

BENJAMIN DISRAELI

ALROY: THE
PRINCE OF THE
CAPTIVITY

Benjamin Disraeli

Alroy: The Prince of the Captivity

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Содержание

AUTHOR'S PREFACE	5
A L R O Y	6
CHAPTER I	6
CHAPTER II	16
CHAPTER III	21
CHAPTER IV	25
CHAPTER V	30
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	42

Earl of Beaconsfield Benjamin Disraeli

Alroy: The Prince of the Captivity

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

Being at Jerusalem in the year 1831, and visiting the traditionary tombs of the Kings of Israel, my thoughts recurred to a personage whose marvellous career had, even in boyhood, attracted my attention, as one fraught with the richest materials of poetic fiction. And I then commenced these pages that should commemorate the name of Alroy. In the twelfth century, when he arose, this was the political condition of the East:

The Caliphate was in a state of rapid decay. The Seljukian Sultans, who had been called to the assistance of the Commanders of the Faithful, had become, like the Mayors of the palace in France, the real sovereigns of the Empire. Out of the dominions of the successors of the Prophet, they had carved four kingdoms, which conferred titles on four Seljukian Princes, to wit, the Sultan of Bagdad, the Sultan of Persia, the Sultan of Syria, and the Sultan of Roum, or Asia Minor.

But these warlike princes, in the relaxed discipline and doubtful conduct of their armies, began themselves to evince the natural effects of luxury and indulgence. They were no longer the same invincible and irresistible warriors who had poured forth from the shores of the Caspian over the fairest regions of the East; and although they still contrived to preserve order in their dominions, they witnessed with ill-concealed apprehension the rising power of the Kings of Karasmé, whose conquests daily made their territories more contiguous.

With regard to the Hebrew people, it should be known that, after the destruction of Jerusalem, the Eastern Jews, while they acknowledged the supremacy of their conquerors, gathered themselves together for all purposes of jurisdiction, under the control of a native ruler, a reputed descendant of David, whom they dignified with the title of 'The Prince of the Captivity.' If we are to credit the enthusiastic annalists of this imaginative people, there were periods of prosperity when the Princes of the Captivity assumed scarcely less state and enjoyed scarcely less power than the ancient Kings of Judah themselves. Certain it is that their power increased always in an exact proportion to the weakness of the Caliphate, and, without doubt, in some of the most distracted periods of the Arabian rule, the Hebrew Princes rose into some degree of local and temporary importance. Their chief residence was Bagdad, where they remained until the eleventh century, an age fatal in Oriental history, from the disasters of which the Princes of the Captivity were not exempt. They are heard of even in the twelfth century. I have ventured to place one at Hamadan, which was a favourite residence of the Hebrews, from being the burial-place of Esther and Mordecai.

With regard to the supernatural machinery of this romance, it is Cabalistical and correct. From the Spirits of the Tombs to the sceptre of Solomon, authority may be found in the traditions of the Hebrews for the introduction of all these spiritual agencies.

Grosvenor Gate: July, 1845.

ALROY

CHAPTER I

A Great Day for Israel

THE cornets sounded a final flourish as the Prince of the Captivity dismounted from his white mule; his train shouted as if they were once more a people; and, had it not been for the contemptuous leer which played upon the countenances of the Moslem bystanders, it might have been taken for a day of triumph rather than of tribute.

‘The glory has not departed!’ exclaimed the venerable Bostenay, as he entered the hall of his mansion. ‘It is not as the visit of Sheba unto Solomon; nevertheless the glory has not yet departed. You have done well, faithful Caleb.’ The old man’s courage waxed more vigorous, as each step within his own walls the more assured him against the recent causes of his fear, the audible curses and the threatened missiles of the unbelieving mob.

‘It shall be a day of rejoicing and thanksgiving!’ continued the Prince; ‘and look, my faithful Caleb, that the trumpeters be well served. That last flourish was bravely done. It was not as the blast before Jericho; nevertheless, it told that the Lord of Hosts was for us. How the accursed Ishmaelites started! Did you mark, Caleb, that tall Turk in green upon my left? By the sceptre of Jacob, he turned pale! Oh! it shall be a day of rejoicing and thanksgiving! And spare not the wine, nor the flesh-pots for the people. Look you to this, my child, for the people shouted bravely and with a stout voice. It was not as the great shout in the camp when the ark returned; nevertheless, it was boldly done, and showed that the glory had not yet departed. So spare not the wine, my son, and drink to the desolation of Ishmael in the juice which he dare not quaff.’

‘It has indeed been a great day for Israel!’ exclaimed Caleb, echoing his master’s exultation.

‘Had the procession been forbidden,’ continued Bostenay, ‘had it been reserved for me of all the princes to have dragged the accursed tribute upon foot, without trumpets and without guards, by this sceptre, my good Caleb, I really think that, sluggishly as this old blood now runs, I would— But it is needless now to talk; the God of our fathers hath been our refuge.’

‘Verily, my lord, we were as David in the wilderness of Ziph; but now we are as the Lord’s anointed in the stronghold of Engedi!’

‘The glory truly has not yet utterly departed,’ resumed the Prince in a more subdued tone; ‘yet if— I tell you what, Caleb; praise the Lord that you are young.’

‘My Prince too may yet live to see the good day.’

‘Nay, my child, you misinterpret me. Your Prince has lived to see the evil day. ‘Twas not of the coming that I thought when I bid you praise the Lord because you were young, the more my sin. I was thinking, Caleb, that if your hair was as mine, if you could recollect, like me, the days that are gone by, the days when it needed no bride to prove we were princes, «the glorious days when we led captivity captive; I was thinking, I say, my son, what a gainful heritage it is to be born after the joys that have passed away.’

‘My father lived at Babylon,’ said Caleb. ‘Oh! name it not! name it not!’ exclaimed the old chieftain. ‘Dark was the day that we lost that second Zion! We were then also slaves to the Egyptian; but verily we ruled over the realm of Pharaoh. Why, Caleb, Caleb, you who know all, the days of toil, the nights restless as a love-sick boy’s, which it has cost your Prince to gain permission to grace our tribute-day with the paltry presence of half-a-dozen guards; you who know all my difficulties,

who have witnessed all my mortifications, what would you say to the purse of dirhems, surrounded by seven thousand scimitars?’

‘Seven thousand scimitars!’ ‘Not one less; my father flourished one.’ ‘It was indeed a great day for Israel!’ ‘Nay, that is nothing. When old Alroy was prince, old David Alroy, for thirty years, good Caleb, thirty long years we paid *no* tribute to the Caliph.’

‘No tribute! no tribute for thirty years! What marvel then, my Prince, that the Philistines have of late exacted interest?’

‘Nay, that is nothing,’ continued old Bostenay, unmindful of his servant’s ejaculations. ‘When Moctador was Caliph, he sent to the same Prince David, to know why the dirhems were not brought up, and David immediately called to horse, and, attended by all the chief people, rode to the palace, and told the Caliph that tribute was an acknowledgment made from the weak to the strong to insure protection and support; and, inasmuch as he and his people had garrisoned the city for ten years against the Seljuks, he held the Caliph in arrear.’

‘We shall yet see an ass mount a ladder,’¹ exclaimed Caleb, with uplifted eyes of wonder.

‘It is true, though,’ continued the Prince; ‘often have I heard my father tell the tale. He was then a child, and his mother held him up to see the procession return, and all the people shouted “The sceptre has not gone out of Jacob.”’

‘It was indeed a great day for Israel.’

‘Nay, that is nothing. I could tell you such things! But we prattle; our business is not yet done. You to the people; the widow and the orphan are waiting. Give freely, good Caleb, give freely; the spoils of the Canaanite are no longer ours, nevertheless the Lord is still our God, and, after all, even this is a great day for Israel. And, Caleb, Caleb, bid my nephew, David Alroy, know that I would speak with him.’

‘I will do all promptly, good master! We wondered that our honoured lord, your nephew, went not up with the donation this day.’

‘Who bade you wonder? Begone, sir! How long are you to idle here? Away!’

‘They wonder he went not up with the tribute to-day. Ay! surely, a common talk. This boy will be our ruin, a prudent hand to wield our shattered sceptre. I have observed him from his infancy; he should have lived in Babylon. The old Alroy blood flows in his veins, a stiff-necked race. When I was a youth, his grandsire was my friend; I had some fancies then myself. Dreams, dreams! we have fallen on evil days, and yet we prosper. I have lived long enough to feel that a rich caravan, laden with the shawls of India and the stuffs of Samarcand, if not exactly like dancing before the ark, is still a goodly sight. And our hard-hearted rulers, with all their pride, can they subsist without us? Still we wax rich. I have lived to see the haughty Caliph sink into a slave viler far than Israel. And the victorious and voluptuous Seljuks, even now they tremble at the dim mention of the distant name of Arslan. Yet I, Bostenay, and the frail remnant of our scattered tribes, still we exist, and still, thanks to our God! we prosper. But the age of power has passed; it is by prudence now that we must flourish. The gibe and jest, the curse, perchance the blow, Israel now must bear, and with a calm or even smiling visage. What then? For every gibe and jest, for every curse, I’ll have a dirhem; and for every blow, let him look to it who is my debtor, or wills to be so. But see, he comes, my nephew! His grandsire was my friend. Methinks I look upon him now: the same Alroy that was the partner of my boyish hours. And yet that fragile form and girlish face but ill consort with the dark passions and the dangerous fancies, which, I fear, lie hidden in that tender breast. Well, sir?’

‘You want me, uncle?’

‘What then? Uncles often want what nephews seldom offer.’

‘I at least can refuse nothing; for I have naught to give.’

¹ page 4.—*We shall yet see an ass mount a ladder.*—Hebrew proverb.

‘You have a jewel which I greatly covet.’ ‘A jewel! See my chaplet! You gave it me, my uncle; it is yours.’

‘I thank you. Many a blazing ruby, many a soft and shadowy pearl, and many an emerald glowing like a star in the far desert, I behold, my child. They are choice stones, and yet I miss a jewel far more precious, which, when I gave you this rich chaplet, David, I deemed you did possess.’ ‘How do you call it, sir?’ ‘Obedience.’

‘A word of doubtful import; for to obey, when duty is disgrace, is not a virtue.’

‘I see you read my thought. In a word, I sent for you to know, wherefore you joined me not to-day in offering our—our—’

‘Tribute.’

‘Be it so: tribute. Why were you absent?’ ‘Because it was a tribute; I pay none.’ ‘But that the dreary course of seventy winters has not erased the memory of my boyish follies, David, I should esteem you mad. Think you, because I am old, I am enamoured of disgrace, and love a house of bondage? If life were a mere question between freedom and slavery, glory and dishonour, all could decide. Trust me, there needs but little spirit to be a moody patriot in a sullen home, and vent your heroic spleen upon your fellow-sufferers, whose sufferings you cannot remedy. But of such stuff your race were ever made. Such deliverers ever abounded in the house of Alroy. And what has been the result? I found you and your sister orphan infants, your sceptre broken, and your tribes dispersed. The tribute, which now at least we pay like princes, was then exacted with the scourge and offered in chains. I collected our scattered people, I re-established our ancient throne, and this day, which you look upon as a day of humiliation and of mourning, is rightly considered by all a day of triumph and of feasting; for, has it not proved in the very teeth of the Ishmaelites, that the sceptre has not yet departed from Jacob?’

‘I pray you, uncle, speak not of these things. I would not willingly forget you are my kinsman, and a kind one. Let there not be strife between us. What my feelings are is nothing. They are my own: I cannot change them. And for my ancestors, if they pondered much, and achieved little, why then ‘twould seem our pedigree is pure, and I am their true son. At least one was a hero.’

‘Ah! the great Alroy; you may well be proud of such an ancestor.’

‘I am ashamed, uncle, ashamed, ashamed.’

‘His sceptre still exists. At least, I have not betrayed him. And this brings me to the real purport of our interview. That sceptre I would return.’

‘To whom?’

‘To its right owner, to yourself.’

‘Oh! no, no, no; I pray you, I pray you not. I do entreat you, sir, forget that I have a right as utterly as I disclaim it. That sceptre you have wielded it wisely and well; I beseech you keep it. Indeed, good uncle, I have no sort of talent for all the busy duties of this post.’

‘You sigh for glory, yet you fly from toil.’

‘Toil without glory is a menial’s lot.’

‘You are a boy; you may yet live to learn that the sweetest lot of life consists in tranquil duties and well-earned repose.’

‘If my lot be repose, I’ll find it in a lair.’

‘Ah! David, David, there is a wildness in your temper, boy, that makes me often tremble. You are already too much alone, child. And for this, as well as weightier reasons, I am desirous that you should at length assume the office you inherit. What my poor experience can afford to aid you, as your counsellor, I shall ever proffer; and, for the rest, our God will not desert you, an orphan child, and born of royal blood.’

‘Pr’ythee, no more, kind uncle. I have but little heart to mount a throne, which only ranks me as the first of slaves.’

‘Pooh, pooh, you are young. Live we like slaves? Is this hall a servile chamber? These costly carpets, and these rich divans, in what proud harem shall we find their match? I feel not like a slave. My coffers are full of dirhems. Is that slavish? The wealthiest company of the caravan is ever Bostenay’s. Is that to be a slave? Walk the bazaar of Bagdad, and you will find my name more potent than the Caliph’s. Is that a badge of slavery?’

‘Uncle, you toil for others.’

‘So do we all, so does the bee, yet he is free and happy.’

‘At least he has a sting.’

‘Which he can use but once, and when he stings—’

‘He dies, and like a hero. Such a death is sweeter than his honey.’

‘Well, well, you are young, you are young. I once, too, had fancies. Dreams all, dreams all. I willingly would see you happy, child. Come, let that face brighten; after all, to-day is a great day. If you had seen what I have seen, David, you too would feel grateful. Come, let us feast. The Ishmaelite, the accursed child of Hagar, he does confess to-day that you are a prince; this day also you complete your eighteenth year. The custom of our people now requires that you should assume the attributes of manhood. To-day, then, your reign commences; and at our festival I will present the elders to their prince. For a while, farewell, my child. Array that face in smiles. I shall most anxiously await your presence.’

‘Farewell, sir.’

He turned his head and watched his uncle as he departed: the bitter expression of his countenance gradually melted away as Bostenay disappeared: dejection succeeded to sarcasm; he sighed, he threw himself upon a couch and buried his face in his hands.

Suddenly he arose and paced the chamber with an irregular and moody step. He stopped, and leant against a column. He spoke in a tremulous and smothered voice:

‘Oh! my heart is full of care, and my soul is dark with sorrow! What am I? What is all this? A cloud hangs heavy o’er my life. God of my fathers, let it burst!

‘I know not what I feel, yet what I feel is madness. Thus to be is not to live, if life be what I sometimes dream, and dare to think it might be. To breathe, to feed, to sleep, to wake and breathe again, again to feel existence without hope; if this be life, why then these brooding thoughts that whisper death were better?

