

do I not owe to thee, my counsellor, my friend?

Alas! alas! for woman's love; tho' charm was how complete. Nurtured in a solitary harem, her young heart denied all sympathy with its kind, Shereen had grown from infancy to womanhood surrounded by severity and gloom. The hour on which her eye had fallen on the handsome brahmin had taught her that all men were not like her haughty, dark-browed brother, and, as she thought of that noble countenance and graceful form, came fancies of the free and happy things that were denied to her; and thus, noting nothing of the difference of their faith (for what are crabb'd tenets to young and trusting hearts?) Shereen, all unconscious that it was so, loved the stranger, and clothing him with imagined perfections, gave to them the worship of her young affections; and thus it was, that when she had again seen him, had listened to a voice not harsh and deep like the dreaded kha'n's, but softening into music as it breathed gentle and persuasive words to her beguiled ear, the natural independence of Shereen evinced itself in accordance with her will, and scorning danger on the path of him she loved, the maiden resolved to go forwards to Ateer, and the aged Heera, who would have freely given her life to secure the happiness of the child of her affections, so far from opposing her inclination, rejoiced that the love of the young subahdar might in the far solitude of her native village, afford to her young mistress some compensation for the cold pomp of the prince's harem; and perhaps even some comfort, protection, and support, when death should lay her own grey hairs beneath the spreading boughs of the sítá phul.

The scene was changed, for the travellers had journeyed on, and the Hindoos, who had first arrived at Murnae, were now joined by their Moslem friends to the number of some twenty. It was late, and the party sat together in the lower room of one of the most secluded houses in the bazar of Chároso, a town nine coss nearer to Ateer.

The room was large and gloomy, the floor formed of beaten earth, and the huge wooden rafters much eaten by white ants, and blackened by the smoke of torches. It was bare and totally unfurnished, but here and there were niches in the wall, that held little cups of red earthenware filled with oil, and serving as temporary lamps; while, to judge from the appearances around, some offering or sacrifice had lately been made by the assembled group, for in the centre of the floor was a square, marked with turmeric and lime; there was also a sheet of white linen with grains of rice upon it, and a freshly gathered cocoa-nut, and by its side three flat stones were placed, like a rude altar, and on it lay a small image, a pickaxe, and a cord, with a goat without spot or blemish lately slaughtered. Nearest the altar, as its ministering priest, stood the young Subahdar Cheidamee, who, looking round upon the dark and excited countenances of the group, lifted the pickaxe from the altar, and advanced to the centre of the apartment.

"My friends," he said, "I see the dawn approach; shall I strike?—and all cried 'strike!' Raising then the pickaxe in his hand, the young brahmin struck the cocoa-nut, dashing it into a thousand pieces, exclaiming as he did so, 'Then had the mighty Kalee Davee! and may she accept the sacrifice to the prosperity of her slaves, the Thugs of Hindoostan! Dig a pit here, my friends, with the sacred axe, and bury it from the eyes of the uninitiated, even as

check my eye has ever looked on.' Drawing to her side, Cheidamee, encouraged by her now smiling lip and down-cast eye, gently disengaged the veil from her trembling hand, and with many courteous and soothing words, drew at length from the maiden the history of her flight, her hopes, her fears,—of all, indeed, except her love for him; a love scarcely confessed even to her own pure heart. Their converse was long, and new-formed sympathy to the young and unsuspecting, even from those who have no interest in their affections, touches a thousand chords to which the heart responds; and thus it was that, as a fleeting blush played on the cheek of Shereen, whilst she told him, with a voice whose tones grew every instant softer, of her dread of the marriage with the hated kha'n, and when he asked her why? smiled, sighed, yet found no answer, that Cheidamee, remembering the gentle sigh that had been wasted to his ear from the purdah's screen, as he stood in the council-chamber of Ameeran Kha'n—a sigh that had long since, in far different scenes haunted his imagination—felt that the fair being beside whom he stood surely loved him.

It was a strange and sudden thought, and one which might be supposed to afford him both joy and triumph, for Cheidamee was young and handsome, and Shereen the fairest and most noble of her land; but still, from that moment, the subahdar grew silent and full of thought, and changes passed across his brow that were full of strange meaning. Now remorse would agitate every muscle of his countenance, and then the fire of enthusiasm and devotion lighted his eyes with a fitful fever, while this again gradually faded away into soft and tender admiration for the sweet girl who stood gazing upon his face, utterly, however, unconscious of all but the joy of looking again upon him she loved.

