

subdued valleys of northern Circassia. One of the richest and most important personages whom the czar's protection and encouragement had induced to build their homes at Kleti was Hamed, a Turk, who had fled from Constantinople to save his neck from a bowstring and his carcass from a sack, but who, contriving to bring with him a goodly purse of gold, traded in salt and manufactured goods, and lived, if not in safety, at least without the dread of any one save the dauntless Tcherkesses. The commander or governor of Kleti was one of those needy unscrupulous wretches who almost universally constitute the agents of the emperor; uncertain of the tenor of his office, and fearful lest he should be superseded before he became rich, he robbed and plundered the flocks and herds of the mountaineers with insatiable rapacity, and seizing upon the maidens and youths, sold them, through Hamed's agency, to the Turkish smugglers who landed goods on the Circassian coast, despite the ukase of Nicholas and the lubberly look-out of his fleet. Nirkoff received a consideration for shutting his eyes to the trade of the Moslems, and he found in them willing agents when he had fair young Circassians to send to the market at Stamboul, so that, instead of acting for his government, he acted, no matter whether wisely or well, very diligently and undividedly for himself.

"Jamesa has rebelled at last, has he?" cried Nirkoff, with a sneer, as the discomfited party told their tale; "and he has called me thief, and threatened me, has he? ha, ha! the silly coward that he is, does he think that I do not know how to tame him? Go, Warok, take a hundred men, burn the hogsties of Nefil, and as the valley of Vastoghai has several surplus damsels, in consequence of their mates swallowing Russian musket-balls, bring a few hither, especially that Wusu, whom fame reports so beautiful."

The valley of Vastoghai was attacked that evening, when all the people who dwelt in it had sunk to sleep, and Wusu and several others were captured. In the confusion and noise of the evening attack Ozban contrived to escape; he was either too young to think of rescuing his sister, or he was prudent enough to subdue his desire to attempt doing so. He saw Wusu, however, mounted before a man whom he suspected by his dress to be Hamed, and following the robbers with all the speed and energy of a young mountaineer, he beheld a portion of the prisoners lodged in the fort of Kleti, while several of the most beautiful maidens, among whom was Wusu, were conveyed to the house of Hamed—the former to be sent across the Kuban as an evidence

of the vigilance and honesty of the commandant, Nirkoff; the latter to await the felucca of the Turkish contrabandists, that they might be sold for his particular advantage. Ozban turned his face towards the south-east, and with the speed of the antelope made for the nearest friendly village; the horses, heavily clogged, were grazing in the little enclosure, and he without hesitation caught and mounted one of the fleetest. Agitated with fear, and almost beside himself concerning the abduction and destiny intended for his sister, he urged the horse to its utmost speed, and dashed onward like the storm, from which he derived his name, for the home of Jamesa in Nefil. There he was greeted by sable desolation and the silence of death; ruin had preceded him to the pastoral home of his friend, and he looked around in bewilderment on smouldering ashes where he had hoped to find sympathy and succour. "Whether shall I turn?" exclaimed the agitated boy, in tones of eager expectancy; "where can Jamesa have gone?" The steed, that had stood with its head inclined towards the earth for some time, at this instant suddenly tossed its forelock on high and pricked up its ears, and as Ozban bent on the sagacious creature's neck and listened, he heard the cadence of one of the war-songs of his people come pealing on the night breeze from the mountains. A tremor passed over the frame of the youth, as if he had been electrified, when the deep tones of the warriors, mellowed by distance, fell upon his ear; and then his eyes shone like the stars above him when his sense resolved the meaning of the sound, and shouting, "Sons of the Adijhe, flash your red sabres in the faces of the trembling Moscovs!" he struck the gallant horse, and, scouring up the valley, boldly approached the fastness of the mountains. In a comparatively short period the boy Ozban stood amongst a group of his manly and picturesque countrymen. A fire, supplied by withered shrubs and fragments of decayed ash boughs, threw a strong and flickering light upon the tall athletic men who bivouacked around it, revealing the diverse colours of their picturesque garments and the character of their arms, while it exaggerated into gigantic proportions their reclining or sitting forms. Several of the shepherds who had escaped from the sack of the Vastoghai were already here, muttering vengeance on Nirkoff and his myrmidons, and inflaming the wrath of their compatriots with recitations of their fathers' wrongs and of their deeds of retaliation; but Ozban passed them all without noticing any of them, and placed himself silently beside Jamesa, who sat upon a rock with his hand supporting his head. "You know it,