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THE PIRATE CITY: AN ALGERINE TALE

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Содержание

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Chapter One. Opens the Tale

Some time within the first quarter of the present nineteenth century, a little old lady—some people would even have called her a dear little old lady—sat one afternoon in a high-backed chair beside a cottage window, from which might be had a magnificent view of Sicilian rocks, with the Mediterranean beyond.

This little old lady was so pleasant in all respects that an adequate description of her is an impossibility. Her mouth was a perfect study. It was not troubled with anything in the shape of teeth. It lay between a delicate little down-turned nose and a soft little up-turned chin, which two seemed as if anxious to meet in order to protect it. The wrinkles that surrounded that mouth were innumerable, and each wrinkle was a distinct and separate smile; so that, whether pursing or expanding, it was at all times rippling with an expression of tender benignity.

This little old lady plays no part in our tale; nevertheless she merits passing introduction as being the grandmother of our hero, a Sicilian youth of nineteen, who, at the time we write of, sat on a stool at her feet engaged in earnest conversation.

"Grandmother," said the youth in a perplexed mood, "why won't you let *me* go into the Church instead of brother Lucien? I'm certain that he does not want to, though he is fit enough, as far as education goes, and goodness; but you know well enough that he is desperately fond of Juliet, and she is equally desperate about him, and nothing could be more pleasant than that they should get married."

"Tut, child, you talk nonsense," said the old lady, letting a sigh escape from the rippling mouth. "Your father's dearest wish has always been to see Lucien enter the Church, and although Juliet is our adopted child, we do not intend to interfere with the wishes of her uncle the abbot, who has offered to place her in the convent of Saint Shutemup. As to you taking Lucien's place,"—here the mouth expanded considerably—"ah! Mariano, you are too foolish, too giddy; better fitted to be a sailor or soldier I should think—"

"How!" interrupted Mariano. "Do you then estimate the profession of the soldier and sailor so low, that you think only foolish and giddy fellows are fit for it?"

"Not so, child; but it is a school which is eminently fitted to teach respect and obedience to foolish and giddy fellows who are pert to their grandmothers."

"Ah! how unfair," exclaimed Mariano, with assumed solemnity; "I give you good advice, with gravity equal to that of any priest, and yet you call me pert. Grandmother, you are ungrateful as well as unjust. Have I not been good to you all my life?"

"You have, my child," said the little old lady; "very good—also rather troublesome, especially in the way of talking nonsense, and I'm sorry to find that although your goodness continues, your troublesomeness does not cease!"

"Well, well," replied the youth, with a sprightly toss of the head, "Lucien and I shall enjoy at least a few weeks more of our old life on the blue sea before he takes to musty books and I to the stool of the clerk. Ah, why did you allow father to give us a good education? How much more enjoyable it would have been to have lived the free life of a fisherman—or of that pig," he said, pointing to one which had just strayed into the garden and lain down to roll in the earth—"what happy ignorance or ignorant happiness; what concentrated enjoyment of the present, what perfect oblivion as to the past, what obvious disregard of the future—"

"Ay," interrupted the little old lady, "what blissful ignorance of the deeds of ancient heroes, of the noble achievements of great and good men, of the adventures of Marco Polo, and Magellan, and Vasco de Gama, over whose voyages you have so often and so fondly pored."

"I see, grandmother, that it is useless to argue with you. Let

us turn to a graver subject. Tell me, what am I to bring you from Malta? As this is in very truth to be our last voyage, I must bring you something grand, something costly.—Ah, here comes Juliet to help us to decide."

As he spoke a pretty dark-eyed girl of nineteen entered the room and joined their council, but before they had gone very deep into the question which Mariano had propounded, they were interrupted by the entrance of the head of the house, Francisco Rimini, a strong portly man of about fifty years of age, with a brown, healthy complexion, grizzled locks, a bald pate, and a semi-nautical gait. He was followed by a stranger, and by his eldest son, Lucien—a tall, grave, slender youth of twenty-three, who was in many respects the opposite of his brother Mariano, physically as well as mentally. The latter was middle-sized, broad-shouldered, and very powerful, with short curly brown hair, flashing eyes and sprightly disposition—active as a kitten, and rather mischievous. Lucien was grave, gentle, and studious; elegantly rather than powerfully formed, and disposed rather to enjoy fun by looking on than engaging in it. Both brothers, as well as their father, possessed kindly dispositions and resolute spirits.

"Mother," said Francisco, "let me introduce to you my friend Signor Bacri, a merchant who goes in my vessel as a passenger to Malta. He dines with us to-day; and that reminds me that you must hasten our dinner, as events have transpired which oblige me to set sail two hours earlier than I had intended; so please

expedite matters, Juliet."

The stranger bowed with Oriental dignity to the little old lady, and, seating himself by her side, entered into conversation.

Bacri was a middle-aged man of magnificent appearance. From the cast of his features it was easy to perceive that he was of Jewish extraction, and his proportions might have been compared to those of the ancient enemy of his nation, Goliath. Like Saul, he was a head and shoulders higher than ordinary men, yet he evidently placed no confidence in his physical strength, for although his countenance was grave and his expression dignified, he stooped a good deal, as though to avoid knocking his head against ceilings and beams, and was singularly humble and unobtrusive in his manners. There was a winning softness, too, in his voice and in his smile, which went far to disarm that distrust of and antipathy to his race which prevailed in days of old, and unfortunately prevails still, to some extent, in Christendom.

With the activity of a good housewife, Juliet expedited the operations of the cook; dinner was served in good time; Francisco, who was owner of his vessel and cargo as well as padrone or captain, entertained Bacri with accounts of his adventures on the sea, which the Jew returned in kind with his experiences of mercantile transactions in savage lands. Mariano drank in all that they said with youthful avidity, and the little old lady's mouth rippled responsive, like the aspen leaf to the breeze; while Lucien and Juliet, thus left to themselves, had no other resource than to entertain each other as best they could!

Then the adieux were said, the voyagers went down to the port, embarked on board their good ship—a trim-built schooner—and set sail with a fair wind.

"I wish I saw them all safe back again!" said the little old lady, with a sigh.

Juliet said nothing, though she echoed the sigh.

Meanwhile the schooner leant over to the breeze, and ere night-fall left the shores of Sicily far behind.

Chapter Two.
Unfolds a Little of the Tale

Another and a very different vessel chanced to be floating in those seas at the time the Sicilian trader set sail. At a distance she might have been mistaken for a fishing-boat, for she carried only two lateen sails, of that high triangular form which may still be seen in the Mediterranean and on the lakes of Switzerland. In reality, however, the vessel was of greater dimensions than even the largest boat, and her main-mast with its sail was of gigantic proportions. She was also full-decked, and several pieces of heavy ordnance pointed their black muzzles from port-holes in her bulwarks.

No one could have mistaken her character as a vessel of war, for, besides the guns referred to, she had an unusually large crew of bronzed and stalwart men. Their costume, as well as their arms, told that these were of Eastern origin. Although there was much variety in detail, they all wore the same gold-laced jackets, the same loose Turkish drawers gathered in below the knees, and broad silken scarfs round their waists, with richly chased silver-mounted pistols and yataghans or curved swords. Some wore the turban, others the blue-tasselled red fez or tarbouch of Tunis, while a few contented themselves with a kerchief tied loosely round their heads.

One, who appeared to be the captain of the vessel, stood near the steersman, leaning on the bulwarks, and scanning the horizon with a telescope. His costume was similar to that of his men, but of richer material.

"It is certainly a sail," said he whom we have styled the captain to one who stood by his side, and might have been his lieutenant or mate.

"She bears sou'-west, I think," replied the latter.

"So much the better," returned the captain; "let her fall off a little—so, steady. If this wind holds for half an hour we shall get well abreast of her, and then—"

The captain shut up the telescope with an emphatic bang, by way of termination to his remark, and, turning on his heel, paced the deck rapidly by the side of his mate.

"We have been unlucky hitherto," he observed; "perchance fortune may change and now be favourable. At all events, we shall be ready. See, the breeze freshens. Go, call up the men and clear for action."

The breeze had indeed been freshening while he spoke, and now came down in a series of squalls that caused the piratical-looking craft to lie over as if she were about to capsize. The vessel which they were pursuing also bent over to the breeze and crowded all sail; for well did Francisco, its owner and padrone, know, from past experience, that Algerine corsairs were fast sailers, and that his only hope lay in showing them his heels! He had often given them the slip before—why should he not again?

While thus doing his best to escape, however, the bluff merchant did not neglect to make preparations for defence.

"Clear away the big gun," he said to Mariano, who acted as his first officer, Lucien being the scrivano or supercargo of the vessel; "'tis a good piece, and has turned the flight of many a pirate with its first bark."

The latter part of this remark was addressed to Bacri, who stood, leaning over the taffrail, looking anxiously at the vessel in chase.

"If it be Sidi Hassan," muttered the Jew half aloud, "there is little chance—"

"What say you?" demanded Francisco.

"I say that if it be the vessel of a man whom I happen to know, you will have to trust to your sails for deliverance—fighting will be of no avail."

Francisco looked at the Jew with some surprise, not unmingled with contempt.

"A warlike spirit, it seems, does not always consort with a powerful frame," he said; "but how come you to have scraped acquaintance with these pirates, whose existence is a blight upon the commerce of the Mediterranean, and a disgrace to our age?"

"None should know better than thyself that a trader, like any other traveller, becomes acquainted with strange bedfellows," replied Bacri, with a quiet smile. "As to a warlike spirit, of what use would it be in a despised Israelite to display such?"

"There is truth in that," returned the padrone in a more

respectful tone; "nevertheless, if fighting becomes needful, I trust that one furnished with such thews and sinews will not fail to lend effective aid."

"That he will not, I dare say; and here is a cutlass for him, wherewith to carve a name and fame," said Mariano, coming aft at the moment and presenting the weapon to Bacri, who took it with a half-humorous smile, and laid it on the seat beside him.

"Hast got the big gun ready, boy?" demanded Francisco.

"Ay—loaded her almost to the muzzle. I ordered her to be double-shotted, and that big black rascal Manqua slily crammed in a handful of nails without leave. I only hope she won't burst."

"Burst!" exclaimed the padrone, with a laugh; "if you were to load her even beyond the muzzle she wouldn't burst. I remember once loading her with a full dose of canister, and clapped two round shot on the top of that, after which the same negro you have mentioned, (for he has a tendency in that way), shoved in a handspike without orders, and let the whole concern fly at a pirate boat, which it blew clean out of the water: she well-nigh burst the drums of our ears on that occasion, but showed no sign whatever of bursting herself."

"Nevertheless," said Bacri earnestly, "I advise you to trust entirely to your sails."

"We haven't another stitch of canvas to set," said Francisco in reply; "and if we had, the old schooner couldn't stand it, for, as you may see, the strain is already as much as she can bear."

This was indeed the case, for the vessel was by that time flying

before a stiff breeze, with all the sail set that she could carry, while the water dashed in clouds from her bows, and rushed over her lee bulwarks.

But the sailing powers of the pirate-vessel were superior to those of the trading schooner. In a short time she was close alongside, and fired a shot across her bows to cause her to heave-to. This, however, the determined skipper resolved not to do. In reply he sent on board the pirates the varied contents of the big gun, which cut the halyards of their smaller sail, and brought it down on the deck. This result was celebrated by a hearty cheer from the schooner's crew. The pirates, in return, discharged a broadside which cut away the foremast of the schooner, thus rendering escape impossible.

"Now, men," cried Francisco, when the disaster occurred, "you must this day make your choice—victory or slavery—for there is no mercy in the breasts of these scoundrels."

He waited for no reply, but at once sprang to the big gun, which had been re-loaded with a charge so miscellaneous that the sable Manqua grinned with satisfaction as he endeavoured to ram it home.

Meanwhile Mariano and Lucien placed the men, who were armed to the teeth, at the gangways, and along the weather-side of the schooner, to be in readiness to repel the foe when they should attempt to board.

