VARIOUS

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Содержание

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DUMAS IN ITALY

[*Souvenirs de Voyage en Italie, par* ALEXANDRE DUMAS. 5 vols. duod.]

France has lately sent forth her poets in great force, to travel, and to write travels. Delamartine, Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, and others, have been forth in the high-ways and the high-seas, observing, portraying, poetizing, romancing. The last-mentioned of these, M. Dumas, a dramatist very ingenious in the construction of plots, and one who tells a story admirably, has travelled quite in character. There is a dramatic air thrown over all his proceedings, things happen as pat as if they had been rehearsed, and he blends the novelist and tourist together after a very bold and original fashion. It is a new method of writing travels that he has hit upon, and we recommend it to the notice of our countrymen or countrywomen, who start from home with the fixed idea, happen what may, of inditing a book. He does not depend altogether upon the incidents of the road, or the raptures of sight-seeing, or any odd fantasy that buildings or scenery may be kind enough to suggest: he provides himself with full half of his materials before he starts, in the shape of historical anecdote and romantic story, which he distributes as he goes along. A better plan for an amusing book could not be devised. Your mere tourist, it must be confessed, however frivolous he submits for our entertainment to become, grows heavy on our hands; that rapid and incessant change of scene which is kindly meant to enliven our spirits, becomes itself wearisome, and we long for some resting-place, even though it should be obtained by that most illegitimate method of closing the volume. On the other hand, a teller of tales has always felt the want of some enduring thread—though, as some one says in a like emergency, it be only *packthread*—on which his tales may be strung—something to fill up the pauses, and prevent the utter solution of continuity between tale and tale—something that gives the narrator a reasonable plea for *going on again*, and makes the telling another story an indispensable duty upon his part, and the listening to it a corresponding obligation upon ours; and ever since the time when that young lady of unpronounceable and unrememberable name told the One Thousand and One Tales, telling a fragment every morning to keep her head upon her shoulders, there has been devised many a strange expedient for this purpose. Now, M. Dumas has contrived, by uniting the two characters of tourist and novelist, to make them act as reliefs to each other. Whilst he shares with other travellers the daily adventures of the road—the journey, the sight, and the dinner—he is not compelled to be always moving; he can pause when he pleases, and, like the *fableur* of olden times, sitting down in the market-place, in the public square, at the corner of some column or statue, he narrates his history or his romance. Then, the story told, up starts the busy and provident tourist; lo! the *voiture* is waiting for him at the hotel; in he leaps, and we with him, and off we rattle through other scenes, and to other cities. He has a track *in space* to which he is bound; we recognize the necessity that he should proceed thereon; but he can diverge at pleasure through all *time*, bear us off into what age he pleases, make us utterly oblivious of the present, and lap us in the Elysium of a good story.

With a book written palpably for the sole and most amiable purpose of amusement, and succeeding in this purpose, how should we deal? How but receive it with a passive acquiescence equally amiable, content solely to be amused, and giving all severer criticism—to him who to his other merits may add, if he pleases, that of being the first critic. Most especially let us not be carping and questioning as to the how far, or what precisely, we are to set down for *true*. It is all true—it is all

fiction; the artist cannot choose but see things in an artistical form; what ought not to be there drops from his field of vision. We are not poring through a microscope, or through a telescope, to discover new truths; we are looking at the old landscape through coloured glasses, blue, or black, or roseate, as the occasion may require. And here let us note a favourable contrast between our dramatic tourist, bold in conception, free in execution, and those compatriots of our own, authors and authoresses, who write travels merely because they are artists in ink, yet without any adequate notion of the duties and privileges of such an artist.

When a writer has got a name, the first rational use to make of the charming possession is to get astride of it, as a witch upon her broomstick, and whisk and scamper over half the kingdoms of the earth. Talk of bills of exchange!--letters of credit!--we can put our name to a whole book, and it will pass—it *will* pass. The idea is good—quite worthy of our commercial genius—and to us its origin, we believe, is due; but here, as in so many other cases, the Frenchman has given the idea its full development. Keeping steadily in view the object of his book, which is—first, amusement—secondly, amusement—thirdly, amusement; he adapts his means consistently to his end. Does he want a dialogue?—he writes one: a story?—he invents one: a description?—he takes his hint from nature, and is grateful—the more grateful, because he knows that a hint to the wise is sufficient. It is the description only which the reader will be concerned with; what has he to do with the object? That is the merely traveller's affair. Now, your English tourists have always a residue of scruple about them which balks their genius. Not satisfied with pleasing, they aspire to be believed; are almost angry if their anecdote is not credited; content themselves with adding graces, giving a turn, trimming and decorating—cannot build a structure boldly from the bare earth. This necessity of finding a certain straw for their bricks, which must be picked up by the roadside, not only impedes the work of authorship, but must add greatly to their personal discomfort throughout the whole of their travels. They are in perpetual chase of something for the book. They bag an incident with as much glee as a sportsman his first bird in September. They are out on pleasure, but manifestly they have their task too; it is not quite holiday, only half-holiday with them. The prospect or the picture gives no pleasure till it has suggested the appropriate expression of enthusiasm, which, once safely deposited in the note-book, the enthusiasm itself can be quietly indulged in, or permitted to evaporate. At the dinner-table, even when champagne is circulating, if a jest or a story falls flat, they see with an Aristotelian precision the cause of its failure, and how an additional touch, or a more auspicious moment, would have procured for it a better fate; they stop to pick it up, they clean it, they revolve the chapter and the page to which it shall lend its lustre. Nay, it is noticeable, that without much labour from the polisher, many a dull thing in conversation has made a good thing in print; the conditions of success are so different. Now, from all such toils and perplexities M. Dumas is evidently free; free as the wildest Oxonian who flies abroad in the mere wanton prodigality of spirits and of purse. His book is made, or can be made, when he chooses: fortune favours the bold, and incidents will always dispose themselves dramatically to the dramatist.

Our traveller opens his campaign at Nice. It may be observed that M. Dumas cannot be accused, like the present minister of his country, of any partiality to the English; if the mortifying truth must be told, he has no love of us at all; to which humour, so long as he delivers himself of it with any wit or pleasantry, he is heartily welcome. Our first extract will be thought, perhaps, to taste of this humour; but we quote it for the absurd proof it affords of the manner in which we English have overflooded some portions of the Continent:—

> "As to the inhabitants of Nice, every traveller is to them an Englishman. Every foreigner they see, without distinction of complexion, hair, beard, dress, age, or sex, has, in their imagination, arrived from a certain mysterious city lost in the midst of fogs, where the inhabitants have heard of the sun only from tradition, where the orange and the pine-apple are unknown except by name, where there is no ripe fruit but baked apples, and which is called *London*.

"Whilst I was at the York Hotel, a carriage drawn by post horses drove up; and, soon after, the master of the hotel entering into my room, I asked him who were his new arrivals.

"'*Sono certi Inglesi*,' he answered, '*ma non saprei dire se sono Francesi o Tedeschi*. Some English, but I cannot say whether French or German.'"—Vol. i. p. 9.

The little town of Monaco is his next resting-place. This town, which is now under the government of the King of Sardinia, was at one time an independent principality; and M. Dumas gives a lively sketch of the vicissitudes which the little state has undergone, mimicking, as it has, the movements of great monarchies, and being capable of boasting even of its revolution and its republic. During the reign of Louis XIV. the territory of Monaco gave the title of prince to a certain Honore III., who was under the protection of the *Grand Monarque*.

"The marriage of this Prince of Monaco," says our annalist, "was not happy. One fine morning his spouse, who was the same beautiful and gay Duchess de Valentinois so well known in the scandalous chronicles of that age, found herself at one step out of the states of her lord and sovereign. She took refuge at Paris. Desertion was not all. The prince soon learned that he was as unfortunate as a husband can be.

"At that epoch, calamities of this description were only laughed at; but the Prince of Monaco was, as the duchess used to say, a strange man, and he took offence. He got information from time to time of the successive gallants whom his wife thought fit to honour, and he hanged them in effigy, one after the other, in the front court of his palace. The court was soon full, and the executions bordered on the high road; nevertheless, the prince relented not, but continued always to hang. The report of these executions reached Versailles; Louis XIV. was, in his turn, displeased, and counselled the prince to be more lenient in his punishments. He of Monaco answered that, being a sovereign prince, he had undoubtedly the right of pit and gallows on his own domain, and that surely he might hang as many men of straw as he pleased.

"The affair bred so much scandal, that it was thought prudent to send the duchess back to her husband. He, to make her punishment the more complete, had resolved that she should, on her return, pass before this row of executed effigies. But the dowager Princess of Monaco prevailed upon her son to forego this ingenious revenge, and a bonfire was made of all the scarecrows. 'It was,' said Madame de Sevigné, 'the torch of their second nuptials.' ...

"A successor of this prince, Honore IV., was reigning tranquilly in his little dominions when the French Revolution broke out. The Monacites watched its successive phases with a peculiar attention, and when the republic was finally proclaimed at Paris, they took advantage of Honore's absence, who was gone from home, and not known where, armed themselves with whatever came to hand, marched to the palace, took it by assault, and commenced plundering the cellars, which might contain from twelve to fifteen thousand bottles of wine. Two hours after, the eight thousand subjects of the Prince of Monaco were drunk.

"Now, at this first trial, they found liberty was an excellent thing, and they resolved to constitute themselves forthwith into a republic. But it seemed that Monaco was far too extensive a territory to proclaim itself, after the example of France, a republic one and indivisible; so the wise men of the country, who had already formed themselves into a national assembly, came to the conclusion that Monaco should rather follow the example of America, and give birth to a federal

republic. The fundamental laws of the new constitution were then discussed and determined by Monaco and Mantone, who united themselves for life and death. There was a third village called Rocco-Bruno: it was decided that it should belong half to the one and half to the other. Rocco-Bruno murmured: it had aspired to independence, and a place in the federation; but Monaco and Mantone smiled at so arrogant a pretension. Rocco-Bruno was not the strongest, and was reduced to silence: from that moment, however, Rocco-Bruno was marked out to the two national conventions as a focus of sedition. The republic was finally proclaimed under the title of the Republic of Monaco.

"The Monacites next looked abroad upon the world for allies. There were two nations, equally enlightened with themselves, to whom they could extend the hand of fellowship—the American and the French. Geographical position decided in favour of the latter. The republic of Monaco sent three deputies to the National Convention of France to proffer and demand alliance. The National Convention was in a moment of perfect good-humour: it received the deputies most politely, and invited them to call the next morning for the treaty they desired.

"The treaty was prepared that very day. It was not, indeed, a very lengthy document: it consisted of the two following articles:—

"'Art. 1. There shall be peace and alliance between the French Republic and the Republic of Monaco.

"'Art. 2. The French Republic is delighted with having made the acquaintance of the Republic of Monaco.'

"This treaty was placed next morning in the hands of the ambassadors, who departed highly gratified. Three months afterwards the French Republic had thrown its lion's paw on its dear acquaintance, the Republic of Monaco."—P. 14.

From Monaco our traveller proceeds to Geneva; from Geneva, by water, to Livorno, (*Anglicé*, Leghorn.) Now there is little or nothing to be seen at Livorno. There is, in the place *della Darnesa*, a solitary statue of Ferdinand I., some time cardinal, and afterwards Grand-Duke of Florence. M. Dumas bethinks him to tell us the principal incident in the life of this Ferdinand; but then this again is connected with the history of Bianca Capello, so that he must commence with her adventures. The name of Bianca Capello figures just now on the title-page of one of Messrs Colburn's and Bentley's *last and newest*. Those who have read the novel, and those who, like ourselves, have seen only the title, may be equally willing to hear the story of this high-spirited dame told in the terse, rapid manner —brief, but full of detail—of Dumas. We cannot give the whole of it in the words of M. Dumas; the extract would be too long; we must get over a portion of the ground in the shortest manner possible.

"It was towards the end of the reign of Cosmo the Great, about the commencement of the year 1563, that a young man named Pietro Bonaventuri, the issue of a family respectable, though poor, left Florence to seek his fortune in Venice. An uncle who bore the same name as himself, and who had lived in the latter city for twenty years, recommended him to the bank of the Salviati, of which he himself was one of the managers. The youth was received in the capacity of clerk.

"Opposite the bank of the Salviati lived a rich Venetian nobleman, head of the house of the Capelli. He had one son and one daughter, but not by his wife then living, who, in consequence, was stepmother to his children. With the son, our narrative is not concerned; the daughter, Bianca Capello, was a charming girl of the age of fifteen or sixteen, of a pale complexion, on which the blood, at every emotion, would appear, and pass like a roseate cloud; her hair, of that rich flaxen which Raphael has made so beautiful; her eyes dark and full of lustre, her figure

slight and flexile, but of that flexibility which denotes no weakness, but force of character; prompt, as another Juliet, to love, and waiting only till some Romeo should cross her path, to say, like the maid of Verona—'I will be to thee or to the tomb!'

"She saw Pietro Bonaventuri: the window of his chamber looked out upon hers; they exchanged glances, signs, promises of love. Arrived at this point, the distance from each other was their sole obstacle: this obstacle Bianca was the first to overcome.

"Each night, when all had retired to rest in the house of the Salviati, when the nurse who had reared Bianca, had betaken herself to the next chamber, and the young girl, standing listening against the partition, had assured herself that this last Argus was asleep, she threw over her shoulders a dark cloak to be the less visible in the night, descended on tiptoe, and light as a shadow, the marble stairs of the paternal palace, unbarred the gate, and crossed the street. On the threshold of the opposite door, her lover was standing to receive her; and the two together, with stifled breath and silent caresses, ascended the stairs that led to the little chamber of Pietro. Before the break of day, Bianca retired in the same manner to her own room, where her nurse found her in the morning, in a sleep as profound at least as the sleep of innocence.

"One night whilst our Juliet was with her Romeo, a baker's boy, who had just been to light his oven in the neighbourhood, saw a gate half open, and thought he did good service by closing it. Ten minutes afterwards, Bianca descended, and saw that it was impossible to re-enter her father's house.

