

# HINDALLAH.

A METRICAL ROMANCE—IN THREE CANTOS.

BY ANDREW L. PICKEN.

CANTO FIRST.

THE DESERT.

O'er the broad waste, like some pale star,  
The Bedouin's camp-fire flashed afar,  
Shooting its cold and sulphury light  
Beneath the sullen brow of night;  
As shines the shark, when it rests asleep  
'Neath the ebon waves of the midnight deep,  
And seems to the corsair's watchful eye  
Like light reflected from the sky.  
And oft, on the eager sense there fell,  
The tinkling chime of the camel bell,  
With glimpse of the coursing sentinel,  
As he shot, like meteor swift and bright,  
From the dark obscure, on wings of light.

By that cresset fire reclined, was seen  
One youthful warder of martial mien,  
Unsheltered, save by the lofty shade  
Of the desert palm-tree's gourdlike blade:  
One arm across his corsair thrown,  
In quiet stretched beside him down,  
His form half resting on its neck,  
His fingers wreathed in the bridle-check;  
Turning his swift unsettled eye,  
As danger there he might descry,  
E'en in the desert, where might be  
No danger, save from treachery.  
Yet still he pierced the dark profound,  
With vulture glance, all sides around,  
And leant his train'd ear to the ground,  
To catch, with jackall's readiness,  
Th' unwary footfall, or to trace,  
From post to post, the sentinel,  
By camel hoof and camel bell.

That desert ranger oft hath sat  
Unnoted at Balsora's gate,  
And heard the silent warder beat  
His measured round with weary feet,  
Disposed the guise of foreign lands  
Around his form with cunning hands,  
Displayed the juggler's magic feat,  
Or took the fakir's lowly seat  
Beside the mosque at morning streak,  
Or onward like some desert Scheik,  
With slim high stave and sily of palm,  
And downward look and meek salcam,  
Through street and square pursued his way  
Unrecognized, wher'er it lay;  
And when the camel-driver tied  
His tinkling bells at eventide,  
The khan's frequented porch beside,  
And quaffed the housewife's cool sherbet,  
Wherewith men of many lands were met,

The serpent-charmer's hire to claim,  
With bursting eyes and Nubian hue,  
He oft and unsuspected came,  
And ever so withdrew.  
And well his ear was trained to catch,  
In silence of his midnight watch,  
Each motion soft, with but of sound  
To wake one echo from the ground  
Whereon he lay: and he has heard,  
In mosque and shrine, each whispered word  
In which the kneeling wretch arrayed  
His guilty prayers to Mohammed.  
Though many a bolt and barrier  
Was drawn before his stationed ear,  
And many a curtain muffled round,  
To crush at once the rising sound,  
Ere round disclosed, from roof and wall,  
The penitent's confessional!

And now that restless eye could scan  
The heavy flighted pelican,  
With greedy eye, and noiseless wing,  
Hanging above the slumbering;  
Or onward far, at distance, note  
The ostrich ply his meteor foot,  
And speed afar, like a thing of light,  
Too swift for man to track his flight.

Son of the wild!—a Syren rings  
Her song of slumber in thine ears,  
And fancy's sleepless pinton brings  
The shadowy forms of other years,  
To glad the dream that o'er thee steals  
And all thou'st loved and lost reveals:  
The dark, the melancholy eye,  
That watched thy sleep of infancy,  
And welcomed with a mother's joy  
The waking day smile of her boy,—  
That voice, whose sad and tender sound  
First caught thine infant ear, and found,  
Mid many greetings and much art,  
The closet of thine infant heart:  
That mother's eye, that mother's hand,  
Are withered 'neath the desert sand;  
That voice is hushed and every tone  
Thy better feelings prized, is gone;  
But still in Memory's fond embrace  
That cherished form retains its place,  
Mid never dying beams, and flowers  
In all the glow of vanished hours.—  
Tis with thee now, that dreamy eye,  
And thy sad heart throbs heavily.