There was no hesitation on the part of the pirates, although they saw plainly the vigorous preparations which were being

made to receive them. Bearing down on the crippled vessel at full speed, in spite of the bellowing discharge from the great gun, and a well-delivered volley of small shot, which stretched many of them on the deck, they ran straight against her, threw grappling-irons into the rigging, and sprang on board with a fierce yell.

The mêlée that followed was sharp, but very short and decisive. The Sicilian crew fought with the courage of desperate men, but were almost instantly overpowered by numbers. Mariano had singled out the pirate captain as his own special foe. In making towards the spot where he expected that he would board, he observed the tall Jew standing by the wheel with his arms crossed on his breast, and regarding the attack with apparent indifference.

"What!" cried Mariano, anger mingling with his surprise, "do you stand idle at such a moment?"

"You will miss your chance," returned Bacri, giving a glance and a nod towards the side of the vessel where the pirate captain stood ready to spring.

Almost at the instant that the brief hint was given, Mariano had sprung to the bulwarks, and parried the thrust of a boarding-spike, which act unfortunately disconcerted his aim in discharging his pistol. Next moment he had seized the pirate by the throat, and fell with him to the deck, where a fierce struggle ensued.

We have said that the Sicilian youth was powerfully made, but the pirate captain was more than a match for him in size,

if not in courage; nevertheless, the superior activity of Mariano, coupled with the fact that he chanced to fall uppermost, gave him an advantage which would in a few moments have cost the pirate his life, had not a blow from behind rendered his youthful adversary insensible.

Rising hastily and regaining the yataghan which had fallen from his grasp in the struggle, the pirate captain was about to rush again into the fight, but, perceiving that although one or two of the schooner's crew still showed resistance, his men were almost everywhere in possession of the deck, he desisted, and turned with a look of surprise to the man who had freed him from his antagonist.

"*You* here, Bacri!" he said. "Truly my fate is a hard one when it condemns me to be rescued by a dog of a Jew."

"It might have been harder, Sidi Hassan, if it had condemned you to be slain by the hand of a Christian," replied the Jew, with an air of humility that scarcely harmonised with his towering height and his breadth of shoulder.

Hassan uttered a short laugh, and was about to reply when a shout from his men caused him to run to the forward part of the vessel, where Francisco, Lucien, and the warlike negro already referred to were still fighting desperately, surrounded by pirates, many of whom were badly wounded. It was well for the three heroes that their foes had discharged all their pistols at the first rush. Some of them, now rendered furious by the unexpectedly successful opposition made by the dauntless three, as well as

by the smarting of their wounds, were hastily re-loading their weapons, when their captain came forward. It was obvious that mercy or forbearance had been driven from their breasts, and that a few seconds more would put a bloody end to the unequal contest.

"Spare them, Sidi Hassan," said the Jew in a deeply earnest tone.

"Why should I spare them?" returned the captain quietly; "they deserve to die, and such men would prove to be but troublesome slaves."

The Jew bent towards Hassan's ear and whispered.

"Ha! sayest thou so?" exclaimed the pirate, with a piercing glance at his companion. "May I trust thee, Jew?"

"You may trust me," replied the Jew, apparently quite unmoved by the insolent tones of the other.

"Stand back, men!" cried Hassan, springing between the combatants; "death by sword or pistol is too good for these Christian dogs; we shall reserve them for something better." Then, turning to Francisco, "Lay down your arms."

"We will lay down our arms," answered the bluff merchant, who was not at all sorry to obtain this brief period of breathing-time, "when we have laid you and a few more of your ruffians on the deck."

Hassan turned to his men and gave them an order in the Turkish language.

Several of them hurried aft, and immediately returned,

dragging along with them poor Mariano, who was just recovering from the blow given to him by Bacri. On seeing the plight of his father and brother he made a desperate effort to free himself, but quickly found that he was as helpless as a child in the grasp of the three powerful men who held him.

Hassan drew a pistol and put its muzzle to the youth's temple, then, turning to Francisco, said:—

"Lay down your arms, else I scatter his brains on the deck. Take your choice, but see that you be quick about it."

There was that in the pirate captain's tone and look which induced instant compliance. Francisco and his companions, at once laying down their weapons, were seized and had their arms pinioned. Mariano was also bound, and then their conquerors proceeded to clear the decks of the dead and wounded. This was soon accomplished; a prize crew was placed in the schooner; the captives, still pinioned, were transferred to the deck of the pirate-vessel, and there left to do as they pleased, while the captain and Bacri descended to the cabin.

Night soon after descended on the sea, the wind fell almost to a calm, the moon shone round and full in a cloudless sky, and the vessel glided quietly along, while the rascally crew lay conversing and smoking on her deck, many of them bearing marks of the recent conflict, and some sleeping as peacefully as though their hands were guiltless of shedding human blood, and legitimate trade their occupation.

Chapter Three.
Reveals something Surprising in Regard to European Forbearance And Piratic Impudence

Seated on a gun-carriage, apart from his comrades in sorrow, Francisco Rimini gazed in stern silence upon the moonlit sea, and thought, perchance, of the little old lady with the rippling mouth, and the dark-eyed daughter of his adoption.

"Your fate is a sad one," said a deep voice close to his side.

Francisco started, and looked round with indignant surprise at Bacri.

"None the less sad that a friend has proved false, Jew," he said sternly. "It has never been my custom to call any of your race 'dog,' as too many of my creed have done in time past, but I am tempted to change my custom this night."

"To misname me would do you no good and me no harm," replied the Jew gravely. "My race is an accursed one as far as man is concerned, but man's curse is of no more value than his blessing."

"If these arms were free, Bacri," retorted Francisco hotly, "I would teach thee that which would prove anything but a blessing to thy carcase, thou huge caitiff! I had thought better of thee than

thou didst deserve.—Go, thy bulky presence is distasteful."

"Wherein have I wronged you?" asked the Jew.

"Wronged me!" exclaimed Francisco, with rising wrath, "art thou not hand and glove with the chief pirate? Thinkest thou that my eyes have lost their power of vision?"

"Truly I am acquainted with the corsair, though the acquaintance was none of my seeking," returned the Jew, "for, as I said before, traders have dealings with many sorts of men; but I did not advise him to attack you, and I could not hinder him."

"Scoundrel!" exclaimed the padrone, "couldst thou not restrain thine hand when it knocked the senses out of my boy Mariano? Wouldst have me believe that thy huge fists are not subject to thy villainous will, or that they acted as they did by mere accident, instead of aiding to repel the pirates?"

"I did it to save his life," replied Bacri, "and not only his, but your own and the lives of all your men. I saw that Mariano was about to prevail, and if he had slain the corsair chief, not one of you would have been alive at this moment."

Francisco's wrath when roused was not readily appeased, nevertheless this statement puzzled him so much that he remained silently gazing at the Jew, from sheer inability to express his feelings.

"Listen," continued Bacri, drawing nearer, and speaking in a lower tone, "the man into whose hands you have fallen is Sidi Hassan, one of the most noted and daring of the pirates on the Barbary coast. Escape from him is impossible. I know him well,

and can assure you that your only hope of receiving anything that deserves the title of good treatment depends on your quiet and absolute subjection to his will. Rebellious or even independent bearing will insure your speedy and severe humiliation. We 'dogs of Jews,'" continued Bacri, with a sad smile, "may seem to you to hang our heads rather low sometimes, but I have seen Christian men, as bold as you are, crawl upon the very dust before these Turks of Algiers."

"Our fate, then," said Francisco, "is, I suppose, and as I half suspected, to be slavery in that pirates' nest, Algiers?"

"I fear it is," replied the Jew, "unless Providence permits a storm to set you free; but let me correct your notion of Algiers. A pirates' nest it undoubtedly is, but there are others than pirates in the nest, and some of these are even honest men."

"Ha!" exclaimed the padrone, quickly and with bitterness; "is one of these said honest men a Jew of stalwart frame, and does his connexion with the piratical nest free him from the bonds to which I and my sons are doomed?"

"To both questions I answer yes," replied the Jew.

"Then a fig for your honesty, Master Bacri!" said Francisco, with a toss of his head, in lieu of a snap of his fingers, which in the circumstances was impossible, "for I now believe that you knocked Mariano down simply to save the life of your comrade Sidi Hassan, and that you will pocket your own share of my ship and cargo."

"I have not the power to alter your belief," said the Jew

quietly, as he turned away and left the unfortunate captive to his meditations.

As the night advanced the wind continued to abate, and when morning broke, the broad breast of the Mediterranean undulated like a sheet of clear glass, on which was gradually revealed the form of a strange vessel becalmed not far from the prize.

As soon as it was sufficiently light to permit of objects being clearly seen, Sidi Hassan fired a gun and showed the Algerine flag.

"Our luck has changed," he said to his first officer, with an air of satisfaction. "Get the boats ready; we will board at once."

"She shows British colours," said the mate, regarding the vessel in question intently through his glass.

"So she does," returned the captain, "but that device won't go down with me. Board her at once, while I bring our broadside to bear."

The mate, with two boats full of armed men, soon pulled alongside the strange sail, and the pirate-vessel was brought round with her broadside to bear by means of long oars or sweeps. In a short time the boats returned with the mortifying intelligence that the papers were all right, and that the vessel, being in truth a British merchantman, was not a legitimate prize. The corsair therefore sailed away under the influence of a light breeze which had arisen.

At the time of which we write, (about sixty years ago), Algiers was under the dominion of Turkey, but exercised all the rights

of an independent state. It may be described as a monstrous blot of barbarism hanging on the skirts of civilisation. It was an anomaly too, for it claimed to be an orthodox power, and was recognised as such by the nations of Europe, while in reality its chief power consisted in consummate impudence, founded on pride and ignorance of the strength of other powers, coupled with the peculiarity of its position and with the fact that the great nations were too much engaged fighting with each other to be at leisure to pay attention to it. Its rulers or Deys were most of them ignorant men, who had risen, in many cases, from the ranks of the janissaries or common Turkish soldiery, and its sole occupation was piracy—piracy pure and simple.

It did not, like other powers, find a pretext for war in the righting of a supposed or real wrong. The birds of the Pirates' Nest were much too simple in their grandeur thus to beat about the bush. They went straight to the point. Without any pretext at all they declared war with a nation when they had a mind to plunder it, and straightway set about making prizes of the merchantmen of that nation; at the same time keeping carefully clear of its cruisers. If there had been a tangible grievance, diplomacy might have set it right—but there never was any grievance, either real or imaginary. If there had been a worthy fleet that would come out and face a foe, courage and power might have settled the question—but there was no such fleet. The nest possessed only a few small frigates and a considerable number of boats, large and small, which crept along the northern

shores of Africa, and pounced upon unwary traders, or made bold dashes at small villages on the southern shores of Europe and in the isles of the Mediterranean. Trade was horribly hampered by them, though they had no ostensible trade of their own; their influence on southern Europe being comparable only to that of a wasps' nest under one's window, with this difference, that even wasps, as a rule, mind their own business, whereas the Algerine pirates minded the business of everybody else, and called *that* their own special vocation!

Like other powers, they took prisoners, but instead of exchanging these in times of war and freeing them on return of peace, they made galley-slaves of them all, and held them to ransom. At all times there were hundreds of Christian slaves held in bondage. Even in this present century, so late as 1816, the Algerine Turks held in captivity thousands of Christian slaves of all grades and classes, from all parts of Europe, and these were in many cases treated with a degree of cruelty which is perhaps equalled, but not surpassed, by the deeds recorded of negro slavery; and so hopeless were people as to the power or intention of governments to mend this state of things, that societies were formed in some of the chief countries in the world, including England, France, and America, for the express purpose of ransoming Christian slaves from those dreaded shores of Barbary.

Having said this, the reader will doubtless be prepared to hear that the civilised world, howling with indignation, assailed,

burned, and exterminated this pirates' nest. Not at all. The thing was tolerated; more than that, it was recognised! Consuls were actually sent to the nest to represent Great Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, Holland, Sweden, Denmark, America; disgraceful treaties were entered into; and annual tribute was paid by each of these, in the form of a costly "present" to the Dey, for the purpose of securing immunity to their trading vessels! Whatever nation kept a consul at this nest and paid "black-mail" passed scot free. The nation that failed in these respects was ruthlessly and systematically plundered—and this at the time when Lord Nelson was scouring the ocean with mighty armaments; when our songs lauded the wooden walls of old England to the skies; and when Great Britain claimed to herself the proud title of "Mistress of the Sea"! If you doubt this, reader, let us assure you that all history asserts it, that recorded facts confirm it, and that our proper attitude in regard to it is to stand amazed, and admit that there are some things in this curious world which "no fellow can understand."

