

eye that had previously so impressed me with its mingled brilliancy and softness, while the strong and iron compression of the mouth threw so much of determination and ferocity into his aspect, that I was suddenly struck with the idea that he was liable to attacks of temporary insanity, and that one of the paroxysms of his malady was at hand. Desirous of avoiding anything like a scene, I uttered a few common-place phrases, and rose to bid him adieu; whereupon his face instantly resumed its natural wonted expression, and the beauty, so spiritual in its style, again shone forth in every lineament—

As the stream late conceal'd
By the fringo of its willows,
When it rushes reveal'd
In the light of its billows;
As the bolt bursts on high
From the dark cloud that bound it,
Flash'd the soul of that eye
Through the long lashes round it,

He begged me to prolong my stay; to call again; and he offered me his services as *cicerone* round the environs of the mosque, promising to show me some ancient tombs and sarcophagi in the neighbourhood. I agreed to his request, and took my departure, rather perplexed by my new acquaintance, his normal appearance, and the mystic nature of his metamorphosis.

After the lapse of about a week, I proceeded to fulfil my engagement by paying Latif a second visit. I found that he was at home, and, as I ascended the stairs, my ears were assailed by the high and angry tones of his and another voice engaged in some vehement discussion or altercation; but the sounds died away in hissing whispers, and on my entering the small anteroom, both the disputants immediately assumed a placid and unembarrassed air, and the stranger, saluting us courteously, passed out. He was a man of about Latif's age, and apparently of some rank in one of the government departments: at least, so I judged by the style and richness of his dress. The *Sokhta** talked on trivial subjects for a few minutes, but soon grew excited; and turning the conversation on his late visitor, with seeming reluctance, he gave me to understand that the individual in question was his rival, and more—a successful rival; but whether in the path of science and ambition, or in the thornier mazes of love, I was unable to determine. All I could glean from Latif's words was that the stranger was about to wrest from his expectant grasp the prize he had been struggling to attain, and had been on the point of attaining, when the man I had just seen stepped in between him and his soul's desire.

"But," said he, rising and pacing his small apartment with rapid strides, while he gesticulated with all the wild energy of madness; "but I will drag his soul from his polluted carcase, if he continues to intrude his odious presence between me and the object I have toiled for so long!"

Then, apologising for this rude behaviour to his Frankish guest and his father's friend, without an effort he resumed the noble and winning deportment which had so impressed me at our former interview, and in the course of our ensuing discussion on general topics, he displayed such accurate and extensive information on matters totally unconnected with the Koran and its manifold commentaries, and quite unknown to the majority of his countrymen, that I was both greatly and pleasantly surprised. Our discourse ended by his pressing me to accompany him during the next vacation on his visit to his paternal house, and to spend some time among those scenes, the praise of which from the mouth of a Frank had so much gratified his *amor patriæ*. I cheerfully accepted his friendly invitation, with the proviso that my occupations should allow of my leaving the capital when he did.

In a few days I again knocked at his door, my curiosity and interest having been strongly excited by my new friend's conduct, and by the indefinable cloud of mystery in which I fancied him enveloped. I was answered by an Armenian, who told me that the Effendi was from home, and would not return till late.

* Vulgarly called "Softa," a term designating a Turkish divinity student.

"But," he added, "you must be tired after your walk; come in, if you will so far condescend, and while you are taking a little repose, I will cook you a cup of coffee."

Impelled by the desire of hearing something of Latif's history, and of the cause of the enmity existing between him and the above-mentioned stranger, I entered, and did not wait many minutes ere the coffee and the pipe were presented. Reclining on the divan, the garrulous Armenian on a low stool at my feet, as I sipped and puffed, I gradually led the way to his master and his master's concerns.

"Ah, Effendi!" said the valet, "Latif Effendi is a man of great head, and as much superior to the other dogs of Turks as his faith will permit, but—" Here the servant paused, touched his forehead with the tip of his finger, slowly shook his head, and recommenced in a soft whisper, "Latterly there is something wrong here—you understand me, *Tchelebi*?"

I nodded; and, after a few pantomimic gestures on either side, doubtless meant to convey a world of meaning, I asked him the name of the gentleman for whom his master appeared to entertain such bitter hatred.

"Effendi," replied the Armenian; "well, I will tell you all, for are we not brothers? I too, am Christian, a Catholic" (making the sign of the cross); "but, by your mother's soul and your own two eyes, let not a breath escape you, or I shall die under the stick!"

