could be achieved. Death had likewise been busy with the Asmoneans. Judas, the good and valiant Judas, lay beside his fathers ; but he died as he had lived, for Judea. Eleazar, too, perished on the battle field, crushed by an elephant which he had stabbed with his own hand ; and John, the eldest of the brothers, had been treacherously murdered in a moment of devotion to the salvation of his country, by an Arab tribe. Cleomenes had fallen by the side of his glorious leader ; and Laodice soon followed him to the land of shadows, leaving behind her one child, a daughter. Imla, the still beautiful Imla, a happy wife and mother, resided with her husband in another land. Salome too was no longer the timid shrinking woman as before. She had learned courage in a hard school. She was now fit to be the wife and mother of heroes. Poor Berenice still lived mourning the fate of her beloved Judas.

It was a festival day, and the temple was thronged with worshippers. Every dwelling was decked with flowers, for the harvest had just been gathered in, and universal gladness reigned in Jerusalem.

On these great annual festivals, every son of

Israel thought it his duty to pay his thank-offerings to Jehovah, in his solemn temple. Every house in Jerusalem was freely open to every comer. Thus was the bond of brotherhood perpetuated among that extraordinary people. People in their holiday garments traversed the streets, or poured out through the gates into the country beyond. But amidst all, one heart was sad. It was that of Berenice. She rejoiced for her country, but mourned for herself. Since the death of Judas no smile had ever wreathed her lips. She always shared the counsels of Jonathan; and to his children and those of Simon she was instructress and friend. From her lips the celebrated John Hyrcanus learned his first lessons of religion and valour. To her description of his immortal uncle, he was never weary of listening. But she had yet another charge. When Imla learned that her beloved sister was widowed, as well as childless, she determined to send her one of her own offspring. Death had taken from her her daughter; and when the birth of Miriam, three years after the death of Judas, enabled her to fulfil her promise, she herself brought the lovely child to Judea, and gave it to Berenice as her own. With this child, Rebecca, the

daughter of Laodice, had grown up ; and both in beauty resembled their mothers. Rebecca wanted the gentleness of Laodice. The Grecian blood, inherited from both her parents, had given her a fiery and poetic temperament ; and, although warm-hearted and affectionate to those she loved, she was still more constant and impetuous in her hate. Miriam was a complete contrast in her disposition. She was timid, almost to a fault ; and her want of self-reliance often caused pain to Berenice, for she forboded many evils to her sweet charge from it. For both the lovely girls John Hyrcanus indulged a strong affection. But in the heart of Rebecca he had a rival. All the dormant seeds of ambition had been awakened in her bosom by an idle prophecy, given by a wandering Egyptian, who had foretold that she should become a queen, adding at the same time, that the crown should be given by her husband. Much as she admired the brave Hyrcanus, still she nourished in her inmost heart the hope that the prediction might be fulfilled. "See how brightly the sun shines, dear Miriam," said Rebecca, as they stood together at the gilded lattice in their chamber. "It seems inviting us to go forth and share in the general gladness. Put on thy

veil, dearest, and let us walk alone. I long to feel the fresh breeze blowing on my brow." "Shall we ask John to share our walk?" said the timid Miriam. "Our dear mother will not like us to traverse the city unprotected." "Nay, nay," answered Rebecca, "that would spoil our ramble; and we can be back again before the time of the evening service." Miriam offered no further interruption; and linking their arms in each other, they passed unseen through a private gate, and took their way through a retired path, towards the valley of Jehoshaphat, a favorite walk of both. Mount Olivet was now in its summer beauty, clothed with verdure, and covered with the graceful trees from which it had taken its name; while the brook Cedron, almost dried by the heat of the sun, lay sparkling at its foot. "Come hither, my Miriam," said Rebecca, "and see what a lovely spot I have chosen for our seat." Miriam approached, and joined in admiring the taste of her companion. It was indeed a lovely view. A short way up the mountain, in a lone and secluded spot, a small stream had burst forth, and the edge of this little brooklet was fringed with drooping willows, and wild flowers of every variety and colour. A sunbeam was resting upon the waters, and the bank on one side was covered

with bright green verdure. "How beautiful!" exclaimed Miriam, as she took her seat by her friend. "How deliciously cool and sequestered. I could spend hours here, with only the companionship of my own thoughts, and never grow weary of the solitude." Rebecca smiled, and removing her veil, bid her companion do the same. Then commenced an eager conversation. Gradually Miriam became interested, for their conversation was of the future. So absorbed were the fair girls in their occupation, that neither knew they were no longer alone. A stranger had approached unheeded, and was listening attentively to their words. He was, by his dress, an officer of the Syrian garrison: and although past the prime of manhood, still retained much of its vigour and beauty. His features were Grecian in expression and shape, and his figure stately and commanding. At first, the maidens spoke low; but as Rebecca warmed with her subject, she raised her voice, and said with much animation, "It was a true prophecy, Miriam—I know it was—I feel as if the diadem had already circled my brow. I shall in truth be the bride of a king." "Oh Rebecca!" answered the soft voice of Miriam, "does a queenly diadem ensure more happiness

than is to be found in a lowlier lot, that thou shouldst covet it so strongly? Believe me, dearest, that power is dearly purchased at the price of peace." "For thee it might be so," said Rebecca, proudly; "for thine heart is formed for the calm and quiet of domestic life. But I could scarce be satisfied with the dull routine of woman's duty—mine, I trust, is a nobler spirit." "Perhaps so; yet I do not envy thee." While Miriam had been speaking, the stranger held his breath, as if he feared to lose a word, a tone of that voice, which recalled to him a voice as sweet, a form as lovely, as hers on whom he gazed; while memory rapidly conjured up an event which two-and-twenty years had not erased from his remembrance—his slighted love, his scornful rejection, when he breathed his passion to a woman's ear. Since then, the Athenian had looked on many a lovely form, encountered many a bright glance, but none sufficed to banish from his bosom the image of Imla. He knew that she was a wife and a mother—that another possessed the being so idolised; but for years he had lost sight of her. He never wedded, for the words which had changed his love to deadly hate had blasted every feeling in his bosom, save a burning thirst for revenge. He

had devoted all his energies to the ruin of Jonathan, the peculiar object of his hate. But the Maccabee still lived, lived honored and wealthy, the prince over a powerful people. He had sworn to dip his hands in his blood: for this he had lingered for weeks in Jerusalem; but Jonathan's shield was the love of his people; and Dion found it a safeguard more secure than a buckler of adamant. Now, as he looked upon that beautiful girl, every passion gained tenfold force, and in his inmost soul he swore she should be his. Assuming a gallant smile, he addressed Rebecca. She started at the appearance of the stranger; but her bright eyes gleamed with pleasure, when he spoke to her in her father's native language, words of admiration for her beauty; while the timid Miriam drew down her veil, and rising, said, "Rebecca, let us depart." "Why so speedily, pretty maiden?" said Dion, and his voice faltered as he addressed her in his softest tone. "The sun itself would grow dark, if deprived of the light of thy countenance." "Come, Rebecca," she exclaimed, indignantly, "let us depart—we did wrong to wander thus far unprotected." "Thou art right, dearest;" and Rebecca drew her arm through her friend's, and prepared to depart; but the Athenian caught

her hand. "Nay, nay, noble maiden," he said; "thou must plead for me to thy young and timid companion. I meant not to offend. Pardon then, my presumption in thus detaining thee—for oh! the sight of that face, which the envious veil conceals from my view, were worth the world to me—for it is like one I knew and loved, many, many years ago." "Thou art bold, stranger," and Rebecca frowned, as she drew away her hand. "Come, dearest Miriam." Miriam was not slow to follow. With rage in his heart, the Athenian saw them depart, but he followed at a distance, and beheld them enter the dwelling of the high priest, the man he most hated. "Furies seize it!" he exclaimed, grinding his teeth; "but by Nemesis, I will thwart him yet." Berenice was reading a tephillo, or book of common prayer; but on the entrance of her adopted children, the appearance of Miriam alarmed her, for she looked much agitated, and almost fainting, as she threw herself on a seat and burst into tears. "Rebecca, what ails thy sister?" she said. "Surely it is something dreadful to cause such emotion." Rebecca instantly related the appearance of the stranger, and the reason for their sudden return. "You are too young, aye, and I will add, too lovely, my children, to venture

forth alone. Yet, my sweet Miriam, I see no cause for this excessive agitation. Thou must strive against a weakness which will embitter thine whole existence. Look at me, Miriam; not forty summers have passed over my head; yet my hair is grey, and my eyes are dim, because of my sore affliction. But I struggled firmly to bear the will of providence, and I triumphed over my woman's weakness, and said, 'Thy will, not mine, O Lord! be done.' Thinkest thou if slight things had bowed down my courage and unnerved my spirit, I should ever have become the counsellor of Judas Maccabeus? Yes, Miriam, it was I, his wife—who loved him as woman seldom has loved—counselled him to stay and meet a glorious death, rather than stain his laurels by a coward's flight. I had no children; and, woman as I was, I put on armour, and went forth with him to battle. The Almighty for his own good purposes saw fit to permit his defeat. He was struck down by my side. But when I saw him fall, and deemed all lost for Judca, I did not weep—for tears should only be shed over the grave of the coward. All night I watched by his corpse, lest the birds of the air should prey upon him; and, on the morrow, with my own hands I dug a

grave, and laid him in it, until his brother could give him a more honourable sepulchre. Since that day," she continued, as she passed her hand over her brow, "life has no charms for me. But this is useless—come, my children, your uncles await our coming."

Simon and his family spent the festivals always at Jonathan's house ; and no shade of jealousy clouded his generous spirit, that a younger brother should hold the high office for which he was equally worthy. It was this generosity of disposition that rendered the Asmoneans so illustrious, true, and invincible.

CHAPTER II.

Oh! for a tongue to curse the slave,
Whose treason, like a deadly blight,
Comes o'er the councils of the brave,
And blasts them in their hour of might!

MOORE.

TIME glided on: summer had given place to autumn, and winter had already shown signs of his approach. Jonathan was distant from Jerusalem, following up a career of victory against the ungrateful Demetrius, one of the pretenders to the throne of Syria. Miriam had strolled forth into the garden, to gather a chaplet of the latest flowers for her brow. Unconsciously, she often paused in her employment, and heaved a deep sigh. On the morrow, she was to leave Jerusalem for Modin, whither her aunt had determined on retiring. Rebecca was to accompany them: still there were many dear ones left behind. "A grave employ, Miriam!" said Rebecca, as she joined her sister (for so she had been accustomed to name her). "So we leave the city to-morrow, dearest; and I would fain

take one more walk to the mount. Wilt thou go with me? The lady Berenice is in close conversation with the grave Simon. They have just received letters from the high priest, and John is with them. Let us then go forth, my Miriam, to that sweet spot we discovered in the summer—we may never see it again.” “Dost thou not remember what occurred the last time we visited the mount together?” said Miriam. “Nay, nay, there is no fear now, dear sister; the garrison is besieged so closely that a mouse could not leave it, without the consent of Simon and his soldiers—therefore there is no fear of interruption. Come, thou must not refuse so trifling a request.” Miriam yielded, but with some reluctance; and the two girls set forth on their ramble. They soon left the city behind, and reached the brook without interruption. The aspect of the vale was changed since their last visit. The water, swelled by late rains, was of twice the extent. The foliage of the trees had assumed a thousand gorgeous dyes, and the flowers were all faded and withered. Neither of the maidens felt inclined for conversation. There was an appearance of loneliness about the place that struck a chill to the hearts of both. How unlike the lovely repose of summer! The sadness of decay was on all around.

Rebecca already half repented leaving home. "Met again, sweet maidens," said a voice that struck terror to their hearts, as the Athenian prostrated himself at the feet of Miriam. "Oh! how often I have hovered about the city, waiting and watching for this blissful moment! How many weary days have I lingered around the dwelling that contained thee, and longed for the sight of that face which is dearer to me than all earth beside! And now, that thou art here, we will not part again. And thou, fair one," said he, casting a momentary glance at Rebecca, "prepare to accompany thy companion." Her eyes flashed, and passion almost choked her utterance, as she answered, "Insolent! begone! nor dare pollute our sight. Come, my Miriam; my rashness has exposed thee to this insult. We will stay here no longer." "Thou must first obtain my permission to depart," said Dion, haughtily; and he drew a small gold whistle from his vest, and blew a long loud note. It was answered by the appearance of four armed men. Miriam uttered a piercing shriek; but Rebecca scorned to show the terror she really felt; she clung to the arm of her sister, and strove to release her from the grasp of Dion. "Away, fool!" said the Athenian, fiercely. "It

is not thee I want—I seek a fairer. An hour hence and thou shalt be free. I seek the daughter of her who scorned my love.” His voice sank into a tone of deep exultation, as he added, “I have her!” He lifted the now senseless Miriam into a ready prepared litter, and giving her in charge of a female slave within it, bade the bearers move on, while he turned once more to Rebecca, who saw with agony her young companion borne away. “For thee, bright maiden,” he said, “I have yet a charge; know that he who now addresses thee, was thy father’s earliest friend, his companion in many a bloody field, the sharer of his every thought and feeling. He adopted another creed, another country. The first I would not join him in—oh! would that I had avoided the latter. I followed him to Judea; with him I fought by the side of Judas Maccabeus; and when the battle was over, I went with him to the Hebrew’s home. There I saw and loved the mother of her whom I have just torn from her home and kindred. Imla was equally beautiful, equally gentle, to all but me. I loved her madly, from the hour in which I first beheld her. When I told her my passion, she coldly rejected me. I offered for her sake to renounce religion and country; she answered

me with bitter scorn—she reviled and insulted me for the very love I bore to her; and her brother felled me to the earth by a blow, in requittance for my true affection. O ye Gods! what a tempest of passions strove within my bosom!—but all merged in an absorbing desire for vengeance. Imla is beyond my reach; but deep is the wound that reaches the heart of a mother, through the bosom of her child.” “Fiend!” exclaimed Rebecca, struggling with the horror that almost overwhelmed her—“pitiless fiend! have mercy, O have mercy!” “Mercy!” answered the Athenian, speaking between his closed teeth; “think ye that I have devoted the energies of a life that might have been better spent, to my revenge, to be moved now by a woman’s words? No, no! my purpose is achieved; Jonathan is a prisoner in Ptolemais; and Imla’s child is in the power of Dion the Athenian.” “Stay, stay!” said Rebecca, with frantic eagerness, catching his robe as he was about to depart: “Are thy terrible words true? Is Jonathan indeed a prisoner?” “As true as that blue sky is above thine head,” he replied, with an exulting laugh, and darted out of sight. She tried to rise, but his laughter rung in her ears; her head grew giddy, and

she fell senseless on the ground. The stars were shining brightly in the little pool, when she awoke from her deathlike trance. Some one was supporting her head, which ached intensely; she felt the cold stream upon her burning temples, and heard a sweet voice, but unfamiliar, giving directions to her attendant; and then came a sound of hurrying steps, but it grew fainter and fainter. She became again insensible. When consciousness once more returned, she was in her own chamber, and well-known faces were anxiously bent over her. A peasant girl, who was in the habit of bringing flowers to her and Miriam, had found her stretched senseless on the bank of the stream, where she drew water every evening for her parents. She sent to inform Berenice, who had grown alarmed at the protracted stay of the maidens, of Rebecca's situation. Need the eager questionings that awaited her recovery, or the agony that her heavy tidings caused, be repeated? Alas! they had cause to believe in their truth, for ere the night was spent, they were confirmed by a fugitive from Gilead. Under a pretence of delivering up the town to him, the treacherous Tryphon had enticed the too-confiding Jonathan within the

walls ; after which he murdered the few who had entered with him, and threw the gallant Asmonean into a dungeon. All search after Miriam was ineffectual, and Berenice and Simon were almost heart-broken. On the morrow, the inhabitants of Jerusalem met in every street, to bewail the probable fate of their brave leader and themselves.

Simon's bosom was wrung with agony ; but still the great cause swallowed up every private feeling, and he sent instantly to assemble the elders in the market-place, where he addressed them : " Friends and countrymen," he said ; " I need not tell you that my father, my brothers, and myself, have devoted our lives to obtain the common liberty. I need not tell ye, that three of my brothers have fallen already, and that the fourth is in the power of a treacherous tyrant ; nor need I tell ye how dear my father's son was to my heart. He was the last-born, as well as the last one left to me ; and I loved him for the sake of those who were gone, as well as for his own. Look not, therefore, farther for a leader ; for ye have one here before ye, who is willing to peril all things, as his brethren did before him, to revenge ye on your enemies and mine ; trusting to the God of our

fathers to aid us. The wolves of Syria deem that ye are defenceless, because they have basely taken your shepherd from ye ; but they will find themselves mistaken when our swords are in their hearts, and their fields are stained with blood." A loud cheer followed, and Simon was at once proclaimed the leader of the people. Then from the market they adjourned to the temple, to offer up prayers and sacrifices for Jonathan's safe return.

CHAPTER III.

And even in him it asks the name of love.

BYRON.

As if the memory of some deadly feud,
Or disappointed passion, lurked below.

CHILDE HAROLD.

I've none to smile when I am free,
And when I sigh, to sigh with me.

KIRKE WHITE.

“ I TELL thee, Miriam,” said Dion, in a softened voice, in answer to her entreaties that he would restore her to her sorrowing friends, “ that not even thy charms can blot out the hatred of years, or obliterate the memory of that blow.” “ Can nothing move thee?” she said, despairingly. “ Nothing, nothing, save thy love, my beautiful ; thy promise, that if I bear thee back to Jerusalem, it shall be as the wife—aye, the wife of the scorned and slighted Dion.” “ Never !” she exclaimed, with unusual energy : “ my father’s curse—my mother’s malediction—and my kindred’s hate, would rest upon my soul, and darken every hour of my future existence. Have mercy upon me, if thine

heart be not utterly hardened—if a human feeling still lingers there.” “Miriam, there does linger a human feeling in my breast; that feeling is unmeasured hate for thy kindred, mingled with love for thee. But thou hast yet power to sweeten the bitter streams of my passions; even as thine own legends tell, the law-giver sweetened the fountain of Marah, that thy people should drink in the wilderness. My conditions are not hard. I offer thee rank, equal to thine own; wealth, that kings might envy. Accept my proffers, and thou wilt revive each better thought, and win me back to honour and to virtue. Refuse, and the consequence be on thy own head. To-morrow I will have thine answer.” “My uncle?” murmured Miriam, almost inaudibly, as he turned to quit her. “Is safe yet,” said the Athenian, with a smile of dark meaning. “Simon hath taken upon him the command of Judea. He is fortifying the city strongly; and the fort is vigorously pressed. To-morrow our army marches to its relief, and Tryphon hath offered terms for the ransom of Jonathan.” “What terms?” she asked, breathlessly. “Two of his sons as hostages, and one hundred talents of silver.” “And will my uncle agree to this?” “Doubtless,” and another dark smile rested upon his features, “he

will not let his brother perish." There was such a demoniacal glance in his eye, as he quitted her, that the poor girl felt her heart sink within her, and she burst into tears. Nemia, the slave who had attended her since the night of her capture, found her mistress weeping when she entered. She was a Hebrew by birth; but many years residence in Syria, whither she had been carried while yet a child, and sold as a slave, had almost obliterated from her mind the remembrance of her native country and national religion. The only trace that remained, was a small silver medallion, hung round her neck by her mother at their parting, on which was engraven the name of the Most High. This talisman served to keep in her remembrance that Syria was not the land of her birth, and to warm her heart towards the unfortunate Miriam. Few had been the words of kindness that ever greeted the unfortunate Nemia. For years she had been the unresisting object of tyranny. Use had made harsh words and unjust blows familiar to her, until at length they fell unheeded on the callous ear or shrinking form of the poor slave. Yet she had been born to high estate, to wealth, and splendour. Her parents were among the many victims to the ruthless Antiochus.

Perhaps, of all the variety of human misery, the sense of loneliness is the worst. Moore has said,—

“Ah! who would inhabit
This cold world alone?”

He is right. We lose all zest for pleasure, when we have none to share it with us; and oh! how keen is that sorrow of which no sympathising bosom partakes.

The voice of Miriam, ever sweet and gentle, but doubly so to one unused to listen to such accents, thawed the apathy of despair, and aroused within the bosom of the girl feelings to which she had long been a stranger. And she who was thus kind and good, was herself a mourner. She perchance had been torn from a fond father, an adoring mother. Nemia remembered, as one remembers some far-off vision, a form that had bent over her in infancy, and blessed her when she smiled—a form that sometimes brightened her dreams; and she pictured to herself her young and lovely mistress pining for the loss of such a being; and perhaps for the first time in her life, she wept for sorrow not her own. The magic chord of sympathy was awakened in a bosom that readily responded to

its call. Still weeping, she said, as she knelt beside Miriam, "Oh! would that thy poor Nemia could serve thee! How gladly she would lay down her life could it purchase an hour's happiness to her beloved mistress. Lady, but few were the days of my life unmarked by bitter misery, until thy lovely face gladdened my sight. A word of kindness never greeted mine ear until I heard the tones of thy sweet voice, and then I wept for very gladness. O lady, thou knowest not—mayest thou never know—the loneliness of that heart that pants in vain for sympathy. They only are wretched, who pass through life uncheered by affection; who know that when the grave closes over them there are none to shed a tear upon the spot that shelters their remains. To live solitary, and die forgotten, is indeed a curse, and such a fate is mine. I have no parents or kindred; I stand in the world, utterly alone; but it was not of myself I wished to speak," she continued, mastering her emotion by a strong effort, "but of thee, dear mistress." "O kind-hearted girl," said Miriam, "I fear thy power to assist me is small indeed." "Perhaps not," answered Nemia, hesitatingly; "sometimes the humblest instruments avail. Try me," she continued, earnestly,

“and see how eagerly I will strive in thy cause.” “Canst thou bear me from this prison? Canst thou release my beloved uncle from the power of his murderers? Canst thou restore me to home and happiness? No, no, no! thou canst not;” and again she put her hand before her eyes, and wept bitterly. The girl watched her with agony scarcely inferior to her own; but she timidly clasped her arm around Miriam’s waist, and bending her face over her, said, “Dear lady, trust not Dion; he is a villain, a deep designing villain; and oh! if thou knowest aught of this great Hebrew leader, or his kin, find some means of dissuading them from yielding to the demands of the treacherous Tryphon. He only seeks the children in order to make their father’s fate more terrible.” “How knowest thou this?” exclaimed Miriam, checking her tears, and gazing fixedly into the pale but earnest face of the kneeling slave. A crimson blush suffused it at the question; and she turned from the searching glance of her mistress. But when the question was repeated, she said, in a voice still lower than before, “I used the slave’s privilege for thy sake, dear lady, and overheard all their dark designs.” “Thou wert a listener, then?” said Miriam, with something

of contempt in her tone; for from her childhood she had been taught to despise a meanness, which her less fortunate attendant had learned in self-defence, or as a means of retaliation on her oppressors; and she drooped her head, heart-struck and abashed. She could not mistake that look of stern rebuke, that altered voice. She felt she had committed wrong, but that wrong was for the sake of Miriam. She raised her tear-fraught eyes, and said, in the tone which habit made natural to her, "Forgive, oh forgive me!" Miriam answered in a gentler tone, for she felt that in her present situation the love of Nemias might be a treasure indeed; "Nay, thou hast not offended me. But my uncle, my brave uncle—what said they of him?" "I will tell thee;"—but ere she did so, she looked cautiously around, to see that none of her fellows were taking the same method of gaining intelligence; then again approached her anxious mistress, and narrated a tale of such coldblooded treachery and heartless cruelty, that Miriam's blood ran cold within her. "My uncle! my poor cousins!" and she wrung her hands in anguish. "Great God! must they be butchered remorselessly, and I, knowing all their danger, have no power to aid them? Oh! I feared it would be so! But thinkest thou no messenger

could be found, to dissuade the noble Simon from yielding the children of his brother to a murderer?—pent up like a bird in a cage;” answered Miriam, bitterly. “My only hope is in my God—I could do it.” Again a flash tinged the dark cheek of Nemia. “I will find means to leave the town (thy uncle’s children rest not five miles from here) to night. My limbs are inured to hardship, and I could swiftly return. I ask no letter, no tokens. A message from thy lips would suffice. Only say that it shall be so.” With a sad heart, Miriam yielded at last to the fervent intreaties of her attendant, and severing one of her own beautiful tresses, she gave it as a token; and bidding God bless her, suffered the slave to depart on what was destined to be a fruitless errand. Miriam sat alone, racked by a thousand fears, and uncheered by a single gleam of hope to gild the darkness of despair. She was by nature timid, unfit for trying scenes or desperate emergencies; and in her gentleness there was none of the energy requisite for the times in which she lived.

The deep, unvarying sadness of Berenice had likewise imparted a tinge of gloom to Miriam’s character. Of music and poetry she was passionately fond; but the solemn grandeur and exquisite pathos of her own countrymen better

suiting her taste, than the brilliant fictions of other nations. Added to this, she was deeply imbued with the religious enthusiasm which had incited her uncle to so many glorious actions; which had enabled a mother to look unshrinkingly on the martyrdom of her children, and to rejoice in their triumph over pain and death. But there was one feeling, deep seated within her heart, that cost her many a bitter pang. That feeling was, love for her valiant and generous-hearted cousin, John Hyrcanus. Ah! how different from him who now sought her love with such fierce ardour. Yet Rebecca, the proud, ardent, and ambitious Rebecca, she felt, had always shared his affections with herself; and she knew her energetic and beautiful sister was far more fitted for a warrior's bride than she could ever hope to be. One thing gave her hope. She well remembered the flush of joy that had brightened the clear cheek of Rebecca, as she listened proudly to the prophecy which had foretold such a glorious fate for her; and John Hyrcanus was not, never would be, a king. Miriam disbelieved the prediction, but she knew its influence on the mind of Rebecca. Strange, that the strongest intellect should the soonest yield to the sway of superstition.

CHAPTER IV.

For time at length makes all things even ;
And if ye will but watch the hour,
There never yet was human power
That could evade, if unforgiven,
The patient search, the vigils long,
Of him who treasures up a wrong.

BYRON.

Ye know not what ye do,
Who call the slumberer back
From the world, unseen by you,
Unto life's dim faded track.

MRS. HEMANS.

THE Athenian stood before the door of a vault, and listened; but there was no sound within, such as he hoped to hear—no rattling of chains, no groans of despair, to betoken the wretchedness of its inhabitant. All was quiet as the grave. Dion applied the huge key to the lock, and noiselessly drawing back the door, entered the room. The interior was long and low, and lighted by an iron lamp. A small table, and standing bed-place, were its only furniture. Such was the prison of the high-principled Jonathan. A human form was re-

clining on the rude bed. Dion approached it, and ascertained that his victim was sleeping. Heavy fetters loaded his recumbent form ; but his face was calm though pale, and a faint smile played around the closed mouth. When first Dion had looked upon that face, it was blooming with youth and beauty. Now grief had saddened it, and years of anxious thought and toil had impressed deep furrows on that once smooth brow, and silvered its raven hair. His own appearance had also undergone a change ; but his bright brown locks were still unmixed with white, and his face was unwrinkled, save by a few deep lines on the forehead. In the dark counsels of the villain Tryphon, Dion was deeply implicated. They were attached by ties of blood, as well as by kindred passions. The usurper's mother had been his father's sister.

For some moments the Greek stood gazing upon the shackled Maccabee, with feelings of demoniac triumph. But he was unwilling longer to allow him even the bliss derived from forgetfulness of sorrow. He cried aloud, in a voice that shook the vault, "Jonathan, awake !" "Art thou here, fiend, tormentor?" said the Asmonean, raising his head. "Of what new deed of infamy dost thou come to inform me?" "My cousin

and royal master," said Dion, "greete thee kindly, and trusts the lodgings, food, and attendance they have provided thee with, are suitable to the state and splendour of a Hebrew prince." "Man!" answered the Hebrew, calmly, "bear back this message from the High Priest and Prince of Judea to the usurper Antiochus and the villain Tryphon. Tell them, they may fetter the body, but no chains can bind the soul; it is free as the flight of an eagle—as fearless and untamed. The shackles wherewith they have bound my limbs are not half so heavy as the load of guilt that weighs down their souls, that will witness against them in the judgment, when an avenging God shall smite them for their crimes." The Athenian tried to laugh; but there was a solemnity in the tone and manner of Jonathan, that produced an effect even upon him; and he said, in a less sarcastic tone, "We are content to abide the result. The railings of an angry man are better calculated to arouse laughter than awaken terror; and thine shall be told at the evening banquet, where it will serve to excite a moment's mirth. Meanwhile, as this abode is somewhat lonely, scarcely suited to one our chieftain holds so dear as the brave Jonathan, he hath invited guests from amongst the best and dearest of thy kindred." "What?" exclaimed Jonathan, sur-

prised out of his calmness, "more victims? Oh when will this carnage and bloodshed cease? When will the sword depart out of my father's house?" Then suddenly remembering that another was a witness to the emotion into which he was betrayed, he resumed his previous manner, and turning to the Athenian, said, in a calm and determined tone, "I would be alone." "Nay, that were niggard hospitality, to leave our guests to entertain themselves—especially so distinguished a one as the brave and virtuous Jonathan." "My foot is in the snare—therefore rail as thou wilt. I heed thee not." "Aye, aye, the caged bird will oftentimes break its wings, in efforts to free itself; but what avails its struggles, when the cage is strong and the keeper determined? It must yield at last; and spite of thy big words and lofty scorn, we shall find a way to break the eagle's spirit. Remember, the Hebrew God, in whom thou reliest so securely, is but one; and the Gods of Syria are many." The Asmonean was not to be taunted from his silence: but the Athenian had yet a poisoned arrow in his quiver, and his aim was sure at his victim's heart: looking steadfastly at the pallid but composed features of the prince, he said, in a tone of affected sympathy, "The

prison air agrees but ill with thee, noble Jonathan. But if the negotiations now pending between thy brother and the king be successful, thou wilt soon exchange it for a better. Know that Tryphon has offered Simon to deliver thee up, on condition that he give one hundred talents of silver as thy ransom, and two of thy children as hostages."

A less keen observer than Dion might have marked the change that came over the countenance of Jonathan—the agony—the despair—the struggle to conceal the pangs that tortured his mighty spirit, almost beyond endurance. These were sources of deep exultation to him, and he watched his captive with that delight a rattlesnake may be supposed to feel, when it beholds its terrified victim vainly striving to escape its fatal fascination, whilst gradually, in spite of its utmost effort, advancing to certain destruction.

Jonathan's lips moved as if he were about to speak—but no word found utterance; and large drops of agony stood on his broad brow. He longed to question his tormentor, but dared not, lest he should only provoke mockery. Dion guessed what was passing in his mind; but he knew human nature too well to exchange a sus-

pence so fearful for a reality, however dark. He saw the Asmonean did not doubt him ; and he was satisfied. “ He will not be sleeping when I visit him again,” he said, as he left the prison. When Jonathan at length determined, at all risks, to know the truth, he found that he was alone. Vain were the attempt to paint the feelings of Jonathan, as he recurred to the words of the Athenian. He knew but too well the perfidy and cruelty of Tryphon, to believe that he was sincere in his offers to Simon. Then came the question—would his brother agree to such terms? But not even there could hope find a green spot whereon to rest her wings. Another might have suffered ambitious motives to influence him against taking any steps to relieve one whose very existence was a bar to his accession to the supreme honours : but he knew his brother’s disinterested affection, his lofty patriotism, his pure and noble heart ; and he feared love for him might induce Simon, against his better judgment, to trust in one who had already shown himself capable of any baseness. “ My children, my poor children !” he exclaimed, clasping his fettered hands ; “ can nothing be done to save them? God of my fathers ! have pity on them ! or at least teach me to bow with resignation beneath

thy chastening rod. I have borne much. I have seen those I loved perish in the pride of manhood by violent death; but they fell, sword in hand, on the battle field, contending with the enemies of Judea. But to be pent up thus, hourly expecting the knife of the assassin at my throat—to know myself helpless, powerless, and my innocent children perhaps already on the way to destruction—my manhood fails me, and woman's tears fill mine eyes. My cup of misery is full, even to overflowing." "Not yet," said the low scoffing voice of Dion. "I have seen the already filled vessel forced to bear a few drops more." The prince looked up. Their eyes met, and his tormentor shrank from the glance of the man he hated. "Reptile!" said Jonathan, slowly; "tempt me not too far, lest I show thee that although deprived of his claws the lion hath yet power to crush thee!" and he again sat down in gloomy silence. "I do not boast idly," said Dion, and as he spoke removed himself beyond the reach of the Asmonean: "thou shalt know that my words are the words of truth ere the sun be many hours older—so now, farewell. I shall soon visit thee again."

The Athenian once more sought the chamber of Miriam; her hand trembled as he took it in

his own. She strove to draw it away, but he held it yet firmer. "Miriam," he said, "I have seen thine uncle." She started, and her cheek grew pale, but she did not speak. "Words have passed between us, which have fixed my determinations with regard to thee." "Does he know that I am here?" asked the maiden. "He does not: but listen to me, Miriam. Now, on this very spot, this very instant, I require thine answer. Wilt thou be mine?" I have said that Miriam was timid: but the most sensitive nature, when aroused by a powerful stimulus, will exhibit a strength of mind which it is unconscious of possessing until circumstances call it forth. And thus it was with the daughter of Imla—her courage rose with the trials that awakened it. "Athenian," she said, "thou hast torn me from my native land, from the protectress of my youth, from my happy and dearly loved home. Thy words of love to me have been mingled with threats, curses, and denunciations of hate against my mother and kin. And thinkest thou that this is the right way to gain the heart and hand of a daughter of Israel? Restore me to my home and friends. Give back to mine uncle the freedom of which, by thine own confession, thou hast helped to deprive him, and then, but not

till then, canst thou hope to obtain the love of Miriam. In Judea, they woo not the daughter by cursing the mother, nor do they strive to gain a maiden's heart at the point of the sword." "Miriam," he replied, passionately, "I loved thy mother, and wooed her with tender words. How was my love repaid? But my hate is even stronger than my love — beware how thou awakenest it. I can be tempted too far." She was about to answer, when her eye suddenly encountered the glance of Nemia, who was standing in the doorway, with her finger on her lips. The sight of her whom she had deemed far distant, melted the remaining spark of courage within her breast. The words faltered on her tongue, and she fell back almost fainting. Dion knelt by her side, and took her trembling hand. "Miriam," he said, "my gentle Miriam, forgive me, if I have alarmed thee by the violence of my passions. One word, only one word, to say that thou wilt be mine, and I swear to thee, that ere another sun dawns, thine uncle shall be free. For his sake, for thine own, spurn not my proffers." "Traitor! vile, treacherous, blood-thirsty traitor! away! I know thee, know thee as thou art! I despise and detest thee, and thine offers. Never, never, while one drop of

blood flows in my veins, hope to obtain aught save the hate of Miriam the Asmonean." "Is it so?" he said, rising with a calmness more fearful than the stormiest passion. "Woman, thou hast spoken thy doom—the doom of all thy race." As he spoke, he raised the helpless maiden in his arms, and regardless of the shrieks she uttered, bore her with the speed of light along the passages of the palace which he had traversed. Jonathan heard those shrieks in his prison : they came nearer and nearer, the voice was familiar to him. In another moment the door of his prison was thrown open, and then, O sight of misery ! he beheld the form of Miriam in the grasp of the Athenian. Another followed unseen by any of the three; Nemias had glided in, and concealed herself behind the door. Dion now no longer shrunk from the glance of Jonathan, but he watched with malicious pleasure the effect her appearance produced on the already heart-wrung prince, who turned deadly pale, and staggered back. She no sooner beheld that beloved form, than, with a cry more wild than any she had yet uttered, she raised herself, and attempted to spring towards him; but with a refinement of cruelty he alone could have contemplated, Dion held her back, and

only laughed at her efforts to free herself. "One embrace," she cried; "only one embrace!—by all that is dear to thee, by thine hopes of heaven!" "Thou art speaking to an idolator, Miriam; ask no favours at his hands. By thy love, thy duty, I charge thee!" She ceased to implore, while still, by the exertion of all her little strength, she strove again to free herself. It was vain. Unable any longer to control his feelings, Jonathan tried by almost supernatural efforts to reach his niece, but even the exertion of his vast strength was in vain. The chains drew him back, and their rattling smote on his heart: but in the midst of his efforts, he suddenly stood still—for Miriam had succeeded in freeing herself from the arms of the Greek; and although he still held her hands, had thrown herself at his feet; and it was the sight of her, with clasped hands and streaming eyes, in an attitude of supplication, which had arrested her uncle's attention. He instantly cried, in a voice of mingled grief and sternness, "On thy knees, Miriam! Rise, rise, for shame, and remember thou art an Asmonean!" "I told thee, Hebrew," said the Athenian, "that I was no liar. Behold," he continued, looking down on the still kneeling girl, "the living image of her at whose shrine I

first poured forth the breathings of an impassioned heart. My true devotion was slighted ; my love thrown back upon itself, to consume the breast that cherished it—and my proffers repaid by a blow—a blow from thy hand. Ha ! thou knowest me now, Jonathan ! I am Dion, the Athenian.” In the excitement of the moment he heard not a step that approached behind him ; he felt not that his hold was loosened from his victim, until Nemias had noiselessly retreated, and Miriam was in the arms of her uncle. She wept bitterly ; and even Jonathan suffered tears to fall down his cheeks unheeded, while her fair face rested on his neck. “ That we should meet thus, my Miriam ! ” he said, at length, striving to regain an appearance of composure. “ It hath pleased God in his wisdom to afflict me with many bitter trials ; but this hour hath wrought the worst of all. Yon ruthless heathen once dared to insult thy mother by his threats. I smote him for his temerity ; since then he hath pursued me with unrelenting hate. But let that pass. The events of our lives are unchangeably written in the great book of fate, and man’s efforts cannot alter them. But thou ; how camest thou here ? Why didst thou leave the protection of Berenice ? ” A

sound of many footsteps prevented Miriam's reply; and in breathless terror she clung close to the bosom that sheltered her, while an agonizing fear took possession of Jonathan, and he cried aloud: "My children; oh! my children!" Miriam comprehended the exclamation, while Dion sprung to the door, and threw it open, to admit the new comers. He who entered first was magnificently attired; and might have been called noble in appearance, but for a lurking sneer in the corners of his mouth, and the cunning expression of the eyes, which destroyed the effect of his otherwise fine features. It was Tryphon. Behind him came some of the officers of his court; for so in truth it might have been styled, since Antiochus was only a nominal king. Jonathan strained his eyes beyond. Yes, they were there; his beloved treasures, more precious to him than aught the world contained, had come to share their father's captivity, perhaps his death. The young princes stood with their hands firmly locked in each other's, gazing around with looks of bewilderment and dread. Their sole attendant was a black slave, who had accompanied them from Jerusalem. Tryphon allowed no other to be present at their interview with their father. The eldest of the two

had scarcely completed his twelfth year, and the other was two years younger. Tryphon meanwhile approached the high priest, but stopped short in astonishment when he beheld Miriam. The stern, sad countenance of Jonathan enabled him, however, to guess at the truth; and he said somewhat harshly to the Athenian: "Remove the girl—we have no time for fooleries. It was unadvised to bring her here." "I know it," answered Dion; and in a moment he was attempting to remove Miriam from her uncle's neck. "Away," said Jonathan, waving his hands; and as he did so, the rattling of the fetters rung through the vault, and reached the ears of his children. "Father, father," cried they, as they sprung through the crowd that surrounded them, and fell at his feet. Still Miriam did not move—she was senseless; there was a terrible struggle in the breast of the high priest, as he gazed down upon his lovely children, whilst his lips were compressed, and his bosom heaved with anguish. He knew that many eyes were upon him, watching the slightest demonstration of feeling, in order that they might exult in his misery. "Take away the girl!" cried several voices; "what does she here?" Again Dion tried to undo the firm

clasp of the unfortunate Miriam; but again Jonathan withstood him. Finding he could not, unassisted, force her from him, Tryphon aided him to tear away the insensible girl. Dion bore her back to the chamber, gave her into the arms of Nemia, and once more returned to the vault. The voice of Jonathan, as he entered, struck upon his ear. The Hebrew chief stood erect, his arms folded upon his breast, and his dark eyes fixed full upon the face of Tryphon. Scorn, detestation, and measureless contempt, all spoke in that eloquent glance. Truth and integrity were written on the brow of the betrayed—guilt and blood-thirstiness, on that of the betrayer. The words of the Asmonean were low, stinging, and bitter. Tryphon's every limb trembled with suppressed rage, as he listened; while Dion shouted aloud: "Bring heavier fetters. Stop his mouth! But stay," he added, in a calmer tone; and pointing to the young princes, "there is a better way to tame him." Those who were not utterly hardened in the train of the Syrian, shuddered at the fiendish malignity that could dictate such a proposal; whilst those who were, hurried away to execute the orders of the favourite. They soon entered again, bearing heavy chains. Jonathan

bent down a look of pity and love upon his children ; but to them he dared not trust his voice to speak ; and as he raised his eyes again, they fell upon the countenance of the black slave. He started with surprise, but checked the exclamation about to rise to his lips ; while the slave uttered the single word, "Courage," in the ears of the young princes. The voice was not to be mistaken ; and Jonathan augured good, he scarce knew why, from those familiar tones ; he suffered them without resistance to fasten fresh shackles upon him. The princes watched him with intense agony. Young as they were, they shared in his heroic fortitude ; and although each in turn was fettered, neither uttered a word. This act of cruelty performed, the usurper and his train departed, suffering the black to remain. When the last footstep was no longer heard, she threw herself beside Jonathan, exclaiming : "It is as I feared ; these poor lambs are, indeed, betrayed." "Berenice, why thus tempt fate ? Are not the number of victims sufficient, that thou, too, must suffer ?" Berenice arose, and brushed the tears from her eyes, as she said : "Jonathan, what ties have I to bind me to life, save the hope of assisting those I love ? It was that hope which brought me

hither, and thus I have insured the safety of our Miriam. John Hyrcanus will this night effect her escape. He hath long been planning thine; and now he knows it is hopeless, he will at least snatch Miriam from the power of her oppressor." This intelligence brought a balm to the heart of Jonathan; while she continued: "These children, these helpless innocents—it is for their sakes I am here. At this moment there are no prying eyes to look upon us. Approach, children, and embrace your sorrowing father." The words were scarcely spoken when the youths made a simultaneous movement. But what words can describe their feelings, when they found that the links of the chains had been purposely shortened, to prevent their embracing their afflicted parent? This blow had been so totally unexpected, that it overcame every effort of composure. The father beat his head against the floor in a paroxysm of despair, while Berenice buried her face in her hands, to hide the bitterness of her sorrow. The poor boys looked at each other, and the silent tears rolled down their cheeks. At length the eldest spoke; but his voice was hollow and broken by sobs, and the words he uttered were almost inarticulate—he said: "Father, dear father, do

his own. She strove to draw it away, but he held it yet firmer. "Miriam," he said, "I have seen thine uncle." She started, and her cheek grew pale, but she did not speak. "Words have passed between us, which have fixed my determinations with regard to thee." "Does he know that I am here?" asked the maiden. "He does not: but listen to me, Miriam. Now, on this very spot, this very instant, I require thine answer. Wilt thou be mine?" I have said that Miriam was timid: but the most sensitive nature, when aroused by a powerful stimulus, will exhibit a strength of mind which it is unconscious of possessing until circumstances call it forth. And thus it was with the daughter of Imla—her courage rose with the trials that awakened it. "Athenian," she said, "thou hast torn me from my native land, from the protectress of my youth, from my happy and dearly loved home. Thy words of love to me have been mingled with threats, curses, and denunciations of hate against my mother and kin. And thinkest thou that this is the right way to gain the heart and hand of a daughter of Israel? Restore me to my home and friends. Give back to mine uncle the freedom of which, by thine own confession, thou hast helped to deprive him, and then, but not

till then, canst thou hope to obtain the love of Miriam. In Judea, they woo not the daughter by cursing the mother, nor do they strive to gain a maiden's heart at the point of the sword." "Miriam," he replied, passionately, "I loved thy mother, and wooed her with tender words. How was my love repaid? But my hate is even stronger than my love — beware how thou awakenest it. I can be tempted too far." She was about to answer, when her eye suddenly encountered the glance of Nemia, who was standing in the doorway, with her finger on her lips. The sight of her whom she had deemed far distant, melted the remaining spark of courage within her breast. The words faltered on her tongue, and she fell back almost fainting. Dion knelt by her side, and took her trembling hand. "Miriam," he said, "my gentle Miriam, forgive me, if I have alarmed thee by the violence of my passions. One word, only one word, to say that thou wilt be mine, and I swear to thee, that ere another sun dawns, thine uncle shall be free. For his sake, for thine own, spurn not my proffers." "Traitor! vile, treacherous, blood-thirsty traitor! away! I know thee, know thee as thou art! I despise and detest thee, and thine offers. Never, never, while one drop of

not kill us by the sight of this despair. We come willingly, more in the hope of sharing thy prison, than witnessing thy release; and next to the joy of saving thee, is the bliss of dying with thee." "Speak to them, Berenice; comfort them, if thou canst," said the heart-broken parent; "I have not the power."