Without apologising for this digression, we return to the thread of our tale.

Finding, then, as we have said, that the British merchantman was not a legitimate foe, the corsair proceeded to look out for a more worthy object of attack—namely, a vessel of some hapless petty state, which, being too venturesome, or too poor to pay black-mail, was at war, perforce, with the Algerines. Fortune, however, ceased for a short time to be propitious. No suitable

vessel was to be found, therefore Sidi Hassan resolved to exercise the rights of the unusually free and independent power of which he was a worthy representative in a somewhat strange fashion.

Bearing down on the coast, he sailed along it for some time, with the intention of making a bold dash at some small fishing village. His mate rather objected to this, knowing well that such attempts were too apt to be attended with considerable loss of life; but Sidi Hassan was not a man to be easily turned from his purpose. The sight of a brig in the offing, however, induced him to run out again to sea. He was soon within hail, and, finding that the vessel was a Sicilian trader, boarded her at once.

No opposition was offered, the brig being totally without arms and her crew small. She, like the vessel of our friend Francisco, was laden with wine and fruit. There were only two passengers on board, but these two were great prizes in Hassan's estimation, being beautiful girls of about seventeen and eighteen respectively. They were sisters—the elder being on her way with her infant son to join her husband in Malta.

Hassan was glad of the opportunity thus thrown in his way of pleasing his master the Dey of Algiers by presenting to him these unfortunates, whose manners and appearance bespoke them ladies, and at once sent them on board his vessel, along with their money and jewels. Their wardrobe was distributed among the pirate crew—the money and jewels being the Dey's perquisite.

"I have a plan in my head," said Hassan to his second in

command, “which the capture of this brig has suggested to me. Go, take charge of our vessel, and send me twenty of the best men of our crew fully armed—also a British Union-jack. There is a captain of a port in this neighbourhood against whom I have a special grudge, and to whom I would fain give a free passage to Algiers! so make haste.”

The order was soon executed, and the pirate-vessel ordered to remain where she was while the brig stood inshore and sailed along the coast. In a few hours she was off the port above referred to, when she hove-to, hoisted the British flag, and fired a gun. The captain of the port innocently put off to the brig, and in a few minutes found himself and his boat’s crew taken captive by the Algerines!

Having thus successfully accomplished his design, Hassan returned to his vessel, put a crew on board the second prize, and, directing his course to Africa made all sail for the port of Algiers.

During the voyage the unfortunate captives saw little of each other, nevertheless Mariano saw enough of the sisters, to create in his breast feelings of the tenderest pity—especially for the younger sister, whom he thought rather pretty than otherwise! As for the Jew, he kept aloof from all the captives, but seemed to have a good understanding with the pirate captain, and to be acquainted with several of his men.

Chapter Four.
Introduces the Reader to the Pirate City, and to a Few of its Peculiarities and Practices

Permit us now, good reader, to introduce you to the top of a house in Algiers. The roofs of the houses in the Pirate City are flat—a most admirable Eastern peculiarity which cannot be too strongly recommended to Western builders. They are, therefore, available as pleasant "terraces," on which you may rise above your cares, to lounge, and smoke—if afflicted with the latter mania—and sip coffee with your wife, (wives, if you be a Turk), or romp with your children—if not too dignified—or cultivate flowers, or read in a state of elevated serenity, or admire the magnificent view of the blue bay, backed by the bluer Jurjura mountains, with the snow-topped range of the Lesser Atlas beyond. How much wiser thus to utilise one's house-top than to yield it up, rent-free, to cats and sparrows!

Achmet Pasha, the Dey of Algiers at this time, or rather the pirate-king, had a thorough appreciation of the roof of his palace, and spent many hours daily on it, in consultation with his ministers, or in converse with his wives.

As deys went, Achmet was a comparatively respectable man.

He thought no more of cutting off a human head than of docking a rat's tail; but then he did not take a particular pleasure in this employment, and was not naturally cruel, which is more than could be said of many of his predecessors. He was also said to be a kind husband and a fond father, but as no one, save the wives and children in question, knew anything of the inner and private life of the palace, this must for ever remain a matter of uncertainty. There was no doubt, however, that he was a tall, handsome, dignified man, in the prime of life, with a stern eye and a pleasant expression of mouth; that, in character, he was bold and resolute; and that, in his jewelled turban, gold-incrusted vestments, and flowing Eastern robes, he looked resplendent.

Courage and resolution were, indeed, qualities without which a Dey of Algiers could scarcely come into existence, because his high position, not being hereditary, was naturally the ambitious goal of all the bold spirits in the Turkish army of janissaries which held the city with its mixed Arab population in subjection. The most common mode of a change of government was the strangulation of the reigning Dey by the man who had power and party influence sufficient to enable him to ascend the vacant throne. Sometimes the throne thus obtained was held for only a few days, or even hours, when it chanced that there were several factions of pretty equal power, and two or three men of similar vigour in the army. It is a fact that on more than one occasion three Deys have ascended and sat upon this undesirable throne within twenty-four hours, each having been strangled or having

had his head cut off by "the opposition" soon after occupying his predecessor's warm seat!

Achmet, however, had reigned for a considerable period in peace, and was on the whole a popular ruler.

At the time when we introduce him he was pacing the terrace, or roof of the palace, with slow dignified steps, but with a troubled expression of countenance. His chief adviser, Sidi Omar, the Minister of Marine, and one of the most unscrupulous and cunning men in the nest, walked beside him. They were attended and followed by a young but nearly full-grown lion. It was a common thing for the Deys and his chief officers to keep lion-pups as pets, but as a rule these were chained up on becoming too large to be safe playthings. Achmet, however, being of a bold, reckless nature, seemed to enjoy the occasional symptoms of alarm betrayed by his attendants at sight of his overgrown pup, and kept it by him until, as we have said, it was nearly full-grown. He appeared to have no idea of personal danger. Possibly he did not believe the huge playful brute to be capable of mischief. Perhaps he felt confident in the keen edge of his Damascene scimitar, and in the power of his arm to lop off even leonine heads. Whatever may have been the truth on this point, his ease and indifference were evidently not shared by Sidi Omar.

That sly individual was a strong-bodied, middle-aged Turk of commanding presence but sinister countenance, which latter was damaged by the loss of an eye and a sabre-cut across the nose.

"I have been asked," said Omar, continuing a conversation which had already lasted some time, "to beg that your highness will grant an audience to the Spanish consul; he claims as countrywomen the two ladies who have been just brought in by Sidi Hassan, but I advise that you should refuse him."

"Why so?" asked Achmet.

"Because, although there is, I believe, some ground for his claim, the investigation of the question will only occasion useless trouble, as he is unable to prove his case."

"Nay, then, your last reason seems to me in favour of granting an audience," returned the Dey, "for if his plea be insufficient I shall thus appear to be desirous of furthering justice without suffering loss. It is always wise to act with urbanity when it costs one nothing."

Achmet smiled, and a gleam of mischievous fun twinkled in his eyes as he observed his minister cast a furtive glance, suggestive of anything but urbanity, at the lion, which had playfully brushed its tail against his leg in passing.

"Your highness's judgment is always just," returned Sidi Omar; "and were we desirous of maintaining peace with Spain at present, it would be right to propitiate their consul; but, as you are aware, the treaties which we have recently formed with various nations are not to our advantage. The peace recently forced upon us by America has stopped suddenly the annual flow of a very considerable amount of tribute,[1] and the constant efforts made by

[1] In 1795 the Americans concluded peace with the Algerians by the payment of half

that nation of ill-favoured dogs, the British, to bring about peace between us and Portugal will, I fear, soon dry up another source of revenue, if things go on as they have been doing of late, it is plain to me that we shall soon be at peace with all the world, and be under the necessity of turning our hands to farming or some such work for a livelihood!"

"Fear not, Sidi Omar," replied the Dey, with a short laugh, "this fair and ancient city has lived too long by war to be capable of condescending now to arts of peace. We shall have no difficulty in picking a quarrel with any nation that seems most desirable when our coffers begin to grow empty—in regard to which, let us be thankful, they show no signs at present. But have a care, Omar, how you speak disrespectfully of the British. They are apt, like their representative at your heels, to spring when you least expect it, and they have powerful claws and teeth. Besides, they are my very good friends, and some of their statesmen have a great regard for me. Being at war, as you know, with some of the most powerful European nations just now, they know that I do them good service in the Mediterranean by rendering trade difficult and hazardous to all except those with whom I am at peace. Spain being on friendly terms with us at present, I will receive the Spanish consul. Go, let him know my pleasure, and see that thou hast my scrivano instilled with all requisite information to refute him."

Sidi Omar bowed low, and retired without venturing a reply.

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a million piastres, and an annual tribute of 24,000 piastres.

At the same time a man of curious aspect stepped from the doorway which conducted from the terrace to the lower parts of the house. His Eastern costume was almost equal to that of the Dey in magnificence, but there was a tinselly look about the embroidery, and a glassy sheen in the jewels, which, added to the humorous and undignified cast of his countenance, bespoke him one of low degree. He was the Dey's story-teller, and filled much the same office at the palace that was held by court jesters in the olden time. The presence of some such individual in Achmet's court, even in the first quarter of the present century, was rendered necessary by the fact that the Dey himself had risen from the ranks, and was an illiterate man.

Advancing towards his master with a freedom that no other domestic of the palace would have dared to assume, he, with affected solemnity, demanded an audience.

"I cannot refuse it, Hadji Baba, seeing that thou dost swagger into my presence unbidden," said Achmet, with a smile, as he sat down in the usual oriental fashion—cross-legged on a low couch—and patted the head of the noble animal which he had chosen as his companion, and which appeared to regard him with the affection of a dog—

"What may be your news?"

"I have no news," replied Baba, with humility. "News cannot be conveyed to one who knows all things, by one who is a dog and knows nothing."

"Thou knowest at all events how to look well after that which

concerns thyself," replied the Dey. "What hast thou to say to me?"

"That the man with the proboscis, who struts when he walks, and snivels when he speaks, desires a favour of your highness."

"Speak not in riddles," returned the Dey sharply. "I have no time to waste with thee to-day. Say thy say and be gone."

Hadji Baba, who was indeed thoroughly alive to his own interest, was much too prudent to thwart the humour of his master. Briefly, though without changing his tone or manner, he informed him that the Spanish consul awaited his pleasure below.

"Let him wait," said the Dey, resuming the pipe which for some minutes he had laid aside, and caressing the lion's head with the other hand.

"May I venture to say that he seems anxious?" added the story-teller.

"How much did he give thee for thus venturing to interrupt me, at the risk of thy head?" demanded the Dey sternly.

"Truly," replied the jester, with a rueful air, "not much more than would buy gold thread to sew my head on again, were your highness pleased to honour me by cutting it off."

"Be gone, caitiff," said the Dey, with a slight smile.

Baba vanished without further reply.

Meanwhile Sidi Omar left the palace and directed his steps to his own quarters, which stood on the little fortified island in front of Algiers. This islet, having been connected with the mainland by a pier or neck of masonry about a hundred yards

long, formed the insignificant harbour which gave shelter to the navy of small craft owned by the pirates. At the present day the French have constructed there a magnificent harbour, of which that now referred to is a mere corner in the vicinity of the old light-house. Although small, the port was well fortified, and as the Minister of Marine descended towards it, his eye glanced with approval over the double and treble tiers of guns which frowned from its seaward battlements. In passing over the connecting pier, Sidi Omar paused to observe a gang of slaves at work repairing some of the buildings which covered the pier stretching from the mainland to the island.

