

this thin lip, as the royal warrior spoke so slightly of his manhood, whether his ignorance was indeed so great as the stout Englishman believed,—“Why, man,” he added, laughing, “I thought you had too often seen me deal with such craven cattle by scores or even hundreds, to fear to trust me here in my own guarded tent with one poor renegade. Fie! Wilford, fie! your fears do misbecome your judgment and my manhood.”

“Were you, fair Prince, but standing in your stirrups, with your proud destrier beneath you, belted as best becomes a knight, with casque on head and spur on heel and that good broadsword in your hand, which clove the sultan of Damascus from silken turban to girth saddle-bow, right gladly would I trust you with a hundred, right glad’y be your godfather in such a championship, and win or fall beside you! At least, at least, my prince, if you will speak with him alone, let me call in the yeomen of your guard and have him searched if he bear no weapon. My life on it, a venom’d kanjar shall be found within his belt, for all he seems so innocent and fenceless!”

“No! Wilford, no! it must not be,” Edward replied; “it doubtless would offend him, and he for spite would hide those counsels which I would give a year of life to know. Tush! man, I will be cautious. Thou knowest I can be cautious if I will.”

“Not of yourself, my noble Prince,” said Wilford,—“not of yourself I fear me! Yet I implore be so now—think what a loss and shame it would be to England, Europe,—yea! all Christendom,—what joy and triumph to the vile paynimrie, if ought should now befall you in the full tide of glory! and think how should we, thy faithful followers, who would die for thee, dare to look England in the face, and thou slain in the midst of us. Nay! nay! fair Prince, wax not wroth with me, nor impatient. I go, and may God keep your highness.”

“A very faithful fellow,” said Edward to himself, as he departed, “and bold as any lion in his own person, but timid as a girl if but a shadow wave toward me. Now, Saracen,” he added, changing the language in which he had spoken hitherto for the *lingua Franca*, “Now, Malech, speak—what are your tidings?”

The spy, before he answered, unwound the crimson shawl which formed his turban, and, as he untwisted it, produced from the central fold a long strip of white parchment, closely

written on both sides, which he handed to the eager prince.

“Read these,” he said, “my lord, and the thy slave will speak what there you may understand.”

Edward took the scroll, and so cunningly was the device framed, that it appeared to him at a glance that it related to matters of the most intense interest, and his whole soul was soon engaged in the perusal; still he did not for some little time, entirely neglect the caution of his chamberlain, but raised his eyes once or twice and fixed them with a piercing scrutiny on the quiet and seemingly passionless face of the infidel. Perceiving nothing there to justify the suspicion which he in some sort shared with Wilford, and feeling a sort of half shame that he should find himself fearful or suspecting any thing, after another side-long look he gave himself entirely up to the subject of his thoughts, and read attentively and without interruption, though at times he had occasion to ask for some little explanation which was in every case promptly and understandingly given, until he reached the bottom of the first page. Then he once more looked up, and met the eye of the infidel fixed on his face with an expression so bland and calm and free from the least shade of consciousness or apprehension, that he cast all care to the winds and actually smiled at his own doubts as he turned the scroll and directed his attention to the rest of its contents. Had he however seen the answering smile which stole across the dark and now speaking features of the Saracen, who had read easily the meaning of Edward’s confident calm smile, he would have altered his opinion. But he saw it not and read on. Apparently, the contents of the scroll became line after line more interesting—the prince’s colour came and went, he clenched his right hand and unclenched it rapidly, and even muttered a few words in English to himself, so thoroughly engrossed was he in his high studies, so utterly forgetful that any mortal being stood beside him. Scarce had he read ten lines, however, upon the second side before his false security was fearfully and well-nigh fatally invaded. Freeling by a motion of his right hand, so slight as to be almost imperceptible, a long straight two-edged dagger with a blade waved in the shape of a curling flame or rippling water, from its scabbard within the sleeve of his right arm, while it hung down by his side, the infidel collected all the energies of his muscular limbs, drawing himself back a little and crouching like a tiger