‘Away! The demon tempts me. But to what? What nameless deed shall desecrate this hand? It must not be: the royal blood of twice two thousand years, it must not die, die like a dream. Oh! my heart is full of care, and my soul is dark with sorrow!

‘Hark! the trumpets that sound our dishonour. Oh, that they but sounded to battle! Lord of Hosts, let me conquer or die! Let me conquer like David; or die, Lord, like Saul!

‘Why do I live? Ah! could the thought that lurks within my secret heart but answer, not that trumpet’s blast could speak as loud or clear. The votary of a false idea, I linger in this shadowy life, and feed on silent images which no eye but mine can gaze upon, till at length they are invested with all the terrible circumstance of life, and breathe, and act, and form a stirring world of fate and beauty, time, and death, and glory. And then, from out this dazzling wilderness of deeds, I wander forth and wake, and find myself in this dull house of bondage, even as I do now. Horrible! horrible!

‘God, of my fathers! for indeed I dare not style thee God of their wretched sons; yet, by the memory of Sinai, let me tell thee that some of the antique blood yet beats within these pulses, and there yet is one who fain would commune with thee face to face, commune and conquer.

‘And if the promise unto which we cling be not a cheat, why, let him come, come, and come quickly, for thy servant Israel, Lord, is now a slave so infamous, so woe-begone, and so contemned, that even when our fathers hung their harps by the sad waters of the Babylonian stream, why, it was paradise compared with what we suffer.

‘Alas! they do not suffer; they endure and do not feel. Or by this time our shadowy cherubim would guard again the ark. It is the will that is the father to the deed, and he who broods over some long idea, however wild, will find his dream was but the prophecy of coming fate.

‘And even now a vivid flash darts through the darkness of my mind. Methinks, methinks—ah! worst of woes to dream of glory in despair. No, no; I live and die a most ignoble thing; beauty and love, and fame and mighty deeds, the smile of women and the gaze of men, and the ennobling consciousness of worth, and all the fiery course of the creative passions, these are not for me, and I, Alroy, the descendant of sacred kings, and with a soul that pants for empire, I stand here extending my vain arm for my lost sceptre, a most dishonoured slave! And do I still exist? Exist! ay, merrily. Hark! Festivity holds her fair revel in these light-hearted walls. We are gay to-day; and yet, ere yon proud sun, whose mighty course was stayed before our swords that now he even does not deign to shine upon; ere yon proud sun shall, like a hero from a glorious field, enter the bright pavilion of his rest, there shall a deed be done.

‘My fathers, my heroic fathers, if this feeble arm cannot redeem your heritage; if the foul boar must still wallow in thy sweet vineyard, Israel, at least I will not disgrace you. No! let me perish. The house of David is no more; no more our sacred seed shall lurk and linger, like a blighted thing, in this degenerate earth. If we cannot flourish, ‘why, then, we will die!’

‘Oh! say not so, my brother!’

He turns, he gazes on a face beauteous as a starry night; his heart is full, his voice is low.

‘Ah, Miriam! thou queller of dark spirits! is it thou? Why art thou here?’

‘Why am I here? Are you not here? and need I urge a stronger plea? Oh! brother dear, I pray you come, and mingle in our festival. Our walls are hung with flowers you love;² I culled them by the fountain’s side; the holy lamps are trimmed and set, and you must raise their earliest flame. Without the gate, my maidens wait, to offer you a robe of state. Then, brother dear, I pray you come and mingle in our festival.’

‘Why should we feast?’

‘Ah! is it not in thy dear name these lamps are lit, these garlands hung? To-day to us a prince is given, to-day—’

‘A prince without a kingdom.’

‘But not without that which makes kingdoms precious, and which full many a royal heart has sighed for, willing subjects, David.’

‘Slaves, Miriam, fellow-slaves.’

‘What we are, my brother, our God has willed; and let us bow and tremble.’

‘I will not bow, I cannot tremble.’

‘Hush, David, hush! It was this haughty spirit that called the vengeance of the Lord upon us.’

‘It was this haughty spirit that conquered Canaan.’

‘Oh, my brother, my dear brother! they told me the dark spirit had fallen on thee, and I came, and hoped that Miriam might have charmed it. What we may have been, Alroy, is a bright dream; and what we may be, at least as bright a hope; and for what we are, thou art my brother. In thy love I find present felicity, and value more thy chance embraces and thy scanty smiles than all the vanished splendour of our race, our gorgeous gardens, and our glittering halls.’

‘Who waits without there?’

‘Caleb.’

‘Caleb!’

‘My lord.’

² page 12.—Our walls are hung with flowers you love. It is the custom of the Hebrews in many of their festivals, especially in the feast of the Tabernacle, to hang the walls of their chambers with garlands of flowers.

‘Go tell my uncle that I will presently join the banquet. Leave me a moment, Miriam. Nay, dry those tears.’

‘Oh, Alroy! they are not tears of sorrow.’

‘God be with thee! Thou art the charm and consolation of my life. Farewell! farewell!’

‘I do observe the influence of women very potent over me. ‘Tis not of such stuff that they make heroes. I know not love, save that pure affection which doth subsist between me and this girl, an orphan and my sister. We are so alike, that when, last Passover, in mimicry she twined my turban round her head, our uncle called her David.’

‘The daughters of my tribe, they please me not, though they are passing fair. Were our sons as brave as they are beautiful, we still might dance on Sion. Yet have I often thought that, could I pillow this moody brow upon some snowy bosom that were my own, and dwell in the wilderness, far from the sight and ken of man, and all the care and toil and wretchedness that groan and sweat and sigh about me, I might haply lose this deep sensation of overwhelming woe that broods upon by being. No matter! Life is but a dream, and mine must be a dull one.’

Without the gates of Hamadan, a short distance from the city, was an enclosed piece of elevated ground, in the centre of which rose an ancient sepulchre, the traditionary tomb of Esther and Mordecai.³ This solemn and solitary spot was an accustomed haunt of Alroy, and thither, escaping from the banquet, about an hour before sunset, he this day repaired.

As he unlocked the massy gate of the burial-place, he heard behind him the trampling of a horse; and before he had again secured the entrance, some one shouted to him.

He looked up, and recognised the youthful and voluptuous Alschiroch, the governor of the city, and brother of the sultan of the Seljuks. He was attended only by a single running footman, an Arab, a detested favourite, and notorious minister of his pleasures.

‘Dog!’ exclaimed the irritated Alschiroch, ‘art thou deaf, or obstinate, or both? Are we to call twice to our slaves? Unlock that gate!’ ‘Wherefore?’ inquired Alroy.

‘Wherefore! By the holy Prophet, he bandies questions with us! Unlock that gate, or thy head shall answer for it!’

‘Who art thou,’ inquired Alroy, ‘whose voice is so loud? Art thou some holiday Turk, who hath transgressed the orders of thy Prophet, and drunken aught but water? Go to, or I will summon thee before thy Cadi;’ and, so saying, he turned towards the tomb.

‘By the eyes of my mother, the dog jeers us! But that we are already late, and this horse is like an untamed tiger, I would impale him on the spot. Speak to the dog, Mustapha! manage him!’

‘Worthy Hebrew,’ said the silky Mustapha, advancing, ‘apparently you are not aware that this is our Lord Alschiroch. His highness would fain walk his horse through the burial-ground of thy excellent people, as he is obliged to repair, on urgent matters, to a holy Santon, who sojourns on the other side of the hill, and time presses.’

‘If this be our Lord Alschiroch, thou doubtless art his faithful slave, Mustapha.’

‘I am, indeed, his poor slave. What then, young master?’

‘Deem thyself lucky that the gate is closed. It was but yesterday thou didst insult the sister of a servant of my house. I would not willingly sully my hands with such miserable blood as thine, out away, wretch, away!’

‘Holy Prophet! who is this dog?’ exclaimed the astonished governor.

³ page 13.—*The traditionary tomb of Esther and Mordecai.* ‘I accompanied the priest through the town over much ruin and rubbish to an enclosed piece of ground, rather more elevated than any in its immediate vicinity. In the centre was the Jewish tomb—a square building of brick, of a mosque-like form, with a rather elongated dome at the top. The door is in the ancient sepulchral fashion of the country, very small, consisting of a single stone of great thickness, and turning on its own pivots from one side. Its key is always in possession of the eldest of the Jews resident at Hamadan. Within the tomb are two sarcophagi, made of a very dark wood, carved with great intricacy of pattern and richness of twisted ornament, with a line of inscription in Hebrew,’ &c.—*Sir R. K. Porter’s Travels in Persia, vol. ii. p. 107.*

‘Tis the young Alroy,’ whispered Mustapha, who had not at first recognised him; ‘he they call their Prince; a most headstrong youth. My lord, we had better proceed.’

‘The young Alroy! I mark him. They must have a prince too! The young Alroy! Well, let us away, and, dog!’ shouted Alschiroch, rising in his stirrups, and shaking his hand with a threatening air, ‘dog! remember thy tribute!’

Alroy rushed to the gate, but the massy lock was slow to open; and ere he could succeed, the fiery steed had borne Alschiroch beyond pursuit.

An expression of baffled rage remained for a moment on his countenance; for a moment he remained with his eager eye fixed on the route of his vanished enemy, and then he walked slowly towards the tomb; but his excited temper was now little in unison with the still reverie in which he had repaired to the sepulchre to indulge. He was restless and disquieted, and at length he wandered into the woods, which rose on the summit of the burial-place.

He found himself upon a brow crested with young pine-trees, in the midst of which rose a mighty cedar. He threw himself beneath its thick and shadowy branches, and looked upon a valley small and green; in the midst of which was a marble fountain, the richly-carved cupola,⁴ supported by twisted columns, and banded by a broad inscription in Hebrew characters. The bases of the white pillars were covered with wild flowers, or hidden by beds of variegated gourds. The transparent sunset flung over the whole scene a soft but brilliant light.

The tranquil hour, the beauteous scene, the sweetness and the stillness blending their odour and serenity, the gentle breeze that softly rose, and summoned forth the languid birds to cool their plumage in the twilight air, and wave their radiant wings in skies as bright— Ah! what stern spirit will not yield to the soft genius of subduing eve?

And Alroy gazed upon the silent loneliness of earth, and a tear stole down his haughty cheek.

‘Tis singular! but when I am thus alone at this still hour, I ever fancy I gaze upon the Land of Promise. And often, in my dreams, some sunny spot, the bright memorial of a roving hour, will rise upon my sight, and, when I wake, I feel as if I had been in Canaan. Why am I not? The caravan that bears my uncle’s goods across the Desert would bear me too. But I rest here, my miserable life running to seed in the dull misery of this wretched city, and do nothing. Why, the old captivity was empire to our inglorious bondage. We have no Esther now to share their thrones, no politic Mordecai, no purple-vested Daniel. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! I do believe one sight of thee would nerve me to the sticking-point. And yet to gaze upon thy fallen state, my uncle tells me that of the Temple not a stone remains. ‘Tis horrible. Is there no hope?’

‘The bricks are fallen, but we will rebuild with marble; the sycamores are cut down, but we will replace them with cedars.’

‘The chorus of our maidens, as they pay their evening visit to the fountain’s side.⁵ The burden is prophetic.

‘Hark again! How beautifully, upon the soft and flowing air, their sweet and mingled voices blend and float!’

‘YET AGAIN I WILL BUILD THEE, AND THOU SHALT BE BUILT, O VIRGIN OF ISRAEL! YET AGAIN SHALT THOU DECK THYSELF WITH THY TABRETS, AND GO FORTH IN THE DANCE OF THOSE THAT MAKE MERRY. YET AGAIN SHALT THOU PLANT VINEYARDS ON THE MOUNTAINS OF SAMARIA.’

⁴ page 16.—A marble fountain, the richly-carved cupola supported by twisted columns. The vast magnificence and elaborate fancy of the tombs and fountains is a remarkable feature of Oriental architecture. The Eastern nations devote to these structures the richest and the most durable materials. While the palaces of Asiatic monarchs are in general built only of wood, painted in fresco, the rarest marbles are dedicated to the sepulchre and the spring, which are often richly gilt, and adorned even with precious stones.

⁵ page 17.—The chorus of our maidens. It is still the custom for the women in the East to repair at sunset in company to the fountain for their supply of water. In Egypt, you may observe at twilight the women descending the banks of the Nile in procession from every town and village. Their graceful drapery, their long veils not concealing their flashing eyes, and the classical forms of their vases, render this a most picturesque and agreeable spectacle.

‘See! their white forms break through the sparkling foliage of the sunny shrubs as they descend, with measured step, that mild declivity. A fair society in bright procession: each one clothed in solemn drapery, veiling her shadowy face with modest hand, and bearing on her graceful head a graceful vase. Their leader is my sister.

‘And now they reach the fountain’s side, and dip their vases in the water, pure and beautiful as themselves. Some repose beneath the marble pillars; some, seated ‘mid the flowers, gather sweets, and twine them into garlands; and that wild girl, now that the order is broken, touches with light fingers her moist vase, and showers startling drops of glittering light on her serener sisters. Hark! again they sing.’

‘O VINE OF SIBMAH! UPON THY SUMMER FRUITS, AND UPON THY VINTAGE, A SPOILER HATH FALLEN!’

A scream, a shriek, a long wild shriek, confusion, flight, despair! Behold! from out the woods a tur-baned man rushes, and seizes the leader of the chorus. Her companions fly on all sides, Miriam alone is left in the arms of Alschiroch.

The water column wildly rising from the breast of summer ocean, in some warm tropic clime, when the sudden clouds too well discover that the holiday of heaven is over, and the shrieking sea-birds tell a time of fierce commotion, the column rising from the sea, it was not so wild as he, the young Alroy.

Pallid and mad, he swift upsprang, and he tore up a tree by its lusty roots, and down the declivity, dashing with rapid leaps, panting and wild, he struck the ravisher on the temple with the mighty pine. Alschiroch fell lifeless on the sod, and Miriam fainting into her brother’s arms.

And there he stood, fixed and immovable, gazing upon his sister’s deathly face, and himself exhausted by passion and his exploit, supporting her cherished but senseless body.

One of the fugitive maidens appeared reconnoitring in the distance. When she observed her mistress in the arms of one of her own people, her courage revived, and, desirous of rallying her scattered companions, she raised her voice, and sang:

‘HASTE, DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM; O! HASTE, FOR THE LORD HAS AVENGED US, AND THE SPOILER IS SPOILED.’

And soon the verse was responded to from various quarters of the woods, and soon the virgins reassembled, singing,

‘WE COME, O DAUGHTER OF JERUSALEM! WE COME; FOR THE LORD HAS AVENGED US, AND THE SPOILER IS SPOILED.’

They gathered round their mistress, and one loosened her veil, and another brought water from the fountain, and sprinkled her reviving countenance. And Miriam opened her eyes, and said, ‘My brother!’ And he answered, ‘I am here.’ And she replied in a low voice, ‘Fly, David, fly; for the man you have stricken is a prince among the people.’