At length Cheidamee spoke; but his words were cold, and fell like a knell upon the ear of his listener. 'Lady,' said he, 'there is danger here; lose no time, but travel on; yet on your life go not to Ateer for thither lies my path, the one I bid thee shun; but as you value the safety of yourself and followers, set out on dawn and take the road of the Kaul Nisar.' 'Danger!' exclaimed Shereen; 'danger in these peaceful woods! Oh! it cannot be; but if there is, and you travel to Ateer, my future home, suffer your escort to join my own, and what can there be to dread?' 'Lady,' returned Cheidamee, 'I speak but truly. I do beseech you to be warned, and seek not to proceed by the jungle road. I dare not explain all that I know of that which threatens thee; yet, trust me, I speak but truly, and though I see thee for the last time, let me not urge my prayer in vain; but even now, summon thy attendants, and take no rest until the mear of Kaul Nisar breaks upon thy view. Lady, I must leave thee; but the influence of the hour passed in sweet converse by thy side will follow me in many distant scenes, and the wood of Murnae be to thy memory, midst other thoughts, like a bright fountain upon the desert sands.' So saying, Cheidamee pressed the hand of Shereen to his lips, and hurried through the brushwood, when the poor maiden, springing with the speed of a young fawn towards the tent, cast her arms around her faithful nurse, exclaiming, as the tears gushed over her fair cheeks, 'Heera! dearest Heera! I have seen him, he is here! Make ready to proceed onwards to Ateer by to-morrow's dawn. There does he live; and noble by day, dear Heera, I may see his noble form, and hear the music of his voice, Ah! what

your own destruction? Did not Jhoteer Kha'n, the black, lie sleepless upon the ground until the morning watch, but two nights since, from the cries of crickets, and has not the har crossed your path to-day? Will nothing save you?' 'You say well, Minuk,' replied the Moslem; 'Nutha listens too much to the Moslem heresies; but we will press on, ay, and than the rest can follow. Ere we start, however, he added, rising from his carpet, 'I will see this Moslem lady, for 'tis long since I have looked on a fair face.'

The brahmin crossed the court, and disappeared by the little wicket; after which the travellers drew closer in their circle, speaking together in low whispers, and as they did so, words escaped from time to time which an ear well trained in the languages of India might yet have failed to recognize.

By the side of a glittering rivulet, which, in its murmuring course, afforded nourishment to beautiful groups of young plantain-trees, whose long, smooth, and tenderly-coloured leaves, waving with the slightest breeze, cast their undulating shadows upon a ground richly tinted by the rays of the coming sunset, stood the fair Shereen, her veil fallen from her brow, and her cheek tinged with the new-born hopes of peace. In her brother's harem, lone and persecuted, he had seemed a victim whom grief had made her own; but in this bright garden, surrounded by flowers and sunshine, by the sweet voices of the tiny songsters piping forth their evening hymn, and by the soft free air laden with the odours borne on the sunset breeze, Shereen appeared, as nature intended she should be, a crowning grace to her most lovely works, and a personification of all that is most sweet and fair.

And now, with that dream-like, yet most delicious feeling, which is produced by the tranquilizing influences of nature, even when we are, perhaps, least conscious of their presence, the lady lingered by the rivulet, and from time to time an expression of pure complacency stole, like a sunbeam, over her face—an expression too gentle to be called a smile, too thoughtful, perhaps, for a sign of joy; for there are certainly as many tints of varied tone in happiness, as there are different shades in grief; and now, it was but a few days since Shereen had fled her childhood's home, nor had she yet gained the refuge she sought. Still, nature and freedom had brought to her young heart emotions until now unknown, and as happy thoughts love to group themselves together, there were mingling with the rest, perhaps, some gentle memory of that gentle stranger, who had, in spite of herself, led captive her girlish fancy.

At length, warned by the increasing shadows that stole around her, Shereen, raising her eyes, with a soft sigh, turned to regain the tent where Heera and her followers remained; but, as she did so, a faint exclamation of mingled surprise and fear burst from her lips, for there, as she had seen him in her brother's palace, stood the Subahdar Cheidamee, the being lately unshrined in her tenderest thoughts. Instinctively Shereen sought her veil, but the delicate fabric was too hopelessly entangled with her drapery to be replaced by a hand trembling with mingled and new emotions, and whilst she uselessly essayed the task, the subahdar approached, entreating her, with a mein full of respectful courtesy, to forbear.

'Lady,' he said, raising his hand in graceful salutation, 'forgive me for thus intruding on your solitude, and punish me not, I beseech thee, by shading the loveliest