CHAPTER V.

Yet wherefore pause upon our way ?
'Tis best to hurry on ;
For half the dangers that we fear,
We face them, and they're gone.

MISS LONDON.

“COMFORT, comfort, sweet mistress,” said Nemia, as Miriam opened her eyes; “aid is nigh. One who loves thee, and whom thou lovest, will this night bear thee far away from the tyrant, who deems his possession so secure.” Miriam answered not—her eyes were bent on vacancy, while she was murmuring inaudible expressions. Nemia threw herself at the feet of her mistress, and said, “Dear, dear lady, listen to thy poor slave.” “Uncle! dear uncle!” exclaimed Miriam, faintly. “Those horrid, horrid chains—how they ring in mine ears.” A shudder convulsed her frame as she spoke; tears streamed down her cheeks; and she burst into a fit of hysterical laughter. Nemia’s heart was almost broken on witnessing the present state of her mistress. She knew not how to act. Night was fast approaching, and the Athenian

was engaged at the banquet in the palace of Tryphon. On the morrow the army was to march, and then all hope was over. The chamber of Miriam opened on one side into a long gallery, containing the sleeping apartments of the female slaves; but the gilded lattice led into a balcony, communicating by a flight of marble steps with the garden, which gradually sloped down to the sea shore; from which, however, a thick grove of trees completely shut out the view, except where a small pavilion had been erected, in front of which was moored a pleasure galley. Nemia sat watching her mistress anxiously, until sunset. When it had grown completely dark, she then went into the balcony: the night had become intensely cold, but the clear blue sky was illumined by myriads of stars. Miriam had fallen into slumber; therefore the girl feared not to leave her, while she carefully descended the steps, and entered the garden. A black slave was keeping guard under the balcony; with him she held a brief consultation, and then passed on with a hurried step. Lightly fell the foot of the girl along the path, strewn with dead leaves and flowers. Once or twice she fancied she heard a step beside her, but when she paused she could only

hear the wind sighing through the bare trees. Again she hurried on; and when at length she reached the summer-house, she felt sick at heart, and was obliged to stop and draw a long breath. Ere she could look around, the sight of a small skiff, dancing over the bright water, set her fears at rest. In an instant it was close to the shore, and a young man, dressed in the garb of an Arab trader, sprung out, and stood beside her. "Where is Miriam?" said John Hyrcanus, almost breathless; "tell me, is all safe?" "Gold is a powerful talisman," answered Nemias, "and few can resist its power. Alas! my poor mistress is at present sleeping." "Sleeping! in a time like this, when an hour's delay may cost us our lives? I went on shore two hours before sunset, with the master of the vessel. I find thy warning was truth, and my uncle's fate is indeed hopeless. But what now is to be done?" "Follow me," said Nemias, "and I will explain as we proceed. There is nought to hinder us. The guard is bribed." John followed her in silence, first bidding the boatmen prepare to push off at a moment's notice; and as they went, Nemias detailed to the indignant young man the scene she had witnessed in the dungeon. Snow had begun to

fall, and the poor girl trembled as much from cold as fear. They were nearing the palace, when Hyrcanus suddenly paused, exclaiming, "Didst thou hear nothing?" "Nothing, save the moaning of the wind," answered Nemias. "No, no! it is a human form!—look, look!" Hyrcanus turned in the direction to which she pointed, and beheld something emerging from the shadows of the trees. Nemias instantly recognized the slave whom she had bribed to aid them. "Quick! quick!" he exclaimed; "to the boat—to the boat! thou art betrayed. Dion is in the palace; but I would not take thy gold for nothing," and he placed the apparently lifeless form of Miriam in the arms of her astonished cousin. There needed no further incentives to urge them onward, for the sound of voices and footsteps were heard in every direction; and that part of the palace that overlooked the garden was blazing with light, while a shout told them they were discovered, and a flight of arrows fell thick as hail-stones amongst them, fortunately without effect. "They are there," exclaimed a stentorian voice. "It is Dion!" shrieked Nemias; "on! on! there is yet time." Again the bowstrings twanged, and this time with better effect, for John Hyrcanus felt him-

self wounded; but still he pressed forward, although the dark stream of blood alone might have pointed out their track. They had nearly reached the summer house, when, as if to add to their peril, Miriam began to recover, and uttered a succession of piercing shrieks, when she found herself in the arms of a man, and borne she knew not whither. Guided by her voice, their pursuers were gaining upon them, when Nemias snatched a scarf from her shoulders, and threw it over Miriam's head, thus effectually securing her silence. On the cessation of the screams, the Syrians paused for a moment; but Dion again urged them forward; when Hyrcanus, faint from his wound, suddenly stopped, unable to proceed any farther. "Take her," he said faintly to Nemias; "I cannot go on. But the boat is close at hand—provide for thine own safety; I can remain here and die." Nemias raised the form of the helpless girl, and placed it in the arms of her fellow slave; while, nerved almost to desperation, she dragged rather than led Hyrcanus forward, exclaiming, "A few steps farther, and we are safe." She had scarcely spoken when they reached the spot where they had left the boat. Their enemies were close behind, with torches in their hands,

and the blaze of the pine-wood illumined the whole scene with a bright red glow. Another second, and they would have risked their lives in vain. "In! in!" said Nemias; "heed not me." "Oh God! they will be too late," faintly cried Hyrcanus; then exerting all his remaining strength, he leaped into the boat. The slave with Miriam, had already entered. Nemias was on the beach alone; but the presence of mind of the brave girl did not forsake her. Dion and his followers reached the beach, just in time to see her push the galley from the shore, and unaided steer it toward an Arab ship in the harbour, which she reached in safety, in time to receive her beloved mistress from the arms of her faithful companion.

CHAPTER VI.

He leans upon his hand his manly brow,
Consents to death, but conquers agony ;
And his drooped head sinks gradually low,
And through his side the last drops, ebbing slow,
From the red gash fall heavy, one by one.

BYRON'S CHILDE HAROLD.

Towards him they steer,
And they save him, as 'twere, from the jaws of death.

CHARLES SLOMAN.

FROM his fruitless pursuit of Miriam, the Athenian returned to his palace, every feeling swallowed up in a burning desire of revenge. Dion loved the beautiful Hebrew as only natures like his can love ; if indeed unhallowed enthusiasm like his can be called by that pure and holy name ; and now that she was beyond his reach, he cursed his folly in suffering himself to be baffled. But Jonathan was still in his power, and he resolved to put it out of the reach of fate to thwart him in his long-cherished hope of revenge. With this intention, as soon as the first burst of disappointment had been vented in execration, he hastened to seek Try-

phon. As he passed through the streets, the falling snow almost blinded him, and his limbs ached with the intensity of the cold. "It is a bitter night for a dungeon," he muttered, "and I am already half revenged; and yet," he added, while some touch of human feelings came over him, "I could almost find it in my heart to pity that lion-hearted Asmonean, were it not for the remembrance that through life he and his have continually crossed me, turning my nature into gall and bitterness. Why did I suffer a pair of bright eyes to dazzle me? How much misery might I have saved myself and others;—but such thoughts are now too late. I believe that some men are destined for evil—such destiny has been mine." While these reflections were passing through his mind, he reached the palace. The guard suffered him to pass unquestioned, and he entered the brilliant hall, glittering with light. What a contrast the gay festival presented to his own dark soul! Tryphon was surrounded by a group of young men, the gayest and noblest of the court, while the shadow who bore the name of king, sat on his splendid throne, neglected, and almost alone. Skilled in the language of the eye, the Syrian soon perceived that Dion wished to speak with him, and

shaking off the crowd of flatterers, he beckoned him to approach. "We are alone here," said Tryphon, as they entered a small closet: "I see by thy look thou hast something important to speak of." Dion approached his cousin, and bent his lips to his ear, as if he feared the very walls should listen to his words. He said, in a low hoarse whisper, "The High Priest must die to night." "So soon?" said Tryphon, with a start; but quickly recovering himself, added, "Be it so. I remember my promise, that his life should be thine whenever thou shouldst claim it, and I am ready to abide by it. Take this signet," and he drew a ring from his finger, "this will be warrant sufficient. My guests are waiting me—farewell." "Cold blooded wretch!" muttered Dion; "but he serves my purpose, and what matters it to me? It is sharp," he continued, as he passed his finger over his sabre's edge, "and 'twill soon be done." Again he hastened through the silent streets; but now he heeded not the falling snow, for a furious rage was in his heart, and his brain reeled like one suffering from the effects of wine. Still a strange feeling of horror mingled with the exultation he felt at the approaching consummation of his hatred. The Athenian entered the

palace, and snatching a pine torch from the hand of a slave, passed alone through the subterranean passages. To the soldiers who guarded them he showed the ring, and bade them depart, as the prisoner would need no farther watching. The soldiers gazed significantly upon his excited countenance and keen sabre, and passed on. He entered so silently that none of the captives heard him. Jonathan's forehead was leaned upon his hand, and he was gazing earnestly on the faces of his suffering children. Berenice sat between them, holding a hand of each. She had stripped off her cloak and covered them with it, for the intensity of the cold had chilled their blood. The hard stones of the prison was their only couch—they whose limbs had rested always on the softest down. Neither of them uttered a complaint; down the cheek of the youngest indeed, a few tear-drops had fallen, but even these were frozen in their passage. "God help ye, my boys," murmured the Asmonean; "the bitterest drop in all my cup of misery, is, to see ye suffer thus, without the power to aid you." "We are happy, dear father," they said, speaking both together, although the tones belied the words; "happier in sharing a dungeon with thee, than a palace without thee." Jonathan

shook his head mournfully ; he could not answer. "It was thy voice," they continued, "that first taught us to put our trust in Jehovah ; and on him we will rely." "My senses will desert me !" he exclaimed ; "oh, my God, this is dreadful indeed !" Berenice arose, and bent over him. "For thy children's sake," she said, "if not for thine own, bear in silence. It will break their young hearts to see thee thus desponding. It is to thee they look for an example of fortitude. O, do not disappoint them !" "Berenice, thou hast been a mother ; thou hast seen the child of thy love perish when it was but a blossom ; and, oh ! how deeply didst thou mourn its loss. Had it grown beside thee, into a fair and healthful plant, untouched by disease, blooming in beauty, and thou hadst then seen the axe lifted to cut it down, without power to avert the blow, couldst thou have been patient ?" How could she answer such a question ? She returned to her seat in silence. Dion heard all this. He raised his hand to his brow, and wiped away the damp dew that rested on it. Now or never, must he pay his debt of vengeance. He thought of Imla, and of Miriam ; and it nerved his heart again. The lamp burnt dimly, leaving that part of the cell in which he

stood, in shadow; but as he passed forward, its rays fell upon the steel blade of the sabre. Mattathias, the eldest of the princes, discovered it, and uttered a loud cry. That cry cost him his life; for, enraged that he was discovered, with one blow the miscreant severed his head from his body, and flung it in the face of his father. Jonathan uttered no sound: he saw that his hour was come; but, clasping the bleeding head close to his heart, he kissed the still warm lips; while his own quivered with all a father's deep love, and horror took possession of his soul. The other boy stood gazing on the motionless and disfigured corpse, with feelings that defy description; while Dion approached the sorrowing parent, and shouting aloud, "This for Imla!" and "this for Miriam!" plunged the sabre in his bosom; then drew it forth, reeking with gore, while he said in a low hissing voice, "I have paid thee blow for blow; and Dion the Athenian owes thee nought." "And this for the wife of Judas, and the sister of Jonathan!" exclaimed Bercnice, as she struck a dagger up to the hilt in his heart; "and now their debt is paid likewise." The Athenian staggered and fell, uttering a loud shriek, by the

side of his victim, while his own blood mingled with the dark stream that oozed from the breast of the brave Asmonean. Yet even in death the spirit of revenge lit up his eye. Pointing to the ghastly head, and the dying Jonathian, he cried aloud: "Revenge, revenge! scorn for scorn! blow for blow!—ha! ha!" The death-rattle was in his throat, and in the midst of that fearful laughter, he expired!

Berenice was kneeling by the side of the prince, and vainly striving to staunch the life-stream that was flowing fast from a deep wound in his breast. "Nay, nay; it is in vain," he said, faintly. "Berenice, my race of life is run: but to my God and thee, I trust my helpless orphan. One is gone before me; the other—oh! that I could bless him, ere my eyes are closed in death." The wish was granted; for in his strong agony, the boy had rent his chain, as he would have broken an osier band; and he now threw himself into his father's arms. The feelings that rent the hearts of both, while the parent's hand rested on the head of his child, what pen can pourtray? Some moments passed away—they were precious moments to Jonathan—for with them was passing away the life which had been devoted to virtue and honour. Bere-

nice broke the silence: she had dragged the corpse of the Greek into the passage beyond the cell, that the presence of the dead might not pollute the descendant of Aaron. In so doing, she discovered the ring, engraven with the name of Tryphon. "Behold!" she said, "God has not deserted us. This will at least enable us to pass the-guard; and there are those in Accho who will not refuse shelter and concealment to the orphan of Jonathan!" "Bless, oh! bless thee, my sister!" exclaimed Jonathan, while a gleam of joy lighted up his eyes. "Now take him from me, that the sight of my child banish not the remembrance of the God to whom I am hastening." She obeyed his request; for the boy was insensible. She could see the lips moving, and she knew that he was praying; but suddenly their motion ceased. She could distinguish a low gurgling sound, and then all was over. "Farewell," she said, as she kissed his damp cold brow. "Thine was as brave and true a spirit as ever dwelt in human form. Alas! To think that thy brilliant career is closed thus by the hand of a midnight murderer!" And she drew her mantle over her eyes, and wept bitterly. But not long did she waste the time for action in useless sorrowing. The living claimed her care. The pine-torch still lay on the ground

unextinguished. Snatching it up, she raised her youthful nephew in her arms; but as she was about to depart, something caught her eye—it was a small embroidered bag, worked by her own hands, and given by her to Jonathan when he first officiated as high priest in the temple. It contained his Tephillim. With a trembling hand she placed it in the folds of her dress, as a gift for the survivor, and left the prison. The passage branched off in several directions. There was no time to deliberate. She took the nearest, and hurried on. Two hours passed, and still she found herself involved in obscure passages. Her torch burned out, and in total darkness, and yielding to despair, she sat down and clasped the boy to her breast, unable to proceed farther, and prayed fervently for assistance to the Most High. Worn out by fatigue and horror, she at length fell into a tranquil slumber, from which she was awakened by the rushing of waters. When she opened her eyes, she saw that the spot on which she sat was illumined by the rays of the noon-day sun, and before her were the blue waves of the sea. The winding passage in which she had lost herself, led under the bowels of the earth into the bosom of the rocks, without the harbour. On one of those she now sat, with her precious

charge. The sight of the sunshine for a moment gladdened her drooping spirits, but a second glance served to reveal all the perils of their situation. They were on a naked rock, unsheltered even by a tree, without food, or clothing to protect them from the biting cold. To go back, even could they find their way, was certain death. Almost hopelessly she turned to the boy. He was awake, and fully conscious of all that had befallen him, and the look of patient suffering depicted on his countenance touched her more than the loudest expression of grief. Tears that she could not repress again filled her eyes. A light cloud had for some time been gathering in the sky. It was now becoming dense and heavy, while a shower of hail and snow began to fall fast around them. They crouched down beneath the scanty shelter the rock afforded; but their situation was becoming momentarily more dangerous, for the spray from the sea, agitated by a rising wind, wet them to the skin, while the numbing cold was almost beyond endurance. Berenice kept her arm firmly twined around the boy, and in her agony, she almost wished that he had perished with his father and brother.

It is a sad thing to watch the death struggles

of those we love, even when sickness and sorrow have laid their hands on the fevered brow, and dimmed the lustre of their eyes. But it is sadder still to see the young, warm spirit crushed, and the heart broken by the load of unexpected sorrow; to see the joys of childhood swept away at one blow, and the hues of premature woe succeed the glad smile of youth: and how much of agony had been crowded into that child's existence in the space of twenty-four hours! Many have passed through a long life, and known less of real suffering. As he lay beside her, so uncomplaining, his mild eyes bent upon her pale face, cold, hungry, and despairing, she prayed that he might die at once, rather than perish inch by inch before her eyes. Time passed on. "It is almost night," said Judas, with a shudder; "and before to-morrow morning the wind may howl our requiem, and the white surge roll above our lifeless corpses. It is a fearful thing to die thus. Oh my poor father!—my murdered brother!—art thou looking down from thy blest abode with an eye of pity for our misery?"

The sun was indeed setting, and a single bright star twinkled on the verge of the horizon. The snow had ceased, and the sea was growing calmer. Berenice looked upon that star, and

hoped, she knew not why ; but when she turned to point it out, she saw Judas with his head bent forward, and his eyes intently fixed on some object on the surface of the waters. She looked in the direction on which he was gazing ; but years of suffering had dimmed her eyes. She could distinguish nothing, and she felt bitterly disappointed. Suddenly the boy raised his head, exclaiming " God be thanked—it is a sail:" but he added in a tone of deep despondency, " they cannot see us, and they may pass us." Berenice shouted as loud as she could, to the approaching vessel ; but it kept steadily on its course, without hearing, or unheeding their loud cries. As they came nearer and nearer, they could distinguish the voices of the oars-men singing an Arabic song to the rising moon. Again they raised their voices with the desperate exertion of despair. The oars-men ceased. That shout was all that broke the stillness of the night, awakening the echoes of the surrounding rocks, and startling the sea-fowl from their nests. The pause that followed was one of agonizing suspense. The galley neared them. She is close to their place of refuge. Another moment, and both were on the deck of the stranger. It was a vessel bound

for Joppa, having several Hebrews on board. They gladly performed the rites of hospitality to the rescued victims. Berenice thought it prudent to preserve her disguise until they reached Jerusalem in safety.

CHAPTER VII.

Weep for the love that must resign
The soul's enchanted dream ;
And float like some neglected bark
Adown life's lonely stream.

L. E. L.

AGAIN the summer had spread her mantle on the earth. Tryphon, after the fall of snow, that prevented his marching to the relief of Acra, returned to Antioch, and consummated his crimes by the murder of his pupil, young Antiochus.

Simon, who after the death of Jonathan had succeeded to the high priesthood, dismantled the fortress, and even levelled the hill on which it stood, so that it no longer overlooked the hill of the temple. He had recovered the bodies of his brother and nephew, and buried them with great solemnity at Modin, the burying-place of his family. Hither Berenice had retired with Miriam and Rebecca. Her only pleasure was in watching the progress of the stately monument which the piety and affection of Simon

had induced him to rear to the memory of his parents and brethren.

The Passover was just over—it had been celebrated with unusual magnificence ; for the stronghold of their enemies, which for five-and-twenty years had insulted the sight of every true Hebrew, lay low in the dust. Yet was their joy diminished, by the sad remembrance of the murdered Jonathan ; and the sight of his child, offering up prayers by that shrine at which he had so lately officiated, excited universal sorrow for his loss, and detestation for his murderers, mingled with many a deep curse and vow of revenge. Miriam had never recovered her health and spirits since her escape from the Athenian ; and although Rebecca was ever at her side, striving to awaken some of her former cheerfulness, all her efforts could excite was a melancholy smile, or a wish to be alone. Miriam had many causes for sorrow, some of which she carefully concealed ; for with the keen eye of love, she had discovered what even Rebecca herself was unconscious of, namely, that the latter loved, with all the warmth of her disposition, the object of her own cherished affection. Could she, who was so quick in discovering the feelings of others, blind herself to her own ?

Oh no! She felt that her own heart was irrecoverably in the possession of another. Would that other prize the unsought-for gift? It was a question that brought infinite pain, yet how often did it recur to her.

It was evening, and the two girls sat together in a large apartment, enclosed on three sides, but open on the fourth. Round the slender pillars in front, a number of flowering creepers had entwined their fragile stems; and Rebecca sat near one of those, gazing out upon the garden. A lute lay on her lap—but it was untouched, and a shade of sadness darkened her marble brow. Miriam sat at a broidery frame, and Nemia was bending over her; but her thoughts were far away, and her fingers moved mechanically, as if she pursued her task more from habit than from any wish to complete it. The light of the lamp falling full upon her face, revealed to the glance of Nemia the traces of tears upon her cheek. A sudden exclamation from Rebecca caused Miriam to look up from her employment to the face of her companion. The tell-tale blood was rushing in crimson streams to the neck, cheek, and brow of the beautiful girl, as she pointed to the form of John Hyrcanus, who had entered unperceived; and while Miriam clung faint and trem-

bling to the arm of Nemias, he bounded toward Rebecca. Yes, his first greeting, his first embrace, was for her. When he approached Miriam, although his voice was kind to the ear of love, there was a perceptible difference in the tenderness of tone. "Thou art pale, sweet cousin," he said, as he took her trembling hand; "and sad, I fear; but we must not lose thy cheerful smile without an effort to restore it. All things rejoice in the gay summer—birds, insects, and flowers. Thou must not be the only mourner." "Perchance," said Rebecca, with an arch smile, "there may be something more persuasive in thy voice than in mine, for she sits day after day at her broidery, and her lips never wear a smile. In vain I strive to win her back to old employment; and my aunt is wholly absorbed in the past. She feels no interest in our pleasures." "Is it so, my Miriam?" said Hyrcanus, gently; but she could not answer, and unable to control her emotion, she burst into tears, and rushed from the room, followed by Nemias.

Rebecca gazed sadly after her, and tears filled her eyes as she said, "I have been the cause of all this. Oh! why did I suffer my impetuous nature to overcome reason, in that fatal visit to the brook." "Nay, nay," he answered, "thou

wilt be as bad as Miriam. Let us go forth into the garden; the soft sweet moonlight will calm thy perturbed spirits." She took his proffered arm without reply, and they strolled on.

It was late in Eyor, or May, and the soft and balmy air, playing over beds of fragrant flowers, came towards them laden with perfume. The red and white rose, and the queen-like lily, mingled their sweets with the odour of citron and lemon trees, while the gaudy tulip and the stately peony attracted the eye by their brilliant colouring. Rebecca and her companion, however, passed forward, unheeding their loveliness, until they reached a beautiful and sequestered spot, named "Imla's bower."

The boughs of two pomegranate trees were interlaced by a wild vine, forming a sort of natural arbour; and their scarlet blossoms blended with the delicate jasmine flowers, and the blue forget-me-not, just peeping out from beneath the luxuriant foliage of the vine. Beneath had been erected a rustic seat, and near it was a huge bason of black marble, filled by a fountain, formed of a fawn's head, and overshadowed by a clump of orange trees. Some withered blossoms lay on the seat. Rebecca threw them carelessly on the ground, and seated herself. "It is a lovely and

refreshing place," she said, "and I usually spend my mornings here—for the fierce rays of the sun cannot pierce through the matted foliage, and I enjoy all the beauty, without the heat of the morning." "Henceforth, it will be a favourite retreat of mine," said Hyrcanus; and the hand that held hers, trembled as he pronounced the words.

Again she felt a deep blush dye her cheek, while he continued, "Whatever thou lovest, I also must love." He paused, as if awaiting a reply; but she did not speak. Gaining courage from her silence, he proceeded. "Thou askest not why I came to Modin. I will tell thee. I came to woo and wed. Rebecca,"—his voice faltered from excess of emotion—"as children we loved each other; and the affection that dwelt in the bosom of the child has strengthened in the heart of the man. Rebecca, need I say more? Wilt thou repay the love I bear thee? Wilt thou become my bride?" He threw himself at her feet, and waited in breathless silence to hear his doom. Nor had that avowal fallen on an heedless ear. Once or twice she looked forth into the moonlight, and thought on the prophecy; but when again she looked upon the noble face and manly form of her lover, love conquered

every feeling of ambition. Bending over him, she whispered, "Thine, thine only!" "Heaven bless thee for those words!" he exclaimed, as he sprung up, and caught her in his arms. He was about to add more, when a rustling amongst the leaves and a faint cry met his ear.

Releasing her from his arms, he rushed forth, and beheld Miriam, leaning against a tree, almost insensible. The secret of her heart was unveiled—Rebecca at once divined the truth. "Miriam, my poor Miriam!" she exclaimed, all the generosity of her nature aroused by the sight of her suffering. "Oh, John! cannot we be both happy?" "Thanks, my own, my generous love," he said, as he raised the drooping head of his cousin, and supported it on his breast. Miriam slowly recovered her senses as the large tear drops forced their way through her closed lids, and streamed down her pale face, while her sister brought water from the fountain, to sprinkle her fevered brow. "Miriam, my beloved Miriam," said Hyrcanus, as he kissed her burning lip; "thou shalt share together the love of my bosom. Equal in all things, thou shalt be alike to me. Then look up, for my sake, dearest, and tell me that thou hearest my words." "I do hear them," she said, in a low

voice, and making a great effort to be composed. "I do hear them, and they are but words to me. Thou shalt hear also my irrevocable determination, since my weakness has betrayed me—" and for a moment a crimson glow flushed her cheek, then left it paler than before. "I will now tell thee all. For years I have loved thee, loved ere I knew the passion's name, with such love as woman knows but once. Thinkest thou that a divided heart could satisfy a passion like mine? To know that another stood before me in thine affections, would poison my cup of bliss for ever. I have given to thee—unasked, it is true—my whole soul, and I cannot take a shadow in return. But I will go back to my own country, and on the bosom of my mother strive to forget that thou wert more to me than a beloved brother. With Rebecca thou wilt be happy. Her disposition is suited to thine; and when the first bitter pang is over, I shall be blest in knowing thou art so." She ceased, and the sobs of Rebecca were all that broke the stillness of the night. While he gazed on each fair face, a thousand varying feelings were depicted on his countenance. "Farewell," said Miriam, solemnly; "farewell to both: for I could not trust myself to see either again. Ere I quit Palestine for

ever, thou, my Rebecca, must be doubly a child to my poor aunt, that she grieve not for my absence." "Stay, stay!" exclaimed Rebecca, throwing herself before her; "if one must be the sacrifice, I only will suffer; Miriam, thinkest thou that I could be happy, and know that thou wert broken-hearted? No, no!" And again the affectionate girl wept bitterly. "My poor Rebecca," said Miriam, calmly, while a radiant smile lighted up her lovely features, "thou hast yet to learn the strength of my resolution. But were I base enough to take advantage of thy generosity, would it not be the worst of misery, to know that my smiles, my caresses, were endured, not solicited; and that he whom I loved, pined in his secret soul for another's love? I could not endure it!" And as Rebecca was about to reply, she moved swiftly away. Rebecca would have followed, but John held her back. "It is useless," he said; "and will only inflict farther pain on both." "My poor Miriam!" she said, and put her hand over her brow to hide the falling tears.

Three days afterwards Miriam was on her way to Alexandria; and Rebecca was preparing, with a saddened heart, for her bridal. And Berenice—it was rending of the last link that bound

her spirit to earth. Her heart was already with the dead, but the cup of sorrow was not yet full.

CONCLUSION.

Six years passed away — happy years for Judea—under the mild, but vigorous sway of the last of the Maccabees. Tryphon in turn had expiated his crimes by a violent death, and another sat on the throne of Syria—another equally base, equally cruel.

The streets of Modin were crowded by an anxious multitude—women filled the balconies, and children stood gazing with mournful countenances on an approaching procession, who were toiling up the steep hill, on the top of which stood the monument of the Asmoneans. Heavy clouds lowered in the atmosphere; but heavier clouds were in the hearts of the people. Following the procession at a distance, with the slow, uncertain step of age, was a veiled woman. That woman was Berenice, the wife of Judas, following Simon, the last of the Maccabees, to his grave. On the morrow, the women of Modin came to strew flowers on the sepulchre, when they found a female lying dead at the foot of it.

The next day they laid the corpse of Berenice in a grave, beside her husband.

John Hyrcanus, after narrowly escaping the fate of his father and brothers, was proclaimed high priest and king of Judea—thus uniting both dignities for the first time. His reign was stormy at first ; but he afterwards was feared by his enemies, and loved by his people. Rebecca was his crowned queen, and thus was the prophecy which had so much influenced her imagination in early youth, at length literally fulfilled.

END OF VOL. II.

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THE
ROMANCE OF JEWISH HISTORY

BY
THE MISSES C. AND M. MOSS,
AUTHORESSES OF "EARLY EFFORTS," &c., &c.

And where are they? and where art thou,
My country? On thy voiceless shore
The heroic lay is tuneless now—
The heroic bosom beats no more!
And must thy lyre, so long divine,
Degenerate into hands like mine?

BYRON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.
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THE
ROMANCE OF JEWISH HISTORY.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

3653. HYRCANUS was succeeded by his son, Aristobulus, who starved his mother to death, and ordered his brother, Antigonus, to be assassinated. No sooner had he committed these revolting and unnatural crimes, than he was seized with the most agonizing remorse, which occasioned a vomiting of blood. The slave who carried away the vessel, stumbling by accident on the spot where Antigonus was killed, the blood of the brothers mingled on the pavement. A cry of horror rang through the palace, and the king extorting the dreadful cause from his attendants, immediately expired.

3654. Alexander Janneus, the next in succession, ascended the throne. His first act was the death of his brother, who attempted to usurp the crown.

3665. At the feast of Tabernacles, mutiny broke out, but was speedily quelled. Six thousand of the populace were slaughtered.

3668. The people again broke into a rebellion, which lasted six years. At length the rebels obtained assistance

3674. from the King of Syria. Alexander was completely routed, with the loss of nearly all his troops.

3679. The king again found himself at the head of an army of 60,000 men : he routed the insurgents, and marched in triumph to Jerusalem, where he publicly crucified 8000 men, and slew their wives and children in their presence.

3683. Alexandra succeeded her husband ; and in conformity to his last advice, entrusted the administration to the Pharisees, who conferred the high priesthood upon her eldest son, Hyrcanus.

3692. Hyrcanus II. succeeded to the crown : but was immediately obliged to contest his title with his brother, Aristobulus. He was defeated in a pitched battle on the plain of Jericho, and compelled to resign the sceptre to his younger brother.

3695. Hyrcanus, by the advice of Antipater, an Idumean of noble birth, who aspired to the crown, obtained an army of 50,000 men from Aretas, king of Arabia, and marched against Aristobulus, who, deserted by the people, fled to Jerusalem, and was finally compelled to shut himself up in the temple, to which Hyrcanus laid siege.

3696. Aristobulus bribed Scaurus, the lieutenant of Pompey, the Roman general, to order Aretas to break up the siege, which he did ; and Aristobulus, following in the rear of the Arabian army, defeated them near Papyrion.

3697. The brothers agreed to refer their claims to the decision of Pompey ; but the impatience of Aristobulus would not permit him to await the procrastination of the Roman general, and he shut himself up in the fortified city of Alexandrion. Pompey besieged the city, and compelled the prince to fly to Jerusalem, whither he followed him. The party of Hyrcanus

received him with every demonstration of joy; and Aristobulus, deserted by all but the priests, was a second time obliged to take refuge in the temple, which was defended with the utmost courage during a siege of three months; at the end of which time it was taken. Pompey surveyed every part of the sacred edifice. He even penetrated the holy of holies, and was surprised to find it empty, without even a symbol of the Deity to whom it was dedicated. The immense riches he found there he left untouched, nominated Hyrcanus to the high priesthood, limited his dominions to Judea, appointed the tribute, and demolished the walls of the city.

3703. Pompey returned to Rome, taking with him Aristobulus, his two sons and two daughters, whom he had taken prisoners on the capture of the temple. Alexander, the eldest of the princes, effected his escape during the journey.

3705. He rebuilt the walls of Alexandrion, and garrisoned that and two other cities, Meacharpis and Hyrcania. His uncle and father-in-law, Hyrcanus, summoned the Roman to his assistance. Gabinius, the Lieutenant of Pompey, entered Judea, and defeated Alexander, who shut himself up in Alexandrion, to which Gabinius laid siege, and reduced it to the last extremity. Alexander, through the influence of his mother, who had always espoused the Roman cause, entered into a treaty, in which he received a general amnesty for his insurrection, on condition of surrendering his fortresses.

No sooner was Alexander subdued, than Aristobulus himself and his younger son, having escaped from Rome, again raised the standard of revolt. He re-fortified Alexandrion—he was taken, after being severely wounded, and sent back in chains to Rome; but his son, Antigonus, obtained his liberty through the interest of his mother with Gabinius, who interceded with the Senate on his behalf.

3706. Gabinius, with the celebrated Mark Antony as his

master of the horse, determined on the conquest of Egypt ; but scarcely had he withdrawn his troops from Syria, when Alexander again appeared in arms. He drove the few remaining Romans into a strong position on Mount Gerizim, where he besieged them. On the return of Gabinius, he had the courage to meet him at the head of 80,000 men in the open field, near Mount Tabor ; but was defeated, and obliged to take flight.

3713. Julius Cæsar, who was contesting the supremacy in Rome with Pompey, sent Aristobulus, whom he had released from captivity, in order to create a diversion in Judea in his favor ; but the friends of Pompey poisoned the unfortunate king, and Scipio, a descendant of the celebrated heroes of that name, publicly executed his gallant son, Alexander, at Antioch.

3728. Jerusalem was taken from Antigonus, the youngest son of Aristobulus, by Herod, son of Antipater the Idumean, who had been appointed king by Augustus and Antony, after an obstinate defence of above half a year. Antigonus was sent prisoner to Rome, and there executed, through the interest of Herod, who ascended the Jewish throne.

3729. Herod raised Aristobulus, grandson of the late monarch, and brother to Mariamne, his own wife, to the high priesthood ; but growing jealous of his superior claims to the throne, he caused him to be drowned by his companions, while bathing. This unfortunate young prince was only seventeen when he was murdered, and was the last lineal male descendant of the Asmoneans.

3731. Herod, instigated by a feeling of jealousy, caused his beloved wife, Mariamne, to be beheaded, on a fancied charge of adultery.

3743. The Temple of Jerusalem rebuilt in great splendour by Herod.

3754. Alexander and Aristobulus, the two sons of Mariamne, were executed, on a false accusation of attempting their father's life.

3755. Antipater, Herod's son by Doris, whom he had appointed his successor, was found guilty of conspiring with his uncle Pheroras, to perpetrate the very crime of which he had falsely accused his brothers, namely—poisoning his father.