Although slaves, they were not of the black colour or thick-lipped, flat-nosed aspect which we are apt to associate with the name of slave. They were, indeed, burnt to the deepest brown, and many of them also blistered, by the sun, but they were all "white men," and contemptuously styled, by their Mohammedan task-masters, Christians. The pier on which they wrought had been constructed long before by thirty thousand such slaves; and the Algerine pirates, for above three centuries previous to that, had expended the lives of hundreds of thousands of them in the building of their fortifications and other public works; in the cultivation of their fields and gardens, and in the labours of their domestic drudgery.

Some of the slaves thus observed by the Minister of Marine had been sailors and merchants and mechanics, military and naval officers, clerks, scholars, and other gentlefolks from Italy,

Portugal, America, and all the lands which chanced to be "at war" with his highness the Dey. Formerly there had been hosts of English, French, Spanish, etcetera, but their governments having bowed their heads, opened their purses, and sent consuls to the piratical city, they were now graciously exempted from thraldom. It was hardish work for men accustomed to cooler climates to be obliged, in the sunshine of an African summer, to harness themselves to carts like oxen, and lift huge stones and hods of mortar with little more than a ragged shirt and trousers to cover them from the furnace-heat of day or the dews of night. Men who carry umbrellas and wear puggeries now-a-days on the Boulevard de la République of Algiers have but a faint conception of what some of their forefathers endured down at the "Marina" not much more than fifty years ago, and of what they themselves could endure, perhaps, if fairly tried! It must not be supposed, however, that all the slaves stood the trial equally well. Some were old, others were young; some were feeble, others strong; all were more or less worn—some terribly so.

Yonder old man carrying the block of stone which might tax the energies of a stout youth, and to whom a taskmaster has just administered a cut with the driving-whip, looks like one who has seen better days. Even in his ragged shirt, broken-brimmed straw hat, and naked feet, he looks like a gentleman. So he is; and there is a gentle lady and a stout son, and two sweet daughters, in Naples, who are toiling almost as hard as he does—if hours be allowed to count for pains—in order to make up his ransom. The

strong bull-necked man that follows him with a hod of mortar is an unmistakable seaman of one of the Mediterranean ports. He is a desperate character, and in other lands might be dangerous; but he is safe enough here, for the bastinado is a terrible instrument of torture, and the man is now not only desperate in wrath, but is sometimes desperately frightened. His driver takes a fiendish pleasure in giving him an extra cut of the whip, just to make him apparently a willing horse, whether he will or not. The poor youth beside him is a very different character. His training has been more gentle, and his constitution less robust, for he has broken down under the cruel toil, and is evidently in the last stages of consumption. The taskmaster does not now interfere with him as he was wont to do when he first arrived. He knows that the day is not far distant when neither the bastinado nor any other species of torture will have power to force work out of him. He also knows that overdriving will only shorten the days of his usefulness; he therefore wisely lets him stagger by unmolested, with his light load.

But why go on enumerating the sorrows of these slaves? Sidi Omar looked at them with a careless glance, until he suddenly caught sight of something that caused his eyes to flash and his brows to contract. A sbirro, or officer of justice, stood near him, whether by chance or otherwise we know not. Touching the sbirro on the shoulder, he pointed to a group under the shade of an archway, and said in a low tone—

"Go, fetch hither that scoundrel Blindi."

The sbirro at once stepped towards the group, which consisted of two persons. One was an old, apparently dying, slave; the other was a strong middle-aged man, in a quaint blue gown, who knelt by his side, and poured something from a flask into his mouth.

The sbirro seized this man rudely by the neck, and said—

"Get up, Blindi, and come along with me." Laying the head of the old man gently on the ground, and rising with some wrath, Blindi demanded, in English so broken that we find difficulty in mending it sufficiently to be presented to the reader—

"Wot for you means by dat?"

"Speak your mother tongue, you dog, and make haste, for the Minister of Marine wants you."

"Oh! mos' awfrul," exclaimed Blindi, turning pale, and drawing his blue garment hastily round him, as he meekly followed the officer of justice—whose chief office, by the way, was to administer injustice.

The man whom we have styled Blindi was a somewhat peculiar character. He was an Algerine by birth, but had served several years in the British navy, and had acquired a smattering of the English language—forecastle English, as a matter of course. In consequence of this, and of having lost an eye in the service, he had obtained a pension, and the appointment of interpreter to all his Britannic Majesty's ships visiting Algiers. He dwelt at the harbour, or Marina, where he excited the wonder and admiration of all the Turks and Moors by his volubility in talking English. He was a man of no small importance, in his own estimation, and was

so proud of his powers as a linguist that he invariably interlarded his converse with English phrases, whether he was addressing Turk, Jew, or Christian. Lingua Franca—a compound of nearly all the languages spoken on the shores of the Mediterranean—was the tongue most in use at the Marina of Algiers at that time, but as this would be unintelligible to our reader, we will give Blindi's conversations in his favourite language. What his real name was we have failed to discover. The loss of his eye had obtained for him in the navy the name of Blind Bob. In his native city this was Italianised into Blindi Bobi. But Bobi was by no means blind of the other eye. It was like seven binocular glasses rolled into one telescope. Once he had unfortunately brought it to bear on the Minister of Marine with such a concentrated stare that he, being also blind of an eye, regarded it as a personal allusion thereto, and never forgave Blindi Bobi.

"This is the second time," said Omar, when the culprit was brought before him, "that I have caught you interfering with the slaves."

"Please, sar, hims was werry bad—dyin', me s'pose."

"Speak your own tongue, dog, else you shall smart for it," said the Minister of Marine, with increasing wrath.

The poor interpreter to his Britannic Majesty's navy repeated his words in the Lingua Franca, but Omar, again interrupting him, ordered the sbirro to take him off and give him the bastinado.

"And have a care, Blindi," added Omar, observing that the

interpreter was about to speak; “if you say that you are under the protection of the British consul I’ll have you flayed alive.—Off with him!”

The sbirro, with a comrade, led Bobi through several of the narrow streets of the town to a chamber which was set apart for the infliction of punishment. It was a dark, vaulted apartment under a public building. The massive pillars of stone which supported its roof looked pale and ghostlike against the thick darkness which was beyond them, giving the idea of interminable space. One of the sbirros lighted a lantern, and led the way through a massive door, all studded with huge nails, into a small square chamber, the walls of which looked as if they had been bespattered with a dark-brown liquid, especially in the neighbourhood of several iron rings, from which chains depended. In addition to these and a number of other characteristic implements, there was a pile of blood-stained rods in a corner.

Saying a few words to a powerful negro whom they found in attendance, the sbirros handed Blindi Bobi over to him. He instantly disrobed him of his blue gown, and threw him on his back with the aid of an equally powerful assistant, and began to uncover his stomach.

The interpreter was no coward. He had prepared himself to endure manfully the bastinado on the soles of his feet—as it was usually administered—but when he perceived that they were about to inflict the blows on a more tender part of his body, he

trembled and remonstrated.

"Sidi Omar no' say you hit 'im dare. Hims 'peal to British consil—"

Thus far he spoke, from the force of habit, in his adopted tongue, but fear speedily drove him to that of his mother.

All tongues, however, were alike to the negroes, who, rendered callous from long service against their will in a brutalising office, went about their preparations with calm and slow indifference.

Just as they were about to begin, one of the sbirros, who had a personal regard for Bobi, spoke a few words to one of the negroes, who immediately turned Blindi Bobi on his face and firmly raised his feet so that the naked soles were turned upwards. The other negro applied one of the rods thereto with all his might. For a few seconds the poor sufferer uttered no sound, but at last he gave vent to an irresistible yell. At a sign from the chief sbirro the punishment was stopped, and Bobi was released and allowed to rise.

Conducting him to the door, the sbirro thrust him into the street, flung his blue gown after him, and advised him to beware of again rousing the wrath of Sidi Omar.

Blindi Bobi was far too well acquainted with the cruelties perpetrated continually in the pirate city to be ignorant of the fact that he had got off with a light punishment, yet we fear that did not cause him to entertain much gratitude to Sidi Omar as he limped back to his quarters at the Marina.

Arrived there, he observed that the sick old man still lay where he had left him. Running towards him with a sudden impulse, he drew forth his flask, knelt down, raised the old man's head and gave him a long hearty draught, after which he took another to himself.

"Derre!" he said, rising and shaking his fist defiantly in the direction in which Sidi Omar dwelt, "I's revenged on you—brute! bah! boo-o!"

After this relief to his feelings Blindi Bobi went home to attend to his poor feet.

Chapter Five.
Shows the Light in which Consuls were Regarded by Pirates, and tells of a Cruel Separation and a Stunning Blow

Seated on a throne in a recess of the audience-chamber of the palace, Achmet Pasha at length condescended to receive Don Pedro, the representative of Spain.

The Dey was robed in barbaric splendour, and absolutely shone with gold embroidery and precious stones. Centuries of robbery on the high seas had filled the treasury of the pirates' nest to overflowing, not only with hard cash, but with costly gems of all kinds, hence there was a lavish expenditure of jewellery on the costumes of the Dey and his wives and courtiers.

The recess in which he sat had a dome-ceiling, of workmanship so elaborate that there was not a square inch of unadorned stucco on any part of it. It was lighted partly from the roof by means of four minute windows, of yellow, crimson, green, and blue glass. The walls were decorated with coloured china tiles, and the floor was paved with white marble.

In front of the throne or elevated daïs couched the magnificent lion which we have already mentioned. It was the Dey's whim to use this animal as a footstool on all public occasions, much to

the annoyance of his courtiers and household, who felt, although they did not dare to express it, considerable anxiety lest it should take a sudden fancy to feed on human flesh.

Behind the Dey stood several guards, two of whom were negroes.

Don Pedro bowed low on being admitted, and the lion, raising his head, uttered a low growl, which had something distantly thunderous in the tone. Being apparently satisfied that the Don was a friend, it again laid its chin on its paws and appeared to go to sleep.

The Spanish consul was a fine-looking, dignified man, with a nose sufficiently prominent to account for the irreverent reference made to it by Hadji Baba, the story-teller.

In a few words he stated his case touching the female captives recently brought in by Sidi Hassan, and claimed that, as Spanish subjects, they should be set free and placed under his care.

"What proof can you give," demanded the Dey, "that these ladies are really the subjects of Spain?"

"Alas!" replied Don Pedro, "I have no means of verifying what I say; but I feel assured that your highness will not doubt my word, when I say that, while in my own land, I knew the family to which they belong."

"That is not sufficient," returned the Dey. "From all that I can learn, their father lived and died and they were born, in Sicily, and the eldest is the wife of an Italian merchant, who will doubtless be glad to pay a good ransom to get her and his little infant back.

As to the sister, we can find room for her in the palace, if she be not ransomed. Besides, Monsieur le Console,"—here the Dey spoke sternly—"your word is not a good guarantee. Did you not give me your word three months ago that your government would pay the six thousand dollars which are still due to us? Why has not this promise been fulfilled?"

"It grieves me, your highness," replied Don Pedro, with a mortified look, "that this debt has not yet been discharged, but I can assure you that I have communicated with my Sovereign on the subject and have no doubt that a satisfactory explanation and reply will be sent to you without delay."

"It is to be hoped that such may be the case, for I give you *my* word—and you may safely rely on *it*—that if the cash is not sent to me immediately I will send you to work in chains in the quarries with the other slaves.—Go, let your Sovereign know my intention as speedily as may be."

Lest the reader should be surprised to hear of any consul being thus cavalierly treated, it may be well to explain that the barbarians, who were thus unworthily honoured in being recognised by the European powers at all, were grossly ignorant of the usages of civilised nations, and of the sacred character in which the persons and families of consuls are held. The Deys of Algiers were constantly in the habit of threatening the consuls themselves with flagellation and death, in order to obtain what they desired from their respective governments, and sometimes even carried their threats into execution—as an instance of which

we may cite the well-authenticated fact that when the French Admiral Duquesne bombarded Algiers, the consul and twenty-two other Frenchmen were sent out to the fleet in small pieces—blown from the mouths of cannon! True, this was in the year 1683, but up to the very end of their bloody and ferocious domination, the Deys maintained their character for ignorance and barbarity—evidence of which shall be given in the sequel of our tale.

