

in his arms, and bore her to the apartments of the seraglio.

It was with strange and mingled feelings that Azra, the unfettered and the free, found herself the voluntary inmate of a gilded prison—for such in truth it was. She, whose dwelling had ever been with nature, and among the cottage homes of the lowly and the simple, was overwhelmed with wonder and admiration at the splendid appointments, and luxurious elegance of her new abode. Each apartment of the palace, as it seemed to her, surpassed the rest in beauty—though all were hung with costly draperies, and cooled by gushing fountains—all were furnished with luxurious couches, and piles of richly embroidered cushions, while every where, exquisite vases, filled with delicious flowers, met the eye, mingling their fragrance with that of the perfumed waters which silent slaves continually sprinkled around to refresh the air, and with the odoriferous smoke which evolved in light wreaths through the small apertures of the bronze and porphyry censers in which fragrant pastiles were kept constantly burning.

For a few weeks, Azra rioted with a delight, which she fondly thought could never change to satiety, in the unaccustomed luxury and splendor that surrounded her. But soon all grew familiar to her senses, and with its novelty, departed also the charm which had made her seek for its attainment,—till at length every weary day seemed but the transcript of that which had preceded it, and she learned to hate the tiresome monotony of her existence. Her spirits lost their buoyancy, her bright face its glad glow of happiness. Nothing in short gave her pleasure—the conversation of her companions was insipid—the graceful dances of the country, which she had at first admired so much, she soon thought less beautiful than those of her own dear land—the music seemed to her passionless, compared with that which her ear had drunk in among her native hills,—and even the rare and dainty viands that daily tempted her palate, she thought less delicious than the rich clusters of her father's grapes, and the sweet barley-cakes prepared for her by the hand of her faithful Mahala.

In a word, though living amidst the pomp of eastern luxury, and though the favourite and trusted attendant of her royal mistress, she felt herself a captive and a slave, and this humiliating thought preyed like a canker-worm upon the root of all her joy. She was indeed free to range through the spacious halls and saloons of the Sultana's palace, to brush the early dew, and watch the evening star in its spacious and, delightful gardens, but amid their shades she inhaled not the air of freedom, nor did the music of their

hundred fountains soothe her soul like the low murmur of those sylvan waters that gushed from the grey rock in the fur-off land of Arabia, and she longed, at times intensely, to fly beyond the stately walls of her prison, and seek again the free and simple home of her childhood.

But alas, for poor Azra! She knew not her own heart, and when she only believed herself weary of the pomp that surrounded her, she knew not that she loved it still, that her high ambition had not attained its aim, and that regret filled her soul, because she had not achieved for herself the greatness which she coveted. Inwardly she repined to feel herself only a cypher in the household of the Sultana, a mere dependant on her will, an instrument of her pleasure, and her proud spirit rebelled at the degradation she had sought. Could she have exchanged positions with her mistress, and have reigned where she was now doomed to serve, the current of her thoughts and feelings would have flowed in a far different channel, and it is to be feared the fountain, and the grove, and the simple home of her father, would have been remembered only in humble contrast with the brightness of her exalted fortunes. But she did not seek to analyze the vain desires and regrets that were busy in her heart—she thought only, it is better to be the object of idolatry in a mud-walled cottage, than to be the slave of another's caprice in the gilded saloons of a palace. And as these feelings day by day gained a stronger hold upon her mind, the sweet flow of her thoughts and affections became chilled and embittered; she learned to envy the power and happiness of her confiding mistress, to brood with morbid melancholy over her voluntary degradation, and to deprecate unceasingly the hour when she had yielded to the bondage that now so hopelessly entrained her. This self-inflicted torture was rendered more poignant by a certain degree of indifference, of late manifested towards her by the Sultana, whose absorbing love for her husband rendered her almost regardless of her former favourites, while the power which she had obtained over her sickle and imperious lord, seemed little else than the effect of magic.

Dwelling upon these circumstances, and mentally aggravating every real or fancied slight which she had recently received, Azra stole one sultry noon from her restless couch, when the eyes of the whole Seraglio were sealed in their customary siesta, and wandered forth alone into the latticed balcony, and from thence into the embowered shades of the garden. Full of brooding thought, she strolled slowly on, now pausing listlessly beside a marble fount, and now resting for a minute's space within some mossy grotto which the hand of art had formed into a faint