3756. Antipater, on a false report of his father's death, endeavoured to bribe his gaoler. Herod lived just long enough to order his immediate execution, and remodel his will, when he immediately expired. Archelaus, who succeeded his father Herod, suppressed an insurrection, and set out for Rome to procure the Emperor's recognition of his title. Judea and Samaria were bestowed on him, under the title of Ethnarch. Galilee and Perea were given to his brother Herod Antipas, who had gone before him to Rome, in the hope of supplanting him on the throne.

3757. An imposter, assuming the name of Alexander, the murdered son of Mariamne, was detected, and sentenced to the galleys. His instructor was put to death.

3766. Archelaus was stripped of his dominions, for injustice and cruelty, and banished to Vienne, in Gaul. The countries of Judea and Samaria, which he had governed, became dependent on the prefecture of Syria.

THE GIDEONITE.

CHAPTER I.

Ye powers of aidance, show me such a way
As I am capable of going.

THE PICCOLOMINI.

If you have nothing to object,
We'll take a trifling retrospect.

OLD SONG.

“AN escaped prisoner! a wanderer in the country in which my father was king!—Great God! how inscrutable are thy ways!” Such were the reflections of the young Prince Alexander, son of Aristobulus, and nephew of Hyrcanus, as with aching heart and weary limbs, he flung himself down in the hollow cleft of a rock, and sought repose. The new moon had just risen, and displayed to the eager eyes of the royal fugitive the tendrils of a wild vine, twining round the inequalities of the rock,

their bright rich green forming a not unlovely relief to the dark grey rock. The thick clusters of fruit hanging gracefully down, like curls on the neck of beauty, though not yet quite ripe, made a grateful repast for the tired and hungry prince. He had tasted nothing for many hours previous. Having satisfied the cravings of appetite, he lay down on his rocky bed, with a few dry leaves and a little moss for his pillow, and ruminated on the chances of life. His situation was a perplexing one; but he was young, ardent, and brave, and by far too sanguine to despair. He was surrounded by dangers on every side; but fatigue conquered his powers of thought, and he slept as soundly on that rude couch as if he had reposed on the softest down.

Alexander was yet young, but he was not unused to the changefulness of fortune. True, his father was a king, but his reign had been stormy, from its commencement to its close; and the prince was no stranger to his reverses, for he had shared them. He knew too the frail foundation on which his father grounded his title to the throne, which by right of inheritance belonged to Hyrcanus. But if Hyrcanus was the elder, he was entirely unfit to govern

a brave and warlike nation ; while Aristobulus his brother possessed in an eminent degree the qualities requisite for the government of a military people, such as the Jews were at that time. Alexander grieved to see his beloved country torn by faction, and destroyed as it were by her own children ; but he never for a moment blamed his father, nor considered him as accessory to its destruction. On the contrary, he looked on him as a patriot, suffering bondage for his country's sake ; and he determined to avenge his cause or die.

Any one, who is at all acquainted with Jewish history, is aware of the distractions of Judea which took place on the death of Alexandra. Hyrcanus was the next heir to the crown ; but being of a weak, vacillating disposition, he lay completely at the mercy of the Pharisees, a sect which had been in high favour during the regency of his mother. Alexandra had conciliated them ; but she was a woman of strong and vigorous intellect ; she seemed to be entirely governed by their counsels, while in fact she ruled them. The art of becoming popular lies not so much in giving way, as in seeming to do so, to the opinions of the people. Unlike his mother, Hyrcanus was weak and wavering, and

just the sort of king who is liable to be made the puppet and tool of a faction ; and while he supinely rested in the assurance of ascending the throne, his younger brother, brave, vigorous, and aspiring, was actively employed in winning the favor of the people. He was high in the estimation of the army, regarded by the people as the fittest representative of the Maccabees, and possessing a strong desire to rule. In the early part of Hyrcanus' reign, he drove him from the throne, and took possession of the crown he so coveted. Hyrcanus seemed content to remain in the quiet obscurity to which the imperious Aristobulus and his own inactive disposition had consigned him ; and he would probably have never again emerged from it, had not Antipater (father of the notorious Herod afterwards king) an Idumean of noble birth, whom Aristobulus had the misfortune to offend, and who therefore closely adhered to the fortunes of the elder brother, stirred up the inglorious spirit, and worked upon the easy and yielding nature of his master, by tales of a conspiracy, which he said was formed against his life. It was long ere he could induce Hyrcanus to listen to his invidious charges ; for though he was deficient in the warlike attributes

of the high and noble race he sprang from, he was naturally unsuspecting; and being himself incapable of aught so treacherous as to conspire against his brother's life, he believed Aristobulus equally free from treachery. "We threw our rights in the scale of war," he would say, in reply to Antipater's insinuations; "Aristobulus conquered me fairly. Our conditions were agreed on in the sight of God and man, and ratified in the temple by a fraternal embrace. He has my crown, and governs over my—I should say his—people. I have not wronged him. I have not disturbed him in his government. He is fitter to rule than I; the people and the soldiers have chosen him for their king, and I am content. No, my Antipater; thy zeal for thy master betrays thee into injustice towards thy king. Wherefore should he seek my life?" "The tyrant seeks no reason but his own safety," replied the artful counsellor. "He is not secure, while Hyrcanus lives—for the besotted people are already awakening to a sense of the injustice they have done. They will forsake the usurper, and return to their allegiance. Mark me, prince; it is thine own fault if Aristobulus wears thy crown or wields thy sceptre longer. His army is ripe for revolt. Dost

thou marvel now that he seeks to be rid of one who is like to be so troublesome ?”

Hyrchanus yielded at length ; and at the head of fifty thousand men, whom Aretas, king of Arabia Petra, had been induced to raise in his behalf, he marched to Jerusalem, and defeating Aristobulus, drove him to take refuge in the mount of the temple. - As Antipater had predicted, the people had flocked by thousands to the banner of Hyrchanus ; and in his last extremity, the remnant who had still clung to the fallen fortunes of Aristobulus, deserted him. Of all who followed his fortunes in prosperity, the priests alone remained by him in his reverses. With these devoted and gallant men, he retired to and fortified the temple, where they were subjected to a long and harassing siege. It was during this siege that Onias, a holy man, gave utterance to that beautiful prayer that cost him his life, and immortalized his name. It was supposed that once, during a time of great drought, his prayers had procured rain ; and the multitude believing his curses would be equally efficacious, brought him forth, and besought him to curse Aristobulus. For a long while Onias resisted all importunity ; but finding it would be worse than useless to attempt evasion, he devoutly

prayed: "O, Lord God; King of the Universe! —since those that are with us are thy people, and those that are besieged in thy temple are thy priests, I pray that thou wouldst hear the prayers of neither of them against the other." This adjuration, so different from what they had solicited, or expected, inflamed the besiegers so much, that they stoned him to death on the spot.

Soon after this occurrence, Aristobulus received intelligence that Scaurus, one of the lieutenants of Pompey, the Roman general, was quartered at Damascus, with a large detachment of troops. To him he applied for assistance. Hyrcanus adopted the same measure; but Scaurus yielded to the suit of Aristobulus, influenced no doubt by the knowledge that the temple treasure was in his possession. Perhaps the same motive acted on Gabinius, another Roman officer, who, fortunately for Aristobulus, happened then to be in the province; at all events, Aretas received orders to break up the siege, and to retire to his own territory.

On the receipt of this order, which was accompanied, in case of disobedience, by a threat to invade his kingdom, and lay it waste with fire and sword, the king of Arabia with-

drew his forces, and marched from Jerusalem. Burning for revenge, Aristobulus followed with what troops he could collect, gave him battle, and defeated him with great slaughter at a place called Papyrion. But it would swell these pages to a tedious length to enter into minute detail of the various negotiations, sieges, &c., &c., that preceded the capture of the Jewish prince, under the orders of Pompey the Great, who espoused the cause of Hyrcanus, influenced no doubt by the bribes and intrigues of Antipater and his son Herod. Suffice it, that after a three months' siege in the temple, in which he had again taken refuge, he was taken prisoner, and Pompey intended to carry him, with his sons Alexander and Antigonus, and two of the princesses, his daughters, to Rome.

The proud spirit of Alexander chafed at the disgrace of his house, and his heart yearned to the country over which he had hoped to reign at some future period, and from which he was about to be carried away captive; and still more forcibly did it yearn toward his beautiful wife and children—for Alexander was a father. The nature of the prince was too fiery and impatient to allow him to brood long over his misfortunes, without seeking to remedy them. Often did he

ponder over the means of his meditated escape. Many were the schemes that his ever active mind presented; but all were rejected in turn, for all possessed the same objection, namely, a want of feasibility. At length chance (or Providence, which, with the inborn ingratitude of human nature, we are all too ready to call by that more worldly name,) effected for the prisoner what his own ingenuity failed to accomplish. After a day's march, they had arrived at the seaport town from which they were to embark on the following morning, and Alexander ceased to hope. It was midnight; the guard had just been changed, and a deep and solemn silence brooded over the earth; but Alexander vainly endeavoured to woo sleep to his embrace. Feverish and restless, he paced the narrow limits of his prison chamber. His heart swelled with many an indignant throb; and in the deep stillness of the hour, he fancied he could hear its rapid and irregular pulsations. A heavy fall roused him from his melancholy meditations; and hastening to the door, he essayed to open it. It was fastened on the outside. "Fool!" muttered the prince, between his closed teeth; and he bit his nether lip until the blood started. "Fool that I am; am I not

a prisoner? The lion caught in the hunter's toils may chafe and fret, but he is not the less surely deprived of freedom, and his captors enjoy the terrible struggles of the mighty animal to shake off his ignoble bonds. But all his efforts serve no other purpose than to entangle him still farther in the meshes of the treacherous net. I am in the situation of the captive lion, and my efforts at freedom are equally vain and fruitless. Oh! that I had died for thee, my country—my poor, prostrate country! The foot of the Roman has been upon thy soil, his eye has gloated on thy beauties—he has pierced the mystery of thy sanctuary, and profaned thy holiest place: and thou wilt one day be but a province of Rome! * The hawk hovers not over the dovecote with a more longing eye—the vulture scents not his prey from afar with a more voracious appetite—the wolf approaches not the sheepfold with a more murderous design, than the Roman has approached and looked upon thee. Oh, Jerusalem! Jerusalem! lost, devoted city!—thy days are numbered; and this good right arm must wither in a dun-

* When Pompey took the Temple, fancying there were treasures concealed in the Ark, he removed the veil, and entered the Holy of Holies.

geon, and may not be stretched forth to save thee: and this panting soul must waste its strength and energies in weeping for thee, when they might have been exerted to save thee."

A faint moan without attracted the prince's attention. Again he tried the door, and again he turned away with the galling feeling of disappointment, that is so bitter to a young proud spirit. "And yet," he said, "it concerneth me not! Why should I seek to discover what wretch may be now expiring—perhaps a Roman soldier in his dying throes! So much the better! It will be one enemy less for Judea." Yet, in spite of his philosophic resolve to abstain from seeking farther, Alexander's curiosity was painfully excited; and he knew it could only be gratified by forcing the door, before the guard was changed. Again he examined it carefully; nothing but force could open it from within. "There is still one chance for freedom left," sighed the prince. "Could I but open this cursed barrier to my egress—let the result be what it may, I will try;" and he applied his strength to the task. It shook beneath the brawny sinews of the Asmonean. He paused, and wiped the perspiration from his forehead, and then renewed his efforts. A dead weight

from without, seemingly placed there to baffle his labour, increased the difficulty threefold ; but Alexander was not to be discouraged. Again he pressed his shoulder against it. It groaned and cracked beneath the pressure. The veins started in his brow, and the blood gushed from his nostrils with the mighty effort ; yet still he persevered. At length it yielded, and gave way, and, staggering from the effects of his exertions, and covered with blood and perspiration, he stood once more under the blue canopy of heaven, a free man.

The extraordinary obstruction to his labours lay before him, in the form of a heavy German legionary, stiff and dead. He had fallen down in a fit, and died for want of timely assistance.

Alexander saw there was no time to lose. Promptitude alone could save him. The situation in which he stood was a novel one ; the moments were fraught with fate, and there were none to spare in deliberation—for already the stars were waxing pale before the coming dawn. He stood upon the ramparts of a large stone building, and could distinctly hear the tread of the other sentinels, as they paced along the battlements. Before him lay the blue waters ; the swelling bosom of the waves was dotted with the

vessels destined to convey the Roman general, his army, and royal prisoners to the imperial city.

Alexander was not ignorant of his position ; but fortunately he was as well acquainted with the localities as with the dangers by which he was surrounded. At a short distance along the coast was a singular cavern, the entrance of which he had discovered by chance, and which was so well concealed, that if he could once gain it in safety, there was scarcely a possibility of discovery. But to go unarmed, and unprovided with any necessary, would be madness ; and notwithstanding his impatience he was not willing to hazard recapture, for want of a little prudent forethought. To delay the search for his person as long as possible, was a primary consideration. The only way that presented itself to effect this very necessary delay, was to conceal the dead body of the soldier ; and as that would probably be the last place subjected to suspicion, he dragged the corpse of the sentinel into the chamber he had been placed to guard. He then unfastened the sword and leathern purse secured in the girdle of the poor legionary. It was with a feeling of sickness, nearly allied to loathing, that the prince took possession of these articles,

although they were now so valueless to their former owner, and would be eminently useful to himself. But necessity has no law; and, however disgusted he felt at the means he was obliged to resort to, in order to regain his freedom, he shrunk not from using them. This done, Alexander paused—for his strength was well nigh exhausted; but nothing daunted, he seized the wine flask, from which a few hours before he had turned with loathing, and drank a long invigorating draught. Cooled and refreshed, he secured the remainder, together with some dried fruits, in the folds of his dress. Nothing now remained to be done but to fasten the door, and remove other appearances of violence as much as possible.

He then proceeded to examine at what point descent would be most practicable. There was not much time for this precaution—for already the eastern sky was streaked with a faint line of light. A scarf, a love token from his wife, was his only means of descent. This he fastened around the trunk of one of the trees with which the terrace was lined, and securing the other end round his middle, he swung himself off. Deceived by the obscurity, Alexander had miscalculated the distance to the ground, and

the destinies of the Asmonean prince hung suspended by a silken thread, midway between earth and heaven. What was to be done in this extremity? Another might have given himself up for lost, and abandoned himself to his fate. Not so Alexander. He had risked too much, and he determined to escape or die. But now the faint yellow on the horizon had deepened into glowing crimson, and every moment increased the danger of his position and the probability of detection. If he loosed the frail thread, which was already cracking with the straining weight attached to it, inevitable death was the consequence; but death was preferable to recapture. To reascend was the only alternative. The task was a difficult one: but he was young, active, and determined; and it was accomplished. It was but the exertion of a few moments, and he was again on firm ground. Quickly he unwound the shawl of which his turban was composed, and splitting it in twain, fastened it to the end of the scarf which had previously sustained him, and again commenced his descent. This time he reached the ground in safety.

We shall not pause to describe the consternation occasioned by the flight of the prince.

Suffice it that he baffled his pursuers, and reached in safety the spot where we left him sleeping, and to which we shall now return.

This spot was not, as some of my readers might suppose, the cave wherein he had taken refuge on the day of his escape; but merely a rest in a rock, about five hours' journey from Alexandrion, a strong city, built on a rock, on the very confines of Judea, and overlooking the barren and arid sands of Arabia Deserta, the fortifications of which had been nearly destroyed by the Romans, who had besieged it a few months before, during the time it was garrisoned by his father's troops. Thither Alexander intended to hasten, and repairing the walls and fortifications, to defend himself from his enemies, whilst stone walls and faithful hearts stood firm against the attacks of invaders; and in this resolve he was strengthened by the knowledge that his wife and children were at present residing there.

CHAPTER II.

But turn and look! then wonder, if thou wilt,
That I should hate, should take revenge by guilt,
Upon the hand, whose mischief, or whose mirth,
Sent me thus maimed and monstrous upon earth;
And on that race, who, though more vile they be
Than mowing apes, are demigods to me!
Here, judge if hell, with all its power to damn,
Can add one curse to the foul thing I am!"

MOORE.

THE morning sun had completed three hours of his journey ere the prince awoke. His head ached no longer. His limbs were invigorated by repose. His spirits arose as the fresh mountain breeze wantoned carelessly over his face. He determined to push on to Alexandrion as soon as he finished his simple repast, which, like that of the preceding evening, consisted of the luscious grape, with the addition of some wild honey, which he had found in the fissures of the rock. "The couch which nature spreads, and the simple diet that requires not the aid of art to render it palatable to the taste, give the glow of

health to the cheek, keep the head cool, and the hand steady for action."

The prince started, as these remarks, uttered in a voice of the most unpleasing and dissonant harshness, fell upon his ear; nor was the disagreeable impression the tones left upon his mind at all lessened by the appearance of the speaker, who now stood before him. He was about three feet seven or eight inches high, with long bony arms and hard sinewy hands. His head was immeasurably disproportionate to his body, and seemed to grow directly from his shoulders, as if disdainful of the intermediate space of a throat. His forehead was low and contracted; his nose long and considerably hooked; his large mouth was frightfully distorted; and his teeth, of dazzling white, resembling more the fangs of a savage beast than the teeth of a human being, were too long and sharp to permit the thin blue lips to close upon them; while, from beneath the bent and lowering brows shone forth a pair of indescribable black eyes. To say that in expression they combined the cautious cunning of the fox, with the bitter malignity of the fiend, would be to convey but a faint idea of the reality. The flash of the meteor, the glare of the firebrand,

might have paled before those eyes ; they had no parallel in nature ; and it were but a fruitless task to seek for that which is not. But those orbs were the mirrors of a heart that for cruelty, craft and hatred to all his species, might have belonged to the arch-fiend himself. It was not, then, with the most complacent feeling or admiring glances, that the young man gazed upon this surpassing specimen of human deformity. Nor did the dress of this singular being at all soften the outline of his figure, which, besides its dwarfish stature, was otherwise deformed by a huge hump, that rising between his shoulders, grew gradually upward, until it became a formidable rival to his large ill-set head. He wore a long flowing robe of black, which descended to the ankle. This robe was fastened round the waist by a crimson girdle. A conical cap of the same material surmounted his coal-black hair, and a pair of goatskin sandals completed his costume. A feeling of terror, he knew not why—for his was not a mind to be easily subdued—crept over Alexander ; and his intelligent features, the true index of his high and noble heart, betrayed the only half acknowledged feeling that chilled it. A terrible smile distorted the features of the dwarf, as he marked the impression his pre-

sence produced on his companion ; but, without pausing for an answer to his first remark, he proceeded. " 'Thou art bound for Alexandrion. Nay, son of Aristobulus, interrupt me not. I know it is thy destination. Aye, and I know, too, thy purpose in journeying thither. Thou wouldst defend thyself from the power of thine uncle Hyrcanus, and his Roman auxiliaries, and preserve to thyself the freedom thou hast achieved. Thou wouldst redeem thy father, brother, and sister from slavery. Thou wouldst replace Aristobulus on the throne of Judea ; and if that be not possible, thou wouldst reign in his stead. Is it not so ? But there needs no reply : I can read it in the lightning flash of thy dark eye, and the bright flush of thy young cheek. I can read it in the dilation of thy proud nostril, and the haughty curve of thy lip ; but, above all, in the short quick breath, and the heaving of the chest. Thou wouldst do all this : but to do it well, thou wilt need, besides the brave hearts and ready hands of thy partisans, a friend to assist thee in council—not one to lead thy forces to the field, and teach them by glorious example how to live as warriors and die as men ; not one who by his eloquence can stir up even the coward to courage, and render the

brave man doubly brave ; not one who can be equally great in defeat as in victory—for all this thou canst accomplish for thyself—and who so fit to lead an army, to win a kingdom, as he who is to rule it ? Who so proper to show men how to grace a victory, or to triumph over a defeat, as he whose all is centered in the deep game of war they are playing ? A prince who is desirous of wresting a crown from the brows of another, to place it upon his own, must teach the soldiers who fight for it, and the people who give it, that he fears not to share the danger of gaining it, nor is unable to preserve it when it is gained. But still thou wilt need a friend, who can counsel thee how to act ; one who has already seen kingdoms lost and won ; one who has traversed three parts of the habitable globe, and made man his study—not the study of an hour, a day, or a week, but of months and years, and read thoroughly their weaknesses, their vices, their crimes, as well as their virtues and greatnesses, (if they possess any),” he added, bitterly ; “ one who combines the wisdom and experience of years, with the devoted energies and strength of youth ; and such an one stands before thee—such an one will I be.”

“Thou!” exclaimed Alexander, in undisguised astonishment, all the high-wrought visions fancy had been weaving for the last few moments, vanishing like the beautiful tracery of frostwork in the sun. “Yes, I, prince, think as lightly as thou wilt. Nor will I deceive thee in one iota. I will not tell thee I will do all I have said for nothing. I will not tell thee I have no interest in the game, and that pure patriotism alone dictates the offer of my services—for he who perils life and limb for the chance (and it is but a mere chance) of being spoken of as a patriot, is in my opinion but little better than the fool who fought with his own shadow for following him. No; I will not tell thee this, for thou wouldst not believe it. Know, then, that I have a stake as deep as thine—the stake of love; and when I have counselled and led thee on to victory; when I have shown thee how to free thy kindred from captivity; when I have taught thee how to bring thine enemy to thy feet; when I have graced thy brows with the regal diadem, and placed the sceptre of Judea in thine hand; then, and not before, will I claim my reward; and to thee it will seem nought, though to me it is of more real value than the glory and the power of the Roman, or

the boundless treasures of the earth. Promise me, prince, on the word of an Asmoncan, that if I realize—and I solemnly aver that I can do so—the vision of glory, wealth, and power I have laid before thee, that the princess Helena shall be mine.” Then laying his long bony hand on that of the shrinking prince, he fixed his keen searching eyes on his face.

Stunned, stupefied, bewildered, as one in the mazes of a troubled dream, Alexander had listened to the words of the strange apparition, seeming to hear the sound, without comprehending its sense; but when he wound up the whole by a declaration of love for his young and beautiful sister Helena, the prince, who was keenly alive to a sense of the ridiculous, when he looked on the grotesque figure of the uncouth being, and thought of him as a suitor for female loveliness, could no longer restrain his mirth, and the rocks around him rung forth to his wild peal of loud and not unmusical laughter. “Thou,” he said, when the first burst of merriment had ceased, “thou place me on the throne of my fathers! Thou marry Helena—the graceful, the admired, the courted Helena! Ha! ha! ha! Why, thou pitiful libel of

man—thou hideous humpbacked, presumptuous dwarf—thou foul lampoon of our species—thou vile ape, how darest thou think of mating with the beautiful? By the living God, I would trample thee under my foot for thy daring, but that I scorn thee for thine insignificance.” “Prince,” and he drew his hand away: “Prince! the living God has not created the meanest reptile that crawls the earth without an end; and my end,”—he spoke in a deep hoarse whisper, while all the evil passions that can darken the soul seemed concentrated in the demoniac expression of that hideous face, and the glance of fell malignity that absolutely burned in those terrible eyes, curdled the warm blood in the veins of his companion and paled the proud cheek of the noble Asmonean,—“my end is revenge. I offered thee my services, my friendship—for what?—the trifling reward of a woman’s hand. Thou hast rejected my proffered services—rejected them with scorn. Thou hast called me a dwarfed humpback—thou wert right: a lampoon upon thy species—thou wert right: an ape—why in that thou wert right too; but know the power, that set a seal on me, that made me a thing apart from the rest of mankind, a

thing to be mocked at, hated, shunned, despised, that power that cursed me with the form of an ape, gifted me with its cunning malignity. The ape never forgets the person of one who has injured it: nor will I. Thou hast vented thy wrath in scornful words, and mocking laughter. I will show my revenge in deeds—deeds that shall be written in thy blood, and sealed with thy life. Thou hast scoffed at my love. Now, take my hate. Thou hast refused me as a friend, and now I will be thy foe; and for thy threats, I defy thee. I will be to thee what the canker is to the rose, and the blight to the fruit. I will be to thee what the wasting hopelessness of unrequited love is to the young cheek of beauty. I will eat the heart from thy buds of hope; I will be a serpent in thy path, the bane of thine existence. Prince of Judah! son of Aristobulus! beware of Simeon the hump-backed dwarf. Beware of Simeon the Gideonite!" Alexander laughed aloud, and eyeing the dwarf with a look of mingled pity and contempt, spat upon him.

Slowly and deliberately Simeon raised his coarse hand, and swinging round his muscular arm, he struck the prince, who was unprepared

for the blow, to the ground, and kneeling on the prostrate body, he clutched the throat with his bony fingers. The veins started with agony: the face of Alexander grew livid; there was a gurgling, like the death rattle in his throat: another moment, and he must have been a corpse. But a sudden thought seemed to have crossed the mind of his assailant—for, loosening his deadly gripe, he arose. “Not yet,” he said, as he glared into the face of the scarcely conscious prince; “not yet—thy cup is not full: but this hand shall still be bathed in thy blood, and this heart shall yet slake its burning, and till then undying thirst for revenge in the purple life-stream of thine. Prince, farewell! We shall meet again, not in the silence of morning, amid the wild fastnesses of nature, with only the eternal heavens for our witness; but the eyes of thousands will be upon us. Whenever misfortune overtakes thee, I will be nigh. When thine head is on the block, and the arm of the executioner is raised to strike it off, while mocking crowds exult in thine ignominious death, then will I be there. And the gibe that is bitterest, the laugh that is loudest, and the jest that is most scornful and

galling, shall be the gibe, laugh, and jest, of the dwarf. Farewell, prince ; once more I bid thee beware of the Gideonite." Then wrapping his long black robe about him, he turned and departed.]

CHAPTER III.

His Ellen clung round him ; his children with smiles
Hailed their father's return to the home of his birth ;
Their innocent prattle his sorrow beguiles,
And the castle resounds with the voices of mirth.

CAPTIVE'S DREAM.

THE scene of our story is changed, and we are about to introduce a new and not unimportant character to the reader. Perched on the very summit of a lofty rock, and surrounded by the dilapidated walls of a fallen city, not the ruin of age, and hoar with antiquity, but a city destroyed within a few months, stood the fortress castle of Alexandrion. The battlements were broken down in many places, and there was an air of desolation in the gloomy grandeur of the half dismantled fortress, that struck a chill to the heart. But there was still some portion of the castle habitable; and the beautifully terraced gardens had escaped the hands of the spoiler, and were still in a high state of cultivation; and

the sweet scent of the perfumed flowers was gently wafted by a pleasant breeze through the half open casement of an apartment opening upon the ground. The lattice was overgrown by jessamine, clematis, and a profusion of other beautiful creepers. The soft air of evening was rendered musical by the hum of a thousand bright and beautiful insects ; the winged children of the glorious summer mingling their voices with the mournfully sweet cadences of the nightingale, who had built its home among the dark foliage of a stately cedar, whose leafy luxuriance perfectly concealed the melancholy song-bird from human observation. The sky was cloudlessly blue, save where it was tinged with the many brilliant hues of dying day. It was a lofty chamber, furnished with much costliness and taste. In the centre a small exquisitely carved fountain of alabaster threw up a stream of rose water, which performed the double office of cooling and perfuming the air. A glowing profusion of flowers, tinged with every hue of the rainbow, were arranged in vases of the purest crystal; and luxurious couches and ottomans of brodered velvet, were ranged around. The occupants of this chamber consisted of a

group of three females, and two young children. Two of the former were engaged at an embroidery frame, and conversing together in suppressed whispers. The other, who was evidently the superior, sat apart. She might have been about twenty-one or two; she was not more, but the bud and promise of spring had ripened into the full maturity of womanhood and beauty. She was negligently attired in a loose robe of white gauze; but the careless folds of her drapery increased rather than diminished the grace of her rounded and somewhat voluptuous figure. A necklace of pearl was twisted round her swan-like throat, and a network of the same costly material confined her long black hair. Her countenance was eminently beautiful, and there was an air of firmness and decision about the well cut mouth, that harmonised with the severe style of her beauty; tall and commanding in height, there was that air of majesty and innate nobility in her manners, which seemed to proclaim the blood of princes in her veins. Such was the princess Alexandra, at the time of which we speak; and though she afterwards became an intriguante at the court of that king whose family and self had caused the death of her noble hus-

band, and the dethronement, mutilation, and death of her father, yet at that time no debasing thought had sullied the purity and dignity of her mind. Those two dear pledges of her love were already fated, as they sported at their mother's feet, and as in fancy she traced out their future career—oh ! how little did she dream that early and unnatural death would destroy them both !

Her cheek was extremely pale—for the rich glow that health gives the complexion was gone. She had been weeping ; and as she put back the dark hair that clustered round the ivory forehead of Mariamne, whose countenance already gave promise of that surpassing loveliness which made her at once the favourite and the victim of Herod, she could no longer restrain her sorrow ; and the choking sensation of grief at last found vent in words. But Alexandra's haughty spirit brooked not that her maidens should witness its outpourings, and she bade them retire. " The prince and princess?" said one of them, in a tone of inquiry. " Leave them ;" and she was alone with her children. Then, then, were the passionate feelings loosened from the icy fetters of pride ; the frame shook, and the chest heaved

with the deep-drawn sobs of long pent-up agony, while she clenched her small white hands, until the blood almost started. It is terrible to witness the breaking forth of the feelings of one who ordinarily restrains them within the bonds of self-control. The young Aristobulus and his sister, children as they were, terrified at the excess of their mother's sorrow, twined their arms round each other, and wept bitterly. "My children," passionately exclaimed Alexandra, as she gazed on her offspring; "my worse than orphaned children, well may ye weep: and yet, poor babes, your tears flow ye know not wherefore—ye know not that your father is a prisoner in a strange land. Oh, Alexander! Alexander! why were we sundered? Why may I not share the bitterness of thy captivity? The gloom and misery of a prison with thee were a thousand times preferable to liberty without thee." "Therefore am I here to share it with thee, my beloved!" And the young matron was clasped in the arms of her husband. No exclamation burst from her lips, no tears rolled down her cheeks; but the fire of those dark eyes seemed melted into liquid light, as her head drooped upon her shoulder, and he pressed the warm kiss of chaste affection on her

brow. It was a bright moment of happiness that meeting, a green spot in the waste; and their children—there was something inexpressibly beautiful in those words, at least to them—for they conveyed whole worlds of passionate love, whose depths were only to be felt, not spoken.

The glorious sun was gone; but the chaste moon threw a pale silvery radiance over the scene. The children had wept themselves to sleep in each other's arms. Happy childhood! what a blessed prerogative is thine. There is no thorn on thy pillow. No stormy passions disturb the tranquillity of thy repose! But thy brief period is not all joy. Oh, no! that is a fiction of the poet: yet though thou art sometimes doomed to weep, thou canst at least weep thyself into forgetfulness. Who can look upon thine innocent slumbers, and not feel that there is yet peace on earth? It was a beautiful thought that of the old Greek poets, to endow love with the form of a blind child; for what is so much calculated to excite the purest and holiest emotions of our nature, as the artless beauty of that tender age?—and when childhood is united with affliction, cold indeed must be the heart that views it without sympathy. And

is not sympathy the parent of love? So felt that young husband and wife, as they sat gazing on the fair forms of their sleeping children, until the moon waned, and day—a day of freshness and glory—dawned upon the world again.

The moments snatched from war, and dedicated to love, were few, for Alexander's life was an eventful one; and, however mistaken were his motives, we cannot but admire the zeal and courage of the young prince, whose life ultimately paid the forfeit for a misdirected, but not vain, ambition. Prompt as he was brave, a short time sufficed for Alexander to repair the damages the walls had sustained; and the cities of Machaerus and Hyrcanus, as well as Alexandrion, were soon in a state of defence, and garrisoned by a considerable force, who flocked at once around the standard of a leader so well calculated to excite the enthusiasm of a brave people. The education of Alexander had been essentially military; but he possessed all the courtly accomplishments requisite to enable him to maintain the dignity of his station in peace or war, and possessed, in an eminent degree, the art of acquiring friends; and what is of yet

greater importance, the still more enviable and difficult art of retaining them. Those who were once admitted to the private confidence of this high-minded, amiable, and persecuted prince, never forsook him. Once his friend, was to be his friend always.

CHAPTER IV.

Have I not suffered things to be forgiven ?
Have I not had my brain seared—my heart riven ?

Feared—shunned—belied—ere youth had lost her force,
He hated man too much to feel remorse,
And thought the voice of wrath a sacred call,
To pay the injuries of some on all.

BYRON.

SLOWLY Simeon threaded his way through the intricate mountain paths, until he arrived at a secluded and woody dell, whose wild and lonely beauty looked as if it had never till now been profaned by the unwelcome foot of man. He flung himself down upon the soft emerald turf, at the foot of a pine which had been riven by lightning—whose lofty head, towering on high, and seared and leafless branches, contrasting with the vernal green around, gave an air of gloomy grandeur to the scene. “Curses on him—curses on his race; and all who bear the name of man!” said the Gideonite, bitterly. “The earth, sea, and sky, are glad and beautiful, and revel in the consciousness of their beauty.

Man links himself with his brother man, and they rejoice together. Infancy is soothed by the caresses of those who gave it being; manhood is cheered by the gentle smile and tender embrace of the young, the loving, and the beautiful; age is smoothed in its path to the grave by the hand of youth, who thus repays the care bestowed upon it in childhood. The birds build themselves nests, and dwell therein. The beasts flock together in herds; even the hyena, fierce, wild, and untamable as it is, has its mates and younglings to cling to; the meanest insect, the veriest reptile that crawls upon the earth, has something to love, and be loved by in return. And I alone, of all created beings, am selected to be despised, loathed and shunned by my species. Why is this? Is it for wronging my fellows? Is it for sinning against my Maker?—for robbing the widow, or deceiving the fatherless? No, no, no! it is for none of these offences—for it commenced with my birth, and ripened while I was yet an unconscious infant on my mother's bosom. It was not for any fault of mine own. Wherefore was it, then? Because, forsooth, my face was less beautiful, and nature curtailed this poor, stunted, misshapen mass of clay, and made it a mockery of

man. They have treated me as a worm, but I will avenge myself as a snake. They have trampled down every feeling of humanity in my breast—they have shrunk from me as a pestilence, and avoided me as a demon. By Gehinnom, if I have the form, I will show them that I have likewise the heart of a fiend! He, even he, the proud Asmonean prince, might yet have saved me, and would not. I am what the world has made me; and by the God of my fathers, I will pay them back in kind.”

True were the words of the Gideonite. He had, indeed, been a lonely being from his birth. His father had early married his mother—married her for her beauty, for she was portionless, while he was almost boundlessly wealthy. The only fruit of this union was the unfortunate Simeon. A child so unlike its lovely mother, excited no other feeling than disgust in the mind of its father, and Joash wedded another wife. Bitterly did Hannah repine at seeing another occupying her place; and that repining engendered a feeling of detestation towards the unconscious and innocent cause of her husband's estrangement, so that Simeon might be said to have been literally nurtured on the stream of hate. Years passed away, and Joash

became the father of many sons and daughters, all surpassingly lovely, and poor Simeon early learned to know the value of personal attractions. Naturally of a passionate and loving disposition, his heart yearned for some object on which to lavish the kindly feelings of his nature ; but he could find no kindred soul. His father took no pains to conceal his dislike to the little unfortunate. His brothers and sisters would not suffer him to share in their childish sports; and when he sought to unburthen his full heart to his mother, and would throw himself on her bosom, and weep, she strove not to soothe the poignancy of his grief; she showed no sympathy with his childish sorrows; but checking the full tide of confidence in its outpourings, she repelled him with hate. Even the very household slaves mocked at the deformed.

Thus repulsed on every side, the warm current of his affections chilled, and his feelings were thrown back to prey upon themselves. Simeon became a lonely and miserable being. Denied all companionship with his kind, he hated them with a burning intensity, such as only hearts like his can feel. In books he sought that sympathy which even a mother

refused ; and plunged in the thickest recesses of the forest, he gave up his soul to the enchanting love of the poets and fabulists of many lands, whose languages his indefatigable application and constant study enabled him to conquer. Or he would wander among the wild mountain scenery, sometimes absenting himself from home for weeks together. This constant estrangement from all that makes home dear to the heart—this shutting out of all social ties—hardened his heart, and drying up the source of every tender feeling, converted him to the belief that every living thing was leagued against him ; and his dislike, as we have said, grew into hate. Insensibly at first the course of his studies engendered a desire to visit other lands, which at length grew into a passion. As soon as he expressed this desire, his father, who was far from anxious to detain him, furnished him with ample means for travel. Without a single regretful feeling at leaving the home of his birth, he quitted his native city ; and having journeyed through Judea, he hastened to Greece. Sadly he wandered through that beautiful land. Every where he saw the marks of devastation. The foot of the Roman had been there, and Greece was no longer the land of the free.

Sickening, he turned from those scenes of desolation and ruin; and leaving the land of the conquered, repaired to that of the conqueror. He visited Rome. He wandered among the monuments of art. He mixed with her people; and his capacious mind saw at a glance the source of Roman wealth and power. He was in the emporium of civilization; but his spirit was restless; for amid the vast multitudes that thronged the streets of that ever busy city, no heart beat in unison with his own. He saw gay groups of merry children sporting together; and memory reverted to his own unloved and neglected childhood. He spoke to them in the language of love; but every rosy face grew pale at his approach, and with cries of fear, or looks of mute terror, they shrank from the caress of the wretched dwarf.

He returned to his solitary abode, and wept in the bitterness of a seared and blighted heart. Few acquaintance did he make during his sojourn in Rome; but these few were men of power, who perceived the capacities of his mighty mind—a mind that had far outstripped his age—one that, had its energies been properly directed, might have benefitted his kind, and lived yet in the annals of his nation, embalmed, as other

names have been, in the tears of a grateful people. But it had been early warped; and the latent seeds of virtue, that needed but a fostering hand to produce glorious fruit, for want of culture had been choked up by weeds. Friends he had none. Again he resumed his wanderings, and leaving Rome and civilization behind, traversed great part of Germania. Even there, amongst the savages, he was avoided; and when they met him by chance, they fled away, howling forth they had seen an evil spirit. Heartsick and oppressed, Simeon traversed the mighty forests. Once only, when wounded by a poisoned arrow, he sought the hospitality of man; and then, refusing all assistance, the inhabitants hid themselves from him. Cursing the whole human race, he buried himself in an extensive wood, and laid himself down, as he thought to die. More than once his hand had been red with the blood of his fellow creatures, but then it was shed in self-defence. Now he felt as if he could remorselessly exterminate all who bore the hated name of man. At last he succeeded in extracting the arrow, and slowly recovered. He resumed his weary travel. He crossed the beautiful river, since so celebrated as the winding Rhine, and traversing Gallia crossed to

Britain, then but newly appended to the empire of Rome; and having explored that country in every direction, returned to his own. There were no glad anticipations of the delights of home to lighten his way. No hearts had sorrowed at his departure, none would expand and gladden at his return. No arms would open to receive him; no sweet familiar voices would breathe his welcome home. Home—that word usually so fraught with all the dear associations and fond remembrances of childhood, had no charms for him.

He had left the place of his nativity without one pang of grief, and he returned to it without one throb of pleasure. He found his father's house no longer what it had been; his mother was dead; and his beautiful brothers and sisters, one by one, as they had arrived at maturity, had sunk into the grave, and Joash was left to die alone. He had survived all his friends and kindred, all but the outcast offspring of Hannah, who arrived just in time to see him die. It is not to be supposed that such a child grieved for the loss of such a parent.

Simeon rose from his Shiva a solitary being; but he had been that even during the lifetime of his kindred, and he had grown callous to it.