When Don Pedro had been thus ignominiously dismissed, Sidi Hassan was sent for by the Dey. This man was one of the most turbulent characters in the city, and the Dey thought it his wisest policy to secure his friendship if possible by mingling kindness with severity. In the event of this course failing, he comforted himself with the reflection that it would not be difficult to get rid of him by the simple, and too frequently used, process of strangulation. The knowledge that Hassan was a favourite among the Turkish troops prevented his at once adopting the latter method.

He was all urbanity and smiles, therefore, when the pirate captain obeyed his summons. He thanked him for the two pretty slave-girls he had brought in, commended him for his success in taking prizes, and added that he had appointed him to fill the office of attendant janissary upon the British consul.

Up to this point Sidi Hassan had listened with satisfaction, but the appointment just offered seemed to him so contemptible that he had difficulty in dissembling his feelings. The knowledge,

however, that his despotic master held his life in his hand, induced him to bow and smile, as if with gratitude.

"And now," said the Dey, "I have a commission for you. Go to the British consul, tell him of your appointment, and present him with my compliments and with the eldest slave-girl and her infant as a gift from me. Paulina is her name, is it not?"

"Yes, your highness—Paulina Ruffini, and the sister's name is Angela Diego."

"Good. Angela you may keep to yourself," continued the Dey, as coolly as if he had been talking of a silver snuff-box.

Hassan again bowed and smiled, and again had to constrain his countenance to express gratification, though he was not a little disgusted with Achmet's indifference to the captive girls.

Leaving the palace in a state of high indignation, he resolved to sell Angela in the public market, although by so doing he could not hope to gain so much as would have been the case were he to have disposed of her by private bargain. Thus, with strange perversity, does an angry man often stand in the way of his own interests.

We need scarcely say that, when their fate was announced to the unhappy sisters, they were plunged into a state of wild grief, clung to each other's necks, and refused to be separated.

Little did Sidi Hassan care for their grief. He tore them asunder, locked Paulina up with her infant, and led the weeping Angela to the slave-market, which was in the immediate neighbourhood of one of the largest mosques of the city.

This mosque, named Djama Djedid, still stands, under the name of the Mosquée de la Pêcherie, one of the most conspicuous and picturesque buildings in Algiers. It was built in the seventeenth century by a Genoese architect, a slave, who, unfortunately for himself built it in the form of a cross, for which he was put to death by the reigning Dey. In front of the northern door of this mosque the narrow streets of the city gave place to a square, in which was held the market for Christian slaves.

Here might be seen natives of almost every country—men and women and children of all ages and complexions, civilised and uncivilised, gentle and simple—exposed for sale; while turbaned Turks, Moors in broad-cloth burnouses and gay vestments, Jews in dark costume, Arabs from the desert, and men of nondescript garments and character, moved about, criticising, examining, buying, and selling.

Just as Sidi Hassan reached the market, a gang of Christian slaves were halted near the door of the mosque. It was evening. They had been toiling all day at the stone-quarries in the mountains, and were now on their way, weary, ragged, and foot-sore, to the Bagnio, or prison, in which were housed the public slaves—those not sold to private individuals, but retained by government and set to labour on the public works.

A few of these slaves wore ponderous chains as a punishment for having been unruly—the others were unshackled. Among them stood our unfortunate friends Francisco Rimini and his sons Lucien and Mariano—but ah! how changed! Only two days

had elapsed since their arrival, yet their nearest friends might have failed to recognise them, so dishevelled were they, and their faces so covered with dust and perspiration. For their own garments had been substituted ragged shirts and loose Turkish drawers reaching to below the knee. Old straw hats covered their heads, but their lower limbs and feet were naked; where not stained by blood and dust, the fairness of their skins showed how little they had been used to such exposure. Lucien's countenance wore an expression of hopeless despair; that of his father, which was wont to look so bluff and hearty, now betrayed feelings of the tenderest pity, as if he had forgotten his own sufferings in those of his children. Mariano, on the contrary, looked so stubborn and wicked that no one could have believed it possible he had ever been a gay, kindly, light-hearted youth! Poor fellow! his high spirit had been severely tried that day, but evidently not tamed, though the blood on the back of his shirt showed that his drivers had made vigorous attempts to subdue him. During the heat of the day Lucien had grown faint from toil and hunger, and had received a cruel lash from one of their guardians. This had roused Mariano. He had sprung to avenge the blow, had been seized by three powerful men, lashed until he became insensible, and, on recovering, had been forced to continue his toil of carrying stones until not only all the strength, but apparently all the spirit, was taken out of him.

From this condition he was reviving slightly when he reached the market-place, and, as his strength returned, the firm pressure

of his lips and contraction of his brows increased.

The slave-drivers were not slow to observe this, and two of them took the precaution to stand near him. It was at this critical moment that the poor youth suddenly beheld Angela Diego led into the market—more interesting and beautiful than ever in her sorrow—to be sold as a slave.

Mariano had been deeply touched by the sorrow and sad fate of the sisters when he first saw them on board the pirate-vessel. At this sight of the younger sister, prudence, which had retained but a slight hold of him during the day, lost command altogether. In a burst of uncontrollable indignation he sent one of his guards crashing through the open doorway of the mosque, drove the other against the corner of a neighbouring house, rushed towards Sidi Hassan, and delivered on the bridge of that hero's nose a blow that instantly laid him flat on the ground. At the same moment he was seized by a dozen guards, thrown down, bound, and carried off to the whipping-house, where he was bastinadoed until he felt as if bones and flesh, were one mass of tingling jelly. In this state, almost incapable of standing or walking, he was carried to the Bagnio, and thrown in among the other prisoners.

While Mariano was being conveyed away, Sidi Hassan arose in a half-stupefied condition from the ground. Fortunately he was ignorant of who had knocked him down, and why he had been so treated, or he might have vented his wrath on poor Angela.

Just at that moment he was accosted by Bacri the Jew—a convenient butt on whom to relieve himself; for the despised

Israelites were treated with greater indignity in Algiers at that time than perhaps in any other part of the earth.

"Dog," said he fiercely, "hast thou not business enough of thine own in fleecing men, that thou shouldst interfere with me?"

"Dog though I may be," returned Bacri, with gravity, but without a touch of injured feeling, "I do not forget that I promised you four thousand dollars to spare the Christians, and it is that which induces me to intrude on you now."

"Humph!" ejaculated Hassan, somewhat mollified; "I verily believe that thou hast some interested and selfish motive at the bottom. However, that business is thine, not mine."

"Whether my motive be interested or not you are well able to judge," returned Bacri gently, "for the slaves are poor and helpless; they are also Christians, and you know well that the Jews have no love for the Christians; in which respect it seems to me that they bear some resemblance to the men of other creeds."

Sidi Hassan felt that there was an intended sarcasm in the last remark, but the thought of the dollars induced him to waive further discussion.

"Do you wish to sell the girl?" said Bacri in a casual way, as though it had just occurred to him.

"Ay, but I must have a good price for her," replied the Turk.

"Name it," said the Jew; "my wife has need of a handmaiden just now."

Hassan named a sum much larger than he had any expectation the Jew would give. To his surprise, the other at once agreed to it.

"Why, Bacri," he said, with a smile, as with his right hand he tenderly caressed his injured nose, "you must have been more than usually successful in swindling of late."

"God has recently granted me more than deserved prosperity," returned the other.

Without further palaver the bargain was struck. Hassan accompanied the Jew to his residence in one of the quaint Moorish houses of the old town. Angela was handed over to Bacri's wife, a pleasant-visaged woman of forty, and Hassan returned home with his pockets well lined, his nose much swelled, and his temper greatly improved.

Bethinking him of the Dey's commands, he set out with Paulina and her infant for the residence of the British consul, which lay a short distance outside the northern wall of the town, not far from the bluff height on which, at the present day, towers the picturesque pile of Nôtre-Dame d'Afrique.

Chapter Six.
Sends a Gleam of Hope into a Gloomy Region

The short twilight of southern latitudes was giving place to the shades of night, when Bacri the Jew issued from the low door of his house, and threaded the narrow labyrinth of streets which compose the old town of Algiers.

The greater part of the old, or, as it is styled, the Moorish town, remains almost exactly the same at the present time that it was at the time of which our tale treats. It occupied the face of a steep hill, and was built in the form of a triangle, the apex being a fort, or "casba," near the summit of the hill. The base was a street of oriental houses upwards of half a mile in extent, beyond which the sea-wall, well lined with batteries, rose directly from the beach, and was washed by the spray in every breeze. All the houses facing the sea have now been taken down, and their places are occupied by wide handsome streets of French buildings; the beach and the site of the old wall being occupied by splendid quays, wharves, and terraces.

The houses of the Moorish town were square white-washed blocks, built so close to each other that most of the streets were mere lanes, not more than from six to ten feet wide. No windows worthy of the name garnished the dead white walls of these

houses, whose light sprang in reality from within, each house being in the form of a square of building surrounding a central court, which at the top was open to the weather. The real windows of the houses looked into the courts, which, however, were by no means dismal. They had fountains in the midst of them, which sent up a perpetual—and, in such a climate, grateful—sound of trickling water; while in their corners and elsewhere boxes of earth enabled banana-trees, and palms, and various creepers, to convert the little spots into delightful, though miniature, gardens. Such windows as opened outwards were mere loop-holes, not much more than a foot square—many of them less,—the larger of them being always strongly grated. Most of these houses projected beyond their basement storeys, thus rendering the open space above narrower than the streets below, and in many cases the walls absolutely met, and converted the streets into tunnels. Strange wooden props, seemingly insufficient for their duty, upheld these projecting upper storeys, and gave a peculiarly un-European character to the streets,—a character which became still more perplexing to the stranger when he observed here and there, in places where architecture had scarcely space or light to be seen, fountains of the most elegant design and workmanship; doorways of white marble, most elaborately and beautifully carved; and entrance-halls that resembled courts of the Alhambra in miniature.

When one first sees such things they induce surprise, but the surprise evaporates when we reflect that these pirates had at their

command the services of thousands of slaves, many of whom represented the artistic talent of the civilised world.

Passing rapidly along these narrow streets, and bending his tall form when he came to low archways, Bacri at length emerged on the chief "high street" of the town, which, entering at the north, or Bab-el-Oued gate, completely traversed the city under that name as far as the Dey's palace, where it changed its name to Bab-Azoun, and terminated at the south gate of the same name.

In this street was the Bagnio, already mentioned as being the prison of the government slaves.

Here Bacri paused, drew a glittering coin from his pocket, and knocked at a strong oaken door. A janissary opened, and roughly demanded his business, but changed his tone at once and gave the Jew admission, on receiving the coin.

Passing though a lobby, whose marble pillars were sadly broken and disfigured, the Jew entered a courtyard, open to the sky, around which were a number of recesses or cells. In these the unhappy slaves sat huddled together. They were not cold, for it was summer; but their misery and want of space probably induced them to cling closely to each other.

The place had once been a bathing establishment, and an old fountain still gurgled in the centre of the court; but its drains had been choked long ago, and the waters had overflowed, to find exit as they best might, rendering the floor a damp and uncomfortable residence for scorpions, centipedes, and other repulsive insects.

The slaves received only two small rolls of black bread as

their rations at the close of each day, and they were too eagerly engaged in devouring these to pay much regard to their visitor.

Looking carefully round, the Jew at length discovered the objects of his search,—Francisco, Lucien, and Mariano Rimini. The two first were seated side by side, eating their meagre meal. Mariano lay near them, heavily laden with irons, and also endeavouring to eat.

"Friends," said Bacri, approaching them.

"Villain!" cried Mariano, starting up into a reclining attitude, despite the agony that the act occasioned, and fixing his eyes on the Jew.

"You do me injustice, young man," said Bacri, seating himself on the basement of a pillar.

"It may be that he does you injustice," said Lucien sternly, "nevertheless we have all of us good reason to believe that you are a friend of the pirate Hassan, and no friend of ours."

"Whether friend or foe, say thy say, man, and be gone," cried the bluff Francisco, whose spirit suffered even more than his body from the indignities to which he had been subjected that day.