"Bianca was one of those energetic spirits whose resolutions are taken at once, and for ever. She saw that her whole future destiny was changed by this one accident, and she accepted without hesitation the new life which this accident had imposed on her. She re-ascended to her lover, related what had happened, demanded of him if he was ready to sacrifice all for her as she was for him, and proposed to take advantage of the two hours of the night which still remained to them, to quit Venice and conceal themselves from the pursuit of her parents. Pietro was true—he adopted immediately the proposal; they stepped into a gondola, and fled towards Florence.

"Arrived at Florence, they took refuge with the father of Pietro—Bonaventuri the elder, who with his wife had a small lodging in the second floor in the place of St Mark. Strange! it is with poor parents that the children are so especially welcome. They received their son and their new daughter with open arms. Their servant was dismissed, both for economy and the better preservation of their secret. The good mother charged herself with the care of the little household. Bianca, whose white hands had been taught no such useful duties, set about working the most charming embroidery. The father, who earned his living as a copyist for public offices, gave out that he had retained a clerk, and took home a double portion of papers. All were employed, and the little family contrived to live.

"Meanwhile, it will be easily imagined how great a commotion the flight of Bianca occasioned in the palace of the noble Capello. During the whole of the first day they made no pursuit, for they still, though with much anxiety, expected her return. The day passed, however, without any news of the fugitive; the flight, on the same morning, of Pietro Bonaventuri was next reported; a thousand little incidents which attracted no notice at the time were now brought back to recollection, and the result of the whole was the clear conviction that they had fled together. The influence of the Capelli was such that the case was brought immediately before the Council of Ten; and Pietro Bonaventuri was placed under the ban of the Republic.

> The sentence of this tribunal was made known to the government of Florence; and this government authorized the Capelli, or the officers of the Venetian Republic, to make all necessary search, not only in Florence, but throughout all Tuscany. The search, however was unavailing. Each one of the parties felt too great an interest in keeping their secret, and Bianca herself never stirred from the apartment.
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> "Three months passed in this melancholy concealment, yet she who had been habituated from infancy to all the indulgences of wealth, never once breathed a word of complaint. Her only recreation was to look down into the street through the sloping blind. Now, amongst those who frequently passed across the Place of St Mark was the young grand-duke, who went every other day to see his father at his castle of Petraja. Francesco was young, gallant, and handsome; but it was not his youth or beauty that preoccupied the thoughts of Bianca, it was the idea that this prince, as powerful as he seemed gracious, might, by one word, raise the ban from Pietro Bonaventuri, and restore both him and herself to freedom. It was this idea which kindled a double lustre in the eyes of the young Venetian, as she punctually at the hour of his passing, ran to the window, and sloped the jalousie. One day, the prince happening to look up as he passed, met the enkindled glance of his fair observer. Bianca hastily retired."

What immediately follows need not be told at any length. Francesco was enamoured: he obtained an interview. Bianca released and enriched her lover, but became the mistress of the young duke. Pietro was quite content with this arrangement; he had himself given the first example of inconstancy. He entered upon a career of riotous pleasure, which ended in a violent death.

Francesco, in obedience to his father, married a princess of the house of Austria; but Bianca still retained her influence. His wife, who had been much afflicted by this preference of her rival, died, and the repentant widower swore never again to see Bianca. He kept the oath for four months; but she placed herself as if by accident in his path, and all her old power was revived. Francesco, by the death of his father, became the reigning Duke of Tuscany, and Bianca Capello, his wife and duchess. And now we arrive at that part of the story in which Ferdinand, the brother of Francesco, and whose statue at Livorno led to this history, enters on the scene.

> "About three years after their nuptials, the young Archduke, the issue of Francesco's previous marriage, died, leaving the ducal throne of Tuscany without direct heir; failing which the Cardinal Ferdinand would become Grand-duke at the death of his brother. Now Bianca had given to Francesco one son; but, besides that he was born before their marriage, and therefore incapable of succeeding, the rumour had been spread that he was supposititious. The dukedom, therefore, would descend to the Cardinal if the Grand-duchess should have no other child; and Francesco himself had begun to despair of this happiness, when Bianca announced to him a second pregnancy.
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> "This time the Cardinal resolved to watch himself the proceedings of his dear sister-in-law, lest he should be the dupe of some new manœuvre. He began, therefore, to cultivate in an especial manner the friendship of his brother, declaring, that the present condition of the Grand-duchess proved to him how false had been the rumours spread touching her former *accouchement*. Francesco, happy to find his brother in this disposition, returned his advances with the utmost cordiality. The Cardinal availed himself of this friendly feeling to come and install himself in the Palace Pitti.
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> "The arrival of the Cardinal was by no means agreeable to Bianca, who was not at all deceived as to the true cause of this fraternal visit. She knew that, in

the Cardinal, she had a spy upon her at every moment. The spy, however, could detect nothing that savoured of imposture. If her condition was feigned, the comedy was admirably played. The Cardinal began to think that his suspicions were unjust. Nevertheless, if there were craft, the game he determined should be played out with equal skill upon his side.

"The eventful day arrived. The Cardinal could not remain in the chamber of Bianca, but he stationed himself in an antechamber, through which every one who visited her must necessarily pass. There he began to say his breviary, walking solemnly to and fro. After praying and promenading thus for about an hour, a message was brought to him from the invalid, requesting him to go into another room, as his tread disturbed her. 'Let her attend to her affairs, and I to mine,' was the only answer he gave, and the Cardinal recommenced his walk and his prayer.

"Soon after this the confessor of the Grand-duchess entered—a Capuchin, in a long robe. The Cardinal went up to him, and embraced him in his arms, recommending his sister most affectionately to his pious care. While embracing the good monk, the Cardinal felt, or thought he felt, something strange in his long sleeve. He groped under the Capuchin's robe, and drew out—a fine boy.

"'My dear brother,' said the Cardinal, 'I am now more tranquil. I am sure, at least, that my dear sister-in-law will not die this time in childbirth.'

"The monk saw that all that remained was to avoid, if possible, the scandal; and he asked the Cardinal himself what he should do. The Cardinal told him to enter into the chamber of the Duchess, whisper to her what had happened, and, as she acted, so would he act. Silence should purchase silence; clamour, clamour.

"Bianca saw that she must renounce at present her design to give a successor to the ducal crown; she submitted to a miscarriage. The Cardinal, on his side, kept his word, and the unsuccessful attempt was never betrayed.

"A few months passed on; there was an uninterrupted harmony between the brothers, and Francesco invited the Cardinal, who was fond of field-sports, to pass some time with him at a country palace, famous for its preserves Of game.

"On the very day of his arrival, Bianca, who knew that the Cardinal was partial to a certain description of tart, bethought her to prepare one for him herself. This flattering attention on the part of his sister-in-law was hinted to him by Francesco, who mentioned it as a new proof of the Duchess's amiability, but, as he had no great confidence in his reconciliation with Bianca, it was an intimation which caused him not a little disquietude. Fortunately, the Cardinal possessed an opal, given to him by Pope Sixtus V., which had the property of growing dim the moment it approached any poisonous substance. He did not fail to make trial of it on the tart prepared by Bianca. The opal grew dim and tarnished. The Cardinal said, with an assumed air of carelessness, that, on consideration, he would not eat to-day of the tart. The Duke pressed him; but not being able to prevail—'Well,' said he, 'since Ferdinand will not eat of his favourite dish, it shall not be said that a Grand-duchess had turned confectioner for nothing—I will eat of it.' And he helped himself to a piece of the tart.

"Bianca was in the act of bending forward to prevent him—but suddenly paused. Her position was horrible. She must either avow her crime, or suffer her husband to poison himself. She cast a quick retrospective glance along her past life; she saw that she had exhausted all the pleasures of the world, and attained to all its glories; her decision was rapid—as rapid as on that day when she had fled from

Venice with Pietro. She also cut off a piece from the tart, and extending her hand to her husband, she smiled, and, with her other hand, eat of the poisoned dish.

"On the morrow, Francesco and Bianca were dead. A physician opened their bodies by order of Ferdinand, and declared that they had fallen victims to a malignant fever. Three days after, the Cardinal threw down his red hat, and ascended the ducal throne."—P. 63.

But presto! Mr Dumas is traveller as well as annalist He must leave the Middle Ages to themselves; the present moment has its exigences; he must look to himself and his baggage. He had great difficulty in doing this on his landing at the Port of Livorno; and now, on his departure, he is beset with *vetturini*. Let us recur to some of these miseries of travel, which may at least claim a wide sympathy, for most of us are familiar with them. It is not necessary even to leave our own island to find how great an embarrassment too much help may prove, but we certainly have nothing in our own experience quite equal to the lively picture of M. Dumas:—

"I have visited many ports—I have traversed many towns—I have contended with the porters of Avignon—with the *facchini* of Malta, and with the innkeepers of Messina, but I never entered so villanous a place as Livorno.

"In every other country of the world there is some possibility of defending your baggage, of bargaining for its transport to the hotel; and if no treaty can be made, there is at least liberty given to load your own shoulders with it, and be your own porter. Nothing of this kind at Livorno. The vessel which brings you has not yet touched the shore when it is boarded; *commissionnaires* absolutely rain upon you, you know not whence; they spring upon the jetty, throw themselves on the nearest vessel, and glide down upon you from the rigging. Seeing that your little craft is in danger of being capsized by their numbers, you think of self-preservation, and grasping hold of some green and slimy steps, you cling there, like Crusoe to his rock; then, after many efforts, having lost your hat, and scarified your knees, and torn your nails, you at length stand on the pier. So much for yourself. As to your baggage, it has been already divided into as many lots as there are articles; you have a porter for your portmanteau, a porter for your dressing-case, a porter for your hat-box, a porter for your umbrella, a porter for your cane. If there are two of you, that makes ten porters; if three, fifteen; as we were four, we had twenty. A twenty-first wished to take Milord (the dog,) but Milord, who permits no liberties, took him by the calf, and we had to pinch his tail till he consented to unlock his teeth. The porter followed us, crying that the dog had lamed him, and that he would compel us to make compensation. The people rose in tumult; and we arrived at the *Pension Suisse* with twenty porters before us, and a rabble of two hundred behind.

"It cost us forty francs for our portmanteaus, umbrellas, and canes, and ten francs for the bitten leg.[1] In all, fifty francs for about fifty steps."—P. 59.

[1] This was not the only case of compensation made out against this travelling companion. "Milord," says our tourist, "in his quality of bulldog, was so great a destroyer of cats, that we judged it wise to take some precautions against overcharges in this particular. Therefore, on our departure from Genoa, in which town Milord had commenced his practices upon the feline race of Italy, we enquired the price of a full-grown, well-conditioned cat, and it was agreed on all hands that a cat of the ordinary species—grey, white, and tortoiseshell—was worth two pauls—(learned cats, Angora cats, cats with two heads or three tails, are not, of course, included in this tariff.) Paying down this sum for two several Genoese cats which had been just strangled by our friend, we demanded a legal receipt, and we added successively other receipts of the same kind, so that this document became at length an indisputable authority for the price of cats throughout all Italy. As often as Milord committed a new assassination, and the attempt was made to extort from us more than two pauls as the price of blood, we drew this document from our pocket, and proved beyond a cavil that two pauls was what we were accustomed to pay on such occasions, and obstinate indeed must have been the man or woman who did not yield to such a weight of precedent."

This was on his landing at Livorno: on his departure he gives us an account, equally graphic, of the *vetturini*:—

> "A diligence is a creature that leaves at a fixed hour, and its passengers run to it; a vetturino leaves at all hours, and runs after its passengers. Hardly have you set your foot out of the boat that brings you from the steam-vessel to the shore, than you are assailed, stifled, dragged, deafened by twenty drivers, who look on you as their merchandise, and treat you accordingly, and would end by carrying you off bodily, if they could agree among them who should have the booty. Families have been separated at the port of Livorno, to find each other how they could in the streets of Florence. In vain you jump into a *fiacre*, they leap up before, above, behind; and at the gate of the hotel, there you are in the midst of the same group of villains, who are only the more clamorous for having been kept waiting. Reduced to extremities, you declare that you have come to Livorno upon commercial business, and that you intend staying eight days at least, and you ask of the *garçon*, loud enough for all to hear, if there is an apartment at liberty for the next week. At this they will sometimes abandon the prey, which they reckon upon seizing at some future time; they run back with all haste to the port to catch some other traveller, and you are free.
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> "Nevertheless, if about an hour after this you should wish to leave the hotel, you will find one or two sentinels at the gate. These are connected with the hotel, and they have been forewarned by the *garçon* that it will not be eight days before you leave—that, in fact, you will leave to-morrow. These it is absolutely necessary that you call in, and make your treaty with. If you should have the imprudence to issue forth into the street, fifty of the brotherhood will be attracted by their clamours, and the scene of the port will be renewed. They will ask ten piastres for a carriage—you will offer five. They will utter piercing cries of dissent—you will shut the door upon them. In three minutes one of them will climb in at the window, and engage with you for the five piastres.
>
> "This treaty concluded, you are sacred to all the world; in five minutes the report is spread through all Livorno that you are *engaged*. You may then go where you please; every one salutes you, wishes you *bon voyage*; you would think yourself amongst the most disinterested people in the world."—P. 94.

The only question that remains to be decided is that of the drink-money—the *buona-mano*, as the Italian calls it. This is a matter of grave importance, and should be gravely considered. On this *buona-mano* depends the rapidity of your journey; for the time may vary at the will of the driver from six to twelve hours. Hereupon M. Dumas tells an amusing story of a Russian prince, which not only proves how efficient a cause this *buona mano* may be in the accomplishment of the journey, but also illustrates very forcibly a familiar principle of our own jurisprudence, and a point to which the Italian traveller must pay particular attention. We doubt if the necessity of a written agreement, in order to enforce the terms of a contract, was ever made more painfully evident than in the following instance:—

> "The Prince C—— had arrived, with his mother and a German servant, at Livorno. Like every other traveller who arrives at Livorno, he had sought immediately the most expeditious means of departure. These, as we have said, present themselves in sufficient abundance; the only difficulty is, to know how to use them.
>
> "The vetturini had learnt from the industrious porters that they had to deal with a prince. Consequently they demanded twelve piastres instead of ten, and the prince, instead of offering five, conceded the twelve piastres, but stipulated that this should

include every thing, especially the *buona-mano*, which the master should settle with the driver. 'Very good,' said the vetturini; the prince paid his twelve piastres, and the carriage started off, with him and his baggage, at full gallop. It was nine o'clock in the morning: according to his calculation, the Prince would be at Florence about three or four in the afternoon.