He was now the master of unbounded wealth, unshackled by a single tie. He saw the distractions of his native land, and he lost no time in making himself acquainted with the cause of those distractions. He arrived in Judea just after the capture of Aristobulus; and in travelling to Jerusalem, he saw by chance the princess Helena.

Then, then the scared current of human affections burst forth again, and he loved with all the ardour of his own wild nature. Then, for the first time, he thought of and prized his wealth. He could hasten to the port from whence they were to embark, and ransom her father, brothers, and sisters, and then gratitude might induce Helena to listen to his suit. This plan was no sooner conceived than he hastened to carry it into execution; but despite of his diligence he arrived too late. Alexander had effected his escape; and Aristobulus, Antigonus, and the two princesses, were already far on their way to Rome.

Impatient of delay, he tracked the steps of the fugitive prince, determined to offer him his really valuable services, and thus by serving the brother secure the sister's hand. How that offer was received we have already recorded.

He was indeed what the world had made him ; and he left the young Asmonean with all his preconceived hatred of mankind rendered doubly venomous. " Helena shall be mine," he said, " in spite of her proud brother ! Yes, she shall be mine, my wedded wife, ape as I am ; and he —ha ! ha ! ha !—the axe and the block, the axe and the block," he slowly repeated, " shall pay the debt I owe him."

CHAPTER V.

That eve she sat alone within her bower,
Watching the streamlet as it murmured by ;
'Twas at that soft, that most bewitching hour,
When first pale Luna's beams illumine the sky.

• • • •
* * * *

And never yet was scene so fair,
But something ill was lurking there.

BERTHA.

IN a secluded bower, formed of the twisted boughs of the scented myrtle, interlaced with clematis, at the close of a balmy summer day, sat the princess Helena. A quantity of beautiful flowers lay on her lap, and from them she was twining a garland, to wreath among the flowing ringlets that gracefully wanted around her ivory neck and bosom. Helena was at that age when all worldly things are tinged with the fairy colouring of fancy—when the artless gaiety of the girl is so sweetly blended with the graceful timidity of early womanhood. She was lovely ; but hers was the loveliness that passeth descrip-

tion, for it was the beauty of expression, not feature.

The departing orb of day tinged the western sky with many-coloured and gorgeous light ; and the faint south wind, heavy with perfume, made sweet music among the whispering leaves. It was a gentle hour, and gentle indeed was the maiden who sat in that bower. She seemed to pursue her task mechanically, as she warbled forth one of the wild melodies of her country ; and as the rich cadences of her musical voice swelled on the southern wind, the tears rolled unheeded down her cheek. Sorrow had already found its way to that youthful heart. The captivity of her kindred sensibly affected her spirits, and the once gay princess became sad and melancholy. Her song had ceased ; and the half-finished wreath lay on her knee. She was not sleeping, but her spirit was rapt, and her imagination was busy, when the sound of a footfall on the dry leaves that had been shaken off by the wind, startled her from her reverie. She raised her eyes, and beheld the form of a man standing between her and the light of the newly-risen moon. She would have shrieked, but her tongue clave to the roof of her mouth, and she sat as if spellbound, so still and motionless was she,

while her eyes remained rivetted upon the object before her. But the harsh voice of Simeon, for he it was, dispelled the charm, when hastily seizing her veil, which lay on the seat beside her, she threw it over her head, and rose to depart; but the Gideonite, divining her purpose, threw himself on his knees before her to prevent it. "Listen to me, lady," he said, imploringly; and Helena, fancying him a supplicant for some exertion of her benevolence, reseated herself, and listened attentively. "Princess," continued the Gideonite, still retaining his prostrate position; "I need not tell thee that thy father's hopes are crushed—for I doubt not thou knowest this; the tale that is fraught with sorrow always finds narrators. Perchance thou knowest, too, that thy brother Alexander has effected his escape." "I do," said the princess, marvelling greatly to what this preface might tend. "It is of him I would speak," resumed the dwarf. "'Tis true he has escaped; but—" "But what?" interrupted Helena, almost breathlessly. "Patience, lady: he has escaped from prison, but at present is wandering through the country, hunted like a beast of prey. His foes are on his track. This can last but a little while, for he is surrounded by snares on every side, and

he cannot escape them. What then will be his fate I leave thee to imagine." Helena clasped her hands in mute agony, and Simeon went on. "Yes; he will fall into their snares. The Romans are a merciless people, and a life of slavery and a death of ignominy will be the inevitable fate of thy gallant brother." "Is there no way to avert such a doom?—no way to save him from a fate so terrible?" demanded the princess, in a tone of unutterable anguish. "Yes, lady!—there is yet one chance left. There is one who would warn him of his danger; one who could,"—he laid a strong emphasis on the last word—"save him from the gulf of destruction that is yawning to receive him. But for a service so valuable he would require a reward." "Name it," said Helena, impatiently; "and though we are not what we have been, the wife and daughter of Aristobulus can still find enough to ransom Alexander, even if they part with their jewels to furnish the sum required;" and she looked at the gorgeous bracelet clasped round her slender wrist, and for the first time in life calculated its value. "Go," she continued, after a brief pause; "bring this being to me, and thou shalt ever have the prayers and gratitude of Helena." "Raise thy veil, lady," replied the dwarf; "the

man who could, who would save thy brother is here before thee." Helena threw aside her veil, and gazed on the hideous form and features of the Gideonite, who had sprung to his feet, and now stood erect before her in all his native deformity. She had seen him but imperfectly before, and now she shuddered, and with difficulty repressed the scream that rose to her lips. Simeon marked the sensation which his ill-favoured presence made on the beautiful girl. He compressed his lips, and clenched his hands forcibly together, to prevent any violent ebullition of ill-timed passion. "And for thy reward?" said Helena, faintly breaking the pause, and anxious to terminate an interview which she felt had already lasted too long, while with an instinctive foreboding of coming evil she dreaded his reply. "Thine hand, princess," he replied. "Keep thy gems—I want them not, save as a love-token ;" and he proudly pushed back the bracelet which she had unclasped and extended towards him ; and again prostrating himself, he caught the beautiful hand, and pressing it between his own rough palms, he poured forth a torrent of passionate words, expressive of his devoted and ardent love, not one of which the astonished maiden comprehended, save his calling her

“his Helena,” and wildly imploring her to become his bride. “Thy bride?” she exclaimed, almost gasping for breath; “thy bride? It cannot be. Now I comprehend all thy vile scheme. Thou hast been playing upon the feelings of a credulous girl, merely to answer thine own selfish ends. Thou hast wrung my heart to agony, to afford thee a moment’s sport; but thou hast foiled thyself. Begone, lest I be tempted to forget my royal birth and maidenly dignity. A daughter of the house of Asmoncus become thy bride? It is impossible; and I marvel at thy presumption in preferring a suit so insulting to her whose presence thou hast outraged by such words as thou hast spoken.” She endeavoured to pass him, and depart. “Why this sounds well, Helena,” tauntingly exclaimed her companion: “such words become the daughter of a captive; and the flush of anger harmonises with the delicacy of thy complexion. But,” he added, quickly changing his tone, “believe me, Helena, thou hadst better not decide too hastily, lest thou shouldst repent thy decision. Remember it is a brother’s life that is placed in the balance. What,” as the indignant princess haughtily averted her head, “wilt thou not listen?—well, be it so. I will detain thee no longer, for the

air is growing damp and chill. Farewell, lady ; may the hosts of heaven guard thy sinless rest. To-morrow I shall see thee again." Then springing to his feet, he disappeared through the thick belt of trees that fenced her bower.

Trembling with terror and apprehension, and panting from her recent excitement, Helena sped along the garden path, until she reached the house ; then bursting into her mother's presence, she flung herself on her bosom, and gave way to a passionate burst of tears.

"What ails thee, my daughter?" demanded the queen, as she fondly put back the disordered ringlets from the aching brow of the agitated maiden, and looked into her pale face with maternal solicitude.

Helena was too much exhausted to be able to reply. The violence of her emotions had overpowered and unnerved her, and she wept, till, childlike, she wept herself to sleep.

CHAPTER VI.

'Tis hard to bid a mother choose
Between her children, which she will sacrifice
To save the other? Both, both, are very dear; yet one
The choice must fall on.
There's no time for delay. Choose, and quickly,
Which shall't be?

M.S.

LONG before Helena rose from her couch the next morning, her mother was acquainted with the cause of her agitation on the previous evening. Simeon had been closeted with her for nearly two hours. It is needless to repeat all that passed at that interview, or what arguments he used to prevail on the unhappy queen to consent to his union with her daughter. Enough that he had wrought so skilfully on the mother's feelings as to induce her to sacrifice one child for the sake of another. She had placed the happiness of Helena in the scale with Alexander's life, and it weighed as nought in the balance. She knew there would be some difficulties to overcome, some scruples of delicacy

on the part of Helena; but she determined to overrule all objections, and with this resolution sought the princess's chamber. Helena was sleeping; and as the queen gazed upon those expressive features, hushed in the sweet calm of repose, and marked the ever changeful hue of the fair cheek whose rich natural bloom resembled the downy blush of the peach,¹ while the hair of wavy jet, agitated by every breath, now veiled the snowy brow and glowing face in its thick masses, now revealed them in all their graceful loveliness, she sighed to think how soon that beauty would be worthless to its possessor. The thought was a saddening one, and filled her eyes with tears. As she bent over her daughter and pressed her lips to her radiant cheek, her scalding tears fell upon it.

Helena started; the light and healthful slumber of youth was broken, and raising herself on her pillow, she fixed an earnest and enquiring glance upon her mother. "What grieves thee, dear mother?" eagerly questioned the affectionate girl, as she threw her arms around her neck, and kissed away the tears from the pale face of the queen, who, unable longer to control her feelings, sobbed aloud. The princess repeated her question in a tone of alarm. "What grieves thee

my mother? Has aught again occurred to trouble thee? Wilt thou not confide in thine own Helena? O tell me thy sorrows; and if the most filial love, the most devoted and willing obedience can soothe or aid thee, thou shalt have no cause to regret thy confidence." "Thy ready obedience can alone aid me," replied the queen, struggling to regain her composure; "and on that I shall rely for support, Helena." Her voice and manner assumed a deep solemnity, as she added, "It is no trifle thy mother would ask, as a proof of thy love."

The impressive tones and sorrowful looks of the queen awed the princess, and filled her with anxiety, making her heart beat with a quicker throb, and tinging her cheek with a still deeper crimson. She listened in breathless attention as her mother proceeded. "My daughter, thou hast a serious duty to perform, and life or death hangs upon the manner in which thou dischargest it. Farther preface would be useless. Thou knowest thou wert ever my favourite child, and I would not lead thee astray; but thou answerest not—What am I to infer from thy continued silence? Answer me; art thou prepared to yield implicit obedience to my will, and to grant thy mother's ardent prayer?"

Helena whispered an assent. How unlike her usual cheerful tones sounded that hoarse and broken whisper, even to her own ear! She could not account for it; but her blood seemed to have lost its healthful play, and to creep sluggishly through her burning veins, while a weight as of iron lay upon her heart. A brief pause ensued, during which both seemed communing with their own thoughts. The queen was the first to break it. "Thanks, my daughter," she said, as she folded the agitated girl to her bosom. "Thou hast indeed removed the agony that oppressed me, and saved thy brother's life."

Helena's cheek grew livid. "Saved her brother's life?" The truth flashed upon her. She knew it, saw it all. It needed not the hurried narration of her interview with the dwarf, which her mother gave, to confirm her apprehension; yet she listened in mute attention, and no tears dimmed the natural brilliancy of her eyes, no tremor shook her voice as she said, "Now leave me, mother." The mother wept, as she looked upon the face of her child, and marked the deadly paleness of the features so lately flushed with health; but she never for a moment relented, nor wavered in her resolution; and when Helena repeated her desire to be left alone, she

quitted the chamber. Still the princess wept not; the tears seemed frozen in their fount, and a fearful sense of utter desolation oppressed her. She saw the immensity of the sacrifice she was required to make, but she thought not of receding. She knew that her own dream of happiness had faded for ever; but her brother's life would be the forfeit for her non-compliance, and the idea was too terrible to be borne. To hear his widowed wife reproach her, and say, as she pointed to her orphaned children, "But for thee, they had not been fatherless," was a thought she could not endure. And was there no other thought to wring her lacerated heart? Oh yes! but she repressed it in its birth. She would not trust herself to think of the loved, the absent one, to whom she had hoped to be united at no distant period. She would not suffer her imagination to brood too fondly over the past—for to draw comparisons between her former and her present lover was maddening.

Short was the time allowed for preparations. Four days was the utmost delay that could be made; and the only indulgence granted to the unhappy princess, was, that she should not be obliged to see the bridegroom until the morning of the bridal; and, as it was most consonant to

the feelings of all, the wedding was to be strictly private.

Four days! They seemed years to Helena, while passing; but how much change had they wrought in her! She was no longer the blooming happy girl, scarcely yet past the verge of childhood, but a pale heart-broken woman. The bridesmaids admired the graceful symmetry of the fair princess, as they arrayed her in her bridal robes; but they failed not to mark the settled melancholy of her brow, as they twined the wreath of white almond-flowers in the braids of her hair; and they said, that never did young maiden look so pale and hopeless, yet so resignedly miserable on the morning of her bridal. Yet did she look very beautiful, but it was a beauty that is not of earth. She stood under the canopy, where the bridegroom appeared arrayed in cloth of gold stiff with the quantity of diamonds that ornamented it; but the splendour of his attire only served to render his deformity more conspicuous. A slight shudder passed through her frame, and her breast heaved convulsively; but it was only for a moment. Recovering her outward composure, she submitted passively to her fate. It was well for her the ritual required no effort of the

voice,* for she felt she was powerless to utter a word. The ceremony was over, the nuptial benediction given, and she was the wife of the Gideonite.

The thought of the object to be attained by her self-sacrifice had sustained her through the trial; but now that it was over, human nature could endure no more. Uttering a deep groan, she fell heavily on the floor. At that moment a messenger, bearing a sealed packet, forced his way through the crowd of domestics, and placed his missive in the queen's hand. It was sealed with the signet of Alexander. Distracted between her terror for the senseless princess, and her anxiety to make herself acquainted with the situation of her son, she hastily broke the seal, and perused the contents of the packet. "God of heaven," she uttered, faintly, "what have I done?—my child, my child!" and she hurried to the sofa on which she lay. Alexander's letters had explained to her the mode of his escape, and he likewise detailed to her his meeting with the dwarf, and what had passed between them. Alas! poor Helena! her sacrifice had been in vain, and now it was too late to retract.

* The Jewish bride expresses her acquiescence to the marriage ceremony by signs only.—See MALAH, chap. i.

How bitterly did her mother repent of the fatal union she had enforced. "Helena, my child!" she shrieked in wild agony, "look up and tell me thou forgivest me!" But she spake to one who could never again return her tender caresses. For her brother's sake, Helena had submitted to become the wife of Simcon. For his sake she had struggled against all the most cherished feelings of her heart, and that proudly sensitive heart had broken in the struggle.

The wild shriek of the mother as she kissed her death-cold brow, told the tale to those around, and the bridal chamber was filled with the sound of wailing. The wretched queen was forcibly carried from the apartment to her own. Her first words, on her return to consciousness, was an order to secure the Gideonite, and place him in safe custody. But on search being made, he was nowhere to be found. Simeon had picked up Alexander's letter, which the queen had dropped in the moment of agitation, and making himself master of its contents, he thought it best to retire, truly conjecturing that he should be the object of the outraged mother's vengeance; and in the confusion that ensued, he found no difficulty in effecting his escape.

Once more alone in the world, the destroyer of the hapless Helena, with bitter imprecations on him, went forth to plot the destruction of the brother she died to save.

CHAPTER VII.

There was no portent in the sky,
No shadow on the round bright sun;
With music, mirth, and melody,
The long, fair summer days came on.

ALARMED at the rapid increase of his nephew's forces, and his military talents, Hyrcanus called in the Romans to assist him. Woe to the nation that sought their aid! From that hour it was no longer free. From the moment they stepped foot on the soil it was subjected to the magnificent but terrible tyranny of that nation, whose mighty power is unparelled in the history of the world. That nation, so splendid in its sunshine of pride, so contemptible in its downfall. Then the mistress of the world—now the most degraded of nations. O Rome! Rome! how art thou fallen—from the splendid despotism of the Cæsars, to the pitiful tyranny of the Pope; from the proud bravery of the ancient and stern republicans, to the miserable slaves who now dwell among thy ruins!

Gabinus, the Roman general, accepted the

offers of Hyrcanus, and entered Judea at the head of his legionaries. It was the eve of battle, and Alexander was in his tent alone. His lips were compressed, his brow contracted, and that countenance, usually so calmly beautiful, was working with dark and troubled thought. It was not fear that paled the prince's cheek; but there was much in his situation for anxious thought and bitter reflection. He knew that his foes possessed every advantage. His own army was hastily organized, and their undisciplined zeal was no match for the trained and iron-nerved soldiers of Rome. Besides, he was truly a patriot; and holy as he deemed his cause, he shuddered at the idea of involving his beloved country in the desolation of civil war, and he wept—yes, he wept, and blushed not for his tears—to think of the kindred blood that would be shed on the morrow; of the homes and the hearts that would be made desolate for him; of the mothers who would be left childless, the wives husbandless, and the children fatherless—for what? he dared not ask himself. He thought of his own beautiful wife. He was going to war against her father, his uncle. The reflection was fraught with agony; yet it was now too late to retract. It was a long

miserable night to Alexander—a night of feverish excitement and conflicting feelings. He flung himself on his couch, but slept not. The boiling and effervescent blood could not be stilled to repose; and again he started up, and paced the tent with rapid strides. “Morning will never dawn,” he impatiently exclaimed, as he raised the curtain of his tent, and looked forth into the almost palpable blackness of the night; “how slowly the hours creep along! how interminable seems the night—it will never end.” Nevertheless, it did end, and the dawn came at last, clothed in her robe of light, and giving brilliant promise of a day of splendour. The hours moved not more slowly than ordinarily; but when did fiery and impatient youth calculate the movements of time by any other dial-plate than its own wayward feelings?

The dawn brightened into day, and with the return of light the prince regained his firmness; and his armour-bearer, as he assisted to equip him for battle, saw no trace of the emotion that had been at work, and the wearing excitement in which he had passed the night. His brow was calm and unruffled, and his features glowed with enthusiasm. “It is a glorious day, Reuben,” he said, as he buckled on his corslet;

“may it be an omen of victory! Is it not exhilarating to look on this beautiful sunshine? It seems as if Providence smiled upon us.” “It does indeed,” replied Reuben, catching a spark of his master’s enthusiasm; “and dastardly indeed would he be who doubted success under such a leader.” Alexander smiled. There never was a human heart, however noble, however exalted, that was insensible to the voice of praise.

Proudly beautiful looked that gallant and princely youth, as mounted on his battle steed he harangued his little army. His words were few, but they were energetic and inspiring, and he concluded by shouting forth the war-cry of his family. “No, no, no! We will have a new battle cry,” exclaimed the soldiers; and shouting forth “For Alexander, freedom, and Judea!” they rushed into the battle.

The conflict was hot and fierce, while it lasted; but it was soon over. Alexander’s undisciplined troops could not withstand the serried phalanx of their foes, whose compact ranks seemed impenetrable. Not long was the victory doubtful: Alexander was defeated; his army scattered and flying in the utmost confusion; and himself, obliged to abandon all hopes of retrieving his

loss, borne along in the crowd of fugitives. Bitterly did he now repent the rashness that had induced him to venture on a pitched battle; and sad indeed were his ruminations, as, still at the head of a small body of men, whom with some difficulty he had reorganised, he retreated in good order from the disastrous field. He rode a little apart from the rest: the deep gloom on his brow, the livid hue of his cheek, and the strong play of the muscles of his finely cut mouth, told of the irritation of his feelings. "All is lost," he said, thinking aloud; "fool, fool, that I was, to venture my all upon the fate of one battle! My rashness is rewarded, and I have nought to hope for. My dream of glory is over." "Not yet, not yet," said a deep hoarse voice beside him; "thy cup is not full." With a haughty and impatient gesture, the prince turned towards the speaker, and his eye rested on the features of the Gideonite. Alexander's heart swelled at the sight, and the form of the ill-fated Helena rose before him; but, as if a spell were upon him, he could not move a limb. "Not yet," repeated the dwarf, returning the prince's look of withering hate and scorn; "thy career will not be ended by the sword on the field of honourable warfare. The

axe and the block will be the reward of Alexander's virtue." "Insolent!" passionately exclaimed the exasperated prince, "at least thou shalt not live to see that hour;" and he endeavoured to seize his bridle, but dexterously eluding his grasp, he turned and departed, and the prince had the mortification to see him galloping along the plain towards the Roman camp. With a muttered curse upon the ill omened and misshapen thing, he put spurs to his horse, and soon overtook the remnant of his host.

CHAPTER VIII.

But quenched to-night that ardour seems,
And pale his cheek, and sunk his brow;
Never before, but in her dreams,
Had she beheld him pale as now.

MOORE.

The city must surrender, there's no hope left;
Disaster and defeat seems the heritage of his race.

ANONYMOUS.

“THOU art sad to-night, Alexander, too sad and desponding. Thou wert not wont to yield thus to sorrow,” said Alexandra, as with her hand clasped in her husband’s, she sat gazing on his pale careworn face. Alexander was indeed changed; and few would have recognised in the languid and altered mien of the prince, the gallant bearing of the haughty warrior who had led his little army against the Romans. Anxiety had begun its work upon his constitution; and the untimely death of his sister, combined with his own defeat, preyed upon his spirits.

“Nay, chide me not, dearest,” he replied,

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fondly returning the warm pressure of her hand, and looking into her beaming eyes with tender sadness; "the heat of the room oppresses me." "Let us walk forth on the terrace, then," she said, rising from her seat as she spoke. "Nay, not in the garden to-night; the heavy fragrance of the flowers overpowers me." Alexandra yielded, and they ascended to the battlements. It was a lovely night. The air was soft and balmy, and the illimitable blue of heaven was bright with lustrous stars, though the queen of night was absent. Before them lay the city, dark and silent; and beyond the walls were the tents of the Roman army, who were then laying siege to the city; while, far away in the distance, stretched the parched and sandy desert. Behind them, fertilized by the ever-living waters, lay the olive-crowned hills, and beautiful valleys of Judea. How holy is the calm of night!—how soothing it is to stand on the eternal mountains, with a sleeping world around, and gaze upon the deep blue heavens. They err who call midnight the hour for remorse and guilt. Midnight is the hour for all soft and beautiful feelings to hold sway. There is something so gentle and pleasing in the solitude, the breathing silence, that dead indeed to every

kindly sensation must the heart be, that can look upward to the starlit dome above, and not for a brief moment forget the petty cares, the strife, the struggles of day, and revert again, in thought at least, to the glowing romance and poetry of youth: at least to those two who stood on the ramparts together, there was a tranquillizing influence in the hour. Neither of them spoke, as they stood gazing into each other's eyes. The world's ambition, glory, all the thousand feelings that by turns agitate the mind of man, seemed swallowed up in all-absorbing and passionate love. It seemed enough for him to know that he was loved, even as his generous and unselfish nature deserved to be loved. They did not speak—for both felt too full of heart; and they shrank from words as if even the sound of their own voices would awaken them again to the sad realities of their fate.

“Is it not happiness to stand thus?” said Alexander, at length, as he drew the beautiful being who stood beside him closer to his bosom. “O Alexander, if I could die now, were it not for thine and our children's sake, I could die happy. My soul pants to free itself from this load of clay, and soar away in unfettered freedom to the bright world beyond.”

At that moment the words of the Gideonite flashed through his brain : "Thou shalt not die by the sword in open and honourable warfare, but on the block, and by the axe." The animation of the moment passed, and his cheek grew pale as marble. Alexandra felt the arm that encircled her waist tremble violently ; and he, who a moment before had sustained her, now leaned on her for support. The prince blushed for his weakness, but endeavoured in vain to shake it off. The words rung in his ears, like the prediction of truth, and the deformed and hideous dwarf seemed present to his imagination. "Good God ! what means this change ?" enquired Alexandra, in a tone of anxious solicitude ; "art thou ill ?" "Nay, nay," he replied ; "it was but a sudden qualm, and is already gone ; but the air is growing chill. Come, let us seek repose." They retraced their steps, Alexandra leading the way. She paused before the door of a chamber, at the farther end of the corridor in which their own stood, and softly opening it, whispered him to enter ; and taking his hand, she led him to the bedside of their sleeping children. The dark curls of the little princess hung carelessly over her polished forehead ; while the full parted lips, revealing their

ivory treasures, and the exquisitely moulded features, presented a perfect model of infantine loveliness. "Sleep on, sweet girl, in the pure slumber of innocence. The time will come when thou wilt recall this hour with regret, and wish thou mightest sleep such sleep again." Nor was the infant Aristobulus less beautiful than his sister. But there was something ethereal in his beauty, such as we combine with the idea of one predestined to an early grave. The mother bent over her first-born, her delicate Mariamne; and the father gazed on his boy, with the proud feelings of one who sees before him the heir to his honours and his name. But, oh! how much of tenderness was in that pride. It was a beautiful thing to see those young parents, themselves still in the bloom of youth, gazing on the offspring of their love—and three out of the four who occupied that chamber, were destined to an early—all of them to a violent death! An hour flew away. The princess had attained her object. Alexander's tranquillity was restored by the sight of his sleeping children; and they sought their own chamber.

It was long since Alexander had slept so calmly, as, with his head pillowed on the breast

of love, he sunk to forgetfulness. With the morrow came the din of war again. The arrows of the beleaguers committed fearful havoc. Nor was this all. Provisions were getting scarce; and the discontent of the garrison, at first only vented in whispers and mutterings, at length broke forth in audible complaints. It was impossible, with these combined evils, that the city could hold out much longer; and Alexander's only alternative was, to make terms as advantageous as possible for himself and followers, while there was yet time, or to continue the siege with the same obstinacy, and be rewarded by seeing the inhabitants of Alexandria at last put to the sword. Of the two ills, he chose the lesser; and dispatched a messenger to his mother, who, having always espoused the Roman's cause, and possessing great influence with Gabinius, succeeded in negotiating a peace. Alexander, and all who had linked themselves to his fortunes, received a general amnesty on condition of his surrendering all the fortresses in his possession.

“My evil genius has been at work again,” said Alexander, bitterly, as with his head depressed on his breast, and his cheek pale with care, he rode by the side of the litter containing

his wife and children. "It has, indeed," said the never-to-be-forgotten voice of his tormentor; and raising his eye, it encountered the fiendish and malignant smile of the Gideonite, who, mounted on a black charger of the Arabian breed, was riding on by his side. "I have thee now, fiend," shouted the prince, striving to clutch his garments; but the dwarf dashed his hand aside, and giving the rein to his spirited steed, bounded past. But amid the trampling of the horse's hoofs, and the demoniac laughter of the rider, Alexander distinctly heard the words, "Beware of Simeon the Gideonite." The princess, who heard the words of her husband, put aside the curtains of her litter, to ascertain their meaning. He sat erect in his saddle, rigid and motionless. The reins hung loose on the arching neck of his gallant steed, and his hands, clenched forcibly together, seemed grasping the empty air. His face was flushed, and his proud lip curled with rage, while his chest heaved as in the throes of mortal agony. He literally gasped for breath, and the perspiration poured like water-drops over his brow. She shrieked aloud for assistance; but recalled by her voice to a sense of what was passing around, he resumed the rein, and riding up to

her side, he kissed her cheek, and whispered consolation in her ear. But Alexandra was not easily satisfied. She had long perceived that some secret grief was preying upon the very vitals of her husband ; and anxious on his account, and curious on her own, she sat with her face buried in the folds of her veil, and even the playful caresses of her children failed to arouse her from the reverie that absorbed her during the rest of her journey.

CHAPTER IX.

She rose—she sprung—she clung to his embrace,
Till his heart heaved beneath her hidden face.

* * * * *

Scarce beat that bosom where his image dwelt;
So full, that feeling seemed almost unfelt.

* * * * *

Again—again—that form he madly pressed,
Which mutely clasped, imploringly caressed.

BYRON.

It was a dreadful moment; not the tears,
The lingering, lasting misery of years,
Could match that minute's anguish.

MOORE.

It is not our purpose to enter into a detailed account of the various public events that took place in Judea, during this very eventful period. Every one is or ought to be acquainted with the escape of Aristobulus and his son Antigonus from Rome, their unsuccessful revolt, and the recapture of the former, who was sent back in chains to the imperial city. The latter recovering his freedom on the intercession of his mother. We shall not dwell on the reorganization of the

government by Gabinius, who deprived Hyrcanus of the sovereignty, and left him a very inconsiderable share of power as High Priest, until Julius Cæsar reinstated him with the title of king. Neither shall we dwell on the new revolt of Alexander, his daring courage in again taking the field against the Romans, and his defeat and flight—for it would swell this tale beyond the bounds to which, we must own rather regretfully, we are obliged to limit it. Those who are not acquainted with this portion of Jewish history we would advise to read it as soon as may be. To those who are, the repetition would be needless. Amongst other interesting details we must pass over the poisoning of Aristobulus by the adherents of Pompey, and resume the thread of our narrative by requesting the reader to journey with us to Antioch. It is to a dungeon, gentle reader, we are about to introduce thee, and in requital for thy courtesy in attending us thither, we will inform thee, that the prisoner thou art about to visit is the prince Alexander. He is condemned to a public execution in the market-place of Antioch. This is the sentence of Scipio, the lieutenant of Pompey.

It was a low damp vault, several feet below the surface of the earth, and the river Orontes

rolled sullenly overhead. No glimpse of sunlight ever pierced the dungeon, which was dug several feet under the bed of the river, and the green damp of ages was gathered on the walls and roof. A single iron cresset, suspended from the roof by a rusty chain, lighted the miserable abode. The sole furniture was a rude stone bench fixed against the wall, which was seat, table, and bed, to the wretched occupant. There was not even a truss of straw to protect his limbs from the noisome damp; and the bench was so high, and ceiling so low, that he could not even sit erect.

In that cell, bowed in body, but unbent in spirit, was the noble prince, who, having sought to free his country from the sway of one whose cowardly vacillation was more fatal than the most arbitrary despotism, was condemned to an ignominious death. The axe and the block were to be his reward. How much desolation did the weakness of one man, the only dastard in a race of heroes whose name was still without a stain, occasion! He was unworthy of his noble heritage. How was the descendant of the glorious Maccabees fallen! The first, the last, the only blot on their proud escutcheon—that one man caused the destruction of his race, his own mu-

tilation and death by the hand of his pretended friend, and the final subjugation of his country, with the scattering of her children. Oh! Hyrcanus! Hyrcanus! accursed to Judea was the hour that gave thee to the light!

It was the evening before the execution, and Alexander sat in his cell, surrounded by his wife and children. They had met together for the last time. It would have been an interesting study for the philosopher, to mark how differently the passion of grief wrought upon the sufferers; and yet, for the honour of our species, we doubt if there is one who could have marked the powerful workings of human agony, with sufficient immovability to have calmly estimated the scene.

Ten years had wrought a change in every member of the little group; yet though the prince and princess were bowed down by sorrow and long suffering, youth had not quite departed. He was in the prime of manhood, and she was still very lovely. Alexander's features were calm; but the calmness was evidently produced by a strong effort. The princess was seated by his side, her dress disordered, her long hair dishevelled, her face working with the internal struggles, her dark orbs dim but tearless,

and her lips blanched and colourless. At their mother's knee stood Aristobulus and Mariamne.

They too were changed. They had passed through infancy, and the first, the brightest years of childhood ; but they had not yet passed through that happiest epoch of life, and they looked, as they stood there, like two beautiful cherubs, whose sphere is far away from this dark and troubled earth. Yet was there fear in each young face, as they glanced in terrified silence around that drear vault, the dismal abode of misery and death, whose very air was pollution, and carried the seeds of disease through the veins of those who inhaled the dank and poisonous vapour. "Why do we stay here, mother?" asked Aristobulus, breaking the fearful stillness for the first time, and speaking in a lisping and timid voice. "Because," replied Alexandra, in a tone of sepulchral hoarseness, "this is thy father's home—therefore came we hither." "And why is our father here? why does he not come to us? Does he not like our dwelling?" said Mariamne, inquisitively. "I am sure if he once saw it, he would rather, much rather, live in our beautiful home, than ever return to this terrible place again." Alexandra replied not; her heart was too full for speech; and again deep silence pervaded the

cell. "Heardst thou not the sound of coming feet?" said Alexander. "Surely my hour is come;" and his voice sounded awfully clear and distinct through the gloom. It was only the sullen roar of the river above; but Alexandra could no longer repress her emotions, and she flung herself on her husband's bosom, and wept convulsively. "Be comforted, dearest," said the prince, soothingly; "and promise me, when the executioner shall have done his work, and this headless trunk is laid in an unhonoured and nameless grave, far away from the sepulchre of my fathers, promise me—that—that—" The voice of the speaker became inaudible, and the conclusion of the sentence died away unheard. "Ask me not to survive thee, my own love; for this I cannot do, even at thy bidding. We have shared each other's joys and sorrows too long to be sundered now; and if we can no longer live, at least we can die together. Yes," she continued, clasping her hands with passionate energy, "the moment that deprives thee of life shall be the last of mine." "Not so, Alexandra; remember we have children, who will soon be fatherless; thou wouldst not make them doubly orphans." Then straining Mariamne to his bosom, he placed her in her mother's arms, and

caught Aristobulus in his own. "My boy, my boy," he exclaimed, with a powerful but vain effort at composure. The long suppressed tears burst forth, in spite of his endeavour to restrain them. "Why dost thou weep, dear father?" said the child, his own tears flowing from sympathy. "I thought tears were but for children, like me and Mariamne, and I knew not until now, that men ever wept." "Alas! alas! thou wilt soon be fatherless!" said the agonized parent, as he clasped the sobbing prince still closer to his heart. "Oh! do not die, and leave us unprotected and alone in this bleak world," shrieked the unhappy wife, wringing her hands and weeping bitterly.

"This is vain, Alexandra," exclaimed the prince, in a tone of blended tenderness and reproach, as he placed his son on the ground, and drew her closer to him. "Thou knowest that nought can save me. Am I not doomed by those who never relent, who never felt the gentle touch of mercy? No no, I cannot listen to such useless ravings: the sentence of my foes must be fulfilled—I must die."

"If I live to be a man, I will avenge thee, father!" cried Aristobulus, clenching his hands, and stamping his little feet on the floor, while

his beautiful eye flashed with the indignant pride of his race. The young breast heaved and swelled with an emotion too mighty for words, and the infantine form dilated with passion. "God in his mercy protect thee, my son; but I fear me thou wilt never live to manhood." The words of the prince were prophetic.

It is morning; but no daylight has gleamed into the dungeon, no stray sunbeam has smiled through the rayless gloom; but there is the sound of coming feet in the vaulted passage. The hour, nay, the very moment of parting is at hand. The key turns in the lock, and the heavy door swings back, grating on its rusty hinges, and the gaoler and his satellites enter. They came to convey the young, the noble, and brave, from the dungeon to the place of execution.

"Farewell, my beloved," he said, in a voice whose collected calmness belied the fierce struggle at his heart. "My wife, my children, farewell—farewell for ever!" "Oh! not yet, not yet!" she said, as she tore herself from the gaoler's hold, who, with more humanity than his rugged look bespoke him possessed of, quietly and respectfully strove to draw her away. But clinging to her husband's robe, with the strength which is only born of madness or woman's love,

she besought them not to tear them asunder. "Thou art unmanning me, dearest," said the prince, gently but firmly releasing himself. "The Asmonean blood in thy veins should have taught thee more fortitude." "Alexander," she replied, suddenly rising from her crouching posture, and standing before him in her proud beauty, with a firm rigidity of features, which a moment before she seemed incapable of, "Thou art right to remind me of my high birth, and the pure blood that flows in these veins. I will unman thee no more. Yet," and for a moment her voice trembled into tenderness, and then again resumed its measured and unfaltering tone, "it is not kind of thee, on the very threshold of the grave, to chide, and leave thy last remembrance clothed in the words of reproach. One thing more, Alexander—thou seest I am calm now—even my rebellious heart has ceased to throb with quicker pulsation than ordinary. Alexander, hadst thou died in thy bed, a death of lingering decay, whose eye would have watched thee?—whose ear would have strained and listened for thy very breathing, lest it should not catch the last? Mine! Whose hand would have smoothed thy pillow and performed the thousand nameless but dear offices of love?

Mine. Whose bosom would have pillowed thy dying head? Mine, mine. But since thou art not fated to die thus; since thou must go down to the grave with the poetry of youth yet unfaded, and all the energies and deep love of thy noble nature still fresh and warm at thy heart; since thou must leave me a widow, and our—oh! how beautiful, how dear seems that little word which yet connects us together—our children fatherless; since the sun that rises and sees thee yet in the flush and noon of manhood, strength, and beauty, the pride of thy lip unquelled, the light of thine eye unquenched, will set on thy bloody and headless corpse,—let me at least see thee die. The eyes of thousands will be upon thee; at least let there be *one* who will look on thee with the eye of love.” He shook his head mournfully. “For our children’s sakes, it may not be. We must part now, and on earth for ever.” “Be it so. Then now, farewell!” Once more he embraced her, once more he blessed his weeping children, and they turned to depart. “Farewell!” Alexander now turned to the gaoler, who, moved even to tears, stood sobbing apart, his rugged nature melted by that parting scene, while she, the desolate wife and mother, saw with unflinching calmness her fated hus-

band embracing his children for the last time. "Now, sir, lead on—we follow;" and with a steady step and unaltered mien, she passed forever from her husband's presence.

History has recorded hers and her children's fate.

CHAPTER X.

They never fail who die
In a great cause : the block may soak their gore ;
Their heads may sodden in the sun ; their limbs
Be strung to city gates and castle walls ;
But still their spirit walks abroad. Though years
E lapse, and others share as dark a doom,
They but augment the deep and sweeping thoughts
Which overpower all others, and conduct
The world at last to freedom.

BYRON.

With light heart stole he on his evil way,
And light of heart hath vengeance stole on after him.

THE PICCOLOMINI.

THE morning was yet young, but the market-place of Antioch was crowded to an excess that almost prevented respiration. In the centre of the square, the point on which all eyes were bent, stood a raised scaffolding, covered with black ; and on one side was a bier, hung with the same sombre drapery. The iron-clad soldiers of Rome, mute and immoveable as statues, were posted around the square to keep off the populace, who seemed meditating some hostile

design. There was tumult and clamour among the crowd, and the mingling of their voices sounded like the threatening mutterings of the coming storm. Suddenly the sound subsided into silence, and breathless stillness succeeded to the clang of voices. In the midst of the cleared space on the steps of the scaffold, stood the victim. His step was firm, his head erect, and the proud eye glanced with a look of fire on the assembled multitude. There was haughty defiance in the curl of the lip, as with a calm voice he addressed the people; and while he spoke, a change came over the expression of the countenance. Hearts of iron melted at his words, and eyes whose fountain of tears seemed long since dried, wept again.