"Listen, then," said Bacri impressively. "You know my name and nation, but you do not know that I am the chief of the Jews in this city of devils. I and my people are regarded by these followers of Mohammed as worse than the dogs in their streets, yet, while they treat us with the utmost indignity, they know that we are good traders, and as such bring riches within their walls.

I have power—the power of wealth—to help you at a pinch; indeed I *have* helped you, for it was only by means of a promise of gold that I induced Sidi Hassan to spare your lives when his men were bent on taking them. But that is not what I came to tell you to-night. I came to say that the poor captive girls with whom you voyaged to this place are for the present out of danger."

"Say you so?" exclaimed Mariano eagerly. "How can that be? Did I not see Angela led to the slave-market this very afternoon?"

"You did, and I purchased her for the purpose of protecting her. She is now in my house. Her sister and the infant have been sent as a temporary gift or loan to the British consul, under whose care she is safe *for the present*. But be not too sanguine," added Bacri, seeing that Mariano's countenance brightened; "the whim of the Dey, or a change of government, which latter is common enough here, may totally alter the state of affairs. If the Dey willed it, I could not hold anything that belongs to me for an hour. They call us dogs, and treat us as such."

"They are themselves dogs!" cried Mariano indignantly.

"Christians have called us by the same name," returned the Jew calmly, "thereby proving the falsity of their own faith."

"Say not so!" cried Lucien with animation. "Many, calling themselves Christians, have undoubtedly treated your race ill, but those who really love the Lord Jesus cannot help respecting the people from whom Himself sprang. I side not with those who disgrace themselves by vilifying the Jews."

Lucien extended his hand as he spoke, and Bacri grasped it

kindly.

"Bah! you are fools; all of you arrant idiots!" cried a wild-looking ragged man in the neighbouring cell, starting up and glaring at them as he clenched his fists. "What avails Christianity, or Judaism, or anything else here? 'Tis a world of fiends!—ha, ha! murderers, tormentors, hypocrites,—ha! ha!"

Here the man gave vent to a burst of wild ferocious laughter, so loud that even the careless and callous warder was disturbed, and rattled his keys as if about to enter. The sound appeared to send a chill to the heart of the captive; an expression of terror overspread his thin haggard features, and he shrunk together as he retired quickly to the remotest corner of his cell.

"A maniac, I fear," said Francisco in a low tone, observing that the Jew regarded him with a look of pity.

"No, not quite mad," replied Bacri in the same low tone, "but sometimes very near it, I think. Poor man, I know him well. He has been fifteen years a prisoner in Algiers. When first brought here he was as fine a specimen of a Genoese youth as I ever saw. His name is Lorenzo Benoni. He was captured with his wife and two children, all of whom died before the first year was out. Of course, although in the same city, he was never again permitted to see wife or children. He was very dangerous at first, attacking and nearly killing his guards whenever he got a chance, and frequently attempting to take his own life, so that they were obliged to make him work constantly in heavy irons, and, I need scarcely add, bastinadoed and tortured him until his

body became a mass of bruises from head to foot. They subdued him, in the course of years, to a condition of callous and brutal indifference to everything, and at last his great strength began to give way. He is now considered incapable of doing much injury to any one, and seems almost tamed. The Turks think that this has been brought about by sickness and starvation; it may be partly so, but I cannot help thinking that, despite the contempt which, in a sudden burst of passion, he poured on it just now, religion has something to do with it, for I have noticed a considerable change in him since he began to listen to the voice of an old man who has been a true friend of the poor slaves since long before I came here. The old man professes, at least he teaches, your religion; but I know not to what sect he belongs. Indeed, I think he belongs to none. This, however, am I sure of, that he holds equally by our Scriptures and your Testament as being the whole Word of God."

The three captives listened to this narration with sinking hearts, for it opened up a glimpse of the terrible and hopeless future that lay before themselves, so that for some time they sat gazing in silence at their visitor, and at the miserable beings who were devouring the last crumbs of their black bread around them.

"I came to see you," continued Bacri, "partly to assure you of the comparative safety of the girls who interested us all so much on board the vessel of Sidi Hassan, and partly to say that I will do what lies in my power to alleviate your sad condition. With Lucien's education and knowledge of languages, it may be

possible to get him into the immediate service of the Dey, in which case he will be able to aid his father and brother."

"Have you, then, much influence with the Dey?" asked Francisco.

"None," replied the Jew, with a sad smile. "I have already told you that the pirates detest us; that we are tolerated only because of our money-making powers, and the ease with which they can bleed us when they want gold. But I have some influence with others in the city who have power to move the Dey. There is one thing, however," here the Jew glanced pointedly at Mariano, "in regard to which I would give you most earnest counsel, namely, that you should at once dismiss all idea of rebellion. It will be utterly unavailing. You may, like the caged lion, if you will, dash yourselves to death against your prison bars, but you cannot break them. Countless thousands of bold and brave spirits have attempted this plan, with no good result, in time past. The Turks are well acquainted with and quite prepared for it. Your only chance of mitigating the woes of your condition lies in submission."

"It were better and nobler to die than to submit," said Mariano gloomily.

"It were better and nobler to bow to the will of the Almighty than to commit suicide," retorted Bacri, somewhat sternly. "It is selfishness and pride which induces us to seek deliverance from sorrow and suffering in death. There are men who have thought that truest nobility lay in choosing a life in the midst of suffering

and woe for the purpose of alleviating it, and who have acted on their opinion. This lesson, however, is not so frequently learnt by us through precept as in the school of sorrow."

Mariano felt abashed, yet at the same time rather nettled.

"Truly, then," he said, with a glance at his blood-stained shirt, "it seems to me that I have at all events begun my lesson in the right school. However, I believe thou art right, Bacri, and I bear thee no ill-will for the rap thou didst bestow on my skull, which, luckily, is a thick one, else thy ponderous fist had split it from the cranium to the chin."

"We had misjudged you, Bacri," said Francisco, extending his hand, as the Jew rose to depart.

"We will lay your advice to heart; and we thank you, meanwhile, for coming to see us in this foul den, which I dislike less because of moisture and dirt—these being familiar to me—than because of the lively reptiles which hold their nightly revels in it."

There was mingled humour and bitterness in Francisco's tone, as he uttered this sentence, which he concluded with a heavy sigh. Immediately after, the rusty bolts of their prison-door grated harshly on their ears, and they listened sadly to the retreating footsteps of one whom they now esteemed their only friend, as they died away in the distance.

Chapter Seven.
Some New Characters walk, glide, and furiously gallop into the Tale, and otherwise introduce themselves to Notice

In the interior court of a beautiful Moorish villa not far from the city, sat Mrs Langley, wife of Colonel Langley, British consul at the "Court" of Algiers.

The lady of whom we write was unusually romantic, for her romance consisted of a deep undercurrent of powerful but quiet enthusiasm, with a pretty strong surface-flow of common-sense. Her husband was a man of noble mind and commanding presence—a magnificent representative John Bull, with the polish of a courtier and the principles of a Christian; one who had been wisely chosen to fill a very disagreeable post, full of responsibility and danger.

On a stool at the feet of Mrs Langley sat a sunny second edition of herself, about eight years of age, named Agnes. In the cradle which Agnes had formerly occupied reposed a remarkably plump and dimpled representative of the Colonel. When respectfully addressed he was called Jim, but he was more familiarly known as Baby.

A small negress from beyond the Zahara, and blacker than any coal, rocked Jim violently. For this—not the rocking, but the violence—she had been unavailingly rebuked by Mrs Langley, until that lady's heart had nearly lost all hope.

"There—you have done it again, Zubby," said Mrs Langley, referring to a push that well-nigh rolled Master Jim, (as a sea-captain once said), out at the starboard side of the cradle.

Zubby confessed her guilt, by looking abashed—and what a solemn look an abashed one is in a negress with very large eyes! —as well as by rocking more gently.

Agnes vented a sudden little laugh at the expression of Zubby's face; and, the door opening at that moment, Colonel Langley entered the court, and sat down beside his wife under the giant leaves of a small banana-tree, whose life was drawn from a boxful of earth about three feet square.

"My dear," said the Colonel, "I have two rather amusing things to lay before you this evening. One is a gift from the Dey, the other is a letter. Which will you have first?"

"The gift, of course," replied the lady.

"Let her come in, Ali," called the Colonel to his interpreter, who stood in the passage outside.

Rais Ali, a Moor clad in the usual Turkish garb, but with a red fez or skull-cap on his head instead of a turban, threw open the door leading out of the court, and ushered in poor Paulina Ruffini with her child.

"Is *this* the Dey's gift?" asked the astonished lady, rising

hurriedly.

"It is; at least she is lent to us, and we are bound to accept her.—Address her in French, my dear; she does not understand English. In fact, you'd better take her to your own room and have a talk."

Mrs Langley addressed to the poor captive a few reassuring words, and led her away, leaving the Colonel to amuse himself with Agnes.

"What has she been sent to us for?" asked Agnes.

"To be a serv— a companion to you and baby, my pet."

"That was kind of the Dey, wasn't it?" said the child.

"Well—ye–es; oh yes, doubtless, it was very kind of him," replied the Colonel.

We fear that the Colonel did not fully appreciate the kindness that resulted in the gift either of Paulina Ruffini as his servant, or of Sidi Hassan as his attendant, for he saw clearly that the former was unaccustomed to menial work, and he knew that Sidi Hassan was a turbulent member of the community. However, being a man of prompt action, and knowing that it was of the utmost importance that he should stand well in the good graces of the Dey, he resolved to receive Paulina into his establishment as governess of the nursery and companion to his wife, and to leave Sidi Hassan very much to the freedom of his own will, so long as that will did not interfere with the interests of the consulate.

On the return of his wife he listened to her pathetic account of Paulina's sad history, and then produced the letter to which he

had referred on first entering.

"This letter necessitates my riding into town immediately. It is a curious document in its way, therefore lend me your ear."

Opening it he began to read. We give it *verbatim et literatim*:—

> "*To the brittish Cownsul algeers.*
>
> "7 *teenth Jully*, 18—
>
> "Sur i'm an irishman an a sailer an recked on the cost of boogia wid six of me messmaits hoo are wel an arty tho too was drowndid on landin an wan wos spiflikated be the moors which are born divls an no mistaik. I rite to say that weer starvin but the Kaid as they cals the guvner Here says heel take a ransum for us of 150 spanish dolars the Kaid has past his word in yoor name to the moors for that sum or theyd hav spiflikate us too. I hope yer onor has as much to spair in yer pokit, an will luke alive wid it, for if yoo don't its all up wid me mesmaits inkloodin yoor onors obedent humbil servint to comand ted flagan."

"Well, I hope, with poor Flaggan," said Mrs Langley laughingly, "that you *have* as much to spare in your 'pokit,' for if not, it is plain that the poor fellows will be led into captivity."

"I would readily advance a larger sum for so good an end," replied the consul, folding the letter. "I shall at once ride into town to make arrangements, and as it is so late, will pass the night in our town house. I shall send our new attendant, Sidi Hassan, on this mission, and leave you for the night under the guardianship of Rais Ali."

The consul left immediately, and next morning Sidi Hassan

set out for Bugia with the necessary ransom.

In regard to this we need say nothing more than that he accomplished his purpose, paid the ransom, and received the seven British seamen, accompanied by whom he commenced the return journey, he and his men riding, and driving the sailors on foot before them as though they had been criminals. On the way, however, they were attacked, not far from Algiers, by a body of predatory Arabs from the Jurjura mountains.

These bold villains, at the very first onset, killed more than half of the Turkish escort, and put the rest to flight. Six of the sailors they captured and carried off, but Ted Flaggan, who was an exceedingly active as well as powerful man, proved himself more than a match for them all. During the mêlée he managed to throw himself in the way of one of the best-mounted among the Arabs, who instantly charged him, but Ted sprang aside and let him pass, ducking low to avoid a cut from his curved sword.