"They had advanced about a quarter of a league when the horses relaxed their speed, and began to walk step by step. As to the driver, he sang upon his seat, interrupting himself now and then to gossip with such acquaintances as he met upon the road; and as it is ill talking and progressing at the same time, he soon brought himself to a full stop when he had occasion for conference.

"The prince endured this for some time; at length putting his head out of the window, he said, in the purest Tuscan, '*Avanti! avanti! tirate via!*'

"'How much do you give for *buona-mano*?' answered the driver, turning round upon his box.

"'Why do you speak to me of your *buona-mano*?' said the prince. 'I have given your master twelve piastres, on condition that it should include every thing.'

"'The *buona-mano* does not concern the master,' responded the driver; 'how much do you give?'

"'Not a sou—I have paid.'

"'Then, your excellence, we will continue our walk.'

"'Your master has engaged to take me to Florenco in six hours,' said the Prince.

"'Where is the paper that says that—the written paper, your excellence?'

"'Paper! what need of a paper for so simple a matter? I have no paper.'

"'Then, your excellence, we will continue our walk.'

"'Ah, we will see that!' said the Prince.

"'Yes, we *will* see that!' said the driver.

"Hereupon the prince spoke to his German servant, Frantz, who was sitting beside the coachman, and bade him administer due correction to this refractory fellow.

"Frantz descended from the voiture without uttering a word, pulled down the driver from his seat, and pummelled him with true German gravity. Then pointing to the road, helped him on his box, and reseated himself by his side. The driver proceeded—a little slower than before. One wearies of all things in this world, even of beating a coachman. The prince, reasoning with himself that, fast or slow, he must at length arrive at his journey's end, counselled the princess his mother to compose herself to sleep; and, burying himself in one corner of the carriage, gave her the example.

"The driver occupied six hours in going from Livorno to Pontedera; just four hours more than was necessary. Arrived at Pontedera, he invited the Prince to descend, as he was about to change the carriage.

"'But,' said the Prince, 'I have given twelve piastres to your master on condition that the carriage should not be changed.'

"'Where is the paper?'

"'Fellow, you know I have none.'

"'In that case, your excellence, we will change the carriage.'

"The prince was half-disposed to break the rascal's bones himself; but, besides that this would have compromised his dignity, he saw, from the countenances of those who stood loitering round the carriage, that it would be a very imprudent step. He descended; they threw his baggage down upon the pavement, and after about

an hour's delay, brought out a miserable dislocated carriage and two broken-winded horses.

"Under any other circumstances the Prince would have been generous—would have been lavish; but he had insisted upon his right, he was resolved not to be conquered. Into this ill-conditioned vehicle he therefore doggedly entered, and as the new driver had been forewarned that there would be no *buona-mano*, the equipage started amidst the laughter and jeers of the mob.

"This time the horses were such wretched animals that it would have been out of conscience to expect anything more than a walk from them. It took six more hours to go from Pontedera to Empoli.

"Arrived at Empoli the driver stopped, and presented himself at the door of the carriage.

"'Your excellence sleeps here,' said he to the prince.

"'How! are we at Florence?'

"'No, your excellence, you are at the charming little town of Empoli.'

"'I paid twelve piastres to your master to go to Florence, not to Empoli. I will sleep at Florence.'

"'Where is the paper?'

"'To the devil with your paper!'

"'Your excellence then has no paper?'

"'No.'

"'In that case, your excellence now will sleep at Empoli!'

"In a few minutes afterwards the prince found himself driven under a kind of archway. It was a coach-house belonging to an inn. On his expressing surprise at being driven into this sort of place, and repeating his determination to proceed to Florence, the coachman said, that, at all events, he must change his horses; and that this was the most convenient place for so doing. In fact, he took out his horses, and led them away.

"After waiting some time for his return, the prince called to Frantz, and bade him open the door of this coach-house, and bring somebody.

"Frantz obeyed, but found the door shut—fastened.

"On hearing that they were shut in, the prince started from the carriage, shook the gates with all his might, called out lustily, and looked about, but in vain, for some paving stone with which to batter them open.

"Now the prince was a man of admirable good sense; so, having satisfied himself that the people in the house either could not, or would not hear him, he determined to make the best of his position. Re-entering the carriage, he drew up the glasses, looked to his pistols, stretched out his legs, and wishing his mother good night, went off to sleep. Frantz did the same on his post. The princess was not so fortunate; she was in perpetual terror of some ambush, and kept her eyes wide open all the night.

"So the night passed. At seven o'clock in the morning the door of the coach-house opened, and a driver appeared with a couple of horses.

"'Are there not some travellers for Florence here?' he asked with the tone of perfect politeness, and as if he were putting the most natural question in the world.

"The prince leapt from the carriage with the intention of strangling the man—but it was another driver!

"'Where is the rascal that brought us here?' he demanded.

"'What, Peppino? Does your excellence mean Peppino?'

"'The driver from Pontedera?'

"'Ah, well, that was Peppino.'

"'Then where is Peppino?'

"'He is on his road home. Yes, your excellence. You see it was the fête of the Madonna, and we danced and drank together—I and Peppino—all the night; and this morning about an hour ago says he to me, 'Gaetano, do you take your horses, and go find two travellers and a servant who are under a coach-house at the *Croix d'Or*; all is paid except the *buona-mano*.' And I asked him, your excellence, how it happened that travellers were sleeping in a coach-house instead of in a chamber. 'Oh,' said he, 'they are English—they are afraid of not having clean sheets, and so they prefer to sleep in their carriage in the coach-house.' Now as I know the English are a nation of originals, I supposed it was all right, and so I emptied another flask, and got my horses, and here I am. If I am too early I will return, and come by and by.

"'No, no, in the devil's name,' said the prince, 'harness your beasts, and do not lose a moment. There is a piastre for your *buona-mano*.'

"They were soon at Florence.

"The first care of the prince, after having breakfasted, for neither he nor the princess had eaten any thing since they had left Livorno, was to lay his complaint before a magistrate.

"'Where is the paper?' said the judicial authority.

"'I have none,' said the prince.

"'Then I counsel you,' replied the judge, 'to let the matter drop. Only the next time give five piastres to the master, and a piastre and a half to the driver; you will save five piastres and a half, and arrive eighteen hours sooner.'"—P. 97.

M. Dumas, however, arrives at Florence without any such disagreeable adventure as sleeping in a coach-house. He gives a pleasing description of the Florentine people, amongst whom the spirit of commerce has died away, but left behind a considerable share of the wealth and luxury that sprang from it. There is little spirit of enterprise; no rivalry between a class enriching itself and the class with whom wealth is hereditary; the jewels that were purchased under the reign of the Medici still shine without competitors on the promenade and at the opera. It is a people that has made its fortune, and lives contentedly on its revenues, and on what it gets from the stranger. "The first want of a Florentine," says our author, "is repose; even pleasure is secondary; it costs him some little effort to be amused. Wearied of its frequent political convulsions, the town of the Medici aspires only to that unbroken and enchanted slumber which fell, as the fairy tale informs us, on the beautiful lady in the sleepy wood. No one here seems to labour, except those who are tolling and ringing the church-bells, and they indeed appear to have rest neither day nor night."

There are but three classes visible in Florence. The nobility—the foreigner—and the people. The nobility, a few princely houses excepted, spend but little, the people work but little, and it would be a marvel how these last lived if it were not for the foreigner. Every autumn brings them their harvest in the shape of a swarm of travellers from England, France, or Russia, and, we may now add, America. The winter pays for the long delicious indolence of the summer. Then the populace lounges, with interminable leisure, in their churches, on their promenades, round the doors of coffee-houses that are never closed either day or night; they follow their religious processions; they cluster with an easy good-natured curiosity round every thing that wears the appearance of a fête; taking whatever amusement presents itself, without caring to detain it, and quitting it without the least distrust that some other quite as good will occupy its place. "One evening we were roused," says our traveller, "by a noise in the street: two or three musicians of the opera, on leaving the theatre, had taken a fancy to go home playing a waltz. The scattered population of the streets arranged themselves, and followed waltzing. The men who could find no better partners, waltzed together. Five or six hundred persons

were enjoying this impromptu ball, which kept its course from the opera house to the Port del Prato, where the last musician resided. The last musician having entered his house, the waltzers returned arm-in-arm, still humming the air to which they had been dancing."

> "It follows," continues M. Dumas, "from this commercial apathy, that at Florence you must seek after every thing you want. It never comes of itself—never presents itself before you;—everything there stays at home—rests in its own place. A foreigner who should remain only a month in the capital of Tuscany would carry away a very false idea of it. At first it seems impossible to procure the things the most indispensable, or those you do procure are bad; it is only after some time that you learn, and that not from the inhabitants, but from other foreigners who have resided there longer than yourself, where anything is to be got. At the end of six months you are still making discoveries of this sort; so that people generally quit Tuscany at the time they have learned to live there. It results from all this that every time you visit Florence you like it the better; if you should revisit it three or four times you would probably end by making of it a second country, and passing there the remainder of your lives."[2]

Shall we visit the churches of Florence with M. Dumas? No, we are not in the vein. Shall we go with him to the theatres—to the opera—to the Pergola? Yes, but not to discuss the music or the dancing. Every body knows that at the great theatres of Italy the fashionable part of the audience pay very little attention to the music, unless it be a new opera, but make compensation by listening devoutly to the ballet. The Pergola is the great resort of fashion. A box at the Pergola, and a carriage for the banks of the Arno, are the *indispensables*, we are told, at Florence. Who has these, may eat his macaroni where he pleases—may dine for sixpence if he will, or can: it is his own affair, the world is not concerned about it—he is still a gentleman, and ranks with nobles. Who has them not—though he be derived from the loins of emperors, and dine every day off plate of gold, and with a dozen courses—is still nobody. Therefore regulate your expenditure accordingly, all ye who would be somebody. We go with M. Dumas to the opera, not, as we have said, for the music or the dancing, but because, as is the way with dramatic authors, he will there introduce us, for the sake of contrast with an institution very different from that of an operatic company—

> "Sometimes in the midst of a cavatina or a *pas-de-deux*, a bell with a sharp, shrill, excoriating sound, will be heard; it is the bell *della misericordia*. Listen: if it sound but once, it is for some ordinary accident; if twice, for one of a serious nature; if it sounds three times, it is a case of death. If you look around, you will see a slight stir in some of the boxes, and it will often happen that the person you have been speaking to, if a Florentine, will excuse himself for leaving you, will quietly take his hat and depart. You inquire what that bell means, and why it produces so strange an effect. You are told it is the bell *della misericordia*, and that he with whom you were speaking is a brother of the order.
>
> "This brotherhood of mercy is one of the noblest institutions in the world. It was founded in 1244, on occasion of the frequent pestilences which at that period desolated the town, and it has been perpetuated to the present day, without any alteration, except in its details—with none in its purely charitable spirit. It is

[2] It is amusing to contrast the *artistic* manner in which our author makes all his statements, with the style of a guide-book, speaking on the manufactures and industry of Florence. It is from Richard's *Italy* we quote. Mark the exquisite medley of humdrum, matter-of-fact details, jotted down as if by some unconscious piece of mechanism:—"Florence *manufactures* excellent silks, woollen cloths, elegant carriages, bronze articles, earthenware, straw hats, perfumes, essences, *and candied fruits*; also, all kinds of turnery and inlaid work, piano-fortes, philosophical and mathematical instruments, &c. The dyes used at this city are much admired, particularly the black, *and its sausages are famous throughout all Italy*.

composed of seventy-two brothers, called chiefs of the watch, who are each in service four months in the year. Of these seventy-two brothers, thirty are priests, fourteen gentlemen, and twenty-eight artists. To these, who represent the aristocratic classes and the liberal arts, are added 500 labourers and workmen, who may be said to represent the people.

"The seat of the brotherhood is in the place *del Duomo*. Each brother has there, marked with his own name, a box enclosing a black robe like that of the *penitents*, with openings only for the eyes and mouth, in order that his good actions may have the further merit of being performed in secret. Immediately that the news of any accident or disaster is brought to the brother who is upon guard, the bell sounds its alarm, once, twice, or thrice, according to the gravity of the case; and at the sound of the bell every brother, wherever he may be, is bound to retire at the instant, and hasten to the rendezvous. There he learns what misfortune or what suffering has claimed his pious offices; he puts on his black robe and a broad hat, takes the taper in his hand, and goes forth where the voice of misery has called him. If it is some wounded man, they bear him to the hospital; if the man is dead, to a chapel: the nobleman and the day labourer, clothed with the same robe, support together the same litter, and the link which unites these two extremes of society is some sick pauper, who, knowing neither, is praying equally for both. And when these brothers of mercy have quitted the house, the children whose father they have carried out, or the wife whose husband they have borne away, have but to look around them, and always, on some worm-eaten piece of furniture, there will be found a pious alms, deposited by an unknown hand.

"The Grand-duke himself is a member of this fraternity, and I have been assured that more than once, at the sound of that melancholy bell, he has clothed himself in the uniform of charity, and penetrated unknown, side by side with a day-labourer, to the bed's head of some dying wretch, and that his presence had afterwards been detected only by the alms he had left behind."—p. 126.

It is not to be supposed that our dramatist pursues the same direct and unadventurous route that lies open to every citizen of Paris and London. At the end of the first volume we leave him still at Florence; we open the second, and we find him and his companion Jadin, and his companion's dog Milord, standing at the port of Naples, looking out for some vessel to take them to Sicily. So that we have travels in Italy with Rome left out. Not that he did not visit Rome, but that we have no "souvenirs" of his visit here. As the book is a mere *capriccio*, there can be no possible objection taken to it on this score. Besides, the island of Sicily, which becomes the chief scene of his adventures, is less beaten ground. Nor do we hear much of Naples, for he quits Naples almost as soon as he had entered it. This last fact requires explanation.

