

CHAPTER XXX.

THE DAY OF SACRIFICE.

At last the time came.

It was the end of the dark season. Then, as the sun rises for its permanent course around the heavens, when the long day of six months begins, all in the land of the Kosekin is sorrow, and the last of the loved darkness is mourned over amid the most solemn ceremonies, and celebrated with the most imposing sacrifices. Then the most honored in all the land are publicly presented with the blessing of death and allowed to depart this hated life, and go to the realms of that eternal darkness which they love so well. It is the greatest of sacrifices, and is followed by the greatest of feasts. Thus the busy season—the loved season of darkness—ends, and the long, hateful season of light begins, when the Kosekin lurk in caverns and live in this way in the presence of what may be called artificial darkness.

It was for us—for me and for Almah—the day of doom. Since the ceremony of separation I had not seen her; but my heart had been always with her. I did not even know whether she was alive or not, but believed that she must be; for I thought that if she had died I should have heard of it, as the Kosekin would have rejoiced greatly over such an event. For every death is to them an occasion of joy, and the death of one so distinguished and so beloved as Almah would have given rise to nothing less than a national festival.

Of time I had but a poor reckoning; but, from the