But not long was he allowed the freedom of speech—for his judges had ordained it otherwise, fearful that his words might stir up sedition in the hearts of the fiery and excitable people. Alexander turned to look for his executioner. God of heaven! Do his eyes deceive him? No! it is reality! and he again beheld the humpbacked and dwarfish figure of the Gideonite. The axe gleamed in his hand, and a smile of devilish triumph still more frightfully distorted his horrible mouth. "We have met again, prince;" and his words thrilled

like liquid fire through the burning veins of the Asmoncan. "We have met again, and now, now, thy cup is filled even to overflowing. The eyes of gazing thousands are upon us, and the block and the axe are here. I told thee, Alexander, I was like the ape it pleased thee to liken me to in thy mirth; and lo! I have patiently worked out my revenge. But for me, thou hadst not been doomed to this. It was I who told Hyrcanus of thy gathering strength. It was I who bore his message to Gabinus, and urged the mercenary Roman with gold from mine own treasury to hasten on his march. He did. Thou wert defeated. It was I who fomented the discontent of the soldiers at Alexandrion, and obliged thee to make a disgraceful capitulation. It was I who hastened Gabinus back from Syria, and caused thine overthrow at mount Tabor. It was I who poisoned thy father; and it was I—dost thou hear me?" and he fixed his keen unearthly eyes on the pale but sternly calm countenance of the prince, who stood with a look of haughty indifference gazing into the countenance of the speaker, who, after surveying him for a moment in silence, resumed: "It was I who, as a reward for ridding the world of Aristobulus, procured

the condemnation of his son. I, I,"—and the words came hissing through his set teeth, "have been the black drop in thy cup, turning its honey into gall and wormwood. Even as I warned thee I would do, so have I done. And now we are here face to face again: Thou hast not perished in honourable warfare. Thou hast escaped the sword and the arrow, the javelin and the spear, to finish thy career on the block. Thou art here, as I foretold, and I am here to fulfill my threat. My hand will be bathed in thy vital stream; my hatred washed out in thy blood. What sayest thou now to Simeon, the Gideonite? Hadst thou not cause to beware his revenge?—What sayest thou now to the hump-backed dwarf?" "That I scorn and defy him, now as ever," replied the prince, and he spat in his face.

A glare of such ferocious malignity lighted up the eyes of the dwarf, that even the Roman soldiers shrank aghast as they came forward to bandage the eyes of the prince. "Stand back," said Alexander, in a tone of quiet dignity that ensured obedience. "I will not be pinioned and blindfolded like a common criminal. It shall never be said that Alexander feared to face death like a man." The gallant prince

glanced around him with a flashing eye. His noble form, rich in every manly beauty, and and his calm, noble features, full of the sweet dignity of thought, which not even the approach of death could banish from their expression, seemed yet more beautiful from their contrast to the terrible deformity of his executioner.

“Farewell!”—his voice swelled into a rich deep cadence, that thrilled in its sad solemnity to every heart, and filled every eye with tears. “Farewell, thou soft blue heaven, and thou glorious sun, with thy life-giving radiance. Farewell, thou bright and beautiful earth. Farewell, farewell, my countrymen. Farewell to thee, dear home of my childhood—I shall see thee no more. And thou, oh my lost, doomed country! for whom all my race have died—to whom I gave the energies of my youth, and the strength of my manhood, were it not for thine own sake, I could leave thee without regret—since the sole rewards thou hast for thy patriot sons are a traitor’s name and a traitor’s death. Lost! lost! but still adored land of my sires, farewell! farewell!”

Then dashing the rebel tear from his eyes, he laid his head upon the block. The axe swung heavily round, and a headless trunk rolled upon

the thirsty earth. Gallant, but ill-fated prince!
thou art avenged! A cry of mingled pity and
indignation rends the air. The dwarf is in the
hands of the infuriate multitude. Vain, vain,
are his threats and curses; vain his shrieks for
mercy. Piecemeal they tear him asunder, and
the ravenous wolf and carrion-crow feed on the
limbs of the Gideonite!!

HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

3728. A LONG period of rapine and oppression, under the Roman governors, ensued after the deposing of Archelaus. Agrippa, son of the unfortunate Aristobulus, and grandson of Mariamne, was kindly received at the court of Caligula, his intimate friend, who conferred on him the vacant tetrarchate of Philip-Iturea, with the title of king. Herod Antipas, at the instigation of his wife, took a journey to Rome, in order to obtain the title of king. Agrippa, aware of his designs, sent a messenger, who arrived before Herod, accusing him of laying up arms in case of a revolt. On this accusation, Herod was deprived of his dominions, which were added to those previously bestowed on Agrippa, and he was banished to Lyons in Gaul. In the same year a horrible massacre was perpetrated by the Greeks on the Jews of Alexandria.

3801. Agrippa hastened to Rome, in order to procure the repeal of an edict, ordering the statue of the emperor to be placed in the temple of Jerusalem, which he obtained in the following manner. He invited Caligula to a sumptuous entertainment. Exhilarated with wine, and pleased with the banquet, the emperor offered to grant any request he might make. Agrippa immediately sought and obtained the revocation of the fatal edict.

During the occurrence of these events, A.M. 3792, two or-

phans of Nearda, the chief city of the settlement of the Babylonian Jews, Anilai and Asinai, who had been brought up as weavers, on some ill-usage from their master, fled; and gathering together some discontented characters, built a strong fortress, secured by the marshes, and levied a kind of black mail upon the shepherds. The satrap of Babylon took advantage of the sabbath to endeavour to suppress them. Asinai, who was reposing among his followers, whose arms lay scattered around, suddenly exclaimed, "I hear the trampling of horses; it must be more than a troop of wild ones in their pastures, for I hear likewise the jingling of bridles." The whole band flew to arms, and attacking their assailants, defeated them with great slaughter. Asinai was afterwards appointed by the king of Parthia to the supreme command in Babylon. Anilai married a Parthian woman, who, still adhering to her own religion, caused a feeling of discontent in the Jewish people. Asinai remonstrated with his brother; but the Parthian, fearing some further exercise of his authority, poisoned him, and thus the supreme authority devolved on Anilai. His excesses now became so great, that the Babylonians, unable longer to endure his tyranny, sent to Nearda, to demand his surrender. The Jews in Nearda were unable to comply. At length the Babylonians surprised him in his camp, and slew him and his whole band.

3801. Agrippa, having, on the murder of Caligula, assisted to adjust the disputes between the army and senate of Rome, and place Claudius on the imperial throne, was rewarded with the whole of the dominions of the elder Herod.

3804. Agrippa died; and his son, who bore his name, being considered too young to be entrusted with regal power, Judea again became a Roman province.

Izates, king of Adiabene, and his mother Helena, became proselytes to the Jewish faith.

3808. Young Agrippa was appointed king of Chalcis, with the sovereignty of the temple.

3812. Jonathan, the high priest, was slain in the temple, by assassins, whom Felix, the Roman governor, had employed.

3813. A tumult broke out in Cæsarea, between the Greeks and Jews. The Roman soldiery taking part with the Greeks, they massacred and pillaged the Jews.

3826. An insurrection broke out in Jerusalem, in consequence of the cruelty of Florus, the Roman governor, and the insults of the Greeks. Agrippa and his sister Berenice, having vainly endeavoured to pacify the people, retired to his own dominions.

The war-party obtained possession of the fortress of Masada. Eleazar, the son of Ananias the high priest, persuaded the officiating priests to reject the imperial offerings to the temple, and to make a regulation that no foreigner should in future be allowed to sacrifice, by this measure renouncing all allegiance to Rome. The insurgents now besieged the towers which were in possession of the Roman garrison. They put Ananias, the high priest, to death. The garrison surrendered on a promise of free egress, but immediately on their laying down their arms, they were all massacred, except their commander. Scenes of rapine, murder, and pillage, enacted by the Romans and Greeks, which it is almost too painful to relate, followed this event. 50,000 Jews were slain in Alexandria alone. At length, on the 8th of November, Cestius Gallus, prefect of Syria, advanced to besiege the city and temple. He was completely routed: his battering train and military engines fell into the hands of the Jews, and the whole kingdom immediately prepared for war. Joseph Ben Matthias, better known as the celebrated Flavius Josephus, one of the priesthood, was invested with the government of Galilee, whither he immediately proceeded. He raised and

disciplined an army, and fortified all the cities in the province. In the meantime, Ananias, the high priest, took the lead in Jerusalem. The city was strengthened, and arms fabricated with the utmost expedition.

3827. Vespasian appeared at Antioch, with an immense army, and joining Agrippa, advanced to Ptolemais. Sepphoris, the capital of Galilee, immediately opened its gates to him. Josephus made one strong, but unavailing effort to recover it, and then retreated to Jotapata, a strong mountain fortress.* Vespasian marched through Gadara, and though the citizens opened their gates, and appeared unarmed, the soldiers received orders to put all to the sword, men, women, and children, and the city was given up to pillage. On the 15th of May, he commenced the attack on Jotapata, and succeeded in taking it, after a siege of forty-seven days, the garrison being betrayed by a deserter. The besieged made one of the finest defences recorded in ancient or modern history. Josephus was taken prisoner. Japha, a neighbouring city, was taken by Trajan and Titus; and the Samaritans were almost exterminated during the siege of Jotapata. Jappa, Tiberias, and Tarachea, soon followed. Gamala, Itabyrium, and Gischala, fell, after an obstinate resistance, and the Romans became masters of all Galilee.

* Placidus endeavoured to surprise it; but was repulsed.

THE SIEGE OF JOTAPATA.

CHAPTER I.

But, look! the morn, in russet mantle clad,
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastern hill.

HAMLET.

The flowers with the dew of the morning are laden,
There is not a cloud in the blue sky above;
And there, on the mountains, a youth and a maiden
Stood drinking deep draughts from the fountain of love.

UNPUBLISHED POEM.

It was yet early spring, and all nature was clothed in the rich and varied garb of that verdant season, when the earth puts on a smile of gladness, and the streams rejoice in their recovered freedom. The sun was just rising, and dispelling with its radiant beams the mist, which hung like a thin grey veil over the lofty and thickly wooded mountains, on which stood the

strongly fortified, but beautiful city of Jotapata. While the huge mountains were tinged with the gorgeous beams of the glorious luminary, the city still lay wrapt in clouds and silence. How balmy is the cool breeze of morning! how fresh is the breath of the flowers! and how sweet is the busy hum of nature! The voice of God seems speaking to the heart, in the light carol of the birds, who wing their joyous flight as if they would hail the first beams of the sun, and bear the glad tidings of day on their unfettered pinions back to the rejoicing earth. "Beautiful, indeed, are the tents of Jacob; and the dwelling places of Israel, are they not beautiful, my Zarina? Are they not glorious types of the infinite benignity of that Divine Being, who gave us this lovely and fruitful land as an heritage? How could our fathers ever turn aside from the pure worship of their own God, to bow down at the shrine of an idol their own hands had created? And yet such things have been done! They have bowed down and worshipped images. Even the wise Solomon, in his old age, was led away by the counsels of his heathen wives!" "Lovely, indeed," replied Zarina, "are the works of the Creator; until the wild passions of man distort

the fair features of nature, turning that which was given him in trust for the benefit of himself and his race to evil, and rendering it subservient to his own base purposes; perverting all that is loveliest and best, to the worst and vilest uses, making a curse of that which was intended for a blessing. But we will not now speak of these things. Come, Elcazar, let us hasten our return; for I would not that my mother should again find me absent. She has chidden me once, and I would not again incur her anger. Yet I would fain tarry a little longer; for we may never stand upon these hills again. War has raised her banner on high; and who shall say when it shall be furled? Ere to-morrow's sunrise, the scene which is now so calm and still may resound with the trampling of armed men, and those green valleys be dyed crimson by the best blood of her children. Let us then gaze, while we yet may, on the exquisite loveliness of this all glorious scene."

The landscape on which the youth and maiden gazed was one of those grand and gorgeous works of nature, which seem more like the dazzling creation of imaginative fancy, than aught on which reality has set its seal; and which leaves an ineffaceable impression on the

mind of the beholder. Nor did that youth and maiden form the least remarkable features of the landscape.

The young man seemed scarcely yet to have attained the ripened age of twenty years. His features wore that expression of mingled gentleness and dignity, which in all ages, and in all countries, denote the highborn and noble. He was attired in the light picturesque dress of the country. His under garment was of the finest linen, with an embroidered tunic of Tyrian dye; a light mantle of the richest material was thrown carelessly over his shoulders. His feet were sandalled, and the waving ringlets of his glossy black hair were surmounted by a turban—that graceful head-dress of the East. His figure was tall and slight; and his gracefully symmetrical limbs possessed all the lightness and agility of youth, combined with the muscular strength of more mature manhood. His chest was broad and expanded, while his sun-browned countenance was strongly marked with high and chivalrous feeling; and with the curved lips, curling black beard, and dark expressive eyes full of latent fire, overarched by the beautiful brow and the white polished forehead, on which appeared the lines of premature thought, formed

a model of masculine beauty, which contrasted with the fair and delicate girl who leaned on his arm for support, like the lily of the valley sheltering itself under the overhanging branches of the lofty pine; and there, as they stood on those huge rocks that raised their mighty forms until their pinnacles seemed lost in the clouds, that hung darkling o'er them, the freshness and warmth of spring were around them. Night no longer seemed struggling with day for empire over the world, which lay glowing in the ruddy light of the already powerful beams. The city of Jotapata was situated in the wildest and most picturesque part of Galilee. The mountain, at the base of which it was built, rose nearly perpendicularly from deep and almost impassable ravines, with which it was surrounded. Looking down from the walls of the city, the eye could not fathom the depths of those dark and frightful chasms. Like a race of hardy giants, placed there by the protecting arm of Providence, rose a natural rampart of stupendous mountains, clothed with wild forest trees, totally concealing the city from view until the observer arrived close under the walls, and rendering it inaccessible on every side, except the north. The end of the ridge sloped

gradually down to the declivity on which the city stood. Thus strongly fortified by nature and art, and surrounded by the wildest and most rugged scenery, what wonder if the inhabitants, in the pride of their hearts, deemed it impregnable to all assaults from without? Who that gazed upon that fair scene of wood and glade, mountain and valley, and that densely populated city, which was now pouring forth its crowded inhabitants, like a swarm of bees from the hive, to the cares and troubles, toils and pleasures of the day, would deem that the hand of man, guided by the fierce and ungovernable passions of his heart, and by his lust of power, would destroy and lay them waste; and the seemingly impregnable fortress would ere long lie desolate, or only remain as a ruin—a thing of the past, a monument at once of the pride and littleness of man?

While the youth and maiden were yet lingering on the hills, her face flushed with the radiant blood called up by exercise. No; it was the blush of maidenly pride and modesty; and there were tears, too—large, bright drops—glistening upon her long lashes, and dewing her beautiful cheeks, like rain-drops sparkling on a rose. The youth was agitated, too; but

there was joy in every feature. He had told a tale of love—deep, passionate, devoted love—such as warms human heart but once: and though he had received no word in reply to his ardent vows, he knew, by the look of confiding affection, that his words fell on no unwilling ear. When he took her hand in his own, she had not withdrawn it; there was an eloquence in her silence, more expressive than words. The face has a language which cannot be mistaken. Words, words, what are they compared to that silent glance of affection, whose language, though silent and mute, is the language of the soul? Oh! how sweet is that interchange of affection when the feelings are fresh and warm, and the heart is like a pure, unstained stream. Still they lingered. Life has but few such moments of unalloyed happiness. Both seemed unwilling to destroy the spell that hung over them. While they were yet engaged in those all-engrossing thoughts, a scene of stirring import was passing within the walls. But in order to elucidate the scene which was now calling forth the inhabitants of Jotapata, and filling its streets and squares with thronging crowds of men, women, and children, we must enter a little into the history of Judea, at the time of which we are writing.

After the death of Herod, falsely styled the Great, the kingdom became a Roman province, and the inhabitants were compelled to allow the Emperor of Rome to nominate their kings, or governors, as it suited the imperial whim or policy ; Tetrachs, and Ethnarchs, that is, rulers of the provinces, high priests, and judges ; and in short, all officers of the state, whether civil or religious. Sometimes these rulers of the people were just and humane ; but at other times, they ground them with burdensome taxes ; insulted them for their steady adherence to the religion of their forefathers, to which they clung with the tenacity of conviction. Proud and wayward as they were, the Jews always loved their religion better in their adversity than when in the pride of prosperity ; and they resisted all innovations on their pure worship, as an insult to the majesty of their God. Heaping upon them every kind of indignity, the Romans were garnering up fuel, that in the end, kindled a fire which could only be quenched in streams of blood. Amongst other grievances, and in the eyes of the persecuted Jews the most terrible of all, was that fearful massacre of the Jews of Alexandria, on account of their refusing to worship the Emperor Caligula as a God. This determination on the

part of the miserable people, who though trampled on and oppressed, still retained the unbending spirit of their nation, afforded a fresh pretext for those who already possessed too many, for crushing them. It was represented at Rome as a most flagrant act of rebellion against their rulers, and a sign of their unquenchable pride, and the spirit of obstinacy with which they repelled the advances of other nations; they were painted in the blackest colouring, by those who were interested in their ruin, as evil disposed, rebellious and ungovernable. Stimulated by bad reports from abroad; and evil counsellors at home, the weak and wicked Caligula issued a mandate, for a gilded and colossal statue of himself to be placed within the Holy of Holies!—and the temple sacred to the Creator of the universe, the just and terrible One, who had said, “Thou shalt have none other Gods but me,” was to be dedicated to an arrogant mortal, who had been flattered by men even more depraved and wicked than himself into a real or pretended belief of his own divinity. The temple was to be desecrated by a graven image—the image of a tyrant, who was deified under the name of Jupiter the younger; and this dreadful national calamity was only averted by the humanity of P. Petronius, who

was appointed to superintend the casting of the statue, and at the same time to succeed Vitellias as prefect of Syria, and by the kind interference of king Agrippa, the emperor's personal friend.

From this time forward the discontents of the Israelites, and their hatred towards their Roman tyrants, daily increased. The fire kindled with more intensity from its burning inwardly. The death of Caligula deferred the bursting of the gathering storm, and left Judea for a time in comparative tranquillity.

Agrippa was in Rome at the time of the emperor's murder, and succeeded in establishing peace between the army and the senate; which good office secured to him the goodwill and gratitude of the emperor Claudius, who requited his services by investing him with the title of king over Judea and Samaria, which were reunited, with Galilee, Perca, and the provinces beyond the Jordan, into one kingdom.

Not to be diffuse on a subject which may be found in history, after the death of Agrippa, his son, young Herod Agrippa, being only seventeen, was considered too young for the regal dignity, and the kingdom once more became a Roman province. Roman governors were again appointed. The storm which was to crush the

city of David and Solomon gathered in strength and energy during the governments of Cuspius Fadus, Tiberias, Alexander, Ventidius Cumanus, Claudius Felix; and though the rigid but upright government of Porcius Festus caused a short interval of peace, the appointment of Albinus as his successor renewed the bitter feeling of animosity; and it only needed such a man as Gessius Florus, in order to kindle the long smouldering heat into flame. Exactions of every kind were practised, but the first outbreak was caused by the following circumstance. The magistracy of Cæsarea were Greeks by the decree of Nero; it happened that the Jews had a synagogue there, the ground around which belonged to a Greek, who not only refused to sell it, but performed offensive and indecent rites whenever the people were going or coming from prayers; and at last blocked it up with buildings, so as to narrow the paths to the smallest possible limits. Some of the hotheaded youths fell upon the labourers, and dispersing them, destroyed the works. The men of greater wealth, and among the rest, John, a publican, fearful of the consequences of this rash act, collected the sum of eight talents,* and sent to Florus, as a bribe, to stop the buildings. He accepted the bribe, and

* A talent of gold was £5475, English money.

hastened from Cæsarea to Sebaste, in order to give full scope to the riot, as it was his interest to promote the tumult as much as possible in order to conceal his own peculations. An affray took place between the Jews and the Greeks; the Jews were worsted. Taking up the books of their law, they went to Marbata, whence a deputation hastened to Florus, to seek for redress; when modestly referring to the eight talents they had given him, they were thrown by him into prison. The news spread to Jerusalem—the people rose as one man, and the whole city was in a state of tumult, loudly execrating the tyrant's name; and though it was partially quieted by the entreaties of the priests and elders, the truce was hollow and could not last. It was with dogged sullenness that they went forth to meet Florus on his entrance into Jerusalem; but in vain they humiliated themselves; he remembered nothing but the insults offered to his name, and sent a message to order them to disperse. The next morning he sent for the priest and Sanhedrim, and insisted on their giving up those who had dared to insult his name. On their alleging that it was only a few idle youths whom it would be impossible to discover among the population of a large city,

he gave licence to his soldiery. The market-place was pillaged, houses broken open and stripped. The narrow streets were crowded with fugitives, and many who escaped the sword were trampled to death. Bitter were the feelings of revenge excited in the bosoms of the unhappy people, and it was with the greatest difficulty they were pacified by the united entreaties of the priests, king Agrippa, and his sister Berenice.

The insurrection soon broke out afresh. They refused the imperial offering to the temple; they refused to pay the taxes. The revolt under Manahem, his death, the revolt of Eleazar, the advance of Cestius Gallus, his defeat and retreat, followed each other in quick succession; and the province of Judea was in open rebellion against Rome.

The Jews now began to organize their plans, by raising troops, appointing generals and governors of their own. Since the struggle was no longer the war of words, it was sword to sword, the oppressed against the oppressor; a wronged and insulted people endeavouring to throw off the yoke of a foreign power; a small province measuring its strength against the united power of the whole civilized world—

Judea against Rome, it was like matching the strength of a child against the united power of a dozen strong men. The concussion of two such powers was tremendous. Never before nor since, excepting in the time of the Maccabees, had the world witnessed such a desperate struggle for independence.

Among the other officers appointed, Joseph, the son of Matthias, (now more commonly known by the name of Josephus the historian,) was made governor of Galilee. Deep, calculating, subtle, and designing, Josephus possessed more military skill and knowledge than any other of the Jewish leaders of the day. Possessed of a pleasing exterior, and a flow of eloquence, combined with considerable ability and learning, deeply versed in the laws of his country, he gained the esteem and love of an ardent and enthusiastic people. He organized an army in his province, which for regularity and discipline vied with the Romans themselves. But he had other difficulties to contend with; independent of the common foe, he had many private enemies. He, however, overcame them all; but just as he fancied himself secured from all farther dissensions, Sepphoris, the capital of

Galilee, made overtures to the Roman general, Vespasian, who received the deputies with courtesy, and sent them back with a body of 1000 horse, and 6000 foot, to defend them from the attacks of the Jews. This powerful force was placed under the command of Placidus. Josephus made one strong effort to regain the capital, but it proved abortive. The campaign was now fairly begun. The Roman troops overspread the whole country. But the war was yet only a name in Jotapata, one of the strongest fortresses in Galilee; and, with the exception a few fugitives who had taken refuge within the walls, they had seen nothing of its terrors. The whole population of the province (with the exception of a few unwarlike persons, who were destroyed by the Roman troops) fled from the open country to the protection of the cities and walled towns. Josephus, avoiding all contact in the open country with the well-disciplined forces of the enemy, threw himself into the garrison of Jotapata; and it was the arrival of this general, who was much beloved by the Galileans, that drew forth the inhabitants of the city, who welcomed his coming with acclamations, waving of banners, and strains of martial music. It was a lovely sight, that proud and beautiful

city, with its stately marble palaces, its colonnades, and public baths; the mingled looks of fear and pleasure, exhibited in the ancient faces of the thronging citizens; the gleaming of the sunshine on the polished armour of the soldiers of the garrison, who came forward to meet the army, formed a picture of surpassing beauty. That scene, and all its actors, are passed away. The vulture sits brooding in the palaces of princes; the grass is growing up in its proud halls; the invader and the invaded have alike been swept down the stream of time; but their names will never be blotted out from the pages of history. Judea is a land of ruins; and Rome—what now is Rome—the mightiest among the mighty, the mistress, the conqueror, the queen of the world—the seven-hilled city of the Cæsars? It is a bye-word among the nations, a scoff, a jest—lower, more degraded than the meanest of the so-called barbarian nations that she trampled on in her hour of pride.

CHAPTER II.

She gazed on high, as if to gain
Fresh courage from above ;
She knew not how to choose between
Her duty and her love.

UNPUBLISHED POEM.

“ THOU mayest go, Terah ; we would be alone. See that none intrude on our presence,” said the lady Sarah to a young Arab slave, who had been amusing her by accompanying herself on a small silver lute, which she now laid aside, and obedient to her mistress’s command, glided noiselessly from the room. The last rays of the setting sun were shining brightly through the half opened casement of the apartment, throwing one part into shade, while the other was illuminated by the golden beams that danced over the marble floor, and gave a bright tinge to the jewelled tresses of Sarah, who, reclining on a crimson velvet couch, seemed lost in that delicious state of dreamy reverie which only the inhabitants of an eastern climate can appre-

ciate. Her features had been very beautiful, and even now were strikingly expressive. They might have been considered handsome, but for the stern determination that characterised the mouth. Her once clear olive complexion had become sallow with long sickness ; but her large black eyes, though their fire was somewhat subdued by years of suffering, were still full of light.

On a pile of cushions at her feet, sat a fair young girl, apparently engaged in perusing a volume that lay open on her knee, but in reality lost in busy and absorbing thoughts. One who had watched closely those expressive features, would have perceived, by the rapid changes that passed over them, that those thoughts were not entirely of a pleasant nature ; though it seemed scarcely possible that one so young and lovely could know aught of sorrow : nor was it such feelings that agitated her. She was dreaming of love, and all the chances that might prevent an union with the object of her affections. Love is a strange compound of human feelings, hopes and fears, joys and sorrows ; yet it is the sweetest portion of existence, when the young heart first becomes susceptible to the tender emotion ; when the tell-

tale blood mantles to the cheek at the mention of one name, and the eyes sparkle and the heart beats with unspeakable pleasure when that one is present. There is something so pure, holy, and unselfish, in the love of youth, that tinges all things with its own beautiful colouring, and invests every object with its own fanciful imaginings.

“Zarina,” said the lady Sarah, at length, arousing herself from her reverie; “Zarina,” and the young girl raised a face of such exquisite sweetness and beauty, that it seemed more like a seraphic than a human countenance. The contour was decidedly Jewish; but the complexion was much fairer than the generality of her countrywomen, and her eyes, instead of being black, like her mother’s—for such was the relationship in which the lady Sarah stood toward her—were of the deepest tinge of blue; but so liquid were they, so varying in their expression, that one might have gazed for years without knowing their real colour. “Zarina, thou didst tarry long this morning upon the hill tops. I waited for thee, and thou camest not. This is not well, sweetest; nor is it seemly that thy father’s daughter—a daughter of the princely house of the Asmoneans, should wan-

der forth at the dawn, ere the sun has kissed the dew from the mountain's brow, or the slaves are astir in thy mother's dwelling, with a youth like Eleazar, even were he thrice thy kinsman. Thy mother is a widow, fairest, and has suffered much and long ; and it were not well that the fair fame of her first-born and best, her choicest earthly treasure, should be sullied by the foul calumnies of slanderous and evil tongues. Thy sire sleeps in the tomb of his fathers, and I feel I am hastening to join him. Fain would I see thee and thy young sister well cared for, ere I pass through the shadowy valley of death. Hitherto, Zarina, thou hast been wild as the untamed gazelle on its native hills, and thy sports have been the wild sports of girlhood. I have suffered thee to give free vent to thy playful spirits, and thy intercourse with Eleazar (Zarina's breath came thicker, and the eloquent blood mounted to her face) has been unrestrained ; but now it must be so no longer. Thou hast higher and sterner duties to perform. Dost thou attend to me, my child ? But I see thou dost, and I thank thee ;" and as she spoke she put back the shining curls of her hair, and printed a long fervent kiss on the burning forehead of her fair child. "Art thou prepared,

gentle one, to forego all former thoughts, feelings, and pastimes?—to leave the young maidens thy companions; to enter at once into the solemn and holy state of wedlock, and take upon thee the dignity and sacred duties of a Jewish matron?” Zarina’s colour went and came rapidly, while her mother was speaking. She had entered her presence with the intention of confiding to her ear the tale of love, which on that morning had been first breathed into her own; but when she comprehended the tendency of her mother’s discourse, she waited in breathless silence for the conclusion, which she doubted not would change hope into delightful certainty. She therefore remained silent, while her mother continued: “It is for this I have spoken to thee,—for I have promised thy hand to Samaes, the Saabite; and though thy beauty is great among the maidens of Galilee, and rich will be thy dower, yet mayest thou consider thyself as peculiarly blest in possessing the love of Samaes. He is wealthy, nobly born, young, and generous, and withal has a presence and bearing that will render him pleasant in thine eyes; and, more than this, he will be a father to thy young sister Ruth, and thou wilt be a mother to her. Wilt thou not? It

will soothe my dying pillow, and rob death of half its bitterness, to know thou hast a protector, who does and will love thee for thine own sake only. Speak. Art thou satisfied with thy mother's provision?" Zarina was incapable of answering. The words of her mother had dispelled at once the bright vision of future happiness that hope had created. The very blood seemed frozen in her veins, and lay like an ice-bolt at her heart. Her brain became dizzy, and a thick film obscured her sight. The blank waste of despair had succeeded to the sunny prospect of hope; and the crushed feelings could find no vent in words. The lady Sarah saw her inability to reply; and satisfied that her hitherto obedient child could not oppose aught so conducive to her own happiness, she waved her hand, and said, "Thou mayest retire to thine own apartments. Compose thyself; and I will receive thine answer to-morrow. It is but natural thou shouldst be too agitated for reply. Go, my beloved child; may peace hover around thy pillow, and the guardian angel of innocence watch over thy repose." Zarina waited no second bidding. While the invalid, exhausted with the unusual effort, sank back upon her couch, once more lost in thought, the maiden

proceeded with a quick and hurried step along the corridors of the palace, till she reached her own chamber. She closed the door, drew the bolt across, and throwing herself on the bed, removed the bodkins that fastened her hair, and releasing it from its confinement, she suffered it to stray over her neck—for even its light weight seemed too much for her burning brow.

It is at all times sad to see the blight of disappointment destroy the cherished but delusive dreams that the heart delights in: but when it falls upon youth and beauty, ere the feelings have been blunted by long contact with the world, it is doubly painful—for the heart is then unschooled to bear the stern decrees of adverse fortune. It grieves us not to see the dry branch, from which winter has robbed both life and beauty, trodden under foot; but when the rose-tree, covered with blossoms and flowers, is destroyed by a storm, we weep to see the leaves so lately expanded become the sport of every idle wind. The maiden closed her eyes, and clasped her hands upon her brow, as if she would shut out thought by the violence of the pressure. But thought is of too subtle a nature to be restrained by mere animal strength; and, despite of her efforts at composure, the tears forced

themselves through the closed lids, and coursed heavily down her white marbly cheeks ; and the sobs she had struggled to repress, now burst forth audibly. How bitter were those tears—how heart-searing were those sobs ! They served but to exhaust, without refreshing, resembling more the violence of a wintry storm than the genial shower of spring ; and hiding her head in the coverlid, she gave free vent to her sorrow.

Zarina loved her mother with even more than the usual devoted affection, which ever has been and still is a distinguished characteristic of our people ; and it was only after hours of painful emotion that the conviction—to her the harrowing conviction—that she loved another better than her beloved mother, forced itself upon her. That one was her cousin, who, if she acceded to her mother's wishes, could never claim a greater portion of her thoughts than might be properly bestowed on any other man. What would be his thoughts, his feelings, should she yield to her mother, and become the wife of Samaes, she dared not trust herself to think. At length she raised her hot and aching head from the couch, and pressing her hands convulsively on her throbbing heart, she strove to stifle the feelings of agony that oppressed her.

The air seemed excessively hot. Advancing to the casement, she threw it open, and admitted a stream of yellow moonlight into the apartment. It was a clear, lovely night, in Eyor, (April.) A delicious silence pervaded the air, only broken by the night-bird's song, and the murmur of the fountains; while the fresh breeze, laden with perfume, cooled the fever that burned in her heated veins. The bright stars—not the frosty planets of our northern hemisphere—but the brilliant orbs that only shine out in that eastern clime, were glittering in their vaulted home, and reflected back in the placid waves of the blue Galilean sea. There is something exceedingly soothing in the feeling with which we look out into the moonlight, when the silence of night hangs over a city—when the hopes, fears, ambition, love, hate, and every other passion that agitated their possessor during the day, is stilled, under the balmy influence of sleep, to know that we are surrounded by human beings, and yet feel as if we were alone in the vast world around us. It was such feelings as these that made her continue at the casement. It soothed her ruffled feelings, and brought higher and holier ones in their stead—for who can look upon the

universal stillness of nature, and not become elevated beyond the common feelings of every day life?—who can turn from the contemplation of all that is bright and beautiful, and not feel wiser and better? As time rolled on, and every moment brought her nearer to that dreaded morrow, she felt that she had a painful task to perform. For the first time in her life, she was going voluntarily to inflict pain upon that loved parent, who was dearer to her than her own life, or, what was more precious still—her love. She would willingly have sacrificed both, to spare her one unnecessary pang; but it was not only her own happiness that was to be compromised—no, that of her cousin, her lover—of him who had taught her awakened heart to confess the power of love. What right had she to trifle with his happiness? What right had she to play with a heart so devoted? If she had not confessed her love, then indeed the case would have been different, and filial affection might have triumphed over it. But it had been confessed. Why did the blood diffuse so deep a crimson over her face? There were no witnesses of that severe mental struggle. She knew not herself, nor did she stay to ask her heart. Yes, she had owned her love to the

object that had excited it; and why should it grieve her mother to know that the heart of her child was bestowed on her kinsman? Was he not worthy of it? Would not Eleazar be as tender a protector to herself, as kind and trusty a guardian to her sister, as this Saabite? Surely he, who had been the playmate of her childhood, the companion of her youth, would be the fittest protector of her maturer years. Thus reasoning herself into tranquillity, and consoling herself with the sweet conviction that her mother could not—nay, as her happiness was that dear mother's only care, would not—refuse to sanction her love, and bless her union with the being with whom that happiness was inseparably connected. As she concluded this silent colloquy with herself, she felt a drowsiness stealing over her senses. Closing the casement, she again sought her couch, and was soon sleeping that tranquil slumber which none but the innocent can enjoy.

CHAPTER III.

Sure 'tis the friendly yawn of death for me.

* * * * *

My father, then, will cease his tyranny.

CONGREVE.

AT length the morrow came, in brightness and beauty. The sky was brilliantly blue, and the air balmy with the breath of flowers. Zarina arose calm and refreshed from her long and sweet repose. While her attendant bound up the luxuriant tresses of her raven hair, and arranged it in many a shining braid, her thoughts reverted to the past night : but those thoughts were no longer tinged with bitterness ; and when the handmaid retired, she seated herself by the casement, and drawing her white drapery in graceful folds around her, she patiently awaited the summons to attend her mother.

She was admiring the stillness of the morning, when suddenly the quiet was broken by the sound of the trumpets braying the alarm, and the quick tread of hurrying feet in the

square below. She looked forth, and as far as her eye could reach, she saw naught but one continuous stream of people pouring from every part of the city toward the quarter in which the governor resided. Onward swept the multitude, like a vast avalanche, seeming to gather strength and numbers in its course. But soon the last form disappeared—the last sound of steps died away in the distance, leaving the before silent square more silent and deserted than ever.

Leaving Zarina for awhile, we will follow, or rather precede the crowd, to the dwelling of the governor of Galilee. It was midnight, and the lamps were burning in the palace. In a large apartment which ran through the whole building, the furniture of which consisted of a long low table, surrounded by couches, and piles of cushions, there sat Josephus and his councilors. All looked flushed and agitated; but there was an expression of stern resolve on every brow, as their quick dark eyes glanced alternately from the countenance of the governor to that of a tall swarthy-looking youth, at the foot of the table. He stood with a calm, fixed look, his arms folded across his broad

chest, one foot slightly advanced, his curving lip curled with a look of scorn and defiance.

“ There breathed but few on earth, who might defy
The full encounter of that searching eye.”

“ And thou sayest that Placidus intends to surprise and destroy us in our fancied security?” said the governor, evidently continuing, and not commencing an examination of the youth. “ Even so, my lord,” was the brief reply. “ And the army is guided by a deserter from our own ranks?” resumed his interrogator. “ Such was my intelligence; and that, too, from an unquestionable source,” replied the youth. “ You hear, my brave friends, and brothers in arms, all of ye. Had I none but myself to consult, I would sally from the walls; and, desperate as the chance may appear, the enemy may be repelled by the suddenness of the attack, when all other means would fail. We might at least gain time to strengthen our defences. But I had forgotten ye were summoned here to give, not to receive counsel from me.” He paused and glanced around him, with the keen look of one who is accustomed to read men’s thoughts in their countenances, and to form his judgment

with precision and truth. Josephus had not deceived himself in the idea that none would reject the course he had proposed. "Ye have said wisely, my lord," was the reply of all; "and now it were well that the citizens were made acquainted with their danger." "Nay, that were unwise, indeed; for secrecy in counsel, promptitude in decision, a clear head to plan, and a bold arm to strike, must ever be the soul of such an expedition. The trumpet that plays before us on our march, must give them the first warning. It were folly to waste their strength and nerve with needless alarm. Let them rest while they may; for even if we are now successful, I fear it will not be long ere all their energies and powers of endurance will be put to a terrible test; and it were useless profusion to waste them on trifles, ere that time arrives. Now to our rest. To rest all of ye; and thou, too, brave youth, I doubt not art in need of refreshment and repose." He rose from his seat as he spoke; and beckoning the youth to follow him, he gracefully inclined his head to the rest, and left the apartment.

The council was over. The members retired to their own quarters, not to spend the remnant of the night in slumber, but to pass it in prayer

and preparation for the morrow, the all-important morrow. It was the sound, in the morning, of trumpets and kettledrums animating the soldiers, that led the affrighted citizens to the dwelling of their governor, where they loudly demanded admittance; but they demanded in vain. Already a body of armed men, headed by Joseph in person, were moving toward the northern gate of the town, where it was anticipated the attack would commence, that being the least defensible portion of the walls, and consequently more open to assault.

The sortie was made. The brave Israelites defeated the forces of Placidus; and were greeted, on their return within the walls, by enthusiastic shouts of applause from the grateful and excited populace, who, with the enthusiasm of the times, looked on this temporary success as an omen of the victorious result of their glorious struggle for liberty. Little time, however, was left for preparation or rejoicing. Stung to the quick by the defeat of Placidus by a body of ill-armed soldiers, Vespasian resumed his march; and by the following morning, the Roman army had pitched their camp on a hill directly facing the north front of the city. It was on the 28th day of Eyor, (about the 15th of May,) in the year

of the world 3827, that the army of Vespasian encamped opposite Jotapata; and this may properly be called the opening of the campaign which was to end in the overthrow of the Jewish state. The taking of Gadara could not be so termed, for the citizens had not even closed their gates. In that case, the soldiers had received orders to put all to the sword; and fatally were those inhuman commands obeyed—men, women, and children, were mercilessly slain; the houses were given up to pillage; and the unresisting city was left as a monument of the stern Roman commander's unsparing vengeance. In their blood had he washed out the stain the eagle of Rome had received in the fate of Cestius Gallus. Little mercy, therefore, could be expected from the imperial army towards those who ventured to oppose them in their triumphant march through the rebellious country. It was a new thing for them to experience defeat; and they had fancied the revolted province would return to its allegiance immediately on the sight of that banner which waved triumphantly over the fairest countries of the then known world, from the proudest city in sunny Greece, the mother of liberty, to the humblest village in the wilds of Germany, or among the still almost

unknown forest-lands of Britain, which was deemed the extremity of the world.