M. Dumas has had the honour to be an object of terror or of animosity to crowned heads. When at Genoa, his Sardinian Majesty manifested this hostility to M. Dumas—we presume on account of his too liberal politics—by dispatching an emissary of the police to notify to him that he must immediately depart from Genoa. Which emissary of his Sardinian Majesty had no sooner delivered his royal sentence of deportation, than he extended his hand for a *pour boire*. Either M. Dumas must be a far more formidable person than we have any notion of, or majesty can be very nervous, or very spiteful. And now, when he is about to enter Naples——but why do we presume to relate M. Dumas's personal adventures in any other language than his own? or language as near his own as we—who are, we must confess, imperfect translators—can hope to give.

"The very evening of our arrival at Naples, Jadin and I ran to the port to enquire if by chance any vessel, whether steam-boat or sailing packet, would leave

on the morrow for Sicily. As it is not the ordinary custom for travellers to go to Naples to remain there a few hours only, let me say a word on the circumstance that compelled us to this hasty departure.

"We had left Paris with the intention of traversing the whole of Italy, including Sicily and Calabria; and, putting this project into scrupulous execution, we had already visited Nice, Genoa, Milan, Florence, and Rome, when, after a sojourn of about three weeks at this last city, I had the honour to meet, at the Marquis de P——'s, our own *chargé des affaires*, the Count de Ludorf, the Neapolitan ambassador. As I was to leave in a few days for Naples, the Marquis introduced me to his brother in diplomacy. M. de Ludorf received me with that cold and vacant smile which pledges to nothing; nevertheless, after this introduction, I thought myself bound to carry to him our passports myself. M. de Ludorf had the civility to tell me to deposit the passports at his office, and to call there for them the day after the morrow.

"Two days having elapsed, I accordingly presented myself at the office: I found a clerk there, who, with the utmost politeness, informed me that some difficulties having arisen on the subject of my *visa*, I had better make an application to the ambassador himself. I was obliged, therefore, whatever resolution I had made to the contrary, to present myself again to M. de Ludorf.

"I found the ambassador more cold, more measured than before, but reflecting that it would probably be the last time I should have the honour of seeing him, I resigned myself. He motioned to me to take a chair. This was some improvement upon the last visit; the last visit he left me standing.

"'Monsieur,' said he, with a certain air of embarrassment, and drawing out, one after the other, the folds of his shirt-front, 'I regret to say that you cannot go to Naples.'

"'Why so?' I replied, determined to impose upon our dialogue whatever tone I thought fit—'are the roads so bad?'

"'No, monsieur; the roads are excellent, but you have the misfortune to be on the list of those who cannot enter the kingdom of Naples.'

"'However honourable such a distinction may be, monsieur l'ambassadeur,' said I, suiting my tone to the words, 'it will at present be rather inconvenient, and I trust you will permit me to inquire into the cause of this prohibition. If it is nothing but one of those slight and vexatious interruptions which one meets with perpetually in Italy, I have some friends about the world who might have influence sufficient to remove it.'

"'The cause is one of a grave nature, and I doubt if your friends, of whatever rank they may be, will have influence to remove it.'

"'What may it be?'

"'In the first place, you are the son of General Matthieu Dumas, who was minister of war at Naples during the usurpation of Joseph.'

"'I am sorry,' I answered, 'to be obliged to decline any relationship with that illustrious general. My father was not General Matthieu, but General Alexandre Dumas. The same,' I continued, seeing that he was endeavouring to recall some reminiscences connected with the name of Dumas, 'who, after having been made prisoner at Tarentum, in contempt of the rights of hospitality, was poisoned at Brindisi, with Mauscourt and Dolomieu, in contempt of the rights of nations. This happened, monsieur l'ambassadeur, at the same time that they hanged Carracciolo in the Gulf of Naples. You see I do all I can to assist your recollection.'

"M. de Ludorf bit his lips.

"'Well, monsieur,' he resumed after a moment's silence, 'there is a second reason—your political opinions. You are marked out as a republican, and have quitted Paris, it is said, on some political design.'

"'To which I answer, monsieur, by showing you my letters of introduction. They bear nearly all the seals and signatures of our ministers. Here is one from the Admiral Jacob, another from Marshal Soult, another from M. de Villemain; they claim for me the aid of the French ambassador in any case of this description.'

"'Well, well,' said M. de Ludorf, 'since you have foreseen the very difficulty that has occurred, meet it with those means which are in your power. For me, I repeat, I cannot sign your passport. Those of your companions are quite regular; they can proceed when they please; but they must proceed without you.'

"'Has the Count de Ludorf' said I, rising, 'any commissions for Naples?'

"'Why so, monsieur?'

"'Because I shall have great pleasure in undertaking them.'

"'But I repeat, you cannot go to Naples.'

"'I shall be there in three days.'

"I wished M. de Ludorf good morning, and left him stupefied at my assurance."—Vol. ii. p. 5.

Our dramatical traveller ran immediately to a young friend, an artist then studying at Rome, and prevailed on him to take out a passport, in his own name for Naples. Fortified with this passport, and assuming the name of his friend, he left Rome that evening. The following day he reached Naples. But as he was exposed every moment to detection, it was necessary that he should pass over immediately to Sicily. The steam-boats at Naples, unlike the steam-boats every where else, start at no fixed period. The captain waits for his contingent of passengers, and till this has been obtained both he and his vessel are immovable. M. Dumas and his companion, therefore, hired a small sailing vessel, a *speronara* as it is called, in which they embarked the next morning. But before weighing anchor M. Dumas took from his portfolio the neatest, purest, whitest, sheet of paper that it contained, and indited the following letter to the Count de Ludorf:—

"Monsieur le Comte,

"I am distressed that your excellency did not think fit to charge me with your commissions for Naples. I should have executed them with a fidelity which would have convinced you of the grateful recollection I retain of your kind offices.

"Accept, M. le Comte, the assurance of those lively sentiments which I entertain towards you, and of which, one day or other, I hope to give you proof.

"ALEX. DUMAS."

"Naples, 23d Aug. 1835."

With the crew of this *speronara* we became as familiar as with the personages of a novel; and, indeed, about this time the novelist begins to predominate over the tourist.

On leaving the bay of Naples our traveller first makes for the island of Capri. The greatest curiosity which he here visits and describes in the *azure grotto*. He and his companion are rowed, each in a small skiff, to a narrow dark aperture upon the rocky coast, and which appears the darker from its contrast with the white surf that is dashing about it. He is told to lie down on his back in the boat, to protect his head from a concussion against the low roof.

"In a moment after I was borne upon the surge—the bark glided on with rapidity—I saw nothing but a dark rock, which seemed for a second to be weighing on my chest. Then on a sudden I found myself in a grotto so marvellous that I

uttered a cry of astonishment, and started up in my admiration with a bound which endangered the frail bark on which I stood.

"I had before me, around me, above me, beneath me, a perfect enchantment, which words cannot describe, and which the pencil would utterly fail to give any impression of. Imagine an immense cavern, all pure azure—as if God had made a tent there with some residue of the firmament; a surface of water so limpid, so transparent, that you seem to float on air: above you, the pendant stalactites, huge and fantastical, reversed pyramids and pinnacles: below you a sand of gold mingled with marine vegetation; and around the margin of cave, where it is bathed by the water, the coral shooting out its capricious and glittering branches. That narrow entrance which, from the sea, showed like a dark spot, now shone at one end a luminous point, the solitary star which gave its subdued light to this fairy palace; whilst at the opposite extremity a sort of alcove led on the imagination to expect new wonders, or perhaps the apparition of the nymph or goddess of the place.

"In all probability the azure grotto was unknown to the ancients. No poet speaks of it; and surely with their marvellous imagination the Greeks could not have failed to make it the palace of some marine goddess, and to have transmitted to us her history. The sea, perhaps, was higher than it is now, and the secrets of this cave were known only to Amphitrite and her court of sirens, naiads, and tritons.

"Even now at times the sea rises and closes the orifice, so that those who have entered cannot escape. In which case they must wait till the wind, which had suddenly shifted to the east or west, returns to the north or south; and it has happened that visitors who came to spend twenty minutes in the azure grotto, have remained there two, three, and even four days. To provide against such an emergency, the boatmen always bring with them a certain quantity of biscuit to feed the prisoners, and as the rock affords fresh water in several places, there is no fear of thirst. It was not till we had been in the grotto some time that our boatmen communicated this piece of information; we were disposed to reproach them for this delay, but they answered with the utmost simplicity, that if they told this at first to travellers, half of them would decline coming, and this would injure the boatmen.

"I confess that this little piece of information raised a certain disquietude, and I found the azure grotto infinitely less agreeable to the imagination.... We again laid ourselves down at the bottom of our respective canoes, and issued forth with the same precautions, and the same good fortune, with which we had entered. But we were some minutes before we could open our eyes; the burning sun upon the glittering ocean absolutely blinded us. We had not gone many yards, however, before the eye recovered itself, and all that we had seen in the azure grotto had the consistency of a dream."

From Capri our travellers proceed to Sicily. We have a long story and a violent storm upon the passage, and are landed at Messina. Here M. Dumas enlarges his experience by an acquaintance with the *Sirocco*. His companion, M. Jadin, had been taken ill, and a physician had been called in.

"The doctor had ordered that the patient (who was suffering under a fever) should be exposed to all the air possible, that doors and windows should be opened, and he should be placed in the current. This was done; but on the present evening, to my astonishment, instead of the fresh breeze of the night—which was wont to blow the fresher from our neighbourhood to the sea—there entered at the open window a dry hot wind like the air from a furnace. I waited for the morning, but the morning brought no change in the state of the atmosphere.

"My patient had suffered greatly through the night. I rang the bell for some lemonade, the only drink the doctor had recommended; but no one answered the summons. I rang again, and a third time: still no one came; at length seeing that the mountain would not come to me, I went to the mountain. I wandered through the corridor, and entered apartment after apartment, and found no one to address. It was nine o'clock in the morning, yet the master and mistress of the house had not left their room, and not a domestic was at his post. It was quite incomprehensible.

"I descended to the portico; I found him lying on an old sofa all in tatters, the principal ornament of his room, and asked him why the house was thus deserted.

"'Ah, monsieur!' said he, 'do you not feel the sirocco?'

"'Sirocco or not, is this a reason why no one should come when I call?'

"'Oh, monsieur, when it is sirocco no one does any thing!'

"'And your travellers, who is to wait upon them?'

"'On those days they wait upon themselves.'

"I begged pardon of this respectable official for having disturbed him; he heaved such a sigh as indicated that it required a great amount of Christian charity to grant the pardon I had asked.

"The hour arrived when the doctor should have paid his visit, and no doctor came. I presumed that the sirocco detained him also; but as the state of Jadin appeared to me alarming, I resolved to go and rouse my Esculapius, and bring him, willing or unwilling, to the hotel. I took my hat and sallied forth.

"Messina had the appearance of a city of the dead: not an inhabitant was walking in the streets, not a head was seen at the windows. The mendicants themselves (and he who has not seen the Sicilian mendicant, knows not what wretchedness is,) lay in the corners of the streets, stretched out, doubled up, panting, without strength to stretch out their hand for charity, or voice to ask an alms. Pompeii, which I visited three months afterwards, was not more silent, more solitary, more inanimate.

"I reached the doctor's. I rang, I knocked, no one answered. I pushed against the door, it opened;—I entered, and pursued my search for the doctor.

"I traversed three or four apartments. There were women lying upon sofas, and children sprawling on the floor. Not one even raised a head to look at me. At last, in one of the rooms, the door of which was, like the rest, half-open, I found the man I was in quest of, stretched upon his bed.

"I went up to him, I took him by the hand, and felt his pulse.

"'Ah,' said he, with a melancholy voice, and scarcely turning his head towards me, 'Is that you? What can you want?'

"'Want!--I want you to come and see my friend, who is no better, as it seems to me.'

"'Go and see your friend!' cried the doctor, in a fright—'impossible!'

"'Why impossible?'

"He made a desperate effort to move, and taking his cane in his left hand, passed his right hand slowly down it, from the golden head that adorned it to the other extremity. 'Look you,' said he, 'my cane sweats.'

"And, in fact, there fell some globules of water from it, such an effect has this terrible wind even on inanimate things.

"'Well,' said I, 'and what does that prove?'

"'That proves, that at such a time as this, there are no physicians, all are patients.[3]'"—P. 175.

Seeing there was no chance of bringing the doctor to the hotel, unless he carried him there by main force, Mr Dumas contented himself with relating the symptoms of his friend. To drink lemonade—much lemonade—all the lemonade he could swallow, was the only prescription that the physician gave. And the simple remedy seems to have sufficed; for the patient shortly after recovered.

Not the least agreeable portion of these travels, is the pleasant impression they leave of the traveller himself, one who has his humours doubtless, but who is social, buoyant, brave, generous, and enterprising. A Frenchman—as a chemist, in his peculiar language, would say—is a creature "endowed with a considerable range of affinity." Our traveller has this range of affinity; he wins the heart of all and several—the crew of his *speronara.* We will close with the following extract, both because it shows the frank and lively feelings of the Frenchman, and because it introduces a name dear to all lovers of melody. The father of Bellini was a Sicilian, and Dumas was in Sicily.

"It was while standing on this spot, that I asked my guide if he knew the father of Bellini. At this question he turned, and pointing out to me an old man who was passing in a little carriage drawn by one horse—'Look you,' said he, 'there he is, taking his ride into the country!'

"I ran to the carriage and stopped it, knowing that he is never intrusive who speaks to a father of his son, and of such a son as Bellini's. At the first mention of his name, the old man took me by both hands, and asked me eagerly if I really knew his son. I drew from my portfolio a letter of introduction, which, on my departure from Paris, Bellini had given me for the Duchess de Noja, and asked him if he knew the handwriting. He took the letter in his hands, and answered only by kissing the superscription.