‘He will be merciful, my sister; and, doubtless, since he first erred, by this time he has forgotten my offence.’

‘Justice and mercy! Oh, my brother, what can these foul tyrants know of either! Already he has perhaps doomed you to some refined and procrastinated torture, already— Ah! what unutterable woe is mine! fly, my brother, fly!’

‘Fly, fly, fly!’

‘There is no fear, my Miriam; would all his accursed race could trouble us as little as their sometime ruler. See, he sleeps soundly. But his carcass shall not defile our fresh fountain and our fragrant flowers. I’ll stow it in the woods, and stroll here at night to listen to the jackals at their banquet.’

‘You speak wildly, David. What! No! It is impossible! He is not dead! You have not slain him!’

He sleeps, he is afraid. He mimics death that we may leave his side, and he may rise again in safety. Girls, look to him. David, you do not answer. Brother, dear brother, surely he has swooned! I thought he had fled. Bear water, maidens, to that terrible man. I dare not look upon him.'

'Away! I'll look on him, and I'll triumph. Dead! Alschiroch dead! Why, but a moment since, this clotted carcass was a prince, my tyrant! So we can rid ourselves of them, eh? If the prince fall, why not the people? Dead, absolutely dead, and I his slayer! Hah! at length I am a man. This, this indeed is life. Let me live slaying!'

'Woe! woe, our house is fallen! The wildness of his gestures frightens me. David, David, I pray thee cease. He hears me not; my voice, perchance, is thin. I am very faint. Maidens, kneel to your Prince, and soothe the madness of his passion.'

'SWEET IS THE VOICE OF A SISTER IN THE SEASON OF SORROW, AND WISE IS THE COUNSEL OF THOSE WHO LOVE US.'

'Why, this is my Goliath! a pebble or a stick, it is the same. The Lord of Hosts is with us. Rightly am I called David.'

'DELIVER US FROM OUR ENEMIES, O LORD! FROM THOSE WHO RISE UP AGAINST US, AND THOSE WHO LIE IN WAIT FOR US.'

'Were but this blow multiplied, were but the servants of my uncle's house to do the same, why, we should see again the days of Elah! The Philistine, the foul, lascivious, damnable Philistine! and he must touch my sister! Oh! that all his tribe were here, all, all! I'd tie such firebrands to their foxes' tails, the blaze should light to freedom!'

While he spoke, a maiden, who had not yet rejoined the company, came running towards them swiftly with an agitated countenance.

'Fly,' she exclaimed, 'they come, they come!'

Miriam was reclining in an attendant's arms, feeble and faint, but the moment her quick ear caught these words she sprang up, and seized her brother's arm.

'Alroy! David! brother, dear brother! I beseech thee, listen, I am thy sister, thy Miriam; they come, they come, the hard-hearted, wicked men, they come, to kill, perhaps to torture thee, my tender brother. Rouse thyself, David; rouse thyself from this wild, fierce dream: save thyself, fly!'

'Ah! is it thou, Miriam? Thou seest he sleepeth soundly. I was dreaming of noble purposes and mighty hopes. 'Tis over now. I am myself again. What wouldst thou?'

'They come, the fierce retainers of this fallen man; they come to seize thee. Fly, David!'

'And leave thee?'

'I and my maidens, we have yet time to escape by the private way we entered, our uncle's garden. When in his house, we are for a moment safe, as safe as our poor race can ever be. Bostenay is so rich, so wise, so prudent, so learned in man's ways, and knows so well the character and spirit of these men, all will go right; I fear nothing. But thou, if thou art here, or to be found, thy blood alone will satiate them. If they be persuaded that thou hast escaped, as I yet pray thou mayest, their late master here, whom they could scarcely love, why, give me thy arm an instant, sweet Beruna. So, that's well. I was saying, if well bribed,—and they may have all my jewels,—why, very soon, he will be as little in their memories as he is now in life. I can scarcely speak; I feel my words wander, or seem to wander; I could swoon, but will not; nay! do not fear. I will reach home. These maidens are my charge. 'Tis in these crises we should show the worth of royal blood. I'll see them safe, or die with them.'

'O! my sister, methinks I never knew I was a brother until this hour. My precious Miriam, what is life? what is revenge, or even fame and freedom without thee? I'll stay.'

'SWEET IS THE VOICE OF A SISTER IN THE SEASON OF SORROW, AND WISE IS THE COUNSEL OF THOSE WHO LOVE US.'

'Fly, David, fly!'

'Fly! whither and how?'

The neigh of a horse sounded from the thicket.

‘Ah! they come!’ exclaimed the distracted Miriam.

‘ALL THIS HAS COME UPON US, O LORD! YET HAVE WE NOT FORGOTTEN THEE, NEITHER HAVE WE DEALT FALSELY IN THY COVENANT.’

‘Hark! again it neighs! It is a horse that calleth to its rider. I see it. Courage, Miriam! it is no enemy, but a very present friend in time of trouble. It is Alschiroch’s courser. He passed me on it by the tomb ere sunset. I marked it well, a very princely steed.’

‘BEHOLD, BEHOLD, A RAM IS CAUGHT IN THE THICKET BY HIS HORNS.’

‘Our God hath not forgotten us! Quick, maidens, bring forth the goodly steed. What! do you tremble? I’ll be his groom.’

‘Nay! Miriam, beware, beware. It is an untamed beast, wild as the whirlwind. Let me deal with him.’

He ran after her, dashed into the thicket, and brought forth the horse.

Short time I ween that stately steed had parted from his desert home; his haughty crest, his eye of fire, the glory of his snorting nostril, betoken well his conscious pride, and pure nobility of race. His colour was like the sable night shining with a thousand stars, and he pawed the ground with his delicate hoof, like an eagle flapping its wing.

Alroy vaulted on his back, and reined him with a master’s hand.

‘Hah!’ he exclaimed, ‘I feel more like a hero than a fugitive. Farewell, my sister; farewell, ye gentle maidens; fare ye well, and cherish my precious Miriam. One embrace, sweet sister,’ and he bent down and whispered, ‘Tell the good Bostenay not to spare his gold, for I have a deep persuasion that, ere a year shall roll its heavy course, I shall return and make our masters here pay for this hurried ride and bitter parting. Now for the desert!’

CHAPTER II

The Slaying of an Ishmaelite

SPEED, fleetly speed, thou courser bold, and track the desert's trackless way. Beneath thee is the boundless earth, above thee is the boundless heaven, an iron soil and brazen sky. Speed, swiftly speed, thou courser bold, and track the desert's trackless way. Ah! dost thou deem these salty plains⁶ lead to thy Yemen's happy groves, and dost thou scent on the hot breeze the spicy breath of Araby? A sweet delusion, noble steed, for this briny wilderness leads not to the happy groves of Yemen, and the breath thou scentest on the coming breeze is not the spicy breath of Araby.

The day has died, the stars have risen, with all the splendour of a desert sky, and now the Night descending brings solace on her dewy wings to the fainting form and pallid cheek of the youthful Hebrew Prince.

Still the courser onward rushes, still his mighty heart supports him. Season and space, the glowing soil, the burning ray, yield to the tempest of his frame, the thunder of his nerves, and lightning of his veins.

Food or water they have none. No genial fount, no graceful tree, rise with their pleasant company. Never a beast or bird is there, in that hoary desert bare. Nothing breaks the almighty stillness. Even the jackal's felon cry might seem a soothing melody. A grey wild rat, with snowy whiskers, out of a withered bramble stealing, with a youthful snake in its ivory teeth, in the moonlight grins with glee. This is their sole society.

Morn comes, the fresh and fragrant morn, for which even the guilty sigh. Morn comes, and all is visible. And light falls like a signet on the earth, and its face is turned like wax beneath a seal. Before them and also on their right was the sandy desert; but in the night they had approached much nearer to the mountainous chain, which bounded the desert on the left, and whither Alroy had at first guided the steed.

The mountains were a chain of the mighty Elburz; and, as the sun rose from behind a lofty peak, the horse suddenly stopped and neighed, as if asking for water. But Alroy, himself exhausted, could only soothe him with caresses. And the horse, full of courage, understood his master, and neighed again more cheerfully.

For an hour or two the Prince and his faithful companion proceeded slowly, but, as the day advanced, the heat became so oppressive, and the desire to drink so overwhelming, that Alroy again urged on the steed towards the mountains, where he knew that he should find a well. The courser dashed willingly forward, and seemed to share his master's desire to quit the arid and exhausting wilderness.

More than once the unhappy fugitive debated whether he should not allow himself to drop from his seat and die; no torture that could await him at Hamadan but seemed preferable to the prolonged and inexpressible anguish which he now endured. As he rushed along, leaning on his bearer's neck, he perceived a patch of the desert that seemed of a darker colour than the surrounding sand. Here, he believed, might perhaps be found water. He tried to check the steed, but with difficulty he succeeded, and with still greater difficulty dismounted. He knelt down, and feebly raked up the sand with his hands. It was moist. He nearly fainted over his fruitless labour. At length, when he had dug about a foot deep, there bubbled up some water. He dashed in his hand, but it was salt as the ocean. When

⁶ page 24.—I describe the salty deserts of Persia, a locality which my tale required; but I have ventured to introduce here, and in the subsequent pages, the principal characteristics of the great Arabian deserts: the mirage, the simoom, the gazelle, the oasis.

the horse saw the water his ears rose, but, when he smelt it, he turned away his head, and neighed most piteously.

‘Alas, poor beast!’ exclaimed Alroy, ‘I am the occasion of thy suffering, I, who would be a kind master to thee, if the world would let me. Oh, that we were once more by my own fair fountain! The thought is madness. And Miriam too! I fear I am sadly tender-hearted.’ He leant against his horse’s back, with a feeling of utter exhaustion, and burst into hysteric sobs.

And the steed softly moaned, and turned its head, and gently rubbed its face against his arm, as if to solace him in his suffering. And strange, but Alroy was relieved by having given way to his emotion, and, charmed with the fondness of the faithful horse, he leant down and took water, and threw it over its feet to cool them, and wiped the foam from its face, and washed it, and the horse again neighed.

And now Alroy tried to remount, but his strength failed him, and the horse immediately knelt down and received him. And the moment that the Prince was in his seat, the horse rose, and again proceeded at a rapid pace in their old direction. Towards sunset they were within a few miles of the broken and rocky ground into which the mountains descended; and afar off Alroy recognised the cupola of the long-expected well. With re-animated courage and rallied energies he patted his courser’s neck, and pointed in the direction of the cupola, and the horse pricked up its ears, and increased its pace.

Just as the sun set, they reached the well. Alroy jumped off the horse, and would have led it to the fountain, but the animal would not advance. It stood shivering with a glassy eye, and then with a groan fell down and died.

Night brings rest; night brings solace; rest to the weary, solace to the sad. And to the desperate night brings despair.

The moon has sunk to early rest; but a thousand stars are in the sky. The mighty mountains rise severe in the clear and silent air. In the forest all is still. The tired wind no longer roams, but has lightly dropped on its leafy couch, and sleeps like man. Silent all but the fountain’s drip. And by the fountain’s side a youth is lying.

Suddenly a creature steals through the black and broken rocks. Ha, ha! the jackal smells from afar the rich corruption of the courser’s clay. Suddenly and silently it steals, and stops, and smells. Brave banqueting I ween to-night for all that goodly company. Jackal, and fox, and marten-cat, haste ye now, ere morning’s break shall call the vulture to his feast and rob you of your prey.

The jackal lapped the courser’s blood, and moaned with exquisite delight. And in a moment, a faint bark was heard in the distance. And the jackal peeled the flesh from one of the ribs, and again burst into a shriek of mournful ecstasy.

Hark, their quick tramp! First six, and then three, galloping with ungodly glee. And a marten-cat came rushing down from the woods; but the jackals, fierce in their number, drove her away, and there she stood without the circle, panting, beautiful, and baffled, with her white teeth and glossy skin, and sparkling eyes of rabid rage.⁷

Suddenly as one of the half-gorged jackals retired from the main corpse, dragging along a stray member by some still palpitating nerves, the marten-cat made a spring at her enemy, carried off his prey, and rushed into the woods.

Her wild scream of triumph woke a lion from his lair. His mighty form, black as ebony, moved on a distant eminence, his tail flowed like a serpent. He roared, and the jackals trembled, and immediately ceased from their banquet, turning their heads in the direction of their sovereign’s voice. He advanced; he stalked towards them. They retired; he bent his head, examined the carcass with

⁷ page 28.—*Jackals and marten-cat*. At nightfall, especially in Asia Minor, the lonely horseman will often meet the jackals on their evening prow. Their moaning is often heard during the night. I remember, when becalmed off Troy, the most singular screams were heard at intervals throughout the night, from a forest on the opposite shore, which a Greek sailor assured me proceeded from a marten-cat, which had probably found the carcass of some horse.

condescending curiosity, and instantly quitted it with royal disdain. The jackals again collected around their garbage. The lion advanced to the fountain to drink. He beheld a man. His mane rose, his tail was wildly agitated, he bent over the sleeping Prince, he uttered an awful roar, which awoke Alroy.

He awoke; his gaze met the flaming eyes of the enormous beast fixed upon him with a blended feeling of desire and surprise. He awoke, and from a swoon; but the dreamless trance had refreshed the exhausted energies of the desolate wanderer; in an instant he collected his senses, remembered all that had passed, and comprehended his present situation. He returned the lion a glance as imperious, and fierce, and scrutinsing, as his own. For a moment, their flashing orbs vied in regal rivalry; but at length the spirit of the mere animal yielded to the genius of the man. The lion, cowed, slunk away, stalked with haughty timidity through the rocks, and then sprang into the forest.

Morn breaks; a silver light is shed over the blue and starry sky. Pleasant to feel is the breath of dawn. Night brings repose, but day brings joy.

The carol of a lonely bird singing in the wilderness! A lonely bird that sings with glee! Sunny and sweet, and light and clear, its airy notes float through the sky, and trill with innocent revelry.

The lonely youth on the lonely bird upgazes from the fountain's side. High in the air it proudly floats, balancing its crimson wings, and its snowy tail, long, delicate, and thin, shines like a sparkling meteor in the sun.

The carol of a lonely bird singing in the wilderness! Suddenly it downward dashes, and thrice with circling grace it flies around the head of the Hebrew Prince. Then by his side it gently drops a bunch of fresh and fragrant dates.

'Tis gone, 'tis gone! that cheerful stranger, gone to the palmy land it loves; gone like a bright and pleasant dream. A moment since and it was there, glancing in the sunny air, and now the sky is without a guest. Alas, alas! no more is heard the carol of that lonely bird singing in the wilderness.

'As thou didst feed Elijah, so also hast thou fed me, God of my fathers!' And Alroy arose, and he took his turban and unfolded it, and knelt and prayed. And then he ate of the dates, and drank of the fountain, and, full of confidence in the God of Israel, the descendant of David pursued his flight.