The inhabitants of Jotapata had little to expect, except from their own resources; and even the most peaceably inclined of the inhabitants,—and there were some of them who even then would have made concessions, and purchased peace on the most abject terms,—were obliged to arm themselves in their own defence, and that of their wives, their children, their homes, their country, and their God. They had relied, or at least partially so, on the strength of the mighty mountains, and the black, impenetrable forest, with which their city was girded round, for security; but they saw those forests fall beneath the unsparing axes of the Roman pioneers, and those mighty mountains, that for ages had towered to the sky with their lofty heads, bowed down, and laid low in the dust,—low as their own proud nation were doomed soon to lie. Alas! the desolation of these their natural guardians was but typical of their own utter prostration. The scattering of those giant trees was emblematical of their own dispersion. But surely the hand that cast down can raise up; he who scattered can gather together again. He can, he can; and who shall dare to doubt,

that he, the most High, will redeem his promise, by delivering from their present bondage his own peculiar and chosen people—those on whom he has put a mark and a sign,—the nation whom he has set apart from all others,—and gather them again together in their own land. But to my tale.

In the space of five days, the fair city lay open to the invaders. The hill on which they encamped was about a mile from the city.

Although the soldiers were too weary with their long march, to be capable of battle on the day of their arrival, Vespasian allowed no time for idleness, but set the workmen about erecting a triple wall of circumvallation, for which the woods they had levelled afforded sufficient materials.

We left Zarina seated at the open casement. We must now return to her. We left her indulging in hope—hope, the brightest, the most beautiful; alas, that we must add, and the most delusive of human feelings—we had well nigh said weaknesses; but why should we call it so, for is not hope to the heart what sunshine is to the flowers? Without its influence, existence would be a blank, with half its loveliest sentiments unawakened; and the bud would never reach to maturity, would never expand into the

glorious and many-tinted flower. She indulged in the fond hope that her mother would yield to her entreaties, and sanction her union with her young and noble kinsman, Eleazar. Dream on, dream on, whilst thou mayest, young visionary! for when the spell is once broken for thee, it will be broken for ever. How shall the tree survive the withering of the root?—how shall the fountain continue its course, when its source is dry?

We must here pause, in order to give some slight history of the principal actors in our drama. The lady Sarah traced her ancestry, on her mother's side, in a direct line from the Asmonean family; and on her father's from Saul, the first king of Israel. She had wedded, at the age of fourteen, into one of the noblest families in Galilee. Naturally of a proud and active disposition, her pride had been fostered into hauteur and wilfulness by overindulgence; for her father had not married in his youth, and when in his age he wedded the young and beautiful daughter of an early friend, he had devoted himself entirely to her happiness, and that of her two daughters, the only offspring of their union. He had succeeded in partially spoiling the dispositions of both; but when Sarah wed-

ded, the activity of her temperament would not permit her to vegetate in calm domestic life. She entreated her husband to spend a few years at the court of Rome. Malthusar could refuse nothing to his young fair wife. He acceded to her request, and they passed many years in the imperial city, where her youngest child, Ruth, and indeed many other children, were born, but all save her had died in their infancy. It was only the mortal illness of her noble husband that had induced her to return to her own land with her two children. Malthusar only went back to the fair province of Galilee in time to be laid in the sepulchre of his fathers, leaving his young wife a widow, with two children, the eldest only seven years old, and the other still a babe in its nurse's arms. The first year, she had strictly confined herself to her own dwelling, and gave herself up to uncontrollable sorrow; but at the expiration of that time, her naturally energetic soul threw off the depression that had enervated her spirit, and destroyed her health; and though her constitution was shattered and broken beyond recovery, the thought of her children roused her from the sinful indulgence of her lethargic grief and in-

activity, and she determined to devote the remnant of a life, which she knew she had curtailed, unto them. Though many suitors had sought the hand of the young and wealthy widow, she steadily refused them all. Malthusar had wedded no other wife; he had devoted his whole life to her, and none other should occupy his place, none other should have her hand; for her heart was buried in his grave, and all that was left her of human affection, was centred in his children. It was at this time that a new duty devolved on her. Her sister, as well as herself, had married young: her lot had been less fortunate. Her husband, a young merchant of Joppa, had embarked the whole of his property in a mercantile adventure. The vessels he had freighted were wrecked, and all that he possessed was lost. He saw himself, his wife, and child, reduced to beggary. They were obliged to remove from their former splendid dwelling; and in a humble cottage, in the midst of penury and discomfort, he strove to forget what he had once been. But the deprivation was too much for him; overwhelmed with his calamities, he sunk into the grave. Rachel would not have survived the loss of her beloved husband, but

for the sake of her boy ; and she felt, as she pressed him to her widowed heart, that she had a double duty to perform. For his sake she bore patiently with her sorrows. Deserted by her summer friends, that had flocked around her in prosperity, and not knowing where to seek her sister, her only surviving relative, she still struggled on. But when she heard of her sister's return to her own land—and that was not till many months after her overwrought frame gave way, worn down by years of sickness and poverty—she yielded to death, as a deliverer from a world of which she had grown weary ; and giving her orphan child all she had—a blessing, she left him to the care of his aunt. With a heart already deeply tried by suffering, the young Eleazar was removed from his own lowly and desolate home, to the palace dwelling of his wealthy and noble aunt. Eleazar had been nursed in sorrow, and early inured to want ; but the love of a fond and tender mother, whose exertions and anxieties had been all for him, was entirely and devotedly his own, and it recompensed him for the want of that sweet companionship in which childhood delights. When she was taken from him he wept,

because he could not die too, and go down to the grave with her. In his childish imagination, he pictured his aunt as harsh and unkind, the very reverse of his own lovely and gentle mother. How different did he find her! The novelty of his new home, and new ties, soon blunted the edge of his grief; and he learned to look on his kind and indulgent aunt as a second mother, and to love his fair young cousin as a sister. They were educated together; they had the same instructors; they shared the same meals; and together they roamed through the green vales, and among the sunny hills of their beautiful land. They grew together like twin buds; and as their characters were gradually developed, their feelings, their hopes, their thoughts, were for and of each other; and their unrestrained intercourse, which so few of the youth of eastern nations enjoy, ripened their childish affection into love. Though fast advancing to maturity, to Sarah they still seemed like children, and the declining state of her health rendered her usually keen perceptions more dull than their wont; besides, she deemed their love but fraternal; and the flame, which might have been quenched had it been

checked in its birth, had strengthened beyond the power of aught human to destroy. How chilling, then, must it have been to the heart of Zarina, revelling, as it was, in the delight of a feeling long nurtured in her secret soul, but never till that morning confessed, even to herself, when her mother announced to her the contract she had made with Samaes. It may easily be supposed with what trembling she received the summons to attend her parent. She was about to lay bare to another the most cherished feelings of her heart, the most delicate secret of a young girl's life. She paused not to think; but hastily throwing her veil over her head, she clung to the arm of the slave for support, and descended into the family apartment, in which her mother awaited her. It was the room in which the family usually took their meals. A painful blush crimsoned her cheek, as the thought that Eleazar might be there flitted for a moment across her mind. It was a needless fear. The room was only occupied by her mother and sister.

"Go, Ruth, go," said her mother, disengaging her hand from that of the sweet young child, who was playing beside her, and whose

singularly beautiful countenance gave promise of a womanhood of surpassing loveliness. "May I not tarry a little while with my sister?" she asked; "why dost thou tremble so, dear Zarina?—thou art very pale. Come, come with me into the garden—let us chase the bright insects together, and twine a wreath of flowers for my hair. It is long since thou hast gathered flowers for me; they are all so beautiful to-day, they seem to invite us to gather them. Come, come with me now." She spoke eagerly, for she spoke from her heart; and taking her sister's hand in both her own, she strove to draw her towards the casement, which opened on a sloping terrace that led down into a garden, now fragrant with the perfume of flowers, and adorned with all the beauties of art and nature which the exquisite taste of its fair mistress could suggest. The birds in the aviary made the perfumed air vocal with their delicious music. "Not now, Ruth," replied Zarina, mournfully. "Go with Terah, pretty one, and she will twine garlands for thine hair, and sing gay songs to amuse thee. Go, for thou mayest not tarry longer here." With a sad look, Ruth resigned her sister's hand, and suffered Terah to lead her forth into the garden.

“And now, Zarina, that we are alone ; now what may thine answer to Samaes be ? Turn not away thine head, dearest. But it needs not words to assure me of thy willing assent to his, to my proposal. Come hither, my gentle child, and receive thy mother’s blessing, for thy prompt obedience to her will. Thy nuptials may not be long delayed, for troubles and war have come upon our rebellious people ; and who shall say when the sword may be sheathed, or the dove find the olive branch of peace ? Thou hast neither father nor brother ; but thy young cousin Eleazar will be both unto thee, for he loves thee with an affection which surpasses even a brother’s love ; and I shall yet live to see thee wedded.” But observing her daughter’s reserve, she said, “Why comest thou not to receive thy mother’s proffered blessing ?” “Because I deserve it not,” she replied, struggling with emotions that nearly forbade utterance ; “because thy daughter is undeserving of thy blessing, and cannot accept that of which she knows herself unworthy. Forgive me, O my mother ; but I cannot wed Samaes, even were he a monarch’s son, and could lay the world’s diadem at my feet ; and even if my refusal were to doom

me to life-long misery. Mother, thou hast spoken of my kinsman as a father or a brother ; but those are cold words, and oh ! I feel that language would exhaust itself, and still leave untold, the burning, absorbing passion I feel for him. When I came to thee yestereven, mother, I came to lay bare my heart before thee. But when thou spokest to me of another, my confidence was gone, and I could not tell thee ; but I fear not to tell thee now, that we have interchanged our troth, and I may not wed the Saabite, even were I never to wed another." "And none other shalt thou wed," said her mother, rising from her couch, while her brow grew dark with rage, her proud eye flashing fire, and her lip curling with an expression of ineffable scorn. "O mother ! visit me not with thy wrath, for it is more than my strength can bear. Perhaps I have erred in yielding up my heart to the keeping of another without thy knowledge ; yet I cannot recant the sweet error, all sinful though it be ; nor can I give my hand to Samaes, for that would be worse than error—it would be criminal, knowing as I do that my affections are irrecoverably gone ; but—" "Make no reservations. Go on, go on, that I may hear how far

thine insolence will carry thee. Perhaps thou mayest have maiden modesty sufficient to throw thyself on thy cousin's protection, and wed without thy mother's consent. God of my fathers! that a child of mine—the child in whom I have garnered up the richest treasures of affection—should live to repay me with disobedience!—that a Jewish maiden should yield up her heart, and exchange her troth, without even consulting her mother!" "Mother, mother," shrieked Zarina, throwing herself at her feet, "Oh hear me, hear me, I implore thee. I have not willingly offended thee; and though I cannot recall the heart I have given, I will not give him my hand, I will never, never—" wed him, she would have said; but her mother interrupted her by exclaiming, "That thou shalt not, while I have life to prevent thee. This day shall he quit my dwelling; and thou—leave go thy hold, ere I curse thee. Well hast thou said, that thou wert undeserving of my blessing." As she spoke, she disengaged herself from Zarina's hold, and fixing her flashing eyes for a moment on the form of her prostrate child, she passed majestically from the room. Zarina raised her streaming eyes, glistening through their tears,

like blue violets bathed in morning dew, and gazed on the retreating form of her angry parent: then, uttering a long, piercing shriek, she fell forward with stunning violence, and lay senseless on the marble floor.

CHAPTER IV.

HE spoke—his words were cold—
But his smile was unaltered.
I knew how much he felt,
For his deep-toned voice faltered.
He called me by my name,
As the bride of another.
Oh, thou hast been the cause
Of this anguish, my mother.

T. H. BAYLEY.

THY mother too doth shun me,
For she knew I loved her child.

LOST ROSABEL.

HOURS flew away, and night had brought silence and repose to the earth. Even the music of the birds was hushed into silence. The moon had not yet risen, and there was nought to relieve the deep intense blue of the heavens, save where one solitary star in the far east shed down its pale, golden light, over the sleeping world below. When Zarina recovered from her long swoon, she found herself alone, stretched upon the couch. At first she could distinguish nothing, comprehend nothing, save

that her temples were throbbing painfully, and that her head ached intensely. There was not a sound to be heard, except the murmurs of a small fountain, that sent up its waters in a mimic cascade, and fell back with a sweet bubbling sound into the marble basin that formed its reservoir; or the sighs of the night breeze, that came in through the open casement, and blew aside the dark hair that hung in long loose ringlets over her feverish forehead. By degrees, as reason recovered its sway, the remembrance of the morning rose vividly before her. The words of her mother rung in her ears, making the warm blood curdle in her veins, and filling her heart with undefined fear. The bitter feeling of blighted hope filled her beautiful eyes with tears of anguish. She sighed deeply as the sad thoughts crossed her mind, and the sigh was echoed back with even more of sadness than her own had conveyed. She started at the sound, and her before colourless cheeks became flushed with the brightest crimson. She strove to speak, but the effort failed; for though her lips moved, no sound escaped them. Sick with terror, that she almost blushed even to confess to herself, she sunk back again upon her couch with an over-

powering sense of agony. For awhile she listened in breathless silence ; she hoped, yet dreaded to hear that sound repeated—she listened in vain. The monotonous murmurs of the fountain alone met her ear ; suspense became intolerable—she had partially raised herself on her arm, with the intention of summoning a slave, but she paused, for at that moment the tones of a lute came mingling with the breeze. Who could it be at that hour ? Perhaps it was the Arab Terah, playing to amuse her mother—but no ; though Terah played with skill and sweetness, there was a deep melting pathos in the strain she now heard, that convinced her it could not be the slave. Besides, her mother's apartments were too far off for the sound of music in them to reach her so distinctly ; and Terah was always too close an attendant on her mother, to be near her ; she felt convinced the music she now listened to was in the room, or on the terrace immediately beneath the window. For a moment the musician struck the chords with a careless hand ; then paused, as if lost in thought ; and then again swept the strings, and played a low melancholy prelude. Then came a voice on the night breeze, mingling its rich melody with the sad and wailing tones of the instrument.

As she listened, she heard the voice of the singer, first in low indistinct murmurs, as if trying its strength ; and then it came louder and more distinctly on her ear, when she heard the words of the following song—

Our young day-dream has faded,
Like the meteor glare of night ;
And sorrow's wing hath shaded
Thy blue eyes' living light.
Alas ! how soon grief alters
The beauty of the brow ;
And the voice of music falters,
That never failed till now !

Thy mother's hand hath broken
The spell that bound my heart :
Thy mother's voice hath spoken
The doom that bids us part.
And yet full many a kindness
She lavished once on me ;
And I dare not, in love's blindness,
Disobey the stern decree.

Again the hand was thrown carelessly over the chords of the instrument, and then all was silent as before. But the voice had found an echo in the heart of its beautiful auditress—for it was the voice of Eleazar. He had seen her mother, and he knew all the misery that had fallen on them. Her stern parent had bid-den him forth from her dwelling, even in the

hour in which she had crushed all his sweet dreams of happiness, and trampled on the hopes that had formed the delight of existence. But he was near her still, and there was yet time to console him with the sweet assurance of her unchangeable love, that neither threats nor entreaties should induce her to wed another. She rose from the couch, and advanced to the casement; yet it was with much difficulty she articulated his name. It needed no second invitation to bring him to her side. For some minutes they stood gazing in silence on each other; but at length the youth broke the painful stillness. He took her hand in his own, and said, in a tone so low that it went not beyond the ear for which it was intended, "This is happiness I dreamed not of—for we must meet no more as we have met; and this one short moment perhaps is the last we may ever pass together." "Alas! I know it too well," said the maiden, sadly, as she turned away her beautiful face, to avoid the young man's ardent gaze—for his dark eyes were fixed on her features, as if he would engrave every line in his heart, in this, probably their last interview. Beautiful indeed did she look, as the light of the newly-risen moon streamed in through the open casement, reveal-

ing her sylph-like figure, her graceful head averted, and her perfectly faultless countenance, half veiled by the luxuriant hair, whose sable hue formed a strong contrast to her white throat. As Eleazar looked on her almost aërial loveliness, it seemed so natural that he, who had grown up from youth to manhood by her side, should love her, that he could not comprehend the blindness that could see their daily intercourse with each other, and not know that they loved. He knew not that those who are in the habit of mixing freely with us, who spend hour after hour, day after day, and year after year, with us, are the last to discover our real character, qualities, or inclinations. It is the passing acquaintance, the casual visitor, who is most frequently the first to discover the existence of genius or love.

“My mother, then, has told thee all?” said Zarina, suddenly starting from a momentary reverie; “and thou knowest we must be nought unto each other, more than thou and Ruth are?” “O repeat not the dreadful tale,” interrupted her companion; “alas! it is too much. I know that thou art betrothed to another—for thus much thy mother told me, and thou—thou—Zarina—” He hesitated and paused; again he continued,

more rapidly ; “ thou can’st give but one answer ; and thou wilt wed Samaes, and I—” Here he paused again, as if he feared to give utterance to his feelings. She felt the hand that held her own tremble violently, while a few burning tears fell upon her neck. “ And thou,” she said, in a voice, which despite of her efforts at composure, betrayed her inward struggle,—“ Thou art more unkind, more ungenerous, than I could have believed thee to be. Had another told me thou hadst breathed such words, I should have deemed him thine enemy,—one who maligned thee, because he loved thee not. I tell thee, I will never be a bride, unless thou art my bridegroom. It may be unmaidenly to tell thee so, and perhaps thou wilt despise me. I have told my mother, that I will never wed Samaes ; for even the loss of that dear mother’s love, much as I prize it, shall never induce me to break the faith I have plighted to thee. Have I not vowed to thee, even under the blue vault that is shining over us now ?” and as she spoke, she fixed her eyes upon him, while their soft blue, usually so tender and loving, flashed with light, and her whole face was illumined with the radiant glow of pure unselfish love ; yet there was something reproachful in her tone. “ Thou hast

doubted; but follow me." She stepped out upon the terrace, and clasping her hands passionately together, raised her beaming eyes, blue as the depths of the heaven on which she gazed; "Hear me, Eleazar; here under this wondrous canopy, studded with myriads of stars that gem its azure depths, I am willing to renew the troth I have before plighted to thee; but mark me, though I will wed none other, I will never be thy wife if the union be unsanctioned by my mother's blessing; and I doubt not, when this quarrel with our Roman masters be ended—" "And that will never be, Zarina," he said, interrupting her, "until every city, town, and village in Judea, be levelled with the ground. It will never be, until the temple,—nay, start not—till the temple is a ruin, and our conquerors ride over the necks of our prostrate countrymen. It will never be, till there is not a foot of land we can call our own. It will never be;—" he spoke with vehemence—"for the time for pacific measures is gone past: and unless we consent to crawl forth on our knees; nay, scarcely even then, will our taskmasters forgive our glorious though futile effort to attain our freedom. Not unless we yield tamely to a worse bondage than our forefathers endured in Egypt; and I swear by the God who redeemed those forefathers from

slavery, I would be the last to counsel such a measure, the very thought of which brings shame and degradation; for while I speak the spirit of my mighty ancestors, the glorious Maccabees, seems to animate my words. Have we not borne with them long enough? Have we not submitted to their galling taunts and grinding exactions? And yet we forbore, until forbearance became criminal. Our old men have been murdered in cold blood; our young maidens have been seized upon in their mid-day walks, torn from the bosom of their families, torn from the homes of their youth, and sold into slavery. Did they not seek to place a graven image in the temple? nay, even within the Holy of Holies? Did not Gessius Florus see the peaceful citizens of Jerusalem butchered in their own market-place? Did they not refuse us redress, and mock at our ambassadors? And if thou requirest further proof, look at Gadara. Our countrymen offered no resistance; they did no wrong; but they were not spared. And thou speakest of peace—peace with Rome! As soon mayest thou look for mercy from the hyena to its prey. The vulture hath spread its wings, and opened its ravenous beak; and it will know no rest, till it is sated with blood. I would not seek to appease those haughty Romans, even were the city

in flames ; and thou, all lovely as thou art, I would sooner watch thy dying throbs, than thou shouldst live and be exposed to the mercy of the Romans." He ceased, and looked anxiously in the pale face of the maiden, who had stood silent during this passionate harangue, with her arms folded meekly on her breast, the thick masses of black hair thrown back from her pallid face, which looked in the moonlight white as the marble pillar against which she leaned for support, every feature working with the varied emotions his words had awakened—for well she knew that the picture was but too true. When he had concluded, she still stood, as if the echo of his words yet lingered on her ear. "I am very ill," she said at last, in a feeble tone. She took the arm the youth proffered for assistance, and returned to the apartment. But ere they reached the couch, he felt her lean yet more heavily upon him; her head drooped, and she would have fallen, but he raised her in his arms, and laying her gently on the couch, bathed her temples with the clear water of the fountain, till she recovered. Then pressing his burning lips upon her hand, he prepared to leave her. "Farewell, farewell; perhaps for ever," said Zarina, sorrowfully; "for it were now almost

sinful to meet again. For worlds, I would not that my mother knew of this—for although I cannot obey her, I would not willingly inflict another wound on her feelings. Now, Eleazar, leave me.” “Adieu, dearest Zarina; God bless thee, for the sweet assurance of thy love; and though my hitherto kind kinswoman has forbidden my approach to her dwelling; although I am an outcast from the roof that sheltered my happy childhood, and an alien from the heart that has cherished me with maternal tenderness: yet will I be near, to protect and guard over thee in the hour of danger. That, at least, will be no crime.” He bent down, and printed a fond kiss on either cheek; then passing through the open window, disappeared, leaving her to the sad companionship of her own gloomy thoughts.

CHAPTER V.

The city resounds with the horrible din,
Of the Roman without, and the famine within.

UNPUBLISHED POEM.

Bring from the east, bring from the west,
Flowers for the hair, gems for the vest ;
Bring the rich silks that are shining with gold,
Wrought in rich broidery on every fold.

Bring ye the perfumes that breathe on the rose,
Such as the summer of Egypt bestows ;
Bring the white pearls from the depths of the sea,
They are fair like the neck where their lustre will be.

Such are the offerings that now will be brought,
But can they bring peace to the turmoil of thought ?
Can they one moment of quiet bestow,
To the human heart, feverish and beating below.

MISS LONDON.

I wore my bridal robes,
But I rivalled their whiteness ;
Bright gems were in my hair,
How I hated their brightness.

WE MET.

As the days passed on, the besiegers and
beseiged were busily employed in works of
offence and defence. While the troops of

Vespasian pursued their works with the steady coolness for which they were celebrated, the Jews, driven to desperation, left no means untried, in order to destroy the embankment which their foes were raising around the walls; and they hurled down stones and other missiles upon the penthouse which covered the Roman workmen. Annoyed and irritated by these demonstrations of continued resistance, Vespasian ordered the military engines to clear the walls. The Jews were far from yielding to despair. On the contrary, their courage rose with the occasion, and though driven from the walls above—for they dare not expose their persons to the huge stones hurled by the balistas, or the balls of fire and hissing javelins that fell in showers around them—they began to fight from below. Used to desultory warfare, they stole out in small bands, and destroyed the breastworks.

Such a state of things could not last long; and it was with feelings of desperation the garrison saw the embankment completed. It seemed as if another city had sprung up beside their own, and that they were to struggle hand to hand with their stern and deadly opponents.

The mind of the governor seemed nothing daunted. He was prepared to meet every

exigency. He gave orders for the walls to be raised, and when the workmen he selected for the occasion represented the perfect impracticability of so doing, he ordered tall stakes to be driven into the ground, and covered with hides of oxen newly slain. Under this protection the men worked with security night and day. They toiled till the work was completed. They raised the wall full twenty cubits higher. On this they built several towers, and completed the work with a strong battlement. With dismay the Romans, who had already deemed the city their own, saw this new proof of skill and ingenuity in the besieged, who again sallied out in small parties, destroyed the hostile works, and carried off every thing they could lay hands on. Maddened by rage at these unexpected results, Vespasian determined to change the siege into a blockade, and as he could not take the city by assault, to reduce it by famine.

Now indeed came the terrors of war; for though the garrison were well provided with every necessary, such as wheat, &c., every thing except salt, the want of water began to be terribly felt. There were no springs within the city, and the inhabitants were obliged to content themselves with rain water. Even that

was only to be obtained in small quantities, for it seldom rains in the east during the summer months. Orders were given to serve the water out to the people in measures, and rich and poor were alike forced to submit. To increase the calamity, the Roman soldiers swept the miserable Israelites down from the walls as they passed along with their pitchers for their daily supply. This scanty doling out of the chief support of existence was truly dispiriting. Josephus saw the dreadful havoc want of water and the unerring precision with which their foes took aim was making among the men, and determined not to be outmanœuvred; he made some of them steep their clothes in water, and hang them from the walls to dry. The Romans, convinced that men who could so wantonly waste the precious fluid could be in no want of it, and wearied out by the tedious inactivity of blockade, returned once more to the assault.

It was in a large airy room, closely curtained to exclude the rays of the burning sun, although the lattices were open to admit the air, that, propped up by pillows, her wan countenance still more wan and sallow than when first introduced to the reader, her lips parched with fever, and her hands thin almost to transparency, re-

clined the attenuated figure of Sarah. At the foot of the bed, on a seat of sandal-wood, sat the slave Terah, watching the feverish and broken slumber of her mistress. On a small table beside her stood a silver censer, richly embossed, in which were burning the odoriferous woods of Araby, poor Terah's sunny land. An embroidery frame was in her hand, but her thoughts were evidently far away. She was thinking of her distant home—the smiling stream, beside whose banks she had so often knelt in childhood, with her young companions, twining wreaths of wild-flowers to decorate the shining tresses of her raven hair—of the groves of spice, where she used to sit in the noontide, listening to the songs of the birds, or her own voice, scarcely less sweet or merry than theirs, as she poured forth the exuberance of her glad spirit in song. Sunshine and song are sweet accompaniments of each other. Who could be sad or unhappy when the beauty and fulness of summer are around them? Then she had been happy; for she was free as the wild bird, whose wings bore him through the blue fields of air. And what was she now? A slave—a favourite slave, indeed—but though her chain was of flowers, and she scarcely felt its weight,

it was still a chain. There is something inexpressibly painful in the memories of the past, when the heart should be yet young in sorrow ; when hope and imagination should wave their pinions with their first freshness, yet untainted by care. The young should look to the future for happiness, and not dwell on the past, as if pleasure were dead for them. The tears fell unheeded on the pale face of the young slave, giving a subdued lustre to her large, full, black eyes, as they trembled beneath the long silken lashes. She longed to be out in the fresh air, among the flowers ; for to them she could pour forth her sorrows as to long familiar friends ; and the tears she shed upon them seemed to form between them a link of sympathy. There was no human being who could enter into and sympathise with her feelings ; and she felt that if deprived of that source of consolation, even of its own fulness, her heart would burst. She loved Sarah, her mistress, it is true, for she had been kind to her ; but it was the love of the slave for the mistress. Ah ! the love of one free heart is worth that of a thousand slaves.

An hour had passed away, when Terah's solitary musings were broken by the sound of a of a light foot-fall on the stair. A low tap was

heard at the door. The slave replied in a low subdued tone, "Come in—she sleeps." The door was cautiously unclosed, and Zarina entered the sick chamber of her mother. She, too, was changed. It seemed as if the mildew of blighted hope, like the canker on the rose, had banished the warm bright hue of health from lip and cheek, for her face was pale—very pale. Her slight graceful figure had lost much of the roundness and beauty of its outline; and you might almost trace the rich blood in its windings through the clear blue veins in the white forehead, over which her hair was folded in soft and wavy lines. She wore no ornaments in her simple white dress; not a jewel on her person, excepting a rich emerald clasp, that fastened the girdle with which her loose drapery was confined at the waist; and even slight as the ornament was, it would have been laid aside but that it had once been Eleazar's—his mother's dying gift to him, the only remnant she had rescued from the wreck of her former state. It had been preserved, because it was the first gift of her husband. With her dying hand she had given it to her child, as a memento of his father and herself. She bade him never part with it, until he found a being worthy of his

love. He had treasured up the dying gift of his mother next his heart, and her dying words in his memory. He had given it to her on the morning when they had first interchanged their troth; for she was good and beautiful as his own beloved parent. He had given it, as they stood on the mountain-top, and heard and felt there was a God in all that was around them. It was the day from which she might date the commencement of her sorrows. Poor girl, she had known but little of happiness since then. She had been excluded from the sight of her sweet young sister, whose gentle and loving disposition made her the favourite of all who knew her; denied even an interview with her beloved mother; and when she entreated permission to attend on her sick couch, as she had been wont to do in days gone by, her prayers and tears were answered with bitter scorn and reviling. Once, and once only had she been summoned to attend her mother; and then the joy she felt was crushed, and hope blighted; for the summons was attended by an order to attire herself in her richest robes, to deck her hair with gems and flowers, and appear as became a Jewish maiden on the day of her betrothal. For this purpose she had received a tiara and

c.

zone of glittering gems, and a necklace of orient pearls, that had been placed around her mother's neck by an imperial hand, during her residence at the court of Rome, with the gallant remark that a neck so beautiful well became the purest and loveliest gems that the world produced. In vain she wept—in vain she remonstrated: her mother sternly commanded her to appear, and the bridegroom impatiently awaited her coming. “And this,” thought Zarina, as she passively allowed her handmaidens to adorn her person, “this, then, is the consummation of my day-dream of happiness!” They twined sparkling jewels, and the fragrant blossoms of the jessamine—those delicate bride-like flowers—among the rich tresses of jetty hair. They arrayed her in a robe of the purest white; but her face was whiter than her robe. They placed the richly embroidered veil upon the head of the pale, fair girl, who resembled a victim more than a bride. She allowed them to conduct her to her mother's presence, but inwardly resolved never to break her plighted troth; and, with a fortitude she knew not she possessed, she steadily adhered to her resolution. “I will not speak a sentence,” she murmured to herself, as she entered the apartment in which the cere-

mony was to take place. It was a long, lofty apartment. The floor and pillars that supported the roof were of red marble, beautifully veined with green and blue. It was decked out for the occasion, in a style of almost regal magnificence. The hangings were of crimson and gold. The door-posts, cornices, and pillars, were wreathed with festoons of the most fragrant flowers. It seemed as if spring had been despoiled of its richest treasures, to form those beautiful bouquets that were ranged in vases of wrought gold and silver, the gorgeous splendour of which was relieved by their being placed on stands of white marble. At the upper end, on a rich divan, sat her mother, arrayed in a gorgeous dress of cloth of gold, her proud brow encircled by a tiara of rubies, the zone around her waist of pure gold, and fastened with a large ruby brooch. At her side sat Ruth, forming the most complete contrast to her proudly beautiful mother. Her little child-like form, arrayed in a simple white dress ; her sweet face, dimpled with smiles ; and her large loving eyes, laughing out in the mirth of her glad young spirit ; her long black hair, hanging in natural ringlets down her back, just parted on the polished brow, which was encircled

by a garland of white roses, and sprigs of jessamine. Before them was a table of cedar wood, inlaid with gold, on which lay the contract of betrothal, ready for the signature of the intended bride and bridegroom. Seated on couches of crimson silk around the table, were Samacs, the priest who was to perform the rites, the scribe who had drawn out the contract, and all the Jewish domestics of the household, placed according to the offices which they held.

It needed but a moment to make Zarina aware of the reality of the scene we have just described. Leaning upon her handmaidens for support, she advanced up the room. The bridegroom and her mother rose to receive her. A single glance sufficed to convince her her Saabite lover was very handsome; but the haughty expression of the mouth, the restless flashing of his black eyes, the manly though stern beauty of his countenance, and the air of decision that characterized the whole, made her soul sink within her. Her mother laid her hand upon her head as she passed, and blessed her fervently. All the preliminaries had been settled previous to her arrival, and, after a short pause, the priest commenced during a dead silence from all around.

But when he came to that portion of the ceremony, where, taking the hem of his garment he presented it to the maiden, and asked the question, if she thought she loved Samaes well enough to perform toward him the duties of a wife, she answered not. "Speak!" exclaimed her mother, in a voice of terrible wrath. "Answer, O my child," said the priest, a meek old man, whose silver hair and beard, broad brow, and gentle smile, gave an air of benevolence to his venerable countenance, "the question I have asked of thee;" and he repeated it in a voice which, always soft and musical, sounded doubly so after the harsh and angry tones of her mother. Then it was that she repented her of her self-imposed silence, and after a moment's thought, she answered modestly, but in a calm firm tone, the single monosyllable "No." A cry of surprise rang through the lofty apartment. Such an answer to such a question was unparalleled. For a moment all was doubt and confusion; but her mother understood it well, and rising from her seat, with an air of calm dignity, and with a look of measureless rage, she placed her clasped hands upon the head where a few moments before she had placed them to call down a blessing, and invoked the most deadly curses that anger

and excited feelings could suggest. Zarina clasped her hands together, and wept in agony of spirit; but she attempted not to deprecate her mother's wrath by words. "She is mad, surely. God has visited her with an exceeding great affliction," said the aged priest. "She is indeed so," repeated the domestics, in subdued whispers to each other; "or surely she, who was always so good and gentle, would not refuse to obey the parent she has always looked upon with reverence and love."

The disappointed Samaes, who stood with arms crossed, in the same attitude in which he had stood before the council of Josephus, was the only one of the circle who joined not in these exclamations. "She is not mad," exclaimed the wrathful mother. "Disobedient, base, degenerate as she is, she is not mad; and as surely as she has refused to obey me, so surely shall it be visited on the head of the ungrateful boy who instigated her to do so." "If reason has not deserted thee," said the priest, again turning toward the wretched girl, "kneel to thy mother, and seek her forgiveness—for thou hast sinned greatly, and submission to thy justly offended parent is thine only means of appeasing the wrath of a terrible but all-merciful God."

“Alas, I cannot comply with her wishes, without breaking the solemn vows I have vowed unto another. Yet, oh! my mother,” she said, suddenly rising and throwing her arms round her neck, with the wild energy of despair; “yet, O my mother, in what have I offended, that thou shouldst curse me? Have I not always been a dutiful and affectionate child unto thee, obeying thy slightest behest? How I have,—how I still love thee—and thou, who wert always so kind, so fond, until now—” “Off, off! there is contamination in thy touch. Go, disobedient and rebellious as thou art; go to thine own chamber, and dare not quit it again. Dare not to hold commune with him. Go!” and she stamped with rage as she released herself from her passionate embrace.

Zarina sank upon the ground, clasped her knees, and raised her uncovered face—for her veil had fallen off—with a look of unutterable agony—it might have melted the most obdurate heart; yet her mother shook her off, and with a voice rendered almost inarticulate from excess of passion, bade her quit the apartment. She could not raise herself from her prostrate position; and Ruth, who had stood like the angel of purity weeping for the sins of human nature,

flew forward to assist her. It was a group for a sculptor, that mother and children, all beautiful, exquisitely beautiful; and yet how different their shades of character—the proud and haughty mother, the personification of pride and scorn; the kneeling figure of Zarina, with her faultless features convulsed with agony, her eyes swimming with tears; Ruth, bending over her sister, her fairy figure and sweet young face the very ideal of innocent loveliness and sorrow. “Away, Ruth! touch her not, I command thee; she is unworthy of thy love.” Ruth shrank back to her seat. The domestics did not attempt to raise the sufferer—for their stern mistress forbade, and none dared to disobey. Her own immediate attendant,—a young Hebrew girl, who had been left a destitute orphan, and whom Zarina had obtained her mother’s consent to take as her own handmaid—had wept until she was incapable of affording her the assistance required.

Samaes, who had stood apart during this strange scene more like a spectator than a principal, now advanced towards the weeping girl, and raising her in his arms with the same ease with which he would have lifted an infant, he

supported, or rather carried her to the door, where her handmaidens received her now senseless form, and bore her to her own chamber. Then turning, the youth strode towards the table, and taking the contract with an untrembling hand, though with quivering lips and contracted brow—contracted as in pain, not anger—he tore it into minute pieces, and flinging it from him quitted the house, without uttering a word.

From that day the unfortunate Zarina had been refused all intercourse with the members of her family; and her mother would even have deprived her of the attendance of the faithful Naomi, had not the poor attendant besought her on her knees, not to separate her from her beloved mistress. Yet Zarina hoped that her mother would soon relent toward her; but when Naomi told her that her mother was ill, and would not permit her to soothe down her sick couch, but preferred the attendance of her Arab slave, she settled down into gloomy despondence, accusing herself as the cause of her mother's illness and probable death. Nights of feverish unrest succeeded days of misery and despair. The loss of her delightful rambles, and of the pure fresh air, restricted as she was to the boundary

of her own chamber, proved as fatal to her health as mental anxiety did to her spirits. At length, unable longer to bear the separation from all she loved, she determined to seek her mother's presence without asking her permission, and beseech her, by the memory of that dear father, for whose sake she had passed her young years in widowhood, to banish her no longer from the sunshine of her smiles.

She had now been many days confined to one room ; and it was with a feeling of inexpressible delight she felt the cool wind of heaven blowing in through the open casements of the corridors she was obliged to traverse ere she could reach her mother's chamber. It was like passing from the very essence of light, warmth and beauty, into the damp darkness of a dungeon, for such appeared that darkened chamber of sickness. "Go, Terah ; I will take thy place, and watch my mother's slumber. Thou must be weary of sitting here so long alone. Go into the gardens, and enjoy an hour in the bright sunshine." Terah rose, and gladly laying aside her embroidery, and resigning her seat to her young mistress, she silently quitted the apartment, and bounded into the garden, with some

such delight as we may imagine a long-caged bird to enjoy, when it again tries its pinions in the green woodlands.

With a heart lightened of half its sorrows, Zarina took her seat, and beguiled the tedious hours by plying the busy needle at 'Terah's embroidery. It was almost night when the sleeper awoke from her long repose, and raising herself, exclaimed, in a querulous voice, "Terah, 'Terah!—what, art thou sleeping again? Arouse thee, arouse thee, I say!" Zarina dared not trust her voice to reply. "Lay aside thy frame," continued her mother, without waiting for an answer; "lay aside the needle, and take up thy lute; for the silence weighs heavy on my spirits, and my soul pants to hear thy sweet voice, even as the wayworn traveller thirsts for the running brook."

Zarina arose, and with noiseless steps, possessed herself of the slave's lute. Sweeping the strings of the little instrument, she rescued herself, and in a voice, the richness and depth of whose melody was only subdued to suit the stillness of the sick room, she poured forth the following pathetic strain.—

Song.

“ Oh ! for the harp of David now !
Oh ! for the glorious sword of Saul !
That we might grapple with the foe,
Or with the foe, like Sampson, fall ;
And in one general ruin, see
Our foemen crushed, as well as we.

“ Oh ! for the high and palmy days
When Solomon ruled o'er the state ;
And every man beneath the shade
Of his own vine and fig-tree sate ;
Or knelt in worship at the shrine
That, Israel's God, was wholly thine.

“ Oh ! that this woman's arm could wield
A sword, to guard its country's right !
Gladly, upon the battle field,
I'd brave the perils of the fight.
Dying I'd wreath my brow with fame,
But never never, never live to shame.

“ Oh ! that one victim would suffice
To set my bleeding country free ;
Gladly I'd be the sacrifice,
And die, my native land, for thee ;
Decking my head with flowers, to meet
A doom, by freedom rendered sweet.

“ It may not be !—it may not be !
The sacred covenant is broke ;
Thou proud and stiff-necked race, by thee
The eternal voice of God hath spoke ;
And Israel's sons, a scattered race,
Shall find no certain dwelling-place.”

The strain was done, and a death-like pause ensued. Zarina was mute, in the hope that the invalid, just awakened from a refreshing slumber, with every feeling softened by its influence, added to the sweet but mournful music, would recognize the voice of her child, and disarmed of every evil feeling toward her, would, in the heavenly spirit of forgiveness, take that repentant child once more to her arms. It was a bitter disappointment to her excited feelings, when, after a moment's silent expectation, she fancied the music had lulled her to sleep; or, under the delusion of a sick fancy, she might believe it was the accustomed voice of the Arab. She again drew her hand across the strings, and though the notes were rendered low and tremulous by her emotion, they were still clear and distinct, as she accompanied the strain with her voice.

