

"Next morning the fugitive and his wife were safe in their little tent of camels' hair in the Sahel, unmolested and undiscovered; and the body of cavalry returned, brow-beaten, to Tangier, to tell a dreadful tale of wonders.

"Alee with a keen eye, scrutinized the path and bushes; and following the fibre of aloe with which he had encircled their abode, found it unbroken, except in the path they had entered. His stock of food which he had left there since his last visit, was also safe.

CHAPTER V.

"ALEE, as I told you, never molested the poor. Wealthy caravans or porsy traders, were the sufferers; but his robberies were bloodless, unless he met with resistance or disobedience. He was, indeed, on such good terms with the villagers in whose neighborhood he carried on his depredations, that he is said to have been daily provided with an abundance of *mons*, to which each village contributed a portion; and in return, when there happened to be a marriage-feast, Alee would sometimes appear, and, bringing a gift for the bride, would assist at the rejoicings.

"Now Sheikh Biteewy of the village of—— had made known, by the public crier, that his eldest son, Jilaly, was to take unto him: for wife, Fatma, the daughter of Kaid Etsisy.

"These were joyful news for the Six-fingered, who loved a carousal, and was fond to excess of *somets*.* So having laid in the necessary store of provisions for his wife, he promised to return to her after three days; for Rahimann was expecting soon to become a mother.

"Alee then selected from the spoils of a wealthy Israelite, who had lately fallen into his clutches, a handsome piece of brocade, and a pair of massive gold anklets; and having wrapped them up in a fine silk handkerchief, of Fas manufacture; he set out towards the thatched dwelling of the sheikh about the Mogareb.†

"The sheikh was sitting at his porch when Alee approached; he welcomed him kindly, and very graciously accepted his offerings.

"Alee, as I said, was fond of *somets*, and never had he been accused of passing the wooden bowl without taking a long and hearty pull. That night his potations were more deep and frequent than usual; and at length, overcome by the intoxicating fumes, the freebooter lay senseless on the floor.

* An intoxicating drink, being boiled juice of grape, which is distributed to the guests at the merry-makings of the mountaineers in this country.

† The hour of evening prayer.

"What sum has been offered for this drunkard?" said old Kador, the one-eyed, who, by the bye, had frequently handed the bowl to Alee (near to whom he had seated himself). "They say," he continued, "that our lord the Sultan would give the dower of a Basha's daughter for the bullet-head of that villain. Are we to disregard the royal mandate? Are we to admit into our feasts one whose very hand is stained with the blood of our kindred? Did he not shoot my uncle's wife's brother, Kaid Mokhar, while obeying the orders of Seeyeloonah? Are we to accept gifts bought at the price of blood? Are we, in the face of God and man, to be a party to his lawless acts? Let others do as they please; but I," said he, unsheathing his dagger at the same time; "I will not be a traitor to my Sultan."

"Heated with wine, and excited by the appeal of the one-eyed, several of the guests started up, applauding his decision. 'But,' said they, 'let us not take his life, and bring ill luck upon the bride and bridegroom; rather let us secure his person, and send him in chains to the Prince of Believers.'

"Now, knowing the immense strength of Alee, and his luck in escaping from the hands of justice, they agreed, in order to prevent any failure in their attempt, that two of the party should be ready with loaded guns to shoot him if he made the slightest resistance.

"It was some moments before Alee discovered their treachery, for the fumes of *somets* had addled his brains; resistance too was useless, so he suffered himself to be bound hand and foot.

"Having effected this, the villagers called a consultation, and agreed that three armed men should be left to watch him for the night. Old Kador again interposed, saying, 'O fools! ye know not with whom you have to deal; this is not a thief of the Shloh: this is not a cattle-stealer of Benimsooar. This is the Six-fingered; ay, this is he for whom three hundred mitzakel have been offered. If you will listen, I will tell you how to secure him.'

"Speak then, O Kador," they cried.

"Upon which the one-eyed said, 'let the skin of his feet be torn from the soles; and then if he break his bonds, he will not have power to go far.'

"The savage proposition was put into execution. Alee groaned with agony; and called upon those around for mercy. To many of them he had performed acts of kindness: but they had gone too far to retract, and were deaf to his entreaties.

"This done, the three guards were left to watch their bleeding prisoner, who lay groaning

* Epithet for the Sultan, meaning "our Lord."