He now commenced the ascent of the mountainous chain, a wearisome and painful toil. Two hours past noon he reached the summit of the first ridge, and looked over a wild and chaotic waste full of precipices and ravines, and dark unfathomable gorges. The surrounding hills were ploughed in all directions by the courses of dried-up cataracts, and here and there a few savage goats browsed on an occasional patch of lean and sour pasture. This waste extended for many miles; the distance formed by a more elevated range of mountains, and beyond these, high in the blue sky, rose the loftiest peaks of Elburz,⁸ shining with sharp glaciers of eternal snow.

It was apparent that Alroy was no stranger in the scene of his flight. He had never hesitated as to his course, and now, after having rested for a short time on the summit, he descended towards the left by a natural but intricate path, until his progress was arrested by a black ravine. Scarcely half a dozen yards divided him from the opposite precipice by which it was formed, but the gulf beneath, no one could shoot a glance at its invisible termination without drawing back with a cold shudder.

The Prince knelt down and examined the surrounding ground with great care. At length he raised a small square stone which covered a metallic plate, and, taking from his vest a carnelian talisman covered with strange characters, he knocked thrice upon the plate with the signet. A low solemn murmur sounded around. Presently the plate flew off, and Alroy pulled forth several yards of an iron chain, which he threw over to the opposite precipice. The chain fastened without difficulty to the rock, and was evidently constrained by some magnetic influence. The Prince, seizing the chain with both his hands, now swung across the ravine. As he landed, the chain parted from the rock, swiftly disappeared down the opposite aperture, and its covering closed with the same low, solemn murmur as before.

⁸ page 30. Elburz, or Elborus, the highest range of the Caucasus.

Alroy proceeded for about a hundred paces through a natural cloister of basalt until he arrived at a large uncovered court of the same formation, which a stranger might easily have been excused for believing to have been formed and smoothed by art. In its centre bubbled up a perpetual spring, icy cold; the stream had worn a channel through the pavement, and might be traced for some time wandering among the rocks, until at length it leaped from a precipice into a gorge below, in a gauzy shower of variegated spray. Crossing the court, Alroy now entered a vast cavern.

The cavern was nearly circular in form, lighted from a large aperture in the top. Yet a burning lamp, in a distant and murky corner, indicated that its inhabitant did not trust merely to this natural source of the great blessing of existence. In the centre of the cave was a circular and brazen table, sculptured with strange characters and mysterious figures: near it was a couch, on which lay several volumes.⁹ Suspended from the walls were a shield, some bows and arrows, and other arms.

As the Prince of the Captivity knelt down and kissed the vacant couch, a figure advanced from the extremity of the cavern into the light. He was a man of middle age, considerably above the common height, with a remarkably athletic frame, and a strongly-marked but majestic countenance. His black beard descended to his waist, over a dark red robe, encircled by a black girdle embroidered with yellow characters, like those sculptured on the brazen table. Black also was his turban, and black his large and luminous eye.

The stranger advanced so softly, that Alroy did not perceive him, until the Prince again rose.

‘Jabaster!’ exclaimed the Prince.

‘Sacred seed of David,’ answered the Cabalist,¹⁰ ‘thou art expected. I read of thee in the stars last night. They spoke of trouble.’

⁹ page 31.—A circular and brazen table, sculptured with strange characters and mysterious figures; near it was a couch on which lay several volumes. A cabalistic table, perhaps a zodiac. The books were doubtless *Sepher Happeliah*, the Book of Wonders; *Sepher Hakkaneh*, the Book of the Pen; and *Sepher Habbahir*, the Book of Light. This last unfolds the most sublime mysteries.

¹⁰ page 32.—Answered the Cabalist. ‘Simeon ben Jochai, who flourished in the second century, and was a disciple of Akibha, is called by the Jews the Prince of the Cabalists. After the suppression of the sedition in which his master had been so unsuccessful, he concealed himself in a cave, where, according to the Jewish historians, he received revelations, which he after-wards delivered to his disciples, and which they carefully preserved in the book called Sohar. His master, Akibha, who lived soon after the destruction of Jerusalem, was the author of the famous book *Jezirah*, quoted by the Jews as of Divine authority. When Akibha was far advanced in life, appeared the famous impostor Barchochebas, who, under the character of the Messiah, promised to deliver his countrymen from the power of the Emperor Adrian. Akibha espoused his cause, and afforded him the protection and support of his name, and an army of two hundred thousand men repaired to his standard. The Romans at first slighted the insurrection; but when they found the insurgents spread slaughter and rapine wherever they came, they sent out a military force against them. At first, the issue of the contest was doubtful. The Messiah himself was not taken until the end of four years.’—Enfield, *Philosophy of the Jews*, vol. ii. ‘Two methods of instruction were in use among the Jews; the one public, or *exoteric*; the other secret, or *esoteric*. The exoteric doctrine was that which was openly taught the people from the law of Moses and the traditions of the fathers. The esoteric was that which treated of the mysteries of the Divine nature, and other sublime subjects, and was known by the name of the Cabala. The latter was, after the manner of the Pythagorean and Egyptian mysteries, taught only to certain persons, who were bound, under the most solemn anathema, not to divulge it. Concerning the miraculous origin and preservation of the Cabala, the Jews relate many marvellous tales. They derive these mysteries from Adam, and assert that, while the first man was in Paradise, the angel Rasiel brought him a book from heaven, which contained the doctrines of heavenly wisdom, and that, when Adam received this book, angels came down to him to learn its contents, but that he refused to admit them to the knowledge of sacred things entrusted to him alone; that, after the Fall, this book was taken back into heaven; that, after many prayers and tears, God restored it to Adam, from whom it passed to Seth. In the degenerate age before the flood this book was lost, and the mysteries it contained almost forgotten; but they were restored by special revelation to Abraham, who committed them to writing in the book *Jezirah*.’—Vide Enfield, vol. ii. p. 219. ‘The Hebrew word *Cabala*,’ says Dom Calmet, ‘signifies tradition, and the Rabbins, who are named Cabalists, apply themselves principally to the combination of certain words, numbers, and letters, by the means of which they boasted they could reveal the future, and penetrate the sense of the most difficult passages of Scripture. This science does not appear to have any fixed principles, but depends upon certain ancient traditions, whence its name Cabala. The Cabalists have a great number of names which they style sacred, by means of which they raise spirits, and affect to obtain supernatural intelligence.’—See Calmet, Art. *Cabala*. ‘We spake before,’ says Lightfoot, ‘of the commonness of Magick among them, one singular means whereby they kept their own in delusion, and whereby they affronted ours. The general expectation of the nation of Messias coming when he did had this double and contrary effect, that it forwarded those that belonged to God to believe and receive the Gospel; and those that did not, it gave encouragement to some to take upon them they were Christ or some great prophet, and to others it gave some persuasion to be deluded by them. These deceivers dealt most of them with Magick, and that cheat ended not when Jerusalem ended, though one would have thought that had been a fair term of not further expecting Messias; but since the people were willing to be deceived by such expectation, there rose up deluders still that were willing to deceive them.’—Lightfoot, vol. ii. p. 371. For many curious details of the Cabalistic Magic, Vide Basnage, vol. v. p. 384, &c.

‘Trouble or triumph, Time must prove which it is, great master. At present I am a fugitive and exhausted. The bloodhounds track me, but methinks I have baffled them now. I have slain an Ishmaelite.’

CHAPTER III

The Hope of Israel

IT WAS midnight. Alroy slept upon the couch: his sleep was troubled. Jabaster stood by his side motionless, and gazing intently upon his slumbering guest.

‘The only hope of Israel,’ murmured the Cabalist, ‘my pupil and my prince! I have long perceived in his young mind the seed of mighty deeds, and o’er his future life have often mused with a prophetic hope. The blood of David, the sacred offspring of a solemn race. There is a magic in his flowing veins my science cannot reach.

‘When, in my youth, I raised our standard by my native Tigris, and called our nation to restore their ark, why, we were numerous, wealthy, potent; we were a people then, and they flocked to it boldly. Did we lack counsel? Did we need a leader? Who can aver that Jabaster’s brain or arm was ever wanting? And yet the dream dissolved, the glorious vision! Oh! when I struck down Marvan, and the Caliph’s camp flung its blazing shadow over the bloody river, ah! then indeed I lived. Twenty years of vigil may gain a pardon that I then forgot we lacked the chief ingredient in the spell, the blood that sleeps beside me.

‘I recall the glorious rapture of that sacred strife amid the rocks of Caucasus. A fugitive, a proscribed and outlawed wretch, whose life is common sport, and whom the vilest hind may slay without a bidding. I, who would have been Messiah!

‘Burn thy books, Jabaster; break thy brazen tables; forget thy lofty science, Cabalist, and read the stars no longer.¹¹ But last night I stood upon the gulf which girds my dwelling: in one hand, I held my sacred talisman, that bears the name ineffable; in the other, the mystic record of our holy race. I remembered that I had evoked spirits, that I had communed with the great departed, and that the glowing heavens were to me a natural language. I recalled, as consolation to my gloomy soul, that never had my science been exercised but for a sacred or a noble purpose. And I remembered Israel, my brave, my chosen, and my antique race, slaves, wretched slaves. I was strongly tempted to fling me down this perilous abyss, and end my learning and my life together.

‘But, as I gazed upon the star of David, a sudden halo rose around its rays, and ever and anon a meteor shot from out the silver veil. I read that there was trouble in the holy seed; and now comes this boy, who has done a deed which—’

‘The ark, the ark! I gaze upon the ark!’ ‘The slumberer speaks; the words of sleep are sacred.’ ‘Salvation only from the house of David.’ ‘A mighty truth; my life too well has proved it. ‘He is more calm. It is the holy hour. I’ll steal into the court, and gaze upon the star that sways the fortunes of his royal house.’

The moonbeam fell upon the fountain; the pavement of the court was a flood of light; the rocks rose dark around. Jabaster, seated by the spring, and holding his talisman in his left hand, shaded his sight with the other as he gazed upon the luminous heavens.

A shriek! his name was called. Alroy, wild and panting, rushed into the court with extended arms. The Cabalist started up, seized him, and held him in his careful grasp, foaming and in convulsions.

‘Jabaster, Jabaster!’

¹¹ page 34.—*Read the stars no longer.* ‘The modern Jews,’ says Basnage, ‘have a great idea of the influence of the stars.’ Vol. iv. p. 454. But astrology was most prevalent among the Babylonian Rabbins, of whom Jabaster was one. Living in the ancient land of the Chaldeans, these sacred sages imbibed a taste for the mystic lore of their predecessors. The stars moved, and formed letters and lines, when consulted by any of the highly-initiated of the Cabalists. This they styled the Celestial Alphabet.

‘I am here, my child.’

‘The Lord hath spoken.’

‘The Lord is our refuge. Calm thyself, son of David, and tell me all.’

‘I have been sleeping, master; is it not so?’

‘Even so, my child. Exhausted by his flight and the exciting narrative of his exploit, my Prince lay down upon the couch and slumbered; but I fear that slumber was not repose.’

‘Repose and I have naught in common now. Farewell for ever to that fatal word. I am the Lord’s anointed.’

‘Drink of the fountain, David: it will restore thee.’

‘Restore the covenant, restore the ark, restore the holy city.’

‘The Spirit of the Lord hath fallen upon him. Son of David, I adjure thee tell me all that hath passed. I am a Levite; in my hand I hold the name ineffable.’

‘Take thy trumpet then, summon the people, bid them swiftly raise again our temple. “The bricks have fallen, but we will rebuild with marble.” Didst hear that chorus, sir?’

‘Unto thy chosen ear alone it sounded.’

‘Where am I? This is not our fountain. Yet thou didst say, “the fountain.” Think me not wild. I know thee, I know all. Thou art not Miriam. Thou art Jabaster; I am Alroy. But thou didst say, “the fountain,” and it distracted me, and called back my memory to—

‘God of Israel, lo, I kneel before thee! Here, in the solitude of wildest nature, my only witness here this holy man, I kneel and vow, Lord! I will do thy bidding. I am young, O God! and weak; but thou, Lord, art all-powerful! What God is like to thee? Doubt not my courage, Lord; and fill me with thy spirit! but remember, remember her, O Lord! remember Miriam. It is the only worldly thought I have, and it is pure.’

‘Still of his sister! Calm thyself, my son.’

‘Holy master, thou dost remember when I was thy pupil in this cavern. Thou hast not forgotten those days of tranquil study, those sweet, long wandering nights of sacred science! I was dutiful, and hung upon each accent of thy lore with the devotion that must spring from love.’

‘I cannot weep, Alroy; but were it in my power, I would yield a tear of homage to the memory of those days.’

‘How calmly have we sat on some high brow, and gazed upon the stars!’

‘Tis very true, sweet child.’

‘And if thou e’er didst chide me, ‘twas half in jest, and only for my silence.’

‘What would he now infer? No matter, he grows calmer. How solemn is his visage in the moonlight! And yet not Solomon, upon his youthful throne, could look more beautiful.’

‘I never told thee an untruth, Jabaster.’

‘My life upon thy faith.’

‘Fear not the pledge, and so believe me, on the mountain brow watching the starry heavens with thyself, I was not calmer than I feel, sir, now.’

‘I do believe thee.’

‘Then, Jabaster, believe as fully I am the Lord’s anointed.’

‘Tell me all, my child.’

‘Know, then, that sleeping on the couch within, my sleep was troubled. Many dreams I had, indefinite and broken. I recall none of their images, except I feel a dim sensation ‘twas my lot to live in brighter days than now rise on our race. Suddenly I stood upon a mountain tall and grey, and gazed upon the stars. And, as I gazed, a trumpet sounded. Its note thrilled through my soul. Never have I heard a sound so awful. The thunder, when it broke over the cavern here, and shivered the peak, whose ruins lie around us, was but a feeble worldly sound to this almighty music. My cheek grew pale, I panted even for breath. A flaming light spread over the sky, the stars melted away, and I beheld, advancing from the bursting radiancy, the foremost body of a mighty host.

‘Oh! not when Saul led forth our fighting men against the Philistine, not when Joab numbered the warriors of my great ancestor, did human vision gaze upon a scene of so much martial splendour. Chariots and cavalry, and glittering trains of plumed warriors too robust to need a courser’s solace; streams of shining spears, and banners like a sunset; reverend priests swinging their perfumed censers, and prophets hymning with their golden harps a most triumphant future.

“Joy, joy,” they say, “to Israel, for he cometh, he cometh in his splendour and his might, the great Messiah of our ancient hopes.”

‘And, lo! a mighty chariot now appeared, drawn by strange beasts whose forms were half obscured by the bright flames on which they seemed to float. In that glorious car a warrior stood, proud and immovable his form, his countenance. Hold my hand, Jabaster, while I speak; that chieftain was myself!’

‘Proceed, proceed, my son.’