“ Was it well, O my mother, to crush every feeling
Of tenderness, just budding forth into flower?
Oh! thou knowest not the agonized pang of concealing
A passion whose strength would all others o'erpower.

“ Was it well to oppose, to each hope that I cherished,
The stern, the impassable barrier of pride?
Alas! all the hopes of my girlhood are perished;—
Oh, would in that hour thy daughter had died!

“ Yet not for myself do I mourn thy unkindness ;
But he whom thou’st cherished and loved from his birth ;
Thou hast driven him forth in a moment of anger,
An alien at once to thy heart and thy hearth.”

The emotion she felt was changed into one of almost stifling agony, when, after another momentary pause, the silence was broken by the voice so loved, that till within the space of a few short days, had never addressed a sentence to her unaccompanied by some endearing epithet. Now, although it was calm and collected, it breathed with concentrated passion. “ And thou hast dared to disobey me ? ” she said. “ This is well ; but perhaps thou thinkest the best way of fulfilling the command to honour and obey thy parents, is to wring the heart of thy sole surviving one ? Hast thou not done enough already ? Hast thou not reduced me to this ? Or art thou come to rejoice in the suffering thou hast caused, and to say, in the exultation of thine heart, ‘ This, this is my work ! ’ ” Zarina answered not, but throwing herself on her knees by the bedside, and clasping her hands imploringly together, she wept aloud. “ Aye ! weep,” said her mother, incoherently ; “ weep for me, my gentle one ; for am I not cursed with a disobedient child ? But thou, poor slave, thou lovest me—

thou hast never, never been unkind to thy mistress, and thou art desolate and forlorn as I; but when I die, as I soon shall—for I feel that which none ever felt and lived—so, so,” and she endeavoured to collect her scattered thoughts; “when I die, thou shalt be free, and thou shalt have gold, aye, gold enough to carry thee to thine own land. Bend forward, that I may bless thee. There,” she said, when she had concluded her benediction, “there, now sing to me again; but not such songs as Zarina sung, ungrateful, unrepenting as she is. And he who taught her to be undutiful—may the curses of a blighted and broken heart, blighted and broken by them, rest upon them both! Let her not come to me again. Guard the door well, Terah, that she may not again come in the way of my just anger, and disturb my last moments.” She sank back upon the pillow, exhausted by the vehemence of her feelings. The silence of the grave again pervaded the apartment. Though Zarina answered not the words, they sunk to her heart. Her mother’s strong intellect had been warped by long sickness, and the storm-gusts of passion, that had lately swept across her mind, had left fearful traces of their destructive power.

She had blessed and cursed her child with the same breath ; and that unhappy child had knelt beside her, and she knew her not. “ O God !” ejaculated the wretched girl, “ this is horrible— and I am the unhappy cause !”

CHAPTER VI.

MOMENTS there are, and this was one,
Snatched like a minute's gleam of sun
Amid the black simoom's eclipse ;
Or like those verdant spots, that bloom
Around the burning crater's lips,
Sweetening the very edge of doom.
The past, the future—all that Fate
Can bring of dark or desolate
Around such hours—but make them cast
Intenser radiance while they last.

MOORE.

He died—as heroes are born to die,
In the warm flush of victory.

SONG.

It was a bright clear moonlight night. The streets of the city were silent—not a leaf was stirring ; the air was heavy, and oppressively hot ; not a sound was heard, save the measured tread of the sentinels as they paced along the walls at regular distances. The position of the moon, which by this time was at its noon,

told that it was deep midnight, when the figure of a man slowly emerged from one of the narrow streets into the principal square of the city. His tall figure, closely enveloped in a dark mantle, threw a long black shadow on the pavement, as he glided along. He seemed not to notice the splendid dwellings around him, in the midst of their terraced gardens, with their flat roofs covered with smiling flowers and flowering shrubs, where the wealthy citizens were in the habit of enjoying the cool breeze of evening, and indulging in the luxury of silence after the bustle and heat of the day. He appeared to be wholly unconscious that there was another human being in the world beside himself, so deeply was he absorbed in his own thoughts, as he almost mechanically took his way toward a stately palace, the white marble columns of which rose in bright relief against the soft moonlight. By the time he reached it, however, he seemed perfectly roused from his reverie—for he skirted round the building with cautious steps, and avoiding the principal entrance, reached the garden gate. Here he paused for a moment, and looked carefully around him, apparently to ascertain that none

were near. He seemed satisfied with his survey—for he raised a small silver bugle, (such as were used by hunters,) to his lips, and blew three times a low peculiar note, pausing between, and prolonging each note to the utmost of his power. The third time it was answered by a light quick step approaching rapidly, and in a moment more the gate was opened by a young female, closely enveloped in the folds of her veil. “Follow me,” uttered in a low soft tone, were the only words spoken, as, after entering the gateway, the stranger assisted his companion to secure the fastening, and then, obedient to her command, followed the noiseless footsteps of his silent guide, till they reached a small arbour or summer-house, the entrance of which was covered with the graceful treillage of the wild vine and other creeping plants, while around grew orange and rose trees, the fragrance of whose beautiful blossoms loaded the hot and sultry air with overpowering perfume. “Stay,” said his conductress, in the same low tone of caution; “stay here till I return:” and putting aside the thickly matted tendrils of the luxuriant creepers, which formed a sort of natural curtain before the entrance, she bade him enter,

and then left him. With a sad look he gazed around him: the furniture of the beautiful little bower (which formed no inapt representation of the favorite dwelling of meek-eyed peace,) consisted of a sort of rustic bench, which ran around three sides of the building, and was covered with soft matting. The floor was also covered with the same material. In the middle stood a table of carved cedar-wood, of exquisite workmanship. On it lay a small golden lute, round which had been twined a wreath of wild flowers; but they were withered and dried, and they had evidently been there many days. Close by the lute lay two richly emblazoned scrolls, containing the psalms of King David, and the songs of King Solomon, of blessed memory. Beside them was placed an embroidery frame, but the silks were tangled and the colors faded. The rest of the table was covered by scrolls written in the Latin language—for during her long residence at the court of Rome, the lady Sarah had learned the language, and became enamoured of the works of some of their finest historians and poets. She had carried away copies of them to her own land, and she had delighted in teaching Zarina and her cousin to peruse them; so that

their young minds were early imbued with the romance and poetry of that sunny land, recollections of which floated through the mind of the fair girl, like the dreamy remembrance of some delicious, but only half-remembered vision. "They are here, all here, as when last we sat together," sighed the youth, as he gazed sadly round him; "but the fountains that were wont to make the air musical with their never ceasing murmurs, are hushed and dried up, even as the spring of our own warm hopes." The train of his reflections was broken by the rapid approach of coming feet. Naomi had been Eleazar's guide to the little bower where he had passed so many happy hours with his beloved—it was there they had pursued their studies together, and believed, as they read over the burning love tales of the Latin poets, that life was one unfading path of flowers. Alas! too soon had they awakened from the beautiful ideal to the stern reality. After leaving him there, the slave flew quickly to her young mistress, and roused her from the deep sleep that weighed down her heavy eyelids, after a long and weary watch by the bedside of her mother, whose chamber she had seldom quitted since the eventful night recorded

in the last chapter—for the poor invalid, with few intervals, had remained unconscious ever since. Zarina had ministered with untiring assiduity to all the whims and caprices which are the never-failing attendants of a sick couch, even with the most patient sufferers. The want of water, so generally felt throughout the devoted city, was peculiarly so in this unhappy dwelling; and often had the unfortunate girl deprived herself of her own scanty portion, to cool the parched lips of her unconscious parent. She had resigned her seat at length to the watchful Terah, who, after an hour's anxious persuasion, had prevailed on her young mistress to retire, and endeavour to obtain repose: but ere she retired, she visited Ruth's chamber, and impressing a warm kiss on the fair cheek of the sleeping child, she breathed a fervent prayer for her happiness, and hastened to her own room, where, without removing her clothes, she flung herself on the couch, and soon sunk into the deep but unrefreshing slumber from which Naomi aroused her.

“Is my mother worse?” exclaimed the alarmed girl, starting; “why didst thou not awaken me before? Oh! would I had not left her!” “Hush, dear mistress, hush—it is only

thine own Naomi. O do not look thus frightened, or I shall repent of my temerity."

Zarina, now fully awake, calmed herself, and said, in a subdued tone, "If my mother is not worse, why hast thou awakened me?" "There is one who would see thee;" and she hesitated, "and whom thou wouldest wish to see." "Midnight is an unseemly hour for a visit, Naomi." "Nay, nay, fair lady; he cannot come at any other time." "He?—then it is a man, and I will not see him," was the firm reply. "Surely there can be no harm in this," replied the girl; "thou wert not wont to refuse an interview to thy mother's sister's son. Besides, I shall be with thee, *if* thou wishest it; and consider, in times so dangerous, thou mayest never be able to redeem the precious moments wasted in the scruples of an overstrained modesty. Forgive me if I am too bold; but though reduced in fortune—" and here her voice trembled with emotion; but she conquered it, and proceeded—"I too am an Hebrew maiden, and know what is becoming thine high estate. But this is no time for idle ceremony, and I must speak even at the risk of thy displeasure." She did not, however, incur the anger she seemed to dread. On the contrary, Zarina yielded to her reasoning, and

throwing a thick mantle around her, to protect her delicate frame from the night-dews, and leaning on the arm of her young attendant, she descended into the garden ; and it was their approach that roused the young man from his reverie.

With a trembling hand, the maiden put back the fragrant curtain of leaves from the entrance of her summer bower, and the next instant the two cousins stood in each other's presence. For a moment they stood gazing in silence on each other, as if doubtful of their identity ; for both were sadly altered since last they met. The melancholy, that seemed natural to the countenance of the youth, had settled into an expression of deep gloom ; and his handsome features were worn with privation and fatigue. She, too, was altered, from the day on which she had ventured into her mother's presence. Her figure had lost the rich roundness of its proportions, and her beautiful face was emaciated and wan, from long and weary watching in the confined and unwholesome atmosphere of a sick room.

For a moment, as I have said, they stood gazing in silence on each other ; but in the next,

they were startled by the sound of a quick movement among the trees. The blood mantled to the brows of both, and Eleazar half drew his sword, as he listened attentively. There was no cause to fear ; for it was only Naomi, who, young as she was, with the true tact of a woman's heart, perceived that her presence was no longer required, and, in fact, that her mistress seemed to have forgotten that such a being as herself was in existence ; she had therefore retired as quickly as possible. Nevertheless her exit was not effected with the silence she had hoped. One glance around sufficed to reassure the mind of Zarina, and she felt grateful for the delicate attention of Naomi. She was the first to break the painful silence : " Why hast thou summoned me hither, Eleazar, at an hour so unseemly ? " " Zarina," replied the youth, " I could not longer bear a separation so terrible. How long, how miserably long, the hours have seemed, since we parted, and what scenes of horror and carnage have I witnessed ! O God ! I have gazed upon men, young and noble as myself, the playmates of my childhood, the companions of my youth—yes, I have seen them standing by my side, and conversed with

them ; I have turned from them for a moment, and when I looked again, they were struck down by javelins or darts ; and those who, a moment before, were numbered with the living, lay ghastly and disfigured corpses at my feet. I have seen—but it would harrow thy very soul even to hear of half the horrors these eyes have witnessed.” “ Yet,” she said, “ would I fain hear the details of the siege, and if there is no hope left for this miserable city.” “ Listen, then,” said the youth, as he drew her towards him, and they seated themselves upon the bench, while the clear moonlight shone in through the crevices of the twisted boughs that formed the roof of the bower, making a beautiful and natural mosaic work on the floor, and throwing into shade the forms of the lovers, who had retired into the remotest corner. They sat together, one of his arms twined round her waist, the other still closely enveloped in the folds of his mantle ; while hers were passed through the sable ringlets of her hair, like snow flakes on a raven’s wing, and were busy disarranging them from their position on her ivory forehead. Her dark blue eyes were fixed upon his face, as if she would read his thoughts ere they shaped them-

selves into words. But, not to tire the reader with the somewhat prolix account of the young warrior, which was often interrupted by exclamations of horror and surprise from his fair auditress, we shall now endeavour to give as succinct an account as possible of the stirring events of the last few days. We have said, in a former chapter, that the Romans had abandoned their intention of starving out the brave defenders of the city, and once more had recourse to the more congenial measures of active siege,—the very point to which the besieged wished to prive them, preferring death by the sword to the more lingering, but not less destructive torments of famine. It is not to be supposed that the Jews, naturally fiery and courageous, goaded on as they were by the remembrance of their past grievances, the bitter unredressed wrongs, and by the terrible conviction that, even if they threw down their arms and opened their gates, there was no hope of mercy for them; and, if for a moment such an idea entered their minds, the fate of Cadara came like a warning voice of Providence, to counteract the unpatriotic design; it is not to be supposed, I say, that they were inactive, with such powerful incentives to exer-

tion. Amongst the many fruitful schemes which the never-failing mind of the governor suggested, the following is not the least worthy of record. Every usual source of communication, by which intelligence might be obtained from without, was of course cut off, by the strict guard the Romans had placed on every avenue leading to the beleaguered city. There was one narrow and rugged path, however, which they had either overlooked, or neglected to secure, perhaps on account of the improbability of any one attempting to descend by a pathway seemingly fraught with certain destruction. But Josephus was not one to allow the slightest fortuitous advantage to escape his observation. By this narrow and dangerous pathway, which was formed by the dry bed of a torrent, and led into the valley from the south, the emissaries of the Jewish leader, disguised in the skins of animals, stole from the city, creeping along on all-fours, bearing letters from, and with all things of small bulk necessary for the comfort of the soldiers, returning to the garrison. This plan succeeded for some time, to the perfect satisfaction of those within the walls; but at length it was discovered, and effectually closed by the enemy. It was at this perilous juncture

of affairs, that Josephus formed the desperate and cowardly design of deserting the city; yes, cowardly—for what truly brave or patriotic man would desert his post in the hour of danger? For this purpose he summoned a secret council; and at the same board, surrounded by the same men whom not many days before he had summoned to mature plans for the defence of the city, he now proposed to abandon it in its utmost need, and in the hour of its greatest peril.

The youth who, at the last meeting of this secret conclave, had stood before them as the messenger of evil tidings, now sat on the right hand of the governor, but little altered in appearance since the last meeting, save that a still unhealed javelin wound, that had laid his brow bare, gave a yet fiercer and more determined expression to his dark, but handsome countenance. Yet those who were skilled in the study of the human face would have perceived there was something more gentle and subdued in the glance of his brilliant eyes. Indeed from the hour the Saabite had gazed on the enchanting features of her he had sought as a bride, in their unveiled loveliness raised imploringly to those of her mother—from the moment he had raised her in his arms, and felt

her warm breath on his cheek, until it seemed entering into his very heart, till he resigned her fainting form to the care of her attendants, something of his mother's softness had stolen into his soul, and subdued each sterner feeling there. He felt, as he destroyed the useless papers that were to have been a covenant between them, that he had destroyed the germ of hope within his own heart for ever ; that there was not one fertile spot in the barren waste of his blighted affections, on which one blossom of beauty could ever bloom again. Yet he blamed her not, whose surpassing loveliness had opened and seared in the same moment the hitherto sealed fount of his softer feelings ; he blamed her not—those very feelings she had herself awakened taught him at once that her heart could never be his. Convinced that, beautiful as was the casket, without that priceless gem to him it would be wholly worthless, with an unshrinking hand he had torn the contract, with a steady step he had left the house. He had not hurried along the streets ; for fiery and impatient of control as he was, Samaes was not of disposition to let men pry into the history of his secret feelings. He was not a man to betray, by the disorder of his gait, that his spirit had received

an incurable wound. His pride could not brook the pity of the vulgar. He would have scorned, and deemed himself unworthy the name of a Hebrew patriot, had he been unable to conquer, or at least to conceal the weaknesses of his nature. For these reasons, which none but a nature sensitive as his own could have suggested, he pursued his way towards his own home with his usual gait, neither moving with a slower or quicker step. When he reached his dwelling, he retired at once to the privacy of his chamber ; and not until he had drawn bolts and bars, so as to secure himself from all fear of interruption, did he consider himself alone, and free to give vent to his pent-up feelings. Then they burst forth more wildly terrible for their long suppression. Folding his arms on the table before him, and leaning his face upon them, he wept—aye, the strong, proud warrior, the wild hunter of the hills, the noble patriot, to whose ear the hoarse voice of war was sweet as the tinkling of a woman's lute, wept like a chidden child on its mother's bosom, and his broad chest heaved with the deep sobs of uncontrollable emotion.

The shades of evening gathered darkly over the horizon, and still found Samaes weeping ; but the violence of his emotion had exhausted

itself. Like the rivulet that in winter overleaps its boundaries, sweeping along all that opposes its course, in spring again becomes a calm stream, and fertilizes where it before destroyed, were the feelings that had that day convulsed his frame. He had ceased to sob, but the tears came plenteously, and brought with them the precious balm of relief. It moves us not to see a woman weeping, for tears seem natural to her sex ; but when men weep, there is something terrible in their tears, for no light sorrow will cause men to shed the drops that they deem degrading to their sterner natures. At length he rose from his seat, and arousing himself, unclosed the door, and ascended to the garden on the flat roof ; and seating himself by the side of a small cistern of red marble, filled with clear water, beside which grew a young citron tree, he laid aside his turban, and suffered the cool night breeze to wanton freely through the dark curls of his hair, while he bathed his throbbing and fevered brow with the cool liquid. From that night, if any thought of Zarina still lingered in his heart, it was buried in its most secret recesses—for after that one wild burst of uncontrollable weeping, he never again gave way to tears. He was the foremost in every dangerous sally. He was the bravest

among the brave; and his daring courage in battle was only equalled by his prudence and wisdom at the council board. Probably it was these qualities, united with the valuable information he had laid before him in his first interview, that had secured to him the admiration and friendship of the commandant, and procured for him an invitation to this secret midnight council. But if Josephus reckoned on him as a ready coadjutor in any plan he might propose, he was mistaken. Samaes was a true patriot, in the fullest sense of that beautiful word. It was his voice only that was raised against the plan of desertion laid before them by the governor. It was his calm reasoning alone that attempted to confute the specious arguments he adduced in order to prove the feasibility—nay, the propriety of so doing, since the only means for saving the otherwise devoted city from complete destruction—for Josephus was too politic to let any one perceive that in the proposed attempt to leave it he at all consulted his own safety or convenience—was by their escaping, if possible, as he doubted not that it was, and raising an army for its relief. “Perhaps,” he said, “when they know we have left it, they may raise the siege.”

There was not one voice save that of the

Saabite, opposed to the seemingly sage plan of their chief. But he strongly objected to it. "My lord," he said, in the deep peculiar voice that proceeds from calm conviction, "this should not be. I am young—perhaps you may think too young to give advice to those who have grown grey in the service of their country; but if I live, I will emulate the example you have set me." His face lighted up with enthusiasm as he spoke: "and I repeat, this should not be; no arguments, no reasoning, can convince either me, or any right thinking man. I mean not to impugn your wisdom or rectitude, but I cannot be convinced that this is right. I for one will never desert the city, until it is free, or there is not one stone left standing on the other. I will fight for it—I would die for it. I love my native city of Saab. I have loved it ever and always;" some passing emotion seemed to choke his utterance—perchance it was a thought of her he loved; but if it was, the sigh was choked in its birth. He continued: "I love this fair city even better than the spot of my nativity; and, disguise it as we will from others, we shall never be able to blind ourselves to the baseness of the act, nor those whom we forsake. Long as the annals of history shall last, all men will look upon it as a

foul desertion of the cause to which we have sworn ourselves."

There was that in the tone and look of the speaker, that carried conviction to the hearts of all. But when Josephus spoke again, his subtle arguments, if they could not shake the truth of Samaes' reasoning, at least went far towards annulling its effects on the minds of those who heard him; and they unanimously coincided in his view of the case.

"Then I have nothing farther to do here," said the young patriot, as he rose from his seat, and prepared to depart. "Surely thou wilt not leave us, ere thou hast tasted of the hospitality of my house?—nor wilt thou betray the object of our secret council—for that would neither be wise nor well." "My lord," replied the youth, sternly, and his eyes flashed with a mingled expression of indignation and scorn, "my lord, I will reply to the latter part of thy questioning first. I am not a man to pry into and then betray other men's secrets. I came here as an invited guest, or I should not have intruded on the privacy of thyself and thy noble coadjutors. I came, I say, as an invited guest, and free, as I supposed, to give my advice and express my sentiments on the questions propounded in my

presence. Thou spakest of that which no Hebrew, no patriot, should have spoken of or listened to, and I have freely advanced my opinions on the subject. They neither affected thee nor thy counsellors as I could have wished. Thou hast decided on measures that my soul abhors, my reason repudiates, and my judgment condemns. I would not hear more on a subject that to me is so painful; yes, it is humiliating to me, to think that I have even listened to such propositions. Therefore will I depart; and as for tasting the hospitality of thine house, I will not break bread and eat salt* with one who has dared even to dream, far less to speak, in doubt of the honour of Samaes the Saabite. Farewell, my lord; farewell to all. I trust in God thou wilt think better of this." As he concluded, he bowed low and departed. After the departure of the Saabite, the plans of the governor, which he had already matured in his own mind, were quickly explained. The hour for abandoning the city was decided on. The banquet was served; and two hours after Samaes had taken his leave, the members of the council separated.

* Among the Jews, as among all other Eastern nations, the custom of eating salt, even to this day, is considered as a pledge of amity.

Secret, however, as their proceedings were, long before the time appointed for their departure the news was spread abroad, and the whole population, astounded by the intelligence, poured forth in one continuous stream toward the residence of the governor. There was the grey-headed old man, hurrying along by the side of youth fresh in health and luxuriating in their strength. There might be seen the young maiden, her veil forgotten, and her dark hair streaming on the wind; the strong man, in the prime and pride of manhood; the mother, with her unweaned babe on her breast, and leading others by the hand; the betrothed bride, and the wife of a day—all hurrying along together, in the greatest disorder, making the air ring with their demands for the governor to come forth.— They were soon gratified by his appearance on the balcony. No sooner did the people perceive him than they besought him with loud cries and lamentations not to desert them in their utmost need. For a time nothing was to be heard but the mingled voices of the multitude.

When Josephus waved his hand, the vast crowd, like the undulating waves of the mighty ocean subsiding into a calm, became silent.

When he spoke, on whose words their fate appeared to depend, a stillness, as of death, seemed to have fallen upon them all. It would be needless to recapitulate all the arguments he made use of in order to convince the people it was solely for their good that he sought to leave the city; and that, cooped up as he was, within the walls, he could afford them no assistance; whereas, if he could once make good his retreat, he would soon be able to bring an army to their relief.

They heard him quietly to the end; but after a few moments' silence on his part told them he had concluded his harangue, one loud shout, in which every voice joined, rent the sky, and he plainly distinguished the cry of "O, do not forsake us!" The words smote on his ear like a death-blow to his hope; and, after a little longer parleying, fearing if he did not consent to remain they would detain him by force, he resolved to make a virtue of necessity, and yield as gracefully as the circumstances would permit. Perhaps it was the promptings of a nature which, none will deny, was originally noble, and whose principal fault was an inordinate love of life, that inflamed Josephus. He was a good general—one of the best of the time. He loved, and would

have saved his country, had it been in his power; but when he found that to be impracticable, he abandoned himself to the circumstances of the times, and sacrificed his popularity, and the esteem and confidence of his countrymen, in order to preserve his life. Whatever his failings might have been, he still possessed some of the finest feelings that ennoble the nature of man. Whatever were his motives, he now abandoned his designs, and told the grateful people, who shouted with joy to hear his words, that he would stand by them to the last, and that *their* welfare had ever been *his* sole consideration.

Breathing blessings upon his name, with joy on their faces, and thanksgiving in their hearts, the multitude separated, and returned to their homes. Some of the bravest, however, gathered round their general, who said he would go forth—they would fight valiantly, and if they did not save the city, they could at least die for their country, and leave a glorious example to posterity. Many suddenly rushed forth from the walls, and driving in the Roman guard, carried their inroads even into the camp. They tore up the hides with which the works had been defended, and for many nights and days they kept up a continued alarm, without wearying. The

Roman general, finding himself, as it were, besieged in turn, since the embankment was now close to the walls, ordered the battering-ram to be advanced. The heavy ram was slowly brought forward, covered with a penthouse of wattles and hides to protect it and the men who were to work it, the catapults and other engines cleared the battlements of the gallant defenders, who lay crouching below, not knowing what was about to happen. At the first blow, the walls shook, as with an earthquake, and astounded the people with the terrible noise—for at that time the battering-ram was little known to the Jews. As it went on battering, shock after shock, the wall began to totter and crumble; when the governor, who never for a moment lost his presence of mind, ordered some sacks of straw to be slung over the walls, on which the blows fell harmless. The Romans were now astonished in turn; but the artifice was soon discovered, and they cut down the sacks by means of scythes fixed to long poles. The engine then played on without interruption.

The Jews divided themselves into three parties, and sallying forth, with all the lighted combustibles they could seize in their hands, they set fire to the Roman works. The conflagration

spread with the greatest rapidity, and one hour sufficed to destroy the work of many days.

The youth paused, and looking steadily in the eloquent face of his listener, drew a long breath. "Is this all? Why pausest thou?" asked the maiden, sadly. "Thank God, it is no worse." "Perhaps thou wouldst not wish to hear what I have yet to tell," replied Eleazar. "Nay, I would know all, all, that has happened—for nothing now could wring my heart, save the fall of the city, or thy death." "Well, then," he continued, "I would speak of death,—the death of him who was to have been thy husband—who was my rival." "He was a generous rival," interrupted Zarina, mournfully; "one whom, though I could not love, I admired and esteemed; and whom I shall always regret." "I too regret him, Zarina," he continued, "and regard him with an admiration which all felt, and all who ever heard of his noble action will feel. He was standing unarmed upon the walls. I was close beside him. I never saw a nobler youth. He seemed to eye all with a look of careless indifference, when suddenly he bent down, and taking up a mighty stone, rose again, and looking toward the spot where the ram was battering, and raising his arm, he whirled it round for a moment, in order to give greater

force to the fall, and then hurled the stone from him with a steady and deliberate aim. It struck off the head of the ram; and ere any one was aware of his purpose, or could interfere to prevent him, he leaped from the walls, and taking possession of his prize, was bearing it back to the city. The darts, javelins, and arrows of the enemy, were all turned against him. Five arrows had taken effect, and the blood trickled fast from his wounds; yet still he pressed onward, and regained the walls boldly. He stood up, and displayed his trophy in the sight of admiring and applauding thousands. Even his foes admired—how could they do otherwise?—an action so bold and unparalleled. Then, still convulsively clinging to it, he sunk down and expired. Were I to live for ages, I should never forget his look of mingled triumph, agony, and gratified feelings, as he murmured forth, with his dying breath, ‘My country, I die for thee.’” “O God!” said the maiden, shudderingly, “O God! this is too horrible.”

At that moment the branches were again put aside, and Naomi stood before them. “The moon is set,” she said, and the grey dawn is rapidly brightening into day.” “It is time that we should part, then,” said the youth, withdraw-

ing his arm from its resting-place. "Go, Naomi, go; withdraw the bolts from the gate, and I will join thee presently."

Naomi left them, and they were again alone. "And now, Zarina," said Eleazar, "it is time for me to depart; but may I not see thee again? There is no barrier between us now; and surely thou wilt not refuse me this boon—for if we are victorious, and conquer our oppressors, thou mayest yet be mine." "Eleazar," replied the maiden, in a faltering tone, "thou mayest visit me again; and yet I am far from sure that I am right in permitting it. But go now—O do not, do not tarry another moment." Eleazar looked the thanks he could not find words to express; and depositing on the table the skin of water he had concealed under his mantle, lest Zarina should refuse to accept the present, however welcome, knowing, as she could not fail to do, that he had deprived himself of it for her sake, pressed a warm kiss on the ruby lips of the blushing girl, as if to seal the promise she had given him, drew his mantle closely around him, and departed.

With a slow step, and a sad heart, Zarina retraced her way to the house, where all was hushed in deep silence. Gaining her own

chamber, she besought the Almighty to protect her through the day. Then disrobing, she laid her aching head on the pillow, exhausted with many conflicting feelings. Overwearyed nature gave way, and she was soon wandering in the delicious mazes of the "music land of dreams."

CHAPTER VII.

DEATH is a fearful thing to look upon, even in its gentlest seeming; but when it comes in the shape of madness, it is terrible indeed.

REFLECTIONS ON DEATH.

Oh! no—'twas grief, 'twas madness did it all.

• • • •
Who, though they know the strife is vain,
Who, though they know the riveu chain
Snaps but to enter in the heart
Of him who rends its links apart;
Yet dare the issue, blest to be
Even for one bleeding moment free,
And die in pangs of liberty?

MOORE.

It was dark night when Zarina awoke. The sun had set, and the moon had not yet arisen. She raised herself on her couch, and clasping her hands on her forehead, strove to collect her wandering thoughts; but all was chaos and confusion. She could remember nothing distinctly. She was weak and ill; from many causes—she

had not tasted food for hours, and the ceaseless exertion had unstrung her nerves, and shattered her health. She was still in this state of half-consciousness, when the door was thrown open, and some one entered, bearing a lighted taper. Zarina covered her dazzled eyes, to shield them from the light, as she said, in a low tone, "I am glad thou art here, Naomi—for I am far from well. Come hither, and assist me to rise. When I have broken my fast I will resume my watch by my mother's side; come, haste, Naomi." She was answered by the intruder's placing her light on the table, and throwing her arms around her neck. It was the sweet voice of her sister that addressed her. "Arise, arise, oh my sister!" said Ruth, weeping bitterly as she spake. "I left Naomi in my mother's chamber, while I came hither to arouse thee." "Why art thou weeping, Ruth?" asked her sister, anxiously. "Is our mother then so ill, that thou shouldst fear to leave her alone with Terah?" "She is worse, much worse," replied the sobbing child, while her hot tears fell fast upon her sister's brow; "and oh! she has said such horrible things—it has made my blood freeze, and my very heart grow sick to hear her! She is

mad—I am sure she is mad, or my kind and gentle mother could never have given utterance to such awful words.”

Zarina rose, and with the assistance of Ruth, succeeded in attiring herself. After swallowing a draught of milk in order to sustain her failing strength, she descended into her mother's apartment. As the sisters approached the door, a wild unearthly cry from within struck upon their ears. For a moment they paused, almost paralyzed with terror; but the next, they unclosed the door, and stood within the threshold, gazing in silent agony on the awful scene that presented itself to their view. All the female Jewish domestics, with two or three of the most intimate female friends of the family, were congregated together around the bed, solemnly repeating the viddas;* for the skilful physician who had attended the sufferer during her long and painful illness, had bidden Terah to summon the women, as her mistress was dying. The two daughters were only in time to witness the last painful struggle between life and death. That

* Prayers appointed to be repeated in the chamber of the dying, either by males or females, as the case may be.

dying scream had issued from their mother's lips. No wonder they shrank shudderingly back—for it was indeed a ghastly sight, to look upon that large gloomy chamber, with its heavy hangings faintly illumined by the flickering light of the half-shaded and untrimmed lamp; the figures of the women, all in the attitudes of devotion, while in low wailing tones, they said, or rather chaunted, the sublime and beautiful prayers appropriated to the occasion; while on the bed, around which they stood, foaming with rage and the impotent strength of madness, lay, or rather sat (for she had raised herself thus far, despite the efforts of the women to withhold her) the dying woman, shouting, cursing, shrieking, and laughing by turns. Oh! that wild unearthly laughter! It was even more appalling to the awe-stricken and startled females than her ravings, soul-harrowing as they were. At length she ceased, and sinking back upon her pillow, faintly articulated the name of Terah.

With streaming eyes the poor slave came forward, and kneeling by the bedside, bent her ear to catch the words of her dying mistress. "Ruth!" she said, in a low hoarse whisper, "bring Ruth hither." Terah obeyed instantly,

by beckoning her forward with her hand, and the two sisters approached the bedside together. "Art thou here, Ruth? Speak, if thou art, that I may hear thy voice—for my eyes fail, and I cannot see thee." "I am here, mother," said Ruth, repressing with a mighty effort the emotion that well nigh choked her. "Then put thine arms about my neck, my blessed child, that I may kiss and bless thee ere I die." Ruth threw her white arms around her mother's neck. "God bless thee, my darling! God bless and preserve thee from evil, my own sweet child!" But her voice faltered with agitation and weakness, and she could not proceed. "And me, mother?" said Zarina, hoarsely. "Mother, hast thou no blessing for thine other child?" The sound of her voice seemed to put to flight the last remains of her shattered reason. Turning towards her, she shouted, "I have no other child! Blessing for thee?—off, reptile, off! I have nought for thee, but hate—deep, deadly, enduring hate." "Oh! mother, mother, as thou hopest to meet with mercy at the dread tribunal of thy God, where thou must soon, too soon, appear, forgive and bless thy child." "By that God to whom thou hast appealed," shrieked the dying maniac, with

that method which so often gives the semblance of reason to the most horrible madness, "by that God to whom thou hast appealed, I will never do aught but curse,—curse,—curse thee—" "Go, dear mistress—this is no place for thee," said Naomi, coming forward; "nor thee, either," turning to the pale and horror-stricken Ruth; and with the assistance of Terah, and some of the other women, she strove to drag them away. They succeeded in removing the younger sister; but Zarina clung to the bed with the strength and energy of despair, beseeching her mother, in terms that might have melted a heart of marble, to forgive her, and remove the weight of her curse. "Never, never!" she replied, with the strange perversity of her malady; and the more wildly her wretched child besought a blessing, the more obstinately did she persist in cursing her. "A mother's curse be on thee!" The last words came gurgling out with the death-rattle; and while the hands, withered and attenuated by long sickness, which she had clasped on the devoted head of Zarina, relaxed in their hold, she sank back upon her pillow a corse!—yes, she was dead, and had died unforgiving. "God receive her soul,"

said the women, reverently, and in the whispered accents of awe ; and they again strove to remove Zarina from the chamber of death. This time they met with no opposition ; indeed she was incapable of offering any ; her limbs were nearly as stiff and rigid as that of the corpse. Her lips and face were of a livid hue, and her eyes seemed starting from their sockets ; while every vein in her throat and brow stood forth with startling distinctness. " Is she dead, too ? " shrieked Ruth, bursting from her own room ; and following the domestics who bore the inanimate form of her sister to her chamber, and throwing herself on the bed beside her, she wept bitterly for many hours, until, wearied and exhausted, the sobs became fainter and fainter. They died away into a low moan, and at last ceased entirely. She had wept herself to sleep.

Heavily the night wore away to the weary watchers in the house of mourning. And yet the morning sun dawned as brightly as if there was no sorrow in that dwelling, no bloodshed in that fated city. It was the first day of the Pentecost, when the people were wont to go up to the holy city, and worship in the temple of their God. Who heeded it now ? The door-

posts were wreathed with no flowers; there were no glad songs of rejoicing to be heard—for what *should* they rejoice?—for their coming desolation! Great God, how inscrutable are thy ways! Who shall dare to question thy decrees? Who shall say, to-morrow shall be to me a day of gladness? That day was the anniversary of Zarina's birth. It had been a day always set apart for festivity, always looked forward to with pleasure by every member of the family, and by none more so than the lady Sarah. A month, a little month ago, and she had been planning pleasures to consecrate that day. It came; and where was she? In her shroud! They dared not bury her, according to custom, before the sun went down, for it was a holy day; but when the festival (if such a mockery of festivity deserve the name) was over, they laid her in the grave. The customary rites on the death of a parent, were not performed; for Zarina still lay in a state of torpor, unconscious of all that was passing around her; and Ruth was too young to rend her robes, or keep the Shiva. *

* First week of mourning, when visits of condolence are received. Children, under the age of thirteen, are considered too young to partake in this or any other religious ceremony.

We return once more to the painful details of the siege. We have said that Samaes died in the very moment of his gallant achievement. Two others, Netiras and Philip of Rama, broke through the ranks of the tenth legion, and slew all who opposed them. Josephus, and a large body of his trained men, followed the heroic example, and all the engines and breast-work of the fifth and tenth legions were destroyed. Others followed; the first rank of the assailants heaping the earth over what was destroyed. Still, toward the evening, the Romans again set up the battering ram, and began battering the walls in the same place as before. While Vespasian was himself directing the assault, he was wounded in the heel by a javelin from the walls; slightly, indeed, for the javelin was spent. But the greatest alarm spread through the army, and many gave up the attack, that they might crowd around the general, who was bleeding and leaning on his son for support.

Suppressing the pain of the wound, Vespasian soon relieved their fears; and the whole army, with a loud shout, rushed to the walls that they might revenge the hurt of their commander. The Jews fell in great numbers; for although the missiles fell around them like hail, they

would not abandon the walls, but continually showered down immense stones and fiery combustibles on the wattle which protected those who worked the battering ram. They fought at the utmost disadvantage, for their own fires made the walls as light as day, and the enemy were thus enabled to take steady aim; while the black engines lay in shadow in the distance, and they could not distinguish when the bolts were about to be discharged. The catapults and scorpions, raging more and more fiercely, swept the walls; and the stones from the other engines shattered the pinnacles and corners of the turrets, which kept falling with a fearful crash. The stones passed through dense masses of men, reaching even to the rearmost. It was a night of unexampled confusion. The clattering of the bolts, the shouts of the Roman army, the heavy fall of the huge stones, and the thundering shocks of the ram, were mingled with the groans of the dying men, the frantic shrieks of women, and the shrill screams of children. The whole space about the walls was deluged in blood, and men could mount up on the dead bodies of their slaughtered friends. Many fell, and many more were wounded; but till the morning-

watch, the wall stood against the shocks it received, and then at length yielded. Still those who were well provided with defensive armour, laboured hard to form new buttresses and bulwarks wherever a breach was threatened, before the machines by which the enemy were to mount could be advanced.

Many were the deeds of desperate valour performed, and conspicuous in the most dangerous situations, might be seen the form of Eleazar. Wherever the fight raged thickest, there was he, animating those around him by his own noble example.

Morning was breaking in the east, when Vespasian called off his troops, and allowed them a short time for refreshment and repose. But before the sun had reached the third hour, they were again at work. In order to repel the besieged from the breach, he made the bravest of his horsemen dismount, and dividing them into three parties, they were completely cased in steel, and armed with long spikes, that they might be ready to charge as soon as the machines were fixed for mounting. Behind these were stationed the flower of his army, and the rest of the horse were stationed on the mountains that encircled the town, so that none might

escape. Behind the foot were the archers, the slingers and engineers, and another party with scaling ladders, to be applied to such parts of the walls as were yet unimpaired, in order to distract the attention of the defenders from the breach. During this disposition of the enemy's forces, the besieged were not idle spectators. The governor, who was second to none of that age, not even excepting Vespasian, in generalship, now seemed devoted, heart and soul, to the cause confided to his charge. Every hope of escape was past, and he shrunk not from the task assigned him; but with that prudence and skill that marked the whole of his military career, he disposed of his scanty forces in the most advantageous manner. The old, the infirm, the fatigued and wounded, were selected to man the walls, where Vespasian had planted his decoy ladders. The bravest he chose to man the breach; six, of whom himself was one, and Eleazar another, whose bravery had recommended him to notice, occupied the post of honour and danger in front. He then addressed them in a few words, enjoining them not to be alarmed by the shout of the legionaries. He bade them kneel down, and covering their heads with bucklers, retreat a little, until the bowmen had exhausted their

quivers; and when the Romans had fixed their machines, then, as if they were all animated by one soul, to leap down upon them, and combat hand to hand with their assailants. He bade them remember that they fought not now for safety—for of that there was no longer any hope—but for a brave revenge, and as an example to their unhappy countrymen. Finally—and his eyes flashed out as he spoke, and his whole form seemed to dilate with the importance of the subject on which he dwelt—finally, they were to set before their minds their toil-worn fathers, their aged mothers, their young children—nay, even their sucking babes—massacred; while their wives and their young maidens would be defiled, carried away captives, and sold for slaves. “Let us,” he said, “anticipate a just revenge for these inevitable calamities. Now to thy tents, O Israel!” The words were answered back by a low but deep-breathed vow of revenge.