"'Ah,' said he, turning round to me, 'you know not how good he is! We are not rich. Well, at each success there comes some remembrance, something to add to the ease and comfort of an old man. If you will come home with me, I will show you how many things I owe to his goodness. Every success brings something new. This watch I carry with me, was from *Norma*; this little carriage and horse, from *the Puritans*. In every letter that he writes, he says that he will come; but Paris is far from Sicily. I do not trust to this promise—I am afraid that I shall die without seeing him again. You will see him, you——'

"'Yes,' I answered, 'and if you have any commission——'

[3] The extreme misery of the paupers in Sicily, who form, he tells us, a tenth part of the population, quite haunts the imagination of M. Dumas. He recurs to it several times. At one place he witnesses the distribution, at the door of a convent, of soup to these poor wretches, and gives a terrible description of the famine-stricken group. "All these creatures," he continues, "had eaten nothing since yesterday evening. They had come there to receive their porringer of soup, as they had come to-day, as they would come to-morrow. This was all their nourishment for twenty-four hours, unless some of them might obtain a few *grani* from their fellow-citizens, or the compassion of strangers; but this is very rare, as the Syracusans are familiarized with the spectacle, and few strangers visit Syracuse. When the distributor of this blessed soup appeared, there were unheard-of cries, and each one rushed forward with his wooden bowl in his hand. Only there were some too feeble to exclaim, or to run, and who dragged themselves forward, groaning, upon their hands and knees. There was in the midst of all, a child clothed, not in anything that could be called a shirt, but a kind of spider's web, with a thousand holes, who had no wooden bowl, and who wept with hunger. It stretched out its poor little meagre hands, and joined them together, to supply as well as it could, by this natural receptacle, the absent bowl. The cook poured in a spoonful of the soup. The soup was boiling, and burned the child's hand. It uttered a cry of pain, and was compelled to open its fingers, and the soup fell upon the pavement. The child threw itself on all fours, and began to eat in the manner of a dog."—Vol. iii. p. 58.And in another place he says, "Alas, this cry of hunger! it is the eternal cry of Sicily; I have heard nothing else for three months. There are miserable wretches, whose hunger has never been appeased, from the day when, lying in their cradle, they began to draw the milk from their exhausted mothers, to the last hour when, stretched on their bed of death, they have expired endeavouring to swallow the sacred host which the priest had laid upon their lips. Horrible to think of! there are human beings to whom, to have eaten once sufficiently, would be a remembrance for all their lives to come."—Vol. iv. p. 108.

"'No—what should I send him?—My blessing?—Dear boy, I give it him night and morning. But tell him you have given me a happy day by speaking to me of him—tell him that I embraced you as an old friend—(and he embraced me)—but you need not say that I was in tears. Besides,' he added, 'it is with joy that I weep.—And is it true that my son has a reputation?'

"'Indeed a very great reputation.'

"'How strange!' said the old man, 'who would have thought it, when I used to scold him, because, instead of working, he would be eternally beating time, and teaching his sister all the old Sicilian airs! Well, these things are written above. I wish I could see him before I die.—But your name?' he added, 'I have forgotten all this time to ask your name.'

"I told him: it woke no recollection.

"'Alexandre Dumas, Alexandre Dumas,' he repeated two or three times, 'I shall recollect that he who bears that name has given me good news of my son. Adieu! Alexandre Dumas—I shall recollect that name—Adieu!'

"Poor old man! I am sure he has not forgotten it; for the news I gave him of his son was the last he was ever to receive."—P. 226.

Sicily is one of those *romantic* countries, where you may still meet with adventures in your travels, where you may be shot at by banditti with pointed hats and long guns. M. Dumas passes not without his share of such adventures. Perhaps, as Sicily is less trodden ground than Italy, his "Souvenirs" will be found more interesting as he proceeds. We have naturally taken our quotations in the order in which they presented themselves, and we have not advanced further than the second of the five delectably small volumes in which these travels are printed. Would our space permit us to proceed, it is probable that our extracts would increase, instead of diminishing, in interest.

AMMALÁT BEK

A TRUE TALE OF THE CAUCASUS. FROM THE RUSSIAN OF MARLÍNSKI

CHAPTER VI

Fragments from the Diary of Ammalát Bek.—Translated from the Tartar.

... Have I been asleep till now, or am I now in a dream?... This, then, is the new world called *thought*!... O beautiful world! thou hast long been to me cloudy and confused, like the milky way, which, they say, consists of thousands of glittering stars! It seems to me that I am ascending the mountain of knowledge from the valley of darkness and ignorance; each step opens to me views further and more extensive.... My breast breathes freer, I gaze in the face of the sun.... I look below —the clouds murmur under my feet!... annoying clouds! You prevent me from seeing the heavens from the earth; from the heaven to look upon the earth!

I wonder how the commonest questions, *whence* and *how*, never before came into my head? All God's world, with every thing in it good or evil, was seen reflected in my soul as in the sea: I only knew as much of it as the sea does, or a mirror. In my memory, it is true, much was preserved: but to what end did this serve? Does the hawk understand why the hood is put on his head? Does the steed understand why they shoe him? Did I understand why in one place mountains are necessary, in another steppes, here eternal snows, there oceans of sand? Why storms and earthquakes were necessary? And thou, most wondrous being, Man! it never has entered my head to follow thee from thy cradle, suspended on a wandering mule, to that magnificent city which I have never seen, and which I am enchanted merely to have heard of!... I confess that I am already delighted with the mere outside of a book, without understanding the meaning of the mysterious letters ... but V. not only makes knowledge attractive, but gives me the means of acquiring it. With him, as a young swallow with its mother, I try my new wings.... The distance and the height still astonish, but no longer alarm me. The time will come when I shall mount upwards to the heavens!...

... But yet, am I happy because V. and his books teach me to think? The time was, when a spirited steed, a costly sabre, a good gun, delighted me like a child. Now, that I know the superiority of mind over body, my former pride in shooting or horsemanship appears to me ridiculous—nay, even contemptible. Is it worth while to devote oneself to a trade, in which the meanest broad-shouldered noúker can surpass me?... Is it worth while to seek honour and happiness, of which the first wound may deprive me—the first awkward leap? They have taken from me this plaything, but with what have they replaced it?... With new wants, with new wishes, which Allah himself can neither weary nor satisfy. I thought myself a man of consequence; but now I am convinced of my own nothingness. Formerly, to my memory, my grandfather and great-grandfather were at the beginning of the night of the past, with its stories and dreaming traditions.... The Caucasus contained my world, and I peacefully slept in that night. I thought to be famous in Daghestán—the height of glory. And what then? History has peopled my former desert with nations, shattering each other for glory; with heroes, terrifying the nations by valour to which we can never rise. And where are they? Half forgotten, they have vanished in the dust of ages. The description of the earth shows me that the Tartars occupy a little corner of the world; that they are miserable savages in comparison with the European nations; and that of the existence, not only of their brave warriors, but of the whole nation, nobody thinks, nobody knows,

nobody wishes to know. It is worth while to be a glow-worm amongst insects. Was it worth while to expand my mind, in order to be convinced of such a bitter truth?

What is the use of a knowledge of the powers of nature to me, when I cannot change my soul, master my heart? The sea teaches me to build dykes—but I cannot restrain my tears!... I can conduct the lightning from the roof, but I cannot throw off my sorrows! Was I not unhappy enough from my feelings alone, without calling around me my thoughts, like greedy vultures? What does the sick man gain by knowing that his disease is incurable?... The tortures of my hopeless love have become sharper, more piercing, more various, since my intellect has been enlightened.

No! I am unjust. Reading shortens for me the long winter-like night—the hours of separation. In teaching me to fix on paper my flying thoughts, V. has given me a heartfelt enjoyment. Some day I shall meet Seltanetta, and I shall show her these pages; in which her name is written oftener than that of Allah in the Korán. "These are the annals of my heart," I shall say: "Look! on such a day thus thought about you—on such a night, I saw you thus in my dreams! By these little leaves, as by a string of diamond beads, you may count my sighs, my tears for you." O lovely, and beloved being! you will often smile at my strange phantasies—long will they supply matter for our conversations. But, by your side, enchantress, shall I be able to remember the past?... No, no!... Every thing before me, every thing around me, will then fade away, except the present bliss—to be with you! O, how burning, and how light will my soul be! Liquid sunshine will flow in my veins—I shall float in heaven, like the sun! To forget all by your side is a bliss prouder than the highest wisdom!

I have read stories of love, of the charms of woman—of the perfidy of man—but no heroine approaches my Seltanetta in loveliness of soul or body—not one of the heroes do I resemble—I envy them the fascination, I admire the wisdom of lovers in books—but then, how weak, how cold is their love! It is a moonbeam playing on ice! Whence come these European babblers of Tharsis—these nightingales of the market-place—these sugared confections of flowers? I cannot believe that people can love passionately, and prate of their love—even as a hired mourner laments over the dead. The spendthrift casts his treasure by handfuls to the wind; the lover hides it, nurses it, buries it in his heart like a hoard.

I am yet young, and I ask "what is friendship?" I have a friend in V.—a loving, real, thoughtful friend; yet I am not *his* friend. I feel it, I reproach myself that I do not reciprocate his regard as I ought, as he deserves—but is in my power? In my soul there is no room for any one but Seltanetta —in my heart there is no feeling but love.

No! I cannot read, I cannot understand what the Colonel explains to me. I cheated myself when I thought that the ladder of science could be climbed by me ... I am weary at the first steps, I lose my way on the first difficulty, I entangle the threads, instead of unravelling them—I pull and tear them—and I carry off nothing of the prey but a few fragments. The *hope* which the Colonel held out to me I mistook for my own progress. But who—what—impedes this progress? That which makes the happiness and misery of my life—love. In every place, in every thing, I hear and see Seltanetta —and often Seltanetta alone. To banish her from my thoughts I should consider sacrilege; and, even if I wished, I could not perform the resolution. Can I see without light? Can I breathe without air? Seltanetta is my light, my air, my life, my soul!

My hand trembles—my heart flutters in my bosom. If I wrote with my blood, 'twould scorch the paper. Seltanetta! your image pursues me dreaming or awake. The image of your charms is more dangerous than the reality. The thought that I may never possess them, touch them, see them, perhaps, plunges me into an incessant melancholy—at once I melt and burn. I recall each lovely feature, each attitude of your exquisite person—that little foot, the seal of love, that bosom, the gem of bliss! The remembrance of your voice makes my soul thrill like the chord of an instrument—ready to burst from the clearness of its tone—and your kiss! that kiss in which I drank your soul! It showers roses and coals of fire upon my lonely bed—I burn—my hot lips are tortured by the thirst for caresses—

my hand longs to clasp your waist—to touch your knees! Oh, come—Oh, fly to me—that I may die in delight, as now I do in weariness!

Colonel Verkhóffsky, endeavouring by every possible means to divert Ammalát's grief, thought of amusing him with a boar-hunt, the favourite occupation of the Beks of Daghestán. In answer to his summons, there assembled about twenty persons, each attended by his noúkers, each eager to try his fortune, or to gallop about the field and vaunt his courage. Already had grey December covered the tops of the surrounding mountains with the first-fallen snow. Here and there in the streets of Derbénd lay a crust of ice, but over it the mud rolled in sluggish waves along the uneven pavement. The sea lazily plashed against the sunken turrets of the walls which descended to the water, a flock of bustards and of geese whizzed through the fog, and flew with a complaining cry above the ramparts; all was dark and melancholy—even the dull and tiresome braying of the asses laden with faggots for the market, sounded like a dirge over the fine weather. The old Tartars sat in the bazárs, wrapping their shoubes over their noses. But this is exactly the weather most favourable to hunters. Hardly had the moóllahs of the town proclaimed the hour of prayer, when the Colonel, attended by several of his officers, the Beks of the city, and Ammalát, rode, or rather swam, through the mud, leaving the town in the direction of the north, through the principal gate Keerkhlár Kápi, which is covered with iron plates. The road leading to Tárki is rude in appearance, bordered for a few paces to the right and left with beds of madder—beyond them lie vast burying-grounds, and further still towards the sea, scattered gardens. But the appearance of the suburbs is a great deal more magnificent than those of the Southern ones. To the left, on the rocks were seen the Keifárs, or barracks of the regiment of Koúrin; while on both sides of the road, fragments of rock lay in picturesque disorder, rolled down in heaps by the violence of the mountain-torrents. A forest of ilex, covered with hoar-frost, thickened as it approached Vellikent, and at each verst the retinue of Verkhóffsky was swelled by fresh arrivals of *Beglar* and *Agalar*[4]. The hunting party now turned to the left, and they speedily heard the cry of the *ghayálstchiks*[5] assembled from the surrounding villages. The hunters formed into an extended chain, some on horseback, and some running on foot; and soon the wild-boars also began to show themselves.

The umbrageous oak-forests of Daghestán have served, from time immemorial, as a covert for innumerable herds of wild hogs; and although the Tartars—like the Mussulmans—hold it a sin not only to eat, but even to touch the unclean animal, they consider it a praiseworthy act to destroy them—at least they practise the art of shooting on these beasts, as well as exhibit their courage, because the chase of the wild-boar is accompanied by great danger, and requires cunning and bravery.

The lengthened chain of hunters occupied a wide extent of ground; the most fearless marksmen selecting the most solitary posts, in order to divide with no one else the glory of success, and also because the animals make for those points where there are fewer people. Colonel Verkhóffsky, confident in his gigantic strength and sure eye, posted himself in the thickest of the wood, and halted at a small savannah to which converged the tracks of numerous wild-boars. Perfectly alone, leaning against the branch of a fallen tree, he awaited his game. Interrupted shots were heard on the right and left of his station; for a moment a wild-boar appeared behind the trees; at length the bursting crash of falling underwood was heard, and immediately a boar of uncommon size darted across the field like a ball fired from a cannon. The Colonel took his aim, the bullet whistled, and the wounded monster suddenly halted, as if in surprise—but this was but for an instant—he dashed furiously in the direction whence came the shot. The froth smoked from his red-hot tusks, his eye burned in blood, and he flew at the enemy with a grunt. But Verkhóffsky showed no alarm, waiting for the nearer approach of the brute: a second time clicked the cock of his gun—but the powder was damp and missed fire. What now remained for the hunter? He had not even a dagger at his girdle—flight would have been

[4] *Lar* is the Tartar plural of all substantives.