‘I started in my dream, and I awoke. I found myself upsitting on my couch. The pageantry had vanished. Naught was seen but the bright moonlight and the gloomy cave. And, as I sighed to think I e’er had wakened, and mused upon the strangeness of my vision, a still small voice descended from above and called, “Alroy!” I started, but I answered not. Methought it was my fancy. Again my name was called, and now I murmured, “Lord, I am here, what wouldst thou?” Naught responded, and soon great dread came over me, and I rushed out and called to thee, my master.’

‘It was “the Daughter of the Voice”¹² that spake. Since the Captivity ‘tis the only mode by which the saints are summoned. Oft have I heard of it, but never in these sad degenerate days has its soft aspiration fallen upon us. These are strange times and tidings. The building of the temple is at hand. Son of David, my heart is full. Let us to prayer!’

Day dawned upon Jabaster, still musing in solitude among his rocks. Within the cavern, Alroy remained in prayer.

Often and anxiously the Cabalist shot a glance at his companion, and then again relapsed into reverie.

‘The time is come that I must to this youth reveal the secrets of my early life. Much will he hear of glory, much of shame. Naught must I conceal, and naught gloss over.

‘I must tell how in the plains of Tigris I upraised the sacred standard of our chosen race, and called them from their bondage; how, despairing of his recreant fathers, and inspired by human power alone, I vainly claimed the mighty office for his sacred blood alone reserved. God of my fathers, grant that future service, the humble service of a contrite soul, may in the coming glory that awaits us, atone for past presumption!

‘But for him great trials are impending. Not lightly must that votary be proved, who fain would free a people. The Lord is faithful to his promise, but the Lord will choose his season and his minister. Courage, and faith, and deep humility, and strong endurance, and the watchful soul temptation cannot sully, these are the fruits we lay upon his altar, and meekly watch if some descending flame will vouchsafe to accept and brightly bless them.

¹² page 38.—The Daughter of the Voice. ‘Both the Talmudick and the latter Rabbins,’ says Lightfoot, ‘make frequent mention of *Bath Kol*, or *Filia Vocis*, or an echoing voice which served under the Second Temple for their utmost refuge of revelation. For when Urim and Thummim, the oracle, was ceased, and prophecy was decayed and gone, they had, as they say, certain strange and extraordinary voices upon certain extraordinary occasions, which were their warnings and advertisements in some special matters. Infinite instances of this might be adduced, if they might be believed. Now here it may be questioned why they called it *Bath Kol*, the daughter of a voice, and not a voice itself? If the strictness of the Hebrew word *Bath* be to be stood upon, which always it is not, it may be answered, that it is called The Daughter of a Voice in relation to the oracles of Urim and Thummim. For whereas that was a voice given from off the mercy-seat, within the vail, and this, upon the decay of that oracle, came as it were in its place, it might not unfitly or improperly be called a daughter, or successor of that voice.’—Lightfoot, vol. i. pp. 485, 486. Consult also the learned Doctor, vol. ii. pp. 128, 129: ‘It was used for a testimony from heaven, but was indeed performed by magic art.’

‘It is written in the dread volume of our mystic lore, that not alone the Saviour shall spring from out our house of princes, but that none shall rise to free us, until, alone and unassisted, he have gained the sceptre which Solomon of old wielded within his cedar palaces.

‘That sceptre must he gain. This fragile youth, untried and delicate, unknowing in the ways of this strange world, where every step is danger, how much hardship, how much peril, what withering disappointment, what dull care, what long despondency, what never-ending lures, now lie in ambush for this gentle boy! O my countrymen, is this your hope? And I, with all my lore, and all my courage, and all my deep intelligence of man; unhappy Israel, why am I not thy Prince?’

‘I check the blasphemous thought. Did not his great ancestor, as young and as untried, a beardless stripling, with but a pebble, a small smoothed stone, level a mailed giant with the ground, and save his people?’

‘He is clearly summoned. The Lord is with him. Be he with the Lord, and we shall prosper.’

It was at sunset, on the third day after the arrival of Alroy at the cave of the Cabalist, that the Prince of the Captivity commenced his pilgrimage in quest of the sceptre of Solomon.

Silently the pilgrim and his master took their way to the brink of the ravine, and there they stopped to part, perhaps forever.

‘It is a bitter moment, Alroy. Human feelings are not for beings like us, yet they will have their way. Remember all. Cherish the talisman as thy life: nay! welcome death with it pressing against thy heart, rather than breathe without it. Be firm, be pious. Think of thy ancestors, think of thy God.’

‘Doubt me not, dear master; if I seem not full of that proud spirit, which was perhaps too much my wont, ascribe it not to fear, Jabaster, nor even to the pain of leaving thee, dear friend. But ever since that sweet and solemn voice summoned me so thrillingly, I know not how it is, but a change has come over my temper; yet I am firm, oh! firmer far than when I struck down the Ishmaelite. Indeed, indeed, fear not for me. The Lord, that knoweth all things, knows full well I am prepared even to the death. Thy prayers, Jabaster, and—’

‘Stop, stop. I do remember me. See this ring: ‘tis a choice emerald. Thou mayst have wondered I should wear a bauble. Alroy, I had a brother once: still he may live. When we parted, this was the signal of his love: a love, my child, strong, though we greatly differed. Take it. The hour may come that thou mayst need his aid. It will command it. If he live, he prospers. I know his temper well. He was made for what the worldly deem prosperity. God be with thee, sacred boy: the God of our great fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob!’

They embraced.

‘We linger,’ exclaimed the Cabalist, ‘we linger. Oh! in vain we quell the feelings of our kind. God, God bless and be with thee! Art sure thou hast all? thy dagger and thy wallet? That staff has seen some service. I cut it on the Jordan. Ah! that I could be thy mate! ‘Twould be nothing then. At the worst to die together. Such a fate seems sweeter now than parting. I’ll watch thy star, my child. Thou weapest! And I too. Why! what is this? Am I indeed Jabaster? One more embrace, and so—we’ll not say farewell, but only think it.’

CHAPTER IV

Alroy Falls Among Thieves

TRADITION taught that the sceptre of Solomon could be found only in the unknown sepulchres of the ancient Hebrew monarchs, and that none might dare to touch it but one of their descendants. Armed with the cabalistic talisman, which was to guide him in his awful and difficult researches, Alroy commenced his pilgrimage to the Holy City. At this time, the love of these sacred wanderings was a reigning passion among the Jews as well as the Christians.

The Prince of the Captivity was to direct his course into the heart of those great deserts which, in his flight from Hamadan, he had only skirted. Following the track of the caravan, he was to make his way to Babylon, or Bagdad. From the capital of the caliphs, his journey to Jerusalem was one comparatively easy; but to reach Bagdad he must encounter hardship and danger, the prospect of which would have divested any one of hope, who did not conceive himself the object of an omnipotent and particular Providence.

Clothed only in a coarse black frock, common among the Kourds, girded round his waist by a cord which held his dagger, his head shaven, and covered with a large white turban, which screened him from the heat, his feet protected only by slippers, supported by his staff, and bearing on his shoulders a bag of dried meat and parched corn, and a leathern skin of water, behold, toiling over the glowing sands of Persia, a youth whose life had hitherto been a long unbroken dream of domestic luxury and innocent indulgence.

He travelled during the warm night or the early starlit morn. During the day he rested: happy if he could recline by the side of some charitable well, shaded by a palm-tree, or frighten a gazelle from its resting-place among the rough bushes of some wild rocks. Were these resources wanting, he threw himself upon the sand, and made an awning with his staff and turban.

Three weeks had elapsed since he quitted the cavern of the Cabalist. Hitherto he had met with no human being. The desert became less arid. A scanty vegetation sprang up from a more genial soil; the ground broke into gentle undulations; his senses were invigorated with the odour of wild plants, and his sight refreshed by the glancing form of some wandering bird, a pilgrim like himself, but more at ease.

Soon sprang up a grove of graceful palm-trees, with their tall thin stems, and bending feathery crowns, languid and beautiful. Around, the verdant sod gleamed like an emerald: silver streams, flowing from a bubbling parent spring, wound their white forms within the bright green turf. From the grove arose the softening song of doves, and showers of gay and sparkling butterflies, borne on their tinted wings of shifting light, danced without danger in the liquid air. A fair and fresh Oasis!

Alroy reposed in this delicious retreat for two days, feeding on the living dates, and drinking of the fresh water. Fain would he have lingered, nor indeed, until he rested, had he been sufficiently conscious of his previous exertion. But the remembrance of his great mission made him restless, and steeled him to the sufferings which yet awaited him.

At the dawn of the second day of his journey from the Oasis he beheld to his astonishment, faintly but distinctly traced on the far horizon, the walls and turrets of an extensive city.¹³ Animated by this unexpected prospect, he continued his progress for several hours after sunrise. At length, utterly exhausted, he sought refuge from the overpowering heat beneath the cupola of the ruined tomb of

¹³ page 44.—*The walls and turrets of an extensive city.* In Persia, and the countries of the Tigris and Euphrates, the traveller sometimes arrives at deserted cities of great magnificence and antiquity. Such, for instance, is the city of Anneh. I suppose Alroy to have entered one of the deserted capitals of the Seleucidae. They are in general the haunt of bandits.

some Moslem saint. At sunset he continued his journey, and in the morning found himself within a few miles of the city. He halted, and watched with anxiety for some evidence of its inhabitants. None was visible. No crowds or cavalcades issued from the gates. Not a single human being, not a solitary camel, moved in the vicinity.

The day was too advanced for the pilgrim to proceed, but so great was his anxiety to reach this unknown settlement, and penetrate the mystery of its silence, that ere sunset Alroy entered the gates.

A magnificent city, of an architecture with which he was unacquainted, offered to his entranced vision its gorgeous ruins and deserted splendour; long streets of palaces, with their rich line of lessening pillars, here and there broken by some fallen shaft, vast courts surrounded by ornate and solemn temples, and luxurious baths adorned with rare mosaics, and yet bright with antique gilding; now an arch of triumph, still haughty with its broken friezes; now a granite obelisk covered with strange characters, and proudly towering over a prostrate companion; sometimes a void and crumbling theatre, sometimes a long and elegant aqueduct, sometimes a porphyry column, once breathing with the heroic statue that now lies shivered at its base, all suffused with the warm twilight of an eastern eve.

He gazed with wonder and admiration upon the strange and fascinating scene. The more he beheld, the more his curiosity was excited. He breathed with difficulty; he advanced with a blended feeling of eagerness and hesitation. Fresh wonders successively unfolded themselves. Each turn developed a new scene of still and solemn splendour. The echo of his step filled him with awe. He looked around him with an amazed air, a fluttering heart, and a changing countenance. All was silent: alone the Hebrew Prince stood amid the regal creation of the Macedonian captains. Empires and dynasties flourish and pass away; the proud metropolis becomes a solitude, the conquering kingdom even a desert; but Israel still remains, still a descendant of the most ancient kings breathed amid these royal ruins, and still the eternal sun could never rise without gilding the towers of living Jerusalem. A word, a deed, a single day, a single man, and we might be a nation.

A shout! he turns, he is seized; four ferocious Kourdish bandits grapple and bind him.

The bandits hurried their captive through a street which appeared to have been the principal way of the city. Nearly at its termination, they turned by a small Ionian temple, and, clambering over some fallen pillars, entered a quarter of the city of a more ruinous aspect than that which Alroy had hitherto visited. The path was narrow, often obstructed, and around were signs of devastation for which the exterior of the city had not prepared him.

The brilliant but brief twilight of the Orient was fast fading away; a sombre purple tint succeeded to the rosy flush; the distant towers rose black, although defined, in the clear and shadowy air; and the moon, which, when he first entered, had studded the heavens like a small white cloud, now glittered with deceptive light.

Suddenly, before them rose a huge pile. Oval in shape, and formed by tiers of arches, it was evidently much dilapidated, and one enormous, irregular, and undulating rent, extending from the top nearly to the foundation, almost separated the side to which Alroy and his companions advanced.

Clambering up the remainder of this massive wall, the robbers and their prisoner descended into an immense amphitheatre, which seemed vaster in the shadowy and streaming moonlight. In it were groups of men, horses, and camels. In the extreme distance, reclining or squatting on mats and carpets, was a large assembly, engaged in a rough but merry banquet. A fire blazed at their side, its red and uncertain flame mingling with the white and steady moonbeam, and throwing a flickering light over their ferocious countenances, their glistening armour, ample drapery, and shawled heads.

‘A spy,’ exclaimed the captors, as they dragged Alroy before the leader of the band.

‘Hang him, then,’ said the chieftain, without even looking up.

‘This wine, great Scherirah, is excellent, or I am no true Moslem,’ said a principal robber; ‘but you are too cruel; I hate this summary punishment. Let us torture him a little, and extract some useful information.’

‘As you like, Kisloch,’ said Scherirah; ‘it may amuse us. Fellow, where do you come from? He cannot answer. Decidedly a spy. Hang him up.’

The captors half untied the rope that bound Alroy, that it might serve him for a further purpose, when another of the gentle companions of Scherirah interfered.

‘Spies always answer, captain. He is more probably a merchant in disguise.’

‘And carries hidden treasure,’ added Kisloch; ‘these rough coats often cover jewels. We had better search him.’

‘Ah! search him,’ said Scherirah, with his rough brutal voice; ‘do what you like, only give me the bottle. This Greek wine is choice booty. Feed the fire, men. Are you asleep? And then Kisloch, who hates cruelty, can roast him if he likes.’

The robbers prepared to strip their captive. ‘Friends, friends!’ exclaimed Alroy, ‘for there is no reason why you should not be friends, spare me, spare me. I am poor, I am young, I am innocent. I am neither a spy nor a merchant. I have no plots, no wealth. I am a pilgrim.’

‘A decided spy,’ exclaimed Scherirah; ‘they are ever pilgrims.’

‘He speaks too well to speak truth,’ exclaimed Kisloch.

‘All talkers are liars,’ exclaimed Scherirah.

‘That is why Kisloch is the most eloquent of the band.’

‘A jest at the banquet may prove a curse in the field,’ replied Kisloch.

‘Pooh!’ exclaimed Scherirah. ‘Fellows, why do you hesitate? Search the prisoner, I say!’

They advanced, they seized him. In vain he struggled.

‘Captain,’ exclaimed one of the band, ‘he wears upon his breast a jewel!’

‘I told you so,’ said the third robber.

‘Give it me,’ said Scherirah.

But Alroy, in despair at the thought of losing the talisman, remembering the injunctions of Jabaster, and animated by supernatural courage, burst from his searchers, and, seizing a brand from the fire, held them at bay.

‘The fellow has spirit,’ said Scherirah, calmly. ‘Tis pity it will cost him his life.’

‘Bold man,’ exclaimed Alroy, ‘for a moment hear me! I am a pilgrim, poorer than a beggar. The jewel they talk of is a holy emblem, worthless to you, to me invaluable, and to be forfeited only with my life. You may be careless of that. Beware of your own. The first man who advances dies. I pray you humbly, chieftain, let me go.’