While this scene was passing around the chief, the idle multitude, with the women and children, saw the city still surrounded by triple lines—for the Romans did not withdraw any part of their guards for the approaching conflict; the appalling force standing with their drawn

swords before the breach ; the whole mountain gleaming with the lances of the cavalry ; and the Arabian archers, with their bows strung and arrows already levelled ; they were seized with an universal panic. One shrill agonizing shriek rang through the city, as if the horrors of the capture were already begun. Josephus, lest they should dispirit the men, ordered the women to be locked in the houses, and threatened with exemplary punishment if they raised any disturbance ; and then took his post in the breach.

The sun shone out brilliantly ; the deep blue cloudless skies seemed smiling upon the scene in all the richness of their summer beauty. Nature was sleeping in the stillness of early morning. The legionaries stood like iron statues on the mountain-side. The woods were yet glittering with the sparkling dews, while the Hebrews stood calm and silent ; but theirs was the calmness of despair.

It was a splendid panoramic view. Suddenly the quiet of the scene was broken. At once the trumpets of the legions sounded, and the whole Roman host set up one terrific shout. At the same moment the air was darkened by flights of arrows. The Jews closed their ears to the

noise, and, shrouded under their bucklers, avoided the arrows. As soon as the mounting engines were fixed, they leaped down upon them, before the Romans had mounted, fighting with those who fixed them, hand to hand, with the most resolute courage. At length the Romans, who could continually pour new troops upon them, while the besieged had none to supply their place when weary, formed a solid phalanx, and moving on as one man, drove back the brave Galileans, and were already within the breach. Still Josephus had another expedient. He had ordered a vast quantity of boiling oil to be prepared, and at a given signal this was thrown down, vessels and all, and they burst upon the ascending phalanx. A wild shriek—oh! how different from their late exultant shout—rang through the air. The ranks were broken, and the men rolled down, writhing with agony. The hot fluid trickled through the crevices of their armour; there was no time to tear off their breastplates and bucklers, ere it had penetrated. It was horrible to look upon those bold brave men, writhing with anguish, or plunging headlong from the bridges in intolerable agony. If they attempted to turn and fly, they were pierced in their backs, the only part of their bodies un-

covered by defensive armour. Yet the steady courage of the Romans was not to be thus repelled. They pitied their suffering companions, but that very pity inflamed their courage. Pressing forward, they sternly rebuked them for standing in their way, and impeding braver men in the performance of their duty. "Now," said Josephus, as he saw the fresh troops ascending, "remember it is freedom or Roman bondage—fethers, forged by vengeance and rivetted with blood. We cannot longer fight hand to hand—that is an impossibility. Therefore we are compelled to use stratagem. If they do take the city, as take it they must, they shall march over the dead bodies of her defenders. They have already dragged down one of our bravest with them ;"—and he spoke truly—for one of the writhing wretches who had already planted his foot within the breach when the vessels containing the oil which had done so much mischief to the besiegers were thrown over, had caught in the agony of the moment, on the arm of Eleazar, who stood in the very mouth of the breach ; thrown off his guard for one minute, one fatal minute, he lost his equipoise, and fell. In vain the young Israelite strove to regain his footing. Though the centurion who had drag-

ged him down could not repress a cry of agony, he never for a moment released his hold on his captive ; but encircling him with both of his own mailclad arms, he succeeded in pinioning the youth to his side as securely as if they were bonds of iron ; and it was not till he resigned him to the charge of a party of his own legionaries, and saw him fettered and borne to the camp, surrounded by a strong guard, that he seemed even to think of his own sufferings.

But to return to Josephus. When he had concluded his harangue, he bade them bring the preparation he had ordered to be in readiness. This preparation was made of fennygreek, a kind of herb, which had been boiled down to a consistency ; and they poured it down upon the planks on which the enemy were mounting, rendering them so slippery that it was impossible either to advance or retreat. Some of them fell upon their faces, and were trampled down by those who followed ; others rolled down upon the embankment, and the Jews struck at them as they lay ; or the close combat being interrupted, discharged their javelins and heaped darts and stones upon them.

Evening was now rapidly closing in, and the Roman general recalled his weary and worsted

men, with considerable loss in killed and wounded; and the Jotapatans thus found time to remove their wounded, amounting to three hundred, and to bury their dead, six in number.

CHAPTER VIII.

'Twas come : his hour of martyrdom,
In Iran's sacred cause, is come.

MOORE.

I am a Greek, and how should I fear death?
A slave, and wherefore should I dread my freedom?

BYRON.

It was night—a dark moonless night; and masses of heavy clouds lay rolled together in ominous blackness. There was silence in the city of the beleaguered. There was silence in camp of the beleaguerer. Animate and inanimate nature seemed alike hushed in repose. Yet were there many watchful eyes that night. The guards were set, and the weary Romans retired to their tents, worn out with the fatigue and dispiriting defeat of the day. Yet there were sounds of festivity in one part of the camp at least. It was in a tent as much distinguished from the rest by its magnificence as its superiority in size; and the banner of the Flavian family, richly wrought and emblazoned, floating

beside the imperial eagle, told, if any such corroboration were necessary, that it was the general's. The sound of music came from within the pavilion, which was blazing with light. If the exterior gave a promise of splendour, the interior fully redeemed it. The hangings were of crimson cloth, richly embroidered with gold. A carpet, from the finest looms of Persia, so thick that the foot that pressed it seemed sinking into its rich depth, covered the floor. In a large recess stood a colossal marble statue of Mars; the eagle of Rome hovered over his head, on which he had dropped a laurel wreath. At the base lay Atlas, on the neck of whom one foot was planted, and the other rested on that of Neptune, signifying that Rome swayed both earth and ocean. Round the sides were ranged luxurious couches; while at the head, on a sort of throne or chair of state, sat Vespasian. On his right hand was his son Titus; and around the table, which was of cedar wood, elaborately carved and inlaid with ivory, sat about twenty of his principal officers. They had laid aside their heavy armour, and arrayed themselves in festal robes. The costly viands had been removed; and goblets of crystal, sparkling with rosy wine,

replaced them. The tent was brilliantly illuminated with many shining lamps ; and on the table stood two large candlesticks, one of wrought gold, the other of chased silver. In a gallery at one side, curtained with crimson, to correspond with the hangings, sat a band of musicians, playing at intervals the most ravishing melodies. "Drinking is but dull pastime," said Vespasian, after a long pause, as with an impatient gesture he pushed the goblet from him ; "and methinks, in times like these, we might occupy the hours otherwise than in idle revels." "In truth, my lord and father, thou art right," replied Titus ; "though music is well enough when it precedes us to, or cheers us in the battle, or in the gay assemblage, where the noble matrons and peerless maidens of imperial Rome welcome us back as victors with the glad song of rejoicing." "The noble Titus speaks wisely," said Clodius, a young companion of Titus, whose patrician birth, combined with a highly cultivated mind and great military talent, had already raised him to a rank in the army far exceeding his most sanguine expectations, and secured for him what he valued still more—the friendship and affection of Titus ; "could we not beguile the tedious hours of night by examining the young Jew, whom the

brave centurion, Paulinus, captured to-day; and perhaps we may elicit some valuable information." "By Hercules! the young man speaks the words of wisdom, and puts his superiors to shame," exclaimed a grey-headed officer, whose seat, on the left of Vespasian, bespoke him of considerable rank. "Thou art right," said Vespasian; "dismiss the musicians and slaves, and let him be brought hither. Go, Etius," turning to his own personal attendant, who stood in waiting behind his master; "go, and bid Marcus bring the young Jewish prisoner hither." He was instantly obeyed. The musicians and slaves retired, and in a few moments the sound of approaching footsteps was heard, the curtain of the tent was raised, and Etius entered. "Marcus waits thy command without, general," said the freedman. "Bid him enter."

The curtain was again raised, and Marcus entered, followed by a dozen legionaries, in the midst of whom was Eleazar. His hands were pinioned together, but his head was erect, and his bearing bold, while he glanced around him with a look of proud defiance. "What means this?" said Vespasian, angrily, and his brow grew dark as he spoke; "what means this array of armed men? Couldst thou not bring

one fettered and unarmed prisoner through our own camp to thy general's tent, unattended by armed legionaries enough to guard a royal captive? Go, sir; it argues well for thy bravery, and shall be rewarded at a proper season. Go, sir; and thou, Etius, wait without. And now, Jew," he said, turning toward the prisoner, who thus deprived of his guard, stood alone in the middle of the tent, with every eye fixed upon him, some in scorn, some in pity, and some in admiration of his bold front and dauntless bearing. Among the latter were Titus, Clodius, and the old officer before mentioned. "Advance, prisoner; we would confer with thee. Dost thou know why thou wert summoned hither?" "I am no diviner, Roman," replied the youth, in the purest Latin, while a slight smile curled his handsome lip. The language in which he spoke somewhat surprised his hearers; it was a rare accomplishment among the Jewish youth, for hating the nation they despised the language. "Then I will tell thee, boy," said his interrogator. "Thou art not too young to bear arms, it would seem, since thou wert taken sword in hand. Therefore thou canst not be ignorant of the causes of this most foul rebellion, and that though in justice we might demand obedience

at the sword's point, yet we have offered mercy in the emperor's name, the name of imperial and all-powerful Rome, the mistress of the world; but, despite of mercy or justice, thy unbending and besotted people have dared to resist. If thou hast the reason which thy noble countenance bespeaks thee possessed of, thou wilt at once perceive that war with Rome is both useless and unwise; for when the eagle once wets its beak, it will not be satisfied till the land is drenched in blood. Though thou wert taken in arms, yet, provided thou wilt afford us such intelligence as shall leave yon mutinous city to our just chastisement, we will not only guarantee thy full pardon for all thy former disloyalty to thy lawful sovereign, but thou shalt receive honour and reward." A few moments' pause ensued, when he resumed, "We have said. What is thy reply?"

"Roman!" answered the youth, proudly, "I am thy prisoner; but I will speak as a free man, or I will remain silent." "Speak as thou wilt," said Vespasian; "for on thine own words depend a life of freedom and honour, or a death of agony and shame." "Then listen to me, Roman. Thou hast presumed rightly in deeming me aware of the causes of Judea's glorious

struggle for freedom. Listen, and I will recount them. We were a free people; there was peace in our vallies, there was fruitfulness on our hills. We sat beneath the shadow of our own fig-trees, in our own land; we went forth to hunt on the hills; we went up to worship in our temple; and none said, 'Wherefore doest thou these things? Then came the Romans in the guise of friends, but with the intentions of enemies. They came like a herd of famished wolves. They ate of the fatness of our land; they drained our treasure houses; they called themselves our masters, and taxed our people. Fools that we were, we submitted. They strove to defile our temple, even the Holy of Holies. Yet thou speakest of their justice and mercy. Our elders went to Rome—how were they received? With reviling. Was this justice? When the Israclites sought protection from the Greeks, and laid their complaints before the Roman governor, he threw them into prison. Was that mercy? When he made his soldiers ride over the people at Jerusalem, and slay them in their own market-place, which call ye that—mercy or justice? And yet ye marvel that we drew the sword. O God! I could weep at the bare name of such outrages as have been put

upon us ; and now (after refusing to listen to our claims for justice) we seek to redress our own wrongs, ye stigmatize us as rebellious. By the God of my fathers, ye are worse than I deemed ye. And then, forsooth, I must bow the knee, and ask pardon of those who have alone offended ; and only by treachery to my bleeding country can I hope for mercy from thy king—for Israel should have no king, but Israel's God. Ye have said that my life or death is in my own hands ; but ye have painted both falsely. If I live, it will be in shame and ignominy, deservedly branded with the name of traitor. If I die, it will be as a patriot, and I shall at least have the pleasure of earning my country's blessing, instead of her curse. Thy promises cannot tempt me ; thy threats cannot appal me. Roman, I can die for my country, but I cannot betray her." "Then die thou shalt," shouted Vespasian, "a death more horrible than fancy has ever shadowed forth in her darkest mood." Titus looked at the gallant Hebrew, and his heart bled for him. "Father," he said, with a deprecating look and tone, "spare the youth yet a little while, if it be only till dawn. He may yet repent of his temerity, and afford thee the intelligence thou requirest." What might

have been his reply, it is impossible to say—for Eleazar left him no time for words; but raising his dark eyes to the face of the speaker, and clasping his fettered hands, he exclaimed, “Thanks, noble Roman; thanks for thy kindness towards a stranger, not an enemy—for I cannot consider thee as such. My words have been the words of truth, and what is spoken may not be unsaid. Yet if thou wilt witness the execution of thy father’s will, thou shalt see how a Jewish patriot can die.” “What ho! Etius!” shouted Vespasian; “let this Jew be borne hence. We will test his boasted fortitude. See that he be put to the torture. Let his vile body be burned with searing irons, and then bring him hither again. Etius seized the unresisting youth, and dragged him from the tent. The commands of the general were obeyed to the full; and when the horrible sentence was accomplished, he was reconducted to his presence. In vain did Vespasian now question him; in vain did even Titus address him. He maintained a silence as unbroken as he had done during the infliction of the torture. “Take away the hardy fool,” cried the indignant Roman; “and, as he prefers a death of torture to a life of freedom, let him be crucified. His foul bones shall be left to

rot in the sun, while his flesh becomes food for the vulture.”

No voice was now raised to save him—for even Titus dared not brave his father’s terrible wrath. His commands were obeyed. They nailed him to the cross; but though his shrinking flesh quivered with agony, his tongue was mute. He uttered no cry. The Asmoneans’ blood was in his veins, and he did not disgrace the memory of his ancestors. While the name of Titus is recorded in the page of history, and even children are taught to lisp his name with admiration, that of Eleazar is forgotten by all but his own people—such is the unfaithfulness of history—such the caprice of fame.

CHAPTER IX.

Our walls,
Though thinly mann'd, may still hold out
Against their present force, or aught, save treachery.

BYRON'S SARDANAPALUS.

And Zelica was left within the ring
Of those wide walls the only living thing,
The only wretched one still cursed with breath
In all that frightful wilderness of death.

MOORE'S VEILED PROPHECY.

When true hearts be withered,
And fond ones are flown,
Oh! who would inhabit
This bleak world alone?

MOORE.

MEANWHILE orders were given to raise the embankment around the devoted city, and that fifty towers should be built upon it, girded with iron to preserve them from fire, while the weight should make them more firm and secure. In these were placed the javelin men, the slingers and archers, with the lighter engines for the discharge of missiles. This was a fatal measure

to the Jews. The darts and arrows came pouring down from above, so that they were unable to avoid them ; nor could they revenge themselves on their invisible foes, for their arrows would not reach the height of the towers, and the solid iron could not be set on fire. All they could do was to abandon the walls, and when any party approached, make a rapid and desperate sally to beat them off. Thus their loss was considerable, while that of the Romans was very slight. Still, however, they kept up a manful resistance, and constantly repelled the enemy from their walls.

But now the fall of Japha and the massacre of the Samaritans on Mount Gerizim occurred, and afforded a mournful omen of their coming fate to the inhabitants of the city. The end of Jotapata drew near ; it was tottering to its fall. For forty-seven days the gallant inhabitants had resisted the discipline and courage of the whole Roman army under their most skilful general. They had confronted bravery with bravery, stratagem with stratagem. They were now worn down with watching and fatigue, wounds and thirst. Their ranks were dreadfully thinned, the best and the bravest were gone, and the overweared survivors had to fight all day, and

watch all night. Their suffering was aggravated by the fearful want of water. Exposed as they were to the fiery midsummer heat of a burning eastern sun, their wounds unwashed, their thirst unquenched, the want of water was scarcely endurable. Mothers saw their sucklings perishing on their breasts, for the want of the sustenance nature had ordained for their support; and their young daughters, with their ruby lips grown pale, and their beauty wasted. The daughter looked in the face of her mother, and saw the struggle between maternal solicitude and the fearful selfishness engendered by her own terrible privations. The wife looked at her husband, the young girl at her betrothed, the father on his son, and the sister on her brother who had been nurtured at the same breast, and knew them not. Men turned away from each other when they met, fearful of reading their own fate on the countenances of each other. In this dreadful extremity were they, when a deserter found his way to Vespasian's camp, and gave intelligence of the enfeebled condition of the garrison, urging him to make an attack at the early dawn, when the sentinels were likely to be found sleeping on their post. Vespasian received this treacherous communication with suspicion—

for nothing had been more striking throughout the siege, than the constancy of the Jews to their cause. He remembered too what tortures Eleazar had unflinchingly endured, and he doubted still. The story however bore marks of probability; and thinking no stratagem could materially injure his powerful army, he prepared for the assault.

Heavily rose the memorable morning of the fourteenth day of Tamas, (July,) in the year of the world 3827. A thick morning mist hung over the city; it rained at intervals, as if the very heavens wept at the approaching desolation of that fair citadel, and the destruction of the chosen people. Titus was the first to mount the wall, with Domitius Sabinus, and a few soldiers of the fifteenth legion. They killed the sentinels, and stole quietly down into the city. Sextus Cerealis and Placidus followed, with their troops. This movement was effected so noiselessly, that it seemed more like a band of robbers entering a dwelling-house by night, than a body of valiant soldiers entering an enemy's garrison.

Day was fast advancing; the citadel was full of Roman soldiers; yet the besieged, in the

heavy sleep of fatigue, had not discovered it, and even those who awoke saw nothing through the dim and blinding mist. By this time the whole army were within their gates, and they were only awakened to a sense of their danger by the commencement of the slaughter.

“Awake! oh, awake!—the Romans are within the city, slaughtering all who appear. Up, up, if thou valuest the life thy God, has given thee! Up, or you will be murdered in your bed! Oh! would that I were away in my own sunny land! Why, why was I singled out from all others, and carried away as a slave from the spice groves of my beautiful Araby?” Such were the exclamations that assailed the ear of Ruth, as she was aroused from her repose by a rude shake of the shoulder, when raising her head from the pillow, she gazed on the group of terrified women who surrounded her bed. “Terah, Naomi, Bela, Rebecca,” exclaimed the wondering and bewildered child, as she turned from one to the other. “Speak some of ye, and tell me what is the meaning of this?” “The Romans are within the gates,” reiterated Terah, in a voice rendered tremulous by terror, “slaying all, and sparing none, men and boys, women

and children. Therefore we would have thee arise instantly ; put on thy garments, and let us fly." " And my sister," said Ruth, anxiously, " what will become of my poor, poor sister ?" " This is no time to think of others," answered the young Arabian, with the true selfishness of terror. " Thy sister is incapable of judging for herself, and we must not be burthened by one who cannot even help us with her advice. We must fly now; there are no males in the house to assist us, and our time is too short to waste in idle controversy. Thou must arise at once, and leave thy sister to her fate." " That will I never," said Ruth, resolutely, as she arrayed herself in a loose white robe. " I will go to her, and endeavour to arouse her from her overwhelming sorrow ; and if I cannot succeed in saving her, I will—" " Nay," interrupted Terah in a tone of authority, " this is no time for useless ceremony ; we are equals in danger, and all else must be forgotten, at least for the present : therefore I tell thee, thou must leave thy sister, or if thou wilt not, thou must share her fate—for by my father's gods I will stay here no longer ; there has been but too much time wasted already. What, for the whim of a child, are we to wait

like sheep tied to a stake, till the butchering Romans come to slaughter us? Stay all of ye, if ye will; but I for one, will not." "Go then," said Ruth, proudly; "Go then, slave; and if thou thinkest there is safety elsewhere, seek it. I ask thee not, I want thee not to stay for me. Go, any—all go, if thou deemest there is protection yet to be found; for me, I will not abandon my sister." Without waiting for a reply, she sought Zarina's chamber. She found her in the kind of lethargy that had fallen on her since her mother's death; she lay there in her beauty, her fair brow clouded by sorrow, her bright eyes gleaming with a brilliancy almost unnatural, her hair hanging in thick unbraided masses around the marble brow and white cheek—that cheek so sunken and roseless—those lips so parched and colourless, contrasted with the large blue eyes, whose restless fire was scarcely softened by the sleepy lids with their long silky fringes, presented a picture of woe, more harrowing than the most frantic outburst of violent grief. She had spoken to none since that fatal night. Her mother's curse was upon her, and its shadow seemed to have darkened her spirit, and quenched the light of her reason for ever. She

had never shed a tear ; yet it was evident, by the convulsive working of her features, that she suffered much ; and now as Ruth approached her, she did indeed seem incapable of bearing the fatigues of flight. She gave no look of recognition, betrayed no sign of consciousness.

“Zarina, dear Zarina,” she said, as she came near, and raised one of the thin white hands that lay listlessly on the coverlet, “look up. It is Ruth, thine own Ruth. Dost thou not know me? Only say one word unto me, one little word, that I may know thou hast not ceased to love me. O God, O God! I shall become powerless as she, if she does not answer me. I am very, very young ; yet I should not shrink from death, for I have never committed wrong. Eleven winters have not passed over my head, and I am already weary of life ; yet to be murdered by the rude soldiery of the Roman tyrants—to have my corse kicked aside by some careless foot, perhaps made the butt of some savage jest—or to be sold for a slave, made the object of traffic, while some proud Roman dame examines me with curious eye, and laughs at the fate of the noble and high-born Jewess—I could not bear it. I a slave! I, who have been born

and reared in the soft lap of indulgence and affection! I a slave!—it is too dreadful to think of.” “Who speaks of slavery here?” said Zarina, faintly. “Who speaks of slavery here?” Ruth uttered a wild scream of joy, and throwing her arms around her sister’s neck, she wept upon her bosom. How many mingled feelings caused those tears to flow! yet, had they been analysed, happiness would have been found predominant. “O Ruth!” she continued, “I have dreamed such such fearful dreams;—but it is past now.” She paused, and drew her hand across her brow, as if to collect her wandering thoughts. “I dreamed—but no, thy looks assure me it is all truth, all stern reality—is it not so?” Ruth sobbed violently, but made no reply, save by pressing her arms still more tightly round her neck. The action was enough—the long sealed-up fount of her tears was opened, and the sisters wept in each other’s arms. Oh what blessed soul-reviving drops were they! But they lasted not long; and looking up, she exclaimed, “Thou spakest of slavery and death but now, Ruth; what meant those words?—to whom did they refer?” “They mean that the Romans are within the gates; that the city is

given up to pillage ; and they are slaughtering all. Turn where'er thou wilt, there is nought but bloodshed and destruction. Zarina, there is no safety for us but in flight." "Flight, my sweet sister !—and whither wouldst thou fly ? there is no safety for us, save in death. But where is Elcazar ? He promised to be near, to protect and guard over us in the hour of danger. Hast thou not seen him since our mother's death ?" "No," said the child, "I have not seen him since—" "I know to what thou wouldst allude ; but spare me, spare me now, and assist me to rise." Ruth obeyed : Zarina was soon attired, and now bade the women barricade the doors and casements, and carry all the missiles they could find to the roof. "Quick, quick," she said ; "we must ultimately yield : but we will remember we are Asmoneans, and will sell our lives dearly. We will teach these proud Romans that even Jewish women and children can fight for their freedom, and die for their country. We will remember, as we hurl down our missiles on their heads, that every Roman slain to-day makes one enemy less to Judea." Her voice was calm and firm, and her eyes flashed with the fiery courage and enthusiasm of

her race, though her lips quivered with suppressed emotion. Ruth hastened to obey her, though she feared the women were already flown; but she found them all where she had left them, and communicated Zarina's orders. They looked upon the recovery of their beloved mistress as little less than a miracle, and with Terah at their head, were soon actively employed in performing the task she had assigned them. The doors and windows were secured, and every kind of missile conveyed to the roof, where they found the sisters awaiting their coming. The sounds of conflict raging in the city became louder and louder. As it approached more near, the shrieks of the dying Israelites were mingled with the hoarse cries of exultation from the savage Romans, who seemed to gloat over the reeking bodies of their slaughtered foes. Stern and inexorable as they always were, their appetite for blood seemed increased ten-fold.

If a momentary gleam of mercy crossed their minds, they remembered what they had suffered during the siege; they remembered their repulse from the breach; they remembered the obstinate resistance of the besieged, their daring

courage, and noble conduct, which they called rebellion; and they unsparingly struck down all they met. Some were slain by the sword, some—and these were not few—were trodden down in the uneven ways and narrow lanes; and some were murdered in their beds, while they slept. Streets and squares, lanes and alleys, were choked up with corpses; it was almost literally a city of the dead.

Zarina looked down from the parapet, and saw the carnage in the square beneath. She would have shrunk back from scenes so horrible; but her eyes were rivetted by a sight that might have appalled a bolder heart than hers, enfeebled as it was by sickness and sorrow.

Immediately beneath, on the pavement knelt an old man, his venerable countenance scarred with many wounds, some of them not yet cicatrised. His thin silver hair streamed in the morning wind, and his lips moved, as in supplication, to a party of legionaries, who, commanded by a centurion, stood before him. She could not hear his words, but she saw by his gestures that he was imploring mercy. Yet it did not seem that he sought forbearance for himself, but for two lovely youths, apparently

not more than thirteen years of age, who knelt beside him. The soldiers seemed inclined to grant his prayers, until the centurion, whose savage countenance and gory hands bespoke his blood-thirsty disposition, stood forward, and in a voice whose harsh tones reached even her ears, exclaimed, "They must die! What, comrades, are ye so satisfied with the conduct of these accursed Jews, that ye are to be subdued by the womanish tears of this canting old rebel? I tell ye, they shall die; aye, if they had a thousand lives, they should lose them all." "Marcus is right," exclaimed many voices together; and the momentary feeling of mercy gave way beneath the awakened fury of their savage nature. "Yes, they shall die," continued Marcus, who to the hatred of the Jews, which was so general a feeling among his countrymen, added a private store of his own, generated by the public and stern rebuke of the general, on account of the guard with which he had surrounded Eleazar. "Will it not be sweet music, old man, to hear the dying groans of these goodly youths? By Mars, it would be a pleasant sight to see those dainty limbs torn asunder by wild horses; but since that may not

be, we will try if there be no other means of death worthy these noble Israelites." As he spoke, the murderous wretch approached; but, whatever his intentions might have been, they were frustrated—for the two noble boys, who had only been induced to kneel by the entreaties of their aged grandsire, now, as if actuated by the same spirit, plunged their daggers into their own hearts, and died without a groan.

With a yell of rage and disappointment, Marcus sprang forward upon the old man; but a dozen swords had been sheathed in his heart, and his blood mingled in the crimson streams that welled up from the hearts of his grandchildren. Shuddering, Zarina turned away from the scene of this terrible tragedy, when the doors were assailed, and loud demands for admittance reached her ears. "Now," she said, "come forward, all of ye, and a thousand shekels* of gold for her who slays yon centurion. The next moment the shouts of the invaders were answered by a quick discharge of the missiles from above "Curses on them all! Will they never be satisfied?" shouted Marcus, who had thrice nar-

* A gold shekel was one pound sixteen and sixpence, sterling.

rowly escaped from stones hurled by the hand of Terah. "We will have a bloody revenge for this," he continued, as he wiped the blood and perspiration from his swarthy brow; "and this dwelling will afford us ample spoils, if the inside but answer to its outward appearance." Again he and his legionaries assailed the doors, while the women kept up an incessant discharge of stones, and whatever else they could lay hands on, until there was nothing left to hurl down. Then they descended, fully determined not to fall alive into the hands of the soldiery, whose already excited passions they had inflamed by the wounds inflicted upon some of them. They were yet partaking of some slight refreshment, when their alarm was turned into a new channel. The whole dwelling was suddenly filled by a dense volume of smoke. "They have set fire to the palace!" shrieked Naomi, creeping close to her mistress; "we shall all be burned alive. 'Twere better to throw ourselves upon the mercy of the Romans, than thus to perish in the flames." "Silence, Naomi," said Zarina, sternly; "we have just witnessed a specimen of Roman mercy. I tell thee, we had better die ten thousand deaths than be taken alive. I could have

forgiven Terah such an expression ; but thou, a Jewish maiden, and not prefer death to dishonour ? Shame, shame ! we are not obliged to die by flame while steel is so near at hand." Thus saying, she drew a dagger from her girdle, and said, " Were it not better to perish among the burning embers of our homes, than to be left on the highway as food for the raven or the jackall ? But go ; there has been too much precious time wasted already. Go all of ye down to my garden bower, and I will follow ye presently. Go, Ruth ; go, my sweet sister ;" and straining her fondly to her heart, she covered her forehead with passionate kisses ; and then releasing her from her embrace, she suffered her to depart, with Terah, Naomi, and the other women.

Zarina was aroused from the moment's reverie into which she had fallen, by a wild cry that rung through the whole building. She rushed to the door, and threw it open. The apartment was instantly filled with smoke, and the flames came bursting up from every part of the dwelling. The shrill cry of distress issued from a long gallery of cedar wood, that led into the garden. At the farther end of it she thought she perceived the slight childlike figure of Ruth, her

thin white garments enveloped in flame. She was not—she could not be mistaken. It was Ruth's voice that called upon her name in the wild agony of despair. She would have flown to her, but her trembling limbs refused to perform their wonted office. She tried to call to her, that she might know she was not unheard, but her tongue clave to the roof of her mouth ; her eyes seemed starting from their sockets ; and while she yet gazed, her unhappy sister sunk down. A wild, unearthly scream from many voices came upon her ear ; and she was the only living thing in that desolate home. .

The marble floor on which she stood, glowed like a furnace, and scorched her feet. Wherever she turned, the flames were around, above, below. She was girt with flame. The whole palace was one sheet of living fire. A giddiness came over her brain—her heart grew sick—a film, as of death, gathered over her straining eyes ; and she would have sunk on the heated floor, when an arm was twined around her slender waist. A sweet, though unfamiliar voice, whispered in her ear : “ Courage, maiden!—there is yet time for escape.” She was lifted in the arms of the speaker, and borne along the blazing passages. She felt, with a sort of vague consciousness, that she

had escaped from the burning dwelling. She heard a sound, as if the world was at an end. The roof fell in with a fearful crash. One long red spire of flame shot up to heaven, and the home of her fathers was a heap of ashes. She was borne rapidly along. The cold, chill air, blew over her heated brow. Then came a blank. Her overstrung nerves gave way beneath the accumulation of sorrow; and she lay an inanimate weight in the arms of her preserver.

There were shrieks of dying agony borne upon the wind, but she heard them not. There were corpses, thick as snow-flakes on the ground, but she saw them not; and it was not till she was beyond the gates of the reeking city, that she unclosed her eyes, and then it was but for a moment. Yet that moment was sufficient to add a fearful weight to her load of anguish—for it served to reveal to her the stiffened corse of Eleazar nailed to the cross where he had died. A cold shuddering passed rapidly through her heart, and convulsed her frame, as she recognised the well known features of her beloved; and her senses again forsook her.

Drearly wore away that fearful day of carnage. Evening—a calm summer evening, was stealing on, and the sun that had been veiled beneath a

cloud the whole day, now burst forth with radiant splendour, and gilded that bloody scene. At length Zarina unclosed her aching eyes, and gazed around her with a look of wonder. She was reclining on a couch in a tent. How came she there? Too soon the dreadful reality forced itself back on her memory; and, clasping her hands across those burning orbs, she passionately invoked death to release her. "Thou art faint and weary, fair maiden," said the same gentle voice that addressed her in the morning. "Wilt thou not partake of some slight refreshment?" And as he spoke, he gracefully presented her some dried fruits and milk. "I want nothing now," she replied, in a tone of bitter agony, "but death." "Death?" repeated Titus—for it was he who had rescued her. "Death! aye, death," she replied. "Oh! but by Venus, thou art very lovely, and too young yet to talk of the grim king of terrors. Why should'st thou wish for death, when life is all so fair and glowing?" "Why live, Roman," said the maiden, "live! for whom? Not for parents, relatives, or friends, for I have none; thou hast slain them all. My sister, even my young, innocent sister, was buried in the ruins of our burning dwelling; and I saw the corpse of my beloved nailed to a

cross, and whitening in the sun. My God! my God! that such things should come to pass! But he foresaw it all. He told me all thy goodness, all thy mercy; and yet thou biddest me live, perhaps to sell the loveliness thou speakest of into slavery." The last words came more and more faintly.

Titus raised the beautiful head that had fallen on the arm of the couch. Her eyes were closed, her cheeks ghastly pale. The chiselled features were still exquisitely lovely, but the spirit that had animated them had passed away for ever; and the arm of the young Roman supported the head of a corpse. My tale is done.

They who would know the fate of Josephus, and those who escaped the first day's dreadful slaughter, must seek it in the pages of history.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

3927. JOHN, the governor of Gischala, made his escape to Jerusalem. Three factions now divided the holy city, which had been in a state of civil war during the stirring events in Galilee. Eleazar, and a sect called the Zealots, had possession of the temple; John of Gischala kept the upper, and Simon Ben Gioras the lower city.

In the mean time Nero died; and Vespasian succeeding to the empire, left his son Titus to finish the conquest of Judea, by the capture of Jerusalem.

Thus for two years had the march of the conqueror been stayed; but Jerusalem profited naught by the delay; it was still distracted by civil wars and factious broils, when it should have united all its energies against the common foe. One after another, the great men of the city were murdered by the three ruffians who still kept possession of their respective retreats in the city. The houses of the opulent were pillaged, themselves slain, and their wives and daughters violated, and then subjected to the same fate. It seemed as if the Almighty

had abandoned Zion, and delivered her over as a prey to demons.

The streets of the city ran with the blood of her murdered children. The sacred Temple was profaned by the savage shouts of fighting warriors, and the dying groans of wounded victims. The marble pavement was strown with corpses. Even the sanctuary of the Almighty One was invaded; and the arms of savage men, reeking with the gore of their own brethren, rested on the walls and gates of the Holy of Holies.

The sacrifices were still made; but frequently the pious worshippers were struck by arrows or stones, and the altar was polluted with their dead bodies. The granaries, which would have maintained the city in plenty for years, were wantonly fired by Simon, to prevent their falling into the hands of John.

3829. At length, on the 14th day of April, during the feast of Passover, Titus advanced, and laid siege to the city. Famine and intestine war were doing their dreadful work within the walls. Houses were broken open, and pillaged for food, by the soldiery, and the inmates put to the sword. Thousands of human beings lay rotting in the sun, for want of burial; and the loathsome effluvia engendered by the putrid bodies generated terrible diseases among the living.

Still the desperate Jews defended their last stronghold inch by inch. Horrible, most horrible, are the details of that dread siege. Every natural tie seemed broken. Mothers slew their children, to relieve their own gnawing hunger. Brothers tore the last morsel from their weaker brethren: and the glory had indeed departed from the city of David; while those who deserted, were mercilessly slain by the unrelenting Romans. At length, on the 9th of Av, a day for ever memorable in the Jewish calendar, the Temple was taken and burnt. The gold ran in streams from the doors and pin-

nacles. Victor and vanquished perished together in the dread conflagration. The Jews were massacred without mercy, and human blood and molten gold mingled together. One after another the splendid buildings fell in; the raging element enveloped the sacred structure; and the red flames lit up the adjacent country for miles around. The walls resounded with the screams of the dying, and shrieks of anguish rent the air. No part escaped the fury of the ferocious soldiery. The treasures were totally destroyed, and nothing remained but a small part of the outer cloister, in which 6000 unarmed and defenceless people, men, women and children, had taken refuge.

Five days afterwards, the priests who had escaped, surrendered, and were immediately executed by the order of Titus.

Still the upper city held out. John and Simon, who defended it, demanded free egress for their wives and children, on condition of their evacuating the city, and departing into the wilderness. Their terms were refused, and Titus vowed the unsparing extirpation of the whole people. Infuriated, and rendered desperate by this refusal, they took possession of the palace, slew 8400 who had taken refuge there, beat back the Romans, and plundered all the treasure.

3830. On the 7th of September, Titus made himself master of the upper city. The Romans spread through the streets, slaying and burning as they went. In some places, the flames were actually quenched by streams of blood, and night alone put an end to the carnage.

When Titus entered the city, he clearly perceived it was the hand of God which had made him master of such fortresses, almost without a struggle. He ordered the city to be razed, except the three towers and part of the western wall of the Temple, which stand to this day. Yet Simon and John

baffled all pursuit, till John and his brethren, reduced by famine, came forth and surrendered. His life was spared; but he was condemned to perpetual imprisonment, and finally sent to Italy.

Toward the end of October, after Titus had left the city, as some of the Roman soldiers were reposing among the ruins of the Temple, a man, clad in white raiment, with an upper robe of purple, seemed to arise from the earth in silent dignity.

At first they viewed him with looks of awe; but at length they ventured to approach, and demand his name. "Simon Ben Gioras," he answered; "call hither your general." Terentius Rufus was summoned, and to him the cruel, but brave, defender of Jerusalem surrendered himself. News of his surrender were sent to Titus, who ordered him to be set apart to grace the imperial triumph.

Thus fell the ancient and holy city of Jerusalem, which, had it been defended by a people free from intestine discord, and relying on the protection of the Almighty Ruler, would have been impregnable; but the decree of Jehovah had gone forth, and Zion was to be no more among the cities of the earth. Other cities have risen on its ruins; but the curse of Providence has fallen on them all, as if the God of Israel had pronounced an inalienable malediction on the city he had chosen and sanctified.

Herodion immediately opened its gate. Machæus capitulated after a short siege; and Masada, the only fortress which still held out, was besieged by Flavius Silva.

3831. Eleazar, the commander of Masada, after a noble defence, proposed that rather than submit, they should die by each other's hands. The proposal was agreed to by the garrison, who first slew their wives and children, and then willingly submitted to death. The last man made a careful

search to see that none other was living ; and then taking a lighted brand, set fire to the palace, and immediately stabbed himself through the heart. Two women and five children, who had crept into a cavern, were all that escaped; nine hundred and sixty perished. Next morning, when the Romans entered the city, not a human being appeared, and the vestiges of fire astonished them. Awe-struck by the desolate appearance of the place, they shouted aloud, to startle the people from their hiding places ; and the trembling women and children came forth. The Romans would not believe their tale, until they had partially extinguished the flames, and made their way into the palace. Even the stern hearts of the rude soldiery were touched, when they beheld this unexampled spectacle of generous self-devotion to the cause of liberty.

Thus passed away the kingdom of David ; and although the Jews afterwards appeared in two distinct communities, under the rabbins of Tiberias, and the Rosh Goloth, or prince of the captivity, they have never yet regained their place among the scale of nations.

“ How doth the city sit solitary *that was* full of people !—*how* is she become as a widow ! She *that was* great among the nations *and* princes, among the provinces, how is she become tributary !”

LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH, Chap. i., v. 1.

“ And shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.

“ That then the LORD thy GOD will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee

from all the nations whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee.

“If any of thine be driven out unto the utmost *parts* of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee.”

DEUTERONOMY, Chap. xxx., verses 1, 2, 3.

THE END.

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