[5] Beaters for the game.

useless. As if by the anger of fate, not a single thick tree was near him—only one dry branch arose from the oak against which he had leaned; and Verkhóffsky threw himself on it as the only means of avoiding destruction. Hardly had he time to clamber an arschine and a half[6] from the ground, when the boar, enraged to fury, struck the branch with his tusks—it cracked from the force of the blow and the weight which was supported by it.... It was in vain that Verkhóffsky tried to climb higher—the bark was covered with ice—his hands slipped—he was sliding downwards; but the beast did not quit the tree—he gnawed it—he attacked it with his sharp tusks a *tchétverin* below the feet of the hunter. Every instant Verkhóffsky expected to be sacrificed, and his voice died away in the lonely space in vain. No, not in vain! The sound of a horse's hoofs was heard close at hand, and Ammalát Bek galloped up at full speed with uplifted sabre. Perceiving a new enemy, the wild-boar turned at him, but a sideway leap of the horse decided the battle—a blow from Ammalát hurled him on the earth.

The rescued Colonel hurried to embrace his friend, but the latter was slashing, mangling, in a fit of rage, the slain beast. "I accept not unmerited thanks," he answered at length, turning from the Colonel's embrace. "This same boar gored before my eyes a Bek of Tabasóran, my friend, when he, having missed him, had entangled his foot in the stirrup. I burned with anger when I saw my comrade's blood, and flew in pursuit of the boar. The closeness of the wood prevented me from following his track; I had quite lost him; and God has brought me hither to slay the accursed brute, when he was on the point of sacrificing a yet nobler victim—you, my benefactor."

"Now we are quits, dear Ammalát. Do not talk of past events. This day our teeth shall avenge us on this tusked foe. I hope you will not refuse to taste the forbidden meat, Ammalát?"

"Not I! nor to wash it down with champagne, Colonel. Without offence to Mahomet, I had rather strengthen my soul with the foam of the wine, than with the water of the true believer."

The hunt now turned to the other side. From afar were heard cries and hallooing, and the drums of the Tartars in the chase. From time to time shots rang through the air. A horse was led up to the Colonel: and he, feasting his sight with the boar, which was almost cut in two, patted Ammalát on the shoulder, crying "A brave blow!"

"In that blow exploded my revenge," answered the Bek; "and the revenge of an Asiatic is heavy."

"You have seen, you have witnessed," replied the Colonel, "how injury is avenged by Russians—that is, by Christians; let this be not a reproach, but—a lesson to you."

And they both galloped off towards the Line.

Ammalát was remarkably absent—sometimes he did not answer at all—at others, he answered incoherently to the questions of Verkhóffsky, by whom he rode, gazing abstractedly around him. The Colonel, thinking that, like an eager hunter, he was engrossed by the sport, left him, and rode forward. At last, Ammalát perceived him whom he was so impatiently expecting, his hemdjék, Saphir Ali, flew to meet him, covered with mud, and mounted on a smoking horse. With cries of "Aleikoúm Selam," they both jumped off their horses, and were immediately locked in each other's embrace.

"And so you have been there—you have seen her—you have spoken to her?" cried Ammalát, tearing off his kaftán, and choking with agitation. "I see by your face that you bring good news; here is my new *tchoukhá*[7] for you for that. Does she live? Is she well? Does she love me as before?"

"Let me recollect myself," answered Saphir Ali. "Let me take breath. You have put so many questions, and I myself are charged with so many commissions, that they are crowding together like old women at the door of the mosque, who have lost their shoes. First, at your desire, I have been to Khounzákh. I crept along so softly, that I did not scare a single thrush by the road. Sultan Akhmet Khan is well, and at home. He asked about you with great anxiety, shook his head, and enquired if you did not want a spindle to dry the silk of Derbénd. The khánsha sends you tchokh selammóum,

[6] Rather less than an English yard.

[7] The Tartars have an invariable custom, of taking off some part of their dress and giving it to the bearer of good news.

(many compliments,) and as many sweet cakes. I threw them away, the confounded things, at the first resting-place. Soúrkhai-Khan, Noutzal-Khan"——

"The devil take them all! What about Seltanetta?"

"Aha! at last I have touched the chilblain of your heart. Seltanetta, my dear Ammalát, is as beautiful as the starry sky; but in that heaven I saw no light, until I conversed about you. Then she almost threw herself on my neck when we were left alone together, and I explained the cause of my arrival. I gave her a camel-load of compliments from you—told her that you were almost dead with love—poor fellow!--and she burst into tears!"

"Kind, lovely soul! What did she tell you to say to me?"

"Better ask what she did not. She says that, from the time that you left her, she has never rejoiced even in her dreams; that the winter snow has fallen on her heart, and that nothing but a meeting with her beloved, like a vernal sun, can melt it.... But if I were to continue to the end of her messages, and you were to wait to the end of my story, we should both reach Derbénd with grey beards. Spite of all this, she almost drove me away, hurrying me off, lest you should doubt her love!"

"Darling of my soul! you know not—I cannot explain what bliss it is to be with thee, what torment to be separated from thee, not to see thee!"

"That is exactly the thing, Ammalát; she grieves that she cannot rejoice her eyes with a sight of him whom she never can be weary of gazing at. 'Is it possible,' she says, 'that he cannot come but for one little day, for one short hour, one little moment?'"

"To look on her, and then die, I would be content!"

"Ah, when you behold her, you will wish to live. She is become quieter than she was of old; but even yet she is so lively, that when you see her your blood sparkles within you."

"Did you tell her why it is not in my power to do her will, and to accomplish my own passionate desire?"

"I related such tales that you would have thought me the Shah of Persia's chief poet. Seltanetta shed tears like a fountain after rain. She does nothing else but weep."

"Why, then, reduce her to despair? 'I cannot now' does not mean 'it is for ever impossible.' You know what a woman's heart is, Saphir Ali: for them the end of hope is the end of love."

"You sow words on the wind, djanníon (my soul.) Hope, for lovers, is a skein of worsted—endless. In cool blood, you do not even trust your eyes; but fall in love, and you will believe in ghosts. I think that Seltanetta would hope that you could ride to her from your coffin—not only from Derbénd."

"And how is Derbénd better than a coffin to me? Does not my heart feel its decay, without power to escape it? Here is only my corpse: my soul is far away."

"It seems that your senses often take the whim of walking I know not where, dear Ammalát. Are you not well at Verkhóffsky's—free and contented? beloved as a younger brother, caressed like a bride? Grant that Seltanetta is lovely: there are not many Verkhóffskys. Cannot you sacrifice to friendship a little part of love?"

"Am not I then doing so, Saphir Ali? But if you knew how much it costs me! It is as if I tore my heart to pieces. Friendship is a lovely thing, but it cannot fill the place of love."

"At least, it can console us for love—it can relieve it. Have you spoken about this to the Colonel?"

"I cannot prevail on myself to do so. The words die on my lips, when I would speak of my love. He is so wise, that I am ashamed to annoy him with my madness. He is so kind, that I dare not abuse his patience. To say the truth, his frankness invites, encourages mine. Figure to yourself that he has been in love since his childhood with a maiden, to whom he was plighted, and whom he certainly would have married if his name had not been by mistake put into a list of killed during the war with the Feringhis. His bride shed tears, but nevertheless was given away in marriage. He flies back to his country, and finds his beloved the wife of another. What, think you, should I have done in such a case? Plunged a dagger in the breast of the robber of my treasure!--carried her away to the end or the

world to possess her but one hour, but one moment! Nothing of this kind happened. He learned that his rival was an excellent and worthy man. He had the calmness to contract a friendship with him: had the patience to be often in the society of his former love, without betraying, either by word or deed, his new friend or his still loved mistress."

"A rare man, if this be true!" exclaimed Saphir Ali, with feeling, throwing away his reins. "A stout friend indeed!"

"But what an icy lover! But this is not all. To relieve both of them from misrepresentation and scandal, he came hither on service. Not long ago—for his happiness or unhappiness—his friend died. And what then? Do you think he flew to Russia. No! his duty kept him away. The Commander-in-chief informed him that his presence was indispensable here for a year more, and he has remained—cherishing his love with hope. Can such a man, with all his goodness, understand such a passion as mine? And besides, there is such a difference between us in years, in opinions. He kills me with his unapproachable dignity; and all this cools my friendship, and impedes my sincerity."

"You are a strange fellow, Ammalát; you do not love Verkhóffsky for the very reason that he most merits frankness and affection!"

"Who told you that I do not love him? How can I but love the man who has educated me—my benefactor? Can I not love any one but Seltanetta? I love the whole world—all men!"

"Not much love, then, will fall to the share of each!" said Saphir Ali.

"There would be enough not only to quench the thirst, but to drown the whole world!" replied Ammalát, with a smile.

"Aha! This comes of seeing beauties unveiled—and then to see nothing but the veil and the eyebrows. It seems that you are like the nightingales of Ourmis; you must be caged before you can sing!"

Conversing in this strain, the two friends disappeared in the depths of the forest.

CHAPTER VII

FRAGMENT OF A LETTER FROM COLONEL VERKHÓFFSKY TO HIS BETROTHED.

Derbénd, April.

Fly to, me, heart of my heart, dearest Maria! Rejoice in the sight of a lovely vernal night in Daghestán. Beneath me lies Derbénd, slumbering calmly, like a black streak of lava flowing from the Caucasus and cooled in the sea. The gentle breeze bears to me the fragrant odour of the almond-trees, the nightingales are calling to each other from the rock-crevices, behind the fortress: all breathes of life and love; and beautiful nature, full of this feeling, covers herself with a veil of mists. And how wonderfully has that vaporous ocean poured itself over the Caspian! The sea below gleams wavingly, like steel damasked with gold on an escutcheon—that above swells like a silver surge lighted by the full moon, which rolls along the sky like a cup of gold, while the stars glitter around like scattered drops. In a moment, the reflection of the moonbeams in the vapours of the night changes the picture, anticipating the imagination, now astounding by its marvels—now striking by its novelty. Sometimes I seem to behold the rocks of the wild shore, and the waves beating against them in foam. The billows roll onward to the charge: the rocky ramparts repel the shock, and the surf flies high above them; but silently and slowly sink the waves, and the silver palms arise from the midst of the inundation, the breeze stirs their branches, playing with the long leaves, and they spread like the sails of a ship gliding over the airy ocean. Do you see how she rolls along, how the spray-drops sparkle on her breast, how the waves slide along her sides. And where is she?... and where am I?... You cannot imagine, dearest Maria, the sweetly solemn feeling produced in me by the sound and sight of the sea. To me, the idea of eternity is inseparable from it; of immensity—of our love. That love seems to me, like it, infinite—eternal. I feel as if my heart overflowed to embrace the world, even as the ocean, with its bright waves of love. It is in me and around me; it is the only great and immortal feeling which I possess. Its

spark lights and warms me in the winter of my sorrows, in the midnight of my doubts. Then I love so blindly! I believe so ardently! You smile at my fantasy, friend and companion of my soul. You wonder at this dark language; blame me not. My spirit, like the denizen of another world, cannot bear the chill and frosty moonlight—it shakes off the dust of the grave; it soars away, and, like the moonlight, dimly discovers all things darkly and uncertainly. You know that it is to you alone that I write down the pictures which fall on the magic-glass of my heart, assured that you will guess, not with cold criticism, but with the heart, what I would describe. Besides, next August, your happy bridegroom will himself explain all the dark passages in his letters. I cannot think without ecstasy of the moment of our meeting. I count the sand-grains of the hours which separate us. I count the versts which lie between us. And so in the middle of June you will be at the waters of the Caucasus. And nought but the icy chain of the Caucasus will be between two ardent hearts.... How near—yet how immeasurably far shall we be from each other! Oh! how many years of life would I not give to hasten the hour of our meeting! Long, long, have our hearts been plighted.... Why have they been separated till now?

My friend Ammalát is not frank or confiding. I cannot blame him. I know how difficult it is to break through habits imbibed with a mother's milk, and with the air of one's native land. The barbarian despotism of Persia, which has so long oppressed Aderbidján, has instilled the basest principles into the Tartars of the Caucasus, and has polluted their sense of honour by the most despicable subterfuge. And how could it be otherwise in a government based upon the tyranny of the great over the less—where justice herself can punish only in secret—where robbery is the privilege of power? "Do with me what you like, provided you let me do with my inferior what I like," is the principle of Asiatic government—its ambition, its morality. Hence, every man, finding himself between two enemies, is obliged to conceal his thoughts, as he hides his money. Hence every man plays the hypocrite before the powerful; every man endeavours to force from others a present by tyranny or accusation. Hence the Tartar of this country will not move a step, but with the hope of gain; will not give you so much as a cucumber, without expecting a present in return.

Insolent to rudeness with every one who is not in power, he is mean and slavish before rank or a full purse. He sows flattery by handfuls; he will give you his house, his children, his soul, to get rid of a difficulty, and if he does any body a service, it is sure to be from motives of interest.

In money matters (this is the weakest side of a Tartar) a ducat is the touchstone of his fidelity; and it is difficult to imagine the extent of their greediness for profit! The Armenian character is yet a thousand times more vile than theirs; but the Tartars hardly yield to them in corruption and greediness —and this is saying a good deal. Is it surprising that, beholding from infancy such examples, Ammalát —though he has retained the detestation of meanness natural to pure blood—should have adopted concealment as an indispensable arm against open malevolence and secret villany? The sacred ties of relationship do not exist for Asiatics. With them, the son is the slave of the father—the brother is a rival. No one trusts his neighbour, because there is no faith in any man. Jealousy of their wives, and dread of espionage, destroy brotherly love and friendship. The child brought up by his slave-mother—never experiencing a father's caress, and afterwards estranged by the Arabian alphabet, (education,) hides his feelings in his own heart even from his companions; from his childhood, thinks only for himself; from the first beard are every door, every heart shut for him: husbands look askance at him, women fly from him as from a wild beast, and the first and most innocent emotions of his heart, the first voice of nature, the first movements of his feelings—all these have become crimes in the eyes of Mahometan superstition. He dares not discover them to a relation, or confide them to a friend.... He must even weep in secret.

All this I say, my sweet Maria, to excuse Ammalát: he has already lived a year and a half in my house, and hitherto has never confessed to me the object of his love; though he might well have known, that it was from no idle curiosity, but from a real heartfelt interest, that I wished to know the secret of his heart. At last, however, he has told me all; and thus it happened.

