

MARTES, THE PERSIAN BOY.

(Continued from last Month.)

The morning sun is shining brightly as a man with staggering yet rapid steps approaches his home; he enters the door and looks upon his wife quietly working. "O Teispes, husband, what is it?" she cries as she sees his haggard face. "Enough!" he answers hoarsely, "our boy has slept at his post, the sacred fire is out!" With a wild scream the beautiful Rhodogune throws herself at her husband's feet exclaiming "Where is he, O tell me where is my child!" "In the House of Darkness" answers Teispes, at which words the wife and mother, falling heavily against her husband, forgets for the time her great sorrow in unconsciousness.

II

Again the moon is sending its rays over palace and prison, over temple and forest. Who is she that so stealthily creeps in the shadow? It is Rhodogune going to find her child. As she approaches his place of confinement her steps falter, but raising her eyes to heaven she prays that she may be permitted once more to see her boy; her prayer is answered, and entering the dark cell she clasps Martes to her breast. For some moments there is silence, which is at last broken by the mother's wailing cry: "Alas! my son, I know that thou must die—thou who wast always so loving and obedient—but O what will be the death?" and she shudders as she thinks of those who have been executed by burying up to the head in the ground, and of others who first had their noses and ears cut off, tongues torn out and eyes put out. Martes raises his eyes to his mother and her grief is checked as she looks at him, for never before did she see such beauty in that face. "Mother," he says. "be not troubled, I can tell thee how I shall die. I am to be smothered in ashes; I greatly feared the punishment of 'the boat,' and am thankful

the agony will be so quickly over with. And mother," seeing her tremble, "I am happy now; they have told thee I am going to the 'house of destruction,' but the 'house of hymns' will be my home, and I shall dwell forever with Ahuromazdai. The happiness I always felt when I knew I had done right is with me now, and so much greater. O mother, if thou could'st only hear the voice which tells me so plainly that all will be well with me. The last I knew before the fire went I was asking Ahuromazdai to make me obedient and my heart pure, that his Divine Spirit might dwell with me, and it is with me now mother, and will be ever for those who obey His spirit in their hearts, shall live forever. The fire was only His emblem, it was neglected by me because in my own heart I held communion with Him, and I shall not be punished for it. You may not understand me, but the time will come when our people will learn that Ahuromazdai is the same God worshipped by other nations without the sacred fire, and worshipped just as acceptably if they live such lives that His spirit can work in their hearts. So do not mourn for me, mother, but follow me to a better life than this." The interview at an end Rhodogune embraces her son and sadly turns toward home. She can scarcely bear to meet the stern father, who, after delivering up his son to the officers, thinks he has performed his whole duty. But Rhodogune sees a change in her husband's face; he cannot forget that scene in the 'great hall of audience,' when his son stood so calmly before him, his accuser, and before his powerful judges, whose very glances cause people to quake with fear. And Teispes will remember to his dying day the ringing voice of his boy as he replied to his judges after they had pronounced his doom. "It is only my poor, feeble life here you can take away, 'the Divine Spirit cannot be resisted,' and it is that which strengthens me now. I am going to the 'best life,' and the last judgment will decide