‘Kill him,’ said Scherirah.

‘Stab him!’ exclaimed Kisloch.

‘Give me the jewel,’ said the third robber.

‘The God of David be my refuge, then!’ exclaimed Alroy.

‘He is a Hebrew, he is a Hebrew,’ exclaimed Scherirah, jumping up. ‘Spare him, my mother was a Jewess.’

The assailants lowered their arms, and withdrew a few paces. Alroy still remained upon his guard.

‘Valiant pilgrim,’ said Scherirah, advancing, with a softened voice, ‘are you for the holy city?’

‘The city of my fathers.’

‘A perilous journey. And whence from?’

‘Hamadan.’

‘A dreary way. You need repose. Your name?’

‘David.’

‘David, you are among friends. Rest, and repose in safety. You hesitate. Fear not! The memory of my mother is a charm that always changes me!’ Scherirah unsheathed his dagger, punctured his

arm,¹⁴ and, throwing away the weapon, offered the bleeding member to Alroy. The Prince of the Captivity touched the open vein with his lips.

‘My troth is pledged,’ said the bandit; ‘I can never betray him in whose veins my own blood is flowing.’ So saying, he led Alroy to his carpet.

‘Eat,’ David,’ said Scherirah.

‘I will eat bread,’ answered Alroy.

‘What! have you had so much meat lately that you will refuse this delicate gazelle that I brought down this morning with my own lance? ‘Tis food for a caliph.’

‘I pray you give me bread.’

‘Oh! bread if you like. But that a man should prefer bread to meat, and such meat as this, ‘tis miraculous.’

‘A thousand thanks, good Scherirah; but with our people the flesh of the gazelle is forbidden. It is unclean. Its foot is *cloven*.’

‘I have heard of these things,’ replied Scherirah, with a thoughtful air. ‘My mother was a Jewess, and my father was a Kour. Whichever be right, I hope to be saved.’

‘There is but one God, and Mahomed is his prophet!’ exclaimed Kisloch; ‘though I drink wine. Your health, Hebrew.’

‘I will join you,’ said to the third robber. ‘My father was a Guebre, and sacrificed his property to his faith; and the consequence is, his son has got neither.’

‘As for me,’ said a fourth robber, of very dark complexion and singularly small bright eyes, ‘I am an Indian, and I believe in the great golden figure with carbuncle eyes, in the temple of Delhi.’

‘I have no religion,’ said a tall negro in a red turban, grinning with his white teeth; ‘they have none in my country; but if I had heard of your God before, Calidas, I would have believed in him.’

‘I almost wish I had been a Jew,’ exclaimed Scherirah, musing. ‘My mother was a good woman.’ ‘The Jews are very rich,’ said the third robber. ‘When you get to Jerusalem, David, you will see the Christians,’ continued Scherirah.

‘The accursed Giaours,’ exclaimed Kisloch, ‘we are all against them.’

‘With their white faces,’ exclaimed the negro. ‘And their blue eyes,’ said the Indian. ‘What can you expect of men who live in a country without a sun?’ observed the Guebre.

Alroy awoke about two hours after midnight. His companions were in deep slumber. The moon had set, the fire had died away, a few red embers alone remaining; dark masses of shadow hung about the amphitheatre. He arose and cautiously stepped over the sleeping bandits. He was not in strictness a prisoner; but who could trust to the caprice of these lawless men? To-morrow might find him their slave, or their companion in some marauding expedition, which might make him almost retrace his steps to the Caucasus, or to Hamadan. The temptation to ensure his freedom was irresistible. He clambered up the ruined wall, descended into the intricate windings that led to the Ionic fane, that served him as a beacon, hurried through the silent and starry streets, gained the great portal, and rushed once more into the desert.

A vague fear of pursuit made him continue his course many hours without resting. The desert again became sandy, the heat increased. The breeze that plays about the wilderness, and in early spring is often scented with the wild fragrance of aromatic plants, sank away. A lurid brightness suffused the heavens. An appalling stillness pervaded nature; even the insects were silent. For the first time in his pilgrimage, a feeling of deep despondency fell over the soul of Alroy. His energy appeared suddenly to have deserted him. A low hot wind began to rise, and fan his cheek with pestiferous kisses, and enervate his frame with its poisonous embrace. His head and limbs ached with a dull sensation, more terrible than pain; his sight was dizzy, his tongue swollen. Vainly he looked around for aid; vainly he extended his forlorn arms, and wrung them to the remorseless heaven, almost frantic with thirst. The

¹⁴ page 49.—*Punctured his arm*. From a story told by an Arab.

boundless horizon of the desert disappeared, and the unhappy victim, in the midst of his torture, found himself apparently surrounded by bright and running streams, the fleeting waters of the false mirage!

The sun became blood-red, the sky darker, the sand rose in fierce eddies, the moaning wind burst into shrieks and exhaled more ardent and still more malignant breath. The pilgrim could no longer sustain himself.¹⁵ Faith, courage, devotion deserted him with his failing energies. He strove no longer with his destiny, he delivered himself up to despair and death. He fell upon one knee with drooping head, supporting himself by one quivering hand, and then, full of the anguish of baffled purposes and lost affections, raising his face and arm to heaven, thus to the elements he poured his passionate farewell.

‘O life! once vainly deemed a gloomy toil, I feel thy sweetness now! Farewell, O life, farewell my high resolves and proud conviction of almighty fame. My days, my short unprofitable days, melt into the past; and death, with which I struggle, horrible death, arrests me in this wilderness. O my sister, could thy voice but murmur in my ear one single sigh of love; could thine eye with its soft radiance but an instant blend with my dim fading vision, the pang were nothing. Farewell, Miriam! my heart is with thee by thy fountain’s side. Fatal blast, bear her my dying words, my blessing. And ye too, friends, whose too neglected love I think of now, farewell! Farewell, my uncle; farewell, pleasant home, and Hamadan’s serene and shadowy bowers! Farewell, Jabaster, and the mighty lore of which thou wert the priest and I the pupil! Thy talisman throbs on my faithful heart. Green earth and golden sun, and all the beautiful and glorious sights ye fondly lavish on unthinking man, farewell, farewell! I die in the desert: ‘tis bitter. No more, oh! never more for me the hopeful day shall break, and the fresh breeze rise on its cheering wings of health and joy. Heaven and earth, water and air, my chosen country and my antique creed, farewell, farewell! And thou, too, city of my soul, I cannot name thee, unseen Jerusalem—’

Amid the roar of the wind, the bosom of the earth heaved and opened, swift columns of sand sprang up to the lurid sky, and hurried towards their victim. With the clang of universal chaos, impenetrable darkness descended on the desert.

¹⁵ page 52.—*The pilgrim could no longer sustain himself.* An endeavor to paint the simoom.

CHAPTER V

Lord Honain Rescues Alroy

NOW our dreary way is over, now the desert's toil is past. Soon the river broadly flowing, through its green and palmy banks, to our wearied limbs shall offer baths 'which caliphs cannot buy. Allah-illah, Allah-hu. Allah-illah, Allah-hu.'

'Blessed the man who now may bear a relic from our Prophet's tomb; blessed the man who now unfolds the treasures of a distant mart, jewels of the dusky East, and silks of farthest Samarcand. Allah-illah, Allah-hu. Allah-illah, Allah-hu.'

'Him the sacred mosque shall greet with a reverence grave and low; him the busy Bezestein shall welcome with confiding smile. Holy merchant, now receive the double triumph of thy toil. Allah-illah, Allah-hu. Allah-illah, Allah-hu.'

'The camel jibs, Abdallah! See, there is something in the track.'

'By the holy stone,¹⁶ a dead man. Poor devil! One should never make a pilgrimage on foot. I hate your humble piety. Prick the beast and he will pass the corpse.'

'The Prophet preaches charity, Abdallah. He has favoured my enterprise, and I will practise his precept. See if he be utterly dead.'

It was the Mecca caravan returning to Bagdad. The pilgrims were within a day's journey of the Euphrates, and welcomed their approach to fertile earth with a triumphant chorus. Far as the eye could reach, the long line of their straggling procession stretched across the wilderness, thousands of camels in strings, laden with bales of merchandise, and each company headed by an animal of superior size, leading with tinkling bells; groups of horsemen, clusters of litters; all the pilgrims armed to their teeth, the van formed by a strong division of Seljukian cavalry, and the rear protected by a Kourdish clan, who guaranteed the security of the pious travellers through their country.

Abdallah was the favourite slave of the charitable merchant Ali. In obedience to his master's orders, he unwillingly descended from his camel, and examined the body of the apparently lifeless Alroy.

'A Kourd, by his dress,' exclaimed Abdallah, with a sneer; 'what does he here?'

'It is not the face of a Kourd,' replied Ali; 'perchance a pilgrim from the mountains.'

'Whatever he be, he is dead,' answered the slave: 'I doubt not an accursed Giaour.'

'God is great,' exclaimed Ali; 'he breathes; the breast of his caftan heaved.'

'Twas the wind,' said Abdallah.

'Twas the sigh of a human heart,' answered Ali.

Several pilgrims who were on foot now gathered around the group.

'I am a Hakim,'¹⁷ observed a dignified Armenian. 'I will feel his pulse; 'tis dull, but it beats.'

'There is but one God,' exclaimed Ali.

'And Mahomed is his Prophet,' responded Abdallah. 'You do not believe in him, you Armenian infidel.'

'I am a Hakim,' replied the dignified Armenian. 'Although an infidel, God has granted me skill to cure true believers. Worthy Ali, believe me, the boy may yet live.'

¹⁶ page 54.—*By the holy stone.* The Caaba.—The Caaba is the same to the Mahomedan as the Holy Sepulchre to the Christian. It is the most unseemly, but the most sacred, part of the mosque at Mecca, and is a small, square stone building.

¹⁷ page 56.—*I am a Hakim;* i.e. Physician, an almost sacred character in the East. As all Englishmen travel with medicine-chests, the Turks are not be wondered at for considering us physicians.

‘Hakim, you shall count your own dirhems if he breathe in my divan in Bagdad,’ answered Ali; ‘I have taken a fancy to the boy. God has sent him to me. He shall carry my slippers.’

‘Give me a camel, and I will save his life.’

‘We have none,’ said the servant.

‘Walk, Abdallah,’ said the master.

‘Is a true believer to walk to save the life of a Kourid? Master slipper-bearer shall answer for this, if there be any sweetness in the bastinado,’ murmured Abdallah.

The Armenian bled Alroy; the blood flowed slowly but surely. The Prince of the Captivity opened his eyes.

‘There is but one God,’ exclaimed Ali.

‘The evil eye fall on him!’ muttered Abdallah.

The Armenian took a cordial from his vest, and poured it down his patient’s throat. The blood flowed more freely.

‘He will live, worthy merchant,’ said the physician.

‘And Mahomed is his Prophet,’ continued Ali.

‘By the stone of Mecca, I believe it is a Jew,’ shouted Abdallah.

‘The dog!’ exclaimed Ali.

‘Pah!’ said a negro slave, drawing back with disgust.

‘He will die,’ said the Christian physician, not even binding up the vein.

‘And be damned,’ said Abdallah, again jumping on his camel.

The party rode on, the caravan proceeded. A Kourdish horseman galloped forward. He curbed his steed as he passed Alroy bleeding to death.

‘What accursed slave has wounded one of my clan?’

The Kourid leaped off his horse, stripped off a slip of his blue shirt, stanching the wound, and carried the unhappy Alroy to the rear.

The desert ceased, the caravan entered upon a vast but fruitful plain. In the extreme distance might be descried a long undulating line of palm-trees. The vanguard gave a shout, shook their tall lances in the air, and rattled their scimitars in rude chorus against their small round iron shields. All eyes sparkled, all hands were raised, all voices sounded, save those that were breathless from overpowering joy. After months wandering in the sultry wilderness, they beheld the great Euphrates.

Broad and fresh, magnificent and serene, the mighty waters rolled through the beautiful and fertile earth. A vital breeze rose from their bosom. Every being responded to their genial influence. The sick were cured, the desponding became sanguine, the healthy and light-hearted broke into shouts of laughter, jumped from their camels, and embraced the fragrant earth, or, wild in their renovated strength, galloped over the plain, and threw their wanton jerreeds in the air,¹⁸ as if to show that suffering and labour had not deprived them of that skill and strength, without which it were vain again to enter the haunts of their less adventurous brethren.

The caravan halted on the banks of the broad river, glowing in the cool sunset. The camp was pitched, the plain glittered with tents. The camels, falling on their knees, crouched in groups, the merchandise piled up in masses by their sides. The unharnessed horses rushed neighing about the plain, tossing their glad heads, and rolling in the unaccustomed pasture. Spreading their mats, and kneeling towards Mecca, the pilgrims performed their evening orisons. Never was thanksgiving more sincere. They arose: some rushed into the river, some lighted lamps, some pounded coffee.¹⁹ Troops

¹⁸ page 57.—*Threw their wanton jerreeds in the air.* The Persians are more famous for throwing the jerreed than any other nation. A Persian gentleman, while riding quietly by your side, will suddenly dash off at full gallop, then suddenly check his horse, and take a long aim with his lance with admirable precision. I should doubt, however, whether he could hurl a lance a greater distance or with greater force and effect than a Nubian, who will fix a mark at sixty yards with his javelin.

¹⁹ page 58.—*Some pounded coffee.* The origin of the use of coffee is obscure; but there is great reason to believe that it had not been introduced in the time of Alroy. When we consider that the life of an Oriental at the present day mainly consists in drinking coffee

of smiling villagers arrived with fresh provisions, eager to prey upon such light hearts and heavy purses. It was one of those occasions when the accustomed gravity of the Orient disappears. Long through the night the sounds of music and the shouts of laughter were heard on the banks of that starry river; long through the night you might have listened with enchantment to the wild tales of the storer, or gazed with fascination on the wilder gestures of the dancing girls.²⁰

The great bazaar of Bagdad afforded an animated and sumptuous spectacle on the day after the arrival of the caravan. All the rare and costly products of the world were collected in that celebrated mart: the shawls of Cachemire and the silks of Syria, the ivory, and plumes, and gold of Afric, the jewels of Ind, the talismans of Egypt, the perfumes and manuscripts of Persia, the spices and gums of Araby, beautiful horses, more beautiful slaves, cloaks of sable, pelisses of ermine, armour alike magnificent in ornament and temper, rare animals, still rarer birds, blue apes in silver collars, white gazelles bound by a golden chain, greyhounds, peacocks, paroquets. And everywhere strange, and busy, and excited groups; men of all nations, creeds, and climes: the sumptuous and haughty Turk, the graceful and subtle Arab, the Hebrew with his black cap and anxious countenance; the Armenian Christian, with his dark flowing robes, and mild demeanour, and serene visage. Here strutted the lively, affected, and superfine Persian; and there the Circassian stalked with his long hair and chain cuirass. The fair Georgian jostled the ebony form of the merchant of Dongola or Sennaar.

