

"Ah! mother, how happy they are that are handsome enough to be taken to beautiful Stamboul, where the streets are strewn with gold and diamonds," said the boy, in affected wonder. "Ah, how happy they must be who are taken there!"

The old crone laughed, patted him on the head, and called him a silly child; then lowering her voice, she said, in low rapid tones, as if afraid to be heard—"Ay, boy, there is a girl in the harem of Hamed who might grace the seraglio of the Grand Turk. Nirkoff asks two thousand dollars for her, and Hamed has paid the money; she will be a bargain at four thousand, and Rameth will take her away and bring back that sum for her, or I am no judge of beauty."

"Well, mother, I will come in two days for the salt," said the boy, rising quickly.

"In two days, my little man," and she opened the door cautiously, gave egress to the fish-seller, and then quickly shut it behind him.

Next evening, the moonbeams were streaming through the broken crumbling walls of the ruin which stood upon the borders of the lake. It had been built, according to tradition, by a colony of Armenians, who had fled from Turkish oppression, and had settled upon this spot, and traded with the Tartars of Crimea. They had been extirpated, however, by a band of mountaineers from Not-wah, whose chief, "the fair-haired Ardan," had fallen in the attack, and from that circumstance the spot had become classic ground to the tradition-loving Circassians. The walls of the building had crumbled to within a very few feet of the ground, and the trees and shrubs that clung around it and curtained its little subterranean cells invested the ruin with a dull sepulchral aspect which awed even the smugglers, as they hid their contraband goods within its dark cavernous shades.

It was to this ruin that Jamesa led his band; for the information which Ozban had received while disguised as a fish-seller, pointed it out as the rendezvous of the agents of Nirkoff and Hamed. The eager and courageous Circassians had not lain long concealed amongst the underwood which grew so plentifully around the solitary pile, when the sound of voices was heard, and two poplars that seemed to grow on the very verge of the water moved slowly from their places, disclosing to the cautious Jamesa the convenient place for the embarkation of passengers. The Turkish mariners busied themselves in arranging the cordage and sails of their little vessel, and seemed quite indifferent to everything

else, even to the conversation of Rameth and Hamed, who, each holding a hand of Wusu, were absorbed in the discussion of their own speculations. Hamed and Rameth were men of widely dissimilar temperaments, and it was easily to be observed that in physical strength and activity there was a great disparity between them. The agent was muscular, prompt, and cruel; the seaman was of a phlegmatic cast of the body, and of a slow turn of mind; yet he was prudent and doggedly brave, and in his nefarious and hazardous calling he had acquired the fame of unimpeachable integrity.

"You will bring me her worth in brown silk and gold and silver lace," said Hamed; "for I sell most of these to her finery-loving sisters on the mountains."

"Three thousand dollars worth is all I will promise thee, Hamed," replied the other, slowly. "The risk of running here is greater than it used to be, you see, and the blockade is stricter; and another thing, the Franks are persuading the vicegerent of the prophet that this traffic—this selling of infidels is sinful."

"Bah! Rameth, you are growing covetous as you are growing old," answered Hamed quickly. "You will gain a thousand dollars by the maiden at my price, so let us say four thousand."

Rameth was in the act of shaking his head in contradiction to this appeal, when he suddenly uttered a scream, sprung up into the air, and then fell dead at the feet of Wusu. The sharp reports of the Circassian rifles now mingled with the shouts of those who plied them; but as Jamesa sprung sword in hand towards Hamed, no one of his companions followed him, for Hamed was the only one, save Wusu, that the ambuscade had left alive. The maiden had been a shield to the Turkish agent, and he knew this well as he clasped her in his arms, and hurried with her into the skiff. He had been spared the contents of a rifle, not that he might be taken alive, but lest harm should come to the girl, whom he threw violently into the bottom of the bark, and pushed vigorously out from the shore. Hamed was strong, and possessed of that quality of brute courage which becomes a passion in meanly selfish minds when it is called into action by the desire to defend what they esteem their property. To lose Wusu was to lose his wealth, which he valued as his life, and only in parting life would he part with his slave.

Jamesa, his equal in daring and physical strength, was impelled to rescue Wusu by one of the strongest of human incentives; so that, when Hamed pushed off from the shore, the lover holding his scimitar with his teeth, dashed into