I promised inviolable secrecy, and my companion thus began:—

"You know the large red building you pass at the corner of the street leading into the square of the mosque? Well, it is the dwelling of the chief Imaum of our mosque here—a curse on all mosques! That harem contains a white rose, a lily, an unpierced pearl; but I cannot describe her—how could I? her beauty is as far above words as the sun is above the fire of your pipe. I have seen her, for my brother is head groom to the old Imaum, and when I go of an evening to smoke a chibouque with him, I can gaze on her unveiled as she lounges in the rose garden, the fairest flower in it, like a *Houri* in Paradise, but a thousand times better, since you know there are no such beings. Well, *Tchelebi*, our Latif Effendi, who often visits the Imaum, happened to see her one day unveiled as she came in, not being aware that a *Nemharem* was with her father: from that moment Latif's liver became a *kebab*, and now he burns so, that he has lost all recollection of sleep, meat, or drink. Now, *Tchelebi*, you have seen the Effendi's father and his place, and you know that his inheritance is something, and indeed everyone who understands these matters says, that if he becomes an Imaum, 'Sheik el Islam' is a title that he has more right to expect to enjoy hereafter than any man of his time. Well, then, Latif having considered the position of affairs, deemed that, should he propose a marriage with the Imaum's daughter, nobody could call him 'presumptuous one;' so he goes like an upright gentleman to the headnurse of her father's harem, and gives her his word for two purses if she will bring about an union between the rose-bud and himself. Latif's prospects and qualities being pretty thoroughly known in this quarter, the old woman said, 'Inshallah! the thing should be!' Not that she cared for the piastres, but because she loved him as her own son, and she would not wish her 'milk-child' to be in the harem of a better spouse. So she spoke to the maiden's mother, who in her turn spoke to the father; and as he took care not to repel the proposal, it was soon understood and agreed among all parties that, when Latif should become a regular Imaum, and procure a good mosque, he was to set up his house, and the damsel was to be demanded for him by some respectable mutual friend, according to the custom in these countries. Things were going on in this manner, and the heart of our good Latif was glad and full of hope that his fondest dreams of happiness were shortly to be realized, when that individual you saw the other day (may God bestow his curse on him!) came to our neighbourhood, strutting and twirling his moustache, and cast a black shadow over Latif's horoscope. *Tchelebi*,

this world of ours is a very astonishing one, and who can resist the decrees of heaven? The fellow came, I say, and hired a house close by, which he furnished like a man of substance, and lived in it like a man of wealth (misfortunes on him here and hereafter!) He quickly heard that there was a 'fairy face' in the harem of the Imaum; and as soon as he had ascertained, through an ill-omened daughter of thirteen, his agent in the business, that the fair one's beauty and her father's riches were not exaggerated, he sent his mother as his ambassadress in this work of evil. She repaired with many slaves and much ceremony to the Imaum's harem; and having been admitted to the presence of the lady of the house, she began by inquiring after her health, paying numerous compliments in honeyed words; and thus skilfully leading the way to the real object of her visit, she opened the cause, enlarged on her son's good qualities, alluded to the caiques that he would keep on the Bosphorus, enumerated the Arab horses and the slaves that he would be able to place at his wife's disposal, and finally suggested that the Imaum's daughter should become that wife, winding up her insidious discourse with the hint that the post then occupied by her son—that of secretary to the paymaster of the arsenal—was but the first step in the ladder of honours, riches, and distinctions, which he was destined to ascend. These offers were carried to the father directly the old lady was gone; and he, the wily fox, looking more to the wealth of this world than to the treasures of the life to come, was greatly pleased and flattered by so brilliant a prospect, and thenceforth began to show a sour face to Latif, the unhappy one, who was given to understand that his presence and his proposals were alike unacceptable. Thus the thread of his hopes was cut asunder—he eats misfortune, and since that time he has wept rivers of blood, being no longer himself. He has striven with all his soul to make that man of evil augury forego his pretensions—in vain! God show mercy to him!"

"Oh! he will forget!" said I.

"He will never forget!" rejoined the Armenian.

Shortly after the above narrative had been confided to me, I was called away to a distance, and was absent for three weeks from Stamboul. One of my first visits on my return was to Latif's quarter, when, approaching the precincts of the mosque, I perceived a multitude of people densely crowded round one spot, while numbers were continually pouring in from every avenue to the same point. I entered a *gahvé* (café) which I had been in the habit of frequenting occasionally since the time that my introduction to Latif had led me to that part of the city.

"Ah! *Tchelebi*," exclaimed mine host of the café, "you are welcome,—your coming is agreeable—be seated. But since you left us we have all had much grief."

"Wherefore?" I enquired.

"They have cut off the head of your *Kafuder* (gossip)," answered he of the *gahvé*, "and the people are now gazing on his dead body."

On hearing this shocking announcement, I rushed from the coffee-shop, and, struggling through the crowd, I succeeded in reaching the place, where, too surely, lay the corpse of Latif. His head, with the turban still enveloping it, was deposited under his arm; a *Yefta* pinned to his breast, indicated to the public both the nature of the crime for which he had suffered, and the retributive justice in store for all evil-doers and spillers of blood, with a conclusion—hardly perhaps appropriate to the occasion—extolling the clemency of "our lord the Sultan."

The hapless Latif was dressed in the apparel that he had worn on the day of my last visit to him; his features, those exquisite features, were still invested with an air of placidity and repose, the head surrounded by a small pool of blood that had issued from its severed veins, now mingling with the dust, and discolouring the long flowing beard, dark as the raven's wing, which drooped on one side. I was awakened from the trance of horror into which I had sunk by the shrill harsh accents of an old crone, screaming, "Thanks be to Allah! he deserved thus to die." I turned and fled from the dreadful spectacle.