Through the long, narrow, arched, and winding streets of the bazaar, lined on each side with loaded stalls, all was bustle, bargaining, and barter. A passenger approached, apparently of no common rank. Two pages preceded him, beautiful Georgian boys, clothed in crimson cloth, and caps of the same material, sitting tight to their heads, with long golden tassels. One bore a blue velvet bag, and the other a clasped and richly bound volume. Four footmen, armed, followed their master, who rode behind the pages on a milk-white mule. He was a man of middle age, eminently handsome. His ample robes concealed the only fault in his appearance, a figure which indulgence had rendered somewhat too exuberant. His eyes were large, and soft, and dark; his nose aquiline, but delicately moulded; his mouth small, and beautifully proportioned; his lip full and red; his teeth regular and dazzling white. His ebony beard flowed, but not at too great a length, in graceful and natural curls, and was richly perfumed; a delicate mustachio shaded his upper lip, but no whisker was permitted to screen the form and shroud the lustre of his oval countenance and brilliant complexion. Altogether, the animal perhaps predominated too much in the expression of the stranger's countenance; but genius beamed from his passionate eye, and craft lay concealed in that subtle lip. The dress of the rider was sumptuous. His turban, formed by a scarlet Cachemire shawl, was of great breadth, and concealing half of his white forehead, increased by the contrast the radiant height of the other. His under-vest was of white Damascus silk, stiff with silver embroidery, and confined by a girdle formed by a Brusa scarf of gold stuff, and holding a dagger, whose hilt appeared blazing with brilliants and rubies. His loose and exterior robe was of crimson cloth. His white hands sparkled with rings, and his ears glittered with pendulous gems.

'Who is this?' asked an Egyptian merchant, in a low whisper, of the dealer whose stuffs he was examining.

and smoking tobacco, we cannot refrain from asking ourselves, 'What did he do before either of these comparatively modern inventions was discovered?' For a long time, I was inclined to suspect that tobacco might have been in use in Asia before it was introduced into Europe; but a passage in old Sandys, in which he mentions the wretched tobacco smoke in Turkey, and accounts for it by that country being supplied with 'the dregs of our markets,' demonstrates that, in his time, there was no native growth in Asia. Yet the choicest tobaccos are now grown on the coast of Syria, the real Levant. But did the Asiatics smoke any other plant or substance before tobacco? In Syria, at the present day, they smoke a plant called *timbac*; the Chinese smoke opium; the artificial preparations for the hookah are known to all Indians. I believe, however, that these are all refinements, and for this reason, that in the classic writers, who were as well acquainted with the Oriental nations as ourselves, we find no allusion to the practice of smoking. The anachronism of the pipe I have not therefore ventured to commit, and that of coffee will, I trust, be pardoned.

²⁰ page 58.—*Wilder gestures of the dancing girls*. These dancing girls abound throughout Asia. The most famous are the Almeah of Egypt, and the Nautch of India. These last are a caste, the first only a profession.

‘Tis the Lord Honain,’ replied the dealer. ‘And who may he be?’ continued the Egyptian. ‘Is he the Caliph’s son?’

‘A much greater man; his physician.’ The white mule stopped at the very stall where this conversation was taking place. The pages halted, and stood on each side of their master, the footmen kept off the crowd.

‘Merchant,’ said Honain, with a gracious smile of condescension, and with a voice musical as a flute, ‘Merchant, did you obtain me my wish?’

‘There is but one God,’ replied the dealer, who was the charitable Ali, ‘and Mahomed is his Prophet. I succeeded, please your highness, in seeing at Aleppo the accursed Giaour, of whom I spoke, and behold, that which you desired is here.’ So saying, Ali produced several Greek manuscripts, and offered them to his visitor.

‘Hah!’ said Honain, with a sparkling eye, ‘tis well; their cost?’

‘The infidel would not part with them under five hundred dirhems,’ replied Ali.

‘Ibrahim, see that this worthy merchant receive a thousand.’

‘As many thanks, my Lord Honain.’

The Caliph’s physician bowed gracefully.

‘Advance, pages,’ continued Honain; ‘why this stoppage? Ibrahim, see that our way be cleared. What is all this?’

A crowd of men advanced, pulling along a youth, who, almost exhausted, still singly struggled with his ungenerous adversaries.

‘The Cadi, the Cadi,’ cried the foremost of them, who was Abdallah, ‘drag him to the Cadi.’

‘Noble lord,’ cried the youth, extricating himself by a sudden struggle from the grasp of his captors, and seizing the robe of Honain, ‘I am innocent and injured. I pray thy help.’

‘The Cadi, the Cadi,’ exclaimed Abdallah; ‘the knave has stolen my ring, the ring given me by my faithful Fatima on our marriage-day, and which I would not part with for my master’s stores.’

The youth still clung to the robe of Honain, and, mute from exhaustion, fixed upon him his beautiful and imploring eye.

‘Silence,’ proclaimed Honain, ‘I will judge this cause.’

‘The Lord Honain, the Lord Honain, listen to the Lord Honain!’

‘Speak, thou brawler; of what hast thou to complain?’ said Honain to Abdallah.

‘May it please your highness,’ said Abdallah, in a whining voice, ‘I am the slave of your faithful servant, Ali: often have I had the honour of waiting on your highness. This young knave here, a beggar, has robbed me, while slumbering in a coffee-house, of a ring; I have my witnesses to prove my slumbering. ‘Tis a fine emerald, may it please your highness, and doubly valuable to me as a love-token from my Fatima. No consideration in the world could induce me to part with it; and so, being asleep, here are three honest men who will prove the sleep, comes this little vagabond, may it please your highness, who while he pretends to offer me my coffee, takes him my finger, and slips off this precious ring, which he now wears upon his beggarly paw, and will not restore to me without the bastinado.’

‘Abdallah is a faithful slave, may it please your highness, and a Hadgee,’ said Ali, his master.

‘And what sayest thou, boy?’ inquired Honain.

‘That this is a false knave, who lies as slaves ever will.’

‘Pithy, and perhaps true,’ said Honain.

‘You call me a slave, you young scoundrel?’ exclaimed Abdallah; ‘shall I tell you what you are? Why, your highness, do not listen to him a moment. It is a shame to bring such a creature into your presence; for, by the holy stone, and I am a Hadgee, I doubt little he is a Jew.’

Honain grew somewhat pale, and bit his lip. He was perhaps annoyed that he had interfered so publicly in behalf of so unpopular a character as a Hebrew, but he was unwilling to desert one whom

a moment before he had resolved to befriend, and he inquired of the youth where he had obtained the ring.

‘The ring was given to me by my dearest friend when I first set out upon an arduous pilgrimage not yet completed. There is but one person in the world, except the donor, to whom I would part with it, and with that person I am unacquainted. All this may seem improbable, but all this is true. I have truth alone to support me. I am destitute and friendless; but I am not a beggar, nor will any suffering induce me to become one. Feeling, from various circumstances, utterly exhausted, I entered a coffee-house and lay down, it may have been to die. I could not sleep, although my eyes were shut, and nothing would have roused me from a tremulous trance, which I thought was dying, but this plunderer here, who would not wait until death had permitted him quietly to possess himself of a jewel I value more than life.’

‘Show me the jewel.’

The youth held up his hand to Honain, who felt his pulse, and then took off the ring.

‘O, my Fatima!’ exclaimed Abdallah.

‘Silence, sir!’ said Honain. ‘Page, call a jeweller.’

Honain examined the ring attentively. Whether he were near-sighted, or whether the deceptive light of the covered bazaar prevented him from examining it with ease, he certainly raised his hand to his brow, and for some moments his countenance was invisible.

The jeweller arrived, and, pressing his hand to his heart, bowed before Honain.

‘Value this ring,’ said Honain, in a low voice.

The jeweller took the ring, viewed it in all directions with a scrutinising glance, held it to the light, pressed it to his tongue, turned it over and over, and finally declared that he could not sell such a ring under a thousand dirhems.

‘Whatever be the justice of the case,’ said Honain to Abdallah, ‘art thou ready to part with this ring for a thousand dirhems?’

‘Most certainly,’ said Abdallah. ‘And thou, lad, if the decision be in thy favour, wilt thou take for the ring double the worth at which the jeweller prizes it?’

‘My lord, I have spoken the truth. I cannot part with that ring for the palace of the Caliph.’

‘The truth for once is triumphant,’ said Honain. ‘Boy, the ring is thine; and for thee, thou knave,’ turning to Abdallah, ‘liar, thief, and slanderer!—for thee the *bastinado*,²¹ which thou destinedst for this innocent youth. Ibrahim, see that he receives five hundred. Young pilgrim, thou art no longer destitute or friendless. Follow me to my palace.’

The arched chamber was of great size and beautiful proportion. The ceiling, encrusted with green fretwork, and studded with silver stars, rested upon clustered columns of white and green marble. In the centre of a variegated pavement of the same material, a fountain rose and fell into a green porphyry basin, and by the side of the fountain, upon a couch of silver, reposed Honain.

He raised his eyes from the illuminated volume on which he had been long intent; he clapped his hands, and a Nubian slave advanced, and, folding his arms upon his breast, bowed in silence before his lord. ‘How fares the Hebrew boy, Analschar?’

‘Master, the fever has not returned. We gave him the potion; he slumbered for many hours, and has now awakened, weak but well.’

‘Let him rise and attend me.’

The Nubian disappeared.

‘There is nothing stranger than sympathy,’ soliloquised the physician of the Caliph, with a meditative air; ‘all resolves itself into this principle, and I confess this learned doctor treats it deeply and well. An erudite spirit truly, and an eloquent pen; yet he refines too much. ‘Tis too scholastic.’

²¹ page 64.—*For thee the bastinado*. The *bastinado* is the common punishment of the East, and an effective and dreaded one. It is administered on the soles of the feet, the instrument a long cane or palm-branch. Public executions are very-rare.

Observation will teach us more than dogma. Meditating upon my passionate youth, I gathered wisdom. I have seen so much that I have ceased to wonder. However we doubt, there is a mystery beyond our penetration. And yet 'tis near our grasp. I sometimes deem a step, a single step, would launch us into light. Here comes my patient. The rose has left his cheek, and his deep brow is wan and melancholy. Yet 'tis a glorious visage, Meditation's throne; and Passion lingers in that languid eye. I know not why, a strong attraction draws me to this lone child.

'Gentle stranger, how fares it with thee?'

'Very well, my lord. I come to thank thee for all thy goodness. My only thanks are words, and those too weak; and yet the orphan's blessing is a treasure.'

'You are an orphan, then'

'I have no parent but my father's God.'

'And that God is—'

'The God of Israel.'

'So I deemed. He is a Deity we all must honour; if he be the great Creator whom we all allow.'

'He is what he is, and we are what we are, a fallen people, but faithful still.'

'Fidelity is strength.'

'Thy words are truth, and strength must triumph.'

'A prophecy!'

'Many a prophet is little honoured, till the future proves his inspiration.'

'You are young and sanguine.'

'So was my ancestor within the vale of Elah. But I speak unto a Moslem, and this is foolishness.'

'I have read something, and can take your drift. As for my faith, I believe in truth, and wish all men to do the same. By-the-bye, might I inquire the name of him who is the inmate of my house?'

'They call me David.'

'David, you have a ring, an emerald cut with curious characters, Hebrew, I believe.'

'Tis here.'

'A fine stone, and this inscription means—'

'A simple legend, "*Parted, but one*;" the kind memorial of a brother's love.'

'Your brother?'

'I never had a brother.'

'I have a silly fancy for this ring: you hesitate. Search my palace, and choose the treasure you deem its match.'

'Noble sir, the gem is little worth; but were it such might deck a Caliph's brow, 'twere a poor recompense for all thy goodness. This ring is a trust rather than a possession, and strange to say, although I cannot offer it to thee who mayst command, as thou hast saved, the life of its unhappy wearer, some stranger may cross my path to-morrow, and almost claim it as his own.'

'And that stranger is—'

'The brother of the donor.'

'The brother of Jabaster?'

'Jabaster!'

'Even so. I am that parted brother.'

'Great is the God of Israel! Take the ring. But what is this? the brother of Jabaster a turbaned chieftain! a Moslem! Say, but say, that thou hast not assumed their base belief; say, but say, that thou hast not become a traitor to our covenant, and I will bless the fortunes of this hour.'

'I am false to no God. Calm thyself, sweet youth. These are higher questions than thy faint strength can master now. Another time we'll talk of this, my boy; at present of my brother and thyself. He lives and prospers?'

'He lives in faith; the pious ever prosper.'

‘A glorious dreamer! Though our moods are different, I ever loved him. And thyself? Thou art not what thou seemest. Tell me all. Jabaster’s friend can be no common mind. Thy form has heralded thy fame. Trust me.’

‘I am Alroy.’

‘What! the Prince of our Captivity?’

‘Even so.’

‘The slayer of Alschiroch?’

‘Ay!’

‘My sympathy was prophetic. I loved thee from the first. And what dost thou here? A price is set upon thy head: thou knowest it?’

‘For the first time; but I am neither astonished nor alarmed. I am upon the Lord’s business.’

‘What wouldst thou?’

‘Free his people.’

‘The pupil of Jabaster: I see it all. Another victim to his reveries. I’ll save this boy. David,—for thy name must not be sounded within this city,—the sun is dying. Let us to the terrace, and seek the solace of the twilight breeze.’

‘What is the hour, David?’

‘Near to midnight. I marvel if thy brother may read in the stars our happy meeting.’

‘Men read that which they wish. He is a learned Cabalist.’

‘But what we wish comes from above.’

‘So they say. We make our fortunes, and we call them Fate.’

‘Yet the Voice sounded, the Daughter of the Voice that summoned Samuel.’

‘You have told me strange things; I have heard stranger solved.’

‘My faith is a rock.’

‘On which you may split.’

‘Art thou a Sadducee?’

‘I am a man who knows men.’

‘You are learned, but different from Jabaster.’

‘We are the same, though different. Day and Night are both portions of Time.’

‘And thy portion is—’

‘Truth.’

‘That is, light.’

‘Yes; so dazzling that it sometimes seems dark.’

‘Like thy meaning.’

‘You are young.’

‘Is youth a defect?’

‘No, the reverse. But we cannot eat the fruit while the tree is in blossom.’

‘What fruit?’

‘Knowledge.’

‘I have studied.’

‘What?’

‘All sacred things.’

‘How know you that they are sacred?’

‘They come from God.’

‘So does everything. Is everything sacred?’

‘They are the deep expression of his will.’

‘According to Jabaster. Ask the man who prays in yonder mosque, and he will tell you that Jabaster’s wrong.’

‘After all, thou art a Moslem?’

‘No.’

‘What then?’

‘I have told you, a man.’

‘But what dost thou worship?’

‘What is worship?’

‘Adoration due from the creature to the Creator.’