Yesterday I took a ride out of the town with Ammalát. We rode up through a defile in the mountain on the west, and we advanced further and further, higher and higher, till we found ourselves unexpectedly close to the village of Kelík, from which may be seen the wall that anciently defended Persia from the incursions of the wandering tribes inhabiting the Zakavkáz, (trans-Caucasian country,) which often devastated that territory. The annals of Derbénd (Derbéndnámé) ascribe, but falsely, the construction of it to a certain Iskender—*i.e.* Alexander the Great—who, however, never was in these regions. King Noushirván repaired it, and placed a guard along it. More than once since that time it has been restored; and again it fell into ruin, and became overgrown, as it now is, with the trees of centuries. A tradition exists, that this wall formerly extended from the Caspian to the Black Sea, cutting through the whole Caucasus, and having for its extremity the "iron gate" of Derbénd, and Dariál in its centre; but this is more than doubtful as far as regards the general facts, though certain in the particulars. The traces of this wall, which are to be seen far into the mountains, are interrupted here and there, but only by fallen stones or rocks and ravines, till it reaches the military road; but from thence to the Black Sea, through Mingrelia, I think there are no traces of its continuation.

I examined, with curiosity, this enormous wall, fortified by numerous towers at short distance; and I wondered at the grandeur of the ancients, exhibited even in their unreasonable caprices of despotism—that greatness to which the effeminate rulers of the East cannot aspire, in our day, even in imagination. The wonders of Babylon, the lake of Mœris, the pyramids of the Pharaohs, the endless wall of China, and this huge bulwark, built in sterile places, on the summits of mountains, through the abyss of ravines—bear witness to the gigantic iron will, and the unlimited power, of the ancient kings. Neither time, nor earthquake, nor man, transitory man, nor the footstep of thousands of years, have entirely destroyed, entirely trodden down, the remains of immemorial antiquity. These places awake in me solemn and sacred thoughts. I wandered over the traces of Peter the Great; I pictured him the founder, the reformer, of a young state—building it on these ruins of the decaying monarchies of Asia, from the centre of which he tore out Russia, and with a mighty hand rolled her into Europe. What a fire must have gleamed in his eagle eye, as he glanced from the heights of Caucasus! What sublime thoughts, what holy aspirations, must have swelled that heroic breast! The grand destiny of his country was disclosed before his eyes; in the horizon, in the mirror of the Caspian, appeared to him the picture of Russia's future weal, sown by him, and watered by his red sweat. It was not empty conquest that was his aim, but victory over barbarism—the happiness of mankind. Derbénd, Báka, Astrabád, they are the links of the chain with which he endeavoured to bind the Caucasus, and rivet the commerce of India with Russia.

Demigod of the North! Thou whom nature created at once to flatter the pride of man, and to reduce it to despair by thine unapproachable greatness! Thy shade rose before me, bright and colossal, and the cataract of ages fell foaming at thy feet! Pensive and silent, I rode on.

The wall of the Caucasus is faced on the north side with squared stones, neatly and firmly fixed together with lime. Many of the battlements are still entire; but feeble seeds, falling into the crevices and joints, have burst them asunder with the roots of trees growing from them, and, assisted by the rains, have thrown the stones to the earth, and over the ruins triumphantly creep mallows and pomegranates; the eagle, unmolested, builds her nest in the turret once crowded with warriors, and on the cold hearthstone lie the fresh bones of the wild-goat, dragged thither by the jackals. Sometimes the line of the ruins entirely disappeared; then fragments of the stones again rose from among the grass and underwood. Riding in this way, a distance of about three versts, we reached the gate, and passed through to the south side, under a vaulted arch, lined with moss and overgrown with shrubs. We had not advanced twenty paces, when suddenly, behind an enormous tower, we came upon six armed mountaineers, who seemed, by all appearance, to belong to those gangs of robbers—the free Tabasaranetzes. They were lying in the shade, close to their horses, which were feeding. I was astounded. I immediately reflected how foolishly I had acted in riding so far from Derbénd without

an escort. To gallop back, among such bushes and rocks, would have been impossible; to fight six such desperate fellows, would have been foolhardiness. Nevertheless, I seized a holster-pistol; but Ammalát Bek, seeing how matters stood, advanced, and cried in a calm slow voice: "Do not handle your arms, or we are dead men!"

The robbers, perceiving us, jumped up and cocked their guns, one fine, broad-shouldered, but extremely savage-looking Lezghín, remaining stretched on the ground. He lifted his head coolly, looked at us, and waved his hand to his companions. In a moment we found ourselves surrounded by them, while a path in front was stopped by the Ataman.

"Pray, dismount from your horses, dear guests," said he with a smile, though one could see that the next invitation would be a bullet. I hesitated; but Ammalát Bek jumped speedily from his horse, and walked up to the Ataman.

"Hail!" He said to him: "hail, sorvi golová! I thought not of seeing you. I thought the devils had long ago made a feast of you."

"Softly, Ammalát Bek!" answered the other; "I hope yet to feed the eagles with the bodies of the Russians and of you Tartars, whose purse is bigger than your heart."

"Well, and what luck, Shermadán?" carelessly enquired Ammalát Bek.

"But poor. The Russians are watchful: and we have seldom been able to drive the cattle of a regiment, or to sell two Russian soldiers at a time in the hills. It is difficult to transport madder and silk; and of Persian tissue, very little is now carried on the arbás. We should have had to quest like wolves again to-day, but Allah has had mercy; he has given into our hands a rich bek and a Russian colonel!"

My heart died within me, as I heard these words.

"Do not sell a hawk in the sky: sell him," answered Ammalát, "when you have him on your glove."

The robber sat down, laid his hand on the cock of his gun, and fixed on us a piercing look. "Hark'e, Ammalát!" said he; "is it possible that you think to escape me?—is it possible that you will dare to defend yourselves?"

"Be quiet," said Ammalát; "are we fools, to fight two to six? Gold is dear to us, but dearer is our life. We have fallen into your hands, so there is nothing to be done, unless you extort an unreasonable price for our ransom. I have, as you know, neither father nor mother: and the Colonel has yet less —neither kinsmen nor tribe."

"If you have no father, you have your father's inheritance. There is no need then to count your relations with you: however, I am a man of conscience. If you have no ducats, I will take your ransom in sheep. But about the colonel, don't talk any more nonsense. I know for him the soldiers would give the last button on their uniforms. Why, if for Sh—— a ransom of ten thousand rubles was paid, they will give more for this man. However, we shall see, we shall see. If you will be quiet.... Why, I am not a Jew, or a cannibal—Perviáder (the Almighty) forgive me!"

"Now that's it, friend: feed us well, and I swear and promise by my honour, we will never think of harming you—nor of escaping."

"I believe, I believe! I am glad we have arranged without making any noise about it. What a fine fellow you have become, Ammalát! Your horse is not a horse, your gun is not a gun: it is a pleasure to look at you; and this is true. Let me look at your dagger, my friend. Surely this is the Koubatchín mark upon the blade."

"No, the Kizliár mark," replied Ammalát, quietly unbuckling the dagger-belt from his waist; "and look at the blade. Wonderful! it cuts a nail in two like a candle. On this side is the maker's name; there—read it yourself: Alióusta—Kóza—Nishtshekói." And while he spoke, he twirled the naked blade before the eyes of the greedy Lezghín, who wished to show that he knew how to read, and was decyphering the complicated inscription with some difficulty. But suddenly the dagger gleamed like lightning.... Ammalát, seizing the opportunity, struck Shermadán with all his might on the head; and

so fierce was the blow, that the dagger was stopped by the teeth of the lower jaw. The corpse fell heavily on the grass. Keeping my eyes upon Ammalát, I followed his example, and with my pistol shot the robber who was next me, and had hold of my horse's bridle. This was to the others a signal for flight; the rascals vanished; for the death of their Ataman dissolved the knot of the leash which bound them together. Whilst Ammalát, after the oriental fashion, was stripping the dead of their arms, and tying together the reins of the abandoned horses, I lectured him on his dissembling and making a false oath to the robber. He lifted up his head with astonishment: "You are a strange man, Colonel!" he replied. "This rascal has done an infinity of harm to the Russians, by secretly setting fire to their stacks of hay, or seizing and carrying straggling soldiers and wood-cutters into slavery. Do you know that he would have tyrannized over us—or even tortured us, to make us write more movingly to our kinsmen, to induce them to pay a larger ransom?"

"It may be so, Ammalát, but to lie or to swear an oath, either in jest or to escape misfortune, is wrong. Why could we not have thrown ourselves directly at the robbers, and have begun as you finished?"

"No, Colonel, we could not. If I had not entered into conversation with the Ataman, we should have been riddled with balls at the first movement. Moreover, I know that pack right well: they are brave only in the presence of their Ataman, and it was with him it was necessary to begin!"

I shook my head. The Asiatic cunning, though it had saved my life, could not please me. What confidence can I have in people accustomed to sport with their honour and their soul? We were about to mount our horses, when we heard a groan from the mountaineer who had been wounded by me. He came to himself, raised his head, and piteously besought us not to leave him to be devoured by the beasts of the forest. We both hastened to assist the poor wretch; and what was Ammalát's astonishment when he recognized in him one of the noúkers of Sultan Akhmet Khan of Avár. To the question how he happened to be one of a gang of robbers, he replied: "Shairán tempted me: the Khan sent me into Kemék, a neighbouring village, with a letter to the famous Hakím (Doctor) Ibrahim, for a certain herb, which they say removes every ailment, as easily as if it were brushed away with the hand. To my sorrow, Shermadán met me in the way! He teazed me, saying, 'Come with me, and let us rob on the road. An Armenian is coming from Kouba with money.' My young heart could not resist this ... oh, Allah-il-Allah! He hath taken my soul from me!"

"They sent you for physic, you say," replied Ammalát: "why, who is sick with you?"

"Our Khanóum Seltanetta is dying: here is the writing to the leech about her illness:" with these words he gave Ammalát a silver tube, in which was a small piece of paper rolled up. Ammalát turned as pale as death; his hands shook—his eyes sank under his eyebrows when he had read the note: with a broken voice he uttered detached words. "Three nights—and she sleeps not, eats not—delirious!--her life is in danger—save her! O God of righteousness—and I am idling here—leading a life of holidays—and my soul's soul is ready to quit the earth, and leave me a rotten corse! Oh that all her sufferings could fall on my head! and that I could lie in her coffin, if that would restore her to health. Sweetest and loveliest! thou art fading, rose of Avár, and destiny has stretched out her talons over thee. Colonel," he cried at length, seizing my hand, "grant my only, my solemn prayer—let me but once more look on her!"——

"On whom, my friend?"

"On my Seltanetta—on the daughter of the Khan of Avár—whom I love more than my life, than my soul! She is ill, she is dying—perhaps dead by this time—while I am wasting words—and I could not receive into my heart her last word—her last look—could not wipe away the icy tear of death! Oh, why do not the ashes of the ruined sun fall on my head—why will not the earth bury me in its ruins!"

He fell on my breast, choking with grief, in a tearless agony, unable to pronounce a word.

This was not a time for accusations of insincerity, much less to set forth the reasons which rendered it unadvisable for him to go among the enemies of Russia. There are circumstances before

which all reasons must give way, and I felt that Ammalát was in such circumstances. On my own responsibility I resolved to let him go. "He that obliges from the heart, and speedily, twice obliges," is my favourite proverb, and best maxim. I pressed in my embrace the unhappy Tartar, and we mingled our tears together.

"My friend Ammalát," said I, "hasten where your heart calls you. God grant that you may carry thither health and recovery, and bring back peace of mind! A happy journey!"

"Farewell, my benefactor," he cried, deeply touched, "farewell, and perhaps for ever! I will not return to life, if Allah takes from me my Seltanetta. May God keep you!"

He took the wounded Aváretz to the Hakím Ibrahim, received the medicinal herb according to the Khan's prescription, and in an hour Ammalát Bek, with four noúkers, rode out of Derbénd.

And so the riddle is guessed—he loves. This is unfortunate, but what is yet worse, he is beloved in return. I fancy, my love, that I see your astonishment. "Can that be a misfortune to another, which to you is happiness?" you ask. A grain of patience, my soul's angel! The Khan, the father of Seltanetta, is the irreconcilable foe of Russia, and the more so because, having been distinguished by the favour of the Czar, he has turned a traitor; consequently a marriage is possible only on condition of Ammalát's betraying the Russians, or in case of the Khan's submission and pardon—both cases being far from probable. I myself have experienced misery and hopelessness in love; I have shed many tears on my lonely pillow; often have I thirsted for the shade of the grave, to cool my anguished heart! Can I, then, help, pitying this youth, the object of my disinterested regard, and lamenting his hopeless love? But this will not build a bridge to good-fortune; and I therefore think, that if he had not the ill-luck to be beloved in return, he would by degrees forget her.

"But," you say, (and methinks I hear your silvery voice, and am revelling in your angel's smile,) "but circumstances may change for them, as they have changed for us. Is it possible that misfortune alone has the privilege of being eternal in the world?"

I do not dispute this, my beloved, but I confess with a sigh that I am in doubt. I even fear for them and for ourselves. Destiny smiles before us, hope chaunts sweet music—but destiny is a sea—hope but a sea-syren; deceitful is the calm of the one, fatal are the promises of the other. All appears to aid our union—but are we yet together? I know not why, lovely Mary, but a chill penetrates my breast, amid the warm fountains of future bliss, and the idea of our meeting has lost its distinctness. But all this will pass away, all will change into happiness, when I press your hand to my lips, your heart to mine. The rainbow shines yet brighter on the dark field of the cloud, and the happiest moments of life are but the anticipations of sorrow.

CHAPTER VIII

Ammalát knocked up two horses, and left two of his noúkers on the road, so that at the end of the second day he was not far from Khounzákh. At each stride his impatience grew stronger, and with each stride increased his fear of not finding his beloved amongst the living. A fit of trembling came over him when from the rocks the tops of the Khan's tower arose before him. His eyes grew dark. "Shall I meet there life or death?" he whispered to himself, and arousing a desperate courage, he urged his horse to a gallop.