Before he could turn, the Irishman ran close to his side, seized him by the burnous, at the same time grasping his bridle, and pulled him out of the saddle with such sudden violence that he fell headlong to the ground, where he lay quite stunned by the fall. Flaggan instantly sprang into the saddle, as if he had been an accomplished cavalier, though in reality he knew no more about horses than an Esquimaux. However, a man who was accustomed to hold on to a top-sail-yard in a gale was not to be easily shaken off by an Arab charger. He clung to the high saddle-bow with one hand, and with the other grasped his clasp-knife, which he

opened with his teeth. Therewith he probed the flanks of his fiery steed to such an extent that he not only distanced all his Arab pursuers, but overtook and passed his own escort one by one, until he reached Sidi Hassan himself. He then attempted to pull up, but the clasp-knife had fired the charger's blood in an unusual degree. With a wicked snort and fling that lifted Flaggan high out of the saddle, it rushed madly on, left the pirate captain far behind, and at length dashed through the Bab-Azoun gate of Algiers, despite the frantic efforts of the guard to check or turn it. Right onward it sped through the street Bab-Azoun, scattering Turks, Moors, Jews, negroes, and all the rest of them like chaff; passed the Dey's palace, straight along the street Bab el-Oued; out at the water-gate, with similar contempt of the guards; down into the hollow caused by the brook beyond; up the slope on the other side, half-way towards the summit, on the opposite side of Frais Vallon, and was not finally pulled up until it had almost run down the British consul, who chanced to be riding leisurely homeward at the time.

"You seem to have had a pretty sharp run, my man," said the consul, laughing, as the Irishman thankfully jumped off, and grasped the bridle of the now thoroughly winded horse.

"Faix an' I have, yer honour; an' if I haven't run down an' kilt half the population o' that town, wotever's its name, no thanks to this self-opiniated beast," replied Flaggan, giving the bridle a savage pull.

"You're an Irishman, I perceive," said the consul, smiling.

"Well, now, yer right, sur; though how ye came to persaive is more nor I can understand."

"Where have you come from? and how in such a plight?" demanded the consul in some surprise, observing that a troop of janissaries came galloping up the winding road, near the top of which they stood.

"Sorrow wan o' me knows where we touched at last," replied the seaman in some perplexity; "the names goes out o' me head like wather out of a sieve. All I'm rightly sure of is that I set sail four days ago from a port they calls Boogee, or so'thin' like it, in company with a man called Seedy Hassan; an' sure he'd ha bin seedy enough be now if his horse hadn't bin a good 'un, for we wos attacked, and half his party killed and took, forby my six messmates; but—"

"Your name is Ted Flaggan?" inquired the consul hastily.

"It is," said the seaman, in great surprise; "sure yer honour must be—"

The sentence was cut short by the arrival of the janissaries, who pulled up with looks of considerable astonishment on finding the mad fugitive engaged in quiet conversation with the British consul.

"Gentlemen," said Colonel Langley, with much urbanity of tone and manner, "I suppose you wish to make a prisoner of this man?"

The soldiers admitted that such was their desire and intention.

"Then you will oblige me," continued the Colonel, "by

allowing me to be his jailer in the meantime. He is a British subject, of whom I can give a good account at the fitting time and place. Sidi Hassan, under whose charge he has been by my orders, will doubtless soon arrive in town, and further enlighten you on this subject."

Without waiting for a reply the Colonel bowed, and wheeling his horse round rode quietly away, followed by the Irishman, who regarded his new jailer with a very puzzled look, while a touch of humour further tended to wrinkle his remarkably expressive countenance.

Chapter Eight.
Ted Flaggan and Rais Ali proceed on a Mission, and see Impressive Sights

Two days after the events narrated in the last chapter, Mrs Langley, being seated on her favourite couch in the court under the small banana-tree, sent Zubby into the garden to command the attendance of Ted Flaggan. That worthy was gifted with a rare capacity for taking the initiative in all things, when permitted to do so, and had instituted himself in the consul's mansion as assistant gardener, assistant cook and hostler, assistant footman and nurseryman, as well as general advice-giver and factotum, much to the amusement of all concerned, for he knew little of anything, but was extremely good-humoured, helpful, and apart from advice-giving—modest.

"Flaggan," said Mrs Langley, when the stout seaman appeared, hat in hand, "I want you to accompany our interpreter, Rais Ali, into town, to bring out a message from a gentleman named Sidi Omar. Ali himself has other duties to attend to, and cannot return till evening, so take particular note of the way, lest you should miss it in returning."

"I will, ma'am," replied Ted, with a forecastle bow, "Does Mister Ally onderstand English?"

"Oh yes," returned Mrs Langley, with a laugh. "I forgot that he

was absent when you arrived. You will find that he understands all you say to him, though I'm not quite sure that you will understand all he says to you. Like some of the other Moors here, he has been in the British navy, and has acquired a knowledge of English. You'll find him a pleasant companion, I doubt not. Be so good as to tell him that I wish to see him before he leaves."

Obedient to the summons, Rais Ali quickly appeared. The interpreter was a stout, tall, dignified man of about thirty-five, with a great deal of self-assertion, and a dash of humour expressed in his countenance.

"Ali," said Mrs Langley, "you are aware that Sidi Omar is to be married to-morrow. I have been invited to the wedding, but have stupidly forgotten the hour at which I was asked to see the bride dressed. Will you go to Sidi Omar, or some of his people, and find this out? Take the sailor, Mr Flaggan, with you, and send him back with the information as soon as possible."

"Yis, mum," replied the interpreter; "an' please, mum, I was want too, tree days' leave of absins."

"No doubt Colonel Langley will readily grant your request. Have you some particular business to transact, or do you merely desire a holiday?"

"Bof," replied the Moor, with a mysterious smile. "I'se got finished the partikler bizziness of bein' spliced yesterdays, an' I wants littil holiday."

"Indeed," said Mrs Langley in surprise, "you have been very quiet about it."

"Ho yis, wery quiet."

"Where is your bride, Ali? I should like so much to see her."

"Her's at 'ome, safe," said Rais Ali, touching a formidable key which was stuck in his silken girdle.

"What! have you locked her up?"

"Yis—'bleeged to do so for keep her safe."

"Not alone, I hope?" said Mrs Langley.

"No, not 'lone. Her's got a bootiflul cat, an' I means buy her a little nigger boy soon."

Having arranged that Mrs Langley was to visit his bride on her way to Sidi Omar's wedding the following day, Rais Ali set out on his mission, accompanied by Mr Flaggan.

The Irishman soon discovered that the Moor was a conceited coxcomb and a barefaced boaster, and ere long began to suspect that he was an arrant coward. He was, however, good-humoured and chatty, and Ted, being in these respects like-minded, rather took a fancy to him, and slily encouraged his weakness.

"Ye must have seed a power o' sarvice in the navy, now," he said, with an air of interest; "how came you to git into it?"

"Ha! that wos cos o' me bein' sitch a strong, good-lookin' feller," replied Ali, with an air of self-satisfaction.

"Just so," said Flaggan; "but it's not common to hear of Moors bein' taken aboard our men o' war, d'ee see. It's that as puzzles me."

"Oh, that's easy to 'splain," returned Ali. "The fac' is, I'd bin for sev'l year aboord a Maltese trader 'tween Meddrainean an'

Liverp'l, and got so like a English tar you coodn't tell the one fro' the oder. Spok English, too, like natif."

"Ha!" exclaimed Ted, nodding his head gravely—"well?"

"Well, one night w'en we was all sleeperin' in port, in a 'ouse on shore, the press-gang comes round an' nabs the whole of us. We fight like lions. I knock seven men down, one before the tother, 'cause of bein' very strong, an' had learn to spar a littil. You know how to spar?"

"Well," returned Ted, looking with a smile at his huge hands, "I can't go for to say as I know much about the science of it, d'ee see; but I can use my fists after a fashion."

"Good," continued the Moor. "Well, then, we fights till all our eyes is black, an' all our noses is red, an' some of our teeths is out, but the sailirs wos too many for us. We wos 'bleeged to gif in, for wot kin courage do agin numbers? so we wos took aboord a friggit and 'zamined."

"An' what?" asked the seaman.

"'Zamined. Overhauled," replied the Moor.

"Oh! examined, I see. Well?"

"Well, I feels sure of git hoff, bein' a Algerine Moor, so w'en my turn comes, I says to the hofficer wot 'zamined us, says I, 'I's not a Breetish man!'

"'Wot are you, then?' says the hofficer.

"'I's a Moor,' says I.

"'Moor's the pity,' says he."

Ted gave a short laugh at this.

"Now, that's strange," observed Ali, glancing at his companion in some surprise; "that's 'zactly wot they all did, w'en the hofficer says that! I've thought oftin 'bout it since, but never could see wot they laugh at."

"Oh, it's just a way we've got," returned Flaggan, resuming his gravity; "the English have a knack o' larfin', off and on, w'en they shouldn't ought to.—Git along with your yarn."

"Well, that wos the finish. I became a Breetish tar, an' fouted in all the battils of the navy. I 'spected to get promotion an' prize-money, but nivir git none, 'cause of circumstances as wos never 'splained to me. Well, one night we come in our friggit to anchor in bay of Algiers. I gits leave go ashore wi' tothers, runs right away to our Dey, who gits awrful waxy, sends for Breetish cap'n, 'splain that I's the son of a Turk by a Algerine moder an' wery nigh or'er the cap'n's head to be cutted off."

"You don't say so?"

"Yis, it's troo. Wery near declare war with England acause of that," said Ali, with an air of importance. "But the Breetish consul he interfere, goes down on hims knees, an' beg the Dey for to parding hims nation."

"He must ha' bin a cowardly feller, that consul!"

"No," said the interpreter sternly, "him's not coward. Him was my master, Kurnil Langley, an' only do the right ting: humbil hisself to our Dey w'en hims contry do wrong.—Now, here we is comin' to Bab-el-Oued, that means the Water-gate in yoor lingo, w'ere the peepils hold palaver."

This in truth appeared to be the case, for many of the chief men of the city were seated under and near the gate, as the two drew near, smoking their pipes and gossiping in the orthodox Eastern style.

The big Irishman attracted a good deal of notice as he passed through the gates; but Turks are grave and polite by nature: no one interrupted him or made audible comments upon his somewhat wild and unusual appearance.

Passing onwards, they entered the town and traversed the main street towards the Bab-Azoun gate, which Ali explained to his companion was the Gate of Tears, and the place of public execution.

Here they came suddenly on the body of a man, the feet and limbs of which were dreadfully mangled, showing that the miserable wretch had perished under the bastinado.

At the time we write of, and indeed at all times during Turkish rule, human life was held very cheap. For the slightest offences, or sometimes at the mere caprice of those in power, men were taken up and bastinadoed in the open streets until they died from sheer agony, and their relations did not dare to remove the bodies for burial until their tyrants had left the scene. Cruelty became almost the second nature of the people. Theft was checked by the amputation of the first joint of the fore-finger of the right hand for the first offence. For the second, the whole hand was sacrificed, and for the third, the head itself was forfeited. Sometimes, in cases of capital punishment, decapitation was

performed by degrees! and other refinements too horrible to mention were constantly practised.

While the interpreter was explaining to his companion as much of this as he deemed it right for him to know, several of the sorrowing relations of the dead man came forward and carried the body away. Little notice was taken of the incident, which, from beginning to end, scarcely interrupted the general flow of business.

At the Bab-Azoun gate, which occupied a position not many yards distant from the spot on which now stands the principal theatre of Algiers, Ali left Ted Flaggan for a few minutes, begging him to wait until he had transacted a piece of business in the market held just outside the gate.

"Tell me before ye go, Ally, what may be the use of them three big hooks close to the gate," said Flaggan, pointing upwards.

"Them's for throwin' down teeves an' murderers on to.—You stay here; me not be wery long come back."

Rais Ali hurried away, leaving the sailor to observe and moralise on all that passed around him. And there was a good deal to induce thought in one who had been accustomed to comparatively humane laws and merciful dispensations in his native land, for, besides the scene which he had just witnessed, and the huge hooks whose uses had just been explained to him, he now noticed that several conspicuous places near him were garnished with the heads of malefactors who had been recently executed. He observed, also, that the innumerable donkeys which

were being constantly driven past him, overladen with market produce, were covered with open sores, and that these sores appeared to be selected for special flagellation when the brutal drivers wished to urge the wretched creatures on.