‘Which is he?’

‘Our God.’

‘The God of Israel?’

‘Even so.’

‘A frail minority, then, burn incense to him.’

‘We are the chosen people.’

‘Chosen for scoffs, and scorns, and contumelies. Commend me to such choice.’

‘We forgot Him, before He chastened us.’

‘Why did we?’

‘Thou knowest the records of our holy race.’

‘Yes, I know them; like all records, annals of blood.’

‘Annals of victory, that will dawn again.’

‘If redemption be but another name for carnage, I envy no Messiah.’

‘Art thou Jabaster’s brother?’ ‘So our mother was wont to say: a meek and blessed woman.’

‘Lord Honain, thou art rich, and wise, and powerful. Thy fellow-men speak of thee only with praise or fear, and both are cheering. Thou hast quitted our antique ark; why, no matter. We’ll not discuss it. ‘Tis something; if a stranger, at least thou art not a renegade. The world goes well with thee, my Lord Honain. But if, instead of bows and blessings, thou, like thy brethren, wert greeted only with the cuff and curse; if thou didst rise each morning only to feel existence to be dishonour, and to find thyself marked out among surrounding men as something foul and fatal; if it were thy lot, like theirs, at best to drag on a mean and dull career, hopeless and aimless, or with no other hope or aim but that which is degrading, and all this, too, with a keen sense of thy intrinsic worth, and a deep conviction of superior race; why, then, perchance, Honain might even discover ‘twere worth a struggle to be free and honoured.’ ‘I pray your pardon, sir; I thought you were Jabaster’s pupil, a dreaming student. I see you have a deep ambition.’

‘I am a prince; and I fain would be a prince without my fetters.’

‘Listen to me, Alroy,’ said Honain in a low voice, and he placed his arm around him, ‘I am your friend. Our acquaintance is very brief: no matter, I love you; I rescued you in injury, I tended you in sickness, even now your life is in my power, I would protect it with my own. You cannot doubt me. Our affections are not under our own control; and mine are yours. The sympathy between us is entire. You see me, you see what I am; a Hebrew, though unknown; one of that despised, rejected, persecuted people, of whom you are the chief. I too would be free and honoured. Freedom and honour are mine, but I was my own messiah. I quitted in good time our desperate cause, but I gave it a trial. Ask Jabaster how I fought. Youth could be my only excuse for such indiscretion. I left this country; I studied and resided among the Greeks. I returned from Constantinople, with all their learning, some of their craft. No one knew me. I assumed their turban, and I am the Lord Honain. Take my experience, child, and save yourself much sorrow. Turn your late adventure to good account. No one can recognise you here. I will introduce you amongst the highest as my child by some fair Greek. The world is before you. You may fight, you may love, you may revel. War, and Women, and luxury are all at your command. With your person and talents you may be grand vizir. Clear your head of nonsense. In the present disordered state of the empire, you may even carve yourself out a kingdom, infinitely more delightful than the barren land of milk and honey. I have seen it, child; a rocky wilderness, where I would not let my courser graze.’

He bent down, and fixed his eyes upon his companion with a scrutinising glance. The moonlight fell upon the resolved visage of the Prince of the Captivity.

‘Honain,’ he replied, pressing his hand, ‘I thank thee. Thou knowest not me, but still I thank thee.’

‘You are resolved, then, on destruction.’

‘On glory, eternal glory.’

‘Is it possible to succeed?’

‘Is it possible to fail?’

‘You are mad.’

‘I am a believer.’

‘Enough. You have yet one chance. My brother has saddled your enterprise with a condition, and an impossible one. Gain the sceptre of Solomon, and I will agree to be your subject. You will waste a year in this frolic. You are young, and can afford it. I trust you will experience nothing worse than a loss of time, which is, however, valuable. My duty will be, after all your sufferings, to send you forth on your adventures in good condition, and to provide you means for a less toilsome pilgrimage than has hitherto been your lot. Trust me, you will return to Bagdad to accept my offers. At present, the dews are descending, and we will return to our divan, and take some coffee.’

Some few days after this conversation on the terrace, as Alroy was reclining in a bower, in the beautiful garden of his host, meditating on the future, some one touched him on the back. He looked up. It was Honain.

‘Follow me,’ said the brother of Jabaster.

The Prince rose, and followed him in silence. They entered the house, and, passing through the saloon already described, they proceeded down a long gallery, which terminated in an arched flight of broad steps leading to the river. A boat was fastened to the end of the stairs, floating on the blue line of the Tigris, bright in the sun.

Honain now gave to Alroy a velvet bag, which he requested him to carry, and then they descended the steps and entered the covered boat; and, without any directions to the rower, they were soon skimming over the water. By the sound of passing vessels, and the occasional shouts of the boatmen, Alroy, although he could observe nothing, was conscious that for some time their course lay through a principal thoroughfare of the city; but by degrees the sounds became less frequent, and in time entirely died away, and all that caught his ear was the regular and monotonous stroke of their own oar.

At length, after the lapse of nearly an hour from their entrance, the boat stopped, and was moored against a quay. The curtains were withdrawn, and Honain and his companion debarked.

A low but extensive building, painted in white and gold arabesque, and irregular but picturesque in form, with many small domes, and tall thin towers, rose amid groves of cypress on the bank of the broad and silent river. The rapid stream had carried them far from the city, which was visible but distant. Around was no habitation, no human being. The opposite bank was occupied by enclosed gardens. Not even a boat passed.

Honain, beckoning to Alroy to accompany him, but still silent, advanced to a small portal, and knocked. It was instantly opened by a single Nubian, who bowed reverently as the visitors passed him. They proceeded along a low and gloomy passage, covered with arches of fretwork, until they arrived at a door of tortoise-shell and mother-of-pearl.²² Here Honain, who was in advance, turned round to Alroy, and said, ‘Whatever happen, and whoever may address you, as you value your life and mine, do not speak.’

²² page 73.—*A door of tortoise-shell and mother-of-pearl.* This elegant mode of inlay is common in Oriental palaces, and may be observed also in Alhambra, at Granada.

The door opened, and they found themselves in a vast and gorgeous hall. Pillars of many-coloured marbles rose from a red and blue pavement of the same material, and supported a vaulted, circular, and highly-embossed roof of purple, scarlet, and gold.²³ Around a fountain, which rose fifty feet in height from an immense basin of lapis-lazuli, and reclining on small yellow Barbary mats, was a group of Nubian eunuchs, dressed in rich habits of scarlet and gold,²⁴ and armed with ivory battle-axes, the white handles worked in precious arabesque finely contrasting with the blue and brilliant blades.

The commander of the eunuch-guard rose on seeing Honain, and pressing his hand to his head, mouth, and heart, saluted him. The physician of the Caliph, motioning Alroy to remain, advanced some paces in front of him, and entered into a whispering conversation with the eunuch. After a few minutes, this officer resumed his seat, and Honain, beckoning to Alroy to rejoin him, crossed the hall.

Passing through an open arch, they entered a quadrangular court of roses,²⁵ each bed of flowers surrounded by a stream of sparkling water, and floating like an enchanted islet upon a fairy ocean. The sound of the water and the sweetness of the flowers blended together, and produced a lulling sensation, which nothing but his strong and strange curiosity might have enabled Alroy to resist. Proceeding along a cloister of light airy workmanship which connected the hall with the remainder of the buildings, they stood before a lofty and sumptuous portal.

It was a monolith gate, thirty feet in height, formed of one block of green and red jasper, and cut into the fanciful undulating arch of the Saracens. The consummate artist had seized the advantage afforded to him by the ruddy veins of the precious stone, and had formed them in bold relief into two vast and sinuous serpents, which shot forth their crested heads and glittering eyes at Honain and his companion.

The physician of the Caliph, taking his dagger from his girdle, struck the head of one of the serpents thrice. The massy portal opened with a whirl and a roar, and before them stood an Abyssinian giant,²⁶ holding in his leash a roaring lion.

'Hush, Haroun!' said Honain to the animal, raising at the same time his arm; and the beast crouched in silence. 'Worthy Morgargon, I bring you a remembrance.' The Abyssinian showed his tusks, larger and whiter than the lion's, as he grinningly received the tribute of the courtly Honain; and he uttered a few uncouth sounds, but he could not speak, for he was a mute.

The jasper portal introduced the companions to a long and lofty and arched chamber, lighted by high windows of stained glass, hung with tapestry of silk and silver, covered with prodigious carpets, and surrounded by immense couches. And thus through similar chambers they proceeded, in some of which were signs of recent habitation, until they arrived at another quadrangle nearly filled by a most singular fountain which rose from a basin of gold encrusted with pearls, and which was surrounded by figures of every rare quadruped²⁷ in the most costly materials. Here a golden tiger, with flaming eyes of ruby and flowing stripes of opal, stole, after some bloody banquet, to the refreshing brink; a camelopard raised its slender neck of silver from the centre of a group of every inhabitant of the forest; and brilliant bands of monkeys, glittering with precious stones, rested, in every variety of fantastic posture, on the margin of the basin.

²³ page 74.—*A vaulted, circular, and highly embossed roof, of purple, scarlet, and gold.* In the very first style of Saracenic architecture. See the Hall of the Ambassadors in Alhambra, and many other chambers in that exquisite creation.

²⁴ page 74.—*Nubian eunuchs dressed in rich habits of scarlet and gold.* Thus the guard of Nubian eunuchs of the present Pacha of Egypt, Mehemet Ali, or rather Caliph, a title which he wishes to assume. They ride upon white horses.

²⁵ page 74.—*A quadrangular court of roses.* So in Alhambra, 'The Court of Myrtles,' leading to the Court of Columns, wherein is the famous Fountain of Lions.

²⁶ page 75.—*An Abyssinian giant.* A giant is still a common appendage to an Oriental court even at the present day. See a very amusing story in the picturesque 'Persian Sketches' of that famous elchee, Sir John Malcolm.

²⁷ page 75.—*Surrounded by figures of every rare quadruped.* 'The hall of audience,' says Gibbon, from Cardonne, speaking of the magnificence of the Saracens of Cordova, 'was encrusted with gold and pearls, and a great basin in the centre was surrounded with the curious and costly figures of birds and quadrupeds.'—*Decline and Fall*, vol. x. p. 39.

The fountain itself was a tree of gold and silver²⁸ spreading into innumerable branches, covered with every variety of curious birds, their plumage appropriately imitated by the corresponding tints of precious stones, which warbled in beautiful melody as they poured forth from their bills the musical and refreshing element.

It was with difficulty that Alroy could refrain from an admiring exclamation, but Honain, ever quick, turned to him, with his finger pressed on his mouth, and quitting the quadrangle, they entered the gardens.

Lofty terraces, dark masses of cypress, winding walks of acacia, in the distance an interminable paradise, and here and there a glittering pavilion and bright kiosk! Its appearance on the river had not prepared Alroy for the extent of the palace itself. It seemed infinite, and it was evident that he had only viewed a small portion of it. While they were moving on, there suddenly rose a sound of trumpets. The sound grew nearer and nearer, louder and louder: soon was heard the tramp of an approaching troop. Honain drew Alroy aside. A procession appeared advancing from a dark grove of cypress. Four hundred men led as many white bloodhounds with collars of gold and rubies.²⁹ Then came one hundred men, each with a hooded hawk; then six horsemen in rich dresses; after them a single horseman, mounted on a steed, marked on its forehead with a star.³⁰ The rider was middle-aged, handsome, and dignified. He was plainly dressed, but the staff of his hunting-spear was entirely of diamonds and the blade of gold.

He was followed by a company of Nubian eunuchs, with their scarlet dresses and ivory battle-axes, and the procession closed.

'The Caliph,' whispered Honain, when they had passed, placing at the same time his finger on his lip to prevent any inquiry. This was the first intimation that had reached Alroy of what he had already suspected, that he was a visitor to the palace of the Commander of the Faithful.

The companions turned down a wild and winding walk, which, after some time, brought them to a small and gently sloping lawn, surrounded by cedar-trees of great size. Upon the lawn was a kiosk, a long and many-windowed building, covered with blinds, and further screened by an overhanging roof. The kiosk was built of white and green marble, the ascent to it was by a flight of steps the length of the building, alternately of white and green marble, and nearly covered with rose-trees. Honain went up these steps alone, and entered the kiosk. After a few minutes he looked out from the blinds and beckoned to Alroy. David advanced, but Honain, fearful of some indiscretion, met him, and said to him in a low whisper between his teeth, 'Remember you are deaf, a mute, and a eunuch.' Alroy could scarcely refrain from smiling, and the Prince of the Captivity and the physician of the Caliph entered the kiosk together. Two women, veiled, and two eunuchs of the guard, received them in an antechamber. And then they passed into a room which ran nearly the whole length of the kiosk, opening on one side to the gardens, and on the other supported by an ivory wall, with niches painted in green fresco, and in each niche a rose-tree. Each niche, also, was covered with an almost invisible golden grate, which confined a nightingale, and made him constant to the rose he loved. At the foot of each niche was a fountain, but, instead of water, each basin was replenished with the purest quicksilver.³¹ The roof of the kiosk was of mother-of-pearl inlaid with tortoise-shell; the pavement, a mosaic of rare marbles and precious stones, representing the most delicious fruits and the most

²⁸ page 76.—*A tree of gold and silver.* 'Among the other spectacles of rare and stupendous luxury was a tree of gold and silver, spreading into eighteen large branches, on which, and on the lesser boughs, sat a variety of birds made of the same precious metals, as well as the leaves of the tree. While the machinery effected spontaneous motions, the several birds warbled their natural harmony.'—*Gibbon*, vol. x. p. 38, from Abulfeda, describing the court of the Caliphs of Bagdad in the decline of their power.

²⁹ page 76.—*Four hundred men led as many white bloodhounds, with collars of gold and rubies.* I have somewhere read of an Indian or Persian monarch whose coursing was conducted in this gorgeous style: if I remember right, it was Mahmoud the Gaznevide.

³⁰ page 76.—*A steed marked on its forehead with a star.* The sacred steed of Solorhon.

³¹ page 78.—*Instead of water, each basin was replenished with the purest quicksilver.* 'In a lofty pavilion of the gardens, one of those basins and fountains so delightful in a sultry climate, was replenished, not with water, but with the purest quicksilver.'—*Gibbon*, vol. x, from Cardonne.

beautiful flowers. Over this pavement, a Georgian page flung at intervals refreshing perfumes. At the end of this elegant chamber was a divan of light green silk, embroidered with pearls, and covered with cushions of white satin and gold. Upon one of these cushions, in the middle of the divan, sat a lady, her eyes fixed in abstraction upon a volume of Persian poetry lying on her knees, one hand playing with a rosary of pearls and emeralds,³²

³² page 78.-*Playing with a rosary of pearls and emeralds*. Moslems of rank are never without the rosary, sometimes of amber and rare woods, sometimes of jewels. The most esteemed is of that peculiar substance called Mecca wood.

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