He came up with a horseman completely armed: another horseman rode out of Khounzákh to meeting, and hardly did they perceive one another when they put their horses to full speed, rode up to each other, leaped down upon the earth, and suddenly drawing their swords, threw themselves with fury upon each other without uttering a word, as if blows were the customary salutation of travellers. Ammalát Bek, whose passage they intercepted along the narrow path between the rocks, gazed with astonishment on the combat of the two adversaries. It was short. The horseman who was approaching the town fell on the stones, bedewing them with blood from a gash which laid open his skull; and the victor, coolly wiping his blade, addressed himself to Ammalát: "Your coming is opportune: I am

glad that destiny has brought you in time to witness our combat. God, and not I, killed the offender; and now his kinsmen will not say that I killed my enemy stealthily from behind a rock, and will not raise upon my head the feud of blood."

"Whence arose your quarrel with him?" asked Ammalát: "why did you conclude it with such a terrible revenge?"

"This Kharám-Záda," answered the horseman, "could not agree with me about the division of some stolen sheep, and in spite he killed them all so that nobody should have them ... and he dared to slander my wife. He had better have insulted my father's grave, or my mother's good name, than have touched the reputation of my wife! I once flew at him with my dagger, but they parted us: we agreed to fight at our first encounter, and Allah has judged between us! The Bek is doubtless riding to Khounzákh—surely on a vizit to the Khan?" added the horseman.

Ammalát, forcing his horse to leap over the dead body which lay across the road, replied in the affirmative.

"You go not at a fit time, Bek—not at all at a fit time."

All Ammalát's blood rushed to his head. "Why, has any misfortune happened in the Khan's house?" he enquired, reining in his horse, which he had just before lashed with the whip to force him faster to Khounzákh.

"Not exactly a misfortune, his daughter Seltanetta was severely ill, and now"——

"Is dead?" cried Ammalát, turning pale.

"Perhaps she is dead—at least dying. As I rode past the Khan's gate, there arose a bustling, crying, and yelling of women in the court, as if the Russians were storming Khounzákh. Go and see—do me the favour"——

But Ammalát heard no more, he dashed away from the astounded Ouzdén; the dust rolled like smoke from the road, which seemed to be set on fire by the sparks from the horse's hoofs. Headlong he galloped through the winding streets, flew up the hill, bounded from his horse in the midst of the Khan's court-yard, and raced breathlessly through the passages to Seltanetta's apartment, overthrowing and jostling noúkers and maidens, and at last, without remarking the Khan or his wife, pushed himself to the bed of the sufferer, and fell, almost senseless, on his knees beside it.

The sudden and noisy arrival of Ammalát aroused the sad society present. Seltanetta, whose existence death was already overpowering, seemed as if awakening from the deep forgetfulness of fever; her cheeks flushed with a transient colour, like that on the leaves of autumn before they fall: in her clouded eye beamed the last spark of the soul. She lad been for several hours in a complete insensibility; she was speechless, motionless, hopeless. A murmur of anger from the bystanders, and a loud exclamation from the stupefied Ammalát, seemed to recall the departing spirit of the sick, she started up—her eyes sparkled.... "Is it thou—is it thou?" she cried, stretching, forth her arms to him: "praise be to Allah! now I am contented, now I am happy," she added, sinking back on the pillow. Her lips wreathed into a smile, her eyelids closed, and again she sank into her former insensibility.

The agonized Asiatic paid no attention to the questions of the Khan, or the reproaches of the Khánsha: no person, no object distracted his attention from Seltanetta—nothing could arouse him from his deep despair. They could hardly lead him by force from the sick chamber; he clung to the threshold, he wept bitterly, at one moment praying for the life of Seltanetta, at another accusing heaven of her illness! Terrible, yet moving, was the grief of the fiery Asiatic.

Meanwhile, the appearance of Ammalát had produced a salutary influence on the sick girl. What the rude physicians of the mountains were unable to accomplish, was effected by his arrival. The vital energy, which had been almost extinguished, needed some agitation to revivify its action; but for this she must have perished, not from the disease, which had been already subdued, but from languor—as a lamp, not blown out by the wind, but failing for lack of air. Youth at length gained the victory; the crisis was past, and life again arose in the heart of the sufferer. After a long and quiet slumber, she awoke unusually strengthened and refreshed. "I feel myself as light, mother," she cried,

looking gaily around her, "as if I were made wholly of air. Ah, how sweet it is to recover from illness; it seems as if the walls were smiling upon me. Yet, I have been very ill—long ill. I have suffered much; but, thanks to Allah! I am now only weak, and that will soon pass away. I feel health rolling, like drops of pearl, through my veins. All the past seems to me a sort of dark vision. I fancied that I was sinking into a cold sea, and that I was parched with thirst: far away, methought, there hovered two little stars; the darkness thickened and thickened; I sank deeper, deeper yet. All at once it seemed as if some one called me by my name, and with a mighty hand dragged me from that icy, shoreless sea. Ammalát's face glanced before me, almost like a reality; the little stars broke into a lightning-flash, which writhed like a serpent to my heart: I remember no more!"

On the following day Ammalát was allowed to see the convalescent. Sultan Akhmet Khan, seeing that it was impossible to obtain a coherent answer from him while suspense tortured his heart, that heart which boiled with passion, yielded to his incessant entreaties. "Let all rejoice when I rejoice," he said, as he led his guest into his daughter's room. This had been previously announced to Seltanetta, but her agitation, nevertheless, was very great, when her eyes met those of Ammalát—Ammalát, so deeply loved, so long and fruitlessly expected. Neither of the lovers could pronounce a word, but the ardent language of their looks expressed a long tale, imprinted in burning letters on the tablet of their hearts. On the pale cheek of each other they read the traces of sorrow, the tears of separation, the characters of sleeplessness and grief, of fear and of jealousy. Entrancing is the blooming loveliness of an adored mistress; but her paleness, her languor, that is bewitching, enchanting, victorious! What heart of iron would not be melted by that tearful glance, which, without a reproach, says so tenderly to you, "I am happy, but I have suffered by thee and for thy sake?"

Tears dropped from Ammalát's eyes; but remembering at length that he was not alone, he mastered himself, and lifted up his head to speak; but his voice refused to pour itself in words, and with difficulty he faltered out, "We have not seen each other for a long time, Seltanetta!"

"And we were wellnigh parted for ever," murmured Seltanetta.

"For ever!" cried Ammalát, with a half reproachful voice. "And can you think, can you believe this? Is there not, then, another life, in which sorrow is unknown, and separation from our kinsmen and the beloved? If I were to lose the talisman of my life, with what scorn would I not cast away the rusty ponderous armour of existence! Why should I wrestle with destiny?"

"Pity, then, that I did not die!" answered Seltanetta, sportively. "You describe so temptingly the other side of the grave, that one would be eager to leap into it."

"Ah, no! Live, live long, for happiness, for—love!" Ammalát would have added, but he reddened, and was silent.

Little by little the roses of health spread over the cheeks of the maiden, now happy in the presence of her lover. All returned into its customary order. The Khan was never weary of questioning Ammalát about the battles, the campaigns, the tactics of the Russians; the Khánsha tired him with enquiries about the dress and customs of their women, and could not omit to call upon Allah as often as she heard that they go without veils. But with Seltanetta he enjoyed conversations and tales, to his, as well as her, heart's content. The merest trifle which had the slightest connexion with the other, could not be passed over without a minute description, without abundant repetitions and exclamations. Love, like Midas, transforms every thing it touches into gold, and, alas! often perishes, like Midas, for want of finding some material nourishment.

But, as the strength of Seltanetta was gradually re-established, with the reappearing bloom of health on Ammalát's brow, there often appeared the shadow of grief. Sometimes, in the middle of a lively conversation, he would suddenly stop, droop his head, and his bright eyes would be dimmed with a filling of tears; heavy sighs would seem to rend his breast; he would start up, his eyes sparkling with fury; he would grasp his dagger with a bitter smile, and then, as if vanquished by an invisible hand, he would fall into a deep reverie, from whence not even the caresses of his adored Seltanetta could recall him.

Once, at such a moment, Seltanetta, leaning enraptured on his shoulder, whispered, "Asis, (beloved,) you are sad—you are weary of me!"

"Ah, slander not him who loves thee more than heaven!" replied Ammalát; "but I have felt the hell of separation; and can I think of it without agony? Easier, a hundred times easier, to part from life than from thee, my dark-eyed love!"

"You are thinking of it, therefore you desire it."

"Do not poison my wounds by doubting, Seltanetta. Till now you have known only how to bloom like a rose—to flutter like a butterfly; till now your will was your only duty. But I am a man, a friend; fate has forged for me an indestructible chain—the chain of gratitude for kindness—it drags me to Derbénd."

"Debt! duty! gratitude!" cried Seltanetta, mournfully shaking her head. "How many gold-embroidered words have you invented to cover, as with a shawl, your unwillingness to remain here. What! Did you not give your heart to love before it was pledged to friendship? You had no right to give away what belonged to another. Oh, forget your Verkhóffsky, forget your Russian friends and the beauty of Derbénd. Forget war and murder-purchased glory. I hate blood since I saw you covered with it. I cannot think without shuddering, that each drop of it costs tears that cannot be dried, of a sister, a mother, or a fair bride. What do you need, in order to live peacefully and quietly among our mountains! Here none can come to disturb with arms the happiness of the heart. The rain pierces not our roof; our bread is not of purchased corn; my father has many horses, he has arms, and much precious gold; in my soul there is much love for you. Say, then, my beloved, you will not go away, you will remain with us!"

"No, Seltanetta, I cannot, must not, remain here. To pass my life with you alone—for you to end it—this is my first prayer, my last desire, but its accomplishment depends on your father. A sacred tie binds me to the Russians; and while the Khan remains unreconciled with them, an open marriage with you would be impossible—the obstacle would not be the Russians, but the Khan"——

"You know my father," sorrowfully replied Seltanetta; "for some time past his hatred of the infidels has so strengthened itself, that he hesitates not to sacrifice to it his daughter and his friend. He is particularly enraged with the Colonel for killing his favourite noúker, who was sent for medicine to the Hakím Ibrahim."

"I have more than once begun to speak to Akhmet Khan about my hopes; but his eternal reply has been—'Swear to be the enemy of the Russians, and then I will hear you out.'"

"We must then bid adieu to hope."

"Why to hope, Seltanetta? Why not say only—farewell, Avár!"

Seltanetta bent upon him her expressive eyes. "I don't understand you," she said.

"Love me more than any thing in the world—more than your father and mother, and your fair land, and then you will understand me, Seltanetta! Live without you I cannot, and they will not let me live with you. If you love me, let us fly!"

"Fly! the Khan's daughter fly like a slave—a criminal! This is dreadful—this is terrible!"

"Speak not so. If the sacrifice is unusual, my love also is unusual. Command me to give my life a thousand times, and I will throw it down like a copper poull.[8] I will cast my soul into hell for you—not only my life. You remind me that you are the daughter of the Khan; remember, too, that my grandfather wore, that my uncle wears, the crown of a Shamkhál! But it is not by this dignity, but by my heart, that I feel I am worthy of you; and if there be shame in being happy despite of the malice of mankind and the caprice of fate, that shame will fall on my head and not on yours."

"But you forget my father's vengeance."

"There will come a time when he himself will forget it. When he sees that the thing is done, he will cast aside his inflexibility; his heart is not stone; and even were it stone, tears of repentance

[8] Coin.

will wear it away—our caresses will soften him. Happiness will cover us with her dove's wings, and we shall proudly say, 'We ourselves have caught her!'"

"My beloved, I have lived not long upon earth, but something at my heart tells me that by falsehood we can never catch her. Let us wait: let us see what Allah will give! Perhaps, without this step, our union may be accomplished."

"Seltanetta, Allah has given me this idea: it is his will. Have pity on me, I beseech you. Let us fly, unless you wish that our marriage-hour should strike above my grave! I have pledged my honour to return to Derbénd; and I must keep that pledge, I must keep it soon: but to depart without the hope of seeing you, with the dread of hearing that you are the wife of another—this would be dreadful, this would be insupportable! If not from love, then from pity, share my destiny. Do not rob me of paradise! Do not drive me to madness! You know not whither disappointed passion can carry me. I may forget hospitality and kindred, tear asunder all human ties, trample under my feet all that is holy, mingle my blood with that of those who are dearest to me, force villany to shake with terror when my name is heard, and angels to weep to see my deeds!--Seltanetta, save me from the curse of others, from my own contempt—save me from myself! My noúkers are fearless—my horses like the wind; the night is dark, let us fly to benevolent Russia, till the storm be over. For the last time I implore you. Life and death, my renown and my soul, hang upon your word. Yes or no?"

Torn now by her maiden fear, and her respect for the customs of her forefathers, now by the passion and eloquence of her lover, the innocent Seltanetta wavered, like a light cork, upon the tempestuous billows of contending emotions. At length she arose: with a proud and steady air she wiped away the tears which, glistened on her eyelashes, like the amber-gum on the thorns of the larch-tree, and said, "Ammalát! tempt me not! The flame of love will not dazzle, the smoke of love will not suffocate, my conscience. I shall ever know what is good and what is bad; and I well know how shameful it is, how base, to desert a father's house, to afflict loving and beloved parents! I know all this—and now, measure the price of my sacrifice. I fly with you—I am yours! It is not your tongue which has convinced—it is my own heart which has vanquished me! Allah has destined me to see and love you: let, then, our hearts be united for ever—and indissolubly, though their bond be a crown of thorns! Now all is over! Your destiny is mine!"

If heaven had clasped Ammalát in its infinite wings, and pressed him to the heart of the universe —to the sun—even then his ecstacy would have been less strong than at this divine moment. He poured forth the most incoherent cries and exclamations of gratitude. When the first transports were over, the lovers arranged all the details of their flight. Seltanetta consented to lower herself by her bed-coverings from her chamber, to the steep bank of the Ouzén. Ammalát was to ride out in the evening with his noúkers from Khounzákh, as if on a hawking party; he was to return to the Khan's house by circuitous roads at nightfall, and there receive his fair fellow-traveller in his arms. Then they were to take horses in silence, and then—let enemies keep out of their road!

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.