He stood thus for some time watching with interest the throng of Turks, Jews, Moors, negroes, and others that continually streamed to and fro, some on foot, some on horseback, and others, especially the men with marketable commodities, on mules and donkeys. It was not difficult for him to distinguish between the races, for Rais Ali had already told him that none but Turks were permitted to wear the turban, not even the sons of Turks by Algerine mothers, and that the Jews were by law commanded to dress in sombre black.

Suddenly he observed a body of men advancing towards the gate, carrying something in their arms, and followed by an orderly crowd at a respectful distance. With the curiosity of an idler he approached, and found that they bore a man, who was firmly bound hand and foot. The man was a Moor, and the anxious look of his pale face showed that he was about to suffer punishment of some kind.

The seaman mingled with the crowd and looked on.

Laying the man on the ground with his face downwards, the officers of justice sent away two of their number, who speedily returned with a blacksmith's anvil and forehammer. On this they placed one of their victim's ankles, and Flaggan now saw, with a sickening heart, that they were about to break it with the

ponderous hammer. One blow sufficed to crush the bones in pieces, and drew from the man an appalling shriek of agony. Pushing his leg farther on the anvil, the executioner broke it again at the shin, while the other officials held the yelling victim down. A third blow was then delivered on the knee, but the shriek that followed was suddenly cut short in consequence of the man having fainted. Still the callous executioner went on with his horrible task, and, breaking the leg once more at the thigh, proceeded to go through the same process with the other leg, and also with the arms. When twelve blows had thus been delivered, the writhing of the wretched victim proved that he was still alive, though his labouring chest was now incapable of giving vent to his agony in shrieks.

We would not describe such a scene as this were it not certainly true; and we relate it, reader, not for the purpose of harrowing your feelings, but for the sake of showing what diabolical deeds we men are capable of, unless guarded therefrom by the loving and tender *spirit* of Jesus Christ. We say "spirit" advisedly, for we are well aware that false professors of that blessed name have, many a time, committed deeds even more horrible than that which we have just described.

Unable to bear the sight longer, the sailor turned and hurried away from the spot.

Fortunately he met Rais Ali just outside the crowd.

"Come, lad, come," he cried, seizing that boastful man by the arm, in such a grasp that Rais turned pale with alarm. "I can't stop

here. Let's git away. Sure it's divls they must be, an' not men!"

Blindly dragging the interpreter along by main force through several streets, Flaggan stopped suddenly at last to recover breath and to wipe the perspiration from his brow.

"Don't ask me wot I've seen," he said, to Ali's inquiries, "I can't a-bear to think on it. God help me! I wish I could wipe it out of me brain intirely. Come along, let's finish our business, an' git out o' this cursed place."

Proceeding rapidly and in silence towards the street at the base of the triangular town, which followed the line of ramparts that faced the sea, they discovered the great man of whom they were in search, Sidi Omar, walking up and down with the cadi, or chief judge, to whose daughter he was to be united on the following day.

"It won't do to 'trupt 'em jus' yit. Hold on a littil," said Rais Ali to his companion.

Ted Flaggan had no objection to "hold on," for the sight of the ocean with its fresh breezes cooled his brow, and tended to turn his mind away from the horrible thoughts that filled it.

While they are waiting, let you and me, reader, listen to the conclusion of the converse held between the bridegroom and father-in-law.

The cadi was a stern old Turk, with a long grey beard. The son-in-law elect was, as we have elsewhere said, an ill-favoured elderly man with only one eye. He did not look quite so happy as one would have expected in a bridegroom so near his wedding-

day, but that was to be accounted for, to some extent, by the fact that he already possessed four wives, and was naturally somewhat used to weddings.

"No, no," said he, in a cautious tone, to the judge; "it won't do to be hasty about it, Achmet is too popular at present."

"What has that to do with the question?" asked the cadi, in a tone of contempt. "If our party be strong enough we have only to strike; and I tell you that I believe it to be quite strong enough."

"I know it," returned Omar impatiently, "but I also know that my enemy, Sidi Hassan, is more than usually on the alert just now; I think it well to delay for a time. Besides," he added, smiling, "you surely would not have me begin a revolution on the very eve of my marriage!"

"I would have you lose as little time as possible," replied the cadi. "But see, if I mistake not, these two men are eyeing us rather narrowly."

Seeing that they were observed, Rais Ali advanced, and, with a low salaam, delivered his message to Sidi Omar, who gave him the necessary reply, and dismissed him.

Resuming their conference, the two magnates turned to saunter along the street, when Omar observed a dark object like a dog, coiled up in an angle of the parapet. Poking it with his cane, he caused it to uncoil and display the vacant, features of a half-witted negro boy. The poor creature fell on his knees in alarm on seeing the well-known face of Sidi Omar, but sprang to his feet with alacrity, and ran off at full speed on being sternly

told to "be gone."

Meanwhile Rais Ali led his friend safely through the Bab-el-Oued gate, and, turning his face in the right direction said—

"Now, you git 'ome, fast. Keep 'er steady—a point morer to the westward—so, yoo can't go wrong."

Instead of obeying orders, Ted Flaggan turned, and, with an amused smile, watched the retreating figure of the interpreter. Then, after sauntering on some distance in a reverie, he stopped and gazed long and earnestly at the pirate city, whose white-washed domes and minarets gleamed in the sunshine like marble, contrasting beautifully with the bright green of the Sahel hills behind, and the intense blue of the sky and sea.

"A whited sepulchre!" muttered the seaman, with a frown, as he turned away and pushed forward at a rapid pace towards the residence of the British consul.

Chapter Nine.
Describes a Moorish Bride, a Wedding, and a Metamorphosis, besides indicating a Plot

On the following morning Mrs Langley set out on horseback for the palace of the cadi, to attend the wedding of his daughter with Sidi Omar, and, true to her promise, turned aside on the way to pay a visit to the imprisoned bride of Rais Ali.

She was accompanied, of course, by the remarkable bridegroom himself, and also by her husband's janissary, Sidi Hassan, as well as by her daughter Agnes, who rode a spirited Arab pony.

Immediately on entering the gate of the city, Rais and the ladies dismounted, and leaving their horses in charge of a groom, ascended on foot one of the narrow streets of the town. So steep was this street that it consisted of a flight of broad steps, which led ultimately to the casba, or citadel, at the upper part of the town. But before they had ascended it very far, the interpreter diverged into a cross street, which was much narrower. It terminated in a *cul-de-sac*, at the bottom of which stood the door of Rais Ali's town residence.

And a remarkable door it was, made of thick oaken planks,

studded with enormous nails, the heads of which were as large as a half-crown. Just above it there was a square hole grated with thick iron bars, which served to enlighten the gloomy passage within.

Applying the key before mentioned to this door, Rais threw it open and bade the visitors enter.

Having carefully shut and re-locked the door, the interpreter led them through a narrow passage, which terminated in the usual square court of Moorish houses. This was very small, and, like all such courts, had no roof, so that a pleasant gleam of sunshine flickered through the creepers which twined up its pillars and gleamed on the drops that fell from a tinkling fountain in the centre.

Entering an open doorway on the right of the court, the interpreter led the way up a flight of marble steps to the second storey of the house. A small gallery, such as one sees in public libraries in England, ran round the four sides of the building over the balustrade, of which one could look down on the leafy court with its ever singing *jet d'eau*. The windows of the several private, apartments opened upon this gallery.

In the centre of one side of the square was a large open doorway, in the form of a Moorish arch, by which entrance was obtained into a little extremely ornate apartment. The dome-shaped roof of this boudoir was lighted by four little holes filled with stained-glass, and the walls were covered with beautifully painted tiles. Rich ornaments of various Eastern and fanciful

kinds were strewn about, and valuable Persian rugs covered the marble floor.

On an ottoman, in the centre of all, sat Rais Ali's bride, cross-legged, and on a cushion before her lay the cat, her only companion.

She was clothed in garments of the richest description, which glittered with gold embroidery and jewels. Seated thus, stroking the cat, and with a self-satisfied smile on her fat pretty face, she seemed the very personification of contentment. Her soft brown neck was almost hidden with rows of pearls, and long rows of the same jewels depended from the high filigree cap which towered above her head. Her dress consisted of three open jackets or short caftans, one above the other, without sleeves. These were profusely garnished with gold lace, and fastened only at the waist. White linen trousers or drawers covered her limbs to the ankles, but these were so immensely wide as to bear more resemblance to female drapery than to the masculine appendages which their name suggests. A silken, gold-striped shawl was fastened by two corners round her waist, and hung down in front like an apron. Sleeves of fine embroidered muslin and of great width covered her arms. Her little feet and ankles were bare, but the latter were ornamented with several thick gold leglets. In each ear she wore five large round ear-rings, two of these fitting into two holes in the lower, and three into the upper part of the ear. One awkward result of this was that the upper ear-rings pulled the ears down, and made them pendent like those of a poodle!

The visitors having been introduced, Madam Rais Ali received them with a good-humoured stare, but said nothing. Mrs Langley then tried to engage her in conversation, but Mrs Ali continued to stare and smile without speaking, for the good reason that she understood neither French nor English. Requesting Ali to interpret, Mrs Langley then put one or two questions. The bride turned her large dark eyes on her husband while he was speaking, and then, instead of replying, turned them on her visitors and laughed. Whereupon little Agnes, unable to control herself, also laughed; this unhinged Mrs Langley, who laughed likewise, and Rais Ali followed suit from sympathy.

After this satisfactory ebullition, Mrs Langley again essayed to induce conversation, but beyond yes, no, and a laugh, she could draw forth nothing whatever from the bride, whose mind, in regard to all things terrestrial, with the exception of household affairs, was a perfect blank. Mohammedan females are treated by their lords like babies. They receive no education worthy of the name, and are therefore apt to be childish in their ideas.

After one or two fruitless attempts, the visitors took leave of the happy bride, who was thereupon locked up again by her jealous husband, and left to her own resources and the cat.

Returning to the place where their steeds had been left, the party re-mounted, and proceeded to the palace of the cadi.

This palace, being situated in one of the narrow lanes of the town, had a very undignified and dull exterior. Indeed, no one could have imagined it to be a palace, but for the spiral columns

of marble and other rich and costly carving around the entrance. Inside, however, the aspect of things was more in keeping with the dignity of the owner.

The lady and her daughter were ushered into a little square hall, in which several guards were seated, cross-legged, on small stone seats or niches round the walls, smoking long pipes. Beyond this was the principal entrance-hall or antechamber of the palace. It was gorgeous in marble pillars, stucco designs, horse-shoe arches, and other Mooresque decorations. Here a large party of officials and friends were moving about. Beyond this, they came to the square court, which is the same in general arrangements, in all Moorish houses, though, of course, not in size or luxury of detail.

Here the cadi himself met his guests, and conducted them to the suite of chambers on the second storey, which were devoted to the ladies. At the principal entrance to these they were received by the cadi's wife, and, with much display of friendliness and affection, were conducted into the harem—that mysterious retreat which, in a Mohammedan household, is never entered by mortal man, except the lord thereof.

It was Mrs Langley's first visit to such a scene, and, although she had been prepared for something magnificent, the gorgeous nature of everything far surpassed her expectations. The rooms, indeed, were small, being, like those of all Moorish dwellings, rather long and narrow, with recesses or antechambers. Some of these latter had dome-shaped roofs, with little coloured

glass skylights, such as we have already described, and were delightfully snug retreats. The walls and ceilings of all the apartments were profusely ornamented, and the hangings and furniture were of the richest material.

On a silken couch, at the farther end of one of these small apartments, sat the bride, Zara, youngest daughter of the cadi, and a lovely girl of nineteen. Poor Zara! Her history—not by any means an uncommon one in that land—goes to prove that Mohammedan women, far more than English, have need of a "Women's Rights Society."

Zara was already a widow with two beautiful children! Her first husband, to whom she had been married without her inclination being consulted, had been strangled.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.